

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Wednesday, May 15

Flags at half mast today for Peace Officers Day  
Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, peas and carrots, apricots,, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Sack lunch made by kitchen.

End of Fourth Quarter - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

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

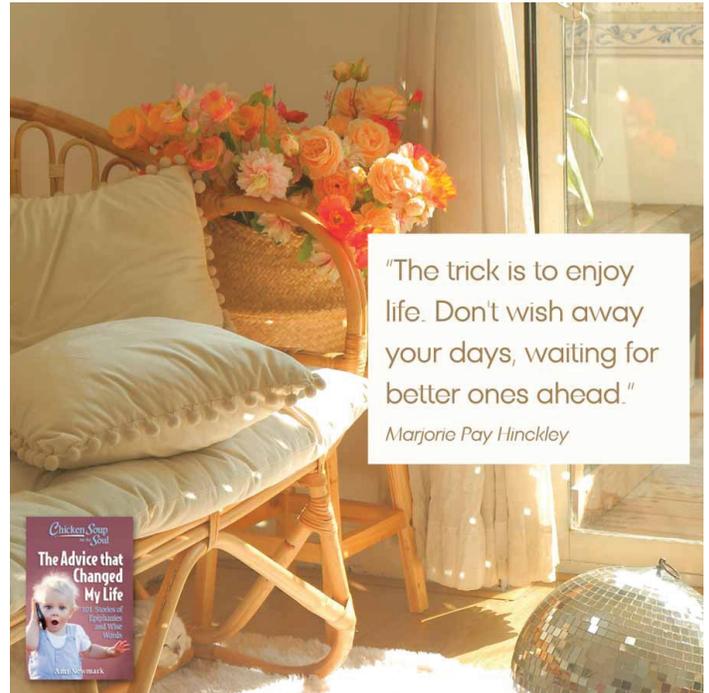
Emmanuel Lutheran: Pastor at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

**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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## Thursday, May 16

Senior Menu: Chesseburger quinoa casserole, cheesy breadstick, steamed Brussel sprouts, fruit.

Faculty Inservice

Girls Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.

Track at Webster, 1 p.m.

## Friday, May 17

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

Region Track at Mobridge.

## Saturday, May 18

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

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

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# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset](#)

The Biden administration announced increased tariffs yesterday on Chinese products, the latest expansion of US duties on goods manufactured in the world's second-largest economy. Imports of electric vehicles will see the steepest increase in tariffs, quadrupling from 25% to 100%. Former President Donald Trump first implemented heightened tariffs on solar panels, metals, and more in 2018.

A search is underway in northern France for armed assailants who killed two prison officers and wounded three others in an ambush on a prison van, freeing a 30-year-old inmate and drug dealer known as "The Fly." The incident marks the first time on-duty prison workers have been killed in France since 1992.

The 77th Cannes Film Festival kicked off yesterday, with 22 films vying for the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or. Greta Gerwig leads the competition jury—the first American woman director to do so—who will award the winner at the end of the festival.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2024 WNBA season kicks off. NFL's regular season schedule released tonight (8 pm ET, NFL Network). Alice Munro, Nobel Prize-winning short story writer, dies at 92. Filmmaker Roman Polanski acquitted in French court of defaming actress who accused Polanski of sexual assault.

George Clooney to debut on Broadway in spring 2025 in stage adaptation of "Good Night, and Good Luck". Pop culture edition of "Jeopardy!" tapped for Amazon Prime Video.

## Science & Technology

Google reveals Project Astra, an AI-powered app that can answer queries based on an object in the camera's field of vision.

Climate analysis finds 2023 was the warmest summer in the Northern Hemisphere over the past 2,000 years; tree ring analysis was used to supplement instrumental evidence, which dates back to 1850.

Human embryos primarily develop from only one of two cells created during the first division of a fertilized egg, while the second cell develops into the yolk sac; discovery expected to help improve in-vitro fertilization treatments.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.5%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +0.8%) despite news of higher-than-expected wholesale prices in April, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell comments indicating interest rates to remain steady.

Boeing allegedly violated a 2021 settlement that allowed the company to avoid criminal prosecution over deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019 involving its 737 Max aircraft, US Justice Department says in court filing.

UK mining firm Anglo American plans to spin off or sell diamond company De Beers as it works to fend off \$43B takeover bid from Australian rival BHP Group. Walmart to lay off hundreds of corporate employees, require majority of remote workers to return to office most days.

## Politics & World Affairs

National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary report on March 26 collapse of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge reveals tripping of electrical breakers on cargo vessel Dali caused propeller to shut down before impact; vessel lost power four times within the 12 hours before crash.

Michael Cohen, ex-personal lawyer to former President Donald Trump, is cross-examined by defense in hush money trial; see takeaways. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R, LA-4) appears at Manhattan courthouse to support Trump.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Kyiv to reiterate US support for Ukraine as Russian airstrikes hit second-largest city of Kharkiv. Georgian parliament passes bill protesters say mimics 2012 Russian law to crack down on dissidents; president expected to veto.

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## Preliminary budget, assistant coach resignations

The Groton Area School District Board got a first look at the 2025 fiscal year budget during a more-than-five-hour meeting.

The board met Monday evening, though they didn't adjourn until Tuesday. That came after four hours of executive session discussion related to personnel and contract negotiations.

Within the first hour, though, board members took a look through next year's preliminary budget.

The district will see an increase in its biggest expenses: salary, benefits and health insurance. The preliminary budget shows a four percent increase in those areas, said Business Manager Becky Hubsch.

Elementary salaries totaled \$878,992 in the district's 2023-2024 budget. The preliminary 2024-2025 budget total increases to \$912,962. Elementary employee benefits also rose from \$257,556 (2023-2024 budget) to an estimated \$266,459 (2024-2025 proposed budget).

Middle school salaries totaled \$428,542 in the district's 2023-2024 budget. The preliminary 2024-2025 budget total increases to \$445,324. Middle school employee benefits also rose from \$109,162 (2023-2024 budget) to an estimated \$112,843 (2024-2025 proposed budget).

High School salaries totaled \$718,024 in the district's 2023-2024 budget. The preliminary 2024-2025 budget total increases to \$744,170. High school employee benefits also rose from \$204,279 (2023-2024 budget) to an estimated \$211,076 (2024-2025 proposed budget).

Some adjustments have been made to cut expenses, including reviewing nontechnical supplies, Hubsch said. Morning monitoring and ICU at the middle/high school were also eliminated from the upcoming budget as those services are underutilized.



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Upcoming capital outlay expenses include updating the elementary school science curriculum, repair some sidewalks by the high school, middle school room flooring and some computer purchases.

Some increased prices are expected, according to the presented preliminary budget. The cost for having seconds during breakfast and/or lunch needs to increase. GRASP-OST may also see a rise in cost.

The district is still looking to transfer some money from the capital outlay fund to the general fund. That is because the opt-out of tax limitations that was approved by a vote in April won't be available until the end of the 2024-2025 school year, Hubsch told the board.

More discussion is set to take place through the next few months, but, for now, Hubsch told the board, "you've got your homework."

- Two assistant coaches have resigned. The board accepted resignations from assistant basketball coach Kyle Gerlach and assistant volleyball coach Jenna Strom for the 2024-2025 school year. Gerlach, who is also K-12 physical education and health teacher, earned the Boys Region 1 Assistant Coach of the Year title after the 2023-2024 basketball season. The board accepted Gerlach's resignation from the assistant coaching position if a suitable replacement can be found. Strom, who has been assistant volleyball coach since 2017, also submitted her resignation. Because Strom is not a full-time employee of the district, her resignation was accepted without qualifiers.

- The board also accepted the resignation of Robin Bitz, special education paraprofessional. Bitz was hired in September.

- Superintendent Joe Schwan discussed recently-released Title IX rules. The U.S. Department of Education released new regulations in April to "promptly and efficiently address all forms of sex discrimination," according to federal government officials. Those regulations are scheduled to go into effect on August 1, but those rules are facing legal challenges from states, including South Dakota. Earlier this month, school districts received a letter from the South Dakota Secretary of Education requesting districts refrain from changing policies yet. Districts are in "limbo" about upcoming policy changes, but new policies likely won't go into place until the legal battles play out, Schwan told the board.

- The board hired Brittany Hubbard, science/health science teacher and oral interp adviser, as HOSA-Future Health Professionals advisor for the 2024-2025 school year at 5 percent of base salary.

- The board approved summer employment agreements for Connect 4Ed Summer School, special education extended school



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year and summer custodial work. Emily Dinger and Julie Erdmann will work for the Connect 4Ed Summer School program at 50 hours each in June at \$31.25 per hour and 50 hours each in July at \$32.50 per hour. Anne Zoellner was hired for both extended school year services and Connect 4Ed Summer School. She will work 100 hours in June at \$31.25 per hour and 75 hours in July at \$32.50 per hour. Ann Gibbs, Todd Peterson and Reilly Fuhrman were hired for the extended school year program. Gibbs will work 50 hours in June at \$31.25 per hour and 25 hours in July at \$32.50 per hour. Fuhrman will work 20 hours in June at \$31.25 per hour. Peterson will work 28 hours in June at \$31.25 per hour and 24 hours after July 1 at \$32.50 per hour. Summer custodial members work 40 hours per week. Those workers include Kristen Dolan (\$15.70-\$16.33 per hour), Delbert Hinkelman (\$14.74-\$15.33 per hour), JoAnn Donley (\$14.74-\$15.33 per hour) and Brandon Clocksene (\$15.69-\$16.32 per hour).

- Hub City Roofing will finish the last portion of roofing work needed at Groton Area Elementary School. The project was broken into multiple parts, with the final portion including the northeast section of the elementary school. Hub City Roofing submitted a base bid of \$110,000 with a 20-year warranty. ARS, a company out of Sioux Falls, submitted a base bid of \$171,140 with a 15-year warranty.

- The board approved establishing custodial accounts for student groups fundraising. Those groups include girls basketball, boys basketball, boys soccer, girls soccer, football, volleyball and music. The move allows student leaders to have more responsibility in balancing the budgets of their student groups and allows for more transparency.

- The board cast three ballots for the South Dakota High School Activities Association. The Groton board voted for Lyman School District Superintendent Chris Long to serve as West River At-Large Representative on the SDHSAA Board of Districts. The board also supported Todd County High School Activities Director Chuck Wilson for the Native American At-Large Representative seat. Finally, the board voted to amend the SDHSAA By-Laws to include policy updates related to student-athletes being paid for promotions. The move comes after the NCAA instituted policy changes to allow college student-athletes to receive compensation from sponsors without impacting their student-athlete status.

- Elizabeth Varin

## Name Released in Union County Fatal Motorcycle Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Interstate 29, mile marker 46, one mile south of Beresford, SD

When: 5:42p.m. Saturday, May 11, 2024

Driver 1: Gene Jerome Eli, 66 year-old male from Yankton, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2004 Kawasaki VN750

Helmet Use: No

Union County, S.D.- A 66-year-old man died Saturday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash one mile south of Beresford, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates the Gene J. Eli, the driver of a 2004 Kawasaki VN750 motorcycle was southbound on I-29 when for an unknown reason the motorcycle drifted off the left side of the highway and into the median. The motorcycle crashed in the median, ejecting the driver. He was not wearing a helmet and sustained serious injuries. Eli was transported to a local hospital by ambulance where he died from his injuries. Speed and alcohol are not believed to be a factor in the crash and no other vehicles were involved.

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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## Aberdeen Central Field Event Meet

The Aberdeen Central Field Event Meet was held Tuesday. Logan Ringgenberg placed fourth in the boys shot put and Emma Kutter was eighth in the girls shot put.

### Boy's Division

**Shot Put:** 4. Logan Ringgenberg, 46' 7.25; 7. Holden Sippel, 43' 8.25; 14. Karter Moody, 38' 11; 32. Ashton Holmes, 31' 7

**Discus:** 9. Holden Sippel, 121' 7; 12. Logan Ringgenberg, 115' 10; 22. Karter Moody, 93' 11; 41. Ashton Holmes, 79' 2

**Javelin:** 12. Colby Dunker, 120' 11; 18. Karter Moody, 101' 0; 29. Ashton Holmes, 83' 3

### Girl's Division

**Shot Put:** 8. Emma Kutter, 32' 4; 19. Faith Flihs, 26' 1; 26. Avery Crank, 22' 4.25; 27. Ashley Johnson, 22' 1.5

**Discus:** 17. Faith Flihs, 79' 4; 20. Avery Crank, 75' 0; 24. Ashley Johnson, 63' 9

**Javelin:** 11. Emma Kutter, 77' 7; 12. Avery Crank, 72' 11; 14. Ashley Johnson, 61' 3

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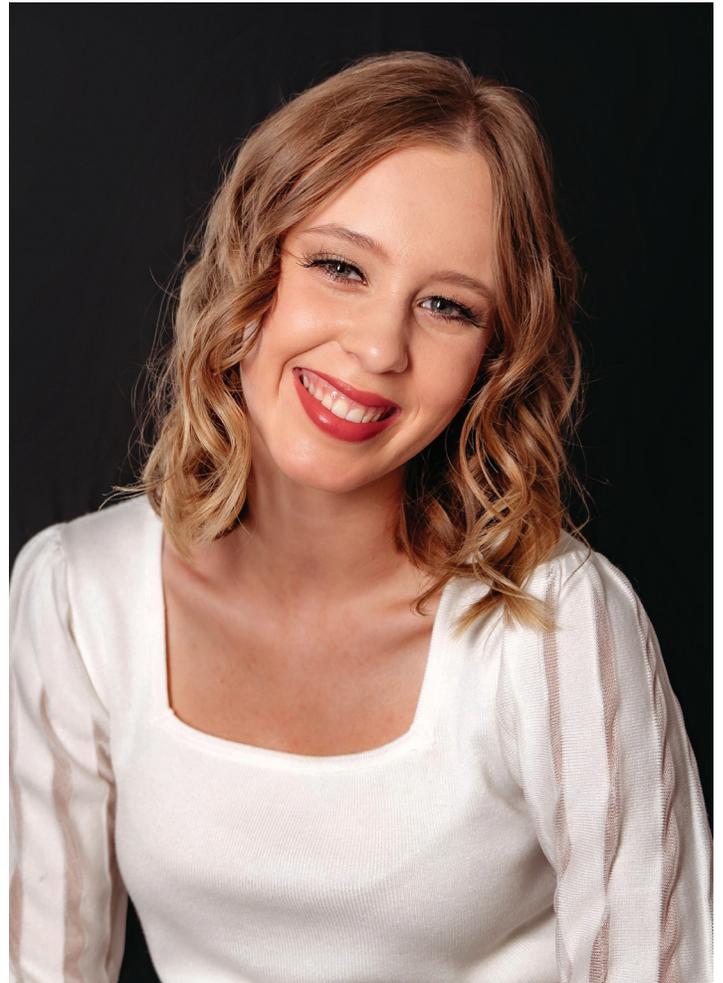
## Anna Bisbee to Compete for Miss South Dakota Outstanding Teen Title in Brookings

Brookings, SD –Anna Bisbee will compete in the 77th Annual Miss South Dakota Scholarship Competition May 30th through June 1st at the Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center in Brookings, SD. Bisbee is from Columbia and will graduate from Groton High School this spring. She currently holds the title of Miss Wolf Pack’s Outstanding Teen. Bisbee is one of 12 delegates hoping to be crowned the next Miss South Dakota Outstanding Teen and compete in the Miss America’s Teen competition in early 2025.

The theme of this year’s program is Swingin’ Glam with delegates judged on interviews, talent, and red carpet. As part of the competition, each candidate champions a social impact project. Bisbee’s initiative is Support for Children of Law Enforcement Officers which focuses on giving support to the younger children of Law Enforcement Officers. Bisbee’s personal impact of being a child of a law enforcement officer helps further her mission to support children to understand their feelings are normal and they are not alone.

Throughout its 77-year history, the Miss South Dakota program has impacted 18,000 young women. Last year, over \$56,000 in scholarships were awarded during the three-day event. The Miss South Dakota Scholarship Program is a means for statewide awareness of the Miss America and Miss America’s Teen programs. Their mission is to uphold the four points of the crown: Service, Scholarship, Success, and Style. The Miss South Dakota Outstanding Teen Competition is an official preliminary of the Miss America’s Teen Competition, the nation’s leading achievement program and the world’s largest provider of scholarship assistance to young women.

Participation in this program provides young women with the opportunity to promote a platform of community service and share their talents, intelligence, and positive values while serving as role models in their communities. The program is run entirely by volunteers and is supported by private donations which help the delegates in their pursuit of academic excellence, service, and lifelong success.



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The DARE Essay winners are Grady Zeck, third place; Ayce Warrington, second place; Preston Hinkelman and Libby Johnson, first place, Andi Iverson, second place and Tori Schuster, third place. The DARE graduation was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM and the video is archived under Other Events. The audio of the presentations is very clear on the video. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



This group of Groton Area fifth graders graduated from D.A.R.E. on Tuesday. In front, left to right, are Lilly Davis Bentley Ehresmann, Quinton Flores, Hadley Heilman, Hank Hill, Brayson Hubbs, Jeremiah Hubben and Andi Iverson; in the second row from front, left to right, are Charli Jacobsen, Libby Johnson, Kendyll Kroll, Easton Larson, Mason Locke, Maycee Moody, Colton Morehouse and Hallie Perkins; in second row from back, left to right, are Caelynn Pullan, Carlos Rodriguez, Graham Rose, Gradyn Rowen, Tori Schuster, Ivan Schwan, Chase Slight and Addison Steffes; in back are Janel Lone, Emmett Zoellner, Landon Thornton, Parker Zoellner and Groton Police Chief Stacy Mayou. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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This group of Groton Area fifth graders graduated from D.A.R.E. on Tuesday. In front, left to right, are Bella Barrera, Rylan Blackwood, Carter Boerger, Gracie Borg, Brynlee Dunker, Amara El-Salahy, Ambrielle Feist and Drew Fjeldheim; in the second row from front, left to right, are Jaela Flihs, Danielle Franken, Keith Furman, Preston Hinkelman, Rylee Hofer, Rayna Loeschke, Blake Malsam and Mya Moody; in the second row from back, left to right, are Knox Mulder, Zoe Olson, Cash Reif, Kinley Sandness, Charles Telkamp, Kinton Tracy, Taylynn Traphagen and Ayce Warrington; in back, left to right, are Shelby Hendrickson, Joslynn White Crane, Legend Whiteaker, Grady Zeck and Groton Police Chief Stacy Mayou. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

**Brown County Deputy Joshua Lee had a presentation with his K-9 drug dog, Hari. Lee has had Hari for three years.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Noem hires former Oglala Sioux police chief for state post as another tribe votes to ban her**

**Yankton Sioux Tribe ban lacks finality, Crow Creek ban official as of Tuesday**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 14, 2024 5:52 PM**

Gov. Kristi Noem appointed a former Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety chief to a post in the state's Department of Tribal Relations on Tuesday, alleging he "found himself without a job" for speaking up about drug cartels on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The appointment of Algin Young as tribal law enforcement liaison came as another tribe voted to ban the governor from its lands, and as questions arose about the impact of a ban voted on by another South Dakota tribe.

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe voted to ban Noem from its lands Tuesday morning, Chairman Peter Lengkeek told South Dakota Public Broadcasting. The Yankton Sioux Tribe's Business and Claims Committee, the highest-level elected body for that nation, voted to support a ban last week, though it's since been pointed out that such a ban would not be final and enforceable without a vote of tribal members. The tribes were the sixth and seventh of the nine tribes in the state to vote in favor of banning the governor so far this year.

The recent spate of conflicts with the state's tribes began on Jan. 31, when the governor delivered a speech on U.S. border policy to a joint session of the South Dakota Legislature. In it, she described the southern border of the U.S. as a "warzone," language she repeated in her Tuesday press release on Young's appointment.

Her speech included language calling out the impact of Mexican drug cartels on the reservations.

Noem has suggested that responses from tribal leaders to her cartel comments, as well as the bans, have come because some of them are "personally benefiting" from a cartel presence on reservations.

She's also drawn fire for telling audiences in Winner and Mitchell that Native children lack hope, and that "they don't have parents who show up and help them."

### **Young appointment implies firing**

Noem has argued that the federal government is failing tribes through a lack of law enforcement funding. The Oglala Sioux Tribe has sued the federal government over that issue, and Noem pledged to support that lawsuit during her Jan. 31 speech.

The governor's office has not intervened as a party in the tribe's most recent federal lawsuit, but she has moved to support tribal law enforcement in other ways. Last month, she pledged to fund a special session of the state's police academy specifically for tribal trainees. Most tribal police train for 13 weeks in New Mexico, and South Dakota's congressional delegation has lobbied for a regional training facility to encourage recruitment.

In February, Noem penned a letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs urging more funding for tribal law enforcement in South Dakota.

In Noem's press release on his appointment, Young said that he looks forward "to serving as an ambassador for the State of South Dakota at the federal level and with the State's nine tribal nations to facilitate solutions for tribal law enforcement and understand and navigate jurisdictional challenges."

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The release also includes a thinly veiled reference to tribal resistance to Noem's comments.

The release says that Young "found himself without a job" after "bravely testifying before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on the cartel presence on tribal lands."

Young testified before that committee during a listening session about public safety in Indian Country on March 20. His testimony came minutes after the testimony of Oglala Sioux Tribal President Frank Star Comes Out.

Neither mentioned cartels in their verbal comments, which can be viewed in full on the committee's website.

The Senate committee did collect written testimony until April 12, and that testimony is not available online. There was no immediate response Tuesday to an email to the committee's press officers asking for any written testimony that may have been submitted by Young or Star Comes Out.

The tribe's director of public safety job was advertised on the tribe's Facebook page on April 15. There were no Senate Indian Affairs Committee hearings between March 20 and that date.

Indian Country Today reported that Young's contract expired on April 20.

Star Comes Out did not return a Searchlight message seeking comment on Young's appointment.

Representatives with Noem's office and the Office of Tribal Relations did not offer a date for the "cartel presence" testimony.

## Yankton Sioux Tribe ban vote not binding

So far, seven tribes have voted to ban Noem from their lands. The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe have yet to pass such a resolution. Lower Brule voted down such a ban earlier this year, but Chairman Clyde Estes told SDPB that it might consider one again in June based on Noem's comments about Native children.

"The children should be left out of any political discussion," Estes told SDPB's Lee Strubinger. "To say that they have no hope is wrong and she should not have said that."

The Yankton Sioux Tribe's Business and Claims Committee voted to support a ban that would bar the governor from its lands on Friday, but that vote lacks the authority of law, the committee's secretary said Tuesday.

Such a ban would not be official without a vote from the tribe's general council, meaning a vote of tribal members at a meeting called by either the committee leadership or a petition from tribal members.

"We don't have anything scheduled," said Secretary Courtney Sully. "We don't even have a resolution."

The Yankton Sioux Tribe is the only one of the nine tribes in South Dakota that lacks a tribal council-style government with elected representatives to vote on all tribal affairs. Such governments are known as "IRA" governments, named for the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which encouraged tribal nations to adopt city council-style authority structures.

The Yankton Sioux Tribe's Business and Claims Committee, Sully said, aligns more closely with pre-colonial decision-making. The committee is empowered to manage the tribe's day-to-day affairs, Sully said, but cannot take larger actions without a vote of the people.

"Banning someone isn't part of our daily business," said Sully, who said she abstained from the Friday vote. She doesn't like the governor's comments, she said, but doesn't believe they rise to the level of something requiring a ban.

The majority of the committee did vote to endorse a ban, however. A statement from Vice Chair Jason Cooke, sent to Searchlight on Tuesday, reiterated the earlier words of committee member Ryan Cournoyer, who said the vote was a sign of solidarity with other tribes.

The statement calls the governor "anti-tribe." It references pre-2024 conflicts over pipeline protests, COVID checkpoints, education, and Noem's lack of response to discrimination against Native Americans by a Rapid City hotel owner. The statement says the governor "now blames tribes for crime in her own cities."

"Governor Noem, stop the political pandering and get serious about working on these issues with Tribes," Cooke wrote. "It has been six years of inaction, ineptness, and ignorance from your office on serious policy

issues impacting our shared citizens.”

*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.*

## Anti-abortion group is behind calls labeled a ‘scam’ by state election official

**Callers are part of impending effort to challenge abortion-rights ballot measure**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 14, 2024 4:17 PM**

Hundreds of phone calls this week that the South Dakota secretary of state has labeled a “scam” are originating from an anti-abortion group seeking to disqualify an abortion-rights ballot measure.

A petition was submitted last week to the Secretary of State’s Office with enough signatures to place the measure on the Nov. 5 ballot, but the signatures must undergo a validation process.

Earlier this year, the Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem passed legislation allowing people to withdraw their signatures from petitions.

Rachel Soulek, elections director with the Secretary of State’s Office, said the callers are capitalizing on the new law.

“This is the first time we are seeing this and it’s a result of the law change to allow individuals to remove their name from a ballot measure up till the point it is validated in our office,” Soulek told South Dakota Searchlight through email.

The office sent a news release Monday warning the public to be aware of scammers impersonating employees of the Secretary of State’s Office, “pushing the voters to challenge the abortion rights ballot measure petitions.”

“Citizens in South Dakota, by law, have the right to petition and people like these scammers are eroding public trust in the election process,” Secretary of State Monae Johnson said in the news release.

Johnson’s office asked state Attorney General Marty Jackley to look into the calls. Jackley said Tuesday that the Division of Criminal Investigation reviewed complaints about the calls, and also reviewed scripts used by callers, and found no indication of criminal wrongdoing.

### Calls are for impending court challenge

The calls are associated with a new South Dakota Petition Integrity political action committee, registered Monday by Dell Rapids Republican state Rep. Jon Hansen. The group is affiliated with the Life Defense Fund ballot question committee, which Hansen co-chairs.

Callers are targeting over 700 South Dakotans who signed the petition and were randomly selected as a sample to validate the petition signatures by the Secretary of State’s Office.

The office uses samples to estimate whether enough of the signatures on a petition are from registered voters, rather than examining every signature. The abortion petition, a proposed state constitutional amendment, needed 35,017 signatures and was submitted with about 55,000.

Hansen said his volunteers are not impersonating state employees. He said they’re clearly stating that they are volunteers with the committee and disclosing how they received the person’s name.

The callers are independently verifying the signatures, Hansen said, and asking signers whether petition circulators followed applicable laws and whether signers were misled into signing the petition. Hansen has alleged some signers were duped into believing they were signing a petition to repeal the state sales tax on groceries when they were actually signing the abortion-rights petition.

The information collected through the phone calls will be used as evidence when opponents of the ballot measure challenge the validity of the signatures in court.

“We don’t intimidate a single person. Our mission is not to intimidate — our mission is to educate,”

Hansen told South Dakota Searchlight.

Hansen obtained the sample list through a public records request. Rick Weiland, who is leading the abortion-rights ballot initiative, also obtained the sample list from the office. The sample list is prepared within five days of the signatures being submitted.

### Information or harassment?

Hansen was a prime sponsor of the petition signature withdrawal bill that passed the Legislature earlier this year with an emergency clause, ensuring that the law went into effect immediately. He said callers are informing signers they can remove their signatures if they were misled or have changed their mind.

"I would encourage anybody who signed that abortion petition to take their name off of it," Hansen said. "Ever since this law was passed and went into effect, I've been encouraging people to take their name off the petition, but it's not coercive. It's not intimidation."

Hansen said the phone calls are not harassment under state law.

"If anybody's harassing anybody, it's wrong and they shouldn't do it. That's certainly not what we're doing — we're just giving people the facts," Hansen said. "We have laws already on the books against harassment, so if anybody is getting harassed those laws should be enforced."

Weiland, with Dakotans for Health, the ballot question committee backing the abortion-rights measure, said the calls are acts of "desperation" in an effort to "suppress direct democracy."

"It smells of voter intimidation and harassment," Weiland added.

Some people who received phone calls from the committee told South Dakota Searchlight that the volunteers did not clearly indicate they were not affiliated with the state government. Some called several times, and some did not state their name or organization when leaving voicemails.

Adrienne Bosma signed the petition and volunteered with Dakotans for Health as a petition circulator. She said a caller from South Dakota Petition Integrity created the impression of being officially associated with the Secretary of State's Office.

The volunteer asked questions, including whether Bosma knew the petition "allows for abortion up to birth." Bosma said she challenged the volunteer's language before the volunteer hung up the phone.

"I was so mad, I was physically shaking," Bosma said. "If you're calling people and harassing them when they're exercising their First Amendment right, that's over the line. That's not OK."

The ballot 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.

### Law creates double standard, official says

Pamela McClure received a voicemail that stated the caller's name and organization. The voicemail also said the group "received" her name from the South Dakota secretary of state.

"She said she was a volunteer of the group registered with the secretary of state and got my name from the secretary of state," McClure said. "To me, that means she's working with the Secretary of State's Office."

Amy Scott-Stoltz, president of the South Dakota League of Women Voters, was also contacted. Scott-Stoltz asked the volunteer several questions about the committee, its intent and mission, which she said went unanswered.

Scott-Stoltz said she was worried about this after the Legislature passed its signature withdrawal bill. She said the law's lack of guidelines for signature withdrawal solicitors feels like a "double standard."

"This just made it legal for them to call and have no restrictions on what they can or cannot say to me, where there are restrictions for petition circulators," Scott-Stoltz said. "I wasn't told who this committee was and couldn't find any information on them at the time. Basically, the transparency wasn't there."

Scott-Stoltz said the law should be reversed or amended to hold signature withdrawal solicitors to the same standards as petition circulators.

Sioux Falls Democratic state Rep. Erin Healy spoke against the signature withdrawal bill during the

legislative session. She told South Dakota Searchlight via text message she believes the law “derails the democratic process.”

“I would like to know if volunteers were required to take a training course prior to contacting South Dakota citizens, because if the Legislature is going to put guardrails in place for gathering signatures or removing signatures, the same should be done for volunteers representing committees that are calling and harassing citizens,” Healy said.

Petition signers should expect to receive another unsolicited phone call soon, this time from Weiland’s organization.

“It’s important because we know what the arguments are, what they’ve been saying all along about our amendment,” Weiland said. “We’ll be trying to address that in our communication to not believe what you’re being told and if you have any questions or concerns, give us a call. That’ll be the gist of what we’ll try to do.”

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

## Where Thune, Rounds and Johnson rank on list of most bipartisan members of Congress

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 14, 2024 12:05 PM**

WASHINGTON — Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins and Pennsylvania Republican Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick were the most bipartisan members of Congress last year, according to a newly released analysis from the Lugar Center and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

The least bipartisan House lawmaker was Ohio Republican Jim Jordan, while Alabama’s Katie Britt, a Republican freshman, placed last among senators.

No member of South Dakota’s all-Republican, three-member congressional delegation ranked in the top 10 of either chamber, but all three were in the top half of the rankings. Sen. Mike Rounds ranked 20th in the 100-member Senate, and Sen. John Thune ranked 42nd. Rep. Dusty Johnson ranked 106th in the 435-member House.

The latest ranking of the most bipartisan lawmakers comes amid one of the least productive Congresses in the nation’s history and just months before nearly all House lawmakers and about one-third of the Senate face voters at the polls in November.

Maria Cancian, dean of the McCourt School of Public Policy, wrote in a statement announcing the new rankings that “while there is much room for improvement, I am encouraged to see some progress on cross-party collaboration.”

“In these deeply divided times, and with an increasing amount of misleading information online, we need tools like the Bipartisan Index more than ever — an evidence-based and nonpartisan approach for measuring how well policymakers work across the aisle to get things done,” Cancian wrote.

Lugar Center Policy Director Dan Diller wrote that it was “especially disheartening that all eight new Senators who took office in January 2023 ranked in the bottom 30 percent of Senate scores.”

“Bipartisan cooperation on legislation in 2023 was deficient by historical standards, though there were some marginal improvements in scores from the previous Congress,” Diller wrote.

The website with the rankings states that the “Bipartisan Index is intended to fill a hole in the information available to the public about the performance of Members of Congress.”

The Lugar Center, founded by the late U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, a Republican from Indiana, “is a platform for informed debate and analysis of global issues, including nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global food security, foreign assistance effectiveness and global development, energy security, and enhancing bipartisan governance,” according to its website.

The rankings take into consideration “the frequency with which a member of Congress sponsors bills

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that are co-sponsored by at least one member of the opposing party" and "the frequency with which a member co-sponsors bills introduced by members of the opposite Party."

## Who is the most bipartisan?

The top 10 senators were:

Collins

Michigan Democrat Gary Peters

New Hampshire Democrat Maggie Hassan

West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin

Texas Republican John Cornyn

Nevada Democrat Jacky Rosen

Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski

Kansas Republican Jerry Moran

Indiana Republican Todd Young

Montana Democrat Jon Tester

The top 10 House lawmakers were:

Fitzpatrick

New York Republican Marcus Molinaro

New Hampshire Democrat Chris Pappas

New York Republican Mike Lawler

North Carolina Democrat Don Davis

Puerto Rico Republican Delegate Jenniffer González-Colón

Nevada Democrat Susie Lee

Nebraska Republican Don Bacon

New Jersey Democrat Josh Gottheimer

Iowa Republican Zach Nunn

The Lugar Center and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University wrote on their website that their "aim in publishing this Index is not to promote a specific legislative agenda, as is the case for many indexes, but solely the promotion of a bipartisan approach to governance."

"The credibility of the Index is derived from the objectivity of its methodology; Index scores are computed formulaically from publicly available data," it states. "The Index requires no subjective assessment of specific legislative items."

The least bipartisan House lawmakers following Jordan were New York Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Missouri Democrat Cori Bush, New York Democrat Jamaal Bowman and Missouri Republican Eric Burlison.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, ranked 423, but will likely be excluded from future scores since he has now occupied one of the top two leadership posts for at least six months.

The least bipartisan senators following Britt were Missouri Republican Eric Schmitt, Washington state Democrat Patty Murray, Wisconsin Republican Ron Johnson and Arkansas Republican Tom Cotton.

Sean Ross, spokesperson for Britt, wrote in a statement that the ranking is "absurd."

"Senator Britt has cosponsored 68 pieces of legislation sponsored by Democrats, as well as dozens and dozens of bipartisan pieces of legislation led by Republican sponsors," Ross wrote.

"The bipartisan efforts she is helping lead span a wide range of important topics to Alabamians, including maternal mortality research and maternal care; youth mental health and social media usage; the fentanyl crisis; affordable insulin access; affordable rural housing; telehealth services; agriculture; domestic manufacturing and supply chains; fair trade; work force development; wildlife conservation; supporting law enforcement; and consumer protections."

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The staff of South Dakota Searchlight contributed to this report. Additionally, after the story's original publication, the story was updated with a quote from Sen. Britt's spokesperson.*

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

## **GOP politicians rush to Manhattan to line up behind Trump as hush money trial continues**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 14, 2024 5:33 PM**

WASHINGTON — Republican lawmakers are taking turns supporting former president and presumed 2024 GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump in his trial in Manhattan criminal court, where he is charged with covering up payments intended to silence porn star Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 election.

Dressed alike in navy blue suits and red ties, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, viewed as a 2024 vice presidential contender, former GOP primary hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy and U.S. Reps. Byron Donalds and Cory Mills of Florida filed behind Trump into the courtroom Tuesday morning, according to reporters present. Outside, U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, conducted a press conference.

The entourage followed appearances Monday by U.S. Sens. J.D. Vance of Ohio, another contender on Trump's VP short list, and Tommy Tuberville of Alabama, and Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird, as well as an appearance last week by U.S. Sen. Rick Scott of Florida.

Tuesday's show of solidarity occurred as the prosecution's star witness and former Trump fixer Michael Cohen took the stand for a second day to testify that Trump signed off on falsifying reimbursement to Cohen for \$130,000 of his own money that Cohen paid to Daniels on the eve of the 2016 election.

Jurors again saw checks signed by Trump, and heard from Cohen about instructions from Trump associates to submit fake invoices for "legal services rendered." Cohen also described a February 2017 Oval Office meeting during which he discussed the reimbursement with Trump, according to reporters at the courthouse.

New York does not allow recording in the courtroom but provides public transcripts of the proceedings.

Cohen followed high-profile and detailed testimony last week from adult film actress and director Daniels about her alleged sex affair with Trump in 2006, an event he denies.

Trump is facing 34 felony counts for each alleged falsified business record related to his repayment to Cohen — 11 invoices, 11 checks and 12 ledger entries.

### **A 'sham' to 'keep him off of the campaign trail'**

Out on the sidewalk, Johnson — the second in line for presidential succession after the vice president — told reporters he wanted "to call out what is a travesty of justice."

With a sarcastic snicker and gesture toward the New York County Supreme Court location on Centre Street in Lower Manhattan, Johnson lamented that he had to speak to media outside "because the court won't allow us to speak inside the building. That's just one of the many things that are wrong here."

It's worth noting that surrogates routinely make comments outside courthouses.

Johnson summed up what he called a "sham trial" as a conspiracy to stymie Trump's reelection campaign — despite recent New York Times/Siena College polls showing the former president leading in several swing states.

"This is the fifth week that President Trump has been in court for this sham of a trial," Johnson said. "They are doing this intentionally to keep him here and keep him off of the campaign trail, and I think everybody in the country can see that for what it is."

The trial meets weekdays, except Wednesdays.

Trump hit the campaign trail Saturday at a rally in Wildwood, New Jersey, where he spoke for 90 minutes, criticizing the New York trial, repeating false claims that he won the 2020 presidential election, calling the "late, great" fictional cannibal serial killer Hannibal Lecter "a wonderful man," and thanking the six U.S. Supreme Court justices — three of whom he appointed — for overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

### **'Election interference'**

Trump's allies echoed Johnson's earlier remarks in their own press conference later outside the courthouse, calling the trial a "scam" and "joke," according to reporters at the event.

Ramaswamy reportedly likened the courtroom to a "Kafka novel" and called it "one of the most depressing places I have been in my life" and said the prosecution's strategy is "to bore jurors into submission."

In a video of the press conference he posted to X, the entrepreneur said the "justice system should be blind to politics" and accused Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg of targeting Trump for political reasons.

Burgum characterized the trial as "election interference" in the 2024 race. Meanwhile, Trump's critics say the trial is squarely about election interference that occurred in 2016.

Mills said "what was the Department of Justice, now the department of injustice, has continued to be utilized against the American people."

The charges for which Trump is now on trial did not originate with the U.S. Department of Justice, but rather from a New York state grand jury investigation.

Trump's two federal cases are in a holding pattern while, for one, the U.S. Supreme Court deliberates over Trump's claim of absolute immunity from criminal charges that he schemed to subvert the 2020 presidential election results. The second, centered on Trump's alleged mishandling of classified documents following his presidency, has been put indefinitely on hold by federal district Judge Aileen Cannon in Florida.

The New York trial is expected to resume Thursday with further cross-examination of Cohen by Trump attorney Todd Blanche.

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

## The number of births continues to fall, despite abortion bans

**But in states where abortion is most restricted, births to Hispanic women rose**

**BY: TIM HENDERSON - MAY 14, 2024 9:16 AM**

Births continued a historic slide in all but two states last year, making it clear that a brief post-pandemic uptick in the nation's birth numbers was all about planned pregnancies that had been delayed temporarily by COVID-19.

Only Tennessee and North Dakota had small increases in births from 2022 to 2023, according to a State-line analysis of provisional federal data on births. In California, births dropped by 5%, or nearly 20,000, for the year. And as is the case in most other states, there will be repercussions now and later for schools and the workforce, said Hans Johnson, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California who follows birth trends.

"These effects are already being felt in a lot of school districts in California. Which schools are going to close? That's a contentious issue," Johnson said.

In the short term, having fewer births means lower state costs for services such as subsidized day care and public schools at a time when aging baby boomers are straining resources. But eventually, the lack of people could affect workforces needed both to pay taxes and to fuel economic growth.

Nationally, births fell by 2% for the year, similar to drops before the pandemic, after rising slightly the previous two years and plummeting 4% in 2020.

"Mostly what these numbers show is [that] the long-term decline in births, aside from the COVID-19 downward spike and rebound, is continuing," said Phillip Levine, a Wellesley College economics professor.

To keep population the same over the long term, the average woman needs to have 2.1 children over her lifetime — a metric that is considered the "replacement" rate for a population. Even in 2022 every state fell below that rate, according to final data for 2022 released in April. The rate ranged from a high of 2.0 in South Dakota to less than 1.4 in Oregon and Vermont.

### Trends for Latina women

The declines in births weren't as steep in some heavily Hispanic states where abortion was restricted in 2022, including Texas and the election battleground state of Arizona. Births were down only 1% in Arizona

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and Texas. When health clinics closed, many women might have been unable to get reliable birth control or, if they became pregnant, to get an abortion.

Hispanic births rose in states where abortion is most restricted, even as non-Hispanic births fell in the same states, according to the Stateline analysis. It's hard, however, to tell how much of a role abortion access played compared with immigration and people moving to growing states such as Texas and Florida.

In states where abortion access is most protected, births fell for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic women. "The big takeaway to me is the likely increase in poverty for all family members, including children, in families affected by lack of access [to abortion and birth control]," said Elizabeth Gregory, director of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender & Sexuality at the University of Houston.

Many of the nation's most Hispanic states where abortion and birth control are more freely available saw the biggest decreases in births: about 5% in California, Maryland, Nevada and New Mexico.

"Hispanic women as a group are facing more challenges in accessing reproductive care, including both contraception and abortion," Gregory said in a university report earlier this year. "Unplanned births often directly impact women's workforce participation and negatively affect the income levels of their families."

Hispanic women on average have more children than Black or white women. Their fertility rates rose throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, then fell in the late 2000s to near the same level as other groups. That's because both abortion and more reliable birth control became more widely available, Gregory said.

The fact that some of the steepest drops were in heavily Hispanic states outside of Arizona and Texas suggests that Latina women are continuing a path toward smaller and delayed families typical of other groups.

Most of the decline in California has been associated with fewer babies born to Hispanic women, especially immigrants, said Johnson, of the Public Policy Institute of California.

"California has a high share of Latinos compared to other states, and so fertility declines in that group have a huge effect on the overall decline in California," he said. California was above replacement fertility as recently as 2008, he added, and would still be there if Hispanic fertility had not dropped. California is about 40% Hispanic, about the same as Texas and second only to New Mexico at 50%.

Birth rates also declined steeply in heavily Hispanic Nevada and New Mexico, with each dropping about 4% from 2022 to 2023. But Arizona, Florida and Texas, also in the top 10 states for Hispanic population share but faster-growing, saw relatively small drops of about 1%.

Texas banned almost all abortions after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. The state also requires parental consent for birth control, a rule that's included federally funded family planning centers since a lower court ruling that same year.

Arizona also saw the number of abortions drop in 2022. After the high court's *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, an Arizona judge revived enforcement of a near-total ban on the procedure that was enacted in the Civil War era. Many clinics closed and never reopened.

Abortions in the state plummeted from more than 1,000 a month early in 2022 to 220 in July 2022, and never fully recovered, according to state records. The rate of abortions dropped 19% for the year. Births that year increased slightly, by 500, over 2021.

In Texas, Gregory's research at the University of Houston research saw an effect on Hispanic births when an abortion ban took effect in 2021. Fertility rates rose 8% that year for Hispanic women 25 and older, according to the report.

Both Texas and Arizona also are growing quickly, making the smaller decreases in births harder to interpret, Arizona State Demographer Jim Chang noted. Chang declined comment on the effect of abortion accessibility on state birth rates.

## Budget effects

Overall, the continuing fall in birth numbers could have significant effects on state budgets in the future. The slide augurs more enrollment declines for state-funded public schools already facing more dropouts since the pandemic.

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"The decline we see in enrollment since COVID-19 is a bigger problem than just the decline in birth rates," said Sofoklis Goulas, an economic studies fellow at the Brookings Institution. Rural schools and urban high schools have been particularly hard hit, according to a Brookings report Goulas authored this year.

"We don't have a clear answer. We suspect a lot of people are doing home education or going to charter schools and private schools but we're not sure," Goulas told Stateline.

Still, states need to recognize declining births as an emerging factor in state budgets to avoid future budget shortfalls, said Jeff Chapman, a research director who monitors the trend at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Nationally, births did increase slightly for women older than 40, indicating a continuing trend toward delayed parenthood, said William Frey, a demographer at Brookings.

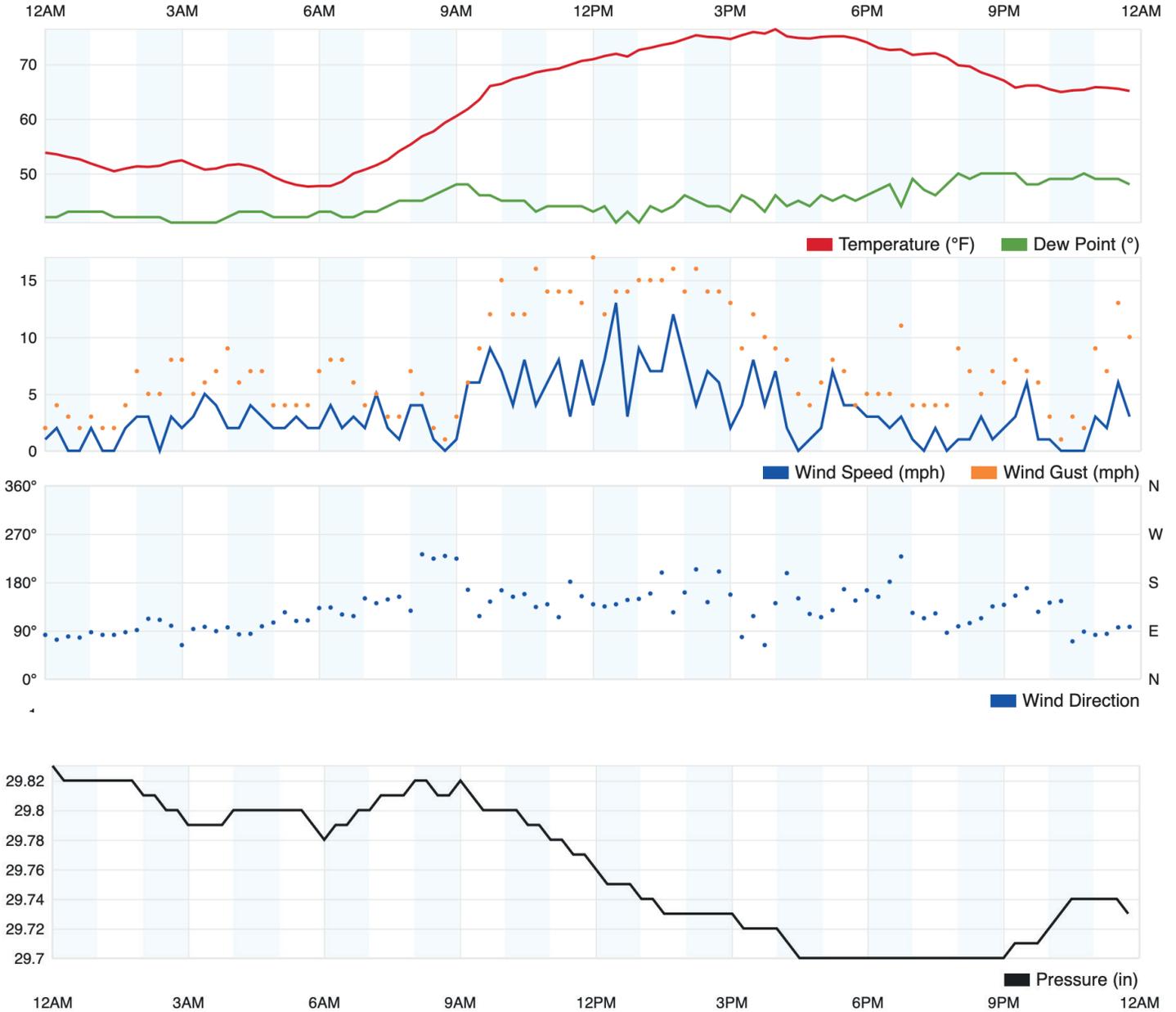
"The last two post-pandemic years do not necessarily indicate longer-term trends," Frey said. "Young adults are still getting used to a recovering economy, including childbearing."

*Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and The Journal News in suburban New York. Henderson became fascinated with census data in the early 1990s, when AOL offered the first computerized reports. Since then he has broken stories about population trends in South Florida, including a housing affordability analysis included in the 2007 Pulitzer-winning series "House of Lies" for the Miami Herald, and a prize-winning analysis of public pension irregularities for The Journal News. He has been a member and trainer for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since its inception 20 years ago, specializing in online data access and visualization along with demographics.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wednesday

Wednesday  
Night

Thursday

Thursday  
Night

Friday



High: 64 °F

Showers then  
Chance  
Showers



Low: 44 °F

Slight Chance  
Showers then  
Partly Cloudy



High: 75 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 52 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 86 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Sunny  
and Breezy

## Today



Showers and a few storms  
(40-90%)

60-70°

## End of the Week

Thu

Fri



70-78°



80-86°

[weather.gov/abr](https://weather.gov/abr)

May 15, 2024 4:23 AM



An area of low pressure crossing the area will produce showers and a few thunderstorms today. Severe storms are not expected. Drier and warmer temperatures are in store for the end of the work week.

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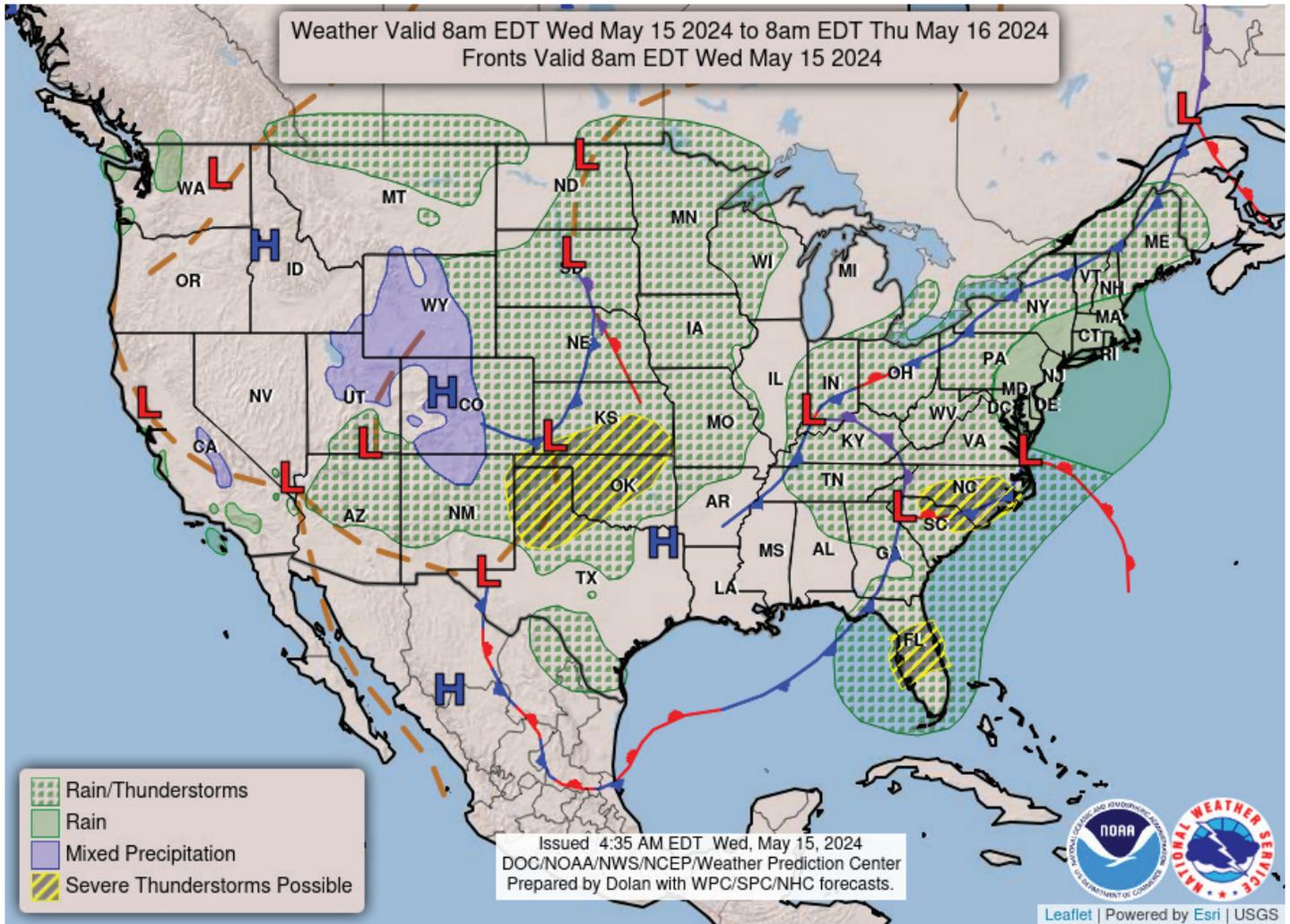
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 76 °F at 3:57 PM**  
**Low Temp: 48 °F at 5:45 AM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 11:54 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 59 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1931  
Record Low: 23 in 2014  
Average High: 70  
Average Low: 44  
Average Precip in May.: 1.65  
Precip to date in May: 0.68  
Average Precip to date: 5.62  
Precip Year to Date: 5.21  
Sunset Tonight: 8:58:19 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58:06 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 15, 1964: A two-day rainfall event ended with 3.57 inches at Rapid City. Damage to roads and bridges was reported in the northern Black Hills.

1834 - The Northern Atlantic Coast States were in the midst of their greatest May snowstorm of record. The hills around Newbury, VT, were covered with two to three feet of snow. (David Ludlum)

1896: An estimated F5 tornado struck Sherman, Texas, killing 73 people; 60 of them in downtown. Tornado victims were found as far as 400 yards away from their original location. A trunk lid was carried 35 miles by the twister.

1957: An F4 tornado killed 20 people in Silverton, Texas. A 5,000-pound gasoline storage tank was reportedly carried 1.5 miles and dropped into a lake. Residents said the tornado "looked like red sand, boiling and rumbling."

1968: Also, an F5 tornado moved through Butler, Chickasaw, Floyd, Franklin, and Howard Counties in northeast Iowa. The tornado touched down northeast from north of Hansell, passing east of Aredale and Marble Rock, before devastating Charles City. The tornado grew more massive and intense as it approached Charles City. The huge funnel passed directly through town, destroying 337 homes, and causing about \$30 million in damage. The tornado continued to the northeast hitting Elma. From there the tornado turned to the north and dissipated south of Chester, 4 miles south of the Minnesota border. Nearly 2000 homes were damaged or destroyed. All 13 deaths occurred in Floyd County. 450 injuries were reported in Floyd County and 12 injuries in Howard County. Another F5 tornado moved north-northeast from southwest of Oelwein to Maynard and east of Randalia in Fayette County, IA. Homes were leveled and swept away in both Oelwein and Maynard. The warning sirens had sounded for only 15 seconds before the power failed in Oelwein. Nearly 1000 homes were damaged or destroyed along the path, and 34 people had to be hospitalized. Almost 1,000 families were affected. In addition to these F5 tornadoes, an F2 tornado touched down 6 miles south of Cresco, IA and two weak F1 tornadoes touched down in Dodge County, MN. Also, baseball size hail fell in Fayette County, IA.

1972 - The worst ice jam flooding of memory for long-time residents took place along the Kuskokwim River and Yukon River in Alaska. It was the first time since 1890 that the two rivers "flowed as one". The towns of Oscarville and Napaskiak were completely inundated. (15th-31st) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather returned to the north central U.S. Seven cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Janestown, ND, with a reading of 96 degrees. Thunderstorms in Utah produced five inches of rain south of Bicknell. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced wind gusts to 80 mph in Oklahoma County, and baseball size hail at Pawnee. Hail piled up to a depth of 18 inches south of Pawnee. Hail damage in Oklahoma was estimated at close to 25 million dollars. Thunderstorms in the Upper Midwest produced golf ball size hail around Cleveland, OH, and wind gusts to 83 mph at Angola, IN. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along and north of a stationary front produced severe weather in the south central U.S. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 145 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Softball size hail caused 2.1 million dollars damage at Sherman, TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Central Plains Region and Oklahoma to Indiana and western Kentucky. Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes, including seven in Oklahoma, and there were 165 reports of large hail or damaging winds. A tornado killed one person, injured a dozen others, and caused four million dollars damage at Stillwater, OK. Another tornado injured eight persons at Foyil, OK. Thunderstorms in Oklahoma also produced wind gusts to 92 mph at Oologah Lake, and softball size hail at Canton and north of Oakwood. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NO LIMITS LOVE!

Four-year-old Martha was just beginning to understand numbers. Trying to put her new knowledge to work, she said, "Mommy, I love you ten times! No, I love you a hundred and ten times. No. That's not right Mommy. I love you more than all the numbers in the world!"

That mother's heart must have jumped with joy!

Numbers have become an important part of everyone's life. It seems as though we try to measure everything one way or another. Whether it is household budgets, interest rates, unemployment numbers, political polls or retirement accounts - to name a few - we attach a number to everything.

But there is one item that cannot be measured. It is impossible to assign a number to the love of God. It is immeasurable, incalculable, and actually beyond our reason to comprehend. God set the pattern or the standard for true, selfless, self-sacrificing love in the gift of His one and only begotten Son.

God paid a price we cannot comprehend when He gave His Son to pay the price of our sins. And we must also add to that love the love of Jesus who willingly and unhesitatingly gave His life on the cross for our salvation.

When we combine the love of God with the love of Jesus, we come to Martha's conclusion: it's more than all the numbers in the world! And then some!

Prayer: Father, we do not understand the love that You have for us. It is beyond our ability to grasp. We do, know, however, that Your love made salvation possible. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16



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: 05.14.24

13 19 43 62 64 6

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$393,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 43  
DRAW: Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.13.24

1 15 16 26 47 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,400,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 58 Mins 14  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.14.24

9 27 43 44 48 9

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 13 Mins 14  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.11.24

7 20 23 28 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$96,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 13 Mins 14  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.13.24

6 14 21 58 69 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 42 Mins 14  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.13.24

5 14 29 38 66 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$59,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 42 Mins 14  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Controversy follows Gov. Kristi Noem as she is banned by another South Dakota tribe

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is now banned from entering nearly 20% of her state after another tribe banished her this week and the leaders of a sixth tribe recommended taking that action over comments she made earlier this year about tribal leaders benefitting from drug cartels.

The latest developments in the ongoing tribal dispute come on the heels of the backlash Noem faced for writing about killing a hunting dog that misbehaved in her latest book. It is not clear how these controversies will affect her chances to become Donald Trump's running mate because it is hard to predict what the former president will do.

The Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe banned Noem earlier this week. Then Friday the leadership committee of the Yankton Sioux Tribe recommended that Noem be banned, but that tribe's general council must vote on it before Noem could be banned from their land in southeastern South Dakota. The Oglala, Rosebud, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Sioux tribes had already taken action to keep her off their reservations. Three other tribes haven't yet banned her.

Noem reinforced the divisions between the tribes and the rest of the state in March when she said publicly that tribal leaders were catering to drug cartels on their reservations while neglecting the needs of children and the poor.

"We've got some tribal leaders that I believe are personally benefiting from the cartels being there, and that's why they attack me every day," Noem said at a forum. "But I'm going to fight for the people who actually live in those situations, who call me and text me every day and say, 'Please, dear governor, please come help us in Pine Ridge. We are scared.'"

Noem's spokesman didn't respond Saturday to email questions about the bans. But previously she has said she believes many people who live on the reservations still support her even though she is clearly not getting along with tribal leaders.

Noem addressed the issue in a post on X on Thursday along while posting a link to a YouTube channel about law enforcement's video about drugs on the reservations.

"Tribal leaders should take action to ban the cartels from their lands and accept my offer to help them restore law and order to their communities while protecting their sovereignty," Noem said. "We can only do this through partnerships because the Biden Administration is failing to do their job."

The tribes have clashed with Noem in the past, including over the 2016 Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock and during the COVID-19 pandemic when they set up coronavirus checkpoints at reservation borders to keep out unnecessary visitors. She was temporarily banned from the Oglala Sioux reservation in 2019 after the protest dispute.

And there is a long history of rocky relations between Native Americans in the state and the government dating back to 1890, when soldiers shot and killed hundreds of Lakota men, women and children at the Wounded Knee massacre as part of a campaign to stop a religious practice known as the Ghost Dance.

Political observer Cal Jillson, who is based at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, said this tribal dispute feels a little different because Noem seems to be "stoking it actively, which suggests that she sees a political benefit."

"I'm sure that Gov. Noem doesn't mind a focus on tensions with the Native Americans in South Dakota because if we're not talking about that, we're talking about her shooting the dog," Jillson said.

Noem appears to be getting tired of answering questions about her decision to kill Cricket after the dog attacked a family's chickens during a stop on the way home from a hunting trip and then tried to bite the governor. Noem also drew criticism for including an anecdote she has since asked her publisher to pull from the book that described "staring down" North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in a private meeting that

experts said was implausible.

After those controversies, she canceled several interviews that were planned as part of the book tour. With all the questions about "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with Politics and How We Move America Forward," no one is even asking anymore about Noem's decision to appear in an infomercial-style video lavishing praise on a team of cosmetic dentists in Texas who gave her veneers.

Jillson said it all probably hurts her chances with Trump, who has been auditioning a long list of potential vice-president candidates.

"I think that the chaos that Trump revels in is the chaos he creates. Chaos created by somebody else simply detracts attention from himself," Jillson said.

University of South Dakota political science professor Michael Card said that if it isn't the vice-president slot, it's not clear what is in Noem's political future because she is prevented from running for another term as governor. Noem is in her second term as governor.

She could go after U.S. Senator Mike Rounds' seat or try to return to the House of Representatives, Card said.

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This story was first published on May 11, 2024. It was updated on May 13, 2024, to correct the name of a tribe to Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, instead of Sisseton-Wahpeton Ovate.

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This story was also updated on May 14, 2024 to correct that Noem has not been banned by the Yankton Sioux Tribe. That tribe's leadership committee recommended that Noem should be banned from the Yankton Sioux Tribe's reservation, but the tribe's general council must vote on that recommendation before Noem would be banned.

## **Zelenskyy postpones all upcoming foreign visits as Ukraine faces a new Russian offensive**

By MATTHEW LEE and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said Wednesday that he has postponed all his upcoming foreign visits amid a new Russian offensive.

Zelenskyy canceled all foreign visits "that were planned for the coming days," his office said Wednesday on Telegram.

The head of state instructed his team to reschedule the visits.

"We are grateful to our partners for understanding," the announcement said.

Zelenskyy had been expected to visit Spain, and perhaps Portugal, later this week.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's Defense Ministry said that air defenses shot down 10 U.S.-supplied Ukrainian missiles targeting the Crimean Peninsula early Wednesday, as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spent a second day visiting Kyiv, and Ukraine's army battled to contain a front-line push by the Kremlin's forces.

The ATACMS long-range ballistic missiles were destroyed over the Black Sea, the ministry said. The U.S. included the Army Tactical Missile System, known as ATACMS, in a military aid package in March.

The Ukrainian attack came as Russian troops pressed their offensive in northeast Ukraine's Kharkiv region that began last week, marking the most significant border incursion since the full-scale invasion began and forcing almost 8,000 local people to flee their homes. Together with Moscow's weekslong effort to build on its recent gains in the eastern Donetsk region, the more than two-year war has entered a critical stage for Ukraine's depleted army.

Against that grim backdrop, with thousands of Ukrainian troops locked in fierce battles in towns and villages, Blinken on Tuesday pledged unceasing U.S. support for the country, during and beyond the war. He also tried to lift spirits in Kyiv, performing on guitar with a band at a city bar and eating pizza at a veteran-run restaurant.

Russia is opening new fronts in order to stretch Ukraine's army, which is short of ammunition and man-

power, along the about 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, hoping defenses will crumble. Russian artillery and sabotage raids have also been menacing Ukraine's northern Chernihiv and Sumy regions,

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Tuesday that the army has sent reinforcements to the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions.

"It is too early to draw conclusions, but the situation is under control," he said. Even so, Zelenskyy canceled a planned trip to Spain later this week, according to the Spanish government. It gave no reason for the cancellation.

The pace of Russia's advance in the Kharkiv border region, where it launched an offensive late last week and has made significant progress, has slowed, the Institute for the Study of War said late Tuesday. The Washington-based think tank said Moscow's main aim there is to create a "buffer zone" that will prevent Ukrainian cross-border strikes on Russia's Belgorod region.

Blinken on Wednesday visited a drone manufacturer on the outskirts of Kyiv and toured a grain transshipment facility where Ukrainian grain is loaded into containers for export by rail.

Blinken praised the ingenuity of the process, which local companies adopted after traditional shipping routes were interrupted by Russia's full-scale invasion, which began on Feb. 24, 2022.

"Ukraine has had to adapt and adjust to this and it's done so remarkably," Blinken said.

Meanwhile, Russian air defenses shot down several Ukrainian missiles over the Black Sea and near the Belbek air base, Sevastopol Gov. Mikhail Razvozhayev said. Sevastopol is where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is headquartered.

The fragments of downed missiles fell into residential areas but caused no casualties, Razvozhayev said.

Russian air defenses also shot down nine Ukrainian drones, two Vilha rockets, two anti-radar HARM missiles and two Hammer guided bombs over the Belgorod region early Wednesday, the Defense Ministry said.

Two people were injured in the village of Dubovoye when a Ukrainian rocket set their house ablaze, according to Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov.

The military said five other Ukrainian drones were downed over the Kursk region and three drones were shot down over the Bryansk region.

The Defense Ministry also said that another Ukrainian drone was downed over the Tatarstan region. Tatarstan is located more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) east of the border with Ukraine.

Vasily Golubev, the governor of the Rostov region, said two drones attacked a fuel depot. He said there were no casualties or fire.

Ukraine has launched a steady series of drone attacks on oil refineries and fuel depots across Russia over the past months, causing significant damage.

## **Palestinians across the Middle East mark their original 'catastrophe' with eyes on the war in Gaza**

By JOSEPH KRAUSS, ABBY SEWELL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians across the Middle East on Wednesday are marking the anniversary of their mass expulsion from what is now Israel with protests and other events at a time of mounting concern over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

The Nakba, Arabic for "catastrophe," refers to the 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what today is Israel before and during the war surrounding its creation in 1948.

More than twice that number have been displaced within Gaza since the start of the latest war, which was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel. U.N. agencies say 550,000 people, nearly a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million people, have been newly displaced in just the last week, as Israeli forces have pushed into the southern city of Rafah, along the border with Egypt, and reinvaded parts of northern Gaza.

"We lived through the Nakba not just once, but several times," said Umm Shadi Sheikh Khalil, who was displaced from Gaza City and now lives in a tent in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah.

The refugees and their descendants number some 6 million and live in built-up refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. In Gaza, they are the majority of the population,

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with most families having relocated from what is now central and southern Israel.

Israel rejects what the Palestinians say is their right of return, because if it was fully implemented, it would likely result in a Palestinian majority within Israel's borders.

## PAINFUL MEMORIES

The refugee camps in Gaza have seen some of the heaviest fighting of the war. In other camps across the region, the fighting has revived painful memories from earlier rounds of violence in a decades-old conflict with no end in sight.

At a center for elderly residents of the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Amina Taher recalled the day her family's house in the village of Deir al-Qassi, in today's northern Israel, collapsed over their heads after being shelled by Israeli forces in 1948. The house was next to a school that was being used as a base by Palestinian fighters, she said.

Taher, then 3 years old, was pulled from the rubble unharmed, but her 1-year-old sister was killed. Now she has seen the same scenes play out in news coverage of Gaza.

"When I would watch the news, I had a mental breakdown because then I remembered when the house fell on me," she said. "What harm did these children do to get killed like this?"

Daoud Nasser, also now living in Shatila, was 6 years old when his family fled from the village of Balad al-Sheikh, near Haifa. His father tried to return to their village in the early years after 1948, when the border was relatively porous, but found a Jewish family living in their house, he said.

Nasser said he would attempt the same journey if the border were not so heavily guarded. "I would run. I'm ready to walk from here to there and sleep under the olive trees on my own land," he said.

## NO END TO WAR

The latest war began with Hamas' rampage across southern Israel, through some of the same areas where Palestinians fled from their villages 75 years earlier. Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people that day, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage.

Israel responded with one of the heaviest military onslaughts in recent history, obliterating entire neighborhoods in Gaza and forcing some 80% of the population to flee their homes.

Gaza's Health Ministry says over 35,000 Palestinians have been killed, without distinguishing between civilians and combatants in its count. The U.N. says there is widespread hunger and that northern Gaza is in a "full-blown famine."

Israel says its goal is to dismantle Hamas and return the estimated 100 hostages, and the remains of more than 30 others, still held by the group after it released most of the rest during a cease-fire last year.

Israeli troops pushed into Rafah last week. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has portrayed the city on Gaza's southern border with Egypt as Hamas' last stronghold, promising victory.

But the militants have regrouped elsewhere in Gaza, even in some of the hardest-hit areas, raising the prospect of a prolonged insurgency.

The fighting in Rafah has made the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing — Gaza's main cargo terminal — mostly inaccessible from the Palestinian side. Israel's capture of the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt has forced it to shut down and sparked a crisis of relations with the Arab country. Aid groups say the loss of the two crossings has crippled efforts to provide humanitarian aid as needs mount.

In a statement on Tuesday, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry accused Israel "distorting the facts" and condemned its "desperate attempts" to blame Egypt for the continued closure of the crossing. Egyptian officials have said the Rafah operation threatens the two countries' decades-old peace treaty.

Shoukry was responding to remarks by Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who said there was a "need to persuade Egypt to reopen the Rafah crossing to allow the continued delivery of international humanitarian aid to Gaza."

Egypt has played a key role in months of mediation efforts aimed at brokering a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas and the release of hostages. The latest round of talks ended last week without a breakthrough.

## French president convenes top ministers to discuss spiraling violence in territory of New Caledonia

By BARBARA SURK and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — At least two people were killed and three were seriously injured overnight in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, French officials there said Wednesday, as President Emmanuel Macron convened a meeting of top ministers to discuss the spiraling violence.

It was the third day of violent unrest over a constitutional reform pushed by Paris that has roiled the archipelago, which has long sought independence.

Macron's office said the president also canceled a trip he had been planning to northwest France on Wednesday while he focused on the crisis.

The special defense and security council meeting called by Macron typically brings together a limited group of officials, including Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and the ministers for defense, interior, economy and foreign affairs.

On Tuesday, the French Interior Ministry sent police reinforcements to New Caledonia, which long served as a prison colony and now hosts a French military base. Four mobile gendarmerie squadrons are being deployed as reinforcements, including 15 gendarmes from an elite intervention unit.

French authorities in the territory said more than 130 people have been arrested since Monday in the violence that has raged across the archipelago, where there have been decades of tensions between indigenous Kanaks seeking independence and descendants of colonizers who want to remain part of France.

Two people were killed and three gravely injured in the unrest overnight, the territory's top French official, High Commissioner Louis Le Franc, said in an interview with France Info broadcaster. Earlier Wednesday, he warned that if calm is not restored, there will be "many deaths" in the area of the capital, Nouméa, where protests over the voting rights turned violent on Tuesday.

Clashes between police and protesters have continued in and around Nouméa despite a curfew and ban on gatherings. Schools have been closed "until further notice" and the main airport, La Tontoura, "remains closed to commercial flights."

"The situation is not serious, it is very serious," Le Franc said. "We have entered a dangerous spiral, a deadly spiral."

The unrest started on Monday with a protest over France's efforts to expand voter lists that would benefit pro-France politicians on New Caledonia and further marginalize the Kanak people, who once suffered from strict segregation policies and widespread discrimination.

Early Wednesday, France's National Assembly adopted a constitutional revision reforming the electoral body in the territory, with 351 lawmakers voting for and 153 against the bill.

Pro-independence representatives appealed to supporters for calm and condemned the vote in the National Assembly, France's most influential house of parliament.

Macron also appealed for calm after the vote and condemned "unworthy violence" in a letter to Caledonian representatives and political parties.

The bill would allow residents who have lived in New Caledonia for 10 years to cast ballots in provincial elections. People of European descent in New Caledonia distinguish between descendants of colonizers and descendants of the many prisoners sent to the territory by force. The vast archipelago of about 270,000 people east of Australia is 10 time zones ahead of Paris.

New Caledonia became French in 1853 under Emperor Napoleon III, Napoleon's nephew and heir. It became an overseas territory after World War II, with French citizenship granted to all Kanaks in 1957.

A peace deal between rival factions was reached in 1988. A decade later, France promised to grant New Caledonia political power and broad autonomy and hold up to three successive referendums.

The three referendums were organized between 2018 to 2021 and a majority of voters chose to remain part of France instead of backing independence. The pro-independence Kanak people rejected the results of the last referendum in 2021, which they boycotted because it was held at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## The Latest | Palestinians mark 76 years of their dispossession as more catastrophe looms in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Palestinians are marking 76 years of dispossession on Wednesday, commemorating their mass expulsion from what is today Israel, as a potentially even larger catastrophe unfolds in Gaza, where more than half a million of people have been displaced in recent days by fighting.

Israel has been pressing its military operations in Rafah, a city along Gaza's southern border with Egypt, and in northern Gaza, where Hamas has regrouped. Around 450,000 Palestinians have been driven out of Rafah over the past week, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday. In northern Gaza, Israeli evacuation orders have displaced at least 100,000 people so far.

Some 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians have fled their homes since the start of the war, with many relocating multiple times.

No food has entered the two main border crossings in southern Gaza for the past week. Some 1.1 million Palestinians are on the brink of starvation, according to the U.N, while a "full-blown famine" is taking place in the north of the territory.

Israel has portrayed Rafah as the last Hamas stronghold, brushing off warnings from the United States and other allies that any major operation there would be catastrophic for civilians.

Seven months of the war have killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to local health officials.

The war began Oct. 7 when Hamas attacked southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people there, mostly civilians, and taking about 250 hostage. Israel says militants still hold around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.

Currently:

— The Biden administration is sending \$1 billion more in weapons and ammo to Israel, congressional aides say.

— Palestinians mark 76 years of dispossession from present-day Israel, a somber Nakba, which is Arabic for catastrophe.

— Some social media users take to a "blockout" of celebrities to pressure them to take a stand over the crisis in Gaza.

— Israelis mark a subdued Independence Day under the shadow of the war in Gaza.

— Amsterdam university cancels classes after violence erupted at a pro-Palestinian rally.

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

Here's the latest:

### EGYPT SLAMS ISRAEL'S TOP DIPLOMAT FOR BLAMING THE CLOSING OF GAZA'S RAFAH CROSSING ON CAIRO

CAIRO — Egypt has blasted comments by Israel's top diplomat in which he blamed the Arab country for the closure of the Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip.

Egypt has expressed mounting frustration with Israel's seizure of the Palestinian side of the crossing last week, saying it threatens the two countries' decades-old peace treaty.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said Israel "is responsible for the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip."

"We reject the policy of distorting the facts," Shoukry said in a statement on Tuesday, denouncing Israel's "desperate attempts" to blame Egypt.

He said Israel's incursion into Rafah was the main reason aid cannot enter through the crossing and called for Israel to allow more aid through its own crossings.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Tuesday that there was a "need to persuade Egypt to reopen the Rafah crossing to allow the continued delivery of international humanitarian aid to Gaza."

"The world places the responsibility for the humanitarian situation on Israel, but the key to preventing a humanitarian crisis in Gaza is now in the hands of our Egyptian friends."

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Egypt has played a key role in mediation efforts aimed at brokering a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas and the release of hostages. It has also expressed fears that the humanitarian crisis could send a mass influx of Palestinians across the border into its Sinai Peninsula.

## ISRAELI DRONE STRIKE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON KILLS A HEZBOLLAH COMMANDER

BEIRUT — An Israeli drone strike on a car in southern Lebanon has killed a local Hezbollah commander, the militant group said Wednesday.

The Israeli military released a video of the strike along a main road near the southern port city of Tyre, saying that the Hezbollah commander had planned and carried out several attacks against Israel.

Hezbollah said 55-year-old Hussein Makki was killed late Tuesday without, giving further details. Lebanon's emergency responders said the strike also wounded two people who were taken to a hospital. They said a fire that broke out as a result of the strike was extinguished and that the body of one person was recovered at the scene.

Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out on Oct. 7, Hezbollah has launched near-daily attacks on Israel, drawing return fire. Israel's military has managed to kill a number of local Hezbollah commanders.

Israeli airstrikes and shelling, mainly in southern Lebanon, have killed nearly 400 people, most of them militants, but also more than 70 civilians and noncombatants. In Israel, the violence has left at least 15 soldiers and 10 civilians dead.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a speech on Monday reiterated his group's stance that it would keep up its strikes until Israel ends the war in Gaza.

## UN AGENCY SAYS ISRAELI PROTESTERS SET FIRE TO THE PERIMETER OF ITS HEADQUARTERS IN EAST JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM — The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees says Israeli protesters have again set fire to the perimeter of its headquarters in east Jerusalem.

Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini wrote on the social media platform X that "Israeli children and young people" had orchestrated an "arson attempt" on the facility on Monday night.

He shared video footage from Israeli media appearing to show small brush fires along the perimeter of the compound. Adam Bouloukos, an UNRWA official, said staff were present in the facility but no one was injured.

UNRWA spokesperson Juliette Touma said the compound had just reopened after a previous round of demonstrations outside the facility last week. Young protesters had twice set fire to the perimeter and hurled stones at UNRWA staff attempting to put out the blazes.

Touma said the compound is staying open for now.

The demonstrations began after Israel accused UNRWA, the largest provider of humanitarian aid to Gaza, of having links to Hamas and other Palestinian militants. UNRWA denies the allegations. An independent investigation found that the agency had "robust procedures" to ensure its neutrality but that there were some gaps in implementation.

## LEADER OF HEZBOLLAH AND HAMMAS OFFICIAL VOW TO KEEP ATTACKS AND PRESSURE ON ISRAEL

BEIRUT — The leader of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and a visiting Hamas official on Wednesday discussed the latest round of cease-fire talks but vowed to keep up the attacks and pressure on Israel.

The Hezbollah-run Al-Manar TV said the militant group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and Hamas' Khalil al-Hayya also talked about so-called "backup fronts" — a reference to Hezbollah's attacks on Israel along the Israeli-Lebanon border, as well as strikes and attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels toward Israel.

The TV station said the two pledged to keep up the pressure in order "to achieve the honorable goals" set out by Hamas' unprecedented Oct. 7, attack on southern Israel that triggered the ongoing war.

## What is the celebrity 'blockout' over the war in Gaza?

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Some social media users are calling out celebrities for what they say is inaction in the face of a humanitarian crisis in Gaza — and they've taken to a "blockout" to pressure the stars to take

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a stand.

For the blackout, users put a block on seeing any and all content from the accounts of certain celebrities on social media platforms including X, TikTok and Instagram. Some have posted about the celebrities they've blocked, using a hashtag such as #blockout, #blockout2024, or #celebrityblockout, while others have shared posts from users lambasting attendees of high-glamour events like the Met Gala and contrasting it with the situation in Gaza.

Blockout participants say it's a protest because the celebrities either haven't spoken up or haven't said enough against Israel's actions in Gaza during its war with Hamas. Since the war erupted Oct. 7 with Hamas' deadly attacks, Israel's military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants.

## HOW DOES THE BLOCKOUT WORK?

On social media platforms, users see content from people they follow, as well as from those chosen for them by algorithms. In both instances, users can select options to mute or block a person or account.

Blocking the accounts of celebrities or influencers means not seeing any of the content they produce on social media — no posts, no photos or videos, no collaborations with sponsors. The number of people interacting with content brings in money, so the blocks are meant to affect views, engagement and — ultimately — paychecks.

The blackout also is meant to target celebrities' brands by taking eyeballs and attention away from their content.

## WHO IS BEING BLOCKED?

There is no single organized list of celebrities being blocked. Some users are offering celebrity suggestions, while others are deciding on their own. Celebrities in the U.S. and beyond have been named in the blackout.

Blocking is up to each social media user. And every celebrity, influencer or content creator must be blocked individually on each platform.

## HOW DID THE BLOCKOUT START?

Protests around the Israel-Hamas war have grown, with encampments on college campuses around the country. Amid those movements, attention to what celebrities and influencers were, or weren't, saying got a boost after the Met Gala last week.

The annual party draws a host of famous faces from the worlds of fashion, movies, music, sports and more. It's known for its over-the-top arrivals carpet and the elaborate outfits celebrities wear. This year, the gala was circled by protesters for much of the evening.

Social media was flooded with images from the star-studded event. Around the same time, images circulated as Israel launched a military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. That led to some users calling out the contrast between the gala's celebrity opulence and the situation in Gaza — using images from both — and condemning celebrities for not using their platforms to speak up for those who are suffering.

## WILL THE BLOCKOUT BE EFFECTIVE?

The effectiveness and staying power of the blockade are yet to be seen, said Beth Fossen, assistant professor of marketing at Indiana University. It might depend on the celebrity and what they're known for — a famous person whose "brand" is tied to humanitarian causes may be more affected than one known primarily for talent, she added.

"If your identity is really tied to promoting something that is key to the boycotting, then this could potentially have really serious consequences for you," Fossen said. "There might be some influencers that gain their fame by sort of promoting peace and then they're being silent on this issue — followers may not forgive them."

## IS THERE BLOCKOUT BACKLASH?

There has been criticism of the blackout, with some saying the focus on celebrities takes attention away from what's happening on the ground in Gaza. Others question what the parameters are for judging whether someone should be blocked — and what would constitute a well-known person speaking out or doing enough.

## Senators urge \$32 billion in emergency spending on AI after finishing yearlong review

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan group of four senators led by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is recommending that Congress spend at least \$32 billion over the next three years to develop artificial intelligence and place safeguards around it, writing in a new report released Wednesday that the U.S. needs to “harness the opportunities and address the risks” of the quickly developing technology.

The group of two Democrats and two Republicans said in an interview Tuesday that while they sometimes disagreed on the best paths forward, it was imperative to find consensus with the technology taking off and other countries like China investing heavily in its development. They settled on a raft of broad policy recommendations that were included in their 33-page report.

While any legislation related to AI will be difficult to pass, especially in an election year and in a divided Congress, the senators said that regulation and incentives for innovation are urgently needed.

“It’s complicated, it’s difficult, but we can’t afford to put our head in the sand,” said Schumer, D-N.Y., who convened the group last year after AI chatbot ChatGPT entered the marketplace and showed that it could in many ways mimic human behavior.

The group recommends in the report that Congress draft “emergency” spending legislation to boost U.S. investments in artificial intelligence, including new research and development and new testing standards to try and understand the potential harms of the technology. The group also recommended new requirements for transparency as artificial intelligence products are rolled out and that studies be conducted into the potential impact of AI on jobs and the U.S. workforce.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds, a member of the group, said the money would be well spent not only to compete with other countries who are racing into the AI space but also to improve Americans’ quality of life — supporting technology that could help cure some cancers or chronic illnesses, he said, or improvements in weapons systems could help the country avoid a war.

“This is a time in which the dollars we put into this particular investment will pay dividends for the taxpayers of this country long term,” he said.

The group came together a year ago after Schumer made the issue a priority — an unusual posture for a majority leader — and brought in Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana and Rounds of South Dakota.

As the four senators began meeting with tech executives and experts, Schumer said in a speech over the summer that the rapid growth of artificial intelligence tools was a “moment of revolution” and that the government must act quickly to regulate companies that are developing it.

Young said the development of ChatGPT, along with other similar models, made them realize that “we’re going to have to figure out collectively as an institution” how to deal with the technology.

“In the same breath that people marveled at the possibilities of just that one generative AI platform, they began to hypothesize about future risks that might be associated with future developments of artificial intelligence,” Young said.

While passing legislation will be tough, the group’s recommendations lay out the first comprehensive road map on an issue that is complex and has little precedent for consideration in Congress. The group spent almost a year compiling the list of policy suggestions after talking privately and publicly to a range of technology companies and other stakeholders, including in eight forums to which the entire Senate was invited.

The first forum in September included Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and owner of X, Meta’s Mark Zuckerberg, former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates and Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

Schumer said after the private meeting that he had asked everyone in the room — including almost two dozen tech executives, advocates and skeptics — whether government should have a role in the oversight of artificial intelligence, and “every single person raised their hand.”

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The four senators are pitching their recommendations to Senate committees, which are then tasked with reviewing them and trying to figure out what is possible. The Senate Rules Committee is already moving forward with legislation, voting on Wednesday on three bills that would ban deceptive AI content used to influence federal elections, require AI disclaimers on political ads and create voluntary guidelines for state election offices that oversee candidates.

Schumer, who controls the Senate's schedule, said those election bills were among the chamber's "highest priorities" this year. He also said he planned to sit down with House Speaker Mike Johnson, who has expressed interest in looking at AI policy but has not said how he would do that.

Some experts warn that the U.S. is behind many other countries on the issue, including the EU which took the lead in March when they gave final approval to a sweeping new law governing artificial intelligence in the 27-nation bloc. Europe's AI Act sets tighter rules for the AI products and services deemed to pose the highest risks, such as in medicine, critical infrastructure or policing. But it also includes provisions regulating a new class of generative AI systems like ChatGPT that have rapidly advanced in recent years.

"It's time for Congress to act," said Alexandra Reeve Givens, CEO of the Center for Democracy & Technology. "It's not enough to focus on investment and innovation. We need guardrails to ensure the responsible development of AI."

The senators emphasized balance between those two issues, and also the urgency of action.

"We have the lead at this moment in time on this issue, and it will define the relationship between the United States and our allies and other competing powers in the world for a long time to come," Heinrich said.

## Miniature poodle named Sage wins Westminster Kennel Club dog show

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For a last hurrah, it was a Sage decision.

A miniature poodle named Sage won the top prize Tuesday night at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show, in what veteran handler Kaz Hosaka said would be his final time at the United States' most prestigious canine event. After 45 years of competing and two best in show dogs, he plans to retire.

Sage notched the 11th triumph for poodles of various sizes at Westminster; only wire fox terriers have won more. The last miniature poodle to take the trophy was Spice, with Hosaka, in 2002.

"No words," he said in the ring to describe his reaction to Sage's win before supplying a few: "So happy — exciting."

Striding briskly and proudly around the ring, the inky-black poodle "gave a great performance for me," Hosaka added.

Sage bested six other finalists to take best in show. Second went to Mercedes, a German shepherd whose handler, Kent Boyles, also has shepherded a best in show winner before.

Others in the final round included Comet, a shih tzu who won the big American Kennel Club National Championship last year; Monty, a giant schnauzer who arrived at Westminster as the nation's top-ranked dog and was a Westminster finalist last year; Louis, an Afghan hound; Micah, a black cocker spaniel; and Frankie, a colored bull terrier.

While Sage was going around the ring, a protester carrying a sign urging people to "boycott breeders" tried to climb in and was quickly intercepted by security personnel. Police and the animal rights group PETA said three demonstrators were arrested. Charges have not yet been decided.

In an event where all competitors are champions in dog showing's point system, winning can depend on subtleties and a standout turn at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, home of the U.S. Open tennis tournament.

The final lineup was "excellent, glorious," best in show judge Rosalind Kramer said.

To Monty's handler and co-owner, Katie Bernardin, "just to be in the ring with everyone else is an honor."

"We all love our dogs. We're trying our best," she said in the ring after Monty's semifinal win. "A stallion" of a dog, he's solid, powerful and "very spirited," said Bernardin of Chaplin, Connecticut.

So spirited that while Bernardin was pregnant, she did obedience and other dog sports with Monty be-

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cause he needed the stimulation.

Dogs first compete against others of their breed. Then the winner of each breed goes up against others in its "group." The seven group winners meet in the final round.

The best in show winner gets a trophy and a place in dog-world history, but no cash prize.

Besides the winners, there were other dogs that were hits with the crowd. A lagotto Romagnolo named Harry earned a chuckle from the stadium audience by sitting up and begging for a treat from his handler, and a vizsla named Fletcher charmed spectators by jumping up on its handler after finishing a spin around the ring.

There were big cheers, too, for a playful great Pyrenees called Sebastian and a Doberman pinscher named Emilio.

Other dogs that vied in vain for a spot in the finals included Stache, a Sealyham terrier. He won the National Dog Show that was televised on Thanksgiving and took top prize at a big terrier show in Pennsylvania last fall.

Stache showcases a rare breed that's considered vulnerable to extinction even in its native Britain.

"They're a little-known treasure," said Stache's co-owner, co-breeder and handler, Margery Good of Cochranville, Pennsylvania, who has bred "Sealys" for half a century. Originally developed in Wales to hunt badgers and other burrowing game, the terriers with a "fall" of hair over their eyes are courageous but comedic — Good dubs them "silly hams."

Westminster can feel like a study in canine contrasts. Just walking around, a visitor could see a Chihuahua peering out of a carrying bag at a stocky Neapolitan mastiff, a ring full of honey-colored golden retrievers beside a lineup of stark-black giant schnauzers, and handlers with dogs far larger than themselves.

Shane Jichetti was one of them. Ralphie, the 175-pound (34-kg) great Dane she co-owns, outweighs her by a lot. It takes considerable experience to show so big an animal, but "if you have a bond with your dog, and you just go with it, it works out," she said.

Plus Ralphie, for all his size, is "so chill," said Jichetti. Playful at home on New York's Staten Island, he's spot-on — just like his harlequin-pattern coat — when it's time to go in the ring.

"He's just an honest dog," Jichetti said.

The Westminster show, which dates to 1877, centers on the traditional purebred judging that leads to the best in show prize. But over the last decade, the club has added agility and obedience events open to mixed-breed dogs.

And this year, the agility competition counted its first non-purebred winner, a border collie-papillon mix named Nimble.

And Kramer, the best in show judge, made a point of thanking "every dog, whether it's a house dog or a show dog.

"Because you make our lives whole."

## India's parliament has fewer Muslims as strength of Modi's party grows

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

MALAPPURAM, India (AP) — Preventing Muslim migrants from gaining citizenship. Revoking the semi-autonomy of the country's only Muslim-majority region. Building a Hindu temple where a violent mob razed a mosque.

These were political triumphs for Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the past decade, burnishing his reputation as a leader who prioritizes the interests India's Hindu majority. For India's 200 million Muslims, they highlight their waning political power in the world's largest democracy.

Tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India are not new, but they have gotten worse under Modi, whose ruling Bharatiya Janata Party touts a Hindu-nationalist ideology. And with Modi seemingly on the cusp of a third five-year term, the outlook for Muslim politicians — and citizens — is bleak. This year's vote will be decided in June.

It's not just that Modi has ramped up anti-Muslim rhetoric in campaign speeches. Ever since the BJP

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began its rise as a political force in the mid-1980s, the proportion of Muslim lawmakers in parliament and state legislatures has shrunk.

Muslim representation has fallen in the ruling BJP, and in opposition parties, too.

When Modi assumed power in 2014, the outgoing parliament had 30 Muslim lawmakers — and just one was a member of the BJP. Muslims now hold 25 out of 543 seats, and none belong to the BJP.

India has gone from being a country where Muslims were largely marginalized to one where they are “actively excluded,” said Ali Khan Mahmudabad, a political scientist and historian at New Delhi’s Ashoka University.

“Without representation, you are unable to ask the state for resources and articulate the kind of needs the community has in order to progress, whether its education, jobs, health or basic infrastructure,” Mahmudabad said.

In the mid-1980s, Muslims accounted for 11% of India’s population, and had 9% of seats in parliament; today they are 14% of the population and have less than 5% of seats in parliament.

Nine out of 10 members in parliament are Hindus, who make up 80 percent of India’s population of 1.4 billion.

The political representation of Muslims at the state level is only slightly better. India has more than 4,000 lawmakers in state legislatures across 28 states and Muslim lawmakers hold roughly 6% of these seats.

A government report in 2006 found Muslims lagged Hindus, Christians and people from India’s lower castes in literacy, income and access to education. They have made some gains since then but are still at a significant disadvantage, according to multiple independent studies.

Under Modi’s decade in power, the BJP has enacted or proposed various laws that Muslim leaders consider discriminatory.

— Some states ruled by the BJP passed laws restricting interfaith marriage as a way to address what they claim is the threat posed by Hindu women marrying Muslim men and then converting.

— One state formerly ruled by the BJP banned girls from wearing hijabs in school. (The law was reversed after the BJP lost political control.)

— The BJP is advocating a common legal code that would affect some religious practices, by changing some laws in India’s constitution that deal with matters ranging from marriage to divorce and inheritance.

Violence against Muslims is commonplace, and Modi has said little to deter it. Muslims have been lynched by Hindu mobs over allegations of eating beef or smuggling cows, an animal considered holy to Hindus. Their homes and businesses have been bulldozed, and their places of worship set on fire.

At recent campaign rallies, Modi has said Muslims are “infiltrators” and that they “have too many children.” Without evidence, he has accused the BJP’s main rival, the Congress party, of planning to redistribute the wealth of Hindus to Muslims.

Many Muslims believe Modi is stoking divisions as a campaign strategy.

“They’re keeping the Hindu-Muslim issue hot... so they remain enemies,” said Mehmood Bhai Khatri, a 64-year-old Muslim voter from Modi’s home state of Gujarat, a BJP stronghold.

“But who will speak up? If they do, they may be picked up (by police) or a bulldozer will be sent to their homes,” said Khatri. “So out of fear, nobody speaks up.”

Not one of India’s 28 states has a Muslim as chief minister; the BJP and its allies have chief ministers in 19 states.

In Uttar Pradesh, the country’s most populous state and where roughly 16% of residents are Muslim, just 7% of state lawmakers are Muslim.

As the BJP becomes ever more powerful, India’s opposition parties have become increasingly reluctant to nominate Muslim candidates for fear of alienating Hindu voters, experts say.

While Hindus overwhelmingly rally around the BJP, Muslims have struggled to form a cohesive political agenda, in part because of how diverse their community is across sects, ethnicity, language, customs, and culture.

“There is no way to unite this very heterogeneous group of people, without making Islam the common denominator,” said Mahmudabad, the political scientist.

But when political parties don't field enough Muslims, issues important to them — from minority rights to hate speech — hardly ever get debated reach in the parliament, said Muhammad Saad, a cab driver in New Delhi who is Muslim.

"If there are no Muslims in the parliament, who will raise the voice for us?" Saad questioned.

Analysts say the BJP has made some outreach efforts to Muslims, such as seeking their help as volunteers and at the polls. But the party fielded just 13 Muslim candidates combined in the 2014 and 2019 elections, and none were elected.

The BJP denies discriminating against Muslim people.

The party "permits accommodation of all kinds of people, not just the Hindus," said M Abdul Salam, the only Muslim out of some 430 BJP candidates running for parliament this year. If he wins, he will become the first Muslim member of the BJP since 2014 in India's lower house of the parliament.

Salam, who is from the Muslim-majority southern city of Malappuram, said Muslim politicians from other parties could gain power by joining the BJP's alliance in parliament.

But Muslims from other parties are struggling simply to stay in office.

S T Hasan, a Muslim member of parliament from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, was not chosen by the Samajwadi Party to seek reelection. He was replaced by a Hindu politician, a decision he believes was made to appeal to Hindu voters, who are the majority in the region he represents.

Hasan said political parties, especially those that consider themselves secular, need to make more room for minority candidates.

"Fair representation of every community is good for a democracy," he said. "But what we are seeing is that one community is being gradually pushed to the corner."

## South Africa braces for what may be a milestone election. Here is a guide to the main players

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — After 30 years of dominating South African politics, the ruling African National Congress will face its toughest election this month as most opinion polls predict it will lose its parliamentary majority for the first time.

Once admired under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, and regarded as a beacon of hope by the Black majority following the fall of apartheid in 1994, the ANC's reputation has been battered by record levels of unemployment, widespread poverty, the collapse of some government services and more than a decade of corruption scandals, leaving voters disillusioned.

President Cyril Ramaphosa hopes the May 29 ballot will lead to his reelection. But if the ANC does lose its majority, it will force it into a coalition to form a government — also a first for the country and something that may complicate policymaking in Africa's most advanced economy.

South Africans don't elect their president directly, but instead vote for parties that get assigned seats in Parliament according to their share of the ballot. Lawmakers then choose the head of state.

As South Africa braces itself for the possibility of its most important change since the end of apartheid, here are the main parties and players in the election:

### A PRESIDENT UNDER PRESSURE

Ramaphosa was a senior figure in the ANC in the early 1990s and was once seen as a protege of Mandela. He left politics to become a successful businessman before returning as deputy president of South Africa in 2014. He became president in 2018 after Jacob Zuma resigned under a cloud of corruption allegations.

Ramaphosa has tried to rebuild the reputation of the ANC by cracking down on government graft. However, unemployment has risen to 32% during his presidency — the highest in the world — while he has struggled to curb poverty. An electricity crisis has led to power outages across the country of 62 million due to failures at the state-run electricity supplier. It badly damaged the economy and Ramaphosa's reputation as someone who could fix South Africa's problems, even if the blackouts are viewed as a result

of mismanagement during the Zuma administration.

The ANC is still expected to win the largest share of votes, but if it receives less than 50% as predicted, it will need the help of coalition partners to reelect the 71-year-old Ramaphosa.

#### THE MAIN OPPOSITION LEADER

John Steenhuisen is the leader of the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance. The centrist DA has promised to "rescue" South Africa from what it says is the corruption and mismanagement of the ANC but has never come close to winning a national election. The DA won 22% in the last general election in 2019 to the ANC's 62%.

The DA entered a preelection agreement with smaller opposition parties, hoping their combined vote might clinch a majority and remove the ANC. But they would all have to increase their share significantly and it's seen as unlikely.

Steenhuisen, 48, is the only white leader among South Africa's main political parties. In a country where race is still at the forefront of the national consciousness, that has led to detractors saying the DA represents the interests of the white minority more than the 80% of South Africans who are Black.

#### A FIREBRAND MARXIST

The Economic Freedom Fighters has risen rapidly to become South Africa's third biggest party in Parliament since it was formed in 2013 by Julius Malema, a former ANC youth leader who was expelled from the ruling party. His fiery, far-left rhetoric has made the 43-year-old South Africa's most contentious politician but his message that the ANC has failed poor, Black South Africans has gained traction, especially with unemployed and disaffected young people.

The EFF has called for the nationalization of mines and the redistribution of land to poor Blacks. The party, which follows a Marxist ideology, says an economic inequality based on race persists decades after apartheid, with whites generally rich and Blacks still poor.

Malema and other EFF lawmakers have regularly interrupted speeches by opponents in Parliament and been involved in scuffles with security guards in the chamber, bringing a militant brand of politics to the heart of South Africa's democracy. The EFF is a possible coalition partner for the ANC, although neither party has said if there is any agreement.

#### ZUMA RETURNS

Former President Zuma added a new dimension when he announced in December that he was turning his back on the ANC he once led and returning to politics with a new party.

Zuma's MK Party is not expected to challenge the top three, but it is expected to further erode the ANC's vote just as the ruling party faces its sternest election test. The 81-year-old former leader still commands support, especially in his home KwaZulu-Natal province.

His reemergence also raised security concerns for the election after his conviction for contempt of court and prison sentence in 2021 sparked a week of rioting and looting that led to the deaths of more than 350 people in the worst violence in South Africa since the troublesome last days of apartheid.

Zuma is involved in a court battle over whether his criminal conviction prevents him from standing as a candidate for Parliament. There are concerns over unrest if he is disqualified. Even if he isn't, his new reputation as an agitator is likely to increase tensions around a pivotal election.

## Mexican citizens were traveling to work at a Florida farm when a pickup hit their bus, killing 8

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

OCALA, Fla. (AP) — Mexican citizens were among those going to work at a Florida watermelon farm on Tuesday when the bus they were traveling in was sideswiped and crashed, killing eight people, officials said.

Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's foreign relations secretary, on Tuesday said via the social media platform X that she was sorry to report that a tragic automotive accident had happened in Florida with Mexican agricultural workers involved. She didn't say how many of the more than four dozen people on board were from Mexico.

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The Mexican consulate in Orlando was working to find out more and provide support, according to a post on X. The Florida Highway Patrol said names of the people who died would be released after relatives were notified.

The Florida Highway Patrol arrested the driver of a pickup truck that crashed into the farmworker bus. Troopers said Bryan Maclean Howard, 41, faces eight counts of driving-under-the-influence-manslaughter for Tuesday morning's crash. No further details were released, including what substance allegedly left Howard impaired.

It wasn't immediately known if Howard has an attorney to comment on his behalf. Attempts to reach Howard were unsuccessful Tuesday. State records show he has previous arrests for alleged driving with a suspended license, leaving the scene of an accident and marijuana possession.

Troopers say Howard was driving a 2001 Ford Ranger that crossed into the center line on State Road 40, a two-lane road that passes through horse farms. The truck sideswiped the bus, causing it to veer off the road at about 6:40 a.m. It plowed through a fence and into a tree and then rolled. In addition to the eight killed, at least 40 were injured.

The accident happened about 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Orlando as the workers were going to Cannon Farms in Dunnellon. The bus ended up on its side, with its windows smashed and its emergency rear door and top hatch open. The truck came to a stop at the side of the road, with its air bag blown and extensive damage to the driver's side.

Andres Sequera, a director of mission and ministry for AdventHealth hospitals, told reporters that the injured workers who could be visited by chaplains "were in good spirits for what they have been through."

"We were able to provide support, presence, prayer when it was asked of us," he said.

No one answered the phone at Olvera Trucking on Tuesday afternoon. The company recently advertised for a temporary driver who would bus workers to watermelon fields and then operate harvesting equipment. The pay was \$14.77 an hour.

A Labor Department document shows Olvera recently applied for 43 H-2A workers to harvest watermelons at Cannon Farms this month. The company again offered a base rate of \$14.77 an hour, with promises of housing and transportation to and from the fields.

The H-2A program allows U.S. employers or agents who meet certain regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals into the country to fill temporary agricultural jobs. Florida farms employ more H-2A workers than any other state, about 50,000 a year, according to the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.

"Thank you to all who have reached out and offered condolences, help and prayers" for the families and loved ones involved in the crash, Cannon Farms posted on its Facebook page, adding that the family-owned operation would stay closed through Wednesday.

Cannon Farms grows peanuts and watermelons, which it sends to grocery stores across the U.S. and Canada.

Federal statistics show that vehicle crashes were the leading cause of job-related deaths among farmworkers in 2022, the latest year available. They accounted for 81 of 171 fatalities. It was not immediately known if the bus had seat belts.

Authorities in several states have been pushing for greater regulations for the safety of farmworkers, who are overwhelmingly migrants.

The Labor Department announced new seat belt requirements for employer vehicles used for farmworkers on temporary visas, among other worker protections that take effect June 28. The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association has been opposed, calling the seat belt requirement "impractical."

State law requires seat belts for farmworker transport using smaller vehicles, weighing less than 10,000 pounds.

A GoFundMe campaign organized by the Farmworker Association of Florida to support accident victims and their families had raised about \$20,000 of a \$50,000 goal by Tuesday night.

"Farmworkers tend to be forgotten, but it's important not to forget farmworkers, especially during such difficult times," the post said.

Two groups that advocate for farmworkers issued statements calling for stricter laws to protect them

from harm.

"It is too easy to dismiss this as just another accident," said Asia Clermont, Florida director for the League of United Latin American Citizens. "Florida must take every possible step to protect its essential workers, who are human beings and the backbone of the state's economy."

Ty Joplin of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers said transportation laws for farmworkers are often unenforced.

"While accidents will happen, protecting workers while transporting them with mandatory and enforceable safety provisions, like seat belts and safety inspections, can reduce injuries and deaths," he said.

## Senate primaries set up a marquee race in Maryland and a likely Republican flip in West Virginia

By BRIAN WITTE, LEAH WILLINGHAM and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Republican voters advanced strong Senate contenders in Maryland and West Virginia on Tuesday, giving the GOP a big boost in its push to claim control of Congress' upper chamber.

Former Gov. Larry Hogan claimed the Republican nomination in what will be a marquee race in Maryland against Angela Alsobrooks, a top local official who could become the fourth Black woman in U.S. history to serve in the Senate.

Meanwhile, another popular Republican, Gov. Jim Justice, won the Senate nomination in deep-red West Virginia, becoming the overwhelming favorite in the race that represents the GOP's best pickup opportunity in the nation.

In both states, which share a border but feature antithetical politics, the Republican nominees represent a serious challenge for Democrats in the general election as they cling to a 51-49 Senate majority and defend seats in other states that former President Donald Trump won four years ago.

At the same time, Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden sought to project strength in low-stakes presidential primaries. And further down the ballot, two people who were on opposite sides of the Jan. 6 insurrection lost their U.S. House bids — a former Capitol Police officer running in Maryland and a former West Virginia state lawmaker who participated in the riot.

In all, three states hosted statewide primary elections Tuesday — Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia — as Republicans and Democrats picked their nominees for a slate of November elections that will decide the presidency and control of Congress.

### A TRUMP CRITIC GRABS MARYLAND'S GOP NOMINATION

In Maryland, Hogan gives Republicans a legitimate chance at picking up a Senate seat in the deep-blue state for the first time in more than four decades.

Hogan overcame his years-long criticism of Trump, a position that put him at odds with many Republican primary voters but will undoubtedly help him in the general election this fall. Maryland voters gave Biden a 33-point victory over Trump four years ago.

On the other side in the Senate contest, Democratic voters nominated Alsobrooks, the top official in Prince George's County outside of Washington. The 53-year-old African American county executive had been endorsed by many of the state's top officials, including Gov. Wes Moore, Sen. Chris Van Hollen and U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer.

Alsobrooks prevailed after a contentious and expensive primary against U.S. Rep. David Trone, a liquor store magnate who had invested more than \$61 million into his unsuccessful bid.

Race was an issue in the Democratic primary and may be in the general election in the months ahead. Alsobrooks is trying to become the first Black senator from a state in which roughly one in three residents identifies as African American.

On the social media site X, Hogan congratulated Alsobrooks and said, "Voters have a clear and stark choice: more of the dysfunctional partisan status quo or real independent and bipartisan leadership."

Alsobrooks, also posting on X, promised to "defeat Larry Hogan, keep Maryland blue, and keep our Senate under Democratic control."

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## THE WEST VIRGINIA BATTLE TO REPLACE MANCHIN

Justice won his primary against U.S. Rep. Alex Mooney. With Manchin gone, the seat is almost guaranteed to turn red come November.

The Trump-endorsed Justice, a former billionaire with a folksy personality, is wildly popular in the state. A former Democrat, Justice switched to the Republican Party in 2017, announcing the change at a Trump rally.

Despite his connection to the former Republican president, Justice doesn't pander to Trump as much as most statewide Republican officials in the state. And he largely avoids focusing on some of the GOP's favorite culture war issues, such as transgender rights.

Mooney had tried to win over conservatives by labeling Justice a "RINO" — which stands for "Republican in name only" — who would support Democratic policies. Justice did support Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law, saying West Virginia couldn't afford to turn away the money offered in the bill.

At a polling place in West Virginia's capital city, voter Steve Ervin said his votes Tuesday were directly related to Trump.

"I really did an exhaustive study of the sample ballot of who I believe supported Trump and Trump supported them," said Ervin, who works in the state's unemployment office. "That's what I made my whole decision on."

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, the Republican nominee in the 2018 Senate race against Manchin, won the nomination for West Virginia governor.

## TESTS OF STRENGTH IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

Biden and Trump have already amassed enough delegates to claim the presidential nominations at their respective national conventions this summer. And they added to their total Tuesday with wins in Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia.

Yet voters on both sides hoped to register a significant protest vote Tuesday that would demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Biden-Trump rematch.

Maryland progressives especially unhappy with the Biden administration's support for Israel in its war against Hamas had encouraged voters to select "uncommitted to any presidential candidate" instead. Results coming in Tuesday night suggested the "uncommitted" vote was running behind the margins of similar movements in Michigan and Minnesota.

There was no uncommitted option in West Virginia or Nebraska.

Everett Bellamy, a Democrat who voted early in Annapolis, said he voted "uncommitted" instead of Biden as a protest against the killing of women and children and noncombatants in Gaza.

"I wanted to send a message," Bellamy, 74, said after leaving an early voting center.

Meanwhile, Trump's Republican critics could not choose "uncommitted," but they could choose his former GOP rival Nikki Haley, who appeared on the ballot in Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia despite formally suspending her campaign more than two months ago.

Derek Faux, an independent voter from Charleston, West Virginia, said he supported Haley, and in other Republican races, he said he voted for the candidates he believed were least like Trump.

"I would rather see moderate, reasonable Republicans than some of the other folks," said Faux, a librarian.

## TWO SIDES OF THE INSURRECTION

Tuesday's elections also included two candidates who were intimately involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

In Maryland, former Capitol Police officer Harry Dunn was among nearly two dozen Democrats running in the state's 3rd Congressional District. The 40-year-old Democrat lost to State Sen. Sarah Elfreth.

In West Virginia, a former member of the House of Delegates, Derrick Evans, lost his bid to oust incumbent Republican Rep. Carol Miller in the 1st Congressional District. The 39-year-old Evans served a three-month jail sentence after livestreaming himself participating in the storming of the U.S. Capitol.

## OTHER KEY RACES

In Nebraska, Republican Sens. Deb Fischer and Pete Ricketts both won their primaries, one of the rare occasions when both senators in a state were on the ballot at the same time. And in Nebraska's 2nd Con-

gressional District, Republican U.S. Rep. Don Bacon fended off a challenge from his right flank.

In North Carolina, voters finalized their pick of the Trump-endorsed Brad Knott in what had become a one-person Republican primary in the state's 13th Congressional District.

## **70 years ago, school integration was a dream many believed could actually happen. It hasn't**

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seventy years ago this week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled separating children in schools by race was unconstitutional. On paper, that decision — the fabled *Brown v. Board of Education*, taught in most every American classroom — still stands.

But for decades, American schools have been re-segregating. The country is more diverse than it ever has been, with students more exposed to classmates from different backgrounds. Still, around 4 out of 10 Black and Hispanic students attend schools where almost every one of their classmates is another student of color.

The intense segregation by race is linked to socioeconomic conditions: Schools where students of color compose more than 90% of the student body are five times more likely to be located in low-income areas. That in turn has resounding academic consequences: Students who attend high-poverty schools, regardless of their family's finances, have worse educational outcomes.

Efforts to slow or reverse the increasing separation of American schools have stalled. Court cases slowly have chipped away at the dream outlined in the case of *Brown v. Board*, leaving fewer and fewer tools in the hands of districts to integrate schools by the early 2000s.

The arc of the moral universe, in this case, does not seem to be bending toward justice.

"School integration exists as little more than an idea in America right now, a little more than a memory," said Derek Black, a law professor at the University of Southern California. "It's actually an idea that a pretty good majority of Americans think is a good idea. But that's all."

### **MORE THAN JUST DIVERSE SCHOOLS**

The dream of *Brown* was never as simple as diversity. It was about equality, and the opportunity that came with it.

From the beginning, funding and integration have been inseparable.

"Whiter schools and districts have more resources, and that is wrong," said Ary Amerikaner, a former Obama administration official and the founder of *Brown's Promise*. "But it is a reality. And that undermines opportunity for students of color, and it undermines our future democracy."

We remember *Brown v. Board* as the end of segregated schools in the United States. But stating values does not, alone, change reality. Though the case was decided in 1954, it was followed by more than a decade of delay and avoidance before school districts began to meaningfully allow Black students to enter white schools.

It took further court rulings, monitoring and enforcement to bring a short-lived era of integration to hundreds of school districts. For the students who took part in those desegregation programs, their life trajectory changed — the more years spent in integrated schools, the better Black children fared on measures like educational attainment, graduation rates, health, and earning potential, with no adverse effects on white children.

For a brief period, it seemed the country recognized the deeper remedies required. "All things being equal, with no history of discrimination, it might well be desirable to assign pupils to schools nearest their homes," Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote in *Swann v. Mecklenburg*, a 1971 decision that upheld the use of busing to integrate schools in North Carolina. "But all things are not equal in a system that has been deliberately constructed and maintained to enforce racial segregation."

But not long after, another series of court decisions would unwind those outcomes. Fifty years ago, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, the court struck down a plan for integrating Detroit public schools across school district lines. The ruling undermined desegregation efforts in the north and Midwest, where small districts allowed

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white families to escape integration.

Other decisions followed. In *Freeman v. Pitts*, the court ruled resegregation from private choice and demographic shifts could not be monitored by the court. More than 200 districts were released from court-monitored desegregation plans. By 2007, when the court ruled in *Parents Involved vs. Seattle Public Schools*, even voluntary integration plans could no longer consider assigning students on the basis of race.

"If you have the tools taken away from you ... by the Supreme Court, then you really don't have a whole lot of tools," said Stephan Blanford, a former Seattle Public Schools board member.

## ONE DISTRICT AS A MICROCOSM

The arc of history is clear in the city where the landmark *Swann* busing case originated.

At its peak, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools was considered such a success at integrating classrooms and closing the gap between Black and white students that educators around the country came to tour the district. Today, more than 20 years after a court ruling overturned busing students on the basis of race, CMS is the most segregated district in North Carolina.

While there are no laws that keep kids siloed by race and income, in so many schools that is the reality.

Charlotte's sprawling, complex busing plan brought Black and white students into the same schools — and by extension, made white children's resources available to Black students for the first time. The district's integration program ended when white families sued after their children did not get their top choice of school placement in a lottery that considered race.

Instead, the district created a school assignment process that said diversity "will be based on the family's decisions." It left the families of Mecklenburg County, some of whom have always had better choices than others, on their own. In the first year of the district's choice program, Black families were more likely to try to use the choice plan to pick an alternative school. They were also more likely to get none of the magnet schools they wanted.

In the decades that followed, the district re-segregated. Years of busing had unwound the segregated makeup of the schools, but the underlying disparities and residential segregation had been left untouched.

Charlotte is a place where the divide between affluence and poverty, and the clear racial lines that mirror it, are so stark that people who live there refer to the city in two parts — the well-off "wedge" and the poorer "crescent." How could anything other than an explicit consideration of those conditions ever hope to ameliorate them?

Solutions to segregated schools exist in this context, often relying on individual families to make choices that are limited by their circumstances. Magnet schools and inter-district transfers — two common policies that may create great individual opportunities — are limited and will always leave some students behind.

Wherever you look, families are divided in how they view integration. For white and affluent families, it can exist as a noble idea, one filled with self-reflection. But for families of color or poor families — those with less of a safety net — the point of integration often is to place their children somewhere better.

Efforts to integrate schools can take two paths, Stefan Lallinger, executive director of Next100, a public policy think tank, says. They either fight around the margins, creating slightly less segregated spaces, or they address the problem head on, which in many parts of the country would mean tackling boundaries deliberately drawn to separate rich from poor.

## HOW TO MOVE FORWARD IN A SYSTEM THAT RESISTS?

Amerikaner and Saba Bireda founded Brown's Promise on the idea of bridging the divide between funding and integration, leveraging state courts to obtain the tools the Supreme Court has taken away from districts.

Their strategy has some precedence. In Connecticut, a 1989 lawsuit in state court resulted in the creation of an inter-district transfer program, which allows students in Hartford to transfer into suburban schools and magnet programs, breaking up concentrations of poverty and racially isolated schools.

"This country had to be moved to integration," Bireda said. "And unfortunately, 70 years later, we feel like we still need litigation. We need the push of the courts."

More recent lawsuits have taken place in New Jersey and in Minnesota. In 2015, Alex Cruz-Guzman became a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging segregation in Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools. Cruz-

Guzman immigrated to the United States from Mexico as a teenager. As a parent, he noticed his children's schools consisted almost entirely of other Latino students. When he tried to place them in more integrated schools, the family faced long waitlists.

The case wound its way through court for nearly a decade, almost reaching a settlement in the legislature before that bill failed to pass.

Cruz-Guzman recalls people asking why he would join a case that likely would not resolve in time to benefit his own children, who struggled with learning English for a time in predominantly Latino schools. To him, the arc of the case is about the kids whose lives could change in the future.

"It's not only my kids. My grandkids will benefit from it," he says. "People for generations will benefit."

How far those legal cases can reach remains to be seen. Actual solutions are imperfect. But integration is something this country has tried before, and while it lasted, by many measures, it worked.

Anniversaries are moments to stop and contemplate. Seventy years after Brown, the work towards achieving its vision remains unfinished. Where there are no perfect, easy answers, what other choice is there besides trying imperfect pathways that bring about an increasingly diverse country somewhere closer to the promise of Brown?

"What's the alternative?" Bireda said. "We are headed towards a country that is going to be majority people of color. ... We can be a strong multiracial democracy, but we cannot be that if we continue to allow most children in the United States not to go to school with children who are from different backgrounds."

## **An Arizona judge helped revive an 1864 abortion law. His lawmaker wife joined Democrats to repeal it**

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

When it was Shawna Bolick's turn to speak, the words tumbled out of her for 20 minutes. The conservative lawmaker was in the middle of a heated debate in the Republican-led Arizona Senate on a bill to repeal an 1864 law banning nearly all abortions.

Democrats needed at least one more vote from the right to advance the bill.

Bolick, head hung low and tripping over her words, described her three difficult pregnancies, including one that ended in miscarriage. She said she wouldn't have got through it "without the moral support of my husband."

Her husband, Arizona Supreme Court Justice Clint Bolick, was part of the majority that voted in April to restore the near-total ban.

Observers in the gallery jeered as the senator declared herself "pro-life." Only in the final moments of her speech did her intention become clear.

"I am here to protect more babies," she said. "I vote aye."

The bill passed and a day later, May 2, Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs signed it into law.

Shawna Bolick's vote to repeal the near-total ban her spouse helped reinstate underscores the increasingly chaotic philosophical and legal landscape surrounding abortion access in Arizona, and it reflects national Republicans' struggle to navigate the politics of abortion during a presidential election year.

This could spell trouble for the judge and the senator. Both declined interview requests from The Associated Press.

Shawna and Clint Bolick met in Washington at an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research institute. They have long been friends with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas — a godfather to one of Clint Bolick's sons — and his conservative political activist wife, Ginni.

Clarence Thomas was part of the majority that overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022 — something he had sought for more than 30 years — and he also pressed his colleagues to reverse rulings protecting same-sex marriage, gay sex and the use of contraceptives.

After the 2020 presidential election, Ginni Thomas sent emails urging Republican lawmakers in Arizona — including Shawna Bolick — to choose their own electors to undo Joe Biden's victory in the state. Bolick,

then a state representative, introduced a bill the following year to rewrite Arizona's election laws to give state lawmakers the power to reject election results "at any time before the presidential inauguration." Her proposal died before coming to a vote.

Their conservative credentials haven't shielded them from criticism as Clint Bolick seeks another six-year term on the bench, and his wife, who was appointed last year to represent her northern Phoenix district, faces a primary challenge on July 30.

After the high court published its ruling, calls from the right to repeal the near-total ban quickly surfaced. On social media, U.S. Rep. David Schweikert, a Republican, said the court "legislated from the bench." Former Republican Gov. Doug Ducey said the court's ruling didn't reflect "the will of the people."

A progressive group also launched a campaign targeting Justices Bolick and Kathryn King — both of them voted to restore the 160-year-old abortion ban and are up for retention election in November.

"Arizonans have a constitutional right to hold judges and justices accountable," said Abigail Jackson, digital coordinator for Progress Arizona. "So we want to let Arizonans know that these two particular justices will be on the ballot in November and to direct some of their energy towards unseating them."

Voters rarely deny a sitting judge another term; only six have been unseated since Arizona adopted its judicial retention election system in 1974.

Democrats, meanwhile, have put the abortion ruling at the center of their quest to take control of the state Legislature for the first time in decades. Sen. Bolick, representing one of the most competitive districts in the state, is among their top targets.

Bolick appeared to argue on the floor that a repeal would guard against extreme ballot initiatives to enshrine abortion rights, saying she wanted "to protect our state constitution from unlimited abortions."

But the Center for Arizona Policy, an anti-abortion advocacy group, blasted her vote to repeal, saying she "voted with pro-abortion activist lawmakers."

Some Republican colleagues agreed.

"She has confused the pro-life community," Sen. Jake Hoffman said on the floor after the vote. "Make no mistake, to everybody watching this and hearing my voice right now, and everyone who will hear it, she voted for abortions."

The repeal bill won't take effect until 90 days after the state's legislative session ends, typically in June or July. The Civil War-era ban could meanwhile be enforced, but the high court on Monday issued a stay on its decision, making a 2022 statute banning abortions after 15 weeks Arizona's prevailing abortion law.

But the legal landscape could change yet again if Arizona voters approve a ballot measure in November to enshrine abortion access up to 24 weeks of pregnancy in the state constitution. Organizers say they'll submit more than enough signatures by the July 3 deadline.

## **ICC prosecutor faces demand for action against Israeli leaders and Russian attack over Putin warrant**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The International Criminal Court's prosecutor faced demands Tuesday for speedy action against Israeli leaders and a blistering Russian attack over the ICC's arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin stemming from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Karim Khan responded by telling the U.N. Security Council that he will not be swayed or intimidated as his team investigates possible war crimes or crimes against humanity in Gaza and the Palestinian territories as well as in Ukraine.

Libya's U.N. ambassador, Taher El-Sonni, told Khan that if the Libyan cases the ICC is investigating are so complex that they won't be completed until the end of 2025, he should allocate the court's efforts to the war in Gaza.

El-Sonni claimed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity are being perpetrated by Israeli forces.

The world expects the ICC "to be courageous and to issue arrest warrants against officials of the Israeli regime who have repeated again and again that they want to commit genocidal actions against Palestin-

ians," El-Sonni said.

"What are you waiting for, Mr. Khan?" he added. "Don't you see the threats against civilians, the potential threats against civilians in Rafah and the massacre that would happen at any time?"

El-Sonni was referring to the latest Israeli offensive in Gaza's southern city of Rafah, where 1.2 million Palestinians had fled seeking safety. The U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees said Tuesday that nearly 450,000 have fled Rafah in the past week, and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated that there is no safe place anywhere in Gaza.

"This is the actual test of the ICC," El-Sonni said. "Is the ICC politicized or is it independent and neutral?"

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia called the ICC a politicized "puppet body" controlled by the West that "has absolutely nothing to do with justice."

The ICC issued an arrest warrant for Putin for alleged war crimes in March 2023, accusing the Russian president of personal responsibility for the abduction of children from Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

Two months later, Russia issued an arrest warrant for Khan. The ICC called that warrant "unacceptable" and said the court "will remain undeterred in the conduct of its lawful mandate to ensure accountability for the gravest crimes of concern to the international community as a whole."

Nebenzia also accused the ICC of accomplishing nothing since it began a preliminary examination of the situation in the Palestinian territories in 2015 and a formal investigation in 2021.

"In this regard, one wonders if the effectiveness of the ICC on this track has been affected by the fact that a new bipartisan bill has been submitted to the U.S. Congress to sanction ICC officials involved in investigating not only the U.S. but its allies," he told the Security Council.

Last week, two Republican congressmen introduced the "Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act" to impose sanctions on ICC officials that go after the United States or its allies including Israel.

They cited reports the ICC is poised to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other high-ranking Israeli officials for their military offensive in Gaza following Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack in southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and saw about 250 people taken hostage. The act's supporters said that if the ICC was a legitimate tribunal it should have issued arrest warrants for Hamas leaders.

Israel's military retaliation, now in its eighth month, has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, the majority of them women and children according to Gaza health officials, and it has sparked worldwide protests.

Algeria's deputy U.N. ambassador, Nacim Gaouaoui, expressed hope the ICC will take "a serious approach" to its Palestinian investigations and "demonstrate that it is not a tool used by some members of the international community to threaten whoever they want, whenever they want."

Khan said he wanted to assure Russia's ambassador that "we will not be swayed, whether it's by warrants for my arrest or the arrest of elected officials of the court by the Russian Federation, or whether it's by other elected officials in any other jurisdiction."

Khan said the ICC endeavors to be "deaf to the noise" and this should be a time "for the law to be allowed to breathe," whether dealing with world crises like Ukraine, Gaza and the Palestinians, Libya or the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar.

"We have a duty to stand up for justice, to stand up for victims," Khan said. "We will stand up and apply the law with integrity, with independence."

## Caitlin Clark struggles early in WNBA debut before scoring 20 points in Fever's loss to Connecticut

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

UNCASVILLE, Conn. (AP) — The Caitlin Clark era in the WNBA has officially begun, although it got off to a slow start.

Clark went scoreless for nearly the first 15 minutes, before getting more comfortable and finishing with 20 points in the Indiana Fever's 92-71 loss to the Connecticut Sun on Tuesday night.

She knows she'll have to play better and has a lot to work on, but also understands that it's only the

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first game in her career.

"It was physical and obviously it wasn't like the best start," Clark said. "It was just a lot of things to learn from."

Clark said before the game that she wouldn't get too caught up on her play in her first game.

"If something isn't perfect, my life's not going to end," she said. "If, you know, we lose the game tonight, my life's not going to end. I'm just going to learn from it and come back on Thursday and try to help us win."

One thing that Clark definitely will want to improve on is her turnovers. She had 10 of Indiana's 25 — many unforced.

"Some uncharacteristic things, like pick the ball up and travel, dribble it off my foot," she said. "A few things that, you know, you have to be crisper."

Clark got off to a really slow start as she missed her first four shots before finally getting on the board midway through the second period. The NCAA's all-time Division I scoring leader stole the ball around the foul line and drove the length of the court before laying the ball in. Clark had said before the game that she thought her first basket would come on a layup since it was a "high-percentage" shot.

Clark later added two free throws and hit a 3-pointer with 29.9 seconds left in the first half to finish the opening 20 minutes with seven points, hitting two of her seven shot attempts.

She carried some of that momentum into the third quarter when she scored five of her points to try to rally the Fever, but it just wasn't enough.

"We got to help her out, better job coming back to the ball," Fever coach Christie Sides said. "We worked on that several times this week. We have to do a better job getting someone back to the ball."

Before her first basket, Clark struggled and got into early foul trouble. Her first shot was a drive to the basket that bounced hard off the glass and into Aliyah Boston's hands for a putback. Clark missed a runner in the lane, and then her 3 from the left wing just rimmed out. She did have an assist on one basket and threw a nifty behind-the-back pass to teammate Boston, but last season's Rookie of the Year was called for a traveling violation.

Meanwhile, Clark was called for two fouls on the defensive end. The second one drew loud boos from the sellout crowd. The crowd gave the No. 1 pick in the draft a loud ovation when she was announced in the pregame introduction.

Before the game, Clark admitted she was eager for her WNBA debut. It was one of four games on the league's opening night to tip-off the WNBA's 28th season. New York, which was runner-up in the WNBA Finals, rallied to beat Washington 85-80 to start the evening.

She sat around most of the day at the hotel and had to wait to get on the court when her team arrived nearly 2 1/2 hours before tipoff.

"I just want to get out there and play," she said. "I got plenty of time to sit and think about it. Still this is exciting. This is fun. ... There's just a different buzz in the air."

Even before playing a WNBA game, Clark has left her mark in the pros. The league's draft had record viewership, and her No. 22 Indiana Fever jerseys have been flying off the shelves. There were hundreds of fans walking around the arena in Clark jerseys and T-shirts.

Three WNBA teams have already moved their games to bigger arenas to keep up with the demand for tickets to watch her play. Her debut in Connecticut is sold out — the first sellout for the Sun in a season opener since they played their inaugural game at Mohegan Sun Arena in 2003 after moving from Orlando. There's also a huge media turnout with nearly four times the number of credentials issued for this game than a normal Sun contest.

This was the second sold-out crowd Clark has played in front of in her extremely young WNBA career. Her preseason game in Dallas was sold out, too. More than 13,000 fans also turned up for her only home preseason game.

Clark's home debut will be Thursday, when the Fever host the New York Liberty.

"Our preseason game was tremendous, doing it for real is going to be a lot of fun; it's going to be loud," Clark said. "Use the environment to our advantage."

## Harvard students end protest as university agrees to discuss Middle East conflict

By MICHAEL CASEY and STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Protesters against the war between Israel and Hamas were voluntarily taking down their tents in Harvard Yard on Tuesday after university officials agreed to discuss their questions about the endowment, bringing a peaceful end to the kinds of demonstrations that were broken up by police on other campuses.

The student protest group Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine said in a statement that the encampment “outlasted its utility with respect to our demands.” Meanwhile, Harvard University interim President Alan Garber agreed to pursue a meeting between protesters and university officials regarding the students’ questions.

Students at many college campuses this spring set up similar encampments, calling for their schools to cut ties with Israel and businesses that support it.

The latest Israel-Hamas war began when Hamas and other militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and taking an additional 250 hostage. Palestinian militants still hold about 100 captives, and Israel’s military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Harvard said its president and the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Hopi Hoekstra, will meet with the protesters to discuss the conflict in the Middle East.

The protesters said they worked out an agreement to meet with university officials including the Harvard Management Company, which oversees the world’s largest academic endowment, valued at about \$50 billion.

The protesters’ statement said the students will set an agenda including discussions on disclosure, divestment and reinvestment, and the creation of a Center for Palestine Studies. The students also said that Harvard has offered to retract the suspensions of more than 20 students and student workers and back down on disciplinary measures faced by 60 more.

“Since its establishment three weeks ago, the encampment has both broadened and deepened Palestine solidarity organizing on campus,” a spokesperson for the protesters said. “It has moved the needle on disclosure and divestment at Harvard.”

Harvard alumnus Rotem Spiegler said she’s glad to see the protest being dismantled, but thinks it improper to reward students in part for being disruptive.

“It just should have happened a while ago, and they should have suffered consequences to what they’ve been doing here violating everybody’s space and not respecting any of the university rules that were adjusted even while they were going,” Spiegler said.

Faculty members who supported the demonstration in Harvard Yard said the students achieved “an important step towards divestment from Israel and liberation for Palestine.”

“We honor the bravery of our students, who put themselves at risk to amplify the worldwide call for Palestinian liberation that global leaders have been trying to suppress,” Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine said in a statement.

At the University of California, Berkeley, students demanding the school divest from companies doing business in Israel began removing their campus encampment Tuesday afternoon as protest leaders held discussions with university administrators.

UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ sent the demonstrators a letter Tuesday evening agreeing “to support a comprehensive and rigorous examination of our investments and our socially responsible investment strategy.”

At Harvard, student Chloe Gambol, said the biggest achievement of the Cambridge protest was just shining a spotlight on the situation in Gaza.

“The point of a protest is to draw attention and to make a scene and make a stand and, I think, definitely achieved that based on what we see on all the news. A lot of people are talking about it,” she said.

But Howard Smith, a senior researcher at Harvard, said he was happy to see the encampment go down. "I think the students were very misguided and, basically, historically incorrect and morally off base," he said. "But I'm pleased that the situation at Harvard was not as crazy as in some other places."

Protesters also voluntarily took down their tents Monday night at Williams College in Massachusetts after its board of trustees agreed to meet later this month. Williams President Maud Mandel said dialogue is the answer.

"In a year when personal, political and moral commitments are being tested, I have seen our diverse community members -- including people in the encampment, and people who question or oppose it -- try to engage with each other across differences, looking for ways to exchange views without trading insults," Mandel said in a statement.

At the University of New Mexico, school president Garnett Stokes warned that the encampment along a busy stretch of the Albuquerque campus needed to be dismantled by Tuesday evening and those who did not comply would be subject to "institutional enforcement."

The collection of tents and tarps had been in place going on three weeks, inhabited by a mix of activists, some students and homeless people.

Stokes' message to all students and staff acknowledged the demands of the protesters who have been advocating for a ceasefire along with disclosure of the university's investment portfolios. She said the school was committed to being transparent.

In western New York, the University of Rochester cleared out an encampment ahead of Friday's commencement ceremony. Most protesters dispersed voluntarily, but two people unaffiliated with the university were arrested for damaging a commencement tent, school spokesperson Sara Miller said.

## **Biden administration is sending \$1 billion more in weapons, ammo to Israel, congressional aides say**

By SEUNG MIN KIM, ELLEN KNICKMEYER and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has told key lawmakers it would send more than \$1 billion in additional arms and ammunition to Israel, three congressional aides said Tuesday. But it was not immediately known how soon the weapons would be delivered.

It's the first arms shipment to Israel to be revealed since the administration put another arms transfer, consisting of 3,500 bombs of up to 2,000 pounds each, on hold this month. The Biden administration, citing concern for civilian casualties in Gaza, has said it paused that bomb transfer to keep Israel from using those particular munitions in its offensive in the crowded southern Gaza city of Rafah.

The package disclosed Tuesday includes about \$700 million for tank ammunition, \$500 million in tactical vehicles and \$60 million in mortar rounds, the congressional aides said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an arms transfer that has not yet been made public.

There was no immediate indication when the arms would be sent. Two congressional aides said the shipment is not part of the long-delayed foreign aid package that Congress passed and President Joe Biden signed last month. It wasn't known if the shipment was the latest tranche from an existing arms sale or something new.

The Biden administration has come under criticism from both sides of the political spectrum over its military support for Israel's now seven-month-old war against Hamas in Gaza — at a time when Biden is battling for reelection against former President Donald Trump.

Some of Biden's fellow Democrats have pushed him to limit transfers of offensive weapons to Israel to pressure the U.S. ally to do more to protect Palestinian civilians. Protests on college campuses around the U.S. have driven home the message this spring.

Republican lawmakers have seized on the administration's pause on the bomb transfers, saying any lessening of U.S. support for Israel — its closest ally in the Middle East — weakens that country as it fights Hamas and other Iran-backed groups. In the House, they are planning to advance a bill this week to mandate the delivery of offensive weaponry for Israel.

Despite the onetime suspension of a bomb shipment, Biden and administration officials have made clear they will continue other weapons deliveries and overall military support to Israel, which is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid.

Biden will see to it that "Israel has all of the military means it needs to defend itself against all of its enemies, including Hamas," national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters Monday. "For him, this is very straightforward: He's going to continue to provide Israel with all of capabilities it needs, but he does not want certain categories of American weapons used in a particular type of operation in a particular place. And again, he has been clear and consistent with that."

The Wall Street Journal first reported the plans for the \$1 billion weapons package to Israel.

In response to House Republicans' plan to move forward with a bill to mandate the delivery of offensive weapons for Israel, the White House said Tuesday that Biden would veto the bill if it were to pass Congress.

The bill has practically no chance in the Democratic-controlled Senate. But House Democrats are somewhat divided on the issue, and roughly two dozen have signed onto a letter to the Biden administration saying they were "deeply concerned about the message" sent by pausing the bomb shipment.

One of the letter's signers, New York Rep. Ritchie Torres, said he would likely vote for the bill, despite the White House's opposition.

"I have a general rule of supporting pro-Israel legislation unless it includes a poison pill — like cuts to domestic policy," he said.

In addition to the written veto threat, the White House has been in touch with various lawmakers and congressional aides about the legislation, according to an administration official.

"We strongly, strongly oppose attempts to constrain the President's ability to deploy U.S. security assistance consistent with U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said this week, adding that the administration plans to spend "every last cent" appropriated by Congress in the national security supplemental package that was signed into law by Biden last month.

## **Driver of pickup that collided with farmworker bus in Florida, killing 8, is arrested on DUI charges**

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

OCALA, Fla. (AP) — The Florida Highway Patrol has arrested the driver of a pickup truck that crashed into a farmworker bus early Tuesday, killing eight, on charges of driving under the influence-manslaughter.

Bryan Maclean Howard, 41, faces eight counts of DUI-Manslaughter, the FHP said in a statement. No further details were released, including what substance allegedly left Howard impaired.

Troopers said he was driving the 2001 Ford Ranger when it crossed into the center line on State Road 40, a straight but somewhat hilly two-lane road that passes through horse farms. The truck sideswiped the bus, causing it to veer off the road at about 6:40 a.m. It crashed through a fence and into a tree before overturning. In addition to the eight killed, at least 40 were injured.

It was not immediately known if Howard has an attorney, and no phone numbers for family members could be found. According to state records, Howard has previous arrests for driving with a suspended license, leaving the scene of an accident and marijuana possession.

The accident happened in Marion County, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Orlando. The workers had been headed to Cannon Farms in Dunnellon, which has been harvesting watermelons. The bus ended up on its side, with its windows smashed and its emergency rear door and top hatch open. The truck came to a stop at the side of the road, with its air bag blown and extensive damage to the driver's side.

Federal statistics show that vehicle crashes were the leading cause of job-related deaths among farmworkers in 2022, the latest year available. They accounted for 81 of 171 fatalities. It was not immediately known if the bus had seat belts.

Authorities in several states have been pushing for greater regulations for the safety of farmworkers, who are overwhelmingly migrants. It is unknown if all the workers on the bus were migrants. The Mexican

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consulate in Orlando said it was making help available to any of the workers who are from its country.

The Labor Department announced new seat belt requirements for employer vehicles used for farmworkers on temporary visas, among other worker protections that take effect June 28. The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association has been opposed, calling the seat belt requirement "impractical."

State law requires seat belts for farmworker transport using smaller vehicles, weighing less than 10,000 pounds.

"We will be closed today out of respect to the losses and injuries endured early this morning in the accident that took place to the Olvera Trucking Harvesting Corp.," Cannon Farms announced on its Facebook page. "Please pray with us for the families and the loved ones involved in this tragic accident. We appreciate your understanding at this difficult time."

Cannon Farms describes itself as a family-owned operation that has farmed its land for more than 100 years. The company now focuses on peanuts and watermelons, which it sends to grocery stores across the U.S. and Canada. It is about 8 miles (13 kilometers) from the crash site.

No one answered the phone at Olvera Trucking on Tuesday afternoon. The company recently advertised for a temporary driver who would bus workers to watermelon fields and then operate harvesting equipment. The pay was \$14.77 an hour.

A Labor Department document shows Olvera recently applied for 43 H-2A workers to harvest watermelons at Cannon Farms this month. The company again offered a base rate of \$14.77 an hour, with promises of housing and transportation to and from the fields.

The H-2A program allows U.S. employers or agents who meet certain regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals into the country to fill temporary agricultural jobs. Florida farms employ more H-2A workers than any other state, about 50,000 a year, according to the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.

Guatemala's government initially said some of its citizens were involved in the crash but retracted that Tuesday night, saying a report on an accident from the consulate in Chicago had been confused with the Florida crash. Goldin López de Bonilla, spokesperson for the Foreign Affairs Ministry, said the Central American nation was still waiting to hear whether any of its citizens were involved in the Florida crash.

Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's foreign relations secretary, said via the social media platform X, "I am sorry to report that a tragic automotive accident happened in Florida with Mexican agricultural workers involved."

The Mexican Consulate in Orlando was on the scene, she said, to provide support.

Andres Sequera, a director of mission and ministry for AdventHealth hospitals, told reporters that the injured workers who could be visited by chaplains "were in good spirits for what they have been through."

"We were able to provide support, presence, prayer when it was asked of us," he said.

A GoFundMe campaign organized by the Farmworker Association of Florida to support accident victims and their families had raised about \$5,000 of a \$50,000 goal by Tuesday evening.

"Farmworkers tend to be forgotten, but it's important not to forget farmworkers, especially during such difficult times," the post said.

Two groups that advocate for farmworkers issued statements calling for stricter laws to protect them from harm.

"It is too easy to dismiss this as just another accident," said Asia Clermont, Florida director for the League of United Latin American Citizens. "Florida must take every possible step to protect its essential workers, who are human beings and the backbone of the state's economy."

Ty Joplin of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers said transportation laws for farmworkers are often unenforced.

"While accidents will happen, protecting workers while transporting them with mandatory and enforceable safety provisions, like seat belts and safety inspections, can reduce injuries and deaths," he said.

## **11 people die in shootings in small town in southern Mexico state of Chiapas, prosecutors say**

By EDGAR H. CLEMENTE Associated Press

MERIDA, Mexico (AP) — Eleven people were killed Tuesday in mass shootings in a small town in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas, the state prosecutor's office said.

The office said the shooting occurred in the township of Chicomuselo, an area known as a trafficking route for migrant and drug smuggling that has been hit by cartel turf battles in recent months.

The township — and the outlying hamlet of Morelia, where the killings occurred — is in a sparsely populated area near Mexico's border with Guatemala.

There have been confrontations between drug cartels in the area as recently as Monday, but at least some of the victims of Tuesday's shootings appeared to be simply residents of the town.

The border area of Chiapas has been plagued by violence as the rival Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels battle for territory. Thousands of people have been displaced as the cartels work to control migrant, drug and weapons smuggling routes and forcibly recruit locals.

## **Cohen gives insider details at trial as Trump's defense attorney accuses him of seeking vengeance**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, ERIC TUCKER, MICHELLE L. PRICE and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It wasn't until after a decade in the fold, after his family pleaded with him, after the FBI raided his office, apartment and hotel room, Michael Cohen testified Tuesday, that he finally decided to turn on Donald Trump.

The complicated break led to a 2018 guilty plea to federal charges involving a payment to the porn actor Stormy Daniels to bury her story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump and to other, unrelated crimes.

And it's that insider knowledge of shady deals that pushed Manhattan prosecutors to make Cohen the star witness in their case against Trump about that same payment, which they say was an illegal effort to influence the 2016 presidential election.

"To keep the loyalty and to do the things that he had asked me to do, I violated my moral compass, and I suffered the penalty, as has my family," Cohen testified Tuesday.

But defense attorneys sought to portray Cohen as motivated by vengeance on his former boss, confronting him on the witness stand with his own profane social media about Trump and wanting to see the former president in handcuffs.

The most stunning moment came outside the courtroom Tuesday, when House Speaker Mike Johnson showed up with Trump, who used his powerful bully pulpit to turn his political party against the rule of law by declaring the trial illegitimate. He and other GOP lawmakers are serving as surrogates while Trump himself remains barred by a gag order in the case following an appeals court ruling Tuesday.

"I do have a lot of surrogates, and they're speaking very beautifully," Trump said before court as the group gathered in the background. "And they come ... from all over Washington. And they're highly respected, and they think this is the greatest scam they've ever seen."

The Republican presidential nominee has pleaded not guilty and denies that any of the encounters took place.

As prosecutors laid out their case, Cohen testified about purposefully mislabeled checks, false receipts and blind loyalty that placed Trump at the center of the scheme. The testimony, somewhat dry for a man who was defined for years by his braggadocio as Trump's problem-zapper, underscored the prosecution's foundational argument — that the case isn't about the spectacle of what Trump was paying for, but rather his effort to illegally cover up those payments.

Cohen has testified in detail about how the former president was linked to all aspects of the hush money scheme, and prosecutors believe Cohen's testimony is critical to their case. But their reliance on a witness with such a checkered past — he was disbarred, went to prison and separately pleaded guilty to lying

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about a Moscow real estate project on Trump's behalf — could backfire, especially as Trump's attorneys continue to cross-examine him.

Blanche spent no time Tuesday asking about the allegations at the center of the trial, instead working to raise doubts about Cohen's credibility and his motivation for helping prosecutors try to put Trump behind bars.

Amid rapid-fire objections from prosecutors, Blanche probed Cohen's hyperfocus on Trump, suggesting he's attempted to parlay his insider knowledge into a reduced prison sentence and court supervision for his own crimes, and a new career making millions of dollars criticizing Trump.

Cohen was asked to listen through headphones to a snippet of his podcast. Blanche asked Cohen if he recalled one episode in which he said Trump "needs to wear handcuffs and to do the perp walk" and that "people will not be satisfied until this man is sitting inside the cell."

"I don't recall saying that, but I wouldn't put it past me," Cohen testified.

At another point, Blanche asked, "Is it fair to say that you are motivated by fame?"

"No sir, I don't think that's fair to say," Cohen said, later adding, "I'm motivated by many things."

Cohen will be the prosecution's last witness. Trump's defense will begin after Cohen, though it's not clear whether his lawyers will call any witnesses or if Trump will testify in his own defense.

Jurors have already heard how Trump and others in his orbit were reeling after the leak just a few weeks before the 2016 election of an "Access Hollywood" tape in which he bragged about grabbing women by the genitals without their permission. The publication of the tape hastened the payments to Daniels, according to testimony.

Cohen testified that Trump was constantly apprised of the behind-the-scenes efforts to bury stories feared to be harmful to the campaign. And after paying out \$130,000 to Daniels in order to keep her quiet about an alleged sexual encounter, Trump promised to reimburse him.

Jurors followed along as Hoffinger, in a methodical and clinical fashion, walked Cohen through that reimbursement process. It was an attempt to show what prosecutors say was a lengthy deception to mask the true purpose of the payments.

As jurors were shown business records and other paperwork, Cohen explained their purpose and reiterated again and again that the payments were reimbursements for the hush money — they weren't for legal services pursuant to a retainer.

It's an important distinction because prosecutors allege that the Trump records falsely described the purpose of the payments as legal expenses. These records form the basis of 34 felony counts charging Trump with falsifying business records. All told, Cohen was paid \$420,000, with funds drawn from a Trump personal account.

"Were the descriptions here on this check stub false?" Hoffinger asked.

"Yes," Cohen said.

"And again, there was no retainer agreement, is that right? Hoffinger asked.

"That's correct," Cohen replied.

Prosecutors also spent time working to blunt the potential credibility issues, painting Cohen as a longtime Trump loyalist who committed crimes on behalf of the former president.

On the witness stand, Cohen described in detail the April 2018 raid that marked the beginning of the end of his time being devoted to Trump.

"How to describe your life being turned upside-down? Concerned. Despondent. Angry," Cohen told jurors.

"Were you frightened?" Hoffinger asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he said.

But he was heartened by a phone call from Trump that he said gave him reassurance and convinced him to remain "in the camp."

He said to me, 'Don't worry. I'm the president of the United States. There's nothing here. Everything's going to be OK. Stay tough. You are going to be OK,'" Cohen testified.

Cohen, who once boasted that he would "take a bullet" for Trump, told jurors that he "felt reassured

because I had the president of the United States protecting me ... And so I remained in the camp."

It was his wife and family who finally made him see how sticking by Trump was detrimental.

"What are you doing? We're supposed to be your first loyalty," Cohen testified. Asked what decision he made, he responded, "That it was about time to listen to them," he said.

Throughout Cohen's testimony Tuesday, Trump reclined in his chair with his eyes closed and head tilted to the side. He occasionally shifted and leaned forward, opening his eyes and talking to his attorney before returning to his recline. Even some of the topics that have animated him the most as he campaigns didn't stir his attention.

It was a far cry from the scene last October, when the once-fierce allies faced off at Trump's civil fraud trial and Trump walked out of the courtroom after his lawyer finished questioning Cohen.

"Mr. Cohen, do you have any regrets about your past work for Donald Trump?" Hoffinger asked as she concluded her questioning.

"I do," Cohen said. "I regret doing things for him that I should not have. Lying. Bullying people in order to effectuate a goal. I don't regret working for the Trump Organization 'cause as I expressed before, some very interesting, great times."

## **Cargo ship that caused Baltimore bridge collapse had power blackouts hours before leaving port**

By LEA SKENE and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — The cargo ship Dali experienced electrical blackouts about 10 hours before leaving the Port of Baltimore and yet again shortly before it slammed into the Francis Key Bridge and killed six construction workers, federal investigators said Tuesday, providing the most detailed account yet of the tragedy.

The first power outage occurred after a crew member mistakenly closed an exhaust damper while conducting maintenance, causing one of the ship's diesel engines to stall, investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board said in their preliminary report. Shortly after leaving Baltimore early on March 26, the ship crashed into one of the bridge's supporting columns because another power outage caused it to lose steering and propulsion at the exact worst moment.

The report provides new details about how the ship's crew addressed the power issues it experienced while still docked in Baltimore. A full investigation could take a year or more, according to the safety board.

Testing of the ship's fuel did not reveal any concerns related to its quality, according to the report.

The Dali was headed from Baltimore to Sri Lanka, laden with shipping containers and enough supplies for a monthlong voyage.

After the initial blackout caused by the closed exhaust damper, investigators say a backup generator automatically came on. It continued to run for a short period — until insufficient fuel pressure caused it to kick off again, resulting in a second blackout. That's when crew members made changes to the ship's electrical configuration, switching from one transformer and breaker system that had been in use for several months to another that was active upon its departure, according to the report.

Investigators stopped short of drawing a direct line between those earlier power issues and the blackout that ultimately caused the bridge collapse.

"The NTSB is still investigating the electrical configuration following the first in-port blackout and potential impacts on the events during the accident voyage," investigators wrote.

The safety board launched its investigation almost immediately after the collapse, which sent six members of a roadwork crew plunging to their deaths. Investigators boarded the ship to document the scene and collect evidence, including the vessel's data recorder and information from its engine room, according to board chair Jennifer Homendy. Investigators also interviewed the captain and crew members.

"Our mission is to determine why something happened, how it happened and to prevent it from recurring," Homendy said at a news conference days after the disaster.

The preliminary report details the chaotic moments prior to the bridge collapse while crew members

scrambled to address a series of electrical failures that came in quick succession as disaster loomed.

At 1:25 a.m. on March 26, when the Dali was a little over half a mile away from the bridge, electrical breakers that fed most of the ship's equipment and lighting unexpectedly tripped, causing a power loss. The main propulsion diesel engine automatically shut down after its cooling pumps lost power, and the ship lost steering.

Crew members were able to momentarily restore electricity by manually closing the tripped breakers, the report says.

Around that time, the ship's pilots called for tugboats to come help guide the wayward vessel. The tugboats that guided it out of the port had peeled off earlier per normal practice, according to the report. Crew members also started the process of dropping anchor, and the pilots' dispatcher called the Maryland Transportation Authority Police and relayed that the ship had lost power. The pilots' dispatcher notified the Coast Guard.

The ship was less than a quarter of a mile from the bridge when it experienced a second power blackout because of more tripped breakers, according to the report. The crew again restored power, but it was too late to avoid striking the bridge.

One of the pilots ordered the rudder turned at the last minute, but since the main engine remained shut down, there was no propulsion to assist with steering, the report says. They also made a mayday call that allowed police to stop traffic to the bridge.

At 1:29 a.m., the 1.6-mile steel span came crashing down into the Patapsco River. The construction workers were sitting in their vehicles during a break when disaster struck.

The last of the victims' bodies was recovered last week.

One member of the seven-person roadwork crew survived the collapse by somehow freeing himself from his work truck. He was rescued from the water later that morning. A road maintenance inspector also survived by running to safety in the moments before the bridge fell.

On Monday, crews conducted a controlled demolition to break down the largest remaining span of the collapsed bridge, which landed draped across the Dali's bow, pinning the grounded ship amid the wreckage. The ship is expected to be refloated and guided back to the Port of Baltimore in the coming days.

It arrived in the U.S. from Singapore on March 19, a week before the crash, according to the report. It made stops in Newark, New Jersey, and Norfolk, Virginia, before coming to Baltimore. Investigators said they were not aware of any other power outages occurring in those ports.

They said they're working with Hyundai, the manufacturer of the ship's electrical system, to "identify the cause(s) of the breakers unexpectedly opening while approaching the Key Bridge and the subsequent blackouts."

The board's preliminary report released Tuesday likely includes a fraction of the findings that will be presented in its final report, which is expected to take more than a year.

The FBI has also launched a criminal investigation into the circumstances leading up to the collapse.

## Lies, loyalty and a gag order upheld: Tuesday's Trump hush money trial takeaways

MICHAEL R. SISAK, ERIC TUCKER, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's attorneys started grilling prosecutors' star witness in his hush money trial Tuesday, portraying former attorney Michael Cohen as a media-obsessed liar who's determined to see the former president behind bars.

Cohen endured intense questioning by defense attorney Todd Blanche after providing pivotal testimony tying the presumptive Republican presidential nominee directly to the hush money scheme at the heart of the case.

Trump's former fixer will return to the witness stand Thursday for more cross-examination before prosecutors rest their case alleging a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election by silencing women who alleged sexual encounters with him. Trump denies that he had sex with the women and denies wrongdoing.

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ing in the case.

Here are some key takeaways from Tuesday's proceedings:

## ALL OF COHEN'S LIES

Prosecutors confronted Cohen's history of falsehoods head-on in an attempt to get ahead of an issue Trump lawyers are seizing on to attack the now-disbarred lawyer's credibility. Prosecutors also sought to paint Cohen as a devoted Trump loyalist, whose crimes were committed on the former president's behalf.

Under questioning from prosecutor Susan Hoffinger, Cohen admitted that he lied to Congress during an investigation into potential ties between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign. Cohen pleaded guilty as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, admitting that he lied, among other things, about the number of times he spoke with Trump about a real estate project in Moscow.

Hoffinger also asked Cohen about concerns that he may have lied on the witness stand at the former president's civil fraud trial last year. In that trial, Cohen insisted he didn't commit tax evasion, and said he had lied to the judge who accepted his guilty plea on the charge in 2018.

Cohen told Hoffinger he did not dispute the facts of his guilty plea, but that he didn't think he should've been charged with a crime "as a first-time offender who always paid his taxes on the due date."

Cohen also told jurors he lied repeatedly for Trump, including after Cohen paid porn actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 to keep her from going public right before the 2016 election with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump.

Asked by Hoffinger why he would do so, Cohen said: "Out of loyalty and in order to protect him."

## NO LONGER LOYAL

Cohen described to jurors how his life and relationship with Trump were upended after the FBI raided his office, apartment and hotel room in 2018. That would lead to Cohen pleading guilty to federal charges and implicating Trump in the hush money scheme. Trump was never charged with any crime related to that federal investigation.

Asked by the prosecutor how he felt at the time, Cohen said: "How to describe your life being turned upside-down? Concerned. Despondent. Angry."

Initially, Cohen said he felt comforted because Trump, who was in the White House at the time, assured him not to worry. Trump's lawyers were also continuing to pay his legal fees and he remained part of a joint-defense agreement with Trump and his lawyers, he testified.

But his family eventually convinced him to turn on Trump, Cohen said.

"My family, my wife, my daughter, my son, all said to me: 'Why are you holding onto this loyalty? What are you doing? We're supposed to be your first loyalty,'" Cohen told jurors.

After Cohen's guilty plea, Trump bashed him on Twitter, writing: "If anyone is looking for a good lawyer I would strongly suggest that you don't retain the services of Michael Cohen!"

## DEFENSE'S TURN TO GRILL

Trump's team opened their cross-examination by pressing Cohen about critical comments and vulgar social media posts he's made about the former president since the trial began. The defense's questions Tuesday didn't address the facts at the heart of the case but were designed to portray Cohen as a Trump- fixated loyalist who, spurned by his ex-boss, is now on a mission to get fame and revenge.

"Is it fair to say you're motivated by fame?" Blanche, Trump's lawyer, asked Cohen.

"No sir, I don't think that's fair to say," Cohen replied. Later he added — in response to a question about whether he was motivated by publicity — that he is "motivated by many things."

Blanche asked Cohen to listen through headphones to an October 2020 podcast episode in which the former lawyer said Trump needs to wear handcuffs and that "people will not be satisfied until this man is sitting inside a cell."

Cohen told Blanche he didn't recall saying that, but added: "I wouldn't put it past me."

Blanche also pressed Cohen on whether he wants to see Trump convicted in the case. Cohen initially hedged, saying: "I would like to see accountability. It's not for me. It's for the jury and this court."

But asked again, Cohen responded: "Sure."

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## GAG ORDER UPHELD

While jurors were hearing testimony from Cohen, Trump suffered another legal blow when an appeals court upheld a gag order that limits what he can say about the case.

Trump had challenged the gag order, which bars the former president from commenting publicly about jurors, witnesses and others connected to the case, including the judge's family and prosecutors other than District Attorney Alvin Bragg.

The appeals court ruled that Judge Juan M. Merchan "properly determined" that Trump's public statements "posed a significant threat to the integrity of the testimony of witnesses and potential witnesses."

Trump challenged restrictions on his ability to comment about Matthew Colangelo, a former Justice Department official who is a part of the prosecution team, and Merchan's daughter, the head of a political consulting firm that has worked for Trump's rival Joe Biden and other Democratic candidates.

Trump's lawyers argued the gag order is an unconstitutional curb on the presumptive Republican nominee's free speech rights while he's campaigning for president and fighting criminal charges. The judge has fined Trump for repeatedly violating the gag order and has warned the former president that future violations could send him to jail.

## TRUMP'S SUPPORTERS

Limited by what he can say publicly about the case, Trump has been joined at the courthouse by a growing entourage of Republican supporters who echo his complaints about the prosecution. U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson was the latest to do so Tuesday, attacking the legal system as "corrupt" and the case against Trump a "sham."

It was a striking moment, underscoring Trump's political power even as he stands trial on criminal charges.

In remarks to reporters outside the courthouse, Johnson slammed Cohen as a man who has "trouble with the truth" and is "clearly on a mission for personal revenge." Painting Trump as the victim of a politically motivated legal system, Johnson said the case is "not about justice."

"The people are losing faith right now in this country, they're losing faith in our system of justice," Johnson said. "I came here again today on my own to support President Trump because I am one of hundreds of millions of people and one citizen who is deeply concerned about this," he said.

## The Latest | UN says over half a million people flee fighting in Gaza; Israel marks Independence Day

By The Associated Press undefined

More than half a million Palestinians have been displaced in recent days by escalating Israeli military operations in Rafah and northern Gaza, the United Nations says.

Israelis celebrated their Independence Day on Tuesday with barbecues in parks across the country, although the normally raucous parties were smaller and quieter this year because of the war in Gaza.

No food has entered the two main border crossings in southern Gaza for the past week. Some 1.1 million Palestinians face catastrophic levels of hunger — on the brink of starvation — according to the United Nations. A "full-blown famine" is taking place in the north.

Around 450,000 Palestinians have been driven out of Rafah in Gaza's south over the past week, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday. Israeli forces are pushing into the city, which they portray as the last Hamas stronghold.

In northern Gaza, Israeli evacuation orders have displaced at least 100,000 people so far, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters Monday. Israeli forces are battling Palestinian militants in areas the military said it had cleared months ago.

Seven months of Israeli bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 35,000 people, most of them women and children, according to local health officials.

The war began Oct. 7 when Hamas attacked southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting about 250 others. Israel says militants still hold around 100 hostages and the remains

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of more than 30 others.

Currently:

- Palestinians mark 76 years of dispossession as a potentially even larger catastrophe unfolds in Gaza.
- Misery deepens in Gaza's Rafah as Israeli troops press operation.
- Israelis mark a subdued Independence Day under the shadow of war in Gaza.
- Amsterdam university cancels classes after violence erupted at a pro-Palestinian rally.
- Harvard students end protest as university agrees to discuss Middle East conflict.

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

Here's the latest:

**WHITE HOUSE ADVISER JAKE SULLIVAN WILL TRAVEL TO ISRAEL AND SAUDI ARABIA, U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS**

WASHINGTON — White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan is expected to travel to Israel and Saudi Arabia this weekend, according to a U.S. official, amid growing American unease as Israeli forces push deeper into the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

The official, who requested anonymity to discuss the pending travel, did not disclose further details about who Sullivan would meet with during the trip.

Sullivan told reporters on Monday that he expected to meet with his Israeli counterpart in a "matter of days" to talk further "about the best way to ensure Hamas' defeat everywhere in Gaza, including in Rafah."

The Biden administration has been pressing Israel to forgo a large-scale operation in Rafah, and administration officials last week confirmed that the U.S. withheld a shipment of about 3,500 bombs for Israel out of concern they would be used in the densely crowded city.

Sullivan had planned a visit to Saudi Arabia last month but postponed that trip because he was recuperating from cracked ribs.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to comment on Sullivan's travel.

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Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani contributed to this report.

**ISRAELI STRIKE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON CITY KILLS 1 PERSON AND WOUNDS 2 OTHERS**

BEIRUT — One person was killed and two wounded in an apparent Israeli drone strike on a car on a busy thoroughfare near the coastal city of Tyre in south Lebanon on Tuesday evening, emergency responders said.

There was no statement from the Israeli military on the strike, and it was not immediately clear who had been killed.

Lebanon's civil defense said in a statement that its responders had extinguished a fire that broke out as a result of the strike and had recovered the body of one person and transported two others to a nearby hospital.

Israel has frequently carried out targeted strikes in Lebanon in recent months, against the backdrop of daily clashes between Israeli forces and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and allied groups. The fighting has taken place in the border region between the two countries, and sometimes beyond.

More than 370 people have been killed by Israeli strikes in Lebanon, most of them militants but also including more than 70 civilians and noncombatants, while strikes from Lebanon have killed at least 15 soldiers and 10 civilians in Israel.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a speech Monday reiterated his group's stance that it would keep up its strikes until Israel ends the war in Gaza.

**UNITED NATIONS BLAMES ISRAELI TANK FOR DEADLY ATTACK ON U.N. VEHICLE, AND GIVES DETAILS ON CASUALTIES**

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations is giving more details about Monday's deadly attack on a U.N. convoy in Gaza, saying an Israeli tank attacked a clearly marked U.N. vehicle. A U.N. security officer from India was killed and another security officer from Jordan was wounded.

The United Nations has no doubt that shots from an Israeli tank hit the back of a white U.N. vehicle en route to the European hospital in Gaza's southern city of Rafah, but wants to know the circumstances,

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said U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq on Tuesday.

He told reporters that the U.N. Department of Safety and Security, which employed the two staffers, has set up a fact-finding panel and the United Nations is in discussion with Israeli authorities.

Israel drew international outrage last month for killing seven charity aid workers in Gaza with a series of drone strikes targeting their vehicles, which were also clearly marked. Israel dismissed two officers over the killings, saying they violated the army's rules of engagement.

Haq identified the U.N. staff member killed as Waibhav Anil Kale. He is the first international employee of the United Nations to be killed in the current war in Gaza.

On his LinkedIn page, Kale said he left the Indian army as a deputy sector commander in July 2022 and then worked for Amazon as a program manager until June 2023. He joined the U.N. in April as a security coordination officer. Indian media said he was 46 and a retired army colonel.

Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified the injured U.N. staffer as Yara Dababneh and said a Jordanian military aircraft would fly her from Jerusalem -- where she was being transferred -- to Amman for treatment at Al-Hussein Medical City, a military medical complex.

"She's receiving medical attention," Haq said. "We believe that she will make it through."

**A HOSPITAL IN RAFAH IS FORCED TO SHUT DOWN DUE TO ISRAELI INCURSION, SAYS MEDICAL AID GROUP**

CAIRO — The international medical aid group Doctors Without Borders says a field hospital it was supplying in Rafah has been forced to shut down because of Israel's incursion into the southern Gaza city.

The group said Tuesday that the 22 patients at the Rafah Indonesian Field Hospital were transferred to other facilities or sent home, and 180 staff were pulled out.

The 60-bed hospital had been treating war wounded since December, according to the group, which goes by the French acronym MSF.

The latest evacuation orders from the Israeli military covered an area that comes to within a block of the hospital, MSF said. Although the hospital was not in the zone, they decided to leave for the protection of staff and patients, it said, citing Israel's deadly and destructive raids on hospitals across the Gaza Strip during its 7-month-old campaign in the territory.

According to the U.N., 24 of Gaza's 36 hospitals have shut down, with the rest only partially operating. Nine field hospitals are also set up in the territory, including six in Rafah, according to the U.N. MSF warned that the field hospitals cannot "cope with a massive influx of wounded civilians, on top of overwhelming medical needs. They can in no way replace a functional health system."

Israel's escalating incursion into Rafah the past week has driven some 450,000 Palestinians to flee the city, many of them setting up new sprawling tent camps further north. Israel has seized the Rafah crossing into neighboring Egypt and has stepped up bombardment and ground incursions into parts of the city, saying it aims to root out Hamas fighters who remain there.

**UNITED NATIONS CHIEF IS 'APPALLED' BY ISRAEL'S ESCALATING MILITARY ACTIVITY IN RAFAH**

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations chief "is appalled by the escalation of military activity in and around Rafah by the Israeli Defense Forces," which is further impeding desperately needed aid deliveries and worsening "an already dire situation," the U.N. says.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also criticized the indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hamas militants, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters Tuesday.

"For people in Gaza, nowhere is safe now," Haq quoted Guterres, who is in Oman, as saying.

"The families being displaced from Rafah are arriving at sites that lack shelter, latrines, and water points," Haq said. "However, it is impossible to improve the situation at displacement sites if supplies can't enter Gaza — and if we lack the fuel to transport them inside Gaza to the families who need them."

The U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, estimated that as of Monday nearly 450,000 people had fled Rafah within the previous week, Haq said. Before the incursion began last week, Rafah was housing some 1.3 million Palestinians, most of whom had fled fighting elsewhere.

Guterres called for the immediate reopening of the Rafah crossing from Egypt, a key delivery route for

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humanitarian supplies and fuel, which the Israeli military took control of last week.

The secretary-general also reiterated his urgent appeal for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire, the release of all hostages taken during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in Israel, protection for civilians and unimpeded access for aid workers throughout Gaza.

In another setback to the delivery of aid, the U.N. humanitarian office reported that Israeli settlers in the West Bank attacked aid trucks bound for Gaza on Monday.

"The settlers offloaded and vandalized the vehicles at the Tarqumiya checkpoint and near the barrier by Beit 'Awwa" and several trucks were damaged, he said.

Haq said: "Israel must protect against violence by Israeli settlers and ensure that all allegations of settler violence are investigated, and the perpetrators are prosecuted."

**ISRAEL FIRES DEADLY STRIKE INTO U.N. SCHOOL IN GAZA, SAYING IT WAS A HAMAS COMMAND POST JERUSALEM** — Israel said it struck a school run by the United Nations in central Gaza on Tuesday, allegedly killing 15 militants who were using part of the school as a "war room" for Hamas commanders.

A Palestinian doctor at the hospital where casualties were taken, Omar Deirawy, said the strike hit a shipping container used as a post by the Hamas-run police in a school-turned-shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing four policemen. The police are a civilian force distinct from Hamas' military wing.

Video from the scene showed twisted sheets of metal from the strike in what appeared to be a yard of the school. The Palestinian Civil Defense, an emergency service operating in Gaza, identified the school as one run by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

The Israeli military said 10 of those killed were member of Hamas and did not specify the identity of the other five. It said Hamas was using the school as a command center but provided no evidence.

The differing accounts and tolls could not be independently confirmed. UNRWA told The Associated Press they were not able to comment on Tuesday's report but said "any report of a violation of a U.N. premises must be investigated."

Throughout the war, Israeli forces have struck hospitals, schools and other U.N.-run facilities sheltering Palestinian families fleeing their bombed-out homes. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas, saying militants operate among the population.

Israel accuses UNRWA, the largest aid group operating in the war-stricken enclave, of collaborating with Hamas and turning a blind eye to the militant group's activities in Gaza. It has repeatedly accused militants of operating out of UNRWA schools. The agency denies the claims.

More than 160 UNRWA facilities have been damaged and 191 U.N. staffers have been killed in the war, according to the U.N.

## ISRAEL'S FAR RIGHT SEEKS REOCCUPATION OF GAZA

**SDEROT, Israel** — Thousands of people marched in the southern Israeli city of Sderot on Tuesday calling for the a return to military occupation for Gaza once the war is over.

Far-right Israelis are calling for the reestablishment of settlements in Gaza, saying they're needed to protect the country. Israeli troops withdrew from Gaza in 2005, uprooting some 9,000 settlers in a move that bitterly divided Israel.

"We want to tell everybody in Israel and everybody in the world that Gaza is very very important to us and it has to be again in Israeli hands. Because if it won't be in Israeli hands we won't finish the things that we started doing in this war," said Smadar Dei, one of the marchers.

The Biden administration says it won't accept a return of Israeli military occupation of the Gaza Strip.

Sderot, which is a few kilometers from Gaza, was one of the first towns impacted when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, and the war is still very much felt in the area.

On Tuesday, which is Israel's independence day, supporters snaked through the city, waving Israeli flags, dancing and singing Hebrew songs against the backdrop of outgoing Israeli shelling into Gaza followed by plumes of smoke.

Rockets were also fired into Sderot from Gaza on Tuesday as people ducked for cover. Associated Press reporters saw what appeared to be the interception of rockets in the sky.

Supporters of reoccupying Gaza said the only way to secure Israel is by expanding Jewish settlements

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across the territory.

"Instead of this smoke we want to see Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip," said Daniella Weiss, one of the organizers who's known as the godmother of the settler movement.

"No more smoke or bombs, no more shelling on Sderot," she said.

**U.N. SAYS ITS CONVOY WAS ATTACKED DESPITE BEING CLEARLY MARKED AND ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE**

GENEVA — The United Nations said Tuesday that a U.N. convoy that was attacked in Gaza a day earlier, killing an Indian staff member and injuring another staffer, was clearly marked and its planned movements had been announced in advance to Israeli authorities.

The Israeli military said previously that it was investigating the incident, which occurred near Rafah in southern Gaza, and that an initial inquiry showed the vehicle was struck in an "active combat zone" and that Israeli Defense Forces "had not been made aware of the route of the vehicle."

Rolando Gomez, a U.N. spokesman in Geneva, told a regular briefing that the U.N. informs Israeli authorities of the movement of all its convoys in Gaza.

"This is a standard operating procedure. That was the case yesterday morning," Gomez said.

The U.N. says the incident marked the first time that a U.N. international staff member has been killed since Israel launched a military offensive in Gaza after the deadly Oct. 7 attacks in Israel led by the militant Palestinian group Hamas.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider of aid in Gaza, says at least 188 of its employees have been killed since the start of the war.

Gomez said the death of the security staffer — whom he identified as an Indian national — was "a sheer illustration that there is really nowhere safe in Gaza at the moment," and that the convoy was on its way to the European Hospital in Rafah.

**NEARLY 450,000 PEOPLE HAVE FLED FROM RAFAH, U.N. SAYS**

JERUSALEM — The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees says nearly 450,000 people have fled from Gaza's southern city of Rafah since Israel launched an incursion there last week.

In a post on the social platform X on Tuesday, UNRWA said "people face constant exhaustion, hunger and fear. Nowhere is safe. An immediate #ceasefire is the only hope."

The U.N. said Monday that another 100,000 people have been displaced in northern Gaza. Israel has ordered new evacuations in the north as it battles a resurgent Hamas in areas that were heavily bombed and cleared by ground troops earlier in the war.

That would mean nearly a quarter of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced in just the last week, more than seven months into the Israel-Hamas war.

The fighting in Rafah has made the two main border crossings into southern Gaza largely inaccessible, while newly opened crossings in the north only allow in a trickle of aid.

Humanitarian organizations say they are struggling to provide dwindling supplies of food, tents and blankets to the large numbers of newly displaced.

Israel has portrayed Rafah as Hamas' last stronghold in Gaza and has said it must operate there in order to defeat the group and return scores of hostages captured in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

Before the incursion began last week, Rafah was housing some 1.3 million Palestinians, most of whom had fled fighting elsewhere.

**QATAR PRIME MINISTER PLEDGES TO KEEP MEDIATING BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS AND SAYS 'A CEASE-FIRE IS REQUIRED NOW'**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Qatar's prime minister said Tuesday that Doha would continue in its work as a mediator between Israel and Hamas amid the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and that "a cease-fire is required now."

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who also serves as Qatar's foreign minister, acknowledged that there had been a "reassessment" over its role as a mediator in recent weeks after facing widespread criticism by Israeli media outlets and politicians there. However, he said Qatar would continue in its work, though he noted that the country "didn't want to be used or abused as a mediator."

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"We need to stop the killing," Sheikh Mohammed said. "We need to stop (the) atrocities that's happening and, of course, negotiate a deal for the hostages."

However, he added: "It's at the hands of the parties at the end of the day." He described the Israeli side as having "no clarity" over how to stop the war as it continued to squeeze in around Rafah, the city in the southern part of the Gaza Strip where many have fled amid the 7-month war there.

Sheikh Mohammed's remarks also suggested Hamas would continue to be based out of Doha. The militant group has had a political office there since 2012. Both Qatar and Egypt have served as mediators in negotiations over the war, which saw one cease-fire in November that saw Israeli hostages released in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

Sheikh Mohammed spoke at the Qatar Economic Forum, put on by the Bloomberg news agency.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell contributed.

## RIGHTS GROUP SAYS ISRAELI MILITARY HAS CARRIED OUT AT LEAST 8 STRIKES ON AID WORKERS AND THEIR CONVOYS

JERUSALEM — Human Rights Watch says Israeli forces have carried out at least eight strikes on aid workers and their convoys, killing at least 15 people, including two children, since the start of the war in Gaza.

The New York-based rights group said in a report Tuesday that in each case the aid groups had provided their coordinates to Israeli authorities to ensure their safety. It says no advance warning was given before the strikes, which also wounded at least 16 people.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says over 250 aid workers have been killed since the start of the war, mostly Palestinian employees of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider in the territory.

The Israeli military says it is investigating after a member of a U.N. security team was killed while driving in the southern city of Rafah on Monday. The military said the shooting occurred in an "active combat zone" and that it had not been informed of the vehicle's route.

The U.N. said one of its international staff was killed and another wounded on Monday when their clearly-marked U.N. vehicle was fired upon. It did not say who was responsible or provide the nationalities of the staffers.

Human Rights Watch says the eight incidents it documented "reveal fundamental flaws with the so-called deconfliction system, meant to protect aid workers and allow them to safely deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance in Gaza."

Belkis Wille, associate crisis, conflict, and arms director at Human Rights Watch, said "Israel's allies need to recognize that these attacks that have killed aid workers have happened over and over again, and they need to stop."

Israel came under heavy criticism last month after launching a series of strikes that killed seven aid workers with World Central Kitchen, the charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés.

Israel acknowledged its forces had made a mistake in that case. It later said it had dismissed two officers and reprimanded three more for mishandling critical information and violating the army's rules of engagement.

Aid organizations say their ability to deliver life-saving assistance to Gaza's 2.3 million people has been hampered by Israeli restrictions, ongoing fighting and the difficulty of coordinating movements with the Israeli military. The U.N. says severe hunger is widespread in Gaza and that the northern part of the territory is experiencing "full-blown famine."

Human Rights Watch says Israel did not respond to a request for information on the strikes sent on May 1. The military did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

ISRAELI STRIKES IN CENTRAL GAZA KILL AT LEAST 12 OVERNIGHT, PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS SAY  
JERUSALEM — Palestinian officials say Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 12 people overnight and into Tuesday.

The Civil Defense says its first responders recovered eight bodies from a three-story house that was flattened in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp. Four of the dead, including two men in their 60s and two

women, were brought to a nearby hospital.

Another strike hit a caravan used by the Hamas-run police in a school-turned shelter in Nuseirat, killing at least four police officers.

The nearby Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital recorded the deaths.

Israel has repeatedly targeted Gaza's police force as part of its campaign to dismantle the group's military and governing abilities. The police in turn have largely vanished from the streets, contributing to a breakdown in law and order that has hindered humanitarian aid operations.

Gaza's Health Ministry says a total of 82 people killed in Israeli strikes have been brought to hospitals in Gaza in the last 24 hours, as well as 234 wounded people.

It says a total of 35,173 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, which was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel. The ministry does not differentiate between fighters and civilians in its tallies.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 13,000 militants, without providing evidence.

WHITE HOUSE ADVISER SAYS ISRAEL RISKS AN ENDLESS COUNTERINSURGENCY IN GAZA

WASHINGTON — White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Monday that the U.S. administration has expressed concerns to Israeli officials about becoming "mired in a counterinsurgency campaign that never ends" as Israel's War Cabinet remains focused on carrying out a major operation the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

The comments from a top adviser to President Joe Biden came a day after Secretary of State Antony Blinken cautioned that Israel could be left "holding the bag" on an enduring insurgency in post-war Gaza.

"Look, we have painful experience in counterinsurgency campaigns fighting terrorists in urban environments, in populated areas," said Sullivan, referring to long U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "And we know that it is not as simple as executing a military operation and calling it a day."

Sullivan added that, "One of the risks of engaging in any kind of counterinsurgency campaign is the ability of the terrorist group to attract more recruits and more followers as time goes on."

Sullivan said he spoke to his Israeli and Egyptian counterparts on Sunday about redoubling diplomatic efforts on a hostage-for-truce negotiations, and that U.S. officials would have further conversations with the Israelis in the coming days about how Israel can refine its plan to go after Hamas militants in Rafah while lessening the risk to Palestinian civilians.

He also pushed back against growing criticism from around the globe — as well as American critics of Israel's prosecution of the war — who say Israeli forces are committing a genocide against the Palestinians.

Egypt, a key U.S. ally, said it would join South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, which accuses Israel of violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention.

"I can't say that it's helpful to the discussions between Egypt and Israel to try to sort through assistance and access issues," Sullivan said of the move announced Sunday by Cairo, which along with Qatar is a mediator in the cease-fire talks.

The top United Nations court has concluded there is a "plausible risk of genocide" in Gaza — a charge Israel strongly denies.

## **Blinken in Kyiv tries to rally sagging Ukrainian spirits as Russia makes new military gains**

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken sought Tuesday to rally the spirits of glum Ukrainians facing a fierce new Russian offensive, assuring them during a visit to Kyiv that they are not alone and that billions of dollars in American military aid on its way after months of political delays will make a "real difference" on the battlefield.

After a day of meetings with senior officials, civil society figures and university students when he exhorted them against being discouraged, Blinken took to the stage at a bar in Ukraine's capital to play rhythm guitar and sing with a local band on Neil Young's 1989 hit "Rockin' in the Free World."

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The performance, and a series of sunny comments from Blinken about Ukraine's battlefield prospects, was a startling juxtaposition to what analysts have called one of the most dangerous moments for Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Russian forces have taken swaths of territory along Ukraine's northeast border, and thousands of civilians in the Kharkiv region have fled the increasingly intense attacks.

But Blinken told Ukrainian leaders during his unannounced visit to Kyiv that despite a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid that left them vulnerable to these renewed Russian military strikes, more weaponry is coming and some has already arrived.

He made the case even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed to him personally for more air defense systems to protect civilians under intense Russian fire in the northeast. Blinken, on fourth trip to Kyiv since the war began, also lambasted Russian President Vladimir Putin for underestimating Ukraine's determination to fight back.

"We meet at a critical moment," he told students at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. "The coming weeks and months will demand a great deal of Ukrainians, who have already sacrificed so much. I've come to Ukraine with a message: You are not alone."

He also pushed back on the notion that time is on Putin's side.

"Putin has it wrong — time is on Ukraine's side," Blinken said. "As the war goes on, Russia is going back in time. Ukraine is moving forward."

But the reality on the ground is that Moscow's troops have captured about 100 to 125 square kilometers (40 to 50 square miles) in recent days in the northeast Kharkiv region, including at least seven villages, according to open-source monitoring analysts. People had already left most of those villages, but the fighting drove out thousands of others.

Seeking to take advantage of Ukrainian shortages in manpower and weapons while new U.S. assistance is in transit, Russian forces also have been making a concerted push in the east to drive deeper into the partly occupied Donetsk region. The main focus of Russian attacks Tuesday was Pokrovsk, just inside the Ukrainian border in Donetsk, where the Kremlin's forces launched 24 assaults, the Ukrainian general staff said in a report.

"We know this is a challenging time," Blinken told Zelenskyy after arriving on an overnight train from Poland. But, he added that U.S. military aid is "going to make a real difference against the ongoing Russian aggression on the battlefield."

Congress approved a long-delayed foreign assistance package last month that sets aside \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine, much of which will go toward replenishing badly depleted artillery and air defense systems. Since then, the Biden administration has announced \$1.4 billion in short-term military assistance and \$6 billion in longer-term support.

Zelenskyy thanked Blinken for the aid but said more is necessary, including two Patriot air defense systems urgently needed to protect Kharkiv.

"The people are under attack: civilians, warriors, everybody. They're under Russian missiles," he said.

Artillery, air defense interceptors and long-range ballistic missiles have already been delivered, some of them already to the front lines, said a senior U.S. official traveling with Blinken who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity ahead of Blinken's meetings.

Moscow's renewed offensive in Kharkiv is the most significant border incursion since the early days of the war, following months when the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line barely budged.

More than 7,500 civilians have been evacuated from the area, according to authorities. At the same time, the Kremlin's forces are expanding their push to the northern border regions of Sumy and Chernihiv, Ukrainian officials say, and Kyiv's outgunned and outnumbered soldiers are struggling to hold them back.

Troops fought street to street on the outskirts of Vovchansk, among the largest towns in the Kharkiv area, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on national television. Two civilians were killed in Russian shelling Tuesday, he said.

The U.N. human rights office said the battles are taking a heavy toll.

"We are deeply concerned at the plight of civilians in Ukraine," Liz Throssell, spokeswoman for the office

of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in Geneva. "In the Kharkiv region, the situation is dire."

Russia in recent weeks also has launched wide attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The operator of the national high-voltage electricity grid, Ukrenergo, said it was starting "controlled emergency shut-downs" for industries and households because of "a significant shortage of electricity in the system due to Russian shelling and an increase in consumption due to the cold weather."

Blinken told Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal that the U.S. intends to support Kyiv beyond the war's end.

"The United States is determined, determined to help Ukraine succeed — succeed both in the battle-field victory but also succeed, as we would say, in winning the peace and building the strongest possible Ukraine," Blinken said.

But delays in U.S. assistance, particularly since the Israel-Hamas war has preoccupied top administration officials, have triggered deep concerns in Kyiv and Europe. Blinken, for example, has visited the Middle East seven times since the war in Gaza began in October. His last trip to Kyiv was in September.

Blinken went with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba for lunch at a Kyiv pizza restaurant founded by Ukrainian veterans, calling it "superb." On Blinken's last visit, the pair ate at a recently reopened McDonald's restaurant.

Blinken and other U.S. officials said despite some recent setbacks, Ukraine could still claim significant victories. Those include reclaiming some 50% of the territory Russian forces took in the early months of the war, boosting its economic standing and improving transportation and trade links, not least through military successes in the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, Putin plans to make a two-day state visit to China this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said. Beijing has backed Moscow politically in the war and has sent machine tools, electronics and other items seen as contributing to the Russian war effort, without actually exporting weaponry.

## **AP Investigation: Training failures can lead police to deadly use of common handcuffing tactic**

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

For decades, police across the United States have been warned that the common tactic of handcuffing someone facedown could turn deadly if officers pin them on the ground with too much pressure or for too long.

Recommendations first made by major departments and police associations culminated in a 1995 federal safety bulletin that explained keeping someone on their chest in what's known as prone restraint can dangerously restrict breathing. The solution: Once cuffed, turn them onto their side.

Yet today, what some officers are doing on the street conflicts with what has long been recognized as safe, a deadly disconnect that highlights ongoing failures in police training, an Associated Press investigation has found.

The cases involving prone restraint are among more than 1,000 AP documented over a decade of people who died not by gunshot but after officers used force that is not meant to kill. In all, at least 740 of these encounters involved prone restraint, making it the most prevalent tactic. It was also commonly misapplied.

In about half of the 740 cases, officers continued to pin someone down after handcuffing, often pressing with knees or hands when the person was controlled. That included people especially susceptible to the risks of prone restraint — those who were obese, impaired by drugs or had a medical condition.

Many people were held down longer than five minutes. In the extreme, at least 13 were down for 10 minutes or more — longer than George Floyd, whose 2020 death thrust policing back into the national conversation. Other cases involved police lying across, sitting or even standing on someone's back.

Training that is ineffective, or that contradicts longstanding best practices, happens in part because policing in the U.S. lacks a national rulebook. The federal government's 1995 guidance that warns against pressing someone down is just that — guidance, not the law.

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Each state writes its own standards, and individual departments and training centers determine what officers hear in classrooms and gyms. The safest techniques don't always filter down to officers.

In 2021, California became the rare state to pass a law limiting police tactics that could result in death due to the positioning of someone's body. One intent was to limit the use of prone restraint. Yet AP found instructors at several state-certified training centers continue to teach — wrongly — that holding someone facedown doesn't cause death by what's known as positional asphyxia, which happens when the chest can't expand, starving the body of oxygen.

That message traces back to a small group of police-aligned lawyers, physicians, experts and academics who authored studies they have used to defend officers facing wrongful death lawsuits. Experts who challenge this group in court say bad information is putting officers in a position of doing what they think is right, only to end up with a dead suspect and a court date.

"Body weight will restrict the ability to expand the chest, and they'll die, and everybody knows it," said Roger Clark, a retired Los Angeles County Sheriff's lieutenant who testifies about police policies and training in use-of-force cases, usually against officers.

Officers almost always used prone restraint with other force, and within AP's database medical officials cited prone position or asphyxia due to restraint as a cause or contributing factor in 61 of the 740 cases that involved the maneuver during the investigation's 2012-2021 timeframe. In dozens of other cases, officers used prone restraint and "restraint" was cited as causing or contributing to the death, but prone position or restraint was not specified.

In many other cases, the cause of death focused on drugs or medical conditions instead of force. Due to the suppression of records, reporters were not always able to get the official determination.

Some states said they require robust training. Since at least 2011, Georgia has mandated that officers learn how to safely restrain subjects facedown, according to the agency that oversees training. But officers in at least three Georgia deaths said they didn't recall learning or were never taught the risks, according to AP's investigation, done in collaboration with the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism and FRONTLINE (PBS).

One such death in Sylvester, a town surrounded by cotton fields and peanut farms, shows how quickly a person's health can deteriorate when they are held down.

On an autumn night in 2016, Sgt. Adam Celinski responded to a 911 call about a paranoid man banging on the door of a woman's home.

The man, Terrell "Al" Clark, told Celinski he was high on "powder" and needed help. Celinski's body-camera video showed he was calm and courteous as he handcuffed the man. Clark also was polite, but neighbors watched as he began to struggle and the officer got Clark facedown on some roadside grass, using a knee and hand to ensure he stayed there.

The 47-year-old trucker had heart disease and was a heavy cocaine user, two risk factors Celinski couldn't have seen. After a minute on the ground, Clark lost consciousness. Minutes later, he was dead. Clark's girlfriend Bontressa Brown, seven months pregnant with his son, arrived after he was loaded into the ambulance.

In an interview, Celinski told AP that on that night he had not known holding someone facedown could be risky, and had safely used the technique his entire career.

While the Georgia Public Safety Training Center could not document exactly what Celinski was taught as a recruit in 2013, its leader of basic training told the AP that positional asphyxia was part of his curriculum, and instructors had to certify that graduates understood it. Told that, Celinski said positional asphyxia may have been discussed briefly during the 408-hour basic training course. Amid everything cadets must learn, he said, any lesson didn't stick.

A medical examiner ruled Clark's death an accident caused by cocaine and heart failure, and did not cite prone position. Celinski said he doesn't believe the restraint contributed. Given subsequent training, Celinski said he now repositions suspects — and would have with Clark, to ensure he did everything right.

"I would have definitely done something differently," Celinski, now a lieutenant with the Worth County Sheriff's Office, said of Clark. "But I didn't know."

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## PATCHWORK OF TRAINING

What officers learn about the risks of prone restraint depends on geography.

Nearly all states have a Peace Officer Standards and Training agency that sets out what must be taught, so AP asked each commission whether it requires instruction on positional asphyxia.

Among the states that responded, 10 said they did not require positional asphyxia training. Some of the 20 states that said they do include that training had deaths blamed at least in part on prone restraint, including Florida, Rhode Island and Georgia. Officers in all three states testified in lawsuits that they were not trained, or didn't recall any training.

After Floyd's death, lawmakers across the country introduced bills targeting prone restraint. While most failed, California passed a law intended to curtail its use, and legislatures in Pennsylvania and Colorado are considering measures.

California's 2021 law said departments "shall not authorize techniques or transport methods that involve a substantial risk of positional asphyxia." The legislation's sponsor, Assemblymember Mike Gipson, said he wanted to limit prone restraint, because "it causes death." The legislation does not include criminal penalties for violating it.

The California Police Chiefs Association opposed Gipson's bill, writing that it would "remove tools needed to overcome dangerous individuals." But the law hasn't stopped some instructors at state-certified training centers in Northern California and Riverside County from continuing to teach that holding someone facedown is a best practice.

"We teach that the safest place for a struggling suspect is to put them on their stomach," Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said of training for his deputies in an interview. "And we teach them that that is not dangerous, even though some people say that it is."

Bianco said that if a suspect is not struggling, a deputy could sit them up, "just to be on the nicer side of law enforcement." AP documented eight restraint deaths involving the sheriff's office. Bianco blamed methamphetamine for the deaths, though that was not always the official cause. "There is nothing that has ever come out scientifically that says positional asphyxia is the thing," according to Bianco.

Among the most senior instructors in Northern California is David Rose. In his 40 years as a trainer, Rose has taught thousands of officers that prone restraint is safe. His pupils take his teachings back to their departments as instructors and, in some cases, investigate deaths involving prone restraint.

Rose said he instructs officers to hold a person facedown with as little pressure as necessary, unless they are combative. He said the methods he teaches don't run afoul of California's law because prone restraint doesn't carry a serious risk of positional asphyxia.

"Positional asphyxia doesn't happen at all. In the field, it doesn't happen," Rose said in an interview at a regional training center in Sacramento.

"Putting weight on a person's back in a prone position does not lead to them expiring unless it's enough that it can actually squash them," he said.

Placing someone on their stomach is not inherently life-threatening, and police use it every day without harming people. But AP's investigation identified 44 cases where a medical examiner or coroner said prone restraint caused or contributed to the death, and another 17 which cited positional asphyxia or asphyxia due to restraint. Informed of this finding, Rose said he relies on the latest information he has gathered.

Rose bases his conclusions on several studies by experts with longstanding ties to law enforcement. The principal author of one such study is Darrell L. Ross, a criminal justice professor at Valdosta State University who has worked for decades in and around law enforcement, including as a prison guard and police trainer. Since 1988, Ross has been hired to defend officers as an expert witness, according to his biography, and has done so in dozens of cases.

For his study, Ross asked 17 law enforcement agencies in six states to collect data on arrests. Over a year, Ross wrote, the agencies reported officers used prone position in 1,085 "violent arrest incidents," for about one to five minutes each time, and nobody died.

While he acknowledged the limitations of a study that relies on officers to self-report force, Ross said the results are significant. In an interview, he attributed deaths of people held facedown to drug use or

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other conditions, not prone restraint.

"I'm not going to say it can never happen," Ross said. "I mean, that would be foolish, but I don't think that has the compelling percentage or likelihood or even the statistical significance."

Dr. Alon Steinberg, a cardiologist who has authored more recent studies that link deaths to prone restraint, is a leading voice against views like those of Ross. Steinberg said the Ross study is flawed because it includes too few departments and officers knew they were under scrutiny.

"Prone restraint has (been) shown to cause death," Steinberg said. "What I'm worried about is the fact that people are dying because of it and the cops don't know better."

Soon after the AP shared its findings with Rose recently, the trainer wrote that he had just received one of Steinberg's studies, and planned to add it to his lecture notes.

AP contacted the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training and asked whether Rose's teachings on positional asphyxia align with state requirements. "POST is taking action and has notified the (Sacramento training) center that they are not compliant with the law. The issue will be remedied," spokesperson Meagan Poulos wrote in an email Monday.

## MISUNDERSTANDING PRONE

What has become widespread agreement on the dangers of prone position began to coalesce about 30 years ago. That's when agencies as diverse as the New York Police Department and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation made videos warning about positional asphyxia. One major industry group, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, published a "training key" in 1993 that said prone position can kill.

To understand what officers knew before deaths involving prone restraint, reporters scoured thousands of pages of interviews and depositions.

In nearly 100 cases, AP identified documents that showed whether officers had training in or otherwise knew the risk of positional asphyxia. In 80 deaths, at least one involved officer had been trained in or knew the potential dangers, though they did not always turn someone off their stomach promptly. Officers in another 14 deaths said they had no training and did not know the risks; could not recall training; or — in a few cases — were trained that prone position is safe.

Some officers repeated two common misconceptions that experts and trainers have long tried to dispel: That if someone can talk they can breathe, and that someone struggling for air is resisting arrest.

To speak, air must move across the vocal cords in the throat. To inhale oxygen and expel carbon dioxide, air must travel to and from the lungs. The short additional distance can be huge if someone is laboring to breathe.

James Britt, a 50-year-old lift operator at a boatyard, was intoxicated when an officer in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, stopped to help him fix a flat tire. Other officers arrived and tensions rose as they tried to arrest him for disorderly conduct. Britt grew agitated as officers got him facedown, handcuffed his wrists behind his back and secured his legs, according to a report by investigators.

"Roll me over. I can't breathe. Please let me breathe," he could be heard screaming on dashcam video, to which an unidentified officer replied, "if you're talking, you're breathing."

Officer Darren Raley later told investigators that he thought Britt was fine when he was yelling. "It's kind of like a crying baby in a choking situation," Raley said. "If they are crying, they are breathing." After medics gave Britt the drug ketamine to sedate him, Raley noticed he was no longer breathing and alerted the medics, later saying they didn't respond with urgency.

In all, three officers held Britt down for 19 minutes. His cause of death was "restraint asphyxia and the toxic effects of ketamine." Britt's widow filed a lawsuit against police and medics and won a \$4.1 million settlement. The AP reached out to Raley and the police department, but they declined to comment.

In cases AP reviewed, some officers also said the person was being combative or resisting — when they may just have been struggling to breathe, like a drowning swimmer who flails in a panic.

"There's a big difference between fighting the officers and fighting for breath," said Seth Stoughton, a University of South Carolina law professor and national use-of-force expert who as a former officer and police trainer has written extensively about prone restraint.

Harriett Jefferson had called 911 many times seeking help for her son Reginald Payne, a 48-year-old

diabetic who sometimes acted incoherently when his blood sugar levels were low. In February 2020, she called for the last time.

Payne, a college graduate and author, was sitting on a couch in the family home in Sacramento, California, swinging his arms and legs when paramedics arrived. They couldn't check him, so they summoned police for help.

Three officers spoke with Payne for about 25 seconds before he slid to the floor and they rushed in. They flipped him onto his stomach and handcuffed his wrists, then two officers positioned themselves on each side of his back and held him in place while a third crossed his feet and pushed them toward his buttocks.

At around 6 feet tall and 250 pounds, Payne was obese — a well-established risk factor for prone position. Officers held him down that night for seven minutes, telling Payne he was all right as he thrashed his head side to side, gasping for air. "I can't breathe," he yelled. "Momma! Daddy!"

A lawsuit from Payne's family alleged the officers were not properly trained. Under oath, one said he had learned the dangers of positional asphyxia but needed to control Payne. "I felt it was just his effort to escape us or get away from us," Officer John Helmich, one of the officers who knelt by his shoulder, said of Payne's movements during a deposition.

The Sacramento Police Department declined to make Helmich available for questions. The city agreed to settle the lawsuit last month for \$4.3 million.

Eventually, first responders put Payne on a gurney and wheeled him to a waiting ambulance. "He'll be right as rain when he comes home," a fire department captain assured Payne's mother.

Payne never left the hospital. A coroner determined his cause of death was "sudden cardiac arrest while being restrained in prone position."

## **The US is wrapping up a pier to bring aid to Gaza by sea. But danger and uncertainty lie ahead**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the coming days, the U.S. military in the eastern Mediterranean is expected to jab one end of a hulking metal dock — the length of five U.S. football fields — into a beach in northern Gaza.

And that may be the end of the easy part for the Biden administration's two-month-long, \$320 million effort to open a sea route to get humanitarian aid into Gaza, with dangers and uncertainties ahead for aid delivery teams as fighting surges and the plight of starving Palestinians grows more dire.

For President Joe Biden, the Pentagon's new floating pier and causeway are a gamble, an attempted workaround to the challenges of getting aid into Gaza from intensifying war and the restrictions its ally Israel has placed at land crossings since Hamas' deadly attacks on Israel launched the conflict in October.

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said Tuesday that humanitarian groups were ready for the first shipments through the U.S. maritime route. "In the coming days, you can expect to see this effort underway. And we are confident that that we will be able to, working with our NGO partners, ensure that aid can be delivered," he said.

Relief groups are watching to see if Israeli officials will allow a freer flow of food and other supplies through this sea route than they have by land and follow through on pledges to protect aid workers. They say protections for humanitarian workers have not improved and point to aid already piling up at Gaza's border crossings, waiting for decisions by Israeli officials to distribute it.

Because land crossings could bring in all the needed aid if Israeli officials allowed, the U.S.-built pier and sea route "is a solution for a problem that doesn't exist," said Scott Paul, an associate director of the Oxfam humanitarian organization.

"Like all of the land crossings, it comes down to the consent of the government of Israel" on allowing aid through its screening process and ensuring aid teams are safe to distribute it within Gaza, Paul said.

"If Israel is comfortable with allowing the maritime corridor to function ... then it will work in a limited way," he said this week, as the U.S. military said it was waiting out bad weather to put the pier and dock

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in place. "And if they don't, it won't. Which is why it's a very, very expensive alternative."

Ophir Falk, foreign policy adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Tuesday that the country had enabled the entrance of thousands of aid trucks into Gaza and would continue to do so. It repeated accusations that Hamas was disrupting aid distribution by hijacking and attacking convoys. U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said this month that there was only one major incident of Hamas commandeering aid trucks.

The Israeli military said in a statement Tuesday that it will keep acting in line with international law to distribute aid to Gaza. It also has previously said there are no limits on aid, it is trying to keep crossings open despite Hamas attacks and has blamed the U.N. for problems with distribution.

With food and aid in short supply in Gaza throughout the war, the head of the U.N. World Food Program and others say that famine has taken hold in northern Gaza and is spreading south.

After an Israeli attack killed seven World Central Kitchen workers on an aid mission on April 1, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to Biden to allow in more aid and safeguard those workers.

Last month, truckloads of aid entering Gaza increased by 13%, said Anastasia Moran, an associate director for the International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian group. But the daily average of trucks entering in April still was about half the average of 500 trucks a day that crossed before the war.

Moran also said Israeli officials have denied permission to roughly two-thirds of aid missions that humanitarian groups have asked to run into northern Gaza, where starvation is the worst.

Now, Israel's military operation in the southern city of Rafah to root out Hamas militants has closed one of Gaza's two main border crossings, while a spate of Hamas attacks has crippled operations at the other crossing, cutting fuel and aid deliveries into Gaza.

It's unclear how much the cutoffs and surge in fighting will affect American-led efforts to deliver food, emergency nutrition for children and other aid to be brought in via the sea route. But humanitarian operations are under threat throughout Gaza, aid officials said.

"The whole aid operation runs on fuel," said Jeremy Konyndyk, president of Refugees International. "So if fuel is cut off, the aid operation collapses, and it collapses quickly."

Safety is another essential need for humanitarian workers — and that too is in short supply. Oxfam, Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee and other organizations assert that Israel's government has failed to make the promised changes to protect humanitarian missions within Gaza from Israeli attack.

On Monday, an attack on a U.N. convoy killed an Indian staff member and injured another staffer. The United Nations said Tuesday that the convoy was clearly marked and its planned movements had been announced in advance to Israeli authorities. Israeli officials said they were investigating and denied being told of the convoy's whereabouts.

Around the world, the process of humanitarian workers communicating their planned movements to combatants and getting clearance to move is known as "deconfliction."

The problem in Gaza, before and after the World Central Kitchen killings, is that Israel has aid teams communicate their plans to the civilian Israeli agency that oversees Palestinian territory, said Paul, the Oxfam official. But unlike the usual operations in other countries, aid teams typically receive no word back from that agency, no assurance that their plans have been passed along to Israeli forces on the ground and no assurances of safety, Paul said.

"There's still not a functioning humanitarian notification system or deconfliction system," said Alexandra Saieh, head of humanitarian policy and advocacy for Save the Children.

Human Rights Watch on Tuesday pointed to eight Israeli strikes on aid group lodgings and convoys whose locations, according to the organizations, had been passed along to Israeli authorities in advance.

The rights group quoted an aid official as saying that without security for these teams, vitally needed goods would pile up undelivered regardless of piers or shipments. Human Rights Watch did not identify the official, citing the person's security.

The U.S. Agency for International Development, which is charged with helping organize and oversee the distribution of aid within Gaza that will be brought in through the U.S. sea route, said it would "continue

to press Israel to create the conditions to ensure the safety of humanitarian actors and activities, open additional land crossings, remove impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid and do far more to prevent the killings" of humanitarian workers and civilians.

The U.N. World Food Program and other humanitarian groups will do the actual delivery of aid from the sea route, USAID said. No U.S. troops will set foot in Gaza. The Israeli military is to handle security on shore, which has been a concern for the United Nations.

The WFP has emphasized the need for neutrality when delivering aid. The sea route can supplement land deliveries but "nothing can compete with truck convoys when it comes to volume of aid," said Abeer Etefa, a spokeswoman for the organization.

Even if deconfliction problems were solved, teams charged with delivering aid from the sea route would find Gaza a deadly place to operate, said Paul, the Oxfam official. The war has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, Palestinian health officials say.

"Even a functioning deconfliction system isn't going to work in a free-fire zone," Paul said.

## **Alice Munro, Nobel literature winner revered as short story master, dead at 92**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

Nobel laureate Alice Munro, the Canadian literary giant who became one of the world's most esteemed contemporary authors and one of history's most honored short story writers, has died at age 92.

A spokesperson for publisher Penguin Random House Canada said Munro, winner of the Nobel literary prize in 2013, died Monday at home in Port Hope, Ontario. Munro had been in frail health for years and often spoke of retirement, a decision that proved final after the author's 2012 collection, "Dear Life."

Often ranked with Anton Chekhov, John Cheever and a handful of other short story writers, Munro achieved stature rare for an art form traditionally placed beneath the novel. She was the first lifelong Canadian to win the Nobel and the first recipient cited exclusively for short fiction. Echoing the judgment of so many before, the Swedish academy pronounced her a "master of the contemporary short story" who could "accommodate the entire epic complexity of the novel in just a few short pages."

Munro, little known beyond Canada until her late 30s, also became one of the few short story writers to enjoy ongoing commercial success. Sales in North America alone exceeded 1 million copies and the Nobel announcement raised "Dear Life" to the high end of The New York Times' bestseller list for paperback fiction. Other popular books included "Too Much Happiness," "The View from Castle Rock" and "The Love of a Good Woman."

Over a half century of writing, Munro perfected one of the greatest tricks of any art form: illuminating the universal through the particular, creating stories set around Canada that appealed to readers far away. She produced no single definitive work, but dozens of classics that were showcases of wisdom, technique and talent — her inspired plot twists and artful shifts of time and perspective; her subtle, sometimes cutting humor; her summation of lives in broad dimension and fine detail; her insights into people across age or background, her genius for sketching a character, like the adulterous woman introduced as "short, cushiony, dark-eyed, effusive. A stranger to irony."

Her best known fiction included "The Beggar Maid," a courtship between an insecure young woman and an officious rich boy who becomes her husband; "Corrie," in which a wealthy young woman has an affair with an architect "equipped with a wife and young family"; and "The Moons of Jupiter," about a middle-aged writer who visits her ailing father in a Toronto hospital and shares memories of different parts of their lives.

"I think any life can be interesting," Munro said during a 2013 post-prize interview for the Nobel Foundation. "I think any surroundings can be interesting."

Disliking Munro, as a writer or as a person, seemed almost heretical. The wide and welcoming smile captured in her author photographs was complemented by a down-to-earth manner and eyes of acute

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alertness, fitting for a woman who seemed to pull stories out of the air the way songwriters discovered melodies. She was admired without apparent envy, placed by the likes of Jonathan Franzen, John Updike and Cynthia Ozick at the very top of the pantheon. Munro's daughter, Sheila Munro, wrote a memoir in which she confided that "so unassailable is the truth of her fiction that sometimes I even feel as though I'm living inside an Alice Munro story." Fellow Canadian author Margaret Atwood called her a pioneer for women, and for Canadians.

"Back in the 1950s and 60s, when Munro began, there was a feeling that not only female writers but Canadians were thought to be both trespassing and transgressing," Atwood wrote in a 2013 tribute published in the Guardian after Munro won the Nobel. "The road to the Nobel wasn't an easy one for Munro: the odds that a literary star would emerge from her time and place would once have been zero."

Although not overtly political, Munro witnessed and participated in the cultural revolution of the 1960s and '70s and permitted her characters to do the same. She was a farmer's daughter who married young, then left her husband in the 1970s and took to "wearing miniskirts and prancing around," as she recalled during a 2003 interview with The Associated Press. Many of her stories contrasted the generation of Munro's parents with the more open-ended lives of their children, departing from the years when housewives daydreamed "between the walls that the husband was paying for."

Moviegoers would become familiar with "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," the improbably seamless tale of a married woman with memory loss who has an affair with a fellow nursing home patient, a story further complicated by her husband's many past infidelities. "The Bear" was adapted by Sarah Polley into the 2006 feature film "Away from Her," which brought an Academy Award nomination for Julie Christie. In 2014, Kristen Wiig starred in "Hateship, Loveship," an adaptation of the story "Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage," in which a housekeeper leaves her job and travels to a distant rural town to meet up with a man she believes is in love with her — unaware the romantic letters she has received were concocted by his daughter and a friend.

Even before the Nobel, Munro received honors from around the English-language world, including Britain's Man Booker International Prize and the National Book Critics Circle award in the U.S., where the American Academy of Arts and Letters voted her in as an honorary member. In Canada, she was a three-time winner of the Governor's General Award and a two-time winner of the Giller Prize.

Munro was a short story writer by choice, and, apparently, by design. Judith Jones, an editor at Alfred A. Knopf who worked with Updike and Anne Tyler, did not want to publish "Lives of Girls & Women," her only novel, writing in an internal memo that "there's no question the lady can write but it's also clear she is primarily a short story writer."

Munro would acknowledge that she didn't think like a novelist.

"I have all these disconnected realities in my own life, and I see them in other people's lives," she told the AP. "That was one of the problems, why I couldn't write novels. I never saw things hanging together too well."

Alice Ann Laidlaw was born in Wingham, Ontario, in 1931, and spent much of her childhood there, a time and place she often used in her fiction, including the four autobiographical pieces that concluded "Dear Life." Her father was a fox farmer, her mother a teacher and the family's fortunes shifted between middle class and working poor, giving the future author a special sensitivity to money and class. Young Alice was often absorbed in literature, starting with the first time she was read Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." She was a compulsive inventor of stories and the "sort of child who reads walking upstairs and props a book in front of her when she does the dishes."

A top student in high school, she received a scholarship to study at the University of Western Ontario, majoring in journalism as a "cover-up" for her pursuit of literature. She was still an undergraduate when she sold a story about a lonely teacher, "The Dimensions of a Shadow," to CBC Radio. She was also publishing work in her school's literary journal.

One fellow student read "Dimensions" and wrote to the then-Laidlaw, telling her the story reminded him of Chekhov. The student, Gerald Fremlin, would become her second husband. Another fellow student,

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James Munro, was her first husband. They married in 1951, when she was only 20, and had four children, one of whom died soon after birth.

Settling with her family in British Columbia, Alice Munro wrote between trips to school, housework and helping her husband at the bookstore that they co-owned and would turn up in some of her stories. She wrote one book in the laundry room of her house, her typewriter placed near the washer and dryer. Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers and other writers from the American South inspired her, through their sense of place and their understanding of the strange and absurd.

Isolated from the literary center of Toronto, she did manage to get published in several literary magazines and to attract the attention of an editor at Ryerson Press (later bought out by McGraw Hill). Her debut collection, "Dance of the Happy Shades," was released in 1968 with a first printing of just under 2,700 copies. A year later it won the Governor's General Award and made Munro a national celebrity — and curiosity. "Literary Fame Catches City Mother Unprepared," read one newspaper headline.

"When the book first came they sent me a half dozen copies. I put them in the closet. I didn't look at them. I didn't tell my husband they had come, because I couldn't bear it. I was afraid it was terrible," Munro told the AP. "And one night, he was away, and I forced myself to sit down and read it all the way through, and I didn't think it was too bad. And I felt I could acknowledge it and it would be OK."

By the early '70s, she had left her husband, later observing that she was not "prepared to be a submissive wife." Her changing life was best illustrated by her response to the annual Canadian census. For years, she had written down her occupation as "housewife." In 1971, she switched to "writer."

Over the next 40 years, her reputation and readership only grew, with many of her stories first appearing in The New Yorker. Her prose style was straightforward, her tone matter of fact, but her plots revealed unending disruption and disappointments: broken marriages, violent deaths, madness and dreams unfulfilled, or never even attempted. "Canadian Gothic" was one way she described the community of her childhood, a world she returned to when, in middle age, she and her second husband relocated to nearby Clinton.

"Shame and embarrassment are driving forces for Munro's characters," Atwood wrote, "just as perfectionism in the writing has been a driving force for her: getting it down, getting it right, but also the impossibility of that."

She had the kind of curiosity that would have made her an ideal companion on a long train ride, imagining the lives of the other passengers. Munro wrote the story "Friend of My Youth," in which a man has an affair with his fiancée's sister and ends up living with both women, after an acquaintance told her about some neighbors who belonged to a religion that forbade card games. The author wanted to know more — about the religion, about the neighbors.

Even as a child, Munro had regarded the world as an adventure and mystery and herself as an observer, walking around Wingham and taking in the homes as if she were a tourist. In "The Peace of Utrecht," an autobiographical story written in the late 1960s, a woman discovers an old high school notebook and remembers a dance she once attended with an intensity that would envelop her whole existence.

"And now an experience which seemed not at all memorable at the time," Munro wrote, "had been transformed into something curiously meaningful for me, and complete; it took in more than the girls dancing and the single street, it spread over the whole town, its rudimentary pattern of streets and its bare trees and muddy yards just free of the snow, over the dirt roads where the lights of cars appeared, jolting toward the town, under an immense pale wash of sky."

## Survey finds 8,000 women a month got abortion pills despite their states' bans or restrictions

By LAURA UNGAR and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Thousands of women in states with abortion bans and restrictions are receiving abortion pills in the mail from states that have laws protecting prescribers, a new report shows.

Tuesday's release of the #WeCount survey shows about 8,000 women a month in states that severely

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restrict abortion or place limits on having one through telehealth were getting the pills by mail by the end of 2023, the first time a number has been put on how often the medical system workaround is being used. The research was conducted for the Society of Family Planning, which supports abortion rights.

An additional 8,000 women in states without bans or major restrictions on telehealth abortion were receiving pills each month through virtual appointments, the study showed.

In all, the survey counted about 90,000 monthly surgical or medication abortions offered by medical providers in 2023, higher than the previous year. Another study recently found that close to two-thirds of the total use pills.

The group found that by December 2023, providers in states with the protections were prescribing pills to about 6,000 women a month in states where abortion was banned at all stages of pregnancy or once cardiac activity can be detected — about six weeks, often before women realize they're pregnant. The prescriptions also were going to about 2,000 women a month in states where the local laws limit abortion pill prescriptions by telemedicine.

"People ... are using the various mechanisms to get pills that are out there," Drexel University law professor David Cohen said. This "is not surprising based on what we know throughout human history and across the world: People will find a way to terminate pregnancies they don't want."

Medication abortions typically involve a combination two drugs: mifepristone and misoprostol. The rise of these pills is one reason total abortion numbers increased even after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022.

A Pew Research Center poll conducted in April found that Americans are substantially more likely to say that medication abortion should be legal, rather than illegal, in their state. According to the poll, which didn't look at laws protecting prescribers, more than half of U.S. adults think medication abortion should be legal in their state, a fifth of them say it should be illegal, and about a quarter say they aren't sure.

After Roe was overturned, abortion bans took effect in most Republican-controlled states. Fourteen states now prohibit it with few exceptions, while three others bar it after about six weeks of pregnancy.

But many Democratic-controlled states went the opposite way. They've adopted laws intended to protect people in their states from investigations involving abortion-related crimes by authorities in other states. By the end of last year, five of those states — Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont and Washington — had such protections in place specifically to cover abortion pill prescriptions by telemedicine.

"If a Colorado provider provides telehealth care to a patient who's in Texas, Colorado will not participate in any Texas criminal action or civil lawsuit," Cohen said. "Colorado says: 'The care that was provided in our state was legal. It follows our laws because the provider was in our state.'"

Wendy Stark, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Greater New York, called the shield law there "a critical win for abortion access in our state."

James Bopp Jr., general counsel for the National Right to Life Committee, said the law where the abortion takes place — not where the prescriber is located — should apply in pill-by-telemedicine abortions. That's the way it is with other laws, he said.

But unlike many other aspects of abortion policy, this issue hasn't been tested in court yet.

Bopp said that the only way to challenge a shield law in court would be for a prosecutor in a state with a ban to charge an out-of-state prescriber with providing an illegal abortion.

"It'll probably occur, and we'll get a legal challenge," Bopp said.

Researchers note that before the shield laws took effect, people were obtaining abortion pills from sources outside the formal medical system, but it's not clear exactly how many.

Alison Norris, an epidemiologist at Ohio State University and a lead researcher on the #WeCount report, said the group is not breaking down how many pills were shipped to each state with a ban "to maintain the highest level of protection for individuals receiving that care and providers providing that care."

Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, director of Aid Access, an abortion pill supplier working with U.S. providers, said having more shield laws will make the health care system more resilient.

"They're extremely important because they make doctors and providers ... feel safe and protected," said

Gomperts, whose organization's numbers were included in the #WeCount report. "I hope what we will see in the end is that all the states that are not banning abortion will adopt shield laws."

## American sought after 'So I raped you' Facebook message detained in France on 2021 warrant

By MARYCLAIRE DALE and NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

LYON, France (AP) — An American accused of sexually assaulting a Pennsylvania college student in 2013 and later sending her a Facebook message that said, "So I raped you," has been detained in France after a three-year search.

A prosecutor in Metz, France, confirmed Tuesday that Ian Thomas Cleary, 31, of Saratoga, California, had been taken into custody last month and will be held pending extradition proceedings.

Cleary had been the subject of an international search since authorities in Pennsylvania issued a 2021 felony warrant in the case weeks after an Associated Press story detailed the reluctance of local prosecutors to pursue campus sex crimes.

The arrest warrant accuses Cleary of stalking an 18-year-old Gettysburg College student at a party, sneaking into her dorm and sexually assaulting her while she texted friends for help. He was a 20-year-old Gettysburg student at the time, but did not return to campus.

According to a French judicial official, Cleary was detained on the street in Metz on April 24 as part of a police check. He told a magistrate that he had "arrived in France two or three years ago" from Albania and had only recently come to Metz, but did not have housing there, the official said. A French lawyer appointed to represent him did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment Tuesday.

Cleary, according to his online posts, had previously spent time in France and also has ties to California and Maryland. His father is a tech executive in Silicon Valley, while his mother has lived in Baltimore. Neither he nor his parents have returned repeated phone and email messages left by the AP, including calls to his parents on Tuesday.

The Gettysburg accuser, Shannon Keeler, had a rape exam done the same day she was assaulted in 2013. She gathered witnesses and evidence and spent years urging officials to file charges. She went to authorities again in 2021 after discovering the Facebook messages that seemed to come from Cleary's account.

"So I raped you," the sender had written in a string of messages.

"I'll never do it to anyone ever again."

"I need to hear your voice."

"I'll pray for you."

According to the June 2021 warrant, police verified that the Facebook account used to send the messages belonged to Ian Cleary. Adams County District Attorney Brian Sinnett, who filed it, did not immediately return a call Tuesday.

The AP does not typically name people who say they are sexual assault victims without their permission, which Keeler has granted. Her lawyer, reached Tuesday, had no immediate comment on Cleary's detention.

After leaving Gettysburg, Cleary earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Santa Clara University, near his family home in California, worked for Tesla, then moved to France for several years, according to his website, which describes his self-published medieval fiction.

Keeler, originally from Moorestown, New Jersey, stayed on to graduate from Gettysburg and help lead the women's lacrosse team to a national title.

By 2023, two years after the warrant was filed, Keeler and her lawyers wondered how he was avoiding capture in the age of digital tracking. The U.S. Marshals Service thought he was likely overseas and on the move, even as he was the subject of an Interpol alert called a red notice.

Across the U.S., very few campus rapes are prosecuted, both because victims fear going to police and prosecutors hesitate to bring cases that can be hard to win, the AP investigation found.

Keeler, when the warrant was issued, said she was grateful, but knew it only happened "because I went

public with my story, which no survivor should have to do in order to obtain justice.”

## There’s bird flu in US dairy cows. Raw milk drinkers aren’t deterred

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Sales of raw milk appear to be on the rise, despite years of warnings about the health risks of drinking the unpasteurized products — and an outbreak of bird flu in dairy cows.

Since March 25, when the bird flu virus was confirmed in U.S. cattle for the first time, weekly sales of raw cow’s milk have ticked up 21% to as much as 65% compared with the same periods a year ago, according to the market research firm NielsenIQ.

That runs counter to advice from the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which calls raw milk one of the “riskiest” foods people can consume.

“Raw milk can be contaminated with harmful germs that can make you very sick,” the CDC says on its website.

As of Monday, at least 42 herds in nine states are known to have cows infected with the virus known as type A H5N1, federal officials said.

The virus has been found in high levels in the raw milk of infected cows. Viral remnants have been found in samples of milk sold in grocery stores, but the FDA said those products are safe to consume because pasteurization has been confirmed to kill the virus.

It’s not yet known whether live virus can be transmitted to people who consume milk that hasn’t been heat-treated.

But CDC officials warned last week that people who drink raw milk could theoretically become infected if the bird flu virus comes in contact with receptors in the nose, mouth and throat or by inhaling virus into the lungs. There’s also concern that if more people are exposed to the virus, it could mutate to spread more easily in people.

States have widely varying regulations regarding raw milk, with some allowing retail sales in stores and others allowing sale only at farms. Some states allow so-called cowshares, where people pay for milk from designated animals, and some allow consumption only by farm owners, employees or “non-paying guests.”

The NielsenIQ figures include grocery stores and other retail outlets. They show that raw milk products account for a small fraction of overall dairy sales. About 4,100 units of raw cow’s milk and about 43,000 units of raw milk cheese were sold the week of May 5, for instance, according to NielsenIQ. That compares with about 66.5 million units of pasteurized cow’s milk and about 62 million units of pasteurized cheese.

Still, testimonies to raw milk are trending on social media sites. And Mark McAfee, owner of Raw Farm USA in Fresno, California, says he can’t keep his unpasteurized products in stock.

“People are seeking raw milk like crazy,” he said, noting that no bird flu has been detected in his herds or in California. “Anything that the FDA tells our customers to do, they do the opposite.”

The surge surprises Donald Schaffner, a Rutgers University food science professor who called the trend “absolutely stunning.”

“Food safety experts like me are just simply left shaking their heads,” he said.

From 1998 to 2018, the CDC documented more than 200 illness outbreaks traced to raw milk, which sickened more than 2,600 people and hospitalized more than 225.

Raw milk is far more likely than pasteurized milk to cause illnesses and hospitalizations linked to dangerous bacteria such as campylobacter, listeria, salmonella and E. coli, research shows.

Before milk standards were adopted in 1924, about 25% of foodborne illnesses in the U.S. were related to dairy consumption, said Alex O’Brien, safety and quality coordinator for the Center for Dairy Research. Now, dairy products account for about 1% of such illnesses, he said.

“I liken drinking raw milk to playing Russian roulette,” O’Brien said. The more times people consume it, the greater the chance they’ll get sick, he added.

Despite the risks, about 4.4% of U.S. adults — nearly 11 million people — report that they drink raw milk at least once each year, and about 1% say they consume it each week, according to a 2022 FDA study.

Bonni Gilley, 75, of Fresno, said she has raised generations of her family on raw milk and unpasteurized cream and butter because she believes "it's so healthy" and lacks additives.

Reports of bird flu in dairy cattle have not made her think twice about drinking raw milk, Gilley said.

"If anything, it is accelerating my thoughts about raw milk," she said, partly because she doesn't trust government officials.

Such views are part of a larger problem of government mistrust and a rejection of expertise, said Matthew Motta, who studies health misinformation at Boston University.

"It's not that people are stupid or ignorant or that they don't know what the science is," he said. "They're motivated to reject it on the basis of partisanship, their political ideology, their religion, their cultural values."

CDC and FDA officials didn't respond to questions about the rising popularity of raw milk.

Motta suggested that the agencies should push back with social media posts extolling the health effects of pasteurized milk.

"Communicators need to make an effort to understand why people consume raw milk and try to meet them where they are," he said.

## **As Melinda French Gates leaves the Gates Foundation, many hope she'll double down on gender equity**

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Melinda French Gates is already one of the biggest philanthropic supporters of gender equity in the United States and is now poised to put another \$12.5 billion toward intractable problems like closing the gender pay gap and increasing women's political participation, her grantees hope.

The additional funds come as French Gates announced Monday that she was stepping down as co-chair of the Gates Foundation, which she founded together with her ex-husband Bill Gates more than 20 years ago. Gates will provide the \$12.5 billion as part of an agreement made when they divorced in 2021.

Organizations like Paid Leave For All, founded in 2019 to coordinate advocacy around passing federal paid leave legislation, said French Gates' steady support over years as well as her advocacy to highlight the issue, counterbalance other funders who have been slow to back difficult fights like theirs.

"If you're only willing to invest in a thing that you think is surely going to win in the short term, then you're not making much of an impact," said Dawn Huckelbridge, founding director of Paid Leave For All.

While no one knows exactly what French Gates' future plans are, Huckelbridge's organization and other grantees anticipate she will use the funds as part of her focused advocacy and philanthropic support for increasing the power and influence of women.

"This amount of money to be moved into a space, even with just a standard 5% draw, is going to be so significant," said Teresa Younger, president and CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women, which supports the women's movement and the movement for gender equality in the U.S. The Ms. Foundation's research has documented the disproportionately small amount of philanthropic dollars that support nonprofits led by women of color or that support Black women and girls, especially.

In her post on Monday announcing her resignation, French Gates said she planned to commit the funds to her work on behalf of women and families, adding, "I'll be sharing more about what that will look like in the near future."

French Gates works through her organization, Pivotal Ventures, which is a limited liability company that also manages investments in for profit ventures. As a result, there is little public information about its grantmaking or the assets it manages. A spokesperson for Pivotal Ventures pointed to French Gates' statement on Monday when asked for comment about her future philanthropic plans.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which will change its name to the Gates Foundation, is one of the largest philanthropic organizations in the world. As of December 2023, its endowment was \$75.2 billion, thanks to donations from Gates and the billionaire investor Warren Buffett. While it works across many issues, global health remains its largest area of work, and most of its funding is meant to address issues internationally rather than in the U.S.

Pivotal Ventures has targeted a number of avenues to increasing women's economic and political participation and power, like closing the wage gap, compensating care work often done by women, and encouraging women to run for political office.

The Associated Press receives financial support for news coverage in Africa from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and for news coverage of women in the workforce and state governments from Pivotal Ventures.

Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, began working with French Gates at least as far back as 2018, she said.

"I have to say, they were one of the most considerate funders, if I can put it that way, in that they provided funding for general support and asked only that we could make ourselves available to give guidance and advice early on," Walsh said. She also credited French Gates with having a capacity for giving and focus on gender equity that no other single funder or foundation offers.

Walsh declined to say how much Pivotal Ventures has granted to her organization, but said the funding supports their research into multiple areas, including the intersection of race and gender in politics and ways female political donors can use their influence and voice to greater effect. Her center is also able to fund the research of faculty and graduate students at other institutions, which helps communicate to those schools that their research is valued, she said.

"I remember thinking that after 40-plus years of working in this space, it was the thing that in many ways I never thought would happen, which is that there would be somebody who would prioritize gender and gender equity, who had the capacity to make investments that could be transformational," Walsh said.

## Israelis mark a subdued Independence Day under the shadow of war in Gaza

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The grills were fired up, the blankets were spread across the grass, the smoke was pungent from sizzling slabs of meat. As in previous years, Israelis marked Independence Day with barbecues in parks across the country. Usually, parties crush so close that not even a tuft of grass is visible between the picnic blankets as Hebrew techno music reverberates through the trees from dueling speakers.

But this year, the day parties Tuesday were smaller and quieter, with far fewer celebrants, in the shadow of the war in Gaza and immediately after the country marked an emotional Memorial Day. Families grappled with their desire to mark Independence Day even as the country is facing a drawn-out war and one of its most difficult tests in decades.

"It's important to us to show Hamas that we are strong and our country is important to us, and we still go out and we still live our lives," said Shiri Simon, a computer programmer from the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Barak. But the thought of the more than 100 hostages being held in Gaza, along with the remains of 30 others, and the soldiers killed and injured in the ongoing fighting was never far from her mind. "The two things can coexist, it doesn't necessarily contradict," she said.

Some 1,200 people were killed in Israel during Hamas' cross-border raid on Oct. 7, when thousands of militants rampaged across southern Israeli military bases and small communities next to the Gaza border. The attack sparked the war, now in its eighth month, which has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to local health officials.

Simon said it was important for her to maintain Independence Day traditions for her children, to make the sausages they love on the grill and spend the day together as a family. The differences this year were apparent, she said, from the lack of fireworks to the fairly empty park.

"Nothing really feels independent here during this time. I spent four and a half months fighting in Gaza, our hostages aren't home, people are still torn from their homes, they killed so many people, civilians and soldiers," said Tom Sharlo, 29, a reservist in a combat tank unit in the Israeli army, as he flipped steaks for his family. "What we're doing is putting on a mask and saying 'everything's OK,' but in reality, nothing's OK," he said.

Independence Day in Israel, which this year began Monday evening and runs until Tuesday evening, comes a day after it marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism. Memorial Day is one of the most somber days on the calendar, as bereaved families visit cemeteries and the country comes to a standstill to remember the dead. The melancholic mood traditionally ends abruptly in the evening with a burst of jubilant Independence Day celebrations, which usually include fireworks.

This year, fireworks were canceled across the country, as many cities scaled down their street parties. The traditional air force fly-by was also called off.

The national torch lighting ceremony, normally broadcast live from Jerusalem, was prerecorded with segments from some of the towns hardest hit in Hamas's Oct. 7 attack that sparked the ongoing war.

The sequence of Independence Day directly after Memorial Day is intended to highlight the link between the costly wars Israel has fought and the establishment and survival of the state. But that contrast is especially hard to reconcile when Israel is actively engaged in warfare and Israelis feel more insecure than ever.

On Tuesday, despite the challenges, some families decided to turn up their festivities. Inga Israeli's family dragged out a drink fridge and five separate grills for their party in a Tel Aviv park, saying that it would be "a prize for Hamas" if they didn't celebrate Independence Day.

Others were less certain. "There's no feeling of joy in the holiday that we usually have. I'm always thinking of the hostages and those that died at the party," said Ruth Amzaleg, referring to the Nova music festival, where 364 people were killed. "I don't know how their families can even breathe," she said. Two hostages still held in Gaza are Amzaleg's neighbors, from towns north of Tel Aviv, and another neighbor lost her soldier son, so Memorial Day was exceptionally difficult this year, she said.

Avivit Amzaleg, her daughter, wasn't sure up until the last moment that she would come to the annual family picnic in Tel Aviv. But in the end, the family decided that being together was the most important thing.

"We understand that life is stronger than death, and we need to live next to the pain," said Avivit Amzaleg.

## **Amsterdam university cancels classes after violence erupted at a pro-Palestinian rally**

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE (AP) — The University of Amsterdam canceled classes Tuesday and shut buildings for two days after the latest pro-Palestinian demonstrations over the war in Gaza turned destructive.

Protests continued to simmer at several European universities where students faced off with academic authorities on whether relations with Israel should be broken off or drastically reduced, as the death toll continues to climb during the seven-month Israel-Hamas war.

Overall, the protests in Europe have failed to reach the intensity of demonstrations at several U.S. universities.

In the Netherlands, the board at the nearly 400-year old University of Amsterdam issued a statement saying it could not guarantee the safety of anyone on campus after a group of masked agitators barricaded doors and spray painted slogans on the walls.

The mayhem on Monday followed a peaceful walkout of staff and students against the Israel-Hamas war and the university's response to earlier protests.

"They (the university) called in the police after people wouldn't remove their face coverings but the police came in balaclavas," political science professor Enzo Rossio told The Associated Press, describing Monday's events. He had returned to his office following the walkout, only for the building to be evacuated minutes later.

While standing outside the building, Rossio said he and his wife, who also works for the university, were repeatedly hit by police with batons.

Last week, police used a bulldozer to evict demonstrators from an encampment established by students who want the university to cut ties with Israel. The protest was one of many that sprung up around Europe following rallies across college campuses in the United States.

Smaller demonstrations have taken place against the war, both at the University of Amsterdam and at other Dutch universities. But last week's protest grew into the thousands, with demonstrators chanting slogans including, "Palestine will be free!" and "Cops off campus!"

Riot police were called in multiple times to end the demonstrations, leading to aggressive confrontations. "I've never witnessed this kind of violence," history student Marin Kuijt said in an interview. Kuijt said he had regularly attended climate change marches and joined the walkout on Monday to protest against the university and police response.

After the walkout, some students set up tents inside buildings, intending to occupy the spaces until the university listened to their demands. According to the University of Amsterdam, the peaceful protest was "hijacked by violent elements" who left behind "wanton destruction."

Higher education institutions in the Netherlands published guidelines on Tuesday for student protests. They include a ban on remaining overnight, occupying buildings and wearing face coverings. Last week, the University of Amsterdam already announced it would not hold talks with any protester who refused to show their face.

In a statement, Amsterdam Student Encampment, which is organizing some of the demonstrations, said it was concerned about outside elections causing destruction, saying it "overshadowed" the protests. The group is calling for more demonstrations at the university in the coming days.

Smaller students actions were held in Belgium, Greece and Italy, among other EU nations.

## **Waymo is latest company under investigation for autonomous or partially automated technology**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The U.S. government's highway safety agency has opened another investigation of automated driving systems, this time into crashes involving Waymo's self-driving vehicles.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration posted documents detailing the probe on its website early Tuesday after getting 22 reports of Waymo vehicles either crashing or doing something that may have violated traffic laws.

In the past month, the agency has opened at least four investigations of vehicles that can either drive themselves or take on at least some driving functions as it appears to be getting more aggressive in regulating the devices.

In the probe of Waymo, which was once Google's self-driving vehicle unit, the agency said it has reports of 17 crashes and five other reports of possible traffic law violations. No injuries were reported.

In the crashes, the Waymo vehicles hit stationary objects such as gates, chains or parked vehicles. Some of the incidents happened shortly after the Waymo driving system behaved unexpectedly near traffic control devices, according to the documents.

Waymo said NHTSA plays an important role in road safety, and it will continue working with the agency "as part of our mission to become the world's most trusted driver."

The company said it makes over 50,000 weekly trips with riders in challenging environments. "We are proud of our performance and safety record over tens of millions of autonomous miles driven, as well as our demonstrated commitment to safety transparency," the statement said.

Waymo, based in Mountain View, California, has been operating robotaxis without human safety drivers in Arizona and California.

Michael Brooks, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, said NHTSA's more aggressive actions show that autonomous vehicles may not be ready yet for public roads.

The agency's only enforcement power on autonomous vehicles, at present, is to open investigations and seek recalls, which it is doing, Brooks said. NHTSA has been criticized in the past for being slow to regulate Tesla and other companies that offer automated driving systems, but Brooks said things appear to have changed.

"Ultimately I think it's a good thing here that they're taking these steps, trying to figure out why these vehicles are acting the way they are," Brooks said.

NHTSA said it would investigate the 22 incidents involving Waymo's fifth generation driving system plus similar scenarios "to more closely assess any commonalities in these incidents."

The agency said it understands that Waymo's automated driving system was engaged throughout each incident, or in some cases involving a test vehicle, a human driver disengaged the system just before an accident happened.

The probe will evaluate the system's performance in detecting and responding to traffic control devices, and in avoiding crashes with stationary and semi-stationary objects and vehicles, the documents said.

Since late April, NHTSA has opened investigations into collisions involving self-driving vehicles run by Amazon-owned Zoox, as well as partially automated driver-assist systems offered by Tesla and Ford.

In 2021 the agency ordered all companies with self-driving vehicles or partially automated systems to report all crashes to the government. The probes rely heavily on data reported by the automakers under that order.

NHTSA also is investigating General Motors' Cruise autonomous vehicle unit after getting reports that the vehicles may not have used proper caution around pedestrians. Cruise recalled its cars to update software after one of them dragged a pedestrian to the side of a San Francisco street in early October.

The agency also has questioned whether a recall last year of Tesla's Autopilot driver-assist system was effective enough to make sure human drivers are paying attention. NHTSA said it ultimately found 467 crashes involving Autopilot resulting in 54 injuries and 14 deaths.

In the Ford investigation, the agency is looking into two nighttime crashes on freeways that killed three people.

The agency also pressured Tesla into recalling its "Full Self Driving" system last year because it can misbehave around intersections and doesn't always follow speed limits.

Despite their names, neither Tesla's Autopilot nor its "Full Self Driving" systems can drive vehicles themselves, and the company says human drivers must be ready to intervene at all times.

In addition, NHTSA has moved to set performance standards for automatic emergency braking systems, requiring them to brake quickly to avoid pedestrians and other vehicles.

The standards come after other investigations involving automatic braking systems from Tesla, Honda and Fisker because they can brake for no reason, increasing the risk of a crash.

In a 2022 interview, then NHTSA Administrator Steven Cliff said the agency would step up scrutiny of automated vehicles, and the agency recently has taken more action. NHTSA has been without a Senate-confirmed administrator since Cliff left for the California Air Resources board in August of 2022.

## **Russian president Putin to make a state visit to China this week**

BEIJING (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a two-day state visit to China this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Tuesday, in the latest show of unity between the two authoritarian allies against the U.S.-led Western liberal global order.

Putin will meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping during his visit starting on Thursday, the ministry said, saying the two leaders would discuss "cooperation in various fields of bilateral relations ... as well as international and regional issues of common concern." No details were mentioned.

The Kremlin in a statement confirmed the trip and said Putin was going on Xi's invitation. It said that this will be Putin's first foreign trip since he was sworn in as president and began his fifth term in office.

China has backed Russia politically in the conflict in Ukraine and has continued to export machine tools, electronics and other items seen as contributing to the Russian war effort, without actually exporting weaponry.

China is also a major export market for energy supplies that keep the Kremlin's coffers full.

China has sought to project itself as a neutral party in the conflict, but has declared a "no limits" relationship with Russia in opposition to the West. The sides have also held a series of joint military drills and

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China has consistently opposed economic sanctions against Russia in response to its now two-year-old campaign of conquest against Ukraine.

The two continent-sized authoritarian states are increasingly in dispute with democracies and NATO while seeking to gain influence in Africa, the Middle East and South America.

Putin's visit comes just days ahead of Monday's inauguration of William Lai Ching-te as the next president of Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy that China claims as its own territory and threatens to annex by force if necessary.

Xi returned last week from a five-day visit to Europe, including stops in Hungary and Serbia, countries viewed as close to Russia. The trip, Xi's first to the continent in five years, was seen as an attempt to increase China's influence and drive a wedge between the EU and NATO on one side, and a yet-to-be-defined bloc of authoritarian nations on the other underpinned by Chinese economic influence that has been wavering amid a housing crisis and dramatically slower domestic economic growth.

## Today in History: May 15, new state of Israel attacked by 5 nations

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 15, the 136th day of 2024. There are 230 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 15, 1948, hours after declaring its independence, the new state of Israel was attacked by Transjordan, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

On this date:

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed an act establishing the Department of Agriculture.

In 1928, the Walt Disney cartoon character Mickey Mouse appeared for the first time in front of a public audience in a test screening of the short "Plane Crazy." (Mickey made his formal screen debut with the release of "Steamboat Willie" six months later.)

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its unanimous *In re Gault* decision, ruled that juveniles accused of crimes were entitled to the same due process afforded adults.

In 1970, just after midnight, Phillip Lafayette Gibbs and James Earl Green, two Black students at Jackson State College in Mississippi, were killed as police opened fire during student protests.

In 1972, Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace was shot and left paralyzed while campaigning for president in Laurel, Maryland, by Arthur H. Bremer, who served 35 years for attempted murder.

In 1975, U.S. forces invaded the Cambodian island of Koh Tang and captured the American merchant ship *Mayaguez*, which had been seized by the Khmer Rouge. (All 39 crew members had already been released safely by Cambodia; some 40 U.S. servicemen were killed in connection with the operation.)

In 1988, the Soviet Union began the process of withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, more than eight years after Soviet forces entered the country.

In 2000, by a 5-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a key provision of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, saying that rape victims could not sue their attackers in federal court.

In 2007, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, who built the Christian right into a political force, died in Lynchburg, Virginia, at age 73.

In 2009, General Motors told about 1,100 dealers their franchises would be terminated.

In 2012, Cleveland Cavaliers guard Kyrie Irving was named the NBA's Rookie of the Year.

In 2015, a jury sentenced Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (joh-HAHR' tsahr-NEYE'-ehv) to death for the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three and left more than 250 wounded.

In 2018, Seattle Mariners second baseman Robinson Cano was suspended for 80 games for violating baseball's drug agreement, becoming one of the most prominent players disciplined under the sport's anti-doping rules.

In 2020, President Donald Trump formally unveiled a coronavirus vaccine program he called "Operation Warp Speed," to speed development of COVID-19 vaccines and quickly distribute them around the country.

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Comedic actor Fred Willard, whose films included "Best In Show" and "Anchorman," died at 86.

In 2022, Police said the white 18-year-old who shot and killed 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket a day earlier had researched the local demographics while looking for places with a high concentration of Black residents.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Anna Maria Alberghetti is 88. Counterculture icon Wavy Gravy is 88. Singer Lenny Welch is 86. Actor-singer Lainie Kazan is 82. Actor Gunilla Hutton is 82. Actor Chazz Palminteri is 78. Former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is 76. Singer-songwriter Brian Eno is 76. Actor Nicholas Hammond (Film: "The Sound of Music") is 74. Baseball Hall of Famer George Brett is 71. Musician-composer Mike Oldfield is 71. Actor Lee Horsley is 69. TV personality Giselle Fernández is 63. Rapper Grandmaster Melle Mel is 63. Actor Brenda Bakke is 61. Football Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith is 55. Actor Brad Rowe is 54. Actor David Charvet (shahr-VAY') is 52. Actor Russell Hornsby is 50. Rock musician Ahmet Zappa is 50. Olympic gold medal gymnast Amy Chow is 46. Actor David Krumholtz is 46. Rock musician David Hartley (The War on Drugs) is 44. Actor Jamie-Lynn Sigler is 43. Actor Alexandra Breckenridge is 42. Rock musician Brad Shultz (Cage the Elephant) is 42. Rock musician Nick Perri is 40. Tennis player Andy Murray is 37.