

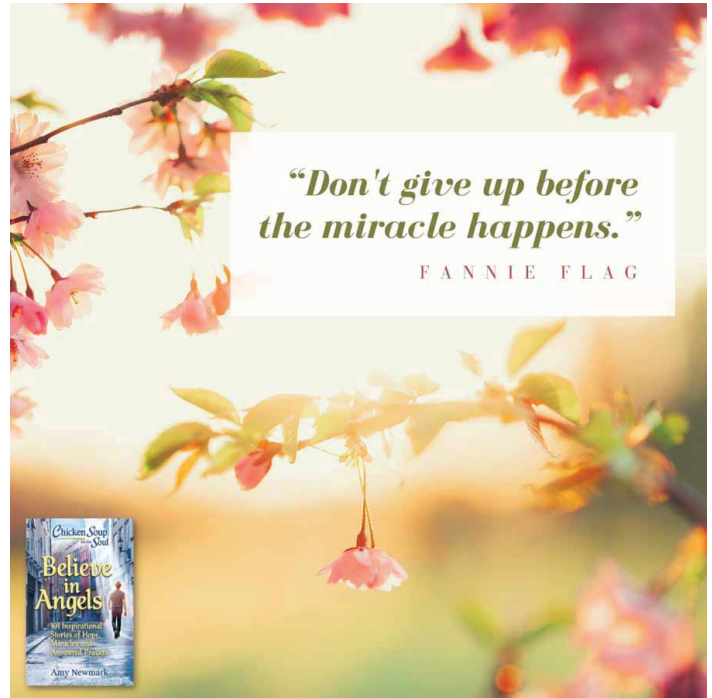
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## Saturday, May 11

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



## Sunday, May 12

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

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

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

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## Geomagnetic Storm

An extreme G5 geomagnetic storm reached Earth last night, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The G5 storm is the strongest to hit Earth since October 2003. The storm triggered the aurora borealis, commonly known as the northern lights, in many parts of the US and around the world. Geomagnetic conditions could persist through this weekend and potentially disrupt some telecommunications and power grids.

A geomagnetic storm is a temporary disturbance to Earth's magnetosphere (the region of the planet dominated by its magnetic field) caused by solar flares and coronal mass ejections. Solar flares are bursts of radiation coming from sunspots, while coronal mass ejections are bursts of plasma and magnetic field lines coming from the sun's corona. NOAA has observed a series of solar flares and coronal mass ejections since Wednesday. This week's solar flares have been associated with a sunspot cluster that is 17 times the diameter of the Earth; the Earth's diameter is roughly 7,926 miles.

An average of four G5 geomagnetic storms occur every solar cycle—the 11-year cycle of the sun's magnetic field. The current solar cycle began in December 2019.

## Russia attacks Ukraine's Kharkiv region, opening up new front.

Russian forces on Friday launched a ground operation in the second-largest city in Ukraine and targeted the northeastern area with shelling and aerial strikes. Ukraine said its forces had repelled Russia's attacks and deployed reserve units along the front, where fighting is ongoing. Until now, fighting was primarily centered in Ukraine's southern and eastern regions.

## UN General Assembly backs bid for Palestinian membership.

The 193-member body voted 143-9, with 25 abstentions, to approve a resolution recognizing Palestine as qualified to join the United Nations. The resolution does not grant full membership and is largely symbolic. Under UN rules, the more exclusive UN Security Council would need to back new membership for final approval. The US, which is part of the UN Security Council, was among the nine UN General Assembly members to vote against the resolution.

## Appeals court upholds Steve Bannon's contempt of Congress conviction.

Bannon was sentenced to four months in prison in 2022 but had been allowed to remain free until the appeals process concluded. He was convicted of contempt of Congress for ignoring a deposition request and for refusing to hand over documents related to former President Donald Trump's alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Bannon is one of two former Trump advisers convicted of contempt of Congress; Peter Navarro began serving his four-month sentence in March.

## Novavax shares double on Sanofi deal to commercialize COVID-19 vaccine.

Biotechnology firm Novavax announced Friday it has struck a \$1.2B licensing deal with French drug-maker Sanofi. Under the deal, Sanofi will have a nearly 5% stake in Novavax and would be able to use Novavax's COVID-19 shot and vaccine technology to develop a combined vaccine that targets both the flu and COVID-19. Shares of Novavax closed up 98% Friday.

## UK exits technical recession as economy grows faster than expected.

Britain's gross domestic product—the total value of goods and services produced—rose 0.6% in the first quarter of 2024, according to latest government data. The figure marks the strongest growth since a

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

1.5% increase in the fourth quarter of 2021. The UK economy had shrunk in the previous two quarters in 2023, signaling a technical recession.

## **World's largest carbon capture facility begins operating in Iceland.**

Swiss startup Climeworks opened a carbon capture and storage facility, dubbed "mammoth," this week. The facility, situated on a dormant volcano in Hellisheidi, Iceland, aims to remove 36,000 metric tons of carbon from the atmosphere annually. Mammoth works similarly to an air filter, using fans to pull carbon dioxide from the air. The carbon dioxide is eventually dissolved in water and pumped into the ground.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Talia S. from Westfield, Massachusetts.

"Last week on a 4+ hour flight from Hartford to Denver, a stranger voluntarily switched seats with my fiancé so we could sit next to each other. She gave up her window seat for a middle seat without even thinking about it. I was 11 weeks pregnant and extremely nauseous. Being able to sit next to my fiancé made the flight bearable and her unexpected kind gesture truly warmed my heart. The same woman found my fiancé's wallet in his former seat and returned it."



*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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**—Weber—**  
**Landscaping**  
**Greenhouse**

**NOW**  
**OPEN!**

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

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**The aurora borealis (northern lights) were very visible last night and into this morning as an extreme G5 geomagnetic storm reached Earth.** (Photos by Paul Kosel)



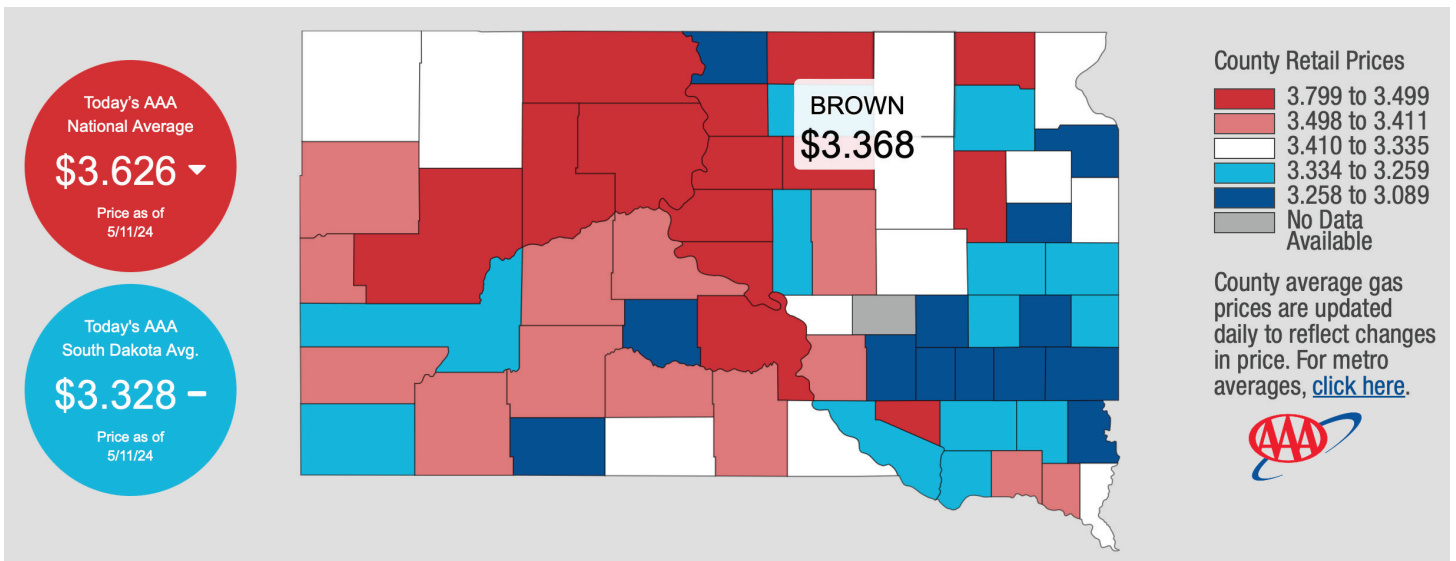
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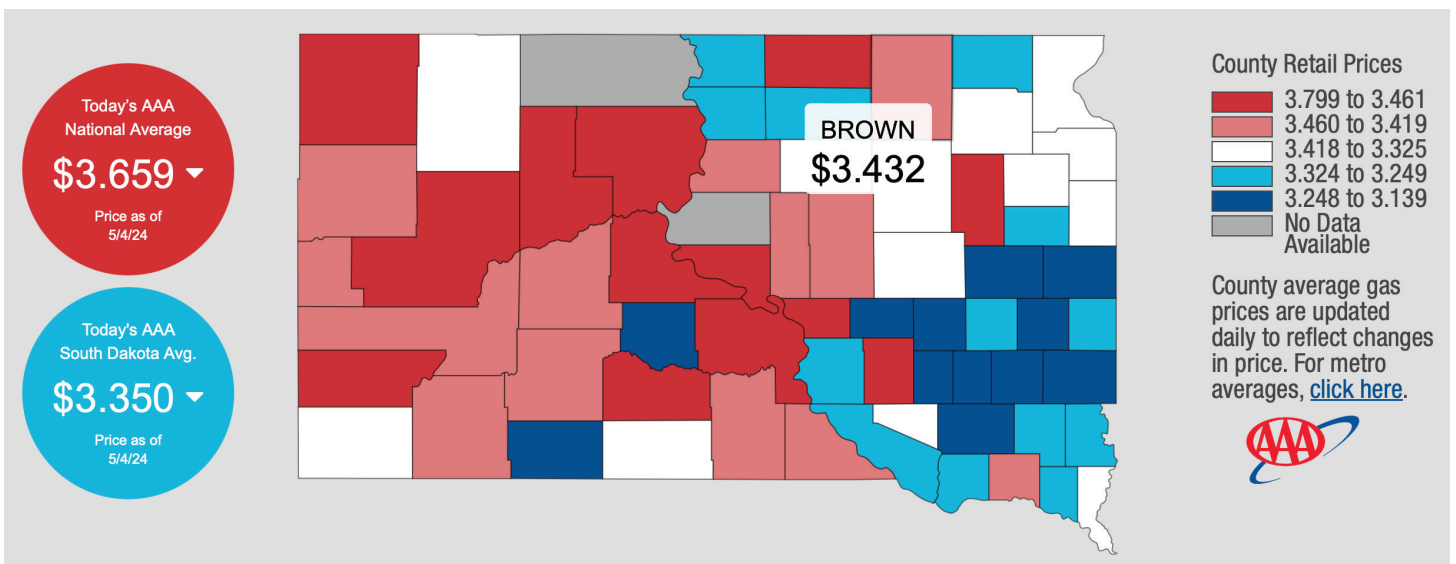
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.328	\$3.495	\$3.905	\$3.618
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.350	\$3.525	\$3.935	\$3.639
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.383	\$3.512	\$3.958	\$3.711
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.459	\$3.608	\$4.065	\$3.812

### This Week



### Last Week



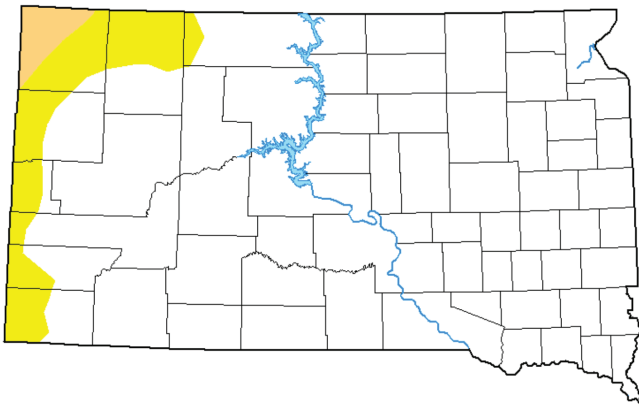
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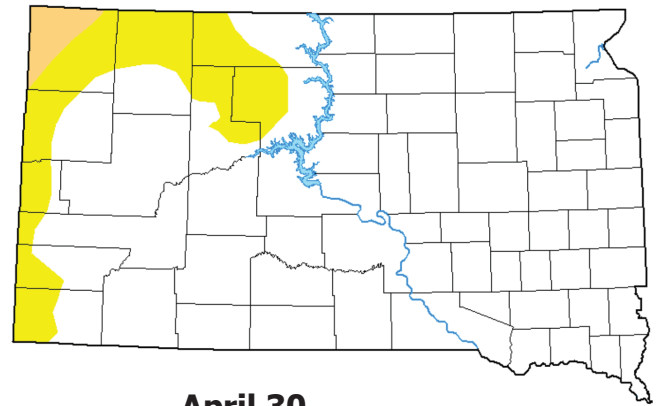
## Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

## Drought Monitor



May 7



April 30

This week, widespread heavy rain fell across Iowa, Missouri, southern Minnesota and portions of central Kentucky. Temperatures across the region this week were mostly above normal (outside of western Iowa); the warmest temperatures occurred in Indiana and Ohio, where weekly anomalies ranged from 6 to 12 degrees above normal. In the western half of the Midwest region, widespread improvements to drought occurred as the recent wet pattern continued, alleviating short-term precipitation deficits in most areas and creating short-term surpluses in some. Streamflows and near-surface soil moisture improved as a result in many areas, leading to some improvements to drought conditions. However, significant long-term precipitation and groundwater deficits remain in many areas, especially in parts of Iowa, so the current drought depiction still shows widespread moderate and severe long-term drought there. Southeast Kentucky saw a small area of short-term moderate drought develop where short-term precipitation deficits grew and streamflow lessened.

## NEC Track Team Scores

The North Eastern Conference (NEC) varsity track meet was held Thursday in Sisseton SD. The girls battled Milbank with Groton Area finishing a close second in the overall team NEC Championship. The boys tied with Clark/Willow Lake for 6th.

- Bruce Babcock

[Back](#)

Northeast Conference Mee

May 9, 2024 HS

### Mens Varsity

20 / 20 Events Completed

1. Milbank	192
2. Webster Area	129
3. Aberdeen Roncalli	94
4. Deuel	90.5
5. Hamlin	87
6. Clark/Willow Lake	45
6. Groton Area	45
8. Sisseton	38.5
9. Britton-Hecla	32
10. Redfield	25

### Womens Varsity

20 / 20 Events Completed

1. Milbank	177
2. Groton Area	137
3. Deuel	91.5
4. Clark/Willow Lake	90
5. Webster Area	73.5
6. Aberdeen Roncalli	70.5
7. Britton-Hecla	45
8. Hamlin	39
9. Sisseton	33
10. Redfield	17.5



**McKenna Tietz approaches high hurdle in the girls 100m race. She placed second in the 100m Hurdle race.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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**Talli Wright and Emerlee Jones cross the 100m High Hurdles in the second heat of the NEC race.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**McKenna Tietz and Emerlee Jones during the 300m hurdles race. McKenna and Emerlee placed 1st and 5th respectively in the 300 intermediate hurdles.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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**(L-R) Riley Dunker and Laila Roberts during the 200m open.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Lane Tietz sprints in the 200m.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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**Jerica Locke, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen, and Ashlynn Warrington place second in the 1600m (mile) relay.** (Photos by Bruce Babcock)

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# MANHART

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 1



**Working to Protect & Promote  
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- Pro Law Enforcement
- Pro Constitution
- Pro Family
- Property Rights



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**Primary Election: *Vote Now Through June 4th***

## Names Released in Spink County Crash Fatality

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 20, mile marker 350, 9 miles southwest of Conde, SD

When: 4:48 p.m., Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Driver 1: Robert Louis Tennis, 77-year-old male from Conde, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2021 CanAm Defender UTV

Seat Belt Use: No

Driver 2: Jeffrey John Miles, 60-year-old male from Conde, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 1996 Peterbilt Conventional 379

Seat Belt Use: Yes

Spink County, S.D.- A 77-year-old man died Tuesday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash nine miles southwest of Conde, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Robert L. Tennis, the driver of a 2021 CanAm Defender UTV, turned in front of a westbound Peterbilt truck on SD Hwy. 20. The truck, driven by Jeffrey J. Miles, struck the UTV, forcing it into the ditch where it rolled. Tennis died from his injuries. Charges are pending against Miles, who did not sustain any injuries.

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

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

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**BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

**May 14, 2024 8:45 A.M.**

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Kelly Weaver & Mark Nelson, GROW SD
  - a. Program Update and Budget Request
5. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
  - a. Final Adopted By-Laws
  - b. Fair Board
  - c. Fair Contracts
    - i. Tents
    - ii. Fireworks
    - iii. Trash Crew
6. First Reading of the following Ordinances:
  - a. Ordinance #268 – Rezone
  - b. Ordinance #269 – Rezone
  - c. Ordinance #270 - Rezone
7. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of May 7, 2024
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Lease Agreements
  - e. Travel Requests
  - f. Primary Election Workers
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at**

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

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## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### Regular School Board Meeting

May 13, 2024 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of April 8, 2024 school board meeting, April 17, 2024 special school board meeting, April 22, 2024 school board, May 7, 2024 special school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of April 2024 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of April 2024 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of April 2024 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of April 2024 School Transportation Report.
6. Approve Open Enrollment Applications #25-01, #25-02, #25-03, #25-04, #25-05, #25-06, #25-07, #25-08 for the 2024-25 school year.

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review Preliminary FY2025 District Budget.
2. Consider Bids for Elementary Roof Project.
3. Approve hiring Brittany Hubbart as HOSA Advisor for the 2024-25 school year at 5% of base salary.
4. Create HOSA Custodial Account and Transfer Remaining FBLA Funds to account.
5. Approve establishing the following custodial accounts: Girls Basketball, Boys Basketball, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Football, Volleyball, Music
6. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Board of Directors West River At-Large Representative.
7. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Board of Directors Native American At-Large Representative.
8. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Constitutional Amendment #1.
9. Approve summer employment agreements:
  - a. Connect 4Ed Summer School
  - b. Special Education Extended School Year (ESY)
  - c. Summer Custodial
10. Executive session pursuant SDCL1-25-2(1) for personnel and SDCL1-25-2(4) for negotiations.
11. Approve 2024-2025 GASA Negotiated Agreement and issue 2024-2025 auxiliary staff work agreements.
12. Approve resignation from Kyle Gerlach, Assistant Basketball Coach, for the 2024-25 school year.
13. Approve resignation from Jenna Strom, Assistant Volleyball Coach, for the 2024-25 school year.
14. Approve resignation from Robin Bitz, Special Education Paraprofessional.
15. Approve 2024-2025 Administrative Staff Negotiated Agreement and issue 2024-2025 Administrative Contracts.

#### ADJOURN



### Sixth tribal nation bans Noem for comments on cartels, Native children

#### Yankton Sioux Tribe's unanimous vote a move of solidarity

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 10, 2024 6:53 PM

Six of the nine Native American tribes in South Dakota have now voted to ban Gov. Kristi Noem from their lands.

The Yankton Sioux Tribe Business and Claims Committee voted unanimously on Friday to ban the governor, citing her comments about drug cartels, Native American children and what one tribal council member characterized as performative rather than substantive efforts to engage tribal leaders.

The committee is the primary elected body for the Yankton Sioux Tribe, whose lands are situated in southeastern South Dakota.

"It's about standing in solidarity together, all the Oceti Sakowin," said Council Member Ryan Cournoyer, referencing the name for speakers of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota languages.

Earlier this week, the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate voted to bar the governor from the Lake Traverse Reservation for similar reasons. Previously voting to ban Noem were the Oglala, Rosebud, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Sioux tribes.

Calls and messages to the leadership of the remaining tribes in the state — the Flandreau Santee, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Sioux tribes — were not immediately returned Friday.

Gov. Noem's spokespeople also did not offer an immediate response to the Yankton Sioux Tribe's vote. Noem has been busy reacting to the fallout from her new book, "No Going Back," in which she sparked a national backlash by revealing she had fatally shot a dog and a goat. Noem also faced criticism for claiming in the book that she had met North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un — a claim she and the book's publisher ultimately retracted.

Beyond tribal solidarity, Cournoyer told South Dakota Searchlight that the governor's comments during town halls in Mitchell and Winner earlier this year were particularly offensive.

In Mitchell, speaking of tribes, Noem said, "Their kids don't have any hope. They don't have parents who show up and help them. They have a tribal council or a president who focuses on a political agenda more than they care about actually helping somebody's life look better."

Comments suggesting that Mexican drug cartels have "set up shop" on the state's reservations have been a sticking point since her delivery of a speech about the U.S. border with Mexico on Jan. 31. Since the speech, delivered to a joint session of the South Dakota Legislature, the governor has written an op-ed column titled "banish the cartels" and claimed without offering evidence that tribal leadership is "personally benefitting" from the cartels.

Noem also angered some tribal leaders during a meeting between the tribes and the federal government in early April in Rapid City. The meeting was about Pè Sla, a stretch of prairie land in the Black Hills considered sacred by the tribes.

She hadn't been invited, and Oglala Sioux Tribal Council President Frank Star Comes Out criticized her surprise arrival as an unwelcome distraction and a "publicity stunt" meant to bolster her chance at becoming Donald Trump's vice presidential running mate.

Cournoyer was at that meeting, and said the governor "charging in there" with her team made her words



about working with tribes to solve problems ring hollow.

"It was more for the media than to show she wanted to work with us," he said.

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

## Man behind the ballot: How a Democrat changes laws in a Republican state

**Abortion rights and grocery tax repeal are latest of many measures  
Rick Weiland has helped place before voters**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FRIDAY MAY 10, 2024 4:30 PM**

Since 2014, South Dakotans have voted for ideas including a higher minimum wage, stricter anti-corruption laws and expanded Medicaid eligibility. This November, statewide ballots are likely to include measures that would restore abortion rights and repeal the state sales tax on groceries.

One Democratic former candidate for Congress has played a part in all of it.

After three unsuccessful runs for office, Rick Weiland knows the grim prospects for Democrats in South Dakota. Republicans hold every statewide office and all but seven of 105 seats in the Legislature. So, instead of pursuing his own electoral ambitions further, he pivoted toward ballot measures to influence public policy.

"The focus is on issues that resonate broadly with South Dakotans, irrespective of party affiliation," Weiland said.

Ballot question committees chaired by Weiland have raised more than \$3 million since 2014. He's led or participated in 11 measures. Five were approved by voters, three are pending for this year's ballot, two failed to make the ballot and one was rejected by voters.

Weiland's strategic shift to ballot measures is rooted in his belief that some progressive policies, presented directly to voters, can transcend the Republican vs. Democrat divide.

"When the policy is removed from all that party stigma, people think with their brains," Weiland said.

### **Weiland's work at the ballot**

Ballot campaigns led by Rick Weiland or his organization:

Increasing government transparency/campaign finance reform, 2016: approved by voters 52%-48%, but later gutted by the Legislature.

Requiring the state to negotiate drug prices with drug companies, 2018: failed to make the ballot.

Reinstate abortion rights, 2024: petitions submitted, pending verification of signatures.

Repeal the state sales tax on groceries, 2024: petitions submitted, pending verification of signatures.

Ballot campaigns that Rick Weiland or his organization assisted with:

Minimum wage increase tied to inflation, 2014: approved by voters 55%-45%.

Referendum to overturn legislative reduction of the youth minimum wage, 2016: approved by voters 71%-29%.

Nonpartisan primary elections, 2016: rejected by voters 55%-45%.

Cap the interest rate of payday loans, 2016: approved by voters 76%-24%.

Repeal a single-subject requirement for ballot questions, and amend the process, 2020: failed to make the ballot.

Medicaid eligibility expansion, 2022: approved by voters 56%-44%.

Nonpartisan primary elections, 2024: petitions submitted, pending verification of signatures.

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## Influenced by the '60s

Weiland, 65, was born and raised in Madison. His parents, Thoreen and Donald, owned and managed a funeral home and ambulance service.

Growing up during the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests and the push for gender equality, Weiland said he was exposed to activism and political engagement daily.

"My family would debate the Vietnam War around the dinner table," he said.

Moments like that planted the seeds of a future career.

"It also didn't hurt that my parents were involved with George McGovern's campaign," Weiland said, referring to the former U.S. senator for South Dakota and the Democratic Party's 1972 presidential nominee.

Weiland's journey into public service began as he completed his studies at the University of South Dakota in 1980. He became a staffer for then-Congressman Tom Daschle, a Democrat who was running for reelection.

Weiland rose through the ranks to become a national finance director and senior adviser for Daschle.

"He did a phenomenal job at that," Daschle said. "I don't know anybody that works harder than Rick does."

Daschle was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1986 and eventually served stints as Senate minority leader and majority leader.

Weiland returned to South Dakota as Daschle's state director in 1989. His work for Daschle spanned 20 years.

## Running for office

Weiland became the Democratic nominee for South Dakota's lone congressional seat in 1996.

"I had been in the political trenches," Weiland said. "I had a good understanding of the process and our state. The timing seemed right."

He lost the general election to Republican John Thune, who later ousted Daschle from the Senate in 2004.

"It was becoming tough for Democrats," Weiland said.

He made another run for the congressional seat in 2002. He lost in the primary election to fellow Democrat Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, who ultimately served in the House from 2004 to 2011. She was defeated in the 2010 election by now-Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican.

Meanwhile, Weiland served under President Bill Clinton as a regional director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, guiding recovery efforts after the 1998 tornado in Spencer, South Dakota, and providing public affairs support after the 1999 Columbine school shooting in Colorado.

"I started with the Grand Forks flood in North Dakota," Weiland said. "It was unbelievable."

Weiland later led the International Code Council as CEO and helped to create the nation's first Green Construction Code in 2012, "marking a substantial step toward sustainable building practices," he said. The council creates codes to ensure buildings are safe, sustainable and accessible.

"We developed a culture around being good stewards of the planet," Weiland said.

In 2014, South Dakota Democrat Tim Johnson announced he would retire from the U.S. Senate rather than seek reelection. Weiland earned the Democratic nomination for the seat but lost the general election to Republican former governor Mike Rounds, in a race that also included former Republican U.S. Sen. Larry Pressler running as an independent.

Pete Stavrianos worked on the staffs or campaigns of prominent South Dakota Democrats including Democratic U.S. Senators McGovern, Jim Abourezk, Daschle and Johnson. Stavrianos worked alongside Weiland and advised his campaigns.

"Rick was a more polished candidate than Daschle when Daschle first started," Stavrianos said. "He would have easily been elected in 1986. But, you know, times were changing."

Over the prior three decades leading up to Weiland's 2014 race, Stavrianos said more rural Americans began blaming the government for the nation's problems, "rather than powerful corporate interests, like in the Roosevelt era — railroads, mining companies, you know, the people controlling their government, not 'the government.'"

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"When politicians and government are not respected by the public, the people arguing for 'less government' do better," he said. "We were so focused on winning elections, we missed that we were losing the broader narrative."

Daschle said politics was formerly local, but "I don't think that's as true anymore." He pointed to the public's shift from reading local journalism toward watching national news commentary as an example.

However, Daschle said, "I think the people of South Dakota still have the right sense of the issues," and he said that's why progressive ballot measures still pass in the state.

Weiland had become well aware of those insights by the end of the 2014 election. It was also during that campaign that he found an alternative path to pursue the policies he favored.

## A new approach

Alongside Weiland's 2014 Senate race was a ballot measure asking South Dakota voters to raise the minimum wage.

"Getting that on the ballot and passed was part of my stump speech for the Senate," Weiland said. "It wasn't my bill, but when we were collecting signatures to get me on the ballot, we'd collect signatures for minimum wage as well."

Voters approved the measure, raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 and increasing it each year based on inflation.

"I think passing that really pissed the Republican Party off," Weiland said.

During the next legislative session, the Republican-controlled Legislature passed a bill decreasing the minimum wage for workers under age 18 from \$8.50 to \$7.50. Weiland helped gather petition signatures to refer that legislation to the 2016 ballot, and voters rejected it.

The 2014 and 2016 minimum wage wins solidified a belief for Weiland.

"What it showed me was that people care more about issues than they care about political parties," he said.

Weiland and a small team decided to propose ballot measures of their own.

He co-founded TakeItBack.org, the website for a political nonprofit and political action committee, with Drey Samuelson, a former Daschle staffer and former chief of staff for Sen. Johnson. The group organizes ballot measures and ballot question committees.

"We believed the way to reform the political process in South Dakota was through the ballot measure process," Samuelson said. "The political divide is such that people are unwilling to cross the partisan line, but they will vote for policies they agree with."

Samuelson said he was highly involved in the organization's early years but turned over the reins to Weiland and Weiland's son, Adam Weiland, around 2020 to focus on other matters.

"I'm proud of what Rick has accomplished," said Samuelson, who is helping with this year's ballot question asking voters to implement open primary elections. Weiland is not leading that effort but has assisted with it.

Weiland said Take it Back has five employees, including himself and Adam, plus contracts with dozens of people. It also works with volunteers.

State law dictates the number of petition signatures required from registered voters to place a measure on the ballot. This year, the requirements are 17,508 signatures for an initiated measure or referred law, and 35,017 for an initiated constitutional amendment. Given the number of signatures needed, ballot question committees often hire people to circulate petitions.

Money comes from donors across the state and nation. Weiland and his team are paid from those donations.

"It's not paying the bills, let's just say that," said Weiland, who owns multiple restaurants in Sioux Falls. He declined to go into further specifics about Take It Back's payroll.

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## On the heels of scandal

Beginning in 2013 and continuing for several years, South Dakota faced two major scandals, known by the names EB-5 and GEAR UP.

The EB-5 scandal — named for a type of visa given to foreign investors — involved the alleged misuse of public funds by a former state official who committed suicide before being criminally charged.

GEAR UP — the name of a program intended to help prepare Native Americans for college — involved the alleged misuse of public funds by a man who ultimately killed himself, his wife and four children.

In response to public calls for corruption reforms, Weiland's team introduced two ballot measures, including one for nonpartisan primary elections, which voters rejected. The effort raised \$1.63 million, the biggest donor being Open Primaries of New York. It's a nonprofit hoping to enact open primaries in all 50 states.

The other measure was Initiated Measure 22. It aimed to reduce corruption and increase government transparency. It passed but was later mostly repealed by the Republican-controlled Legislature.

The committees created for Initiated Measure 22 — South Dakotans for Ethics Reform and South Dakotans for Integrity — raised a combined \$1.66 million. The top donor was a Massachusetts-based nonprofit focused on campaign finance reform, Represent Us, that gave \$1.05 million.

Weiland also assisted with a successful measure in 2016 to cap the interest rate of payday loans at 36%. The industry fled the state upon the bill's passage.

In 2018, Weiland worked with former Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Clara Hart to propose a ballot question requiring the state to negotiate drug prices with drug companies, similar to the way the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs does.

Opponents of the measure sued and found enough problems with the petition signatures and the circulation process to invalidate the measure and remove it from the ballot.

In 2020, Weiland helped with a ballot measure to repeal the single-subject requirement for ballot questions, change the deadline for turning in petition signatures, and change other requirements for initiatives and referendums to remove obstacles standing in the way of placing measures on the ballot. Proponents did not gather enough signatures and the measure did not make the ballot.

In 2022, Weiland and Take It Back created a ballot question committee, Dakotans for Health, which pushed for Medicaid expansion.

The group received enough signatures and raised \$528,410 but withdrew its measure from the November 2022 ballot. It instead aligned with South Dakotans Decide Healthcare to support its separate and ultimately successful Medicaid expansion measure. That measure already had support from the state's hospitals.

"Without Rick and Farmers Union pushing it, I don't think it would have gotten done," said Mitch Richter, who lobbied for the ballot measure that ultimately passed. "You need someone like Rick if you want to get the job done. Anymore, it costs about \$1 million just to get an issue on the ballot."

## Critics of Weiland's approach

In 2022, there was also an unsuccessful ballot measure to legalize recreational marijuana supported by a group led by Matthew Schweich. He said Dakotans for Health reached out to help get signatures for the measure.

"Marijuana was galvanizing a lot more voters than Medicaid," Schweich said. "So, by carrying both, they could get more signatures. And they collected a good number of signatures for us."

However, Schweich said, "I don't see myself working with them again."

He said what started as Weiland's team voluntarily helping to collect signatures turned into an expectation of payment. Weiland confirmed that, saying, "Yeah, we thought we should be paid for our work."

Meanwhile, others take issue with ballot measure tactics more broadly.

Joel Rosenthal, a former chairman of the state Republican Party, said that while paying people to circulate petitions is a legitimate campaign practice, it can mislead the public into believing there is more support for a cause than there is.

"They're using ballot initiatives to do what they can't do in the Legislature," he said.

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Rosenthal thinks increasing signature requirements for ballot measures “would update our laws to reflect the intent of what the initiated measure process was created for.”

“When this was created in the 19th century, out-of-state donors couldn’t just pay people to stand outside the mall and collect signatures,” he said.

Drey Samuelson said Republicans need to look in the mirror.

“If they want to talk about limiting money in politics, I’m happy to listen,” he said. “They don’t mind it when it serves their interests.”

Rosenthal also said if Democrats want to enact laws, they should get elected to the Legislature and introduce them in Pierre.

“There, a bill has to pass committees, the House and Senate, and then the governor,” he said. “That means the bill gets vetted along each step of the way. I believe in democracy, and that our vetting system is superior to television advertising and one-liners.”

Weiland does not agree that lawmaking should be the exclusive domain of lawmakers.

“Yeah, sure, the lawmakers, along with all the special interests and their pockets full of money,” Weiland said. “If they’re doing their jobs, listening to what the people they represent want, I wouldn’t be here. We’re doing their job.”

Weiland said ballot measures are vetted by the Legislative Research Council, the attorney general and ultimately the voters. The Legislative Research Council looks at the proposed idea to check how it might affect the state’s laws and budget. It advises on how to write the proposal. After that, the Attorney General’s Office steps in to write a title and ballot explanation.

## Like a ‘musket against an AR-15’

Pete Stavrianos, the Democratic former longtime politico and congressional staffer, thinks Republicans in the Legislature are overreacting to the handful of wins progressives have achieved through the ballot measure process.

“Ballot measures are like fighting with a single-loader musket against an AR-15,” he said. “If you care about making a difference and they’re the only available option, then you do it.”

This year, Weiland and his team have put two more measures on the ballot: removing the state sales tax on groceries and restoring abortion rights.

“Stuff that affects everyone’s lives,” Weiland said.

The abortion rights petition motivated an anti-abortion response effort, asking voters to “Decline to Sign” the petition. That failed, and Weiland’s group collected more than enough signatures. But the Legislature passed a law last winter allowing petition signers to withdraw their signatures, and anti-abortion advocates are now coordinating a signature-withdrawal effort.

The measure would legalize abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy but allow the state to impose limited regulations in the second trimester and a ban in the third trimester, with exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

Weiland anticipates that if the measure passes, Republicans will “try to encroach upon the rights we have restored, and the bill will end up in the courts, and it’ll be challenged.”

Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, opposes the ballot measure. He described Weiland as opportunistic.

“It’s pretty evident that Weiland gravitates toward measures that have deep pockets to pay for them, usually from out of state,” he said. Venhuizen sponsored a bill that will have voters deciding on another issue this November, asking if the state should be allowed to impose work requirements on Medicaid expansion enrollees.

While some of Weiland’s ballot measure campaigns include a big donor from out-of-state, not all of his efforts do. Dakotans for Health’s latest financial disclosure showed 379 people – mostly South Dakotans – made donations of more than \$100 apiece, totaling \$119,706 for an average of \$316. Another \$10,297 came from donors giving less than \$100 apiece.

The biggest donation to Dakotans for Health was \$55,000 from Take It Back, the other group Weiland helped found. Its latest filing shows \$33,845 donated by individuals giving less than \$100. Another 112

people from all over the U.S. donated more than \$100, totaling \$23,559.

Dakotans for Health spent about \$249,000 last year, including about \$44,000 toward salaries and \$167,000 on consulting. Unlike some other states, South Dakota's campaign finance laws and rules allow generic disclosures such as "consulting" without specific information revealing who was paid and for what.

Venhuizen is additionally critical of Weiland's approach to the language of ballot measures.

"It's also been clear that good drafting and public input are not high priorities," Venhuizen said.

Venhuizen pointed to the Legislature's repeal of most of the 2016 anti-corruption measure, Dakotans for Health's Medicaid expansion proposal being shelved in favor of a similar measure, and this year's measure to legalize abortion not receiving support from groups including Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Venhuizen alleged that Weiland wants to be the first to the ballot measure starting line, to be in a better position to raise money.

"I've helped on at least a dozen ballot measures and I've never been paid a dime," Venhuizen said. "Most people who get involved in these things are volunteers. It's not a business model."

Weiland said Republicans attack his process because they know South Dakotans agree with his proposals. Since a U.S. Supreme Court decision triggered South Dakota's abortion ban, Weiland noted, Republicans had the past two legislative sessions to implement "even the most basic rape and incest abortion exceptions – something even presidential candidate Donald Trump supports – but refused to. So, here we are."

"You know," Weiland added, "there really wouldn't be a need for organizations like ours if the Legislature was doing its job and listening more to the people of our state and less to the organized special interests."

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

## Oglala police chief calls tribal law enforcement funding 'a joke' in congressional testimony

### Native American leaders also press for more education money in two days of hearings

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 10, 2024 1:27 PM**

The Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety is funded at 15% of its needs, its acting chief told appropriators with the U.S. House of Representatives this week.

John Pettigrew testified that the funding shortfall – over which his tribe has twice sued the federal government – means a force at less than half strength and causes tribal members to wait 30 minutes to an hour on average for non-emergency service.

Emergency calls can sometimes take just as long if officers are tied up with another incident miles away on the reservation, which is larger in area than the state of Delaware.

"Five minutes is a lifetime when you're fighting for your life, let alone 30 minutes," Pettigrew told members of the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee on Wednesday.

Pettigrew was one of six South Dakota-based tribal leaders to speak during two days of hearings on the needs of Indian Country.

Each spoke of the gulf between federal funding and need in law enforcement and education, the latter of which is funded on a per-student basis at less than a third the rate for the children of active-duty military families, according to information presented during the hearings.

Native American tribal nations in South Dakota derive most of their funding for basic public services from

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the federal government, through treaty provisions dating to the 1800s.

In addition to the statistics on wait times, Pettigrew told the committee that his agency fielded nearly 30,000 more calls for service last year than the year before, that his department's evidence room holds more than 100 weapons seized from Oglala reservation schools, and that his officers are "overworked, underpaid and on the verge of burnout."

That can be a tough pill to swallow for tribal police, he said, particularly when officers with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Federal Bureau of Investigation and state-level agencies make more money.

"What we're asking for is a budget correction to bring us up to par with our federal and state counterparts," Pettigrew said. "To be real, I know this will never happen, but something needs to, because 15% is a crazy number. We are not asking for more than we need. Fifteen percent is a joke."

## **Rosebud: 15 police, 20 more needed**

Law enforcement was also the lead story for Shere Wright-Plank, vice chair of the tribal council for the Oglalas' neighboring Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

"The Rosebud Sioux Tribe has half the tribal police officers, with twice the population and three times the violent crime suffered back in the year 2000," she said.

"It is evident that the current funding allocated to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the tribal police, approximately \$565 million nationwide, falls significantly short of meeting the real law enforcement needs in Indian country."

Last year at this time, Rosebud Tribal Chairman Scott Herman reminded the committee that BIA's law enforcement budget "should be at least at \$1.2 billion." Wright-Plank said the shortfall indirectly affects non-tribal law enforcement.

"While the country grapples with increased drug and human trafficking, tribes remain a gap in the law enforcement effort, a gap that the federal government is obligated to close," she said.

Rosebud recently declared a state of emergency for public safety, she said, as Oglala did late last year. On her reservation, Wright-Plank said, there are 15 tribal police officers, and "we urgently require an additional 20 officers and detention personnel."

"While we strive for economic development, the pervasive issue of drug and alcohol abuse continues to hinder our progress," she said.

## **Educators: State schools come out ahead**

Cecilia Fire Thunder is president of the Oglala Lakota Nation Education Coalition, president of the Little Wound School Board and a member of the board of directors for Oglala Lakota College.

In her written testimony, Fire Thunder compared federal and state funding for schools. The Oglala Lakota County School District is her reservation's only state-funded school system, while other schools are either federally or privately supported.

Per-student funding for the state schools is about \$16,080, she wrote, citing a 2023 study from EducationData.org. The federal government funded Indian students at \$6,910.

"Indian student funding is dwarfed compared to the only other fully funded federal education system, the Department of Defense Education Agency, which is funded at \$25,000 per student," she wrote.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have shown promise in Indian Country, according to Troy Lunderman of Rosebud's St. Francis Indian School.

Lunderman is human resources director for the school, which launched a CTE program this year.

Absenteeism among CTE students is half the rate it was for them the year before, he told the committee, and the school has seen "increases in 90% of the students' GPAs."

"In some cases, some of them had Fs, and now some of them are on the honor roll," he said.

CTE programs can work for students like those he used to meet in his former role as a social worker, he said. He spoke of one dropout he worked with in that role who struggled with algebra and science in the classroom setting.

That student never returned to school.

"If CTE was available back then for this student in particular, who enjoyed being a mechanic, with different types of math and different types of science, he probably would have succeeded," Lunderman said.

But the federal Perkins program, he said, allocates just \$16 million nationwide for tribal CTE programs.

Federal funding is also lacking for school resource officers, he said. The St. Francis school gets money through the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP), but Lunderman told the committee that schools too often need to tap into that funding to pay officers, maintenance and nutrition staff.

In his written testimony, Lunderman said BIA schools need "at least a 50% increase" in that funding source.

"Without a significant increase in ISEP funding, Indian students will continue to fall further behind their non-Indian peers," he wrote.

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

## U.S. Senate in FAA bill adds flights at Washington National, bucking local opponents

**South Dakota's Thune and Rounds vote in favor of legislation**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 10, 2024 12:52 PM**

WASHINGTON — After hours of uncertainty Thursday, the U.S. Senate struck a deal to reauthorize several Federal Aviation Administration programs for the next five years, though Maryland and Virginia senators were vehemently opposed and lawmakers hoping to attach unrelated provisions lost out.

The bill heads to the House next week for final approval. Lawmakers from the lower chamber left Wednesday after approving a one-week extension for the FAA programs that expire Friday night. The Senate also passed the extension.

The late night vote, 88-4, drew resistance from the Democratic senators representing Maryland and Virginia. They held up speedier passage of the bill over objections to a provision that would allow more flights in and out of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, just over the Virginia border from Washington, D.C.

In a joint statement after the vote, Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner of Virginia said the Senate "abdicated its responsibility to protect the safety of the 25 million people" who annually fly through Reagan airport, known as DCA.

The airport, a favorite for lawmakers as it's closest to the Capitol, is limited by federal regulation on the number of "slots," or flights that can take off and land per day.

"Just weeks after two aircraft nearly crashed into one another at DCA, this body refused to take up our commonsense amendment to remove a dangerous provision that would have crammed more flights onto the busiest runway in America," the statement from Kaine and Warner continued, referring to an April 18 near-miss when two planes cleared to take off came within 400 feet of crashing.

The Virginia senators, as well as Sens. Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, held out for hours Thursday as they negotiated a vote for an amendment to strike or tighten a provision that would increase slots at DCA to five more landings and five more take-offs.

### 'Over 200 member priorities'

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., agreed to bring what the senators described as a "compromise" amendment to the floor Thursday evening. The amendment proposed giving the final say on slots to the Transportation secretary after considering delays and safety.



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But GOP Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, one of the bill's managers, objected, saying that the bill already "contains over 200 member priorities."

Cruz, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, managed the bill with the committee's chair, Democrat Maria Cantwell of Washington.

Cruz is a proponent of increasing slots at DCA, particularly for a direct flight from San Antonio.

Others support the increase as well: Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock of Georgia had originally proposed adding 28 new slots per day. That idea was scrapped and replaced with Cruz's amendment to allow five new daily flights in and out.

On the floor Thursday evening, Cruz pushed back on the safety argument, saying that "the FAA experts have recently clarified that this near miss (on April 18) had absolutely nothing to do with traffic on the runway." He also blamed opposition on a lobbying effort from United Airlines, which operates a massive hub at Dulles International Airport in Virginia and wants to thwart competition.

Cruz said the final bill addresses safety issues by "ensuring we have sufficient air traffic controllers to monitor the traffic and protect safety."

Late Thursday night after the bill's passage, Cantwell took the floor to praise provisions that she said expand the aviation workforce, enhance pilot training and protect consumers.

Among its many provisions, the roughly 1,000-page legislation:

Directs the FAA to increase air traffic controller hiring targets;

Raises the commercial pilot retirement age to 67 from 65;

Prohibits mask-wearing and COVID-19 vaccine policies for passengers or employees;

Directs the FAA to update drone testing and operating rules;

Requires the Department of Transportation to create a seating policy to allow children to sit next to parents or guardians at no extra charge; and

Requires airlines to automatically refund customers after three hours of delay for domestic flights and after six hours for international flights.

"These statutory rights are a big win for consumers," Cantwell said.

## Last flight out of the airport

Many lawmakers view the FAA reauthorization bill as the last major vehicle to which they can attach their priorities before November elections and the close of the 118th Congress.

That opportunity disappeared Thursday when the legislation's managers decided against allowing non-germane amendments to ride on the bill.

Among the proposals lawmakers were eyeing as additions was Oregon Democrat Ron Wyden's bipartisan tax bill that would expand the child tax credit and revive corporate tax breaks. Another included Sen. Josh Hawley's Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, or RECA, which would reauthorize a fund for victims of U.S. radiation testing exposure. The fund expires June 7.

Hawley said Thursday afternoon that he wouldn't object to the FAA bill, even if RECA wasn't added on.

"I have no desire to tank the FAA reauthorization," Hawley, a Missouri Republican, told reporters outside the Senate chamber. "I think we should have a reasonable process around it. But, if we're not going to, we're not going to."

"At least we got automatic refunds for consumers out of this deal, which was good," Hawley added, referring to his amendment with Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts that senators agreed to Tuesday.

## South Dakota's votes

Republican Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds both supported the bill.

Thune said the legislation includes several of his own provisions. He said the bill would strengthen aviation safety, address the pilot shortage, improve airport infrastructure and rural air service programs, establish a new regulatory framework for the integration of drones, and improve aircraft accessibility.

Rounds highlighted the increase in Airport Improvement Program grant limits from \$20 million to \$30 million, for non-hub and small hub airports like Sioux Falls and Rapid City. "This creates additional opportunities for South Dakota airports to expand and accommodate those traveling both to and from our great state," Rounds said in a news release.

*Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.*

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

## As millions lose federal help to pay for internet, some areas aim to fill the gap

**23 million households received a pandemic-era discount through the Affordable Connectivity Program**

**BY: MADYSON FITZGERALD - MAY 10, 2024 6:00 AM**

In the small North Carolina town of Bryson City, just outside Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Kathleen Wain raises two grandchildren in her subsidized-rent apartment, taking them to sing in a church choir on weekends.

For the past year and a half, Wain has received a discount on her internet service through a short-term federal program, allowing her grandkids to do online schoolwork and her to do remote banking.

Her bill decreased from \$52 a month to about \$20 a month. "I said, 'Cool, I don't have to worry about it anymore.'"

But Wain's discount ended in April, after Congress did not extend the pandemic-era Affordable Connectivity Program. She's paying \$30 a month since Frontier, her internet provider, has reduced the cost — for now.

"There's a lot of people that need it [internet] for a lot of things," said Wain, 75. "I can't even imagine being without it — I really can't."

The federal Affordable Connectivity Program, launched at the end of 2021, has provided a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible low-income households and up to \$75 for households on qualifying tribal lands.

Now, without additional funding from Congress, more than 23 million households across the country have begun to lose the aid. April was the last fully funded month, with some households receiving partial benefits from their internet service provider through May. Several congressional bills have been introduced to extend the program, but none has advanced yet.

In response, some states and localities have expanded their broadband initiatives and programs to help those no longer receiving the federal boost. That could leave disparities in access across the country, experts say, and many households will slip through the cracks as they become unable to afford internet service.

Because of the high cost, there's no alternative to a dedicated federal benefit program like the Affordable Connectivity Program to solve the problem of affordability, said Angela Siefer, the executive director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, which advocates for broadband access.

"So, what we're going to end up with is a piecemeal kind of approach where some communities figure out solutions — most of them will not have solutions," she said.

While some states are bolstering programs to help residents afford broadband, others are boosting their infrastructure initiatives to reach those who still can't connect to internet. And some local officials are offering ACP-like benefits through county funds.

Americans pay more for broadband than almost every other nation in the world. U.S. internet bills average \$89 each month, according to a survey of 2,500 Americans late last year by U.S. News & World Report.

The federal Lifeline program, started in 1985, is the only other national initiative giving low-income

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households a discount on phone and internet service. Lifeline, which residents were allowed to use at the same time as the ACP aid, provides a monthly benefit of up to \$9.25 for eligible households and up to \$34.25 for those on tribal lands.

## States try to fill the gaps

Last year, nearly all 50 states considered legislation to expand broadband access and affordability for communities nationwide, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. At least 45 enacted legislation.

This year, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Oregon, Utah and Washington passed legislation related to state broadband grant programs and initiatives to help with access and affordability, many using federal funds.

Nick Batz, the director of the Oregon Broadband Office, said now that the federal Affordable Connectivity Program is gone, his office has shifted its focus to building up broadband infrastructure through the federal \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, known as BEAD, created under the 2021 infrastructure law.

BEAD provides grants to expand broadband access through statewide development projects.

"The challenge ahead of us is tremendous," Batz said. "And it's not something that I can accomplish on my own. It's not something that my team can accomplish on our own. Really, we need engagement from local governments, cities, counties and tribes."

Although BEAD isn't a benefit program, Aaron Wheeler, the director of the Washington State Broadband Office, is hopeful that it will be able to at least get the 7% of households in the state who are without internet connected.

While his office has multiple programs to help households at a statewide level, the federal BEAD program will be especially helpful in identifying the areas most in need, Wheeler said.

"Everyone's really invested in making sure that BEAD goes well, and that the money goes to the places that it needs to," Wheeler said. "Getting people plugged in is No. 1, and then making sure people can still continue to afford it is No. 2."

But with elections drawing nearer, some state officials expect they'll be working under new administrations. Washington state will have a new governor next year, meaning more negotiations for broadband funding, said Devin Proctor, the policy and communications manager for the Washington State Broadband Office.

## Local governments and nonprofits step in

On the local level, some governments have been able to carve out funds to help households pay for broadband. Albemarle County, located in the Piedmont region of Virginia with about 114,000 residents, has invested \$1 million in public broadband expansion by building infrastructure throughout the county.

That, in addition to about \$60 million in state, federal and private funding, means the county is on track to have universal broadband coverage — where every household in the county can access the internet — by the end of 2025, said Jason Inofuentes, the program manager at the county's Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office.

Before the Affordable Connectivity Program ran out of funding, Albemarle County officials created the ACP Bridge program, an additional county benefit for households to use alongside the federal ACP aid. Those enrolled in the program could get an additional \$20 per month toward internet services.

Right now, the ACP Bridge has enough funding to last through the next fiscal year, thanks to a \$500,000 boost from the county Board of Supervisors, Inofuentes said.

Still, with the federal program at its end, affordability will continue to be an issue, he said. And some residents who need the help may not be aware of the available programs.

"I think that there is a distinct reality that there are going to be households in our community and all over the country that are going to lose coverage because of this," said Inofuentes. "The way that we see it, we have to work tirelessly to get people enrolled in other programs they can afford."

In some communities, local nonprofits are raising awareness and providing support, said Sean Gonsalves,

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the associate director for communications at the Community Broadband Networks Initiative, a nationwide project of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a national nonprofit that works to “build local power to fight corporate control.”

Despite the Biden administration’s push to prioritize funding for municipal broadband, nonprofits and other nontraditional internet providers, these types of providers are restricted in many states, Gonsalves said.

“The broadband market is dominated by regional monopoly providers — and that pretty much answers the question as to why broadband in the United States is so expensive,” he said.

Some nonprofits are helping residents afford broadband.

DigitalC, a technology nonprofit based in Cleveland providing affordable internet for underserved communities, is offering internet for \$18 a month under its own Canopy internet service for city residents.

Project Waves, a program fiscally sponsored by the Digital Harbor Foundation based in Baltimore, has been able to offer free internet to low-income residents of the city.

Lawmakers and state officials at all levels have been aware for more than a year that the federal Affordable Connectivity Program would run out of funding, Gonsalves said. But there’s a lot of uncertainty about how to help now.

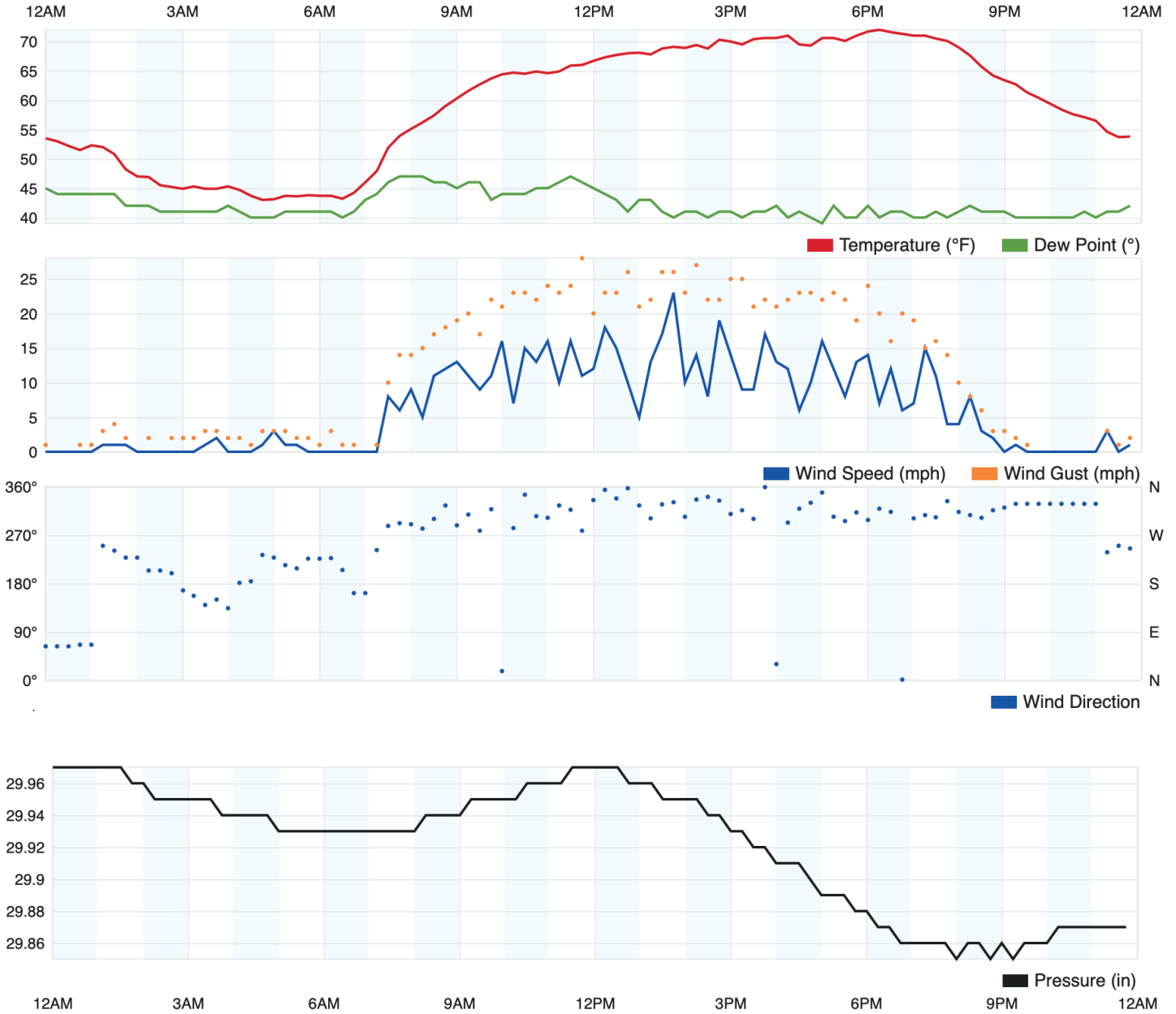
“With ACP — where 23 million households were beneficiaries — we still don’t have a clear sense of what those folks will do when the benefit expires,” Gonsalves said.

*Madyson Fitzgerald is the newsletter producer and breaking news reporter for Stateline.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 81 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 52 °F

Partly Cloudy

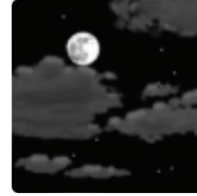
Sunday



High: 79 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 45 °F

Partly Cloudy

Monday



High: 71 °F

Sunny

## Weekend Outlook

Today



77 to 83°

Sunday



75 to 81°

Mother's Day weekend will feature high temperatures 10 to 15 degrees above average, along with mostly dry conditions.

 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce



Today will feature a mix of sun and clouds, with highs in the upper 70s to the low 80s. Westerly winds of 10 to 20 mph today will shift to the north on Sunday, bringing slightly cooler but still above average temperatures.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 72 °F at 6:15 PM

Low Temp: 43 °F at 4:44 AM

Wind: 31 mph at 6:03 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 49 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1900

Record Low: 18 in 1946

Average High: 69

Average Low: 42

Average Precip in May.: 1.21

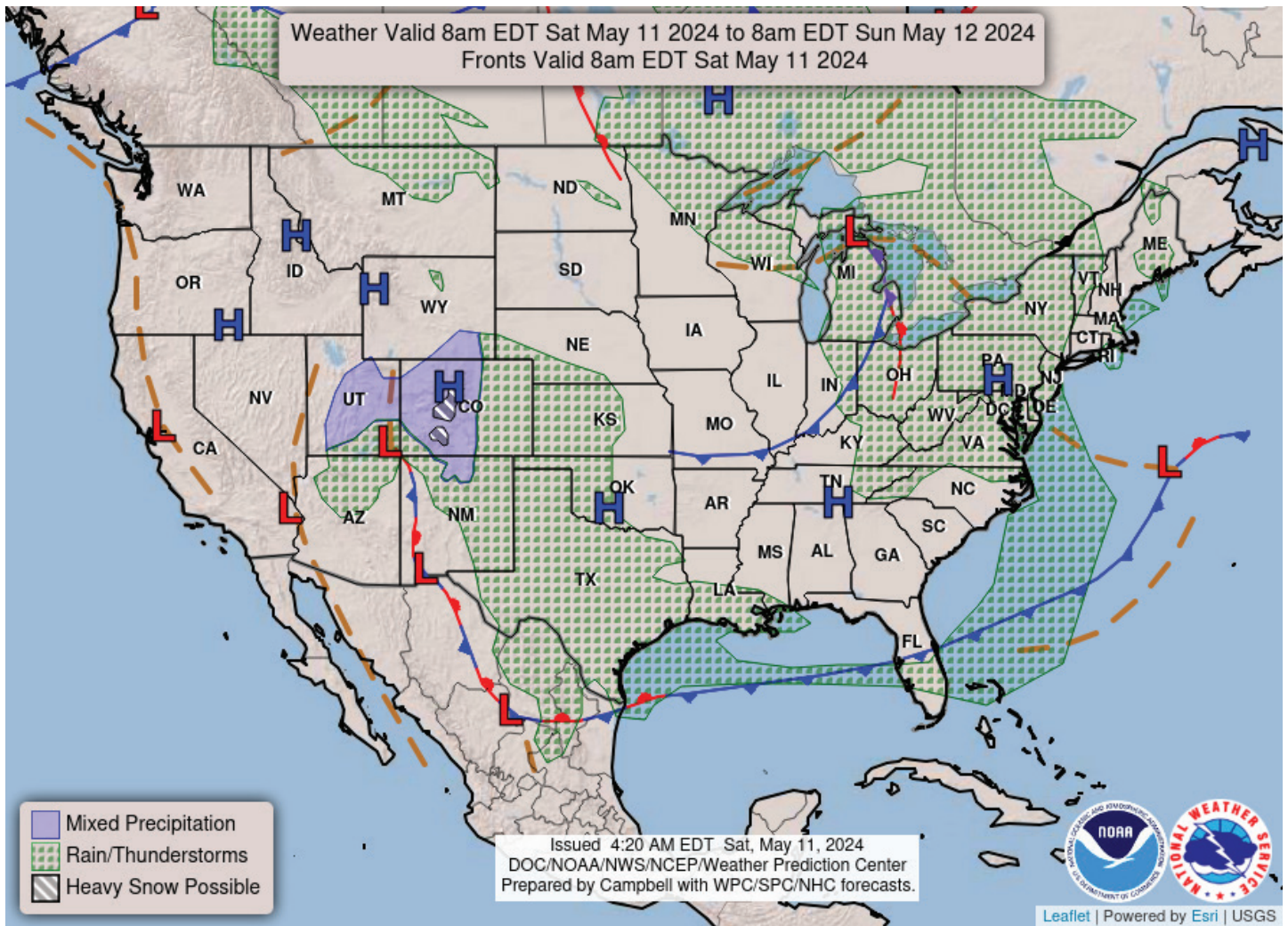
Precip to date in May: 0.68

Average Precip to date: 5.18

Precip Year to Date: 5.21

Sunset Tonight: 8:53:34 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:02:43 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 11, 1966: Late season snow fell in parts of north central and northeast South Dakota and into west central Minnesota. Amounts include; 4 inches in Timber Lake; 3 in Eureka, 2 NNW of Mobridge, and Roscoe; and 2 inches in Artichoke Lake MN, Pollock, and Waubay.

May 11, 1998: Torrential rains of 2 to 4 inches with some amounts nearing 5 inches fell across a large part of Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Clark counties on the evening of the 11th. This round of heavy rain only exacerbated the already extensive flooding occurring from many years of above-average precipitation. Day County was most affected by this round of heavy rain where area lakes were already at new record levels. Blue Dog, Waubay, Rush, and Bitter Lake in Day County were just a few of the lakes hard hit. In fact, extensive sandbagging was done around Blue Dog Lake to save many homes. Some residents of Blue Dog Lake said they had never seen the lake so high in over 35 years of living there. Many more roads become flooded after this heavy rain event and will remain so for quite some time. Spots on U.S. Highway 12 and U.S. Highway 25 become flooded near Holmquist and Webster. Also, more of U.S. Highway 212, 4 miles east of Clark was flooded. There remained only one road opened to the town of Grenville in northeastern Day County. In all five counties, the rising water took away many more acres of farm and pastureland, as well as drowning many crops that had already been planted. One farmer in Spink County said sixty percent of his farm was under water. Some farmhouses and outbuildings became surrounded by water leaving some families stranded. After this heavy rain, around sixty percent of the crop and pastureland in Day County and one-third of it in Spink County had been inundated by a swollen water table and several years of above normal precipitation. Overall, the continued flooding has had a tremendous impact on the economy in the five county areas. Some rainfall amounts on this day include; 4.7 inches just north of Crocker in Clark County; 4.52 at Webster; 4.01 at Doland; 3.81 at Waubay NWR; 3.60 at Turton; 2.63 at Conde; 2.60 at Groton; 2.41 at Clark; and 2.18 inches at Aberdeen.

Additional heavy rain of 2 to 4 inches fell mainly during the evening of the 11th across southern and central Hand County. Many creeks in the area became rushing torrents through the night and the day of the 12th. Also, low-lying areas and a lot of crop and pastureland were flooded. Some businesses and homes in the Miller, Saint Lawrence, Ree Heights, and Vayland areas were flooded. Some sandbagging was done to try and save some properties in Miller. U.S. Highway 14 at the east end of Miller was flooded over for several hours along with many other streets, county and township roads in southern and central Hand County. Many of the roads were damaged as the result of the flooding. Some people in Miller said they had never seen it flood this bad in 35 years. Some rainfall amounts include; 3.99 inches at Miller; 3.10 inches 3 miles south of Ree Heights; and 2.65 at Ree Heights.

1865: A tornado touched down in Philadelphia around 6 PM ET, killing one person and injuring 15 others. There was a considerable destruction of property, with 23 houses blown down, damage to the Reading Railroad depot, with the water tank, carried 150 yards. Fairmont Park was damaged to the amount of \$20,000.

1934: A tremendous dust storm affected the Plains as the Dust Bowl era was in full swing. According to The New York Times, dust "lodged itself in the eyes and throats of weeping and coughing New Yorkers," and even ships some 300 miles offshore sawdust collect on their decks. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

1953: A terrifying F5 tornado rips through downtown Waco, Texas, killing 114 people and injuring nearly 600 more. More than 850 homes, 600 businesses, and 2,000 cars are destroyed or severely damaged. Losses have been estimated at \$41 million. The tornado is the deadliest in Texas history and the tenth deadliest in the US.



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### HOW CAN I KNOW FOR CERTAIN?

A television producer in Great Britain was in the process of developing a series on Heaven and Hell. He wanted to make certain that his facts were right so he decided to call the office of the Archbishop.

"How can I be certain that the position of the Roman Catholic Church on Heaven and Hell is correct and that what you are teaching is true?"

Back came the answer, "Die."

Perhaps the best, shortest, simplest and most complete summary of the Good News comes from Paul and Silas while in prison. When the jailer asked them what he needed to do to be saved they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." There is nothing more and certainly nothing less for anyone to do to be born again and be assured of life everlasting.

But they did not stop with a message that was for the jailer only. They wanted him to know that his family was also included in the invitation. So they said, "Along with your entire family!" - which also included the jailer's servants.

We must always remember that it was not the jailer's faith that brought salvation to his household. Each of them had to come to Jesus in faith believing that He alone was the One who brought them eternal life.

It is indeed a wonderful example of what God can do within a family when the father honors Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we pray that every father everywhere will come to know You as their Savior and by the way they live bring their family to Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." Acts 16:31



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: 05.10.24

13 22 26 32 65 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$363,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.08.24

5 11 18 38 47 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,300,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 39 Mins 56  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.24

24 30 32 35 41 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 55  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.08.24

1 13 25 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$90,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 55  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.08.24

10 22 43 55 57 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 56  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.08.24

7 41 43 44 51 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$36,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 56  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **US dedicates \$60 million to saving water along the Rio Grande as flows shrink and demands grow**

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The U.S. government is dedicating \$60 million over the next few years to projects along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico and West Texas to make the river more resilient in the face of climate change and growing demands.

The funding announced Friday by U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland marks the first disbursement from the Inflation Reduction Act for a basin outside of the Colorado River system. While pressures on the Colorado River have dominated headlines, Haaland and others acknowledged that other communities in the West — from Native American reservations to growing cities and agricultural strongholds — are experiencing the effects of unprecedented drought.

Water users and managers can't afford to waste one drop, Haaland said, sharing the advice her own grandmother used to give when she and her cousins would carry buckets of water to their home at Laguna Pueblo for cooking, cleaning and bathing.

"She was teaching us how precious water is in the desert," Haaland said, standing among the cottonwoods that make up a green belt that stretches the length of the river from the Colorado-New Mexico border south into Texas and Mexico.

Haaland noted that parts of the river have gone dry through the Albuquerque stretch in recent years. In fact, a decades-long drought has led to record low water levels throughout the Rio Grande Basin.

"When drought conditions like this strike, we know it doesn't just impact one community, it affects all of us," she said, pointing to the importance of investing in water projects throughout the basin.

One of the longest rivers in North America, the Rio Grande provides drinking water for millions of people and supplies thousands of farmers with water for crops. Management of the river has sparked legal battles over the decades, with the most recent case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court as New Mexico, Texas and Colorado seek approval of a settlement that will help ensure they have more flexibility in the future.

U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury, a New Mexico Democrat, said improving sustainability along the Rio Grande will help the state meet obligations under a decades-old compact to deliver water downstream to Texas and ultimately Mexico.

Irrigation districts in southern New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, will work with the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to develop projects that will benefit the river and endangered species that inhabit the basin.

The work will range from capturing more stormwater runoff to improving existing infrastructure. Officials said the savings could result in tens of thousands of acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is roughly enough to serve two to three U.S. households annually.

In all, the Inflation Reduction Act provides \$4 billion for mitigating drought in 17 western states, with the priority being the Colorado River Basin. However, the legislation also carved out \$500 million for water management and conservation projects in other basins that are experiencing similar levels of long-term drought.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said funding for other basins will be announced later this year, with the goal of putting the money to use over the next four years.

On the Rio Grande, prolonged drought and heavy reliance on groundwater pumping has reduced surface water supplies, resulting in decreased efficiency and lost wildlife habitat.

By capturing more stormwater and increasing storage, officials said they could recharge aquifers and reduce irrigation demands.

Some of that work already is happening in the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, which serves about 5,000 farmers in southern New Mexico. Near the farming village of Rincon, officials are working to slow

down runoff and keep sediment from clogging channels that feed the river.

It's among several projects that the irrigation district has proposed to federal officials to save water, protect communities from seasonal flooding and restore habitat.

Irrigation district manager Gary Esslinger and Samantha Barncastle, a water attorney who represents the district, traveled to Albuquerque on Friday to participate in a briefing with Haaland and other officials. They described the efforts as "re-plumbing" the West with irrigation and flood control systems that can accommodate the changing conditions.

"It's quite a large vision," Barncastle said, "but it's what everyone should be doing — thinking big is the only way to resolve the climate crisis."

## Solar storm hits Earth, producing colorful light shows across Northern Hemisphere

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — An unusually strong solar storm hitting Earth produced stunning displays of color in the skies across the Northern Hemisphere early Saturday, with no immediate reports of disruptions to power and communications.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects of the Northern Lights, which were prominently on display in Britain, were due to last through the weekend and possibly into next week.

Many in the U.K. shared phone snaps of the lights on social media early Saturday, with the phenomenon seen as far south as London and southern England.

There were sightings "from top to tail across the country," said Chris Snell, a meteorologist at the Met Office, Britain's weather agency. He added that the office received photos and information from other European locations including Prague and Barcelona.

NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to take precautions.

"For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do anything," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center.

The storm could produce northern lights as far south in the U.S. as Alabama and Northern California, NOAA said. But it was hard to predict and experts stressed it would not be the dramatic curtains of color normally associated with the northern lights, but more like splashes of greenish hues.

"That's really the gift from space weather: the aurora," Steenburgh said. He and his colleagues said the best aurora views may come from phone cameras, which are better at capturing light than the naked eye.

Snap a picture of the sky and "there might be actually a nice little treat there for you," said Mike Bettwy, operations chief for the prediction center.

The most intense solar storm in recorded history, in 1859, prompted auroras in central America and possibly even Hawaii. "We are not anticipating that" but it could come close, NOAA space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl said.

This storm poses a risk for high-voltage transmission lines for power grids, not the electrical lines ordinarily found in people's homes, Dahl told reporters. Satellites also could be affected, which in turn could disrupt navigation and communication services here on Earth.

An extreme geomagnetic storm in 2003, for example, took out power in Sweden and damaged power transformers in South Africa.

Even when the storm is over, signals between GPS satellites and ground receivers could be scrambled or lost, according to NOAA. But there are so many navigation satellites that any outages should not last long, Steenburgh noted.

The sun has produced strong solar flares since Wednesday, resulting in at least seven outbursts of plasma. Each eruption, known as a coronal mass ejection, can contain billions of tons of plasma and magnetic field

from the sun's outer atmosphere, or corona.

The flares seem to be associated with a sunspot that's 16 times the diameter of Earth, NOAA said. It is all part of the solar activity ramping up as the sun approaches the peak of its 11-year cycle.

NASA said the storm posed no serious threat to the seven astronauts aboard the International Space Station. The biggest concern is the increased radiation levels, and the crew could move to a better shielded part of the station if necessary, according to Steenburgh.

Increased radiation also could threaten some of NASA's science satellites. Extremely sensitive instruments will be turned off, if necessary, to avoid damage, said Antti Pulkkinen, director of the space agency's heliophysics science division.

Several sun-focused spacecraft are monitoring all the action.

"This is exactly the kinds of things we want to observe," Pulkkinen said.

## **Israel orders new evacuations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah as it prepares to expand operations**

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAM MEDNICK and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel ordered new evacuations in Gaza's southern city of Rafah on Saturday, forcing tens of thousands more people to move as it prepares to expand its operation and adding that it is also moving into an area in northern Gaza where Hamas has regrouped.

Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, pushing the operation to the edges of the heavily populated central area, although Israel's move into the city has so far been short of the full-scale invasion that it planned.

The order comes in the face of heavy international opposition and criticism. U.S. President Joe Biden has already said he will not provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah, and on Friday the U.S. said there was "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law protecting civilians in the way it conducted its war against Hamas — the strongest statement that the Biden administration has yet made on the matter.

The United Nations and other agencies have warned for weeks that an Israeli assault on Rafah, which borders Egypt near the main aid entry points, would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in civilian casualties.

More than 1.4 million Palestinians — half of Gaza's population — have been sheltering in Rafah, most after fleeing Israel's offensives elsewhere. Considered the last refuge in the strip, the evacuations are forcing people to return north where areas are devastated by previous Israeli attacks. Aid agencies estimate that 110,000 had done so before Saturday's order that adds a further 40,000 to that number.

People have been displaced multiple times and there are few places left in the embattled strip to move to. Those fleeing fighting earlier this week erected new tent camps in the city of Khan Younis — which was half destroyed in an earlier Israeli offensive — and the city of Deir al-Balah, straining infrastructure.

Georgios Petropoulos, an official with the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Rafah, said humanitarian workers had no supplies to help them set up in new locations. "We simply have no tents, we have no blankets, no bedding, none of the items that you would expect a population on the move to be able to get from the humanitarian system," he said.

Israeli troops have captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt, forcing it to shut down. Rafah was the main point of entry for fuel.

The World Food Program has warned that it will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday, Petropoulos said. Aid groups have said fuel will also be depleted soon, forcing hospitals to shut down critical operations and bringing to a halt trucks delivering aid across south and central Gaza.

Heavy fighting is also underway in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already launched punishing assaults. Israeli Army spokesman Avichay Adraee told Palestinians in Jabaliya and Beit Lahiya cities and the surrounding areas to leave their homes and head to shelters in the west of Gaza City, warning that people were in "a dangerous combat zone" and

that Israel was going to strike with "great force."

Battles erupted this week in the Zeitoun area on the outskirts of Gaza City. Northern Gaza was the first target of the ground offensive. Israel said late last year that it had mostly dismantled Hamas in the area.

The United Nations agency supporting people in Gaza, known as UNRWA, said that some 300,000 people have been affected by evacuation orders in Rafah and Jabaliya, but the numbers could likely be more as these are very built-up areas.

"We're extremely concerned that these evacuation orders have come both towards central Rafah and Jabaliya," Louise Wateridge, UNRWA spokesperson in Rafah, told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, strikes are continuing across Gaza.

At least 19 people, including eight women and eight children, were killed overnight in central Gaza in strikes that hit the areas of Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al Balah, according to Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al Balah and an Associated Press journalist who counted the bodies.

Israel's bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.

## **Eurovision Song Contest reaches its final with tensions around Israel and doubt over Dutch contender**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

MALMO, Sweden (AP) — It's time for many people to don sequins and spangles — and for others to pick up protest banners and Palestinian flags — for Saturday's final of the 68th Eurovision Song Contest.

The competition that pits nations against one another for pop music glory is reaching its conclusion in the Swedish city of Malmo, with Croatia and Switzerland among those tipped to take the trophy, and Israel at the center of a political storm.

Though the contest's motto is "united by music," this year's event has attracted large protests from Palestinians and their supporters, who say Israel should be excluded because of its conduct of the war against Hamas.

Thousands of people are expected to march for the second time this week through Sweden's third-largest city, which has a large Muslim population, to demand a boycott of Israel and a cease-fire in the seven-month war. In Finland, a group of about 40 protesters stormed the headquarters of public broadcaster YLE on Saturday morning, demanding it withdraw from the song contest because of Israel's participation.

Several miles (kilometers) from central Malmo at the Malmo Arena, 26 acts — narrowed from 37 entrants by two semi-final runoffs — are due to perform three-minute songs in front of a live audience of thousands and an estimated 180 million viewers around the world.

The participation of the Netherlands' Joost Klein was in doubt, however, after he failed to perform at two dress rehearsals on Friday. Contest organizer the European Broadcasting Union said it was investigating an "incident" involving the singer, whose song "Europapa" is one of the bookies' favorites.

It all makes for a messy climax to an event that draws both adoration and derision with its campy, kitschy ethos and passion for pop.

Dean Vuletic, an expert on the history of the contest, says that despite this year's divisions, "there is no other cultural event which brings Europeans together quite like Eurovision does."

"Just this moment where everyone is watching the same television show, which is being broadcast live across 37 countries — that's something very special."

This year's entries range from emotional to eccentric. They include the goofy 1990s nostalgia of Finland's Windows95man, who emerges from a giant onstage egg wearing very little clothing. Ireland's Bombie Thug summons witchy spirits onstage and has brought a scream coach to Malmo, while Spain's Nebulossa boldly reclaims a term used as a slur on women in "Zorra."

The favorites include Swiss singer Nemo — who would be the first nonbinary Eurovision winner if their operatic song "The Code" tops the voting — and Croatia's Baby Lasagna. His song "Rim Tim Tagi Dim" is a

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rollicking rock number that tackles the issue of young Croatians leaving the country in search of a better life.

Vuletic says that despite the contest's reputation for disposable bubblegum pop, Eurovision often tackles "political and social issues such as feminism, European integration, gender identity."

"And I think they're the very interesting songs to look out for, especially because they're the most highly ranked by the bookies," he said.

Sometimes, though, songs run afoul of the contest's ban on openly "political" statements. Eurovision organizers told Israel to change the original title of its song, "October Rain" — an apparent reference to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that killed about 1,200 Israelis and triggered the Gaza war.

Israeli singer Eden Golan has shot up the odds since performing the power ballad, now titled "Hurricane," in Thursday's semifinal. Golan faced some booing at dress rehearsals, but was voted into the final by viewers around the world.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised 20-year-old Golan for performing despite "contending with an ugly wave of anti-Semitism."

Protesters argue that Israel should not be allowed to take part amid a war that has killed almost 35,000 Palestinians.

"I don't think they should be a part of it at all because they are committing crimes against humanity," said local resident Lorenzo Mayr, who attended a demonstration on Thursday.

The competing musicians are feeling the pressure, inundated with messages and abuse on social media and unable to speak out because of the contest rules. Italy's contestant, Angelina Mango, made a statement by walking into the Eurovision media center on Friday and performing John Lennon's "Imagine" as dozens of journalists gathered around her.

Swedish singer Loreen, last year's Eurovision champion — and one of only two performers to win the contest twice — urged people not to shut down the "community of love" that is Eurovision.

"What is happening in the world today and in different places is distorting and traumatizing all of us," she told The Associated Press.

"What heals trauma .... Does trauma heal trauma? Does negativity heal negativity? It doesn't work like that. The only thing that heals trauma for real — this is science — is love."

## **A train in central Buenos Aires strikes a boxcar on the track, injuring dozens**

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — At least 90 people were injured in Argentina's capital when a passenger train struck an empty boxcar on the tracks and derailed Friday, authorities said, a rare collision that fueled questions about basic safety.

The train was on its way from Buenos Aires to the northern suburbs when it derailed around 10:30 a.m. on a bridge in the trendy neighborhood of Palermo, safety officials said.

While it was not immediately clear why the idled boxcar had been on the bridge, Argentina's railway union said several meters (yards) of copper cable used to carry power along the tracks had been stolen from the railway, disabling the signaling system intended to prevent such accidents.

Union leaders fiercely opposed to libertarian President Javier Milei's economic austerity blamed the government for its failure to invest in public infrastructure.

"We have been demanding for 10 days that the stolen signaling cables be repaired," rail union leader Omar Maturano told the country's independent Radio Con Vos station. "The government said there was no money for spare parts."

Prosecutors said they were investigating.

"There is not enough information about the mechanics of this accident," Buenos Aires Mayor Jorge Macri said from the crash site where he praised the swift evacuation of victims.

Dozens of injured were treated at the scene and 30 people taken to hospitals in moderate to serious



condition, at least two by helicopter with chest trauma and broken bones.

Alberto Crescenti, director of the city's emergency service, said rescuers with police dogs had helped 90 people trapped in the derailed train, lowering some by rope from the highway overpass scattered with twisted metal and shattered glass.

Dazed passengers staggering out of the derailed boxcars told local media the train had stopped on the bridge for several minutes before starting up again and slamming violently into the other train, jolting passengers and veering off the rails in a jumble of sparks and smoke.

Officials at the Argentine rail authority, Trenes Argentinos, said service on the popular rail line had been suspended, complicating travel for many commuters.

The collision brought increased scrutiny to rail safety in Argentina, where a string of train crashes from 2012-2014 left over 50 people dead and hundreds injured. It emerged at the time that outdated infrastructure, delays and human error had left the railway system vulnerable to crashes, prompting the government to invest in new safety and braking systems.

With Argentina's economy spiraling and anti-government protests gripping the streets, the crash quickly spawned contradictory narratives, with both government officials and leftist union leaders using the incident to further their agendas.

"The rail company has been totally degraded because there's no budget," said Maturano, from the rail union.

President Milei reposted comments on social media blaming his left-leaning predecessors for neglecting public infrastructure and running up a massive budget deficit.

In the midst of Argentina's worst economic crisis in two decades, police have repeatedly reported would-be cable thieves being electrocuted in the act. Those who succeed wreak havoc on the rail system in stealing metal to sell to scrapyards, where local media says the going rate is about \$7 a kilogram (\$3.18 a pound).

The Argentine website Infobae in February called copper cable theft "a trendy crime for the crisis."

## Heavy rains set off flash floods in northern Afghanistan, killing at least 50 people

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Flash floods from seasonal rains in Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan killed at least 50 people on Friday, a Taliban official said.

The floods also caused losses to homes and property in several districts, according to Edayatullah Hamdard, the provincial director of Natural Disaster Management in Baghlan. He said that the death toll was preliminary and that it "might rise as many people are missing."

The flash floods also hit the capital, Kabul, said Abdullah Janan Saiq, the Taliban's spokesman for the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management. He said that rescue teams bringing food and other aid have been dispatched to the affected areas.

Saiq said that the rescue operation is the main focus of authorities at the moment, and that he later might be able to provide more precise figures on casualties and damage.

In April, at least 70 people died from heavy rains and flash flooding in the country. About 2,000 homes, three mosques, and four schools were damaged last month. Thousands of people require humanitarian assistance. The flooding also damaged agriculture land and 2,500 animals died in the deluges, according to Saiq.

## They made one-of-a-kind quilts that captured the public's imagination. Then Target came along

By ANNA FURMAN Associated Press

Over the past two decades, Gee's Bend quilts have captured the public's imagination with their kaleidoscopic colors and their daring geometric patterns. The groundbreaking art practice was cultivated by direct descendants of slaves in rural Alabama who have faced oppression, geographic isolation and intense

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material constraints.

As of this year, their improvisational art has also come to embody a very modern question: What happens when distinctive cultural tradition collides with corporate America?

Enter Target. The multinational retailer launched a limited-edition collection based on the quilters' designs for Black History Month this year. Consumer appetites proved to be high as many stores around the country sold out of the checkered sweaters, water bottles and faux-quilted blankets.

"We're actually in a quilt revival right now, like in real time," says Sharbreon Plummer, an artist and scholar. "They're so popularized, and Target knew that. It created the biggest buzz when it came out." Indeed, there has been a resurgence of interest among Gen Z and millennials in conscious consumption and the homemade — with "cottagecore" style, baking bread, DIY bracelets — but both are at odds with the realities of fast fashion.

The Target designs were "inspired by" five Gee's Bend quilters who reaped limited financial benefits from the collection's success. They received a flat rate for their contributions rather than pay proportionate to Target's sales. A spokesperson for Target wouldn't share sales numbers from the collection but confirmed that it indeed sold out in many stores.

Unlike the pay structure of the Freedom Quilting Bee of the 1960s — an artist-run collective that disbursed payment equitably to Gee's Bend quilters, who were salaried and could set up Social Security benefits — one-off partnerships with companies like Target benefit only a small number of people, in this case five women from two families.

The maxim "representation matters" is not new, but it's gaining wider traction. Still, when visibility for some doesn't translate into meaningful change for a marginalized community as a whole, how is that reconciled?

## A HISTORY OF OUTSIDERS

"Every stage of the finances has been problematic," says Patricia Turner, a retired professor in World Arts and Culture and African American Studies at UCLA who traced the commodification of Gee's Bend quilts back to the white collector Bill Arnett in the 1990s. "I'm really bothered by Target's in-house designer manipulating the look of things to make it more palatable for their audience," she says of the altered color palettes and patterns.

"Each quilter had the opportunity to provide input on the items featured in our collection on multiple occasions throughout the process," Target spokesperson Brian Harper-Tibaldo wrote in an emailed statement.

While thumbnail-size photos of the makers appeared on some marketing materials and the text "Gee's Bend" was printed on clothing tags, the company's engagement with the quilters was limited. As soon as Black History Month ended, the quilters' names and images were scrubbed from the retailer's site.

While Target has pledged to spend more than \$2 billion on Black-owned businesses by 2025, there are no plans to work again with the Gee's Bend community.

The situation today mirrors that of the 1990s, when some quilters enjoyed newfound visibility, others were disinterested and still others felt taken advantage of. (In 2007, several quilters brought a series of lawsuits against the Arnett family, but all cases were settled out of court and little is known about the suits because of nondisclosure agreements.)

The profit-oriented approach that emerged, which disrupted the Quilting Bee's price-sharing structure, created "real rifts and disharmony within the community," Turner explains, over engaging with collectors, art institutions and commercial enterprises. "To have those bonds disrupted over the commercialization of their art form, I think, is sad."

## REPRODUCING ART OUT OF CONTEXT

By reproducing an aesthetic but stripping it of its social fabric and familial context, Target missed capturing the essence of what makes this particular craft tradition so rich and distinct.

Quilts are made to mark major milestones and are gifted to celebrate a new baby or a marriage, or to honor someone's loss. Repurposing fabric — from tattered blankets, frayed rags, stained clothes — is a central ethos of the community's quilting practice, which resists commodification. But the Target collection

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was mass-produced from new fabrics in factories in China and elsewhere overseas.

The older generations of Gee's Bend quilters are known for one-of-a-kind designs with clashing colors and irregular, wavy lines — visual effects borne of their material constraints. Most worked at night in houses without electricity and didn't have basic tools like scissors, let alone access to fabric stores. Stella Mae Pettway, who has sold her quilts on Etsy for \$100 to \$8,000, has characterized having scissors and access to more fabrics now as a paradox of "advantage and a disadvantage."

Many third- and fourth-generation artists returned to quilting as adults for a creative and therapeutic outlet, as well as a tether to their roots. After her mom died in 2010, quilter JoeAnn Pettway-West revisited the practice and found peace in completing her mother's unfinished quilts. "As I'm making this stitch, I can just see her hand, stitching. It's like, we're there together," she says. "It's a little bit of her, a little bit of me."

Delia Pettway Thibodeaux is a third-generation Gee's Bend quilter whose grandmother was a sharecropper and whose bold, rhythmic quilts are now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art's permanent collection. For the Target collection, she received a flat fee rather than a rate proportional to sales.

"I was kind of concerned in the beginning" about how quilts would be altered to fit with the collection, Pettway Thibodeaux says. "But then again when I saw the collection, I felt different."

## LOOKING FOR ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Because job opportunities are so limited in Gee's Bend, many fourth-generation quilters have left the area to take jobs as teachers, day care workers, home health aides, and to serve in the military.

"We, as the next generation, we was more dreamers," Pettway-West says.

National recognition has certainly brought some positive change. But more visibility — from museum exhibitions, academic research, a U.S. Postal Service stamp collection — hasn't necessarily translated into economic gains. After all, the average annual income in Boykin, Alabama, is still far below the poverty rate at about \$12,000, according to the nonprofit Nest.

"This is a community that still, to this day, really needs recognition, still needs economic revitalization," says Lauren Cross, Gail-Oxford Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts at The Huntington Museum of Art. "And so any economic opportunities that, you know, funnel back to them, I support."

Target's line in particular, though, is disconnected from the group's origins and handmade practice, she says. It's a problem that distills the very challenge at hand when something handcrafted and linked to deep tradition goes national and corporate.

"On one hand you want to preserve the stories and that sense of authenticity," Cross says.

"And on the other hand," she asks, "how do you reach a broader audience?"

## Red, yellow, green ... and white? Smarter vehicles could mean big changes for the traffic light

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

As cars and trucks get smarter and more connected, the humble lights that have controlled the flow of traffic for more than a century could also be on the cusp of a major transformation.

Researchers are exploring ways to use features in modern cars, such as GPS, to make traffic safer and more efficient. Eventually, the upgrades could do away entirely with the red, yellow and green lights of today, ceding control to driverless cars.

Henry Liu, a civil engineering professor who is leading a study through the University of Michigan, said the rollout of a new traffic signal system could be a lot closer than people realize.

"The pace of artificial intelligence progress is very fast, and I think it's coming," he said.

Traffic lights haven't changed much in the U.S. over the years. Cleveland debuted what is considered the first "municipal traffic control system" in 1914, historian Megan Kate Nelson wrote for Smithsonian Magazine. Powered by the electricity from the city's trolley line, engineer James Hodge's invention featured two lights: red and green, the colors long used by railroads. A police officer sitting in a booth on the sidewalk had to flip a switch to change the signal.

A few years later, Detroit police officer William Potts is credited with adding the yellow light, though as

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a city employee he couldn't patent it. By 1930, Nelson wrote, all major American cities and many smaller ones had at least one electrical traffic signal.

The advent of connected and automated vehicles, though, has presented a world of new possibilities for traffic signals.

Among those reimagining traffic flows is a team at North Carolina State University led by Ali Hajbabaie, an associate engineering professor. Rather than doing away with today's traffic signals, Hajbabaie suggests adding a fourth light, perhaps a white one, to indicate when there are enough autonomous vehicles on the road to take charge and lead the way.

"When we get to the intersection, we stop if it's red and we go if it's green," said Hajbabaie, whose team used model cars small enough to hold. "But if the white light is active, you just follow the vehicle in front of you."

Although Hajbabaie's research refers to a "white phase" and possibly even a white light, the specific color isn't important, he said. Current lights could even suffice, say, by modifying them to flash red and green simultaneously to signal that driverless cars are in charge. The key would be making sure that it's universally adopted like the current signals are.

Using such an approach would be years away, as it would require 40% to 50% of vehicles on the road to be self-driving in order to work, Hajbabaie acknowledged.

Waymo spokesperson Sandy Karp pointed out that the self-driving car subsidiary of Google's parent company launched a fully autonomous ride-sharing service in Los Angeles and Austin, Texas, even without the addition of a fourth traffic light.

"While it is good at this early stage of AV development that people are thinking creatively about how to facilitate the safe deployment of safe AVs, policymakers and infrastructure owners should be careful about jumping too soon on AV-specific investments that may turn out to be premature or even unnecessary," Karp said in an email to The Associated Press.

University of Michigan researchers have taken a different approach. They conducted a pilot program in the Detroit suburb of Birmingham using insights from the speed and location data found in General Motors vehicles to alter the timing of that city's traffic lights. The researchers recently landed a U.S. Department of Transportation grant under the bipartisan infrastructure law to test how to make the changes in real time.

Because the Michigan research deals with vehicles that have drivers, not fully autonomous ones, it could be much closer to wider implementation than what Hajbabaie is seeking.

Liu, who has been leading the Michigan research, said even with as little as 6% of the vehicles on Birmingham's streets connected to the GM system, they provide enough data to adjust the timing of the traffic lights to smooth the flow.

The 34 traffic signals in Birmingham were chosen because, like more than half of the signals nationwide, they're set to a fixed-time schedule without any cameras or sensors to monitor congestion. Liu said although there are higher-tech solutions to monitoring traffic, they require cities to make complex and expensive upgrades.

"The beauty of this is you don't have to do anything to the infrastructure," Liu said. "The data is not coming from the infrastructure. It's coming from the car companies."

Danielle Deneau, director of traffic safety at the Road Commission in Oakland County, Michigan, said the initial data in Birmingham only adjusted the timing of green lights by a few seconds, but it was still enough to reduce congestion. Even bigger changes could be in store under the new grant-funded research, which would automate the traffic lights in a yet-to-be announced location in the county.

## **The United Auto Workers faces a key test in the South with upcoming vote at Alabama Mercedes plant**

By KIM CHANDLER and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — After 20 years at the Mercedes-Benz factory in Alabama, Brett Garrard said

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he is “not falling for the lies anymore” and will vote for a union.

The company has repeatedly promised to improve pay and conditions, but Garrard said those promises have not materialized.

“Mercedes claims that we’re a family, one team, one fight. But over the years, I’ve learned one thing: This is not how I treat my family,” Garrard said.

A month after workers at a Volkswagen factory in Tennessee overwhelmingly voted to unionize, the United Auto Workers is aiming for a key victory at Mercedes-Benz in Alabama. More than 5,000 workers at the facility in Vance and a nearby battery plant will vote next week on whether to join the union.

A win at Mercedes would be a major prize for the UAW, which is trying to crack union resistance in the Deep South, where states have lured foreign auto manufacturers with large tax breaks, lower labor costs and a nonunion workforce.

Garrard, 50, and other workers supporting the union told The Associated Press that their concerns include stagnating pay that has not kept up with inflation, insurance costs, irregular work shifts and a sense of being disposable in a plant where they assemble luxury vehicles that can cost more than \$100,000.

“Yes, we’re Southern autoworkers, but we deserve autoworker pay,” Garrard said.

Mercedes currently advertises a starting hourly wage of \$23.50 for full-time production members with pay topping out at about \$34 in four years, according to a state worker training website. Several workers said they company recently increased pay only to try to stave off the union push.

Jacob Ryan, 34, has worked for Mercedes for 10 years, starting as a temporary worker around \$17 per hour for “the same exact work” before being hired full time. Ryan, who says inflation is eating into employee paychecks, said he pays close to \$1,200 each month for his son’s day care and his daughter’s after-school care.

“None of it goes to the employees. We’re stuck where we were, paying way more for everything,” Ryan said.

Ryan said the union push is getting more traction this time after the UAW won more generous pay for workers with Detroit’s three automakers.

After a bitter series of strikes against Ford, General Motors and Stellantis last fall, UAW members made big economic gains under new contracts. Top production workers at GM, for instance, now earn \$36 an hour, or about \$75,000 a year excluding overtime, benefits and profit sharing, which topped \$10,000 this year. By the end of the contract in 2028, top-scale GM workers would make \$42.95 per hour, about \$89,000 per year.

Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc. said in a statement that the company looks forward to all workers having a chance to cast a secret ballot “as well as having access to the information necessary to make an informed choice” on unionization.

The company said its focus is to “provide a safe and supportive work environment” for workers.

“We believe open and direct communication with our Team Members is the best path forward to ensure continued success,” the statement said.

Worker Melissa Howell, 56, said that when she casts her ballot next week — voting begins Monday and will end Friday — she’ll vote against the union.

Howell, a quality team leader who has worked at the Mercedes plant for 19 years, is suspicious of the UAW after a bribery and embezzlement scandal that landed two former union presidents in prison. She grew up in Michigan and heard relatives employed by automakers speak poorly of the union.

Mercedes, she said, treated workers badly for a couple of years, aiding the union’s efforts to organize. But the company began improving conditions after the UAW started recruiting during the past few months, she said. The company did away with a lower tier of wages for new hires. The old plant CEO was replaced with a new one who walks the factory floor and listens to workers, she said.

“I feel like the improvements the company is making, it’s getting people to think long and hard,” Howell said.

Wearing a “Union YES” button at a rally outside a Tuscaloosa church, David Johnston, 26, said he thinks momentum is swinging in favor of the union.

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"Everybody's confident. Everybody knows we are going to win," Johnston said.

Organizing workers at Mercedes will be tougher than it was at Volkswagen's plant in Tennessee, largely because the UAW has not previously recruited enough workers to earn a vote at the Mercedes plant, said Art Wheaton, director of labor studies at Cornell University.

But the overwhelming Volkswagen win on the third plantwide vote since 2014 gives the union huge momentum heading into next week's election, Wheaton said. At Volkswagen, the union had experience recruiting at the plant and knew workers from previous organizing drives, which ended with narrow losses, he said. A UAW win at Mercedes would be a bigger victory than at Volkswagen because it would come on the first try.

Wheaton said he wouldn't be surprised if the UAW wins at Mercedes, "but it's tougher if you don't have that same infrastructure in place."

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and five other Southern governors have urged workers to resist the union, saying it could threaten jobs and stymie growth of the automotive industry in the region.

Ivey said in a statement that Mercedes has "positively impacted" tens of thousands of Alabama families since the plant opened in 1993 but the union "interest here is ensuring money from hardworking Alabama families ends up in the UAW bank account."

The Alabama vote comes on the heels of two high-profile labor fights in the state — an effort to unionize an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer and the end of a nearly two-year strike at Warrior Met Coal, where miners said they took cuts in pay and benefits several years ago to keep the mines open but did not see those benefits restored with the company regained its footing.

Former U.S. Sen. Doug Jones, the last Democrat to hold statewide office in Alabama, said unions have a long history of helping build the middle class in the state.

"This vote can be a turning point for Alabama for organized labor who is already seeing a rise in membership," said Jones, the son of a steelworker and grandson of a coal miner.

## **America's debt tops \$34 trillion, but a commission to address it appears dead in Congress**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For Mike Johnson it was effectively a Day 1 priority.

It's well past time, the newly elected House speaker said in October, to establish a bipartisan commission to tackle the federal government's growing \$34.6 trillion in debt. "The consequences if we don't act now are unbearable," he said, echoing warnings from his predecessor and other House Republicans.

More than six months later, the proposal appears all but dead, extinguished by vocal opposition from both the right and the left.

The collapse underscores an unyielding dynamic in Washington, with lawmakers in both parties loath to consider the unpopular tradeoffs that would be necessary to stem the nation's swelling tide of red ink — particularly in an election year. Facing the reality that any fiscal commission would almost certainly suggest that Americans pay more or get less from their government, lawmakers have time and again done what they do so well: punt the problem to the next Congress. And they seem poised to do so again.

Many Democrats and left-leaning advocacy groups oppose the commission because they fear it would recommend cuts to Social Security benefits. Some Republicans and right-leaning groups are against it as well, fearing the panel would recommend tax increases. They've labeled the commission a "tax trap."

"I'm disappointed that we haven't got as much momentum as I thought we would," said Rep. Jodey Arrington, the Republican chairman of the House Budget Committee. "The speaker supported it, endorsed it from the outset. But I think there are some outside groups that have weighed in, that have said that this is a backdoor way to raise taxes, and it scared some of my Republican colleagues."

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., sponsor of the debt commission bill in the Senate, was even more pessimistic. "No one seems to care," Manchin said. "It's a shame, \$34.6 trillion in debt. No one cares about it."

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The debt commission legislation, modeled after previous efforts, would create a 16-member panel to recommend steps that could be taken to balance the federal budget at the earliest reasonable date and improve the long-term fiscal health of Medicare and Social Security. The commission would have 16 members — 12 from Congress, evenly divided by party, and four outside experts without voting power. The GOP-controlled House Budget Committee advanced the bill in a 22-12 vote.

The fiscal realities that would face any commission are well documented and center to a large extent on Social Security and Medicare, which consume an ever-growing share of the federal budget, and interest payments on the nation's debt.

For Social Security, the reserves for the The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund will run out in 2033. At that point, the program will have enough tax revenue coming in to pay about 79% of scheduled benefits. For Medicare, the trust fund covering inpatient hospital stays, hospice care and stays at skilled nursing facilities has sufficient funds to pay full benefits until 2036. At that point, 11% spending cuts would be required to match incoming revenue.

The last fiscal commission over a decade ago — chaired by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson — recommended \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over the course of a decade through a combination of tax increases and painful spending cuts. But the 11-7 vote in favor of the package was not enough to force Congress to consider it back in 2010.

Supporters of a new debt panel noted that they modeled their bill on something that has succeeded in the past — commissions to consolidate the nation's military bases. The new commission would work under a similar structure with the legislation requiring each chamber to vote on its final proposal expeditiously.

Still, Democratic lawmakers and the White House are skeptical of forming a debt commission. Shalanda Young, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, told lawmakers in a recent hearing that the administration was concerned that the one thing on the table for the commission would be Social Security benefit cuts, not asking high-income Americans to pay higher taxes.

"It will be borne on the backs of those who paid into the system and rely on this program to retire in peace," Young said.

More than 100 Democratic lawmakers also signed onto a letter opposing the commission back in January as powerful groups such as the AFL-CIO and AARP voiced their concerns.

When Republican-aligned groups also came out against the bill, including Americans for Tax Reform and the Club for Growth, prospects for moving ahead dampened considerably. Their opposition weakened GOP leadership's leverage in attaching the commission to an annual spending bill or other must-pass measure.

"There's no guarantee about the outcome. I think that's what scares more people, and this town likes to know what the outcome is," said the House bill's author, Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Mich.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, said any mechanism that allows for tax increases undermines former President Donald Trump and other Republicans running for office on a platform of cutting taxes. He said the focus must be strictly on spending reductions, and "tax increases are what politicians do instead of making decisions and hard choices."

"The modern Republican Party is not going to put tax increases on the table as if they were part of the solution to anything," Norquist said. "Tax increases solve no problem."

That approach also makes Democrats such as Rep. Lloyd Doggett of Texas wary of a commission.

"We cannot solve our problems by cutting entirely. It's got to be with some additional revenue. Unless revenues are very much on the table, I'm not for anything. It has to be both," Doggett said.

As bleak as things look for the bill now, Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., said getting legislation through Congress is often a long game. Getting a House committee to approve the commission was an important step, he said. "We're as far along as we've ever been."

Supporters said they will continue pushing for getting a commission approved by the end of this Congress. Manchin mentioned the possibility of attaching it to legislation in a lame-duck session after the election and before the new Congress is sworn into office.

"We're in that classic position where everybody hates us," said Peters, one of three Democrats who voted for the bill in committee and is a co-sponsor. "We must be doing the right thing."

## Panama's next president says he'll try to shut down one of the world's busiest migration routes

By ALMA SOLÍS Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Panama is on the verge of a dramatic change to its immigration policy that could reverberate from the dense Darien jungle to the U.S. border.

President-elect José Raúl Mulino says he will shut down a migration route used by more than 500,000 people last year. Until now, Panama has helped speedily bus the migrants across its territory so they can continue their journey north.

Whether Mulino is able to reduce migration through a sparsely populated region with little government presence remains to be seen, experts say.

"Panama and our Darien are not a transit route. It is our border," Mulino said after his victory with 34% of the vote in Sunday's election was formalized Thursday evening.

As he had suggested during his campaign, the 64-year-old lawyer and former security minister said he would try to end "the Darien odyssey that does not have a reason to exist."

The migrant route through the narrow isthmus grew exponentially in popularity in recent years with the help of organized crime in Colombia, making it an affordable, if dangerous, land route for hundreds of thousands.

It grew as countries like Mexico, under pressure from the U.S. government, imposed visa restrictions on various nationalities including Venezuelans and just this week Peruvians in an attempt to stop migrants flying into the country just to continue on to the U.S. border.

But masses of people took the challenge and set out on foot through the jungle-clad Colombian-Panamanian border. A crossing that initially could take a week or more eventually was whittled down to two or three days as the path became more established and entrepreneurial locals established a range of support services.

It remains a risky route, however. Reports of sexual assaults have continued to rise, some migrants are killed by bandits in robberies and others drown trying to cross rushing rivers.

Even so, some 147,000 migrants have already entered Panama through Darien this year.

Previous attempts to close routes around the world have simply shifted traffic to riskier paths.

"People migrate for many reasons and frequently don't have safe, orderly and legal ways to do it," said Giuseppe Loprete, chief of mission in Panama for the U.N.'s International Organization for Immigration. "When the legal routes are not accessible, migrants run the risk of turning to criminal networks, traffickers and dangerous routes, tricked by disinformation."

Loprete said the U.N. agency's representatives in Panama would meet with Mulino's team once its members are named to learn the specifics of the president's plans.

If Mulino could be even partially effective, it could produce a notable, but likely temporary, impact. As with the visa restrictions that unintentionally steered migrants to the overland route through Panama, if the factors pushing migrants to leave their countries remain they will find other routes. One could be the dangerous sea routes from Colombia to Panama.

In a local radio interview Thursday, Mulino said the idea of shutting down the migration flow is more philosophical than a physical obstacle.

"Because when we start to deport people here in an immediate deportation plan the interest for sneaking through Panama will decrease," he said. By the time the fourth plane loaded with migrants takes off, "I assure you they are going to say that going through Panama is not attractive because they are deporting you."

Julio Alonso, a Panamanian security expert, said what Mulino could realistically achieve is unknown.

"This would be a radical change to Panamanian policy in terms of migration to avoid more deaths and organized crime using the route," he said. Among the challenges will be how it would work operationally



along such an open and uncontrolled border.

"In Panama, there is no kind of suppression with this situation, just free passage, humanitarian aid that didn't manage to reduce the number of assaults, rapes, homicides and deaths along the Darien route," Alonso said. Mulino's proposal is "a dissuasive measure, yes, (but) whether it can be completely executed we will see."

It's also unlikely that much could be accomplished without a lot of cooperation and coordination with Colombia and other countries, he said.

Adam Isacson, an analyst at the Washington Office on Latin America, said that "without considering the risk of returning migrants to dangerous situations, in mathematical terms I don't know how they hope to massively deport" migrants.

"A daily plane, which would be extremely expensive, would only repatriate around 10% of the flow (about 1,000 to 1,200 per day). The United States only manages to do about 130 flights monthly in the entire world," Isacson said.

## Trump trial turns to sex, bank accounts and power: Highlights from the third week of testimony

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The alleged sexual encounter at the center of Donald Trump's criminal hush money trial got a graphic airing in court this past week as porn actor Stormy Daniels shared her account before a rapt jury.

Daniels' testimony about her time with Trump was by far the most awaited moment of the trial, which now enters its fourth week of witnesses as prosecutors come close to wrapping up their historic case.

But it wasn't all salaciousness. Manhattan jurors saw documentary evidence meant to directly tie Trump to the hush money payments that were sent to Daniels in what prosecutors say was an effort to buy her silence in the weeks before the 2016 presidential election.

A look at what happened over the last week:

### THE (IM)BALANCE OF POWER

The jury heard for seven-and-a-half hours from Daniels, who testified in vivid detail about a 2006 sexual encounter she says she had with Trump, which he has denied.

Though she's shared details before, one striking aspect of her testimony centered on her perception of an "imbalance of power" in the Lake Tahoe hotel suite where Daniels said she and Trump had sex.

With a bodyguard positioned outside the suite, she described Trump as "bigger and blocking the way." When the sex was over, she added, "It was really hard to get my shoes on; my hands were shaking so hard."

Daniels made clear under questioning that she was not physically or verbally threatened to have sex and that she was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time.

But defense lawyers were unnerved enough by her characterizations of the encounter that they moved for a mistrial, telling Judge Juan M. Merchan that her testimony was inflammatory and differed in important ways from what she'd previously said. Her statements — she said she felt "lightheaded" and "blacked out" while with Trump — amounted to a "dog whistle" for rape, Trump attorney Todd Blanche said.

"The issue is she has testified today about consent, about danger. That's not the point of this case," Blanche told the judge.

Merchan denied the mistrial request but also conceded that the testimony included "some things that were better left unsaid." The judge also rejected a separate request to permit Trump to respond publicly to Daniels' testimony in spite of a gag order barring him from incendiary out-of-court comments about witnesses.

### 'PHONY STORIES ABOUT SEX'

Given the salacious nature of Daniels' testimony, and the volume of objections from defense lawyers as

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she spoke, it was hardly surprising that she faced a combative cross-examination in what was easily the most heated back-and-forth of the trial so far.

The Trump team painted Daniels as an untrustworthy witness as it picked apart her personal life and profession.

There were questions about her past claims that she lived in a haunted house and about her participation in a 2018 strip club tour called "Making America Horny Again." (For the record, Daniels said, she "hated" that tagline.) There were suggestions, too, that she stands to profit handsomely by continuing to share her account even as the defense branded it pure fiction.

"You have made all of this up, right?" Trump lawyer Susan Necheles asked.

"No," came the answer.

In several particularly biting exchanges, Necheles invoked Daniels' porn actor profession to cast doubt on her credibility, telling her at one point, "You have a lot of experience in making phony stories about sex appear to be real, right?"

"Wow," Daniels replied. "That's not how I would put it. The sex in the films, it's very much real. Just like what happened to me in that room."

The lawyer also implied that Daniels' experience in the porn industry made it unlikely that she would have been rattled or frightened by the sight of Trump on the bed.

"You've acted and had sex in over 200 porn movies, right. And there are naked men and women having sex, including yourself, in those movies?" Necheles asked. "But according to you, seeing a man sitting on a bed in a T-shirt and boxers was so upsetting that you got lightheaded, the blood left your hands and feet, and you felt like you were going to faint."

## A 'CONTEMPTUOUS' DEFENDANT

Trump's out-of-court comments related to the jury and witnesses have earned him monetary fines and repeated rebukes from a judge.

But his demeanor inside the courtroom this past week led to a separate scolding directed at his attorneys.

At one point, Merchan summoned defense lawyers for a quiet discussion at the bench, where he told them he had observed Trump reacting in improper ways during Daniels' testimony.

"I understand that your client is upset at this point, but he is cursing audibly, and he is shaking his head visually and that's contemptuous. It has the potential to intimidate the witness and the jury can see that," Merchan said, according to a transcript of the proceedings.

"I am speaking to you here at the bench because I don't want to embarrass him," he added.

Apart from that exchange, Trump drew a separate \$1,000 fine for comments about the case made during an interview last month and was warned in the most direct manner yet about the possibility of jail time for further violations of Merchan's gag order.

## THE 'DJT' ACCOUNT

Jurors heard more than just salacious testimony. They also learned about the financial transactions at the center of the case and saw payment checks bearing Trump's signature.

Prosecutors worked to tie Trump directly to the hush money payments to Daniels. They elicited testimony that most of the checks used to reimburse Michael Cohen, Trump's then-lawyer and fixer, for the payments to Daniels were drawn from Trump's personal account — which went by his initials, "DJT."

Deborah Tarasoff, a Trump Organization accounts payable supervisor, said that once Trump became president, checks written from his personal account had to first be delivered, via FedEx, "to the White House for him to sign."

The checks would then return with Trump's Sharpie signature. "I'd pull them apart, mail out the check and file the backup," she said, meaning putting the invoice into the Trump Organization's filing system.

Still, she and another witness, Jeffrey McConney, a former Trump Organization controller, acknowledged not getting direct instructions from Trump himself about the ins-and-outs of the payments.

Tarasoff, for instance, conceded that she did not interact much with Trump over the years and had no reason to believe that he was hiding anything or that there was anything improper about the checks.

## WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

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Jurors got a glimpse at the high-rolling social life Trump enjoyed before becoming president, full of celebrity wattage and bold-faced names.

A redacted contact list that Trump's assistant at his company sent to another Trump aide, representing people he spoke to frequently or might want to, included former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly, tennis player Serena Williams, casino mogul Steve Wynn, "The Apprentice" producer Mark Burnett, "Saturday Night Live" mastermind Lorne Michaels and NFL legends Tom Brady and Bill Belichick.

Their contact details were redacted, but the information nonetheless offered a window into the celebrity universe inhabited by Trump.

## Flooding forecast to worsen in Brazil's south, where often only the poor remain

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

ELDORADO DO SUL, Brazil (AP) — More heavy rain is forecast for Brazil's already flooded Rio Grande do Sul state, where many of those remaining are poor people with limited ability to move to less dangerous areas.

More than 15 centimeters (nearly 6 inches) of rain could fall over the weekend, according to the Friday afternoon bulletin from Brazil's national meteorology institute. It said there is also a high likelihood that winds will intensify and water levels rise in the Patos lagoon next to the state capital, Porto Alegre, and the surrounding area.

Carlos Sampaio, 62, lives in a low-income community next to soccer club Gremio's stadium in Porto Alegre. His two-story home doubles as a sports bar.

Even though the first floor is flooded, he said he won't leave, partly out of fear of looters in his high-crime neighborhood, where police carry assault rifles as they patrol its flooded streets. But Sampaio also has nowhere else to go, he told The Associated Press.

"I am analyzing how safe I am, and I know that my belongings aren't safe at all," Sampaio said. "As long as I can fight for what is mine, within my abilities to not leave myself exposed, I will fight."

At least 126 people have died in the floods since they began last week, and 141 more are missing, local authorities said Friday. The number of people displaced from their homes due to the torrential rains has surpassed 400,000, of whom 70,000 are sheltering in gyms, schools and other temporary locations.

"I came here on Monday — lost my apartment to the flood," Matheus Vicari, a 32-year-old Uber driver, said inside a shelter where he is staying with his young son. "I don't spent a lot of time here. I try to be out to think about something else."

Some residents of Rio Grande do Sul state have found sanctuary at second homes, including Alexandra Zanela, who co-owns a content agency in Porto Alegre.

Zanela and her partner volunteered when the floods began, but chose to move out after frequent electricity and water cuts. She headed to the beachfront city of Capao da Canoa — so far unaffected by flooding — where her partner's family owns a summer home.

"We took a ride with my sister-in-law, took our two cats, my mother and a friend of hers and came here safely. We left the Porto Alegre chaos," Zanela, 42, told AP by phone. "It is very clear that those who have the privilege to leave are in a much safer position, and those living in the poorer areas of Porto Alegre have no option."

In Brazil, the poor often live in houses built from less resilient materials such as wood and in unregulated areas more vulnerable to damage from extreme weather, such as low-lying areas or on steep hillsides.

"We cannot say that the worst is over," Rio Grande do Sul Gov. Eduardo Leite said on social media Friday. The day before, he estimated that 19 billion reais (\$3.7 billion) will be needed to rebuild the state.

The scale of devastation may be most comparable to Hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans, Louisiana, in 2005, Sergio Vale, chief economist at MB Associates, wrote in a note Friday.

Rio Grande do Sul has the sixth highest GDP per capita among Brazil's 26 states and the federal district, according to the national statistics institute. Many of the state's inhabitants descend from Italian and

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German immigrants.

"In the popular imagination, the population of Rio Grande do Sul is seen as white and well-off, but this is not the reality," said Marília Closs, a researcher at the CIPO Platform, a climate think tank. "It's very important to dispel this fiction, because it's constructed with a political objective" to erase Black and poor residents, she said.

In Canoas, one of the hardest-hit cities in the state, Paulo Cezar Wolf's small wooden house has been fully submerged, along with all his belongings. A truck driver, the Black man now lives in the back of a loaned truck with six of his neighbors, who all cook, eat and sleep there.

Wolf, 54, has considered leaving the rural region, where he has lived since childhood, but has nowhere else to go and doesn't want to leave behind his four adult children.

"It is too late for someone like me to move somewhere else," Wolf said, wearing a donated sweatshirt as he stood on a highway.

The meteorology institute predicts the arrival of a mass of cold and dry air will reduce the chance of rain beginning Monday. But it also means temperatures are set to drop sharply, to around freezing by Wednesday. That makes hypothermia a concern for those who are wet and lacking electricity.

Celebrities, among them supermodel Gisele Bündchen and pop star Anitta, have been sharing links and information about where and how to donate to help flood victims. Churches, businesses, schools and ordinary citizens around the country have been rallying to provide support.

The U.N. Refugee Agency is distributing blankets and mattresses. It is sending additional items, such as emergency shelters, kitchen sets, blankets, solar lamps and hygiene kits, from its stockpiles in northern Brazil and elsewhere in the region.

On Thursday, Brazil's federal government announced a package of 50.9 billion reais (\$10 billion) for employees, beneficiaries of social programs, the state and municipalities, companies and rural producers in Rio Grande do Sul.

The same day, the Brazilian air force parachuted over two tons of food and water to areas that are inaccessible due to blocked roads. The navy has sent three vessels to help those affected, among them the Atlantic Multipurpose Aircraft Ship, which it said is considered the largest warship in Latin America. It is due to arrive on the state's coast Saturday.

The U.S. has sent \$20,000 for personal hygiene kits and cleaning supplies and will be providing an additional \$100,000 in humanitarian assistance through existing regional programs, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Friday.

Weather across South America is affected by the El Niño climate phenomenon, a naturally occurring event that periodically warms surface waters in the equatorial Pacific. In Brazil, El Niño has historically caused droughts in the north and intense rainfall in the south, and this year the effects have been particularly severe.

Scientists say extreme weather is happening more frequently due to climate change, caused by the burning of fossil fuels that emit planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, and overwhelmingly agree the world needs to drastically cut the burning of coal, oil and gas to limit global warming.

But there is a need for social policy responses, too, said Natalie Unterstell, president of Talanoa Institute, a Rio de Janeiro-based climate policy think tank.

"Providing an effective response to climate change in Brazil requires us to combat inequalities," Unterstell said.

## **WWII soldiers posthumously receive Purple Heart medals 79 years after fatal plane crash**

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP) — The families of five Hawaii men who served in a unit of Japanese-language linguists during World War II received posthumous Purple Heart medals on behalf of their loved ones on Friday, nearly eight decades after the soldiers died in a plane crash in the final days of the conflict.

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"I don't have words. I'm just overwhelmed," Wilfred Ikemoto said as he choked up while speaking of the belated honor given to his older brother Haruyuki.

The older Ikemoto was among 31 men killed when their C-46 transport plane hit a cliff while attempting to land in Okinawa, Japan, on Aug. 13, 1945.

"I'm just happy that he got recognized," Ikemoto said.

Army records indicate only two of the 31 ever received Purple Heart medals, which the military awards to those wounded or killed during action against an enemy.

Researchers in Hawaii and Minnesota recently discovered the omission, leading the Army to agree to issue medals to families of the 29 men who were never recognized. Researchers located families of the five from Hawaii, and now the Army is asking family members of the other 24 men to contact them so their loved ones can finally receive recognition.

The older Ikemoto was the fourth of 10 children and the first in his family to attend college when he enrolled at the University of Hawaii. He was a photographer and developed film in a makeshift darkroom in a bedroom at home.

"I remember him as probably the smartest and most talented in our family," said Wilfred Ikemoto, who was 10 years old when his brother died.

On board the plane were 12 paratroopers with the 11th Airborne Division, five soldiers in a Counter-intelligence Detachment assigned to the paratroopers, 10 Japanese American linguists in the Military Intelligence Service and four crew members.

They had all flown up from the Philippines to spearhead the occupation of Japan after Tokyo's surrender, said Daniel Matthews, who looked into the ill-fated flight while researching his father's postwar service in the 11th Airborne.

Matthews attributed the Army's failure to recognize all 31 soldiers with medals to administrative oversight in the waning hours of the war. The U.S. had been preparing to invade Japan's main islands, but it formulated alternative plans after receiving indications Japan was getting ready to surrender. Complicating matters further, there were four different units on the plane.

Wilfred Motokane Jr. said he had mixed feelings after he accepted his father's medal.

"I'm very happy that we're finally recognizing some people," he said. "I think it took a long time for it to happen. That's the one part that I don't feel that good about, if you will."

The Hawaii five were all part of the Military Intelligence Service or MIS, a U.S. Army unit made up of mostly Japanese Americans who interrogated prisoners, translated intercepted messages and traveled behind enemy lines to gather intelligence.

They five had been inducted in January 1944 after the MIS, desperate to get more recruits, sent a team to Hawaii to find more linguists, historian Mark Matsunaga said.

Altogether some 6,000 served with the Military Intelligence Service. But much of their work has remained relatively unknown because it was classified until the 1970s.

During the U.S. occupation of Japan, they served crucial roles as liaisons between American and Japanese officials and overseeing regional governments.

Retired Army Gen. Paul Nakasone, who recently stepped down as head of U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency, presented the medals to the families during the ceremony on the banks of Pearl Harbor. Nakasone's Hawaii-born father served in the MIS after the war, giving him a personal connection to the event.

"What these Military Intelligence Service soldiers brought to the occupation of Japan was an understanding of culture that could take what was the vanquished to work with the victor," Nakasone said. "I'm very proud of all the MIS soldiers not only during combat, but also during the occupation."

## US says Israel's use of US arms likely violated international law, but evidence is incomplete

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration said Friday that Israel's use of U.S.-provided weapons in Gaza likely violated international humanitarian law but that wartime conditions prevented U.S. officials from determining that for certain in specific airstrikes.

The finding of "reasonable" evidence to conclude that the U.S. ally had breached international law protecting civilians in the way it conducted its war against Hamas was the strongest statement that the Biden administration has yet made on the matter. It was released in a summary of a report being delivered to Congress on Friday.

But the caveat that the administration wasn't able to link specific U.S. weapons to individual attacks by Israeli forces in Gaza could give the administration leeway in any future decision on whether to restrict provisions of offensive weapons to Israel.

The first-of-its-kind assessment, which was compelled by President Joe Biden's fellow Democrats in Congress, comes after seven months of airstrikes, ground fighting and aid restrictions that have claimed the lives of nearly 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

While U.S. officials were unable to gather all the information they needed on specific strikes, the report said that given Israel's "significant reliance" on U.S.-made weapons, it was "reasonable to assess" that they had been used by Israel's security forces in instances "inconsistent" with its obligations under international humanitarian law "or with best practices for mitigating civilian harm."

Israel's military has the experience, technology and know-how to minimize harm to civilians, but "the results on the ground, including high levels of civilian casualties, raise substantial questions as to whether the IDF is using them effectively in all cases," the report said.

International human rights groups and a review by an unofficial panel of former State and military officials, academic experts and others had pointed to more than a dozen Israeli airstrikes for which they said there were credible evidence of violations of the laws of war and humanitarian law. Targets included aid convoys, medical workers, hospitals, journalists, schools and refugee centers and other sites that have broad protection under international law.

They argued that the civilian death toll in many strikes in Gaza — such as an Oct. 31 strike on an apartment building reported to have killed 106 civilians — was disproportionate to the value of any military target.

Israel says it is following all U.S. and international law, that it investigates allegations of abuse by its security forces and that its campaign in Gaza is proportional to the existential threat it says is posed by Hamas.

Rep. Michael McCaul, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the review "only contributes to politically motivated anti-Israel sentiment" and should never have been done.

"Now is the time to stand with our ally Israel and ensure they have the tools they need," he said in a statement.

But Sen. Chris Van Hollen, the Maryland Democrat who led the push in Congress, told reporters that even even though the administration had reached a general finding, "they're ducking a determination on the hard cases. Politically inconvenient cases."

The U.S. "treats the government of Israel as above the law," Amanda Klasing of the Amnesty International USA rights group said in a statement.

Biden has tried to walk an ever-finer line in his support of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war against Hamas. The U.S. leader is a target of growing rancor at home and abroad over the soaring Palestinian death toll and the onset of famine, caused in large part by Israeli restrictions on the movement of food and aid into Gaza. Tensions have been heightened further in recent weeks by Netanyahu's pledge to expand the Israeli military's offensive in the crowded southern city of Rafah, despite Biden's adamant opposition.

Biden, in the closing months of a tough reelection campaign against Donald Trump, faces demands from many Democrats that he cut the flow of offensive weapons to Israel and denunciation from Republicans

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who accuse him of wavering on support for Israel at its time of need.

The Democratic administration took one of the first steps toward conditioning military aid to Israel in recent days when it paused a shipment of 3,500 bombs out of concern over Israel's threatened offensive on Rafah, a southern city crowded with more than a million Palestinians, a senior administration official said.

The presidential directive that led to the review, agreed to in February, obligated the Defense and State departments to conduct "an assessment of any credible reports or allegations that such defense articles and, as appropriate, defense services, have been used in a manner not consistent with international law, including international humanitarian law."

Nothing in the presidential directive would have triggered any cutoff of arms if the administration had more definitively ruled that Israel's conduct had violated international law.

The agreement also obligated the State and Defense departments to tell Congress whether they deemed that Israel has acted to "arbitrarily to deny, restrict, or otherwise impede, directly or indirectly," delivery of any U.S.-supported humanitarian aid into Gaza for starving civilians there.

On this question, the report cited "deep concerns" that Israel played a significant role in preventing adequate aid from reaching starving Palestinians. However, it said Israel had recently taken some positive steps, although still inadequate, and the U.S. government did not currently find Israel restricting aid deliveries in a way that violated U.S. law governing foreign militaries that receive U.S. military aid.

Van Hollen accused the administration of glossing over what he said were clear Israeli blocks on food and aid deliveries during much of the war. "That's why we have hundreds of thousands of Palestinians that have nothing to do with Hamas on the verge of starvation," he said.

Lawmakers and others who advocated for the review said Biden and previous American leaders have followed a double standard when enforcing U.S. laws governing how foreign militaries use U.S. support, an accusation the Biden administration denies.

Their opponents argued that a U.S. finding against Israel would weaken it at a time it is battling Hamas and other Iran-backed groups. It's not clear how much Friday's more in-between verdict would add to pressure on Biden to curb the flow of weapons and money to Israel's military or further heighten tensions with Netanyahu's hard-right government.

At the time the White House agreed to the review, it was working to head off moves from Democratic lawmakers and independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont to start restricting shipments of weapons to Israel.

Israel launched its offensive after an Oct. 7 assault into Israel, led by Hamas, killed about 1,200 people. Two-thirds of the Palestinians killed since then have been women and children, according to local health officials. U.S. and U.N. officials say Israeli restrictions on food shipments since Oct. 7 have brought on full-fledged famine in northern Gaza.

Human rights groups long have accused Israeli security forces of committing abuses against Palestinians and have accused Israeli leaders of failing to hold those responsible to account. In January, in a case brought by South Africa, the top U.N. court ordered Israel to do all it could to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive.

Biden in December said "indiscriminate bombing" was costing Israel international backing. After Israeli forces targeted and killed seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen in April, the Biden administration for the first time signaled it might cut military aid to Israel if it didn't change its handling of the war and humanitarian aid.

Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, in the 1980s and early 1990s, were the last presidents to openly hold back weapons or military financing to try to push Israel to change its actions in the region or toward Palestinians.

## Police arrest dozens as they break up pro-Palestinian protests at several US universities

By BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

Police made dozens of arrests as pro-Palestinian protest encampments were dismantled Friday at the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, hours after police tear-gassed demonstrators and took down a similar camp at the University of Arizona.

Philadelphia and campus police at Penn took action around daybreak to remove protesters from an encampment in place for more than two weeks. School officials said protesters were given warnings and the chance to leave without being detained.

Initially, officials said 33 people, including faculty members and seven students, were among those arrested and charged with trespass, the school said. Later, school officials said nine students were among those arrested and that the remainder were people who had no affiliation with Penn. Upon searching the encampment, Penn police recovered several long lengths of heavy gauge chains, as well as smaller chains with nuts and bolts attached that police said could be used as weapons, officials said.

Protest camps have sprung up across the U.S. and in Europe in recent weeks as students demand their universities stop doing business with Israel or companies that support its war efforts. Organizers seek to amplify calls to end Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, which they describe as a genocide against the Palestinians. The top United Nations court has concluded there is a "plausible risk of genocide" in Gaza — a charge Israel strongly denies.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, police in riot gear arrived at MIT around 4 a.m., encircled the camp and gave protesters about 15 minutes to leave. Ten students who remained were arrested, the university's president said. A crowd outside the camp began chanting pro-Palestinian slogans but was quickly dispersed.

At the University of Arizona in Tucson, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas at protesters late Thursday — the day before the school's main commencement ceremony — before tearing down an encampment that included wood and plastic barriers. The school said police vehicles were spiked, and rocks and water bottles were thrown at officers and university staff. Two people were arrested, a university spokesperson said. Friday night's commencement will go forward, university President Robert Robbins said.

And at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, police arrested 13 people Thursday night after they refused to leave a damaged and vandalized building. The charges ranged from misdemeanor trespass to felonies including battery on a peace officer, school spokesperson Amanda Bradford said. The building, Hadley Hall, was cleared and open Friday.

Protesters at the University of Wisconsin-Madison agreed Friday to permanently dismantle their 2-week-old encampment and not disrupt graduation ceremonies this weekend, in return for the opportunity to connect with "decision-makers" who control university investments by July 1. The university agreed to increase support for scholars and students affected by wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Graduates from Pomona College in Southern California will have to travel 40 miles (65 km) for their commencement ceremony Sunday, as administrators seek to avoid a current encampment. The college said it will provide transportation to the venue, a historic theater in Los Angeles. In April, protesters entered an administration building and police arrested 20 people.

The protest movement began nearly three weeks ago at Columbia University in New York City. Some colleges nationwide cracked down immediately, while others tolerated the demonstrations. Some recently started calling in the police, citing concerns about disruptions to campus life and safety.

The Associated Press has recorded at least 75 instances since April 18 in which arrests were made at U.S. campus protests. Nearly 2,900 people have been arrested at 57 colleges and universities. The figures are based on AP reporting and statements from schools and law enforcement agencies.

Arizona State University on Friday confirmed that it had placed its campus police chief on paid administrative leave pending a review of "complaints filed related to his actions" two weeks ago when an encampment was removed and police made more than 70 arrests during a pro-Palestine rally on the campus in Tempe.

The school said it was reviewing actions surrounding the establishment and removal of the encamp-



ment. Local news outlets reported earlier that ASU Police Chief Michael Thompson had been placed on leave after he had been seen out of uniform cutting and removing tents during the protest. The school told ABC15 Arizona earlier he had left a meeting to respond to the rally.

Although their encampment was cleared after two weeks, demonstrators at George Washington University vowed Friday to keep up their protest campaign.

Police arrested 33 people on Wednesday while ousting the initial encampment. The next night, a crowd of chanting demonstrators returned to the university about five blocks from the White House, setting up tents while a large Metropolitan Police Department force assembled. After multiple warnings to disperse, protests leaders ended the demonstration around midnight. One person was arrested for throwing water at a police officer.

The move at MIT came several days after police first attempted to clear the camp, only to see protesters storm past barriers and restore the encampment, which includes about a dozen tents in the heart of the campus in Cambridge.

Before removing the encampment, MIT earlier in the week started suspending dozens of students, meaning they're barred from academic activities or commencement.

Protesters insist they will keep demanding MIT cut all ties to the Israeli military. The encampment was up for weeks and especially angered Jewish students, who held counterprotests nearby.

"This is only going to make us stronger. They can't arrest the movement," said Quinn Perian, an undergraduate student and organizer for MIT Jews for Ceasefire. "MIT would rather arrest and suspend some students than they would end their complicity with the genocide going in Gaza."

MIT President Sally Kornbluth, in a letter confirming Friday's arrests, wrote that her responsibility is "to make sure that the campus is physically safe and functioning for everyone ... and that everyone feels free to express their views." The encampment, she wrote, "increasingly made it impossible to meet all these obligations."

## 'Where's Ronald Greene's justice?': 5 years on, feds still silent on Black motorist's deadly arrest

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

FARMERVILLE, La. (AP) — Mona Hardin has been waiting five long years for any resolution to the federal investigation into her son's deadly arrest by Louisiana State Police troopers, an anguish only compounded by the fact that nearly every other major civil rights case during that time has passed her by.

It took just months for Tyre Nichols' beating death last year to result in federal charges against five Memphis police officers. A half-dozen white lawmen in Mississippi have been federally sentenced in last year's torture of two Black suspects. And federal prosecutors long ago brought swift charges in the slayings of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky.

Every one of those cases happened months or years after the death of Ronald Greene in northern Louisiana on May 10, 2019, which sparked national outrage after The Associated Press published long-suppressed body-camera video showing white troopers converging on the Black motorist before stunning, beating and dragging him as he wailed, "I'm scared!"

Yet half a decade after Greene's violent death, the federal investigation remains open and unresolved with no end in sight. And Hardin says she feels ghosted and forgotten by a Justice Department that no longer even returns her calls.

"Where's Ronald Greene's justice?" asked Hardin, who refuses to bury her son's cremated remains until she gets some measure of accountability. "I still have my boy in that urn, and that hurts me more than anything. We haven't grieved the loss of Ronnie because we've been in battle."

Justice Department spokesperson Aryele Bradford said the investigation remains ongoing and declined to provide further details.

Under federal law, no statute of limitations applies to potential civil rights charges in the case because Greene's arrest was fatal. But prosecutors have wavered for years on whether to bring an indictment,

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having all but assured Greene's family initially that an exhaustive FBI investigation would produce charges of some kind.

A federal prosecution seemed so imminent in 2022 that one state police supervisor told AP he expected to be indicted. The FBI had shifted its focus in those days from the troopers who left Greene handcuffed and facedown for more than nine minutes to state police brass suspected of obstructing justice by suppressing video evidence, quashing a detective's recommendation to arrest a trooper and pressuring a state prosecutor.

All the while, federal prosecutors asked local District Attorney John Belton to hold off on bringing state charges until the federal investigation was complete. They later reversed course, and in late 2022 a state grand jury indicted five officers on counts ranging from negligent homicide to malfeasance. Charges remain against only two, with a trial scheduled for later this year for a senior trooper seen on video dragging Greene facedown by his ankle shackles.

State police initially blamed the 49-year-old's death north of Monroe on a crash following a high-speed chase over a traffic violation. But that explanation was called into question by photos of Greene's body on a gurney showing his bruised and battered face, a hospital report noting he had two stun gun prongs in his back and the fact that his SUV had only minor damage. Even the emergency room doctor questioned the troopers' initial account of a crash, writing in his notes: "Does not add up."

All that changed two years later when AP published graphic body-camera video of Greene's final moments, showing him being swarmed by troopers even as he appeared to raise his hands, plead for mercy and wail, "I'm your brother! I'm scared! I'm scared!" Troopers repeatedly jolted Greene with stun guns before he could even get out of the car, with one of them wrestling him to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and punching him in the face. Another called him a "stupid motherf---." They then ordered a shackled Greene to remain facedown on the ground, even as he struggled to prop himself up on his side.

A reexamined autopsy ordered by the FBI ultimately debunked the crash narrative and listed "prone restraint" among other contributing factors in Greene's death, including neck compression, physical struggle and cocaine use.

Greene's family members weren't the only ones baffled by the pace of the federal inquiry. Then-Gov. John Bel Edwards expressed private frustration with the lack of answers in a closed-door meeting with state lawmakers, saying he believed from the first time he saw the video, in late 2020, that Greene's treatment was criminal and racist.

"Are they ever going to come out and have a charge?" the Democratic governor asked amid reporting by AP that he had been notified within hours of Greene's death that troopers engaged in a "violent, lengthy struggle."

"This was a cover-up of the highest order," Michael McClanahan, president of the NAACP's Louisiana state conference, told sign-toting demonstrators Friday outside the Union Parish Courthouse in Farmerville.

"Why call the police when they're the very ones that might kill you?" McClanahan said. "It was Ronald Greene then but it's been a whole lot since Ronald Greene. Enough is enough."

Perhaps the most significant hurdle to federal charges was the untimely death of Chris Hollingsworth, the trooper who was seen on the video repeatedly bashing Greene in the head with a flashlight and was later recorded by his own body camera calling a fellow officer and saying, "I beat the ever-living f--- out of him." Hollingsworth died in a high-speed, single-vehicle crash in 2020 hours after he was told he would be fired over his actions in Greene's death.

Another major sticking point has been whether prosecutors could prove the troopers acted "willfully" in abusing Greene — a key component of civil rights charges that has complicated such prosecutions around the country. The FBI even enhanced the video of the arrest in an ultimately inconclusive attempt to determine whether he had been pepper-sprayed after he was in custody, focusing on an exchange in which a deputy jeeringly said, "S--- hurts, doesn't it?"

The Justice Department has also been conducting a sweeping investigation into use of force by the Louisiana State Police and whether it engages in "racially discriminatory policing." The department began that "pattern-or-practice" inquiry nearly two years ago following an AP investigation that found Greene's

arrest was among at least a dozen cases in which troopers or their bosses ignored or concealed evidence of beatings, deflected blame and impeded efforts to root out misconduct.

Also still pending is the federal wrongful death lawsuit Greene's family filed four years ago seeking damages from the officers, who have denied wrongdoing. The civil case has been put on hold as the criminal proceedings play out.

Hardin said it's long past time for the state of Louisiana to make amends.

"It started with a lie — we were told Ronnie was killed in a car crash," she said. "That was wrong, and it has to be addressed. I will go to my grave knowing I did everything I could to get justice for Ronnie."

## **UN assembly approves resolution granting Palestine new rights and reviving its UN membership bid**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. General Assembly voted by a wide margin on Friday to grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and called on the Security Council to reconsider Palestine's request to become the 194th member of the United Nations.

The world body approved the Arab and Palestinian-sponsored resolution by a vote of 143-9 with 25 abstentions. The United States voted against it, along with Israel, Argentina, Czechia, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Papua New Guinea.

The vote reflected the wide global support for full membership of Palestine in the United Nations, with many countries expressing outrage at the escalating death toll in Gaza and fears of a major Israeli offensive in Rafah, a southern city where about 1.3 million Palestinians have sought refuge.

It also demonstrated growing support for the Palestinians. A General Assembly resolution on Oct. 27 calling for a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza was approved 120-14 with 45 abstentions. That was just weeks after Israel launched its military offensive in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel, which killed 1,200 people.

While Friday's resolution gives Palestine some new rights and privileges, it reaffirms that it remains a non-member observer state without full U.N. membership and the right to vote in the General Assembly or at any of its conferences. And the United States has made clear that it will block Palestinian membership and statehood until direct negotiations with Israel resolve key issues, including security, boundaries and the future of Jerusalem, and lead to a two-state solution.

U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood said Friday that for the U.S. to support Palestinian statehood, direct negotiations must guarantee Israel's security and future as a democratic Jewish state and that Palestinians can live in peace in a state of their own.

The U.S. also vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine.

Under the U.N. Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be "peace-loving" and the Security Council must recommend their admission to the General Assembly for final approval. Palestine became a U.N. non-member observer state in 2012.

The United States considers Friday's resolution an attempt to get around the Charter's provisions, Wood reiterated Thursday.

Unlike resolutions in the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly. Friday's resolution required a two-thirds majority of members voting and got significantly more than the 118 vote minimum.

U.S. allies supported the resolution, including France, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Australia, Estonia and Norway. But European countries were very divided.

The resolution "determines" that a state of Palestine is qualified for membership — dropping the original language that in the General Assembly's judgment it is "a peace-loving state." It therefore recommends that the Security Council reconsider its request "favorably."

The renewed push for full Palestinian membership in the U.N. comes as the war in Gaza has put the more

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than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous council and assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 34,000 people in the territory, according to Gaza health officials, have generated outrage from many countries.

Before the vote, Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, told the assembly in an emotional speech that "No words can capture what such loss and trauma signifies for Palestinians, their families, communities and for our nation as a whole."

He said Palestinians in Gaza "have been pushed to the very edge of the strip, to the very brink of life" with Israel besieging Rafah.

Mansour accused Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of preparing "to kill thousands to ensure his political survival" and aiming to destroy the Palestinian people.

He welcomed the resolution's strong support and told AP that 144 countries have now recognized the state of Palestine, including four countries since Oct. 7, all from the Caribbean.

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan vehemently opposed the resolution, accusing U.N. member nations of not mentioning Hamas' Oct. 7 attack and seeking "to reward modern-day Nazis with rights and privileges."

He said if an election were held today, Hamas would win, and warned U.N. members that they were "about to grant privileges and rights to the future terror state of Hamas." He held up a photo of Yehya Sinwar, the mastermind of the Hamas attack on Israel, saying a terrorist "whose stated goal is Jewish genocide" would be a future Palestinian leader.

Erdan also accused the assembly of trampling on the U.N. Charter, putting two pages that said "U.N. Charter" in a small shredder he held up. .

The original draft of the resolution was changed significantly to address concerns not only by the U.S. but also by Russia and China, three Western diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations were private.

The first draft would have conferred on Palestine "the rights and privileges necessary to ensure its full and effective participation" in the assembly's sessions and U.N. conferences "on equal footing with member states." It also made no reference to whether Palestine could vote in the General Assembly.

According to the diplomats, Russia and China, which are strong supporters of Palestine's U.N. membership, were concerned that granting the rights and privileges listed in an annex could set a precedent for other would-be U.N. members — with Russia concerned about Kosovo and China about Taiwan.

Under longstanding legislation by the U.S. Congress, the United States is required to cut off funding to U.N. agencies that give full membership to a Palestinian state, which could mean a cutoff in dues and voluntary contributions to the U.N. from its largest contributor.

The final draft that was voted on dropped the language that would put Palestine "on equal footing with member states." And to address Chinese and Russian concerns, it decided "on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent" to adopt the rights and privileges in the annex.

It also added a provision in the annex clarifying that it does not give Palestine the right to vote in the General Assembly or put forward candidates for U.N. agencies.

What the resolution does give Palestine are the rights to speak on all issues not just those related to the Palestinians and Middle East, to propose agenda items and reply in debates, and to serve on the assembly's main committees. It also allows Palestinians to participate in U.N. and international conferences convened by the United Nations, but without the right to vote.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas first delivered the Palestinian Authority's application for U.N. membership in 2011. It failed because the Palestinians didn't get the required minimum support of nine of the Security Council's 15 members.

They went to the General Assembly and succeeded by more than a two-thirds majority in having their status raised from a U.N. observer to a non-member observer state. That opened the door for the Palestinian territories to join U.N. and other international organizations, including the International Criminal Court.

In the Security Council vote on April 18, the Palestinians got much more support for full U.N. member-

ship. The vote was 12 in favor, the United Kingdom and Switzerland abstaining, and the United States voting no and vetoing the resolution.

## **At least 1 dead in Florida as storms continue to pummel the South. DeSantis declares emergency**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Powerful storms packing hurricane-force winds killed at least one woman Friday in Florida as a week of deadly severe weather continued in the South, where uprooted trees crashed onto homes and knocked out electricity to thousands in several states.

City officials in Tallahassee said wind gusts of 80 to 100 mph (128 to 161 kph), speeds that exceed hurricane intensity, were reported in Florida's capital city. Images posted on social media showed mangled metal and other debris from damaged buildings littering some areas.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Friday issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency for 12 counties in the northern part of the state affected by the storm.

A statement on the Tallahassee government's website said crews were scrambling to repair 100 broken power poles while half the homes and businesses were left without electricity in a city of 200,000 people. It said the National Weather Service was assessing paths of three potential tornadoes.

"Our area experienced catastrophic wind damage," Tallahassee Mayor John Dailey said on the social platform X.

Crews have told customers in the dark that the restoration may take days. City officials expect the work to restore power will go through the weekend.

City spokesperson Alison Faris told The Tallahassee Democrat that the extent of the damage has made restoration hard-going because crews are focused on fixing the transmission infrastructure before they can start work on the distribution of power that energizes homes and businesses.

"Transmission first and then we restore circuits which impacts distribution," Faris told the Democrat. "All hands are on the transmission. We should start seeing some circuits repaired here shortly."

The first wave of more than 215 personnel from 20 utilities in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina has arrived to help crews as they work to repair the electric system.

The sheriff's office for Leon County, which includes Tallahassee, said in a Facebook post Friday that a woman was killed when a tree fell onto her family's home.

The storm that struck Tallahassee early Friday also knocked two chimneys from apartment buildings at a complex where fallen trees covered a row of cars. Fencing was left bent at the baseball stadium of Florida State University, where classes were canceled Friday.

DeSantis said on social media Friday that the state Division of Emergency Management was working with local officials to "do everything possible to return life to normalcy for our residents as quickly as possible."

The woman killed in Florida was at least the fifth death caused by severe weather in the U.S. this week. A powerful tornado that ripped through a small Oklahoma town on Monday left one person dead, and storms on Wednesday were blamed for killing two people in Tennessee and one person in North Carolina.

An estimated 201,000 homes and businesses from Mississippi to North Carolina were blacked out Friday afternoon, according to the tracking website poweroutage.us. Most of those outages were in Florida, where lights and air conditioning were out for nearly 142,000 customers.

In Mississippi's capital city of Jackson, authorities on Friday were asking residents to conserve and boil water as a precaution after a power outage at one of its major water treatment plants. JXN Water, the local water utility, said customers could expect reduced water pressure as workers assessed damage from overnight storms.

"It will take many hours for the system to recover and some places may take longer," Ted Henifin, the water system's manager, said in a statement.

Other parts of the South were cleaning up from storm damage inflicted earlier in the week. In the rural farming community of Vidalia, Georgia, and surrounding Toombs County, officials said a tornado left a path of destruction roughly 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) long Thursday afternoon.

About 10 houses had trees crash onto or through their roofs and crews worked through the night to remove about 50 downed trees that were blocking roads, said Lynn Moore, emergency management director for Toombs County. A dozen car wrecks were reported as the storm passed, Moore said, but nobody in the county was reported injured.

"We're fortunate that it wasn't stronger than it was," Moore said.

Also Thursday, the weather service reported a hurricane-force wind gust of 76 mph (122 kph) in Autauga County, Alabama. And one person was injured in Rankin County, Mississippi, after a tree fell crashing onto a home, according to weather service damage reports.

Since Monday, 39 states have been under threat of severe weather. On Wednesday and Thursday, about 220 million people were under some sort of severe weather risk, said Matthew Elliott, a Storm Prediction Center forecaster.

The weather comes on the heels of a stormy April in which the U.S. had 300 confirmed tornadoes, the second-most on record for the month and the most since 2011. Both the Plains and Midwest have been hammered by tornadoes this spring.

## Technology crushing human creativity? Apple's new iPad ad has struck a nerve online

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A newly released ad promoting Apple's new iPad Pro has struck quite a nerve online.

The ad, which was released by the tech giant Tuesday, shows a hydraulic press crushing just about every creative instrument artists and consumers have used over the years — from a piano and record player, to piles of paint, books, cameras and relics of arcade games. Resulting from the destruction? A pristine new iPad Pro.

"The most powerful iPad ever is also the thinnest," a narrator says at the end of the commercial.

Apple's intention seems straightforward: Look at all the things this new product can do. But critics have called it tone-deaf — with several marketing experts noting the campaign's execution didn't land.

"I had a really disturbing reaction to the ad," said Americus Reed II, professor of marketing at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "I understood conceptually what they were trying to do, but ... I think the way it came across is, here is technology crushing the life of that nostalgic sort of joy (from former times)."

The ad also arrives during a time many feel uncertain or fearful about seeing their work or everyday routines "replaced" by technological advances — particularly amid the rapid commercialization of generative artificial intelligence. And watching beloved items get smashed into oblivion doesn't help curb those fears, Reed and others note.

Several celebrities were also among the voices critical of Apple's "Crush!" commercial on social media this week.

"The destruction of the human experience. Courtesy of Silicon Valley," actor Hugh Grant wrote on the social media platform X, in a repost of Apple CEO Tim Cook's sharing of the ad.

Some found the ad to be a telling metaphor of the industry today — particularly concerns about big tech negatively impacting creatives. Filmmaker Justine Bateman wrote on X that the commercial "crushes the arts."

Experts added that the commercial marked a notable difference to marketing seen from Apple in the past — which has often taken more positive or uplifting approaches.

"My initial thought was that Apple has become exactly what it never wanted to be," Vann Graves, executive director of the Virginia Commonwealth University's Brandcenter, said.

Graves pointed to Apple's famous 1984 ad introducing the Macintosh computer, which he said focused more on uplifting creativity and thinking outside of the box as a unique individual. In contrast, Graves added, "this (new iPad) commercial says, 'No, we're going to take all the creativity in the world and use a hydraulic press to push it down into one device that everyone uses.'"

In a statement shared with Ad Age on Thursday, Apple apologized for the ad. The outlet also reported that Apple no longer plans to run the spot on TV.

"Creativity is in our DNA at Apple, and it's incredibly important to us to design products that empower creatives all over the world," Tor Myhren, the company's vice president of marketing communications, told Ad Age. "Our goal is to always celebrate the myriad of ways users express themselves and bring their ideas to life through iPad. We missed the mark with this video, and we're sorry."

Cupertino, California-based Apple unveiled its latest generation of iPad Pros and Airs earlier this week in a showcase that lauded new features for both lines. The Pro sports a new thinner design, a new M4 processor for added processing power, slightly upgraded storage and incorporates dual OLED panels for a brighter, crisper display.

Apple is trying to juice demand for iPads after its sales of the tablets plunged 17% from last year during the January-March period. After its 2010 debut helped redefine the tablet market, the iPad has become a minor contributor to Apple's success. It currently accounts for just 6% of the company's sales.

## Man pleads guilty in theft of bronze Jackie Robinson statue from Kansas park

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A 45-year-old man has pleaded guilty in the theft of a bronze Jackie Robinson statue that was cut off at the ankles and found days later smoldering in a trash can in a city park in Kansas.

Ricky Alderete entered the plea during his arraignment Thursday. A judge signed off on it Friday.

Authorities arrested him in February, with court records alleging he entered a Wichita home with the intent to kidnap someone as part of an effort to interfere with law enforcement.

He then was charged later that month with felony theft and aggravated criminal damage to property in the statue theft, along with two other counts. Police said there was no evidence it was a hate-motivated crime. Rather, the intent was to sell the metal for scrap, police said.

The bronze statue was cut from its base in January at a park in Wichita, Kansas. Only the statue's feet were left at McAdams Park, where about 600 children play in a youth baseball league called League 42. It is named after Robinson's uniform number with the Brooklyn Dodgers, with whom he broke the major leagues' color barrier in 1947.

Fire crews found burned remnants of the statue five days later while responding to a trash can fire at another park about 7 miles (11.27 kilometers) away.

Alderete had a criminal record that includes burglary and theft, state correction department records show. His sentencing in the latest case is set for July 1.

Donations poured in after the theft, approaching \$300,000, and work is underway to replace it.

Robinson played for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues before joining the Brooklyn Dodgers, paving the way for generations of Black American ballplayers. He is considered not only a sports legend but also a civil rights icon. Robinson died in 1972.

## Judge directs Michael Cohen to keep quiet about Trump ahead of his hush money trial testimony

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

NEW YORK (AP) — With Donald Trump's fixer-turned-foe Michael Cohen expected to take the witness stand Monday, the judge in the former president's hush money case issued prosecutors a stern warning: Get Cohen to stop his taunting posts and jabs at Trump.

Judge Juan M. Merchan's comments came as a dramatic and consequential week in the first criminal trial of a former American president drew to a close Friday. The prosecution could rest its case by the end of next week, prosecutor Joshua Steinglass said.

Prosecutors have been building up their case ahead of important testimony from Cohen, who arranged

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the \$130,000 payout to porn actor Stormy Daniels to keep her from going public ahead of the 2016 election about an alleged sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump denies ever having sex with Daniels.

The judge's warning underscores how Cohen is not only prosecutors' most crucial witness, but their most complicated. Once a Trump loyalist, he has become one of his fiercest critics since pleading guilty to federal charges, routinely bashing and mocking the former president on social media.

Defense attorneys will argue that the now-disbarred lawyer who served prison time is out to get Trump and cannot be believed.

Two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that Cohen is expected to take the stand Monday. The people could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Trump's lawyers complained after Cohen in a social media video this week wore a shirt featuring a figure resembling the former president behind bars. The defense has argued it's unfair that Trump is under a gag order that prevents him from speaking publicly about witnesses while Cohen is free to speak badly about Trump.

"It's becoming a problem every single day that President Trump is not allowed to respond to this witness, but this witness is allowed to continue to talk," defense attorney Todd Blanche said.

Merchan told prosecutors they should inform Cohen "that the judge is asking him to refrain from making any more statements" about the case or about Trump. Prosecutors told the judge they already requested that Cohen and other witnesses not talk about the case, but they have no direct means of controlling witnesses' behavior.

Cohen did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday from The Associated Press.

As the third week of testimony wrapped up, the case that ultimately hinges on record-keeping returned to deeply technical testimony — a sharp contrast from Daniels' dramatic, if not downright seamy, account of the alleged sexual encounter with Trump that riveted jurors earlier this week.

Witnesses in the case have seesawed between bookkeepers and bankers with testimony about records and finances to Daniels and others with unflattering stories about Trump and the tabloid world machinations meant to keep them secret. Despite all the drama, in the end, the trial is about money changing hands — business transactions — and whether those payments were made to illegally influence the 2016 election.

Friday's dry testimony appeared to test jurors' patience at times. One juror stifled a yawn while another stretched out his arms. Others shifted their gaze around the room or stared up at the ceiling.

Trump, who was visibly angry during much of Daniels' testimony, chatted frequently with his lawyers and read through a stack of papers on the table in front of him as jurors heard from witnesses such as AT&T and Verizon workers, who authenticated phone records.

Leaving the courthouse, Trump addressed the allegation at the heart of the case: that he falsified his company's records to conceal the nature of hush money reimbursements to Cohen. Trump's lawyers have portrayed the ledger entries at issue in the case as pro forma actions performed by a Trump Organization employee.

"A very good bookkeeper marked a legal expense as a legal expense," Trump said. "He was a lawyer, not a fixer," he added, referring to Cohen.

Back on the witness stand Friday morning was Madeleine Westerhout, a former Trump White House aide. Prosecutors used Westerhout's testimony to detail the process by which Trump got personal mail — including checks to sign — while in the White House. It's relevant because that's how he received and signed the checks that reimbursed Cohen for the payment to Daniels, prosecutors say.

While questioning Westerhout, Trump's attorney elicited testimony aimed at supporting the defense's argument that Daniels was paid to stay silent in order to protect Trump's family, not his campaign.

Westerhout told jurors that Trump was "very upset" when The Wall Street Journal published a 2018 story about the hush money deal with Daniels.

"My understanding was that he knew it would be hurtful to his family," Westerhout said, though she acknowledged she didn't recall him saying so specifically.

Jurors also saw social media posts showing that Trump initially praised Cohen after the then-lawyer came



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under federal investigation. Trump started bashing him after Cohen pleaded guilty to campaign-finance violations, along with other crimes, and claimed Trump directed him to arrange the payment for Daniels. Trump was never charged with any crime related to that federal investigation.

Daniels' story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump was a crucial building block for prosecutors, who are seeking to show that the Republican and his allies buried unflattering stories in the waning weeks of the 2016 presidential election in an effort to illegally influence the race.

Over more than 7½ hours of testimony, Daniels relayed in graphic detail what she says happened after the two met at a 2006 celebrity golf outing at Lake Tahoe where sponsors included the adult film studio where she worked. Daniels explained how she felt surprise, fear and discomfort, even as she consented to sex with Trump.

During combative cross-examination, Trump's lawyers sought to paint Daniels as a liar and extortionist who's trying to take down the former president after drawing money and fame from her claims.

After Daniels left the witness stand Thursday, Trump's attorneys pushed for a mistrial over the level of tawdry details she provided, but the judge denied the request.

This criminal case could be the only one of four against the presumptive Republican presidential nominee to go to trial before voters decide in November whether to send him back to the White House. Trump has pleaded not guilty and casts himself as the victim of a politically tainted justice system working to deny him another term.

## **US pledges money and other aid to help track and contain bird flu on dairy farms**

By JONEL ALECCIA and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

U.S. health and agriculture officials pledged nearly \$200 million in new spending and other efforts Friday to help track and contain an outbreak of bird flu in the nation's dairy cows that has spread to more than 40 herds in nine states.

The new funds include \$101 million to continue work to prevent, test, track and treat animals and humans potentially affected by the virus known as Type A H5N1, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said. And they include about \$98 million to provide up to \$28,000 each to help individual farms test cattle and bolster biosecurity efforts to halt the spread of the virus, according to the Agriculture Department.

In addition, dairy farmers will be compensated for the loss of milk production from infected cattle, whose supply drops dramatically when they become sick, officials said. And dairy farmers and farm workers would be paid to participate in a workplace study conducted by the USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

So far, farmers have been reluctant to allow health officials onto their farms to test cattle because of uncertainty about how it would affect their businesses, researchers have said. Also, farm workers, including many migrant workers, have been reluctant to be tested for fear of missing work or because they didn't want to be tracked by the government.

The National Milk Producers Federation, a trade group representing dairy farmers, said they welcomed the new resources. "Care for farm workers and animals is critical for milk producers, as is protecting against potential human health risks and reassuring the public," the group said in a statement.

The incentives should help increase farmers' willingness to test their herds, said Keith Poulsen, director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, who has been monitoring the outbreak.

"It provides the latitude and capacity to start going in the right direction," he said.

The new spending comes more than six weeks after the first-ever detection of an avian bird flu virus in dairy cattle — and one confirmed infection in a Texas dairy worker exposed to infected cows who developed a mild eye infection and then recovered. About 33 people have been tested and another 260 are being monitored, according to the CDC.

As of Friday, 42 herds in nine states have confirmed infections in dairy cows. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said that the outbreak has not spread more widely.

"It's still in the same nine states and that's the most positive thing about where we are," he told reporters. Samples of grocery store milk tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration showed remnants of the virus in about 1 in 5 samples of retail milk nationwide, however, suggesting that the outbreak could be more widespread, scientists have said.

Under a federal order issued last month, farmers are required to test lactating dairy cattle for H5N1 before the animals are moved between states. The Agriculture Department said Friday that 112 out of 905 tests conducted between April 29 and May 5 by federal animal health laboratories appeared to be positive. Officials could not say how many cows tested positive because multiple samples may have been collected from a single cow. Labs are conducting about 80 more tests per day than before the order took effect, an Agriculture Department spokesman said.

About 50,000 dairy cattle typically cross state lines every week, Poulsen estimates.

The FDA found that pasteurization, or heat-treating, killed the virus in the grocery samples of milk, cottage cheese and sour cream. The agency reiterated warnings that people should not consume raw, or unpasteurized milk, because of possible risk from the virus. Officials on Friday also said they expect results soon from tests of pooled raw milk samples sent to commercial processors to "determine potential levels of virus that pasteurization must eliminate." The USDA found no evidence of the virus in a small sample of retail ground beef.

"The risk to the public from this outbreak remains low," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said.

## **In reversal, Virginia school board votes to restore Confederate names to 2 schools**

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

A Virginia school board voted Friday to restore the names of Confederate military leaders to a high school and an elementary school, four years after the names were removed amid nationwide protests calling for a reckoning over racial injustice.

In a reversal experts believe was the first of its kind, Shenandoah County's school board voted 5-1 to rename Mountain View High School as Stonewall Jackson High School and Honey Run Elementary as Ashby Lee Elementary.

Friday's vote reversed a decision by the school board in 2020 when school systems across Virginia and the South were removing Confederate names from schools and other public locations in response to the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, which maintains a database of more than 2,000 Confederate memorials nationwide, is not aware of another case of a school system restoring a Confederate name that was removed, said senior research analyst Rivka Maizlish.

Overall, the trend toward removal of Confederate names and memorials has continued, even if it has slowed somewhat since 2020, she said, noting that the Army renamed nine installations named for Confederate leaders, and removed a Confederate memorial from Arlington National Cemetery.

In Virginia, local governments had been banned from removing Confederate memorials and statues until the law was changed in 2020, though the statute did not apply to school names.

On Friday, school board members who voted to restore the Confederate names said the previous board ignored popular sentiment and due process when the names were stripped.

Elections in 2023 significantly changed the school board's makeup, with one board member writing in an op-ed for the Northern Virginia Daily that the results gave Shenandoah County "the first 100% conservative board since anyone can remember."

That board member, Gloria Carlineo, said during the six-hour meeting that began Thursday night that opponents of the Confederate names should "stop bringing racism and prejudice into everything" because it "detracts from true cases of racism."

The lone board member to vote against restoring the Confederate names, Kyle Gutshall, said he respected

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both sides of the debate but believed a majority of residents in his district wanted to leave the Mountain View and Honey Run names in place.

"I don't judge anybody or look down on anybody for the decision they're making," he said. "It's a complex issue."

During several hours of public comment, county residents spoke up on both sides of the issue.

Beth Ogle, a longtime resident with children in the school system, said restoring the Confederate names is "a statement to the world that you do not value the dignity and respect of your minority students, faculty and staff."

Kenny Wakeman, a lifelong county resident, said the Stonewall Jackson name "stood proudly for 60 years until 2020," when he said the "actions of a rogue police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota," prompted a move to change the name, a reference to the killing of Floyd that propelled nationwide protests and debate over racial injustice.

Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was a Confederate general from Virginia who gained fame at the First Battle of Bull Run near Manassas in 1861 and died in 1863 after he was shot and had his arm amputated. Jackson's name was also removed from another high school in Virginia's Prince William County in 2020 that is now known as Unity Reed High School.

Ashby Lee is named for both Gen. Robert E. Lee, a Virginia native who commanded Confederate forces, and for Turner Ashby, a Confederate cavalry officer who was killed in battle in 1862 near Harrisonburg, Virginia. A high school near Harrisonburg is also named for Ashby.

The resolution approved by the school board states that private donations would be used to pay for the name changes.

Shenandoah County, a largely rural jurisdiction with a population of about 45,000, roughly 100 miles west of the nation's capital, has long been politically conservative. In 2020, Republican Donald Trump won 70% of the presidential vote in Shenandoah, even as Biden won Virginia by 10 points.

In Virginia, local governments were banned from removing Confederate memorials and statues until the 2020 law lifted those restrictions. Statues of Confederate leaders, including Lee, Jackson and Confederate President Jefferson Davis were removed from Richmond's famed Monument Avenue in 2020 and 2021 following protests and vandalizing of the statues.

Maizlish, from the Southern Poverty Law Center, said it's unusual, though not unprecedented, that conservative jurisdictions like Shenandoah removed Confederate names in the first place.

She said that while there's no evidence other jurisdictions have restored Confederate names or monuments, she is "always concerned about people who work to continue to promote Lost Cause propaganda."

## **Mother's Day is a sad reminder for the mothers of Mexico's over 100,000 missing people**

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Hundreds of mothers of missing people, relatives and activists marched in protest through downtown Mexico City Friday to mark a sad commemoration of Mother's Day.

The marchers, angry over what they say is the government's lack of interest in investigating the disappearances of Mexico's over 100,000 missing people, chanted slogans like "Where are they, our children, where are they?" They carried massive banners that, in some cases, showed nearly 100 photos of missing people.

The Mother's Day march comes just days after officials managed to find the bodies of three foreigners less than a week after they went missing in Baja California state, while many Mexican mothers have been searching for the sons and daughters for years, and even decades.

"Because they are foreigners, those boys' country put the pressure on to look for them and they found them," said Maria del Carmen Ayala Vargas, who has been looking for almost three years for any trace of her son, Iván Pastrana Ayala, who was abducted in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz in 2021.

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Ayala Vargas doesn't begrudge the families of the two Australian men and one American man who at least got some closure when their bodies were found at the bottom of a well last week. "We take no pleasure in other people's pain," she said, but she wants the same kind of energetic search for all the missing.

"That's the way we want it done for everybody, equally," she said. "It's real proof that when they (officials) want to do something, they can."

Australian surfers Callum and Jake Robinson and American Jack Carter Rhoad were allegedly killed by car thieves in Baja California, across the border from San Diego, somewhere around April 28 or 29. The killers dumped their bodies in an extremely remote well miles away, but authorities found them in about four days.

In contrast, in her son's case, Ayala Vargas said the government "has done absolutely nothing, they even lost our DNA samples" which relatives submit in hopes of identifying bodies.

But some mothers have been looking even longer.

Martha de Alejandro Salazar has spent almost 14 years looking for her son Irving Javier Mendoza, ever since he and several other youths were abducted from a streetside food stand in the northern city of Monterrey in 2010. As with most mothers, she carries a banner with her son's photo.

"It's been 14 years and my son is still missing, with no answer from the government," said De Alejandro Salazar. "They (prosecutors) always say the same thing, there is no progress in the case."

"What little investigation gets done is because we mothers take them whatever investigative work we have been able to do on our own and lay it on their desks," she said.

Some of the anger Friday was directed at President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, whose administration has spent far more time looking for people falsely listed as missing — who may have returned home without advising authorities — than in searching for grave sites that relatives say they desperately need for closure.

One mother, Yolanda Morán, 70, was pushed in a wheelchair on the march. Though her strength was failing, she vowed never to stop looking for her son Dan Jeremeel who was abducted in the northern state of Coahuila in 2008; a soldier was later found driving his car.

Morán carried a 'missing person' announcement for López Obrador, because, she says, he has been totally absent from the issue.

The march also comes two days after López Obrador's administration raised hackles by accusing the press and volunteer searchers who look for the bodies of missing people of "necrophilia."

A taped segment prepared by state-run television aired Wednesday at the president's morning press briefing accused reporters and volunteer searchers of suffering "a delirium of necrophilia" for having reported on a suspected clandestine crematorium on the outskirts of Mexico City. Authorities have denied that any human remains were found there.

"Our president makes fun of us, he says this doesn't exist," Ayala Vargas said, referring to the disappeared problem that López Obrador has sought to minimize.

## South Africa again requests emergency measures from world court to restrain Israel's actions in Gaza

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — South Africa urged the United Nations' top court Friday to issue more emergency measures to restrain Israel, saying its military incursion in Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza."

The request marks the fourth for additional measures by South Africa, which filed a genocide case against Israel late last year at the International Court of Justice. According to the latest request, the previous preliminary orders by The Hague-based court were not sufficient to address "a brutal military attack on the sole remaining refuge for the people of Gaza."

At hearings in January, lawyers for Israel argued that its war in Gaza was a legitimate defense of its

people and that it was Hamas militants who were guilty of genocide.

South Africa has asked the court to order Israel to withdraw from Rafah; to take measures to ensure unimpeded access to U.N. officials, humanitarian organizations and journalists to the Gaza Strip; and to report back within one week as to how it is meeting these demands.

Earlier this week, Israel issued a warning to evacuate an area of eastern Rafah where approximately 100,000 Palestinians have been sheltering. Israeli military forces have now seized the nearby border crossing with Egypt, leaving all entries and exits from the beleaguered enclave under Israeli control.

South Africa also accused Israel of violating the previous provisional measures imposed by the court. In January, judges ordered Israel to do all it could to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza. Two months later, the court issued a second set of measures, telling Israel to improve the humanitarian situation, including opening more land crossings to allow food, water, fuel and other supplies.

The court also announced on Friday that Libya had asked to join the case and intervene in support of South Africa. The North African country joins Nicaragua and Colombia, which have filed their own requests to take part in the proceedings.

Separately, Nicaragua brought a complaint against Germany, arguing the European country is enabling genocide by sending arms and other support to Israel. Earlier this month, the court rejected a request for emergency measures against Berlin, but the case will continue on merits.

The war began with a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which Palestinian militants killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. The attack sparked an Israeli invasion the Gaza Strip, home to 2.3 million people.

Israel's bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures. Much of Gaza has been destroyed and some 80% of Gaza's population has been driven from their homes.

The U.N. says northern Gaza is already in a state of "full-blown famine."

## Betting money for the WNBA is pouring in on Caitlin Clark and the Indiana Fever

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The betting public is throwing money on Caitlin Clark and the Indiana Fever as the WNBA prepares to open one of the more-anticipated seasons in league history.

A Fever championship would have bookmakers sweating. They are the biggest liability at BetMGM Sportsbook, with nearly half the betting tickets on the Fever, who open the season Tuesday at the Connecticut Sun.

Indiana is second in money wagered at 29%, behind the two-time defending champion Las Vegas Aces at 41.5%, also a popular public team that additionally draws action from many professional bettors.

The heavy money on the Fever caused them to go from +2500 to win the championship to +1800. Las Vegas edged from a +115 favorite to even money.

"Caitlin Clark drove record handle on the women's NCAA Tournament, and the interest from bettors has carried over to the WNBA," BetMGM Sportsbook trading manager Seamus Magee said. "We expect Fever games to be the most bet throughout the season and for Clark's player props to be popular with bettors."

The story is much the same at Caesars Sportsbook.

Indiana, which went 13-27 last season and put the Fever in position to land Clark with the No. 1 overall pick, is tied with the Sun at Caesars with the fourth-best odds at 15-1.

The Aces at +100, last year's runner-up New York Liberty at +240 and the Seattle Storm at +800 are favored to win the title.

"I think we've definitely seen an increase in the handle at this time last year," Caesars basketball oddsmaker David Lieberman said. "It makes sense with the hype around (Clark)."

That buzz also has pushed Clark into the group of favorites to win the MVP award. She has received

68% of the wagers at BetMGM Sportsbook to receive the league's top individual honor, which at +1000 it's a strong value bet.

Las Vegas' A'ja Wilson of Las Vegas at +120 and New York's Breanna Stewart at +550 are the two favorites. Both are two-time winners, with Stewart beating out Wilson and the Sun's Alyssa Thomas last season in a close vote. Wilson used that perceived snub as fuel in last year's WNBA playoffs.

Clark also is third in the MVP odds at Caesars at +850, behind Wilson of Las Vegas at +100 and Stewart at +550.

There is almost no betting value on Clark to win Rookie of the Year. She is -750 at BetMGM Sportsbook, which explains why 22% of the wagers have gone to her and the Chicago Sky's Angel Reese has garnered 43% of the action with a much higher payoff at +3000.

"I would argue there's no value betting the Fever or Caitlin Clark MVP right now," Lieberman said. "The odds are probably a little lower than they should be. It's probably mostly public action there. I don't think there are any sharps (pros) lining up to bet something that's obviously a little lower than it should be at this point."

## **Airman shot by deputy doted on little sister and aimed to buy mom a house, family says**

By STEPHEN SMITH and SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Just two days before a sheriff's deputy in Florida shot him dead, U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Roger Fortson called home to find out what his 10-year-old sister wanted for her birthday.

It was a typical gesture for the 23-year-old from Atlanta, who doted on the girl and was devoted to helping her, a younger brother and his mom prosper, his family says.

"He was trying to give me everything that I never could get for myself," his mother, Chantemekki Fortson, said Thursday at a news conference in Fort Walton Beach, where her son was living when he was killed.

He was her "gift," she said, the man who taught her to love and forgive and served as her co-worker and counselor.

An Okaloosa County sheriff's deputy shot Fortson last Friday. Sheriff's officials say he acted in self-defense while responding to a call of a disturbance in progress at an apartment complex. But civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who is representing the Fortson family, has accused the deputy of going to the wrong apartment and said the shooting was unjustified.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating.

At Thursday's news conference, Chantemekki Fortson held a large framed portrait of her son in dress uniform. He joined the Air Force in 2019, the same year he graduated from Ronald McNair High School — a majority Black school in metro Atlanta's DeKalb County where roughly half of students don't graduate in four years.

Air Force service was a lifelong dream, and Fortson rose to the rank of senior airman. He was stationed at Hurlburt Field near Fort Walton Beach.

"Where we come from, we don't end up where Roger ended up," his mother said.

Fortson, a gunner aboard an AC-130J, earned an Air Medal with combat device, which is typically awarded after 20 flights in a combat zone or for conspicuous valor or achievement on a single mission. An Air Force official said Fortson's award reflected both — completing flights in a combat zone and taking specific actions during one of the missions to address an in-flight emergency and allow the mission to continue. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details that had not been made public.

But his service, like almost everything else he did, had a larger purpose.

"He was trying to help his family have a better life," Crump said Thursday.

That meant serving as a role model for his 16-year-old brother, André, his mom said, saving up to try to buy her a house and getting her a new car. His nickname was "Mr. Make It Happen."

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Chantemekki Fortson recalled that her son, then in high school, accompanied her in the ambulance to the hospital when she was giving birth to her daughter and tried to tell the doctor how to deliver the baby. The girl and his brother were always in his thoughts.

André was not coping well, his father, Keith Vann, said in a phone interview Friday.

"He's basically like a zombie, some people say," he said.

Vann remembered Fortson as a quiet boy who didn't get in any trouble.

"He was very respectful," he said.

Fortson was assigned to the 4th Special Operations Squadron as a special missions aviator, where one of his roles was to load the gunship's 30 mm and 105 mm weapons.

Chantemekki Fortson said her son was injured while loading a plane and was in such severe pain he thought he would die. But he told his mom he had to push through for his brother and sister.

He was also by her side when she got into an accident a short time later and needed to go to the emergency room.

"That's the kind of gift he was," she said. "They took something that can never be replaced."

## **Bob Ross' legacy lives on in new 'The Joy of Painting' series**

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

A new generation can learn how to paint happy trees and to make happy accidents with a TV series teaching the Bob Ross -method of painting using some of the prolific artist's work that have never been seen before.

Before Ross died in 1995 from cancer, he had completed seven paintings to use in season 32 of "The Joy of Painting."

"He was so sick, but he was still working on his next series because he wanted to be able to keep going," said Joan Kowalski, president of Bob Ross Inc. Her parents, Annette and Walt Kowalski, co-founded the company with Ross.

Those works were stored away for almost three decades. Certified Bob Ross instructor Nicholas Hankins has studied those seven paintings and paints them from scratch on camera in "The Joy of Painting with Nicholas Hankins: Bob Ross' Unfinished Season," which started airing this spring in some markets on American Public Television. Some episodes are available on PBS' website.

The opportunity to "take these paintings and do what Bob ultimately wanted done with them, (to) have them out in the world making people happy is gratifying" said Hankins recently over Zoom. He teaches at the Bob Ross Art Workshop and Gallery about 15 miles from Daytona Beach, Florida, and oversees instructor certification. Hankins also uses six of his own paintings in this new "Joy of Painting," which was filmed and produced at WDSC-TV Daytona State College.

"I think that Bob would be incredibly proud of how we're doing this," said Kowalski. "There aren't really many things that come our way where we have to wonder, what should we do? Bob was very specific in how he wanted this whole thing to go into the future."

Hankins is a familiar face to Ross devotees. His own teaching videos posted to the Bob Ross YouTube channel drew upwards of 300,000 views before the idea of TV was ever mentioned.

Kowalski is fascinated by the online response to Hankin's videos. "People notice that Nick is not at all trying to be Bob, and he's delivering naturally as himself and yet there's still that same sort of feeling you get watching Bob."

A surge of interest in all things Bob Ross came out of the pandemic, when people were staying home and looking for ways to pass time. Now, with so many distractions, it can seem like there aren't enough hours in a day to unwind and rest. If viewers don't tune in for a painting lesson, Hankins hopes his 30-minute "Joy of Painting" episodes helps people to relax in the same spirit as the originals.

"I hope I can carry that part of the legacy on," he said. "I want to genuinely create an environment where people are going to come in, take half an hour and just turn off the world. Right now is a time we need it."

Kowalski says people used to sheepishly tell Ross "all the time" that they would fall asleep to his episodes,

but he didn't mind. "He said, 'I love hearing that you've never watched a full episode of me.'"

If you want to paint along, Hankins said you need basic materials like oil colors, an easel, canvas, and brushes. "But if they're just watching all they need is a tall glass of iced tea. "That was Bob's thing," he said, "get some iced tea and kick back and watch."

## Heavy fighting in Gaza's Rafah keeps aid crossings closed and sends 110,000 civilians fleeing

By WAFAA SHURAFU and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Rafah has left crucial nearby aid crossings inaccessible and forced more than 110,000 people to flee north, U.N. officials said Friday.

With nothing entering through the crossings, food and other supplies were running critically low, aid agencies said.

The World Food Program will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday, said Georgios Petropoulos, an official with the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Rafah. Aid groups have said fuel will also be depleted soon, forcing hospitals to shut down critical operations and bringing to a halt trucks delivering aid across south and central Gaza.

The United Nations and other agencies have warned for weeks that an Israel assault on Rafah, on the border with Egypt near the main aid entry points, would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in civilian casualties. More than 1.4 million Palestinians — half of Gaza's population — have been sheltering in Rafah, most after fleeing Israel's offensives elsewhere.

Heavy fighting was also underway Friday in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already launched punishing assaults.

Israel's move into Rafah has been short of the full-scale invasion that it has planned. The United States is deeply opposed to a major offensive and is stepping up pressure by threatening to withhold arms to Israel.

But the heavy fighting has shook the city and spread fear that a bigger assault is coming. Artillery shelling and gunfire rattled throughout the night into Friday, an Associated Press reporter in the city said.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said more than 110,000 people have fled Rafah. Families who have already moved multiple times during the war packed up to go again. One woman held a cat in her arms as she sat in the back of a truck piled with her family's belongings about to head out.

The full invasion hasn't started "and things have already gotten below zero," said Raed al-Fayomi, a displaced person in Rafah. "There's no food or water."

Those fleeing erected new tents camps in the city of Khan Younis — which was half destroyed in an earlier Israeli offensive — and the town of Deir al-Balah, straining infrastructure.

The international charity Project Hope said its medical clinic in Deir al-Balah had seen a surge in people from Rafah seeking care for blast injuries, infections and pregnancies. "People are evacuating to nothing. There are no homes or proper shelters for people to go to," said the group's Gaza team leader based in Rafah, Moses Kondowe.

Petropoulos said humanitarian workers had no supplies to help them set up in new locations. "We simply have no tents, we have no blankets, no bedding, none of the items that you would expect a population on the move to be able to get from the humanitarian system," he said.

Israeli troops captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, forcing it to shut down. Rafah was the main point of entry for fuel.

Israel says the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing — Gaza's main cargo terminal — is open on its side, and that aid convoys have been entering. It said trucks carrying 200,000 liters of fuel were allowed to enter the crossing Friday.

But the U.N. said it is too dangerous for workers to reach the crossing on the Gaza side to retrieve the aid because of Israel's incursion and the ensuing fighting with Hamas.

Israeli troops are also battling Palestinian militants in eastern Rafah, not far from the crossings. The



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military said it had located several tunnels and eliminated militants in close combat and with airstrikes.

Hamas' military wing said it struck a house where Israeli troops had taken up position, an armored personnel carrier and soldiers operating on foot. There was no comment from the Israeli military,

It is not possible to independently confirm battlefield accounts from either side.

Hamas also said it launched mortar rounds at troops near the Kerem Shalom crossing. The military said it intercepted two launches. The crossing was initially closed after a Hamas rocket attack on nearby forces last weekend killed four Israeli soldiers.

Hamas rockets also reached the southern Israeli city of Beersheeva on Wednesday, lightly injuring a woman with shrapnel, Israel's military and rescue services said Friday. Five rockets were fired toward the city, with one intercepted and most falling in open areas, the military said. Through much of the war, Gaza militants fired thousands of rockets from Gaza on Israeli cities and towns, most of them intercepted, but such attacks have grown rarer in past months.

Israel says Rafah is the last Hamas stronghold in Gaza and key to its goal of dismantling the group's military and governing capabilities and returning scores of hostages Hamas captured in its deadly Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

But Hamas has repeatedly regrouped, even in the hardest-hit parts of Gaza.

Heavy battles erupted this week in the Zeitoun area on the outskirts of Gaza City, in the northern part of the territory. Northern Gaza was the first target of the ground offensive, and Israel said late last year that it had mostly dismantled Hamas there.

The north remains largely isolated by Israeli troops, and the U.N. says the estimated 300,000 people there are experiencing "full-blown famine."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to proceed with the Rafah offensive with or without U.S. arms, saying "we will fight with our fingernails" if needed, in a defiant statement late Thursday. The U.S. has stepped up weapons deliveries to Israel throughout the war, and the Israeli military says it has what it needs for Rafah operations.

The war began with Hamas' surprise attack into southern Israel last year, in which the militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. They are still holding some 100 captives and the remains of more than 30, after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year.

Israel's bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures. Much of Gaza has been destroyed and some 80% of Gaza's population has been driven from their homes.

Israel's incursion into Rafah complicated what had been months of efforts by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt to broker a cease-fire and the release of hostages. Hamas this week said it had accepted an Egyptian-Qatari cease-fire proposal, but Israel says the plan does not meet its "core" demands. Follow-up talks appeared to end inconclusively on Thursday.

Hamas has demanded guarantees for an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza as part of any deal — steps that Israel has ruled out.

## Appeals court upholds Steve Bannon's contempt of Congress conviction

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court panel on Friday upheld the criminal conviction of Donald Trump's longtime ally Steve Bannon for defying a subpoena from the House committee that investigated the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit rejected Bannon's challenges to his contempt of Congress conviction for which he was sentenced in 2022 to four months in prison. The judge overseeing the case has allowed him to remain free while he pursues his appeal.

Bannon's attorneys didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. His lawyers could ask the full D.C. appeals court to hear the matter.

Bannon was convicted of two counts of contempt of Congress: one for refusing to sit for a deposition and the other for refusing to provide documents related to his involvement in Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Bannon had initially argued that his testimony was protected by Trump's claim of executive privilege. But the House panel and the Justice Department contended such a claim was dubious because Trump had fired Bannon from the White House in 2017 and Bannon was thus a private citizen when he was consulting with the then-president in the run-up to the riot,

Bannon's lawyers argued at trial that he wasn't acting in bad faith, but was trying to avoid running afoul of executive privilege objections Trump had raised. The onetime presidential adviser said he wanted to have a Trump lawyer in the room for his appearance, but the committee wouldn't allow it.

Bannon's lawyers told the appeals court that the conviction should be overturned because, among other reasons, they said the committee's subpoena was invalid. Bannon also argued that the judge that oversaw the trial wrongly quashed subpoenas seeking testimony and records from the committee's own members, staffers and counsel his lawyers argued could have bolstered his defense.

The appeals court said all of his challenges lacked merit.

"We conclude that none of the information sought in the trial subpoenas was relevant to the elements of the contempt offense, nor to any affirmative defense Bannon was entitled to present at trial," the judges wrote.

A second Trump aide, trade advisor Peter Navarro, was also convicted of contempt of Congress and reported to prison in March to serve his four-month sentence. Navarro has maintained that he couldn't cooperate with the committee because Trump had invoked executive privilege. But courts have rejected that argument, finding Navarro couldn't prove Trump had actually invoked it.

## Inside a makeshift shelter saving hundreds of dogs from floods in southern Brazil

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

CANOAS, Brazil (AP) — Hundreds of volunteers have set up a makeshift dog shelter in an abandoned, roofless warehouse in the city of Canoas, one of the hardest hit by floods in southern Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul state.

They treat and feed sick, hungry or injured dogs, hoping to reunite them with their owners, and they were working at full speed Friday morning as renewed heavy rains are forecast in the region over the weekend.

Authorities say more than 110 people have died, almost 150 are missing, and more than 300,000 people have been displaced by the floods. There is no official tally for the number of animals that have died or are made homeless. Local media estimated the number to be in the thousands.

The makeshift shelter, about the size of a soccer field, has taken in hundreds of canines from inundated areas since Sunday. Every hour between 20 and 30 dogs arrive, many injured after having been run over or nearly drowned. The shelter sends some to veterinary hospitals, but others that are in need of medical attention are too frail to be transported. Dog food is scattered throughout the facility, and dogs are chained at distances from one another to prevent fighting.

Hairdresser Gabriel Cardoso da Silva is one of the main organizers. He came from the neighboring city of Gravataí, which wasn't hit by the heavy rains, to help rescue people.

"When we were about to leave, we heard the barking. I and my wife felt so moved, we just cried; we have two dogs," said Silva, 28.

Many more were drawn to the movement following a social media campaign, he added.

"Sunday we had 10 volunteers, now we have 200. We have tons of food. Our community chose to embrace this, but days ago we felt so alone."

Whenever a dog is reunited with family, the hairdresser shouts "One less!" so other volunteers can stop and applaud throughout the shelter.

Cardoso's call often mixes with loud barks of small, jittery dogs, fights between distraught animals that

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manage to get close and frantic movement by desperate families trying to locate their lost pets.

Éder Luis da Silva Camargo, a garbage collector in Canoas, found two of his six dogs at the center after searching for two days. Hunter and Preta were separated from him on Tuesday, as they boarded different boats during a rescue operation.

"They were so scared then, they ran to the side and we couldn't run after them. Now, thank God, we found them here," Camargo said.

He and his wife Jenifer Gabriela, 21, want to find their four dogs that are still missing: Bob, Meg, Polaca and Ravena.

"This is the third place we came to look for them. This is great, but we still want to find the others," Gabriela said.

Animal protection groups and volunteers have shared images of difficult rescues and heartwarming scenes of pets reuniting with their owners on social media. One video that went viral showed a man crying inside a boat, hugging his four dogs after rescuers went back to his home to save them. The images have spurred Brazilians to send donations and brought veterinarians to the region.

Gustavo Ungerer, a jiu-jitsu teacher who lives in Rio de Janeiro and treats stray animals during his spare time, will join a group of veterinarians heading south in just over a week.

They will bring food and medical supplies, assist cats and dogs that have found shelter and seek out those still fending for themselves, said Ungerer, 41. One veterinarian is specialized in larger animals, such as oxen and horses.

Stray animals "don't know how to ask for help. They get scared and run away or attack when people approach to help," he said by phone. "Sometimes it might be necessary to climb a house, or enter into the river."

The plight of lost animals in southern Brazil became national news this week after a television news helicopter spotted a horse nicknamed Caramelo stranded on a rooftop in Canoas, not far from the shelter.

About 24 hours afterward, as people clamored for his rescue, authorities in Rio Grande do Sul successfully removed Caramelo on Thursday, providing a dose of hope to a beleaguered region.

Carla Sassi, chairwoman of Grad, a Brazilian nonprofit that rescues animals after disasters, said she met with state government officials in Canoas to discuss emergency measures to rescue lost pets, but that nothing came of it.

So far, according to volunteers in some areas, only business leaders and local residents have acted to save pets in flooded areas.

Rio Grande do Sul's housing secretariat says state agents have rescued about 10,000 animals since last week, while those in municipalities and volunteers have saved thousands more.

## **One man was a Capitol Police officer. The other rioted on Jan. 6. They're both running for Congress**

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — For Derrick Evans, being part of the mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol wasn't enough. The former West Virginia lawmaker wants to make his path to the halls of Congress permanent.

On the other side of the metal barricades that day, Police Officer Harry Dunn couldn't stand what he saw as he defended the Capitol and its inhabitants from rioters on Jan. 6, 2021. Ultimately, the Maryland resident watched lawmakers he had protected vote to acquit former President Donald Trump and deny the violence and trauma that led to the deaths of some of his fellow officers.

On Tuesday, Evans and Dunn will make bids for U.S. House seats in their respective state primaries. They come into the election with dramatically different interpretations about what happened that day, and their performance in Tuesday's primaries in West Virginia and Maryland could hint at whether voters' opinions about the attack and its meaning have changed over time.

In terrorizing the Capitol for an entire afternoon, rioters wielded pipes, bats and bear spray. They used flagpoles as weapons, brutally beat police officers, chanted that they wanted to hang Vice President Mike

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Pence, broke through the glass and busted through doors as lawmakers frantically evacuated. A Georgia man bragged that he "fed" a police officer to the mob. More than 100 police officers were injured, many beaten and bloodied. At least nine people who were there died during and after the rioting, including a female rioter who was shot and killed by police.

More than 1,350 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol riot. Over 850 of them have been sentenced — roughly two-thirds received prison terms ranging from a few days to 22 years.

The two candidacies "symbolize a shift on the part of the two big parties regarding their commitment to law and order," said Timothy Naftali, a senior researcher at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

It's remarkable, Naftali said, that on the same day, a former police officer could become a Democratic nominee while Republicans could "select an unrepentant felon" in Evans, who "proudly displays the fact that he violated the law on Jan. 6."

"That is a split screen that one might not have been able to imagine 15 years ago," he said.

While Evans is seen as a longshot to unseat an established incumbent and doesn't have the fundraising advantage Dunn enjoys in Maryland, their candidacies at least raise the possibility that they could serve together while holding starkly different views of the violence and destruction of Jan. 6. But even if Dunn wins and Evans loses, he'd be serving alongside dozens of Republicans who have come to view the defendants as "hostages."

Dunn, a 40-year-old Democrat, resigned last December from the Capitol Police after more than 15 years of service. He was four years short of pension eligibility.

"I'm running for Congress because the forces that spurred that violent attack on January 6th are still at work in our country today, and as a patriotic American, I believe it is my duty to step up and defend our democracy," Dunn said.

Dunn leads all candidates in fundraising by wide margins in Maryland's 3rd District race, with \$4.6 million raised and \$714,000 cash on hand, according to his latest campaign finance report with the Federal Election Commission.

Evans, a 39-year-old Republican and avid Trump supporter, calls himself the only elected official who "had the courage" to stand behind efforts to temporarily halt certification of President Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. He livestreamed himself on Facebook cheering on what he described as a "revolution."

Evans was arrested two days after the riot and resigned from his West Virginia House of Delegates seat a month before the 2021 legislative session. He pleaded guilty to a felony civil disorder charge and served three months in prison. At his sentencing hearing, Evans apologized for his actions, but he did an about-face upon leaving prison. He began portraying himself as a victim of a politically motivated prosecution.

Evans once called himself a Democrat, finishing sixth out of seven candidates in a state House primary in 2016. He then switched to the Libertarian Party in the general election and finished last among five candidates.

Evans is taking on West Virginia 1st Congressional District Rep. Carol Miller, also a big Trump backer. In 2022, Miller received 66% of the vote in a five-candidate GOP primary en route to winning her third term in Congress.

Miller is focused on her own accomplishments and endorsements, not any criticism from Evans or his status as a Jan. 6 defendant.

"I don't think about him at all," she said.

Dunn is among nearly two dozen Democrats running in Maryland's 3rd Congressional District, where incumbent Democrat John Sarbanes is not seeking reelection. The heavily Democratic jurisdiction stretches between Baltimore and the nation's capital.

Trump and New York Rep. Elise Stefanik have referred to Jan. 6 defendants who went to prison as "hostages," reflecting a shifting tone among some conservatives toward the violent attempt to overturn the election result. Evans wrote a 2023 book titled "Political Prisoner: The Untold Story of January 6th."

"I kind of think it fits into the general theme of what's viewed as accepted political behavior among some Republicans in the 2020s that probably wouldn't have been the case 10-20 years ago," said Scott

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Crichlow, an associate political science professor at West Virginia University. "Specifically, I think it fits into the general Derrick Evans sphere of behavior. But also that seems to more and more kind of fit, with at least among some Republicans, what you want to see candidates doing and saying today."

Later this month, another convicted Jan. 6 defendant, construction superintendent Chuck Hand, is running in a GOP U.S. House primary in southwest Georgia's 2nd District. Hand faces three other Republicans on May 21 for the right to take on longtime Democratic incumbent Sanford Bishop. Hand and his wife, Mandy Robinson-Hand, were convicted of misdemeanor parading and picketing at the Capitol. Both were sentenced to 20 days in federal prison.

Both Hand and Evans echo false claims still made by Trump that the 2020 election was stolen.

Dunn is repulsed by such rhetoric.

"I won't sit on the sidelines while Donald Trump and his MAGA allies in Congress try to tear our country apart," he said, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

How much legitimacy there is to rioters' candidacies remains to be seen. None of those seeking public office have gained much traction with voters so far.

In New Hampshire, Capitol riot defendant Jason Riddle plans to run in a crowded GOP primary for the state's 2nd District U.S. House seat. The candidate filing period for the Sept. 10 primary is in early June. Incumbent Democratic Rep. Annie Kuster announced in March that she won't seek a seventh term. Riddle was sentenced to 90 days in prison for helping himself to some wine from a lawmaker's liquor cabinet and stealing a Senate procedure book that he later sold.

In Arizona, Jacob Chansley, the spear-carrying rioter whose horned fur hat, bare chest and face paint made him one of the riot's more recognizable figures, served about 27 months of a 41-month sentence. He hoped to run as a Libertarian in Arizona's 8th Congressional District seat but failed to meet a deadline to turn in required petition signatures to get his name on the ballot.

Tuesday's primaries in Maryland and West Virginia will offer a more tangible test.

"On the one hand, Evans is looking at it as something to be proud of. Dunn's looking at it as something that should never happen again," said Crichlow. "And in that way, these two campaigns really do kind of capture fundamentally different perspectives about the last few years in politics and what politics will look like going forward."

## Mixing games and education, Prince Harry and Meghan arrive in Nigeria to promote mental health

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, arrived in Nigeria amid pomp and dancing on Friday to champion mental health for young people affected by conflicts and to promote the Invictus Games, which the prince founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans.

The couple, in the West African nation for the first time on the invitation of its military, began their three-day visit by going to the Lightway Academy school which receives support from their Archewell foundation to train young girls affected by conflicts in Nigeria, before going on to meet with the nation's military officers.

Harry and Meghan will also be meeting with wounded soldiers and their families in what Nigerian officials have said is a show of support to improve the morale of the soldiers, including those fighting a 14-year war against Islamic extremists in the country's northeast.

Harry served in Afghanistan as an Apache helicopter copilot gunner, after which he founded the Invictus Games in 2014 to offer wounded veterans and servicemembers the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics. Nigeria was among the nations that participated in last year's edition of the games.

At the Abuja school where they kicked off an inaugural mental health summit organized by local non-profit GEANCO, which partners with their foundation, the couple were received by a dancing troupe and a crowd of excited students and teachers.

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"We've got to acknowledge those amazing dance moves!" Meghan said. "My husband was excited to jump up!"

They then went into the classrooms to interact with the children, who showed robot cars they had built.

They spoke to the students about mental health, and about their own children, Archie and Lilibet.

"In some cases around the world ... there is a stigma when it comes to mental health. Too many people don't want to talk about it," Harry said. "So will you promise to us that after today, no more being scared, no more being unsure of mental health?"

Meghan praised her husband's openness.

"You see why I'm married to him?" she said of Harry amid cheers, before urging the schoolchildren to never be ashamed of their experiences in life. "It is a complete honor to have our first visit to Nigeria; be here with all of you. We believe in you. We believe in your future," she said.

Student Nnenna Okorie couldn't hide her excitement at meeting the couple. "She is the prettiest human being ever," said Okorie, a senior student at the school. "I admire her so much and then Harry. I love how he is so supportive," she said.

The couple then went to Nigeria's Defense Headquarters where they were received by servicemen and their wives before going into a private meeting with Nigeria's chief of defense staff, Gen. Christopher Musa.

During their stay, Harry and Meghan will also attend basketball and volleyball matches in Abuja and Lagos. Meghan will co-host an event on women in leadership with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organization, according to the couple's spokesperson, Charlie Gipson.

The news of Meghan's visit excited some in Nigeria where her life — and association with the British royal family — is closely followed. Meghan has also said in the past that she found out through a genealogy test that she was 43% Nigerian.

The Nigerian military has touted the Invictus Games as one which could help the recovery of thousands of its personnel who have been fighting the homegrown Boko Haram Islamic extremists and their factions since 2009 when they launched an insurgency.

"Eighty percent of our soldiers that have been involved in this recovery program are getting better (and) their outlook to life is positive," Marquis, the military's sports director, said.

"The recovery program has given them an opportunity to improve their personal self-esteem, to improve their mental health and emotional intelligence."

## Today in History: May 11, Bob Marley dies at 36

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 11, the 132nd day of 2024. There are 234 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 11, 1981, legendary reggae artist Bob Marley died in a Miami hospital at age 36 of acral lentiginous melanoma, a skin cancer that is rare but the most common type found among people of color.

On this date:

In 1647, Peter Stuyvesant (STY'-veh-sunt) arrived in New Amsterdam to become governor of New Netherland.

In 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state of the Union.

In 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded during a banquet at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

In 1935, the Rural Electrification Administration was created as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs.

In 1946, the first CARE packages, sent by a consortium of American charities to provide relief to the hungry of postwar Europe, arrived at Le Havre, France.

In 1953, a tornado devastated Waco, Texas, claiming 114 lives.

In 1960, Israeli agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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In 1973, the espionage trial of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo in the "Pentagon Papers" case came to an end as Judge William M. Byrne dismissed all charges, citing government misconduct.

In 1996, an Atlanta-bound ValuJet DC-9 caught fire shortly after takeoff from Miami and crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing all 110 people on board.

In 2010, Conservative leader David Cameron, at age 43, became Britain's youngest prime minister in almost 200 years after Gordon Brown stepped down and ended 13 years of Labour government.

In 2020, Twitter announced that it would add a warning label to tweets containing disputed or misleading information about the coronavirus.

In 2022, the Senate fell far short in a rushed effort toward enshrining Roe v. Wade abortion access as federal law, blocked by a Republican filibuster. The move came after a draft report from the Supreme Court overturning the 50-year-old ruling. (The 6-3 decision would be issued essentially as drafted the following month.)

In 2023, Manhattan prosecutors said they would bring criminal charges against a man accused of using a deadly chokehold on an unruly passenger aboard a New York City subway train.

Today's Birthdays: Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan is 91. Rock singer Eric Burdon (The Animals; War) is 83. Actor Pam Ferris is 76. Former White House chief of staff John F. Kelly is 74. Actor Shohreh Aghdashloo (SHOH'-reh ahg-DAHSH'-loo) is 72. Actor Frances Fisher is 72. Sports columnist Mike Lupica is 72. Actor Boyd Gaines is 71. Actor and former MTV VJ Martha Quinn is 65. Actor Tim Blake Nelson is 60. Actor Jeffrey Donovan is 56. Actor Nicky Katt is 54. Actor Coby Bell is 49. Cellist Perttu Kivilaakso (PER'-tuh KEE'-wee-lahk-soh) is 46. Actor Austin O'Brien is 43. Actor-singer Jonathan Jackson is 42. Rapper Ace Hood is 36. Latin singer Prince Royce is 35. Actor Annabelle Attanasio (TV: "Bull") is 31. Musician Howard Lawrence (Disclosure) is 30.