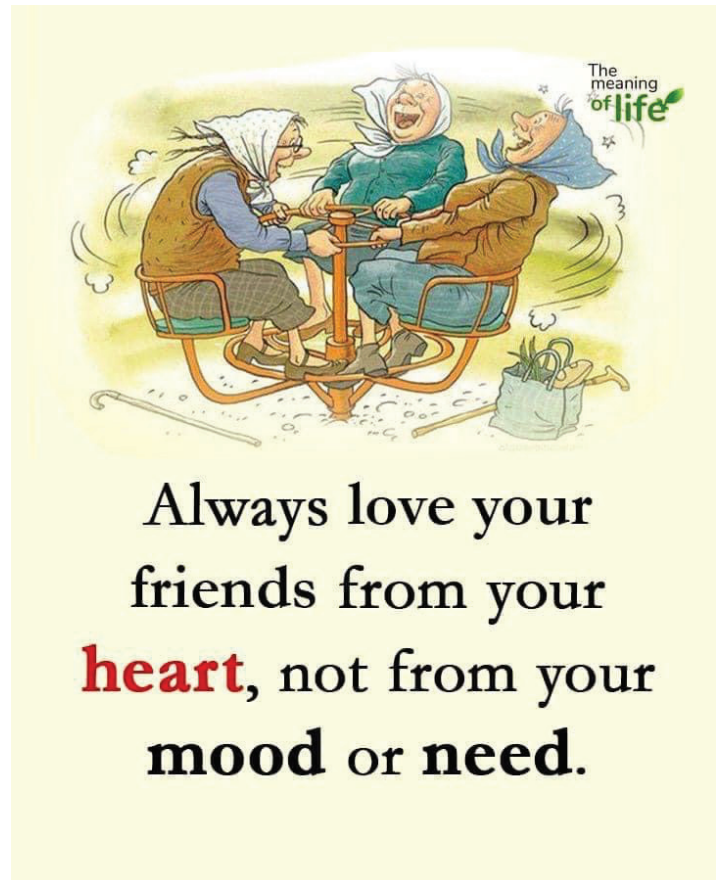


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Groton Daily Independent
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Always love your
friends from your
heart, not from your
mood or **need**.

Friday June 28

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

Legion hosts Milbank, 5:30 p.m. (2)

T-Ball B hosts Claremont, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 29

Junior Legion vs. Platte/Geddes at Britton, 9 a.m. (1)

U10 All - Groton Tourney

SB U10 Gld and Blk at Watertown Tournament

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

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

Moose Golf Outing at Olive Grove 10 a.m.

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1440

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US Presidential Debate

President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump held their first debate of the 2024 election cycle last night at a CNN studio in Atlanta, Georgia. The debate was moderated by CNN hosts Jake Tapper and Dana Bash.

Front and center for the candidates—on track to be the oldest in US history—was mental fitness, with Biden at times appearing to lose his train of thought and often speaking at a low volume, furthering Democratic leaders' concerns over his viability as a candidate. Meanwhile, Trump was criticized for appearing to sidestep questions, including about his role in the events surrounding Jan. 6. Both candidates defended their records on a range of issues, including the economy, abortion, immigration, and foreign wars, while engaging in personal attacks.

The second and final debate planned between the presumptive Republican and Democratic nominees this election season will be held Sept. 10 and hosted by ABC.

Iran's Presidential Election

Iranians head to the polls today for early presidential elections to replace former President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash last month in the mountainous region of northern Iran.

Six candidates have been permitted to run in today's election out of a pool of 80 people vetted by Iran's 12-person Guardian Council. Among those approved are five hardline candidates and one reformist, Masoud Pezeshkian from Iran's large Azeri minority. Pezeshkian is currently leading in polls with roughly a quarter of the vote. Another leading candidate is Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a former mayor of Tehran known for violent crackdowns on university students.

The election comes as annual inflation in Iran has surpassed 35% and follows mass protests over women's rights—prompting government concerns about low voter turnout. If no candidate wins a majority in today's election, the top two candidates will enter a runoff election next week.

Space Station Destroyer

NASA has awarded SpaceX \$843M to develop and build a space vehicle to safely remove the International Space Station from orbit around 2030. Launch costs for the vehicle, which NASA will own and operate, will be procured separately.

Early plans indicate the US Deorbit Vehicle will transfer the aging station, which weighs roughly 1 million pounds, in three stages and later disassemble itself. Once released, each stage will plow through the atmosphere at 17,000 miles per hour to land in the South Pacific's so-called spacecraft cemetery. The \$3B annual budget of the ISS will likely go toward deeper space exploration while opening up low-Earth orbit to private developers of space stations.

A joint effort of the US, Russia, Japan, Canada, and the European Union, the ISS is the largest structure ever built in space and has been continuously inhabited since 2000. Over 3,300 ISS studies conducted by 270 individuals have produced discoveries in medicine, agriculture, and more.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 111th Tour de France begins tomorrow with Stage 1 from Florence, Italy.

Team USA gymnastics trials for Paris Olympics began last night; see full results.

Jury orders NFL to pay \$4.7B in damages in class-action antitrust lawsuit.

Kinky Friedman, musician, satirist, and novelist, dies at 79.

Bill Cobbs, Emmy-winning character actor, dies at 90.

Southern Cal's Bronny James will join his father LeBron James on the Los Angeles Lakers after being selected 55th overall in the NBA Draft.

NHL Draft begins tonight (7:30 pm ET, ESPN).

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

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Science & Technology

Google adds 110 languages to Google Translate—nearly doubling the number supported—after training the platform on its PaLM 2 AI language model.

Company to test facial recognition and tracking at its Seattle campus; visitors not allowed to opt out.

Woolly mammoth extinction happened suddenly instead of a gradual die-off due to inbreeding, new study suggests; last remaining population lived on Siberia's Wrangel Island, disappearing about 4,000 years ago.

Researchers grow 3D brain models using cells from different people in a single organoid for the first time; approach may lead to methods to test new drugs without needing human patients.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq +0.3%) as investors await today's release of the monthly personal consumption expenditures price index.

OpenAI strikes multiyear licensing deal with Time magazine; deal gives OpenAI access to 101 years of Time content to train its models, allows Time to use OpenAI's technology to develop new products.

The Center for Investigative Reporting sues OpenAI and Microsoft for copyright infringement.

Walgreens shares close down 22% after company discloses it will shutter an estimated 650 to 700 underperforming US stores over a multiyear period.

Amazon plans to launch discount store with shipping directly from China in bid to counter Temu and Shein.

Politics & World Affairs

US Supreme Court rejects Purdue Pharma's \$6B OxyContin settlement that shielded the Sackler family from future lawsuits.

Court allows emergency abortions in Idaho for now ... and blocks the Environmental Protection Agency's interstate air pollution regulation ... and limits the Securities and Exchange Commission's use of in-house tribunals to enforce regulations.

Former Uvalde, Texas, schools police chief criminally charged for response to 2022 school shooting that killed 21 people.

Judge sets June 2025 trial date for man accused of murdering four University of Idaho students in 2022.

Oklahoma superintendent orders public schools to teach the Bible for grades 5 through 12; move comes a week after Louisiana became the first state to require the Ten Commandments to be posted in every public school classroom.

65th Anniversary



Don and Nancy Hein will celebrate their 65th Wedding Anniversary on July 3, 2024. Greetings may be sent to 918 Arbor Lane #46, Aberdeen SD 57401.

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Class of 1972

The GHS Class of 1972 celebrated its 70th birthday Thursday night at the Groton American Legion. Members of the class present were Diane Henley Schaffer, Linda Dunker Anderson, Gary Weismantel, Holly Schaller Judd, Bryon Baule, Deb Dorfschmidt Woodworth, Rick Zimney, Tami Raap Eberle, Bill Swisher, Doug Abeln and Bob Swisher. Showing up after the picture was Robyn Greene. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Queen of Hearts

Week 17 of the Queen of Hearts drawing was held Thursday with the jackpot of \$26,045. Ticket sales for the were \$2,060. The name drawn was Angie Sombke with chose card number 26, it was the Nine of Hearts. She won the consolation prize of \$206.

Next Thursday is the Fourth of July so there will be no drawing. The next drawing will be held July 12th.

DANR Announces Nearly \$65 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$64,768,104 in grants and loans for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste projects in South Dakota.

The \$64,768,104 total consists of \$768,000 in grants and \$64,000,104 in low-interest loans, including \$16,169,000 in principal forgiveness to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"I am pleased to announce this financial assistance is available," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "Safe and reliable water, wastewater, and solid waste infrastructure help protect our environment and strengthen communities for our kids and grandkids."

Funds were awarded from DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, Solid Waste Management Program, Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program, and the Water Environment Fund to the following:

Britton received a \$733,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for a wastewater lift station and sewer improvements. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Central City received a \$182,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program loan to further study inlet placement to convey stormwater safely and address stormwater management issues. The loan terms are 3.5 percent for 20 years.

Chamberlain received a \$500,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to improve its drinking water system, replace the recarbonation system, and install water main to loop the system. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Deadwood received a \$2,897,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to upgrade and improve system reliability. This project will install a new line to create a backup supply to the reservoir and create a potentially new pressure zone to the northeast. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Grant-Roberts Rural Water System received a \$2,549,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan with \$619,000 in principal forgiveness for internal improvements to improve capacity into the Hilltop Reservoir, provide water service to individual residents of Marvin, and to create an emergency connection between Grant-Roberts and the City of Milbank. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Ipswich received a \$390,100 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan with \$100,000 in principal forgiveness to construct a storm sewer system to help alleviate stormwater conveyance issues throughout the city. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Joint Well Field received a \$4,059,541 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan for the construction of a new gravity filtration water treatment plant to meet the demands of Kingbrook Rural Water System and Brookings-Deuel Rural Water System. The new treatment plant will increase the treatment capacity. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Madison received a \$2,645,916 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace outdated and inadequate water infrastructure, bring the distribution system up to current design standards, and service requirements of the community. The loan terms are 3.50 percent for 30 years.

Madison also received a \$2,692,547 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace outdated and inadequate sanitary infrastructure, bring the collection system up to current design standards, and service requirements of the community. The loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Meadow Crest Sanitary District received a \$650,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan and a \$168,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant to construct new well to provide system redundancy and meet the additional capacity for current and future users. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Mid-Dakota Rural Water System received a \$14,730,000 Drinking Water State Revolving fund loan with 100% principal forgiveness to provide bulk water service to the city of Wessington Springs. The city of Wessington Springs' current water source has manganese and E. coli levels above recommended human health limits. It has been determined that the most cost effective and best long-term solution for the

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city's water needs is a bulk connection to Mid-Dakota Rural Water System.

Miller received a \$1,100,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan with \$720,000 in principal forgiveness to make improvements to its water storage tank, waterlines, and abandoned wells. Funding for this project was previously awarded in April 2022. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

Northville received a \$125,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to upgrade its storage tank, which will increase capacity to serve the community's needs. Previous funds were awarded in May 2022. The loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Powder House Pass Community Improvement District received a \$2,075,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for upgrades at its wastewater treatment facility and improvements to its lift station to handle increased flows. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022. The terms of the loan are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Sioux Falls received a \$11,000,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to continue constructing a sanitary sewer expansion near 12th Street and Ellis Road. The terms of the loan are 3.5 percent for 20 years.

South East Council of Governments received a \$500,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant for its regional revolving loan fund program. This funding allows the Council to provide low-interest loans for solid waste management and recycling projects in the region.

Southern Missouri Recycling and Waste Management District received a \$100,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant and a \$400,000 Solid Waste Management Program loan to purchase a new baler. The terms of the loan are 3.5 percent for 20 years.

Wessington Springs received a \$1,660,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to abandon the existing water treatment facilities and make necessary upgrades in the city's distribution system to allow the connection to Mid-Dakota Rural Water System for bulk water supply. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

West River/Lyman Jones Rural Water System received a \$14,500,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to add capacity and provide reliability and resiliency to the distribution system for existing customers by adding nearly 26 miles of water main, two water storage tanks, and a new booster station facility. Loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Weston Heights Sanitary District received a \$1,111,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for sanitary sewer main improvements including replacement of sanitary sewer main and new manholes. The current system is experiencing low slope pipe, pipe sags and rock bulges caused by inadequate pipe bedding, root intrusion, and cracking in some locations. The loan terms are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Appropriations from the Water Environment Fund and Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program are funded in part by revenues from the Petroleum Release Compensation Tank Inspection Fee and the sale of lotto tickets. These appropriations provide funding for water, wastewater, and watershed projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated water and waste funding for the Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

The Solid Waste Management Program provides grants and loans for solid waste disposal, recycling, and waste tire projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated funding for the Solid Waste Management Program through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs, which provide low-interest loans for wastewater, stormwater, water conservation, nonpoint source projects, and public drinking water system projects. The programs are funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at Thursday's meeting in Pierre.

DANR Announces More Than \$105 Million of Additional ARPA Grants for Statewide Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$105,010,958 in additional American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants for drinking water and wastewater system improvements in South Dakota. These funds are to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The American Rescue Plan Act provides grants for eligible water, wastewater, stormwater, and nonpoint source projects. Through Governor Noem's leadership and overwhelming support of the legislature, the state of South Dakota is making a historic investment in infrastructure by dedicating \$689,384,221 of ARPA funding for local water and wastewater infrastructure grants. This allocation represents the last of the ARPA water funding.

"I am pleased to announce this financial assistance is available," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "Safe and reliable water and infrastructure helps protect our environment and strengthen communities for our kids and grandkids."

Grants were awarded from State's ARPA funds to the following:

Aurora-Brule Rural Water received an additional \$846,775 ARPA grant to install a new parallel water main, a new water storage reservoir, multiple loops within the system, a booster station, and make distribution line improvements. Previous funding for this project was awarded in April 2022

BDM Rural Water System received an additional \$1,738,345 ARPA grant to construct a new water treatment plant, install a water reservoir, install pipe to expand the water system and loop lines for added redundancy, and replace water meters. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Black Hawk Water User District received an additional \$254,340 ARPA grant to install a new water main crossing I-90 near Exit 52. The existing crossing is undersized and not operating effectively. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022.

Brookings received an additional \$8,000,000 ARPA grant to construct a new lime softening water treatment facility along 34th Avenue. The new treatment plant will require the installation of raw and finished water lines to feed into the distribution system and includes the construction of six new municipal wells and a new transmission main. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Brookings-Deuel Rural Water System received an additional \$1,357,708 ARPA grant to construct water main to interconnect the system's two primary water sources, the Joint Well Field, and the Clear Lake Water Treatment Plant. The project will also include installation of a new water main to the Lake Cochrane service area to improve low pressures around the lake during periods of peak water use. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Clay Rural Water System received an additional \$2,488,710 ARPA grant to construct two ground storage reservoirs near the existing Greenfield reservoir and the Wakonda Water Treatment plant. A new booster station at the Greenfield reservoir and distribution line improvements to provide additional capacity and accommodate a Highway 46 construction project is also included. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Davison Rural Water System received an additional \$189,255 ARPA grant to install a water line to parallel and loop existing mains and make upgrades to its automatic meter reading technology. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Fall River Water User District received an additional \$1,400,007.62 ARPA grant to install a submersible pump and finish piping at the existing Fairburn well, construct a pump station and well house, a control building/pump station, a ground storage reservoir at the well site, pipeline to connect the Fairburn well to the existing distribution system in two locations, and a ground storage reservoir along the new pipeline route. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022.

Grant-Roberts Rural Water System received an additional \$1,023,690 ARPA grant to add transmission capacity allowing the system's two reservoirs to fill during high water use periods. Additional pipeline

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looping and parallels will be completed to distribute water to existing and new customers and improve the reliability of the water system. The project also includes installation new pipeline and other appurtenances to allow the town of Corona to access the Grant-Roberts Rural Water System. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Hanson Rural Water System received an additional \$548,388 ARPA grant to install water lines to parallel and loop of existing mains and make upgrades to its automatic meter reading technology. Previous funding was awarded April 2022.

Joint Well Field, Inc. received an additional \$1,440,459 ARPA grant to construct a new gravity filtration water treatment plant including aeration, detention, filtration, transfer pumping, raw water supply wells, and generation equipment. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Kingbrook Rural Water System received an additional \$4,972,298 ARPA to upgrade the Badger pump station, DeSmet water treatment plant, Chester water treatment plan, Oakwood pump station, and the Orland pump station. The project also involves construction of an elevated tank near Arlington and booster pump station near Bryant, and relocation and resizing of pipeline segments along Highway 25 north of DeSmet. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Lead-Deadwood Sanitary District received an additional \$339,623 ARPA grant to abandon the Hanna raw water transmission pipeline and install new ductile iron or steel pipe. Both low- and high-pressure lines will be re-routed to bypass the Englewood power generation facility, and a portable backup power generator will be purchased for use at multiple locations. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022.

Lead-Deadwood Sanitary District also received an additional \$136,662 ARPA grant to make improvements to the wastewater treatment plant serving Lead, Deadwood, Central City, and other unincorporated areas. Improvements include replacement of five aeration blowers, installation of fine bubble diffusers and aeration piping, and installation of a blower control system. Previous funding was awarded In June 2022.

Lewis & Clark Regional Water System received an additional \$5,000,000 ARPA grant to construct two solids contact units, a sludge thickener, three lime sludge drying beds, and a three million gallon clear well and high service pump station to increase the treatment plant capacity. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Lincoln County Rural Water System received an additional \$571,211 ARPA grant to install transmission improvements to serve newly constructed residences. The project will install approximately 16.5 miles of pipeline and includes looping of dead-end lines. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Mid-Dakota Rural Water System received an additional \$6,830,882 ARPA grant to update the existing water system by installing an advanced metering infrastructure system, paralleling of pipe, addition of a new backwash recovery system, and additional membrane capacity. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Mni Wašté Water Company received an additional \$6,545,503 ARPA grant to install a treated water pipeline, a water tower, and appurtenances including valves, pumps, and air releases. This project replaces the undersized pipeline along Highway 63 and will serve as the main pipeline for the northern tier of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Randall Community Water District received an additional \$10,000,000 ARPA grant to address increasing demand among existing customers and supply water to the City of Mitchell. The proposed improvements will provide enough capacity to allow Mitchell to connect its redundant water line to the system. Booster stations, storage facilities, and an upgrade to the Platte Water Treatment Plant are necessary to complete the proposed improvements. Previous funding was awarded in June 2022.

Rapid City received an additional \$8,000,000 to make improvements to its wastewater treatment facility by adding secondary clarifiers and hydraulic improvements which allows the South Plant to assume all inflow while meeting permit limits. This project would also decommission the North Plant. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Shared Resources received an additional \$10,000,000 ARPA grant for a treatment plant, well field, distribution pipeline, and two storage tanks. Shared Resources is a joint effort between Minnehaha Community Water Corporation and the Big Sioux Community Water System. Previous funding was awarded

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in April 2022.

Sioux Falls received an additional \$8,000,000 ARPA grant to make substantial improvements throughout the city's wastewater reclamation facility and to expand the plant capacity to accommodate growth in the region. Previous funding was awarded in May 2022.

Sioux Rural Water System received an additional \$765,583 ARPA to construct a new elevated tank in the southwest part of the system and two segments of pipeline to increase pressure and capacity. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

South Lincoln Rural Water System received an additional \$2,444,355 ARPA grant to make system wide improvements including installing an elevated water tank, a new pump station, and a new water treatment plant. This project addresses capacity issues in portions of the distribution system and increasing demands within the existing service area. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Southern Black Hills Water System received an additional \$542,432 ARPA grant to extend the existing water system main from the two wells at Paramount Point Subdivision approximately 5 miles northeast to the Spring Creek Acres Subdivision to provide redundancy. The project will also construct a new well, booster pump station, new elevated storage reservoir, chlorination and SCADA systems, and new pressure reducing valve stations. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

TM Rural Water District received an additional \$1,272,908 ARPA grant to install four miles of parallel 12-inch water main to address low water pressure situations during high water demand periods. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

Tripp County Water User District received an additional \$2,034,121 ARPA grant to replace two storage tanks, to parallel and loop water lines to increase the water pressure within the system, and to develop a new well field to address water supply issues. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

WEB Water Development Association received an additional \$10,500,000 ARPA grant. The funding is part of a much larger project to increase water capacity for WEB and to provide a bulk water connection for Aberdeen and BDM Rural Water. The project is known as the Water Investment in Northern South Dakota or WINS project, undertaken by all three entities with WEB acting as the lead contracting entity at this time. Previous funding was awarded in June 2023.

Western Dakota Regional Water System received an additional \$2,165,000 ARPA grant for a feasibility study to explore the use of its Missouri River water to supply a large portion of western South Dakota with a bulk water transmission line conveying Missouri River water to various communities, tribes, and water systems. The current funding will be used to hire an engineering firm to complete facilities plan and preliminary design for the project. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

West River/Lyman-Jones Rural Water System received an additional \$602,702 ARPA grant to install PVC water mains serving areas in Mellette, Haakon, and Lyman counties. A new ground storage tank and necessary electrical controls would also be installed in Pennington County. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022.

DANR Announces \$5 Million for Statewide Riparian Buffer Initiative

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved an additional \$5,000,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant for its statewide Riparian Buffer Initiative (RBI). Previous RBI funding was awarded in April 2022.

Since 2022, the state has directed \$9 million to RBI representing the largest investment in non-point source pollution prevention in South Dakota history.

“Protecting and preserving South Dakota’s water resources is a priority for DANR, and riparian buffers are a proven and effective way to keep pollutants out of our lakes and streams,” said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. “We are excited to build on the recent success of RBI and further expand the project to waterways across the state.”

To date, DANR has executed thirty-one Big Sioux Watershed Riparian Buffer contracts investing \$1,016,649.55 to protect 181,327 linear feet of streambank and shoreline. In addition, DANR has nineteen potential Big Sioux contracts in process. Statewide, DANR has five signed contracts investing \$862,126.63 to protect 178,882 linear feet of streambank with thirteen potential contracts in progress.

A riparian zone is land along the edges of rivers, streams, lakes, and other waterbodies. Vegetation within the riparian zone of waterways serves as a natural buffer preventing pollutants from reaching waterways. Establishing healthy riparian buffers is a common conservation practice used to improve and protect water quality and overall ecological health of aquatic resources. Riparian buffers also provide valuable habitat, additional forage for livestock, and increase the value of marginal crop lands.

Landowners who enroll in the Riparian Buffer Initiative will receive direct payments to install and maintain buffers on eligible lands. Buffers must be a minimum of 50 feet wide and have a maximum average width of 120 feet, may not be harvested or mowed between May 1 and August 1, may not be grazed between May 1 and September 30, and must maintain a minimum of four inches of cover. DANR is partnering with the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (GFP) to add additional incentives for riparian buffers in areas also participating in CRP and CREP contracts.

For more information about DANR’s Riparian Buffer Initiative click [here](#). Landowners interested in enrolling in RBI should contact DANR’s Tanner Clausen at 605-362-3559.

The American Rescue Plan Act provides grants for eligible water, wastewater, storm water, and nonpoint source projects. The state of South Dakota is making a historic investment in infrastructure by dedicating \$689,384,221 of American Rescue Plan Act funding for local water and wastewater infrastructure grants.

The board approved the funding at Thursday’s meeting in Pierre.

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Brookings County Mosquito Pool First West Nile Detection of Season

PIERRE, SD – The South Dakota Department of Health has confirmed the first West Nile virus (WNV) mosquito pools of the season have been detected in Brookings County. State officials urge the public to take simple steps to protect themselves and their families against WNV, which can cause fever, headaches, rash, swollen lymph nodes, and muscle and joint aches.

"Given the rural nature of our state and increased outdoor activities during the summer, protecting yourself against mosquito bites remains an important factor against West Nile infection," said Dr. Joshua Clayton, State Epidemiologist for the Department of Health. "Something as simple as using bug spray or limiting activities between dusk-to-dawn hours can reduce your infection risk significantly."

Prevent mosquito bites and reduce the risk of WNV by taking the following precautions:

Apply mosquito repellents (DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus 2-undecanone, param-menthane-diol, or IR3535) to clothes and exposed skin. Limit exposure by wearing pants and long sleeves in the evening; Limit time outdoors from dusk to midnight when mosquitoes are most active. *Culex tarsalis* are the primary carrier of WNV in South Dakota;

Remove standing water that gives mosquitoes a place to breed. Regularly change the water in birdbaths, outside pet dishes, and drain water from other flowerpots and garden containers and stay away from areas near standing water; and

Support local mosquito control efforts.

Personal precautions are especially important for those at high risk for severe illness from WNV – people over 60 years of age, pregnant women, transplant patients, individuals with cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease. People with symptoms like severe or unusual headaches should see their physicians.

South Dakota has reported more than 2,843 human cases and 53 deaths since WNV was first reported in 2002. Every county has reported cases.

For more information on WNV and other health-related items, visit DOH.SD.GOV.

At the heart of the Department of Health's mission is a simple goal: to protect and improve the health of all South Dakotans. The department is entrusted with the vital task of promoting wellness, preventing disease, and ensuring access to quality healthcare for all South Dakotans.

Two Additional South Dakota Lakes Reopen to Boating

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) today announced the reopening of two additional waterbodies in southeast South Dakota that had been included on Governor Noem's previous "no boating declaration."

Lake Alvin in Lincoln County and Lake Vermillion in McCook County have been removed from the declaration.

"The water levels at Lake Alvin and Lake Vermillion are nearly back to normal," said Sam Schelhaas, Law Enforcement Chief. "Boaters may still find limited access to these waterbodies, but are able to utilize them again moving forward."

Lake Alvin has an existing no-wake zone across the lake, while a portion of Lake Vermillion is also a no-wake zone. Boaters utilizing these waterbodies should use caution as there is debris still below the surface.

"We want to continue to remind boaters to be very cautious," continued Schelhaas. "Safety needs to always be the number one priority every time you are out on the water."

No boating remains in effect on the waters of:

Swan Lake in Turner County,

Wall Lake in Minnehaha County, and

McCook Lake in Union County, South Dakota.

Per the declaration, GFP Secretary Kevin Robling has been appointed as the Governor's designee in order for him to add to, delete, or modify boating restrictions for any bodies of water similarly affected in South Dakota.

We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

The Declaration of Independence: Celebrating and Redeeming its Solemn Promises

The Declaration of Independence, which Abraham Lincoln referred to as the "sheet anchor of the Republic," set forth the proposition, as he said in the Gettysburg Address, that "the United States was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The principle of equality, Lincoln admitted, was "aspirational." Its implementation would await the arrival of America's maturity, that moment when the societal, cultural and political forces would accept the legalization of racial equality. There was no invisible hand that would push the nation across the finish line. As with all great changes in a democracy, leadership was required.

The leadership of congressional Republicans, known and admired as the Radical Republicans, who envisioned, drafted and secured the ratification of the Reconstruction Amendments—the 13th, 14th and 15th—completed the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence and made them part of the Constitution. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, the 14th guaranteed equal protection of the law, and the 15th granted voting rights to former slaves.

What Republicans undertook represented a constitutional revolution, for they changed the legal landscape, the nature and face of America. What lay behind this historic achievement, compelling then, as it is now, was the fact that they interpreted the Constitution in light of the Declaration. They embraced the principle that all men are created equal and believed that slaves and free Blacks were men endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Republicans acknowledged that the Constitution, as it was written in 1787, recognized slavery, which delayed the implementation of the goals, values and principles of the Declaration of Independence. They were, as Lincoln said, "aspirational." The 13th Amendment, as debates in the 39th Congress demonstrated, represented the first, crucial step in "completing" the Constitution, so that it would reflect the egalitarian and animating principles in the Declaration. It extended the right of personal liberty to the newly freedman, which was a function of the principle of equality. The higher, broader purpose was to constitutionalize the Declaration and remove the moral stain from the nation's escutcheon. It remade the Republic in the image of our founding charter.

In the course of debates on the 13th Amendment, the great abolitionist, Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, eloquently stated: "It is only necessary to carry the Republic back to its baptismal vows, and the declared sentiments of its origins. There is the Declaration of Independence: let its solemn promises be redeemed. There is the Constitution: let it speak, according to the promise of the Declaration."

Sen. Sumner's appeal to the "promise of the Declaration" was echoed by his colleagues throughout the debates. Members invoked the Declaration and the opportunity for the nation to atone for its departure from its principles necessitated, they believed, by the dictates of slavery as a compromise to save the Union. Abolition, it was argued, would suffuse the Constitution with the long delayed fundamental principles of the Declaration: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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For Republicans, the Reconstruction Amendments were seen as a means of removing the exceptions to liberty and equality that were implied, and inflicted, by the slavery provisions in the Constitution. They would restore, moreover, the crucial concept of consent of the governed, which the authors of the Declaration of Independence understood to be the only source of governmental legitimacy. Government by consent of the people, which was grounded on the principle of equality, the foundational premise and promise of the Declaration of Independence, had been eviscerated by slavery. In sum, the Reconstruction Amendments would complete the Constitution by squaring it with the Declaration.

As Americans celebrate the Declaration of Independence in the finest ways—parades, food, fireworks and music—we ought to pause in this time of great political divide and turmoil, and recall what united us, in the beginning. We might focus on the great egalitarian principles set forth in our founding charter and view them, as we should, as the nation's North Star, worthy then of our devotion, and worthy still. Let us listen to the voice of Charles Sumner and reflect on our "baptismal vows."

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

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Names Released in Hutchinson County Two Vehicle Double Fatality Crash

What: Two vehicle double fatality crash
Where: Junction of US 18 and US 81, eight miles south of Freeman, SD
When: 2:15p.m. Monday, June 24, 2024

Driver 1: Patrick Lee Bauder 51-year-old male from Scotland, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2002 Chevrolet Pickup
Seatbelt Use: No
Passenger 1: Jackson Patrick Bauder, 11-year-old male from Scotland, SD, fatal injuries
Seatbelt Use: No

Driver 2: Sean Michael Lockhorst, 27 year-old male from Monroe, SD, no injuries
Vehicle 2: 2005 Peterbilt Semi tractor/trailer
Seatbelt Use: No

Hutchinson County, S.D.- Two people suffered fatal injuries in a two-vehicle crash eight miles south of Freeman, SD Monday afternoon.

Preliminary crash information indicates Patrick L. Bauder, the driver of a 2002 Chevrolet pickup was traveling northbound on US Highway 81 at the junction of US highway 18. At the same time, a 2005 Peterbilt tractor/trailer driven by Sean M. Lockhorst, was traveling southbound at the same intersection.

Bauder failed to yield as he turned west onto US 18 and both vehicles collided in the intersection, coming to rest in the southwest ditch of the junction. Bauder and his passenger, Jackson P. Bauder, were not wearing seatbelts and both were fatally injured in the crash. Lockhorst also was not wearing his seatbelt but was not injured.

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.



Hand counting errors muddle post-election audit in McPherson County

By **STU WHITNEY**

South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota's most populous county, Minnehaha, was in the spotlight this week after its top election official ordered the county's post-election audit to consist of all 2024 primary ballots being counted by hand.

But the debate over counting votes by hand vs. machine found a more decisive venue 250 miles away in McPherson County, on the state's northeast edge bordering North Dakota, with a population of about 2,300.

On June 13, citizen hand-counting boards were formed in the county seat of Leola, South Dakota, to conduct a post-election audit of 100% of the ballots from the June 4 primary, which had been tallied by machine tabulators on election day.

The auditing boards, mostly composed of residents who support hand counts and question the accuracy and security of voting machines, encountered problems.

The hand count in two of the county's four precincts did not match election day tallies, and board members of those precincts ended the audits before the count was reconciled, according to county officials.

South Dakota Canvassing, an electoral activist group that supports eliminating machine voting and tabulators, declared victory on social media, posting the tally sheets and stating that the "hand count results were correct and the machine errors are not explainable."

'You're going to see problems'

McPherson County State's Attorney Austin Hoffman filed a request for declaratory judgment June 20 to have the ballots unsealed so the counts could be reconciled, though none of the county or legislative races were close enough to be impacted.

A state circuit court judge allowed the re-audit to occur June 25. Board members from the non-affected precincts were asked to handle the counting.

That re-audit established that human error during the hand counting accounted for the earlier discrepancies, and that machine counts from the primary election were correct, according to County Auditor Lindley Howard, who provided the tally sheets and other documentation to News Watch.

Howard also noted that the hand counting took about 15 minutes per race, which in a general election



Citizen auditing boards conduct a re-audit of the 2024 primary election on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, at the McPherson County Courthouse in Leola, S.D. The count resolved earlier issues with hand-counted ballots in the county. (Photo: McPherson

County Auditor's Office)

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Human errors that occurred during a hand-counted post-election audit "reinforced my opinion that hand counting is not the way to go on election night if you're looking for speed and accuracy," said McPherson County Auditor Lindley Howard. (Photo: McPherson County Auditor's Office)

with 13 or 14 races could have caused reporting lags even in McPherson County, the state's 54th largest county.

"If anything, it reinforced my opinion that hand counting is not the way to go on election night if you're looking for speed and accuracy," said Howard, who is also a member of the State Board of Elections. "If you take the minutes per race and human errors and extrapolate that out to bigger counties, I feel like you're going to see some problems."

Howard is not alone in that conclusion.

According to a News Watch survey of county auditors conducted in March, nearly 90% of those who responded (43 of 49) answered "no" to the question of whether hand counting is an "effective and efficient method of tabulating ballots."

Mike Klipfel, a hand-count supporter who served on one of the audit boards that got the wrong tally, acknowledged in a phone interview with News Watch that human error occurred. But he said better tally sheets and procedures

were available and that Howard was not prepared for the pre-election audit.

"The fact of the matter is that our county auditor failed at what she was supposed to do that day," said Klipfel, who also serves as chairman of the McPherson County Republican Party.

Hand counting is priority for reformists

McPherson County, which gave Republican Donald Trump 81% of the vote in 2020, has seen plenty of recent tussles between government officials and citizen activists as South Dakota grapples with election security and voting reforms.

Howard has clashed with South Dakota Canvassing supporters on legislative and legal issues, including drop boxes, absentee voting, voter-roll records and machine counting of ballots.

"Basically (the activists) are saying, 'I'm a Christian, so I believe in election integrity, and you don't agree with me, so you are doing Satan's work,'" she told News Watch in 2023. "I would say that causes a lot of stress."

Hand counting has replaced the acquisition of cast-vote records as South Dakota Canvassing's most pressing priority, with Minnehaha County Auditor Leah Anderson voicing support for lessening the state's reliance on voting machines.

"If done properly with a good system in place and training ahead of time, (hand counting) can definitely be effective and efficient, especially in smaller counties," Anderson told News Watch earlier this year.

Minnehaha County's own June 25 hand count of more than 13,000 ballots took about 11 hours, Anderson told News Watch the day after the count. That was more than double what she had estimated. Of the 50 people counting ballots, she said some left early "due to health concerns and other commitments, like work."

"Having so many forms to sign for each race and precinct, that definitely slowed down the process," Anderson said. "Many workers wished they didn't have to print and sign their name on every tally sheet and also have to sign every certificate."

Results of the Minnehaha post-election audit were sent to the Secretary of State's office and will be presented at the July 2 meeting of the county commission.

Law requires post-election audits

South Dakota passed a law in 2023 requiring post-election audits using hand counts of randomly selected voting precincts. The law calls for an audit of at least 5% of precincts, but McPherson County consists of just four precincts.

In February, the county's board of commissioners voted in favor of a hand-counted post-election audit

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of all ballots cast in the June 4 primary election.

Needing 20 citizens to fill out four audit boards of five members each, Howard chose people who had expressed interest in hand counting as an alternative to machines.

One of those was Klipfel, a Leola farmer who supported a petition for a public vote to eliminate voting machines in McPherson County for 2024. The county commission voted in April to reject the petition based on legal advice that the measure's wording could violate federal voting laws.

"Every election cycle, we believe, is the most important election in our life," Klipfel said at a District 23 Republican forum in May. "This one is no different."

'It is not numerically possible'

The initial pre-election audit was held June 13 at the McPherson County Courthouse and took two-and-a-half hours. Two of the precincts came out fine. The other two had problems.

One of the discrepancies involved Precinct 3, where 127 Republican ballots were received. That should have amounted to 254 total votes for District 23 House, since people could vote for two candidates and undercounts would still be tallied.

The hand count ended up with 253 total votes.

"It is not numerically possible to have 253 total votes tallied, including under votes, with 127 ballots," Hoffman, the state's attorney, wrote in his June 20 request to unseal the ballots for another audit.

Hoffman made it clear in his filing that the results of the District 23 legislative races "will not be affected by the results of a post-election recount."

Mark Lapka defeated Steven Roseland by 523 votes in the Senate race, while Spencer Gosch and Scott Moore prevailed by more than 1,000 votes in the House race over incumbent James Wangsness.

But since the discrepancies in the audit weren't reconciled, county officials didn't want to send inaccurate final voting tallies to the secretary of state's office.

"If election integrity is what's being asked for, ensuring the post-election audit is done correctly is part of that," said Hoffman.

Howard, the auditor, told News Watch that Klipfel "was adamant that they weren't going to recount. He said that they were right and the machines were wrong and he got up from the table. We were kind of at a loss as far as, 'What do we do now?' Because he was done."

Klipfel disputes that account, saying that Howard suggested running the ballots back through the machine and that he questioned if that would violate state law.

"I told her that I wasn't going to be responsible for doing something that was not legal, and that was the end of it," he said.

Commission race throws off count

In Precinct 4, there were 135 Republican ballots cast in the primary. The audit board tallied 262 votes in the District 23 House race. But the total should have been 270, with Hoffman again stating that a result of 262 was "not numerically possible" with 135 ballots.

Howard and Hoffman theorized that the board was likely thrown off by the fact that the McPherson County Commission race was only listed on four ballots. The board counted those ballots first and tallied the Senate ballots that also included the county race before setting those four ballots aside.

But they neglected to reincorporate those four ballots while counting the House race, making them eight votes short (two House votes per ballot). That explained why they came up with 262 rather than 270.

The same audit board "did re-count the Republican ballots to attempt to reconcile the tally numbers for the State Representative race," Hoffman wrote in his filing. "However, it is believed that the four ballots were again not included in this re-count and the tally again came out to 262."

Human errors confirmed after re-audit

Serving on the Precinct 4 audit board was Jodi Waltman, secretary of the McPherson County Republicans, who had worked closely with South Dakota Canvassing and its advisor, Rick Weible, on the hand counting petition.

Following the audit, South Dakota Canvassing posted the hand tally on Facebook and the Telegram

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instant messaging service, adding that "the results prove the machine is NOT accurate and is in violation of (Election Assistance Commission) requirements. The allowable error rate is 1 in 500,000 ballot marks. This is clearly over that rate, which means the machines must be decertified and immediately and discontinued for us. DECERTIFY!"

That post no longer appeared on Facebook by the time the re-audit was conducted June 25, confirming that the machine count from the June 4 primary election was correct. Jessica Pollema of South Dakota Canvassing responded to a message from News Watch but refused to comment for this story.

County officials cited human error for the discrepancies that occurred during the original post-election audit for Precincts 3 and 4.

"The eight-vote discrepancy in the original audit of Precinct 4 was human error from four ballots that were not included in the House race count when the board conducted the audit," Howard said, confirming earlier theories of what occurred.

'True believers' likely won't be swayed

Tod Gohl, a Leola native who has been vocal at McPherson County Commission meetings and on social media about getting rid of voting machines, told News Watch that the audit results did not change his mind.

Gohl and other election reformists view South Dakota as a proving ground for claims that recent elections across the county were substantially impacted by hacking or fraud, allegations repeatedly rejected by courts of law as well as Democratic and Republican election leaders.

As for Howard, she said she's glad that the audit results were resolved, but she's trying to be realistic about who learned lessons in the process.

"For the people who are true believers, if you will, I don't think it will make much of a difference," she said. "But I'm hoping that people who are on the outer edges of the movement might see things like this and think twice."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org



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Biden and Trump trade insults, accusations of lying in acrimonious presidential debate

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 27, 2024 10:11 PM

President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump pitched to undecided voters Thursday night during the first debate of the presidential campaign — trading insults over their policy differences, immigration and who represents a threat to democracy.

During the debate from CNN's headquarters in Atlanta, the two men argued over who can do better for Americans during the next four years on a broad swath of issues, ranging from the economy to climate change to foreign policy. Each repeatedly accused the other of lying.

Biden early in the debate spoke softly at several points, coughed and gave several somewhat confusing answers. At one point, Biden appeared to lose his train of thought and ended an answer with the statement that "we finally beat Medicare."

The two disagreed sharply over access to reproductive rights, including abortion, with Trump arguing Democrats' position is "radical" and Biden saying that leaving decisions up to the states has been "terrible" for women.

Biden, 81, and Trump, 78, did not shake hands at the beginning, a break from past debates.

Near the end of the debate, Trump said political violence was "totally unacceptable," though he went on to downplay the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, defending the conduct of his mob of supporters.

Trump initially did not directly answer a question about whether he would accept the results of the election if he lost. When pressed by moderator Dana Bash, Trump conditioned his answer.

Jabs over personal conduct

Even with rules meant to minimize crosstalk, the debate — moderated by Bash, anchor and chief political correspondent, and Jake Tapper, anchor and chief Washington correspondent — saw many moments of acrimony.

While Trump had harsh words about Biden's border policy and Biden blasted his predecessor for appointing Supreme Court justices who overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, they saved their harshest criticism for the other's personal conduct.

Referring to reports that, as president, Trump said veterans killed in action in France during World War II were "suckers and losers," Biden, invoked his son, Beau, who was a National Guard veteran and later died of brain cancer.

"My son was not a loser and was not a sucker," Biden told his predecessor, scowling. "You're the sucker. You're the loser."

Trump denied he ever made the remark, first reported in The Atlantic and confirmed in other reports.

Biden at several times attacked Trump's credibility and truthfulness, saying after one answer, "Every single thing he said is a lie."

"I never heard so much malarkey in my whole life," he said in response to another of Trump's answers.

Trump brought up the conviction of Biden's son, Hunter, on federal gun charges this year. And he said that Joe Biden could face prosecution for his performance on border security.

Trump and his legal team argued in front of the Supreme Court in April that presidents have absolute immunity from criminal prosecution.

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Trump's conviction

Thursday's event was the first presidential debate where one participant was a convicted felon.

A New York state jury in May found Trump guilty of 34 felony counts for falsifying business records to cover up hush money payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels for an affair she testified they had that Trump didn't want to harm his 2016 election prospects.

Trump has denied the affair and it hasn't affected his support within the GOP, though his sentencing July 11 could affect his campaign strategy.

Trump rejected his criminal conviction during the debate and reiterated his stance that he didn't have a sexual relationship with an adult film star.

"I didn't have sex with a porn star," Trump said, marking the first time such words, or anything near them, have been uttered during a presidential debate.

"I did nothing wrong, we have a system that was rigged and disgusting," Trump said. "I did nothing wrong."

Trump also responded to the question by referring to Hunter Biden.

"When he talks about a convicted felon, his son is a convicted felon," Trump said.

Jan. 6 disagreement

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to release a ruling within days in another trial involving Trump, this time on whether presidents enjoy complete immunity from criminal prosecution for their actions while in office.

The justices' decision will determine whether a federal trial against Trump for election interference stemming from his actions on Jan. 6, 2021 can proceed.

During the debate, Trump said that "on January 6 we were respected all over the world," but that changed after Biden took office.

Trump seemed to imply that the people who stormed the Capitol building were "innocent" and "patriotic," saying that "you ought to be ashamed of yourself" for those people being in prison.

Biden said that Trump encouraged the "folks" who attacked the U.S. Capitol building and U.S. Capitol Police officers.

"If they're convicted, he says he wants to commute their sentences," Biden said, criticizing Trump's behavior that day. "These people should be in jail. They should be the ones held accountable."

Biden rejected the idea that the people who attacked the police and disrupted the electoral certification were patriots.

Divide on abortion rights

Reproductive rights — including access to abortion — sharply divided Biden and Trump, who sparred over which political party's stance is better.

Trump said that he agreed with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision earlier this month to leave access to mifepristone, one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortion, in place. And he said he wouldn't seek to limit access if elected president in November.

"I agree with their decision to have done that, and I will not block it," Trump said, adding that the Supreme Court's earlier decision to overturn the constitutional right to an abortion was a good thing.

"We brought it back to the states and the country is now coming together on this issue," Trump said. "It's been a great thing."

Trump said he supports exceptions for rape, incest or the life of the woman.

Biden rejected Trump's classification that Democrats are "radical" on abortion policy and said he supports reinstating the protections that existed under Roe v. Wade.

"It's been a terrible thing," Biden said of leaving decisions about abortion access up to state lawmakers, comparing it to leaving civil rights decisions up to the states.

Trump said during an interview with Time magazine released in April that his campaign was on the brink

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of releasing a policy regarding mifepristone, one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortion. The campaign has yet to release that policy.

Trump suggested that he would be okay with states limiting or barring access to contraception during a May interview with a Pittsburgh TV news station. But he quickly walked back those comments in a social media post.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative-leaning think tank, has suggested that another Trump administration could block the mailing of mifepristone by enforcing the Comstock Act.

The group included the proposal along with dozens of others in Project 2025, its 920-page blueprint for a second Trump administration.

The 1873 anti-obscenity law hasn't been enforced in decades and is referred to as a "zombie law" by reproductive rights organizations, but it is still technically a law.

A future Republican attorney general seeking to enforce the law to block the mailing of mifepristone would likely see the law challenged in court, likely working its way up to the Supreme Court.

Mifepristone is one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortions, which are approved for up to 10 weeks gestation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The two-drug regimen accounts for about 63% of all abortions within the United States, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

First of two debates

The two presidential debates this year are a departure from past years, with both candidates ditching the proposed schedule from the nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates.

Biden and Trump later agreed to two debates, the one held Thursday by CNN and another one on Sept. 10 that will be hosted by ABC News.

CNN opted to hold its debate at its studios in Atlanta, Georgia, without an audience. Thursday night's debate was also earlier than any other presidential debates, which have traditionally begun in September or October.

The television news network created frustration ahead of the debate with the White House Correspondents Association when it decided to keep the pool, the group of journalists that travel everywhere with the president, out of the room.

Kelly O'Donnell, president of the WHCA, released a statement Thursday afternoon that the organization was "deeply concerned that CNN has rejected our repeated requests to include the White House travel pool inside the studio."

"The pool is there for the 'what ifs?' in a world where the unexpected does happen," wrote O'Donnell, who is also the senior White House correspondent for NBC News. "A pool reporter is present to provide context and insight by direct observation and not through the lens of the television production."

CNN's rules also said that neither Biden nor Trump was allowed to bring props or pre-written notes into the debate area.

Each stood behind "a uniform podium" and was not allowed to interact with campaign staff during the two commercial breaks.

Biden was scheduled to travel with first lady Jill Biden to Raleigh, North Carolina, immediately after the debate wrapped. They're set to participate in campaign events on Friday morning before traveling to New York later in the day.

The Bidens are then expected to travel to Red Bank, New Jersey, on Saturday for more campaigning before heading back to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland.

Trump will attend a campaign rally Friday afternoon in Chesapeake, Virginia. In a release announcing the event, Trump criticized Biden on inflation, crime and drug addiction, and immigration.

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

COMMENTARY

Flood washes away Noem's false veneer of leadership

by SETH TUPPER

JUNE 27, 2024 4:39 PM

Severe weather brought a deluge to southeast South Dakota recently and exposed Gov. Kristi Noem's faults.

While the rain fell, she abandoned the state for a political conference and television interview.

When catastrophic floodwaters surged toward McCook Lake, her cursory appearance there — along with her lackluster crisis communications and departure for an out-of-state political fundraiser — left people without adequate warning about the danger they faced.

And after declining to use the National Guard for the flood preparations or response, Noem said activating the Guard would be "extremely expensive" and asserted troops should only be used in a "very crisis situation." This from a governor who has ordered troops to the Texas-Mexico border three times, and paid for it with money from the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund.

According to Noem, none of that was a mistake, and she led a solid flood mitigation and response effort informed by her experience.

"We learn with every flood that happens," she said during a Tuesday press conference.

That's true. And there's a lot to learn about her from this one.

'If we don't, then that's wonderful'

The flooding began with three days of rain June 20-22 in southeast South Dakota, surpassing 17 inches in some locations.

The Big Sioux River swelled to a historic level and swamped several towns while flowing toward the Missouri. That's where McCook Lake and 230 homes around it stood in the bullseye.

Meanwhile, where was Noem? Her official calendar is protected by an egregious exemption in South Dakota's open-records laws. But some details of her travels are known, thanks to journalists such as the Argus Leader's Dominik Dausch, who reviewed social media posts from around the country to fill in the gaps of her whereabouts.

On Saturday, June 22, Noem delivered a speech at a Faith & Freedom Coalition conference in Washington, D.C.

On Sunday morning, June 23, she was on NBC's "Meet the Press," where she jostled with the host about politics and whether she's being vetted as a running mate for Donald Trump.

By that afternoon, Noem was back in South Dakota. She led a press conference with federal, state and local officials in North Sioux City, where she talked about a voluntary evacuation order in Dakota Dunes, the construction of a temporary levee, a closure on Interstate 29, and the status of Missouri River dams.

Nobody at the press conference expressed an urgent safety concern about McCook Lake. When somebody asked what lake residents should do, Noem said they should protect their personal property, "because we do anticipate that they will take in water."

"That's what we're preparing for," she said. "If we don't, then that's wonderful that they don't have an impact, but they could see water flowing into McCook Lake."

Nobody at the press conference clearly explained that the levee under construction was intended to direct floodwaters away from North Sioux City through a slough toward McCook Lake, where the overflow would hopefully drain toward the Missouri River while causing minimal damage.

From McCook Lake to Memphis

Granted, it was tough to imagine how thoroughly the lake would be overwhelmed, because nobody's ever seen so much water in the Big Sioux.

But that's precisely why Noem and her advisers should have sounded alarms. She said during the Sunday press conference that the river would reach a record level the following afternoon. She knew an unprec-

edented situation was unfolding.

Shortly after she finished speaking, forecasters were already predicting an earlier and higher river crest. The water was rising so fast, it went up more than a foot during the press conference.

But Noem wasn't watching the river. She slipped away Sunday evening to Tennessee, where she headlined the Shelby County Republican Party's Lincoln Day Gala in a Hilton billed as the tallest hotel in Memphis. Tickets ranged from \$200 to \$2,750 for the "legacy circle table."

Back at McCook Lake that night, all hell broke loose. The Big Sioux surged over Interstate 29 and slammed into houses on the lake's north shore. Local authorities scrambled to alert residents, and rescue teams spent the night and the next morning hauling stunned people to safety.

Noem returned to South Dakota for press conferences Monday and Tuesday, where she described the carnage: "We have whole homes that have fallen into the lake. We've got hundred-foot drop-offs from washouts, we've got live power lines laying across the roads, we've got boats stuck in trees, we've got trees that are half-falling over."

According to her, it was unavoidable.

"That mitigation plan would've worked in a lesser event," she said, "but there was so much water that flowed through there."

Well, yes, just like she knew it would. She said Sunday afternoon that the Big Sioux would crest at an all-time high, and she knew the excess water would be diverted to McCook Lake. That's why people living around the lake needed the clear and loud warning they didn't receive until it was too late — the kind of warning Noem's predecessor, Gov. Dennis Daugaard, provided before a 2014 flood in the same area when he said, "I am very concerned for residents near McCook Lake."

As Noem said, there's something to learn from every flood, and the people of McCook Lake learned a painful lesson: Neither hell nor high water will stop Kristi Noem from pursuing her own ambition at the expense of the people she serves.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Noem, who sent Guard troops to Texas, resists using them for her own state's flooding

Governor says activations are 'expensive' and should only be used for a 'crisis'

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 27, 2024 2:55 PM

After ordering National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border three times, Republican Gov. Kristi Noem is defending her decision to avoid sending troops to flood-ravaged areas in South Dakota, saying it would be "extremely expensive" and that the Guard should only be used for "a very crisis situation."

Meanwhile, her spokesman left open the possibility that the Guard "may still be utilized."

The South Dakota Democratic Party is urging Noem to deploy the Guard to help with relief efforts after the past week's record rainfall and flooding.

"While the governor's decisions to send National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border may have been intended as a political statement, it is imperative that our state's resources are directed toward addressing the immediate and pressing needs of our residents," the party said Thursday in a news release.

Since 2021 and through May of this year, Noem spent a total of \$2.7 million from the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund on three National Guard deployments she ordered to help Texas secure its border with Mexico (two additional border deployments were federally ordered and funded). The cost of one of Noem's deployments was partially offset by a \$1 million donation from Tennessee billionaire Willis Johnson.

On Sunday, before floodwaters overwhelmed part of the McCook Lake area in southeast South Dakota that night, Noem said it was unlikely the National Guard would be used.

"At this point in time, that has not been requested, and we don't believe it's necessary," she said Sunday.

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"We have private contractors and the community that is better prepared and believe they can do the work quickly. And so they stand ready, and we have a plan to activate if necessary, but we don't believe at this time that that's going to be required."

Then, during a Tuesday press conference in Yankton, where she said "a couple dozen homes" were destroyed at McCook Lake, she defended her decision to avoid using the Guard. She said counties would have to request and pay for it.

"That's usually, typically a very crisis situation, and the National Guard is extremely expensive," she said.

She did not mention that she provided South Dakota's troops to Texas for free and used South Dakota's own Emergency and Disaster Fund — the same fund used for flood responses — to cover the costs.

State Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, took to social media on Wednesday to criticize the governor.

"Gov Kristi Noem sent troops to Texas and billed us, South Dakota taxpayers," he shared on X (formerly Twitter). "BUT Noem said it's too expensive to use our guard to help our taxpayers fight the flood. Explain this hypocrisy???"

Noem's spokesperson, Ian Fury, did not respond directly to a South Dakota Searchlight request for comment, but sent an email to numerous South Dakota media outlets defending Noem's actions and comments. He mentioned the one known death resulting from the floods — an 87-year-old man who accidentally backed his vehicle over a washed-out road section near Harrisburg.

"While, tragically, we did see one loss of life, we know that the cooperation between the county emergency managers, first responders, volunteers, and the state departments saved countless homes and lives. The media has chosen to ignore this work and have falsely reported that the National Guard were not deployed due to costs," Fury wrote. "This is not true."

It's unclear what media outlets Fury was referencing.

"In order for National Guard troops to be deployed, a request is [made] to the governor from the local government, and after discussion, no request was ever made," he wrote. "The Guard may still be utilized to help in this disaster if a time comes when a community requests a defined mission that can be best accomplished by our soldiers."

Fury added there are limitations on what National Guard soldiers can do.

"They legally cannot enter people's homes or clear or repair private property," he wrote.

Morgan Speichinger's McCook Lake home was destroyed, and she and others are attempting to recover belongings and start the cleanup.

"There is a 100% need for the National Guard here," Speichinger said Thursday. "How are we going to get all of that done in a short amount of time?"

Noem has deployed troops previously for in-state natural disasters, including in 2022 to help Native American reservations recover from blizzards and to help areas including her hometown of Castlewood recover from severe storms and a tornado.

In 2014, Noem's predecessor, Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard, deployed National Guard troops in advance to help with flood preparations in some of the same areas that are now suffering flood damage, including McCook Lake.

To cover those kinds of costs, state lawmakers annually backfill the state's Emergency and Disaster Fund with money. During last winter's annual legislative session, the funding legislation initially included \$2.8 million. Lawmakers increased that amount to \$4.3 million in anticipation of Noem's latest deployment of Guard troops to Texas this year.

The legislation designates the funding for "costs related to any emergency or disaster" and references a separate state law's definitions of those terms. The definitions include language defining such events as those occurring "in any part of the state," which has led some lawmakers to question the legality of using the fund for troop deployments to Texas.

Noem has defended the costs as a response to what she calls a "warzone" at the border.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public af-

fairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Iowa city, SD company face suit alleging contaminated water, \$4 million in tainted cheese

BY: CLARK KAUFFMAN, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - JUNE 27, 2024 8:07 PM

A cheese manufacturer is suing the Iowa city of Sanborn for water contamination that allegedly infiltrated the plant and caused \$4 million in damages.

The Minnesota dairy cooperative Associated Milk Producers Inc., or AMPI, is suing not only the City of Sanborn in federal court, but also the company hired by the city to clean the municipal water tower, Maguire Iron of South Dakota.

AMPI operates an 80-year-old plant in Sanborn where each day, it produces 280,000 pounds of cheese. As part of the production process, the plant consumes 300,000 gallons of water each day.

In late 2021, the city hired Maguire Iron to clean, maintain and sandblast the municipal water tower. In the summer of 2022, the lawsuit claims, the city drained the water tower, allowing Maguire to begin its work inside and around the structure.

AMPI alleges Maguire negligently performed its sandblasting of the tower's interior by using jagged shards of a toxic black sandblasting aggregate commonly called black magic. Maguire allegedly used the aggregate to clean the tower's interior surfaces without first sealing the intake and outflow pipes that route water in and out of the tower.

That alleged failure to seal the pipes resulted in "sandblasting aggregate and other spent cleaning debris entering the city's water system and subsequently infiltrating the Sanborn plant," the lawsuit claims.

When Maguire finished its work, city officials attempted to refill the tower and noticed sandblasting aggregate flowing out of a standpipe valve connected to the tower. City workers then spent several hours attempting to flush the aggregate out of the pipes and then resumed their efforts to refill the tower, the lawsuit alleges.

When that work was completed, the city had the water tested for bacteria. When the test indicated there was no bacteria present, the city allegedly opened the valves from the tower and restored the flow of water to not just the AMPI plant but to other businesses and homes that rely on the tower.

Within days, officials at the plant allegedly discovered large amounts of sandblasting aggregate in its water, its equipment and in the cheese that had recently been processed. The lawsuit claims the amount of contamination was so significant that the aggregate from within the tower had "blasted AMPI's filters off," leaving piles of black aggregate forming on the plant's floor.

As a result of the incident, AMPI alleges, it had to discard "cheese worth nearly \$4 million that had been contaminated and was unsafe for consumption."

Mayor: Residents didn't complain of contamination

In its lawsuit, AMPI argues the city "negligently performed its role in the maintenance and repair services on the water tower," alleging it failed to hire a third-party inspector to monitor Maguire's work on the water tower.

"The city should have notified Maguire, or hired a third-party, to ensure the city's water supply was free of dangerous sandblasting aggregate and spent cleaning debris before providing such contaminated water to the city's water users," AMPI alleges.

The city has yet to file a response to the lawsuit. A claim of \$4 million in damages equates to \$2,803 for each of Sanborn's 1,427 residents.

With regard to contaminated water that may have flowed to other city businesses and to residents'

homes, the city's attorney, Daniel DeKoter, said he has heard of no such concerns.

"That's not something I have ever been told," he said Thursday. "And I think something like that would have been brought to my attention as the city's attorney."

Mayor Randy Lyman said Thursday that while the city didn't test residents' water for the presence of black aggregate, it did perform other types of testing that indicated the water was safe. Asked why the supply wasn't tested for the presence of the sandblasting aggregate, Lyman said, "We had no complaints from residents about any aggregate in the water."

Lyman added that because the cheese plant is first in line to collect water from the tower, and because it is such a heavy user, the plant "sucks so hard" in drawing water from the tower that any contaminants would have gone directly to the plant rather than to other users.

City Administrator Jim Zeutenhorst did not respond Thursday to a request for comment.

Deputy Editor Clark Kauffman of the Iowa Capital Dispatch has worked during the past 30 years as both an investigative reporter and editorial writer at two of Iowa's largest newspapers, the Des Moines Register and the Quad-City Times. He has won numerous state and national awards for reporting and editorial writing. His 2004 series on prosecutorial misconduct in Iowa was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. From October 2018 through November 2019, Kauffman was an assistant ombudsman for the Iowa Office of Ombudsman, an agency that investigates citizens' complaints of wrongdoing within state and local government agencies.

Presidential election seen as climate turning point as CO2 hits record

BY: LIA CHIEN - JUNE 27, 2024 6:00 AM

WASHINGTON – Despite policies the Biden administration has championed to target climate change, recent findings show carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is at an all-time high, raising the stakes for November's presidential election among advocates for aggressive climate action.

Recent data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration indicate that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has been at record high levels the past two years. The jump from 2022 to 2024 is the largest two-year increase NOAA has recorded in the 50 years the agency has collected data.

As the presidential election approaches, key policy measures to curb climate change are at a turning point, advocates say, with a second Donald Trump presidency likely to defer to fossil fuel interests and roll back much of the environmental progress made under Biden.

The record jump in carbon dioxide came despite President Joe Biden's focus on environmental and climate issues. Biden's administration has taken more action on climate — by issuing executive orders, proposing and supporting ambitious legislation and setting carbon-reduction goals — than any of his predecessors, according to an analysis by the liberal think tank Center for American Progress.

On the campaign trail in 2019, Biden told voters, "We're going to end fossil fuel."

His campaign then announced in July 2020 its plan to eliminate energy production through fossil fuels by 2035.

And in the early days of his presidency, Biden promised to cut 2005-level emissions in half by 2030.

Biden's climate record

According to the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based research organization, the U.S. is on track to achieve that goal.

A study in January 2024 revealed that greenhouse gas emissions — which include many types of gases along with carbon dioxide — were down 2% in 2023 from the previous year and were down more than 17% compared to 2005 levels. At the same time, the U.S. gross domestic product, a figure that approximates total economic output, grew by over 2%.

"What this suggests is that the Biden administration's climate policies are beginning to work and that we're bending the curve of emissions downward," said Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, the executive director of the conservation group Western Environmental Law Center.

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Biden has also set the U.S. economy on a path away from “fossil fuel and carbon-intensive economic sectors,” Schlenker-Goodrich added.

He pointed to the Inflation Reduction Act — the sweeping climate, health and taxes law Congress passed in 2022 with only Democratic votes and major backing from the Biden White House — as a significant investment in tackling climate change and building the U.S. economy around climate-friendly practices.

Biden signed the law in August 2022. It provided \$369 billion in tax credits and spending for renewable energy programs, including electric vehicle tax credits, and provides incentives for climate-smart agriculture.

Climate and infrastructure

By 2030, the IRA will also create more than 1.5 million jobs in clean energy manufacturing and add \$250 billion to the economy, according to projections from the Labor Energy Partnership, a collaboration between the organized labor giant AFL-CIO and the Energy Future Initiative, a D.C.-based clean energy policy nonprofit.

The climate-focused law and the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law that Biden signed in 2021 provide vital resources to developing climate-friendly practices, Schlenker-Goodrich said.

“The key is to set a foundation through U.S. infrastructure,” he said.

The administration has continued to pursue climate initiatives.

Following the NOAA announcement of increased atmospheric carbon dioxide, the Department of Energy and NOAA signed a memorandum of agreement to collaborate in the future on climate initiatives related to marine carbon dioxide removal and research. The effort is “an important pathway” to reach their emissions goal in 2050, according to a NOAA press release.

“Under the assumption that the Biden administration has a second term, the second term should be devoted to looking at how we can facilitate a just transition away from our dependency on oil and gas,” Schlenker-Goodrich said.

The American Petroleum Institute, the leading oil and gas industry group, did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Contrast with Trump

Trump has criticized Biden’s record on climate and energy and has pledged to defer more to the oil and gas industry.

At an April meeting at Mar-a-Lago, the former president’s South Florida club and residence, Trump told the country’s top oil executives that if elected, he’d reverse Biden’s environmental policies and stop all future ones, according to the Washington Post. In exchange, Trump asked them to contribute \$1 billion to his campaign.

Following the meeting, Democratic Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island and Ron Wyden of Oregon launched an inquiry and called into question the reported quid-pro-quo fundraising tactics.

“Whether it’s Donald Trump’s promises to roll back climate policies in exchange for \$1 billion in campaign cash or the fossil fuel industry’s collusion to jack up prices at the pump, Mr. Trump and Big Oil have proven they are willing to sell out Americans to pad their own pockets,” Whitehouse said in a written statement to States Newsroom.

“Let me be clear: A Trump Presidency would be disastrous for climate progress and for our efforts to shore up our economy against climate damages.”

The Biden campaign called attention to Trump’s ties with the fossil fuel industry as well, writing in a statement that Trump intends to work in their favor.

“Donald Trump calls climate change a ‘hoax’ and promises oil and gas executives they’ll get whatever they want behind closed doors if they donate to his campaign,” a campaign spokesperson wrote. “Our planet needs a president who will fight the climate crisis, not someone who pretends it doesn’t exist.”

When asked what a Trump presidency would look like for climate change, Schlenker-Goodrich of Western Environmental Law Center said, “it would prove disastrous.”

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"When it comes to climate action, they're going to do everything they possibly can, within their power and likely go beyond what those legal boundaries are, to support the fossil fuel industry at the expense of our country's energy transition," he said.

First term

During Trump's term, his administration was "largely successful in weakening existing environmental regulations" that were set during Barack Obama's presidency, according to the Brookings Institution.

By August 2020, the Trump administration had taken 74 actions to weaken environmental protections, according to the Brookings analysis.

The 2024 Trump campaign has already outlined the former president's plans to change environmental and energy policy if elected in November. This includes drilling for natural gas and oil, or what Trump often calls "liquid gold."

Trump also plans to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords as he did in 2019 and combat Democratic efforts to implement the Green New Deal, an ambitious climate platform backed by members of the Democratic Party's progressive wing, according to his campaign website. He also plans to reverse Biden's efforts to manufacture more affordable electric vehicles in the U.S.

His priorities include ensuring the lowest energy prices for Americans, reducing inflation, and bringing more jobs to U.S. workers through fossil fuel industries, a campaign spokesperson said, adding that the Biden administration has done the opposite.

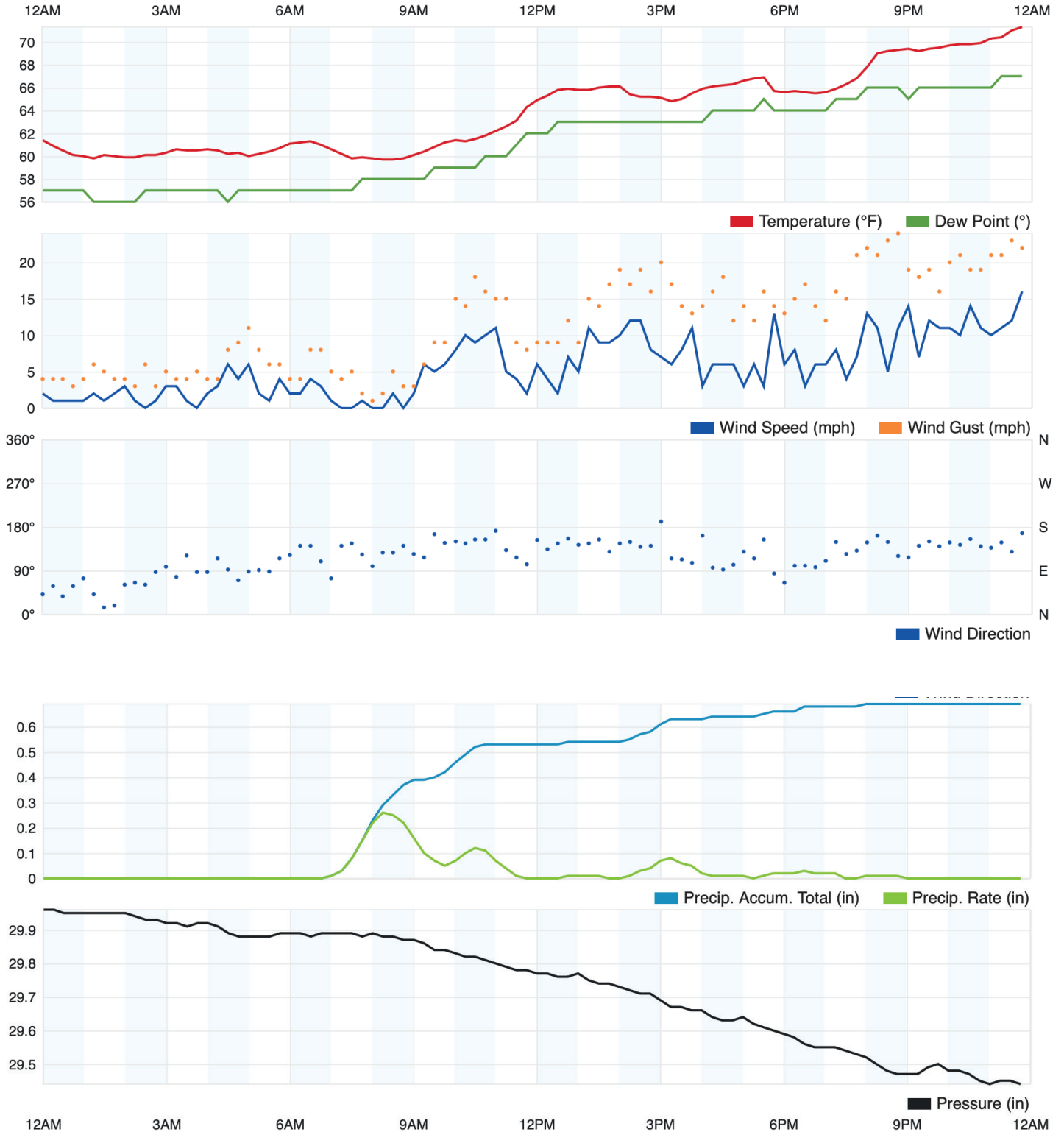
"No one has done more damage to the American oil and gas industry than Joe Biden," the spokesperson wrote.

Lia is a Capitol Reporting Fellow based in the States Newsroom Washington, D.C Bureau. She is passionate about covering agriculture, climate, and education policy areas.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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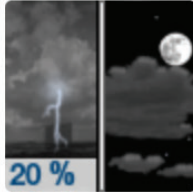
Today



High: 82 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 54 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 70 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Saturday Night



Low: 47 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 75 °F

Mostly Sunny



Severe Weather Threat Overview

June 28, 2024
4:11 AM

This Evening

Hazards (primarily in Dark Green area)

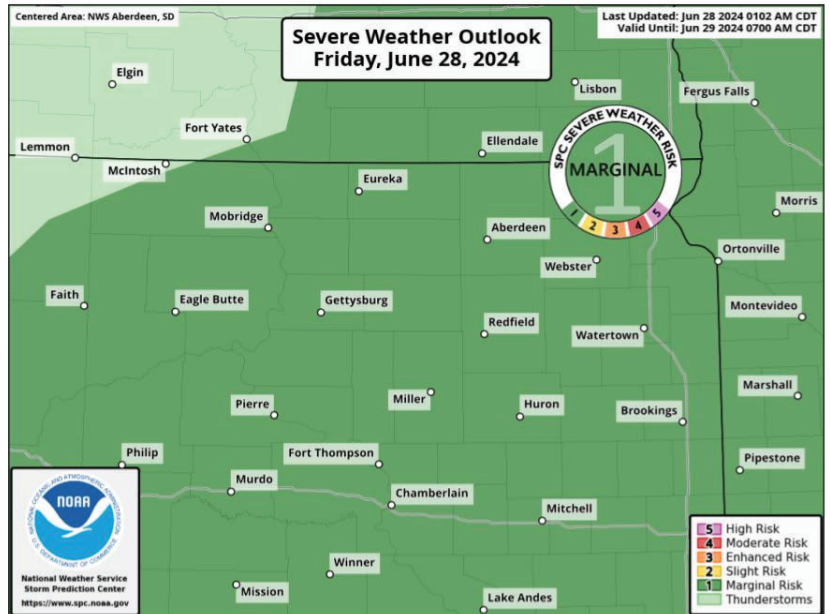
Hail (Golfball) and Damaging Winds (60-70 mph).

Timing/Location

A few storms will develop in western SD and track east/northeast across the area generally after 7 PM CDT. Widespread severe activity is not expected.

Tornado Potential

Very Low	Low	Medium	High
Max Hail Size			
Quarters	Golfball	Tennisball	Baseball
Max Wind Speed			
< 60 mph	60-70 mph	70-80 mph	> 80mph
Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential			
Very Low	Low	Medium	High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A few storms will develop in western SD and move east/northeast across SD. Storms are expected to impact our area after 7 PM CDT. One or two storms may become severe. Hazards with severe storms will be golfball sized hail and 60-70 mph wind gusts.

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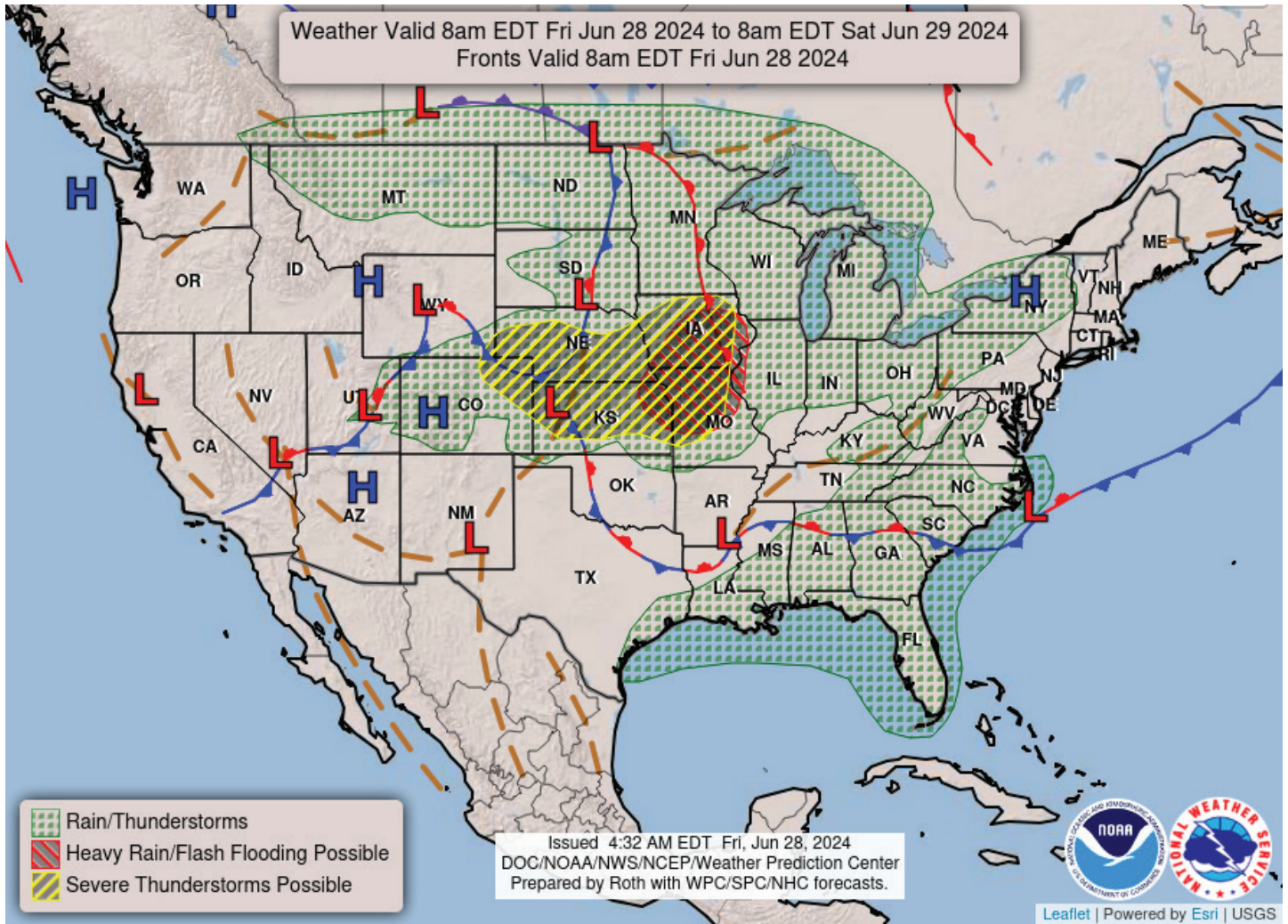
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 71 °F at 11:31 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 8:25 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 8:45 PM
Precip: : 0.69 +.42 overnight =1.11

Day length: 15 hours, 41 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1931
Record Low: 40 in 1951
Average High: 83
Average Low: 58
Average Precip in June.: 3.51
Precip to date in June: 3.98
Average Precip to date: 10.76
Precip Year to Date: 11.05
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:48 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45:25 am



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Today in Weather History

June 28, 1961: An F2 tornado skipped ESE from about 5 miles south of Eureka to Lake Mina. About twelve farm buildings were destroyed. A house was damaged when a small shed was smashed against it in Hillsview. The storm struck north of Roscoe where a barn was unroofed. A second F2 tornado hit west of Hoven. On one farm, a barn, and five small buildings were destroyed, although grain bin nearby was untouched. Another farm, across the road, lost four buildings including a house. The Langford area of Marshall County was struck by an EF2 tornado shortly after 8:00 pm. An estimated 15 to 20 farm buildings were demolished or heavily damaged, and a store in town was partially unroofed.

June 28, 1982: An estimated thunderstorm wind gust up to 94 mph knocked down trees and caused minor structural damage to several homes just west of Wheaton, Minnesota.

June 28, 1990: KDIO radio in Ortonville, Minnesota, clocked winds of 80 to 85 mph for several minutes as a thunderstorm passed. There were reports of numerous trees downed and scattered power outages in Ortonville.

1788: The Battle of Monmouth in central New Jersey was fought in sweltering heat. The temperature was 96 degrees in the shade, and there were more casualties from the heat than from bullets.

1892 - The temperature at Orogrande UT soared to 116 degrees to establish a record for the state. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1923 - A massive tornado hit Sandusky, OH, then swept across Lake Erie to strike the town of Lorain. The tornado killed 86 persons and caused twelve million dollars damage. The tornado outbreak that day was the worst of record for the state of Ohio up til that time. (David Ludlum)

1924: An estimated F4 tornado struck the towns of Sandusky and Lorain, killing 85 people and injuring over 300. This tornado is the deadliest ever in Ohio history.

1975 - Lee Trevino and two other golfers are struck by lightning at the Western Open golf tournament in Oak Brook, IL. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature at Wichita Falls, TX, soared to 117 degrees, their hottest reading of record. Daily highs were 110 degrees or above between the 24th of June and the 3rd of July. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in the north central U.S. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced wind gusts to 70 mph and baseball size hail at Arapahoe, and wind gusts to 80 mph along with baseball size hail at Wolback and Belgrade. Six cities in the Ohio Valley reported record low temperatures for the date, including Cincinnati, OH, with a reading of 50 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms brought much needed rains to parts of the central U.S. Madison, WI, received 1.67 inches of rain, a record for the date, and their first measurable rain since the Mother's Day tornado outbreak on the 8th of May. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms deluged Winnfield LA with eleven inches of rain in four hours and fifteen minutes, and Baton Rouge LA reported 11 inches of rain in two days. Totals in west central Louisiana ranged up to 17 inches. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Northern High Plains. Two inch hail broke windows in nearly every building at Comstock, NE. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced two inch hail at Killdeer, and golf ball size hail at Zap. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE NEXT MILE

Eric Severide was a news journalist who achieved much recognition and fame. In fact, he was considered to be an "elite correspondent."

When he graduated from high school, a local newspaper sponsored him and a classmate, Walter Port, to travel by canoe from Minneapolis to York Factory - a journey of 2250 miles. When they came to the last leg of their journey, they were overwhelmed with what they faced - 450 miles through the rugged wilderness.

As they faced what seemed to them to be overwhelming odds, an old fur trader helped them by offering a few words of simple advice: "Just think of the last mile."

Great advice for them. Great advice for Christians.

We do not know what the journey before us may be. In fact, as we face today or tomorrow or next week, we do not know what lies before us. Sometimes we look back and recall unpleasant memories that have left us scared and scarred, perhaps fearful and frightened.

But we are here today and have the promise of Jesus for the rest of our lives: "Be sure of this, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

When we place our trust in the Lord, we have a Guide who has never strayed from the way and a Guard who has never lost or abandoned one of His children.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the guarantee that You are and always will be with us no matter what. May we trust You always knowing that Your grace is sufficient. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20



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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.25.24

3 16 27 47 62 8

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$116,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 33 Mins 4
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

11 12 27 38 48 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,930,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 48
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 06.27.24

5 14 34 46 48 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 17 Hrs 3 Mins 4
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

6 12 21 28 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

4 19 27 37 56 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 32
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

4 9 36 47 56 7

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$113,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 32
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- 08/02/2024 Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close

News from the Associated Press

Severe weather wreaks havoc across the US — from Midwest flooding to deadly Northeast storms

By MARGERY A. BECK and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Severe weather over days has caused havoc and destruction across the U.S. That includes torrential rains and flooding in the Upper Midwest and powerful storms in the Northeast that left a least two people dead from falling trees.

The deadly storms that raked parts of the Northeast late Wednesday into early Thursday spun off tornadoes and initially left some 250,000 customers in the region without power.

The National Weather Service confirmed that a tornado moved through parts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts on Wednesday evening, and in western Pennsylvania, the storms are believed to have spun off at least three tornadoes. High winds of up to 70 mph (113 kph) brought down power lines and trees and damaged some homes and other structures in the area. No injuries were reported.

The storms came on the heels of widespread flooding in parts of the Midwest after days of torrential rains soaked the area. A 52-year-old man drowned in his Iowa basement after the foundation collapsed and debris pinned him down, the Des Moines Register reported Thursday. Flooding is attributed to at least two other deaths — one in Iowa and one in South Dakota — caused by driving near flooded areas.

Much of the country has also been hit with a scorching heat wave as scientists have sounded the alarm that climate change is likely to bring more weather extremes.

Here is where weather events stand in the U.S. and what's expected in the coming days:

Minnesota dam failure

Heavy rains over days engorged the Blue Earth River, sending water surging around the Rapidan Dam in southern Minnesota. Rushing water washed away large chunks of the riverbank and carried a shipping container with it as it toppled utility poles and wrecked a substation.

A home that had stood near the banks of the river for decades saw the ground gradually erode from underneath it until it collapsed into the river Tuesday.

While their house is gone, Jim Hruska and his wife plan to keep the nearby family store, called The Rapidan Dam Store, going — if it doesn't fall into the raging river, too. The swelling water had eroded the land away to only about 10 feet (3 meters) away from the building,

Local law enforcement has been helping salvage items from the store "in case it disappears," Hruska told The Associated Press. If it remains on solid ground, the family hopes to move the entire structure.

"It can be done, we've looked into that," he said. "But it's just too saturated now. We got to wait for things to dry out a little more, so they can get their heavy equipment in there to get it out of there."

Iowa

In northwest Iowa, neighborhoods in Sioux City and smaller towns have been ravaged by floodwaters. Gov. Kim Reynolds toured the damage alongside federal officials Thursday.

Some communities are still dealing with failing water and sewer systems as residents work to clean up debris. In Rock Valley, officials were tagging homes with color-coded signs to indicate whether they were safe to enter.

Communities along the west fork of the Des Moines River were bracing for the impacts of the swollen river, although officials were encouraged that the threat appeared to be easing.

The river crested Thursday morning at Humboldt, Iowa, at about 17 feet (5 meters) and was expected to soon recede, said Humboldt County Emergency Management coordinator Kyle Bissell.

South Dakota

The southeastern corner of South Dakota was hit hard this week with torrential floods that devastated the lake community of McCook in North Sioux City, collapsing streets, felling utility poles and trees, and washing several homes off their foundations.

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Along the Big Sioux River in the town, the flooding broke apart a more than 100-year-old railroad bridge. Near the small town of Canton, Bob Schultz saw flooding destroy most of his soybean and corn crops. "They were absolutely beautiful, had a good stand and no weeds," he said Thursday. "Then the rain started, and we live by the river, and there's nothing we can do about it."

Nebraska

In northeastern Nebraska, South Sioux City and other nearby towns along the swollen Missouri river saw flooded low-lying riverfront roads, homes and cropland.

Downstream, flood warnings were in effect for communities along the river through much of next week, but the flooding has been less severe there than expected.

What's next

Those further south along flooded tributaries have been scrambling to get ahead of any flooding as the glut of water makes its way downstream.

Justin Spring and dozens of volunteers have spent days hauling his entire inventory of heavy auto parts and machinery to higher ground from his auto recycling business located along the Missouri River in Plattsmouth, a low-lying Nebraska city of about 6,500.

"It was all friends and other businesses who helped move it all out," he said. "It was just a lot of community support. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it."

The river is expected to crest at 32.3 feet (9.8 meters) Saturday. That is high enough to flood riverfront roads and flood Plattsmouth's water wells. If it holds to below 33 feet (10 meters), Spring's machine shops should be spared, he said.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Omaha said Thursday that it has limited releases from Gavins Point Dam on the South Dakota-Nebraska border in an effort to ease flooding along the lower Missouri. That has been helped by slowing flows of rivers into the dam, the Corps said.

Debate-watchers in the Biden and Trump camps seem to agree on something: Biden had a bad night

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "Oh, Joe."

That gasp, from patrons at a Chicago bar when President Joe Biden first stumbled verbally in his debate with Donald Trump, spoke for a lot of Americans on Thursday night.

In watch parties, bars, a bowling alley and other venues where people across the country gathered to tune in, Trump supporters, happily, and Biden supporters, in their angst if not dread, seemed to largely agree they had witnessed a lopsided showdown.

By the end of the 90-plus minutes, some Democrats were saying what partisans say to put the best face on things: It's still early. One debate doesn't necessarily sway the nation. Judge him by what he's done and wants to do, not by how he says things.

But many were let down.

Biden "just didn't have the spark that we needed tonight," Rosemarie DeAngelus, a Democrat from South Portland, Maine, said from her watch party at Broadway Bowl. Trump, she said, showed "more spunk or more vigor" even if, in her view, he was telling a pack of lies.

Fellow Biden supporter and bowling alley attendee Lynn Miller, from nearby Old Orchard Beach, said: "It's like somebody gave Trump an Adderall and I don't think they gave Joe one." (The drug is used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.)

"I've never seen Trump seem so coherent," Miller said. "And I hate to say this, but Joe seemed a little bit off. But I still support him over Trump because Trump lied about every single thing that happened."

Trump supporters certainly agreed that the difference in energy and coherence between the candidates was striking. Wearing her red MAGA hat at a festive pro-Trump party in the Detroit suburb of Novi, Bonnie Call said of Biden: "He just cannot think on his feet at all. President Trump is just on."

In McAllen, Texas, near the Mexico border, London's Bar & Grill is normally loud on a day close to the

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weekend, but many patrons were quiet as they absorbed the debate from TV screens. Here, Biden supporters, Trump supporters and undecided voters mingled.

Among them, Vance Gonzales, 40, a moderate Democrat, said the debate convinced him that "we need another Democratic candidate, to be honest, because this is not competitive." He said of Biden: "He's not on point with anything. I think it's disappointing."

Marco Perez, 53, voted for Biden in the last election and voiced frustration with what he was hearing and seeing. "I want to hear more facts, more action as opposed to more finger-pointing, more accusations or false accusations," he said.

His friend Virginia Lopez, sitting with him, came away still not knowing whom she will support in November. She heard snappy but unsatisfying answers from the Republican. "Trump is just deflecting in all the answers and he's just lying," she said. "It doesn't feel like a real debate."

Biden? "I just feel like he's too old," she said.

Sitting up at the bar, Hector Mercado, 72, a veteran wearing a U.S. military beret, was a distinctive patron as he listened intently to the debate. Although he was a Democrat for several years, he switched parties under Ronald Reagan, a Republican.

Mercado heard Biden accuse Trump of making derogatory comments about veterans, but it didn't sway his support for Trump. "Yeah, he said a few things bad about veterans at one point back in the early days," he said of Trump. "But now he's saying, 'No, I back up the veterans and I never had any problems with him. I got a raise in my VA disability when Trump was president.'"

Biden's performance left him cold. "I think Trump is stronger," he said, "and Biden is a little weak."

In a Tijuana migrant shelter over the border in Mexico, people mainly from southern Mexico who are hoping to apply for asylum in the U.S. watched the debate in folding chairs in front of a screen on the wall.

The migrants, most of whom have been waiting for months for their appointments in that process, stared blankly at the screen as a Spanish-translated version of the debate played on. They watched an American democratic ritual in motion.

Andrea, who did not give her last name due to threats of violence back home, has lived at the shelter for nine months. Her debate takeaway: "Well, I feel that the people of the United States don't love Mexicans now."

At Hula Hula, a tiki bar in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, patrons cheered wildly as their city got a mention from Trump — even if it came up when the Republican was complaining about lawlessness. Biden supporter Amy Pottinger of Seattle said the Democratic president did best when Trump made him angry.

"Once he started talking about Roe v. Wade, it was like Biden woke up and was here," she said.

At the same Chicago bar where patrons exclaimed about Biden's stumbles — the M Lounge in the South Loop — the president scored with this zinger to Trump: "You have the morals of an alley cat."

"Whoa!" the viewers there said.

But at a Democratic watch party in downtown Atlanta, it was a night of jitters.

"I'm so nervous, I feel like my kid is going onstage," Georgia state Sen. Nikki Merritt said early on, patting her stomach as if she had butterflies.

Technicians struggled with sound and video. During one outage, the crowd chanted "Let's Go Joe!"

"I want to hear Joe Biden talking to the voters and ignoring the crazy man in the room," said Matthew Wilson, the Georgia Democratic Party's vice chairman.

But there was no ignoring the man they called crazy.

Iran votes in snap poll for new president after hard-liner's death, but turnout remains a question

By JON GAMBRELL and NASSER KARIMI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranians voted Friday in a snap election to replace the late hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, with the race's sole reformist candidate vowing to seek "friendly relations" with the West in an effort to boost his campaign.

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The remarks by heart surgeon Masoud Pezeshkian come after he and his allies were targeted by a veiled warning from the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, over their outreach to the United States.

Pezeshkian's comments, made after he cast his ballot, appeared to be aimed at boost turnout as public apathy has grown pervasive in the Islamic Republic after years of economic woes, mass protests and tensions in the Middle East.

Voters face a choice between hard-line candidates and the little-known Pezeshkian who belongs to Iran's reformist movement that seeks to change its Shiite theocracy from within. As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from the ballot while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recognized monitors.

The voting comes as wider tensions have gripped the Middle East over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. In April, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel over the war in Gaza, while militia groups that Tehran arms in the region — such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels — are engaged in the fighting and have escalated their attacks.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to enrich uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build — should it choose to do so — several nuclear weapons.

While Iran's 85-year-old Khamenei has the final say on all matters of state, presidents can bend the country's policies toward confrontation or negotiation with the West. However, given the record-low turnout in recent elections, it remains unclear just how many Iranians will take part in Friday's poll.

Pezeshkian, who voted at a hospital near the capital, Tehran, appeared to have that in mind as he responded to a journalist's question about how Iran would interact with the West if he was president.

"God willing, we will try to have friendly relations with all countries except Israel," the 69-year-old candidate said. Israel, long Iran's regional archenemy, faces intense criticism across the Mideast over its grinding war in the Gaza Strip.

He also responded to a question about a renewed crackdown on women over the mandatory headscarf, or hijab, less than two years after the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, which sparked nationwide demonstrations and violent security force response.

"No inhuman or invasive behavior should be made against our girls, daughters and mothers," he said.

A higher turnout could boost Pezeshkian's chances, and the candidate may have been counting on social media to spread his remarks, as all television broadcasters in the country are state-controlled and run by hard-liners. But it remains unclear if he can gain the momentum needed to draw voters to the ballot. There have been calls for a boycott, including from imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi.

Analysts broadly describe the race as a three-way contest. There are two hard-liners, former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and the parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf. A Shiite cleric, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, also has remained in the race despite polling poorly.

Pezeshkian has aligned himself with figures such as former President Hassan Rouhani under whose administration Tehran struck the landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

The voting began just after President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump concluded their first televised debate for the U.S. presidential election, during which Iran came up.

Trump described Iran as "broke" under his administration and highlighted his decision to launch a 2020 drone strike that killed Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani. That attack was part of a spiral of escalating tensions between America and Iran since Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. in 2018 from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, who is in charge of overseeing the election, announced all the polls had opened just at 8 a.m. local time. Khamenei cast one of the election's first votes, urging the public to turn out.

"People's turnout with enthusiasm, and higher number of voters — this is a definite need for the Islamic Republic," Khamenei said.

State television later broadcast images of polling places across the country with modest lines. Onlookers did not see significant lines at many polling centers in Tehran, reminiscent of the low turnout seen in

Iran's recent parliamentary election in March.

More than 61 million Iranians over the age of 18 are eligible to vote, with about 18 million of them between 18 to 30.

Iranian law requires that a winner gets more than 50% of all votes cast. If that doesn't happen, the race's top two candidates will advance to a runoff a week later. There's been only one runoff presidential election in Iran's history, in 2005, when hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad bested former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The 63-year-old Raisi died in the May 19 helicopter crash that also killed the country's foreign minister and others. He was seen as a protégé of Khamenei and a potential successor as supreme leader. Still, many knew him for his involvement in the mass executions that Iran conducted in 1988, and for his role in the bloody crackdowns on dissent that followed protests over the death of Amini, a young woman detained by police over allegedly improperly wearing the mandatory headscarf, or hijab.

A halting Biden tries to confront Trump at debate but sparks Democratic anxiety about his candidacy

By ZEKE MILLER, MICHELLE L. PRICE, WILL WEISSERT, BILL BARROW and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A raspy and sometimes halting President Joe Biden tried repeatedly to confront Donald Trump in their first debate ahead of the November election, as his Republican rival countered Biden's criticism by leaning into falsehoods about the economy, illegal immigration and his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

Biden's uneven performance, particularly early in the debate, crystallized the concerns of many Americans that, at 81, he is too old to serve as president. It sparked a fresh round of calls for the Democrat to consider stepping aside as the party's nominee as members of his party fear a return of Trump to the White House.

Biden repeatedly tore into Trump in an apparent effort to provoke him, bringing up everything from the former president's recent felony conviction to his alleged insult of World War I veterans to his weight. The 78-year-old Trump declined to clearly state he would accept the results of the November election, four years after he promoted conspiracy theories about his loss that culminated in the Jan. 6 insurrection, and repeatedly misstated the record from his time in office.

But Biden's delivery from the beginning of the debate drew the most attention afterward. Trump's allies immediately declared victory while prominent Democrats publicly questioned whether Biden could move forward.

"I think the panic had set in," said David Axelrod, a longtime advisor to former President Barack Obama on CNN, immediately after the debate about Biden's performance. "And I think you're going to hear discussions that, I don't know will lead to anything, but there are going to be discussions about whether he should continue."

Said Van Jones, another Democratic strategist, on CNN: "He did not do well at all."

Rosemarie DeAngelis, a Democrat who watched the debate at a party in South Portland, Maine, said she felt Biden gave the right answers to Trump but "didn't have the spark that we needed tonight."

"That's going to be the challenge going forward. This is only June, this is the first, but can he sustain?" she said. "That is going to be the challenge."

Vice President Kamala Harris, speaking on CNN afterward, sought to defend the president's performance while acknowledging the criticism.

"There was a slow start, but there was a strong finish," she said.

Asked about his performance in the debate, Biden told reporters early Friday that "I think we did well," but said he has a "sore throat." Pressed about Democratic concerns with his showing that he should consider stepping aside, Biden said, "No, it's hard to debate a liar."

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Biden repeatedly lost his train of thought

Biden began the night with a hoarse voice as he tried to defend his economic record and criticize Trump. A person familiar with the matter said Biden was suffering from a cold during the debate, adding that he tested negative for COVID-19.

Biden appeared to lose his train of thought while giving one answer, drifting from an answer on tax policy to health policy, at one point using the word "COVID," and then saying, "excuse me, with, dealing with," and he trailed off again.

"Look, we finally beat Medicare," Biden said, as his time ran out on his answer.

He also fumbled on abortion rights, one of the most important issues for Democrats in this year's election. He was unable to explain *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. A conservative Supreme Court with three justices nominated by Trump overturned *Roe* two years ago.

When asked if he supports some restrictions on abortion, Biden said he "supports *Roe v. Wade*, which had three trimesters. The first time is between a woman and a doctor. Second time is between a doctor and an extreme situation. A third time is between the doctor, I mean, between the women and the state."

He added that he thought doctors, not politicians, should make decisions about "women's health."

Biden began to give clearer answers as the debate progressed, still with a rasp, and attacked Trump's record on issues like fighting climate change.

"The only existential threat to humanity is climate change, and he didn't do a damn thing about it," he said.

Trump sought to deflect blame for Jan. 6

The current president and his predecessor hadn't spoken since their last debate weeks before the 2020 presidential election. Trump skipped Biden's inauguration after leading an unprecedented and unsuccessful effort to overturn his loss that culminated in the Capitol riot by his supporters.

Trump equivocated on whether he would accept the results of the November election, saying he would accept them if the vote was "fair" and "legal," repeating his baseless claims of widespread fraud and misconduct in his 2020 loss to Biden that he still denies.

Pressed on his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, Trump was unapologetic.

"On Jan. 6, we were respected all over the world, all over the world we were respected. And then he comes in and we're now laughed at," Trump said.

After he was prompted by a moderator to answer whether he violated his oath of office that day by rallying his supporters seeking to block the certification of Biden's Electoral College victory and not acting for hours to call them off as they raided the Capitol, Trump sought to blame then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Biden said Trump encouraged the supporters to go to the Capitol and sat in the White House without taking action as they fought with police officers.

"He didn't do a damn thing and these people should be in jail," Biden said. "They should be the ones that are being held accountable. And he wants to let them all out. And now he says that if he loses again, such a whiner that he is, that this could be a 'bloodbath'?"

Trump then defended the people convicted and imprisoned for their role in the insurrection, saying to Biden, "What they've done to some people that are so innocent, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Trump and Biden entered the night facing stiff headwinds, including a public weary of the tumult of partisan politics and broadly dissatisfied with both, according to polling. But the debate was highlighting how they have sharply different visions on virtually every core issue — abortion, the economy and foreign policy — and deep hostility toward each other.

Their personal animus quickly came to the surface. Biden got personal in evoking his son, Beau, who served in Iraq before dying of brain cancer. The president criticized Trump for reportedly calling Americans killed in battle "suckers and losers." Biden told Trump, "My son was not a loser, was not a sucker. You're the sucker. You're the loser."

Trump said he never said that — a line attributed to Trump by his former chief of staff — and slammed Biden for the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, calling it "the most embarrassing day in the history of our country's life."

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Trump himself agreed to the withdrawal with the Taliban a year before he left office.

Biden directly mentioned Trump's conviction in the New York hush money trial, saying, "You have the morals of an alley cat," and referencing the allegations in the case that Trump had sex with a porn actress.

"I did not have sex with a porn star," replied Trump, who chose not to testify at his trial.

Pressed to defend rising inflation since he took office, Biden pinned it on the situation he inherited from Trump amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden said that when Trump left office, "things were in chaos." Trump disagreed, declaring that during his term in the White House, "Everything was rocking good."

By the time Trump left office, America was still grappling with the pandemic and during his final hours in office, the death toll eclipsed 400,000. The virus continued to ravage the country and the death toll hit 1 million over a year later.

Trump was asked what he would do to make childcare more affordable. He used his answer to instead boast about how many people he fired during his term, including former FBI Director James Comey, and criticized Biden for not firing people from his administration.

The age question roars back

Prior to the debate, about 6 in 10 U.S. adults (59%) said they were "very concerned" that Biden is too old to be president, according to Gallup data collected in June. Only 18% had the same level of concern about Trump. The poll found Biden's age was also causing alarm among some Democrats: 31% said they were very concerned.

Trump allies entered the post-debate spin room triumphant. Trump senior adviser Chris LaCivita called it "the most lopsided win in debate history" and mocked the Biden campaign for saying the president had a cold.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a high-profile Democratic supporter of Biden, was pressed on whether he would consider stepping in for Biden. He dismissed the questions, saying, "I will never turn my back on him."

He said he knows Biden and what he's capable of and said, "I have no trepidation."

Biden spent nearly a week at the Camp David presidential retreat preparing for the debate. Shortly before the debate, Biden started selling cans of water labeled, "Dark Brandon's Secret Sauce," on his campaign website, mocking the suggestions from Trump and his advisors that he would use drugs to enhance his performance.

Addressing supporters briefly at a watch party near the debate venue, Biden didn't address his performance directly, but said, "let's keep going," and indicated he has no plans to leave the race.

"See you at the next one," he said.

Debate takeaways: Trump confident, even when wrong, Biden halting, even with facts on his side

By SEUNG MIN KIM and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thursday's presidential debate was a re-run that featured two candidates with a combined age of 159, but it went especially poorly for one of them, President Joe Biden.

Already fighting voter concerns about his age, Biden, 81, was halting and seemed to lose his train of thought, sparking quick concerns among Democrats about the man they hope will keep former President Donald Trump from returning to office. For his part, Trump made repeated false claims and provocative statements. But Trump seemed smoother and more vigorous than Biden, who is only three years older than the Republican ex-president.

The debate covered a wide range of topics and included a former president — Trump — not backing down from his vows to prosecute members of Congress and even the man he was debating. But the overarching theme was the difference between the candidates' performance.

Here are some takeaways from the face-off.

Style v. Substance

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Presidential debates are often scored on style and impression more than substance. Trump was confident and composed, even as he steamrolled facts on abortion and immigration with false assertions, conspicuous exaggerations and empty superlatives. Biden was often halting, his voice raspy, even when he had the facts on his side. He had difficulty finishing his arguments and marshalling his attacks.

Trump's supporters have seemed unconcerned about his relationship with the truth, and his performance and delivery helped him. Biden's supporters consistently express concern about the president's age and capacity and he did little to reassure them.

One of the first glimpses viewers got of Biden was when he lost his train of thought while making his case on tax rates and the number of billionaires in America — trailing off and looking down at his lectern before mumbling briefly and saying "we finally beat Medicare." When he tried to finish his point, he was cut off because of the time limits.

At other times, Biden made some puzzling non sequiturs that seemed to undercut what the campaign has said are his strong points, including the economy and abortion rights. As Biden critiqued Trump's economic record, the president suddenly pivoted to Afghanistan and how Trump "didn't do anything about that" — although the botched withdrawal of Afghanistan is widely considered one of the lowest points of Biden's presidency.

Later, as Biden singled out state restrictions on abortion, he confusingly pivoted to immigration and referred to a "young woman who was just murdered" by an immigrant. It was unclear what point he was trying to make.

Jan. 6 and Trump's revenge

Trump was cruising through the opening of the debate when he suddenly stumbled over the question of how he would reassure voters that he would respect his oath of office after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

He continued to engage in denialism about the attack and refused to denounce those who attacked police and stormed the building by breaking doors and windows. He suggested that those charged will somehow be found one day to be innocent.

More than 1,400 people have been charged with federal offenses stemming from the riot. Of those, more than 850 people have pleaded guilty to crimes, including seditious conspiracy and assaulting police officers. About 200 others have been convicted at trial.

Trump tried to avoid addressing the issue. He defended the people who stormed the Capitol, blaming Biden for prosecuting them. "What they've done to some people who are so innocent, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," Trump told Biden.

Trump warned that the members of the congressional committee that investigated Jan. 6 could face criminal charges, as could Biden himself.

Biden shot back: "The only person on this stage who's a convicted felon is the man I'm looking at."

Trump didn't back down from his vow to seek vengeance. Coupled with his refusal to condemn the Jan. 6 attackers, it made for a stark moment.

Asked if he would accept the results of the election, Trump said, "if it's a fair and legal and good election, absolutely," which notably is not an unqualified yes.

Low road

In what may well be a first in a presidential campaign, Trump called the president, Biden, a "criminal" and said he could well be prosecuted after he leaves office. Biden then brought Trump's recent criminal trial in New York in which prosecutors presented evidence that Trump had sex with a porn actor. "I didn't have sex with a porn star," Trump said.

Trump's vow on abortion

Abortion is an issue Democrats think could help deliver a victory in November. Trump in 2016 campaigned on overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and as president appointed three Supreme Court justices who provided the deciding votes revoking the 49-year right to the procedure. In response to a question from the moderators, Trump vowed not to go further if he returns to the White House, where his administration would have the authority to outlaw the abortion pill mifepristone, which is widely used.

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Overturing Roe is one of Trump's greatest political vulnerabilities, but on Thursday the former president contended everyone was happy with what he did.

"As far as abortion's concerned it's back to the states," Trump said, contending the Founding Fathers would have been happy with the end of Roe. "Everybody wanted it brought back."

That's not true. Polls have shown significant opposition to overturning Roe and voters have punished Republicans in recent elections for it. "The idea that the founders wanted the politicians to be the ones making the decisions about women's health is ridiculous," Biden shot back.

In a unanimous decision this month, the Supreme Court preserved access to mifepristone, a pill that was used in nearly two-thirds of all abortions in the U.S. last year.

Until Thursday, Trump had not detailed his position on access to the medication, but during the debate he indicated he supported the justices' decision, saying: "I will not block it."

But when it was his turn to speak, Biden stumbled through his explanation of Roe, which he said "had three trimesters" — a lost opportunity for the Democrat to make a strong rhetorical case on an issue vital for his party.

"The first time is between a woman and a doctor," Biden continued. "Second time is between a doctor and an extreme situation. A third time is between the doctor, I mean, between the women and the state."

Border skirmish

In recent months, Biden has tried to reverse his poor public standing over his handling of immigration, first by endorsing a bipartisan Senate proposal with some of the toughest border restrictions in recent memory and then, after that legislation collapsed, taking executive action to clamp down on migrants seeking asylum at the southern border.

But as Biden tried to tout the progress he's made, particularly the 40% drop in illegal border crossings since his border directive was implemented this month, Trump invoked his trademark dark and catastrophic rhetoric to paint a portrait of a chaotic border under Biden's watch.

For example, Trump argued that the migrants arriving at the U.S. border are coming from "mental institutions" and "insane asylums" — a frequent refrain of his at rallies for which he has offered no evidence. He also claimed the U.S.-Mexico border is the "most dangerous place anywhere in the world" and cited examples of immigrants in the U.S. illegally who had committed violent crimes.

Though some immigrants do commit horrific crimes, a 2020 study published by the National Academy of Sciences found "considerably lower felony arrest rates" among people in the United States illegally than among legal immigrants or native-born. But Trump often benefits from his certitude.

It's the economy, and Trump said Biden is stupid

The debate began with Biden defending his record on the economy, saying he inherited an economy that was "in a freefall" as it was battered by the pandemic and that his administration put it back together again.

But after Biden touted his administration's accomplishments — such as lowering the cost of insulin and the creation of millions of new jobs — Trump boasted that he oversaw the "greatest economy in the history of our country" and defended his record on the pandemic.

Biden retorted: "He's the only one who thinks that." But Trump responding by attacking him on inflation, arguing that he inherited low rates of inflation when he came into office in January 2021 yet prices "blew up under his leadership."

Suckers and losers

Biden — whose deceased son, Beau, served in Iraq — had one of his most forceful moments when he went on the attack against Trump's reported comments in 2018 that he declined to visit a U.S. military cemetery in France because veterans buried there were "suckers" and "losers."

It was an argument that Biden, then the Democratic challenger, made against Trump in their first 2020 debate and one that the incumbent president has regularly used against Trump, framing him as a commander in chief who nonetheless disparages veterans. "My son was not a loser, was not a sucker," Biden said. "You're the sucker. You're the loser."

Trump responded that the publication that initially reported this comments, The Atlantic, "was a third-

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rate magazine" and had made up the quotes. But undercutting Trump's retort is the fact that his former chief of staff, John Kelly, confirmed those private remarks in a statement last fall.

FACT FOCUS: Here's a look at some of the false claims made during Biden and Trump's first debate

By The Associated Press undefined

President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump traded barbs and a variety of false and misleading information as they faced off in their first debate of the 2024 election.

Trump falsely represented the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol as a relatively small number of people who were ushered in by police and misstated the strength of the economy during his administration.

Biden, who tends to lean more on exaggerations and embellishments rather than outright lies, misrepresented the cost of insulin and overstated what Trump said about using disinfectant to address COVID. Here's a look at the false and misleading claims on Thursday night by the two candidates.

JAN. 6

TRUMP: "They talk about a relatively small number of people that went to the Capitol and in many cases were ushered in by the police."

THE FACTS: That's false. The attack on the U.S. Capitol was the deadliest assault on the seat of American power in over 200 years. As thoroughly documented by video, photographs and people who were there, thousands of people descended on Capitol Hill in what became a brutal scene of hand-to-hand combat with police.

In an internal memo on March 7, 2023, U.S. Capitol Police Chief J. Thomas Manger said that the allegation that "our officers helped the rioters and acted as 'tour guides'" is "outrageous and false." A Capitol Police spokesperson confirmed the memo's authenticity to The Associated Press. More than 1,400 people have been charged with federal crimes stemming from the riot. More than 850 people have pleaded guilty to crimes, and 200 others have been convicted at trial.

TRUMP, on then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's actions on Jan. 6: "Because I offered her 10,000 soldiers or National Guard and she turned them down."

THE FACTS: Pelosi did not direct the National Guard. Further, as the Capitol came under attack, she and then-Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell called for military assistance, including from the National Guard.

The Capitol Police Board makes the decision on whether to call National Guard troops to the Capitol. It is made up of the House Sergeant at Arms, the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Architect of the Capitol. The board decided not to call the guard ahead of the insurrection but did eventually request assistance after the rioting had already begun, and the troops arrived several hours later.

The House Sergeant at Arms reported to Pelosi and the Senate Sergeant at Arms reported to McConnell. There is no evidence that either Pelosi or McConnell directed the security officials not to call the guard beforehand. Drew Hammill, a then-spokesperson for Pelosi, said after the insurrection that Pelosi was never informed of such a request.

TAXES AND REGULATIONS

TRUMP, on Biden: "He wants to raise your taxes by four times."

THE FACTS: That's not accurate.

Trump has used that line at rallies, but it has no basis in fact. Biden actually wants to prevent tax increases on anyone making less than \$400,000, which is the vast majority of taxpayers.

More importantly, Biden's budget proposal does not increase taxes as much as Trump claims, though the increases are focused on corporations and the wealthy. Trump's 2017 tax cuts for individuals are set to expire after 2025, because they were not fully funded when they became law.

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TRUMP, referring to Jan. 6, 2021, the day a mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol in an effort to stop the certification of Biden's victory: "On January 6th we had the lowest taxes ever. We had the lowest regulations ever on January 6th."

THE FACTS: The current federal income tax was only instituted in 1913, and tax rates have fluctuated significantly in the decades since. Rates were lower in the 1920s, just prior to the Great Depression. Trump did cut taxes during his time in the White House, but the rates weren't the lowest in history.

Government regulations have also ebbed and flowed in the country's history, but there's been an overall increase in regulations as the country modernized and its population grew. There are now many more regulations covering the environment, employment, financial transactions and other aspects of daily life. While Trump slashed some regulations, he didn't take the country back to the less regulated days of its past.

INSULIN

BIDEN: "It's \$15 for an insulin shot, as opposed to \$400."

THE FACTS: No, that's not exactly right. Out-of-pocket insulin costs for older Americans on Medicare were capped at \$35 in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act that President Joe Biden signed into law. The cap took effect last year, when many drugmakers announced they would lower the price of the drug to \$35 for most users on private insurance. But Biden regularly overstates that many people used to pay up to \$400 monthly. People with diabetes who have Medicare or private insurance paid about \$450 yearly prior to the law, a Department of Health and Human Services study released in December 2022 found.

CLIMATE CHANGE

TRUMP, touting his environmental record, said that "during my four years, I had the best environmental numbers ever" and that he supports "immaculate" air and water.

THE FACTS: That's far from the whole story. During his presidency, Trump rolled back some provisions of the Clean Water Act, eased regulations on coal, oil and gas companies and pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord. When wildfires struck California in 2020, Trump dismissed the scientific consensus that climate change had played a role. Trump also dismissed scientists' warnings about climate change and routinely proposed deep cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency. Those reductions were blocked by Democratic and Republican lawmakers.

ABORTION

TRUMP: "The problem they have is they're radical because they will take the life of a child in the eighth month, the ninth month, and even after birth, after birth."

THE FACTS: Trump inaccurately referred to abortions after birth. Infanticide is criminalized in every state, and no state has passed a law that allows killing a baby after birth.

Abortion rights advocates say terms like this and "late-term abortions" attempt to stigmatize abortions later in pregnancy. Abortions later in pregnancy are exceedingly rare. In 2020, less than 1% of abortions in the United States were performed at or after 21 weeks, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Abortions later in pregnancy also are usually the result of serious complications, such as fetal anomalies, that put the life of the woman or fetus at risk, medical experts say. In most cases, these are also wanted pregnancies, experts say.

RUSSIA

TRUMP on Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who was detained in Russia: "He should have had him out a long time ago, but Putin's probably asking for billions and billions of dollars because this guy pays it every time."

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong to say that Biden pays any sort of fee "every time" to secure the release of hostages and wrongfully detained Americans. There's also zero evidence that Putin is asking for any money

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in order to free Gershkovich. Just like in the Trump administration, the deals during the Biden administration that have brought home hostages and detainees involved prisoner swaps -- not money transfers.

Trump's reference to money appeared to be about the 2023 deal in which the U.S. secured the release of five detained Americans in Iran after billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets were transferred from banks in South Korea to Qatar. The U.S. has said that that the money would be held in restricted accounts and will only be able to be used for humanitarian goods, such as medicine and food.

COVID-19

BIDEN: Trump told Americans to "inject bleach" into their arms to treat COVID-19.

THE FACTS: That's overstating it. Rather, Trump asked whether it would be possible to inject disinfectant into the lungs.

"And then I see the disinfectant, where it knocks it out in one minute," he said at an April 2020 press conference. "And is there a way we can do something like that, by injection inside or almost a cleaning, because you see it gets in the lungs and it does a tremendous number on the lungs, so it'd be interesting to check that, so that you're going to have to use medical doctors with, but it sounds interesting to me. So, we'll see, but the whole concept of the light, the way it kills it in one minute. That's pretty powerful."

SUPER PREDATORS

TRUMP: "What he's done to the Black population is horrible, including the fact that for 10 years he called them 'super predators.' ... We can't forget that - super predators ... And they've taken great offense at it."

THE FACTS: This oft-repeated claim by Trump dating back to the 2020 campaign is untrue. It was Hillary Clinton, then the first lady, who used the term "super predator" to advocate for the 1994 crime bill that Biden co-authored more than thirty years ago. Biden did warn of "predators" in a floor speech in support of his bill.

MIGRANTS

TRUMP, referring to Biden: "He's the one that killed people with a bad border and flooding hundreds of thousands of people dying and also killing our citizens when they come in."

THE FACTS: A mass influx of migrants coming into the U.S. illegally across the southern border has led to a number of false and misleading claims by Trump. For example, he regularly claims other countries are emptying their prisons and mental institutions to send to the U.S. There is no evidence to support that.

Trump has also argued the influx of immigrants is causing a crime surge in the U.S., although statistics actually show violent crime is on the way down.

There have been recent high-profile and heinous crimes allegedly committed by people in the country illegally. But FBI statistics do not separate out crimes by the immigration status of the assailant, nor is there any evidence of a spike in crime perpetrated by migrants, either along the U.S.-Mexico border or in cities seeing the greatest influx of migrants, like New York. Studies have found that people living in the country illegally are less likely than native-born Americans to have been arrested for violent, drug and property crimes. For more than a century, critics of immigration have sought to link new arrivals to crime. In 1931, the Wickersham Commission did not find any evidence supporting a connection between immigration and increased crime, and many studies since then have reached similar conclusions.

Texas is the only state that tracks crimes by immigration status. A 2020 study published by the National Academy of Sciences found "considerably lower felony arrest rates" among people in the United States illegally than legal immigrants or native-born.

Some crime is expected given the large population of immigrants. There were an estimated 10.5 million people in the country illegally in 2021, according to the latest estimate by Pew Research Center, a figure that has almost certainly risen with large influxes at the border. In 2022, the Census Bureau estimated the foreign-born population at 46.2 million, or nearly 14% of the total, with most states seeing double-digit percentage increases in the last dozen years.

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CHARLOTTESVILLE

BIDEN, referring to Trump after the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017: "The one who said I think they're fine people on both sides."

THE FACTS: Trump did use those words to describe attendees of the deadly rally, which was planned by white nationalists. But as Trump supporters have pointed out, he also said that day that he wasn't talking about the neo-Nazis and white nationalists in attendance.

"You had some very bad people in that group," Trump said during a news conference a few days after the rally, "But you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides."

He then added that he wasn't talking about "the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists, because they should be condemned totally." Instead, he said, the press had been unfair in its treatment of protesters who were there to innocently and legally protest the removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

The gathering planned by white nationalists shocked the nation when it exploded into chaos: violent brawling in the streets, racist and antisemitic chants, smoke bombs, and finally, a car speeding into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one and injuring dozens more.

ECONOMY

TRUMP: We had the greatest economy in history."

THE FACTS: That's not accurate. First of all, the pandemic triggered a massive recession during his presidency. The government borrowed \$3.1 trillion in 2020 to stabilize the economy. Trump had the ignominy of leaving the White House with fewer jobs than when he entered.

But even if you take out issues caused by the pandemic, economic growth averaged 2.67% during Trump's first three years. That's pretty solid. But it's nowhere near the 4% averaged during Bill Clinton's two terms from 1993 to 2001, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. In fact, growth has been stronger so far under Biden than under Trump.

Trump did have the unemployment rate get as low as 3.5% before the pandemic. But again, the labor force participation rate for people 25 to 54 — the core of the U.S. working population — was higher under Clinton. The participation rate has also been higher under Biden than Trump.

Trump also likes to talk about how low inflation was under him. Gasoline fell as low as \$1.77 a gallon. But, of course, that price dip happened during pandemic lockdowns when few people were driving. The low prices were due to a global health crisis, not Trump's policies.

Similarly, average 30-year mortgage rates dipped to 2.65% during the pandemic. Those low rates were a byproduct of Federal Reserve efforts to prop up a weak economy, rather than the sign of strength that Trump now suggests it was.

MILITARY DEATHS

BIDEN: "The truth is, I'm the only president this century that doesn't have any — this decade — any troops dying anywhere in the world like he did."

THE FACTS: At least 16 service members have been killed in hostile action since Biden took office in January 2021. On Aug. 26, 2021, 13 died during a suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, as U.S. troops withdrew from the country. An enemy drone killed three U.S. service members at a desert base in Jordan on Jan. 28 of this year.

PRESIDENTIAL RECORD

BIDEN: "159, or 58, don't know an exact number, presidential historians, they've had meetings and they voted, who is the worst president in American history ... They said he was the worst in all American history. That's a fact. That's not conjecture."

THE FACTS: That's almost right, but not quite. The survey in question, a project from professors at the University of Houston and Coastal Carolina University, included 154 usable responses, from 525 respondents invited to participate.

GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS

TRUMP, on Minneapolis protests after the killing of George Floyd: "If I didn't bring in the National Guard, that city would have been destroyed."

THE FACTS: Trump didn't call the National Guard into Minneapolis during the unrest following the death of George Floyd. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz deployed the National Guard to the city.

Bolivia's president lambasts accusations of a self-coup as 'lies' as his supporters rally

By PAOLA FLORES and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Bolivian President Luis Arce on Thursday angrily called accusations that he was behind an attempted coup against his government "lies," saying the general who apparently led it acted on his own and vowing that he would face justice.

Arce's comments, his first to the press since Wednesday's failed apparent coup, came after the general involved, Juan José Zúñiga, alleged without providing evidence that the president had ordered him to carry out the mutiny in a ruse to boost his flagging popularity.

That fueled speculation about what really happened, even after the government announced the arrest of 17 people, most of them military officers. Opposition senators and government critics joined the chorus of doubters, calling the mutiny a "self-coup."

Some Bolivians said they believed Zúñiga's allegations. "They are playing with the intelligence of the people, because nobody believes that it was a real coup," said 48-year-old lawyer Evaristo Mamani.

Those claims have been strongly denied by Arce and his government. "I am not a politician who is going to win popularity through the blood of the people," he said Thursday.

Meanwhile, Arce's supporters rallied outside the presidential palace on Thursday, giving some political breathing room to the embattled leader as authorities made more arrests in a failed coup that shook the economically troubled country.

Among the 17 people arrested are the army chief, Gen. Zúñiga, and former navy Vice Adm. Juan Arnez Salvador, who were taken into custody the day before. All face charges of armed uprising and attacks against government infrastructure, and penalties of 15 years in prison or more, said the country's attorney general, César Siles.

The president claimed that not only military officers were involved in the plan, but people retired from the military and civil society. He did not elaborate.

The South American nation of 12 million watched in shock and bewilderment Wednesday as military forces appeared to turn on Arce, seizing control of the capital's main square with armored vehicles, repeatedly crashing a small tank into the presidential palace and unleashing tear gas on protesters.

Senior Cabinet member Eduardo del Castillo said among the arrested was one civilian, identified as Aníbal Aguilar Gómez, who was as a key "ideologue" of the thwarted coup. He said the alleged conspirators began plotting in May.

Riot police guarded the palace doors and Arce — who has struggled to manage the country's shortages of foreign currency and fuel — emerged on the presidential balcony as his supporters surged into the streets singing the national anthem and cheering as fireworks exploded overhead. "No one can take democracy away from us," he roared.

Bolivians responded by chanting, "Lucho, you are not alone!"

Analysts say the eruption of public support for Arce, even if fleeting, provides him with a reprieve from the country's economic quagmire and political turmoil. The president is locked in a deepening rivalry with popular former President Evo Morales, his erstwhile ally who has threatened to challenge Arce in 2025.

"The president's management has been very bad, there are no dollars, there is no petrol," said La Paz-based political analyst Paul Coca. "Yesterday's military move is going to help his image a bit, but it's no

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solution.”

Soon after Wednesday’s military maneuver was underway, it became clear that any attempted takeover had no meaningful political support. The rebellion passed bloodlessly at the end of the business day. In an extraordinary scene, Arce argued strongly with Zúñiga and his allies face-to-face in the plaza outside the palace before returning inside to name a new army commander.

“What we saw is extremely unusual for coup d’états in Latin America, and it raises red flags,” said Diego von Vacano, an expert in Bolivian politics at Texas A&M University and former informal adviser to President Arce. “Arce looked like a victim yesterday and a hero today, defending democracy.”

Speaking in Paraguay on Thursday, U.S. deputy secretary of state for management, Rich Verma, condemned Zúñiga, saying that “democracy remains fragile in our hemisphere.”

The short-lived mutiny followed months of mounting tensions between Arce and Morales, Bolivia’s first Indigenous president. Morales has staged a dramatic political comeback since mass protests and a deadly crackdown prompted him to resign and flee in 2019 — a military-backed ouster that his supporters decry as a coup.

Morales has vowed to run against Arce in 2025, a prospect that has rattled Arce, whose popularity has plunged as the country’s foreign currency reserves dwindle, its natural gas exports plummet and its currency peg to the U.S. dollar collapses.

Morales’ allies in Congress have made it almost impossible for Arce to govern. The cash crunch has ramped up pressure on Arce to scrap food and fuel subsidies that depleted state finances.

Defense Minister Edmundo Novillo told reporters that Zúñiga’s coup attempt had its roots in a private meeting Tuesday in which Arce sacked over the army chief’s threats on national TV to arrest Morales if he proceeded to join the 2025 race.

But Zúñiga gave officials no indication he was preparing to seize power, Novillo said.

“He admitted that he had committed some excesses,” he said of Zúñiga. “We said goodbye in the most friendly way, with hugs. Zúñiga said that he would always be at the side of the president.”

Pro-democracy advocates have already expressed doubt that any government-led investigation can be trusted.

“Judicial independence is basically zero, the credibility of the judiciary is on the floor,” said Juan Pappier, deputy director of the Americas at Human Rights Watch. “Not only do we not know today what happened, we probably will never know.”

France is facing an election like no other. Here’s how it works and what comes next

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French voters are being called to the polls on Sunday for an exceptional moment in their political history: the first round of snap parliamentary elections that could see the country’s first far-right government since the World War II Nazi occupation — or no majority emerging at all.

The outcome of the vote, following the second round on July 7 and an exceptionally brief campaign, remains highly uncertain as three major political blocs are competing: the far-right National Rally, President Emmanuel Macron’s centrist alliance and the New Popular Front coalition that includes center-left, greens and hard-left forces.

Here’s a closer look:

How does it work?

The French system is complex and not proportionate to nationwide support for a party. Legislators are elected by district. A parliamentary candidate requires over 50% of the day’s vote to be elected outright on Sunday.

Failing that, the top two contenders, alongside anyone else who won support from more than 12.5% of registered voters, go forward to a second round.

In some cases, three or four people make it to the second round, though some may step aside to im-

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prove the chances of another contender — a tactic often used in the past to block far-right candidates.

Key party leaders are expected to unveil their strategy in between the two rounds. This makes the result of the second round highly uncertain, depending on political maneuvering and how voters will react.

The far-right National Rally, which is ahead in all opinion polls, hopes to be able to get an absolute majority, or at least 289 out of the 577 seats.

The National Assembly, the lower house, is the more powerful of France's two houses of parliament. It has the final say in the law-making process over the Senate, dominated by conservatives.

Macron has a presidential mandate until 2027, and said he would not step down before the end of his term.

What's cohabitation?

If another political force than his centrist alliance gets a majority, Macron will be forced to appoint a prime minister belonging to that new majority.

In such a situation — called "cohabitation" in France — the government would implement policies that diverge from the president's plan.

France's modern Republic has experienced three cohabitations, the last one under conservative President Jacques Chirac, with Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, from 1997 to 2002.

The prime minister is accountable to the parliament, leads the government and introduces bills.

"In case of cohabitation, policies implemented are essentially those of the prime minister," political historian Jean Garrigues said.

The president is weakened at home during a cohabitation, but still holds some powers over foreign policy, European affairs and defense because he is in charge of negotiating and ratifying international treaties. The president is also the commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces, and is the one holding the nuclear codes.

"It's possible for the president to prevent or temporarily suspend the implementation of a certain number of the prime minister's projects, since he has the power to sign or not sign the government's ordinances or decrees," Garrigues added.

"Yet the prime minister has the power to submit these ordinances and decrees to a vote of the National Assembly, thus overriding the president's reluctance," he noted.

Who leads defense and foreign policies?

During previous cohabitations, defense and foreign policies were considered the informal "reserved field" of the president, who was usually able to find compromises with the prime minister to allow France to speak with one voice abroad.

Yet today, both the far-right and the leftist coalition's views in these areas differ radically from Macron's approach and would likely be a subject of tension during a potential cohabitation.

According to the Constitution, while "the president is the head of the military, it's the prime minister who has the armed forces at his disposal," Garrigues said.

"In the diplomatic field also, the president's perimeter is considerably restricted," Garrigues added.

The National Rally's president, Jordan Bardella, said that if he were to become prime minister, he would oppose sending French troops to Ukraine — a possibility Macron has not ruled out. Bardella also said he would refuse French deliveries of long-range missiles and other weaponry capable of striking targets within Russia itself.

If the leftist coalition was to win the elections, it could disrupt France's diplomatic efforts in the Middle-East.

The New Popular Front's platform plans to "immediately recognize the Palestinian state" and to "break with the French government's guilty support" for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

Macron previously argued the recognition of the Palestinian state should take place at a "useful moment," suggesting the Israel-Hamas war doesn't allow such a move at the moment.

What happens if there's no majority?

The president can name a prime minister from the parliamentary group with the most seats at the National Assembly — this was the case of Macron's own centrist alliance since 2022.

Yet the National Rally already said it would reject such an option, because it would mean a far-right

government could soon be overthrown through a no-confidence vote if other political parties join together.

Macron cannot dissolve the National Assembly again before July 2025, under the Constitution's rules.

The president could try to build a broad coalition from the left to the right, an option that sounds unlikely, given the political divergences.

Experts say another complex option would be to appoint "a government of experts" unaffiliated with political parties but which would still need to be accepted by a majority at the National Assembly. Such a government would likely deal mostly with day-to-day affairs rather than implementing major reforms.

If political talks take too long amid summer holidays and the July 26-Aug. 11 Olympics in Paris, Garrigues said a "transition period" is not ruled out, during which Macron's centrist government would "still be in charge of current affairs," pending further decisions.

"Whatever the National Assembly looks like, it seems that the Constitution of the 5th Republic is flexible enough to survive these complex circumstances," Melody Mock-Gruet, a public law expert teaching at Sciences Po Paris, said in a written note. "Institutions are more solid than they appear, even when faced with this experimental exercise."

"Yet there remains another unknown in the equation: the population's ability to accept the situation," Mock-Gruet wrote.

A father who lost 2 sons in a Boeing Max crash waits to hear if the US will prosecute the company

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

As they travel around Alaska on a long-planned vacation, Ike and Susan Riffel stop now and then to put up stickers directing people to "Live Rifffully."

It's a way for the California couple to honor the memories of their sons, Melvin and Bennett, who died in 2019 when a Boeing 737 Max jetliner crashed in Ethiopia.

The Riffels and families of other passengers who died in the crash and a similar one in Indonesia a little more than four months earlier are waiting to learn any day now whether the U.S. Justice Department, all these years later, will prosecute Boeing in connection with the two disasters, which killed 346 people.

Ike Riffel fears that instead of putting Boeing on trial, the government will offer the company another shot at corporate probation through a legal document called a deferred prosecution agreement, or DPA. Or that prosecutors will let Boeing plead guilty and avoid a trial.

"A DPA hides the truth. A plea agreement would hide the truth," Riffel says. "It would leave the families with absolutely no idea" of what happened inside Boeing as the Max was being designed and tested, and after the first crash in 2018 pointed to problems with new flight-control software.

"The families want to know the truth. Who was responsible? Who did what?" the father says. "Why did they have to die?"

Ike is a retired forestry consultant, and Susan a retired religious educator. They live in Redding, California, where they raised their sons.

Mel was 29 and preparing to become a father himself when Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 went down six minutes after takeoff. He played sports in school and worked as a technician for the California Department of Transportation in Redding. Bennett, 26, loved performing arts while growing up. He worked in IT support in Chico, California, and clients still send cards to his parents.

"They were our only two sons. They were very adventurous, very independent, loved to travel," Riffel says.

In early 2019, Mel and his wife, Brittney, took a "babymoon" to Australia. Brittney flew home while Mel met his brother in Taiwan to start what they called their world tour. He and Bennett were headed toward their last stop, South Africa, where Mel planned to do some surfing, when they boarded the Ethiopian Airlines flight in Addis Ababa.

Back in California, Susan Riffel answered the phone when it rang on that Sunday morning. On the other end, someone from the airline told them their sons had been on a plane that had crashed.

"When you first hear it, you don't believe it," Ike Riffel says. "You still don't believe after you see that

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there was a crash. 'Oh, maybe they didn't get on.' You think of all these scenarios."

The next shock came in January 2021: The Justice Department charged Boeing with fraud for misleading regulators who approved the Max, but at the same time, prosecutors approved an agreement that meant the single felony charge could be dropped in three years.

"I heard it on the news. It just kind of blew me away. I thought, what the hell?" Riffel says. "I felt pretty powerless. I didn't know what a deferred prosecution agreement was."

He and his wife believe they were deceived by the Justice Department, which until then had denied there was a criminal investigation going on. Boeing has never contacted the family, according to Riffel. He assumes that's based on advice from the company's lawyers.

"I have no trust in (Boeing) to do the right thing, and I really lost my confidence in the Department of Justice," he says. "Their motto is to protect the American people, not to protect Boeing, and it seems to me they have spent the whole time defending Boeing."

The Justice Department reopened the possibility of prosecuting Boeing last month, when it said the company had breached the 2021 agreement. The DOJ did not publicly specify the alleged violations.

Boeing has said it lived up to the terms of the deal, which required it to pay \$2.5 billion, most of it to the company's airline customers, and to maintain a program to detect and prevent violations of U.S. anti-fraud laws, among other conditions.

The pending decision in Washington matters to family members around the world.

The 157 passengers and crew members who died in the Ethiopian crash came from 35 countries, with the largest numbers from Kenya and Canada. Nearly two dozen passengers were flying to attend a United Nations environmental conference in Nairobi.

The March 10, 2019, crash came just months after another Boeing 737 Max 8, operated by Indonesia's Lion Air, crashed into the Java Sea, killing all 189 people on board. The vast majority of passengers on the Oct. 29, 2018, flight were Indonesians.

In both crashes, software known by the acronym MCAS pitched the nose of the plane down repeatedly based on faulty readings from a single sensor.

Relatives of people on both flights sued Boeing in U.S. federal court in Chicago. Boeing has settled the vast majority of those cases after requiring the families not to disclose how much they were paid.

The Riffels have found strength and purpose in meeting with families of some of the other passengers from Flight 302. Together, they have pressed the Justice Department, the Federal Aviation Administration and Congress to make sure that aircraft are as safe as possible.

Many of them want the government to prosecute high-ranking Boeing officials, including former CEO Dennis Muilenburg and current chief executive David Calhoun, who was on the company's board when the crashes occurred. They have asked the Justice Department to fine Boeing more than \$24 billion for what one of their lawyers, Paul Cassell, called "the deadliest corporate crime in U.S. history."

The group of relatives includes Javier de Luis, an aerospace engineer whose sister, Graziella, was on the Ethiopian flight. And Michael Stumo and Nadia Milleron, who lost their daughter, Samya. Canadians Paul Njoroge and Chris and Clariss Moore have made several trips to Washington to implore government officials to move against Boeing and demand safer planes. Njoroge's wife, three children and mother-in-law were all on the plane, as was the Moores' daughter, Danielle.

At first, the disparate group of family members connected by emails just to check in on each other. Before long, and especially after meeting face to face, they grew more determined to do more than grieve together; they wanted to make a difference.

"We want to find some meaning in what happened to our loved ones," Ike Riffel says. "If we can make aviation safer so this doesn't happen again, then we have had some victories out of this."

The Latest | Trump and Biden squared off for the first time in the 2024 election season

ATLANTA (AP) — The first general election debate of the 2024 season has come to a close, with U.S. President Joe Biden and his Republican rival, Donald Trump, clashing on immigration and climate change and launching deeply personal attacks on each other Thursday evening in Atlanta.

The debate, which was expected to be viewed in some capacity by tens of millions of people, covered a range of issues, from access to abortion following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. CNN moderators also questioned both 81-year-old Biden and 78-year-old Trump on their ability to serve as president for four years given their ages.

Thursday's debate in Atlanta offered an opportunity for both candidates to sway undecided votes and reassure Americans of their suitability for the Oval Office.

The night marked at least a couple of firsts — never before had two White House contenders faced off at such advanced ages, and never before had CNN hosted a general election presidential debate.

Currently:

- Biden stirs Democratic anxiety over his candidacy post-debate
- Takeaways from the first presidential debate of the 2024 election
- Trump and Biden spar on economy and abortion
- A look at some of the false claims made during Biden and Trump's first debate
- CNN debate moderators did little moderating

Here's the latest:

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio says while he thinks Trump won the debate, 'there's a long way to go'

While many Republicans were gloating after the debate, one of Trump's potential running mates was measured in his assessment.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio scored the former president as the big winner but said "there's a long way to go," noting "we haven't even had conventions yet."

He said the election won't turn on one night but on what most Americans feels about inflation and their economic security, the border, and U.S. security amid multiple wars abroad.

"That's going to influence a lot of voters in the real world, everyday people," Rubio said, "not political junkies that are already kind of locked in one direction or another."

Ultimately, the senator added, "I think Trump has an advantage with that."

Vice president says Biden had a slow start but finished strong in the debate

Vice President Kamala Harris in an interview with MSNBC's Rachel Maddow acknowledged President Joe Biden had a slow start, but said she "thought it was a strong finish."

"What we had in Joe Biden is someone who wanted to have a debate based on facts, based on truths, and in Donald Trump we have what we've come to expect, which is someone who is going to push lies and distract from the reality of the damage he has created and continues to create in our country," Harris said.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom says Democrats shouldn't panic after debate

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, in an interview on MSNBC after the debate, said in response to a question about panic in his party: "There shouldn't be."

"I think it's unhelpful. And I think it's unnecessary. We've got to go in, we've got to keep our heads high. And as I say, we've got to have the back of this president. You don't turn back because of one performance," Newsom said. "What kind of party does that?"

He continued defending President Joe Biden, saying, "This president has delivered. We need to deliver for him."

Biden vs. Trump II

Wondering how the second debate might differ from tonight's? You're going to have to wait awhile.

President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump's second debate is scheduled for Sept. 10 on ABC. The network hasn't yet released details on the format.

Thursday's faceoff was the earliest general election presidential debate ever. The second one is also

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early, and will be held more than six weeks before Election Day.

CNN moderators didn't do much moderating

CNN's moderators Jake Tapper and Dana Bash asked questions and not much more during Thursday's presidential debate, as the two candidates essentially carried the show on their own.

Almost never did the moderators jump in and cut off or challenge a statement from Donald Trump or Joe Biden, and the candidates only fleetingly interacted directly with Bash and Tapper other than listening to — and sometimes answering — their questions.

It was a stark contrast from debates in previous presidential-election years, when other candidates — particularly Trump — jostled at times with moderators.

So for 90 minutes, Trump and Biden were largely left to do their thing — however the public chose to judge them.

How would the candidates tackle pricey child care?

How will the two candidates tackle the high cost of child care? It's an issue that is important for millions of working parents of young children.

The presidential debate on Thursday didn't exactly clarify things, even though Joe Biden has put his support for child care at the forefront of his campaign.

When Donald Trump was asked how he would lower the cost of child care, he ignored the question, and went back to defending his decision to fire his then-chief of staff John Kelly, who had confirmed that Trump made disparaging remarks about military veterans.

He was given another chance to answer the question, and he answered by talking about "polling, we have other things, they rate (Biden) the worst."

Biden, in jumbled remarks, talked about child care in ways that were at times difficult to follow, even as the White House tries to make the case that Biden's record investments in child care brought women back to the workforce.

When he was asked what he had to say to Black voters who were "disappointed he hadn't made more progress" on closing racial disparities, he said, "We got to make sure we provide for child care costs ... because when you provide those child care protections, you create economic growth because more people can be in the job market."

After Trump's non-answer on child care, Biden shot back that his opponent has "done virtually nothing" on child care.

"We should be significantly increase the child care tax credit. We should significantly increase the availability of women and men, er, single parents to be able to go back to work," he said.

Trump's niece urges Biden's reelection

Donald Trump's niece, Mary Trump, told reporters after the debate that her uncle has "one policy position — to keep himself out of prison."

She called him a traitor to his country and noted that "the people who know him best can't support him" before urging Biden's reelection.

Trump adviser to Democrats: 'You have your nominee'

Donald Trump adviser Jason Miller said the former president delivered Thursday on the debate stage and held mostly to discussing issues.

On Joe Biden's performance and any talk of Democrats turning to another nominee, Miller said a move would be "structurally impossible."

"Sorry, Democrats. You have your nominee," Miller said.

Trump and Biden leave the studio

After the debate, President Joe Biden returned to the hotel where he spent much of the day to briefly address supporters at a debate watch party.

"I can't think of one thing he said that was true," Biden said about Donald Trump. "Look we're going to beat this guy. We need to beat this guy and I need you in order to beat him."

"God love you all," he said before stepping off the stage to greet some of those supporters.

Meanwhile, Trump was on his way back to his private plane as his aides and supporters gloated about his performance Thursday night.

He's not planning to stop by the spin room, leaving that job to surrogates, which include several of his vice presidential short-listers.

Some voters frustrated with how the debate went

McALLEN, TEXAS — Marco Perez, 53, voted for Joe Biden in the last election and said he was frustrated with the way Thursday's debate was going.

"I want to hear more facts, more action as opposed to more finger-pointing, more accusations or false accusations," Perez said while watching with friends at a McAllen, Texas, bar.

London's Bar & Grill is normally loud on a day close to the weekend, but many patrons were quiet as they listened to the candidates.

Perez's friend Virginia Lopez, 51, said she's unsure which way she's voting.

"I really feel that one of them — the Republican — I'm disappointed with what he's done, with his behavior. And the other one, I just feel like he's too old," she said.

Lopez said she felt Biden took longer to respond, while Donald Trump had quick replies but the answers were unsatisfying. "Trump is just deflecting in all the answers and he's just lying. It doesn't feel like a real debate in the past."

For more years? Biden, Trump take swings at each other's golf skills

They debated the economy, immigration and foreign policy, but it was an argument over golf handicaps that brought out some of the feistiest comments in Thursday's debate as Joe Biden and Donald Trump sparred over how far they can hit the ball and their stamina on the course, with Trump bragging about trophies he's won and Biden noting that he's a single-digit handicap.

Answering a question about his fitness, Trump, who would be 82 at the end of a second term, bragged that he was in "very good shape" and had recently won two championships at one of his golf courses. "To do that, you have to be quite smart and you have to be able to hit the ball a long way."

Biden, he said, "can't hit a ball 50 yards."

Biden then touted his his own golf abilities. "I got my handicap, when I was vice president, down to six," Biden said. He again challenged Trump to a golf match, but only if his foe carried his bag of clubs himself.

"Think you can do it?" asked Biden, whose handicap is listed on the United State Golf Association's website as 6.7, with the last update in July 2018. Trump's handicap last updated in June 2021 is listed as 2.5. Biden would be 86 at the end of his second term.

Trump called Biden's handicap claim "the biggest lie of all," adding: "I've seen your swing. I know your swing."

Trump then sought to shut down the golf discussion.

"Let's not act like children," Trump said.

"You are a child," Biden retorted.

In golf, a handicap is a measure of a player's skill. The lower the handicap, better the player is.

Democrats weighing in

Georgia state Rep. Billy Mitchell, a leading Democrat in the suburban Atlanta Democratic heartland of DeKalb County, said he thought Joe Biden could overcome his debate performance.

"The bar was set so low by his opponent that he certainly exceeded that," Mitchell said at the Biden campaign watch party in downtown Atlanta. "The reality is we love Joe Biden because of where his heart is, despite if he looked like he had a cold here and there."

Former Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro said in a post on the social platform X that, "Biden had a very low bar going into the debate and failed to clear even that bar. He seemed unprepared, lost, and not strong enough to parry effectively with Trump, who lies constantly."

Trump supporters react to his debate performance

As the debate came to a close, Donald Trump supporter retired police officer Nick Glaub, of Ross, Ohio,

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watched with his feet kicked up onto a nearby performance stage, a can of Corona beer sitting on the table. Glaub was pleased with Trump's debate performance and said he noticed the lack of attack lines from Trump.

"I just think he held his composure," he said.

Chuck Thompson, a Trump supporter from Mason, Ohio, who came to the watch party decked in an American flag button-down shirt, was also pleased with Trump's debate performance, noting the difference in tone from Trump's last debate against President Biden in 2020.

"He didn't lash out," Thompson said. "He's learned how to control his temper.

The candidates' closing statements

President Joe Biden began his closing statement with a voice that was even scratchier than earlier and was at times hard to understand.

He said of his administration, "We've made significant progress from the debacle that was left by President Trump is in his last term" but also flubbed the price cuts on insulin he helped champion, saying \$35 when he meant \$15.

In his closing statement, former President Donald Trump tried again to lump Biden in with other career politicians, calling Biden "a complainer."

He also said that the public and foreign leaders don't respect Biden, saying, "The whole country is exploding because of you."

Trump asked if he will accept the results of the 2024 election

Though asked three times, former President Donald Trump never directly affirmed that he would accept the election results, no matter who wins.

Several times Trump noted that he would accept the results "if it's a fair and legal and good election" but wouldn't give a yes or no answer to moderator Dana Bash's inquiries.

The follow-ups came after Trump ultimately denounced political violence as "totally unacceptable."

After the moderator asked Trump three times whether he would accept the results of the November election, Joe Biden responded that he doubted Trump would "because you're such a whiner."

Biden noted there was no evidence of any widespread fraud in the 2020 election and that multiple courts had dismissed challenges brought by Trump's campaign.

Biden uses term 'illegal aliens' while discussing immigration

Joe Biden uses the term "illegal aliens" while responding to Donald Trump's attacks on immigration.

He said that while Trump accuses migrants of taking away jobs, he said "there's a reason why we have the fastest growing economy in the world."

It's not the first time Biden has used terms that are rejected by immigrant rights' groups and are not favored by Democrats. In March, during his State of the Union speech, he referred to a suspect in the killing of a Georgia nursing student as an "illegal" and later said he regretted using that term.

"I shouldn't have used illegal, it's undocumented," he said in an interview with MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart.

Moderators question both Biden and Trump on their ability to be president at their age

More than 80 minutes into the debate, President Joe Biden, 81, and former President Donald Trump, 78, were asked about their age and ability to serve well into his 80s.

Biden, answering with the hoarse voice he's had all night, launched on a litany of policy achievements and noted that Trump is only "three years younger."

Biden also used the answer to slap at Trump for bad-mouthing the U.S. "The idea that we are some kind of failing country? I've never heard a president talk like that before," Biden said.

In his retort, Trump bragged on his golf game and said he's in as good a shape as he was 25 years ago and perhaps "even a little bit lighter."

Ukraine is battling to preserve democratic progress during wartime. It's not easy

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As an investigative journalist, then an activist, and later a lawmaker, Yehor Soboliev sought to expose corruption in business and government as a way to defend Ukraine's budding democracy.

Now, as a soldier battling Russia, he's had to put those aims on hold as he fights alongside some of the people he once tried to bring down.

"Till the victory, we are on the same side," said Soboliev, a lieutenant in a front-line drone unit. "But maybe — definitely — after the victory, we should separate ourselves from each other. And we should continue that fight in making our country more honest, more responsible, more serving to its citizens."

Ukraine has spent years trying to build a Western-style democracy, although not without some bumps along the way as it shed habits from its Soviet past. Russia's full-scale invasion two years ago raised the stakes of these democracy-building efforts, which are fundamental to Ukraine's goal of joining the European Union and NATO.

Soboliev's feelings capture a paradox within Ukraine: To beat back Russia and remain a democracy it has felt compelled to temporarily suspend or restrict some democratic ideals.

Elections have been postponed, a once-robust media has been restrained, corruption-fighting has slipped down the agenda, and freedom of movement and assembly have been curbed by martial law.

And as Russia pounds Ukraine's cities and makes battlefield gains, the unity sparked by the invasion — and the sense of common purpose crucial to defending democracy — have come under growing strain.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series covering threats to democracy in Europe.

Corruption 'metastasized' in the midst of war

When comedian-turned-politician Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected Ukraine's president in 2019, he promised to crack down on corruption that had flourished for decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

War hasn't made that any easier. Corruption exists at a "frightening scale" in Ukraine, the pro-democracy organization Freedom House said in a February report, noting that it "metastasized within the army in 2023," especially around defense contracts and men seeking exemptions from the draft.

The European Union says Ukraine must reduce corruption before it can join the 27-nation bloc and in November said the country had made "some progress" but needed to do more, especially on "high-level cases." Ukraine's defense minister, agriculture minister, top prosecutor, intelligence chief, and other senior officials have been pushed out over the past two years, and last year the head of the Supreme Court was arrested for allegedly taking bribes.

But Ukraine's judiciary has been an obstacle. After Zelenskyy took office, Ukraine's top court said officials no longer needed to declare their assets in an electronic register. That decision was overturned, in part due to public pressure — but it was just one of many that have undercut anti-corruption efforts.

Still, Olha Aivazovska, who chairs the pro-democracy charity OPORA, believes pressure to eliminate corruption will be maintained by Ukraine's desire for EU membership.

"Ukrainian politicians will not win any elections after the end of the war if they will not be successful on the EU integration track," she said.

'A democracy even without elections'

Zelenskyy indefinitely postponed the 2024 presidential election because of the war. With almost one-fifth of Ukraine occupied by Russia and millions of citizens displaced from their homes, Ukraine's opposition leaders supported the decision, and opinion polls suggest most Ukrainians agree.

But some Ukrainians grumble about the power Zelenskyy has accumulated. Criticism of him grew last year after Ukraine's failed counter-offensive, and political rivals are testing the ground.

Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko has accused Zelenskyy of becoming increasingly autocratic, citing the replace-

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ment of some elected mayors with military officials. Zelenskyy's immediate predecessor as president, the candy magnate Petro Poroshenko, says he is planning a postwar comeback. And in a possible sign of his desire to sideline rivals, Zelenskyy in February dismissed the country's popular military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has used the canceled elections to question Zelenskyy's legitimacy. The idea of Zelenskyy as anti-democratic has been echoed in the U.S. by some Republicans in Congress who oppose military support for Ukraine.

Aivazovska rejects that argument. "During wartime, Ukraine can be a democracy even without elections," she said — as long as it strengthens its media, local government and civil society organizations.

"Russia formally had elections in March, but that doesn't mean that Russia is a democratic state," she said. "We need real democracy in Ukraine for development, not fake democracy as Russia has."

Journalists come under pressure

Soon after the invasion, a handful of Ukrainian TV networks combined resources to create one 24-7 channel, the "United News Telemarathon," as a way to ensure continuity.

Public trust in the channel is low, and so are ratings, according to Reporters Without Borders, a journalism advocacy group that has called for the arrangement to be broken up. The U.S. State Department said the consolidation stifled competition and "enabled an unprecedented level of control" by the government by effectively establishing a single authorized broadcaster.

Ukraine has a vigorous online media that includes widely read investigative outlets, though some independent journalists say they have faced dirty tricks from the authorities.

The Committee to Protect Journalists in January called on the government to investigate threats against reporter Yuriy Nikolov, whose apartment door was plastered with notes calling him a traitor and a draft-dodger after he wrote about defense ministry corruption. That same month, the online investigative outfit Bihus.Info said its journalists had been wiretapped and filmed surreptitiously, after a video was published allegedly showing employees using drugs at a party.

In Reporters Without Borders' 2024 press freedom index, Ukraine was ranked 61st out of 180 countries surveyed, up from 79th last year. The group said the situation is improving, citing a reduction in political interference, an outspoken media and the decision in May to readmit reporters to cover parliament.

Marichka Padalko, a TV anchor whose channel is part of the Telemarathon, said Ukrainian journalists know they must fight to ensure a free press.

"Every government is the press' friend at first, and then they want to control it," said Padalko, who is married to Soboliev, the former lawmaker now part of the front-line drone unit. "There is a lot of self-censorship with Ukrainian journalists. So a lot depends on the individual decisions that you make."

To serve or not? The draft divides society

Martial law, imposed on the day Russia launched its full-scale invasion, gave Ukraine's government power to expropriate property, impose curfews, limit people's movement, ban gatherings and more.

Men between 18 and 60 are barred from leaving the country without permission and must register with the military. Nonetheless, there has been an illicit exodus of fighting-age men.

With Ukraine's outnumbered troops facing repeated attempts to push them back by Russia's much larger army, the government in April lowered the conscription age and announced that it was suspending passport renewals and consular services for men of conscription age who are outside the country.

Some human rights groups criticized the move aimed at pressuring expatriates to register for the draft. But it met with broad support inside Ukraine, where the divide between those who stayed and those who left could become a fault line that threatens social unity in the future.

Aivazovska, the pro-democracy activist, said those in the military find it "difficult to accept that many others don't want to serve." And those who have left are scared that society "will not accept them" if they return when the war is over, she said.

Keeping the faith in democracy

Despite everything, research suggests war has not destroyed Ukrainians' belief in democracy, and may

have strengthened it.

Some 59% of Ukrainians surveyed by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology said they felt democracy was more important than having a strong leader — up from 31% before the war.

In the latest survey, respondents conveyed that “Ukraine is a democratic state, but not a full democracy,” the institute’s executive director, Anton Grushetskyi, said.

Twice in the past two decades, Ukrainians have taken to the streets to defend democratic decisions. In 2004, mass protests against attempted election fraud ushered pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko into office in what became known as the Orange Revolution.

In late 2013, Moscow-friendly President Viktor Yanukovich scrapped an agreement to bring Ukraine closer to the EU. Protesters flooded Kyiv’s Independence Square and were met by a brutal police crackdown. Yanukovich was ultimately ousted in what became known as the Revolution of Dignity.

Putin annexed Crimea soon afterwards, and then Moscow-backed separatists began an uprising in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region that grew into a conflict that left thousands dead.

More than two years after Putin escalated with a full-scale invasion, many Ukrainians are tired and traumatized by a war in which victory feels remote. But, by and large, they do not feel powerless to influence events, something experts say is key to the country’s resilience.

Political scientist Olexiy Haran said Ukraine has retained an impressive level of democracy despite the war.

“And definitely it’s not only because of our government, but it’s also because of opposition, civil society, the expert community, media,” he said.

Soboliev, who joined the army on the day of the February 2022 invasion, was an organizer of the 2013 protests against Yanukovich, and sees the current war as an extension of that struggle for democracy.

“I wrote about democracy. I tried to build to improve democracy, and now I am fighting for it,” he said.

Sitting in the family’s Kyiv apartment as her husband prepared for a deployment to the front, Padalko conceded that democracy “is struggling during war.”

“But we need to bring a new democracy to Ukraine after the war is over,” she said.

Their son Misha, who was 7 when Russia seized Crimea and 15 when the full-scale invasion began, once dreamed of being a professional soccer player. Now 17, he focuses on his studies and, in time off from class, has built a drone to send to his father’s unit.

“But then I understand that the good food, the good other things – good friendships, relationships – could be only in a free state,” he said. “For me it’s motivation to work every day, hard, and to win this war for independence.”

Survivors of Israel music festival massacre unite to build a healing community

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — In the months since Hamas’ surprise attack sent them scattering across fields or hiding in desert brush, thousands of survivors of a massacre at a trance festival in Israel have come together as a community to heal.

They have found solace in massage therapy, ice baths, yoga or surfing with the only people who could truly understand what they had been through. And they have built a robust support network for themselves as the Israel-Hamas war rages on and authorities struggle to provide services to devastated communities.

For some, the way back has come through dancing again.

On Thursday, thousands of people attended the Nova Healing Concert in Tel Aviv, the first Tribe of Nova mass gathering since the Oct. 7 attack.

“We understood that people needed to be together, and we’re a community that takes care of itself,” said Omri Sasa, one of the founders of the Tribe of Nova, which organized the festival last October. “I’m in trauma, and I wanted to be with people who also went through this.”

He was among around 3,000 people dancing through the night in a field just miles from Gaza when rockets lit up the sky at 6:29 a.m. Heavily armed Palestinian militants rampaged through the festival, killing

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at least 364 people and taking more than 40 hostage. Many of them are still held in Gaza.

Hila Fakliri, a communications student who was tending bar at the festival, escaped by zigzagging through fields, hiding and running for over five hours, until she reached the safety of a village some 20 kilometers (12 miles) away. Six of her friends were killed and another three were taken hostage.

"Someone asked me if I can dance again, and in the beginning I said no," she said. At a memorial in January for one of her friends, she tried to dance, had a panic attack, and then tried again. "I was crying and dancing at the same time," she said.

But after attending events organized by Nova survivors, she was once again able to find solace in the trance music she loves. At a recent event, she slid into an ice bath while others attended yoga and art classes in a cluster of tents.

Omri Kohavi, 35, one of Nova's founding organizers, said they had felt abandoned by Israel's security forces, who took hours to respond to the Oct. 7 attack. Now director of community programming for the Nova Foundation, Kohavi said organizers realized within days that "if we don't care for ourselves, no one else will."

Survivors began to gather to deal with the trauma they had experienced together. On the first day, 500 showed up. That number doubled the following day. After three months, they shifted to weekly Community Day events and encouraged survivors to return to their regular lives and jobs.

At those events in Tel Aviv, survivors meet with therapists, lawyers, social workers or just spend time with one another. The Nova Foundation connects survivors to opportunities for horse therapy, surfing and massage. Some have completed trainings in peer therapy to help others, and the organization recently began providing support to the families of those killed.

Earlier this month, Israel rescued four hostages who were snatched from the festival, which Sasa said "was the biggest present anyone could imagine." The daytime rescue killed over 270 Palestinians.

The gathering Thursday was to raise money to support the volunteer network and to call for the release of the remaining hostages. To appeal to a broader audience, it featured electronic music and mainstream artists as well as the Nova mainstay, trance.

"We need a lot of money, and the only way we know how to raise money is through events," Sasa said.

Nova provided a separate area at the Nova Healing Concert for survivors and family members of victims, and two hostages who were released during a ceasefire in November addressed the crowd. A chorus of mothers who lost their children performed.

The war ignited by Hamas' attack is far from over. Some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Israel on Oct. 7, and another 250 were taken hostage. Israel's massive offensive in Gaza has killed over 37,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. Fears of another all-out war, this time with Hezbollah in Lebanon, have people on edge.

Sivan Cohen, 30, said ahead of the event Thursday that she would be "dancing for two." Her partner of six years, Yaniv Sarudi, 26, was killed while trying to drive a car filled with nine festivalgoers to safety. Cohen was shot in the leg and, at first, she wasn't sure if she would ever walk again, much less dance.

"My friends and I have grabbed this with both hands and we come every week," Cohen said of Nova's Community Days. She said it's hard to explain to those who weren't there what it means to reunite with someone who was in that car or whose injuries she helped to treat.

On Thursday, tens of thousands danced in the humid June heat, the beat pulsing as the sun set over the Nova stage. Quiet corners for reflection with mandalas and photos of the victims gave way to a massive party at the center stage.

"The only way to really commemorate these people is through living what they lived, which is dancing. That's what they came there to do," Eyal Porat said as he entered the festival.

Moran Stella Yanai, who was snatched from the Nova festival and held hostage for 54 days, took the stage and invited audience members to close their eyes.

"Imagine, imagine that all of the hostages are standing in a line, holding hands, imagine them strong, imagine them smiling, imagine their families standing before them, imagine the happiness that is beginning to well up inside," Yanai said.

"Raise your hands up to the sky, high and strong," she told the crowd. "Open your eyes, believe, and dance!"

As LGBTQ+ Pride's crescendo approaches, tensions over war in Gaza expose rifts

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ahead of New York City's annual LGBTQ+ Pride march, organizers typically spend weeks mapping out the order of the floats, assigning placements based on factors like seniority and music volume.

This year, they're wrestling with a question more fraught: how to plan a parade whose own participants have accused one another of war crimes and support for terrorism.

At Pride events across the U.S, internal tensions over the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza have seeped into the festivities, spurring boycotts and demonstrations at marches and exposing divisions within a movement firmly rooted in protest.

In New York, members of the Israeli consulate say they will march this year despite several other participating groups, and at least two of the parade's four grand marshals, accusing the country of committing genocide against Palestinians.

Their usual float, festooned in rainbow-colored flowers and a Star of David, will be flanked by an added layer of private security when the march begins this Sunday.

"Unfortunately there's a lot of people in the LGBT community that would rather stand with the enemies, with the side that is homophobic, and not with Israel," said Itay Milner, a spokesperson for the consulate. "We're aware of that sentiment but we will not be scared away."

Elsewhere in the line of hundreds of parading groups, members of Tarab NYC, an advocacy group representing queer Middle Easterners and North Africans, say they will seek to "center Palestine" during the march, hoisting Palestinian flags as they chant, "No pride in genocide."

Those marching with the group recently attended a de-escalation training after they were heckled and chased by counterprotesters at a Pride event in Brooklyn this month, according to the group's founder, Bashar Makhay.

Similar confrontations have erupted in many arenas of public life as the war in Gaza has dragged on, prompting demonstrations and clashes on college campuses and more typically neutral settings, including some recent Memorial Day parades.

But the conflict has led to an unusual dynamic for some Pride participants, who now find themselves bracing for protests not only from far-right agitators and other outside groups, but also from activists within their own community. In recent weeks, pro-Palestinian LGBTQ+ groups have disrupted marches in Boston, Denver, Philadelphia and elsewhere to protest sponsors' connections to Israel.

Several groups boycotted the Queens Pride Parade this month after the president of the LGBT Network, which organizes the event, expressed strong support for Israel and chided Palestinian activists in an online piece.

In San Francisco, Jewish groups expressed outrage after Pride organizers announced that there would be no Israeli float at this Sunday's parade, one of the world's largest. The organizers released a follow-up statement clarifying that no one who registered for the event had been denied.

The large annual Pride parade in Tel Aviv, Israel, was canceled last month out of respect for the hostages taken by Hamas that remain in Gaza.

Sandra Perez, the executive director of NYC Pride, says the organization approaches its march with a "free speech mindset" and does not restrict the messaging of registered participants (though police officers are barred from marching in uniform). But, she said, she hoped the issue of the war would not "silence other members of the community."

"Our concern with people choosing to express themselves or protest the issues they want to protest is that it doesn't overshadow the issues facing the LGBTQ community," Perez said.

Supporters of the Palestinian cause see Pride events as a natural venue to showcase solidarity with those facing oppression, noting the first march was held to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall uprising, a riot that began with a police raid on a Manhattan gay bar.

In years past, Black Lives Matter activists briefly disrupted Pride events to call attention to promote more inclusion of people of color.

The recent war protests, some say, have further exposed a widening rift between legacy queer institutions, including those running the parades, and the younger and more diverse segments of the community that have become increasingly vocal about the plight of Palestinians.

"It is safe to say that everyone is thinking about the genocide that is happening in Gaza and Palestine across the board," said Raquel Willis, a transgender writer who will serve as one of the grand marshals of the NYC Pride Parade. "The difference is whether people are being outspoken about it or not."

As the responses to the war in Gaza have inflamed existing tensions within the community, they have also opened new fissures among once-aligned allies.

Since 2019, left-leaning activists fed up with the growing corporate presence at NYC Pride have hosted their own event, known as the Queer Liberation March. Long skeptical of outside funders, the group previously counted Housing Works, a nonprofit focused on fighting AIDS and homelessness, as its sole fiscal sponsor.

But this year, after organizers announced the march's theme would include those facing "war and genocide," as well as youths of color, Housing Works declined to get on board.

In an email to employees, the Housing Works CEO, Charles King, said the organization has not taken a position on the war in Gaza and would not do so at the march on Sunday.

"After much deliberation, we have decided that Housing Works should join the march under the banner of only the first theme, fighting for our Black and Brown youth," he wrote.

In response, the organizers of the Queer Liberation March took to Instagram with a defiant message: Those that "remain silent in the face of wars and genocides," they wrote, "aren't representing the values of the Queer Liberation March."

Judge in Trump classified docs case grants his request for hearing on key evidence in indictment

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal judge presiding over the classified documents case of former President Donald Trump granted his request Thursday for a hearing on whether prosecutors had been permitted to improperly breach attorney-client privilege when they obtained crucial evidence from one of his ex-lawyers.

The order from U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon ensures further delays in a criminal case that has already been snarled by significant postponements, resulting in the indefinite cancellation of trial date that had been set for May 20 in Fort Pierce, Florida. It means that Cannon will revisit a different judge's order from last year that permitted prosecutors to get testimony and other evidence from a Trump attorney that wound up being repeatedly cited in the indictment of the former president.

Trump faces dozens of felony counts accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents from his presidency at his Mar-a-Lago estate and obstructing the FBI's efforts to recover them. He has pleaded not guilty.

Defense lawyers are ordinarily shielded from being forced to testify about their confidential conversations with their client but can be compelled to do so if prosecutors can show that their legal services were used in furtherance of a crime — a doctrine known as the crime-fraud exception.

The then-chief federal judge in the District of Columbia, Beryl Howell, agreed last year with special counsel Jack Smith's team that the exception applied and ordered grand jury testimony from a Trump attorney, M. Evan Corcoran, who represented the former president when the FBI on Aug. 8, 2022, searched Mar-a-Lago for classified documents and seized boxes of classified records.

She also directed Corcoran to turn over audio recordings he made that documented his impressions of

conversations he had had with Trump about returning the documents. Those conversations form the basis of key portions of the indictment, including one quote in which Trump proposed not cooperating with the FBI and Justice Department as they sought the return of classified documents that he took with him to Mar-a-Lago after he left the White House.

"Wouldn't it be better if we just told them we don't have anything here?" Corcoran quoted him as saying.

In her order Thursday, Cannon said there was "nothing unduly prejudicial or legally erroneous about Defendant Trump's fact-development request," even as she sought to deflect the Smith team's concerns that the hearing could be a "mini-trial."

"There is a difference between a resource-wasting and delay-producing 'mini-trial,' on the one hand, and an evidentiary hearing geared to adjudicating the contested factual and legal issues on a given pre-trial motion to suppress, on the other," she said.

Cannon said it was "the obligation of this Court to make factual findings afresh on the crime-fraud issue."

The judge also denied a request for a hearing on a separate Trump team claim that the Justice Department had submitted false or misleading information in an application to search Mar-a-Lago. They argued, for instance, that the application should have noted that a senior FBI official proposed seeking the consent of Trump's lawyers for a search rather than obtaining a court-authorized search warrant.

But Cannon sided with Smith team in finding that neither that nor any other of the alleged omissions raised by the defense had any bearing on whether or not prosecutors had sufficient probable cause to search the property. She had signaled that position during a hearing earlier this week.

"Even accepting those statements by the high-level FBI official, the Motion offers an insufficient basis to believe that inclusion in the affidavit of that official's perspective (or of the dissenting views of other FBI agents as referenced generally in his testimony) would have altered the evidentiary calculus in support of probable cause for the alleged offenses," Cannon wrote.

Survivor of Parkland school massacre wins ownership of shooter's name in lawsuit settlement

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The most severely wounded survivor of the 2018 massacre at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School now owns shooter Nikolas Cruz's name, and Cruz cannot give any interviews without his permission, under a settlement reached in a lawsuit.

Under his recent settlement with Anthony Borges, Cruz must also turn over any money he might receive as a beneficiary of a relative's life insurance policy, participate in any scientific studies of mass shooters and donate his body to science after his death.

The agreement means that Cruz, 25, cannot benefit from or cooperate with any movies, TV shows, books or other media productions without Borges' permission. Cruz is serving consecutive life sentences at an undisclosed prison for each of the 17 murders and 17 attempted murders he committed inside a three-story classroom building on Feb. 14, 2018.

"We just wanted to shut him down so we never have to hear about him again," Borges' attorney, Alex Arreaza, said Thursday.

Borges, now 21, was shot five times in the back and legs and collapsed in the middle of the third-floor hallway. Video shows that Cruz pointed his rifle at Borges as he lay on the floor, but unlike most of the other victims he walked past, did not shoot him a second time. Arreaza said he asked Cruz why he didn't shoot Borges again, but he didn't remember.

A promising soccer player before the shooting, Borges has undergone more than a dozen surgeries and still lives in pain. He received donations, a \$1.25 million settlement from the Broward County school district and an undisclosed settlement from the FBI for their failures in preventing the shooting. Arreaza said it is difficult to say whether Borges has received enough money to cover his future medical expenses.

Several other families also sued Cruz, and a mini-trial had been scheduled for next month to assess damages against him. That trial has been canceled, Arreaza said. David Brill, the attorney representing

the other families, did not return a phone call and two email messages seeking comment.

Florida already has laws that prohibit inmates from keeping any proceeds related to their crimes, including any writings or artwork they might produce in prison. In addition, Judge Elizabeth Scherer, when she sentenced Cruz, ordered that any money placed in his prison commissary account be seized to pay restitution to the victims and their families and all court and investigation costs. In total, that would be millions of dollars.

Arreaza said he feared that without the settlement, Cruz could find a way around the law and the judge's order or assign any money he might receive to a relative or other person.

Borges, the families of those Cruz murdered and other survivors are also suing former Broward County sheriff's deputy Scot Peterson, the sheriff's office and two former school security guards, alleging they failed to protect the students and staff. No trial date has been set. Peterson was acquitted of criminal charges last year.

Robert Kennedy didn't make the debate stage but he answered the same questions during a rival event

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. wasn't with his better-known rivals, President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, when they debated Thursday in Atlanta.

But Kennedy responded in real time to the same questions — about inflation, the COVID-19 response and abortion — that were posed to Biden and Trump in an unusual livestream on the social platform X. Host John Stossell kept Kennedy's answers to the same strict time constraints imposed on the other candidates.

Standing alone on a stage in Los Angeles, Kennedy opened his event, dubbed The Real Debate, by accusing CNN, host of the main contest, of colluding with the Republican and Democratic parties to keep him off.

"This is something that's important for our democracy because Americans feel like the system is rigged," Kennedy said during his opening remarks. "This is exactly the kind of merger of state and corporate power that I'm running to oppose."

Aside from the livestreamed response to the debate, Kennedy has nothing on his public schedule for the coming weeks. Nor does his running mate, philanthropist Nicole Shanahan.

After a busy spring hopscotching the country for a mix of political rallies, fundraisers and nontraditional campaign events, Kennedy appears to be taking a breather.

Kennedy's absence from the main debate stage and the campaign trail carries risk for his insurgent quest to shake up the Republican and Democratic dominance of the U.S. political system. He lacks the money for a firehose of television commercials, and he must spend much of the money he does have to secure ballot access. Public appearances are a low-cost way to fire up supporters and drive media coverage he needs to stay relevant.

Kennedy says he can't win unless voters know he's running and believe he can defeat Biden, a Democrat, and Trump, a Republican. That problem will become increasingly acute as the debate, followed by the major party conventions in July and August, push more voters to tune into the race.

Still, Kennedy has maintained a steady stream of social media posts, and he continues to sit for interviews, most recently with talk show host Dr. Phil.

"Mr. Kennedy has a full schedule for July with many public events, mostly on the East Coast and including one big rally," said Stefanie Spear, a Kennedy campaign spokesperson. "We will start announcing the events next week."

For Thursday's debate on CNN, the network invited candidates who showed strength in four reliable polls and ballot access in enough states to win the presidency. Kennedy fell short on both requirements.

He has cried foul about the rules, accusing CNN of colluding with Biden and Trump in a complaint to the Federal Election Commission and threatening to sue.

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Kennedy wasn't on stage, but his supporters had a visible presence on the streets around the debate hall. Some Kennedy backers set up a lemonade stand a few blocks from the spin room where the press was gathered. A sign on top of the stand read, "CNN Lemons = Kennedy Lemonade." Others waved "Heal the Divide" signs. Not far away, a Kennedy campaign bus blasted music.

Sujat Desai, a 20-year-old student from Pleasanton, California, who supports Kennedy, said Kennedy's absence from the debate is a major hurdle for him to overcome.

"I don't think there's any way to get awareness if you're not on the debate stage," Desai said. "I think it's a pretty lethal blow not to be in this debate, and it would be detrimental not to be in the next."

Still, Desai said he won't be dissuaded from voting for Kennedy even if he appears to be a longshot come November.

"I think this is probably the strongest I've seen an independent candidate in a while, so I'll give him that," Desai said. "I think he's definitely doing well. His policies are strong enough to win, I just don't know if there's awareness."

Independent and third-party candidates like Kennedy face supremely long odds, but Kennedy's campaign has spooked partisans on both sides who fear he will tip the election against them. Biden supporters worry his famous Democratic name and his history of environmental advocacy will sway voters from the left. Trump supporters worry his idiosyncratic views, particularly his questioning of the scientific consensus that vaccines are safe and effective, will appeal to people who might otherwise vote for Trump.

Christy Jones, 54, a holistic health and mindfulness coach from Glendora, California, worries people won't know Kennedy is running without him standing next to Biden and Trump at the debate. But she said he's still all over her social media feeds and she's confident he's making himself visible.

"I do feel like he could still win if people choose to be courageous," she said. "If all the people that actually want change voted for him, he would be in. People are asking for change."

Until recently, Kennedy's website promoted a variety of events weeks or more in advance, including public rallies and private fundraisers. He held comedy nights with prominent comedians in Michigan and Tennessee.

But since he went to the June 15 premiere of a film on combatting addiction, Kennedy has been dark, though he continues to promote in-person and virtual organizing events for his supporters.

Former Uvalde police chief indicted over response to Robb Elementary shooting

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The former Uvalde schools police chief was indicted over his role in the slow police response to the 2022 massacre at a Texas elementary school that left 19 children and two teachers dead, the local sheriff said Thursday.

Pete Arredondo was indicted by a grand jury on 10 counts of felony child endangerment/abandonment and briefly booked into the county jail before he was released on bond, Uvalde Sheriff Ruben Nolasco told The Associated Press in a text message Thursday night.

The Uvalde Leader-News and the San Antonio Express-News reported that former school officer Adrian Gonzales also was indicted on multiple similar charges. The Uvalde Leader-News reported that District Attorney Christina Mitchell confirmed the indictment.

Mitchell did not return phone and email messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Several family members of victims of the shooting did not respond to phone messages seeking comment.

The indictments make Arredondo, who was the on-site commander during the attack, and Gonzales the first officers to face criminal charges in one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history. A scathing report by Texas lawmakers that examined the police response described Gonzales as one of the first officers to enter the building after the shooting began.

The indictments were kept under seal until the men were in custody. It was unclear when Arredondo's indictment would be publicly released.

Over two years ago, an 18-year-old gunman opened fire in a fourth grade classroom, where he remained for more than 70 minutes before officers confronted and killed him. In total, 376 law enforcement officers massed at Robb Elementary School on May 24, 2022, some waiting in the hallway outside the classroom, even as the gunman could be heard firing an AR-15-style rifle inside.

"Today is another day in an impossibly painful journey," state Rep. Joe Moody, who helped the state lawmakers investigation, posted on the social platform X. "The hurt for them will never subside. Today, I pray that there is justice and some sense of closure for them in this process rather than prolonged suffering."

The office of a former attorney for Arredondo said they did not know whether the former chief has new representation. The AP could not immediately find a phone number to reach Gonzales.

Arredondo lost his job three months after the shooting. Several officers involved were eventually fired, and separate investigations by the Department of Justice and state lawmakers faulted law enforcement with botching their response to the massacre.

Whether any officers would face criminal charges over their actions in Uvalde has been a question hanging over the city of 15,000 since the Texas Rangers completed their investigation and turned their findings over to prosecutors.

Mitchell's office has also come under scrutiny. Uvalde city officials filed a lawsuit in 2022 that accused prosecutors of not being transparent and withholding records related to the shooting. Media outlets, including the AP, also sued Uvalde officials for withholding records requested under public information laws.

But body camera footage, investigations by journalists and damning government reports have laid bare how over the course of over an hour, a mass of officers went in and out of the school with weapons drawn but did not go inside the classroom where the shooting was taking place. The hundreds of officers at the scene included state police, Uvalde police, school officers and U.S. Border Patrol agents.

In their July 2022 report, Texas lawmakers faulted law enforcement at every level with failing "to prioritize saving innocent lives over their own safety." The Justice Department released its own report in January that detailed "cascading failures" by police in waiting far too long to confront the gunman, acting with "no urgency" in establishing a command post and communicating inaccurate information to grieving families.

Uvalde remains divided between residents who say they want to move past the tragedy and others who still want answers and accountability. During the first mayoral race since the shooting, locals voted in a man who had served as mayor more than a decade ago over a mother who led calls for tougher gun laws after her daughter was killed in the attack.

Robb Elementary School is now permanently closed. The city broke ground on a new school in October 2023.

NBA draft finally worth the longer wait for some players after moving to a two-day format

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jaylen Wells sat in the stands at Barclays Center in his snazzy white suit, hoping to hear his name called in the first round of the NBA draft.

A day later, at a second site in a second borough, Wells was finally on his way to the NBA — wearing the same white suit.

"Actually, I had two suits planned and then I was like, I just love this one so much," the forward from Washington State said Thursday. "I was like, 'I've got to wear it again.'"

Wells was one of the early selections in the new two-day NBA draft, taken with the No. 39 pick by the Memphis Grizzlies. The league went to the format this year instead of having its draft drag too late into the night.

The second round was held at ESPN's Seaport District studios in Manhattan after the first round took place as usual at the home of the Brooklyn Nets. Ten players and their families attended, though Bronny James wasn't present to hear his name announced after the Los Angeles Lakers took the son of the NBA

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career scoring leader LeBron James at No. 55, near the end of draft.

With extra time between rounds and between picks — it's now four minutes between selections in the second round, up from two previously — the new format might help teams make more confident selections.

It's a little more difficult for the players.

"Two days kind of makes it more stressful," UCLA's Adem Bona, who was taken by Philadelphia with the No. 41 pick, said with a laugh. "If it's one, it's like, 'All right, I'm getting my name called today!'"

But he said he was happier that the new format allowed him to have extended family present. The native of Nigeria who played in high school in California said he had aunts and cousins from Canada with him Thursday, which wouldn't have been the case a night earlier in Brooklyn.

The draft resumed with the Toronto Raptors taking Jonathan Mogbo of San Francisco with the No. 31 pick.

It felt like a normal second round, with a flurry of trades as teams tried to move up and others sought to move out of the draft.

But the setup was all new, with players and their families sitting in a room off the studio set and a nice view of boats docked in the harbor below on a gorgeous summer afternoon.

"It's nice, but I was down there nervous," said Harrison Ingram, the North Carolina product taken by the San Antonio Spurs at No. 48. "I was panicking, my mom was nervous, my sister is up there hyperventilating, so a whole lot of stuff going on."

He also went to Barclays Center and returned Thursday wearing the same blue suit. Ingram said he always wanted to go to the NBA draft and didn't want to miss his chance, but he wished it had been under the old format.

"First time they're doing two nights, so it was tough to go there, hear everybody being called," Ingram said. "A lot of my friends, I was happy for them, but knowing that my day might not come until tomorrow and I have to go to sleep, I couldn't fall sleep until like 3 or 4 a.m., just up thinking about where I'm going to be the next however many years of my life."

Duke's Kyle Filipowski and Johnny Furphy of Kansas, the two players who remained in the green room after the first round, didn't return for the second round. Filipowski was finally selected at No. 32 by Utah with the second pick of the second round. Furphy went a few picks later at No. 35 to San Antonio, which traded his rights to Indiana.

Juan Nunez a guard from Spain who played in Germany, was the first player in attendance who was selected, going 36th to the Indiana Pacers and whose rights were traded to the San Antonio Spurs.

The players who did attend treated the event like the glitzy first round, wearing sharp suits and seated at tables — albeit much smaller ones — that had the same gold basketballs at centerpieces as Barclays Center, just without thousands of fans surrounding them.

And perhaps some of the prospects will have better careers than some of the players who were picked Wednesday.

The NBA has sought to spur interest in the second round with an "every pick matters" slogan, highlighting the success of MVP Nikola Jokic and New York guard Jalen Brunson, who finished fifth in this year's voting, along with former Defensive Players of the Year Draymond Green and Marc Gasol.

Both Filipowski and Furphy were viewed as potential picks in the middle of the first round, so they were certainly some disappointment when they left Barclays Center without knowing their NBA destination.

Not so for Wells, whose family got some food, went to bed and got ready to do it all again.

"I knew I'd hear my name called at one point, so it didn't really get me down," he said. "I was just excited to be here."

Uber and Lyft agree to pay drivers \$32.50 per hour in Massachusetts settlement

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Drivers for Uber and Lyft will earn a minimum pay standard of \$32.50 per hour under a settlement announced Thursday by Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell, in a deal that also includes a suite of benefits and protections.

The two companies will also be required to pay a combined \$175 million to the state to resolve allegations that the companies violated Massachusetts wage and hour laws, a substantial majority of which will be distributed to current and former drivers.

Campbell said the settlement resolves her office's yearslong litigation against the two companies and stops the threat of their attempt to rewrite state employment law by a proposed 2024 ballot initiative.

That question would have resulted in drivers receiving inadequate protections and an earnings standard that would not guarantee minimum wage, she said.

"For years, these companies have underpaid their drivers and denied them basic benefits," Campbell said in a written statement. "Today's agreement holds Uber and Lyft accountable, and provides their drivers, for the very first time in Massachusetts, guaranteed minimum pay, paid sick leave, occupational accident insurance, and health care stipends."

Democratic Gov. Maura Healey said the settlement delivers "historic wages and benefits to right the wrongs of the past and ensure drivers are paid fairly going forward."

In a statement Lyft said the agreement resolves a lawsuit that recently went to trial, and avoids the need for the ballot initiative campaign this November.

"More importantly, it is a major victory in a multiyear campaign by Bay State drivers to secure their right to remain independent, while gaining access to new benefits," the company said.

Uber also released a statement calling the agreement "an example of what independent, flexible work with dignity should look like in the 21st century."

"In taking this opportunity, we've resolved historical liabilities by constructing a new operating model that balances both flexibility and benefits," the company said. "This allows both Uber and Massachusetts to move forward in a way that reflects what drivers want and demonstrates to other states what's possible to achieve."

The companies were pushing a ballot question that would classify drivers as independent contractors eligible for some benefits, but Campbell said the settlement stops the threat of the ballot question. A competing ballot question seeks to give drivers the right to unionize in Massachusetts.

Drivers will now earn one hour of sick day pay for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 40 hours per year. As part of the agreement, Uber and Lyft must update their driver applications so drivers are able to view and claim their sick leave directly in the app. Drivers will also receive a stipend to buy into the state's paid family and medical leave program.

Under the deal, Uber and Lyft will also allow drivers to pool together their hours driving for the two companies to obtain access to a health insurance stipend. Anyone who drives for more than 15 hours per week — for either or both companies — will be able to earn a health insurance stipend to pay for a plan on the Massachusetts Health Connector.

Drivers will be eligible for occupational accident insurance paid by the companies for up to \$1 million in coverage for work-related injuries.

The agreement also requires the companies to provide drivers with key information — about the length of a trip, the destination and expected earnings — before they are expected to accept a ride.

The companies are barred from discriminating against drivers based on race, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or other protected identities — and can't retaliate against drivers who have filed a complaint about the companies with the Attorney General's Office.

The deal also requires the companies to provide drivers in-app chat support with a live person in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French and must provide drivers with information about why they have been deactivated and create an appeals process.

Israel lets 19 kids leave Gaza who are sick or wounded, first medical evacuation in nearly 2 months

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH, WAFAA SHURAFI and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli authorities say 68 people — 19 sick or wounded children plus their companions — have been allowed out of the Gaza Strip and into Egypt in the first medical evacuation since early May, when the territory's sole travel crossing was shut down after Israel captured it.

The nearly nine-month Israel-Hamas war has devastated Gaza's health sector and forced most of its hospitals to shut down. Health officials say thousands of people need medical treatment abroad, including hundreds of urgent cases.

The Israeli military body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, known by its acronym COGAT, said Thursday that the evacuation was carried out in coordination with officials from the United States, Egypt and the international community.

The children and their companions left Gaza via the Kerem Shalom cargo crossing, and the patients were to travel to Egypt and farther abroad for medical treatment.

Family members bade a tearful goodbye to the kids at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis. Many of the families appeared anxious — most relatives had to stay behind, and even those allowed to accompany the patients did not know their final destination.

Nour Abu Zahri wept as he kissed his young daughter goodbye. The girl has severe burns on her head from an Israeli airstrike. He said he didn't get clearance to leave Gaza with her, although her mother did. "It's been almost 10 months, and there is no solution for the hospitals here," he said.

Kamela Abukweik burst into tears after her son got on the bus heading to the crossing with her mother. Neither she nor her husband were cleared to leave.

"He has tumors spread all over his body and we don't know what the reason is. And he constantly has a fever," she said. "I still don't know where he is going."

The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, the only one available for people to travel in or out, shut down after Israeli forces captured it during their operation in the city early last month. Egypt has refused to reopen its side of the crossing until the Gaza side is returned to Palestinian control.

Six of the children were transferred to Nasser Hospital from Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City earlier this week. Five have cancer and one suffers from metabolic syndrome. That evacuation was organized by the World Health Organization, which could not immediately be reached for comment.

At a press conference at Nasser Hospital on Thursday, Dr. Mohammed Zaqout, the head of Gaza's hospitals, said the evacuation was being conducted in coordination with the WHO and three American charities.

Zaqout said over 25,000 patients in Gaza require treatment abroad, including some 980 children with cancer, a quarter of whom need "urgent and immediate evacuation."

He said the cases included in Thursday's evacuation are "a drop in the ocean" and that the complicated route through Kerem Shalom and into Egypt cannot serve as an alternative to the Rafah crossing.

Zaqout said 21 children had originally been scheduled to leave Thursday, but one arrived at the hospital too late to make the departure. It was not immediately clear what prevented the other child from joining the evacuation.

Physicians for Human Rights Israel and Gisha, an Israeli human rights organization, petitioned Israel's Supreme Court to create a "permanent mechanism" to allow people needing medical treatment to evacuate Gaza.

Adi Lustigman, an attorney with Physicians for Human Rights Israel, said that before May 7, when the Israeli military launched their ground operation in Rafah and took control of the crossing, approximately 50 Palestinian patients per day crossed into Egypt for medical treatment abroad.

The fact that fewer than 70 people left the territory Thursday "after two months the crossing has been closed is beyond tragic," said Tania Hary executive director of Gisha. "Our sense of it is that it's just unsustainable in terms of a response."

She called on the Israeli military to reopen Rafah Crossing and allow patients to exit the Erez Crossing

in the northern part of the territory, which had previously been the main crossing for Palestinians entering Israel.

Israel's Supreme Court will hold a hearing on the petition Monday.

In a post on the social media platform X, the World Health Organization regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Hanan Balkhy, welcomed news of the children's evacuation, but noted that "more than 10,000 patients still require medical care outside the Strip. Of the 13,872 people who have applied for medical evacuation since 7 October, only 35% have been evacuated."

"Medical evacuation corridors must be urgently established for the sustained, organized, safe, and timely passage of critically ill patients from Gaza via all possible routes," she said.

Israel's offensive against Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, has killed over 37,700 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and fighters in its count. Thousands of women and children are among the dead.

The war began with Hamas' surprise attack into Israel on Oct. 7, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took another 250 hostage.

On Thursday, the Israeli military ordered new evacuations from Gaza City neighborhoods that were heavily bombed and largely emptied early in the war. The latest orders apply to Shijaiyah and other neighborhoods where residents reported heavy bombing on Thursday.

First responders with Gaza's Civil Defense said airstrikes hit five homes, killing at least three people and wounding another six. It said rescuers were still digging through the rubble for survivors.

Gaza City was heavily bombed in the opening weeks of the war. Israel ordered the evacuation of all of northern Gaza, including the territory's largest city, later that month. Hundreds of thousands of people have remained in the north, even as Israeli troops have surrounded and largely isolated it.

Shijaiyah residents in a messaging group shared video showing large numbers of people fleeing the neighborhood on foot with their belongings in their arms.

International criticism has been growing over Israel's campaign against Hamas as Palestinians face severe and widespread hunger. The eight-month war has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and basic goods to Gaza, and people there are now totally dependent on aid. The top United Nations court has concluded there is a "plausible risk of genocide" in Gaza — a charge Israel strongly denies.

Despite Supreme Court ruling, the future of emergency abortions is still unclear for US women

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court did not settle the debate over whether federal law requires hospitals to stabilize pregnant patients with emergency abortions on Wednesday, despite saying Idaho hospitals can provide abortions in medical emergencies even with the state's restrictions.

The court delivered a 6-3 procedural ruling that left key questions still lingering about whether states can ban doctors from providing emergency abortions that save a woman from serious infection or organ loss.

Health and legal experts say Thursday's order that divided the Supreme Court's conservatives does nothing to protect pregnant women in other states with strict abortion bans, where state bans might conflict with a federal law that the Biden administration argues requires emergency abortions.

"The decision the Supreme Court released this morning doesn't shed any light on how that conflict will or should be resolved," said Joanne Rosen, the co-director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Law and the Public's Health.

Here is a look at emergency abortions in the U.S., the federal law that the Biden administration says requires hospitals to provide them, and why the debate on the legality of those abortions is far from resolved.

How often do pregnancies threaten a woman's health?

Every year, about 50,000 women in the U.S. develop life-threatening complications during pregnancy, including sepsis, hemorrhaging or the loss of reproductive organs.

In rare cases with some of those complications, doctors might terminate the pregnancy, especially when

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there is no chance for a fetus to survive. For example, if a woman's water breaks during the second trimester, a condition known as preterm premature rupture of membranes, the fetus may not be viable and continuing the pregnancy means that the patient may risk developing sepsis, an infection that can be deadly.

Sepsis and blood loss are some of the most common causes of maternal deaths in the U.S. Last year, nearly 700 women died while pregnant, giving birth or immediately following childbirth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Idaho doctors say at least a half-dozen pregnant women have been airlifted to get emergency treatment in other states since January when the strict abortion ban, which allows doctors to perform abortion if a woman's life but not her health is at risk, took effect.

What protections does the federal law provide pregnant patients in emergency rooms?

The law, called the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act or "EMTALA," requires emergency rooms to offer a medical exam if you turn up at their facility. The law applies to nearly all emergency rooms — any that accept Medicare funding.

Those emergency rooms are required to stabilize patients if they do have a medical emergency before discharging or transferring them to another hospital. And if the ER doesn't have the resources or staff to properly treat that patient, staff members are required to arrange a medical transfer to another hospital, after they've confirmed the facility can accept the patient.

Hospitals that violate the federal law risk their Medicare funding and can face steep fines from the federal government.

Why are Idaho and the U.S. Supreme Court involved?

Since the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, Democratic President Joe Biden's administration has told hospitals that abortion is considered stabilizing care that EMTALA requires.

The Biden administration sued Idaho over its strict abortion ban, which only allowed exceptions to save a woman's life, arguing that the law prevented ER doctors from offering an abortion if a woman needed one in a medical emergency.

Attorneys for Idaho argued there's no conflict between the state and federal law since Idaho allows doctors to perform an abortion if the woman's life is at risk.

On Thursday, the justices reinstated a lower court order that had allowed hospitals in Idaho to perform emergency abortions to protect a pregnant patient's health, saying that the U.S. Supreme Court got involved in the case too quickly.

What does the ruling mean for other states with strict abortion bans?

Very little – for now. The U.S. solicitor general has said several other states have abortion bans that are so strict, they might be in conflict with the federal law. But the Supreme Court didn't directly address possible conflicts between the laws in its ruling.

Texas, for example, is suing the federal government over its guidance that says hospitals must provide abortions for women who need one in medical emergencies.

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the administration in January, finding that EMTALA does not require Texas hospitals to provide abortions in emergency rooms. The Justice Department has appealed that decision.

"The availability of abortions in emergency medical cases in Texas will continue to be extraordinarily limited," Rosen of Johns Hopkins said.

Doctors in states like Florida and Missouri have said they are afraid to treat patients with an abortion since the bans were enacted. The federal government has also found hospitals in those states have violated EMTALA in some cases where pregnant patients were turned away or not properly treated.

On Thursday, in a concurring opinion that also expressed dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson argued the court should have settled the debate for doctors and patients alike.

"For as long as we refuse to declare what the law requires, pregnant patients in Idaho, Texas, and elsewhere will be paying the price," Jackson said.

Could the Supreme Court revisit this issue?

Yes. With the Idaho case being sent back to the lower court and the Texas case under appeal, it's an

issue that could land back at the Supreme Court soon.

And six judges have now tipped their hand.

The court's three liberal judges – Jackson, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor – said in their decision that the federal law says women should be able to get abortions in medical emergencies, despite state bans. Three conservative justices – Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas – disagreed that the federal law is that specific, and pointed out that it was written in a way that requires hospitals to treat the “unborn child.”

That leaves Justices Amy Coney Barrett, Brett Kavanaugh and John Roberts in play.

“They don't want to have to make a decision now,” said Rob Gatter, a law professor at St. Louis University, who is an expert on health policy. “That's a recipe for saying, somebody else deal with this first, you get it wrong first, you give it a first try, let me see how this goes.”

Maui officials highlight steps toward rebuilding as 1-year mark of deadly wildfire approaches

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Nearly a year after wind-whipped flames raced through Kim Ball's Hawaii community, the empty lot where his house once stood is a symbol of some of the progress being made toward rebuilding after the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century.

“Welcome to our neighborhood,” Ball said Wednesday as he greeted a van full of Hawaii reporters invited by Maui County officials to tour certain fire-ravaged sites. Already there are signs of change since the fire, which destroyed thousands of homes and killed 102 people in Lahaina.

The gravel covering lots on his street in Lahaina indicate which properties have been cleared of debris and toxic ash in the months since the Aug. 8, 2023, blaze. On the lots along Komo Mai Street, there are pockets of green poking up through still visible charred vegetation.

Speaking over the noise from heavy equipment working across the street, Ball described how he was able to get a building permit quickly, partly because his home was only about 5 years old and his contractor still had the plans.

Ball wants to rebuild the same house from those plans.

“We may change the color of the paint,” he said.

Nearby on Malanai Street, some walls were already up on Gene Milne's property. His is the first to start construction because his previous home was not yet fully completed and had open permits.

When he evacuated, he was living in an accessory dwelling, known locally as an “ohana unit,” borrowing the Hawaiian word for family. The main home was about 70% done.

“I was in complete denial that the fire would ever get to my home,” he recalled. “Sure enough, when I came back a couple days later it was gone.”

It's “extremely healing,” he said, to be on the site and see the walls go up for what will be the new ohana unit. Using insurance money to rebuild, he's “looking forward to that day where I can have a cocktail on the lanai, enjoy Maui — home.”

The construction underway at Milne's property is “a milestone for us,” said Maui Mayor Richard Bissen. “I think the rest of the community can use this as sort of a jumping off point, and say, ‘If they can do it, we can do it, too.’”

Even though it's been nearly a year, rebuilding Lahaina will be long and complicated. It's unclear when people displaced by the fire will be able to move back and whether they'll be able to afford to do so. The county has approved 23 residential building permits so far and 70 are under review, officials said.

“We're not focused on the speed — we're focused on the safety,” Bissen said.

Other stops of the tour included debris removal at a former outlet mall that had been a popular shopping destination for both tourists and locals, and a beloved, giant 151-year-old banyan tree, now drastically greener with new growth thanks to the preservation efforts of arborists.

They cared for the sprawling tree with alfalfa and other nutrients — “mainly just water,” said Tim Griffith, Maui County's arborist, who is helping care for the tree along Lahaina's historic Front Street. “Trees are ... going to heal themselves, especially when they're stressed.”

Justice Department charges nearly 200 people in \$2.7 billion health care fraud schemes crackdown

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 200 people have been charged in a sweeping nationwide crackdown on health care fraud schemes with false claims topping \$2.7 billion, the Justice Department said on Thursday.

Attorney General Merrick Garland announced the charges against doctors, nurse practitioners and others across the U.S. accused of a variety of scams, including a \$900 million scheme in Arizona targeting dying patients.

"It does not matter if you are a trafficker in a drug cartel or a corporate executive or medical professional employed by a health care company," Garland told reporters. "If you profit from the unlawful distribution of controlled substances, you will be held accountable."

In the Arizona case, prosecutors have accused two owners of wound care companies of accepting more than \$330 million in kickbacks as part of a scheme to fraudulently bill Medicare for amniotic wound grafts, which are dressings to help heal wounds.

Nurse practitioners were pressured to apply the wound grafts to elderly patients who didn't need them, including people in hospice care, the Justice Department said. Some patients died the day they received the grafts or within days, court papers say.

In less than two years, more than \$900 million in bogus claims were submitted to Medicare for grafts that were used on fewer than 500 patients, prosecutors said.

The owners of the wound care companies, Alexandra Gehrke and Jeffrey King, were arrested this month at the Phoenix airport as they were boarding a flight to London, according to court papers urging a judge to keep them behind bars while they await trial. An attorney for Gehrke declined to comment, and a lawyer for King didn't immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press.

Authorities allege Gehrke and King, who got married this year, knew charges were coming and had been preparing to flee. At their home, authorities found a book titled "How To Disappear: Erase Your Digital Footprint, Leave False Trails, and Vanish Without a Trace," according to court papers. In one of their bags packed for their flight, there was a book titled "Criminal Law Handbook: Know Your Rights, Survive The System," the papers say.

Gehrke and King lived lavishly off the scheme, prosecutors allege, citing luxury cars, a nearly \$6 million home and more than \$520,000 in gold bars, coins and jewelry. Officials seized more than \$52 million from Gehrke's personal and business bank accounts after her arrest, prosecutors say.

In total, 193 people — including 76 doctors, nurse practitioners, and other licensed medical professionals — were charged in a series of separate cases brought over about two weeks in the nationwide health care fraud sweep. Authorities seized more than \$230 million in cash, luxury cars and other assets. The Justice Department carries out these sweeping health care fraud efforts periodically to help deter other potential wrongdoers.

In another scheme targeting Native Americans, phony sober living homes were set up promising addiction treatment. Claims were then submitted for services that were never actually performed, officials said.

Another case alleges a scheme in Florida to distribute misbranded HIV drugs. Prosecutors say drugs were bought on the black market and resold to unsuspecting pharmacies, which then provided the medications to patients.

Some patients were given bottles that contained different drugs than the label showed. One patient ended up unconscious for 24 hours after taking what he was led to believe was his HIV medication but was actually an anti-psychotic drug, prosecutors say.

Oklahoma state superintendent orders schools to teach the Bible in grades 5 through 12

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahoma's top education official ordered public schools Thursday to incorporate the Bible into lessons for grades 5 through 12, the latest effort by conservatives to incorporate religion into classrooms.

The directive drew immediate condemnation from civil rights groups and supporters of the separation of church and state, with some calling it an abuse of power and a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

The order sent to districts across the state by Republican State Superintendent Ryan Walters says adherence to the mandate is compulsory and "immediate and strict compliance is expected."

"The Bible is an indispensable historical and cultural touchstone," Walters said in a statement. "Without basic knowledge of it, Oklahoma students are unable to properly contextualize the foundation of our nation which is why Oklahoma educational standards provide for its instruction."

Oklahoma law already explicitly allows Bibles in the classroom and lets teachers use them in instruction, said Phil Bacharach, a spokesman for state Attorney General Gentner Drummond.

But it's not clear if Walters has the authority to mandate that schools teach it. State law says individual school districts have the exclusive authority to decide on instruction, curriculum, reading lists, instructional materials and textbooks.

The head of the Oklahoma chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations criticized the directive as a clear violation of the Constitution's Establishment Clause, which prohibits the government from "establishing" a religion.

"We adamantly oppose any requirements that religion be forcefully taught or required as a part of lesson plans in public schools, in Oklahoma, or anywhere else in the country," Adam Soltani said in a statement.

"Public schools are not Sunday schools," said Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, in a statement. "This is textbook Christian Nationalism: Walters is abusing the power of his public office to impose his religious beliefs on everyone else's children. Not on our watch."

The directive is the latest salvo in an effort by conservative-led states to target public schools: Louisiana has required them to post the Ten Commandments in classrooms, while others are under pressure to teach the Bible and ban books and lessons about race, sexual orientation and gender identity. Earlier this week the Oklahoma Supreme Court blocked an attempt by the state to have the first publicly funded religious charter school in the country.

A former public school teacher who was elected to his post in 2022, Walters ran on a platform of fighting "woke ideology," banning books from school libraries and getting rid of "radical leftists" who he claims are indoctrinating children in classrooms.

He has clashed with leaders in both parties for his focus on culture-war issues including transgender rights and banning books, and in January he faced criticism for appointing a right-wing social media influencer from New York to a state library committee.

Julian Assange is now free to do or say whatever he likes. What does his future hold?

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — He has run for office, published hundreds of thousands of leaked government documents online, and once lobbied to save his local swimming pool. One of the most polarizing and influential figures of the information age, Julian Assange is now free after five years in a British prison and seven years in self-imposed exile in a London embassy.

What's next for the WikiLeaks founder remains unclear.

Assange, 52, landed in his homeland of Australia this week after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing U.S. military secrets in a deal with Justice Department prosecutors that put an end to an attempt

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to extradite him to the United States. That could have resulted in a lengthy prison sentence in the event of conviction.

"Julian plans to swim in the ocean every day. He plans to sleep in a real bed. He plans to taste real food, and he plans to enjoy his freedom," his wife, Stella Assange, told reporters Thursday at a news conference that Assange did not attend.

Her husband and the father of her two children would continue to "defend human rights and speak out against injustice," she said. "He can choose how he does that because he is a free man."

Assange himself has given no clues.

Will he "switch off"?

All friends and acquaintances of Assange interviewed by The Associated Press this week emphasized that they did not know his future plans and underscored the toll taken by his ordeal — in prison he spent 23 hours a day in solitary confinement, following years in self-exile inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

"I just want him to survive this ordeal and be happy. I don't care what Julian does next," said Andrew Wilkie, an Independent Australian lawmaker who met Assange before the hacker launched WikiLeaks — and was one of the first politicians to lobby for Australia to intervene in his case.

But some also found it hard to imagine Assange wouldn't eventually return to the preoccupations that have long captured him.

"I suspect though that he doesn't switch off, and it's hard to see him just disappearing to a beach shack forever," added Wilkie.

Assange was "unable to walk past injustice" said Suelette Dreyfus, a lecturer in the School of Computing and Information Systems at the University of Melbourne who has known Assange since he was a teenager, hacking secure networks for the fun of it. Dreyfus, who once lobbied alongside Assange to save a swimming pool in Melbourne, said her friend's health had worsened during his years in a British jail.

"But I suspect he will not sit on a beach for the rest of his life," she said.

What is next for WikiLeaks?

It is unclear what will happen to WikiLeaks, the site Assange founded in 2006 as a place to post confidential documents exposing corruption and revealing secret government workings behind warfare and spying. That work led him to be celebrated by supporters as a transparency crusader but lambasted by national security hawks who insisted that his conduct put lives at risk and strayed far beyond the bounds of traditional journalism.

The site remains online, although Assange told The Nation in 2023 that it had ceased publishing because of his imprisonment, and because state surveillance and the freezing of WikiLeaks funds had deterred whistleblowers. Assange's plea deal with the U.S. included an agreement to destroy any unpublished U.S. documents.

"Will he go back to WikiLeaks and, if he does, will he do it differently? I don't know," said Wilkie, the lawmaker.

Could he receive a pardon?

One matter where Assange's views are known is his hope for a pardon from a current or future U.S. president on the charge he pleaded guilty to as part of his deal.

White House National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said President Joe Biden is not considering one.

Media analysts worry the conviction threatened to cast a chilling effect on public interest journalism. Assange has always insisted he is a journalist and the case could lead to the prosecution of other reporters, said Peter Greste, a professor at the University of Queensland and a former foreign correspondent who was jailed in Egypt for his reporting.

Could he run for office?

In the past, Assange had designs on elected office, making an unsuccessful bid for the Australian senate with his WikiLeaks party in 2013, although he has not suggested he will contest an election again.

"When you turn a bright light on, the cockroaches scuttle away. That's what we need to do to Canberra," he told the news program "60 Minutes" the same year, when asked why he wanted to enter politics.

But where the government of the day had despised Assange — a mutual feeling, he said — he was met in his homeland on Wednesday with a hero's welcome, including from some politicians and a public who had not supported him before.

It reflected a slow reversal of views about the WikiLeaks founder in Australia — but it belied an odd tension, too. In a recent high-profile case, an Australian judge sentenced a former army lawyer to almost six years in prison for leaking classified information that exposed allegations of Australian war crimes in Afghanistan. Assange's legal team mentioned the case on Thursday.

Analysts said that case and others, along with the renewed focus on Assange, drew attention to a fraught national culture of information secrecy that has been endorsed even by some of the politicians who celebrated Assange's freedom.

"We have some of the most restrictive legislation on access to public information in the world, and we have no constitutional protection for press freedom or freedom of speech," said Greste. "I hope that Julian does also get involved in campaigning to support press freedom, and transparency and accountability of information in Australia."

Even when Assange did address the idea of what he may do next — in a 2018 interview for the World Ethical Digital Forum, credited as his last public appearance before he was jailed — he was typically enigmatic.

"I don't know," he said. "No, I mean I do know. But I don't know what I should answer in response to that question."

Oklahoma executes man convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing 7-year-old girl in 1984

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma executed a man Thursday who was convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing his 7-year-old former stepdaughter in 1984.

Richard Rojem, 66, received a three-drug lethal injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester and was declared dead at 10:16 a.m., prison officials said. Rojem, who had been in prison since 1985, was the longest-serving inmate on Oklahoma's death row.

When asked if he had any last words, Rojem, who was strapped to a gurney and had an IV in his tattooed left arm, said: "I don't. I've said my goodbyes."

He looked briefly toward several witnesses who were inside a room next to the death chamber before the first drug, the sedative midazolam, began to flow. He was declared unconscious about 5 minutes later, at 10:08 a.m., and stopped breathing at about 10:10 a.m.

A spiritual adviser was in the death chamber with Rojem during the execution.

Rojem had denied responsibility for killing his former stepdaughter, Layla Cummings. The child's mutilated and partially clothed body was discovered in a field in rural Washita County near the town of Burns Flat on July 7, 1984. She had been stabbed to death.

Rojem was previously convicted of raping two teenage girls in Michigan, and prosecutors said he was angry at Layla Cummings because she reported that Rojem sexually abused her, leading to his divorce from the girl's mother and his return to prison for violating his parole.

Rojem's attorneys argued at a clemency hearing this month that DNA evidence taken from the girl's fingernails did not link him to the crime.

"If my client's DNA is not present, he should not be convicted," attorney Jack Fisher said.

In a statement read by Attorney General Gentner Drummond after the execution, Layla's mother, Mindy Lynn Cummings, said: "We remember, honor and hold her forever in our hearts as the sweet and precious 7-year-old she was.

"Today marks the final chapter of justice determined by three separate juries for Richard Rojem's heinous acts nearly 40 years ago when he stole her away like the monster he was."

Rojem, who testified at the hearing via a video link from prison, said he wasn't responsible for the girl's

death. The panel voted 5-0 not to recommend to the governor that Rojem's life be spared.

"I wasn't a good human being for the first part of my life, and I don't deny that," said Rojem, handcuffed and wearing a red prison uniform. "But I went to prison. I learned my lesson and I left all that behind."

Prosecutors said there was plenty of evidence to convict Rojem, including a fingerprint that was discovered outside the girl's apartment on a cup from a bar Rojem left just before the girl was kidnapped. A condom wrapper found near the girl's body also was linked to a used condom found in Rojem's bedroom, prosecutors said.

A Washita County jury convicted Rojem in 1985 after just 45 minutes of deliberations. His previous death sentences were twice overturned by appellate courts because of trial errors. A Custer County jury ultimately handed him his third death sentence in 2007.

Oklahoma, which has executed more inmates per capita than any other state in the nation since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, has now carried out 13 executions since resuming lethal injections in October 2021 following a nearly six-year hiatus resulting from problems with executions in 2014 and 2015.

Supreme Court halts enforcement of the EPA's plan to limit downwind pollution from power plants

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is putting the Environmental Protection Agency's air pollution-fighting "good neighbor" plan on hold while legal challenges continue, the conservative-led court's latest blow to federal regulations.

The justices in a 5-4 vote on Thursday rejected arguments by the Biden administration and Democratic-controlled states that the plan was cutting air pollution and saving lives in 11 states where it was being enforced and that the high court's intervention was unwarranted.

The rule is intended to restrict smokestack emissions from power plants and other industrial sources that burden downwind areas with smog-causing pollution. It will remain on hold while the federal appeals court in Washington considers a challenge to the plan from industry and Republican-led states.

Writing for the court, Justice Neil Gorsuch said the states are likely to win in the end, among the factors justifying the court's decision to block the plan for now.

In dissent, Justice Amy Coney Barrett was joined by her three liberal colleagues. Barrett said she doubted the states and industry would ultimately prevail.

Yet the high court's order, "leaves large swaths of upwind States free to keep contributing significantly to their downwind neighbors' ozone problems for the next several years," she wrote.

In a statement, the EPA noted that court's action was not a final decision. "The EPA is disappointed in today's ruling, which will postpone the benefits that the Good Neighbor Plan is already achieving in many states and communities," the EPA said.

The Supreme Court, with a 6-3 conservative majority, has increasingly reined in the powers of federal agencies, including the EPA, in recent years. The justices have restricted the EPA's authority to fight air and water pollution — including a landmark 2022 ruling that limited the EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants that contribute to global warming. The court also shot down a vaccine mandate and blocked President Joe Biden's student loan forgiveness program.

The court is currently weighing whether to overturn its 40-year-old Chevron decision, which has been the basis for upholding a wide range of regulations on public health, workplace safety and consumer protections.

Three energy-producing states — Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia — have challenged the air pollution rule, along with the steel industry and other groups, calling it costly and ineffective. They had asked the high court to put it on hold while their challenge makes its way through the courts.

The challengers pointed to decisions in courts around the country that have paused the rule in a dozen states, arguing that those decisions have undermined the EPA's aim of providing a national solution to the problem of ozone pollution because the agency relied on the assumption that all 23 states targeted

by the rule would participate.

The issue came to the court on an emergency basis, which almost always results in an order from the court without arguments before the justices.

But not this time. The court heard arguments in late February, when a majority of the court seemed skeptical of arguments from the administration and New York, representing Democratic states, that the "good neighbor" rule was important to protect downwind states that receive unwanted air pollution from other states.

The EPA has said power plant emissions dropped by 18% last year in the 10 states where it has been allowed to enforce its rule, which was finalized a year ago. Those states are Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. In California, limits on emissions from industrial sources other than power plants are supposed to take effect in 2026.

The rule is on hold in another dozen states because of separate legal challenges. Those states are Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.

States that contribute to ground-level ozone, or smog, are required to submit plans ensuring that coal-fired power plants and other industrial sites don't add significantly to air pollution in other states. In cases in which a state has not submitted a "good neighbor" plan — or in which the EPA disapproves a state plan — the federal plan was supposed to ensure that downwind states are protected.

Ground-level ozone, which forms when industrial pollutants chemically react in the presence of sunlight, can cause respiratory problems, including asthma and chronic bronchitis. People with compromised immune systems, the elderly and children playing outdoors are particularly vulnerable.

Back to Woodstock, with Wi-Fi: Women return after 55 years to glamp and relive the famous festival

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

BETHEL, N.Y. (AP) — Beverly "Cookie" Grant hitchhiked to the Woodstock music festival in 1969 without a ticket and slept on straw. Ellen Shelburne arrived in a VW microbus and pitched a pup tent.

Fifty-five years later, the two longtime friends finally got back to the garden, but this time in high style.

The women, now 76, were recently treated to a two-bedroom glamping tent at the upstate New York site equipped with comfy beds, a shower, a coffee maker and Wi-Fi. No mud from drenching rains this time. They sat in pavilion seats to watch shows by Woodstock veterans John Fogerty and Roger Daltrey.

"We're like hippie queens!" Grant joked over breakfast during the trip earlier this month.

The Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the not-for-profit organization that runs the site, rolled out the tie-dyed carpet for Grant and Shelburne to promote its new luxury camping — or glamping — facilities and to delve deeper into Shelburne's trove of photos from the generation-defining festival held Aug. 15-18, 1969.

The once-trampled hillside by the main stage is now a manicured green space near a Woodstock-and-'60s-themed museum and the concert pavilion. But the return visit still bought back a flood of memories. Shelburne was able to retrace the steps she took as a 21-year-old college student in the photos taken by her then-boyfriend, and future husband, David Shelburne.

"I'm looking at this person in the photograph, who is me, but a person just starting out in life at that age. And now I'm looking back at sort of bookends of my life," Ellen Shelburne said. "All these decades later, I'm back at Woodstock and it just brings it all up in such a positive way."

Grant and Shelburne did not know each other in August 1969 and they attended the concert separately.

Shelburne came from Columbus, Ohio, with David Shelburne, his best friend and another woman. They purchased tickets, got there early and bought ponchos at a local store after rain was forecast. She slept in a pup tent.

"I was never cold, wet, hungry, muddy, dirty, uncomfortable or miserable," she said. "It was the total opposite."

Grant went to Woodstock on a lark.

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A long-haired surfer she knew named Ray came up to her and a friend on a beach in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and said, "There's this music festival happening in New York. You want to hitchhike up there with me?" Grant's friend dropped out along the way, but she and the surfer made it to the town of Bethel. The last driver dropped them off at the edge of the epic traffic jam outside the festival and gave them a blanket.

Grant walked the last several miles to Woodstock barefoot.

Both women were wowed by Jimi Hendrix, The Who and other musical acts, but also by the good vibes from the 400,000 or more people who converged on Max Yasgur's dairy farm some 80 miles (130 kilometers) northwest of New York City.

"If we needed food, someone gave us food. Someone gave us water. We needed nothing," Grant said.

The two women met months later in Columbus, where they each ran shops adjacent to Ohio State University with the men they went to Woodstock with. And they each married their concert companions, though Grant got a divorce several years later.

David and Ellen Shelburne ran a film and video production company together until he died four years ago. Grant moved to Florida and eventually became a chef on mega-yachts before starting her own business providing crews for those big boats.

Each woman kept a spark of the Woodstock spirit. Shelburne said she's "stuck in the '60s and proud of it." They got the bug to return to the festival site last year after providing oral histories in Columbus to curators for the Museum at Bethel Woods.

Just like in 1969, the women were provided what they needed during their recent long weekend of peace, love and nostalgia — though this time it was a "Luxury 2 Bedroom Safari Tent" with a front deck and the shower in a bathroom. And when it rained this time, they were able to stay dry in the museum.

On a sunny Saturday, Bethel Woods senior curator Neal Hitch drove the women around in a golf cart to explore the spots where David Shelburne shot his festival photos. Unlike others who focused their cameras on the stage, he documented festivalgoers camping, swimming, selling goods, relaxing and having fun. Hitch noted that David Shelburne's images also are valuable because they are in sequence, meaning they tell a story.

At one stop, Shelburne stood by a tree line as she held a photo of a field full of campers. She was standing on the spot where her late husband took the photograph and was looking at the same field, minus the campers, 55 years later. Visibly moved, she said "oh" a few times and let out a deep breath before exclaiming, "Wow!"

It broke her heart that her husband is not in the photographs, but she felt his presence that weekend.

The women ranged across the festival site over several days, from the stage area to the woods where vendors had set up stalls. Despite the changes — the luxury tents, the fences, the museum — the women said they recognized the same mellow, friendly vibes here that they experienced as 21-year-olds.

And they were thrilled to immerse themselves in it again decades later.

"It's very wonderful to see that it's in history forever," Grant said, "and we're a part of that."

Biden's asylum halt is falling hardest on Mexicans and other nationalities Mexico will take

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

NOGALES, Mexico (AP) — Ana Ruiz was dismayed seeing migrants from some countries released in the United States with orders to appear in immigration court while she and other Mexicans were deported on a one-hour bus ride to the nearest border crossing.

"They're giving priority to other countries," Ruiz, 35, said after a tearful phone call to family in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas at the San Juan Bosco migrant shelter. The shelter's director says it is receiving about 100 deportees a day, more than double what it saw before President Joe Biden issued an executive order that suspends asylum processing at the U.S.-Mexico border when arrests for illegal crossings reach 2,500 a day.

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The asylum halt, which took effect June 5 and has led to a 40% decline in arrests for illegal crossings, applies to all nationalities. But it falls hardest on those most susceptible to deportation — specifically, Mexicans and others Mexico agrees to take (Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans). Lack of money for charter flights, sour diplomatic ties and other operational challenges make it more difficult to deport people to many countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the U.S. is working with countries around the world to accept more of their deported citizens, citing challenges from diplomatic relations to speed producing travel documents.

“The reality is that it is easier to remove individuals to certain countries than other countries,” he said in an interview Wednesday in Tucson, Arizona. “We do remove individuals to Senegal, we do remove individuals to Colombia, we do remove individuals to India. It can be more difficult.”

Mexicans accounted for 38% of border arrests in May, down from 85% in 2011 but still the highest nationality by far. The Border Patrol’s Tucson sector has been the busiest corridor for illegal crossings for much of the last year. Last month, nearly three of every four arrests there were of Mexicans, helping explain why the asylum ban has had more impact in Arizona. U.S. authorities say the seven-day average of daily arrests in the Tucson sector fell below 600 this week from just under 1,200 on June 2.

Border agents in Arizona have been severely tested since late 2022 by nationalities that are difficult to deport — first from Cuba and later Mauritania, Guinea and Senegal. Many cross near Lukeville, about a four-hour bus ride to a major processing center in Tucson.

Many Mexicans cross illegally much closer to Tucson in Nogales, Arizona, some by climbing over a wall with ladders made from material at a seatbelt plant on the Mexican side to try to disappear into homes and businesses within seconds. Others turn themselves in to border agents to claim asylum, entering through gaps in the wall that are being filled in. On Tuesday, a group of 49 predominantly Mexican migrants were waiting for agents.

Some are taken to the Border Patrol station in Nogales, where they can be held for six days if they express fear of being deported under the asylum halt and seek similar forms of protection that would allow them to remain but that have a much higher bar, such as the U.N. Convention Against Torture.

Most are taken to a cluster of giant white tents near Tucson International Airport, which opened in April 2021 for unaccompanied children. It now has space for 1,000 people, including single adults and families, who sleep on foam mattresses or raised beds.

On Tuesday, about a dozen people who said they feared deportation sat on benches in a cavernous room to hear instructions on the screening interview, which includes a four-hour window to call attorneys or others to prepare. They were then directed to one of 16 soundproof phone booths.

The Tucson processing center didn’t even conduct screenings before Biden’s asylum halt. That resulted in more migrants being released with orders to appear in U.S. immigration court, a practice that has plummeted in recent weeks. The screenings by asylum officers take about 90 minutes by phone.

Many migrants who fail interviews are deported to Nogales, a sprawling city in the Mexican state of Sonora, and end up at San Juan Bosco, where a giant fan in a former chapel offers relief from blistering summer heat.

Francisco Loureiro, who runs the shelter in a hardscrabble hillside neighborhood, said word has gotten out among Mexicans that they will be deported if they surrender to agents to seek asylum and that more will try to avoid being captured. He said one deported migrant accepted a smuggler’s offer outside the shelter Tuesday to try to sneak across undetected.

Ruiz said she did not get a chance to explain to an asylum officer that she feared returning to Mexico due to cartel violence. “They were very direct, yes-or-no questions. You couldn’t explain why you were afraid,” she said.

Mayorkas said complaints about the screening predate Biden’s June order.

“I have confidence in our agents and officers that they are abiding by the guidelines, that our guidelines are strong, and we have the expertise to individuals who manifest fear,” he said.

Anahi Sandoval, 30, said she tried to avoid capture after crossing the border in Nogales and was abandoned by her smuggler in the desert. She said she fled Chiapas after she and her husband, who owned a doors and windows business, refused to be extorted by gangs; her husband was killed and she left her daughter with a relative.

"The Colombians get a pass but not the Mexicans," said Sandoval, who failed her screening interview. "It makes me angry."

Araceli Martinez, 32, said she fears returning home with her 14-year-old daughter to a physically abusive husband but no one asked her and she didn't know that she had to ask until she was on a bus to Mexico. Previously, Border Patrol agents had to ask migrants if they feared returning home. Under new rules, migrants must ask unprompted or express obvious signs of distress, such as crying.

Martinez was eager to spread a message to others: "People come thinking there is asylum, but there isn't."

Prospect of low-priced Chinese EVs reaching US from Mexico poses threat to automakers

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a scenario that terrifies America's auto industry.

Chinese carmakers set up shop in Mexico to exploit North American trade rules. Once in place, they send ultra-low-priced electric vehicles streaming into the United States.

As the Chinese EVs go on sale across the country, America's homegrown EVs — costing an average of \$55,000, roughly double the price of their Chinese counterparts — struggle to compete. Factories close. Workers lose jobs across America's industrial heartland.

Ultimately, it could all become a painful replay of how government-subsidized Chinese competition devastated American industries from steel to solar equipment over the past quarter-century. This time, it would be electric vehicles, which America's automakers envision as the core of their business in the coming decades.

"Time and again, we have seen the Chinese government dump highly subsidized goods into markets for the purpose of undermining domestic manufacturing," Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat, wrote in an April letter to President Joe Biden that called for an outright ban on Chinese electric vehicles in the U.S. "We cannot let the same occur when it comes to EVs."

Low-priced Chinese EVs pose a potentially "extinction-level event" for America's auto industry, the Alliance for American Manufacturing has warned.

The trade deal that Beijing could potentially exploit — the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement — was negotiated by the Trump administration and enacted in 2020. Its rules could let Chinese autos assembled in Mexico enter the United States, either duty-free or at a nominal 2.5% tariff rate. Either way, China could sell its EVs well below typical U.S. prices.

To defuse the threat, the U.S. does have options. Customs officials could rule that Chinese EVs don't qualify for the low-duty or duty-free benefits of being assembled in Mexico. U.S. policymakers could also pressure Mexico to keep Chinese vehicles out of that country. Or they could bar Chinese EVs from the U.S. on the grounds that they would threaten America's national security.

For his part, Donald Trump told Time magazine in April: "I will tariff them at 100%. Because I'm not going to allow them to steal the rest of our business."

Whatever steps the U.S. government might take, though, would likely face legal challenges from companies that want to import the Chinese EVs.

The threat from Beijing is emerging just as U.S. automakers face slowing EV sales even while investing billions to produce them in a high-priced bet that Americans will embrace battery-powered autos in the coming decades. Comparatively high prices, despite federal tax incentives for buyers, have weakened EV sales in the United States. So has public anxiety about a scarcity of charging stations, potentially made worse by rising thefts of cables at charging stations.

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Optimists suggest that an influx of ultra-low-priced Chinese EVs could accelerate U.S. electric vehicle purchases, speed up investment in charging stations and force down prices.

"It would be cheaper just to let the Chinese cars come in, forget all the tariffs and subsidies, let the market figure it out," said Christine McDaniel, a senior research fellow at George Mason University's Mercatus Center who was a trade official in the George W. Bush administration. "Yes, it would be disruptive. But EVs would get on the road in the U.S. a lot faster."

At stake is an enormously consequential question: Who stands to dominate the manufacture and sale of zero-emissions electric vehicles?

China has so far taken a daunting lead. It accounted for nearly 62% of the 10.4 million battery-powered EVs that were produced worldwide last year. The United States, at No. 2, made about 1 million — less than 10% of the total, according to the consulting and analysis firm GlobalData.

In achieving technological breakthroughs while holding down costs, Chinese automakers have made remarkable strides. China's BYD last year introduced a small EV called the Seagull that sells for just \$12,000 in China (\$21,000 for a version sold in some Latin American countries). Considered a marvel of engineering efficiency, its lightweight design allows the Seagull to go farther per charge on a smaller battery. BYD has said it's considering building a factory in Mexico — but only for the Mexican market.

U.S. policymakers and auto companies are less than reassured.

"Just look at China — look at how big their market share is in EVs," John Lawler, Ford Motor's chief financial officer, said at this month's Deutsche Bank Global Auto Industry Conference. "Those are significant competitive threats we need to deal with. They have a development process that is much faster — 24 months." (By contrast, U.S. vehicles have typically undergone development for four to five years, though that's been reduced to three years or less for EVs.)

Critics note that BYD and other Chinese EV makers have achieved their cost efficiencies thanks to heavy government subsidies. Beijing spent 953 billion Chinese renminbi (more than \$130 billion at current exchange rates) on EVs and other green vehicles from 2009 through 2021, according to researchers at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"It's not competition," Biden asserted last month. "It's cheating."

Last month, Biden drastically raised the tariff on Chinese EVs, from the 27.5% established under Trump to 102.5%. It's meant to price even the bargain-priced BYD Seagull out of the U.S. market. (Europeans are worried, too: The European Union says it plans to impose tariffs of up to 38.1% on Chinese EVs for four months starting in July.)

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, though, potentially lets vehicles assembled in Mexico — even if made by European or Asian automakers — enter the U.S. at a much lower tariff or none at all. If made-in-Mexico cars met the USMCA's requirements, they could enter the United States duty-free. At least 75% of a car and its parts would have to come from North America. And at least 40% of it must originate in places where workers earn at least \$16 an hour.

Still, for a Chinese EV maker like BYD, qualifying for duty-free treatment under the USMCA might be difficult even if it tried to source parts in North America.

"Even North American automakers have a challenging time reaching those thresholds," said Daniel Ujcz, senior counsel at the Thompson Hine law firm in Columbus, Ohio.

But there's an easier way that Chinese EV makers could use Mexico to try to dodge Biden's killer 102.5% import tax: They would have to pay only 2.5% — the tax imposed on most cars imported to the United States — if they could show that assembling their EVs in Mexico involved a "substantial transformation" that essentially turned them from Chinese into Mexican cars.

U.S. officials could reject the notion that a substantial transformation occurred during the assembly process. But the U.S. would struggle to prevail if that decision were challenged in the U.S. Court of International Trade, "given the substantial changes that typically take place in automotive assembly factories," David Gantz, a trade lawyer and a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, has written.

Still, Gantz said by email: "My takeaway is that using one or more of the available trade and national

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security mechanisms available to the U.S. government, the U.S. will be successful in excluding Mexican/Chinese EVs.”

The “most effective and quickest” way to keep out Chinese EVs, Gantz argues, would be to block them on national security grounds. Today’s EVs, after all, are loaded with cameras, sensors and other technological gizmos that could collect images from the autos’ surroundings and sensitive personal information from drivers. And China isn’t merely an economic competitor. It’s a geopolitical adversary — and potentially a military one, too.

“U.S. fears regarding possible use of connected vehicles to spy on military installations or powerplants are not irrational,” Gantz wrote.

Biden has even warned that the EVs “could be remotely accessed or disabled.” In February, he ordered his Commerce Department to investigate the technology in Chinese “smart cars,” a potential prelude to blocking Chinese EVs on national security grounds.

McDaniel of the Mercatus Center argues that the United States has significant leeway to do what it wants — especially given Mexico’s dependence on the U.S., its No. 1 export market.

“You could imagine a scenario where the U.S. tells Mexico: ‘Don’t even think about allowing this (Chinese EV) investment into Mexico,’” she said. “‘We will not allow those cars into the U.S.’”

“What’s stopping the White House,” McDaniel said, “whether it’s right now or the next administration, from just releasing a new document, an executive order, saying, ‘We will no longer recognize products from our USMCA partners if they have more than X percent content from foreign entities of concern, including China’?”

The U.S. has additional leverage because the USMCA comes up for review in 2026. If it seeks to alter the agreement — perhaps adding a provision to ban or limit Chinese EVs from Mexico — but fails to prevail after negotiating with Canada and Mexico, it could let the USMCA expire.

McDaniel noted that the World Trade Organization, which was established to enforce global trade rules, has become largely toothless. The WTO’s Appellate Body — its supreme court — effectively stopped functioning in December 2019 because the U.S. blocked the appointment of new judges to the panel. Trade cases now go unresolved indefinitely.

“We’re not in a WTO world anymore,” McDaniel said. “It’s ‘might makes right’ — that’s the sort of world we’re in.”

Today in History: June 28, Franz Ferdinand assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 28, the 180th day of 2024. There are 186 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife, Sophie, were shot to death in Sarajevo by Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip, an act that sparked World War I.

Also on this date:

In 1838, Britain’s Queen Victoria was crowned in Westminster Abbey.

In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. George G. Meade the new commander of the Army of the Potomac, following the resignation of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker.

In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY’) was signed in France, ending the First World War.

In 1939, Pan American Airways began regular trans-Atlantic air service with a flight that departed New York for Marseilles, France.

In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Alien Registration Act, also known as the Smith Act, which required adult foreigners residing in the U.S. to be registered and fingerprinted.

In 1950, North Korean forces captured Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

In 1978, the Supreme Court ordered the University of California-Davis Medical School to admit Allan Bakke, a white man who argued he’d been a victim of reverse racial discrimination.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton became the first chief executive in U.S. history to set up a personal legal

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defense fund and ask Americans to contribute to it.

In 2000, seven months after he was cast adrift in the Florida Straits, Elian Gonzalez was returned to his native Cuba.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-4, that Americans had the right to own a gun for self-defense anywhere they lived.

In 2012, the Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature piece of legislation, narrowly survived, 5-4, an election-year battle at the U.S. Supreme Court with the improbable help of conservative Chief Justice John Roberts.

In 2017, a man armed with a shotgun attacked a newspaper in Annapolis, Md., killing four journalists and a staffer before police stormed the building and arrested him; authorities said Jarrod Ramos had a long-running grudge against the newspaper for its reporting of a harassment case against him. (Ramos was convicted and was given more than five life terms without the possibility of parole.)

In 2019, avowed white supremacist James Alex Fields, who deliberately drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, killing a young woman and injuring dozens, apologized to his victims before being sentenced to life in prison on federal hate crime charges.

In 2022, Ghislaine Maxwell was sentenced to 20 years in prison for helping the wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse teenage girls.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian-movie director Mel Brooks is 98. Diplomat and politician Hans Blix is 96. Comedian-impressionist John Byner is 86. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is 86. Actor Bruce Davison is 78. Actor Kathy Bates is 76. Actor Alice Krige is 70. Football Hall of Famer John Elway is 64. Jazz singer Tierney Sutton is 61. Actor Jessica Hecht is 59. Rock musician Saul Davies (James) is 59. Actor Mary Stuart Masterson is 58. Actor John Cusack is 58. Actor Gil Bellows is 57. Actor Tichina Arnold is 55. Entrepreneur Elon Musk is 53. Actor Alessandro Nivola (nih-VOH'-luh) is 52. Rock musician Mark Stoermer (The Killers) is 47. Writer-director Florian Zeller is 45. Country singer Kellie Pickler is 38. Olympic track star Elaine Thompson-Herah is 32.