

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Saturday, May 18

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

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

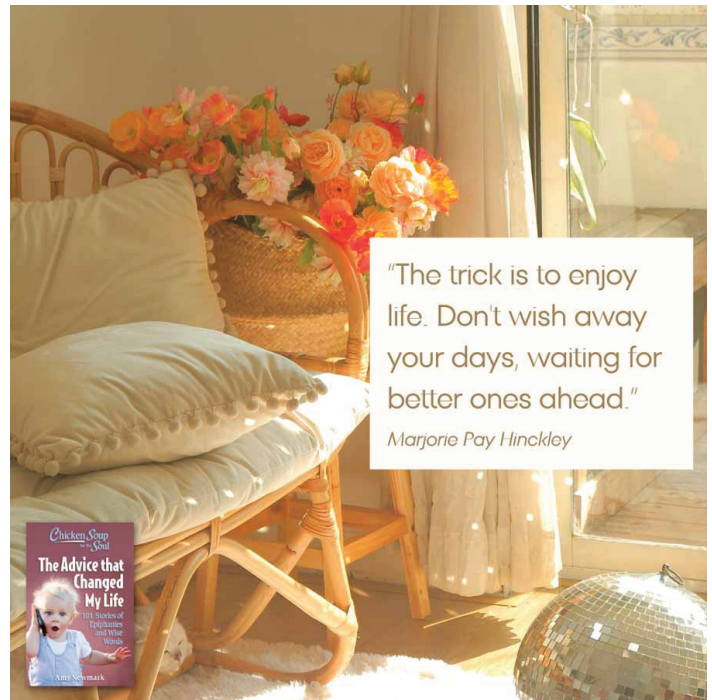
## Sunday, May 19

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

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

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

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



"The trick is to enjoy life. Don't wish away your days, waiting for better ones ahead."

Marjorie Pay Hinckley

a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

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

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

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

## Monday, May 20

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

High School Region baseball at highest two seeds

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

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

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

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

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

**OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton**

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# 1440

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## Scottie Scheffler Arrested

World No. 1 golfer Scottie Scheffler was arrested yesterday and charged with the assault of a police officer ahead of playing the second round of the 2024 PGA Championship in Louisville, Kentucky.

The 27-year-old golf star was driving into Valhalla Golf Club, the site of the championship, when traffic was halted after a pedestrian was struck and killed by a shuttle bus. Scheffler—who won the 2024 and 2022 Masters—allegedly ignored a police officer's instructions and drove past a police roadblock. The police report claims he dragged the officer to the ground, leading to abrasions to the officer's left wrist and knee. Scheffler claims the incident was the result of a misunderstanding over what he was being asked to do, calling the situation chaotic.

Scheffler was charged with second-degree assault of a police officer, third-degree criminal mischief, reckless driving, and disregarding signals from officers directing traffic. The assault charge is a felony, while the other charges are misdemeanors. He was released without bail and made it to his tee time.

## First humanitarian aid arrives at US-built pier off Gaza's coast.

The UK said it delivered its first aid shipment through the temporary floating pier Friday as aid agencies say southern Gaza is running out of food and fuel. US military officials have said they expect the pier to support up to 150 truckloads of aid per day. The Rafah crossing, which had been the main entry point for aid via land, has been shut for two weeks after Israeli forces took control of the Gaza side as part of a ground operation. Separately, the Israeli military said it found the bodies of three hostages in Gaza.

## Attacker of Nancy Pelosi's husband sentenced to 30 years in prison.

David DePape was convicted of federal charges of attempted kidnapping and assault in November 2023. He broke into US Rep. Nancy Pelosi's (D, CA-11) San Francisco home in October 2022 and attacked her husband, Paul Pelosi, with a hammer. DePape admitted he was looking for Nancy Pelosi. DePape also faces a separate trial for state charges.

## Severe storms strike Houston, leaving at least four dead.

Roughly 1 million homes were without power Friday after thunderstorms and damaging winds swept through southeastern Texas and Louisiana. Two people were killed due to toppled trees, while one was killed by a crane that fell. It is unclear how the fourth person died. The storm system is expected to move through the US Gulf Coast through the weekend.

## Released video shows Sean "Diddy" Combs assaulting singer Cassie.

Security footage from a Los Angeles hotel circulated Friday, showing the rapper and producer physically assaulting Cassie Ventura in the hallway of the hotel in 2016. Ventura sued Combs in November 2023 for sexual abuse, which was quickly settled. Combs has since faced multiple allegations of sexual assault from others and is currently under federal investigation for criminal sex trafficking. Combs previously denied all allegations.

## Brazil wins bid to host 2027 Women's World Cup.

Brazil will become the first South American country to host the FIFA Women's World Cup. The country beat out a joint bid from Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. The US and Mexico were also previously in the running until they withdrew their 2027 bid three weeks ago, turning their attention to a 2031 bid.

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## GameStop shares slide after it files to sell additional stock.

Shares of GameStop closed down 20% Friday after the video game retailer said in a regulatory filing it would sell up to 45 million class A common shares and released lower-than-expected preliminary financial results. The news comes after GameStop shares soared earlier in the week as part of a meme-stock rally fueled by social media posts from investor Keith Gill, known as "Roaring Kitty."

## Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Stephen C. in Mae Rim, Thailand.

"I had just flown in from Shanghai, landing at Denver International to attend my son's university graduation. I arrived at 3 am. There were no taxis available so I sat in the terminal until a train to the city was available at 4:30. I was tired and cold and relieved to board a heated car. I was one of three people on the train. The conductor passed through the aisle to collect my ticket. I didn't have one as I had boarded the train in a rush bypassing the ticket vending machines. I told the conductor that I would pay cash or purchase a ticket at the Union Station where the train terminated. 'You can't do that,' he said. Recognizing that it was late and that I was tired and distressed, he let me ride for free. I was so thankful. I saw him on my flight out of Denver and thanked him again. A simple act of kindness, which helped me through a very busy week."

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**Walk-In Interviews: May 21, 3-5 p.m.**

**Under new ownership,  
Beau and Chelsea Larson**



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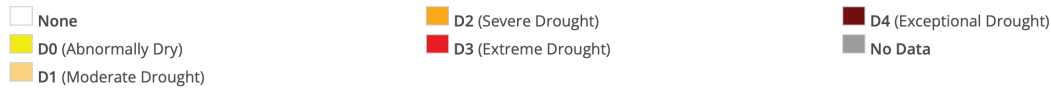
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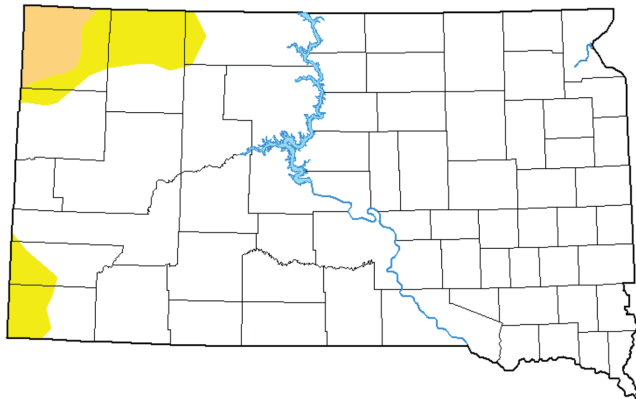
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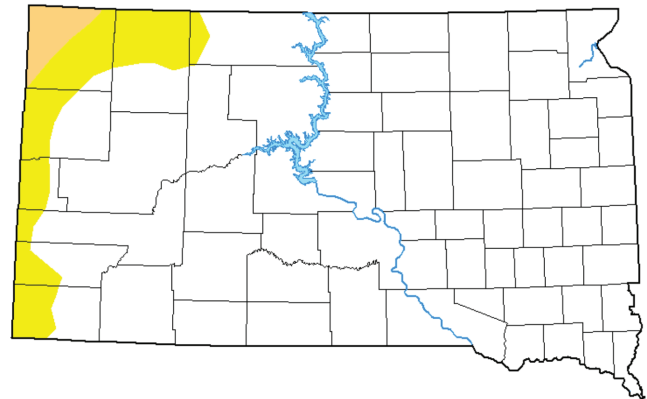
## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



May 14



May 7

The High Plains was a mixed bag of light to moderate precipitation, as well as improvements and degradations. Wyoming and Colorado saw improvements and degradations closely aligning with areas of moderate and light precipitation respectively. Northern and central Wyoming saw improvements, which were a continuation of improvements made in Montana and South Dakota. However, degradations occurred in areas that received trace amounts of precipitation along the eastern and southeastern part of these states into northern Colorado. Northeastern Colorado also saw a slight introduction of abnormally dry (D0) conditions as overflow from adjoining area of western Nebraska, where precipitation was low. Slight improvements occurred in south and northeast areas of Kansas that received precipitation. Elsewhere, conditions in central and western Kansas continued to degrade as streamflows, soil moisture, and groundwater continued to deteriorate. Southeast Nebraska saw slight improvements from continuous moisture over the past few weeks.

## Queen of Hearts

Week 11 of the Queen of Hearts was held Thursday. The jackpot was \$16,386. Ticket sales for the week were \$1,795. Shelly LeRew was drawn and she chose Number 18 which was the Queen of Clubs. The consolation prize was \$179.

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## Now HIRING!

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

A portrait of Logan Manhart, a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark jacket with 'Logan Manhart' and 'MANHART FOR STATE HOUSE' logos. He has his arms crossed and is smiling.

# MANHART

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Primary Election: Vote Now Through June 4th

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

**May 21, 2024 8:45 A.M.**

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Public Hearing for Temporary Special Event Alcohol License for Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce
5. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Landfill Scale Project Payment #1
6. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2024
  - b. Claims/Payroll
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Lease Agreements
  - e. Authorize Advertising Public Hearing for Temporary Special Event Alcohol License
  - f. Surplus Sheriff's Office Vehicle
  - g. Claim Assignments
  - h. April Auditors Report of Accounts
  - i. Transfer of Vehicle from Sheriff's Office to Assessor's Office
7. Other Business
  - a. Rededication of the Freedom Shrine (approximately at 9:15am)
8. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
9. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

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

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

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

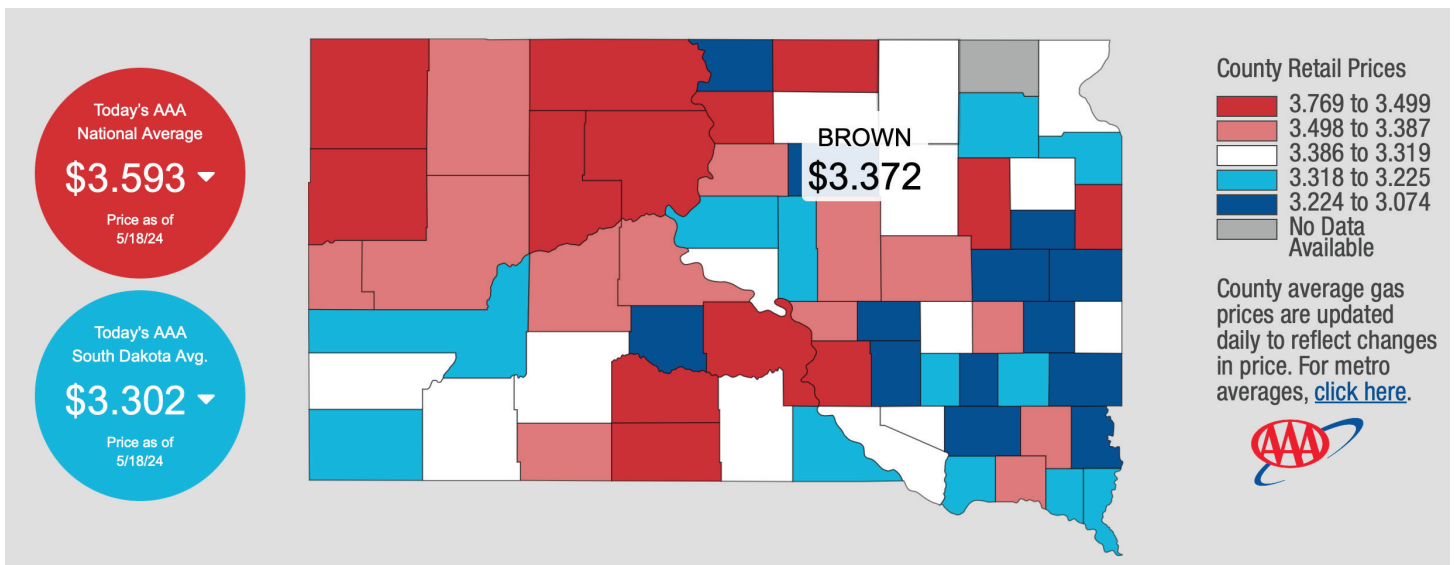
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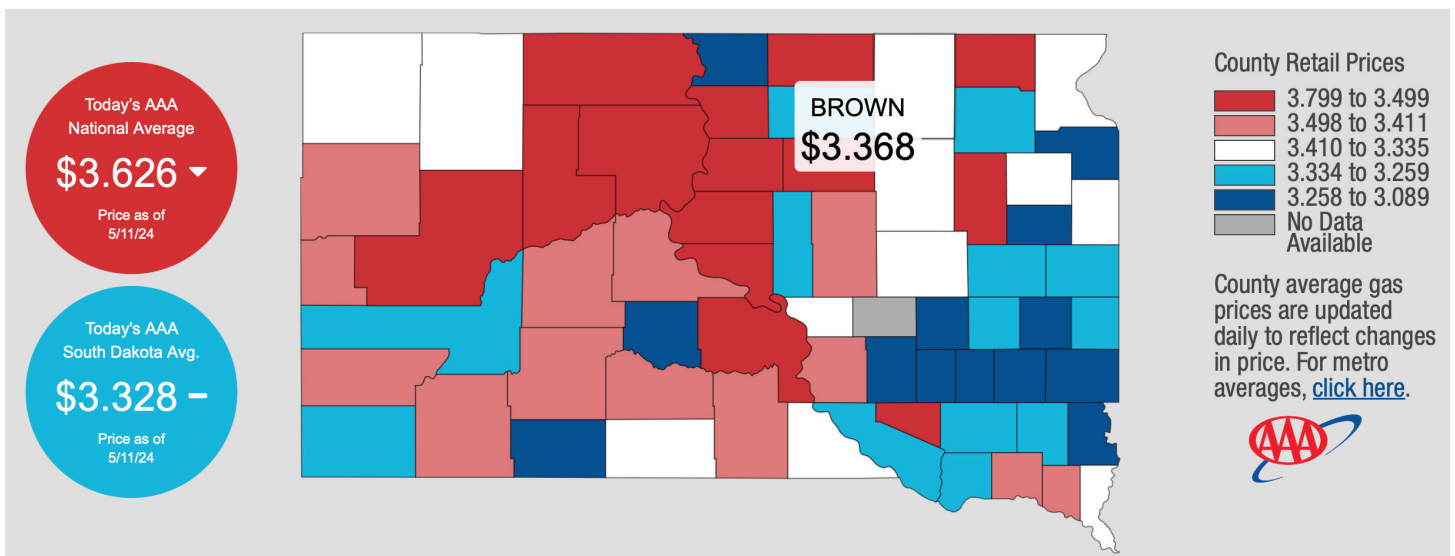
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.302	\$3.443	\$3.876	\$3.547
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.304	\$3.455	\$3.885	\$3.559
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.328	\$3.480	\$3.885	\$3.598
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.399	\$3.544	\$3.973	\$3.716
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.455	\$3.579	\$4.055	\$3.807

### This Week



### Last Week





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Navajo leaders outraged after a Lakota student's tribal regalia was removed at graduation

BY: SHONDIN SILVERSMITH AND SHAUN GRISWOLD - MAY 17, 2024 10:44 PM

Graduation season is typically a time for celebrating the success of students making it through their education programs.

For some Indigenous students, part of that celebration includes having tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance as part of their cap and gown during the graduation ceremony.

In Arizona, Indigenous students are protected under state law. In 2021, then-Gov. Doug Ducey signed House Bill 2705 into law, barring public schools from preventing Indigenous students from wearing traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies.

Not all states have similar laws to protect Indigenous students. New Mexico's lawmakers say they passed legislation to prevent incidents like this from occurring, but it's now unclear if that applies to a case garnering attention in Farmington, New Mexico.

On May 13, Genesis White Bull, a Hunkpapa Lakota of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, was standing for the national anthem alongside her graduating class at the Farmington High School graduation ceremony when two unidentified school faculty members approached her to confiscate her graduation cap.

In video footage shared across social media, White Bull is seen being instructed to remove her graduation cap, which was embellished with an eagle plume and beaded around the rim.

Brenda White Bull, Genesis' mother, shared the experience with the Navajo Nation Council and reported that school officials later cut the plume from her daughter's cap using scissors.

The Navajo Nation Council stated in a press release that Brenda emphasized the sacred significance of the plume, which symbolizes achievement and cultural identity, marking Genesis' transition into new phases of her life.

The Arizona Mirror contacted the family for an interview, but the family did not respond before publication.

#### 'No place for this type of behavior'

Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley called Farmington High School's actions "belittling, humiliating, and demeaning to the student and her family.

"There is no place for this type of behavior in our educational systems," Curley said in a press release. "The school officials owe an apology to the student and her family."

Farmington Municipal Schools, which oversees Farmington High School, released a statement on May 15 in response to the incident.

"During the event, a student's beaded cap was exchanged for a plain one. The feather was returned intact to the family during the ceremony," Farmington Municipal Schools wrote in the statement. "The beaded cap was returned after graduation concluded."

Farmington Municipal Schools referred to the district's protocols, which state that graduation caps and gowns can not be altered, per the 2023-2024 Student and Parent Handbook.

The handbook does not contain policy language stating any exceptions to these rules. However, the school's statement noted that students could choose their clothing attire, which included traditional attire to be worn under the graduation cap and gown, regalia, stoles, and feathers in their tassels.

"Students were informed throughout the school year and immediately before graduation of the protocol,

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including that beaded caps were not allowed," the statement read. "This standard process helps us set student attire during graduations."

"While the staff involved were following district guidelines, we acknowledge this could have been handled differently and better," the statement read. "Moving forward, we will work to refine our processes at the school level."

Farmington Municipal Schools stated that the district is also committed to exploring policies that allow for additional appropriate cultural elements in student attire. Indigenous students comprise nearly 34% of the school district's population.

"School officials across the country need to be reminded who the first Americans are and whose land they inhabit," Curley said in a press release. "No student in any school should be prohibited from wearing regalia that signifies their cultural and spiritual beliefs."

## **Law under review**

New Mexico passed an anti-discrimination law in 2021 that might protect students against the Farmington schools district policy.

However, the legal pathway is unclear according to responses from spokespeople in the governor's offices, state education department, and even lawmakers who wrote the recent law.

Each acknowledged that they were reviewing the law and could only give an official opinion once that was completed. Requests for comment were made to the New Mexico Department of Justice but were not returned in time for publication.

Sen. Harold Pope (D-Albuquerque), who co-sponsored the law, said the legislation stemmed from the national Crown Act push that targeted to stop policies that discriminate against hair style and texture, with a significant tilt against African Americans.

New Mexico's version was written from the views of the Native American cultures present throughout the state, Pope said, and the bill included co-sponsors who are Diñe and Jemez Pueblo.

"We wanted to make sure that we included cultural and religious headdresses to be even more inclusive than your hair alone," he said. "And what I think is important in that language, when we look at Indigenous cultures, feathers are so cherished and protected and it is part of who they are."

It's unclear now if the law will provide White Bull support for any legal action she could take against Farmington Municipal Schools District.

## **'It broke my heart'**

After footage of White Bull's graduation experience spread on social media, it sparked an outpouring of support from Indigenous people and communities across the country.

Navajo Nation leaders have voiced their support for White Bull and called for schools to support an Indigenous student's right to wear regalia during their graduation ceremonies, saying denying it is a violation of their rights.

"It broke my heart," Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Crotty told the Arizona Mirror when she learned what happened to the student.

Crotty said graduations are meant to be one of the happiest moments of a student's life, and White Bull's experience was tarnished by having something so important taken away from her.

"That's so traumatic and not the best way to approach these situations when it comes to our Native students," Crotty said. "In a day of celebration, just for her to be attacked like that."

Crotty said the incident has been reported to the Nation Human Rights Commission, which investigates discrimination within border towns.

Farmington borders the Navajo Nation, and there is a documented history of racism against Indigenous people living or visiting the city.

In April 1974, three white Farmington High School students brutally murdered four Navajo men as part of a practice locals called "Indian rolling."

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In response to the murders, Navajo and other Indigenous people held protests in the city of Farmington denouncing the pervasive racism and bigotry of the community.

Due to escalating tensions in Farmington, the New Mexico Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights launched a study of the relationships between the city, San Juan County and the Navajos living in the community and on the Navajo Nation.

The committee concluded that Indigenous people in almost every area suffer from injustice and maltreatment, according to their report. They recommended that city officials and San Juan County officials, in conjunction with Navajo leaders, work together to develop a plan of action to improve the treatment of Navajos living in the border areas of northwestern New Mexico.

The advisory committee conducted another report 30 years later and found that, while race relations may have somewhat improved in the area, racism is still an issue within the city of Farmington.

"There is a lack of understanding of how Native students identify themselves and celebrate themselves," Crotty said.

She said that it is time to move beyond having conversations about cultural sensitivity for Native students, mainly because incidents like this keep occurring.

"That's why we want to support mom and the family," Crotty said. "She does want the school to be accountable, and she does want some sort of apology."

Crotty said the staff's actions at Farmington High School were inappropriate, and immediate action is needed rather than the school trying to justify what happened.

"The cultural identity of all Native American students attending Farmington High School are protected under the New Mexico Indian Education Act," she said, adding that what happened was a clear violation of the student's rights.

"As we move forward in addressing this issue, we will be meeting with the school board and administration," Crotty added.

In New Mexico, the law passed in 2021 is directed specifically to local school districts, but it does not allow the New Mexico Public Education Department to issue any statewide order on local issues, such as what students can wear at graduation ceremonies.

New Mexico's 89 school districts decide on those policies, which is why other Indigenous students across the state have different experiences with graduation attire.

New Mexico's Public Education Secretary, Dr. Aresenio Romero, offered support for White Bull but noted that the issue is the responsibility of the local district.

"I expect the Farmington Superintendent and school district to reevaluate their graduation policies," Romero said. "I remain committed to promulgating tribal sovereignty and to respecting tribal cultural customs and practices."

## **Governor issues statement**

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham issued a statement Friday saying that it was unacceptable that a student was reprimanded for representing their culture during a time of celebration.

"I appreciate that the Farmington schools acknowledge that they could have handled this situation better and that their policy may be too restrictive," she added. "However, it shouldn't have required the student raising this issue for a school to recognize its lack of inclusivity."

Navajo Nation First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren released a statement supporting Indigenous graduating students who wear their cultural and traditional regalia during graduation.

"We stand with our Native graduates this graduation season and their decision to wear their traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance, including eagle feathers, eagle plumes, and beaded graduation caps," Blackwater-Nygren said in a statement she posted on her Facebook. "Our graduates and families take immense pride in what they choose to wear on graduation day."

Blackwater Nygren was a guest speaker at the Farmington High School graduation, but she said she was unaware of what occurred until after the graduation.

"I am deeply disappointed that this happened at a school where we have many Navajo and Native graduates," she said. "I hope the school learns from this experience and can take corrective measures."

Blackwater-Nygren said that, for many Indigenous students, deciding what to wear goes far beyond simply deciding what color dress or shoes to wear. For some Indigenous students, it is a day for them to wear their traditional regalia proudly.

"Our regalia reminds us of how far we've come as a people; it shows our pride in our culture and how we chose to identify ourselves as Native people," she said. "Some graduates are the first in their families to graduate or are only one of a few high school graduates in the family. A beaded cap further signifies this symbol of achievement, accomplishment and Native resilience."

Blackwater-Nygren is familiar with this issue because, as an Arizona State Representative, she helped pass House Bill 2705 through the legislature.

"As graduation season continues, I hope all schools will respect the decision of our Native students to wear their traditional regalia and objects of cultural significance," Blackwater-Nygren said.

*Shondiin Silversmith is an award-winning Native journalist for the Arizona Mirror based on the Navajo Nation. Silversmith has covered Indigenous communities for more than 10 years, and covers Arizona's 22 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations, as well as national and international Indigenous issues.*

## Noem doubles down on cartel talk, asks tribes to partner with state

**Press conference follows votes to ban her by eight of South Dakota's nine tribes**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 17, 2024 2:19 PM**

PIERRE — At the end of a week in which two more tribal nations voted to ban her from their lands, Gov. Kristi Noem called on tribal leaders to partner with state law enforcement to battle drug activity on reservations.

The governor was flanked by her tribal relations secretary and newly hired tribal law enforcement liaison. She spoke next to a poster-sized quote on the influence of drug cartels in Indian Country from Oglala Sioux Tribal Chairman Frank Star Comes Out. The same quote, delivered in December to congressional leaders in Washington, D.C., was also displayed on a big-screen television in the Capitol's Rushmore Room prior to the start of the press conference.

In the comment, Star Comes Out noted that his tribe is reliant on insufficient federal funding for public safety. "We believe this federal neglect has resulted in the cartel moving on to our reservation, an increase in overdoses, and a proliferation of guns on our school properties," he said, in part.

The governor again called on tribes to "banish the cartels" instead of voting to banish her, as government bodies at eight of the nine tribes in the state have now done.

She also pledged to help the tribes with public safety issues.

"Banishing me does absolutely nothing to solve this problem," Noem said. "All it does is help those who are perpetuating horrible violence and crimes against the people that are citizens of the state of South Dakota."

### **Former tribal police chief: 'We need help'**

Tribal Relations Secretary Dave Flute, a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, read off a series of comments he said the governor's office has received by the hundreds from tribal members.

"Governor Noem is speaking the truth of what is happening across the state, including in our tribal communities," Flute said. "She's speaking out because she cares about the safety of our people. But don't take it from her. And don't take it from me."

Flute read comments from people who, in turn, accused tribal council members of being "some of the biggest drug dealers on the reservation," described being targeted by cartel members in a casino, said

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cartel members have posed as dairy farm workers and said that tribal leaders — those who have voted to ban the governor — do not speak for all tribal members.

Earlier this week, Noem announced her hiring of Algin Young, formerly the Oglala Sioux Tribe police chief, as her tribal law enforcement liaison. The longtime Indian Country law officer told the assembled reporters that he supports Noem because of his experience leading an overworked, understaffed department working to fend off a spike in violence.

He said the Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety, in search of a new permanent chief since his contract expired last month, was averaging “two and a half gun calls a day.”

“I take the position of the governor, because her position is that we need help,” Young said.

## **Federal issue**

Noem and the others on hand, including sheriffs from two counties with reservations in their borders, tied public safety troubles to federal inaction and a lack of funding for law enforcement.

The governor told reporters she’d just returned from a trip Thursday to the U.S.-Mexico border, where 20 South Dakota National Guard members are currently working in the latest of several state missions there since Noem took office.

Noem has been speaking about alleged connections between the border, cartels and reservations since January, when she returned from another trip to the border and delivered a speech to a joint session of the Legislature.

Illegal narcotics like methamphetamine and fentanyl flow across that border and into the United States under the direction of drug cartels, she said, as do criminal actors bent on profiting through drugs and violence.

President Joe Biden’s policies are to blame, she said.

“We have seen an infiltration of dangerous individuals, people that have come into this country that are on the known terrorist watch list,” she said. “People that have been incarcerated in other countries that are perpetuating violence against others.”

Noem and others said that drugs and violence have been an issue for the whole of South Dakota, but that the influence has been particularly impactful for reservations.

“It doesn’t just affect the United States,” said Sen. Mike Walsh, R-Rapid City, a former narcotics detective who accompanied Noem to the border. “It affects South Dakota directly. And it was evident as we spoke with the Border Patrol, as we spoke with the soldiers that see it every day. They see the changes that have occurred in the past few years.”

## **Law enforcement training**

The federal government has also failed Indian Country by failing to fully fund treaty-mandated law enforcement obligations, Noem argued. She pointed out that the Oglala Sioux Tribe has sued the federal government for that failure, and she referenced her recent decision to fund a special training academy specifically for tribal recruits.

Noem said between 13 and 15 recruits have expressed interest in the summer training course, and that “we’ll have a full class.”

Most officers in reservation communities are expected to attend a 13-week training academy in Artesia, New Mexico. Tribal officers can and do get trained in South Dakota, but there are limited slots in basic training courses, and even those who complete state training are expected to spend two weeks in Artesia afterward.

For the new course, set to begin on June 3, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials have agreed to come to South Dakota to offer a two-day version of that two-week portion of the training.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds and Rep. Dusty Johnson, both Republicans, urged the BIA to do that. Both have pushed to place a permanent BIA training facility for the Great Plains in South Dakota.

About 10 minutes before the Friday press conference in Pierre, Rounds’ office sent a press release on

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tribal law enforcement funding. In it, the senator said he'd joined 11 of his colleagues in sending a letter to the Senate Appropriations Interior Subcommittee urging the members to "support robust funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Public Safety and Justice Law Enforcement programs" in the fiscal year 2025 budget. South Dakota Republican John Thune was among the signers.

"Tribal law enforcement agencies have been under-resourced and under-staffed for decades and they are now being asked to face a new, dangerous threat posed by these cartels and criminal organizations," the senators wrote.

## Relationships damaged

The press conference followed a troubled two weeks of tribal relations for Noem. Early last week, the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate – for which Flute was once chairman – voted to ban Noem from its lands. As with the tribes that had voted to ban her prior to the Sisseton vote, tribal leaders tagged the governor's comments at a March town hall in Winner alleging that tribal officials are "personally benefiting" from cartels. Tribal leaders have also cited comments from a March town hall in Mitchell, where Noem said Native American children on reservations lack hope, and that their parents aren't there for them.

A few days after the Sisseton-Wahpeton tribe voted to ban Noem, the Business and Claims Committee of the Yankton Sioux Tribe voted to endorse a ban. This week saw votes to ban the governor by the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, the latter of which had opted not to endorse a ban earlier this year.

The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe is the only one of the state's nine Native nations that has yet to cast such a vote. Its leadership set an emergency meeting for Saturday to discuss the possibility of a ban.

On Friday, Noem repeated a line she's used in past discussions on the issue: that she keeps calling tribes, and they keep ignoring her.

"They all have my personal cell phone number," she said.

The governor has repeatedly said that she wants to help through mutual law enforcement aid, noting that Native nations in South Dakota struggle with jurisdictional challenges that prevent tribal police from enforcing state law and state police from enforcing tribal law. The posterboard quote from President Star Comes Out referenced the same challenge.

Noem rattled off a list of mutual aid agreements outside the law enforcement realm on Friday, ranging from tax collection agreements to child support payment distribution.

"On Pine Ridge alone, our Game Fish and Parks conservation officers conduct joint operations with tribal COs all the time," Noem said. "Law enforcement mutual aid agreements will go a long way to help restore safety and order."

When asked Friday how she intends to repair relationships, the governor pointed to Flute and Young. Those advisers have faced tribal issues from positions of tribal authority, just like the leaders now voting to ban her.

"They've sat in their shoes," she said. "They've been there and seen the challenges. And I'm open to new ideas. If they want to sign an agreement that looks different than what the state has done before, I'm all ears."

## Tribal leader responds

South Dakota Searchlight reached out Friday to leaders of all the tribes that have voted to ban the governor, but did not hear back from most immediately.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Clyde Estes said what stood out most from the press conference was its ending, when a reporter asked Noem if she had any intention of apologizing for her remarks about Native American children.

That particular comment was a last straw moment for Estes.

"She heard the question and walked out," Estes said.

As far as her offer of mutual law enforcement aid, he said "we would be far from that path."

"I don't believe it's the state's role to provide law enforcement when we have contracts with the federal

government," he said.

Estes said Noem is right about the federal government not upholding its obligation to provide law enforcement, but he said Noem, as a former member of Congress, shares some of the blame for that.

He also said it's unclear what Noem means by "banish the cartels." Lower Brule has banished "five or six" non-tribal members during his time in tribal government for committing crimes.

"How are we supposed to banish the cartel when we don't even know who they are, let alone is that going to stop them from coming onto our reservation?" he said.

Even so, he said there is an opening for Noem to improve relations, and he believes it has to start with an apology for her remarks about children.

"When she's ready to apologize, we're ready to sit down and talk."

*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.*

## Missed care, fewer patients: Rural families and clinics feel Medicaid cuts

**South Dakota among states with fewer children enrolled than before pandemic**

**BY: NADA HASSANEIN - MAY 17, 2024 10:41 AM**

Rural children and families are having to skip vital health treatments and even ending up in the emergency room, while already struggling rural clinics are losing more patients, as states cull their Medicaid rolls.

The process began in April 2023, when pandemic-era rules that prohibited kicking people off Medicaid coverage expired and states again began checking whether families met income restrictions. Nationally, nearly 70% of people who lost coverage did so for "procedural" reasons such as incomplete paperwork.

States with the largest drops in coverage also have large rural populations. The loss of coverage compounds struggles disproportionately experienced by rural children and families, experts say, including clinician shortages, long drives to care and poorer health outcomes.

Eight states — Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, South Dakota and Utah — had fewer children enrolled at the end of last year than before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a recent analysis by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families.

"Medicaid is even more of a lifeline for rural communities than it is for urban ones," said Joan Alker, the center's executive director. "There are quite a number of states with large rural populations where things are not going well — so that's very problematic."

A year into the process, frequently referred to as Medicaid "unwinding," South Dakota, Montana, Utah, Texas and Idaho have seen the largest plunges in rates of children losing coverage, with an average of 25% fewer children enrolled in those states since April 2023.

In rural areas, which on average have higher rates of poverty, children are less likely than their urban counterparts to have had a medical checkup or dentist visit in the past year, the center reported.

In Idaho, where 35 of 44 counties are considered rural, "a lot of this is attributed to the state rushing through the process to conduct [income eligibility] redeterminations in six months," said Hillarie Hagen, health policy associate at Idaho Voices for Children, a group that advocates on policies affecting children. "The rush and arbitrary deadline resulted in an alarming number of children losing coverage."

Hagen added that the change "is putting families in a very difficult position of having to choose to delay care or risk significant financial burden on their family." Rural Idaho counties tend to be poorer than urban counties, and Hispanic and Native American state residents are more likely than white residents to be living in poverty.

Dr. Noreen Womack, a pediatrician at a mobile clinic for kids in Boise and nearby rural communities in Idaho, run by St. Luke's Children's Hospital, said not a week goes by that she doesn't see a patient who

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has lost Medicaid coverage — and who is sometimes unaware they're now uninsured.

When kids' parents tell her they have Medicaid, she said, she's learned to ask, "Are you sure?"

She said she regularly sees children and teens who are no longer covered and who stopped taking critical treatments, such as antidepressants and ADHD medications, harming their well-being and school performance.

Womack recalls one 7-year-old boy who was no longer enrolled in Medicaid and whose family couldn't afford his ADHD medication. He was on the verge of being expelled from school.

He looked at Womack, scared and dispirited. "I'm having trouble staying on task again, and they're going to kick me out," she recalled him saying.

"It's so sad, because he's only 7," she said. "These families are already so much living on the edge, and it's hard for them."

Other young patients who have gone undiagnosed for asthma have ended up in the ER, she said. "One of the things we're trying to do is decrease the amount of unnecessary emergency department visits."

As in many states, patient navigators have been key to helping families work through the complex process of renewing Medicaid if they qualify, Womack said.

Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare acknowledged the rapid pace of its redetermination process, but expects the number of enrollees to return to normal.

"Idaho was one of the very first states in the nation to start and finish unwinding activities while many other states are still in the process of completing all initial renewals," spokesperson AJ McWhorter wrote in an email to Stateline. He added that the agency "early on identified and prioritized individuals who were likely no longer eligible for Medicaid. As other states continue to complete their unwinding activities, we expect these numbers to begin to normalize."

Utah has seen the nation's highest overall disenrollment rate at 56%, followed by Idaho and Montana at 55%, and Oklahoma, South Dakota and Georgia, which have each seen coverage loss rates of 50% or higher.

Utah's state Medicaid office asserts that because states are at different stages in unwinding, disenrollment rates between states can't be compared "apples to apples." The state's unemployment and poverty rates are lower than the national average, which means Utahns have fewer uninsured people and fewer Medicaid enrollees to begin with, said Kevin Burt, who oversees Utah's Medicaid eligibility determinations at the state Department of Workforce Services.

"Having just finished unwinding, I don't think the data is quite settled," Burt added.

Jennifer Strohecker, Utah's Medicaid director, said her office has been working with hospitals, clinics and nonprofits to help with redeterminations.

"It is our objective that if a person is eligible for Medicaid, we want them to have that coverage," she said, adding that the state aimed to make sure the health centers "had the right resources and tools to meet the needs of the patient as they saw them, and help them with some of the [eligibility] questions."

## Families of color

Across small towns and rural areas nationwide, Medicaid covers 47% of children and 18% of adults, compared with about 40% of children and 15% of adults in urban counties, the Georgetown center found in an analysis of U.S. Census Bureau and Medicaid data.

Compared with urban residents, those in rural areas are more likely to have poorer overall health.

Many states with the highest rates of Medicaid disenrollments also have large American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Federal tribal affairs and Medicaid officials say the program plays a critical role in filling gaps in funding for tribal health care.

Chickasaw Nation member Dr. Jesica Gilmore, a family medicine doctor and chief medical officer of the Indian Health Care Resource Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, said the loss of Medicaid coverage has left many of her patients unable to obtain or pay for specialist care, such as cardiology or nephrology. While the center is in the city, it's also a pillar for rural Native patients, who drive hours to the clinic for primary

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care and referrals.

"Part of what we're seeing is that then they're having difficulty accessing referral services or some of the specialty tests," she said. "It's provided quite a strain on our system."

Many lost coverage because they no longer qualified or because they didn't finish paperwork, leaving them to pay out of pocket — or forgo care if they can't, she said.

"We have staff members here who specifically help patients with paperwork and can help navigate some of the online systems — many of our patients don't necessarily have continuous access to the internet," she said. "It does get worse when patients are uninsured, because they have no other recourse for care, other than going to the ER."

She remembers one patient recently who lost Medicaid coverage two days before an orthopedic appointment for extreme knee pain. Gilmore estimates it could be another three months before her patient can get a knee replacement approved by a specialist and for the clinic to help her find and apply for another payor, such as the tribe, and up to six months until the actual surgery.

"It was affecting her ability to continue working, walking, standing," she said. "Who's going to pay for this appointment? This patient has been waiting to get this, hopeful. ... Now, she's kind of in a holding pattern."

## Loss of revenue for rural clinics, hospitals

Gilmore worries the longer-term fallout for her clinic will be a hit to revenue due to caring for uninsured rural patients. The clinic was planning to expand services "but might not be able to," she said.

That concern is echoed in other rural health care settings.

Straddling the Utah-Arizona border is the Creek Valley Health Clinic, serving a rural area that the Utah Department of Health says is one of the most underserved regions in the state. The area lacked a primary care clinic for over a decade, and many patients would drive an hour or more to the nearest hospital before the clinic opened in 2019.

"We inherited such a sick patient population with really high rates of chronic disease and unhealthy habits," said Hunter Adams, the clinic's co-founder and CEO. Adams said the clinic had helped lower ER visits for primary care.

Since the clinic opened, Adams said, the patient base has seen improved rates of depression screening, diabetes control and childhood obesity.

But since the unwinding, the clinic saw an 8% drop in Medicaid patients. That, along with changes to pharmacy contract programs and expiring COVID-19 assistance grants, has put the nascent clinic in a bind, Adams said.

"It's kind of a three-legged impact to our budget," he said. "We're in this kind of hard space where we're not big enough to really contract and negotiate payment change, but we're also big enough that we feel these budgetary changes ... with the Medicaid unwinding."

Alan Pruhs, executive director of the Association for Utah Community Health, which represents health centers across the state, estimated that those clinics have seen on average a 12% to 15% reduction in the Medicaid patient population, with some clinics losing up to 20% of Medicaid patients.

"Fiscal fragility just was ratcheted up a few more notches, because we're now losing more revenue," Pruhs said.

He's hearing from clinics that serve particularly vulnerable clients, such as opioid patients, dropping out of rehabilitation programs because of losing Medicaid.

Pruhs said an increase in uninsured patients can further add financial pressure on already strapped rural community health clinics.

"From a health center perspective, your uninsured patient now comes in and it's actually costing you money — it's not generating revenue."

*Nada Hassanein is a health care reporter for Stateline with a focus on inequities.*

## More than half of states sue to block Biden Title IX rule protecting LGBTQ+ students

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - MAY 17, 2024 4:54 PM

WASHINGTON — Twenty-six GOP-led states are suing the Biden administration over changes to Title IX aiming to protect LGBTQ+ students from discrimination in schools.

Less than a month after the U.S. Department of Education released its final rule seeking to protect against discrimination “based on sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics,” a wave of Republican attorneys general scrambled to challenge the measure.

The revised rule, which will go into effect on Aug. 1, requires schools “to take prompt and effective action when notified of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination in their education programs or activities.”

The lawsuits hail from Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

All of the attorneys general in the 26 states suing over the final rule are part of the Republicans Attorneys General Association.

Various advocacy groups and school boards have also tacked onto the states’ legal actions. The lawsuits carry similar language and arguments in vehemently opposing the final rule. They say the new regulations raise First Amendment concerns and accuse the rule of violating the Administrative Procedure Act.

LGBTQ+ advocates say the revised rule offers students a needed protection and complies with existing law.

“Our kids’ experience in schools should be about learning, about making friends and growing as a young person. LGBTQ+ students deserve those same opportunities,” Sarah Warbelow, vice president of legal at the LGBTQ+ advocacy group Human Rights Campaign, said in an emailed statement. “In bringing these lawsuits, these state attorneys general are attempting to rob LGBTQ+ students of their rights, illustrating a complete disregard for the humanity of LGBTQ+ students.”

### GOP states band together against new regulations

In the most recent effort, Alaska, Kansas, Utah, and Wyoming sued the Biden administration on Tuesday, accusing the Department of Education of seeking to “politicize our country’s educational system to conform to the radical ideological views of the Biden administration and its allies.”

The lawsuit claims that under the updated regulations, teachers, coaches and administrators would have to “acknowledge, affirm, and validate students’ gender identities’ regardless of the speakers’ own religious beliefs on the matter in violation of the First Amendment.”

In another lawsuit, a group of Southern states — Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina — sued the administration in federal court in Alabama over the new regulations.

Republican Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said President Joe Biden “has brazenly attempted to use federal funding to force radical gender ideology onto states that reject it at the ballot box” since he took office.

“Now our schoolchildren are the target. The threat is that if Alabama’s public schools and universities do not conform, then the federal government will take away our funding,” Marshall said in a press release.

The lawsuit also drew praise from Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who said “Biden is abusing his constitutional authority to push an ideological agenda that harms women and girls and conflicts with the truth.” He added that the Sunshine State will “not comply” and instead “fight back against Biden’s harmful agenda.”

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## Individual states sue the administration

Meanwhile, some states have opted to file individual lawsuits against the administration.

In Texas, Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton sued the Biden administration late last month in federal court in Amarillo. Paxton filed an amended complaint earlier this week, with two new plaintiffs added.

In an April 29 press release, Paxton said the Lone Star State "will not allow Joe Biden to rewrite Title IX at whim, destroying legal protections for women in furtherance of his radical obsession with gender ideology."

Oklahoma's Republican Attorney General Gentner Drummond filed a lawsuit against the Biden administration earlier this month in federal court in Oklahoma. The state's education department also filed a separate suit against the Biden administration.

## A hodgepodge of states

In late April, Republican attorneys general in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia filed a lawsuit against the Biden administration in federal court in Kentucky.

The states argued that the U.S. Education Department "has used rulemaking power to convert a law designed to equalize opportunities for both sexes into a far broader regime of its own making."

Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi and Montana also sued the Biden administration in late April, echoing the language seen in the other related lawsuits. Seventeen local school boards in Louisiana also joined the states.

Earlier this month, Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota also brought a collective legal challenge to the final rule.

A spokesperson for the Education Department said the department does not comment on pending litigation but noted that "as a condition of receiving federal funds, all federally-funded schools are obligated to comply with these final regulations." They added that the department looks forward "to working with school communities all across the country to ensure the Title IX guarantee of nondiscrimination in school is every student's experience."

The department has yet to finalize a separate rule that establishes new criteria for transgender athletes. So far, 24 states have passed laws that ban transgender students from partaking in sports that align with their gender identity, according to the Movement Advancement Project.

*Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.*

## Farm bill text released in U.S. House, setting up fight with Senate

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 17, 2024 3:02 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House Agriculture Committee Friday released the draft bill text of the long-awaited \$1.5 trillion farm bill, which is likely to face opposition in the Senate from Democrats due to disagreements over federal anti-hunger programs and climate change requirements.

The chair of the committee, GOP Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania, said in a statement that the bill, which will set farm, nutrition, commodity and conservation policy for the next five years, is a "product of extensive feedback from stakeholders and all Members of the House, and is responsive to the needs of farm country through the incorporation of hundreds of bipartisan policies."

The legislation funds programs across 12 titles for five years.

It would boost rural farming, promote a new global market for farmers to sell their products abroad, require new reporting requirements for the foreign purchase of farmland, increase funding for specialty crops and expand eligibility for disaster assistance, among other initiatives.

"The markup is one step in a greater House process, that should not be compromised by misleading arguments, false narratives, or edicts from the Senate," Thompson said.

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The House Agriculture Committee plans to mark up the 942-page bill on Thursday. It is expected to cost \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. A title-by-title summary has also been released.

In a statement, the top Democrat on the committee, Rep. David Scott of Georgia, slammed the draft bill for "taking food out of the mouths of America's hungry children, restricting farmers from receiving the climate-smart conservation funding they so desperately need, and barring the USDA from providing financial assistance to farmers in times of crisis."

Scott warned that the current draft bill is unlikely to pass the House. Although Republicans have a slim majority, any piece of legislation will have to be bipartisan in order to make it through the Senate, which Democrats control.

The current farm bill extension expires Sept. 30.

On the Senate side, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Michigan Democrat who leads the Committee on Agriculture, released Democrats' own proposal in early May. Among other things, it would boost eligibility for nutrition programs for low-income people like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Stabenow made public a summary of the bill, but not legislative text.

Scott and Stabenow released a joint statement Tuesday following a meeting with House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Democrats on the House Agriculture committee. They advocated for Republicans to craft a bipartisan farm bill.

"House Republicans are undermining this goal by proposing policies that split the broad, bipartisan coalition that has always been the foundation of a successful farm bill," they wrote.

"We need a farm bill that holds the coalition together and upholds the historic tradition of providing food assistance to our most vulnerable Americans while keeping our commitment to our farmers battling the effects of the climate crisis every day," they continued.

The House bill has a few provisions that Democrats oppose.

One would remove climate-smart policy requirements for about \$13 billion in conservation projects funded by the Inflation Reduction Act. Another would limit future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, the formula that calculates benefits for SNAP. "The economic impact of the SNAP cuts alone would be staggering," Scott said.

A freeze in the Thrifty Food Plan would result in a roughly \$30 billion SNAP cut over the next decade, according to the liberal-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. There are more than 41 million people who use SNAP benefits, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

However, the House farm bill would remove the ban on low-income Americans who have a drug conviction felony from obtaining SNAP benefits.

Environmental groups are also opposing the draft of the farm bill, raising concerns about reallocating IRA money and including a bill relating to how states regulate animal practices.

A watchdog group that focuses on government and corporate accountability in water, food and corporate overreach, Food & Water Watch Managing Director of Policy and Litigation Mitch Jones said in a statement that the draft bill would gut important climate-smart provisions.

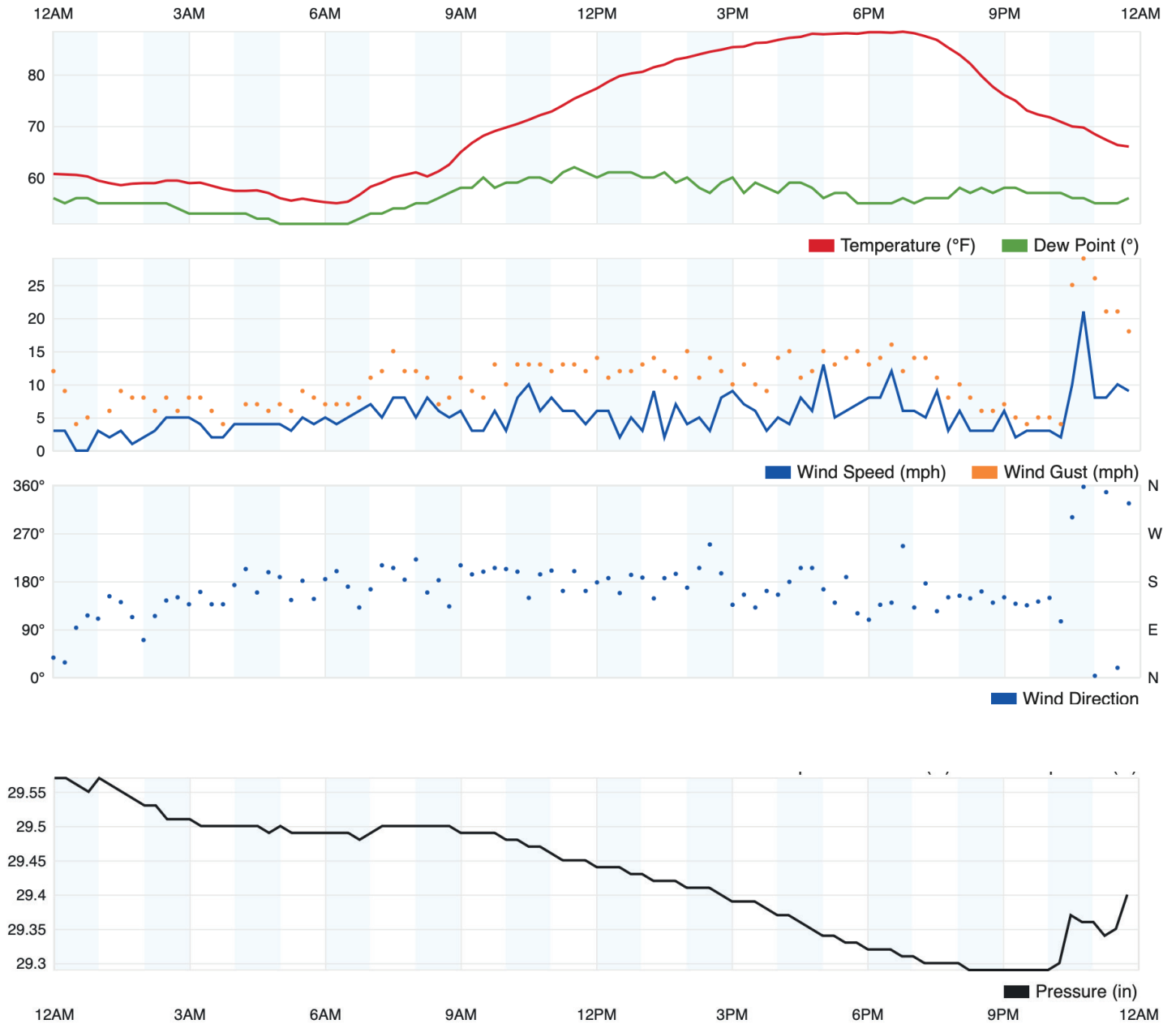
"Some of leadership's more dangerous proposals would take us backwards on animal welfare, and climate-smart agriculture," Jones said. "It's time Congress put the culture wars aside and got back to work on a Farm Bill that puts consumers, farmers, and the environment above politicking and Big Ag handouts."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 71 °F

Sunny and  
Breezy

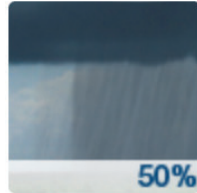
Tonight



Low: 46 °F

Clear then  
Slight Chance  
Showers

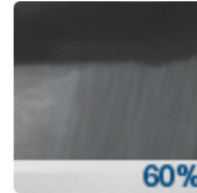
Sunday



High: 73 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Sunday Night



Low: 53 °F

Showers  
Likely

Monday



High: 71 °F

Slight Chance  
T-storms then  
Partly Sunny

## Continued Unsettled Pattern

Today



Highs:  
67 to 73°

Sunday



Highs:  
70 to 80°

Thunder  
Chance  
30-60%

Monday



Highs:  
66 to 73°

Rainfall  
Chance  
15-30%

Tuesday



Highs:  
59 to 66°

Rainfall  
Chance  
20-60%

Wednesday



Highs:  
60 to 67°

Rainfall  
Chance  
10-30%

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

For the next few days we will continue to see system after system cross the region giving us additional opportunities for moisture. Tuesday looks to be the wettest, particularly across eastern SD/western MN #SDWX

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 88 °F at 6:10 PM**

**Low Temp: 55 °F at 6:13 AM**

**Wind: 25 mph at 10:22 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 05 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1934

Record Low: 26 in 1915

Average High: 71

Average Low: 45

Average Precip in May.: 2.00

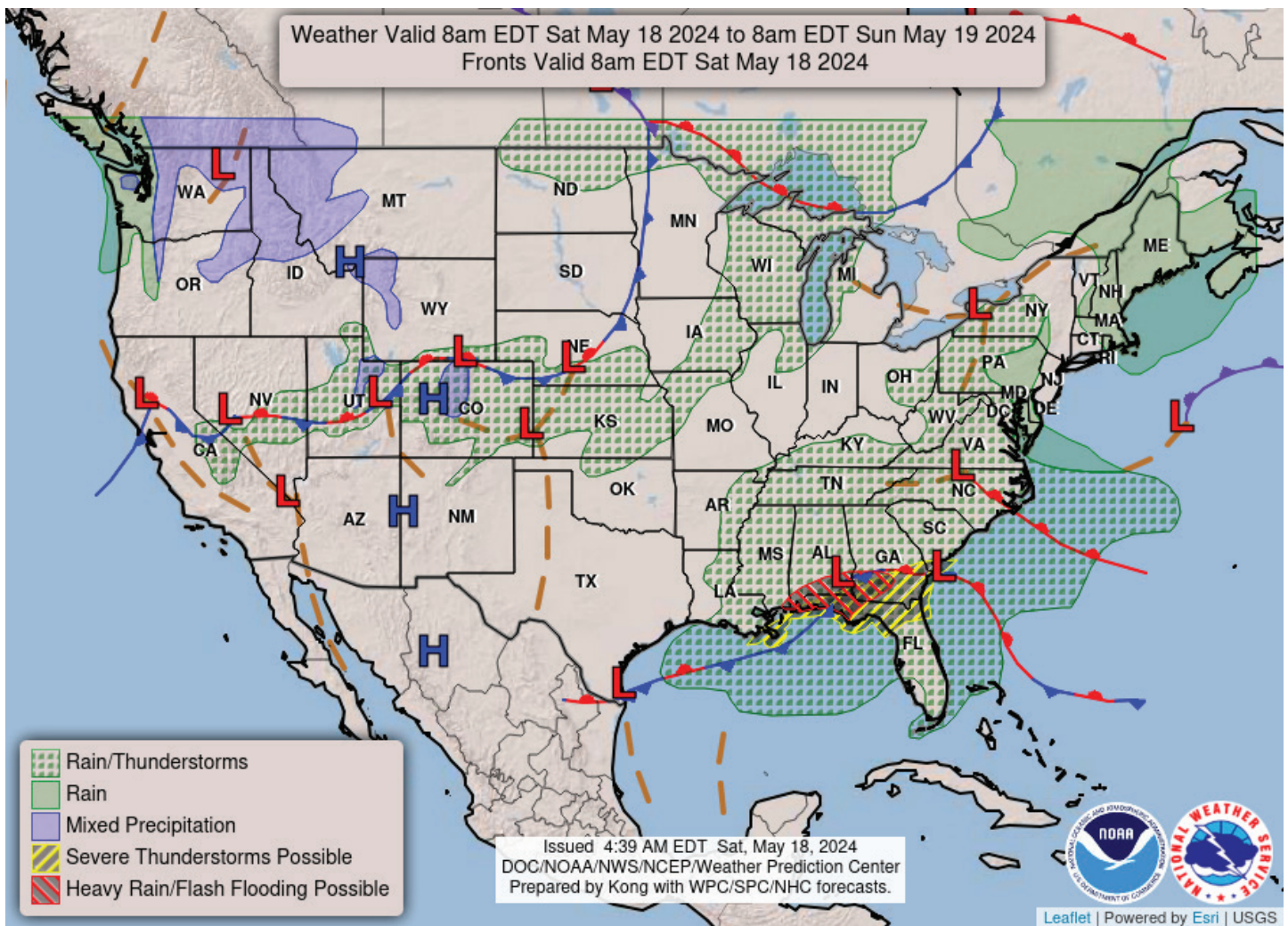
Precip to date in May: 0.91

Average Precip to date: 5.97

Precip Year to Date: 5.44

Sunset Tonight: 9:01:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:54:58 am



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## Today in Weather History

May 18, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado moved NNE from 5 miles NNW of Ferney, across the eastern edge of Groton. Homes were unroofed, and barns were destroyed. Nine farms lost buildings. One man was injured in a barn, another in a car that was thrown from the road. Estimated damage was set at \$60,000. Tornadoes were also seen in Lincoln and Sanborn Counties in South Dakota.

Also, an estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the townships of Akron and Artichoke in Big Stone County, Minnesota. About 300 farms had tornado damage. The funnel dissipated on Artichoke Lake.

May 18, 1960: Pierre received 1.96 inches of rain in less than 30 minutes which caused flash flooding. About 30 basements were flooded with extensive cave-in damage at one home. Flash flooding from 2 to 3 inches of rain occurred near Presho, washing out county roads, three bridges, and a grain storage bin. Gettysburg also received 2.5 inches of rain.

May 18, 1996: A brief F0 tornado touchdown and cut a narrow path from 2 miles east of Willow Lake with no damage reported.

A 100 mph wind gust blew down 38 large trees on Highway 81 from the junction of Lake Norden corner on Highway 28 to the intersection of the Hayti corner. Also, four double posted and five single posted signs were broken off, and one single posted steel sign was bent over.

1825 - A tornado (said to have crossed all of the state of Ohio) smashed into the log cabin settlement of Burlington, northeast of Columbus. (David Ludlum)

1883: The massive tornado outbreak on record in Illinois affected the northern and central parts of the state. At least 14 strong to violent tornadoes touched down killing 52 people. The largest death toll from a single tornado was 12, with 50 injuries, from an estimated F4 tornado which moved from near Jacksonville to 5 miles west of Petersburg. This tornado destroyed the town of Literberry. Another tornado, with an estimated F4 intensity, killed 11 people and injured 50 along its path from the south edge of Springfield northeast to near Kenney. This particular tornado reportedly drove 10 inches by 12-inch oak timbers 10 feet into the ground. Another estimated F4 tornado in far northern Illinois touched down near Capron and tracked for 17 miles before lifting in far southern Wisconsin. Lastly, an estimated F4 tornado tracked 20 miles through Kenosha and Racine Counties in Wisconsin. Eight people were killed, and 85 were injured.

1960 - Salt Lake City UT received an inch of snow. It marked their latest measurable snowfall of record. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - Mount Saint Helens (in Washington State) erupted spewing ash and smoke sixty-three thousand feet into the air. Heavy ash covered the ground to the immediate northwest, and small particles were carried to the Atlantic coast. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Kansas, developing along a cold front, spawned tornadoes at Emporia and Toledo, produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Fort Scott, and produced golf ball size hail in the Kansas City area. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed ahead of the cold front. Pomona NJ reported a record high of 93 degrees, and Altus, OK, hit 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure anchored over eastern Virginia kept showers and thunderstorms over the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Flash flooding was reported in Pennsylvania. Up to five inches of rain drenched Franklin County PA in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf Coast States to the Lower Missouri Valley during the day and evening. Thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, and there were 74 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the central U.S. spawning a sixteen tornadoes, including a dozen in Nebraska. Thunderstorms also produced hail four inches in diameter at Perryton TX, wind gusts to 84 mph at Ellis KS, and high winds which caused nearly two million dollars damage at Sutherland NE. Thunderstorms deluged Sioux City IA with up to eight inches of rain, resulting in a record flood crest on Perry Creek and at least 4.5 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NOT TRUE!

An upscale jewelry store in New York had an exhibit of crosses in their display window. They were anxious to attract shoppers to a sale that was going on. Prominently displayed in the middle of the crosses was a sign that read: "EASY TERMS!"

However, there are no easy terms associated with the cross of Christ. Certainly not for Him. And neither for us if we take our calling to be His disciples seriously.

Jesus said that "A student is not greater than the teacher...and a slave shares the master's fate."

Our commitment to Christ carries with it a cost. A sure sign of those who follow Him is the conflict and disagreement that surrounds them for doing His will and following His teachings. Christian commitment may even separate us from our family, friends and loved ones. How? As we take up our cross and follow Him our eternal values will certainly generate differences of opinions and lifestyles. Our goals will be different. Our vision of right and wrong will bring about separation of what to do with our time, treasures and talents. When we take up His cross and follow Him, He becomes our priority and passion and purpose for living.

Jesus does not call us to a life of peace, pleasure and prosperity. He calls us to live a life like He lived, doing as He did even though we may lose everything we have when we share in the reality of His cross.

Prayer: Give us courage, Lord, to take up our crosses each day knowing that it costs nothing to become a Christian but costs everything to be a Christian. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. Matthew 10:24-40



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: 05.17.24

8 17 40 60 70 3

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$421,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.15.24

17 25 27 47 51 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,450,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 33 Mins 26  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.17.24

2 22 31 34 37 9

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 48 Mins 26  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.15.24

6 20 29 33 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$101,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 48 Mins 26  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.15.24

8 9 29 57 65 10

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 17 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.15.24

19 42 45 55 69 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$77,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 17 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the Associated Press

### Tick season has arrived. Protect yourself with these tips

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

FORT COLLINS, Colorado (AP) — Tick season is starting across the U.S., and experts are warning the bloodsuckers may be as plentiful as ever.

Another mild winter and other favorable factors likely means the 2024 tick population will be equal to last year or larger, some researchers say.

"It's very bad and has only been getting worse," said Susanna Visser of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

An increasing variety of ticks are pushing into new geographical areas, bringing unusual diseases. Exotic southern species like the Gulf Coast tick and the lone star tick are being detected in New York and other northern states, for example.

But the tick that experts warn of the most is a common blacklegged tick, which is found mainly in forests and spreads Lyme disease. Infection rates begin to peak in May, and U.S. health officials estimate nearly half a million Lyme disease infections happen annually.

Here's a look at what's expected this year and how you can protect yourself.

#### TICK FACTS

Ticks are small, eight-legged bloodsucking parasites — arachnids, not insects — that feed on animals and sometimes people. Some ticks are infected with germs that can cause illness, and they spread those germs when they bite.

There is no widely accepted estimate of how many ticks there are from one year to the next, but there is a scientific consensus that they are an increasingly common health hazard in large portions of the United States.

Blacklegged ticks — also known as deer ticks, since they feed on deer — are among the most common ticks in the eastern half of the U.S. They were plentiful centuries ago, then diminished when forests were cut down and deer were hunted, and rebounded alongside deer and wooded suburbs. The ticks have spread out from pockets in New England and the Midwest over a wider range, into the South and the Great Plains.

Tick populations cycle through the year and their numbers depend on a few factors. They like warm, humid weather, and more can be seen after a mild winter. The more deer and mice available to feed matters, too.

Overall, the blacklegged tick population has been expanding for at least four decades, researchers say.

"This is an epidemic in slow motion," said Rebecca Eisen, a CDC research biologist and tick expert.

#### 2024 TICK SEASON FORECAST

Weather can play a role in the severity of a tick season.

Very cold, dry winters can whittle down tick populations, but recent winters have been mild — a trend some attribute to climate change.

As Scott Williams, a tick researcher at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, said: "Winters are no longer limiting the tick population."

Ticks can withstand the heat but tend to almost hibernate when it's a dry summer. That happened in Maine in 2020 through 2022, said Chuck Lubelczyk, a vector ecologist at the MaineHealth Institute for Research.

But last year was a very wet year, and tick activity multiplied in Maine — the state with the highest incidence of Lyme disease in the country. Weather service predictions call for higher temperatures and precipitation, so "on paper, at least, it could be a very good year for the ticks," Lubelczyk said.

In Wisconsin, adult ticks were out longer than usual due to a mild winter. The tick nymphs are starting to emerge, and a wet spring is setting the stage for the possibility that the population will be robust, said Xia Lee, an entomologist at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

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Ditto New York.

"It will be as bad as last year, or worse," said Saravanan Thangamani, who studies ticks and tickborne diseases at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse.

## WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Not all ticks are infected with disease-causing germs — about 20% to 30% of the blacklegged tick nymphs that emerge in the Northeast and Midwest this spring and into summer will be carrying the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, experts estimate.

Lyme disease symptoms tend to start between three and 30 days after a bite occurs and can include fever, headache, fatigue and a bull's-eye-like rash. If you get bitten and develop symptoms, see a doctor to get treated with antibiotics.

## HOW TO KEEP TICKS OFF OF YOU

Experts say the best thing to do is take steps to avoid a tick bite in the first place.

If you go outdoors, make noted of wooded areas and where grassy properties start bleeding into wooded areas. Ticks tend to perch on ankle-level vegetation with their upper legs outstretched, waiting to latch on to an unsuspecting dog or human.

Try to walk in the middle of paths, wear light-colored and permethrin-treated clothing and use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.

## HOW TO CHECK FOR TICKS

When you come inside, check for ticks. They can be found anywhere on the human body, but common spots include around the waist, behind the knees, between fingers and toes, on underarms, in the belly button and around the neck or hairline.

They are harder to see when they are young, so look carefully and immediately pull them off with tweezers.

The CDC does not recommend sending individual ticks to testing services for analysis, because a person might get more than one tick bite and the results from the tested tick may not be sufficient information.

## Abortion rights initiatives make the ballot in South Dakota and Colorado

By JACK DURA Associated Press

Voters in Colorado and South Dakota will have a say on abortion rights this fall after enough signatures were collected to put measures on the ballots.

South Dakota voters will get a chance at direct democracy on the contentious issue in a conservative state where a trigger law banning nearly all abortions went into effect after Roe v. Wade was overturned.

Colorado's measure, which made the ballot Friday, would enshrine abortion protections into the state constitution. Colorado already has broad protections for abortion, becoming a haven for those in states that have restricted abortion, particularly Texas.

South Dakota's top election official announced Thursday that about 85% of the more than 55,000 signatures submitted in support of the ballot initiative are valid, exceeding the required 35,017 signatures.

Voters will vote up or down on prohibiting the state from regulating abortion before the end of the first trimester and allowing the state to regulate abortion after the second trimester, except when necessary to preserve the life or physical or emotional health of a pregnant woman.

Dakotans for Health, which sponsored the amendment, said in a statement Thursday that the signatures' validation "certified that the people of South Dakota, not the politicians in Pierre, will be the ones to decide whether to restore Roe v. Wade as the law of South Dakota."

Abortion rights are also on the ballot in Florida and Maryland, and advocates are still working toward that goal in states including Arizona, Montana and Nebraska in the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 reversal of Roe.

Voters of seven other states have already approved abortion access in ballot measures, including four that wrote abortion rights into their constitution.

Supporters for Colorado's ballot measure said they turned in over 225,000 signatures, nearly double the required number of just over 124,000. Amending the state constitution will require the support of 55%

of voters.

"In this time of uncertainty, we need to secure abortion rights and access in the Colorado Constitution, beyond the reach of politics and politicians," Karen Middleton, president of Cobalt Abortion Fund based in Colorado, said in a statement Friday.

South Dakota outlaws all abortions, except to save the life of the mother.

Despite securing language on the ballot, abortion rights advocates in South Dakota face an uphill battle to success in November. Republican lawmakers strongly oppose the measure, and a major abortion rights advocate has said it doesn't support it.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota warned when the signatures were submitted that the language as written doesn't convey the strongest legal standard for courts to evaluate abortion laws and could risk being symbolic only.

Life Defense Fund, a group organized against the initiative, said they will continue to research the signatures.

Opponents still have 30 days — until June 17 — to file a challenge with the secretary of state's office.

"We are grateful to the many dedicated volunteers who have put in countless hours, and we are resolute in our mission to defend unborn babies," co-chairs Leslee Unruh and state Rep. Jon Hansen said in a statement.

## **A Lakota student's feather plume was cut off her cap during commencement at a New Mexico high school**

FARMINGTON, N.M. (AP) — A Lakota student's traditional feather plume was cut off her graduation cap during her high school commencement ceremony this week in northwestern New Mexico.

It was during the national anthem Monday night when Farmington High School faculty members approached the student, Genesis White Bull, and confiscated her cap, the Tri-City Record reported. The top of it had been decorated with traditional beadwork and an aópazan — Lakota for plume.

White Bull is Hunkpapa Lakota of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota.

Farmington's school district said in a statement Wednesday that it prohibits any modifications to graduation caps and gowns, but students can wear traditional regalia beneath their graduation attire.

"While the staff involved were following district guidelines, we acknowledge this could have been handled differently and better," the statement said.

About 34% of the school district's roughly 11,200 students are Native American or Alaska Natives. The community of Farmington sits on the border of the vast Navajo Nation.

Brenda White Bull, the student's mother, approached the faculty members after they removed her daughter's cap, asking if she could remove the plume herself. The faculty members used scissors to cut it off, she said.

Navajo Nation First Lady Jasmine Blackwater-Nygren, who attended the commencement Monday night, said on Facebook that she was disappointed and called on school officials to allow Native American students the choice to wear traditional regalia at graduation.

"Deciding what to wear goes far beyond a simple decision of what color dress or shoes to wear," Blackwater-Nygren said. "For Native students, this is a day to proudly wear our traditional regalia. Our regalia reminds us of how far we've come as a people, it shows our pride in our culture, and how we chose to identify ourselves as Native people."

Robert Taboada, a school district spokesperson, told The Associated Press on Friday that district officials were working with the Navajo Nation's Department of Diné Education to review and update its policies on graduation attire. Taboada declined to comment further.

Brenda White Bull told the Farmington newspaper that the family had prayed together before placing the plume on the cap.

"That's part of our culture," she said. "When we reach a milestone in our life, we as Lakotas decorate, do our beadwork and place our plume on them."

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The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe says the school owes Genesis White Bull an apology.

"To be humiliated during one of her young life's most celebrated moments is unacceptable," Chairwoman Janet Alkire said.

Brenda White Bull said Wednesday that school officials haven't reached out. Efforts to reach her Friday for comment weren't immediately successful.

## **Slovak prime minister still in serious condition as suspect appears in court**

By JAN GEBERT Associated Press

PEZINOK, Slovakia (AP) — Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's condition was stable but serious Saturday as the man accused of trying to assassinate him faced his first court appearance.

Health Minister Zuzana Dolinkova said two-hour surgery Friday to remove dead tissue from multiple gunshot wounds "contributed to a positive prognosis" for Fico.

Defense Minister Robert Kalinak said his condition still makes it impossible to transport him to the capital, Bratislava.

The update on Fico's condition came as the man accused of attempting to assassinate him made his first court appearance Saturday, Slovak state media said.

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

PEZINOK, Slovakia (AP) — The man accused of attempting to assassinate Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico made his first court appearance Saturday as the nation's leader remained in serious condition recovering from surgery after surviving multiple gunshots, Slovak state media said.

Fico, 59, was attacked as he greeted supporters following a government meeting Wednesday in the former coal mining town of Handlova. The suspect was tackled to the ground and arrested.

Prosecutors are seeking an order from Slovakia's Specialized Criminal Court to detain the suspect.

Prosecutors told police not to publicly identify the suspect or release other details about the case, but unconfirmed media reports said he was a 71-year-old retiree known as an amateur poet who may have once worked as a mall security guard in the country's southwest.

Government authorities gave details that matched that description. They said the suspect didn't belong to any political groups, though the attack itself was politically motivated.

The courthouse in Pezinok, a small town outside the capital, Bratislava, was guarded by officers wearing balaclavas and carrying rifles. News media were not allowed in the courthouse and reporters were kept behind a gate outside.

Police on Friday had taken the suspect to his home in the town of Levice and seized a computer and some documents, Markiza, a Slovak television station reported. Police didn't comment.

Fico underwent another round of surgery Friday to remove dead tissue from his body, said Miriam Lapuníková, director of the University F. D. Roosevelt hospital in Banská Bystrica, where Fico was taken by helicopter after he was shot.

He also underwent a CT scan and was awake and stable in an intensive care unit. She described his condition as "very serious."

World leaders have condemned the attack and offered support for Fico and Slovakia.

Fico has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond. His return to power last year on a pro-Russia, anti-American platform led to worries among fellow European Union and NATO members that he would abandon his country's pro-Western course, particularly on Ukraine.

At the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Slovakia was one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters, but Fico halted arms deliveries to Ukraine when he returned to power, his fourth time serving as prime minister.

Fico's government has also made efforts to overhaul public broadcasting — a move critics said would give the government full control of public television and radio. That, coupled with his plans to amend the penal code to eliminate a special anti-graft prosecutor, have led opponents to worry that Fico will lead

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Slovakia down a more autocratic path.

Thousands of demonstrators have repeatedly rallied in the capital and around the country of 5.4 million to protest his policies.

Fico said last month on Facebook that he believed rising tensions in the country could lead to the killing of politicians, and he blamed the media for fueling tensions.

Before Fico returned to power last year, many of his political and business associates were the focus of police investigations, and dozens have been charged.

His plan to overhaul the penal system would eliminate the office of the special prosecutor that deals with organized crime, corruption and extremism.

## **Ukraine's divisive mobilization law comes into force as a new Russian push strains front-line troops**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A divisive mobilization law in Ukraine came into force on Saturday, as Kyiv struggles to boost troop numbers after Russia launched a new offensive that some fear could close in on Ukraine's second-largest city.

The legislation, which was watered down from its original draft, will make it easier to identify every conscript in the country. It also provides incentives to soldiers, such as cash bonuses or money toward buying a house or car, that some analysts say Ukraine cannot afford.

Lawmakers dragged their feet for months and only passed the law in mid-April, a week after Ukraine lowered the age for men who can be drafted from 27 to 25. The measures reflect the growing strain that more than two years of war with Russia has had on Ukraine's forces, who are trying to hold the front lines in fighting that has sapped the country's ranks and stores of weapons and ammunition.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also signed two other laws Friday, allowing prisoners to join the army and increasing fines for draft dodgers fivefold. Russia enlisted its prisoners early on in the war, and personnel shortages compelled Ukraine to adopt the new measures.

Russian troops, meanwhile, are pushing ahead with a ground offensive that opened a new front in north-eastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region and put further pressure on Kyiv's overstretched military. After weeks of probing, Moscow launched the new push knowing that Ukraine suffered personnel shortages, and that its forces have been spread thin in the northeast.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that the Russian push aims to create "a buffer zone" rather than capturing Kharkiv, the local capital and Ukraine's second-largest city.

Still, Moscow's forces have pummeled Kharkiv with strikes in recent weeks, hitting civilian and energy infrastructure and prompting angry accusations from Zelenskyy that the Russian leadership sought to reduce the city to rubble. On Friday, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said that Russian guided bombs killed at least three residents and injured 28 others that day.

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians, but thousands have died or suffered injuries in the more than 27 months of fighting.

The U.S. last week announced a new \$400 million package of military aid for Ukraine, and President Joe Biden has promised that he would rush badly needed weaponry to the country to help it stave off Russian advances. Still, only small batches of U.S. military aid have started to trickle into the front line, according to Ukrainian military commanders, who said it will take at least two months before supplies meet Kyiv's needs to hold the line.

Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022, some risking their lives as they tried to swim across a river separating Ukraine from neighboring Romania and Hungary.

Late on Friday, Ukraine's border service said that at least 30 people have died trying to cross the Tisza River since the full scale-invasion.

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Romanian border guards days earlier retrieved the near-naked, disfigured body of a man that appeared to have been floating in the Tisza for days, and is the 30th known casualty, the Ukrainian agency said in an online statement. It said the man has not yet been identified.

## Young women in a Rio favela hope to overcome slum violence to play in the Women's World Cup in 2027

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DIARLEI RODRIGUES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A 20-minute drive separates the historic Maracana Stadium from the Complexo do Alemão, one of Rio de Janeiro's most impoverished and violent favelas.

One of its residents, 15-year-old soccer player Kaylane Alves dos Santos, hopes her powerful shots and impressive dribbles will allow her to cover that short distance from slum to stadium in three years to play for Brazil's national team in the final of the 2027 Women's World Cup.

That chance, once remote, became more realistic on Friday when FIFA members voted to make Brazil the first Latin American country to host the Women's World Cup.

Local organizers have suggested that both the opening match and the final are likely to be played at the 78,000-seat Maracana Stadium that staged the final matches of the 1950 and the 2014 men's soccer World Cups.

Teenager dos Santos knows the hurdles for her to ever play for Brazil remain enormous — in 2027 or later. She doesn't have a professional club to play for, she only trains twice a week, and her nutrition is not the best due to limited food choices in the favela.

Most importantly, she often can't leave home to play when police and drug dealers shoot at each other in Complexo do Alemão.

Still, she is excited and hopeful about Brazil hosting the Women's World Cup, resulting in a big boost to her confidence.

"We have a dream (of playing for Brazil in the Women's World Cup), and if we have that chance it will be the best thing in the world," dos Santos told The Associated Press this week after a training session in the Complexo do Alemão.

She and about 70 other young women in the Bola de Ouro project train on an artificial grass pitch in a safe region of the 3-square kilometers long (1.15 square mile) community.

If not on the pitch, Dos Santos and her teammates will be happy enough just to attend games of a tournament they could only dream of watching up close until FIFA members voted for Brazil over the Germany-Netherlands-Belgium joint bid. The Women's World Cup was played for the first time in 1991 and will have its 10th edition in 2027.

A five-time champion in men's soccer, more than any other country, Brazil has yet to win its first Women's World Cup trophy. By then, it is unlikely superstar Marta, aged 38, will be in the roster. Dos Santos and thousands of young female footballers who have overcome sexism to take up the sport are keen to get inspiration from the six-time FIFA player of the year award winner and write their own history on home soil.

As many female footballers experience in Brazil, dos Santos and her teenage teammates rarely play without boys on their teams. Until recently, they also had to share the pitch with five-year-old girls, which didn't allow the older players to train as hard as they would like.

"(The Women's World Cup in Brazil) makes us focus even more in trying to get better. We need to be able to play in this," said 16-year-old Kamilly Alves dos Santos, Kaylane's sister and also a player on the team. "We need to keep training, sharing our things."

Their team, which has already faced academy sides of big local clubs like Botafogo, is trained by two city activists who once tried to become players themselves.

Diogo Chaves, 38, and Webert Machado, 37, work hard to get some of their players to the Women's World Cup in Brazil, but if that's not possible they will be happy by keeping them in school.

Their non-profit group is funded solely by donations.

"At first, basically, the children wanted to eat. But now we have all of this," said Chaves, adding that the

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project began three years ago. "We believe they can get to the national team. But our biggest challenge is opportunity. There's little for children from here, not only for the girls."

Machado said the two coaches "are not here to fool anyone" and do not believe all the young women they train will become professionals.

"What we want from them is for they to be honest people, we all need to have our character," Machado said. "We want to play and make them become nurses, doctors, firefighters, some profession in the future."

The two dos Santos sisters, as do many of their teammates, believe that reaching the Women's World Cup as Complexo do Alemão residents is possible. Brazil has more than 100 professional women's soccer teams, with other players living in favelas, too.

But it won't be easy.

"Sometimes I have to cancel appointments because of shootings, because there's barricades on fire," she said. "Sometimes police tell us to go back home, they say we can't come down and point their guns to me, to my mother," said Kamilly.

Her sister hopes the pair will overcome the violence, against the odds.

"I want to earn my living in soccer, fulfill all dreams," Kaylane says. "And I want to leave the Complexo do Alemão. I want to make it happen."

## **Flash floods due to unusually heavy seasonal rains kill at least 50 people in western Afghanistan**

RAHIM FAIEZ undefined

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Flash floods from heavy seasonal rains in western Afghanistan have killed at least 50 people and dozens remain missing, a Taliban official said on Saturday, adding the death toll was based on preliminary reports and might rise.

Afghanistan has been witnessing unusually heavy seasonal rains.

The hard-hit province of Ghor has suffered significant financial losses, said Abdul Wahid Hamas, spokesman for the provincial governor, after thousands of homes and properties were damaged and hundreds of hectares of agricultural land destroyed following Friday's floods, including the capital city Feroz Koh.

The Taliban's government chief spokesman posted on social platform X, mourning "the loss of our fellow Afghans," and urged "responsible authorities ... to provide all necessary support to alleviate the suffering." He also called on "our benevolent donors" to help and humanitarian organizations to provide the affected communities with aid.

Last week, the U.N. food agency said the exceptionally heavy rains in Afghanistan have killed more than 300 people and destroyed thousands of houses, mostly in the northern province of Baghlan, which bore the brunt of floods on May 10th.

Survivors have been left with no home, no land, and no source of livelihood, the World Food Organization said. Most of Baghlan is "inaccessible by trucks," said WFP, adding that it is resorting to every alternative it can think of to deliver food to the survivors.

The latest disaster came on the heels of devastating floods that killed at least 70 people in April. The waters also destroyed about 2,000 homes, three mosques and four schools in western Farah and Herat, and southern Zabul and Kandahar provinces.

## **Duchene scores winner in 2nd OT, Stars advance to Western Conference final with 2-1 win over Avs**

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — Matt Duchene took off down the ice, slid on his knees and pumped his right glove.

That's what the video will show anyway. Because his big moment was pretty much a big blur. He just knows what it meant: The Dallas Stars are heading back to the Western Conference final.

Duchene scored at 11:42 of the second overtime after being involved in a play that led to a goal disal-

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lowed for goaltender interference in the first extra period, and the Stars advanced with a 2-1 victory over the Colorado Avalanche in Game 6 on Friday night.

Duchene, a 2009 draft pick of the Avalanche, secured a loose puck in front of the net and sent it over a sprawled out Alexandar Georgiev to start the celebration. He was too exhausted, too caught up in the moment, to take it all in.

"Just elation," Duchene said. "I was so tired, I started skating and then I got tired. I don't even know what I did after that, to be honest with you. I was pretty pumped up."

In the locker room after the game, the Stars celebrated by blaring an almost fitting tune — "Rocky Mountain High" by John Denver.

Dallas advances to face either Edmonton or Vancouver next. It's the second straight trip to the conference final for the Stars, who lost last season to eventual Stanley Cup champion Vegas. The Stars won their only Stanley Cup title in 1999.

"The dream's still alive," Stars forward Joe Pavelski said.

Jamie Benn tied the score at 1:56 of the third period.

Mason Marchment thought he scored the winner with 7:29 left in the first overtime but it was waved off for goaltender interference. The play was reviewed and the call on the ice stood. Duchene was jostling with Cale Makar in front of Georgiev, leading to a call. The NHL's situation room explained that Duchene impaired Georgiev's ability to play his position in the crease.

"The explanation that I got was Dutchie's (bottom) was over the line. His feet were outside but his (bottom) was over the line," Marchment explained. "I think honestly, they didn't want to make it a deciding goal. ... At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter. We got the job done. It's awesome."

Jake Oettinger was stellar all night in making 29 saves. One of his biggest was a close-range shot from Artturi Lehkonen down low midway through the second OT.

"He was fabulous," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said of his goaltender.

This was a series in which the road team won five of six games, including the Stars taking all three in Denver. The Avalanche were the top home team in the regular season, while the Stars had the best road record.

It was a difficult end to what was a tumultuous postseason for Colorado, with Valeri Nichushkin suspended before Game 4 for violating terms of the NHL/NHLPA player assistance program.

"A devastating result," Makar said of the Game 6 loss. "The year being where we all feel like we have a team that with all of our pieces can make a push for the whole thing."

Colorado scored the opening goal of the game for the first time in the series when Mikko Rantanen sent a wrist shot over Oettinger early in the second period on a power play.

Makar had an assist to give him 80 career playoff points in 72 games played. He's the fifth defenseman in NHL history to amass 80 career postseason points in 80 or fewer games, joining Bobby Orr (66 games), Paul Coffey (67), Brian Leetch (70) and Al MacInnis (71).

Both teams were missing forwards, with Roope Hintz out for Dallas and Yakov Trenin for Colorado.

"We fought hard," said Avalanche forward Nathan MacKinnon, a Hart Trophy finalist who had four goals and 10 assists in the postseason run. "The effort was there the whole season."

It's the end of hockey for Zach Parise, who's calling it a career. He was drafted by the New Jersey in 2003 and once played for DeBoer while both were with the Devils. They shared a moment after the game.

"I loved playing for him. He's a world-class coach," Parise said. "He's the type of guy, now that we're out, you cheer for him."

## **It was once a center of Islamic learning. Now Mali's historic city of Djenné mourns lack of visitors**

By MOUSTAPHA DIALLO Associated Press

DJENNE, Mali (AP) — Kola Bah used to earn a living as a tour guide in Mali's historic city of Djenné, once a center of Islamic learning known for the sprawling mud-brick mosque that has been on the UNESCO

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World Heritage in Danger list since 2016.

The Grand Mosque of Djenné — the world's largest mud-brick building — used to draw tens of thousands of tourists to central Mali every year. Now it's threatened by conflict between jihadi rebels, government forces and other groups.

Bah says his income was enough to support his family, which now numbers nine children, and to pay for a small herd of cattle. But these days, few visitors come to the city, and he has been largely out of work. When he needs cash, he sells some of his cattle.

Speaking to The Associated Press outside his home in Djenné's old town, Bah said locals believed the crisis would come to an end eventually, and that business would pick up as before.

"But the more time passed, the more this dream proved illusory," he said. "Things are really difficult now."

Djenné is one of the oldest towns in sub-Saharan Africa and served as a market center and an important link in the trans-Saharan gold trade. Almost 2,000 of its traditional houses still survive in the old town.

The Grand Mosque, built in 1907 on the site of an older mosque dating back to the 13th century, is replastered every year by local residents in a ritual that brings together the entire city. The towering, earth-colored structure requires a new layer of mud before the rainy season starts, or it would fall into disrepair.

Women are responsible for carrying water from the nearby river to mix with clay and rice hulls to make the mud used to plaster the mosque. Adding the new layer of mud is a job reserved for men. The joyful ritual is a source of pride for a city that has fallen on hard times, uniting people of all ages.

Bamouyi Trao Traoré, one of Djenné's lead masons, says they work as a team from the very start. This year's replastering took place earlier this month.

"Each one of us goes to a certain spot to supervise," he said. "This is how we do it until the whole thing is done. We organize ourselves, we supervise the younger ones."

Mali's conflict erupted following a coup in 2012 that created a power vacuum, allowing jihadi groups to seize control of key northern cities. A French-led military operation pushed them out of the urban centers the following year, but the success was short-lived.

The jihadis regrouped and launched relentless attacks on the Malian military, as well as the United Nations, French and regional forces in the country. The militants proclaimed allegiance to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

Sidi Keita, the director of Mali's national tourism agency in the capital of Bamako, says the drop in tourism was sharp following the violence.

"It was really a popular destination," he said, describing tens of thousands of visitors a year and adding that today, tourists are "virtually absent from Mali."

Despite being one of Africa's top gold producers, Mali ranks among the least developed nations in the world, with almost half of its 22 million people living below the national poverty line. With the tourism industry all but gone, there are ever fewer means for Malians to make a living.

Anger and frustration over what many Malians call "the crisis" is rising. The country also saw two more coups since 2020, during a wave of political instability in West and Central Africa.

Col. Assimi Goita, who took charge in Mali after a second coup in 2021, expelled French forces the following year, and turned to Russia's mercenary units for security assistance. He also ordered the U.N. to end its 10-year peacekeeping mission in Mali the following year.

Goita has promised to beat back the armed groups, but the U.N. and other analysts say the government is rapidly losing ground to militants. With Mali's dire economic situation getting worse, Goita's ruling junta ordered all political activities to stop last month, and the following day barred the media from reporting on political activities.

Moussa Moriba Diakité, head of Djenné's cultural mission which strives to preserve the city's heritage, said there are other challenges beyond security — including illegal excavations and trash disposal in the city.

The mission is trying to promote the message that security isn't as bad as it seems, he said, and also get more young people involved in the replastering ritual, to help the new generation recognize its importance.

"It's not easy to get people to understand the benefits of preserving cultural heritage right away," he said.

## Even with school choice, some Black families find options lacking decades after Brown v. Board

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

Since first grade, Julian Morris, 16, has changed schools six times, swinging between predominantly white and predominantly Black classrooms. None has met all his needs, his mother said.

At predominantly white schools, he was challenged academically but felt less included. At predominately Black schools, he felt more supported as a Black student, but his mother, Denita Dorsey, said they didn't have the same resources and academic opportunities.

Seventy years after the Supreme Court ruled separating children in schools on the basis of race was unconstitutional, Dorsey said the options available to her family in Michigan are disappointing.

"Segregation is abolished, sure, but our schools are still deeply divided along racial and socioeconomic lines," Dorsey said. "It makes you think: It's been 70 years but was it worth it?"

The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling and desegregation orders were only the first steps toward the elusive goal of equitable education. For some Black families, school choice has been critical in finding the best available option. And that has not meant necessarily the school with the most racial diversity.

Integration alone is not what Black families have pushed for over the decades, said Bernita Bradley of the National Parents Union, an education advocacy group.

"We wanted integration with accountability and that's not what we received," she said. "That's why choice needs to exist but we still need high-quality options."

Dorsey made what she called a "contentious decision" in 2022, choosing Saginaw High School in Michigan, which is predominantly Black, over Julian's predominantly white charter school.

"I was challenged, and I had arguments with family. But Julian is now getting more support from his teachers and administration than he ever did at his previous schools," she said.

The Brown decision is seen as a key impetus to kicking off the modern school choice movement. As many white families began turning to private schools as a way to avoid the court mandate, state lawmakers — primarily in Southern states — began launching school voucher programs.

In Prince Edward County in Virginia, which closed all its public schools in 1959 for five years to evade integration, state and local officials gave white families tuition grants and tax credits to attend private schools. No similar options were provided to Black families. The move inspired other states to adopt similar schemes before they were deemed illegal by the Supreme Court.

The arguments for school choice evolved over time.

Some thinkers in the 1960s such as Milton Friedman argued that giving families money to spend on education how they saw fit would revolutionize education, incentivizing schools to improve or be left behind. At the same time, civil rights leaders stressed that choice could equalize education for lower-income families, which overwhelmingly include Black and Hispanic students.

Today, some of the loudest advocates for vouchers no longer approach it as a way to push for social justice, said Claire Smrekar, a professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University. Rather, the focus is on parents' rights and lifting restrictions that may prevent wealthier families from using the programs at schools of their choice.

"This expansion is really extraordinary when you think about it," Smrekar said. "There are no social justice arguments here for families trapped in poverty and zoned for low-performing schools. The new argument is that everyone should enjoy this subsidy."

Meantime, conservative attacks on how topics related to race and racism are taught in schools have only added to the appeal of alternatives for some Black families. Some schools dedicate themselves to affirming students' Black heritage, claiming the mantle of freedom schools that started during the Civil Rights Movement in response to the inferior education Black Americans were receiving in the South.

"All parents want is a safe and caring environment where their child is going to go and they are going to be a partner in my child's pathway to success," Bradley said.

Black families also turned to homeschooling in large numbers during the pandemic, driven in part by a

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desire to shield their children from racism in classrooms and to better meet the individual academic needs of their children.

American schools are more racially diverse today compared to the era of Brown v. Board, but schools have been re-segregating, with lasting academic consequences. 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, where students have worse educational outcomes.

According to research from Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project, the recent increase in segregation appears to be partially driven by school choice. In school districts where charter schools expanded most rapidly in the last two decades, segregation grew the most.

In Michigan, Julian said he thought his mother was "tripping or just going off the rails" to pull him out of a higher-ranked school.

"It wasn't until I arrived at Saginaw High that I took a second look back and realized that what was said to me and things that happened at the school were not OK," Julian said. "I was different there because I am Black. But now at Saginaw, it feels more welcoming and I feel included and supported. I feel the difference."

Janel Jones, a mother of two children in Atlanta, said she has seen the benefits of choice, having sent her 13-year-old daughter and 17-year-old son to seven different schools combined. But just giving parents an option is not enough, she said.

"School choice is not choice if it is not equitable. At the end of the day, liberation directly affects our economic outcome, and as parents we have to make sure these educational systems are challenging academically but also meet their needs as members of society," Jones said.

It is not as simple as sending children to an all-Black school, she said.

"Your child is protected, but also coddled. You have not learned how to understand and deal with microaggressions you are guaranteed to face when you get your first job. That's the educational part we as Black parents also have to teach our kids and that's not going to change any time soon," she said.

## Widespread power outages from deadly Houston storm raise new risk: hot weather

By LEKAN OYEKANMI and DAVID J. PHILLIP Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — As the Houston area works to clean up and restore power to thousands after deadly storms, it will do so Saturday under a smog warning and as all of southern Texas starts to feel the heat.

The National Weather Service in Houston warned that with temperatures hitting around 90 degrees (32.2 C) this weekend, people should know the symptoms of heat exhaustion. "Don't overdo yourself during the cleanup process," it said in a post on the social platform X.

The balmy weather is a concern in a region where more than 555,000 homes and businesses remained without electricity Friday night — down from nearly 1 million, according to PowerOutage.us. Fierce storms Thursday with winds of up to 100 mph (161 kph) blew out windows downtown, while a tornado touched down near the the northwest Houston suburb of Cypress.

At least four people were killed when the storms swept through Harris County, which includes Houston. Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo said Friday that it could take "weeks" for power to be restored in some areas.

With multiple transmission towers down, Hidalgo urged patience. Another 26,000 customers were without power in Louisiana, where strong winds and a suspected tornado hit, down from a peak of 215,000.

"We are going to have to talk about this disaster in weeks, not days," Hidalgo said.

She said she had heard "horror stories of just terror and powerlessness" as the storm came through. The weather service also reported straight-line winds of up to 100 mph (161 kph) in the suburbs of Baytown and Galena Park.

The Houston Health Department said it would distribute 400 free portable air conditioners to area seniors,

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people with disabilities and caregivers of disabled children.

In addition to the heat, the Houston area has also been warned about poor air quality over the weekend. While to the east, heavy rainfall was possible in eastern Louisiana into central Alabama, while parts of Louisiana were warned of the risk of flash floods through Saturday.

The widespread destruction brought much of Houston to a standstill. Trees, debris and shattered glass littered the streets. One building's brick wall was ripped off.

School districts in the Houston area canceled classes Friday for more than 400,000 students and government offices were closed. City officials urged people to avoid downtown and stay off roads, many of which were flooded or lined with downed power lines and malfunctioning traffic lights.

Houston Mayor John Whitmire warned that police were out in force, including state troopers sent to the area to prevent looting. He said the speed and intensity of the storm caught many off guard.

"Most Houstonians didn't have time to place themselves out of harms way," Whitmire said at a news conference.

Noelle Delgado's pulled up Thursday night to Houston Pets Alive, the animal rescue organization where she is executive director to find the dogs and cats — more than 30 in all — were uninjured, but the awning had been ripped off, the sign was mangled and water was leaking inside. She hoped to find foster homes for the animals.

"I could definitely tell that this storm was a little different," she said. "It felt terrifying."

Yessenia Guzmán worried whether she would get paid with the power still out at the restaurant where she works in the Houston suburb of Katy.

"We don't really know what's going to happen," she said.

Whitmire signed disaster declaration, which paves the way for state and federal storm recovery assistance. President Joe Biden also issued a disaster declaration, his for seven counties in Texas, including Harris, over severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes and flooding since April 26. His action makes federal funding available to people affected by the storms.

Emergency officials in neighboring Montgomery County described the damage to transmission lines as "catastrophic."

High-voltage transmission towers that were torn apart and downed power lines pose a twofold challenge for the utility company because the damage affected transmission and distribution systems, according to Alexandria von Meier, a power and energy expert who called that a rare thing. Damage to just the distribution system is more typical, von Meier said.

How quickly repairs are made will depend on a variety of factors, including the time it takes to assess the damage, equipment replacement, roadwork access issues and workforce availability. Centerpoint Energy deployed 1,000 employees on Friday and had requested 5,000 more line workers and vegetation professionals.

## Donald Trump will address the NRA in Texas. He's called himself the best president for gun owners

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Former President Donald Trump is expected to address thousands of members of the National Rifle Association in Texas a day after campaigning in Minnesota in the midst of his hush money trial.

Trump has pledged to continue to defend the Second Amendment and has called himself "the best friend gun owners have ever had in the White House" as the country faces record numbers of deaths due to mass shootings. Last year ended with 42 mass killings and 217 deaths, making it one of the deadliest years on record.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee has been criticized by President Joe Biden, specifically for remarks he made earlier this year after a school shooting in Iowa, which he called "very terrible" only to later say that "we have to get over it. We have to move forward."

Speaking Friday at a campaign event in Minnesota, Trump said: "You know, it's an amazing thing. People

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that have guns, people that legitimately have guns, they love guns and they use guns for the right purpose, but they tend to vote very little and yet they have to vote for us. There's nobody else to vote for because the Democrats want to take their guns away and they will take their guns away."

He added, "That's why I'm going to be talking to the NRA tomorrow to say, 'You gotta get out and vote.'"

When Trump was president, there were moments when he pledged to strengthen gun laws. After a high school mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 people and wounded 17 others, Trump told survivors and family members that he would be "very strong on background checks." He claimed he would stand up to the NRA but later he backpedaled, saying there was "not much political support."

On Saturday, he is expected to give the keynote address as the powerful gun lobby holds a forum in Dallas. Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott will also speak at the convention. Prominent gun safety groups that have already endorsed Biden are planning to demonstrate near the convention center where the gun lobby plans to meet.

While Trump sees strong support in Texas, Democrats think they have a chance at an upset in November with former NFL player U.S. Rep. Colin Allred leading an underdog campaign to unseat Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. No Democrat has won a statewide office in Texas in 30 years, which is the longest streak of its kind in the U.S.

On Friday, Trump campaigned in Minnesota after attending his son Barron's high school graduation in Florida.

## Noncitizen voting, already illegal in federal elections, becomes a centerpiece of 2024 GOP messaging

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One political party is holding urgent news conferences and congressional hearings over the topic. The other says it's a dangerous distraction meant to seed doubts ahead of this year's presidential election.

In recent months, the specter of immigrants voting illegally in the U.S. has erupted into a leading election-year talking point for Republicans. They argue that legislation is necessary to protect the sanctity of the vote as the country faces unprecedented levels of illegal immigration at its southern border.

Voting by noncitizens already is illegal in federal elections and there is no indication it's happening anywhere in significant numbers. Yet Republican lawmakers at the federal and state levels are throwing their energy behind the issue, introducing legislation and fall ballot measures. The activity ensures the issue will remain at the forefront of voters' minds in the months ahead.

Republicans in Congress are pushing a bill called the SAVE (Safeguard American Voter Eligibility) Act, which would require proof of citizenship to register to vote. Meanwhile, Republican legislatures in at least six states have placed noncitizen voting measures on the Nov. 5 ballot, while at least two more are debating whether to do so.

"American elections are for American citizens, and we intend to keep it that way," House Administration Committee Chairman Rep. Bryan Steil of Wisconsin said during a hearing he hosted on the topic this week.

Democrats on the committee lambasted their Republican colleagues for focusing on what they called a "non-issue," arguing it was part of a strategy with former President Donald Trump to lay the groundwork for election challenges this fall.

"It appears the lesson Republicans learned from the fiasco that the former president caused in 2020 was not 'Don't steal an election' — it was just 'Start earlier,'" said New York Rep. Joe Morelle, a Democrat and ranking member of the committee. "The coup starts here. This is where it begins."

The concern that immigrants who are not eligible to vote are illegally casting ballots has prevailed on the right for years. But it gained renewed attention earlier this year when Trump began suggesting without evidence that Democrats were encouraging illegal migration to the U.S. so they could register the newcomers to vote.

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Republicans who have been vocal about noncitizen voting have demurred when asked for evidence that it's a problem. Last week, during a news conference on his federal legislation to require proof of citizenship during voter registration, House Speaker Mike Johnson couldn't provide examples of the crime happening.

"The answer is that it's unanswerable," the Louisiana Republican said in response to a question about whether noncitizens were illegally voting. "We all know, intuitively, that a lot of illegals are voting in federal elections, but it's not been something that is easily provable."

Election administration experts say it's not only provable, but it's been demonstrated that the number of noncitizens voting in federal elections is infinitesimal.

To be clear, there have been cases over the years of noncitizens illegally registering and even casting ballots. But states have mechanisms to catch that. Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose recently found 137 suspected noncitizens on the state's rolls — out of roughly 8 million voters — and is taking action to confirm and remove them, he announced earlier this week.

In 2022, Georgia's Republican secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, conducted an audit of his state's voter rolls specifically looking for noncitizens. His office found that 1,634 had attempted to register to vote over a period of 25 years, but election officials had caught all the applications and none had been able to register.

In North Carolina in 2016, an audit of elections found that 41 legal immigrants who had not yet become citizens cast ballots, out of 4.8 million total ballots cast. The votes didn't make a difference in any of the state's elections.

Voters must confirm under penalty of perjury that they are citizens when they register to vote. If they lie, they can face fines, imprisonment or deportation, said David Becker, founder and executive director of the nonprofit Center for Election Innovation and Research.

On top of that, anyone registering provides their Social Security number, driver's license or state ID, Becker said. That means they already have shown the government proof of citizenship to receive those documents, or if they are a noncitizen with a state ID or Social Security number, they have been clearly classified that way in the state's records.

"What they're asking for is additional proof," Becker said of Republicans pushing Johnson's bill. "Why should people have to go to multiple government agencies and have them ask, 'Show us your papers,' when they've already shown them?"

Democrats fear adding more ID requirements could disenfranchise eligible voters who don't have their birth certificates or Social Security cards on hand. Republicans counter that the extra step could provide another layer of security and boost voter confidence in an imperfect system in which noncitizen voters have slipped through in the past.

The national focus on noncitizen voting also has brought attention to a related, but different phenomenon: how a small number of local jurisdictions, among them San Francisco and the District of Columbia, have begun allowing immigrants who aren't citizens to vote in some local contests, such as for school board and city council.

The number of noncitizen voters casting ballots in the towns and cities where they are allowed to do so has been minimal so far. In Winooski, Vermont, where 1,345 people cast ballots in a recent local election, just 11 were not citizens, the clerk told The Associated Press. Still, the gradually growing phenomenon has prompted some state lawmakers to introduce ballot measures that seek to stop cities from trying this in the future.

In South Carolina, voters in November will decide on a constitutional amendment that supporters say will shut the door on any noncitizens voting. The state's constitution currently says every citizen aged 18 and over who qualifies to vote can. The amendment changes the phrasing to say "only citizens."

Republican state Sen. Chip Campsen called it a safeguard to prevent future problems. California has similar wording to South Carolina's current provision, and Campsen cited a California Supreme Court decision that ruled "every" didn't prevent noncitizens from voting.

Democratic state Sen. Darrell Jackson asked Campsen during the debate last month, "Do we have that

problem here in South Carolina?"

"You don't have the problem until the problem arises," Campsen replied.

On Friday, legislative Republicans in Missouri passed a ballot measure for November that would ban both noncitizen voting and ranked-choice voting.

"I know that scary hypotheticals have been thrown out there: 'Well, what about St. Louis? What about Kansas City?'" said Democratic state Sen. Lauren Arthur of Kansas City. "It is not a real threat because this is already outlawed. It's already illegal in Missouri."

Asked by a Democrat on Thursday about instances of noncitizens voting in Missouri, Republican Rep. Alex Riley said he didn't have "specific data or a scenario that it has happened," but wanted to "address the concern that it could happen in the future."

In Wisconsin, an important presidential swing state where the Republican-controlled Legislature also put a noncitizen voting measure on the ballot this fall, Democratic state Rep. Lee Snodgrass said during a hearing earlier this week that she couldn't understand why someone who is not a legal citizen would vote.

"I'm trying to wrap my brain around what people think the motivation would be for a noncitizen to go through an enormous amount of hassle to actively commit a felony to vote in an election that's going to end up putting them in prison or be deported," she said.

## **Man gets 30 years in prison for attacking ex-Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband with a hammer**

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The man who broke into the home of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi seeking to hold her hostage and bludgeoned her husband with a hammer was sentenced Friday to 30 years in prison.

But prosecutors later filed a motion saying the court failed to offer the defendant, David DePape, an opportunity "to speak or present any information to mitigate the sentence" as required by federal rule. They asked the court to reopen the sentencing portion to allow him that option. The court did not immediately respond.

A jury found DePape, 44, guilty in November of attempted kidnapping of a federal official and assault on the immediate family member of a federal official. Prosecutors had asked for a 40-year prison term.

The attack on Paul Pelosi, who was 82 at the time, was captured on police body camera video just days before the 2022 midterm elections and sent shockwaves through the political world. He suffered two head wounds including a skull fracture that was mended with plates and screws he will have for the rest of his life. His right arm and hand were also injured.

Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley sentenced DePape to 20 years for attempted kidnapping and 30 years for the assault, the maximum for both counts. The sentences will run concurrently. He also was given credit for the 18 months he has been in custody.

In its afternoon motion to the court, the U.S. attorney's office said DePape was not given the opportunity by the court to speak before being sentenced and that could present an issue.

DePape's defense, however, said they opposed bringing back their client to court and filed a notice of appeal, according to the filing. Prosecutors and defense counsel did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment late Friday.

The court has 14 days to correct a sentence resulting from error, prosecutors said.

DePape stood silently as he was sentenced and looked down at times. His public defense attorneys had asked the judge to sentence him to 14 years, pointing out that he was going through a difficult period in his life at the time of the attack, had undiagnosed mental health issues and had no prior criminal history.

At trial, DePape testified that he had planned to wear an inflatable unicorn costume and record his interrogation of the Democratic speaker, who was not at her San Francisco home at the time of the attack, to upload it online.

Ahead of the sentencing, one of his defense attorneys, Angela Chuang, told the judge to consider the

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prison terms being given to those who participated in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

"The five most serious sentences for people who were convicted of seditious conspiracy, of literally conspiring to overthrow the government, range from 15 to 22 years," Chuang said.

Corley said the Jan. 6 analogy didn't adequately reflect the seriousness of breaking into an official's private home. The attack may have a chilling effect on people seeking office in the future, she said.

"They have to think not only, 'Am I willing to take that risk myself, but am I willing to risk my spouse, my children, my grandchildren?'" the judge said.

Prosecutors asked for the maximum sentence on each count and for DePape to serve 10 years concurrently, giving him a 40-year prison term.

Before sentencing, Christine Pelosi read her father and mother's victim statements, explaining how the violent attack changed their lives. In Paul Pelosi's statement, he explained that 18 months after the attack, he still gets headaches and vertigo and has fainted and fallen twice at home.

"Once you are attacked in such a public and political manner, with such threatening language, you always have to fear a copycat," Nancy Pelosi said in her statement. "When I encourage people, especially women to consider running for office, physical threats to the family should not even be a factor, but they are."

Both Paul and Nancy Pelosi said there are still bloodstains on the floor and other signs of the break-in at their home.

"Our home remains a heartbreaking crime scene," Nancy Pelosi wrote.

DePape admitted during trial testimony that he broke into the Pelosis' home Oct. 28, 2022, intending to hold the speaker hostage and "break her kneecaps" if she lied to him. He also admitted to bludgeoning Paul Pelosi with a hammer after police showed up, saying his plan to end what he viewed as government corruption was unraveling.

Defense attorneys argued DePape was motivated by his political beliefs, not because he wanted to interfere with Nancy Pelosi's official duties as a member of Congress, making the charges against him invalid.

Chuang, one of his attorneys, said during closing arguments that DePape was estranged from his family and was caught up in conspiracy theories.

Sky Gonzalez, David DePape's son, told reporters outside court the 30-year prison term was equivalent to getting a death sentence.

"I think that's quite sad. I think that's a really long time, because if you think about it, he's already nearly 50. Basically, it's just a death sentence," Gonzalez said before repeating the same conspiracy theories his father wrote about before the attack.

At trial DePape, a Canadian who moved to the U.S. more than 20 years ago, testified that he believed news outlets repeatedly lied about former President Donald Trump. In rants posted on a blog and online forum that were taken down after his arrest, DePape echoed the baseless, right-wing QAnon conspiracy theory that claims a cabal of devil-worshipping pedophiles runs the U.S. government.

Prosecutors said he had rope and zip ties with him, and detectives found body cameras, a computer and a tablet.

Paul Pelosi recalled at the trial how he was awakened by a large man bursting into the bedroom and asking, "Where's Nancy?" He said that when he responded that his wife was in Washington, DePape said he would tie him up while they waited for her.

"It was a tremendous sense of shock to recognize that somebody had broken into the house, and looking at him and looking at the hammer and the ties, I recognized that I was in serious danger, so I tried to stay as calm as possible," Pelosi told jurors.

DePape also is charged in state court with assault with a deadly weapon, elder abuse, residential burglary and other felonies. Jury selection in that trial is expected to start Wednesday.

## After decisive loss at Alabama Mercedes plants, powerful auto union vows to return and win

By TOM KRISHER and KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — A decisive vote against the United Auto Workers union at two Mercedes factories in Alabama on Friday sidetracked the UAW's grand plan to sign up workers at nonunion plants mainly in the South.

But newly elected President Shawn Fain said the union will return to Mercedes and will press on with efforts to organize about 150,000 workers at more than a dozen auto factories across the nation.

Employees at Mercedes battery and assembly plants near Tuscaloosa voted 56% against the union in an election run by the National Labor Relations Board.

The vote count handed the union a serious setback a month after the UAW scored a breakthrough victory at Volkswagen's 4,300-worker assembly factory in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The NLRB's final tally showed a vote of 2,642 against the union, with 2,045 in favor. Nearly 93% of workers eligible to vote cast ballots.

Marick Masters, a professor emeritus at Wayne State University's business school who has long studied the union, said the UAW will have to analyze what went wrong and apply those lessons as it moves to other nonunion factories largely in the South.

"They're going to have to go back to the drawing board," said Masters, who added that the union will need to ask itself if it needs to get more workers to sign cards seeking a union election before calling for a vote. The union may also want to respond faster to management opposition, he said.

"Do they need to assess more realistically the actual level of grievances and how passionately workers are to stay committed to a union organizing effort in the face of opposition?" Masters asked.

Fain assured workers that the union will return, telling them the loss was a bump in the road, not failure. He said he told company officials the fight was not over.

"We've been here before, and we're going to continue on and we're going to win," he said. "And I think we'll have a different result down the road, and I look forward to that."

The NLRB said both sides have five business days to file objections to the election, and the union must wait a year before seeking another vote at Mercedes.

Whether the union challenges the election will be up to its lawyers, said Fain, who accused the company of "egregious illegal behavior."

The union already has filed unfair labor practice complaints against the company alleging that management and anti-union consultants tried to intimidate workers. Mercedes has denied the allegations.

"Obviously we're following through on complaints, both here and in Germany" where Mercedes is headquartered, Fain said.

A big difference between the loss at Mercedes and the overwhelming win at Volkswagen, Fain said, was that Mercedes actively fought the union. "Obviously, Volkswagen was more neutral, and that wasn't the case here," he said of Mercedes, which he accused of holding captive meetings of workers to campaign against the UAW.

In a statement Friday, Mercedes said it looks forward to "continuing to work directly with our team members so they can build superior vehicles for the world."

The company said its focus is on providing a safe and supportive work environment.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, who has campaigned against the union, wrote in a post on X that auto manufacturing is one of the state's crown jewel industries, and the state is committed to keeping it that way.

"Alabama is not Michigan, and we are not the Sweet Home to the UAW," she wrote. "We urge the UAW to respect the results of this secret ballot election."

Worker Melissa Howell, who opposed joining the union, said she and other employees realized that the UAW was making lofty promises that it couldn't put in writing, including pay of \$40 per hour, pensions and better benefits.

"They kept repeating over and over, 'You're not going to lose anything. We're going to start with what

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you have right now,” Howell said. “That’s when we really started letting people know, ‘Hey, hold up. It’s all negotiable.’”

But Kirk Garner, 60, who works in quality control at the Mercedes assembly plant and supported joining the union, said workers were shown an anti-union video every day ahead of the vote, while union opponents targeted employees who they thought could be persuaded to vote no.

“I’m disappointed in the people that flipped and believed the persuaders,” Garner said.

The UAW won at Volkswagen largely because of the prospect of substantially higher wages and other benefits. Contracts reached with the Detroit Three automakers, General Motors, Stellantis and Ford, brought 33% raises between now and 2028 when the deals expire, giving the union a large recruiting tool.

Before VW, the United Auto Workers had little success at nonunion auto plants in the South, where workers have been much less drawn to organized labor than in the traditional union strongholds of Michigan and other industrial Midwestern states.

A victory at the Mercedes plants would have represented a huge plum for the union, which has long struggled to overcome the enticements that Southern states have bestowed on foreign automakers, including tax breaks, lower labor costs and a nonunion workforce.

It turns out that the union had a tougher time in Alabama than in Tennessee, where the UAW narrowly lost two previous votes and was familiar with workers at the factory.

## **Trump campaigns in Minnesota, predicting he will win the traditionally Democratic state in November**

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump used a day off from his hush money trial Friday to headline a Republican fundraiser in Minnesota, a traditionally Democratic state that he boasts he can carry in November.

Trump took the stage late as he headlined the state GOP’s annual Lincoln Reagan dinner in St. Paul after attending his son Barron’s high school graduation in Florida.

Declaring his appearance to be “an official expansion” of the electoral map of states that could be competitive in November, Trump said, “We’re going to win this state.”

“This November the people of Minnesota are going to tell Crooked Joe Biden — right? ‘The Apprentice?’ ‘You’re fired!’” Trump said, referencing his former reality television show and the catchphrase he used on it.

Trump boasted that the steep tariffs he imposed on foreign steel while serving as president bought the Iron Range, the iron mining area of northeastern Minnesota, “roaring back to life.” The area, with a heavy population of blue-collar workers and union workers, used to be solidly Democratic, but the region has been trending Republican in recent elections.

He also made a profane attack on President Joe Biden, calling him “a horrible president” who is “destroying our country” and then adding, “He’s a horrible human being too.”

Trump then shifted to calling the president a “non-athlete” and attacked his golf game, accusing him of inflating his golfing abilities and making other misrepresentations before using an expletive that drew loud laughs and sustained applause.

Trump was using part of the day granted by the trial judge for the graduation to campaign in Minnesota, a state he argues he can win in the November rematch with Biden. No Republican presidential candidate has won Minnesota since Richard Nixon in 1972, but Trump came close to flipping the state in 2016, when he fell 1.5 percentage points short of Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump returned to Minnesota several times in 2020, when Biden beat him by more than 7 percentage points.

“I think this is something Trump wants to do. He believes this is a state he can win. We believe that’s the case as well,” David Hann, the chairman of the Republican Party of Minnesota, said in an interview.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Tina Smith of Minnesota, a Biden ally, said the Trump campaign is “grasping at straws” if it thinks he can win the state.

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"The Biden campaign is going to work hard for every vote," Smith said in an interview. "We're going to engage with voters all over the state. But I think Minnesota voters are going to choose President Biden."

Hann co-hosted Friday's dinner along with Trump's state campaign chair, House Majority Whip Tom Emmer, who represents a central Minnesota district. Hann said Emmer was instrumental in bringing the former president to Minnesota.

The dinner coincided with the party's state convention and the roughly 1,400 attendees included former U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz and MyPillow founder Mike Lindell, who has been a prominent promoter of false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump.

Tickets started at \$500, ranging up to \$100,000 for a VIP table for 10 with three photo opportunities with Trump. Hann declined to say how much money he expects it will raise, but he anticipates a full house of around 1,400 people.

All the money from the dinner tickets will go to the state party, Hann said, though he added that some money from photo opportunities may go to the Trump campaign. Ahead of Trump's remarks Friday night, Emmer and Hann told the crowd that thanks to the fundraiser, the state party was out of debt for the first time in 10 years.

"No sham trial is going to keep President Trump off the campaign trail. And it's definitely not going to stop us from turning Minnesota red in November," Emmer said in his remarks.

Experts are split on whether Minnesota really will be competitive this time, given its history and the strong Democratic Party ground game in the state. But Hann said there's "great dissatisfaction with President Biden" in the state, noting that nearly 19% of Democratic voters in its Super Tuesday primary marked their ballots for "uncommitted." That was at least partly due to a protest-vote movement over Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war that has spread to several states.

Trump on Friday night repeated a false claim that he won Minnesota in the 2020 election, wrongly declaring he won "a landslide in your state."

There's no evidence that there were any serious irregularities in the state.

Trump's youngest son, Barron Trump, graduated Friday morning from the private Oxbridge Academy in West Palm Beach, Florida. The former president, who attended the graduation with his wife, Melania Trump, and her father, Viktor Knavs, had long complained Judge Juan M. Merchan would not let him attend the graduation before Merchan agreed not to hold court Friday.

## **Some in Houston facing no power for weeks after storms cause widespread damage, killing at least 4**

By LEKAN OYEKANMI and DAVID J. PHILLIP Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Power outages could last weeks in parts of Houston, an official warned Friday, after thunderstorms with hurricane-force winds tore through the city, knocking out electricity to nearly 1 million homes and businesses in the region, blowing out windows on downtown high rises and flipping vehicles.

The National Weather Service said it confirmed a tornado with peak winds of 110 mph (177 kph) touched down near the northwest Houston suburb of Cypress in Harris County.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, the county's top elected official, said crews were still trying to determine the extent of the damage and the number of casualties from Thursday's storms. Houston Mayor John Whitmire said four people, and possibly five, had died.

"It was fierce. It was intense. It was quick, and most Houstonians didn't have time to place themselves out of harms way," Whitmire said at a news conference.

With multiple transmission towers down, Hidalgo urged patience. Thousands of utility workers were headed to the area, where power had already been restored to roughly 200,000 customers. Another 100,000 customers were without power in Louisiana, down from a peak of 215,000.

"We are going to have to talk about this disaster in weeks, not days," Hidalgo said.

She said she had heard "horror stories of just terror and powerlessness" as the storm came through. The weather service also reported straight-line winds of up to 100 mph (161 kph) in downtown Houston

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and the suburbs of Baytown and Galena Park.

Noelle Delgado's heart sank as she pulled up Thursday night to Houston Pets Alive, the animal rescue organization where she is executive director. The dogs and cats — more than 30 in all — were uninjured, but the awning had been ripped off, the sign was mangled and water was leaking inside. With power expected to be out for some time and temperatures forecast to climb into the 90s Saturday, she hoped to find foster homes for the animals.

"I could definitely tell that this storm was a little different," she said. "It felt terrifying."

Yesenia Guzmán, 52, worried whether she would get paid with the power still out at the restaurant where she works in the Houston suburb of Katy.

"We don't really know what's going to happen," she said.

The widespread destruction brought much of Houston to a standstill. Trees, debris and shattered glass littered the streets. One building's wall was ripped off.

School districts in the Houston area canceled classes for more than 400,000 students and government offices were closed. City officials urged people avoid downtown and stay off roads, many of which were flooded or lined with downed power lines and malfunctioning traffic lights.

Whitmire said at least 2,500 traffic lights were out. He also warned would-be looters that "police are out in force, including 50 state troopers sent to the area to prevent looting."

At least two of the deaths were caused by falling trees and another happened when a crane blew over in strong winds, officials said.

Whitmire's office posted a photo Friday on the social platform X showing the mayor signing a disaster declaration, which paves the way for state and federal storm recovery assistance.

President Joe Biden later issued a disaster declaration for seven counties in Texas, including Harris, due to severe weather since April 26. His action makes federal funding available to people affected by the storms.

The problems from Thursday's storms extended to the Houston suburbs, with emergency officials in neighboring Montgomery County describing the damage to transmission lines as "catastrophic."

High-voltage transmission towers that were torn apart and downed power lines pose a twofold challenge for the utility company because the damage affected transmission and distribution systems, according to Alexandria von Meier, a power and energy expert who called that a rare thing.

"It's more typical that the damage is just at the distribution system, which is, you know, just not as strong," von Meier said, referring to power lines that tend to be more susceptible to wind damage.

How quickly repairs are made will depend on a variety of factors, including the time it takes to assess the damage, equipment replacement, roadwork access issues and workforce availability. Centerpoint Energy deployed 1,000 employees on Friday and had a pending request for 5,000 more line workers and vegetation professionals.

One silver lining, von Meier said, is that the damage was localized, unlike what happened in the 2021 state-wide freeze, which could allow for other jurisdictions to send resources more readily. Although customers might want an aggressive repair timeline, she cautioned that it must proceed carefully and methodically.

"Because if you try to fix this kind of thing in a hurry and you try to restore power in a hurry, you might injure people. You would be putting the workers at risk. You could be putting other people at risk. You could be blowing up equipment that then is going to take longer to replace," von Meier said.

The storms also weren't over Friday. Gulf Coast states could experience scattered, severe thunderstorms with tornadoes, large hail and damaging winds. Heavy to excessive rainfall is possible for eastern Louisiana into central Alabama, the National Weather Service said. Flood watches and warnings remained Friday for Houston and areas to the east.

The Storm Prediction Center's website showed a report of a tornado in Convent, Louisiana, about 55 miles (89 kilometers) from New Orleans, with multiple reports of trees and power poles down.

A suspected tornado hit the Romeville area of St. James Parish on Thursday night with some homes impacted and trees down, but no injuries or fatalities had been reported, parish officials said in a social media post on Friday morning.

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There were wind gusts of 84 mph (135 kph) at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport and 82 mph (132 kph) at New Orleans Lakefront Airport, according to Tim Erickson, a meteorologist at the weather service's office for New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

The office for New Orleans and Baton Rouge issued a flash flood warning through Saturday.

Heavy storms slammed the Houston area during the first week of May, leading to numerous high-water rescues, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes.

## **Trucks are rolling across a new US pier into Gaza. But challenges remain to getting enough aid in**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trucks carrying badly needed aid for the Gaza Strip rolled across a newly built U.S. pier and into the besieged enclave for the first time Friday as Israeli restrictions on border crossings and heavy fighting hindered the delivery of food and other supplies.

The shipment is the first in an operation that American military officials anticipate could scale up to 150 truckloads a day, all while Israel presses in on the southern city of Rafah in its seven-month offensive against Hamas. At the White House, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said "more than 300 pallets" of aid were in the initial delivery and handed over to the U.N., which was preparing it for distribution.

Kirby said the U.S. has gotten indications that "some of that aid was already moving into Gaza."

But the U.S., U.N. and aid groups warn that the floating pier project is not a substitute for land deliveries that could bring in all the food, water and fuel needed in Gaza. Before the war, more than 500 truckloads entered the Palestinian territory on an average day.

The operation's success also remains tenuous because of the risk of militant attack, logistical hurdles and a growing shortage of fuel for the aid trucks due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. Militants killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage in that assault on southern Israel. The Israeli offensive since has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza, local health officials say, while hundreds more have been killed in the West Bank.

Aid agencies say they are running out of food in southern Gaza, while the U.N. World Food Program says famine has already taken hold in Gaza's north.

Troops finished installing the floating pier on Thursday, and the U.S. military's Central Command said the first aid crossed into Gaza at 9 a.m. Friday. It said no American troops went ashore in the operation.

The Pentagon said no backups were expected in the distribution process. The U.S. plan is for the United Nations, through the World Food Program, to take charge of the aid once it leaves the pier. This will involve coordinating the arrival of empty trucks and their registration, overseeing the transfer of goods coming through the floating dock to the trucks and their dispatch to warehouses across Gaza, and, finally, handing over the supplies to aid groups for delivery.

The WFP said Friday evening that aid had that come through the pier had been transported to its warehouses in Deir al-Balah and was ready for collection and distribution.

The U.K. said some of its aid for Gaza was in the first shipment that went ashore, including the first of 8,400 kits to provide temporary shelter made of plastic sheeting. And it said more aid, including 2,000 additional shelter kits, 900 tents, five forklift trucks and 9,200 hygiene kits, will follow in the coming weeks.

"This is the culmination of a Herculean joint international effort," said Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. "We know the maritime route is not the only answer. We need to see more land routes open, including via the Rafah crossing, to ensure much more aid gets safely to civilians in desperate need of help."

The U.N. humanitarian aid coordinating agency said the start of the operation was welcome but not a replacement for deliveries by land.

"I think everyone in the operation has said it: Any and all aid into Gaza is welcome by any route," Jens Laerke, spokesman of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told journalists in Geneva on Friday. Getting aid to people in Gaza "cannot and should not depend on a floating dock far from where needs are most acute."

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Anastasia Moran, an associate director of the International Rescue Committee, argues that the pier is in fact diverting attention from the surging humanitarian crisis.

Over the past couple of months, "the maritime route has been taking time and energy and resources at a time when aid has not been scaled up," she said. "And now that the maritime route is up and running, the land crossings have been effectively shut down."

During the nine-day period between May 6, when Israel began the Rafah offensive, and May 15, a total of 154 trucks carrying food and 156 carrying flour have entered Gaza through three land crossings, U.N. deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said Friday. Haq also warned this week that almost no fuel is getting through.

Israel fears Hamas will use fuel in the war, but it asserts it places no limits on the entry of humanitarian aid and blames the U.N. for delays in distributing goods entering Gaza. Under pressure from the U.S., Israel has opened a pair of crossings to deliver aid into the territory's hard-hit north in recent weeks.

It has said that a series of Hamas attacks on the main crossing, Kerem Shalom, have disrupted the flow of goods. The U.N. says fighting, Israeli fire and chaotic security conditions have hindered delivery. There have also been violent protests by Israelis that disrupted aid shipments.

Israel recently seized the Rafah border crossing in its push against Hamas around that city on the Egyptian border, raising fears about civilians' safety while also cutting off the main entry for aid into the Gaza Strip.

U.S. President Joe Biden ordered the pier project, expected to cost \$320 million. The boatloads of aid will be deposited at a port facility built by the Israelis just southwest of Gaza City. The U.S. has closely coordinated with Israel on how to protect the ships and personnel working on the beach.

Concern about the safety of aid workers was highlighted last month when an Israeli strike killed seven relief workers from World Central Kitchen whose trip had been coordinated with Israeli officials. The group had also brought aid in by sea.

Pentagon officials have made it clear that security conditions will be monitored closely and could prompt a shutdown of the maritime route, even if just temporarily. Already, the site has been targeted by mortar fire during its construction, and Hamas has threatened to target any foreign forces who "occupy" the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces are in charge of security on shore, but there are also two U.S. Navy warships nearby that can protect U.S. troops and others.

The aid for the sea route is collected and inspected in Cyprus, then loaded onto ships and taken about 200 miles (320 kilometers) to the large floating pier off the Gaza coast. There, the pallets are transferred onto the trucks that then drive onto the Army boats, which will shuttle the trucks from the pier to a floating causeway anchored to the beach. Once the trucks drop off the aid, they return to the boats.

## **A former OpenAI leader says safety has 'taken a backseat to shiny products' at the AI company**

Associated Press undefined

A former OpenAI leader who resigned from the company earlier this week said Friday that safety has "taken a backseat to shiny products" at the influential artificial intelligence company.

Jan Leike, who ran OpenAI's "Superalignment" team alongside a company co-founder who also resigned this week, wrote in a series of posts on the social media platform X that he joined the San Francisco-based company because he thought it would be the best place to do AI research.

"However, I have been disagreeing with OpenAI leadership about the company's core priorities for quite some time, until we finally reached a breaking point," wrote Leike, whose last day was Thursday.

An AI researcher by training, Leike said he believes there should be more focus on preparing for the next generation of AI models, including on things like safety and analyzing the societal impacts of such technologies. He said building "smarter-than-human machines is an inherently dangerous endeavor" and that the company "is shouldering an enormous responsibility on behalf of all of humanity."

"OpenAI must become a safety-first AGI company," wrote Leike, using the abbreviated version of artificial

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general intelligence, a futuristic vision of machines that are as broadly smart as humans or at least can do many things as well as people can.

Open AI CEO Sam Altman wrote in a reply to Leike's posts that he was "super appreciative" of Leike's contributions to the company was "very sad to see him leave."

Leike is "right we have a lot more to do; we are committed to doing it," Altman said, pledging to write a longer post on the subject in the coming days.

The company also confirmed Friday that it had disbanded Leike's Superalignment team, which was launched last year to focus on AI risks, and is integrating the team's members across its research efforts.

Leike's resignation came after OpenAI co-founder and chief scientist Ilya Sutskever said Tuesday that he was leaving the company after nearly a decade. Sutskever was one of four board members last fall who voted to push out Altman — only to quickly reinstate him. It was Sutskever who told Altman last November that he was being fired, but he later said he regretted doing so.

Sutskever said he is working on a new project that's meaningful to him without offering additional details. He will be replaced by Jakub Pachocki as chief scientist. Altman called Pachocki "also easily one of the greatest minds of our generation" and said he is "very confident he will lead us to make rapid and safe progress towards our mission of ensuring that AGI benefits everyone."

On Monday, OpenAI showed off the latest update to its artificial intelligence model, which can mimic human cadences in its verbal responses and can even try to detect people's moods.

## **Man who sought revenge for a stolen phone pleads guilty to fire that killed a Senegalese family of 5**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A Colorado man pleaded guilty to murder charges on Friday for starting a 2020 house fire that killed five members of a Senegalese family out of misplaced revenge for a stolen iPhone that he mistakenly tracked to the house.

Kevin Bui, now 20, was a teenager at the time of the fire but prosecuted as an adult. He has been portrayed by prosecutors as the ringleader of three friends who started the Aug. 5, 2020, fire in the middle of the night in a Denver neighborhood. Bui wrongly believed people who had recently robbed him lived in the home after using an app to track his stolen iPhone to the general area, according to prior testimony in the case.

Bui pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree murder. A plea deal reached between the defendant and prosecutors proposes a sentence of up to 60 years in prison -- 30 years for each count. The maximum penalty for each count of second-degree murder is 48 years and a \$1 million fine.

Judge Karen Brody set sentencing for July 2.

Bui was seated at the table with his lawyers during the hearing with his hands cuffed in front of him and wearing a green jail uniform.

He gave perfunctory answers to the judge's questions as his parents watched from the court gallery and listened to the proceedings as relayed by an interpreter through headphones. Bui's father told reporters after the hearing that they accepted the plea agreement.

Bui is the last of the three friends to enter a plea in the fire that killed Djibril Diol, 29, and Adja Diol, 23, and their 22-month-old daughter, Khadija Diol. Their relative, Hassan Diol, 25, and her 6-month-old daughter Hawa Beye were also killed. Three other people escaped by jumping from the second floor of the home, breaking some bones.

No relatives of the victims were in court, but they watched the proceedings online, said Ousman Ba, program coordinator of the African Leadership Group who is a spokesperson for the family of Djibril Diol and Adja Diol. He also consults with Amadou Beye, whose wife and daughter were killed.

The families supported the deal even though they had originally hoped to see Bui sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, Ba said. It is the harshest sentence available in Colorado since it abolished the death penalty and is the automatic punishment for a first-degree murder conviction. However,

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since people who committed crimes as juveniles are treated differently and allowed parole, the families believed that this plea agreement was the best option to resolve this case after nearly four years, he said.

"We are Muslims. We do believe justice will be served by Allah, our maker," said Ba, who thanked prosecutors for keeping the families informed about the case.

One of the counts of second-murder that Bui pleaded guilty to was for killing Dijibril and Adja Diol and their child. The other is for killing Hassan Diol and her baby. Sixty other charges Bui had faced, including first-degree murder, attempted murder, arson and burglary, were dropped by prosecutors under the plea deal.

Last year, Dillon Siebert, who was 14 at the time of the fire, was sentenced to three years in juvenile detention and seven years in a state prison program for young inmates. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder under a deal that prosecutors and the defense said balanced his lesser role in planning the fire, his remorse and interest in rehabilitation with the horror of the crime.

In March, Gavin Seymour, 19, was sentenced to 40 years in prison after pleading guilty to one count of second-degree murder.

Seymour and Bui pleaded guilty after a failed effort to get the internet search history evidence that led to their arrests thrown out.

The investigation of the fire dragged on for months without any leads. Surveillance video showed three suspects wearing full face masks and dark hoodies. Fears that the blaze had been a hate crime led many Senegalese immigrants to install security cameras at their homes in case they could also be targeted.

Without anything else to go on, police eventually obtained a search warrant asking Google for which IP addresses had searched the home's address within 15 days of the fire. Five of the IP addresses found were based in Colorado, and police obtained the names of those people through another search warrant. After investigating those people, police eventually identified Bui, Seymour and Siebert as suspects. They were arrested about five months after the fire.

In October, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the search of Google users' keyword history, an approach that critics have called a digital dragnet that threatens to undermine people's privacy and their constitutional protections against unreasonable searches and seizures.

However, the court cautioned it was not making a "broad proclamation" on the constitutionality of such warrants and emphasized it was ruling on the facts of just this case.

## Scottie Scheffler arrested outside PGA Championship, then returns and climbs leaderboard

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Masters champion Scottie Scheffler was arrested Friday morning on his way to the PGA Championship, with stunning images showing him handcuffed as he was taken to jail for not following police orders during a pedestrian fatality investigation.

In a span of four hours, the top-ranked golfer in the world was arrested wearing gym shorts and a T-shirt, dressed in an orange jail shirt for his mug shot, stretched in a jail cell to stay loose and returned to Valhalla Golf Club dressed and ready for his 10:08 a.m. tee time.

Louisville Metro Police Department said Scheffler was booked on four charges, including second-degree assault of a police officer after his vehicle dragged an officer to the ground.

Scheffler said the incident was a "big misunderstanding amid a chaotic situation."

"I feel like my head is still spinning. I can't really explain what happened this morning," Scheffler said after remarkably posting another 5-under 66 that kept him in the mix for a second straight major championship.

He said he could not offer specifics on the arrest because it was under investigation. In a statement released before his round, he said never intended to disregard police instructions outside the entrance to the club.

"I definitely never imagined ever going to jail, and I definitely never imagined going to jail the morning before one of my tee times for sure," Scheffler said. "I was grateful to be able to go out there and com-

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pete and yeah, it was definitely a nice round of golf."

His attorney, Steve Romines in Louisville, also described it as a misunderstanding and told The Associated Press, "We will litigate the case as it goes."

Louisville mayor Craig Greenberg said tournament vendor John Mills was the pedestrian killed and offered sympathies to his family. Greenberg also said the incident involving Scheffler and LMPD was "unfortunate" and that the police department was investigating.

Traffic was backed up for about a mile in both directions on the only road that leads to Valhalla in the morning darkness with light rain, with dozens of police vehicles flashing red-and-blue lights near the entrance.

Police approached the long line of cars waiting to say a pedestrian had been struck by a bus while crossing the road in a lane that was dedicated to tournament traffic.

Mills, 69, was working for a PGA Championship vendor. He was pronounced dead at the scene about 5:09 a.m.

ESPN reporter Jeff Darlington witnessed the incident and said Scheffler, the No. 1 player in the world who was to start the second round at 8:48 a.m., drove past a police officer a little after 6 a.m. in his SUV with markings on the door indicating it was a PGA Championship vehicle.

The officer screamed at him to stop and then grabbed onto the car until Scheffler stopped about 10 yards later, Darlington said. The officer, identified in the arrest report as Det. Gillis, was dragged "to the ground" and suffered "pain, swelling, and abrasions to his left wrist" after the car "accelerated forward," according to Louisville police.

Scheffler was booked at 7:28 a.m. — about 2 1/2 hours before his updated tee time after the second round was delayed because of the fatality. In addition to the assault charge, he was booked on charges of third-degree criminal mischief, reckless driving and disregarding traffic signals from an officer directing traffic.

"The main thing is he was proceeding exactly as he was directed in a marked vehicle with credentials," Romines said. "He didn't do anything intentionally wrong."

The officer was dressed in a high visibility reflective jacket when he stopped Scheffler's car to give instructions, the arrest sheet said. Gillis was taken to the hospital for his injuries.

Darlington said police pulled Scheffler out of the car, pushed him up against the car and immediately placed him in handcuffs.

"Scheffler was then walked over to the police car, placed in the back, in handcuffs, very stunned about what was happening, looked toward me as he was in those handcuffs and said, 'Please help me,'" Darlington said. "He very clearly did not know what was happening in the situation. It moved very quickly, very rapidly, very aggressively."

Scheffler was released by police and returned to the course at 9:12 a.m. He made his way to the practice area around 9:30 a.m. and was welcomed by fans — one shouted "free Scottie!" and others arrived later wearing "Free Scottie" T-shirts.

Scheffler seemed like his normal, relaxed self, sharing a few laughs on the driving range.

"I was never angry. I was just in shock," Scheffler said. "I was shaking the whole time. I was shaking for like an hour. It was definitely a new feeling for me."

He could see from a TV in the jail that tee times were pushed back 1 hour, 20 minutes because of the traffic situation, and realized when an officer knocked on the door and said, "Let's go," that he had a chance to play.

He made birdie on his first hole of the day after sticking his approach shot to 3 feet.

Darlington, the ESPN reporter, said police were not sure who Scheffler was at first. He said an officer asked him to leave and when he identified himself being with the media, he was told, "There's nothing you can do. He's going to jail."

Darlington said another police officer later approached with a notepad and asked if he knew the name of the person they put in handcuffs.

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Scheffler said he never told police who he was except to say, "I'm sorry, I'm just trying to get to my tee time."

Louisville police have attracted negative national attention in recent years after the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor in 2020 and a federal investigation into its policing practices.

A Department of Justice report released last year said Louisville officers use excessive force and conduct searches based on invalid warrants. The report said Black motorists in Louisville were more likely to be searched during traffic stops, and officers used neck restraints, police dogs and Tasers against people who posed no imminent threat.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was shot by officers in who had come to her apartment with a warrant that federal officials later said was falsified.

PGA of America, which runs the PGA Championship, offered sympathies for Mills' family and said in a statement, "As it relates to the incident involving Scottie Scheffler, we are fully cooperating as local authorities review what took place."

Scheffler is coming off four victories in his last five tournaments, including his second Masters title. He was home in Dallas the last three weeks waiting on the birth of his first child, a son that was born May 8.

Scheffler is trying to become only the fifth player since 1960 to win the first two majors of the year.

## **Putin says Russia wants a buffer zone in Ukraine's Kharkiv but has no plans to capture the city**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that Moscow's offensive in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region aims to create a buffer zone but that there are no plans to capture the city.

The remarks were Putin's first on the offensive launched May 10, which opened a new front and displaced thousands of Ukrainians within days. Earlier Friday, a massive Ukrainian drone attack on the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula cut off power in the city of Sevastopol, after an earlier attack damaged aircraft and fuel storage at an airbase.

In southern Russia, Russian authorities said a refinery was also set ablaze.

Moscow launched attacks in the Kharkiv region in response to Ukrainian shelling of Russia's Belgorod region, Putin told reporters while visiting the Chinese city of Harbin.

"I have said publicly that if it continues, we will be forced to create a security zone, a sanitary zone," he said. "That's what we are doing." Russian troops were "advancing daily according to plan," he said and added there were no plans for now to take the city of Kharkiv.

Ukrainian troops are fighting to halt Russian advances in the Kharkiv region that began late last week. In an effort to increase troop numbers, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed two laws Friday, allowing prisoners to join the army and increasing fines for draft dodgers fivefold. The controversial mobilization law goes into effect on Saturday.

Russia enlisted prisoners early on in the war, and personnel shortages compelled the new measures. The legislation allows for "parole from serving a sentence and further enlistment for military service" for a specific period for some people charged with criminal offences. It doesn't extend to those convicted of crimes against Ukraine's national security.

Penalties will be increased to 25,500 hryvnias (\$650) for citizens and 51,000 hryvnias (\$1,300) for civil servants and legal entities for ignoring draft notices or failing to update the draft board of their information. Fines were previously 5100 hryvnias (\$130) for citizens and 8500 hryvnias (\$215) for civil servants and legal entities.

Ukrainian authorities have evacuated around 8,000 civilians from the recent flashpoint town of Vovchansk, 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the Russian border. The Russian army's usual tactic is to reduce towns and villages to ruins with aerial strikes before troops move in.

At least two people were killed and 19 were wounded in the Russian bombing of Kharkiv, regional chief

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Oleh Syniehubov said on his Telegram posting on Friday. Four of the wounded were in critical condition. Russia's new offensive has "expanded the zone of active hostilities by almost 70 kilometers" (45 miles), in an effort to force Ukraine to spread its forces and use reserve troops, Ukraine's military chief, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said Friday.

In the Kharkiv region, Russian forces have advanced 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the border, Zelenskyy said Friday.

Separately, speaking about Ukraine's upcoming peace conferences in Switzerland next month, Putin said it was a vain attempt to enforce terms of a peaceful settlement on Russia and stressed that Russia wasn't invited to the meeting.

He said that Russia was ready for talks but shrugged off Zelenskyy's peace formula as wishful thinking. Any prospective peace talks should be based on a draft deal negotiated by Russia and Ukraine during their Istanbul talks in 2022, he said.

Ukraine meanwhile carried out drone raids on Crimea in an attempt to strike back during Moscow's offensive in northeastern Ukraine, which has piled on pressure on outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces awaiting delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners.

A Ukrainian intelligence official confirmed to The Associated Press that the country's intelligence services struck Russia's military infrastructure sites in Novorossiysk, on the Black Sea coast, and in Russian-occupied city of Sevastopol. The official was not authorized to make public comments and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The operation, carried out by Ukraine-built drones, targeted Russian Black Sea Fleet vessels, the official said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said air defenses downed 51 Ukrainian drones over Crimea, 44 over the Krasnodar region of Russia and six over the Belgorod region. Russian warplanes and patrol boats also destroyed six sea drones in the Black Sea, it said.

At least three fighter jets were destroyed in an earlier attack in Crimea a few days ago, according to satellite imagery of the airbase provided by Maxar Technologies.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the governor of Sevastopol, which is the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, said the drone attack damaged the city's power plant. He said it could take a day to fully restore electricity and warned residents of power cuts. He also announced city schools would be closed temporarily.

In the Krasnodar region, authorities said a drone attack early Friday caused a fire at an oil refinery in Tuapse, which was later contained. There were no casualties. Ukraine has repeatedly targeted refineries and other energy facilities deep inside Russia, inflicting damage.

The Krasnodar region's governor, Veniamin Kondratyev, said fragments of downed drones around the port of Novorossiysk caused several fires, but there were no casualties.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said a Ukrainian drone struck a vehicle, killing a woman and her 4-year-old child. Another attack there set a fuel tank ablaze at a gas station, he said.

Recent Russian attacks have also targeted the eastern Donetsk region, as well as the Chernihiv and Sumy regions in the north and in the southern Zaporizhzhia region — apparently seeking to further stretch depleted Ukrainian resources.

Having boosted their forces in northern Ukraine, Russian forces are now pushing to advance near the village of Lyptsi, as well as the town of Vovchansk, according to Syrskyi, the Ukrainian military commander.

Syrskyi also said he inspected units that are "preparing for defense" of Sumy. On Tuesday, the head of Ukraine's Military Intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, reportedly said Russia's military planned to launch offensive actions in Sumy.

Russia has also been testing defenses elsewhere along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, which snakes north-to-south through eastern Ukraine. The line has barely changed over the past 18 months, in what has become a war of attrition.

## Canadian police link 4 women killed in the 1970s to dead American serial sex offender

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian police announced Friday they have linked the deaths of four young women nearly 50 years ago to a now-deceased U.S. fugitive who hid in Canada from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s.

Alberta Royal Canadian Mounted Police Supt. Dave Hall said Friday that Gary Allen Srery might also be linked to unsolved murders and sexual assaults in Western Canada, and authorities are asking the public for more information that may link him to other unsolved cases.

"We are now announcing that we have linked four previously unsolved homicides from the 1970s to a now deceased serial, sexual offender," Hall said at a news conference in Edmonton, Alberta.

Srery died in 2011 in a state prison in Idaho of natural causes while serving a life sentence for sexual assault.

A break in the homicides in Canada came when authorities began comparing DNA of the killer with profiles on ancestry websites, which eventually lead them to a match with Srery, Hall said.

Hall provided details of the four Canadian cases linked to Srery.

He said that in 1976 Eva Dvorak and Patricia McQueen were both 14-year-olds living in Calgary, Alberta attending junior high. He said they were last seen walking together in downtown Calgary and that the following day their bodies were found laying on the road under a highway underpass west of the city.

In the spring of 1976, 20-year-old Melissa Rehorek moved to Calgary from Ontario for new opportunities, Hall said. He said at the time of her death she was a housekeeper living at the YMCA in downtown Calgary and was last seen by a roommate before she went hitchhiking. Hall said the following day her body was located in a ditch in a township west of Calgary.

In 1977, Barbara MacLean was a 19-year-old Calgary resident from Nova Scotia who moved west only six months earlier, Hall said. He said MacLean was working at a local bank and was last seen leaving a hotel bar. He said her body was found six hours later just outside Calgary.

Hall said authorities at the time didn't come up with a cause of death for the two 14-year-olds but said Rehorek and MacLean's deaths were attributed to strangulation.

Semen was collected from all four crime scenes but technology did not exist at the time to find DNA matches, Hall said.

"Were Srery alive today he would be 81 years old," Hall said.

Alberta RCMP Insp. Breanne Brown said Srery had an extensive criminal record including forcible rape, kidnapping and burglary when he fled to Canada from California in 1974. He lived in Canada illegally until his arrest for sexual assault in New Westminster, British Columbia in 1998, she said.

Srery used nine different aliases in his lifetime and frequently changed his appearance, residence and vehicles, Brown said. She said he obtained illegal identification and social assistance through aliases and lived a transient lifestyle. He occasionally working as a cook in Calgary, Alberta from 1974 to 1979 and then in the area of Vancouver, British Columbia from 1979 until his arrest and conviction of sexual assault in New Westminster in 1998, she said.

Srery was deported to the U.S. in 2003 where he was convicted in Idaho for sexually motivated crimes and sentenced to life in prison, where he ultimately died in 2011, Brown said.

"We know that Srery's criminality spanned decades over multiple jurisdictions and numerous aliases. The Alberta RCMP believe there are more victims and we are asking the public to assist in furthering Srery's timeline in Canada," Brown said.

## What would Lisa Simpson do? NYU student protesters asked to ponder ethical issues

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Would Lisa Simpson set up a tent at New York University to protest the war in Gaza? How would Principal Skinner respond if she did?

Hard to say, but some NYU students facing discipline for their actions during this spring's pro-Palestinian protests have been assigned a 49-page workbook that includes a "Simpsons"-based module on ethical decision-making. Some have been asked to write an apologetic "reflection paper" and submit it "in 12-point Times New Roman or similar font."

Like colleges across the U.S., NYU was the scene of protests over Israel's response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack during the last weeks of the spring semester.

More than 100 NYU students were arrested when police cleared an encampment at the university's Manhattan campus on April 22, and about a dozen more were arrested at a smaller encampment on May 3.

NYU's school year has ended, but the university is requiring some student protesters to go through a disciplinary process that includes answering questions like "What are your values? Did the decision you made align with your personal values?" in a double-spaced reflection paper.

Others must complete a 49-page "Ethos Integrity Series" that asks students to rank their values from 1 to 42 and complete assignments like "write about how your values affect your daily life and the decisions you make."

One section is based on an episode of "The Simpsons" in which Lisa uncharacteristically cheats on a test and is wracked by guilt. Principal Skinner, meanwhile, wants to keep the cheating under wraps so the school can get a grant. Questions in the ethics workbook include "What, if anything, could Lisa have done or thought about to make better decisions?" and "What are the potential and actual consequences of Principal Skinner's decisions?"

An NYU group called Faculty & Staff for Justice in Palestine criticized the assignments in a news release.

Sara Pursley, an associate professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, noted that students completing the reflection paper are told they must not try to justify their actions or "challenge a conduct regulation."

"Since they can't write anything justifying their action, students seem to be banned from writing about personal values that might be relevant here, such as a belief in freedom of expression, the responsibility to oppose genocide, or the duty of nonviolent civil disobedience under certain circumstances," Pursley said. "This seems rather ironic in an essay on integrity."

NYU spokesperson John Beckman said the disciplinary process is meant to be educational.

"The point of these essays is to reflect upon how a student's way of expressing their values might be having an impact on other members of the NYU community," Beckman said. "We think that's a worthwhile goal."

He added, "Which is not to say that the specific assignments couldn't be improved."

Faculty members and staff from NYU's Office of Student Conduct will meet in the fall, Beckman said, to consider "what might be done to improve the quality of the prompts for the reflection papers as well as the other educational assignments."

## Mexican and Guatemalan presidents meet at border to discuss migration, security and development

By EDGAR H. CLEMENTE Associated Press

TAPACHULA, Mexico (AP) — Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Guatemala President Bernardo Arévalo were meeting Friday in this Mexican border city to tackle issues of shared interest, foremost among them immigration.

Arévalo, who took office earlier this year, noted that they were meeting in the same city where his father Juan José Arévalo, a former president of Guatemala, had met with his Mexican counterpart, Manuel Ávila

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Camacho, in 1946.

"We want a border that unites, a border that unites our people, the Mexican people and the Guatemalan people, a border that allows us to develop and grow together, with reciprocal benefit, trust, enthusiasm and collaboration," Arévalo said.

But both countries are under pressure from the United States to increase control of their shared border to help control the flow of migrants north. The border also carries security concerns, as so many do.

Before their meeting – the first for the two leaders -- López Obrador said he was worried about security in the border area. Two Mexican cartels have been battling for control in the area, causing death and displacement in remote, rural areas as they try to assert control of the drug, migrant and weapons flows through the area. He said Guatemala was concerned too and the leaders would discuss how to address it.

The encounter also comes at a time of intense diplomatic activity between the United States and Mexico and with other countries in the region as the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden tries to get a handle before the November election on migration to the U.S.-Mexico border that reached record levels in late 2023.

Mexico Foreign Affairs Secretary Alicia Bárcena said Tuesday that Mexico, the United States and Guatemala are in agreement that they will direct more resources to the Mexico-Guatemala border, accelerate development programs, commerce and job creation. She also said Mexico would discuss issuing more temporary work visas to bring Guatemalan labor to Mexico.

Perhaps to that end, López Obrador announced Friday that Mexico plans to extend a cargo train line that spans a narrow isthmus its the south to the Guatemalan border. He also repeated his interest in eventually extending his Maya Train legacy project to Guatemala's Peten jungle, something Arévalo's predecessor declined.

For migrants headed north, the critical points in their journey tend to be the Darien Gap on the border of Colombia and Panama where 500,000 migrants – mostly Venezuelans – crossed last year and then again at the Mexico-Guatemala border.

Panama's President-elect José Raúl Mulino has promised to shut down traffic through the Darien. To what extent he can remains to be seen.

On Friday, Panama's outgoing immigration chief said the country was incapable of carrying out mass deportations.

"We can't make it massive because of the high cost and the coordination you have to do with the other countries," Samira Gozaine, director general of Immigration said. "If we could deport all of those who enter we would do it."

Bárcena, Mexico's foreign minister, said the shared Mexico-Guatemala-Belize border is also important. But it is similarly challenging to police.

The border is long, mountainous and remote, filled with blind crossings for migrants and their smugglers. Those are many of the same routes currently being disputed by the Jalisco and Sinaloa cartels.

"We want to make that border space an exemplary space ... no walls," Bárcena said. "The people should feel they entered a country that is pleasant, that can offer them opportunities."

Migrants have typically found traversing Mexico anything but pleasant. They are repeatedly robbed and kidnapped by organized crime and systematically extorted by Mexican authorities, who in recent years have either tried to contain them in the south or return them there time and again until they exhaust their resources.

The same day Bárcena spoke, Carlos Campos, a Venezuelan travelling with his wife sister and nieces and nephews, was flown from Mexico City back to Tapachula after trying to hop a train north.

"They sent us back and we're (north) again," he said as they made their way out of Tapachula.

## Social divisions and hostile rhetoric in Slovakia provide fertile ground for political violence

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — When a gunman shot Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico this week, shock rippled across the Central European country — even though the pro-Russia leader himself warned that the nation was so divided that an assassination attempt was possible.

Slovaks have long disagreed over the path their country should take; should it retain traditional ways and a friendly relationship with Moscow or embrace liberal values and press ever closer to the West. But recently that polarization over the country's future, fueled by vitriolic rhetoric from politicians, has deepened.

The country of 5.4 million has been beset by large protests deriding Fico's policies since he returned to power in September, after campaigning on a nationalist and EU-skeptic platform.

Slovakia, which joined the European Union and NATO in 2004, was one of neighboring Ukraine's staunchest supporters when Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022. Fico, seeking closer ties with Moscow, vowed to immediately cease providing weapons assistance to Kyiv.

This shift alarmed many Slovaks who had envisioned a future firmly aligned with the West and the European Union.

Slovakia was once firmly behind the Iron Curtain as part of Czechoslovakia. The Velvet Revolution, which started in 1989, ushered in an end to communist rule, and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia — the Velvet Divorce — soon followed, bringing independence to Slovakia in 1993.

Grigorij Meseznikov, a political scientist who heads the Institute for Public Affairs think tank in the capital Bratislava, said Slovak society has been divided ever since because of the economic and social inequities that emerged as the country transitioned to a democratic market economy. But he blamed what he called the hostile communication strategies of Slovak politicians for the growing hostilities in recent years.

"While polarization is a reflection of the real dividing lines in society, the confrontation is a function of the politicians, it's a consequence of political style," Meseznikov said.

Slovakia's "pro-liberal democratic forces" stand in contrast to Fico's brand of pro-Russian national populism, he said, characterized by "provoking hostility with radical rhetoric and blaming political opponents."

The wave of protests that has swept Slovakia came in opposition to some of Fico's central policies, including his plan to overhaul the penal system and to take control of Slovakia's public broadcaster.

Last month, the prime minister said on Facebook that he believed rising tensions in the country could lead to the murder of politicians, and blamed the media for fueling divisions. He referred to journalists and liberal Slovak politicians as "rats." He called a major television network, two nationwide newspapers and a news website his enemies, and refused to communicate with them.

But the tensions didn't begin when Fico took office.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Slovakia particularly hard and many Slovaks rejected vaccinations and lockdowns and resisted the then-government's efforts to impose them. Fico, a vocal critic of Slovakia's pandemic response, was detained by police in 2021 for organizing an anti-government rally that had been banned due to lockdown rules.

Disagreements ratcheted up again with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, pitting pro-Western Slovaks against those who prefer a more conciliatory approach toward Russia.

Government officials have criticized protesters and opposition politicians who speak out against Fico's policies, calling them servile to a perceived Western liberal order headed by the EU and United States.

Jan Lipnican, a 27-year-old software engineer from Banska Bystrica — where Fico remained hospitalized after the shooting — said everybody is responsible for the societal division.

"In Slovakia, it's not really left or right. It's like populists versus the progressives," he said. "Everyone is pointing the finger at each other, they don't want to work together. Everyone is trying to polarize."

Zuzana Izakova, a Bratislava resident, said on Friday that society must "realize that we cannot create such a hostile environment, and there should be some act of self-reflection from both sides."

Still, Fico's political allies have been eager to cast blame on their opponents for precipitating the attack.

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Interior Minister Matus Sutaj Estok said Thursday that the shooting suspect cited his dissatisfaction with Fico's policies as motivation for the attack and that he had recently attended an anti-government protest. Estok said the man was "radicalized" by liberal politicians and he blamed the media for inciting what he characterized as a "politically motivated attack."

"We are standing on the edge of civil war," Estok said. "The assassination attempt on the prime minister is a confirmation of that."

Some Slovak leaders have sought to allay tensions and avoid assigning blame. At a news conference on Thursday, outgoing President Zuzana Caputova portrayed the divisions as a problem for which all the country's leaders bore responsibility.

"As a society, we live in a time of many conflicts, but please don't push them to the level of hatred," she said. "What happened yesterday was an individual act. But the tense atmosphere of hatred was our collective work."

But others directly blame Fico's hostile narratives for turning people against each other.

"This society is divided because of Robert Fico and his Smer party, they have been dividing and radicalizing society, and I think this is the result of all that," said Marian Kulich, a Bratislava resident.

"We are living in a Russian information war in Slovakia," Kulich added. "Russian propaganda has an influence here and people believe the disinformation. Society has been divided for a long time and this is another thing that will radicalize them even more."

## **Vatican moves to adapt to hoaxes, Internet and overhauls its process for evaluating visions of Mary**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican on Friday overhauled its process for evaluating alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, weeping statues and other seemingly supernatural phenomena that have marked church history, putting the brakes on making definitive declarations unless the event is obviously fabricated.

The Vatican's doctrine office revised norms first issued in 1978, arguing that they were no longer useful or viable in the internet age. Nowadays, word about apparitions or weeping Madonnas travels quickly and can harm the faithful if hoaxers are trying to make money off people's beliefs or manipulate them, the Vatican said.

The new norms make clear that such an abuse of people's faith can be punishable canonically, saying, "The use of purported supernatural experiences or recognized mystical elements as a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses is to be considered of particular moral gravity."

The Catholic Church has had a long and controversial history of the faithful claiming to have had visions of the Virgin Mary, of statues purportedly weeping tears of blood and stigmata erupting on hands and feet mimicking the wounds of Christ.

When confirmed as authentic by church authorities, these otherwise inexplicable signs have led to a flourishing of the faith, with new religious vocations and conversions. That has been the case for the purported apparitions of Mary that turned Fatima, Portugal, and Lourdes, France, into enormously popular pilgrimage destinations.

Church figures who claimed to have experienced the stigmata wounds, including Padre Pio and Pope Francis' namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, have inspired millions of Catholics even if decisions about their authenticity have been elusive.

Francis himself has weighed in on the phenomenon, making clear that he is devoted to the main church-approved Marian apparitions, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe, who believers say appeared to an Indigenous man in Mexico in 1531.

But Francis has expressed skepticism about more recent events, including claims of repeated messages from Mary to "seers" at the shrine of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, even while allowing pilgrimages to take place there.

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"I prefer the Madonna as mother, our mother, and not a woman who's the head of a telegraphic office, who sends a message every day at a certain time," Francis told reporters in 2017.

The new norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata or other seemingly divinely inspired event supernatural.

Instead, the new criteria envisages six main outcomes, with the most favorable being that the church issues a noncommittal doctrinal green light, a so-called "nihil obstat." Such a declaration means there is nothing about the event that is contrary to the faith, and therefore Catholics can express devotion to it.

The bishop can take more cautious approaches if there are doctrinal red flags about the reported event. The most serious envisages a declaration that the event isn't supernatural or that there are enough red flags to warrant a public statement "that adherence to this phenomenon is not allowed."

The aim is to avoid scandal, manipulation and confusion, and the Vatican fully acknowledged the hierarchy's own guilt in confusing the faithful with the way it evaluated and authenticated alleged visions over the centuries.

The most egregious case was the flip-flopping determinations of authenticity by a succession of bishops over 70 years in Amsterdam about the purported visions of the Madonna at the Our Lady of All Nations shrine.

Another similar case prompted the Vatican in 2007 to excommunicate the members of a Quebec-based group, the Army of Mary, after its founder claimed to have had Marian visions and declared herself the reincarnation of the mother of Christ.

The revised norms acknowledge the real potential for such abuses and warn that hoaxers will be held accountable, including with canonical penalties.

The norms also allow that an event might at some point be declared "supernatural," and that the pope can intervene in the process. But "as a rule," the church is no longer in the business of authenticating inexplicable events or making definitive decisions about their supernatural origin.

And at no point are the faithful ever obliged to believe in the particular events, said Argentine Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, the head of the Vatican doctrine office.

"The church gives the faithful the freedom to pay attention" or not, he said at a news conference.

Despite the new criteria, he said the church's past decision-making on alleged supernatural events — such as at Fatima, Guadalupe or Lourdes — remains valid.

"What was decided in the past has its value," he said. "What was done remains."

To date, fewer than 20 apparitions have been approved by the Vatican over its 2,000-year history, according to Michael O'Neill, who runs the online apparition resource The Miracle Hunter.

Neomi De Anda, executive director of the International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, said the new guidelines represent a significant and welcome change to the current practice, while restating important principles.

"The faithful are able to engage with these phenomena as members of the faithful in popular practices of religion, while not feeling the need to believe everything offered to them as supernatural as well as the caution against being deceived and beguiled," she said in an email.

Whereas in the past the bishop often had the last word unless Vatican help was requested, now the Vatican must sign off on every recommendation proposed by a bishop.

Robert Fastiggi, who teaches Marian theology at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan and is an expert on apparitions, said at first glance that requirement might seem to take authority away from the local bishop.

"But I think it's intended to avoid cases in which the Holy See might feel prompted to overrule a decision of the local bishop," he said.

"What is positive in the new document is the recognition that the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother are present and active in human history," he said. "We must appreciate these supernatural interventions but realize that they must be discerned properly."

He cited the biblical phrase that best applies: "Test everything, retain what is good."

## French police fatally shoot a man suspected of setting fire to a synagogue

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

ROUEN, France (AP) — French police shot and killed a man armed with a knife and a metal bar who is suspected of having started a fire that charred and blackened the insides of a synagogue in the Normandy city of Rouen early Friday, an attack the interior minister said was “clearly” antisemitic and which infuriated Jewish leaders facing a surge in hate crimes since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war.

The suspected arsonist was an Algerian national who wasn’t flagged as a potential extremist, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said after inspecting the fire-damaged synagogue. He said the man had sought permission to stay in France for medical treatment and, after it was refused, had been placed on a police wanted list for possible return back to his country.

Darmanin praised the 25-year-old police officer for using his service weapon against the “particularly dangerous, particularly violent” assailant who rushed at him with a knife, declaring: “He was right to do so.”

The minister said the officer would be decorated for his “extremely courageous, extremely professional” behavior.

“This antisemitic act in Rouen affects all of us, deeply,” he said. France is “extremely determined to continue protecting all the Jews of France, wherever they are, who must practice their religion without fear.”

In the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, antisemitic acts have surged in France, which has the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in Western Europe. France has also seen pro-Palestinian protests in major cities and students occupying university campuses in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

The main French Jewish umbrella group described the synagogue blaze as “a scandalous message” and “a way of saying that Jews don’t belong in French society.” This week, a Paris memorial honoring people who distinguished themselves by helping to rescue Jews in France during the country’s Nazi occupation in World War II was also attacked, defaced with painted blood-red hands.

“It’s unbearable. It’s more and more serious every day. After the antisemitic graffiti we saw in the past few days, antisemitic slogans, antisemitic insults, we now have attempts at setting synagogues on fire,” said Yonathan Arfi, president of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France.

“Everyone is wondering whether they can live a peaceful life in France as a Jew,” he added, speaking in an Associated Press interview. “There’s a climate of fear because it feels like, anywhere in our country and at any time, an antisemitic attack can take place. It aims at intimidating French Jews and we won’t accept this intimidation. We refuse it, and we will continue to fight against this unbridled antisemitism.”

Firefighters were alerted early Friday morning to the blaze at the synagogue. Police officers discovered the man on the roof of the building, clutching the metal bar in one hand and the kitchen knife in the other, and smoke rising from the synagogue’s windows, Rouen prosecutor Frédéric Teillet said.

He said the man hurled abuse and threw the metal bar at the police before jumping off the roof and then running at one of the officers with his knife raised.

The officer fired five shots, hitting the man four times, fatally wounding him, the prosecutor said.

Rouen Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol said that the man is thought to have climbed onto a trash container and thrown “a sort of Molotov cocktail” inside the synagogue, starting the fire and causing “significant damage.”

“When the Jewish community is attacked, it’s an attack on the national community, an attack on France, an attack on all French citizens,” he said. “It’s a fright for the whole nation.”

Hours later, the inside of the synagogue still smelled of fire, although the building was largely intact. A couple of walls were charred and damaged and wooden cabinets adorned with the Star of David where the Torah is stored for services were blistered and blackened.

“It’s a catastrophe,” said Natacha Ben Haim, head of Rouen’s Jewish community. “The assailant threw an incendiary object inside through a small dormer that he most certainly broke into. The fire started then, very quickly apparently, and the damage is considerable. We managed to save the Sefer Torah, but parts of the wall fell, from the ceiling, too.”

The synagogue's rabbi, Chmouel Lubecki, urged community members to light candles and attend Friday night services for the Jewish sabbath to show strength and unity.

"We need to be strong," he said. "Don't let the antisemitism take our Judaism."

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said this month that the sharp spike in antisemitic acts in France that followed the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel has continued into this year.

Authorities registered 366 antisemitic acts in the first three months of 2024, a 300% increase over the same period last year, Attal said. More than 1,200 antisemitic acts were reported in the last three months of 2023 — which was three times more than in the whole of 2022, he said.

"We are witnessing an explosion of hatred," he said.

## **Israel insists it is doing all it can to protect civilians in Gaza and denies genocide charges**

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Israel strongly denied charges of genocide on Friday, telling the United Nations' top court it was doing everything it could to protect the civilian population during its military operation in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice wrapped up a third round of hearings on emergency measures requested by South Africa, which says Israel's military incursion in the southern city of Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza" and has asked the court to order a cease-fire.

Tamar Kaplan-Tourgeman, one of Israel's legal team, defended the country's conduct, saying it had allowed in fuel and medication to the beleaguered enclave.

"Israel takes extraordinary measures in order to minimize the harm to civilians in Gaza," she told The Hague-based court.

A protester shouting "Liars" briefly interrupted Kaplan-Tourgeman's final remarks. The hearing was paused for less than a minute while security guards escorted a woman from the public gallery.

South Africa told the court on Thursday that the situation in the beleaguered enclave has reached "a new and horrific stage" and urged judges to order a halt to Israeli military operations. The court was holding a third round of hearings on emergency measures requested by South Africa since it first filed its genocide case at the end of last year.

According to the latest request, South Africa says Israel's military incursion in Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza." In January, judges ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive. Judges will now deliberate on the request and are expected to issue a decision in the next weeks.

ICJ judges have broad powers to order a cease-fire and other measures, though the court doesn't have its own enforcement apparatus. A 2022 order by the court demanding that Russia halt its full-scale invasion of Ukraine has so far gone unheeded.

Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced since fighting began.

The war began with a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which Palestinian militants killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. More than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war, Gaza's Health Ministry says, without distinguishing between civilians and combatants in its count.

South Africa initiated proceedings in December 2023 and sees the legal campaign as rooted in issues central to its identity. Its governing party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the occupied West Bank to its own history under the apartheid regime of white minority rule, which restricted most Blacks to "homelands." Apartheid ended in 1994.

## Hezbollah introduces new weapons and tactics against Israel as war in Gaza drags on

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah this week struck a military post in northern Israel using a drone that fired two missiles. The attack wounded three soldiers, one of them seriously, according to the Israeli military.

Hezbollah has regularly fired missiles across the border with Israel over the past seven months, but the one on Thursday appears to have been the first successful missile airstrike it has launched from within Israeli airspace.

The group has stepped up its attacks on Israel in recent weeks, particularly since the Israeli incursion into the southern city of Rafah in the Gaza Strip. It has struck deeper inside Israel and introduced new and more advanced weaponry.

"This is a method of sending messages on the ground to the Israeli enemy, meaning that this is part of what we have, and if needed we can strike more," said Lebanese political analyst Faisal Abdul-Sater who closely follows Hezbollah.

While the cross-border exchanges of fire have been ongoing since early October, "complex attacks" by Hezbollah began a few days after Iran's unprecedented drone and missile barrage attack on Israel in mid-April.

In the past two weeks, Hezbollah has escalated further in response to the Israeli incursion into the city of southern Rafah in the Gaza Strip, a Lebanese official familiar with the group's operations said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to detail military information to the media.

The Thursday afternoon attack by a drone carrying missiles came just days after Hezbollah launched three anti-tank guided missiles at an Israeli military post that controlled a surveillance balloon flying over the border. They released camera footage afterward to show they had hit their mark. Hours later, the Israeli military confirmed that the spy balloon had been shot down over Lebanon.

The night before, Hezbollah had carried out its deepest attack in Israel to date using explosive drones to strike at a base in Ilaniya near the city of Tiberias about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Lebanon border. The Israeli military said the attack did not hurt anyone.

Abdul-Sater, the analyst, said the Iran-led coalition known as the axis of resistance, which includes the Palestinian militant group Hamas, has warned that if Israeli troops launch a full-scale invasion of Rafah in an attempt to go after Hamas, other fronts will also escalate.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed Wednesday that they attacked a U.S. destroyer while Iran-backed militants in Iraq have said they fired a series of drones toward Israel in recent weeks after having gone relatively quiet since February.

Hezbollah's use of more advanced weaponry, including drones capable of firing missiles, explosive drones and the small type of guided missile known as Almas, or Diamond, that was used to attack the base controlling the balloon has raised alarms within the Israeli military.

"Hezbollah has been escalating the situation in the north," said military spokesman Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani. "They've been firing more and more."

In adapting its attacks, Hezbollah has also managed to reduce the numbers of fighters lost compared with the early weeks of the conflict.

The group has lost more than 250 fighters so far, compared with 15 Israeli troops since fighting broke out along the Lebanon-Israel border a day after the Israel-Hamas war started on Oct. 7.

According to a count by The Associated Press, Hezbollah lost 47 fighters in October and 35 in November, compared with 20 in April and 12 so far this month.

The official familiar with the group's operations said Hezbollah had reduced the numbers of fighters along the border areas to bring down the numbers of casualties. While Hezbollah continues to fire Russian-made anti-tank Kornet missiles from areas close to the border, it has also shifted to firing drones and other types of rockets with heavy warheads — including Almas as well as Falaq and Burkan rockets — from areas

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several kilometers (miles) from the border.

Over the weekend, Hezbollah said it had launched a new rocket with a heavy warhead named Jihad Mughniyeh after a senior operative who was killed in an Israeli airstrike on southern Syria in 2015.

Eva J. Koulouriotis, a political analyst specialized in the Middle East and jihadi groups wrote on the social media platform X that Hezbollah's recent escalation likely has several goals, including raising the ceiling of the group's demands in any future negotiations for a border deal, as well as raising military pressure on Israel's military in light of the preparations for the battle in Rafah.

Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant vowed in a speech last week that "we will stand, we will achieve our goals, we will hit Hamas, we will destroy Hezbollah, and we will bring security."

On Monday, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah reiterated in a speech that there will be no end to the fighting along the Lebanon-Israel border until Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip come to an end.

"The main goal of Lebanon's front is to contribute to the pressure on the enemy to end the war on Gaza," Nasrallah said.

His comments were a blow to attempts by foreign dignitaries, including U.S. and French officials, who have visited Beirut to try to put an end to the violence that has displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border.

A day after Nasrallah spoke, Canada's Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly visited Beirut and told Lebanon's private LBC TV station that she was pushing for a cease-fire.

"We need the people living in the south of Lebanon to be able to go back to their homes," she said. "We need to make sure that the Israelis living in the northern part of Israel are able to get back to their homes also."

Hezbollah's deputy leader Naim Kassim warned Israel in a speech over the weekend against opening an all-out war.

"You have tried in the past and you were defeated and if you try again you will be defeated," said Kassim, referring to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah 34-day war that ended in a draw.

## **Today in History: May 18, Mount St. Helens erupts**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 18, the 139th day of 2024. There are 227 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 18, 1980, the Mount St. Helens volcano in Washington state exploded, leaving 57 people dead or missing.

On this date:

In 1652, Rhode Island became the first American colony to pass a law abolishing African slavery; however, the law was apparently never enforced.

In 1863, the Siege of Vicksburg began during the Civil War, ending July 4 with a Union victory.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Plessy v. Ferguson, endorsed "separate but equal" racial segregation, a concept renounced 58 years later by Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

In 1910, Halley's Comet passed by earth, brushing it with its tail.

In 1927, in America's deadliest school attack, part of a schoolhouse in Bath Township, Michigan, was blown up with explosives planted by local farmer Andrew Kehoe, who then set off a bomb in his truck; the attacks killed 38 children and six adults, including Kehoe, who'd earlier killed his wife. (Authorities said Kehoe, who suffered financial difficulties, was seeking revenge for losing a township clerk election.)

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure creating the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In 1934, Congress approved, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed, the so-called "Lindbergh Act," providing for the death penalty in cases of interstate kidnapping.

In 1973, Harvard law professor Archibald Cox was appointed Watergate special prosecutor by U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

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In 1981, the New York Native, a gay newspaper, carried a story concerning rumors of "an exotic new disease" among homosexuals; it was the first published report about what came to be known as AIDS.

In 1998, the U.S. government filed an antitrust case against Microsoft, saying the powerful software company had a "choke hold" on competitors that was denying consumers important choices about how they bought and used computers. (The Justice Department and Microsoft reached a settlement in 2001.)

In 2013, French President Francois Hollande signed a law authorizing same-sex marriages and adoption by gay couples.

In 2015, President Barack Obama ended long-running federal transfers of some combat-style gear to local law enforcement in an attempt to ease tensions between police and minority communities, saying equipment made for the battlefield should not be a tool of American criminal justice.

In 2017, Chris Cornell, who was lead singer with rock bands Soundgarden and Audioslave, took his own life in a Detroit hotel room; he was 52.

In 2018, a 17-year-old armed with a shotgun and a pistol opened fire at a Houston-area high school, killing eight students and two teachers.

In 2020, President Donald Trump said he'd been taking a malaria drug, hydroxychloroquine, and a zinc supplement to protect against the coronavirus despite warnings from his own government that the drug should be administered only in a hospital or research setting.

In 2022, nearly 1,000 last-ditch Ukrainian fighters who had held out inside Mariupol's pulverized steel plant surrendered, Russia said, as the battle that turned the city into a worldwide symbol of defiance and suffering drew toward a close.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Priscilla Pointer is 100. Actor Candice Azzara is 83. Bluegrass singer-musician Rodney Dillard (The Dillards) is 82. Baseball Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson is 78. Former Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., is 76. Country singer Joe Bonsall (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 76. Rock musician Rick Wakeman (Yes) is 75. Rock singer Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo) is 74. Actor James Stephens is 73. Country singer George Strait is 72. Actor Chow Yun-Fat is 69. International Tennis Hall of Famer Yannick Noah is 64. Rock singer-musician Page Hamilton is 64. Contemporary Christian musician Barry Graul (MercyMe) is 63. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Tait is 58. Singer-actor Martika is 55. Comedian-writer Tina Fey is 54. Rock singer Jack Johnson is 49. Country singer David Nail is 45. Actor Matt Long is 44. Actor Allen Leech is 43. Christian singer Francesca Battistelli is 39. Actor Spencer Breslin is 32. Actor Violet Beane is 28. Actor Hala Finley is 15.