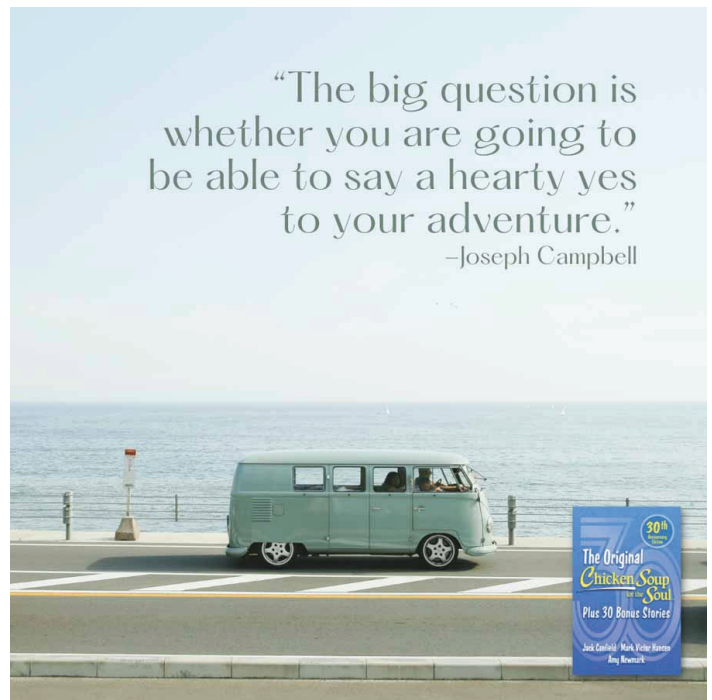


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“The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty yes to your adventure.”
—Joseph Campbell

Sunday, May 19

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday, May 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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—Weber—
Landscaping
Greenhouse

NOW
OPEN!

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



High school graduate eyes child care career path

SIoux FALLS, S.D. – Thousands of South Dakota high schoolers are planning their first steps into adulthood this graduation season. Some may follow relatives into the family business of farming, law, or teaching. Others, like Cordelia Rieck of Sioux Falls, plan to join the family business of raising families.

The number of day cares in South Dakota has almost halved since 2009, from 1,195 to 646 in 2020, according to the Kids Count Data Center. As conversations about the lack of child care access and affordability intensify across the state, the Rieck family is among the dozens of families in South Dakota that run in-home or family day cares. That journey began years before Cordelia was born.

After Karen Rieck and her husband Justin moved to Sioux Falls, they went to see a movie. Karen had a few years of experience with child care at that time.

“Oddly enough, we had gone to see ‘Daddy Day Care’ in the theater,” said Karen. “And that’s what got my brain going. Like, ‘Really, you can do this. You can do child care out of your home. You don’t have to run a center.’”

A week later, the Riecks were creating a business plan. That was 21 years ago.

Today, Mrs. Karen’s House Childcare and Preschool is a state registered family daycare with capacity for a dozen children. When the South Dakota Focus team visited in April, the children’s ages ranged from six to a pair of five-month-old twins. Karen said the in-home setting emphasizes a feeling of family, which was attractive when she and her husband started the venture.

“Family in general is important to us, and we want to be able to instill that with the kids that we help raise,” she said.

In fact, a connection made through one of their clients helped the Riecks expand their own family. They’d previously been told having children would be difficult, if not impossible, based on some health complications. Then, in the early days of their child care operation, they watched the child of a pharmacy assistant.

“She’s the one who introduced me to a physician who was able to figure out what was wrong,” Karen remembered with a smile. “Needed some help, but I have four kids now.”

‘I’ve always had somebody to play with!’

Those kids have grown up alongside the kids who attend Mrs. Karen’s House Childcare and Preschool. The Riecks’s firstborn is Cordelia. She graduates from Sioux Falls Roosevelt High School this month.

“She was born into family child care,” said Karen. “We literally had her on a Thursday at 6:27 p.m. and our doors were open on Monday.”



Karen Rieck runs Mrs. Karen’s House Childcare and Preschool out of her family’s home in Sioux Falls. (Photo:

Krystal Schoenbauer / SDPB)

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Karen and Cordelia Rieck hold five-month-old twins during a chat with the South Dakota Focus team last month. (Photo: Krystal Schoenbauer / SDPB)

"Well, I've never had a bad experience of going to somebody else's daycare," Cordelia explained matter-of-factly. "I always had somebody to play with!"

Cordelia still plays and helps with the daycare kids before and after school.

"I come back and all of them, they bombard me at the stairs. I don't even make it up the stairs, and they're just all over me. It's great," she said.

When it came time to decide what to do after high school, Cordelia knew one thing for sure: "I just wanted to help people. I didn't care how."

As a child, she'd considered being a doctor or veterinarian. Today, she shudders at the math and science involved.

"And I was like, 'You know, I want to help

people. I can help children.' Because first of all, I love children and children usually love me, because I am a child," Cordelia joked.

Few early childhood degree options

South Dakota does not require child care providers to hold higher education credentials for licensing purposes, but as research continues to demonstrate the relationship between a child's earliest years and their future learning outcomes, many providers and parents want to see child care staff with some level of specialized education.

Some child care and preschool providers have begun requiring a one-year Child Development Associate as a minimum credential to lead a classroom, though there are more intensive options. South Dakota State University offers the only four-year degree specialization in early childhood education in the state. Northern State University began offering a two-year associate degree in early childhood education just last year, along with scholarships sponsored by the state Department of Social Services.

Ultimately, Cordelia Rieck decided on an Early Childhood Specialist associate degree from Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls.

"I wanted to stay here because I wanted to help here," she explained.

Cordelia admits none of her classmates are considering a career in child care.

"They go, 'I'm not having kids, so why does that pertain to me,'" she said. "It's really irritating sometimes, because sometimes they're really arrogant about it."

Recent coverage of low wages for child care providers likely doesn't help. In 2021, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said child care workers earn in the bottom 2% of occupations the nation. That has contributed to staff burnout, which perpetuates the lack of child care providers. A 2022 report from South Dakota's Department of Social Services put the turnover rate of direct care staff at 88 percent. However, that same report shows the lowest turnover rate among group family day care providers, at 60 percent.

Karen Rieck believes her daughter has seen both the challenges



Cordelia Rieck decided on a program at Southeast Technical College so she could continue working with the kids at her parents' daycare in Sioux Falls. (Photo:

Krystal Schoenbauer / SDPB)

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and the benefits of running a family day care.

"Having Justin and I both home all the time, she actually got to have us here," she explained. "She had that friend group here that she grew up with...I think she also sees on those days when it's 30-below and we're standing here with our hot cup of coffee and people are coming to us, and we didn't have to go out in that. There's perks to that."

Looking forward

As excited as Karen is to have Cordelia follow in her footsteps, she's also excited for her to blaze her own trail.

"To go from being someone who never thought I would have kids, to Cordelia...we thought we were losing her at 12 weeks," Karen explained through tears. "I've seen her grow up and just become an amazing person, and even when she turned 18, that was so hard for me. She doesn't need her mommy anymore! Part of that moving into the child care world, she's still gonna need me, but I want her to do her own thing and create who she is."

In the meantime, Cordelia is looking forward to high school graduation and the next steps--even if few of her peers are worker towards the same goal.

"The average teenager does not care at all. It's kind of sad, because they don't have any of the childlike experiences after their childhood. I get to experience them every single day."



Karen Rieck and some of the children at her day-care follow a yoga video to wind down before parents arrive for pick-up. (Photo: Krystal Schoenbauer / SDPB)

How to watch 'South Dakota Focus' on SDPB

The next episode of "South Dakota Focus" airs on Thursday, May 23, at 8 p.m. Central time / 7 p.m. Mountain time. It can be viewed on SDPB-TV 1, Facebook, YouTube and SD.net.

The episode includes:

- A Build Dakota scholarship winner graduates from the surgical tech program
- A youth center in Ft. Thompson provides job and mentorship opportunities
- Stories from South Dakota high schoolers on what's next after graduation

GROTON

SUBWAY

REOPENING SOON!

Hiring all positions: Manager, Assistant Manager and Sandwich Artists.
Can apply online or email carmbruster_13@hotmail.com with position, dates, times available, and references.
Walk-In Interviews: May 21, 3-5 p.m.

Under new ownership,
Beau and Chelsea Larson



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Foruth Week Trap Shoot

The fourth week of the Trap Shoot League scores have been released with two Groton Area shooters having perfect scores. Turner Thompson and Payton Mitchell both had perfect scores for the second consecutive week. Ashton Holmes also had a perfect score as the trio are the leaders for the week.

Name	Rd1	Rd2	Total
THOMPSON, TURNER	25	25	50
HOLMES, ASHTON	25	25	50
MITCHELL, PAYTON	25	25	50
FLIEHS, FAITH	25	23	48
FEIST, CADENCE	24	23	47
KAMPA, JAEGER	22	25	47
MITCHELL, PAISLEY	23	24	47
MOREHOUSE, WESLEY	24	23	47
SCEPANIAK, ISAIAH	19	25	44
POWERS-DINGER, MICHAEL	24	20	44
THOMPSON, TARYN	20	23	43
KAMPA, TRISTAN	20	22	42
STANGE, TYTON	21	21	42
SPERRY, ASHLYN	20	21	41
WAMBACH, BRYSON	20	21	41
FROST, CHARLIE	22	18	40
SMITH, TREY	20	19	39
SPERRY, OWEN	15	22	37
HOLMES, SYDNEY	18	17	35
SCEPANIAK, NOAH	17	16	33
LEICHT, TUCKER	16	15	31
KOTZER, ADELINE	15	12	27
KUTTER, IAN	10	11	21
RUDEBUSCH, JACLYN	6	3	9



Now
HIRING!

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

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McCook County Fatal Motorcycle Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Valley Road and 249th Street, six miles north of Montrose, SD

When: 12:55p.m. Saturday, May 18, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 55, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2007 Harley Davidson

Helmet Use: No

Union County, S.D.- A 55-year-old man died Saturday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash six miles north of Montrose, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2007 Harley Davidson motorcycle was southbound on Valley Road. Having stopped at a stop sign, the driver then accelerated quickly away and continued to accelerate, losing control going into a curve and entered the west ditch. The motorcycle rolled several times throwing the driver off. He was not wearing a helmet and died from injuries sustained in the crash.

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

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



MANHART
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 1

**Working to Protect & Promote
Traditional American Values**

- ✓ Pro Law Enforcement
- ✓ Pro Constitution
- ✓ Pro Family
- ✓ Property Rights



Visit the Campaign Site
ManhartForHouse.com or
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Primary Election: Vote Now Through June 4th

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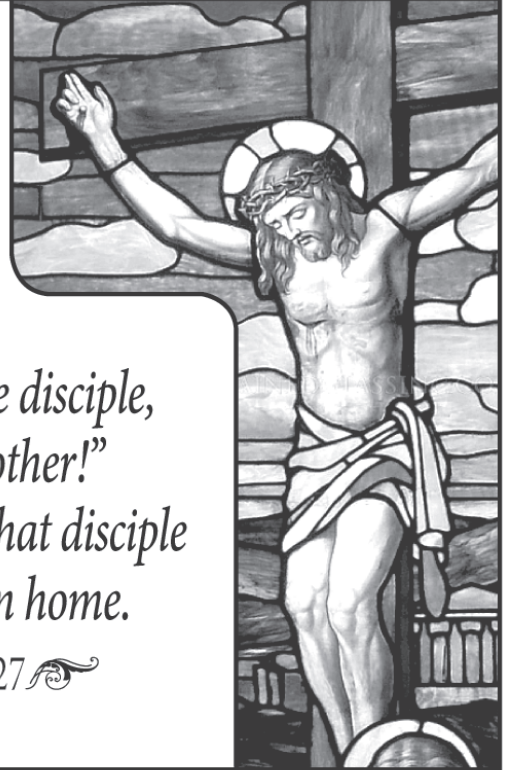
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and
the disciple whom He loved standing by,
He said to His mother,
“Woman, behold your son!”*

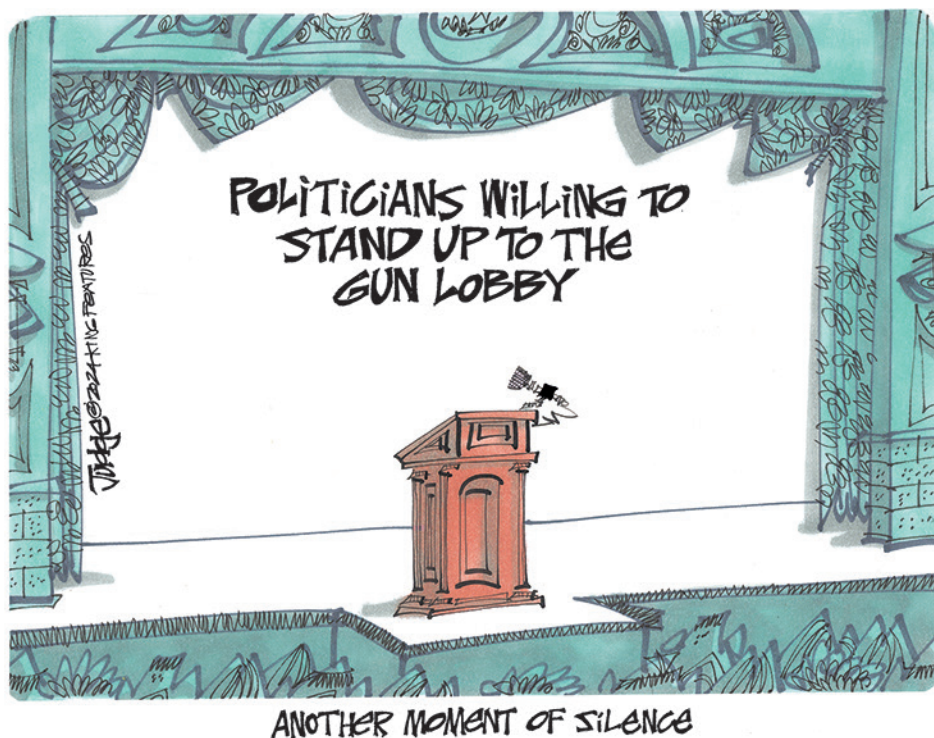


*Then He said to the disciple,
“Behold your mother!”
And from that hour that disciple
took her to his own home.*

JOHN 19:26, 27



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Deuteronomy (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From John 20, by what other name was the apostle Thomas known? *Caleb, Naaman, Omri, Didymus*

3. Which book begins, “And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness”? *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joel*

4. For what did Jesus and Peter pay for with a coin found in a fish’s mouth? *Tax, Bread, Lodging, Sandals*

5. From Proverbs 11, what word did Solomon use to describe soul winners? *Warm, Wise, Wealthy, Wonderful*

6. Which prophet was saved from death by a talking donkey? *Balaam, Ezekiel, Joel, Samuel*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) Didymus, 3) Numbers, 4) Tax, 5) Wise, 6) Balaam

“*Test Your Bible Knowledge,*” a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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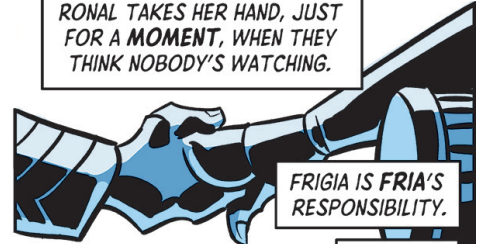


FLASH GORDON

A CREATURE THE SIZE OF A SKYSCRAPER IS COMING TO ATTACK DAY'S PEAK.

THIS IS FRIA'S NIGHTMARE -- HER PEOPLE IN THE PATH OF A DISASTER THAT BORDERS ON BIBLICAL.

RONAL TAKES HER HAND, JUST FOR A MOMENT, WHEN THEY THINK NOBODY'S WATCHING.



FRIGIA IS FRIA'S RESPONSIBILITY.

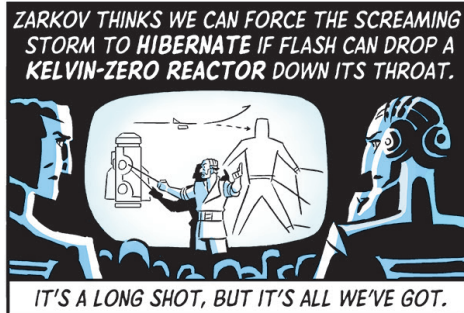
FRIA'S HIS.



I'M DALE ARDEN.

I'M NOT A SCIENTIST OR A PILOT OR A MONSTER HUNTER.

AN ARCTIC KAIJU IS HEADING OUR WAY, AND ALL I CAN DO IS RUN THE SLIDE PROJECTOR.



ZARKOV THINKS WE CAN FORCE THE SCREAMING STORM TO HIBERNATE IF FLASH CAN DROP A KELVIN-ZERO REACTOR DOWN ITS THROAT.

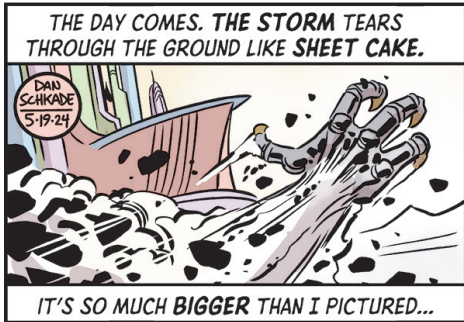
IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT.



EVERYONE GETS READY, IN THEIR OWN WAY.

RONAL MAKES BOK A KNIGHT.

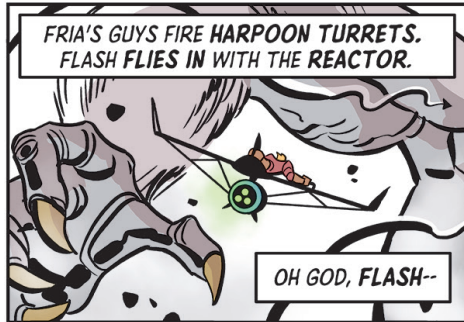
IT'S PRETTY GREAT.



THE DAY COMES. THE STORM TEARS THROUGH THE GROUND LIKE SHEET CAKE.

DAN SCHKADE 5-19-24

IT'S SO MUCH BIGGER THAN I PICTURED...



FRIA'S GUYS FIRE HARPOON TURRETS. FLASH FLIES IN WITH THE REACTOR.

OH GOD, FLASH--

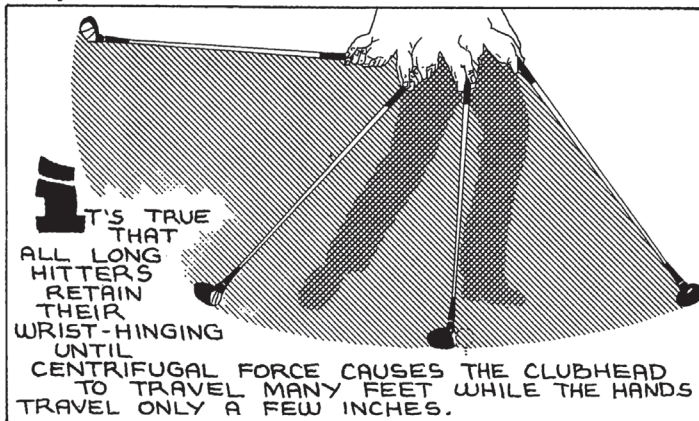


--PLEASE DON'T DIE--

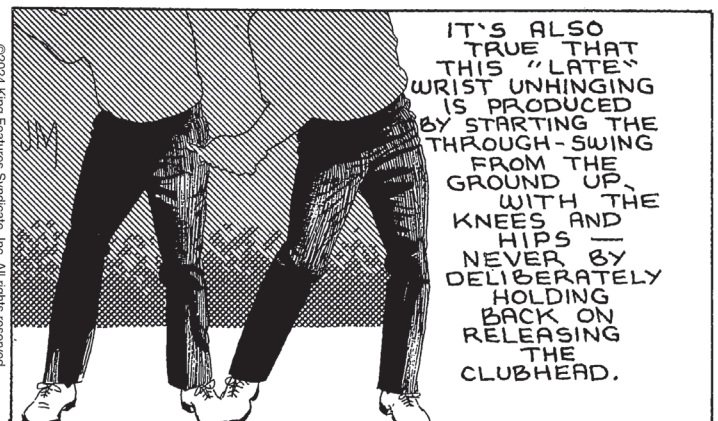
NEXT: HONOR BOUND

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



IT'S TRUE THAT ALL LONG HITTERS RETAIN THEIR WRIST-HINGING UNTIL CENTRIFUGAL FORCE CAUSES THE CLUBHEAD TO TRAVEL MANY FEET WHILE THE HANDS TRAVEL ONLY A FEW INCHES.



IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT THIS "LATE" WRIST UNHINGING IS PRODUCED BY STARTING THE THROUGH-SWING FROM THE GROUND UP, WITH THE KNEES AND HIPS -- NEVER BY DELIBERATELY HOLDING BACK ON RELEASING THE CLUBHEAD.

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Low Iron Levels Might Affect Blood Donor's Depression

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am wondering if there is any link between low iron and depression/anxiety. I am a 37-year-old woman, and I started taking Lexapro a few years ago. I upped my dose last year because I wasn't feeling great, and my doctor and I decided that it was a good step to take.

During the years that I have been taking Lexapro, I have also been a regular blood donor. I am CMV-negative, so I have blood suitable for newborns. The Red Cross says I am a "hero for babies," and I enjoy doing something good.

I haven't donated in about five months, and I am feeling significantly better regarding my depression. I know that donating blood affects iron levels, but does it also affect the concentration of Lexapro in my body? If not, can low iron be contributing to my depression? I would love to know the answer so that I can possibly continue to donate, perhaps less frequently. -- J.M.

ANSWER: First, thank you for donating so regularly. CMV is a virus most people have been exposed to, and like most herpes viruses, it stays in the body forever. Newborns and premature babies, as well as organ transplant recipients, need CMV-negative blood, and there aren't many CMV-negative people who can donate.

Depression and anxiety are both tightly linked to the neurotransmitter serotonin. Lexapro doesn't increase serotonin, but it does make the transmission of serotonin from one nerve cell to another more effective by reducing the reuptake of serotonin at the nerve junction. Low iron levels have been shown to reduce serotonin levels, so this may be part of the reason why your depressive symptoms have been worse.

However, there are many other reasons, both inside and outside of your body, that can make depressive symptoms worse. Still, if you do have low iron levels, you can replace iron faster and keep it normal, despite blood donation and menstruation, with an iron supplement. (It would be best to check with your doctor on this.) If your depression gets better, then this would be pretty good evidence that low iron does affect your mood. (Note: You can have low iron and not have anemia at all.)

Find the right donation frequency so you can still help without putting your mental health in danger.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 86-year-old male in good health. Several years ago, I had about 1/3 of my prostate removed because I couldn't pee. After the surgery, all was well with a steady stream until about two weeks ago. During one of my many trips to the bathroom, I noticed that I had a hard time when starting to urinate, and the stream was stop-and-go. This continues to this day, but it isn't a problem during the day.

Any thoughts on my sudden change in urinating? -- D.S.

ANSWER: A sudden change in urination should prompt an evaluation for a urine infection. These are quite common with men in their 80s, especially those with prostate problems, even if they have undergone surgical treatment. Your first stop should be your regular doctor for a urine test, and if this doesn't reveal the problem, it is time to visit your urologist.

Some medicines can dramatically worsen the ability to urinate in men, especially decongestants and antihistamines. Some people use these at night, which might explain why you only experience problems at that time.

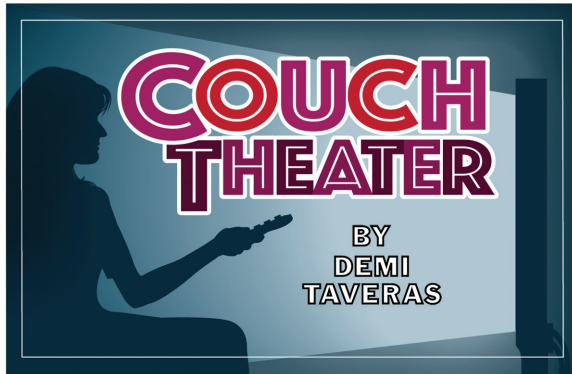
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Austin Butler, left, and Callum Turner star in "Masters of the Air."

Courtesy of Apple TV+

"The Roast of Tom Brady" (TV-MA) -- Whether you're a fan of the proclaimed "GOAT" Tom Brady or a massive hater of the former quarterback (Go, Giants!), this roast is an entertaining watch for all. Hosted by Kevin Hart and roastmaster Jeff Ross, this three-hour TV special features a multitude of

crude jokes that would send just about anyone home in tears, but the New England Patriot alum takes them all in stride. Highlights include comedian Nikki Glaser's set as well as surprise appearances from Ben Affleck, former Patriots coach Bill Belichick, and the Sheriff himself -- Peyton Manning. The special is out now but do note: It has been edited since streaming live, so if you want to see the moment when Kim Kardashian gets booed by the audience, you'll have to look on YouTube. (You're welcome.) (Netflix)

"Eileen" (R) -- Based on the novel by Ottessa Moshfegh, this psychological thriller stars Thomasin McKenzie ("The Power of the Dog") and Anne Hathaway ("The Idea of You"). Taking place in 1960s Massachusetts, a young girl named Eileen (McKenzie) works in a correctional facility for teenage boys while she struggles with an unstable home life due to her alcoholic father, Jim (Shea Whigham). When a new psychologist, Rebecca (Hathaway), is hired at the facility, Rebecca's modern thinking and charming aura starts to rub off on Eileen. Through Rebecca, Eileen is finally able to garner the agency that she's been desperately needing to overcome the obstacles in her life. Out now. (Hulu)

"Franklin" (TV-MA) -- Academy-Award-winning actor Michael Douglas takes on the role of founding father Benjamin Franklin in this eight-episode miniseries out now. This biographical series spans the eight years Franklin spent in France as he tries to convince King Louis XVI to back the United States in the Revolutionary War. Even though politics and history are the drivers behind the story of this series, expect glimpses of comedy, romance and action throughout the episodes. Noah Jupe ("A Quiet Place") co-stars as William Temple Franklin, Ben's grandson, and Daniel Mays ("Rogue One") portrays spy Edward Bancroft. (Apple TV+)

"The Beach Boys" (PG-13) -- A documentary about the American rock band The Beach Boys hits streaming on May 24! Described as the band that personifies the "California dream," The Beach Boys took the nation by storm with "Surfin' U.S.A." back in 1963. After that first hit single, the band continued to call the Top 10 home with songs like "Surfer Girl," "Be True to Your School" and "Fun, Fun, Fun," just to name a few. Of course, the documentary features interviews with band members Brian Wilson, Mike Love, Al Jardine, David Marks and Bruce Johnston, but it also includes soundbites from musicians Lindsey Buckingham (of Fleetwood Mac), Janelle Monae, Ryan Tedder (of OneRepublic) and more. (Disney+)

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1. Which group got their name from a hat?
2. Name Elvis Presley's first No. 1 hit. (Clue: He was still with Sun Records at the time.)
3. Who wrote and released "Angel Baby"?
4. Name the group that wrote and released "Sh-Boom" ("Life Could Be a Dream").
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "And if you would let them hold you, Oh how grateful I will be."

Answers

1. The Tams, from tam o'shanter, which they wore when performing. Their only No. 1 hit was "What Kind of Fool (Do

You Think I Am)" in 1964.

2. "I Forgot to Remember to Forget" in 1955. When he moved over to RCA Records the same year, his first hit with them was "Heartbreak Hotel," also a chart-topper.

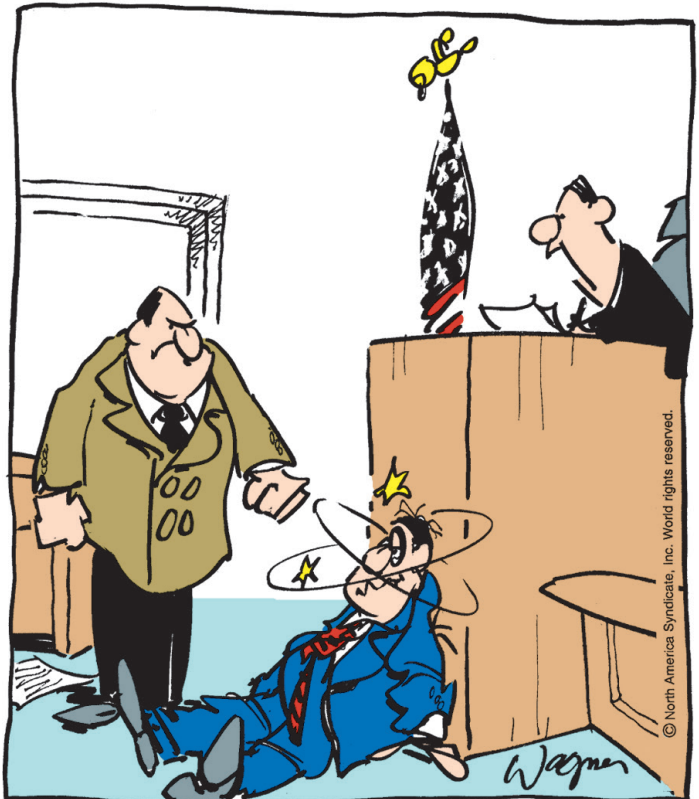
3. Rosie and the Originals, in 1960. To get attention for the song, Rosie asked the music department in a department store to play it. A record company soon signed up the group.

4. The Chords, in 1954. The Crew-Cuts quickly followed with a cover.

5. "These Arms of Mine," by Otis Redding in 1962. The song was singer-songwriter Redding's first major single and it was later featured in several soundtracks, including "Road House" and "Dirty Dancing."

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GRIN and BEAR IT by Wagner



"A simple 'I object' will do, Counselor!"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps

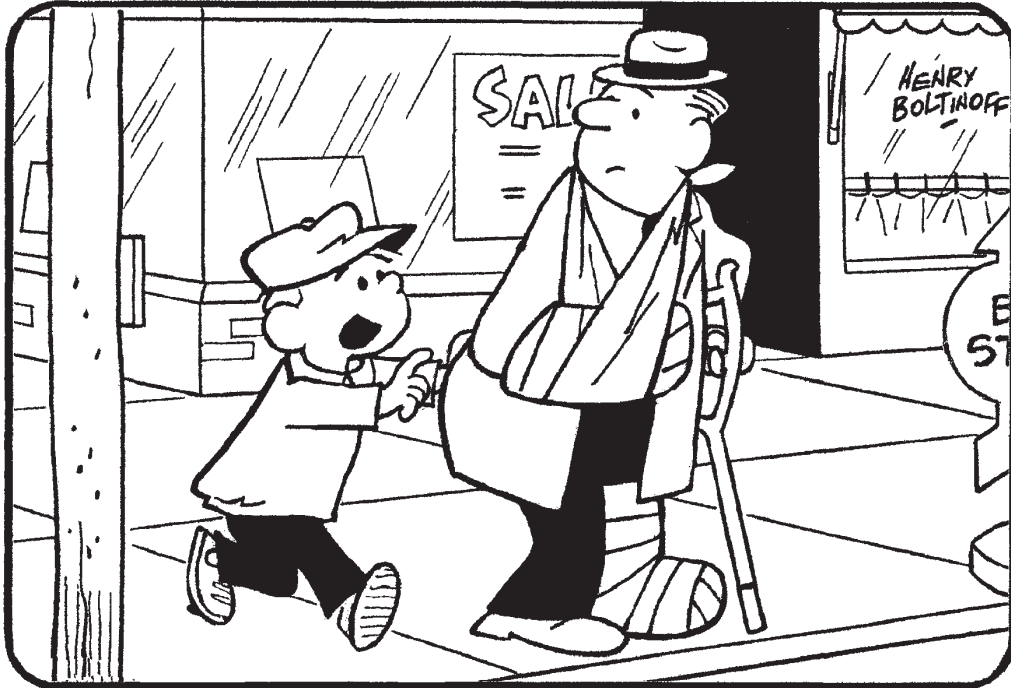


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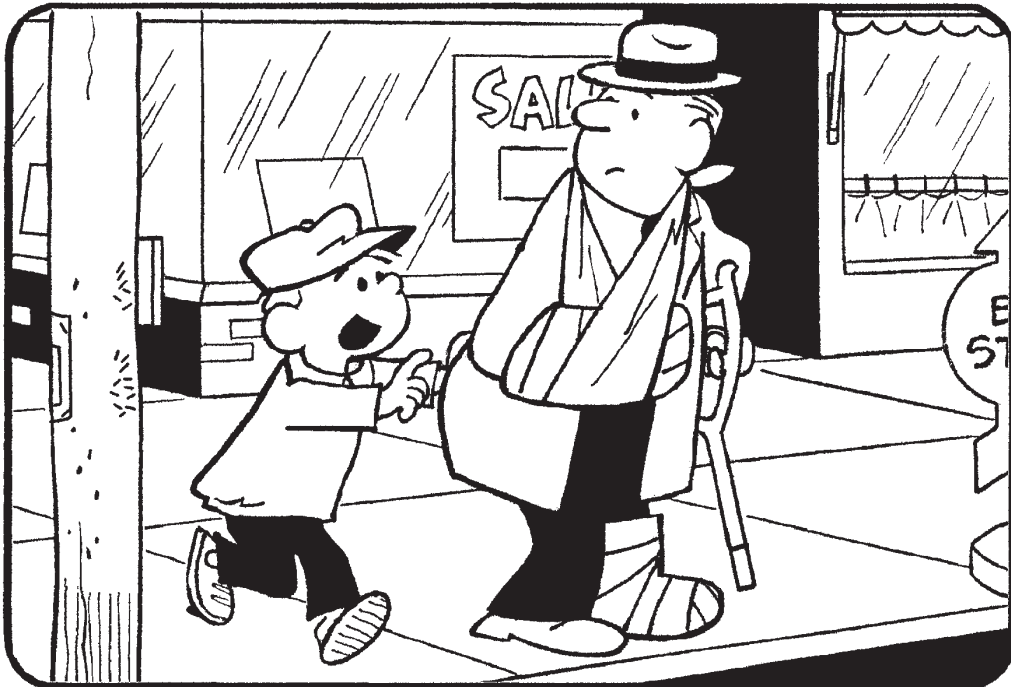
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.

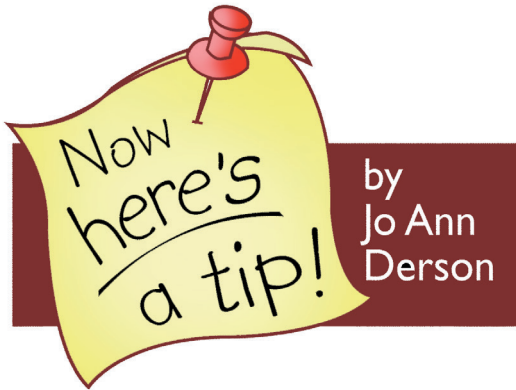


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Differences: 1. Crutch is shorter. 2. Leg is different. 3. Cast is thicker. 4. Hat is larger. 5. Sign in window is different. 6. Pole is smaller.

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* Want to pump up a dying fire? Never use lighter fluid. Even if the coals look really gray, they could be hot on the inside. The stream of fluid CAN catch fire. It's too dangerous. Put new briquettes in with the old, and light those up using a long-stick match.

* "Keep flareups from unintentional blackening: Keep a clean spray bottle filled with plain water next to the grill. Long after you're done cooking and you're ready to clean up those ashes from briquettes, mist the ashes first, and it will keep them from making a dust cloud." -- U.L. in Georgia

* From charcoal grilling expert Kingsford, here's a great tip to use when grilling chicken: "When applying a dry rub to chicken pieces, it's often hard to keep the rub affixed and it's even

more difficult to keep the chicken's original, golden color. Try painting chicken pieces with yellow mustard prior to applying the rub. Not only will the rub stay in place, your final product will be visually appealing -- without any trace of mustard flavor."

* When wrapping vegetables in foil packets to grill, make the seams on the sides. This way, the veggie packets can be turned over for even cooking and to avoid burning on one side. You can even label the outside of the foil in permanent marker. It won't affect the taste of the food.

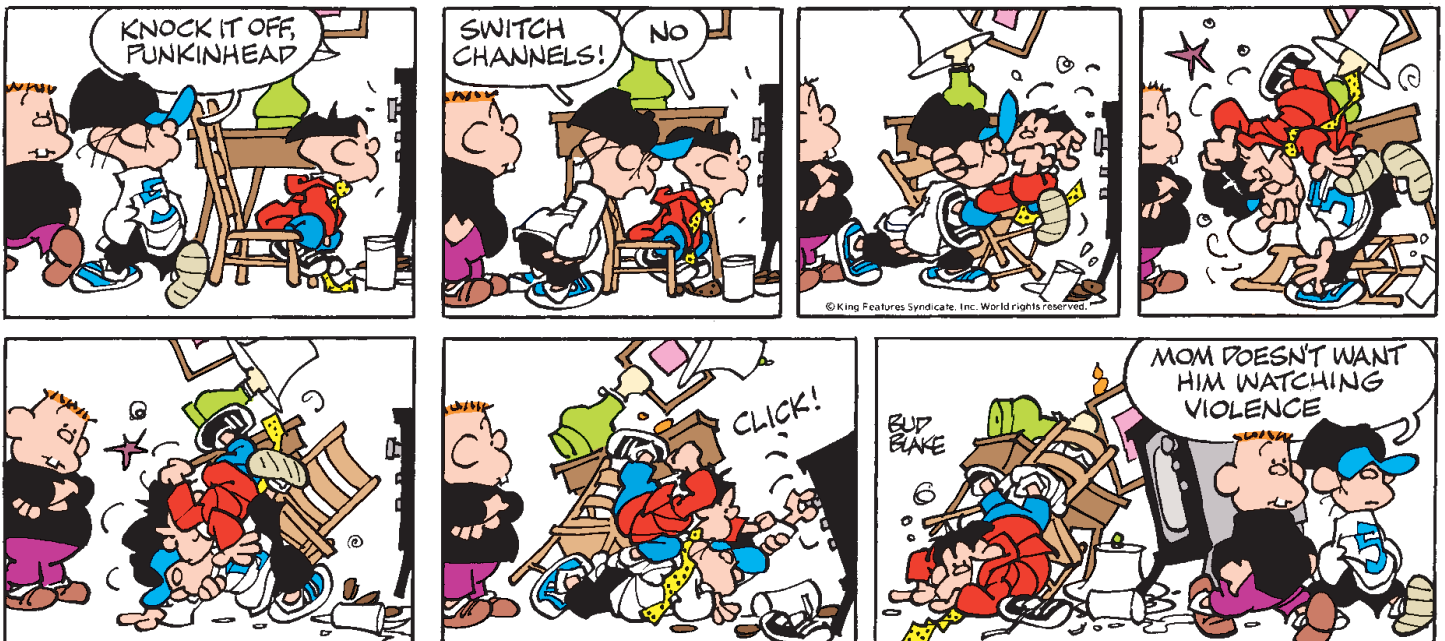
* To cover a picnic table in windy conditions, choose a fitted bed sheet. An alternative that is kid-friendly is to cover a table entirely with white butcher paper, taped at the seams and secured underneath with strong tape such as duct tape. The kids can busy themselves drawing placemats and decorations for everyone in crayon while the adults do the grilling.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Make over
- 5 Lucy of "Kill Bill"
- 8 Sch. for tots
- 12 Flair
- 13 Leb. neighbor
- 14 Bart's sister
- 15 Suffix for million
- 16 Kipling poem
- 18 "Even Now" singer
- 20 "Old MacDonald" refrain
- 21 French article
- 22 PC linkup
- 23 Type of wheat
- 26 Prayerful chants
- 30 Commotion
- 31 Do sums
- 32 "As I see it," to a texter
- 33 "How-to" books
- 36 Dull
- 38 Boy king
- 39 Mandible
- 40 Gold mold
- 43 Capital of Nicaragua
- 47 Work force
- 49 Reddish brown
- 50 Jai —
- 51 Flamenco cheer
- 52 Pedestal part
- 53 — Hari

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16			17				
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33			34	35				36	37			
			38				39					
40	41	42				43				44	45	46
47					48				49			
50					51				52			
53					54				55			

- 54 Quirky
- 11 Deck in the ring
- 35 Car
- 55 Swindle
- 17 Campus big-wig
- 36 Mover's vehicle
- 37 Prizes
- DOWN**
- 1 500 sheets
- 19 Permit
- 39 Hollywood's Leto
- 2 Director
- 22 Young fellow
- 40 Mosque VIP
- Kazan
- 23 "Cheers" bartender
- 41 "The Lion King" lioness
- 42 Bitty biter
- 3 Mend a sock
- 24 Hi-tech organizer
- 43 Blend
- 4 "Anna Christie" playwright
- 25 Very long time
- 44 Avocado dip, for short
- 5 Long rides?
- 26 Rx writers
- 45 Fed. food inspector
- 6 Caesar's "vidi"
- 27 Shred
- 46 Physics bit
- 7 Coffee vessel
- 28 "— dream-ing?"
- 48 Romance
- 8 Lament
- 29 Turf
- 51 Flamenco cheer
- 31 Flight stat
- 52 Pedestal part
- 34 Perfect place
- 9 Anger
- 10 Actor Morales
- 53 — Hari

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

R	E	D	O		L	I	U		P	R	E	K
E	L	A	N		I	S	R		L	I	S	A
A	I	R	E		M	A	N	D	A	L	A	Y
M	A	N	I	L	O	W		E	I	E	I	O
			L	E	S		L	A	N			
S	P	E	L	T		M	A	N	T	R	A	S
A	D	O			A	D	D			I	M	O
M	A	N	U	A	L	S		V	A	P	I	D
			T	U	T		J	A	W			
I	N	G	O	T		M	A	N	A	G	U	A
M	A	N	P	O	W	E	R		R	U	S	T
A	L	A	I		O	L	E		D	A	D	O
M	A	T	A		O	D	D		S	C	A	M

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS
POPEYE
 BY RANDY MILHOLLAND

THERE'S AN ILLEGAL FIGHT TOURNAMENT GOING ON. AS MAYOR, SHOULDN'T YOU DO SOMETHING, JOHN?

GAWN! I'M TIRED, MYRTLE. LET SOMEONE ELSE DEAL WITH IT.

LIKE WHOEVER RUNS AGAINST YOU FOR YOUR OFFICE IN NOVEMBER?

CAN YOU NOT BE RIGHT AT BEDTIME?

THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS
"ENUFFS FISTICUFFS!"
 PART 10

NOW THAT ALL COMBAT IS ILLEGAL IN TOWN, PROF. KILPH HAS SET TO TRYING TO ENTRAP POPEYE FOR BREAKING THE LAW. HE IS NOW PREPARED TO BRING POPEYE DOWN.

YOU DID IT, EL PUÑO VERDE. YOU DEFEATED MY MONSTER, SO YOU EARNED A SURPRISE.

'TIS I, PROF. KILPH! WE KNOW YOU ARE BAD AT DISGUISES AND YOU ARE WITH YOUR BUTLER.

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE, AM I? YOU'RE IN DEEP TROUBLE—

POPEYE?!

C'MON, PAPPY. GRANNY IS WORRIED SICK 'BOUT YA.

BUT HOW?!

THAT CAN'T BE POPEYE! THIS IS POPEYE!

YOUNG LADY, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL?! DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? HOW IMPORTANT I AM?

I AM NOT A JOKE!

PTODEY

THEN WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A PUNCHLINE?

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BARNEY GOOGLE AND SKUFFY SATI

I PLAN ON HAVIN' MY FURST GOLD RECORD, BY TH' TIME I'M A TEENAGER !!

GOOD FER YOU, JUGHAID !!

BUT I'M HOLDIN' OUT FER A FELLER WHO CAN GO PLATINUM !!

YA CAN'T JEST SING TH' WORDS, GALS, YA GOTTA FEEL 'EM !!

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MORE FEELIN' !!

MORE !!

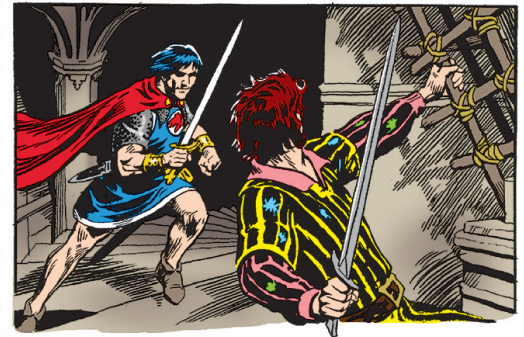
JOHN ROSE

5-28

TOO MUCH FEELIN' !!

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BUT ROGER FIGHTS WITH NO SUCH DISADVANTAGE STAYING HIS HAND - AND USES EVERY DESPERATE TRICK AT HIS DISPOSAL TO END THIS PERSISTENT KNIGHT'S PURSUIT...

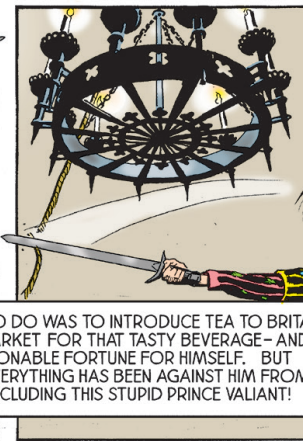


... AS HE HAS NO DESIRE TO BE DRAGGED BEFORE THE REBELLIOUS MOB - OR BEFORE KING ARTHUR'S COURT. HE KNOWS THAT HE COULD EXPECT NO MERCY FROM EITHER.

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ALL HE WANTED TO DO WAS TO INTRODUCE TEA TO BRITAIN, CONTROL THE MARKET FOR THAT TASTY BEVERAGE - AND SO MAKE A REASONABLE FORTUNE FOR HIMSELF. BUT EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HAS BEEN AGAINST HIM FROM THE BEGINNING! INCLUDING THIS STUPID PRINCE VALIANT!



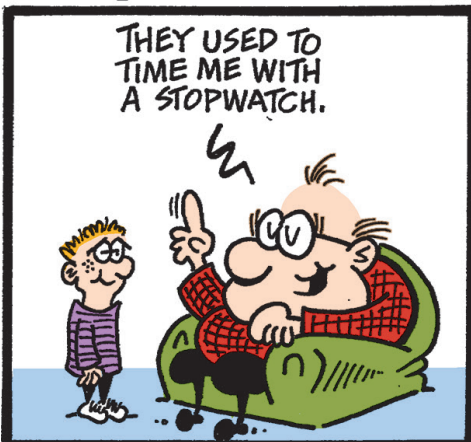
NEXT:
Reversal of fortune



YEATES
3/24/13 3972

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Information sources for food safety

At this writing we're being told on the news that the bird flu that's popping up across the country is being found in milk we buy. Then days later, no, it's not. It's only in raw milk, not the pasteurized we buy at the store. Except yes, there are "viral fragments" in pasteurized milk.

With conflicting information, what can we do to stay safe?

Various agencies in the government release alerts and recalls about our food safety. Sometimes they find an undeclared allergen in a food product or an item has not been inspected. Then there are the adulterants such as tiny pieces of plastic found in food.

Sometimes, however, what's found is quite serious, such as listeria, E. coli or salmonella, which can make people (especially seniors) extremely ill.

Receiving alerts and warnings about these can help us avoid foods that can make us sick. There are several alert/recall sources, but the one with the best information is at www.foodsafety.gov. You can either check the site on your computer or phone, or have the alerts sent to you. The website also has information on safe food storage and food poisoning.

The CDC has information on alerts as well at www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html. One recent recall warned of metal fragments in ice cream.

The FDA has a wider selection of alerts, covering shellfish, baby food products, beverages and dietary supplements. See www.fda.gov/food/recalls-outbreaks-emergencies/alerts-advisories-safety-information. One recent alert concerned elevated levels of lead in several cinnamon products.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls) recently recalled ham products that made it into the country without being inspected and ground beef with E. coli.

Sign up for as many (or as few) alerts as you need to feel safe about your food. If you sign up for more than one, you may get duplicate information, as they often share between agencies.

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1. What caused the quarterfinal match between Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev at the 2024 BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California, to be delayed for almost two hours?

2. What member of the Boston Bruins was found guilty of assault with a weapon for attacking the Vancouver Canucks' Donald Brashear with his hockey stick during a 2001 NHL game?

3. Tyler Gilbert was pitching for what team in August 2021 when he threw a no-hitter in his first MLB start?

4. Lusail International Circuit, which first hosted a FIA Formula 1 World Championship race in 2021, is located in which Middle Eastern country?

5. Name the golf legend who said, "If you are caught on a golf course during a storm and are afraid of lightning, hold up a 1-iron. Not even God can hit a 1-iron."

6. Jay Riemersma, who had a nine-season NFL career with the Buffalo Bills (1996-2002) and Pittsburgh Steelers (2003-04), played what position?

7. What open-road auto race was held in Italy from 1927-57 and claimed the lives of 56 people during its 30-year history?



Answers

1. A swarm of bees.
 2. Marty McSorley.
 3. The Arizona Diamondbacks.
 4. Qatar.
 5. Lee Trevino.
 6. Tight end.
 7. The Mille Miglia (Italian for "Thousand Miles").
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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





How to train an excited, reactive dog

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My 1-year-old puppy, "Shellie," gets very excited when she sees another dog approaching. Because she's already 26 pounds, I'm worried that she'll soon break away from me while on walks. What can I do? -- Glen H., Plattsburgh, New York

DEAR GLEN: Keeping control of your dog on the leash is such an important skill -- and there is a way to achieve that with Shellie.

First, work on curbing overall reactivity. Does Shellie get really excited when the leash appears? Does she practically drag you out the door for walks? Get control of that first:

- Bring out the leash, but don't put it on Shellie right away. Wait until she's calm, then attach the leash.
- Next, walk away from the door. Lead Shellie around the house. She'll be pretty confused, and that's fine.
- Stand at the door and have her sit. Open the door slightly, then close it. Repeat. Repeat again until Shellie is staring at you like, "are you nuts?"
- Now, exit the house, but only if Shellie stays by your side or slightly behind you. If she tries to rush out, repeat the door exercise.

Now, let's address that reactivity on walks. Here are a few tips that can help:

- A sturdy, short leash is essential to maintaining control.
- Train Shellie to walk at your side with a little slack in the leash.
- Work on core commands when no other dogs are around: Come, Sit, Stay, Heel.
- Place yourself between Shellie and an approaching dog. Move her to your other side and keep her slightly behind you. You're her protector right now.
- Avoid practicing "meet and greets" with other dogs until Shellie is no longer reactive on sight.

These training methods are just a start, but they'll put you both on the right track. Most importantly, be consistent with training and daily walks.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

* Australian bushranger Joseph Johns escaped from prison so many times that the government finally had to build a special cell to hold him, after which an overly (if understandably) confident governor said to him, "If you get out again, I'll forgive you." You guessed it: Johns escaped that as well.

* There's a "Heaven Scent Pizza" for dogs, made of flour, carrots, celery and Parmesan cheese.

* A high school basketball coach was fired after his team won 100-0 because the Catholic school he worked for thought

that such a wide-margin victory failed to display a "Christ-like and honorable approach to competition."

* Two Chinese bank employees stole over \$6.6 million and spent it all on lottery tickets. Unfortunately, crime didn't pay when they only recovered about \$13,000.

* Don Rickles died before he could record dialogue for "Toy Story 4." Rather than replacing him, Disney reviewed 25 years of material from the first three films, video games and other media, and assembled enough to cover the entire film.

* A study has found that second-born children are more likely to be troublemakers.

* In Japan, male students can confess their love to another person by giving them the second button -- the one closest to the heart -- from the top of their school uniform.

* Laser removal doesn't actually remove a tattoo. It just helps break it down so the body's white blood cells can carry it away. Eventually, you poop out your tattoo.

* A bloodhound in Alabama went outside to relieve itself and accidentally joined a half marathon, then ended up in seventh place. The race was redubbed the "Hound Dog Half," and those who end up in seventh place earn a special award.

Thought for the Day: "If you run out of kind words for yourself, stop talking." -- Niklas Goke

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The paradise flower

Caesalpinia pulcherrima (also known as "Barbados Pride," "Paradise Flower," "Peacock Tree," or "Poinciana") is a very colorful tree native to the West Indies and Mexico. It is fast-growing, can get up to twenty feet tall, and needs hot weather to bloom, which it does from midsummer into fall, looking splendid even on the hottest days. Many cultures have developed multiple uses for all the parts of this plant, including making it into dyes and insecticide, to stun fish, or using the wood for carpentry and boat-building. - Brenda Weaver

Source: davesgarden.com



by Freddy Groves

Fighting back against the drug companies

You have to love it when a drug company gets nailed for their role in the opioid drug crisis.

In this case, our favorite government department, Office of Inspector General for the VA, was involved in bringing down a huge drug manufacturer for distributing a misbranded opioid. The result: The drug company was hit with the second largest

penalty ever against a pharmaceutical manufacturer: \$1.536 billion (that's billion, not million) in fines and forfeiture.

The manufacturer's list of crimes and deceptive business practices is long. Among other things, they declared that the drug was tamper- and crush-resistant. Sales reps went so far as to hit pills (although not the drug in question) with hammers to prove they were crush-proof and therefore did not have an abuse potential. (Being crush-proof is key when prescribing opioids because there is a risk of misuse such as snorting crushed pills.) They hid the effects of their drug and the fact that it was highly addictive. Additionally, the label that went out with the drugs didn't give correct directions for usage.

To make it even worse, the manufacturer targeted medical providers they knew were prescribing the drug off label (for non-medically accepted reasons), thereby adding to the opioid drug crisis, all in the name of greed. They even held sales contests so the sales reps would be sure to target for sales those who were prescribing the highest level of opioids.

Part of that \$1.5 billion includes \$450 million that will go to state, municipal and Tribal groups to fund drug programs. On top of that is a fine of \$475.6 million for civil liabilities.

Now the VA will be able to recoup some of its expenses (\$8.5 million) for all the drug interventions and treatment they had to do over the years because of that drug -- and the OIG was right there in the middle of it.

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Wishing Well®

5	8	7	6	4	8	2	7	8	3	4	7	5
A	F	L	A	L	R	B	I	I	Y	O	F	G
7	4	5	6	3	7	2	4	5	6	7	5	8
E	V	O	D	O	S	E	E	O	E	T	D	E
2	8	2	6	3	8	7	2	4	2	8	7	6
C	N	O	C	U	D	Y	N	E	T	S	L	I
4	7	3	6	8	6	4	3	4	7	5	3	6
N	E	E	S	B	I	D	N	U	C	S	R	V
2	4	6	4	8	3	8	3	6	4	8	2	7
E	R	E	E	A	I	C	C	D	S	K	N	H
8	3	8	3	6	2	3	7	6	7	3	2	3
Y	H	O	O	A	T	T	A	Y	N	H	E	E
7	3	2	8	5	3	5	7	8	7	8	5	5
G	R	D	U	T	S	A	E	U	S	P	R	T

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. ANATOMY: What does the human vestibular sense do?
2. MOVIES: The phrase "As you wish" is key to which 1987 movie?
3. GEOGRAPHY: What is the largest island in the Caribbean?
4. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What are Chinese astronauts called sometimes in the West?
5. TELEVISION: Which sitcom features a character named Phoebe Buffay?
6. MEASUREMENTS: What is the square footage of an acre?
7. SCIENCE: What are the four states of matter?
8. HISTORY: Which amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote?
9. LITERATURE: Which 19th-century novel contains the line, "I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship"?
10. MONEY: In the old British monetary system, how many pennies were equal to a pound?

Answers

1. It is the sense that deals with movement, gravity and balance.
2. "The Princess Bride."
3. Cuba.
4. Taikonauts.
5. "Friends."
6. 43,560 square feet.
7. Solid, liquid, gas and plasma
8. 19th.
9. "Little Women."
10. 240.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Combatting the Cartel Crisis: at Home and at the Border

"The State of South Dakota lacks criminal jurisdiction over Indian Country crimes; thus, in reality, the sole provider of law enforcement services to the Oglala Sioux Tribe is the federal government. 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."

Those comments were made by the President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Frank Star Comes Out. And I agree with him 100%. The same man who said these words led a movement to banish me just two months later for speaking the same truth. Clearly, many tribal leaders would rather play politics to try and hurt me, rather than work with me to help their people succeed.

Banishing me does nothing to solve this problem or to help those who are suffering horrific tragedies.

Yesterday, I returned home from the dangerous, deadly warzone at our nation's Southern Border. South Dakota National Guard soldiers have helped the Texas National Guard construct miles of border wall in 100-degree weather to keep the American people safe – and keep cartel-driven drugs and human trafficking out of our great country.

These brave soldiers represent the sixth deployment of South Dakota National Guard troops to defend our border, and some might wonder why a small state that's closer to Canada than Texas would care at all. The answer is quite simple: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's radical open border policies have failed the American people and turned even South Dakota into a border state.

The cartels' criminal activity has made all of our communities dangerous, especially tribal reservations where I have no jurisdiction. These cartels are working with gangs throughout the U.S. – like the Bandidos and their local affiliates the Ghost Dancers – to poison our people and to traffic women and children into sex slavery.

In fact, the cartels know it's easy to supply drugs on tribal reservations with near impunity. According to President Jeffrey Stiffarm of the Fort Belknap Indian Community, "We don't have criminal jurisdiction over any of these people that bring in these drugs, over non [tribal] members – even cartel members... so our hands are tied."

State law enforcement has not been welcomed onto tribal reservations to help – and we have respected tribal sovereignty. The federal government has so badly failed at the most basic functions of public safety (both at the border and on our reservations) that the tribes are suing the Biden Administration for shirking their treaty obligations.

The presence of the drug cartels and their affiliates on tribal reservations across the nation is not up for debate – it is established fact. And it is not a unique problem to South Dakota. Even Democrat Senator Jon Tester from Montana recently said in a briefing before the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, "We've got cartels in Indian country. We've got a lot of bad shit going on."

Stiffarm also testified that his tribe and their neighbors are "fighting a losing battle" against the drug cartels. But the most powerful moment of his testimony came when he said that one of his peers declined to testify because he had received death threats from the cartel.

Think about that. A Native American leader decided not to testify before his own Congress because of death threats from a foreign criminal element.

I have repeatedly reached out to South Dakota's nine Native American tribes and offered what help I

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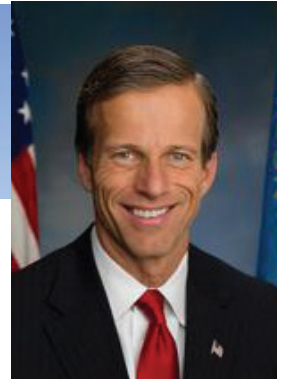
can to improve their public safety. On some issues, we've succeeded – recently launching a first-of-its-kind law enforcement training focused on tribal law enforcement officers alongside our Attorney General. And my state agencies actively work with our tribes on thousands of needs affecting almost every aspect of their lives, from child welfare to emergency response, from tax collection agreements to upgrading their ambulance services.

Tribal residents see my actions and recognize my heart and the truth. One caller to my office, a woman from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, told me that there is tremendous corruption amongst the tribal council, and that some of the tribal council members themselves personally benefit from the cartel being there. She stated that if tribal members call this out, they are "blackballed" and will be prohibited from working anywhere on the reservation.

We have received hundreds of calls and emails in recent weeks like that one with similar disturbing messages. The truth always comes out.

I will work every day to protect our children in every community from the danger of drugs, fight to protect our women from rape and trafficking, and help bring safety and peace to these communities.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



FAA Bill Means Safer and Stronger Skies

Millions of Americans will board airplanes this year to travel throughout the United States and the world. They depend on a robust and efficient national aviation system to keep the skies safe and traffic running smoothly. Congress recently passed a bill to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that includes some significant provisions to create a better experience for the traveling public. I'm proud to have secured several provisions that will strengthen aviation safety, improve airport infrastructure, and streamline the use of next generation technologies.

The United States is currently facing a pilot shortage, which has resulted in reduced air service at airports across the country, especially smaller airports like those in rural states like South Dakota. My proposal to improve pilot training will help address this shortage by making pilot training more accessible and improving training quality.

My proposal, which is based on a recommendation from an independent board, would provide prospective pilots with a new pathway to meet their certification requirements that includes training in advanced simulators. For obvious reasons, standard flight training hours in a cockpit don't involve deliberately flying into a storm or dealing with fires or engine failure. But simulator training offers prospective airline pilots the chance to experience those situations, and deal with them again and again until their response is fine-tuned. I'm glad this proposal was included in the final bill because it's a win-win for addressing the pilot shortage and improving the quality of training airline pilots receive.

I was also able to secure provisions in this bill to support small airports as they expand flight service and upgrade their facilities. One such provision allows communities to receive multiple grants from a program designed for small community air services, which will make it easier to expand sorely needed air service in rural communities. Another gives small airports more flexibility to use certain federal funding for terminal improvements, which will enable rural airports to expand access even as construction costs rise. These elements of the bill will help ensure many of the airports that South Dakotans use can make upgrades in facilities and flight offerings that will benefit South Dakotans.

The FAA bill goes beyond just commercial flights and airplanes. This year's bill also includes my bipartisan legislation related to drone flights. The Increasing Competitiveness for American Drones Act will streamline the approval process for beyond-visual-line-of-sight drone flights, which would clear the way for drones to be used for commercial transport of goods across the country. The wider deployment of drones have transformative potential for our economy, including innovative opportunities in transportation and agriculture that would benefit places like South Dakota. And it will ensure the United States remains competitive in a growing industry that is increasingly dominated by competitors like China.

This year's FAA reauthorization bill takes important steps to keep America at the forefront of aviation. It keeps America's skies safe, increases flight access, and ensures American innovation will continue soaring to new heights. I'm proud of the work that my colleagues and I put into this bill, and I look forward to continued American leadership in the skies.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Great Faces, Great Places

BIG Update

It's Police Week and the House passed several bills this week to show our support for law enforcement officers. Our men and women in blue sacrifice greatly to protect our communities, whether that is by the border, in Washington, D.C., or on reservations. Here's a few bills I voted on to support those in blue:

Detain and Deport Illegal Aliens Who Assault Cops Act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to include the assault of a law enforcement officer as grounds for detention and deportation.

Improving Law Enforcement Officer Safety and Wellness Through Data Act to ensure we have the most accurate information on the impact attacks on our officers have on their mental health.

A resolution to condemn violence against law enforcement officers and condemn calls to defund the police.

A resolution to condemn President Biden's border crisis and the dangers and burdens it has created for America's law enforcement officers.

We must do more to support and protect our men and women in blue so we can keep our communities safe.

BIG Idea

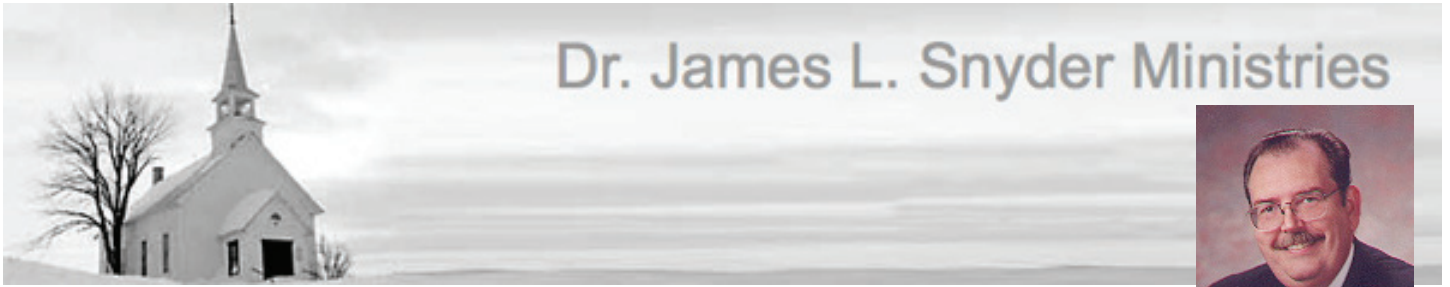
Engineers play an outsized role in building and designing our infrastructure. I met with Doug and Nancy with the American Council of Engineering Companies of South Dakota, which has received the Outstanding Engineering Achievement Award for the third year in a row. We talked about the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act, which I voted for when it passed the House, the surface transportation bill, and the workforce needs of engineering firms.

BIG News

Last week, President Biden announced he will be withholding weapons to Israel, even though Congress recently passed an aid package a couple weeks ago to ensure our greatest ally in the Middle East can continue to defend itself against the terrorist group Hamas. This week, I voted to pass the Israel Security Assistance Support Act to condemn President Biden's pause on sending resources to Israel and require the expeditious delivery of approved defense services. If resources are withheld and Israel is not able to remove Hamas, we risk continued turmoil in the Middle East. I will continue to support Israel in Congress. We can't let Israel down in their time of need.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Whatever Happened to Reality

During my health hiatus I did things I never had time to do before. One of them was to check out some Reality TV Shows.

I never had much interest in these TV shows, but I thought now would be a good time to check some of them just to see what their idea of reality really was.

Of course, my health probably affected my mental capacity, so I wasn't going to take much seriously. I checked them out all the more and discovered that if what I saw on TV was their idea of reality, I had a good deal on a Brooklyn Bridge for one of them.

I thought, and it's just me speaking, that reality had something to do with, what's that word? Oh yes, "truth." I watched several, and if there was any truth in what they were doing or even saying, I could not find it.

I found one show called Naked and Afraid, and I must tell you I didn't come anywhere near that because I was afraid. I was afraid that their idea of naked reality was nowhere near the truth. Who in their right mind, and there are plenty who aren't in their right mind, would spend their time watching such nonsense?

I checked out a few of these reality shows but could never find any reality in anything they showed.

After watching some of these, I got to thinking about the reality in my life. Is my life a "Reality Show", or is it for real?

That's what I got out of looking at some of those shows. I don't want to blame somebody else for doing things I might be doing myself. After all, reality is reality.

During my health hiatus, I was beginning to think that health was not a reality for me. The only thing real about me during that time was sickness, which was characterized by coughing and sneezing.

I must admit that the sickness was a reality at the time. But, it wasn't a reality forever.

Coming out of that health hiatus, I realized that there are more important things in life than just feeling sorry for yourself because you're sick.

During my sickness The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was a reality to me. She brought me pill after pill after pill after pill. At the time, I referred to her as my drug Lord. I got so tired of taking pills that I just did not know what to do.

Looking back on that, I realize that wasn't reality. Oh yes, I was sick for a short period of time, but the key is that it was a short period of time.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage told me time after time that I would get better. At the time, I didn't care if I got better or not. But, eventually, I realized that she was right. After all, isn't she right all the time?

Now that I'm up and getting back to a somewhat normal schedule, I've been thinking a lot about reality. There are things in my life that just are not reality.

My challenge is to find what is real in my life and what is artificial.

My wife and I agree on many things except for one. I'm a firm believer that the strongest aspect of reality is an Apple Fritter. She thinks that broccoli is a reality.

The reality is that both of us are right, and both of us are wrong. I'm not going to try to explain that because if I do, I'm not going to understand it myself.

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The one thing that got me through all that health nonsense was thinking about an Apple Fritter when I was healthy.

The danger is that if I got an Apple Fritter and The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage found out, it might be a challenge to my health at that time.

Every day, my wife asks me how I'm feeling, and I always reply, "I'm fine."

She responds, "No, you're not fine."

And then reality sets in.

At my last doctor's visit, the doctor examined me quite thoroughly and went over all of the forms. Finally, the doctor looked at me and said, "I have good news for you. You're fine."

Sitting right next to me was The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, and so I said, "I'm sorry Dr., what did you say?"

"I said, you're fine."

Looking at my wife with a giggly smile, I said, "My dear, did you hear that? Doctors don't lie."

All the way home from the doctor's visit, I kept chuckling and saying under my breath, "I'm fine."

I did not want to say it out loud because The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was driving, and that's all I'll say about it.

It's a beautiful day when you find reality in your life.

Thinking about this I was reminded what the Apostle Paul said. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

This is a challenge for everyone. Personally, my reality starts in the Bible. I work on adjusting my life to the reality presented in the Bible. Each day I search for that reality that applies to me.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How are the world's rhino populations faring these days? – A.K., Montreal, Quebec

The rhinoceros, famous for its impressive size and striking horns, is one of the biggest land mammals in the world. Once widespread, the species has now become a symbol of catastrophic population decline within conservation discourse. But with more media attention and therefore increased conservation efforts, the situation of rhino populations around the world might be looking up.

There are five different species of rhinos across Asia and Africa: Sumatran, Javan, Black, Greater one-horned and White rhino. Species count is varied, with numbers ranging between 34-47 (Sumatran rhino) and 16,803 (White rhino). Still, all species have significantly declined throughout the 20th century. In 1900, an estimated 500,000 rhinoceros existed. By 1970, this dropped to 70,000, by 2022 to 27,000. All five rhino species are now considered endangered and two have less than 100 individuals in the wild.

Declines are often human-caused. Poaching for rhino horn remains the greatest threat, since rhino horns are often falsely considered aphrodisiacs or luxury goods. According to Save the Rhino International, 9,415 African rhinos have died due to poaching in the last decade. Another threat to rhinoceros is habitat loss, occurring due to the conversion of land for human settlement, agriculture or logging. Rapid human population growth and urban expansion have led to over 17 countries losing their entire rhinoceros populations. A newer threat to rhino populations is climate change. According to Timothy Randhir from the University of Massachusetts, "Rhinos need really unique [climate] conditions." Increased precipitation and longer monsoon periods in Asia as well as rising temperatures in Africa already negatively affect the survival chances of rhinos and will continue to do so in the future.

Recently, the number of rhino individuals has been rising across species. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) African Rhino Specialist Group, the global rhino population increased from 26,272 in 2021 to about 27,000 in 2022. Black and Greater one-horned rhinoceros numbers have been steadily increasing over the past two decades. Sub-species like the Southern White rhinoceros have shown an impressive recovery. In 1900, there were only 20 individuals left. Numbers have continuously been rising since, with now over 16,800 Southern White rhinos existing.

Improvements have not come about through a reduction in threats, but through improved protection. While there has been a marked decline in poaching from the 2010s, it is now on the rise again. Some 561 rhinos died due to poaching in 2022, more than in 2021 (501) and 2020 (503). Due to persistent threats, very few rhinos survive outside of national parks and reserves. Through conservation in protected sanctuaries, species like the Black rhino have increased by nearly five percent in only one year. But Michael Knight, chair of the IUCN rhino group, warns: "It is imperative to further consolidate and build on this positive development and not drop our guard." Some species, like the Javan and Sumatran rhino, remain in decline. The Northern White rhino has only two individuals remaining, and both are female.



Rhinos may not be long for this world given the current population numbers and reproduction trends. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Property taxes, sales taxes on a collision course in South Dakota

Dana Hess

MAY 18, 2024 10:00 AM

In the last legislative session, lawmakers weren't able to agree on any significant changes to the property tax system.

House Bill 1208, requiring the director of equalization to adjust certain agricultural land values, failed in the House on a 25-44 vote.

Senate Bill 167, limiting annual valuation increases in owner-occupied single-family dwellings, failed in the Senate on a vote of 11-20.

Lawmakers couldn't even agree on putting a proposed change in the system to a vote of the people when Senate Joint Resolution 505, limiting assessed value of real property and the amount of tax on real property, was sent to the 41st day by the Senate Taxation Committee on a 6-0 vote.

Lawmakers were able to agree on a summer study looking at the methodology of property tax assessments to make sure they are accurate and consistent. While the Legislature's Executive Board approved of the study, veteran senators on the committee cautioned against it.

Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, a Watertown Republican, asserted that he would rather visit the dentist than open another study of property taxes. Sen. Jim Bolin, a Canton Republican, said he was worried that citizens would hear that the Legislature was studying property taxes and expect their tax bills to go down. "You're going to raise people's expectations and not really accomplish anything significant," Bolin warned.

Expectations for changes in the system are already running high, according to a South Dakota Searchlight story. At an April property tax forum in Rapid City, many of the 100 people in attendance expressed their frustration with rising property taxes.

One solution floated at the forum was raising the state sales tax and using that revenue to offer property tax relief. This flies in the face of what legislators have been up to lately. In 2023 they cut the state sales tax from 4.5% to 4.2%. The effects of that cut are negligible for consumers. It amounts to a 30-cent savings on a \$100 purchase, but it is estimated to leave a \$104 million hole in the state budget.

The sales tax reduction is designed to sunset in 2027. A bill to make the sales tax cut permanent failed during the 2024 session. Lawmakers likely had their eyes on the November ballot when voters will decide if they want to endorse a measure to eliminate the sales tax on food. Polls have shown that cutting the sales tax on food is popular with voters. If the measure is endorsed, it will mean another \$120 million in lost state revenue.

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So much for raising the sales tax to provide property tax relief.

It's apparent that South Dakota is headed for a showdown on taxes, with the Legislature and voters keen on cutting the sales tax and property owners seeking relief from burgeoning valuations and higher property tax bills.

Back at the Executive Board meeting, while Sen. Bolin was not keen on a summer study of property tax assessment methodology, he did have the best idea for how to handle a tax system that is getting out of hand. He may have been half-kidding, but Bolin suggested that for real change, what was called for was a "Super Blue Ribbon Panel" much like the one instituted by Gov. Dennis Daugaard when the state decided to tackle the problem of low teacher pay.

That panel's solution, raising the sales tax to provide more pay for teachers, has already been rolled back with the Legislature's endorsement of the 4.2% sales tax and the state's teachers have once again fallen to the bottom of the national pay scale.

Given the fate of property tax legislation in the 2024 session, it's obvious that a property tax "fix" with just a few sponsors isn't going to carry the day. What the South Dakota tax system needs, with all its variables and exemptions, is a thorough study and a workable solution that will serve the state, school districts, cities and counties.

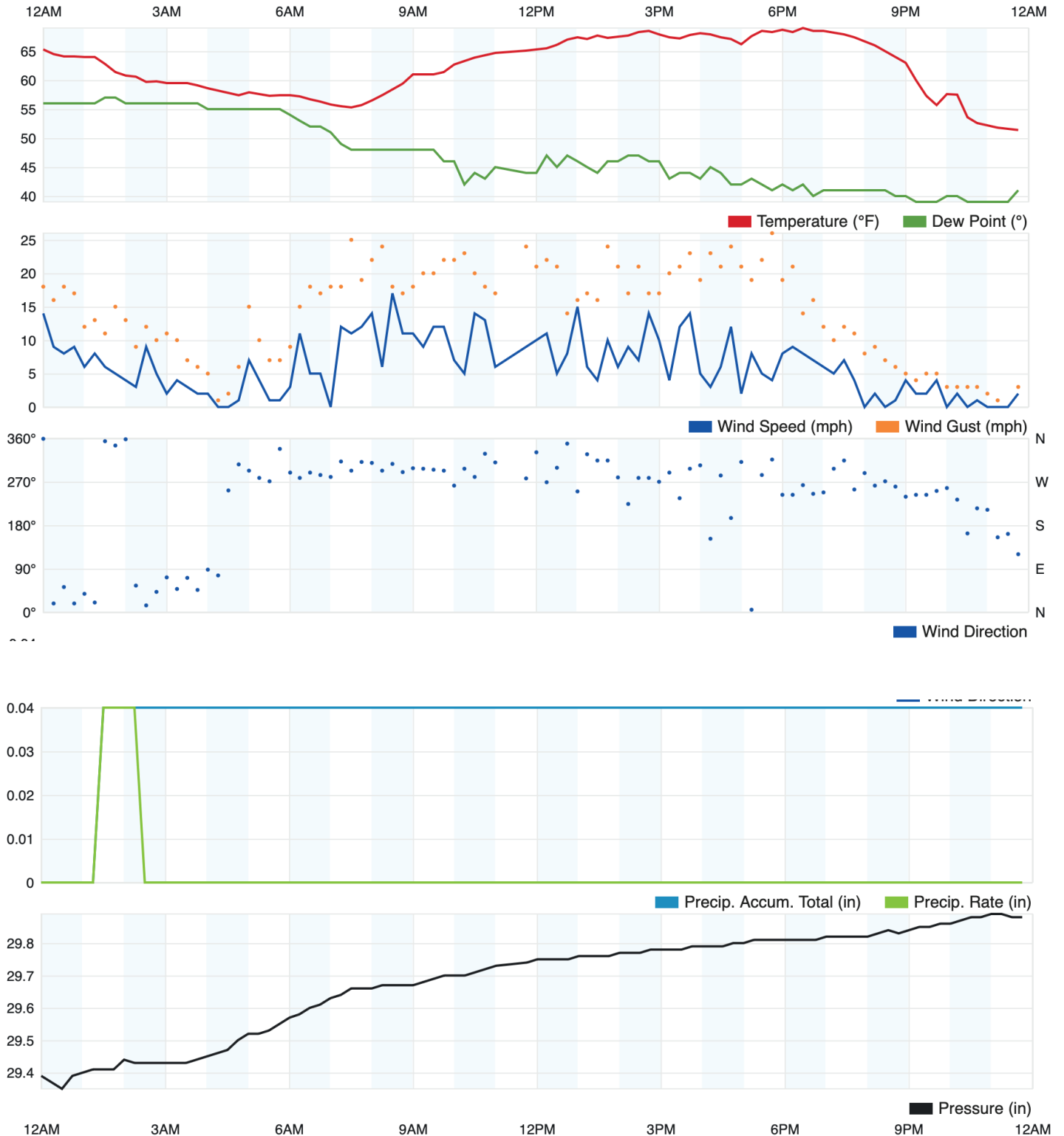
For legislators, a Blue Ribbon study of South Dakota's tax system likely has all the allure of a trip to the dentist, but it may be the only way to, once and for all, balance the needs of all taxpayers.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

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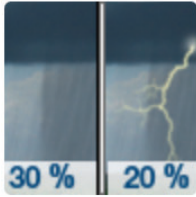
Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday

Monday Night

Tuesday



High: 74 °F

Chance
Showers then
Slight Chance
T-storms and
Breezy



Low: 52 °F

Chance
T-storms



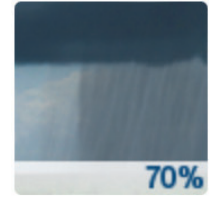
High: 72 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers



Low: 49 °F

Chance
Showers



High: 58 °F

Showers
Likely and
Breezy



Severe Weather Threat Overview

May 19, 2024
4:20 AM

Late Afternoon Through Late Evening

Timing/Location

We anticipate a cluster or line of strong to severe storms to develop in the yellow highlighted area and move east to northeast before weakening.

Primary Threats for the **YELLOW** areas

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size

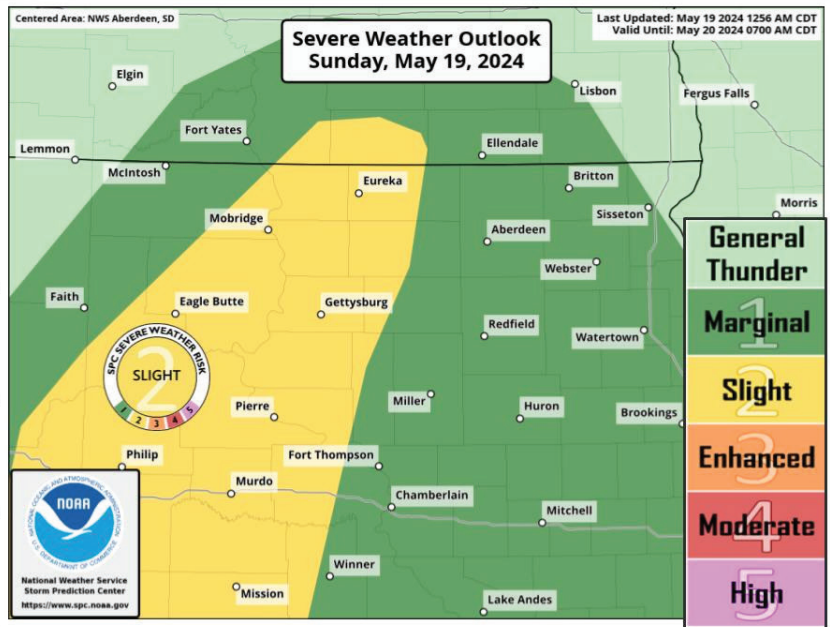
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

While showers and weak thunderstorms will already be across the area this morning into the early afternoon, the focus for potential severe weather is across western and central South Dakota for later into the afternoon and persisting through the evening. Models are generating a cluster or line of convection for the Missouri valley area, with more isolated storms elsewhere, with an environment that supports both the potential for large hail (around 1") and high winds in excess of 60mph.

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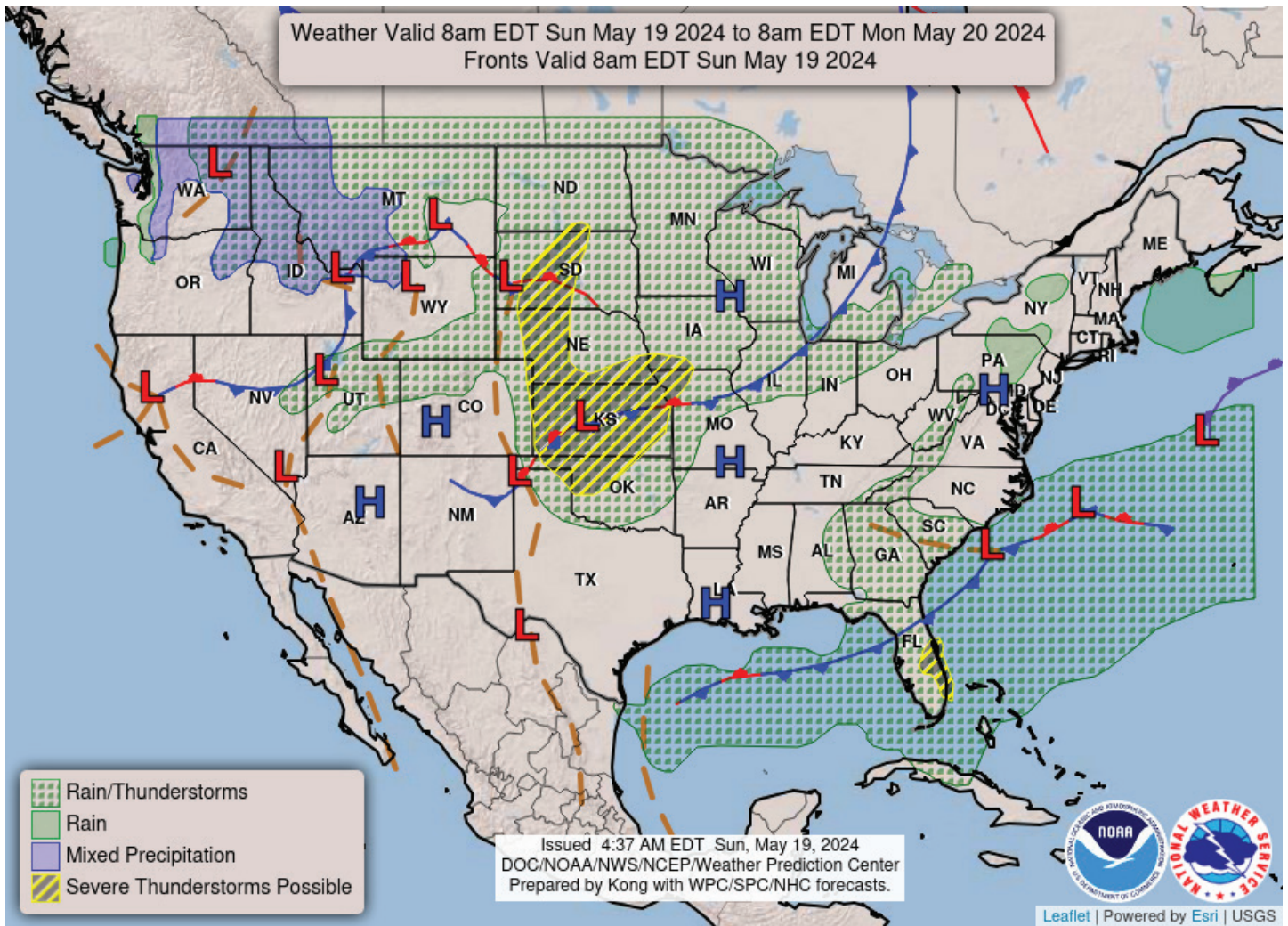
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 6:26 PM
Low Temp: 52 °F at 11:22 PM
Wind: 26 mph at 5:41 PM
Precip: : 0.04

Day length: 15 hours, 07 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1932
Record Low: 28 in 2002
Average High: 72
Average Low: 46
Average Precip in May.: 2.11
Precip to date in May: 0.95
Average Precip to date: 6.08
Precip Year to Date: 5.49
Sunset Tonight: 9:02:52 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53:59 am



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Today in Weather History

May 19, 1982: With the ground in the Black Hills already saturated from heavy rains the previous week, developing thunderstorms were not a welcome sight. The thunderstorms produced additional heavy rains including 3.58 inches at Spearfish, 3.32 inches at Cheyenne Crossing, and 0.82 of an inch in twelve minutes at Hot Springs. With Flash Flood Warnings in effect for much of the area water came out of the banks of many streams causing widespread damage in the Hills. A diversion Dam broke at Spearfish causing a mudslide to cover some roads. In Deadwood, the main water line broke leaving the city temporarily without water. Homes were evacuated at Nisland, Hot Springs, and Bridger. Damage throughout the Black Hills included washed out bridges, flooded basements, several breached dams, and roads completely washed away.

1780: The infamous "dark day" in New England tradition. At noon, it was nearly as dark as night. Chickens went to roost, and many persons were fearful of divine wrath. The "dark day" was caused by forest fires to the west of New England.

1915: A spring storm came to an end after producing widespread snow. Total snowfall from the storm included: 17.6 inches in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 8 inches at Cheyenne, Wyoming, 7 inches at Chadron and 3.9 inches in North Platte, Nebraska.

1955 - Lake Maloya NM received 11.28 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 110 mph in Minnesota, between Fridley and Hugo. Fifty persons were injured. The hail and high winds destroyed fifty mobile homes, and a dozen aircraft, and also destroyed a third of the Brighton Elementary School. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Texas produced thirteen inches of rain northwest of Lavernia. The heavy rain, along with golf ball size hail, destroyed eighty percent of the crops in the area, while high winds toppled trees. Golf ball size hail was also reported south of Dallas and around San Antonio. Up to eight inches of rain drenched Guadalupe County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas produced hail as large as tennis balls around Midland, with the hail accumulating up to a foot deep. Showers and thunderstorms in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region produced 3.5 inches of rain near Schuylkill PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front spawned ten tornadoes from Illinois to Tennessee during the afternoon and night. Snow, wind and cold prevailed in the Northern Plateau Region and the Northern Rockies. Dixie, ID, was blanketed with nine inches of snow, winds gusted to 87 mph at Choteau MT, and the temperature at Crater Lake, OR, dipped to 11 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms deluged Hot Springs AR with thirteen inches of rain in nine hours resulting in a devastating flood. Two waves of water, four to six feet deep, swept down Central Avenue flooding stores and the famous bathhouses on Bathhouse Row. Water released from Lake Hamilton devastated the area between it and Rimmel Dam. The 500 foot Carpenter Dam Bridge across Lake Catherine was completely washed away, as were cabins and mobile homes near the lake, many of which flowed right over the top of Rimmel Dam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

NO ONE CAN REPLACE HIM!

Thomas Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was also the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. One of his other roles was as a Minister of the United States to France.

When he went to France to serve America, he presented his credentials to the French premier. As he looked at them, the premier said, "I see you've come to replace Benjamin Franklin."

"No sir," came his response. "I've come to succeed him. No one can replace him!"

And that is true of each of us: No one can replace us or is equipped to do the work that God has planned for us to do. What a sobering thought.

Even as our fingerprints are unique and will never be given to another person, so are the tasks and responsibilities that God has set before us. We are an "original" with our own set of credentials.

Our worth is not dependent on what we do but on who we are in Christ. Our worth does not come from what we have been able to achieve or accomplish but from God's mercy and grace. Our worth is revealed in the price God paid for our redemption through the death of Christ on the cross.

God has something unique for each of us to do as "His minister" to His World. No one can replace us!

Prayer: May we accept our responsibility, Lord, to do what You would have us to do, knowing that You have chosen us and prepared us for something special. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. Revelation 2:19



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: 05.18.24

7 8 9 12 33 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,500,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.18.24

18 21 34 37 40 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 41 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.18.24

5 7 11 15 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$108,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.18.24

15 17 28 36 60 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.18.24

19 36 37 42 59 19

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$88,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Ukraine and Russia exchange drone attacks while Russia continues its push in the east

By SAMYA KULLAB and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia said it shot down some 60 drones and several missiles over its territory while Ukraine in turn said it destroyed over 30 Russian drones. At least four people were reported killed in an attack on the outskirts of Kharkiv on Sunday as Russia pushed ahead with its renewed offensive in Ukraine's war-ravaged northeast.

Russian air defenses shot down 57 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region overnight, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Local military officials said drone debris hit an oil refinery in the town of Slavyansk-on-Kuban, but there was no fire or damage. News outlet Astra published videos appearing to show an explosion at the refinery as it was hit by a drone. The videos could not be independently verified.

Nine long-range ballistic missiles and a drone were destroyed over the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, following Friday morning's massive Ukrainian drone attack that cut off power in the city of Sevastopol.

A further three drones were shot down over the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. According to regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov, a church roof was set on fire by falling drone debris, but there were no casualties.

The Russian-installed governor of Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said that one person died and 16 were wounded when a Ukrainian drone hit a minibus on Sunday morning.

Ukrainian air force officials said air defenses shot down all 37 Russian drones launched against the country overnight.

In the Kharkiv region, where Moscow recently launched a new offensive, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday morning that one person died and 11 were wounded as a result of shelling over the previous day.

Later on Sunday, Syniehubov said four people were killed and 15 wounded in a Russian strike on the outskirts of the regional capital, also called Kharkiv.

Russia launched an offensive in the Kharkiv region late last week, significantly adding to the pressure on Ukraine's outnumbered and outgunned forces which are waiting for delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners. Ukraine's overstretched forces are trying to slow Russia on the new front by using bomb-laden drones to destroy military vehicles.

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

An airstrike kills 20 in central Gaza and fighting rages as Israel's leaders air wartime divisions

By WAFAA SHURAFI, SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli airstrike killed 20 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced criticism from his own War Cabinet, with his main political rival, Benny Gantz, threatening to leave the government if a plan is not formulated by June 8 that includes an international administration for postwar Gaza.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with top Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious U.S. plan for Saudi Arabia to recognize Israel and help the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood.

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Netanyahu, who is opposed to Palestinian statehood, has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

Gantz' withdrawal would not bring down Netanyahu's coalition government, but it would leave him more reliant on far-right allies who support the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza, full military occupation and the rebuilding of Jewish settlements there.

Even as the discussions of postwar planning take on new weight, the war is still raging with no end in sight. In recent weeks, Hamas has regrouped in parts of northern Gaza that were heavily bombed in the early days of the war and where Israeli ground troops had already operated.

The airstrike in Nuseirat, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, killed 20 people, including eight women and four children, according to records at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah, which received the bodies.

A separate strike on a street in Nuseirat killed another five people, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service. In Deir al-Balah, a strike killed Zahed al-Houli, a senior officer in the Hamas-run police, and another man, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Palestinians reported more airstrikes and heavy fighting in northern Gaza, which has been largely isolated by Israeli troops for months and where the World Food Program says a famine is underway.

The Civil Defense says the strikes hit several homes near Kamal Adwan Hospital in the town of Beit Lahiya, killing at least 10 people. Footage released by the rescuers showed them trying to pull the body of a woman out of the rubble as explosions echo in the background and smoke rises.

In the urban Jabliya refugee camp nearby, residents reported a heavy wave of artillery and airstrikes.

"The situation is very difficult," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, a 48-year-old in Jabaliya. He said the whole eastern side has become a battle zone where the Israeli fighter jets "strike anything that moves."

Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for the Civil Defense, said rescuers had recovered at least 150 bodies, more than half of them women and children, since Israel launched the operation in Jabaliya last week. He said around 300 homes have been "completely destroyed."

Israel launched its offensive after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, in which Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting some 250.

The war has killed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Around 80% of the population of 2.3 million Palestinians have been displaced within the territory, often multiple times.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames the high death toll and destruction on Hamas, which positions fighters, tunnels and rocket launchers in dense, residential areas.

Netanyahu's critics, including thousands of protesters who took to the streets again on Saturday, accuse him of prolonging the war and rejecting a cease-fire deal that would release hostages so he can avoid a reckoning over the security failures that led to the attack.

Polls show that Gantz, a political centrist, would likely succeed Netanyahu if early elections are held. That would expose Netanyahu to prosecution on longstanding corruption allegations.

Netanyahu denies any political motives and says the offensive must continue until Hamas is dismantled and the estimated 100 hostages held in Gaza, and the remains of more than 30 others, are returned. He has said it's pointless to discuss postwar arrangements while Hamas is still fighting because the militants have threatened anyone who cooperates with Israel.

Netanyahu also faces pressure from Israel's closest ally, the United States, which has provided crucial military aid and diplomatic cover for the offensive while expressing growing frustration with Israel's conduct of the war.

President Joe Biden's administration recently held up a shipment of 3,500 bombs of up to 2,000 pounds (900 kilograms) each and said the U.S. would not provide offensive weapons for a full-scale invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, citing fears of a humanitarian catastrophe.

But last week, after Israel launched what it says is a limited operation in Rafah, the administration told legislators it would move forward with the sale of \$1 billion worth of arms, tank ammunition, tactical vehicles and mortar rounds, according to congressional aides.

Sullivan is expected in Israel after meeting with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Saturday. The administration has been working on an ambitious plan in which Saudi Arabia would recognize Israel and join other Arab states in helping to administer and rebuild Gaza, in exchange for a U.S. defense pact and help in building a civilian nuclear program.

But U.S. and Saudi officials say that deal requires Israel to agree to a credible path to eventual Palestinian statehood, something Netanyahu has repeatedly ruled out.

In Gantz' ultimatum, he expressed support for normalizing ties with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. But he also said "we will not allow any outside power, friendly or hostile, to impose a Palestinian state on us."

Biden will deliver Morehouse commencement address during a time of tumult on US college campuses

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Joe Biden is delivering the commencement address at Morehouse College on Sunday, a key opportunity for an election-year appearance before a Black audience but one that also could directly expose him to the anger that some of these and other students across the country have been expressing over his staunch support for Israel in its war against Hamas militants in Gaza.

The White House hinted that Biden would reference the concerns of students and faculty at the male-only, historically Black college over his approach to the war. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "stay tuned," when asked if the Democratic president would address the worries that sparked weeks of student protests on college campuses nationwide.

The speech, and a separate one Biden is giving later Sunday in the Midwest, is part of a burst of outreach to Black constituents by the president, who has watched his support among these voters soften since their strong backing helped put him in the Oval Office in 2020.

After speaking at Morehouse in Atlanta, Biden will travel to Detroit to address an NAACP dinner.

Georgia and Michigan are among a handful of states that will help decide November's expected rematch between Biden and Republican former President Donald Trump. Biden narrowly won Georgia and Michigan in 2020 and needs to repeat — with a boost from strong Black voter turnout in both cities.

Jean-Pierre said Biden has been looking forward to the Morehouse speech, as he does all of his commencement addresses. He has been writing the remarks himself, along with senior advisers, she said.

"When it comes to this difficult moment in time that we're in as we speak about the protests, he understands that there's a lot of pain," Jean-Pierre said. "He understands that people have a lot of opinions and he respects that folks have a lot of opinions."

Biden spent part of Saturday warming up for the big speech. He was greeted at Atlanta's airport by a group of past Morehouse graduates and playfully draped an arm around the shoulder of one. He later stopped at Mary Mac's Tea Room, a Black-owned restaurant that opened nearly 80 years ago, to briefly address about 50 supporters. A 2024 Morehouse graduate introduced him.

The president joked about being surrounded by "Morehouse Men."

Biden spent the back end of the past week reaching out to Black constituents. He met with plaintiffs and relatives of those involved in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision that outlawed racial segregation in public schools. He also met with members of the "Divine Nine" Black fraternities and sororities and spoke with members of the Little Rock Nine, who helped integrate a public school in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957.

Morehouse's announcement that Biden would be the commencement speaker drew some backlash among the school's faculty and supporters who oppose Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war. Some Morehouse alumni circulated an online letter condemning school administrators for inviting Biden and soliciting signatures to pressure Morehouse President David Thomas to rescind it.

The letter claimed that Biden's approach to Israel amounted to support of genocide in Gaza and was out of step with the pacifism expressed by Martin Luther King Jr., Morehouse's most famous graduate.

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The Hamas Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel killed 1,200 people. Israel's offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials.

In an extended interview with The Associated Press, Thomas sought to play down the prospect of students protesting during the ceremony. He held up the all-male campus as a place that, like other historically Black colleges and universities, can balance social justice and political activism with a sense of order and decorum befitting commencement and a presidential address.

"I think you will find on a spectrum that we represent both ends – those who are vehemently opposed to the president coming to speak and those at the other end who think it's a great thing ... and who don't see a contradiction between their feelings about what's going on in Gaza and the president coming," he said.

But some students at Morehouse and the adjacent campuses that make up the Atlanta University Center (AUC) remain staunchly opposed to Biden's appearance. They accuse Thomas and Morehouse trustees of prioritizing status and establishment political alliances over the values the school espouses.

AUC students, faculty and alumni held a rally and die-in against Biden on Friday.

"If our illustrious HBCUs and administrators really loved the activism they claimed to be for and use as a marketing tool then they would ... stand with us as we pray to God, 'From the West End to the West Bank,'" said Morehouse junior Lonnie White of Atlanta, among the students who participated in two AUC demonstrations in recent weeks.

Student protest leaders said they know of no organized protest plans within the commencement site itself.

"I don't even have a ticket," said Morehouse sophomore Anwar Karim, who led a petition calling on Thomas to rescind Biden's invitation.

Karim said he expected some students to attend nearby gatherings planned previously to commemorate the birthday of Malcolm X, a Black leader often credited with advancing the Black Power philosophy as a Civil Rights-era alternative to King's practice of civil disobedience.

Thomas said in the interview that silent, non-disruptive protests would be tolerated, but repeated a pledge to halt the ceremony if disruptions mount.

Former U.S. Rep Cedric Richmond, a Morehouse alumnus and Biden campaign co-chairman who helped broker the president's appearance, called the graduation a "solemn event" and said the gravity of the moment should give potential protesters pause.

"I would hope that people will not interrupt a once-in-a-lifetime moment like that for those students and those parents and grandparents who are there to see these young men walk across that stage," Richmond said.

In Detroit, Biden was set to visit a Black-owned small business before delivering the keynote address at the NAACP's Freedom Fund dinner, which traditionally draws thousands of attendees. The speech gives Biden a chance to reach thousands of people in Wayne County, an area that has historically voted overwhelmingly Democratic but has shown signs of resistance to his reelection bid.

Wayne County also holds one of the largest Arab American populations in the nation, predominantly in the city of Dearborn. Leaders there were at the forefront of an "uncommitted" effort that received over 100,000 votes in the state's Democratic primary and spread across the country.

A protest rally and march against Biden's visit are planned for Sunday afternoon in Dearborn. Another protest rally is expected later that evening outside Huntington Place, the dinner venue.

Congolese army says shootout in the capital is failed coup, perpetrators arrested

By CHRISTINA MALKIA and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo's army says it has "foiled a coup" early Sunday morning and arrested the perpetrators, including several foreigners, following a shootout between armed men in military uniform and a top politician's guards that left three people dead in the capital, Kinshasa

The attempted coup d'état was "nipped in the bud by Congolese defense and security forces (and) the situation is under control," Congolese army spokesperson Brigadier General Sylvain Ekenge said at a media

briefing. He did not give further details.

Clashes were reported between men in military uniform and guards of a local politician at the politician's house on Tshatshi Boulevard, about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the presidential palace and where some embassies are also located.

This came amid a crisis gripping President Felix Tshisekedi's ruling party over an election for the parliament's leadership which was supposed to be held Saturday but was postponed.

The armed men attacked the Kinshasa residence of Vital Kamerhe, a federal legislator and a candidate for speaker of the National Assembly of Congo, but were stopped by his guards, Michel Moto Muhima, his spokesperson said on the X social media platform.

"The Honorable Vital Kamerhe and his family are safe and sound. Their security has been reinforced," he wrote.

Local media identified the men as Congolese soldiers. It wasn't clear if the men in military uniform were trying to arrest the politician.

Two police officers and one of the attackers were killed in the shootout that started around 4:30 a.m. at the house on Tshatshi Boulevard, according to Muhima.

Footage, seemingly from the area, showed military trucks and heavily armed men parading deserted streets in the neighborhood.

On Friday, President Felix Tshisekedi met with parliamentarians and leaders of the Sacred Union of the Nation ruling coalition in an attempt to resolve the crisis amid his party which dominates the national assembly.

He said he would not "hesitate to dissolve the National Assembly and send everyone to new elections if these bad practices persist."

Tshisekedi was reelected as president in December in a chaotic vote amid calls for a revote from the opposition over what they said was a lack of transparency, following past trends of disputed elections in the central African country.

The United States Embassy in Congo issued a security alert, urging caution after "reports of gunfire."

Taiwan's new president inherits a strong foreign policy position but political gridlock at home

By SIMINA MISTREANU and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — In a campaign ad for Taiwan's President-elect Lai Ching-te, incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen was shown driving with Lai in the passenger seat, exchanging reflections on their years governing together. Tsai later turned over the driving to Lai, who was joined by running mate Bi-khim Hsiao.

The message was clear: Lai would steer the island in the direction set by Tsai, who after eight years in power was barred from running again.

Lai, 64, will take office Monday. Continuing Tsai's legacy means aiming to strike a balance between cultivating Taiwan's unofficial alliance with the United States and maintaining peace with China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be retaken by force if necessary.

Lai is also expected to build on some of Tsai's domestic reforms, despite political gridlock. Lai and Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party has lost the majority in the legislature, making it hard for Lai to push through legislation, including the approval of crucial national defense budgets.

Tsai, 67, has been Taiwan's first female president and one of Asia's few female leaders who didn't hail from a political dynasty. Her legacy will be tied to defending the island's sovereignty from China while refashioning it as a credible partner for the U.S. and other democracies. She will also be remembered for overseeing the legalization of same sex-marriage, steering Taiwan through the COVID years and kickstarting the island's military modernization.

She leaves office with high approval ratings. A recent poll by broadcaster TVBS showed 42% of respondents were satisfied with her eight-year performance. Her predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, left office with

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approval ratings of around 23%.

Tsai's popularity partly reflects a shift in Taiwan's identity. A vast majority of residents now identify as Taiwanese as opposed to Chinese and want to be governed separately from Beijing. Taiwan and China have had different governments since a civil war in 1949 saw the Nationalists flee to the island while China's Communist Party took control of the mainland.

Tsai veered from the more China-friendly policies of the previous ruling party, the Kuomintang. By the end of Ma's tenure, the frequent exchanges with Beijing were making many Taiwanese nervous, said Shelley Rigger, a Taiwan expert at Davidson College.

Beijing called Tsai a separatist after she refused to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus, an agreement which says Taiwan is part of "One China." While pulling away from Beijing, however, Tsai left a door open for communication.

"President Tsai has always said that Taiwan, under her leadership, is happy, willing and eager to have dialogue with Beijing, just not on terms unilaterally imposed by Beijing," said Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow with Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council.

China has not only declined to speak to Tsai but also ramped up military and economic pressure on the island, sending warships and military jets near it daily.

Beijing prevents countries it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei. During Tsai's tenure, it intensified a campaign to lure away the island's few diplomatic partners. During Tsai's years in office, China poached almost half of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, bringing the remaining number to 12.

Tsai pushed back by diversifying trade relationships and increasing military spending including submarine development. She also elevated Taiwan's standing on the international stage, said outgoing Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

"Her leadership style is very moderate, but at the same time very firm in dealing with any kind of international pressure," he said.

"She strengthened awareness of Taiwan around the world and its ties with the international community," said Bonnie Glaser, the director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

'TSAI 2.0'

Lai, who served as vice president during Tsai's second term, came across as more of a firebrand earlier in his career. In 2017, he described himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan's independence," drawing Beijing's rebuke. He has since softened his stance and now supports maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and the possibility of talks with Beijing.

"Lai has spent the last two-plus years trying to convince the world that he is Tsai Ing-wen 2.0," said Lev Nachman, an assistant professor at National Chengchi University.

Lai will build on Tsai's efforts to strengthen ties with the U.S., which doesn't formally recognize Taiwan as a country but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

By some measures, Lai's greatest uncertainty on the foreign policy front might come from Washington. A new Donald Trump administration could throw off whatever balance Tsai has achieved in Taipei's relations with Washington and Beijing, Nachman said.

WHAT'S NEXT AT HOME

During Tsai's tenure, Taiwan became the first society in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, though critics say she skirted political responsibility by leaving the decision up to the Supreme Court and a series of referendums.

She oversaw a controversial pension and labor reform and extended the military conscription length to one year. She also kickstarted a military modernization drive, including a program for building indigenous submarines at more than \$16 billion each.

Tsai's leadership during the COVID pandemic split public opinion, with most admiring Taiwan's initial ability to keep the virus largely outside its borders but criticizing the lack of investment in rapid testing as the pandemic progressed.

Tsai's mixed success on the domestic policy front contributed to historically poor results for the DPP in

local elections, said Sung with the Atlantic Council. The party's poor performance in the 2022 elections led to Tsai resigning as party chairwoman. And while Lai won the presidential election, DPP lost its majority in the legislature.

"Much of President Tsai's government's success comes from the foreign policy and related international outreach fronts, and in terms of making inroads on the much more grassroots party machinery level, for example, those still have room for improvement," Sung said.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange facing pivotal moment in long fight to stay out of US court

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The host of a news conference about WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition fight wryly welcomed journalists last week to the "millionth" press briefing on his court case.

Deborah Bonetti, director of the Foreign Press Association, was only half joking. Assange's legal saga has dragged on for well over a decade but it could come to an end in the U.K. as soon as Monday.

Assange faces a hearing in London's High Court that could end with him being sent to the U.S. to face espionage charges, or provide him another chance to appeal his extradition.

The outcome will depend on how much weight judges give to reassurances U.S. officials have provided that Assange's rights won't be trampled if he goes on trial.

Here's a look at the case:

WHAT ASSANGE IS CHARGED WITH

Assange, 52, an Australian computer expert, has been indicted in the U.S. on 18 charges over Wikileaks' publication of hundreds of thousands of classified documents in 2010.

Prosecutors say he conspired with U.S. army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to hack into a Pentagon computer and release secret diplomatic cables and military files on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He faces 17 counts of espionage and one charge of computer misuse. If convicted, his lawyers say he could receive a prison term of up to 175 years, though American authorities have said any sentence is likely to be much lower.

Assange and his supporters argue he acted as a journalist to expose U.S. military wrongdoing and is protected under press freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Among the files published by WikiLeaks was video of a 2007 Apache helicopter attack by American forces in Baghdad that killed 11 people, including two Reuters journalists.

"Julian has been indicted for receiving, possessing and communicating information to the public of evidence of war crimes committed by the U.S. government," his wife, Stella Assange, said. "Reporting a crime is never a crime."

U.S. lawyers say Assange is guilty of trying to hack the Pentagon computer and that WikiLeaks' publications created a "grave and imminent risk" to U.S. intelligence sources in Afghanistan and Iraq.

WHY THE CASE HAS DRAGGED ON SO LONG

While the U.S. criminal case against Assange was only unsealed in 2019, his freedom has been restricted for a dozen years.

Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in 2012 and was granted political asylum after courts in England ruled he should be extradited to Sweden as part of a rape investigation in the Scandinavian country.

He was arrested by British police after Ecuador's government withdrew his asylum status in 2019 and then jailed for skipping bail when he first took shelter inside the embassy.

Although Sweden eventually dropped its sex crimes investigation because so much time had elapsed, Assange has remained in London's high-security Belmarsh Prison while the extradition battle with the U.S. continues.

His wife said his mental and physical health have deteriorated behind bars.

"He's fighting to survive and that's a daily battle," she said.

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A judge in London initially blocked Assange's transfer to the U.S. in 2021 on the grounds he was likely to kill himself if held in harsh American prison conditions.

But subsequent courts cleared the way for the move after U.S. authorities provided assurances he wouldn't experience the severe treatment that his lawyers said would put his physical and mental health at risk.

The British government authorized Assange's extradition in 2022.

WHAT THE LATEST HEARING IS ABOUT

Assange's lawyers raised nine grounds for appeal at a hearing in February, including the allegation that his prosecution is political.

The court accepted three of his arguments, issuing a provisional ruling in March that said Assange could take his case to the Court of Appeal unless the U.S. guaranteed he would not face the death penalty if extradited and would have the same free speech protections as a U.S. citizen.

The U.S. provided those reassurances three weeks later, though his supporters are skeptical.

Stella Assange said the "so-called assurances" were made up of "weasel words."

WikiLeaks Editor-in-Chief Kristinn Hrafnsson said the judges had asked if Assange could rely on First Amendment protections.

"It should be an easy yes or no question," Hrafnsson said. "The answer was, 'He can seek to rely on First Amendment protections.' That is a 'no.' So the only rational decision on Monday is for the judges to come out and say, 'This is not good enough.' Anything else is a judicial scandal."

THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

If Assange prevails, it would set the stage for an appeal process likely to further drag out the case.

If an appeal is rejected, his legal team plans to ask the European Court of Human Rights to intervene. But his supporters fear Assange could possibly be transferred before the court in Strasbourg, France, could halt his removal.

"Julian is just one decision away from being extradited," his wife said.

Assange, who hopes to be in court Monday, has been encouraged by the work others have done in the political fight to free him, his wife said.

If he loses in court, he still may have another shot at freedom.

President Joe Biden said last month that he was considering a request from Australia to drop the case and let Assange return to his home country.

Officials have no other details but Stella Assange said it was "a good sign" and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the comment was encouraging.

Companies are trying to attract more smartphone users across Africa. But there are risks

By FRANCIS KOKUTSE and JACK THOMPSON Associated Press

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Anita Akpeere prepared fried rice in her kitchen in Ghana's capital as a flurry of notifications for restaurant orders lit up apps on her phone. "I don't think I could work without a phone in my line of business," she said, as requests came in for her signature dish, a traditional fermented dumpling.

Internet-enabled phones have transformed many lives, but they can play a unique role in sub-Saharan Africa, where infrastructure and public services are among the world's least developed, said Jenny Aker, a professor who studies the issue at Tufts University. At times, technology in Africa has leapfrogged gaps, including providing access to mobile money for people without bank accounts.

Despite growing mobile internet coverage on the continent of 1.3 billion people, just 25% of adults in sub-Saharan Africa have access to it, according to Claire Sibthorpe, head of digital inclusion at the U.K.-based mobile phone lobbying group GSMA. Expense is the main barrier. The cheapest smartphone costs up to 95% of the monthly salary for the poorest 20% of the region's population, Sibthorpe said.

Literacy rates that are below the global average, and lack of services in many African languages — some 2,000 are spoken across the continent, according to The African Language Program at Harvard University — are other reasons why a smartphone isn't a compelling investment for some.

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"If you buy a car, it's because you can drive it," said Alain Capo-Chichi, chief executive of CERCO Group, a company that has developed a smartphone that functions through voice command and is available in 50 African languages such as Yoruba, Swahili and Wolof.

Even in Ghana, where the lingua franca is English, knowing how to use smartphones and apps can be a challenge for newcomers.

One new company in Ghana is trying to close the digital gap. Uniti Networks offers financing to help make smartphones more affordable and coaches users to navigate its platform of apps.

For Cyril Fianyo, a 64-year-old farmer in Ghana's eastern Volta region, the phone has expanded his activities beyond calls and texts. Using his identity card, he registered with Uniti, putting down a deposit worth 340 Ghanaian Cedis (\$25) for a smartphone and will pay the remaining 910 Cedis (\$66) in installments.

He was shown how to navigate apps that interested him, including a third-party farming app called Cocoa Link that offers videos of planting techniques, weather information and details about the challenges of climate change that have affected cocoa and other crops.

Fianyo, who previously planted according to his intuition and rarely interacts with farming advisors, was optimistic that the technology would increase his yields.

"I will know the exact time to plant because of the weather forecast," he said.

Kami Dar, chief executive of Uniti Networks, said the mobile internet could help address other challenges including accessing health care. The company has launched in five communities across Ghana with 650 participants and wants to reach 100,000 users within five years.

Aker, the scholar, noted that the potential impact of mobile phones across Africa is immense but said there is limited evidence that paid health or agriculture apps are benefiting people there. She asserted that the only beneficial impacts are reminders to take medicine or get vaccinated.

Having studied agricultural apps and their impact, she said it doesn't seem that farmers are getting better prices or improving their income.

Capo-Chichi from CERCO Group said a dearth of useful apps and content is another reason why more people in Africa aren't buying smartphones.

Dar said Uniti Networks learns from mistakes. In a pilot in northern Ghana designed to help cocoa farmers contribute to their pensions, there was high engagement but farmers didn't find the app user-friendly and needed extra coaching. After the feedback, the pension provider changed the interface to improve navigation.

Others are finding benefit with Uniti's platform. Mawufemor Vitor, a church secretary in Hohoe, said one health app has assisted her to track her menstruation to help prevent pregnancy. And Fianyo, the farmer, has used the platform to find information on herbal medicine.

But mobile phones are no substitute for investment in public services and infrastructure, Aker said.

She also expressed concerns about the privacy of data in the hands of private technology providers and governments. With digital IDs in development in African nations such as Kenya and South Africa, this could pave the way for further abuses, Aker said.

Uniti Networks is a for-profit business, paid for each customer that signs up for paying apps. Dar asserted that he was not targeting vulnerable populations to sell them unnecessary services and said Uniti only features apps that align with its idea of impact, with a focus on health, education, finance and agriculture.

Dar said Uniti has rejected lucrative approaches from many companies including gambling firms. "Tech can be used for awful things," he said.

He acknowledged that Uniti tracks users on the platform to provide incentives, in the form of free data, and to provide feedback to app developers. He acknowledged that users' health and financial data could be at threat from outside attack but said Uniti has decentralized data storage in an attempt to lessen the risk.

Still, the potential to provide solutions can outweigh the risks, Aker said, noting two areas where the technology could be transformative: education and insurance.

She said mobile phones could help overcome the illiteracy that still affects 773 million people worldwide according to UNESCO. Increased access to insurance, still not widely used in parts of Africa, could provide

protection to millions who face shocks on the front lines of climate change and conflict.

Back in Fianyo's fields, his new smartphone has attracted curiosity. "This is something I would like to be part of," said neighboring farmer Godsway Kwamigah.

Ohio voters approved reproductive rights. Will the state's near-ban on abortion stand?

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A county judge could rule as early as Monday on Ohio's law banning virtually all abortions, a decision that will take into consideration the decision by voters to enshrine reproductive rights in the state constitution.

The 2019 law under consideration by Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Christian Jenkins bans most abortions once cardiac activity can be detected, which can be as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many women are aware.

A group of abortion clinics sought to overturn the law even before voters approved Issue 1, which gives every person in Ohio "the right to make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions."

Ohio's Republican attorney general, Dave Yost, acknowledged in court filings that the 2023 amendment rendered the ban unconstitutional, but has sought to maintain other elements of the prohibition, including certain notification and reporting provisions.

Ohio was the only state to consider a statewide abortion rights question in 2023, joining a growing number of states where voters are choosing to protect abortion access since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the nationwide protections granted by its landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling.

Besides the case before Jenkins, challenges also are pending to several of Ohio's other abortion restrictions.

Those include a ban on the use of telehealth for medication abortions, a requirement that fetal remains from surgical abortions be cremated or buried, a 24-hour waiting period requirement and a mandate that abortion clinics maintain emergency transfer agreements with local hospitals. Such agreements have been rendered impossible to get by related laws in some cases.

Ohio's ban on abortions because of a Down syndrome diagnosis remains in effect, following a federal court decision in 2021.

Minority Democrats proposed a House measure to bring state law into compliance with the new amendment outside the courts. Their bill, a nonstarter with Ohio's Republican supermajorities, would have repealed the cardiac activity ban; a ban on dilation and evacuation, a common second-trimester abortion procedure; mandatory 24-hour waiting periods; the transfer agreement requirement; and other targeted restrictions on abortion providers.

So far, Ohio's parental consent law has not been challenged in court nor targeted by Democrats, though the anti-abortion Protect Women Ohio campaign suggested it would be a casualty of Issue 1's passage.

Litigation also has not been filed to challenge Ohio's ban on dilation and extraction, a procedure once used in the third term of pregnancy. Yost opined during the voter amendment campaign that Issue 1 would open the door to allowing them, despite the procedure being banned at the federal level.

So-called "heartbeat bills" originated in Ohio before taking off across the country. But it was a decade before the policy became law in the state.

Then-Republican Gov. John Kasich twice vetoed the measure, arguing it was unlikely to pass constitutional muster in a time when Roe v. Wade was still the law of the land.

The law arrived on Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's desk and he signed it after justices appointed by former President Donald Trump solidified the Supreme Court's conservative majority, raising hopes among abortion opponents that restrictions could finally be successfully imposed.

national security adviser, Saudi Arabia's crown prince meet to discuss 'semi-final' security deal

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — President Joe Biden's national security adviser met early Sunday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss what the kingdom described as the "semi-final" version of a wide-ranging security agreement between the countries.

The announcement by the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the strategic deal had been upended after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage back to the Gaza Strip.

In the time since, a punishing Israeli airstrike campaign and ground offensive there has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, endangering the security deal that had included Saudi Arabia diplomatically recognizing Israel for the first time since its founding in 1948.

Saudi state media released no images of Jake Sullivan and Prince Mohammed meeting in Dhahran, a city in the kingdom's far east that's home to its state-run oil giant, the Saudi Arabian Oil Co. known as Saudi Aramco.

"The semi-final version of the draft strategic agreements between the kingdom and the United States of America, which are almost being finalized — and what is being worked on between the two sides in the Palestinian issue to find a credible path — were discussed," the statement released after the talks said.

That included "a two-state solution that meets the aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and "the situation in Gaza and the need to stop the war there and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid," the statement added.

Saudi Arabia has long called for an independent Palestinian state to be created along Israel's 1967 borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital. However, that likely may be untenable for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose government hinges on support from hard-liners who oppose a two-state solution and support Israeli settlements on lands Palestinians want for that state.

The White House had acknowledged Sullivan's trip and that he would later head on to Israel, where he's scheduled meet Netanyahu on Sunday. However, there was no immediate statement from the U.S. on the discussions, other than to say they would be "including the war in Gaza and ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region."

Saudi Arabia has long relied — like other Gulf Arab nations — on the U.S. to be the security guarantor for the wider Middle East as tensions over Iran's nuclear program in recent years have spilled over into a series of attacks. The proposal now being discussed likely would deepen that, and also reportedly includes access to advanced weapons and possibly trade deals as well.

Saudi Arabia has also pushed for nuclear cooperation in the deal that includes America allowing it to enrich uranium in the kingdom — something that worries nonproliferation experts, as spinning centrifuges opens the door to a possible weapons program. Prince Mohammed has said the kingdom would pursue a nuclear weapon if Iran had one. Iran in recent weeks has increasingly threatened it could do so.

Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York meanwhile confirmed that Tehran held indirect talks with U.S. officials in Oman last week. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted the mission as describing the talks as "an ongoing process."

"The negotiations have not been the first and will not be the last of their kind," the mission said, according to IRNA.

Oman, a sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, has been the site of U.S.-Iran talks in the past, including under Biden despite the tensions between the two nations.

Botanists are scouring the US-Mexico border to document a forgotten ecosystem split by a giant wall

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

JACUMÉ, México (AP) — Near the towering border wall flanked by a U.S. Border Patrol vehicle, botanist Sula Vanderplank heard a quail in the scrub yelp “chi-ca-go,” a sound the birds use to signal they are separated from a mate or group.

Then silence.

A quail on the Mexican side called back, triggering a back-and-forth soundtrack that was both fitting and heartbreaking in an ecosystem split by an artificial barrier.

Vanderplank was among several botanists and citizen scientists participating in the Border Bioblitz near the Mexican community of Jacumé, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) east of Tijuana.

Roughly 1,000 volunteers armed with the iNaturalist app on their smartphones are documenting as many species as possible along the U.S.-Mexico border in May. Uploading photos to the app helps identify plants and animals, and records the coordinates of the location.

The hope is the information could lead to more protections for the region’s natural richness, which is overshadowed by news of drug trafficking and migrant smuggling.

On a recent day, Bioblitz volunteers scrutinized a bright yellow blooming carpet of common Goldfields, a sharp contrast to the imposing steel bollards of the border wall topped with rolls of razor wire. Some navigated their way around piles of empty water jugs, a gray hoodie and empty cans of tuna fish left under the branches of native flora like the Tecate Cypress.

“There’s a fabulous amount of biodiversity here that’s traditionally been overlooked,” Vanderplank, of the binational program Baja Rare, said.

The efforts started in response to former President Donald Trump adding hundreds of miles of border walls that toppled untold numbers of saguaro cactuses in Arizona and passed through the biodiversity hotspot of Baja California.

“When the border wall construction began, we realized how little hard data we had, especially when it came to plants and small organisms,” Vanderplank said. “We don’t know what all we could lose.”

Since then, there has been a groundswell of initiatives to document the borderland’s flora and fauna as climate change coupled with habitat loss, pollution and development have hammered the world’s biodiversity. One estimate in 2019 warns that a million plant and animal species face extinction within decades, a rate of loss 1,000 times greater than expected.

The United Nations is expected hold a high-level meeting in Colombia of signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October aiming to protect 30% of land, freshwater and oceans considered important for biodiversity by 2030, known as 30 by 30. Representatives from nearly 200 countries are expected to present plans on how they will meet conservation targets agreed upon in 2022.

Currently, 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas are protected.

Baja California peninsula, which borders California and is home to Tijuana with one of Mexico’s highest homicide rates, has more than 4,000 species of plants. A quarter of them are endemic and at least 400 plants are considered rare with little to no protection.

Flora and fauna that have gone extinct or are in danger of disappearing in the U.S., like the California red-legged frog, are thriving south of the border, producing specimens that are being used to bring back populations.

But the region’s crime deters many U.S. scientists from crossing the border. Mexico also is restricting permits for botanists and not allowing seeds to be collected, further curtailing the work, scientists say.

Bioblitz organizers work with local communities and say they take people only to areas deemed safe.

“You have to be really careful because of the violence,” said Jon Rebman, a curator of botany at the San Diego Natural History Museum, who has named 33 new plants for science from the southern California and Baja California region.

“It’s scary from that standpoint, yet those are the areas where we really need more information because

there's hardly any protected area on the south side," he said.

Using the museum's collection, Rebman made a list of 15 plant species endemic to Baja California and not seen since being collected nearly a century ago. He created a binational team to find them. So far, they have located 11.

Rebman also discovered two new plants to science in 2021 in a canyon off a Tijuana highway: the new species, *Astragalus tijuanaensis*, and a new variety of the *Astragalus brauntonii* named *lativexillum*.

"I was worried they would go extinct before we even got them named," Rebman said. "That tells you what type of area we're working in."

Tijuana-based botanist Mariana Fernandez of Expediciones Botánicas periodically checks on the plants. Working with Rebman, she is pushing Baja California to adopt more protections for its native plants. Currently only a fraction are on Mexico's federal protection list.

She hopes the state will step in, while she also tries to build support by taking Tijuana residents and Baja officials on hikes.

"People are amazed that these things exist in Tijuana, and I hope to show more and more people so they can see the beauty, because we need that," Fernandez said. "It's important to not be impeded by the barriers that humans create."

As border security increases with the number of people being displaced by natural disasters, violence and wars at record levels worldwide, more migrants are traipsing out to areas like the stretch near Jacumé. The tiny community of about 100 families includes members of the Kumeyaay tribe and sits across the border from an equally sparsely populated desert near the California town of Jacumba Hot Springs. Population: about 1,000.

The area has seen thousands of asylum seekers who wait for an opportunity to cross, usually in the cloak of darkness, and then camp again on the U.S. side after turning themselves in to U.S. Border Patrol agents.

Fernandez was among the botanists helping Bioblitz volunteers on the Mexican side near a crumbling crossing station from the 1920s.

"I never would have thought that there would be so much biodiversity on the border," said Jocelyn Reyes, a student of Fernandez at La Universidad Autónoma de Baja California who stopped every few feet to hover over a plant and photograph its details. "It's so interesting and makes you realize there's so much worth saving."

As killings surge, Haitians struggle to bury loved ones and find closure in violent capital

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Dressed in black and white, the crowd of angry teenagers squeezed into a narrow street in Haiti's capital.

They stopped in front of a cemetery and hoisted a coffin onto their shoulders, tears rolling down some faces.

"Viv Ansanm manje li!" they chanted loudly in Haitian Creole as they walked to and fro, the coffin swaying gently with their 16-year-old friend inside.

Their chant accused a gang coalition called Live Together of killing Jhon-Roselet Joseph. He was struck by a stray bullet earlier this month in his community of Solino, which gunmen have repeatedly attacked.

Finding closure for loved ones killed by gangs on a relentless rampage through Haiti's capital and beyond is growing harder day by day in a country where burial rituals are sacred and the dead venerated.

More than 2,500 people were killed or injured in just the first three months of the year, according to the United Nations.

Victims of gang violence are increasingly left to decay on the street, prey to pigs and dogs, because a growing number of areas are too dangerous for people to go out and retrieve the bodies. Some bodies are never seen again, especially those of officers with Haiti's National Police who are killed by gangs.

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Still, there are those like Joseph's friends and family who brave the streets despite the danger of whizzing bullets so they can give their loved ones a proper burial.

Death and life are tightly intertwined in Haiti, where many believe that bodies need a formal resting place so their spirits can drift into the afterlife.

On a sweltering morning, a handful of musicians played drums and a trumpet Saturday as Joseph's friends and family pushed into a small and crowded cemetery, hoisting the coffin up high as small bottles of Barbancourt rum were passed around.

The cries grew louder when his friends opened the coffin, bidding farewell as they vowed revenge.

"Solino will never die! We will always stand up and fight," said Janvier Johnson, 28.

"The fight is just beginning!" another man yelled as he wiped his brow.

Joseph was killed last Sunday, around 5 p.m. He had gotten a haircut at the barbershop in anticipation of going back to school and was crossing the street to go home when a bullet struck him in the neck, said Frantz Paulson, his 24-year-old cousin.

Paulson is familiar with the difficulty of burying people amid incessant gang violence. His older brother was killed by a stray bullet last month and his mother killed last year. They all lived in Solino, one of the last strongholds in Port-au-Prince that has yet to be taken over by gangs that now control 80% of the capital.

Considered a strategic location, gangs have been chipping away at territory in Solino, opening fire from roofs. Bullets killed three other people the same week that Joseph died.

As a result, community leaders have sealed off Solino, controlling who enters the working-class neighborhood that is home to dozens of police officers.

Although many in Solino refuse to speak to reporters, the community welcomed a team of Associated Press journalists the day Joseph was buried.

His mother, Daphne St. Cyr, recalled how Joseph loved school and wanted to become an agronomist. He also was a huge soccer fan and played often, she said.

"Ever since he was a baby, anything he could find, he was kicking it," she recalled with a serious face.

He was obedient and got along well with many people in the neighborhood, St. Cyr added.

"Everybody loved him, all the kids, all the grownups," she said. "He respected everyone."

Joseph's older sister stood quietly next to her mother, declining to say anything.

"I don't want to lose her," St. Cyr said, looking at her daughter. "I want her to leave the country."

The gang coalition created by a former elite police officer named Jimmy Chérizier, best known as Barbecue, is blamed for the killings and attacks in Solino.

A neighborhood of roughly 80,000 people, it already has nine large makeshift shelters crowded with families who have fled violence, said Daniel Saintiace, a community leader who vowed that Solino would not be taken by gangs.

"We resist. That's how we stay strong," he said as he called on people to help Solino. "We are not going to run."

Joseph was buried a week after he was killed, his family relieved they found a place for him since gangs have blocked access to many areas in the capital, even revered spaces.

"Not all cemeteries are available," said Nicy Nadir, a musician who plays at funerals. "There are places you can't go."

Pastor Claudy Midy, who owns the funeral home that helped organize Joseph's burial, said the only solace he can provide is to sit families down and explain to them that death is part of life.

He added that burials are very important in Haiti, especially when someone young dies.

Midy was comforted that Joseph's family was able to bury him. When people call the funeral home but say they have no body to bury, all he can offer them is a poster with the person's picture and a brief symbolic ceremony.

Dominicans to vote in general elections with eyes on crisis in neighboring Haiti

By MARTÍN ADAMES ALCÁNTARA Associated Press

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Voters in the Dominican Republic will take to the polls Sunday in general elections likely to reinforce the government's crackdown on its shared border with Haiti and the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the violence-stricken nation.

Leading the presidential race is President Luis Abinader, who is seeking reelection as one of the most popular leaders in the Americas. If he tops 50% of the vote he will win another term without proceeding to a second round of voting.

Trailing behind him are President Leonel Fernández and mayor Abel Martínez. Dominicans will also vote in legislative elections.

Abinader's anti-corruption agenda and push to grow the Dominican Republic's economy has resonated with many of the 8 million voters in the Caribbean nation. Much of his popularity, however, has been fueled by the government's harsh crackdown on Haitians and the border the Dominican Republic shares with its crisis-stricken neighbor.

"This migratory problem worries me, because we're seeing a massive migration from our neighbor and it feels like it's out of control," said Perla Concepción, a 29-year-old secretary, adding that migration was her main concern as she takes to the polls.

The Dominican Republic has long taken a hardline stance with Haitian migrants, but such policies have ramped up since Haiti entered a free fall following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. As gangs have terrorized Haitians, the Dominican government has built a Trump-like border wall along its 250-mile (400-kilometer) border. He has also repeatedly urged the United Nations to send an international force to Haiti, saying such action "cannot wait any longer."

The government has also rejected calls to build refugee camps for those fleeing the violence and carried out mass deportations of 175,000 Haitians just last year, according to government figures. While the policy is popular among voters, it has provoked sharp criticisms from human rights organizations which call the policy racist and a violation of international law.

"These collective expulsions are a clear violation of the Dominican Republic's international obligations and put the lives and rights of these people at risk. Forced returns to Haiti must end," Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International, wrote in an April report.

Seize the Grey wins the Preakness for D. Wayne Lukas and ends Mystik Dan's Triple Crown bid

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — D. Wayne Lukas worked his way to Seize the Grey after his horse won the Preakness Stakes and kept getting interrupted by well-wishers offering congratulations.

"I think they're trying to get rid of me," Lukas said. "They probably want me to retire. I don't think that'll happen."

Not when the 88-year-old Hall of Fame trainer keeps winning big-time races.

Seize the Grey ended Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan's Triple Crown bid Saturday by going wire to wire to win the Preakness, giving Lukas his seventh victory in the race, one short of the record held by good friend Bob Baffert.

"I'm only one behind him — I warned him already," Lukas said. "It never gets old at this level, and I love the competition. I love to get in here with the rest of them."

The strapping grey colt took advantage of the muddy track just as Lukas hoped he would, pulling off the upset in a second consecutive impressive start two weeks after romping in a race on the Derby undercard at Churchill Downs. Going off at 9-1 as one of the longest shots on the board, Seize the Grey moved to the lead immediately out of the starting gate and never looked back, finishing 2 1/4 lengths ahead of

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Mystik Dan in 1:56.82.

"I thought his action down the backside was beautiful, and I knew that he was handling the track," Lukas said. "I said, 'Watch out, he's not going to quit.'"

Mystik Dan finished second in the field of eight horses running in the \$2 million, 1 3/16-mile race. After falling short of going back to back following his win by a nose in the Kentucky Derby, it would be a surprise if he runs in the Belmont Stakes on June 8 at Saratoga Race Course.

"My colt's a fantastic colt and proud of him," trainer Kenny McPeck said. "It just wasn't his day, but he'll live to race again."

Seize the Grey was a surprise Preakness winner facing tougher competition than in the Pat Day Mile on May 4. Though given the Lukas connection, it should never be a surprise when one of his horses is covered in a blanket of Black-Eyed Susan flowers.

No one in the race's 149-year history has saddled more horses in the Preakness than Lukas with 48 since debuting in 1980 and winning that one with Codex. He had two in this time, with Just Steel finishing fifth, but Seize the Grey — owned by 2,570 people involved in the MyRacehorse group — delivered the victory.

"I just couldn't be happier for every single one of them," MyRacehorse founder and CEO Michael Behrens said. "We had some big expectations, but this exceeds all those expectations."

Seize the Grey paid \$21.60 to win, \$8.40 to place and \$4.40 to show. Mystik Dan paid \$4.20 and \$2.80 after finishing a head in front of third-place Catching Freedom, who paid \$3.20 to show.

Baffert, who was looking for a record-extending ninth Preakness victory, was supposed to have two horses in the field, but morning line favorite Muth was scratched earlier in the week because of a fever. Baffert's Imagination finished seventh.

"He is still learning," Baffert said. "I think we are learning his style. I saw a lot today that I can change going forward. I don't think he wants to run like that. We didn't really have a plan. We thought it would be Wayne or us."

Muth's absence made Mystik Dan the 2-1 favorite, but he and jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. could not replicate their perfect Derby trip to win that race's first three-way photo finish since 1947. Instead, Jaime Torres rode Seize the Grey to a win in his first Triple Crown race of any kind, just two years after starting to ride.

"I have no words," said Torres, a native of Puerto Rico who did not begin racing until seeing it on TV in late 2019. "I'm very excited, very excited and very thankful to all the people that have been behind me, helping me."

This was the last Preakness held at Pimlico Race Course as it stands before demolition begins on the historic but deteriorating track, which will still hold the 150th running of it next year mid-construction.

That process is already well underway at Belmont Park, which is why the final leg of the Triple Crown is happening at Saratoga for the first time and is being shortened to 1 1/4 miles because of the shape of the course. Kentucky Derby second-place finisher Sierra Leone, a half step from winning, is expected to headline that field, though Lukas said he'd wait to see about Seize the Grey also running.

Hot weather poses new risk as thousands remain without power after deadly Houston storm

By LEKAN OYEKANMI DAVID J. PHILLIP and KEN MILLER Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — As the Houston area works to clean up and restore power to hundreds of thousands after deadly storms left at least seven people dead, it will do so amid a smog warning and scorching temperatures that could pose health risks.

National Weather Service meteorologist Marc Chenard said on Saturday that highs of around 90 degrees (32.2 C) were expected through the start of the coming week, with heat indexes likely approaching 100 degrees (38 C) by midweek.

"We expect the impact of the heat to gradually increase ... we will start to see that heat risk increase Tuesday into Wednesday through Friday," Chenard said.

The heat index is what the temperature feels like to the human body when humidity is combined with

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the air temperature, according to the weather service.

"Don't overdo yourself during the cleanup process," the weather service's Houston office said in a post on the social platform X.

In addition to the heat, the Houston area could face poor air quality during the weekend.

Heavy rainfall was possible in eastern Louisiana and central Alabama on Saturday, and parts of Louisiana were also at risk for flooding.

The Houston Health Department said it would distribute 400 free portable air conditioners to area seniors, people with disabilities and caregivers of disabled children to contend with the heat.

Five cooling centers also were opened — four in Houston and one in Kingwood.

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS REMAIN WITHOUT POWER

The widespread destruction of Thursday's storms brought much of Houston to a standstill. Thunderstorms and hurricane-force winds tore through the city — decimating the facade of one brick building and leaving trees, debris and shattered glass on the streets. A tornado also touched down near the northwest Houston suburb of Cypress.

More than a half-million homes and businesses in Texas remained without electricity by midday Saturday, according to PowerOutage.us. Another 21,000 customers were also without power in Louisiana, where strong winds and a suspected tornado hit.

"It's been a madhouse out here," Cypress resident Hallie O'Bannon said. "You know we don't have any power. No hot water. It's been really crazy."

"Everyone is pretty resilient, and everyone's just trying to get back to normal and help each other out and the best way we can," O'Bannon added.

CenterPoint Energy, which has deployed 1,000 employees to the area and is requesting 5,000 more, said power restoration could take several days or longer in some areas, and that customers need to ensure their homes can safely be reconnected.

"In addition to damaging CenterPoint Energy's electric infrastructure and equipment, severe weather may have caused damage to customer-owned equipment" such as the weatherhead, which is where power enters the home, the company said.

Customers must have repairs completed by a qualified electrician before service can be restored, CenterPoint added.

High-voltage transmission towers that were torn apart and downed power lines pose a twofold challenge for utility companies 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.

STORM CAUGHT MANY OFF GUARD

Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez reported late Friday that three people died during the storm, including an 85-year-old woman whose home caught fire after being struck by lightning and a 60-year-old man who had tried to use his vehicle to power his oxygen tank.

Houston Mayor John Whitmire previously said at least four other people were killed in the city when the storms swept through Harris County, which includes Houston.

School districts in the Houston area canceled classes Friday for more than 400,000 students and government offices were closed.

Houston Independent School District Superintendent Mike Miles said Saturday that he hoped to reopen schools on Monday, but that is dependent upon the restoration of electricity in school buildings.

"If a school doesn't have power, it will remain closed," Miles told reporters during a tour of the heavily damaged Sinclair Elementary School.

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.

Noelle Delgado, executive director of Houston Pets Alive, said she pulled up at the animal rescue on Thursday night and found the dogs and cats — more than 30 in all — uninjured, but the building's 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."

STATE AND FEDERAL RECOVERY ASSISTANCE ON THE WAY

In light of the storm damage, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and Whitmire both signed disaster declarations, paving the way for state and federal storm recovery assistance.

A separate disaster declaration from President Joe Biden makes federal funding available to people in seven Texas counties — including Harris — that have been affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes and flooding since April 26.

Usyk beats Fury by split decision to become the first undisputed heavyweight champion in 24 years

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Oleksandr Usyk has been shorter, lighter and older than all of his opponents since he moved up to the heavyweight division.

Usyk's heart and skill are enormous, and he overcame a major size disadvantage against Tyson Fury to become the world's first undisputed heavyweight boxing champion in 24 years.

Usyk defeated Fury by split decision on Sunday, knocking down his hulking opponent in the ninth round and eventually earning a narrow win on two scorecards. The 37-year-old Ukrainian is the first heavyweight to hold every major title belt since Lennox Lewis.

Usyk (22-0) added Fury's WBC title to his own WBA, IBF and WBO belts with a spectacular late-round rally in a back-and-forth matchup between two previously unbeaten champions from a strong era of heavyweight boxing. Two judges favored Usyk, 115-112 and 114-113, while the third gave it to Fury, 114-113.

"It's a great time. It's a great day," said Usyk, who is 6 inches shorter than Fury and weighed in 30 pounds lighter this week.

Usyk started quickly, but then had to survive while the confident, charismatic Fury dominated the middle rounds. Usyk surged in the final rounds, just as the Olympic gold medalist has done so many times in his career, taking control with a dominant eighth and nearly stopping Fury in the ninth.

Usyk hurt the 6-foot-9 Fury (34-1-1) with a left hand and eventually sent him sprawling into a corner in the final seconds of the round, getting credit for a knockdown right before Fury was saved by the bell. Fury struggled to mount a consistent attack after nearly getting stopped, and the knockdown turned out to be the decisive factor in the decision.

"Thank you so much to my team," Usyk said while fighting back tears in the ring. "It's a big opportunity for me, for my family, for my country. Slava Ukraini!"

Fury kissed Usyk on the head after the final bell, and Usyk hugged Fury several moments after the decision was read. Fury also said he wants the rematch in October.

"I believe I won that fight," Fury said. "I believe he won a few of the rounds, but I won the majority of them, and I believe it was one of those what-can-you-do, one of them ... decisions in boxing. We both put on a good fight, best we can do.

"You know, his country is at war, so people are siding with a country at war. But make no mistake, I won that fight, in my opinion, and I'll be back. I've got a rematch clause."

Usyk is the first undisputed heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis held the honor for five months in 1999 and 2000. He is also now the lineal heavyweight champion by beating Fury, who beat Wladimir Klitschko to earn that distinction in 2015.

After moving up from cruiserweight, Usyk upset Anthony Joshua to win three title belts in 2021. He kept them through a rematch and another defense while angling for the ultimate payday of a fight against Fury in Saudi Arabia.

Usyk landed 41% of his 407 punches, while Fury landed just 31.7% of his 496 punches, according to

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CompuBox statistics. Usyk both threw (260 to 210) and landed (122 to 95) more power punches.

Usyk has now joined the elite club of fighters who held every major world championship belt at heavy-weight — and he is the first to do it in the four-belt era, which began in 2007. The list of undisputed champions includes Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Mike Tyson.

The most recent undisputed heavyweight champ was Lewis, who beat Evander Holyfield in late 1999 and enjoyed a five-month reign. He soon lost a title because of the territorial squabbles that have beset boxing for the past quarter-century and routinely prevented the biggest fights from happening.

Fury and Usyk both asked for this matchup, and they finally got together in the ring largely because of the involvement of Saudi Arabia, which made the financial rewards simply too great for the fighters' typically recalcitrant promoters and the sanctioning bodies to reject. Fury will reportedly make more than \$100 million for the bout.

To reach the lucrative Western pay-per-view audience, the bout didn't begin until 1:45 a.m. on Sunday morning at Kingdom Arena.

Usyk was aggressive from the opening bell, repeatedly getting inside his taller opponent's defenses to land body shots. Fury was his usual carefree self, even putting both arms on the ropes in a corner and pretending to dodge punches when Usyk advanced.

But Fury picked up his attack from the third round, working his size advantage and his typically unpredictable movement to throw right hands behind his sharp jab. Fury appeared to hurt Usyk with body shots right at the belt, and he rocked Usyk twice in the sixth with vicious uppercuts.

Usyk rallied, bloodying Fury's nose and face with a left hand. Usyk then punished Fury in the ninth, hitting him with another concussive left before battering the British star around the ring. Fury sagged into a corner while barely staying on his feet with about 10 seconds left in the round.

Referee Mark Nelson could have stopped the fight, but he ordered Usyk away for a standing count interrupted by the bell.

On the undercard at Kingdom Arena, Australia's Jai Opetaia retained his IBF cruiserweight title with a clear unanimous decision over Mairis Briedis. Ireland's Anthony Cacace also claimed the IBF super featherweight title when he stopped Joe Cordina in the eighth round.

Earlier, 41-year-old former light heavyweight champion Sergey Kovalev returned to the ring for only the second time since 2019 with a decision loss to Sweden's Robin Sirwan Safar.

706 people named Kyle got together in Texas. It wasn't enough for a world record.

Associated Press undefined

KYLE, Texas (AP) — How many people named Kyle can fit in one place? For one Texas city, not enough.

Another attempt by the city of Kyle, Texas, to break the world record for the largest gathering of people with one name fell short Saturday despite 706 Kyles of all ages turning up at a park in the suburbs of Austin.

The crown is currently held by a town in Bosnia that got 2,325 people named Ivan together in 2017, according to Guinness World Records.

It's not the first time the Kyles have come gunning for the Ivans. Last year, the official count at what has become known as the Gathering of the Kyles clocked in at 1,490 in the fast-growing Texas city that is about 37 miles south of Austin, the state's capital.

Kyle is not a chart-topper among popular names in the U.S., according to the Social Security Administration, which annually tracks the names given to girls and boys in each state. The most recent data showed Kyle ranked 416th among male names in 2023.

By comparison, Ivan ranked 153.

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters rally in the rain in DC to mark a painful present and past

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of protesters rallied within sight of the U.S. Capitol, chanting pro-Palestinian slogans and voicing criticism of the Israeli and American governments as they marked a painful present — the war in Gaza — and past — the exodus of some 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were forced from what is now Israel when the state was created in 1948.

About 400 demonstrators braved steady rains to rally on the National Mall on the 76th anniversary of what is called the Nakba, the Arabic word for catastrophe. In January, thousands of pro-Palestinian activists had gathered in the nation's capital in one of the larger protests in recent memory.

There were calls in support of Palestinian rights and an immediate end to Israeli military operations in Gaza. "No peace on stolen land" and "End the killings, stop the crime/Israel out of Palestine," echoed through the crowd.

Protesters also focused their anger on President Joe Biden, whom they accuse of feigning concern over the death toll in Gaza.

"Biden Biden, you will see/genocide's your legacy," they said. The Democratic president was in Atlanta on Saturday.

Reem Lababdi, a George Washington University sophomore who said she was pepper-sprayed by police last week when they broke up an on-campus protest encampment, acknowledged that the rain seemed to hold down the numbers.

"I'm proud of every single person who turned out in this weather to speak their minds and send their message," she said.

This year's commemoration was fueled by anger over the ongoing siege of Gaza. The latest Israel-Hamas war began when Hamas and other militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking an additional 250 hostage. Palestinian militants still hold about 100 captives, and Israel's military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Speaker Osama Abuirshad, executive director of American Muslims for Palestine, gestured at the Capitol building dome behind him.

"This Congress does not speak for us. This Congress does not represent the will of the people," he said. "We're paying for the bombs. We're paying for the F-16s and F-35s. And then we do the poor Palestinians a favor and send some food."

Speakers also expressed anger over the violent crackdown on multiple pro-Palestinian protest camps at universities across the country. In recent weeks, long-term encampments have been broken up by police at more than 60 schools; just under 3,000 protesters have been arrested.

"The students are the conscience of America," said Abuirshad, who compared the university demonstrations to earlier protest movements against the Vietnam War and apartheid-era South Africa. "That's why the authorities are working so hard to silence them."

In addition to pressing Israel and the Biden administration for an immediate end to hostilities in Gaza, activists have long pushed for the right of return for Palestinian refugees — an Israeli red line in decades of start-and-stop negotiations.

After the Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment, Israel refused to allow them to return because it would have resulted in a Palestinian majority within Israel's borders. Instead, they became a seemingly permanent refugee community that now numbers some 6 million, with most living in slum-like urban refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. In Gaza, the refugees and their descendants make up around three-quarters of the population.

At several points during the rally and subsequent march, protesters performed a call-and-response, with the speaker naming different cities in Israel and the occupied territories. The response: "raageh!" — Arabic for "I'm returning!"

The demonstrators marched for several blocks on Pennsylvania and Constitution avenues, with police cars closing the streets ahead of them. One lone counter-protester, waving an Israeli flag, attempted to march near the front of the procession. At one point, one of the demonstrators snatched his flag and ran away.

With tensions rising, members of the protesters' "safety team" formed a tight phalanx around the man, both to impede his progress and protect him from hot-heads in the crowd. The standoff was broken when a police officer intervened, led the man away and told him to go home.

Trump receives NRA endorsement as he vows to protect gun rights

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Former President Donald Trump urged gun owners to vote in the 2024 election as he addressed thousands of members of the National Rifle Association, which officially endorsed him just before Trump took the stage at their annual meeting in Texas on Saturday.

"We've got to get gun owners to vote," Trump said. "I think you're a rebellious bunch. But let's be rebellious and vote this time."

Trump, in his speech, said the Second Amendment "is very much on the ballot" in November, alleging that, if Democratic President Joe Biden "gets four more years they are coming for your guns, 100% certain. Crooked Joe has a 40-year-record of trying to rip firearms out of the hands of law-abiding citizens."

The Biden administration has taken a number of steps to try to combat gun violence, including a new rule that aims to close a loophole that has allowed tens of thousands of guns to be sold every year by unlicensed dealers who do not perform background checks.

Trump has pledged to continue to defend the Second Amendment, which he claims is "under siege," and has called himself "the best friend gun owners have ever had in the White House" as the United States 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 Biden, specifically for remarks that Trump made this year after a school shooting in Iowa. Trump called the incident "very terrible" only to later say that "we have to get over it. We have to move forward."

Trump, during his speech, also laced into independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., calling him "radical left" and "a disaster," and noting that Kennedy had once called the NRA a "terror group."

"Don't think about it. Don't waste your vote," he said. "He calls you a terrorist group, and I call you the backbone of America." (Kennedy later said in a Fox News interview that he didn't remember his 2018 tweet. "I don't consider them a terror group, and I support the Second Amendment," he said.)

Trump noted he will be speaking next week at the Libertarian Party's convention and said he will urge its members to vote for him.

"We have to join with them," he said. "We have to get that 3% because we can't take a chance on Joe Biden winning."

Earlier Saturday, Trump's campaign and the Republican National Committee announced the creation of a new "Gun Owners for Trump" coalition that includes gun rights activists and those who work in the firearms industry.

Biden has made curtailing gun violence a major part of his administration and reelection campaign, creating the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention overseen by Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden also has urged Congress to ban so-called assault weapons — something Democrats shied from even just a few years ago.

"Tonight, Donald Trump confirmed that he will do exactly what the NRA tells him to do — even if it means more death, more shootings, and more suffering," said Biden spokesman Ammar Moussa.

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, Trump also brought up the criminal cases against him as his hush money trial heads into the final stretch next week and accused Democrats of being behind these cases because he is Biden's opponent.

"Never forget our enemies want to take away my freedom because I will never let them take away your freedom," he said.

Trump criticized Biden's border policies, repeating his pledge that he will order the largest domestic deportation operation. He spoke about abortion and warned Republicans not to be so extreme on abortion to remain electable.

"In my opinion, Republicans have not been talking about it intelligently. They haven't been talking about it with knowledge," he said. "Remember, speak from your heart. But you also have to get elected again."

Tunisians stage anti-migrant protest as the number of stranded in transit to Europe grows

By SAM METZ Associated Press

JEBENIANA, Tunisia (AP) — Hundreds of Tunisians marched through the streets of Jebeniana on Saturday to protest the presence of sub-Saharan migrants who have found themselves stranded as the country ramps up border patrol efforts.

Anti-migrant anger is mounting in impoverished towns like Jebeniana along the Tunisian coastline that have emerged as a launchpad for thousands of people hoping to reach Europe by boat.

Chanting slogans to oppose settling migrants in Tunisia, protesters demanded the government act to assist agricultural communities dealing with thousands of migrants living in tarpaulin encampments among their olive groves.

"You brought them here and it's your responsibility to send them back to their home countries," Moamen Salemi, a 63-year old retiree from nearby El Amra, said at the protest. "There is a shortage of food throughout the city of El Amra, including sugar, flour, bread and many other items."

A final stop for many who dream of a better life in Europe, Jebeniana and El Amra reflect the compounding problems facing Tunisia, a key transit point for migrants from Syria, Bangladesh and a variety of sub-Saharan African nations.

Law enforcement has expanded its presence in the two agricultural towns, where roughly 83,000 Tunisians live among a growing number of migrants from around the world.

Protesters say they have borne the cost of Tunisia's effort to prevent migrants from reaching the European Union less than a year after the country brokered an anti-migration pact with the 27-country bloc to better police its sea border and receive more than \$1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in aid.

The Tunisian Coast Guard has said it has prevented more than 21,000 migration attempts by land or sea this year. Fewer than 8,000 successfully traveled by boat from Tunisia to Italy in the first four months of 2024, a threefold decrease from 2023, according to the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR.

More Tunisians have traveled by makeshift boat to Italy this year than migrants from sub-Saharan African countries.

Anti-migrant protests erupted in the city of Sfax last year, months after Tunisian President Kais Saied called for measures to address violence and crime he said were caused by illegal immigration. But they are a new development in Jebeniana and El Amra, where a similar protest took place earlier this month.

Encampments sprung up and expanded on the outskirts of the two towns after local authorities started increasingly clearing them from Sfax last year.

The International Organization for Migration's Tunisia office has said roughly 7,000 migrants are living near Jebeniana and El Amra, though residents estimate the number could be much higher.

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

By SAMYA KULLAB and JOANNA KOZLOWSKA 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, controversial measures.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE LAW

Oleksii, 68, who runs a car repair shop in Kyiv, worries his business will have to shut down as he expects 70% of his workers will be mobilized. He asked that only his first name be used to allow him to speak freely.

"With the new law, people will be mobilized and we will have to shut down and stop paying taxes," Oleksii told The Associated Press on Saturday. He said it's very difficult to replace workers because of their specialized skills. Most of them are already in the armed forces, he said, adding that the law is "unfair" and "unclear."

Even essential municipal services will be affected. Viktor Kaminsky, the head of a municipal service department in Kyiv that fits households with heating and repairs utilities in public buildings, said he will struggle to replace mobilized staff and meet demand, even though the law allows him to retain half of workers deemed fit for service.

He said 60 of the 220 people working in Kaminsky's department will be eligible to be called up. "If they take 30 people from what we have, the problem is we don't have anyone to replace them," he said.

"There are pros and cons to this law," Kaminsky said. "It's hard to avoid the mobilization process now, compared to before when people were trying to get around it." But, he said, it would be better if essential workers like his were granted more exemptions.

Meanwhile, Oleksii Tarasenko, a deputy commander of a Ukrainian assault battalion, told AP that his men felt "awful" about the law's failure to address the issue of demobilization. Although many Ukrainian troops have been fighting since the war's early days, it remains unclear when and how they might be relieved of duty.

"It feels like a cruel injustice towards people who have been fighting for two years, and of course, it has a highly negative effect on the psychological state of soldiers and their families," Tarasenko said.

Early drafts of the law envisaged the demobilization of troops after 36 months, and the rotation of those serving on the front line for more than half a year. These clauses were dropped following a last-minute appeal by Ukraine's military leadership, concerned that the armed forces would be left without their best-trained and most experienced troops. The Ukrainian Defense Ministry is working on a separate demobilization law.

Tarasenko said that despite their weariness, his comrades could see the generals' point.

"We already see how many people are lacking, especially professional troops in the units. And simply allowing such professional people who have been through a lot to demobilize would be wrong," he said.

UKRAINIAN FORCES UNDER STRAIN

Ukraine has struggled for months to replenish depleted forces, as Russian troops are pushing ahead with a ground offensive that opened a new front in the northeast and put further pressure on Kyiv's over-

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stretched 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 northeastern Kharkiv region.

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. Mayor Ihor Terekhov said that five people were injured on Saturday in a Russian airstrike that hit a residential area. On Friday, Terekhov reported that Russian guided bombs killed at least three Kharkiv residents and injured 28 others.

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

Kharkiv regional Gov. Ihor Syniehubov on Saturday said that nearly 10,000 civilians had to be evacuated from front-line areas near the Russian border. Only 100 residents remain in Vovchansk, the border town at the center of Moscow's grinding push that's now largely in ruins. The town had a pre-war population of over 17,400.

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.

VOLUNTEERS AND RUNAWAYS

Rusyn is the head of recruitment for the 3rd Assault Brigade, one of the most popular among Ukrainian volunteers. He told AP that he saw a 15% increase in men joining the brigade, which fights in eastern Ukraine, in the past months. Most recruits are aged between 23-25, he said. Speaking at a training session in Kyiv, Rusyn and his recruits asked to be identified by their call signs only, citing security concerns.

"There is no alternative (to mobilization)," said Rohas, a 26-year old recruit. "One way or another, I believe that most men will end up in the ranks of the armed forces and by joining as a volunteer, you still get some preferences."

"Those who are afraid of being mobilized are not the ones hostage to this situation, it's those (soldiers) who are standing in formations of three where there should be 10. Those guys are hostages to this situation and they should be replaced, so that's why we are here," Rohas said.

Many Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022.

The Supreme Court last month said that 930 people were convicted of avoiding mobilization in 2023, a fivefold increase from the previous year.

Around 768,000 Ukrainian men aged 18-64 had been granted temporary protection in European Union countries as of last November, according to data from the bloc's statistical agency, Eurostat.

Kyiv has barred men under 60 from leaving the country since the start of the war, but some are exempt, including those who are disabled or have three or more dependent children. The Eurostat data does not specify how many of the men who have qualified for protection belong to these categories, nor how many others reached the EU from Ukraine's Russian-occupied territories in the east and south.

Unable to cross the border legally, some Ukrainian men risk death trying to swim across a river that separates 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.

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.

Member of Israel's War Cabinet says he'll quit the government June 8 unless there's a new war plan

By WAFAA SHURAF, JOE KRAUSS and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Benny Gantz, a popular centrist member of Israel's three-member War Cabinet, threatened Saturday to resign from the government if it doesn't adopt a new plan in three weeks' time for the war in Gaza, a decision that would leave Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu more reliant on far-right allies.

The announcement deepens a divide in Israel's leadership more than seven months into a war in which Israel has yet to accomplish its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning scores of hostages abducted in the militant group's Oct. 7 attack.

Gantz spelled out a six-point plan that includes the return of hostages, ending Hamas' rule, demilitarizing the Gaza Strip and establishing an international administration of civilian affairs with American, European, Arab and Palestinian cooperation. The plan also supports efforts to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia and widen military service to all Israelis.

He gave a June 8 deadline. "If you choose the path of fanatics and lead the entire nation to the abyss — we will be forced to quit the government," he said.

Netanyahu in a statement responded by saying Gantz had chosen to issue an ultimatum to the prime minister instead of to Hamas, and called his conditions "euphemisms" for Israel's defeat.

Gantz, a longtime political rival of Netanyahu, joined his coalition and the War Cabinet in the early days of the war in a gesture at national unity. His departure would leave Netanyahu more beholden to far-right allies who believe Israel should occupy Gaza and rebuild Jewish settlements there.

Gantz spoke days after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, the third member of the War Cabinet, said he would not remain in his post if Israel elected to reoccupy Gaza, and called on the government to make plans for a Palestinian administration.

In what was seen as a swipe at Netanyahu, Gantz said "personal and political considerations have begun to penetrate into the holy of holies of Israel's security." Netanyahu's critics accuse the prime minister of seeking to prolong the war to avoid new elections, allegations he denies.

Polls suggest Gantz as the most likely candidate to be the next prime minister. That would expose Netanyahu to prosecution on longstanding corruption charges.

Netanyahu is under growing pressure on multiple fronts. Hard-liners want the military offensive on Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah to press ahead. Top ally the U.S. and others warn against the offensive on a city where more than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million had sheltered — hundreds of thousands have now fled — and they threaten to scale back support over Gaza's humanitarian and hunger crisis.

The U.S. national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, will be in Saudi Arabia and Israel this weekend to discuss the war and is scheduled on Sunday to meet with Netanyahu, who has declared that Israel would "stand alone" if needed.

Many Israelis, anguished over the hostages and accusing Netanyahu of putting political interests ahead of all else, want a deal to stop the fighting. There was fresh frustration Friday when the military said its troops in Gaza found the bodies of three hostages killed by Hamas on Oct. 7. Israel on Saturday announced the discovery of the body of a fourth hostage.

Thousands of Israelis again rallied Saturday evening to demand a deal along with new elections. Some police in Tel Aviv responded with water cannons.

"This government is taking the country to places that I don't want to see my country go," said one protester, Noam Fagi.

The latest talks in pursuit of a cease-fire in Gaza, mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt, have brought little.

A new effort to deliver desperately needed aid to Gaza appeared to falter Saturday. Several Israeli tanks fired warning shots in an apparent attempt to clear the way for trucks ferrying food supplies on their way from a new U.S.-built pier. One Palestinian was killed, according to Associated Press journalists at the

scene. Hundreds of Palestinians gathered around the stopped trucks and carried away boxes.

The Hamas Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of around 30 more. The Israeli offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza, local health officials say.

Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local Palestinians who are not affiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. But Netanyahu said it is impossible to plan for such a postwar authority before Hamas is defeated.

An ultimatum raises pressure on Netanyahu to make postwar plans for Gaza, even as fighting rages

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under mounting pressure from his own War Cabinet and his country's closest ally over postwar plans for Gaza, even as the war with Hamas shows no sign of ending.

On Saturday, Benny Gantz, a member of the War Cabinet and Netanyahu's main political rival, said he would leave the government on June 8 if it did not formulate a new war plan including an international, Arab and Palestinian administration to handle civilian affairs in Gaza.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, the third member of the Cabinet, has also called for a plan for Palestinian administration, and said in a speech this week that he wouldn't agree to Israel governing Gaza itself.

The United States has meanwhile called for a revitalized Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza with assistance from Saudi Arabia and other Arab states ahead of eventual statehood. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is expected to push those plans when he visits Israel on Sunday.

So far, Netanyahu has brushed them all off. But Gantz' ultimatum could reduce his margin for maneuver.

Netanyahu has ruled out any role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, saying he plans to hand civil responsibilities over to local Palestinians unaffiliated with it or Hamas. But he has also said that it's impossible to make any such plans until Hamas is defeated because it has threatened anyone who cooperates with Israel.

Netanyahu's government is also deeply opposed to Palestinian statehood.

In a statement issued after the ultimatum, Netanyahu said Gantz' conditions would amount to "defeat for Israel, abandoning most of the hostages, leaving Hamas intact and establishing a Palestinian state."

Netanyahu added, however, that he still thought the emergency government was important for prosecuting the war, and that he "expects Gantz to clarify his positions to the public."

Gantz' departure would leave Netanyahu even more beholden to his far-right coalition allies, including National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who could more easily bring down the government if he doesn't meet their demands.

They have called for Israel to reoccupy Gaza, encourage the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from the territory and reestablish Jewish settlements that were removed in 2005.

Critics of Netanyahu, including thousands who have joined weekly protests in recent months, accuse him of prolonging the war for his own political survival. Gantz, who brought his centrist party into the government days after the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war, warned Netanyahu not to "choose the path of fanatics and lead the entire nation to the abyss."

Netanyahu denies such accusations, saying he is focused on defeating Hamas and that elections would distract from the war effort.

Polls indicate Netanyahu would be driven from office if new elections were held, with Gantz most likely to replace him. That would probably mark the end of Netanyahu's long political career and expose him to prosecution over longstanding corruption charges.

Israeli media have reported growing discontent within the country's security establishment over the course of the war, with officials warning that the lack of any such planning was turning tactical victories

into strategic defeat.

With no one else to govern Gaza, Hamas has repeatedly regrouped, even in the hardest-hit areas that Israel previously said it had cleared. Heavy fighting has erupted in recent days in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in the north and the Zeitoun neighborhood on the outskirts of Gaza City.

Israeli troops are meanwhile pushing into parts of the southern city of Rafah in what they say is a limited operation. The fighting there has displaced some 800,000 people, many who had already fled from other areas, and severely hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Indirect talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt aimed at a cease-fire and the release of scores of hostages held by Hamas meanwhile appear at a standstill, with many of the hostages' families and their supporters blaming the Israeli government.

"Something has gone wrong," Gantz said in his address. "Essential decisions were not taken. Acts of leadership required to ensure victory were not carried out. A small minority has taken over the command bridge of the Israeli ship and is leading it toward a wall of rocks."

Jesus is their savior, Trump is their candidate. Ex-president's backers say he shares faith, values

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

As Donald Trump increasingly infuses his campaign with Christian trappings while coasting to a third Republican presidential nomination, his support is as strong as ever among evangelicals and other conservative Christians.

"Trump supports Jesus, and without Jesus, America will fall," said Kimberly Vaughn of Florence, Kentucky, as she joined other supporters of the former president entering a campaign rally near Dayton, Ohio.

Many of the T-shirts and hats that were worn and sold at the rally in March proclaimed religious slogans such as "Jesus is my savior, Trump is my president" and "God, Guns & Trump." One man's shirt declared, "Make America Godly Again," with the image of a luminous Jesus putting his supportive hands on Trump's shoulders.

Many attendees said in interviews they believed Trump shared their Christian faith and values. Several cited their opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, particularly to transgender expressions.

Nobody voiced concern about Trump's past conduct or his present indictments on criminal charges, including allegations that he tried to hide hush money payments to a porn actor during his 2016 campaign. Supporters saw Trump as representing a religion of second chances.

And for many, Trump is a champion of Christianity and patriotism.

"I believe he believes in God and our military men and women, in our country, in America," said Tammy Houston of New Lexington, Ohio.

"I put my family first, and on a larger scale, it's America first," said Sherrie Cotterman of Sidney, Ohio. "And I would any day of the week, take a president that openly knows he needs the strength from God over his own."

In many ways, this is a familiar story.

About 8 in 10 white evangelical Christians supported Trump in 2020, according to AP VoteCast, and Pew Research Center's validated voter survey found that a similar share supported him in 2016.

But this is a new campaign, and that support has remained durable — even though Republican voters in the early primaries had several openly conservative Christian candidates to choose from, none of whom faced the legal troubles and misconduct allegations that Trump does. In the Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina Republican primary contests earlier this year, Trump won between 55% and 69% of white evangelical voters, according to AP VoteCast.

Trump even criticized one competitor, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, for signing strict abortion curbs into law. In past years, some Trump surrogates have portrayed Trump as friendly to the LGBTQ+ community.

Trump was the only Republican candidate facing scores of criminal charges, ranging from allegations that he conspired to overturn his 2020 election defeat to his current trial on allegations he falsified busi-

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ness records in seeking illegally to sway the 2016 election with hush money to porn actor Stormy Daniels.

Trump was also the only GOP candidate with a history of casino ventures and two divorces, as well as allegations of sexual misconduct — one of them affirmed by a civil court verdict.

Republican primary voters still overwhelmingly chose Trump.

This has frustrated a minority of conservative evangelicals who see Trump as an unrepentant poser, using the Bible and prayer sessions for photo props. They see him as lacking real faith and facing credible, serious misconduct allegations while campaigning with incendiary rhetoric and authoritarian ambitions.

Karen Swallow Prior, a Christian author and literary scholar who has spoken against fellow evangelicals' embrace of Trump, said this support in 2024 is familiar but "intensified."

In the past, she said Trump supporters hoped but weren't certain that Trump shared their Christian faith.

"Now his supporters believe themselves," she said. "Despite the fact that Trump clearly wavers on abortion and he wavers on LGBTQ issues, those things are just ignored, they're just erased out of the narrative."

At the Ohio rally, several attendees cited their belief that Trump has followed the Christian path of repenting and starting a new life.

"We've all come from sinning. Jesus sat with sinners, so he's going to sit with Trump," Vaughn said. "It's not about where Trump came from, it's about where he's going and where he's trying to take us."

The Ohio rally, like other Trump events, featured a recording of the national anthem sung by some of those convicted for crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, whom Trump called "patriots."

At the rally's entrance, one group handed out pamphlets urging attendees both to "trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation" and to support the "J6 patriots."

Caleb Cinnamon, 37, of Dayton, identified as a Christian and said opposing abortion is a top priority. He cited Trump's three Supreme Court appointments, who proved decisive in the 2022 decision overturning of the Roe v. Wade precedent that had legalized abortion nationwide.

"Donald Trump's really the first president who's not only vocalized an anti-abortion stance but also put action behind it," he said. "Republicans since the 1990s were saying 'We're going to do this about abortion,' and then they don't."

Jody Picagli of Englewood, Ohio, said her Catholic faith and views on abortion are central.

"I'm a big right-to-life person," she said. "That's huge for me. And just morals. I think the moral compass is so out of whack right now. And we need religion and church back in here."

She acknowledged that, with the Supreme Court turning the abortion issue over to the states, a future President Trump may not impact abortion law.

"But I know he'll never go to an abortion clinic and visit it, like our vice president did," she said, alluding to Kamala Harris' tour of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Minnesota in March.

Christian supporters of Trump did also cite non-religious issues — from foreign policy and immigration to gas prices and inflation.

Robert Jones, president of the Public Religion Research Institute and an author of books on white supremacy in American Christianity, said the strong evangelical support for Trump isn't surprising. But he said that in a 2023 PRRI poll, less than half of white evangelicals said that abortion was a critical issue to them personally. More than half said that five others were a critical issue, including human trafficking, public schools, rising prices, immigration and crime.

"One of the biggest myths about white evangelical support for Trump is this idea that it's really about abortion and they're holding their nose and voting for Trump," Jones said.

He added that Trump's rhetoric about immigrants "invading the country and changing our cultural heritage" resonates with his audience.

The slogan "Make America Great Again" echoes an "ethno-religious vision of a white Christian America, just barely underneath the surface," Jones said.

He acknowledged the racial lines aren't absolute, with Trump attracting Black supporters such as South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott.

The Ohio rally included a vast majority of white attendees but with some Black and other ethnic groups represented.

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Earlier this year, Trump hit multiple applause lines in speaking to a conservative audience at the National Religious Broadcasters convention.

"We will protect Christians in our schools and in our military and our government," Trump said. "We will protect God in our public square. ... I will protect the content that is pro-God."

Trump pledged a federal task force to fight the "persecution against Christians in America" and "the toxic poison of gender ideology," saying "God created two genders, male and female."

Trump's rallies take on the symbols, rhetoric and agenda of Christian nationalism, which typically includes a belief that America was founded to be a Christian nation and seeks to privilege Christianity in public life.

Trump endorsed a Bible edition that includes U.S. founding documents and the lyrics to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA."

"This is a Bible specifically for a kind of white evangelical audience that sees themselves as the rightful inheritors of the country," Jones said, citing a 2023 PRRI poll in which about half of white evangelicals agreed that God intended America as a promised land for European Christians.

Trump's campaign events have the feel of a worship service. The former president has shared a "God Made Trump" video depicting him in messianic terms. Jones said Trump builds on the messianic theme with statements like, "They're not after me, they're after you. I'm just standing in the way."

But Mark DeVine, a Southern Baptist pastor and seminary professor from Birmingham, Alabama, wrote in the online journal American Reformer that conservative Christians support Trump because "elected Democrats and Democrat-serving, unelected bureaucrats" have an "evil" agenda on issues ranging from abortion to gender to the border to pandemic lockdowns that kept churches closed.

"Trumpers want to shield themselves, their children, their communities, and the nation they love from the woke, totalitarian onslaught now being unleashed upon them where they live, work, study, play, and worship," he wrote.

At the Ohio rally, some said they believed the nation or its founding documents, such as the Bill of Rights, had Christian origins, though historians dispute such assertions.

Some Trump supporters voiced hope for a more Christian America.

Thomas Isbell of Greensboro, North Carolina, who has set up vending booths for years at Trump rallies around the country, said his "God, Guns & Trump" shirts are a top seller.

"It's a Christian country," he said, adding that if he were president, he would only allow public worship by Christians.

"We're not going to set up a temple to no other gods in our land," he said.

6 people killed, 10 others injured in Idaho when pickup crashes into passenger van

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (AP) — Six people were killed Saturday in Idaho in a two-car accident that included a large passenger van, authorities said.

Ten others were injured in the crash on U.S. Highway 20 in Idaho Falls and taken to local hospitals, Idaho State Police said in a statement.

An eastbound pickup crossed the centerline about 5:30 a.m. and hit a westbound passenger van, police said.

The van's driver and five passengers died from their injuries at the scene. Nine other passengers in the van and the pickup's driver were hospitalized, according to police.

Police have not released other details of the accident, including where the 15 people in the van were from or where they were headed. Idaho State Police, which is handling the investigation, did not immediately return phones messages or emails Saturday to The Associated Press.

As ethnic armed group claims to have captured a town in western Myanmar, Muslim Rohingyas flee again

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A powerful ethnic armed group fighting Myanmar's military government in the country's western state of Rakhine claimed Saturday to have seized a town near the border with Bangladesh, marking the latest in a series of victories for foes of the country's military government.

Members of the state's Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority, targets of deadly army-directed violence in 2017, appear to have been the main victims of fighting in the town of Buthidaung, where the Arakan Army claims to have chased out forces of the military government.

There are contradictory accounts of who is to blame for the reported burning of the town, compelling its Rohingya residents to flee.

The competing claims could not be verified independently, with access to the internet and mobile phone services in the area mostly cut off.

Khaing Thukha, a spokesperson for the Arakan Army, told The Associated Press by text message from an undisclosed location that his group had seized Buthidaung after capturing all the military's outposts there.

The Arakan Army is the well-trained and well-armed military wing of the Rakhine ethnic minority movement, which seeks autonomy from Myanmar's central government. It is also a member of an armed ethnic group alliance that recently gained strategic territory in the country's northeast on the border with China.

The group said in a Saturday statement on the Telegram messaging platform that fighting was ongoing on the outskirts of Buthidaung as its troops chased after the retreating army soldiers and local Muslims it said were fighting alongside them.

Khaing Thukha said the Arakan Army's troops were caring for Muslim villagers fleeing the fighting.

He denied allegations by Rohingya activists on social media that the Arakan Army had set fire to the town, which is mostly populated by Rohingya.

Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations, but they are widely regarded by many in the country's Buddhist majority, including members of the Rakhine minority, as having illegally migrated from Bangladesh. The Rohingya face a great amount of prejudice and are generally denied citizenship and other basic rights.

The Rohingya were the targets of a brutal counterinsurgency campaign incorporating rape and murder that saw an estimated 740,000 flee to neighboring Bangladesh as their villages were burned down by government troops in 2017.

Ethnic Rakhine nationalist supporters of the Arakan Army were also among the persecutors of the Rohingya minority. However, the 2021 military coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi shifted political alignments, with a resistance movement against military rule -- a position shared by the Arakan Army -- counting the Rohingya population among its allies.

Lingering tensions between the ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and the more than 600,000 Rohingya are still living in Rakhine flared when the government in February recruited Rohingya living in displacement camps to do military service. Both coercion and promises of citizenship were reportedly employed to get them to join.

Nay San Lwin, a co-founder of the Free Rohingya Coalition group based outside of Myanmar, said in a Friday email to the AP that the Arakan Army had warned Buthidaung's Rohingya residents to evacuate the town by 10 a.m. on Saturday, and that more than 200,000 Rohingya seeking refuge there in houses, government buildings, a hospital, and schools, were in an extremely dangerous situation.

He also alleged that the Arakan Army had fired on a school and a hospital where displaced Rohingya are sheltering, resulting in deaths and injuries.

Aung Kyaw Moe, a Rohingya who is deputy minister for human rights in the resistance movement's shadow National Unity Government, wrote on his Facebook page on Saturday that Buthidaung had been burned to "a pile of ash" and that its residents had fled to rice fields outside of town.

He did not clearly lay blame for the arson, but said the situation was dire for those who fled.

"A comprehensive and impartial investigation needs to be carried out and those responsible must be

held accountable," he wrote. "Revolution against the military dictatorship is not a license to do anything you want. 'War has rules.'"

The Arakan Army's Khaing Thukha described the allegations his group was responsible were baseless, claiming the houses caught fire due to the airstrikes by the military government. He also said retreating army troops and what he called their allies in "terrorist organizations" — meaning Rohingya guerrilla groups — and local Muslims inducted into the military also set fire to houses as they retreated.

The military government has a well-established record of burning down villages as it battles pro-democracy and ethnic separatist groups opposed to military rule

6 Penn students among 19 pro-Palestinian protesters arrested during attempt to occupy building

By RON TODT Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A half-dozen University of Pennsylvania students were among 19 pro-Palestinian protesters arrested during an attempt to occupy a school building, university police said Saturday.

Their arrests came a week after authorities broke up a protest encampment on campus and arrested nine students — and as other colleges across the country, anxious to prepare for commencement season, have either negotiated agreements with students or called in police to dismantle protest camps.

Members of Penn Students Against the Occupation of Palestine announced the action Friday at the school's Fisher-Bennett Hall, urging supporters to bring "flags, pots, pans, noise-makers, megaphones" and other items, the University of Pennsylvania Division of Public Safety said in a news release.

Officers could be seen closing in "within the hour," The Philadelphia Inquirer reported. University police supported by city police then escorted the protesters out and secured the building, news outlets reported.

Police said after clearing the building that they recovered "lock-picking tools and homemade metal shields fashioned from oil drums."

Exit doors had been secured with zip ties and barbed wire and barricaded with metal chairs and desks, while windows were covered by newspaper and cardboard, and bike racks and metal chairs blocked entrances, police said.

Seven of the students arrested on Friday remained in custody Saturday awaiting felony charges, including one person who assaulted an officer, campus police said. A dozen were issued citations for failing to disperse and follow police commands. They have been released from custody.

The attempted occupation of Fisher-Bennett Hall came a week after city and campus police broke up a two-week encampment on the campus, arresting 33 people, nine of whom were students and two dozen of whom had "no Penn affiliation," according to university officials.

Meanwhile, a group protesting the war in Gaza and demanding that the University of Chicago divest from companies doing business with Israel temporarily took over a building on the school's campus Friday afternoon.

Members of the group surrounded the Institute of Politics building around 5 p.m. while others made their way inside, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

The Chicago protest follows the May 7 clearing of a pro-Palestinian tent encampment at the school by police. University of Chicago administrators had initially adopted a permissive approach, but said earlier this month that the protest had crossed a line and caused growing concerns about safety.

On Friday, campus police officers using riot shields gained access to the Institute of Politics building and scuffled with protesters. Some protesters climbed from a second-floor window, according to the Sun-Times.

The school said protesters attempted to bar the entrance, damaged university property and ignored directives to clear the way, and that those inside the building left when campus police officers entered.

"The University of Chicago is fundamentally committed to upholding the rights of protesters to express a wide range of views," school spokesperson Gerald McSwiggan said in a statement. "At the same time, university policies make it clear that protests cannot jeopardize public safety, disrupt the university's operations or involve the destruction of property."

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No arrests or injuries were reported.

Students and others have set up tent encampments on campuses around the country to protest the Israel-Hamas war, pressing colleges to cut financial ties with Israel. Tensions over the war have been high on campuses since the fall but the pro-Palestinian demonstrations spread quickly following an April 18 police crackdown on an encampment at Columbia University.

The demonstrations reached all corners of the United States, becoming its largest campus protest movement in decades, and spread to other countries, including many in Europe.

Lately, some protesters have taken down their tents, as at Harvard, where student activists this week said the encampment had "outlasted its utility with respect to our demands." Others packed up after striking deals with college administrators who offered amnesty for protesters, discussions around their investments, and other concessions. On many other campuses, colleges have called in police to clear demonstrations.

Nearly 3,000 people have been arrested on U.S. campuses over the past month. As summer break approaches, there have been fewer new arrests and campuses have been calmer. Still, colleges have been vigilant for disruptions to commencement ceremonies.

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

On Thursday, police began dismantling a pro-Palestinian encampment at DePaul University in Chicago, hours after the school's president told students to leave the area or face arrest.

Sean 'Diddy' Combs abuse allegations: A timeline of key events

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Newly released video appears to show Sean "Diddy" Combs beating his former singing protege and girlfriend Cassie in a Los Angeles hotel in 2016.

The video was aired by CNN Friday six months after the R&B singer filed a lawsuit that set off a wave of similar cases and public allegations against one of the most influential music moguls of the past three decades.

Here is a look at the key events that have unfolded since late last year.

NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Cassie says in a lawsuit that Combs subjected her to years of abuse, including beatings and rape. Cassie, whose legal name is Cassandra Ventura, signed to Combs' label in 2005, and the two were on-again-off-again romantic partners for more than a decade starting in 2007. The lawsuit filed in federal court says Combs was "prone to uncontrollable rage" and subjected her to "savagely" beatings. It says he plied her with drugs, forced her to have sex with other men, and raped her in her home as she was trying to end the relationship in 2018. Combs, through his attorney, "vehemently denies" the accusations.

NOVEMBER 17, 2023

With staggering speed, Ventura's lawsuit is settled the day after it is filed. The terms of the agreement are kept confidential. "We have decided to resolve this matter amicably," Combs says in a statement. "I wish Cassie and her family all the best. Love."

NOVEMBER 23, 2023

Two more women accuse Combs of sexual abuse in lawsuits filed on the eve of the expiration of the Adult Survivors Act, a New York law permitting victims of sexual abuse a one-year window to file civil action regardless of the statute of limitations. The lawsuits, filed by Joi Dickerson and another woman who was not named, allege acts of sexual assault, beatings and forced drugging in the early 1990s by Combs, then a talent director, party promoter and rising figure in New York City's hip-hop community. Combs' attorneys called the allegations false.

NOVEMBER 28, 2023

Combs temporarily steps down as chairman of his cable television network, Revolt, because of the wave of sexual abuse allegations. It would be one of several business setbacks for Combs brought on by the

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lawsuits.

DECEMBER 6, 2023

A woman alleges in another lawsuit that in 2003 when she was 17, Combs and two other men raped her. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Manhattan says she was living in a Detroit suburb and was flown to a New York studio, where she was given drugs and alcohol that made her incapable of consenting to sex, and the men took turns raping her. Combs says in a statement that "I did not do any of the awful things being alleged. I will fight for my name, my family and for the truth."

FEBRUARY 26, 2024

A music producer files a lawsuit alleging Combs sexually assaulted him and forced him to have sex with prostitutes. The lawsuit gives a long list of potentially illegal activities dealing with drugs and sex that the producer says he witnessed. A lawyer for Combs calls the allegations "pure fiction."

March 25, 2024

Homeland Security Investigations serves search warrants in early morning raids on Combs' homes in Los Angeles and Miami in what officials tell The Associated Press is a sex-trafficking investigation. Combs was at one of his homes in Miami at the time. His two sons, at his home in Los Angeles, were handcuffed during the search, Combs' attorneys said. Officials did not say whether the raids were prompted by the civil lawsuits, but Combs' attorneys said they believed they were.

MARCH 26, 2024

Combs' lawyer calls the raids "a gross use of military-level force" and says Combs is "innocent and will continue to fight" to clear his name. The attorney, Aaron Dyer, says there is "no excuse for the excessive show of force and hostility exhibited by authorities or the way his children and employees were treated."

APRIL 4, 2024

A lawsuit that names Combs as a co-defendant alleges that his son Christian "King" Combs sexually assaulted a woman working on a yacht chartered by his father. The lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court says Sean Combs created the circumstances that led to the assault and paid to cover it up afterward. An attorney for the two men calls the allegations "outrageous."

APRIL 26, 2024

In the first major piece of legal pushback from Combs and his team, they file a motion to dismiss several elements of Dickerson's lawsuit because they were not illegal in 1991 when the alleged incidents occurred. While the legal objections are procedural, the filing also slams the "numerous false, offensive, and salacious accusations" in the lawsuit.

MAY 10, 2024

Combs asks a federal judge to dismiss the Dec. 6 lawsuit that alleged he and two co-defendants raped a 17-year-old girl from Michigan in a New York recording studio. Again, the objections are procedural — alleging the lawsuit was filed too late under the law — but the court document calls its claims "false and hideous."

May 17, 2024

CNN airs video that appears to show Combs attacking Ventura in hotel hallway in 2016. The video closely mirrors an assault described in her lawsuit, which said Combs had already punched her that night, and she was trying to leave the InterContinental Hotel in Los Angeles when he woke and came after her. In the footage, a man who appears to be Diddy, wearing only a towel, punches Ventura, kicks her, and throws her on to the floor. The lawsuit alleges Combs paid \$50,000 to take away the video at the time. Combs' representatives had no immediate comment. The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office said it hadn't been presented with a case in the attack depicted in the video. And that even if law enforcement presented a case to prosecutors, the statute of limitations would apply, preventing them from charging Combs, the office said in a statement posted on social media Friday

US intelligence suggests American who vanished in Syria in 2017 has died, daughter says she was told

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials have developed specific and highly credible intelligence suggesting that an American citizen who disappeared seven years ago while traveling in Syria has died, the man's daughter said Saturday.

Maryam Kamalmaz said in an interview with The Associated Press that during a meeting in Washington this month with eight senior American officials she was presented with detailed intelligence about the presumed death of her father, Majd, a psychotherapist from Texas.

The officials told her that on a scale of one to 10, their confidence level about her father's death was a "high nine." She said she asked whether other detained Americans had ever been successfully recovered in the face of such credible information, and was told no.

"What more do I need? That was a lot of high-level officials that we needed to confirm to us that he's really gone. There was no way to beat around the bush," Maryam Kamalmaz said.

She said officials told her they believe the death occurred years ago, early in her father's captivity. In 2020, she said, officials told the family that they had reason to believe that he had died of heart failure in 2017, but the family held out hope and U.S. officials continued their pursuit.

But, she said, "Not until this meeting did they really confirm to us how credible the information is and the different levels of (verification) it had to go through."

She did not describe the intelligence she learned.

A spokesperson for the White House declined to comment Saturday. The FBI's Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell issued a statement that did not offer any update on Kamalmaz but said that no matter how much time has passed, it continues to work "on behalf of the victims and their families to recover all U.S. hostages and support the families whose loved ones are held captive or missing."

Majd Kamalmaz disappeared in February 2017 at the age of 59 while traveling in Syria to visit an elderly family member. The FBI has said he was stopped at a Syrian government checkpoint in a suburb of Damascus and had not been heard from since.

Kamalmaz is one of multiple Americans who have disappeared in Syria, including the journalist Austin Tice, who went missing in 2012 at a checkpoint in a contested area west of Damascus. Syria has publicly denied holding Americans in captivity.

In 2020, in the final months of the Trump administration, senior officials visited Damascus for a high-level meeting aimed at negotiating release of the Americans. But the meeting proved unfruitful, with the Syrians not providing any proof-of-life information and making demands that U.S. officials deemed unreasonable. U.S. officials have said they are continuing to try to bring home Tice.

The New York Times first reported on the presumed death of Majd Kamalmaz.

Flash floods due to unusually heavy seasonal rains kill at least 68 people in Afghanistan

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Flash floods from heavy seasonal rains have killed at least 68 people in Afghanistan, Taliban officials said Saturday, adding the death toll was based on preliminary reports.

Afghanistan has been witnessing unusually heavy seasonal rains.

In the hard-hit western province of Ghor, 50 people were reported dead, said Abdul Wahid Hamas, spokesman for the provincial governor. He also said the province has suffered significant financial losses 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.

Meanwhile, 18 people in the northern province of Farayab were killed and two others injured on Friday, according to Esmatullah Moradi, the provincial governor's spokesman. Damages to property and land were

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reported across four districts and over 300 animals were killed, he added.

The U.N. food agency posted on social media platform X, saying Ghor was the most affected by the floods where 2500 families were impacted. WFP assessment teams are on the ground to deploy assistance, the post said.

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

Last week, WFP 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.

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 before 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 the U.S.-Mexico border.

Voting by people who are not U.S. citizens 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 that 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 past week.

Democrats on the committee lambasted their Republican colleagues for focusing on what they called a "nonissue," 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, the committee's top Democrat. "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 voting by those who are not citizens 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 such people 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 this past 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.

Yemen's Houthi rebels launch a missile that strikes an oil tanker in the Red Sea, US military says

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an oil tanker in the Red Sea with a ballistic missile early Saturday, damaging the Panama-flagged, Greek-owned vessel in their latest assault over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, officials said.

Though the Houthis did not immediately claim the assault, it comes as they claimed to have shot down another U.S. military's MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen and have launched other attacks on shipping, disrupting trade on a key maritime route leading to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea.

The attack around 1 a.m. struck the oil tanker *Wind*, which recently docked in Russia and was bound for China, the U.S. military's Central Command said. Both China and Russia maintain ties over military equipment and oil to Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor.

The missile strike "caused flooding which resulted in the of loss propulsion and steering," Central Command said on the social platform X. "The crew of M/T *Wind* was able to restore propulsion and steering, and no casualties were reported. M/T *Wind* resumed its course under its own power."

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center and the private security firm Ambrey similarly acknowledged the attack earlier Saturday. Ambrey said it caused a fire aboard the *Wind*.

It can take the Houthis hours — or even days — to claim their attacks.

The Houthis have launched attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, demanding Israel ends the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration.

Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a U.S.-led airstrike campaign in Yemen. Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden still remains low because of the threat, however.

The Houthis claimed that they shot down the Reaper on Thursday with a surface-to-air missile. They described the drone as "carrying out hostile actions" in Yemen's Marib province, which remains held by allies of Yemen's exiled, internationally recognized government.

Since the Houthis seized the country's north and its capital, Sanaa, in 2014, the U.S. military has previously lost at least five drones to the rebels.

Reapers, which cost around \$30 million apiece, can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land.

Suspected would-be assassin ordered detained as Slovak prime minister's condition is stable

By JAN GEBERT Associated Press

PEZINOK, Slovakia (AP) — The man accused of attempting to assassinate Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico was ordered to remain behind bars Saturday as the nation's leader was in serious but stable condition after surviving multiple gunshots, officials said.

Slovakia's Specialized Criminal Court ordered the detention of the suspect after prosecutors said they feared he could flee or carry out other crimes if set free, a court spokesperson said. The suspect can appeal the order to the Supreme Court.

Fico, 59, was shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters following a government meeting Wednesday in the former coal mining town of Handlova, officials said. Video showed Fico approach people gathered at barricades and reach out to shake hands as a man stepped forward, extended his arm and fired five rounds before being tackled and arrested.

Government ministers outside the hospital where Fico is being treated said his condition Saturday looked promising after two hours of surgery Friday removed dead tissue from his gunshot wounds. But he still is not healthy enough to travel to a hospital in the capital, Bratislava.

"Several miracles have occurred ... in the past few days, coming from the hands of the doctors, nurses and entire medical staff," Defense Minister Rober Kalinak said outside University F. D. Roosevelt Hospital in Banská Bystrica, where Fico was taken by helicopter after the shooting. "I can't find words of gratitude for the fact that we are steadily approaching that positive prognosis."

The hearing in Pezinok, a small town outside the capital, Bratislava, was held behind closed doors and under tight security by heavily armed police. Reporters were not allowed on the grounds of the courthouse.

Officers carrying rifles wore flak jackets, helmets and had balaclavas covering their faces. They guarded a gate that only opened when a vehicle presumably carrying the suspect came and later left with a two-car police escort.

Little information about the suspect has been disclosed after prosecutors told police not to publicly identify him or release details about the case. Unconfirmed media reports have named him and said he was a 71-year-old retiree known as an amateur poet who may have once worked as a mall security guard.

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.

It's not clear how long the hearing lasted but the suspect was inside for about four hours.

A day earlier, police took the suspect to his home in the town of Levice and seized a computer and some documents, Markiza, a Slovak television station reported.

Footage showed the gray-bearded man being escorted out of the building while holding a shopping bag full of items in his cuffed hands. He was wearing a helmet and protective vest.

Police didn't comment on the apparent search.

With authorities remaining largely silent about the case, it was not clear how the suspect got a gun.

Slovakia has strict rules on firearms and gun owners must have a good reason to possess one and are required to pass a test.

As a consequence, Slovakia has one of the lowest gun ownership rates in Europe. It was ranked 23rd out of 27 European Union countries with a gun ownership rate of 6.5 per 100 people, according to the Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the EU.

World leaders have condemned the attack and offered support for Slovakia and Fico, who has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond.

His return to power for the fourth time 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 neighboring Ukraine. Slovakia was one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, but Fico halted arms deliveries when he returned to power.

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 prosecutor that deals with organized crime, corruption and extremism, have led opponents to worry Fico will lead Slovakia down a more autocratic path.

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.

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.

Supporters of Fico who showed up outside the hospital Saturday spoke of the divisions in the country that had led to this moment.

"We are here mainly because the opposition's hatred of this government has come to such a point that a psychopath who is an assassin has been created and has (tried to) assassinate Prime Minister Robert Fico," Marek Soun said. "He has been harassed for months and months by today's opposition."

Despite nobody being named as temporary leader of Slovakia, there was nothing imminent that needed the premier's attention and the government was operating as planned and moving forward with Fico's agenda, Kalinak said.

Communication with Fico was limited given his condition, Kalinak said.

The next government session is planned for Wednesday and Kalinak will be in charge, the Slovak government office said.

Jesus is their savior, Trump is their candidate. Ex-president's backers say he shares faith, values

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

As Donald Trump increasingly infuses his campaign with Christian trappings while coasting to a third Republican presidential nomination, his support is as strong as ever among evangelicals and other conservative Christians.

"Trump supports Jesus, and without Jesus, America will fall," said Kimberly Vaughn of Florence, Kentucky, as she joined other supporters of the former president entering a campaign rally near Dayton, Ohio.

Many of the T-shirts and hats that were worn and sold at the rally in March proclaimed religious slogans such as "Jesus is my savior, Trump is my president" and "God, Guns & Trump." One man's shirt declared, "Make America Godly Again," with the image of a luminous Jesus putting his supportive hands on Trump's shoulders.

Many attendees said in interviews they believed Trump shared their Christian faith and values. Several cited their opposition to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, particularly to transgender expressions.

Nobody voiced concern about Trump's past conduct or his present indictments on criminal charges, including allegations that he tried to hide hush money payments to a porn actor during his 2016 campaign. Supporters saw Trump as representing a religion of second chances.

And for many, Trump is a champion of Christianity and patriotism.

"I believe he believes in God and our military men and women, in our country, in America," said Tammy Houston of New Lexington, Ohio.

"I put my family first, and on a larger scale, it's America first," said Sherrie Cotterman of Sidney, Ohio. "And I would any day of the week, take a president that openly knows he needs the strength from God over his own."

In many ways, this is a familiar story.

About 8 in 10 white evangelical Christians supported Trump in 2020, according to AP VoteCast. Pew Research Center's validated voter survey found that a similar share supported him in 2016.

But this is a new campaign, and that support has remained durable — even though Republican voters in the early primaries had several conservative Christian candidates to choose from, none of whom faced

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the legal troubles and misconduct allegations that Trump does. In the Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina Republican primaries, Trump won between 55% and 69% of white evangelical voters, according to AP VoteCast.

Trump even criticized one competitor, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, for signing strict abortion curbs into law.

Trump was the only Republican candidate facing scores of criminal charges, ranging from allegations that he conspired to overturn his 2020 election defeat to his current trial on allegations he falsified business records in seeking illegally to sway the 2016 election with hush money to porn actor Stormy Daniels.

Trump was also the only GOP candidate with a history of casino ventures and two divorces, as well as allegations of sexual misconduct — one of them affirmed by a civil court verdict.

Republican primary voters still overwhelmingly chose Trump.

This has frustrated a minority of conservative evangelicals who see Trump as an unrepentant poser, using the Bible and prayer sessions for photo props. They see him as lacking real faith and facing credible, serious misconduct allegations while campaigning with incendiary rhetoric and authoritarian ambitions.

Karen Swallow Prior, a Christian author and literary scholar who criticized fellow evangelicals' embrace of Trump, said this support in 2024 is familiar but "intensified."

In the past, she said Trump supporters hoped but weren't certain that he shared their Christian faith.

"Now his supporters believe themselves," she said. "Despite the fact that Trump clearly wavers on abortion and he wavers on LGBTQ issues, those things are just ignored, they're just erased out of the narrative."

At the Ohio rally, several attendees cited their belief that Trump has followed the Christian path of repenting and starting a new life.

"We've all come from sinning. Jesus sat with sinners, so he's going to sit with Trump," Vaughn said. "It's not about where Trump came from, it's about where he's going and where he's trying to take us."

The Ohio rally, like other Trump events, featured a recording of the national anthem sung by some of those convicted for crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, whom Trump called "patriots."

At the rally's entrance, one group handed out pamphlets urging attendees both to "trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation" and to support the "J6 patriots."

Jody Picagli of Englewood, Ohio, said her Catholic faith and views on abortion are central.

"I'm a big right-to-life person," she said. "That's huge for me. And just morals. I think the moral compass is so out of whack right now. And we need religion and church back in here."

She acknowledged that, with the Supreme Court turning the abortion issue over to the states, a future President Trump may not impact abortion law.

"But I know he'll never go to an abortion clinic and visit it, like our vice president did," she said, alluding to Kamala Harris' tour of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Minnesota in March.

Robert Jones, president of the Public Religion Research Institute and an author of books on white supremacy in American Christianity, said the strong evangelical support for Trump isn't surprising. But he said that in a 2023 PRRI poll, less than half of white evangelicals said that abortion was a critical issue to them personally. More than half said that five others were a critical issue, including human trafficking, public schools, rising prices, immigration and crime.

"One of the biggest myths about white evangelical support for Trump is this idea that it's really about abortion and they're holding their nose and voting for Trump," Jones said.

He added that Trump's rhetoric about immigrants "invading the country and changing our cultural heritage" resonates with his audience.

The slogan "Make America Great Again" echoes an "ethno-religious vision of a white Christian America, just barely underneath the surface," Jones said.

He acknowledged the racial lines aren't absolute, with Trump attracting Black supporters such as South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott.

The Ohio rally included a vast majority of white attendees but with some Black and other ethnic groups represented.

Trump's rallies take on the symbols, rhetoric and agenda of Christian nationalism, which typically includes a belief that America was founded to be a Christian nation and seeks to privilege Christianity in public life.

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Trump endorsed a Bible edition that includes U.S. founding documents and the lyrics to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA."

"This is a Bible specifically for a kind of white evangelical audience that sees themselves as the rightful inheritors of the country," Jones said, citing a 2023 PRRI poll in which about half of white evangelicals agreed that God intended America as a promised land for European Christians.

At the Ohio rally, some attendees said they believed the nation or its founding documents, such as the Bill of Rights, had Christian origins, though historians dispute such assertions.

Some Trump supporters voiced hope for a more Christian America.

Thomas Isbell of Greensboro, North Carolina, who has set up vending booths at many Trump rallies, said his "God, Guns & Trump" shirts are a top seller.

"It's a Christian country," he said, adding that if he were president, he would only allow public worship by Christians.

"We're not going to set up a temple to no other gods in our land," he said.

Today in History: May 19

Anne Boleyn, wife of Henry VIII, beheaded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, May 19, the 140th day of 2024. There are 226 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 19, 1536, Anne Boleyn, the second wife of England's King Henry VIII, was beheaded after being convicted of adultery.

On this date:

In 1780, a mysterious darkness enveloped much of New England and part of Canada in the early afternoon.

In 1913, California Gov. Hiram Johnson signed the Webb-Hartley Law prohibiting "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from owning farm land, a measure targeting Asian immigrants, particularly Japanese.

In 1920, ten people were killed in a gun battle between coal miners, who were led by a local police chief, and a group of private security guards hired to evict them for joining a union in Matewan, a small "company town" in West Virginia.

In 1921, Congress passed, and President Warren G. Harding signed, the Emergency Quota Act, which established national quotas for immigrants.

In 1943, in his second wartime address to the U.S. Congress, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill pledged his country's full support in the fight against Japan; that evening, Churchill met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House, where the two leaders agreed on May 1, 1944 as the date for the D-Day invasion of France (the operation ended up being launched more than a month later).

In 1962, film star Marilyn Monroe sang "Happy Birthday to You" to President John F. Kennedy during a Democratic fundraiser at New York's Madison Square Garden.

In 1967, the Soviet Union ratified a treaty with the United States and Britain, banning nuclear and other weapons from outer space.

In 1993, the Clinton White House set off a political storm by abruptly firing the entire staff of its travel office; five of the seven staffers were later reinstated and assigned to other duties.

In 1994, former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis died in New York at age 64.

In 2003, WorldCom Inc. agreed to pay investors \$500 million to settle civil fraud charges.

In 2013, Taylor Swift won eight awards, including artist of the year and album of the year for "Red," at the Billboard Music Awards.

In 2017, former U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., whose penchant for sexting strangers ended his political career, pleaded guilty in Manhattan to a sex charge, tearfully apologizing for communications with a 15-year-old girl. (Weiner received a 21-month prison sentence.)

In 2018, Britain's Prince Harry wed American actor Meghan Markle.

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In 2020, a Trump administration policy of quickly expelling most migrants stopped along the border because of the COVID-19 pandemic was indefinitely extended.

In 2023, British novelist Martin Amis died at age 73.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality David Hartman is 89. Actor James Fox is 85. Actor Nancy Kwan is 85. Rock singer-composer Pete Townshend (The Who) is 79. Concert pianist David Helfgott is 77. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Archie Manning is 75. Singer-actor Grace Jones is 73. Rock musician Phil Rudd is 70. Actor Steven Ford is 68. Actor Toni Lewis is 64. Rock musician Iain Harvie (Del Amitri) is 62. Actor Polly Walker is 58. Actor Jason Gray-Stanford is 54. Gospel singer Israel Houghton is 53. Rock singer Jenny Berggren (Ace of Base) is 52. Former race car driver Dario Franchitti is 51. TV personality Kim Zolciak Biermann (TV: "Real Housewives of Atlanta") is 46. Country/rock singer Shooter Jennings is 45. Actor Drew Fuller is 44. Actor-comedian Michael Che (chay) (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 41. Christian rock musician Tim McTague (Underoath) is 41. Actor Eric Lloyd is 38. Pop singer Sam Smith is 32. Actor Nolan Lyons is 23.