

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 1 of 83

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Hein Anniversary Ad](#)
- [4- Bradin Althoff's Clutch Hitting Propels Groton Post 39 To Victory Over Milbank Post 9](#)
- [5- Groton Post 39 Firing On All Cylinders Against Milbank Post 9](#)
- [5- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [6- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [7- Drought Monitor](#)
- [8- National and South Dakota Legislative News Connection](#)
- [9- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [10- Avantara Groton receives AHCA/NCAL Bronze National Quality Award](#)
- [10- West Nile Virus Update - South Dakota](#)
- [11- Name Released in Butte County Fatal Crash](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Idaho abortion ruling doesn't affect South Dakota law, attorney general says](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: 13 states, including SD, opt out of summer food program for kids](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Democrats reel from 'terrible' Biden debate performance as he defends candidacy](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: White House seeks emergency funds for Midwest disaster relief, Key Bridge in Maryland](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, June 29

Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
U10 All - Groton Tourney (see bracket on Page 11)
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.

Jr. Legion Tournament in Groton

Saturday, June 29

- 8:00 Britton U16 vs Groton U16
- 10:00 Britton U14 vs Sisseton U14
- 12:00 Platte Geddes U16 vs Mobridge U16
- 2:00 Lake Norden U14 vs Sisseton U14
- 4:00 Britton U16 vs Mobridge U16
- 6:00 Platte Geddes U14 vs Lake Norden U14
- 8:00 Groton U16 vs Platte Geddes U16

Sunday, June 30

- 9:00 Britton U14 vs Lake Norden U14
- 11:00 Platte Geddes U14 vs Sisseton U14
- 1:00 Britton U16 vs Platte Geddes U16
- 3:00 Britton U14 vs Platte Geddes U14
- 5:00 Groton U16 vs Mobridge U16

Sunday, June 30

Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
U12 All - Groton Tourney
United Methodist: Worship at Conde at 8:30 a.m., at Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion at 9 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

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

1440

In partnership with **smartasset**[™]

Obstruction Law Ruling

The US Supreme Court yesterday ruled federal prosecutors improperly relied on an obstruction law used in charging over 300 people involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the US Capitol.

At issue is the 2002 Sarbanes-Oxley Act, passed after the Enron financial scandal. The defendant in the obstruction challenge argued the statute applies only to the tampering of evidence. The high court agreed, requiring proof that a defendant's actions impaired the availability or integrity of physical evidence used in an official proceeding. The decision could affect roughly 150 people, who have pleaded guilty or received convictions under the statute.

The Supreme Court also overturned a 1984 decision that directed lower courts to defer to federal regulators when laws passed by Congress are unclear, and separately made it easier for cities to enforce laws against homeless encampments.

A ruling is expected Monday on former President Donald Trump's appeal for blanket immunity from criminal prosecution. Monday will mark the first time since 2020 (the second since 1996) in which the court's term has been extended into July.

Iranians vote in snap presidential elections.

As of this writing, hard-liner Saeed Jalili is in the lead, followed by reformist Masoud Pezeshkian. Both candidates are still short of the votes needed to avoid a potential July 5 runoff election. A candidate must secure more than 50% of the votes to win. A total of four candidates are vying for the presidency following former President Ebrahim Raisi's fatal helicopter crash.

Iowa Supreme Court rules in favor of six-week abortion ban.

The court's 4-3 ruling dismissed a challenge to a new Iowa law that bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy and directed a lower court to dissolve a temporary injunction as court proceedings continue. Before the latest law, Iowa had banned abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. The six-week ban will take effect in three weeks.

Bolivia detains four more military officers tied to failed coup.

The number of people arrested in connection with Wednesday's failed attempt to overthrow the government of President Luis Arce has risen to 21. Those arrested include the Bolivian army's commanding general, Juan José Zúñiga, who allegedly led the coup attempt. Zúñiga claims he was following a scheme hatched by Arce to boost his popularity; Arce has denied the accusations.

Nike shares fall 20% after weaker full-year forecast.

The drop in Nike's shares is the largest daily decline on record and erased roughly \$28B in market value. The drop comes after the footwear company announced it expects sales to fall 10% in the current quarter amid softer sales in China. Analysts had forecast a 3.2% drop in quarterly sales. Nike also expects fiscal 2025 sales to drop, a reversal from its previous growth forecast.

Key US inflation measure rises as expected in May.

The core personal consumption expenditures price index, which measures costs consumers pay across a wide swath of items, excluding food and energy, rose 2.6% year-over-year and 0.1% month-over-month. Both figures are in line with analyst estimates, while the annual rate is the lowest reading since March 2021. The index is the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 3 of 83

FDA says new study shows milk pasteurization kills bird flu.

The Food and Drug Administration said a widely used treatment that heats milk for at least 15 seconds at 161 degrees Fahrenheit kills the bird flu virus in cow's milk. The virus, known as the H5N1 avian influenza, was first detected in cows in March, though the FDA has said the risk to the public remains low.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Deb P. in Fort Pierce, Florida.

"My husband and I recently celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary. We had a great visit with family in Yellowstone National Park where we had all pitched in on a van rental. When the family departed, we knew we would need a compact car to keep expenses down while our journey continued."

"At the rental desk, when asked what our plans were, we explained we would be spending two days sight-seeing to celebrate our milestone anniversary. Without skipping a beat, the rental agent found and upgraded us to a luxury BMW M5! No charge. Just goodness and kindness from her to us. We were thrilled and made sure her superiors knew what a great agent she was before zipping off in 'our' beautiful car."

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.

Bradin Althoff's Clutch Hitting Propels Groton Post 39 To Victory Over Milbank Post 9

By GameChanger Media

Bradin Althoff drove in five runs on two hits to lead Groton Post 39 past Post 9 19-11 on Friday. Althoff doubled in the sixth inning, scoring three runs, and tripled in the second inning, scoring two.

Both offenses were strong at the plate as Groton Post 39 collected 17 hits and Post 9 five in the high-scoring affair.

Post 9 jumped out to the lead in the top of the second inning after Mason Miester drew a walk, scoring one run, and Dillen Scheeley doubled, scoring three runs.

Groton Post 39 flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the second, scoring six runs on five hits to take a 6-4 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a triple by Brevin Flihs that drove in two.

Post 9 made the score 7-6 in the top of the fourth after an error scored one run, and Reece Rabe doubled, scoring two runs.

Groton Post 39 flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the fourth, scoring five runs on four hits to take a 11-7 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a double by Carter Simon that drove in two.

Post 9 tied the game in the top of the fifth thanks to a single by Joe Schulte, a walk by Tanner Hallquist, and a double by Rabe.

Groton Post 39 flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the sixth, scoring eight runs on five hits to take a 19-11 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a double by Althoff that drove in three.

Taylor Diegel earned the win for Groton Post 39. The right-handed pitcher surrendered two hits and seven runs (four earned) over three and one-third innings, striking out three and walking eight. Schulte took the loss for Post 9. They went five and one-third innings, giving up 15 runs (14 earned) on 14 hits, striking out four and walking six. Braxton Imrie tossed two innings of no-run ball for Groton Post 39 in relief. The righty surrendered zero hits, striking out none and walking two.

Groton Post 39 collected 17 hits in the game. Imrie, Groton Post 39's number eight hitter, led the team with four hits in five at-bats. Dillon Abeln, Colby Dunker, and Simon each collected multiple hits for Groton Post 39. Ryan Groeblichhoff led Groton Post 39 with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, amassing nine walks for the game. Groton Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Rabe went 2-for-4 at the plate to lead Post 9 in hits. Dillen Scheeley and Rabe each drove in four runs for Post 9. Jace Jonasen paced Post 9 with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, accumulating 12 walks for the game.

Copyright © 2024 GameChanger Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Any reuse or republication of this story must include the preceding attribution and is subject to the Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc. Terms of Use, License Agreement, and Privacy Policy.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 5 of 83

Groton Post 39 Firing On All Cylinders Against Milbank Post 9

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 easily dispatched Post 9 on Friday, 10-0.

Groton Post 39 were the first to get on the board in the first when Bradin Althoff singled, scoring one run. A tag up by Brevin Flihs, an error, and a hit by a pitch helped Groton Post 39 extend their early lead in the third.

Groton Post 39 scored five runs on four hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Nick Groeblichhoff singled, scoring one run, Gavin Englund singled, scoring one run, Nick Morris drew a walk, scoring one run, Kellen Antonsen singled, scoring one run, and Dillon Abeln drew a walk, scoring one run.

Carter Simon earned the win for Groton Post 39. The starting pitcher surrendered zero hits and zero runs over four innings, striking out two and walking none. Josh Pederson took the loss for Post 9. The starting pitcher went two and two-thirds innings, giving up five runs (one earned) on two hits, striking out three and walking four.

Antonsen, the number nine hitter for Groton Post 39, led the way with two runs batted in. The outfielder went 1-for-2 on the day. Althoff went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 in hits. Morris paced Groton Post 39 with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game. Flihs stole two bases. Groton Post 39 were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Ryan Groeblichhoff made the most plays with three.

Groton Post 39 play at home on Tuesday against Watertown Post 17 Legion in their next game.

Copyright © 2024 GameChanger Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Any reuse or republication of this story must include the preceding attribution and is subject to the Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc. Terms of Use, License Agreement, and Privacy Policy.

WITTE 
EXTERIORS LLC

Specializing in Asphalt and Wood Shingles

Call for an estimate

Zack Witte ~ 605-695-7874

Webster, SD

No Contracts!

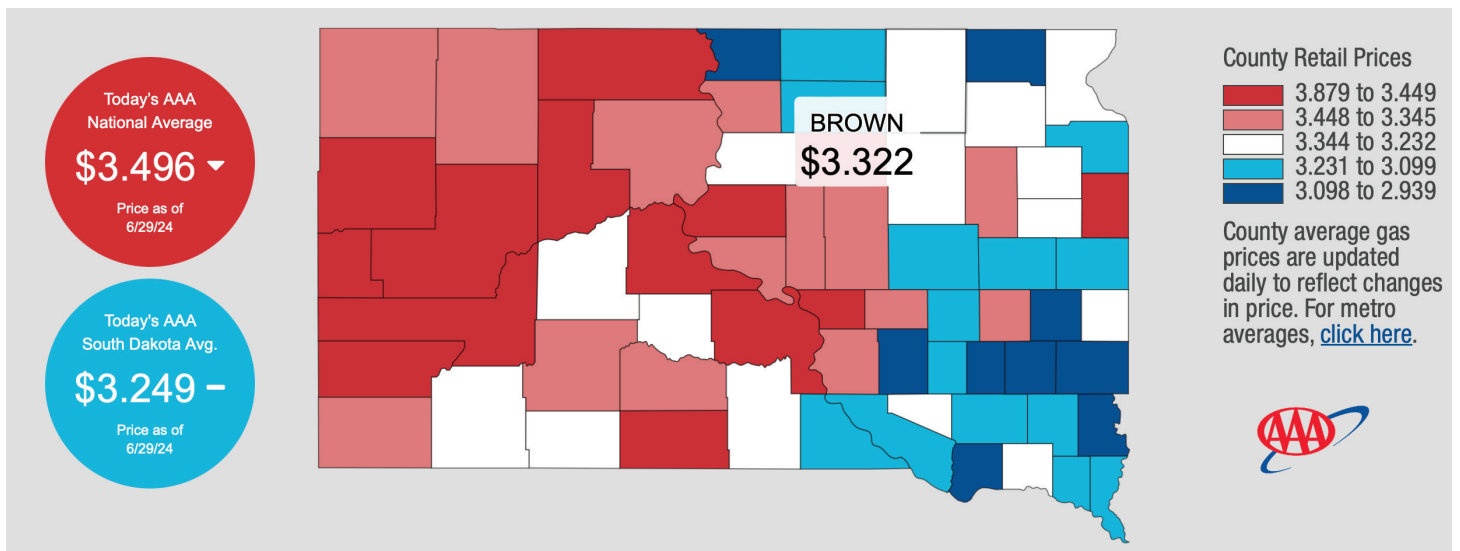
Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 6 of 83

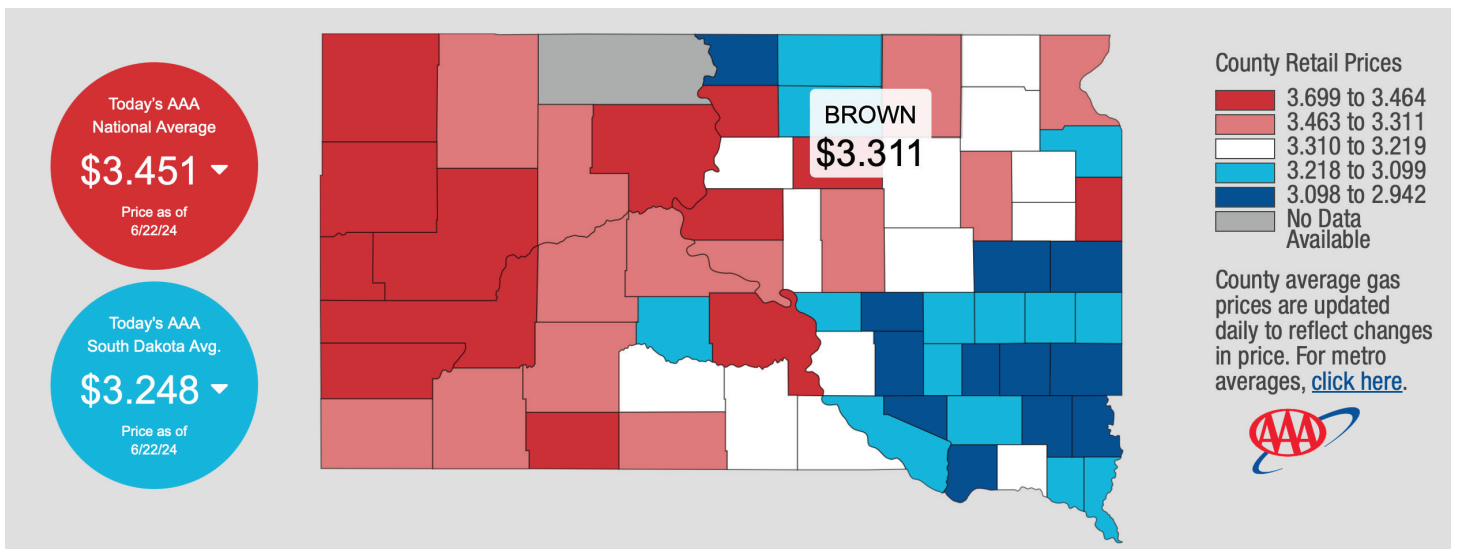
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.249	\$3.451	\$3.871	\$3.433
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.249	\$3.439	\$3.864	\$3.423
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.248	\$3.444	\$3.873	\$3.417
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.296	\$3.486	\$3.902	\$3.475
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.507	\$3.647	\$4.130	\$3.704

This Week



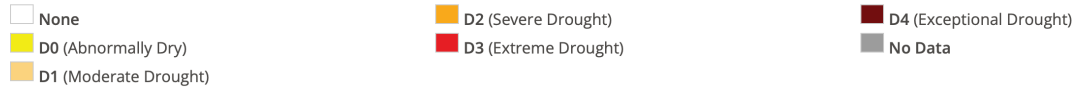
Last Week



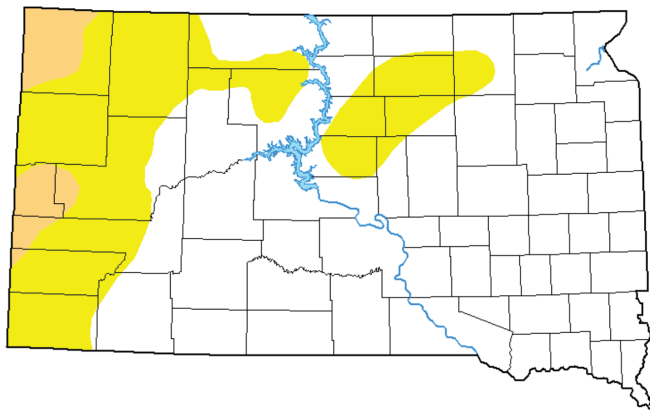
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 7 of 83

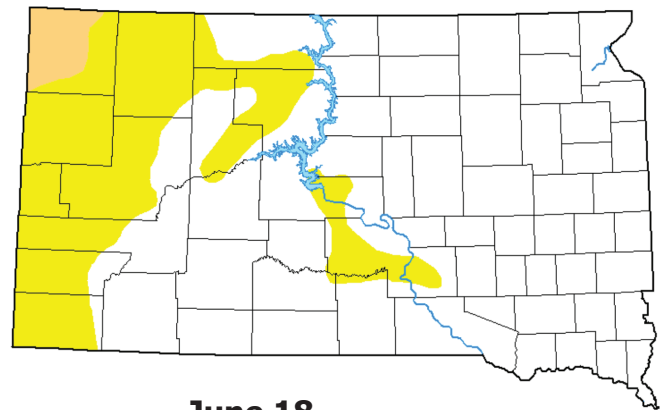
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



June 25



June 18

The High Plains region experienced a mixture of both deteriorating and improving drought conditions last week, which has predominantly been the case over at least the last month. High pressure over the eastern U.S. and an active storm track across the northern tier of the lower 48 states have been able to funnel moisture northward over the past few weeks, but precipitation has been hit-and-miss from week to week. However, last week was a little different from prior weeks, as some of the moisture from Tropical Storm Alberto was funneled northward into the Four Corners region and then into the Central and Northern Plains. Southeastern South Dakota received in excess of 5 inch rainfall surpluses for the week leading to flooding along the Missouri River and some of its tributaries. Heavy rain also fell across parts of southeastern Colorado and southwestern Kansas last week, associated with the surge of moisture from Alberto, leading to some targeted improvements to the drought depiction in those areas as well. Elsewhere in the High Plains region, targeted degradations are warranted due to antecedent dryness, below normal weekly precipitation, and predominantly above normal temperatures (with the exception of northern Montana and the Dakotas).

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 8 of 83

National and South Dakota Legislative News Connection

Washington- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Antitrust Division announced a significant expansion to address agricultural issues with a plan to increase staffing dedicated to civil and criminal enforcement in the sector. The DOJ intends to expand the hiring of lawyers for its Chicago Office, primarily focusing on antitrust, competition, and fairness issues within agricultural supply chains.

NFU President Rob Larew praised the DOJ's initiative, stating, "We appreciate that the DOJ is intensifying efforts to address anticompetitive practices in the agricultural sector. The increased focus on antitrust enforcement is a vital step toward ensuring fair competition and protecting family farmers and ranchers."

Washington- Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced updates to the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) rules at an event with Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust Johnathon Kanter. The proposed rule would clarify the unfair practices that the P&S Act prohibits.

NFU President Rob Larew commended Secretary Vilsack and the Biden-Harris Administration for the progress in issuing important updates to the P&S Act. In a statement, President Larew commented on the announcement saying, "Family farmers and ranchers continue to face unfair practices at the hands of monopolistic meatpackers, and they need P&S Act rules that are clear, durable, and enforceable. NFU looks forward to fully reviewing the rule to ensure it protects farmers from abuses in the marketplace."

South Dakota News

Pierre - The Property Rights and Local Control Alliance delivered petitions to the Secretary of State's Office to bring a referendum against SB 201 in South Dakota. A minimum of 17,509 valid signatures from registered South Dakota voters is required for the 2024 referral to proceed.

House Republican Party Leader Will Mortenson of Fort Pierre supports the law, stating that it provides protections and financial compensation for landowners, tax benefits to counties, and maintains local input while giving the state Public Utilities Commission final authority over permit approval. Opponents of the bill say it stripped local control from counties, municipalities, and townships and did not address the core issue of eminent domain.

Iowa- Summit Carbon Solution's main liquid carbon dioxide pipeline has been approved in Iowa. The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) found that the pipeline is a public convenience and necessity. Additionally, the IUB board found that the company has the right to eminent domain "across all requested parcels as necessary to the extent requested, including great construction areas." However, the approval comes with conditions, including the need for further approvals in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Nebraska, as well as maintaining a \$100 million insurance policy and ensuring compensation for damages resulting from construction.

In 2023, South Dakota's Public Utilities Commission rejected Summit's application. Regulators stated that there were too many conflicts between the proposed route and county guidelines for setbacks. Following the decision by Iowa's IUB board, the company announced that they would be filing a South Dakota permit application in early July.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 9 of 83

South Dakota Planting & Production Progress

According to an updated news release from the National Agricultural Statistic Service (USDA, Northern Plains Region) the current percentages across South Dakota:

- Corn Emerged - 100%
- Corn Condition - 3% very poor, 4% poor, 21% fair, 61% good, 11% excellent
- Soybean Planted - 100%
- Soybeans Emerged - 96%
- Soybean Bean Condition- 4% very poor, 5% poor, 19% fair, 61% good, 11% excellent
- Winter Wheat Headed - 91%
- Winter Wheat Condition - 4% poor, 23% fair, 56% good, 17% excellent
- Pasture and Range Condition - 3% poor, 4% poor, 19% fair, 61% good, 14% excellent
- Days Suitable for Field Work - 5.0
- Top Soil Moisture Condition - 1% very short, 8% short, 66% adequate, 1% surplus
- Subsoil Moisture Condition - 1% very short, 11% short, 64% adequate, 24% surplus

Cub Cadet®

YOUR BEST YARD AWAITS.



CC30H RIDING MOWER

- 10.5 HP† Briggs & Stratton engine
- 30" mowing deck
- Hydrostatic transmission

\$2,239*

Ultima™ ZT1 42 ZERO-TURN

- 21.5 HP†† Kawasaki® FR691V V-twin OHV engine
- 42" stamped twin-blade deck
- Dual Hydro-Gear® EZT-2200™ transmission

\$3,299*

Ultima™ ZTS1 50 ZERO-TURN

- 24 HP†† Kohler® KT7000 V-twin OHV engine
- 50" AeroForce™ fabricated triple-blade deck
- Sealed ball bearing maintenance-free spindles
- 1" - 4.5" cutting height / dial-control knob deck lift w/ 15 quarter-inch height adjustments

\$4,899*

FOR FULL PRODUCT SPECS **Cub Cadet** VISIT CUBCADET.COM

HARRY IMPLEMENT INC.
109 CENTER ST
FERNEY, SD 57439
www.harrysinc.com
605-395-6421

*Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. † As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. †† As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International. **See operator's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Kohler® is a registered trademark of Kohler Co. Kawasaki® is a registered trademark of KAWASAKI JUKOKYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 10 of 83

Avantara Groton receives AHCA/NCAL Bronze National Quality Award

Avantara Clark, Avantara Groton, Avantara Lake Norden, Avantara Redfield, and Avantara Watertown have been recognized as 2024 recipients of the Bronze – Commitment to Quality Award by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) for their outstanding commitment to improving the lives of residents through high-quality care. This distinction is the first of three progressive award levels in the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program.

“We are incredibly proud of our teams at Avantara Clark, Groton, Lake Norden, Redfield, and Watertown for their dedication to providing exceptional care. Receiving the Bronze Quality Award is a testament to their hard work and commitment to excellence,” said Lydia Nelson, Vice President of Operations. “We look forward to continuing our journey towards even higher standards of care and quality.”

Created by AHCA/NCAL in 1996, the National Quality Award Program is a rigorous three-level process judged by trained experts against a set of nationally recognized standards for organizational excellence. These standards, based on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, help organizations achieve superior performance to improve the quality of life and care for long-term care residents and staff.

Providers begin the quality improvement process at the Bronze level, where they develop an organizational profile with essential performance elements such as a vision, mission statement, and key strengths and challenges. Bronze applicants must demonstrate their ability to implement a sustainable performance improvement system. Trained examiners review each application to determine if the center has met the criteria demands. As recipients of the Bronze - Commitment to Quality Award, these Avantara facilities can now advance towards achieving the Silver - Achievement in Quality Award criteria.

West Nile Virus Update - South Dakota

The first West Nile virus positive mosquito pool has been detected in Brookings County.

No human case of West Nile virus has been reported in South Dakota at this time. Last year, 2023, 49 WNV fever cases, 46 neuroinvasive cases, 54 hospitalizations, 4 deaths, and 11 positive blood donors were reported among South Dakota residents.

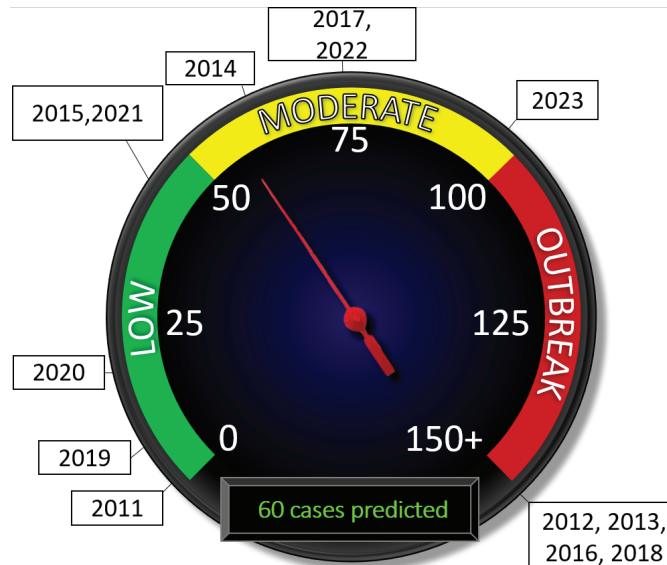
SD WNV (as of June 28):

No human cases reported.

1 county with positive mosquito pools (Brookings)

US WNV (as of June 25): 9 cases (AR, AZ, KS, MD, MI, MS, TN)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of June 28)



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 11 of 83

Name Released in Butte County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: SD Highway 34, mile marker 13, three miles west of Belle Fourche, SD
When: 12:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 25, 2024

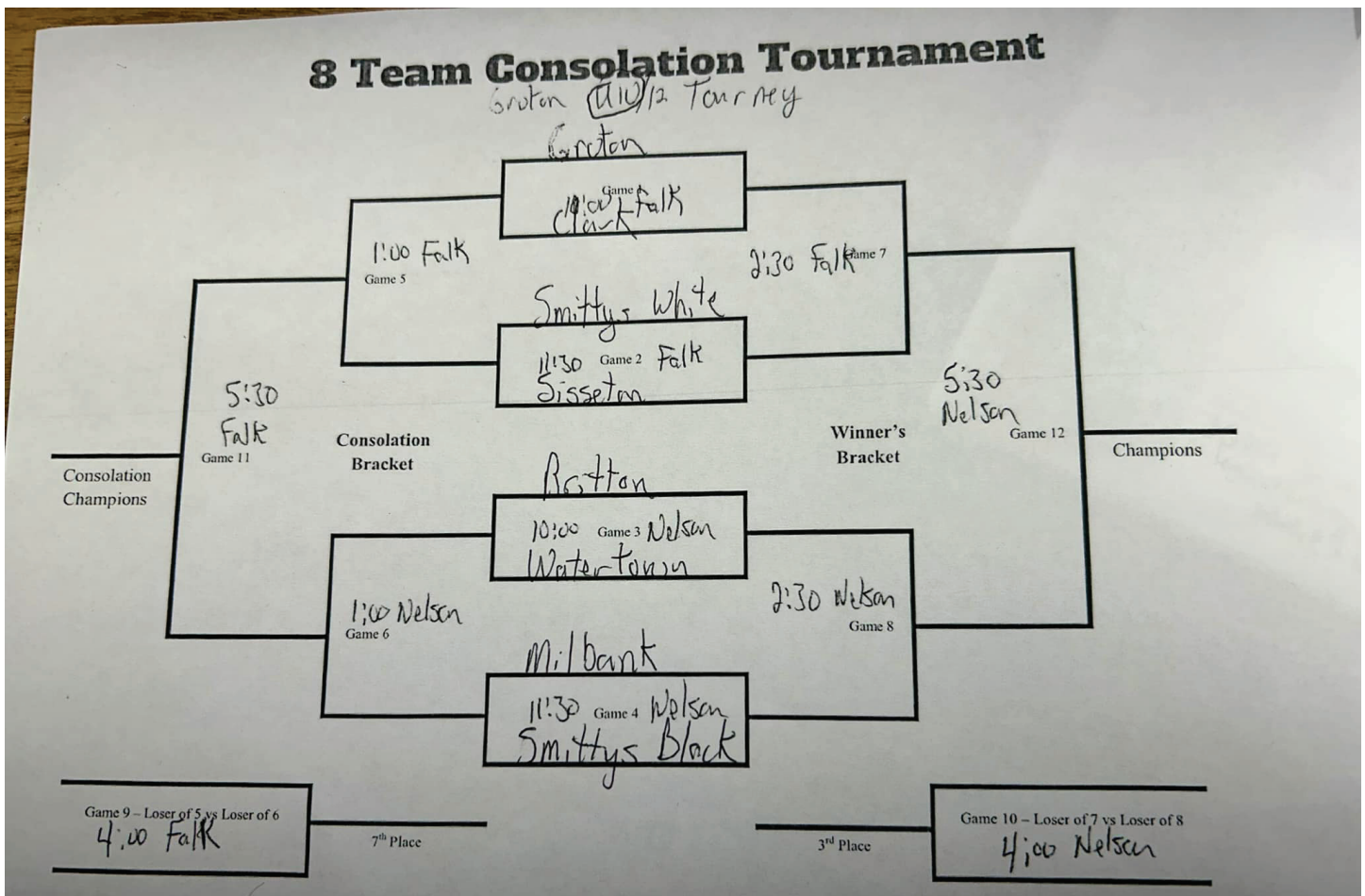
Driver 1: Randy Arthur Dockendorf, 69-year-old male from Arlington, TX, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2017 Toyota Sienna
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Butte County, S.D.- A 69-year-old man died Tuesday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash near Belle Fourche, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Randy A. Dockendorf, the driver of a 2017 Toyota Sienna was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 34 near mile marker 13. For an unknown reason, the vehicle left the roadway and entered the ditch, struck a driveway approach and came to rest in an irrigation ditch. Dockendorf died from his injuries.

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

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





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Idaho abortion ruling doesn't affect South Dakota law, attorney general says

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 28, 2024 4:26 PM

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling that shields emergency room doctors from prosecution under Idaho's near-total abortion ban won't have any immediate impact on South Dakota, according to Republican Attorney General Marty Jackley.

The court did not rule on the underlying arguments in the case, but rather remanded it back to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on a technicality.

"Because the Supreme Court did not reach the merits of the case, there's no impact on South Dakota law at this point," said Tony Mangan, spokesperson for Jackley.

South Dakota, like Idaho, has a near-total ban on abortion. There is an exception that allows abortion to save the life of the mother, but lawmakers rejected an attempt to define "life of the mother" in 2023. Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, R-Sioux Falls, had introduced a bill to offer clarity to medical providers on when the exception applies, but it was tabled in the face of opposition from anti-abortion lawmakers.

South Dakotans are set to vote on a ballot measure that would restore abortion rights in November's general election, pending a legal challenge from anti-abortion activists seeking to disqualify the measure.

The Idaho case originated in 2022, soon after the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, which overturned Roe v. Wade and returned regulation of abortion procedures to the states.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued Idaho to block it from enforcing its abortion ban for emergency room physicians who might need to perform an abortion when a pregnant patient is at risk of infection or other potentially serious health problems.

The department argues that prosecuting physicians under those circumstances would violate the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA, which requires Medicare-funded hospitals to treat patients who come to an emergency room regardless of their ability to pay.

This week, the high court ruled 6-3 that it had taken the case too early. A lower court judge had granted an injunction, blocking the Idaho abortion ban from taking effect. The Supreme Court dropped that injunction when it agreed to take the case, leaving doctors open to prosecution.

This week's decision reinstated the lower court's injunction, the merits of which will now be argued before the Ninth Circuit.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 13 of 83

13 states, including SD, opt out of summer food program for kids

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA - JUNE 28, 2024 7:00 AM

A new, permanent summer grocery program will help nearly 21 million kids across 37 states get enough to eat this year while school's out.

But 13 states with Republican governors have opted out of the federal program, citing their opposition to what they deride as "welfare" and their unwillingness to cover administrative costs.

Under the new \$2.5 billion program created by Congress, eligible low-income households will receive a total of \$120 per child over the three summer months when school-based free and reduced-price lunch programs aren't available.

Washington, D.C., several territories and tribal nations also are participating. Families making up to 185% of the federal poverty level, or \$57,720 for a family of four, are eligible.

Funds have already been distributed to families in many states.

The money will be available on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. Households enrolled in state-administered programs can use their benefits at retail stores that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as food stamps.

The states that chose not to participate in Summer EBT — Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Wyoming — could decide to opt in next year.

While Oklahoma is not participating in the program, the Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes in the state are. Fourteen states with Republican governors are participating in the program.

The money put on the digital cards comes from the federal government, but states must cover half the cost of administering the program. Those costs include the salaries and benefits of the people running the program, office expenses and outreach efforts.

Iowa officials said the program would cost \$2.2 million for the state to administer. Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said in a news release that federal cash benefit programs don't provide long-term solutions and that the EBT card "does nothing to promote nutrition" because there are few restrictions on food purchases.

The office of Mississippi Republican Gov. Tate Reeves said the state opted out of the program as part of his rejection of "attempts to expand the welfare state," according to Mississippi Today.

Texas officials told The Texas Tribune that the federal government didn't give them enough time to get the program up and running.

Jason Raven, a spokesperson for the South Carolina Department of Education, told Stateline that the state already has two federally funded summer programs that provide free meals to kids 18 and under.

But one advocacy group estimates that close to 150,000 children statewide don't get enough food even with existing programs, the South Carolina Daily Gazette reported.

One participating state, Tennessee, has already announced it will opt out of the program in 2025, according to The Associated Press.

A spokesperson for Republican Gov. Bill Lee's office said that Tennessee has other food assistance programs in place.

Change of heart

Three states — Louisiana, Nebraska and Vermont — originally said they would not participate in the summer program, but changed course.

After Louisiana Republican Gov. Jeff Landry's administration and the state Department of Education opted not to apply for the program, the Louisiana legislature pushed back and included \$3.6 million in the state budget to participate.

Vermont Republican Gov. Phil Scott's administration initially opted out, saying the state wouldn't be able to afford the administrative costs, according to Vermont Public. But state officials secured a waiver to participate after they said they worked with the federal government to get more flexibility in administering the program, VTDigger reported.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 14 of 83

When Nebraska Republican Gov. Jim Pillen changed his mind about opting out of the U.S. Department of Agriculture program in February, it was a visit from schoolchildren that won him over.

"They talked about being hungry, and they talked about the summer USDA program and, depending upon access, when they'd get a sack of food," Pillen said at a news conference. "And from my seat, what I saw there, we have to do better in Nebraska."

Alabama's legislature in May approved \$10 million for the state to participate in 2025.

Kelsey Boone, senior child nutrition policy analyst at Food Research & Action Center, which advocates for people struggling with poverty-related hunger, said she expects more states to commit to Summer EBT in 2025, if the program demonstrates success.

"For most states, the trade-off ends up being that for all that's being spent on administrative costs, the benefits of the program far outweighs it," Boone said.

"I think there will be a lot of pushback and a lot of people reaching out to their state agencies and their state governors' offices to, you know, ask them to run the program in 2025, and that will be very powerful," she said.

Food insecurity

Roughly 17 million households experienced food insecurity in 2022, according to the USDA, compared with 13.5 million in 2021 and 13.8 million in 2020. The agency defines food insecurity as limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

In December 2022, Congress permanently authorized the Summer EBT program, with a start date of this summer.

Since 2010, the USDA has rolled out several versions of this program through various pilot programs. In its evaluation of the program over a decade, the department found that the Summer EBT program reduced childhood food insecurity by a "significant amount" and promoted a healthy diet.

Miriam Cobbs, a single mother of three children who lives in Missouri, praised the program as a lifeline for parents in the summer months. A May survey commissioned by meal-kit brand HelloFresh of more than 450 parents with kids under 18 found that 41% of parents struggle to provide food for their families during school breaks.

"With the food prices being so high, every little bit helps," Cobbs said. "This is an awesome idea for people that have children at home for the summer. So many children go hungry during these summer months, especially when the parents have little income to work with."

Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

Democrats reel from 'terrible' Biden debate performance as he defends candidacy

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - JUNE 28, 2024 2:43 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden touched on a flood of criticism of his debate performance during a rally on Friday, while Democrats interviewed on Capitol Hill said the party must figure out a way to reassure voters after what they described as a "terrible" showing and a "bad night."

Biden, speaking from Raleigh, North Carolina, acknowledged some of the blunders that plagued him during the Thursday night debate on CNN, which included a raspy, low voice and answers that often began one way before veering into a completely separate topic.

"I know I'm not a young man, let's state the obvious," Biden said. "I don't walk as easy as I used to. I don't speak as smoothly as I used to. I don't debate as well as I used to, but ... I know how to tell the truth."

Biden, 81, told the crowd that despite the mishaps, he's still up for four more years on the job and said that his rival, the 78-year-old presumptive GOP presidential nominee Donald J. Trump, is a "genuine threat to this nation."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 15 of 83

"When you get knocked down, you get back up," Biden said. "I would not be running again if I didn't believe with all my heart and soul I can do this job because, quite frankly, the stakes are too high."

Outside the Beltway, Democrats continued to try to absorb what they saw on Thursday night. In Colorado, Democratic Gov. Jared Polis would not answer directly when asked about calls from some Democrats for Biden to step aside. In the swing state of Pennsylvania, Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro as well as other Democrats came to Biden's defense on social media and on the airwaves.

Hoyer rejects idea of Biden quitting

Back in Washington, D.C., lawmakers had mixed reviews for how Biden performed during the debate, with some saying one bad night shouldn't lead the party to change its nominee in the weeks ahead, while others said Biden should reassess his decision to run for reelection.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Steny Hoyer said Biden "had a bad night," but said the president still showed respect for "people, the truth and the Constitution."

"The other candidate, who respects none of those, showed that last night," he said of Trump.

Hoyer rejected a question about whether Democrats need a new presidential candidate, saying they already had one and it "is Joe Biden."

"He's got an extraordinary record of accomplishments," Hoyer said.

Minnesota Democratic Rep. Angie Craig said it was a "terrible debate."

"We all have to acknowledge that and Donald Trump lied every time he opened his mouth," Craig said, adding that she wasn't worried about November, but focused on flooding in her home state.

Mood on House floor

New York Democratic Rep. Gregory Meeks said he didn't expect that all of a sudden members of the party would "jump ship" from the Biden-Harris ticket, but said Biden has a lot of work to do before Election Day.

"I know Joe Biden. I've sat across the room from Joe Biden in some very important meetings," Meeks said. "And I know that he's all there and he has the ability to do that. He did not do that last night. But I do know that he has that ability."

The mood on the House floor Friday morning, however, was less than ideal, he said.

"You can't hide that, people are not pleased. Nobody's in there jumping for joy, saying that, you know, 'That was a great night last night,'" Meeks said. "Is there concern? Yeah, because we know how important it is to make sure that we win this election."

Meeks declined to speculate about whether Biden will back out of the second debate in September, but said "it might be difficult, maybe, to get out of it."

Biden, he said, needs to get in front of voters much more before the election through town halls and interviews to provide reassurance.

Meeks also sought to draw a difference between Biden and Trump, saying that the lies Trump told during the debate signal he hasn't evolved.

"Nothing has changed with reference to Trump. He is still that pathological liar that Lindsey Graham called him. He's still the con man that Marco Rubio called him," Meeks said, referring to Republican senators from South Carolina and Florida. "And I definitely don't want a pathological liar and a con man to be President of the United States of America. It would be bad for us and will be bad for our allies."

House speaker sees 'serious problem'

House Speaker Mike Johnson said that Cabinet members should "search their hearts" on what represented the best path forward for the country, about "this alarming situation."

"I think they know they have a serious problem — but it's not just political, it's not just the Democratic Party, it's the entire country," Johnson said. "We have a serious problem here because we have a president, who, by all appearances, is not up to the task."

"This is a very serious moment in American history and it needs to be regarded and handled as such,"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 16 of 83

Johnson added.

The Louisiana Republican didn't rule out that the 25th Amendment, which deals with presidential disability and succession, might be appropriate. But he noted that's up to the Cabinet, not the House.

Trump, during the debate, "showed the temperament, the stamina and the mental acuity that is necessary to do this really important job at this really important time," Johnson said.

Biden, on the other hand, "showed last night that he was weak, sadly, that he is feeble," Johnson added.

Democrats are moving forward with plans to nominate Biden as their official presidential candidate before the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in late August.

The all-virtual roll call vote is supposed to take place before Aug. 7, the final date for candidates to get on Ohio's ballot. The state requires candidates to be officially nominated at least 90 days before the November election.

That means any final decisions about Biden's candidacy likely need to take place during the month of July.

No need to replace Biden

Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Richard Neal said he was taking the "long view" of the campaign and didn't believe Democrats needed to replace Biden at the top of the ticket.

"I think that we are kind of caught up in a moment where personalities are a big deal in politics," Neal said. "At the same time, I think that Joe Biden's got a really good track record to run on ... And I think we want to make sure that people see it in the fullness of his presidency."

Neal said that Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee for president in 2016, won her first debate against Trump, even though Trump went on to win the election.

He also noted that Walter Mondale, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1984, was widely considered to have won his first debate against Republican Ronald Reagan, though Reagan went on to sweep him during the election.

Florida Democratic Rep. Lois Frankel said that "there was only one decent, honest man who reflected my values, and that was Joe Biden."

Frankel said she wasn't too concerned about calls for Biden to step down from the top of the ticket, though she said she hasn't been involved in those talks.

Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. Matt Cartwright said Biden's performance reminded him of a 2022 debate he had where his own performance was "lousy,"

"He had a tough night," Cartwright said, adding that he believes Democrats shouldn't "overreact."

Cartwright said he didn't believe Biden's debate performance would affect how voters in his district, which covers sections of northeastern Pennsylvania, including Scranton, will vote for down-ballot races later this year.

"People split their tickets where I live," Cartwright said. "They know who I am and they know I'm not the same guy as whoever's in the White House."

Republicans react

Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack said Biden's performance "validated" a lot of the concerns that lawmakers and others had about his "cognitive abilities" heading into the debate.

"But at the end of the day, you have to assume that they're both still going to be head-to-head in November," Womack said.

Republicans, he said, need to move "full steam ahead" to hold the House, flip the Senate and win back the White House in November, but that's only the beginning of the hard work.

"If that happens, we've got a couple of years and we need to be able to demonstrate that we're serious about leading America," Womack said.

Iowa Republican Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks said it's up to "Democrats to determine whether or not they feel that their candidate is up to the task of running the country for the next four years."

"From my perspective, what I saw last night emphasizes to me that he's not and that I will be voting for

President Trump," Miller-Meeks said. "I thought President Trump's answers and policies were well reasoned, show that he was very sharp, very in tune and very well-informed."

Miller-Meeks said it will be challenging for the Biden campaign and Democrats to brush aside concerns about Biden's mental functioning following the debate.

"I think what has been appearing to a lot of people is now very very apparent and difficult to hide, given the performance that everyone saw last night," Miller-Meeks said.

Florida Republican Rep. Byron Donalds, one of the lawmakers on Trump's short list for vice president, said that Trump "did what he was supposed to do — demonstrated leadership, demonstrated command talking about the issues that are plaguing this country."

"As far as I'm concerned, whether it's Joe Biden, Kamala Harris or anybody else, the Democrat agenda has been a failure. Period."

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.

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

White House seeks emergency funds for Midwest disaster relief, Key Bridge in Maryland

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 28, 2024 2:36 PM

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is asking Congress to approve billions in emergency funding for domestic priorities it says are essential, including border security, emergency preparedness and child care.

The \$4 billion in new emergency spending requested Friday calls on lawmakers to approve more funding than was included in the dozen annual government funding bills passed earlier this year.

White House budget director Shalanda Young wrote in a letter to Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., that the supplemental request builds on a similar ask that the Biden administration sent to the Hill last October.

"I write today to reiterate the October request and submit revised estimates of an additional \$4 billion for certain disaster needs, including funding to help respond to the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, the devastating fires on Maui last summer, and tornado survivors in Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and throughout the Midwest," Young wrote.

"Particularly as we enter what the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is describing as an 'extraordinary' hurricane season, the Administration urges prompt congressional action on this request, including for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), to ensure that we can uphold the Federal Government's responsibility to both rebuild from past disasters and respond to future events," Young added.

Problems ahead

The request is unlikely to gain full approval by the Republican-controlled House and may face headwinds in the Democratic-controlled Senate as well.

Leaders in both chambers of Congress are already working on the 12 annual funding bills for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1, and are increasingly focused on campaigning ahead of the November elections.

Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, released a statement saying she looked forward to working with the other leaders on the committee "in the coming weeks to ensure we deliver this much-needed relief."

"Families who've lost homes, workers who've lost their livelihoods, and communities who are working to rebuild are counting on Congress to step up and provide the help they need — and it's critical we do

just that," Murray wrote.

A senior administration official, speaking on background on a call with reporters, didn't set a specific timeline for Congress to approve the supplemental request, but said the Biden administration hopes they do so "as swiftly as possible."

"And we are going to work with the Hill and obviously many, I think, legislators on the Hill recognize that urgency to achieve that goal," the official said.

Bridge rebuild, road repair

The updated spending request includes an additional \$3.1 billion for the Department of Transportation to rebuild the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland, after a cargo ship barreled into the bridge earlier this year, destroying the structure and killing six construction workers.

The transportation funding would also go toward repairing "other Federal-aid highways and federally-owned roads across the Nation that have been seriously damaged by natural disasters or catastrophic failures from external causes," according to a summary of the request.

The U.S. Coast Guard would receive \$79.5 million to address costs related to the destruction of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, including the response and recovery efforts as well as its salvage operation.

The Army Corps of Engineers would receive \$33 million, should Congress approve the request. That funding would go toward replenishing accounts that were used to remove parts of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and to help re-open the shipping channel.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development would get an additional \$700 million for disaster relief and other recovery needs that stemmed from major disaster declarations in 2023 as well as this year.

An additional \$25 million would go to the Labor Department for the Dislocated Worker National Reserve "to make awards for reconstruction and recovery needs caused by multiple large disasters, including typhoons, wildfires, and hurricanes, as well as cleanup and recovery efforts following the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge," according to a summary of the request.

Increase from earlier request

The original \$56 billion domestic supplemental request, released in October, included \$23.5 billion for disaster response needs for several federal departments and agencies, including the Small Business Administration and FEMA.

The October proposal, which was re-requested on Friday alongside the new spending proposals, included \$16 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services for child care subsidies.

It included \$6 billion for the Federal Communication Commission "to extend free and discounted high-speed internet through the Affordable Connectivity Program."

An additional \$1.55 billion would address fentanyl abuse through HHS' opioid response grants, while slightly more than \$1 billion would go toward the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food for Peace program.

Another \$220 million was requested for the USDA and Department of Interior to avoid cuts to wildland firefighter salaries.

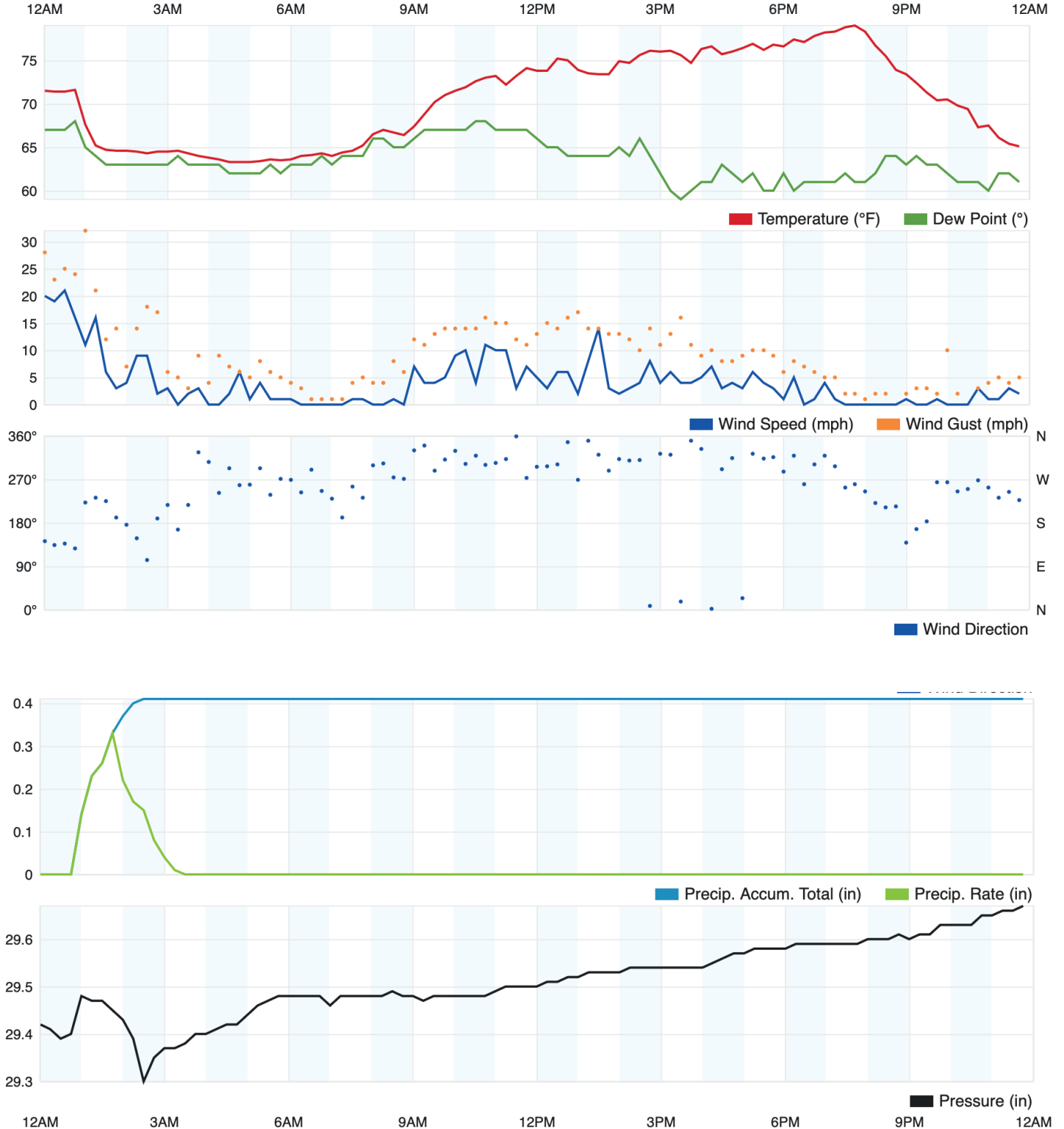
The October request for emergency assistance for Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, which Congress did later act on, also included \$13.6 billion for border security efforts.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 19 of 83

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 20 of 83

Today



High: 71 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 47 °F

Mostly Clear

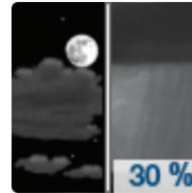
Sunday



High: 75 °F

Sunny

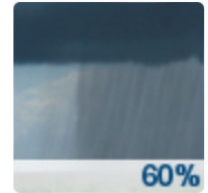
Sunday Night



Low: 62 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Monday



High: 75 °F

Showers
Likely and
Breezy

<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
HIGHS: 66-72°F LOWS: 47-52°F	HIGHS: 70-79°F LOWS: 59-64°F CHANCE OF SHOWERS/STORMS LATE

Slightly cooler temperatures today across the area with highs in the mid 60s to low 70s. We will be slightly warmer on Sunday with highs in the 70s. Dry conditions are expected through the day Sunday, but there is a chance (25-40%) of some showers/storms after sunset.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 21 of 83

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 7:33 PM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 4:59 AM

Wind: 32 mph at 12:55 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 41 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1931

Record Low: 42 in 1900

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.63

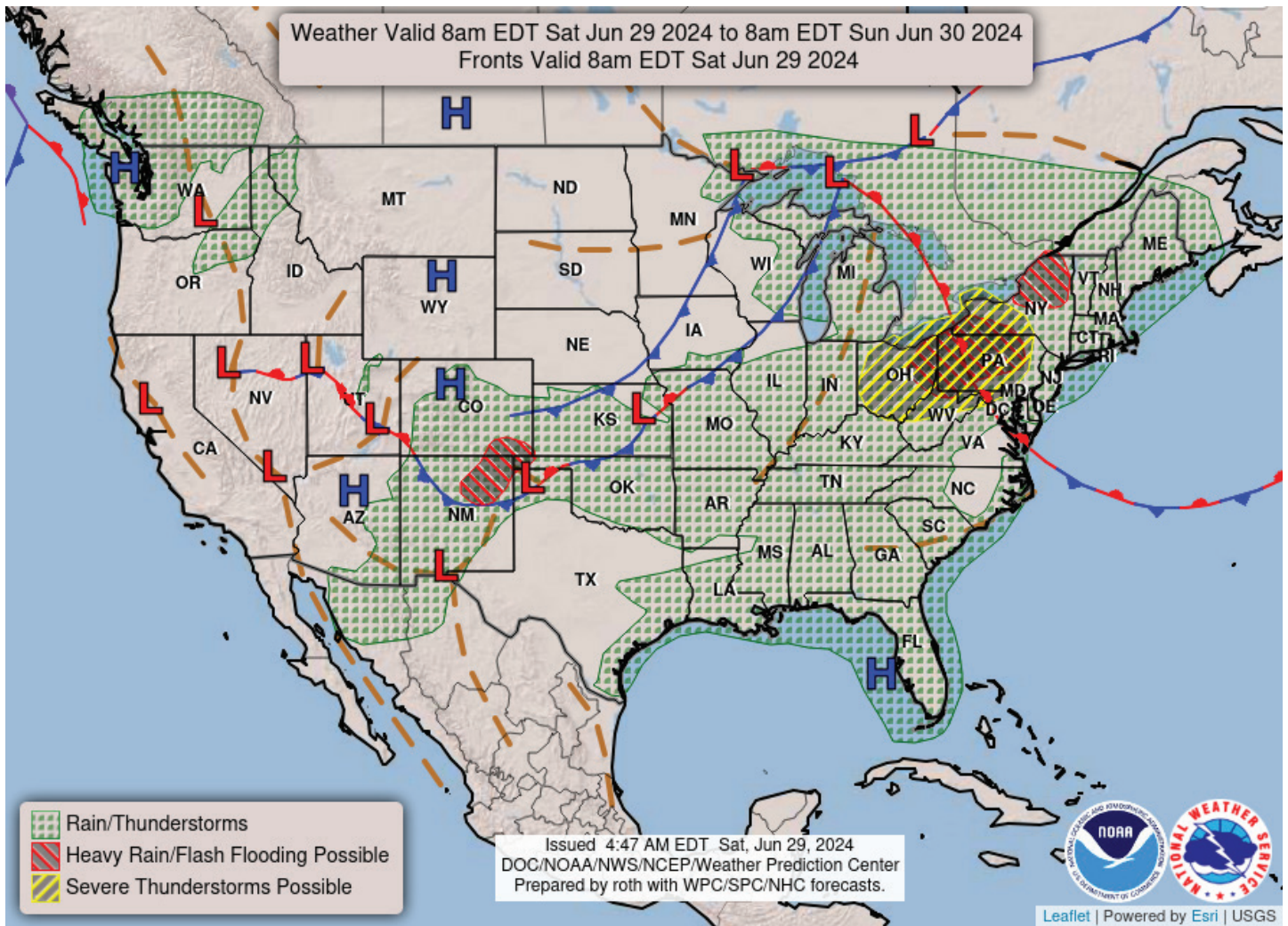
Precip to date in June: 3.98

Average Precip to date: 10.88

Precip Year to Date: 11.05

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:41 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45:57 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 22 of 83

Today in Weather History

June 29, 1927: This estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from near Claremont, passing along the northwestern edge of Britton. The Claremont area had a \$12,000 loss as a large silo was destroyed. A dozen homes had roof damage in Britton.

June 29, 2005: Torrential rains of three to seven inches fell across far eastern Brown, western and northern Day, and most of Marshall Counties in the early morning and again in the afternoon hours. One location measured five inches of rain in two hours. Many township roads and highways were flooded along with thousands of acres of cropland. Water surrounded several homes resulting in people being rescued. Some of the houses were flooded. Many bridges were damaged, and roads and culverts were washed out. In Day County, 30 roads were washed out, and 15 bridges needed repairs. Some rainfall amounts include 5.04 inches in Britton, 3.34 at 8N of Columbia, and 2.08 in Aberdeen. Total June rainfall for some locations in Marshall and Day Counties was between 11 and 12 inches. The flooding continued into early July before receding by July 10th.

1826: Thomas Jefferson made his last entry in his weather observation log on this date, just six days before he died. The weather held a fascination for Jefferson as he made regular weather observations. He bought his first thermometer while working on the Declaration of Independence and his first barometer shortly after that.

1904: Tornado hits Karacharov Village area of Moscow killing about 24 people.

1931 - The temperature at Monticello FL hit 109 degrees to establish an all-time record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1954 - Hurricane Alice dumped as much as 27 inches of rain on the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The Rio Grande River at Laredo reached a level 12.6 feet above its previous highest mark, and the roadway of the U.S. 90 bridge was thirty feet below the high water. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes Region, with reports of large hail and damaging winds most numerous in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes in Michigan. A tornado near Clare MI was accompanied by softball size hail. In Colorado, an untimely winter-like storm blanketed Mount Evans with six inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Alpena, MI, reported a record low of 39 degrees while Jackson, MS, equalled their record for the month of June with an afternoon high of 105 degrees. Thunderstorms in the central U.S. soaked Springfield MO with 3.62 inches of rain, a record for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern and Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced softball size hail at Kit Carson, while pea to marble size hail caused ten million dollars damage to crops in Philips County, CO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: "The Corn Belt Derecho of 1998" in the following states NE, IA, IL, IN, KY. A derecho which originated in far southeast South Dakota moved across Illinois during the afternoon and evening and continued as far east as Ohio the next morning. Every county in central Illinois sustained some damage, as these severe thunderstorms passed. Winds gusted in the 60 to 80 mph range, with some localized microbursts producing winds more than 100 mph. Significant damage occurred in the microburst areas, including the towns of Morton, McLean, LeRoy, and Tolono. In Tolono, 22 cars of a southbound 101-car Illinois Central freight train were blown off the tracks. It was unknown how many vehicles were picked up by the wind, but 16 cars were turned over, and another six derailed but remained upright. The train was en route to Centralia from Chicago with a load of mixed freight, including plastic pellets and meal. The freight cars empty weighed about 60,000 pounds, while a full one weighs about 260,000 pounds. Overall, 12 people were injured, and damage was estimated at around \$16 million.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 23 of 83

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE THINKING TABLE

A local television station sent one of its reporters to a kindergarten to interview the children. One young boy seemed to stand out above all of the other children. His energy, his enthusiasm, his excitement was very obvious.

Approaching him the reporter asked, "Do you like school?"

"Oh yes," he replied. Then he became quiet for a moment and said, "Except for the thinking table."

"The thinking table? What's the thinking table?" asked the reporter.

"It's that table over in the corner. The teacher sends us over there to make us think," he responded.

"Think? Think about what?" continued the interviewer.

"Well," the boy answered, "the last time I had to go there and think was after I hit Sarah. I had to go over there and think about why I hit her and why I shouldn't have."

Paul said that we "should think of others better than ourselves." This does not mean that we should put ourselves down, but that we are to set aside our desires and not take advantage of others. We are to treat others with respect and common courtesy. If we did think of their needs first we would not need "thinking tables."

Prayer: Often, Father, we think "more highly of ourselves" than we should. We ask You to convict and convince us to "let Your mind be in us." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. Philippians 2:3-4



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 24 of 83

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 25 of 83



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.24

28 31 33 42 66 24

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$137,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 DRAW: 16 Hrs 11 Mins 59
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.28.24

10 21 41 43 48 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 27 Mins 0
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

6 12 21 28 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 27 Mins 0
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.26.24

4 19 27 37 56 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 59
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 DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 59
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 26 of 83

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

Raleigh drives in winning run and Mariners beat Twins 3-2

By SHANE LANTZ Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Cal Raleigh drove in the winning run with a walk-off fielder's choice in the 10th inning and the Seattle Mariners beat the Minnesota Twins 3-2 on Friday night.

Raleigh hit a grounder to Twins reliever Cole Sands (2-1), who threw home to try to keep J.P. Crawford from scoring. The throw sailed high and Crawford was safe.

It was the fourth career walk-off for Raleigh, and his second this season.

"I kind of got rewarded for swinging at a bad pitch, but you know, it's kind of how baseball is sometimes," Raleigh said. "You've just got to put the ball in play. Definitely, probably not the right way to do it there, but we take what we can get."

The rally capped off what started as a pitchers' duel, as Minnesota's Bailey Ober and Mariners starter Logan Gilbert both pitched well early.

Ober faced the minimum before walking a pair in the fourth, and Gilbert allowed just three hits in the first five innings.

The Mariners took a 1-0 lead in the fifth when Josh Rojas hit an RBI double, but Carlos Correa put the Twins ahead with a two-run homer off Gilbert in the sixth.

Gilbert allowed four hits and two earned runs over six innings with three strikeouts, while Ober allowed one run on two hits, with three walks and nine strikeouts.

Correa's homer ended a 21-inning scoreless streak for Gilbert, the longest by a Mariners pitcher this season. It was also his major league-best 14th quality start in 17 appearances. In five June starts, Gilbert had one walk and 31 strikeouts.

"That's what you do when you're a top-end starter," manager Scott Servais said. "He's been carrying us, every time out there I feel like we're going to win the game and he's going to throw a shutout. Close tonight, unfortunately Correa got him. But great win and great way to start the series."

Seattle tied the game on a wild play in the eighth, as Julio Rodríguez hit a groundball to third baseman Jose Miranda, who missed a tag on baserunner Luke Raley before throwing the ball past Carlos Santana at first base for an error.

Raley scored on the play, while Rojas and Rodríguez each advanced a base.

"I think there were some funky plays off the bat that we had to deal with today," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. "But overall, I wouldn't say we played a poor ballgame. I would say we played a decent ballgame."

Ryne Stanek (5-1) pitched a scoreless top of the 10th inning, as the bullpen threw four shutout innings with just two hits allowed.

"That's a tough lineup over there," Gilbert said. "They're a really good team on both sides of the ball, but the bullpen doing what they do, I have full confidence in them."

ROSTER MOVE

Seattle recalled LHP Jhonathan Díaz from Triple-A Tacoma, and optioned RHP Cody Bolton.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Mariners: RHP Gregory Santos (lat strain) threw a live batting practice session Friday, and will start a rehab assignment on July 2 in Triple-A Tacoma. Santos hasn't pitched yet this season after getting injured in spring training ... LHP Gabe Speier (rotator cuff) will throw a bullpen on Tuesday, and is expected to return around the All-Star break ... RHP Bryan Woo had an MRI that showed mild inflammation in his hamstring, but GM Justin Hollander doesn't expect a lengthy IL stint.

UP NEXT

Twins RHP Pablo López (7-6, 5.11 ERA) will pitch Saturday against Mariners RHP Bryce Miller (6-6, 3.90 ERA)

Iran to hold runoff election with reformist Pezeshkian and hard-liner Jalili after low-turnout vote

By JON GAMBRELL and AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran announced Saturday it will hold a runoff presidential election to replace the late hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi after an initial vote saw the top candidates not securing an outright win in the lowest turnout poll ever held in the Islamic Republic.

The election this coming Friday will pit reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian against the hard-line former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

Mohsen Eslami, an election spokesman, announced the result in a news conference carried by Iranian state television. He said of 24.5 million votes cast, Pezeshkian got 10.4 million while Jalili received 9.4 million.

Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf got 3.3 million. Shiite cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi had over 206,000 votes.

Iranian law requires that a winner gets more than 50% of all votes cast. If not, the race's top two candidates 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.

Eslami acknowledged the country's Guardian Council would need to offer formal approval, but the result did not draw any immediate challenge from contenders in the race.

As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from running, while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recognized monitors.

There were signs of the wider disenchantment of the public with the vote. More than 1 million votes were voided, according to the results, typically a sign of people feeling obligated to cast a ballot but not wanting to select any of the candidates.

The overall turnout was 39.9%, according to the results. The 2021 presidential election that elected Raisi saw a 48.8% turnout, while the March parliamentary election saw a 40.6% turnout.

Despite the low turnout, Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi praised the public for turning out to a vote conducted without any internationally recognized observers.

He thanked the people who voted for their "very valuable presence," adding that the election was held in "complete safety" and "with very serious competition."

There had been calls for a boycott, including from imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi. Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the leaders of the 2009 Green Movement protests who remains under house arrest, has also refused to vote along with his wife, his daughter said.

There's also been criticism that Pezeshkian represents just another government-approved candidate. In a documentary on the reformist candidate aired by state TV, one woman said her generation was "moving toward the same level" of animosity with the government that Pezeshkian's generation had in the 1979 revolution.

Jalili, once described by CIA director Bill Burns as "stupefyingly opaque" in negotiations, likely would have won outright had the three hard-liners not split Friday's vote.

Qalibaf, a former general in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, had been thought to have a wider power base, despite being plagued by corruption allegations. He is also known for launching a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999 and reportedly ordering live fire to be used against students in 2003 while serving as the country's police chief.

Now the question becomes whether Pezeshkian will be able to draw voters into his campaign. On Election Day, he offered comments on outreach to the West after voting seemingly aimed at drumming up turnout for his campaign — even after being targeted by a veiled warning from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Though he has received notable endorsements from major reformist figures, including former Presidents (Hassan) Rouhani and Mohammad Khatami, Pezeshkian has been a generally underwhelming candidate," the geopolitical consultancy Eurasia Group said in an analysis before the vote. "Should he qualify for a

runoff, his position would weaken as the conservative voting bloc unites behind a single candidate.”

Raisi, 63, 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. 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 Mahsa Amini, a young woman detained by police over allegedly improperly wearing the mandatory headscarf, or hijab.

The voting came 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, the Islamic Republic 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.

Despite the recent unrest, there was only one reported attack around the election. Gunmen opened fire on a van transporting ballot boxes in the restive southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, killing two police officers and wounding others, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. The province regularly sees violence between security forces and the militant group Jaish al-Adl, as well as drug traffickers.

Tropical Storm Beryl forms in the Atlantic Ocean, blowing toward the Caribbean Sea

MIAMI (AP) — Tropical Storm Beryl formed Friday in the Atlantic Ocean and could strengthen into the year’s first hurricane before it reaches the Caribbean Sea early next week.

The Meteorological Service of Barbados issued a hurricane watch for Barbados early Saturday morning.

Beryl is the second named storm in what is predicted to be a busy hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30 in the Atlantic. Earlier this month, Tropical Storm Alberto came ashore in northeast Mexico with heavy rains that resulted in four deaths.

Beryl was moving westward Friday, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. It had top sustained winds of 40 mph (64 kph). A tropical storm is defined by sustained winds between 39 mph and 73 mph (62 kph and 117 kph). Winds above that make it a hurricane.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts the 2024 hurricane season is likely to be well above average, with between 17 and 25 named storms. The forecast calls for as many as 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 14 named storms, seven of them hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

A no-name storm earlier this June dumped more than 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain on parts of South Florida, stranding numerous motorists on flooded streets and pushing water into some homes in low-lying areas.

Orlando Cepeda, the slugging Hall of Fame first baseman nicknamed ‘Baby Bull,’ dies at 86

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Baseball Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Orlando Cepeda, the slugging first baseman nicknamed “Baby Bull” who became a Hall of Famer among the early Puerto Ricans to star in the major leagues, has died. He was 86.

The San Francisco Giants and his family announced the death Friday night and a moment of silence was held as his photo showed on the scoreboard at Oracle Park midway through a game against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

“Our beloved Orlando passed away peacefully at home this evening, listening to his favorite music and surrounded by his loved ones,” his wife, Nydia, said in a statement released through the team. “We take

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 30 of 83

comfort that he is at peace.”

It’s been a heartbreaking month for the Giants given Cepeda’s death followed Hall of Famer Willie Mays’ passing only 10 days earlier on June 18 at age 93.

“Man, what another gut punch,” said Giants manager Bob Melvin, who grew up in the Bay Area cheering for the team. “Another just incredible personality and just beloved here. Statue out front. The numbers he put up, there are a lot of legends here and he’s certainly right in the middle of that. To have it so close in proximity to Willie, it’s kind of staggering.”

Cepeda was a regular at Giants home games through the 2017 season until he dealt with some health challenges. He was hospitalized in the Bay Area in February 2018 following a cardiac event.

One of the first Puerto Rican stars in the majors but limited by knee issues, he became Boston’s first designated hitter and credits his time as a DH for getting him enshrined into the Hall of Fame in 1999 as selected by the Veteran’s Committee.

“Orlando Cepeda’s unabashed love for the game of baseball sparkled during his extraordinary playing career, and later as one of the game’s enduring ambassadors,” Hall of Fame Chairman Jane Forbes Clark said. “We will miss his wonderful smile at Hall of Fame Weekend in Cooperstown, where his spirit will shine forever, and we extend our deepest sympathies to the Cepeda family.”

When the Red Sox called Cepeda in December 1972 to inquire whether he’d like to be their first designated hitter, the unemployed player accepted on the spot.

“Boston called and asked me if I was interested in being the DH, and I said yes,” Cepeda recalled in a 2013 interview with The Associated Press in the 40th year of the DH. “The DH got me to the Hall of Fame. The rule got me to the Hall of Fame.”

He didn’t know what it would mean for his career, acknowledging, “I didn’t know anything about the DH.” The experiment worked out beautifully for Cepeda, who played in 142 games that season — the second-to-last in a decorated 17-year major league career. The A’s had released Cepeda only months after acquiring him from Atlanta on June 29, 1972.

Cepeda was celebrated at Fenway Park on May 8, 2013, for a ceremony celebrating his role as designated hitter. The Red Sox had invited him for their first home series of the season but his former Giants franchise was honoring the reigning World Series champions at the same time.

“It means a lot,” Cepeda said then. “Amazing. When you think everything’s finished, it’s only the beginning.”

He said then-A’s owner Charlie Finley sent him a telegram to call him within a 24-hour period or he’d be released. Cepeda didn’t meet the deadline and was let go in December 1972. He played in only three games for Oakland after the A’s acquired him for pitcher Denny McLain. Cepeda was placed on the disabled list with a left knee injury. He had 10 knee operations in all, sidelining him four different years.

Cepeda had been a first baseman and outfielder before joining the first class of baseball’s designated hitters under the new American League rule.

“They were talking about only doing it for three years,” he said. “And people still don’t like the idea of the DH. They said it wouldn’t last.”

The addition of the DH opened new opportunities for players such as Cepeda and others from his era who could still produce at the plate late in their careers but no longer played the field with the spot-on defense of their primes.

Cepeda was thrilled to have another chance.

He hit .289 with 20 home runs and 86 RBIs in 1973, starting off strongly with a .333 average and five homers in April. He drove in 23 runs in August on the way to DH of the Year honors. On Aug. 8 at Kansas City, Cepeda hit four doubles.

“That was one of the best years,” Cepeda recalled, “because I was playing on one leg and I hit .289. And I hit four doubles in one game. Both my knees were hurting, and I was designated hitter of the year.”

Cepeda topped Baltimore’s Tommy Davis (.306, seven homers, 89 RBIs) and Minnesota’s Tony Oliva (.291, 16 HRs, 92 RBIs) for top DH honors.

“It wasn’t easy for me to win the award,” Cepeda said. “They had some great years.”

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 31 of 83

Cepeda also knew little English when he arrived in the minor leagues in the mid-1950s, putting him among the first wave of Spanish-speaking players thrown into a different culture to play professional baseball, build new lives and send money back home.

It was an opportunity to succeed in a sport he loved, as long as daunting challenges off the field could be overcome.

Early on, Cepeda was told by a manager to go home to Puerto Rico and learn English before coming back to his career in the U.S.

"Coming here my first year, everything was a novelty to me, a surprise," Cepeda recalled in a 2014 interview with the AP. "When I came to Virginia, I was there for one month and my father died. My dad said, 'I want to see my son play pro ball,' and he died the day before I played my first game in Virginia.

"From there I went to Puerto Rico and when I came back here, I had to come back because we didn't have no money and my mother said, 'You've got to go back and send me money, we don't have money to eat,'" he said.

Cepeda had continued to be encouraged watching so many young players from Latin America arriving in the United States with better English skills, thanks in large part to all 30 major league organizations putting more emphasis into such training through academies in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela.

There also are English classes offered to young players during spring training and into extended spring, plus through the various levels of the minor leagues.

He had his troubles, too.

Cepeda was arrested in May 2007 after being pulled over for speeding when officers discovered drugs in the car.

The California Highway Patrol officer arrested Cepeda after finding a "usable" amount of a white-powder substance that likely was methamphetamine or cocaine, while marijuana and a syringe were also discovered.

After his playing career ended, Cepeda was convicted in 1976 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, of smuggling marijuana and sentenced to five years in prison.

That conviction was probably one reason he was not elected to the Hall of Fame by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Cepeda eventually was elected by the Veterans Committee in 1999.

Cepeda played first base during his 17 seasons in the majors, beginning with the Giants. He also spent time with St. Louis, Atlanta, Oakland, Boston and Kansas City. In the spring of 1969, Cepeda was traded by the Cardinals to the Braves for Joe Torre.

A seven-time All-Star who played in three World Series, Cepeda was the 1958 NL Rookie of the Year with San Francisco and NL MVP in 1967 with St. Louis, a city sad to see him go in that trade that brought Torre to town. In 1961, Cepeda led the NL with 46 homers and 142 RBIs. Cepeda was a .297 career hitter with 379 home runs.

It wasn't until after that 1973 season as DH that Cepeda could look back and appreciate all he had accomplished that year — along with the big part he played in history and change in the sport.

"I just did it," he said of learning the DH. "Every day, I say to myself, how lucky I am to be born with the skills to play ball."

As North Korean and Chinese threats rise, US looks to lock in defense partnerships with Asian allies

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

GIMHAE AIR BASE, South Korea (AP) — The United States wrapped up its first multidomain exercise with Japan and South Korea in the East China Sea on Saturday, a step forward in Washington's efforts to strengthen and lock in its security partnerships with key Asian allies in the face of growing threats from North Korea and China.

The three-day Freedom Edge increased the sophistication of previous exercises with simultaneous air and naval drills geared toward improving joint ballistic-missile defense, anti-submarine warfare, surveillance

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 32 of 83

and other skills and capabilities.

The exercise, which is expected to expand in years to come, was also intended to improve the countries' abilities to share missile warnings — increasingly important as North Korea tests ever-more sophisticated systems.

Outside of Australia, Japan and South Korea are the only U.S. partners in the region with militaries sophisticated enough to integrate operations with the U.S. so that if, for example, South Korea were to detect a target, it could quickly relay details so Japanese or American counterparts could respond, said Ridzwan Rahmat, a Singapore-based analyst with the defense intelligence company Janes.

"That's the kind of interoperability that is involved in a typical war scenario," Rahmat said. "For trilateral exercises like this the intention is to develop the interoperability between the three armed forces so that they can fight better as a cohesive fighting force."

Such exercises also carry the risk of increasing tensions, with China regularly denouncing drills in what it considers its sphere of influence, and North Korea already slamming the arrival of the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier group in the port of Busan — home to South Korea's navy headquarters and its Gimhae Air Base — in preparation for Freedom Edge as "provocative" and "dangerous."

On Wednesday, the day after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol visited the Roosevelt in Busan, becoming the first sitting South Korean president to board a U.S. aircraft carrier since 1994, North Korea tested what it said was a multiwarhead missile, the first known launch of the developmental weapon, if confirmed.

South Korea's military said a joint analysis by South Korean and U.S. authorities assessed that the North Korean missile launch failed.

The defense cooperation involving both Japan and South Korea is also politically complex for both Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, due to the lingering resentment over Imperial Japan's brutal occupation of Korea before and during World War II.

The two countries have the largest militaries among American allies in East Asia — and together host some 80,000 American troops on their territories — but the U.S. has tended to work with them individually rather than together due to their history.

Kishida's increase of defense spending and cooperation with South Korea have generally been well received by the Japanese public but has caused friction with the right wing of his own party, while Yoon's domestic appeal has weakened, but he has stayed the course.

"South Korea's shift under the Yoon administration toward improving its relations with Japan has been extremely significant," said Heigo Sato, international politics professor and security expert at Takushoku University in Tokyo.

Both leaders are seen to be trying to fortify their defense relationships with Washington ahead of the inauguration of a new president, with South Korean officials saying recently that they hope to sign a formal security framework agreement with the U.S. and Japan this year that would lock in a joint approach to responding to a possible attack from North Korea.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has also long been working to increase cooperation between South Korea and Japan — something that many didn't think was possible at the start of his presidency, said Euan Graham, a defense analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

"Credit where it's due — the fact that it's happening is a significant achievement from the administration's regional policy," he said.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump caused friction with both allies during his time in office by demanding greater payment for their hosting of U.S. troops while holding one-on-one meetings with North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

Under Biden, Washington is seeking to solidify its system of alliances, both with increasingly sophisticated exercises and diplomatic agreements, Graham said.

"It's obviously a U.S. attempt to try and mesh their alliances as positively as possible, not just given the challenge of their adversaries, but also the uncertainty around a second Trump administration," he said. "They're trying to institutionalize as many of these habits of cooperation while they can."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 33 of 83

Tensions with North Korea are at their highest point in years, with the pace of Kim Jong Un's weapons programs intensifying, despite heavy international sanctions.

China, meantime, has been undertaking a massive military buildup of both nuclear and conventional weapons, and now has the world's largest navy. It claims both the self-governing island of Taiwan and virtually the entirety of the South China Sea as its own territory, and has increasingly turned to its military to press those claims.

China and North Korea have also been among Russia's closest allies in its war against Ukraine, while Russia and China are also both key allies for North Korea, as well as the military leaders of Myanmar who seized power in 2021 and are facing ever-stiffer resistance in that country's civil war.

In Pyongyang this month, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kim concluded a mutual defense pact, agreeing to come to the other's aid in the event of an attack, rattling others in the region.

Despite a greater number of ships overall, China still only has three aircraft carriers compared to the U.S. fleet's 11 — probably the most effective tool a country has to bring vast amounts of power to bear at a great distance from home.

China's advantage, however, is that its primary concern is the nearby waters of the Indo-Pacific, while Washington's global focus means that its naval assets are spread widely. Following the exercises in the East China Sea with Japan and South Korea, the Roosevelt is due to sail to the Middle East to help protect ships against attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

That has made strong security partnerships all the more important, not only with Japan and South Korea but with Australia, the Philippines, Taiwan and others in the region, and building those up has been a priority for the Biden administration.

"One of the weaknesses of the Chinese navy, despite the number of hulls that they have compared to the Americans, is the fact that they don't have a network of friendly ports from which they can operate in the event they need to launch a campaign," Rahmat said.

"One of the strengths of the U.S. Navy is not just its ships and its technology, but its ability to call on a vast network of friendly ports and, aware of this strength, they are doubling down by increasing partnerships across the region."

Only 17% of targets to improve life around the world are likely to be reached by 2030, UN reports

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations warned Friday that only 17% of its 169 targets to improve life for the world's more than 7 billion people are on track to be reached by the 2030 deadline.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the annual report saying, "It shows the world is getting a failing grade."

World leaders adopted the 17 wide-ranging development goals from ending global poverty to achieving gender equality in 2015, and set 169 specific targets to be reached by the end of the decade.

According to the report, nearly half the targets show minimal or moderate progress and over one-third are stalled or regressing — with just 17% are on track to be achieved.

"The takeaway is simple," Guterres said. "Our failure to secure peace, to confront climate change, and to boost international finance is undermining development."

The report also cited the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and said an additional 23 million people were pushed into extreme poverty and over 100 million more were suffering from hunger in 2022 compared to 2019.

"In a world of unprecedented wealth, knowledge and technologies, the denial of basic needs for so many is outrageous and unacceptable," Guterres said.

On the downside, the U.N. reported that for the first time this century, per-capita GDP growth in half of the world's most vulnerable nations is slower than that of advanced economies, threatening improvements in equality. And in 2022, it said, nearly 60% of countries faced moderate to abnormally high food prices.

The goal of quality education is far offtrack. Only 58% of students worldwide achieved minimum proficiency in reading by the end of primary school, and "recent assessments reveal a significant decline in math and reading scores in many countries," the report said.

As for gender equality, it said the world continues to lag: One in five girls still marry before age 18, violence against women persists, far too many women don't have the right to decide on their sexual and reproductive health — and at current rates it will take 176 years for women to reach parity with men in management positions.

Guterres said the report also has "some glimmers of hope."

Mobile broadband is accessible to 95% of the world's population, up from 78% in 2015. Global capacity to generate electricity from renewable has been expanding at an unprecedented 8.1% annually for past five years, the report said.

Increased access to treatment has averted 20.8 million AIDS-related deaths in the past three decades. New malaria vaccines being rolled out could save millions of lives. Girls in most regions are now achieving parity with boys in education. And many women are breaking glass ceilings, it said.

"But the speed and scale of the change needed for sustainable development is still far too slow," Guterres said.

He called for action to end wars from Gaza to Ukraine, Sudan and beyond, "and to pivot from spending on destruction and war to investing in people and peace."

The secretary-general also called for greater action to combat climate change and on "the green and digital transitions."

According to the report, there is a \$4 trillion annual gap in the investments needed to help developing countries reach the sustainable development goals.

Guterres called for stepped-up efforts to deliver the resources and also to reduce debt pressures and debt servicing costs, to expand access to contingency financing for countries at risk of a cash flow crisis, and to multiply the lending capacity of the World Bank and other development banks.

"We must not let up on our promises — to end poverty, protect the planet and leave no one behind," the secretary-general said.

Ukrainians held prisoner for years in Russia return to Kyiv

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ten Ukrainians who had been held prisoner for years were released from Russian captivity Friday with the mediation of the Vatican, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Part of the group arrived overnight by helicopter at Kyiv International Airport, which has been closed since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. It was the first time in over two years the airport received passengers. The rest of the group arrived by bus.

Some of the released civilians had been captured before Russia's invasion. It's a rare occasion when people detained after 2014, when Russia illegally annexed the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, were released.

Among the freed was Nariman Dzhelyal, deputy head of the Mejlis, a representative body of Crimean Tatars that was relocated to Kyiv after Russia seized the peninsula. He was taken from Crimea, where he lived despite the annexation, one year before the war.

"I was in captivity, where many Ukrainians remain," he said. "We cannot leave them there, because the conditions, both psychological and physical, are very frightening there."

In the main hall of the airport, where pre-war advertisements still hang, former prisoners wrapped in blue and yellow flags reunited with their families and called those who couldn't be there. For some, the separation had lasted many years.

"I really want to hug you. I'll be with you soon, Mommy," said Isabella Pekh, the daughter of freed art historian Olena Pekh, through a video call. "I'm so sorry I couldn't meet you."

For almost six years, Isabella Pekh spoke at international conferences and appealed to foreign ambassadors for help in freeing her mother, who was detained in the occupied part of the Donetsk region.

Eventually, her efforts succeeded.

"It was six years of hell that words cannot describe. But I knew I had my homeland, I had people who loved me, I had my daughter," said Olena Pekh.

Two priests were also among those who returned Friday. One of them, Bohdan Heleta, was detained in 2022 inside his church in the occupied city of Berdiansk in the Zaporizhzhia region.

According to Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 3,310 Ukrainians have already been released from Russian captivity. But many thousands, both civilians and military personnel, remain imprisoned.

Russia presses its offensive in Ukraine and issues new threats as the West tries to blunt the push

By The Associated Press undefined

Slowly but steadily this summer, Russian troops are forging through Ukraine's outgunned and undermanned defenses in a relentless onslaught, prompting the West to push for new weapons and strategies to shore up Kyiv.

That, in turn, has brought new threats by President Vladimir Putin to retaliate against the West — either directly or indirectly.

The moves by the West to blunt the offensive and the potential Kremlin response could lead to a dangerous escalation as the war drags through its third year — one that further raises the peril of a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO.

Russia's probing offensive

Russia took advantage of its edge in firepower amid delays in U.S. aid to scale up attacks in several areas along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front. Relatively small units are probing Ukrainian defenses for weak spots, potentially setting the stage for a more ambitious push.

Russia's offensive near Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, that began in May and worried Kyiv's Western allies has apparently lost momentum after the Ukrainian army bolstered its forces in the area by redeploying troops from other sectors.

Meanwhile, Russia has made incremental but steady advances in the Donetsk region, including around the strategic hilltop town of Chasiv Yar, a gateway to parts of Donetsk still under Ukrainian control. Analysts say the fall of Chasiv Yar would threaten the key military hubs of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

Putin declared that Moscow wasn't seeking quick gains and would stick to the current strategy of advancing slowly.

Jack Watling of the Royal United Services Institute said that by stretching Ukrainian forces along a wide front, Russia is overcoming the limitations of its military that lacks the size and training for a major offensive.

The breadth of the strikes has forced Ukraine to spread out its artillery, "expending munitions to break up successive Russian attacks," he said in an analysis. "Russia's aim is not to achieve a grand breakthrough but rather to convince Ukraine that it can keep up an inexorable advance, kilometer by kilometer, along the front."

Michael Kofman of the Carnegie Endowment said Russia's apparent goal is to maintain pressure and try to stretch out Ukraine's forces. He noted that even though Ukraine managed to stabilize the front line, it had to use reserves intended to be deployed elsewhere.

"It will take more and more time to actually regenerate Ukraine's combat strength because of that," he said in a recent podcast.

Moscow also has stepped up airstrikes on Ukraine's energy facilities and other vital infrastructure with waves of missiles and drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the country had lost about 80% of its thermal power and one-third of its hydroelectric power in the strikes.

"This will be a growing problem when we talk about the future Ukraine's economic viability," Kofman said.

Watling said the shortage of air defenses is giving Ukraine a difficult choice between concentrating them

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 36 of 83

to safeguard critical infrastructure, or protecting troops on the front.

"The persistence of Russia's long-range strike campaign means that not only is the front being stretched laterally, but it is also being extended in its depth," he said.

The West responds, the Kremlin counters

Washington and some NATO allies have responded to the offensive by allowing Kyiv to use Western weapons for limited strikes inside Russia. The U.S. has allowed Ukraine to use American weapons against military targets in Russia near Kharkiv and elsewhere near the border, but, to Kyiv's dismay, Washington so far hasn't given permission for strikes deeper in Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron and some other Western officials argue that Kyiv has the right to use their equipment to attack military assets anywhere in Russia. There also has been talk by Macron and the leaders of NATO's Baltic members — but not the U.S. — of deploying troops to Ukraine.

Putin warns that this would be a major escalation, and he threatened to retaliate by providing weapons to Western adversaries elsewhere in the world.

He reinforced that argument by signing a mutual defense pact with North Korea in June and holding the door open for arms supplies to Pyongyang.

He declared that just as the West says Ukraine can decide how to use Western weapons, Moscow could provide arms to North Korea and "similarly say that we supply something to somebody but have no control over what happens afterward" — an apparent hint at Pyongyang's role as arms trader.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, noted Moscow could arm anyone who considers the U.S. and its allies their enemies, "regardless of their political beliefs and international recognition."

Another threat of escalation followed a Ukrainian attack with U.S.-made ATACMS missiles that killed four and injured over 150 in Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. Russia's Defense Ministry warned it could take unspecified measures against U.S. drones over the Black Sea that provide intelligence to Ukraine.

The nuclear threat and Putin's long game

Putin said it was wrong for NATO to assume that Russia won't use its nuclear arsenal, reaffirming it will use "all means" if its sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened.

He also warned that Moscow was pondering possible changes to its doctrine that specifies when it resorts to nuclear weapons.

Underscoring that, Russia held military drills with battlefield nuclear weapons involving Belarus. Last year, Moscow deployed some of those weapons to Belarus to try to discourage Western military support for Ukraine.

A military defeat in Ukraine, Putin said, would deal a deadly blow to Russian statehood, and he vowed to press his goals "to the end."

He declared that for Russia to halt the fighting, Ukraine must withdraw its troops from the four regions that Moscow annexed in 2022, an idea Kyiv and its allies dismissed. He also said Ukraine must abandon its bid to join NATO.

Hawkish Russian commentators criticized Putin for failing to respond forcefully to NATO ramping up support for Kyiv and allowing the West to continuously push back Russia's red lines. Some argued that if the damage grows from Ukrainian strikes deep inside Russia with longer-range Western missiles, Moscow should hit NATO assets.

Vasily Kashin, a Moscow-based defense analyst, noted that while Ukraine already had used Western weapons to inflict limited damage, Putin will "have to do something if there are cruise missile strikes deep inside Russian territory resulting in significant casualties."

Russia could respond by targeting Western drones or U.S. spy satellites, or also strike some NATO countries' assets in overseas territories to minimize triggering an all-out conflict with the alliance, Kashin said.

Other Russian commentators argued, however, that such action fraught with triggering a direct conflict with NATO isn't in Moscow's interests.

Moscow-based security analyst Sergei Poletaev said the Kremlin aims to steadily drain Ukrainian resources

to force Kyiv into accepting a peace deal on Russia's terms.

While nothing spectacular is happening on the front line, he said, "constant dropping wears away a stone." Moscow's military advantage allows it to "maintain pressure along the entire front line and make new advances while waiting for Ukraine to break down," he said in a commentary

Lacking the resources for a major offensive, the Kremlin has opted for slow advances, aiming to "keep pressure on Ukraine while warding off the West from direct involvement in hostilities," Poletaev said.

"We must walk the razor's edge between our victory and a nuclear war," he said.

The brutal killing of a Detroit man in 1982 inspires decades of Asian American activism nationwide

By RYAN DOAN-NGUYEN Associated Press

Two white autoworkers bludgeoned 27-year-old Chinese American Vincent Chin to death with a baseball bat during his bachelor party in Detroit in 1982, but his loved ones' cries for justice fell on deaf ears.

Twelve days passed before any media outlets reported Chin's killing by men who blamed Asian manufacturers for the downfall of the city's mainstay auto industry, and none acknowledged the racism in his killing at the time. The defendants pleaded guilty to manslaughter and were sentenced to three years' probation. Circuit Judge Charles Kaufman reasoned, "These aren't the kind of men you send to jail."

The injustice spurred Asian Americans to unite across ethnic and cultural lines. Hundreds protested the trial's outcome in downtown Detroit. Chin's mother traveled the country sharing his story and pushing for a federal civil rights prosecution.

More than four decades later, activists still fight to ensure Chin is not forgotten, saying his story inspires advocacy nationwide. Law students reenact his trial, Hollywood adapted his story into a movie and Asian Americans remember the impact of his killing on their struggle for racial justice and equality.

"For a whole generation of Asian American activists, the Vincent Chin case was the case that got them involved," says writer and filmmaker Curtis Chin. "It was the thing that brought them to the table."

A chorus of Asian American voices

After the judge spared Vincent Chin's killers, Curtis Chin — then 14 — grabbed his parents' typewriter and wrote outraged letters to newspaper editors. He had found his calling.

Instead of taking over his family's Chinese restaurant, Curtis Chin — who is not related to the man killed on June 23, 1982 — spent the next 30 years elevating Asian American voices, and recounting Vincent Chin's story and the racism of 1980s Detroit.

For Helen Zia, an Asian American activist who moved to Detroit in the 1970s, Chin's case laid bare the glaring injustices that her community faced.

Lacking any local organizations to advocate for Asian American civil rights, Zia co-founded the American Citizens for Justice, which helped to secure a federal trial against Chin's killers. One was acquitted of civil rights violations and the other was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison. His conviction was overturned on appeal.

On June 20, the FBI released a 602-page file on Chin's death, revealing previously unseen witness interviews with descriptions of his final moments and the anti-Asian slurs his attackers used, among other details. Activists told the Detroit Free Press, which first reported on the FBI documents, that they were not notified about the file, and the agency did not provide a reason for its release.

Last year, Zia launched the Vincent Chin Institute, an advocacy organization to counter hatred against Asian Americans.

Chin's case has had an impact beyond advocacy. Students at Harvard Law School have reenacted the trials of his attackers to highlight shortcomings in the legal system. And his killing has inspired documentaries, a podcast and a movie, "Who Killed Vincent Chin?"

Vincent Chin was a victim of brutal, racial violence, but from that tragedy emerged "a chorus of Asian American voices," Curtis Chin says.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 38 of 83

Considerable work ahead

The autoworkers who attacked Chin blamed foreign vehicle manufacturers for hardships in the U.S. auto industry.

This fear of foreign economic threat parallels modern "anti-China hysteria and scapegoating," says Stop AAPI Hate co-founder Cynthia Choi, pointing to attacks on Asians by people accusing them of culpability in the COVID-19 pandemic.

"What's different for our community today is that we are speaking out. We are speaking out loudly," Choi says.

Established in 2020, Stop AAPI Hate advocates for policy change and collects comprehensive data on acts of hatred against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The group has documented thousands of cases nationwide, including verbal and physical abuse, and discrimination in business and education.

"Close to 50% of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders reported that they experienced some form of race-based hate in the past year," Choi says.

Advocates say there's still considerable work to be done.

No comprehensive history of Asian Americans is included in core K-12 curricula. Asked to name a prominent Asian American in a recent survey, most Americans responded "I can't think of one" or Jackie Chan, who is not American.

"We don't even exist to most Americans," Zia says, citing lack of visibility as a key driver in the perpetuation of Asian American stereotypes.

John Yang, the president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, underscores the damage of stereotypes.

"In terms of job opportunities, we are pigeonholed as perpetual foreigners," Yang says. "Asian Americans don't get promoted at the same rate. We don't occupy C-suites. We don't occupy boards in the same way that other Americans do."

Discrimination also extends to housing. The Urban Institute, a think tank that conducts economic and policy research, reports that Asian American buyers are shown 18.8% fewer properties overall compared to white buyers. Yet the stereotype of Asian Americans as the model minority leads some fair housing advocates to exclude Asian Americans from their efforts.

"Everyone is concerned about whether an Asian American is truly an American, and so they're not being shown the same houses," Yang says. "They're not being afforded the same opportunities."

Standing on the shoulders of giants

On Sunday, dozens of residents stood with their heads bowed beneath Boston's Chinatown gate to remember Chin. Wearing T-shirts reading "STOP ASIAN HATE," they arranged candles in the shape of a heart and displayed a portrait of Chin with his name written in Chinese and "May 18, 1955 - June 23, 1982."

Wilson Lee, co-founder of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance Boston Lodge and the Chinese American Heritage Foundation, said he and his wife have organized a vigil for Chin every June 23 for six years. Even as media attention faded, their dedication to Chin's memory has not wavered.

"We're in it for the long haul," Lee says. "Because it's the right thing to do, not because it's the popular thing to do."

A collection of local dignitaries joined the remembrance, as did 16 Asian American elementary and high school students whom Lee described as "stakeholders." They held orange lilies and yellow flowers pressed to their chests.

"We need to make sure that future generations, especially our young people, know about the experience that he went through," Lee says. "They are standing on the shoulders of giants, and Vincent Chin was a giant."

The Saipan surprise: How delicate talks led to the unlikely end of Julian Assange's 12-year saga

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About a year and a half ago, a lawyer for Julian Assange presented federal prosecutors in Virginia with a longshot request: Dismiss the case against the WikiLeaks founder.

It was a bold ask given that Assange had published hundreds of thousands of secret documents and was arguably the highest-profile detainee in the world facing a U.S. government extradition request. By that point, the Justice Department had been engaged in a protracted fight in British courts to send him to the United States for trial.

Yet from that request, recounted by a person familiar with the matter, were the seeds that led to Wednesday's unthinkable moment: Assange stepping out of a U.S. courthouse on a remote Western Pacific island, beginning his journey home after being holed up in self-exile and prison for a dozen years.

"How does it feel to be a free man, Mr. Assange?" someone shouted.

He smiled and nodded and kept walking. There was another flight to catch to take him home to Australia.

The plea deal unfolded against the backdrop of a plodding extradition process that produced no guarantee the self-styled free speech advocate would ever be transferred for prosecution and a recognition by U.S. officials of the more than five years he'd already served in a British prison. By the end, a series of proposals and counterproposals were made to resolve points of division: the Justice Department's desire for a felony guilty plea and Assange's refusal to step foot in the continental U.S., where he envisioned any number of potential cataclysmic scenarios for himself.

The agreement also included safety valves that would ensure Assange's liberty in Australia in the unlikely event a judge rejected it at the last minute.

This report is based on interviews with people familiar with the negotiations and overall case who spoke with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the process, as well as a review of court records.

Assange's release in the unlikely location of Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands, concluded a polarizing legal saga that spanned three presidential administrations and multiple continents.

It would have been unthinkable five years ago.

That's when the Justice Department unsealed charges as British authorities hauled a bearded and shouting Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy where he'd been holed up for the prior seven years. Assange took refuge in 2012 after being released on bail while facing extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations that were later dropped.

He remained there, fearing arrest and extradition to the U.S. in connection with the receipt and publication by WikiLeaks of hundreds of thousands of war logs and diplomatic cables that American prosecutors say he conspired with Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to illegally obtain.

At the time of his indictment, Assange was perhaps better well-known for WikiLeaks' involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential contest when the secret-spilling website released tranches of damaging emails about Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton that were stolen by Russian military intelligence officers in what officials said was brazen election interference by Moscow.

The releases prompted Trump to memorably proclaim during the campaign: "WikiLeaks, I love WikiLeaks."

The view was different inside the Justice Department that Trump would soon lead. Attorney General Jeff Sessions in 2017 called the arrest of Assange a priority amid a crackdown on leaks of classified information.

The crime at issue wasn't the hack-and-dump election interference but the diplomatic cables from years earlier. The Obama administration had had extensive debate about charging Assange but did not pursue an indictment under the Espionage Act — which criminalizes the mishandling of national defense information — in part over concerns it could be viewed as an attack on journalism.

But the Justice Department in the Trump administration took a different tack. The existence of a criminal case was inadvertently revealed by a filing error in 2018. The first narrowly tailored charge to be unsealed months later was a computer intrusion count that accused him of conspiring with Manning to crack a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 40 of 83

password that gave her higher-level access to classified computer networks.

Within weeks, the department disclosed 17 other counts that accused him of violating the Espionage Act by obtaining and disseminating the secret records.

Prosecutors say he crossed the line by soliciting the hacking of computer networks for classified information and by indiscriminately publishing secrets, including the unredacted names of sources who provided information to U.S. military forces. Assange's supporters have for years maintained that he provided an invaluable public service by exposing military misconduct in America's foreign wars, much the same way journalists are tasked with doing.

The case wasn't easy legally. It also had logistical complications.

With Assange jailed in London's Belmarsh prison, the Justice Department tried, fitfully, to secure his extradition — a multi-step process involving judges who, along with Assange, sought assurances that he could attempt to defend himself by invoking the First Amendment protections enjoyed in America.

With the prospects for Assange's transfer in the balance, his team saw the presence of a more press-friendly attorney general, Merrick Garland, as a potential opening to try for a resolution in the case.

About a year and a half ago, in the first substantive communications between the two sides, an Assange lawyer made a presentation to Justice Department prosecutors in Virginia seeking the indictment's dismissal. The prosecutors listened, and though the idea was unworkable, returned months later with a counteroffer: Would Assange consider a guilty plea?

The Assange team responded that it was open to exploring that possibility but had two lines in the sand about what a resolution would need to entail. He would not accept any additional prison time, nor set foot on U.S. soil given the anxieties shared by him and his supporters about what the American government might do to him.

Assange's lawyers broached the idea of a misdemeanor plea, which under federal court rules could be entered remotely without Assange having to travel to America.

When that idea couldn't cross the finish line, the two sides discussed the possibility of WikiLeaks as an organization pleading guilty to a felony and Assange to a misdemeanor, said one of the people, describing an overall effort by both sides "to get to yes."

The negotiations were largely held with prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia, where the case was charged, but then in the final months with Justice Department national security officials.

Department officials who wanted an Assange felony plea ultimately signaled respect for his core demands by floating a concept in which he could enter the deal outside the 50 states, avoid additional prison and be released from custody in Britain, the person said.

That "concept then led to several weeks of serious back-and-forth," said the person. There were a limited number of locations that fit that criteria — Guam is one — but Saipan was selected.

"The Justice Department reaches a resolution in plea matters when the Justice Department believes it can reach a resolution that serves the best interests of the United States. That's what we've done here," Garland said at an unrelated news conference Thursday when asked why the department resolved the case.

From the Justice Department's perspective, the more than five years he spent in a high-security British prison was in line, or potentially even greater, than a sentence he might have received in the U.S.

All the while, the extradition process was strained and slow-moving.

In March, a British court ruled that Assange could not be extradited unless U.S. authorities guaranteed he wouldn't get the death penalty and could use the same free-speech defense as a U.S. citizen would.

The U.S. provided those assurances. But Assange's lawyers accepted only that he wouldn't face capital punishment and said the assurance that Assange could "raise and seek to rely upon" the First Amendment fell short of the protections he deserved. Last month, a court held that he could appeal his extradition order after judges said the U.S. had given "blatantly inadequate" assurances.

Importantly, built into the plea deal was a set of contingencies in the event the judge did not approve it. That included a condition permitting Assange to withdraw from the deal and return home to Australia as the two sides had a limited window to try to negotiate a new result to achieve the same outcome.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 41 of 83

And if the judge insisted on detaining him, the Justice Department agreed to dismiss the Saipan charge. Behind the scenes, Australian officials were agitating for his release, with the government asking the Justice Department in an April letter to consider a plea deal to end the case, one person familiar with the matter said. President Joe Biden told reporters that month that his administration was "considering" dropping the case. A White House official this week said the White House had nothing to do with the plea agreement.

The deal with the U.S. was reached on June 19, according to London's High Court, one of many behind-the-scenes actions that led to Assange's freedom.

That same day, his wife, Stella Assange, stood in front of a camera outside Belmarsh Prison in London and recorded a video in which she said she expected her husband to soon be at the end of his long ordeal.

"This period of our lives, I'm confident now, has come to an end," she said.

The video was not released until almost a week later when Assange was in the air Tuesday on his way to Saipan and after word of the plea deal had gotten out.

"If you're seeing this, it means he is out," WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson said in the same video.

On Wednesday morning, Saipan — a rural Pacific island, the theater of a World War II battle between the U.S. and Japan and, more recently, a scuba diving destination with lush golf courses — became the unlikely site of a history-making coda to a sensational case.

After a marathon flight from London to Bangkok to the final destination, Assange arrived Wednesday morning at the island's grand federal courthouse. Opened four years ago, it boasts towering pillars and impressive seaside views.

The white-haired Assange strode into the courthouse wearing a dark suit with a gold-colored tie loosened at the neck. Inside the courtroom, he appeared relaxed, donning glasses as he perused documents and cracking an occasional joke. When the judge asked if he was satisfied with the plea deal, he replied, "It might depend on the outcome," sparking laughter in the courtroom.

After the plea, the judge pronounced him a "free man" and Assange headed home to Australia where he was reunited with his wife and father, John Shipton, who earlier in the week told the Australia Broadcasting Corporation that "doing cartwheels is a good expression of the joy that one feels."

He said his son would now be able "to walk up and down the beach and feel the sand through his toes in winter, that lovely chill, and be able to learn how to be patient and play with your children for a couple of hours. All of the great beauty of ordinary life."

As for Assange, his future in Australia remains certain. He avoided the media at a news conference Thursday where his wife suggested he was looking forward to smaller pleasures.

"Julian plans to swim in the ocean every day," she said. "He plans to sleep in a real bed. He plans to taste real food, and he plans to enjoy his freedom."

Doug Burgum vetoed anti-LGBTQ measures while governor. Then he started running for president

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — For most of North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum's two terms in office, he approached the job like a CEO running a business.

The wealthy former software executive, now on a shortlist to be Donald Trump's running mate, was laser-focused on priorities like strengthening the state's economy and cutting taxes. He mostly steered clear of social issues that animated many fellow Republicans, and he sometimes pushed back on them.

In 2020, Burgum criticized an anti-LGBTQ resolution of the state GOP as "hurtful and divisive rhetoric." He vetoed a 2021 measure to ban transgender girls from playing on girls' teams in public schools, saying it "would unnecessarily inject the state into a local issue by creating a ban with myriad unforeseen consequences." In 2023, Burgum vetoed a bill he said would make teachers into "pronoun police."

But as Burgum prepared a bid for the presidency that spring, he also signed a sheaf of bills that imposed

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 42 of 83

restrictions on transgender people — including two that were nearly identical to the sports ban he vetoed in 2021. Another bill banned gender-affirming medical treatments for kids, and he signed a measure that had provisions nearly identical to parts of the pronoun bill he had vetoed earlier in 2023. Burgum also signed a book ban bill, though he did veto a second, further-reaching one. Opponents decried both bills for targeting LGBTQ themes.

While conservatives cheered, others close to Burgum — who applaud what they call his independent streak and inclusivity as a leader — said the 2023 bill signings were disappointing and marked a shift as the governor entered the national stage. Some saw Burgum's willingness to support the measures as an attempt to gain traction among Republicans as he eyed a presidential campaign, or as a response to action in other GOP-led states.

State Rep. Emily O'Brien, a moderate Republican who opposed the bills but supported Burgum's presidential bid, said it was shocking Burgum signed them because of his business mentality of "trying to move the needle" and improve government, not drive social issues.

"Social issues aren't helping move the needle — economic development, quality of life ... in his words, 'treating the taxpayers like customers,'" she said. "I think it's, you know, that business-model mentality of 'No matter who comes through the door, you treat them with respect.'"

Burgum, through a spokesman, declined an interview request for this story. He told The Bismarck Tribune after the 2023 session — Burgum's last regular legislative session as governor — that with Republicans holding enough seats in the state Legislature to override his vetoes, he had to "pick his spots." He also bemoaned the time and energy spent on social issues as "a missed opportunity."

"I talk to real people, creating real jobs, building real companies and hiring people, and some of the things the Legislature is focused on is not what the citizens are focused on," Burgum said.

Caedmon Marx, of Bismarck, repeatedly testified against the anti-trans bills when they were before the Legislature. Marx previously viewed Burgum as someone in the political middle, who had North Dakota's best interests in mind.

"After last session, it was kind of someone with his own interests in mind and his own political gain," said Marx, whose boyfriend, a transgender man, moved to Minnesota earlier this year due to the new laws.

Who is Doug Burgum?

Burgum, 67, grew up in tiny Arthur, North Dakota. After earning a master's of business administration from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, Burgum went on to lead Great Plains Software. In 2001, Microsoft acquired the company for \$1.1 billion, and Burgum stayed on as a vice president until 2007. He's led other companies in real estate development and venture capital.

When he launched his 2016 bid for governor, Burgum's announcement — like other speeches he gives — felt like a TED Talk, complete with a slideshow and lacking a lectern. Burgum ran on a vision of "re-inventing" government as the state faced a \$1 billion revenue shortfall that drained reserves. He defeated North Dakota's longtime attorney general in the GOP primary, a major upset.

Burgum is a policy wonk who can speak at length about subjects important to him — his recent State of the State address was two hours long — such as advancing carbon capture or reducing regulations. Sometimes he visibly chokes up when discussing serious topics, such as his wife Kathryn's recovery from addiction.

He's a huge fan of North Dakota State University football and might sprinkle a so-called dad joke into a speech. But people who have worked with him as governor say he's also extremely inquisitive and works long hours.

When former policy adviser Sean Cleary was dating his now-wife in 2019, he sometimes returned to the Capitol after their dates to work for a few hours until as late as 11 p.m. or midnight, he said.

Former Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford recalled a late-night meeting where Burgum looked at him and others in the room at 1 a.m. and said enthusiastically, "Isn't this fun, doing the work for North Dakota?"

Business focus shifts

Most often, Burgum was advocating business-oriented priorities: income tax cuts, updates to state government websites, cybersecurity enhancements, attracting capital to the state and rejiggering the early

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 43 of 83

budgeting process with state agencies.

He's touted a data-driven approach to problems and frequently talks about "innovation over regulation."

Burgum entered office during the often-chaotic protests of the Dakota Access oil pipeline, the controversial project long opposed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. Sanford said Burgum displayed courage and listening amid the controversy, inviting the tribal chairman to his office, and hosting a listening session on the tribe's reservation. In 2019, he announced the display of tribal flags near the entrance to the governor's state Capitol office, a legislative push for years.

Today, North Dakota's finances are in healthy shape. The 2020 census found the state as one of the fastest-growing. North Dakota was tied with South Dakota for the lowest unemployment rate in the U.S., at 2% in May.

Burgum has had to work with a Legislature that in recent years has focused more on social-issue legislation, and has approved more of those types of bills than in previous sessions. The North Dakota Legislature meets for regular session only in odd-numbered years.

Two book ban bills passed the Legislature last year. He signed one that targeted "explicit sexual material" in public libraries' children's collections and required those libraries to have policies for reviewing their collections, with a "compliance report" for lawmakers. But he vetoed the other bill, which he said went too far in "criminalizing potential disagreements" over certain content, and had no money for libraries to review their materials.

In 2023, Burgum also signed one of the strictest abortion bans in the U.S. The bill largely revised or reorganized North Dakota's myriad abortion laws after the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*. North Dakota's ban outlaws abortion with few exceptions: in cases of rape or incest up to six weeks gestation, or to prevent the death of or "a serious health risk" to the mother.

That law and the ban on gender-affirming care for kids are both the subject of ongoing lawsuits. Burgum has not been outspoken on abortion or transgender issues.

'Why did you do it?'

After the state GOP's anti-LGBTQ resolution gained attention in 2020, Burgum telephoned the state's first openly gay lawmaker, then the House minority leader, to say he disagreed with it.

Democratic state Rep. Josh Boschee said Burgum told him he would work to keep the resolution out of policy and to ensure North Dakota remained "an open and inclusive state, because that's one of the values that he has," Boschee said. Burgum also shared personal stories about LGBTQ people he knows who have had a positive impact on him, said Boschee, who called it a good conversation.

But during the 2023 session, as Burgum planned his presidential campaign, Boschee said he sensed "the independence I think many of us admired about him" was going away.

"He had to shore up that base," Boschee said. "When you are going to the national stage, you know, other people wouldn't know that nuance. They would see that he signed and he'd be able to say he did these things if he wanted to say it out loud."

Burgum doesn't appear to have run for president on those bills or touted them in rallies, "so then it's why did you do it?" Boschee said. "Was it to get inside the orbit so you didn't have to worry about it, and now you can stand behind it if you need to?"

The authentic Doug Burgum begins a speech with gratitude before diving into energy and tax policy, he said.

"I have a lot of positive things to say about Gov. Burgum because of the man I know him to be, which makes it extremely disappointing to see the man he has become in the last several months," in "the way that he has attached himself to Donald Trump now," Boschee said.

In Georgia, conservatives seek to have voters removed from rolls without official challenges

By JEFF AMY and TRENTON DANIEL Associated Press

WOODSTOCK, Ga. (AP) — Conservative activists in Georgia and some other states are quietly pushing a way to remove names from the voting rolls without filing a formal legal challenge.

They're asking election administrators to use their data to purge voter registrations, which means names could be removed in a less public process than a formal voter challenge. The strategy could mean electors won't be summoned in advance to defend their voting rights and the identities of those seeking to purge voters might not be routinely public.

Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office insists any living voter stricken from the rolls must be notified. But because Georgia has 159 counties and no formal statewide rules governing these less formal inquiries, it's unclear how every county will react. People removed in error could vote a provisional ballot, but local officials might count those votes only in exceptional cases.

The strategy is expanding even as a new Georgia law takes effect Monday that could lead to counties removing a larger share of voters using formal voter challenges.

That law already has been met with alarm by Democrats and voting rights advocates. They view the hundreds of thousands of voter challenges filed since 2020 as part of Georgia's long history of blocking voting dating back to slavery. Now, as details of below-radar efforts surface, those advocates fear a double-barreled attack on voting.

"There's built-in transparency into the challenge process, and some level of voter protection in that notice requirements and hearings are required," said state Rep. Saira Draper, an Atlanta Democrat and Joe Biden's 2020 state director of voter protection. "You can't sidestep that by just unofficially challenging people and saying it's not a challenge because we're not calling it a challenge."

The less-formal approach has worked at least once. In suburban Atlanta's Cobb County, the county removed some voters after a man sent inquiries listing 245 potentially dead people.

"All we're doing is a free service. Hey, this group of 500 people, or this group of 800 people said they moved. Maybe you should look into it," Jason Frazier, a Republican who has formally challenged nearly 10,000 voters in Atlanta's heavily Democratic Fulton County, said during a presentation Friday.

The effort is one prong of a wide-ranging national effort coordinated by Donald Trump allies to take names from rolls.

An Associated Press survey of Georgia's 40 largest counties finds more than 18,000 voters have been challenged in 2023 and 2024, although counties rejected most challenges. Election officials predict challenges will surge under the new law.

Most controversially, that law says officials can use as evidence the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address list showing people have moved, although not as the sole reason for removing voters. Opponents slam that list as unreliable.

It's unclear how much change the law will bring because the state hasn't issued guidelines to counties on handling challenges.

County officials routinely remove voters who are dead, convicted of felonies, mentally incompetent or no longer living in Georgia, using lists provided by the secretary of state's office.

For people who have moved, federal law says Georgia can only cancel an inactive registration if a voter doesn't respond to a mailing and then doesn't vote in two following federal general elections. That process takes years.

Activists fueled by Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen say state cleanup efforts are woefully inadequate and inaccuracies invite fraud. Douglas Frank, a former teacher traveling the country peddling election conspiracy theories, urged Georgians to use software called EagleAI to file challenges this spring.

"You have the constitutional right to challenge any other voter in your county," Frank said at Cherokee County Republican headquarters in Woodstock. "In fact, it's not merely your right. It's your duty to clean the voter rolls."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 45 of 83

Texas-based True the Vote challenged 364,000 Georgia voters prior to two U.S. Senate runoffs in 2021. Individuals and groups have since challenged many more. Election officials say many challenges are powered by EagleAI. The tool was created by Dr. John "Rick" Richards Jr., a retired physician and entrepreneur who lives in suburban Augusta's Columbia County.

Richards said in a Wednesday interview that people using his software are citizen volunteers, likening the work of finding ineligible voters to picking up roadside trash.

"No one is going to be denied the right to vote," Richards said. "That's a bunch of hooley."

In online meetings and in-person appearances over the past year, Richards has pushed EagleAI as a sophisticated platform to cleanse dirty voter lists. The Associated Press found the platform is funded and used by supporters of Trump, some of whom worked to overturn the 2020 vote, and entwined with the Republican's campaign.

An EagleAI document last year touted the system's "use of AI" and "multitiered algorithms" to cleanse dirty voter lists, but Richards now says there is no artificial intelligence at work. The software instead draws in part from a database of "suspicious" voters hand-built by conservative activists, the AP found.

Over past months, an AP reporter joined online meetings publicized among activists before eventually being asked to leave. The AP also obtained additional meeting videos to glean a behind-the-scenes look at how the software is used in states including Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Nevada and Ohio.

"The left will hate this — hate this. But we love it," Cleta Mitchell, a frequent participant, said during one presentation. Mitchell is a GOP election attorney who took part in the call when Trump implored Raffensperger to "find" more votes in the 2020 election. While Trump was indicted in Georgia for the call, Mitchell was not. Mitchell now is a leader in multiple organizations pushing to purge voting rolls.

Richards called Mitchell's affiliations "irrelevant."

"This has nothing to do whatsoever with the 2020 election — has nothing to do with the current politicians," he said. "It has to do with what's right is right."

Richards' hometown election board in Columbia County agreed in December to buy EagleAI software, the only Georgia government known to have done so.

The county agreed to pay \$2,000, saying EagleAI would help maintain its voter list but wouldn't be "the sole means to remove a voter." But the deal stalled because Richards hasn't returned a signed contract. He said elections officials have been too busy thus far to use the contract's 90-day training period.

Eugene Williams, an active voter challenger and EagleAI user, emailed Cobb County Elections Director Tate Fall three lists totaling 245 potentially dead voters in December, January and March, citing obituaries.

"When we investigated, most of them had already been removed from the voter roll," Fall told the AP. "But we have removed voters based on the data that he sent us."

However, she added no voter would be removed without evidence and a vote by the county election board.

Others are pushing election officials to act using software other than EagleAI. True the Vote says its IV3 tool has highlighted 317,886 "invalid voter records."

Mitchell has repeatedly urged allies to befriend officials, including on a 2023 EagleAI call with Richards.

She suggested asking officials: "How can we help you? What are the things that you wish you had that you don't have?" And they always say more money and more people. Well, you can say, "We have people, and we're here to help you."

Biden concedes debate fumbles but declares he will defend democracy. Dems stick by him — for now

By ZEKE MILLER, STEVE PEOPLES and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden worked forcefully Friday to quell Democratic anxieties over his unsteady showing in his debate with former President Donald Trump, as elected members of his party closed ranks around him in an effort to shut down talk of replacing him atop the ticket.

Biden's halting delivery and meandering comments, particularly early in the debate, fueled concerns

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 46 of 83

from even members of his own party that at age 81 he's not up for the task of leading the country for another four years. It created a crisis moment for Biden's campaign and his presidency, as members of his party flirted with potential replacements, and donors and supporters couldn't contain their concern about his showing against Trump.

Biden appeared to acknowledge the criticism during a rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, saying "I don't debate as well as I used to." But he added, "I know how to do this job. I know how to get things done." Speaking for 18 minutes, Biden appeared far more animated than he had the night before as he excoriated Trump for his "lies" and for waging a campaign aimed at "revenge and retribution."

"The choice in this election is simple," Biden said. "Donald Trump will destroy our democracy. I will defend it."

He added, alluding to his candidacy, "When you get knocked down, you get back up."

First lady Jill Biden, at a Friday evening fundraiser in New York City, said her husband told her after the debate, "I don't know what happened. I didn't feel that great." But she seconded the president in stressing that he tells the truth and he bounces back from adversity.

Even before the debate, Biden's age had been a liability with voters, and Thursday night's faceoff appeared to reinforce the public's deep-seated concerns before perhaps the largest audience he will garner in the four months until Election Day.

Privately, his campaign worked to tamp down concerns and keep donors and surrogates on board. Democratic lawmakers on Friday acknowledged Biden's poor showing, but tried to stop talk of replacing him as their standard-bearer, and instead shift the focus to Trump's attacks and falsehoods.

"Well, the president didn't have a good night, but neither did Donald Trump with lie after lie and his dark vision for America," North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper told The Associated Press on Friday, hours before he introduced the president in Raleigh. "We cannot send Donald Trump back to the White House. He's an existential threat to our nation."

Former President Barack Obama backed up his former vice president, posting on X that "Bad debate nights happen." Alluding to his own poor showing in the first debate of his reelection campaign in 2012, Obama continued, "Trust me, I know. But this election is still a choice between someone who has fought for ordinary folks his entire life and someone who only cares about himself."

He added: "Last night didn't change that, and it's why so much is at stake in November."

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries answered with a flat "no" when asked Friday if Biden should step aside.

Rep. Ritchie Torres, D-N.Y., allowed he "had to take a few more antidepressants than usual" after Biden's debate showing.

But he added that "a Donald Trump presidency would cause me far greater discomfort than a Joe Biden debate performance."

Biden's campaign billed the Raleigh event as the largest-yet rally of his reelection bid in the state Trump carried by the narrowest margin in 2020. He then traveled to New York for a weekend of big-dollar fundraisers that his campaign now needs more than ever.

Biden's campaign announced that it raised \$14 million on debate day and the morning after, while Trump's campaign said it raised more than \$8 million from the start of the debate through the end of the night.

Vice President Kamala Harris, whom the Biden campaign sent out to defend his performance, tried to reassure Biden supporters at a rally in Las Vegas on Friday, saying, "This race will not be decided by one night in June."

"This race will be decided by you. By us," she said. "Who sits in the White House next year will be determined by what we together do in these next 130 days."

Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said there had been no internal conversations "whatsoever" about Biden stepping aside, though he, too, acknowledged that the president had a "bad night" on stage.

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., said he could hardly sleep because of the number of telephone calls he

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 47 of 83

got after Biden performed "horribly" in the debate.

"People were just concerned. And I told everybody being concerned is healthy, overreacting is dangerous," Cleaver said.

Rep. James Clyburn, a South Carolina Democrat whose support in that state helped Biden secure the Democratic nomination four years ago, said he would likely speak to Biden later Friday and his message would be simple: "Stay the course."

Biden and his team have long wagered that voters would look past their concerns about his age and unpopularity when confronted at the ballot box with a choice between the president and Trump. Despite their concerns about Biden's performance, they took solace in Trump doing little to expand his own appeal to voters on Thursday.

Polls from CNN and 538/Ipsos conducted soon after the debate found that most debate-watchers thought Trump outperformed Biden. But the two men's favorability ratings remained largely unchanged, just as they did in the aftermath of Trump's conviction.

Democrats seized on Trump's equivocations on whether he would accept the will of voters this time around, his refusal to condemn the rioters who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, trying to overturn his 2020 loss to Biden, and his embrace of the conservative-leaning Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade* that had legalized abortion nationwide.

But Biden 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.

As elected Democrats united behind Biden publicly, donors and party operatives shared panicked text messages and phone calls Thursday night and into Friday expressing their concern that Biden's performance was so bad that he may be unelectable this fall.

Among the few public Democratic voices calling on Biden to step aside was congressional candidate Nancy Boyda in Kansas, who broke with most in her party and called on Biden to suspend his campaign and retire at the end of his current term.

But there were no immediate signs of organized efforts among donors, his campaign leadership or the Democratic National Committee to convince the president to step aside, according to interviews with several people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to share sensitive conversations.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat frequently mentioned as a 2028 contender and speculated about as a potential replacement for Biden, released a statement backing him on Friday.

"The difference between Joe Biden's vision for making sure everyone in America has a fair shot and Donald Trump's dangerous, self-serving plans will only get sharper as we head toward November," she said.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom also dismissed questions on whether he would consider stepping in for Biden, telling reporters, "I will never turn my back on him."

Under current Democratic Party rules, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to replace Biden as the party's nominee without his cooperation or without party officials being willing to rewrite the rules at the August national convention.

Trump was set to hold a rally Friday afternoon in Chesapeake, Virginia, a onetime battleground that has shifted toward Democrats in recent years but that his aides believe can flip toward the Republicans in November.

Martin Mull, hip comic and actor from 'Fernwood Tonight' and 'Roseanne,' dies at 80

ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Martin Mull, whose droll, esoteric comedy and acting made him a hip sensation in the 1970s and later a beloved guest star on sitcoms including "Roseanne" and "Arrested Development," has died, his daughter said Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 48 of 83

Mull's daughter, TV writer and comic artist Maggie Mull, said her father died at home on Thursday after "a valiant fight against a long illness."

Mull, who was also a guitarist and painter, came to national fame with a recurring role on the Norman Lear-created satirical soap opera "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," and the starring role in its spinoff, "Fernwood Tonight."

"He was known for excelling at every creative discipline imaginable and also for doing Red Roof Inn commercials," Maggie Mull said in an Instagram post. "He would find that joke funny. He was never not funny. My dad will be deeply missed by his wife and daughter, by his friends and coworkers, by fellow artists and comedians and musicians, and—the sign of a truly exceptional person—by many, many dogs."

Known for his blonde hair and well-trimmed mustache, Mull was born in Chicago, raised in Ohio and Connecticut and studied art in Rhode Island and Rome.

His first foray into show business was as a songwriter, penning the 1970 semi-hit "A Girl Named Johnny Cash" for singer Jane Morgan.

He would combine music and comedy in an act that he brought to hip Hollywood clubs in the 1970s.

"In 1976 I was a guitar player and sit-down comic appearing at the Roxy on the Sunset Strip when Norman Lear walked in and heard me," Mull told The Associated Press in 1980. "He cast me as the wife beater on 'Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman.' Four months later I was spun off on my own show."

His time on the Strip was memorialized in the 1973 country rock classic "Lonesome L.A. Cowboy" where the Riders of the Purple Sage give him a shoutout along with music luminaries Kris Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge.

"I know Kris and Rita and Marty Mull are hangin' at the Troubadour," the song says.

On "Fernwood Tonight" (sometimes styled as "Fernwood 2 Night"), he played Barth Gimble, the host of a local talk show in a midwestern town and twin to his "Mary Hartman" character. Fred Willard, a frequent collaborator with very similar comic sensibilities, played his sidekick. It was later revamped as "America 2 Night" and set in Southern California.

He would get to be a real talk show host as a substitute for Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show."

Mull often played slightly sleazy, somewhat slimy and often smarmy characters as he did as Teri Garr's boss and Michael Keaton's foe in 1983's "Mr. Mom." He played Colonel Mustard in the 1985 movie adaptation of the board game "Clue," which, like many things Mull appeared in, has become a cult classic.

The 1980s also brought what many thought was his best work, "A History of White People in America," a mockumentary that first aired on Cinemax. Mull co-created the show and starred as a "60 Minutes" style investigative reporter investigating all things milquetoast and mundane. Willard was again a co-star.

He wrote and starred in 1988's "Rented Lips" alongside Robert Downey Jr., whose father, Robert Sr., directed.

His co-star Jennifer Tilly said in an X post Friday that Mull was "such a witty charismatic and kind person."

In the 1990s he was best known for his recurring role on several seasons on "Roseanne," in which he played a warmer, less sleazy boss to the title character, an openly gay man whose partner was played by Willard, who died in 2020.

Mull would later play private eye Gene Parmesan on "Arrested Development," a cult-classic character on a cult-classic show, and would be nominated for an Emmy, his first, in 2016 for a guest run on "Veep."

"What I did on 'Veep' I'm very proud of, but I'd like to think it's probably more collective, at my age it's more collective," Mull told the AP after his nomination. "It might go all the way back to 'Fernwood.'"

Other comedians and actors were often his biggest fans.

"Martin was the greatest," "Bridesmaids" director Paul Feig said on X. "So funny, so talented, such a nice guy. Was lucky enough to act with him on The Jackie Thomas Show and treasured every moment being with a legend. Fernwood Tonight was so influential in my life."

Mull is survived by his daughter and musician Wendy Haas, his wife since 1982.

Families say those detained in Bolivia failed coup were tricked. President says it's not his problem

By MEGAN JANETSKY and PAOLA FLORES Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — The death threats came rolling in shortly after Gimena Silva's husband was detained on accusations that he took part in a failed coup in Bolivia.

"They call us, they say that if we do anything, say anything, they're going to disappear us. They threaten not just us, but our children too," Silva said. "They're anonymous calls and they say they will kill our kids."

Now, Silva, a mother of three children, sits with her mother and brother crying at the doors of a jail, clinging to any news of her husband, Luis Domingo Balanza.

Balanza, a military major of more than 15 years, was among 21 people arrested after a group of military and armored vehicles attempted what the government has called a "failed coup d'état." On Friday night, a Bolivian judge sent former Gen. Juan José Zuñiga, who led the failed coup, to a maximum security prison on preventative detention alongside two others accused of terrorism and armed uprising against the state.

Families of those detained were visibly confused and anxious in the jail where their loved ones were kept on Friday, saying they knew nothing of a plot in the lead-up to Wednesday's spectacle. Many families of those detained say their loved ones were simply "following orders" or told they were carrying out a "military exercise."

Bolivian President Luis Arce washed his hands of the families' claims that those detained were innocent or tricked in an interview Friday with The Associated Press.

"It's a problem of those who were involved, it's not the government's problem," Arce said.

Images from Bolivia shocked the world Wednesday as an armored car rammed into the government palace in La Paz, the country's seat of government, and military officers fled after Arce said his government was not backing down.

Senior Cabinet member Eduardo del Castillo told AP in an interview Friday that a squad of snipers was on the way to assist Zuñiga, but didn't arrive in time as the coup plot fell apart. He said the coup attempt represented a stunning intelligence failure by Bolivia.

Zuñiga, meanwhile, was sacked by Arce amid the chaos and claimed that he stormed the government office as a favor to Arce to earn him political favor at a time of deep economic discontent in Bolivia, stirring doubt in many.

Around 200 military officers took part in the attempted coup, Bolivia's ambassador to the Organization of American States said Thursday.

"These people commanded the destruction of Bolivian heritage," Del Castillo said at a news conference.

Del Castillo was echoed by hundreds of protestors roaring outside the jail and other government buildings on Friday, carrying posters reading "Zuñiga, traitor, coup leader, respect the state."

Inside, crying families told another story.

Silva and her mother, Daniela, said their family was left economically devastated with no income to care for their three children. The family was among those that said their father was simply following orders, asked to step away from an online course and head to the plaza outside the governmental palace. Silva said her husband later turned himself over.

"How are we going to feed our family?" asked Daniela, who spoke on condition of not being identified by her last name due to the threats.

"My son isn't a villain," she said. "He's just a subordinate. He safeguarded his patrimony and they took advantage of him."

Families and lawyers of defendants interviewed by the AP could share few details about their family members' cases and legal arguments because they were in the wake of legal proceedings but most said they sought "justice" for those detained.

Others like Nubia Barbery said her husband, Col. Raul Barbery Muiba, was instructed by Zuñiga to carry out a "military exercise". Upon entering the square, Barbery said he left, telling Zuñiga that he was "tricked," calling her shortly afterward.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 50 of 83

The families' claims add an extra layer of confusion to doubts already sewed by Zuñiga Wednesday night about the veracity of the coup.

Upon his swift arrest, he alleged, without providing evidence, that Arce ordered him to carry out the rebellion, prompting political opposition to dub the case a "self-coup."

Zuñiga claimed the takeover was all a ruse to boost Arce's flagging popularity as he struggles to manage a spiraling economy, deepening political divisions and bubbling public discontent. Arce on Thursday vigorously denied accusations. He told AP that Bolivia was not in an economic crisis and that the government was "taking action" to address the economic hardships ailing the Bolivian people.

The embattled president is vying with powerful ex-President Evo Morales over who will be their party's candidate in the 2025 presidential election. Arce said his government has been "politically attacked" by Morales, hamstringing his government from addressing economic turmoil.

The escalating political feud has left Bolivians disillusioned and bewildered as to what really happened during those three chaotic hours Wednesday when armored vehicles rolled into downtown La Paz and Arce confronted the putschists face-to-face and ordered them to back off.

Whether Zuñiga's allegations about Arce are true — or whether the disgruntled general simply sought to exploit Bolivia's mounting crises for his own benefit — remains unclear.

Still, many like Cintia Ramos were outraged by Wednesday's chaos.

"Zuñiga must pay the highest sentence for having attacked the Bolivian people," said 31-year-old Cintia Ramos, one of the protesters at the jail.

Families may say their loved ones are innocent, but Ramos said "this couldn't have been carried out by just one person. This person had allies, high-level allies. ... They should also be pay the highest sentence."

Police could be seen Friday morning marching Zuñiga through the jail in handcuffs.

Shortly before, his wife, Graciela Arzacibia, kept her eyes downcast as she waited for the general to emerge from the police station. Holding a small bag of snacks, she expressed concern for her 6-year-old son, who she said believed his jailed father was simply away at work.

"I'm asking that they consider the families," she told the AP. "We haven't done anything."

Alec Baldwin's case on track for trial in July as judge denies request to dismiss

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A court ruling on Friday put an involuntary manslaughter case against Alec Baldwin on track for trial in early July as a judge denied a request to dismiss the case on complaints that key evidence was damaged by the FBI during forensic testing.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer sided with prosecutors in rejecting a motion to dismiss the case.

Defense attorneys had argued that the gun in the fatal shooting was heavily damaged during FBI forensic testing before it could be examined for possible modifications or problems that might exonerate the actor-producer.

The ruling removes one of the last hurdles before prosecutors can bring the case to trial with jury selection scheduled for July 9 in Santa Fe.

At trial, attorneys plan to call on witnesses from a court-approved list of more than 60 people. They include film director Joel Souza, who was wounded in the shooting as well as assistant director Dave Halls, who earlier pleaded no contest to negligent use of a deadly weapon, and an array of first responders, investigators, firearms experts and close-range witnesses to the shooting.

Baldwin isn't listed but has the right to testify at his own trial.

During a rehearsal on the set of the Western film "Rust" in 2021, Baldwin pointed a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins when the revolver went off, killing her and injuring director Souza as the bullet became lodged in his shoulder. Baldwin has maintained that he pulled back the gun's hammer but not the trigger and has pleaded not guilty.

The FBI conducted an accidental discharge test on the gun by striking it from several angles with a rawhide

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 51 of 83

mallet, eventually breaking the gun. Prosecutors plan to present evidence at trial that they say shows the firearm "could not have fired absent a pull of the trigger" and was working properly before the shooting.

Baldwin has twice been charged in Hutchins' death. Prosecutors dismissed an earlier charge, then refiled it after receiving a new analysis of the revolver that Baldwin pointed at Hutchins.

"Rust" armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed is serving an 18 month sentence on a conviction for involuntary manslaughter in the fatal shooting, as she appeals the jury verdict. It's likely the prosecutors will call her to testify at Baldwin's trial, despite her refusal to answer questions at a pretrial interview and instead invoke her constitutional rights against self-incrimination under the Fifth Amendment. A judge refused a request to compel her testimony by providing immunity.

Marlowe Sommer said that destruction of internal components of the firearm "is not highly prejudicial" to a fair trial and that Baldwin's legal team failed to demonstrate bad faith by investigators.

While Baldwin "contends that an unaltered firearm is critical to his case, other evidence concerning the functionality of the firearm on Oct. 21, 2021, weighs against the defendant's assertions," the judge wrote.

Sheriff's investigators initially sent the revolver to the FBI for routine testing, but when an FBI analyst heard Baldwin say in an ABC TV interview that he never pulled the trigger, the agency told local authorities they could conduct an accidental discharge test, though it might damage the gun.

The FBI was told by a team of investigators to go ahead, and tested the revolver by striking it from several angles with a rawhide mallet. One of those strikes fractured the gun's firing and safety mechanisms.

Defense attorneys say that the "outrageous" decision to move forward with testing may have destroyed exculpatory evidence.

Prosecutors said it was "unfortunate" the gun broke, but it wasn't destroyed and the parts are still available. They say Baldwin's attorneys still have the ability to defend their client and question the evidence against him.

In Friday's ruling, the judge said prosecutors will have to fully disclose at trial the destructive nature of the FBI forensic testing on the gun, including what was lost in the process and its relevance in reaching a verdict.

Several hours of testimony about the gun and forensic testing during online hearings in recent days provided a dress rehearsal for the possible trial against Baldwin. Attorneys for Baldwin gave long and probing cross-examinations of the lead detective, an FBI forensic firearm investigator and the prosecution's independent gun expert, Lucien Haag.

Prosecutors plan to present evidence that they say shows the firearm "could not have fired absent a pull of the trigger" and was working properly before the shooting.

Since the 2021 shooting, the filming of "Rust" resumed but moved to Montana under an agreement with Hutchins' husband, Matthew Hutchins, which made him an executive producer. The completed movie has not yet been released for public viewing.

Here's why it would be tough for Democrats to replace Joe Biden on the presidential ticket

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's halting debate performance has led some in his own party to begin questioning whether he should be replaced on the ballot before November.

There is no evidence Biden is willing to end his campaign. And it would be nearly impossible for Democrats to replace him unless he chooses to step aside.

Here's why:

Delegates Biden won in the primaries are pledged to support him

Every state has already held its presidential primary. Democratic rules say that the delegates Biden won should support him at the party's upcoming national convention unless he tells them he's leaving the race.

The president indicated that he had no plans to do that, telling supporters in Atlanta shortly after he left the debate stage, "Let's keep going." Biden campaign spokesperson Lauren Hitt was even clearer, saying

Friday: "Of course he's not dropping out."

The conventions and their rules are controlled by the political parties. The Democratic National Committee could convene before the convention opens on Aug. 19 and change how things will work, but that isn't likely as long as Biden wants to continue seeking reelection.

The current rules read: "Delegates elected to the national convention pledged to a presidential candidate shall in all good conscience reflect the sentiments of those who elected them."

VP Kamala Harris couldn't automatically replace Biden

The vice president is Biden's running mate, but that doesn't mean she can swap in for him at the top of the ticket by default. Biden also can't decree that she replace him should he suddenly decide to leave the race.

The Democratic National Convention is being held in Chicago, but the party has announced that it will hold a virtual roll call to formally nominate Biden before in-person proceedings begin. The exact date for the roll call has not yet been set.

If Biden opts to abandon his reelection campaign, Harris would likely join other top Democratic candidates looking to replace him. But that would probably create a scenario where she and others end up lobbying individual state delegations at the convention for their support.

That hasn't happened for Democrats since 1960, when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson jockeyed for votes during that year's Democratic convention in Los Angeles.

Other potential Democratic candidates would also face challenges

In addition to the vice president, others that had endorsed Biden in 2024 while harboring their own presidential aspirations for future cycles include California Gov. Gavin Newsom, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, Illinois Gov. J. B. Pritzker and California Rep. Ro Khanna.

Still others who Biden bested during the party's 2020 presidential primary could also try again, including Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, as well as Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

If Biden were to abruptly leave the race, conservative groups have suggested they will file lawsuits around the country, potentially questioning the legality of the Democratic candidate's name on the ballot.

But Elaine Kamarck, a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington, who wrote a book about the presidential nominating process and is also a member of the Democratic National Committee's rulemaking arm, said that courts have consistently stayed out of political primaries as long as parties running them weren't doing anything that would contradict other constitutional rights, such as voter suppression based on race.

"This is very clear constitutionally that this is in the party's purview," Kamarck said in an interview before the debate. "The business of nominating someone to represent a political party is the business of the political party."

NASA astronauts will stay at the space station longer for more troubleshooting of Boeing capsule

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

Two NASA astronauts will stay longer at the International Space Station as engineers troubleshoot problems on Boeing's new space capsule that cropped up on the trip there.

NASA on Friday did not set a return date until testing on the ground was complete and said the astronauts were safe.

"We're not in any rush to come home," said NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich.

Veteran NASA test pilots Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams blasted off aboard Boeing's Starliner capsule for the orbiting laboratory on June 5. It was the first astronaut launch for Boeing after years of delays and setbacks.

The test flight was expected to last a week or so, enough time for Wilmore and Williams to check out the capsule while docked at the station. But problems with the capsule's propulsion system, used to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 53 of 83

maneuver the spacecraft, prompted NASA and Boeing to delay the flight home several times while they analyzed the trouble.

They also wanted to avoid conflicting with spacewalks by station astronauts. But a spacewalk this week was canceled after water leaked from an astronaut's spacesuit. The issue hasn't been resolved and the planned spacewalk next week was postponed.

As Starliner closed in on the space station a day after launch, last-minute thruster failures almost derailed the docking. Five of the capsule's 28 thrusters went down during docking; all but one thruster was restarted.

Starliner already had one small helium leak when it rocketed into orbit and several more leaks sprung up during the flight. Helium is used to pressurize fuel for the thrusters. Boeing said this week that the two problems aren't a concern for the return trip.

In delaying the astronauts' return, NASA and Boeing said they needed more time to collect information about the thruster trouble and leaks while the capsule was docked. Both are in the service module, a unit attached to the capsule that burns up during reentry.

NASA initially said the Starliner could stay docked at the space station for up to 45 days due to battery limits. But in-flight tests have shown that limit can be extended, Stich said.

Officials said they won't set a return date while they do ground tests of capsule thrusters in the New Mexico desert, which were expected to last a couple of weeks. They want to try to replicate the situation that occurred during docking.

"I want to make it very clear that Butch and Suni are not stranded in space," said Stich, adding that Starliner is designed for a mission of up to 210 days.

Stich said the astronauts could return to Earth in Starliner in the case of a space station emergency.

After the space shuttle fleet retired, NASA turned over astronaut rides to private companies. Elon Musk's SpaceX has made nine taxi flights for NASA since 2020. NASA plans to alternate between SpaceX and Boeing in ferrying crews to and from the space station.

Indictment accuses former Uvalde schools police chief of delays while shooter was 'hunting' children

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The police chief for schools in Uvalde, Texas, failed to identify an active shooting, did not follow his training and made critical decisions that slowed the law enforcement response to stop a gunman who was "hunting" victims and ultimately killed 21 people at Robb Elementary, according to an indictment unsealed Friday.

Pete Arredondo was arrested and briefly booked into the Uvalde County jail before being released Thursday night on 10 state jail felony counts of abandoning or endangering a child in the May 24, 2022, attack that killed 19 children and two teachers.

Former school officer Adrian Gonzales, one of the first officers to enter the building after the shooting began, was indicted on 29 similar charges that accuse him of abandoning his training and not confronting the shooter, even after hearing gunshots as he stood in a hallway. Gonzales was booked into jail briefly Friday and released on bond.

Arredondo, 52, and Gonzales, 51, are the first officers to be criminally charged for the police response to one of the worst school shootings in U.S. history, and the indictments from a Uvalde County grand jury follow two years of calls from some families for such action. Some victims' relatives said Friday that while they are happy Arredondo and Gonzales were indicted, they want more officers to be charged.

"They decided to indict only two. That's hard for me to accept," said Jesse Rizo, whose niece Jacklyn Cazares was among the students killed.

In a statement, an attorney for Gonzales called the charges against law enforcement "unprecedented in the state of Texas."

"Mr. Gonzales' position is he did not violate school district policy or state law," said Nico LaHood, the former district attorney for Bexar County, which includes San Antonio.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 54 of 83

Arredondo does not have a listed phone number and the court clerk had no record of an attorney for him. The first U.S. law enforcement officer ever tried for allegedly failing to act during an on-campus shooting was a sheriff's deputy in Florida who didn't go into the classroom building and confront the perpetrator of the 2018 Parkland massacre. The deputy was acquitted of felony neglect last year. A lawsuit by the victims' families and survivors is pending.

The indictment against Arredondo, who was the on-site commander at the Uvalde shooting, accused the chief of delaying the police response despite hearing gunshots and being notified that injured children were in the classrooms and that a teacher had been shot. Arredondo called for a SWAT team, ordered the initial responding officers to leave the building, and attempted to negotiate with the 18-year-old gunman, the indictment said.

"After being advised that a child or children were injured in a class at Robb Elementary School (Arredondo) failed to identify the incident as an active shooter incident and failed to respond as trained to an active shooter incident and instead directed law enforcement officers to evacuate the wing before confronting the shooter thereby delaying the response by law enforcement officers to an active shooter who was hunting and shooting a child or children," the indictment said.

The actions and inactions by both Arredondo and Gonzales amounted to "criminal negligence," the indictments said.

More than 370 federal, state and local officers converged on Robb Elementary, but they waited more than 70 minutes before confronting the shooter, even as the gunman could be heard firing an AR-15-style rifle. Terrified students inside the classroom called 911 as parents begged officers — some of whom could hear shots being fired while they stood in a hallway — to go in. A tactical team of officers eventually went into the classroom and killed the shooter.

"I want every single person who was in the hallway charged for failure to protect the most innocent," Velma Duran, whose sister Irma Garcia was one of the teachers killed, said Friday. "My sister put her body in front of those children to protect them, something they could have done. They had the means and the tools to do it."

It was unclear whether the grand jury considered indictments against any others.

Arredondo is accused of failing to protect survivors of the attack, including Khloie Torres, who called 911 and begged for help, telling a dispatcher, "Please hurry. There's a lot of dead bodies. Some of my teachers are still alive but they're shot."

Gonzales' indictment charges him with failing to protect children who were killed as well as survivors.

Although the investigative report by Texas lawmakers identified Gonzales as one the first officers to go in the the building, it also identified two other officers who allegedly heard gunfire. It is unclear whether those officers were part of the grand jury's investigation.

"After hearing gun shots and being advised of the general location of the shooter and having time to respond to the shooter, (Gonzales) failed to follow, engage, distract or delay the shooter" and "failed to respond to respond to gun fire," the indictment said.

The charges carry up to two years in jail if convicted.

In an interview with the Texas Tribune two weeks after the shooting, Arredondo insisted he took the steps he believed would best protect the lives of students and teachers.

"My mind was to get there as fast as possible, eliminate any threats, and protect the students and staff," he told the newspaper.

Since then, scathing state and federal investigative reports on the police response have catalogued "cascading failures" in training, communication, leadership and technology problems.

Arredondo lost his job and several other officers were eventually fired. Separate investigations by the Department of Justice and state lawmakers alleged law enforcement botched the response.

Texas state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, who represents Uvalde, said the investigation should not stop with the indictments against Arredondo and Gonzales. Gutierrez has been critical of the Texas Department of Public Safety and its head, Steve McCraw. That department had more than 90 officers at the school — more than any other agency — and McCraw testified before the grand jury in February.

"Every single officer that stood down that day must be held accountable," Gutierrez said. "We can't rest until we have justice."

Trump's debate references to 'Black jobs' and 'Hispanic jobs' stir Democratic anger

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump warned during his debate with Joe Biden and again at a Friday rally that migrants were taking “Black jobs” and “Hispanic jobs” from Americans, angering critics who called it a racist and insulting attempt to expand his appeal beyond his white conservative base.

While President Joe Biden's halting debate performance on Thursday night stirred widespread concerns among fellow Democrats about his readiness, Trump also repeatedly made false claims and repeated conspiracy theories that he's long promoted during his campaign.

Trump suggested without evidence that Democrats want migrants to displace Americans as voters, and he described the state of the nation under Biden as worse than during the deadly 2017 neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, Virginia. Trump has often downplayed the racist overtones of the march, once saying there were “fine people on both sides.”

Trump's depiction of a country on the brink, under siege from unfettered migration and beset by racial strife and economic chaos echoed his longstanding rhetoric about the state of the U.S. It's a pessimistic vision that has long appealed to the GOP's largely white, hard-right base but has also alienated other Americans, especially voters of color.

“The fact is that his big kill on the Black people is the millions of people that he's allowed to come in through the border. They're taking Black jobs now,” Trump said during the debate on CNN. “They're taking Black jobs and they're taking Hispanic jobs. And you haven't seen it yet, but you're going to see something that's going to be the worst in our history,” he warned without specifying the danger.

Yet Trump and his allies believe that such rhetoric may hold greater appeal with Black and Hispanic communities this year dissatisfied with Biden's performance in office. Trump repeated the comments during a rally Friday in Virginia.

The phrase “Black jobs” was widely condemned by Democrats and Black leaders as vague and insulting.

“I'm still wondering, what is a ‘Black job,’” Jaime Harrison, chair of the Democratic National Committee, quipped on Friday during a news conference with former Georgia Democratic gubernatorial nominee Stacey Abrams in Atlanta. Other prominent Biden allies including Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Tx., Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., also condemned Trump's words following the debate.

“There is no such thing as a Black job. That misinformed characterization is a denial of the ubiquity of Black talent. We are doctors, lawyers, school teachers, police officers and firefighters. The list goes on,” said Derrick Johnson, president and CEO of the NAACP. “A ‘Black job’ is an American job. It's concerning that a presidential candidate would seek to make a nonexistent distinction. But the divisive nature of this comment is not surprising for Donald Trump.”

Trump's allies pushed back on the critiques as missing the president's broader message.

“He meant the jobs of Black people. And we've been using that term for a while,” said Diante Johnson, president of the Black Conservative Federation. “It's any job. Instead of Black people having unlimited accessibility to all types of jobs, illegal immigrants are taking their jobs from them.”

Much economic research shows that immigration has helped to increase employment, with a 2024 paper by the economists Alessandro Caiumi and Giovanni Peri finding that immigration between 2000 and 2019 had a positive effect on the wages of less educated workers born in the United States. Still, separate research have suggested that greater immigration may have hurt the wages of less educated Black men, though it was one of several factors.

Asked to clarify what Trump meant in describing a “Black job” during an interview with NBC News, Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, who is Black and is under consideration to be Trump's vice presidential nominee, sidestepped the question, instead discussing homeless veterans.

Some Black adults do think there's a possibility that immigration will affect employment opportunities for workers who are already here. About 4 in 10 Black adults say it's a “major risk” that the number of jobs available to American workers will be reduced when immigrants come to the U.S. — whether they arrive

legally or illegally — according to an AP-NORC poll from March. But the poll also found that about 3 in 10 Black adults think it's a major benefit that immigrants will take jobs that Americans don't want.

In some communities like Chicago, an increased number of migrants has generated greater economic anxiety and concern that government resources are not allocated fairly. Yet Black and Hispanic Americans are on average more supportive of immigration than other demographics, and in cities like Chicago, Denver and New York, racial justice groups have been at the forefront of mitigating potential strife between communities of color and undocumented people on issues like jobs.

For some Black activists, the comments changed little about the state of the presidential race.

Michael Blake, founder and CEO of the Kairos Democracy Project, said "It's hard for someone to believe that (Trump) means they're taking quality jobs."

"It is the responsibility for us to then tell the story of the benefits of diversity, rather than the fears of it. And the notion that those people are taking from you is a fear-only message as opposed to asking: How do we all win?," Blake added. "When you embrace all races, we all win. We should not allow fear of the past to supersede the prosperity of the future, because we all can win."

Prosecutors in Sen. Bob Menendez's bribery trial rest; Judge rejects defense request for acquittals

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Prosecutors at the bribery trial of Sen. Bob Menendez rested their case on Friday after presenting evidence for seven weeks, enabling lawyers for the Democrat and two New Jersey businessmen to begin calling their own witnesses next week to support their claims that no crimes were committed and no bribes were paid.

On their final day of direct questioning, prosecutors elicited details about the senator's financial records by questioning an FBI forensic accountant. Judge Sidney H. Stein then dismissed jurors for the weekend. Defense attorneys are scheduled to begin presenting their case on Monday in Manhattan federal court.

Later Friday, Stein rejected requests by lawyers for all three defendants that he acquit their clients on grounds that prosecutors had failed to provide sufficient evidence to the jury for it to deliver a verdict. The requests are a routine feature of trials after prosecutors rest.

Prosecutors say gold bars and hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash found in a raid of Menendez's home two years ago were bribes paid by three businessmen from 2018 to 2022 in return for favors that the senator, using his political power, carried out on their behalf.

Defense lawyers claim the gold belonged to his wife and that Menendez had a habit of storing cash at home after his family lost almost everything in Cuba before they moved to New York, where Menendez was born.

"The government hasn't proven its case," the senator remarked as he left the courthouse Friday afternoon.

Menendez, 70, is on trial with two of the businessmen after a third pleaded guilty in a cooperation deal with the government and testified at the trial. Menendez's wife, Nadine Menendez, is also charged in the case, which was unveiled last fall. Her trial has been postponed while she recovers from breast cancer surgery. All defendants have pleaded not guilty.

Menendez's lawyers are planning to spend up to three days presenting testimony from several witnesses to support their argument that Nadine Menendez, who was Nadine Arslanian when she began dating the senator in early 2018, kept him in the dark about her financial troubles. The couple married in the fall of 2020.

The defense also plans to introduce testimony to try to show that Arslanian was in close contact with the senator at the height of the alleged conspiracy in late 2018 and early 2019 because she was being harassed by an ex-boyfriend.

Stein said Thursday that defense lawyers can elicit testimony to counter evidence introduced by prosecutors that might otherwise be interpreted to suggest that Arslanian and the senator seemed to be closely following each other's whereabouts because they were involved in the alleged conspiracy.

But he said he wouldn't allow the jury to hear testimony that she underwent treatment at a hospital because of an abusive relationship with an ex-boyfriend. He said Friday that a witness also cannot testify about specific acts of stalking or abuse.

"This is not going to be 'Days of Our Lives' or some soap opera," the judge warned lawyers Thursday.

Polls close in Iran presidential election held after hard-liner's death and as Mideast tensions rise

By JON GAMBRELL and NASSER KARIMI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranians voted on 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 energize supporters in a vote beset by apathy.

Voters faced a choice between hard-line candidates and the little-known reformist Masoud Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon. As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from running, while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recognized monitors.

The voting came 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.

Pezeshkian's remarks followed a veiled warning directed at him and his allies from the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, over their outreach to the United States.

The comments, made after Pezeshkian cast his ballot, appeared to be aimed at boosting turnout as public apathy has grown pervasive in the Islamic Republic after years of economic woes and mass protests. He seemed to hope that invoking the possibility of Iran emerging from its isolation would motivate people otherwise disillusioned with Iranian politics.

A higher turnout typically aids those like Pezeshkian in the reformist movement that seeks to change the country's Shiite theocracy from within.

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. Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the leaders of the 2009 Green Movement protests who remains in house arrest, also has refused to vote with his wife, his daughter said.

There's also been criticism that Pezeshkian represents just another government-approved candidate. One woman in a documentary on Pezeshkian aired by state TV said her generation was "moving toward

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 58 of 83

the same level" of animosity with the government that Pezeshkian's generation had in the 1979 revolution.

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.

Iranian state media made a point to publish images of voters lined up in the city of Kerman near Soleimani's grave. 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.

Khamenei cast one of the election's first votes.

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

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

Polls closed shortly after midnight, following three extensions of voting hours. Iranian state media said those who were still waiting at the polling stations would be allowed to cast their ballots but no one else.

Counting was to begin immediately, with initial results expected Saturday.

As the weather cooled off a little in the evening hours, more people headed to vote and long lines formed outside polling stations in downtown Tehran and in the southern parts of the city.

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.

Chevron takeaways: Supreme Court ruling removes frequently used tool from federal regulators

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal rules that impact virtually every aspect of everyday life, from the food we eat and the cars we drive to the air we breathe, could be at risk after a wide-ranging Supreme Court ruling Friday.

The court rejected a 40-year-old legal doctrine colloquially known as Chevron, effectively reducing the power of executive branch agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and shifting it to the courts.

The doctrine, named after a 1984 case involving the energy giant, has been the basis for upholding thousands of federal regulations but has long been a target of conservatives and business groups, who argue it grants too much power to the executive branch, or what some critics call the administrative state.

Here are some takeaways from the court ruling and its implications.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 59 of 83

One less tool for governing

The Chevron decision essentially gave federal agencies the authority to issue rules to implement laws that weren't clear. And that deference to the executive branch has enabled presidential administrations from both parties to use rulemaking to create policy, especially in times of deep partisan division in Washington.

Friday's Supreme Court ruling means that the federal government could have a harder time defending those rules in federal court.

Writing for the court, Chief Justice John Roberts said Chevron gave too much power to experts who work for the government. "Courts must exercise their independent judgment in deciding whether an agency has acted within its statutory authority," Roberts wrote.

The ruling does not call into question prior cases that relied on the Chevron doctrine, he added.

Cara Horowitz, an environmental law professor and executive director of the Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at UCLA School of Law, said the decision "takes more tools out of the toolbox of federal regulators."

"By definition, statutes typically don't clearly define how agencies should tackle new and emerging threats, like climate change, that weren't well understood when these decades-old statutes were written," she said.

Potential impacts on the environment, public health

The decision could set back efforts to reduce air and water pollution, restrict toxic chemicals or even take on new public health threats like COVID—19, environmental and public health advocates said.

Horowitz called the ruling "yet another blow to the EPA's ability to tackle emerging problems like climate change."

And Vickie Patton, general counsel for the Environmental Defense Fund, said, "It undermines vital protections for the American people at the behest of powerful polluters."

Carrie Severino, a lawyer and conservative activist, called the decision "a big victory for the rule of law."

"Good riddance to Chevron deference, which put a two-ton judicial thumb on the scale of government bureaucrats against the little guy," she said.

If regulators "want to win in the future, they need to do a more careful job" and resist the urge to "push their own agendas," Severino said.

The ruling follows a Supreme Court decision Thursday that blocks enforcement of EPA's "good neighbor" rule, intended to restrict smokestack emissions from power plants and other industrial sources that burden downwind areas with smog-causing pollution.

Increased role for Congress?

Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley said the ruling "restores appropriate balance" to the three branches of government.

"Congress will now be under extreme pressure to be more specific when writing legislation, so that a bill's plain text can be clearly interpreted by the courts & fed agencies when legislation becomes law," Grassley posted on the social media site X.

But Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, said the court's conservative majority "just shamelessly gutted long-standing precedent in a move that will embolden judicial activism and undermine important regulations."

New York Rep. Jerrold Nadler, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said the decision "comes at the expense of everyday Americans who depend on federal agencies to look out for their health and safety, not the bottom lines of giant corporations."

What's next?

Craig Segall, vice president of the environmental group Evergreen Action, said the ruling "opened the door" for large corporations to challenge a host of federal rules.

"The dismantling of the Chevron doctrine grants every Trump-appointed judge the authority to overrule agency experts' interpretation of the law and substitute their ideological viewpoint for the informed determination of career public servants," Segall said.

Jeff Holmstead, a lawyer and former EPA division chief under President George W. Bush, said it will now

be up to federal agencies to "decide what Congress actually wanted them to do."

"The days of federal agencies filling in the legislative blanks are rightly over," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey said the ruling creates "a regulatory black hole that destroys fundamental protections for every American." He and other Democrats pledged to push for legislation to restore the Chevron doctrine, an effort that faces long odds in a closely divided Congress.

Auto safety rules imperiled?

In the short term, the decision is likely to limit government actions on auto safety, making the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration second-guess itself about new regulations, said Michael Brooks, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, a watchdog group.

"It's going to be harder for NHTSA to put forth rules that are ultimately going to mandate better safety," Brooks said.

But the Specialty Equipment Market Association, which represents companies that make specialty vehicle parts, said the decision will free small businesses that have been hurt by federal regulatory overreach.

Earlier this year, NHTSA proposed a requirement that automatic emergency braking be standard on all new U.S. passenger vehicles in five years, calling it the most significant safety rule in the past two decades.

Automakers already are petitioning the agency to reconsider the rules, saying the performance standards are nearly impossible to meet with current technology.

Divided Supreme Court rules in major homelessness case that outdoor sleeping bans are OK

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court cleared the way for cities to enforce bans on homeless people sleeping outside in public places on Friday, overturning a ruling from a California-based appeals court that found such laws amount to cruel and unusual punishment when shelter space is lacking.

The case is the high court's most significant ruling on the issue in decades and comes as a rising number of people in the U.S. are without a permanent place to live.

In a 6-3 decision along ideological lines, the high court found that outdoor sleeping bans don't violate the Eighth Amendment.

Western cities had argued that the ruling made it harder to manage outdoor encampments in public spaces, but homeless advocates said punishing people who need a place to sleep would criminalize homelessness.

In California, which is home to one-third of the country's homeless population, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom said the decision gives state and local officials the authority to clear "unsafe encampments" from the streets while acting with compassion. "This decision removes the legal ambiguities that have tied the hands of local officials for years," he said.

Justice Neil Gorsuch acknowledged those concerns in the opinion he wrote for the majority.

"Homelessness is complex. Its causes are many. So may be the public policy responses required to address it," he wrote. "A handful of federal judges cannot begin to 'match' the collective wisdom the American people possess in deciding 'how best to handle' a pressing social question like homelessness."

He suggested that people who have no choice but to sleep outdoors could raise that as a "necessity defense," if they are ticketed or otherwise punished for violating a camping ban.

Homeless advocates, on the other hand, have said that allowing cities to punish people who have no other place to sleep would ultimately make the crisis worse. Cities had been allowed to regulate encampments under a U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling but couldn't completely bar people from sleeping outdoors.

"Sleep is a biological necessity, not a crime," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor, reading from the bench a dissent joined by her liberal colleagues. "Homelessness is a reality for so many Americans."

Punishing people for something they can't control, like homelessness, is cruel and unusual, she said. She warned that striking down Eighth Amendment arguments against camping bans likely won't end the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 61 of 83

fight over the ordinances in court.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, a Democrat, criticized the majority ruling, saying cities shouldn't "attempt to arrest their way out of this problem or hide the homelessness crisis in neighboring cities or in jail." The only way to truly address it, she said, is to connect people with housing and services.

The case came from the rural Oregon town of Grants Pass, which appealed a ruling striking down local ordinances that fined people \$295 for sleeping outside after tents began crowding public parks. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction over the nine Western states, has held since 2018 that such bans violate the Eighth Amendment in areas where there aren't enough shelter beds.

Grants Pass Mayor Sara Bristol told The Associated Press that the city will not immediately start enforcing those local ordinances fining people for sleeping outside and that the city council will need to review the decision and determine the next steps.

"This lawsuit was about whether cities have a right to enforce camping restrictions in public spaces, and I'm relieved that Grants Pass will be able to reclaim our city parks for recreation," said Bristol, who serves in a nonpartisan position. "Homelessness is a complex issue, and our community has been trying to find solutions."

Attorney Theane Evangelis, who represented Grants Pass before the high court, applauded the ruling, saying the 9th Circuit decision had "tied the hands of local governments."

"Years from now, I hope that we will look back on today's watershed ruling as the turning point in America's homelessness crisis," she said.

In Portland, meanwhile, a spokesperson for the mayor's office said the effect of the ruling would likely be muted since the state has separate legal limits on how cities can manage encampments. Seattle officials also expected a limited impact.

An attorney for homeless people who live in Grants Pass bemoaned the decision.

"We are disappointed that a majority of the court has decided that our Constitution allows a city to punish its homeless residents simply for sleeping outside with a blanket to survive the cold when there is nowhere else for them to go," said Ed Johnson, director of litigation at the Oregon Law Center.

Friday's ruling comes after homelessness in the United States grew a dramatic 12% last year to its highest reported level, as soaring rents and a decline in coronavirus pandemic assistance combined to put housing out of reach for more people.

More than 650,000 people are estimated to be homeless, the most since the country began using a yearly point-in-time survey in 2007. A lack of access to mental health and addiction resources can contribute to the crisis. Older adults, LGBTQ+ people and people of color are disproportionately affected by homelessness, advocates said.

Nearly half of people without housing sleep outside, federal data shows.

Derrick Belgarde, executive director of the nonprofit Chief Seattle Club, said some people may simply choose to sleep outside. Before his organization was started, members of the local Native American community weren't using shelters because they didn't feel safe in them or felt as though they belonged.

"I think it's going to cause a lot of pain, a lot of misery to deny people the right to safety, to feel safe, to feel a sense of belonging. It's going to be devastating for a lot of people," said Belgarde, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

The 9th Circuit decision had governed nine states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

This is how the US-built pier to bring aid to Gaza has worked — or not

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military-built pier has been pulled again from the Gaza shore due to rough seas, and its future role in the distribution of aid to Palestinians is uncertain.

Humanitarian aid groups stopped distributing supplies that arrived by sea on June 9 due to security concerns and have not started again. U.S. officials say the pier may not be reinstalled unless aid agencies

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 62 of 83

reach an agreement to begin distributing the aid again. Meanwhile, food and other provisions shipped from Cyprus are piling up on shore, and soon the the secure area on the beach in Gaza will reach capacity.

It's been a long and difficult road for the pier, which has been battered by weather and troubled by security problems. Here's a look at how it started and where it is now.

March: announcement and prep

MARCH 7: President Joe Biden announces his plan for the U.S. military to build a pier during his State of the Union address.

"Tonight, I'm directing the U.S. military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the coast of Gaza that can receive large shipments carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters," he said.

But even in those first few moments, he noted the pier would increase the amount of humanitarian aid getting into Gaza but that Israel "must do its part" and let more aid in.

MARCH 8: Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon spokesman, tells reporters it will take "up to 60 days" to deploy the forces and build the project.

MARCH 12: Four U.S. Army boats loaded with tons of equipment and steel pier segments leave Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia and head to the Atlantic Ocean for what is expected to be a monthlong voyage to Gaza.

The brigade's commander, Army Col. Sam Miller, warns that the transit and construction will be heavily dependent on the weather and any high seas they encounter.

LATE MARCH: U.S. Army vessels hit high seas and rough weather as they cross the Atlantic, slowing their pace.

April: construction and hope

APRIL 1: Seven World Central Kitchen aid workers are killed in an Israeli airstrike as they travel in clearly marked vehicles on a delivery mission authorized by Israel.

The strike fuels ongoing worries about security for relief workers and prompts aid agencies to pause delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

APRIL 19: U.S. officials confirm that the U.N. World Food Program has agreed to help deliver aid brought to Gaza via the maritime route once construction is done.

APRIL 25: Major construction of the port facility on the shore near Gaza City begins to take shape. The onshore site is where aid from the causeway will be delivered and given to aid agencies.

APRIL 30: Satellite photos show the U.S. Navy ship USNS Roy P. Benavidez and Army vessels working on assembling the pier and causeway about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the port on shore.

May: The pier opens ... then closes

MAY 9: The U.S. vessel Sagamore is the first ship loaded with aid to leave Cyprus and head toward Gaza and ultimately the pier. An elaborate security and inspection station has been built in Cyprus to screen the aid coming from a number of countries.

MAY 16: Well past the 60-day target time, the construction and assembly of the pier off the Gaza coast and the causeway attached to the shoreline are finished after more than a week of weather and other delays.

MAY 17: The first trucks carrying aid for the Gaza Strip roll down the newly built pier and into the secure area on shore, where they will be unloaded and the cargo distributed to aid agencies for delivery by truck into Gaza.

May 18: Crowds of desperate Palestinians overrun a convoy of aid trucks coming from the pier, stripping the cargo from 11 of the 16 vehicles before they reach a U.N. warehouse for distribution.

May 19-20: The first food from the pier — a limited number of high-nutrition biscuits — reaches people in need in central Gaza, according to the World Food Program.

Aid organizations suspend deliveries from the pier for two days while the U.S. works with Israel to open alternate land routes from the pier and improve security.

MAY 24: So far, a bit more than 1,000 metric tons of aid has been delivered to Gaza via the U.S.-built pier, and USAID later says all of it has been distributed within Gaza.

MAY 25: High winds and heavy seas damage the pier and cause four U.S. Army vessels operating there

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 63 of 83

to become beached, injuring three service members, including one who is in critical condition.

Two vessels went aground in Gaza near the base of the pier and two went aground near Ashkelon in Israel.

MAY 28: Large portions of the causeway were pulled from the beach and moved to an Israeli port for repairs. The base of the causeway remains at the Gaza shore.

June: big crises for the pier

JUNE 7: The damaged causeway was rebuilt and reconnected to the beach in Gaza.

JUNE 8: The U.S. military announced that deliveries resumed off the repaired and reinstalled dock.

The same day, Israel rescued four hostages taken by Hamas during the Oct. 7 attacks in an operation that killed 270 Palestinians.

JUNE 9: World Food Program chief Cindy McCain announced a "pause" in cooperation with the U.S. pier during a TV interview, citing the previous day's "incident" and the rocketing of two WFP warehouses that injured a staffer.

JUNE 10: WFP said the U.N. would conduct a security review to assess the safety of its staff in handling aid deliveries from the pier. In the meantime, the U.S. military said it would stockpile aid shipments on a secure beach in Gaza.

Ryder, the Pentagon spokesman, said no aspect of the pier or its equipment had been used in Israel's rescue operation. The Pentagon says an area south of the pier was used for the return of the freed hostages back to Israel.

JUNE 14: The pier was detached from the beach in Gaza to prevent damage during rough seas and allow the military to reattach it more quickly later, U.S. officials said.

JUNE 19: The pier was re-anchored in Gaza and more than 656 metric tons, or 1.4 million pounds, of aid was delivered in the hours after it resumed operations, Ryder said.

Aid agencies, however, did not restart their distribution of the aid, so workers have been storing it in the secure area.

JUNE 28: The pier is removed due to weather, and the U.S. is considering not putting it back unless aid begins heading again to Palestinians in need, several U.S. officials said.

Iowa's Supreme Court tells lower court to let strict abortion law go into effect

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Iowa Supreme Court said Friday the state's strict abortion law is legal, telling a lower court to dissolve a temporary block on the law and allowing Iowa to ban most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy — before many women know they are pregnant.

The 4-3 ruling is a win for Republican lawmakers, and Iowa joins more than a dozen other states with restrictive abortion laws following the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022.

The instructions to the lower court will be formally sent in 21 days and, for now, abortion remains legal in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. It is unclear how long the district court would take to act after that point.

Currently, 14 states have near-total bans at all stages of pregnancy and three ban abortions at about six weeks.

The Iowa Supreme Court's majority reiterated on Friday that there is no constitutional right to abortion. As the state requested, they instructed courts to assess whether the government has a legitimate interest in restricting the procedure, rather than whether there is too heavy a burden for people seeking abortion access.

In writing the majority's opinion, Justice Matthew McDermott wrote that a right to an abortion is "not rooted at all in our state's history and tradition." In fact, the majority determined it was the opposite.

"The state's interest in protecting the unborn can be traced to Iowa's earliest days," he wrote.

But Chief Justice Susan Christensen emphatically delivered a dissent, writing that the majority opinion

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 64 of 83

"strips Iowa women of their bodily autonomy."

Christensen countered McDermott, saying the majority's "rigid approach relies heavily on the male-dominated history and traditions of the 1800s" and said the Iowa Constitution was not written to reflect the full and equal rights of women.

The ruling previews the ending of a yearslong legal battle over abortion restrictions in Iowa that escalated in 2022 when the Iowa Supreme Court and then the U.S. Supreme Court both overturned decisions establishing a constitutional right to abortion.

In the Iowa State Capitol rotunda, Maggie DeWitte, executive director of Pulse Life Advocates, said she's been working for 25 years to reach this moment.

"Today is celebration for life for moms, for babies and for the entire state," she said. "To think now that we will finally have protection for children is really hard to put into words."

Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds immediately released a celebratory statement Friday morning.

"I'm glad that the Iowa Supreme Court has upheld the will of the people of Iowa," she said.

The Iowa law passed with exclusively Republican support in an one-day special session last July. A legal challenge was filed the next day by the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, Planned Parenthood North Central States and the Emma Goldman Clinic.

The law was in effect for a few days before a district court judge put it on pause, a decision that Reynolds appealed.

At the time, Planned Parenthood North Central States said it stayed open late and made hundreds of phone calls to prepare patients amid the uncertainty, rescheduling abortion appointments in other states for those who wanted. Court filings showed Iowa clinics had several hundred abortion appointments scheduled over two weeks last July, with most past the six-week mark in their pregnancies.

Since then, Planned Parenthood has ceased abortion services in two Iowa cities, including one in Des Moines. The other Des Moines location doesn't currently have the capacity to serve patients seeking an abortion, so abortion medication and the procedure are being offered about 36 miles (59 kilometers) north in Ames.

On Friday, Iowa abortion providers said they will continue to operate within the confines of the law. While it is not clear when in late July the injunction will be dissolved, Planned Parenthood North Central States and Emma Goldman Clinic representatives both said they would schedule as many appointments as possible before that point.

Ruth Richardson, president and CEO of PPNCS, also said the organization has spent the last year making "long-term regional investments" in preparation for this outcome, including expanding facilities in Mankato, Minnesota, and in Omaha, Nebraska.

"We stand ready to connect Iowans with the essential health care they so desperately need, even if that means traveling out of state," she said.

Abortion access stands to be a major issue in the 2024 election across the country, and the issue was a key point of contention in Thursday's presidential debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump. Biden weighed in Friday on the ruling in Iowa, saying "this should never happen in America." It remains to be seen whether the decision will turn the tide in an increasingly red Iowa.

There are limited circumstances under the Iowa law that would allow for abortion after six weeks of pregnancy: rape, if reported to law enforcement or a health provider within 45 days; incest, if reported within 145 days; if the fetus has a fetal abnormality "incompatible with life"; or if the pregnancy is endangering the life of the patient. The state's medical board recently defined rules for how doctors should adhere to the law.

Still, details from the board on enforcement were more limited. The rules do not outline how the board would determine noncompliance or what the appropriate disciplinary action might be.

Also missing was additional guidance on just how imminent risks to the pregnant women must be before doctors can intervene, a question vexing physicians across the country, especially after the Texas Supreme Court denied a pregnant woman with life-threatening complications access to abortion. While the U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday cleared the way for emergency abortions in Idaho, the court stopped short

of issuing broader rulings.

Emily Boevers, an obstetrician gynecologist practicing in rural Iowa who advocates for abortion access, questioned how far women will suffer before they are provided life-saving care.

"I hope that our governor will be available by telephone to take the calls wondering if we pass that line where patients are deadly ill and we can perform life-saving care for her," she said Friday. "Our patients will suffer."

Texas Supreme Court upholds ban on youth gender transitions. It's the largest state with such a law

By JIM VERTUNO and ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Supreme Court upheld the state's ban on gender-affirming care for transgender youths Friday, rejecting pleas from parents that it violates their right to decide on and seek medical care for their children.

The 8-1 ruling from the all-Republican court leaves in place a law that has been in effect since Sept. 1, 2023. Texas is the largest of at least 25 states that have adopted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors.

The Texas law prevents transgender people under 18 from accessing hormone therapies, puberty blockers and transition surgeries, though surgical procedures are rarely performed on children. Children who had already started the medications had to taper off their use.

"We conclude the Legislature made a permissible, rational policy choice to limit the types of available medical procedures for children, particularly in light of the relative nascency of both gender dysphoria and its various modes of treatment and the Legislature's express constitutional authority to regulate the practice of medicine," Justice Rebeca Aizpuru Huddle wrote in the court's decision.

The lawsuit that challenged the Texas law argued it devastates transgender teens who are unable to obtain critical treatment recommended by their physicians and parents. The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates about 29,800 people ages 13-17 in Texas identify as transgender.

The only justice dissenting with Friday's ruling said the Texas Supreme Court was allowing the state to "legislate away fundamental parental rights."

"The State's categorical statutory prohibition prevents these parents, and many others, from developing individualized treatment plans for their children in consultation with their physicians, even the children for whom treatment could be lifesaving," Justice Debra Lehrmann wrote in a dissenting opinion. "The law is not only cruel — it is unconstitutional."

A lower court had ruled the law unconstitutional, but it was allowed to take effect while the state Supreme Court considered the case.

Texas' Republican attorney general, Ken Paxton, vowed in a post on the social platform X after the ruling that his office "will use every tool at our disposal to ensure that doctors and medical institutions follow the law."

Advocates criticized the ruling.

"It is impossible to overstate the devastating impact of this ruling on Texas transgender youth and the families that love and support them," said Karen Loewy, senior counsel and director of Constitutional Law Practice at Lambda Legal, which was among the groups that sued the state on behalf of doctors and families.

"Our government shouldn't deprive trans youth of the health care that they need to survive and thrive," said Ash Hall, policy and advocacy strategist for LGBTQIA+ rights at ACLU of Texas. "Texas politicians' obsession with attacking trans kids and their families is needlessly cruel."

The law includes exemptions for children experiencing early puberty or who have "a medically verifiable genetic disorder of sex development."

Such exemptions underscore the law's discriminatory nature, said Dr. Jack Drescher, a psychiatry professor at Columbia University who edited the section about gender dysphoria in the American Psychiatric

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 66 of 83

Association's diagnostic manual. Gender dysphoria is the psychological distress experienced by those whose gender expression does not match their gender identity and is a required diagnosis before treatments can begin.

"They're saying if you're not a transgender child and you need these drugs, you can have them, but if you're a transgender child who might benefit from these drugs, then sorry, you have to move to another state," Drescher said.

The restrictions on health care are part of a larger backlash against transgender rights, touching on everything from bathroom access to participation in sports. Former President Donald Trump has vowed to pursue other measures that would restrict the rights of transgender people if he wins the November election, including a ban on gender-affirming care for minors at the federal level.

As more states move to enforce health care restrictions, families of transgender youths are increasingly forced to travel out of state for the care they need at clinics with growing waiting lists. At least 13 states have laws protecting care for transgender minors.

Most of the states that have passed restrictions face lawsuits, and the U.S. Supreme Court recently agreed to hear an appeal from the Biden administration attempting to block state bans on gender-affirming care. The case before the high court involves a Tennessee law that restricts puberty blockers and hormone therapy for transgender minors, similar to the Texas law.

Gender-affirming care for transgender youths is supported by major medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychiatric Association and the Endocrine Society.

In a concurring opinion, one justice dismissed the position of the medical groups.

"The fact that expert witnesses or influential interest groups like the American Psychiatric Association disagree with the Legislature's judgment is entirely irrelevant to the constitutional question," Justice James Blacklock wrote. "The Texas Constitution authorizes the Legislature to regulate 'practitioners of medicine.'"

Texas officials defended the law as necessary to protect children and noted a myriad of other restrictions for minors on tattoos, alcohol, tobacco and certain over-the-counter drugs.

Several doctors who treat transgender children testified in a lower court hearing that patients risk deteriorating mental health, which could possibly lead to suicide, if they are denied safe and effective treatment.

The ban was signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, the first governor to order the investigation of families of transgender minors who receive gender-affirming care.

Putin calls for resuming production of intermediate missiles after scrapping of treaty with US

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday called for resuming production of intermediate-range missiles that were banned under a now-scrapped treaty with the United States.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty, or INF, which banned ground-based nuclear and conventional missiles with a range of 500-5,500 kilometers (310-3,410 miles), was regarded as an arms control landmark when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. President Ronald Reagan signed it in 1988.

The U.S. withdrew from the treaty in 2019, citing Russian violations.

"We need to start production of these strike systems and then, based on the actual situation, make decisions about where — if necessary to ensure our safety — to place them," Putin said at a meeting of Russia's national security council.

Putin said Russia hadn't produced such missiles since the 2019 treaty scrapping, but that "today it is known that the United States not only produces these missile systems, but has already brought them to Europe for exercises, to Denmark. Quite recently it was announced that they are in the Philippines."

Since withdrawing from the treaty, the U.S. Army has moved forward with developing a conventional, ground-launched, midrange missile capability called the Typhon that would have been banned under the INF. The Typhon fires two Navy missiles, the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile and Standard Missile-6.

The U.S. Army ran the system through tests during an exercise in the Philippines this spring.

The end of the INF was a milestone in the deterioration of relations between the U.S. and Russia. The last remaining arms-control pact between Washington and Moscow is the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. It's set to expire in 2026, and the lack of dialogue on anchoring a successor deal has worried arms control advocates.

Putin's statement comes amid rising tensions between Russia and the West over the conflict in Ukraine and concern about possible nuclear attacks.

In June, Putin spoke to executives from international news organizations about Moscow's use of nuclear weapons.

"We have a nuclear doctrine, look what it says," he said. "If someone's actions threaten our sovereignty and territorial integrity, we consider it possible for us to use all means at our disposal. This should not be taken lightly, superficially."

The Supreme Court weakens federal regulators, overturning decades-old Chevron decision

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Friday upended a 40-year-old decision that made it easier for the federal government to regulate the environment, public health, workplace safety and consumer protections, delivering a far-reaching and potentially lucrative victory to business interests.

The court's six conservative justices overturned the 1984 decision colloquially known as Chevron, long a target of conservatives who have been motivated as much by weakening the regulatory state as social issues including abortion. The liberal justices were in dissent.

The case was the conservative-dominated court's clearest and boldest repudiation yet of what critics of regulation call the administrative state.

Billions of dollars are potentially at stake in challenges that could be spawned by the high court's ruling. The Biden administration's top Supreme Court lawyer had warned such a move would be an "unwarranted shock to the legal system."

The heart of the Chevron decision says federal agencies should be allowed to fill in the details when laws aren't crystal clear. Opponents of the decision argued that it gave power that should be wielded by judges to experts who work for the government.

"Courts must exercise their independent judgment in deciding whether an agency has acted within its statutory authority," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

Roberts wrote that the decision does not call into question prior cases that relied on the Chevron decision.

But in dissent, Justice Elena Kagan wrote that the assurance rings hollow. "The majority is sanguine; I am not so much," she wrote.

Kagan called the latest decision "yet another example of the Court's resolve to roll back agency authority, despite congressional direction to the contrary." Just a day earlier, the same lineup of justices stripped the Securities and Exchange Commission of a major tool used in fighting fraud.

The court ruled in cases brought by Atlantic herring fishermen in New Jersey and Rhode Island who challenged a fee requirement. Lower courts used the Chevron decision to uphold a 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service rule that herring fishermen pay for government-mandated observers who track their fish intake.

Conservative and business interests strongly backed the fishermen's appeals, betting that a court that was remade during Republican Donald Trump's presidency would strike another blow at the regulatory state.

The court's conservative majority has previously reined in environmental regulations and stopped the Democratic Biden administration's initiatives on COVID-19 vaccines and student loan forgiveness.

The justices hadn't invoked Chevron since 2016, but lower courts had continued to do so.

Forty years ago, the Supreme Court ruled 6-0, with three justices recused, that judges should play a limited, deferential role when evaluating the actions of agency experts in a case brought by environmental

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 68 of 83

groups to challenge a Reagan administration effort to ease regulation of power plants and factories.

"Judges are not experts in the field, and are not part of either political branch of government," Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in 1984, explaining why they should play a limited role.

But the current high court, with a 6-3 conservative majority, has been increasingly skeptical of the powers of federal agencies. Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas all had questioned the Chevron decision.

They were in Friday's majority, along with Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Roberts' opinion took direct aim at what Stevens wrote 40 years ago. "That depends, of course, on what the 'field' is. If it is legal interpretation, that has been, 'emphatically,' 'the province and duty of the judicial department' for at least 221 years," Roberts wrote, quoting from the Marbury v. Madison decision that established the Supreme Court as the last word in interpreting laws and the Constitution.

Kagan, though, said that in getting rid of Chevron "gives courts control over matters they know nothing about." She read a summary of her dissent aloud in the courtroom to emphasize her disagreement with the majority.

Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor joined Kagan in dissent.

Opponents of the Chevron doctrine argue that judges applied it too often to rubber-stamp decisions made by government bureaucrats. Judges must exercise their own authority and judgment to say what the law is, the court said Friday, adopting the opponents arguments.

Bill Bright, a Cape May, New Jersey-based fisherman who was part of the lawsuit, said the decision to overturn Chevron would help fishing businesses make a living. "Nothing is more important than protecting the livelihoods of our families and crews," Bright said in a statement.

Reacting to the decision, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the ruling "is yet another deeply troubling decision that takes our country backwards. Republican-backed special interests have repeatedly turned to the Supreme Court to block common-sense rules that keep us safe, protect our health and environment, safeguard our financial system, and support American consumers and workers."

Federal agencies and the Justice Department had already begun reducing their reliance on the Chevron decision in crafting and defending new regulations.

Environmental, health advocacy groups, civil rights organizations, organized labor and Democrats on the national and state level had urged the court to leave the Chevron decision in place.

"The Supreme Court is pushing the nation into uncharted waters as it seizes it seizes power from our elected branches of government to advance its deregulatory agenda," Sambhav Sankar, a lawyer with the environmental group Earthjustice, said after the ruling. "The conservative justices are aggressively reshaping the foundations of our government so that the President and Congress have less power to protect the public, and corporations have more power to challenge regulations in search of profits. This ruling threatens the legitimacy of hundreds of regulations that keep us safe, protect our homes and environment, and create a level playing field for businesses to compete on."

Gun, e-cigarette, farm, timber and home-building groups were among the business groups supporting the fishermen. Conservative interests that also intervened in recent high court cases limiting regulation of air and water pollution backed the fishermen as well.

The fisherman sued to contest the 2020 regulation that would have authorized a fee that could have topped \$700 a day, though no one ever had to pay it.

In separate lawsuits in New Jersey and Rhode Island, the fishermen argued that Congress never gave federal regulators authority to require the fisherman to pay for monitors. They lost in the lower courts, which relied on the Chevron decision to sustain the regulation.

The justices heard two cases on the same issue because Jackson was recused from the New Jersey case. She took part in it at an earlier stage when she was an appeals court judge. The full court participated in the case from Rhode Island.

Theodore Roosevelt's pocket watch was stolen in 1987. It's finally back at his New York home

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

The silver pocket watch was a prized possession of Theodore Roosevelt, a keepsake given to him by his sister and her husband in 1898 before he became president that would travel with him around the world and end up at Sagamore Hill — his home on Long Island, New York, and now a national historic site.

But in 1987, it went from museum piece to pilfered prize when someone stole it from an unlocked case at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in Buffalo, New York, where it was on loan.

It was mystery that endured 36 years until it turned up at a Florida auction house last year and was seized by federal agents. On Thursday, it was returned to public display at Sagamore Hill as the National Park Service and the FBI triumphantly announced it was back home during a ceremony featuring Roosevelt's great-grandson, Tweed Roosevelt.

"This was feel-good news," Tweed Roosevelt, 82, said Friday in a phone interview. "For me, it kind of felt like almost as if a piece of TR's spirit being returned to Sagamore Hill, like a little bit of him was coming back. And so I felt that was really cool."

Growing up, he said he didn't know about the watch and only learned about it vaguely after it was stolen. He called it "unremarkable" in appearance, but priceless to his great grandfather.

"As it turns out, this isn't just any old pocket watch," he said. "It was a watch that TR placed great sentimental value on."

The mystery of the watch's disappearance, however, is not fully solved. It is still not clear who stole it and how. The Park Service and FBI only released details of its reappearance this week after an investigation. The agencies did not return messages seeking comment Friday.

Roosevelt, who was president from 1901 to 1909, apparently had the watch with him at the Battle of San Juan Hill in Cuba during the Spanish-American War and during future exploits, including wild game hunting in Africa and exploring the Amazon in South America, according to the Park Service.

The watch, made by the now-defunct Waltham Watch Co. in Massachusetts, appears like many pocket watches of its day, with a plain silver exterior and no etchings. But the inside reveals its significance, with engraving that says "THEODORE ROOSEVELT" and "FROM D.R. & C.R.R.," referring to Roosevelt's brother-in-law and sister, Douglas Robinson Jr. and Corinne Roosevelt Robinson.

When it showed up last year at Blackwell Auctions in Clearwater, Florida, owner Edwin Bailey was excited by the engraving but skeptical it was real. It had no supporting documents with it, and the general mindset among art dealers and collectors is to verify before getting your hopes up, he said.

Bailey said he did not know the watch was stolen, and the person who brought it to him didn't know where it came from. He declined to identify the person, saying he never divulges the identities of his consigners. He only would say the person was an art dealer and collector in Buffalo in the 1970s and 1980s.

The collector told Bailey that he received the watch from another man who used to borrow money from him to go "picking" for antiques and other collectibles in the late 1980s. The picker would leave the watch with the collector as collateral, Bailey said.

One day, the picker never showed up to retrieve the watch, and the collector found out that he had died, Bailey said.

"This dealer probably had that thing just squirreled away for 30 years thinking it was just another pocket watch," Bailey said Friday. "I don't think that my consigner had a clue about not only where it came from, but he probably didn't even suspect it was real."

Bailey said he researched the watch for weeks, pouring through Roosevelt's writings in online archives, trying to come up with definitive proof it was authentic. He said he found several bits of evidence that made him believe it was. The FBI, Park Service and Sagamore Hill officials would later confirm it was the real deal.

In a note to his sister in May 1898, Roosevelt wrote, "Darling Corinne, You could not have given me a more useful present than the watch; it was exactly what I wished. ... Thank old Douglas for the watch —

and for his many, many kindnesses.”

He also mentioned a watch in his 1914 book “Through the Brazilian Wilderness.” Writing about a bayou crossing, he said “One result of the swim, by the way, was that my watch, a veteran of Cuba and Africa, came to an indignant halt.” Bailey believes that was the same watch Roosevelt’s sister and brother-in-law gave him.

Bailey also wrote letters and sent pictures of the watch to various museums, the Sagamore Hill historic site and others, asking if they had any information about it.

Last year, shortly before he was set to put the watch up for auction, Bailey got a visit from several people he thought were interested buyers. Then they pulled out their badges and a warrant. It was the FBI coming to investigate the watch and take possession of it, he said.

The federal agents were courteous in asking questions, and he told them the story. He said he was glad that the watch is now where it belongs.

“It was exciting,” Bailey said. “I’ve had a small handful of items that I say ‘these are the best things I’ve ever handled.’ I got to hold something that was personally treasured by a prominent American president. ... This was Teddy Roosevelt’s watch. This was a Mount Rushmore guy’s personal pocket watch.”

Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation gauge shows price pressures easing further

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A measure of prices that is closely tracked by the Federal Reserve suggests that inflation pressures in the U.S. economy are continuing to ease.

Friday’s Commerce Department report showed that consumer prices were flat from April to May, the mildest such performance in more than four years. Measured from a year earlier, prices rose 2.6% last month, slightly less than in April.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core inflation rose 0.1% from April to May, the smallest increase since the spring of 2020, when the pandemic erupted and shut down the economy. And compared with a year earlier, core prices were up 2.6% in May, the lowest increase in more than three years.

Prices for physical goods actually fell 0.4% from April to May. Gasoline prices, for example, dropped 3.4%, furniture prices 1% and the prices of recreational goods and vehicles 1.6%. On the other hand, prices for services, which include items like restaurant meals and airline fares, ticked up 0.2%.

The latest figures will likely be welcomed by the Fed’s policymakers, who have said they need to feel confident that inflation is slowing sustainably toward their 2% target before they’d start cutting interest rates. Rate cuts by the Fed, which most economists think could start in September, would lead eventually to lower borrowing rates for consumers and businesses.

“If the trend we saw this month continues consistently for another two months, the Fed may finally have the confidence necessary for a rate cut in September,” Olu Sonola, head of U.S. economic research at Fitch Ratings, wrote in a research note.

The Fed raised its benchmark rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023 in its drive to curb the worst streak of inflation in four decades. Inflation did cool substantially from its peak in 2022. Still, average prices remain far above where they were before the pandemic, a source of frustration for many Americans and a potential threat to President Joe Biden’s re-election bid.

During Thursday night’s presidential debate, Donald Trump attacked Biden’s record on inflation. The presumptive Republican nominee asserted that Biden inherited low rates of inflation when he entered office in January 2021 but that prices “blew up under his leadership.”

While inflation was in fact ultra-low at the start of the Biden presidency, that was largely because the nation was still recovering from the brutal Covid recession, which flattened the economy. Once the economy began surging back to life with unexpected speed, causing severe shortages of goods and labor, inflation soared.

Friday’s price figures added to signs that inflation pressures are continuing to ease, though more slowly

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 71 of 83

than they did last year.

The Fed tends to favor the inflation gauge that the government issued Friday — the personal consumption expenditures price index — over the better-known consumer price index. The PCE index tries to account for changes in how people shop when inflation jumps. It can capture, for example, when consumers switch from pricey national brands to cheaper store brands.

Like the PCE index, the latest consumer price index showed that inflation eased in May for a second straight month. It reinforced hopes that the acceleration of prices that occurred early this year has passed.

The much higher borrowing costs that followed the Fed's rate hikes, which sent its key rate to a 23-year high, were widely expected to tip the nation into recession. Instead, the economy has kept growing, and employers have kept hiring.

Lately, though, the economy's momentum has appeared to flag, with higher rates seeming to weaken the ability of some consumers to keep spending freely. On Thursday, the government reported that the economy expanded at a 1.4% annual pace from January through March, the slowest quarterly growth since 2022. Consumer spending, the main engine of the economy, grew at a tepid 1.5% annual rate.

Friday's report also showed that consumer spending and incomes both picked up in May, encouraging signs for the economy. Adjusted for inflation, spending by consumers — the principal driver of the U.S. economy — rose 0.3% last month after having dropped 0.1% in April.

After-tax income, also adjusted for inflation, rose 0.5%. That was the biggest gain since September 2020.

A decade after the Islamic State group declared a caliphate, it's defeated but remains lethal

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — A decade after the Islamic State militant group declared its caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria, the extremists no longer control any land, have lost many prominent leaders and are mostly out of the world news headlines.

Still, the group continues to recruit members and claim responsibility for deadly attacks around the world, including lethal operations in Iran and Russia earlier this year that left scores dead. Its sleeper cells in Syria and Iraq still carry out attacks against government forces in both countries as well as U.S.-backed Syrian fighters, at a time when Iraq's government is negotiating with Washington over a possible withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The group that once attracted tens of thousands of fighters and supporters from around the world to come to Syria and Iraq, and at its peak ruled an area half the size of the United Kingdom was notorious for its brutality. It beheaded civilians, slaughtered 1,700 captured Iraqi soldiers in a short period, and enslaved and raped thousands of women from the Yazidi community, one of Iraq's oldest religious minorities.

"Daesh remains a threat to international security," U.S. Army Maj. Gen. J.B. Vowell, the commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force — Operation Inherent Resolve, said in comments sent to The Associated Press. Daesh is the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

"We maintain our intensity and resolve to combat and destroy any remnants of groups that share Daesh ideology," Vowell said.

In recent years, the group's branches have gained strength around the world, mainly in Africa and Afghanistan, but its leadership is believed to be in Syria. The four leaders of the group who have been killed since 2019 were all hunted down in Syria.

In 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, then the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq group, which was formed as an offshoot of al-Qaida, distanced himself from the al-Qaida global network and clashed with its branch in Syria, then known as the Nusra Front. The group renamed itself the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and launched a military campaign during which it captured large parts of Syria and Iraq.

In early June 2014, the group captured the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, Iraq's second largest, as the Iraqi army collapsed. Later that month, it opened the border between areas it controlled in Syria and Iraq.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 72 of 83

On June 29, 2014, al-Baghdadi appeared as a black-robed figure to deliver a sermon from the pulpit of Mosul's Great Mosque of al-Nuri in which he declared a caliphate and urged Muslims around the world to swear allegiance to it and obey him as its leader. Since then, the group has identified itself as the Islamic State.

"Al-Baghdadi's sermon — an extension of the extremist ideology of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — continue to inspire ISIS members globally," said retired U.S. Army officer Myles B. Caggins III, senior nonresident fellow at the New Lines Institute and former spokesman for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. He was referring to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida's leader in Iraq who was killed in a U.S. strike in 2006.

From the self-declared caliphate, the group planned deadly attacks around the world and carried out brutal killings, including the beheading of Western journalists, setting a Jordanian pilot on fire while locked inside a cage days after his fighter jet was shot down, and drowning opponents in pools after locking them in giant metal cages.

A coalition of more than 80 countries, led by the United States, was formed to fight IS and a decade , the alliance continues to carry out raids against the militants' hideouts in Syria and Iraq.

The war against IS officially ended in March 2019, when U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led fighters of the Syrian Democratic Forces captured the eastern Syrian town of Baghouz, which was the last sliver of land the extremists controlled.

Before the loss of Baghouz, IS was defeated in Iraq in July 2017, when Iraqi forces captured the northern city of Mosul. Three months later, IS suffered a major blow when SDF captured the Syrian northern city of Raqqa, which was the group's de-facto capital.

The United Nations says the group still has between 5,000 and 7,000 fighters in Syria and Iraq.

Still, at least in Iraq, government and military officials have asserted that the group is too weak to stage a comeback.

"It is not possible for (IS) to claim a caliphate once again. They don't have the command or control capabilities to do so," Iraqi army Maj. Gen. Tahseen al-Khafaji told the AP at the headquarters of the Joint Special Operations Command in Baghdad, where Iraqi officers and officials from the U.S.-led coalition supervise operations against the extremists.

The command, which was formed to lead operations against the group starting weeks after the caliphate was declared, remains active.

Al-Khafaji said that IS is now made up of sleeper cells in caves and the desert in remote areas, as Iraqi security forces keep them on the run. During the first five months of the year, he said, Iraqi forces conducted 35 airstrikes against IS and killed 51 of its members.

Also at the headquarters, Sabah al-Noman of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service said that having lost its hold on Iraq, the militant group is focused mostly on Africa, especially the Sahel region, to try to get a foothold there.

"It is not possible for them to take control of a village, let alone an Iraqi city," he said. He added that the U.S.-led coalition continues to carry out reconnaissance and surveillance in order to provide Iraqi forces with intelligence, and the security forces "deal with this information directly."

Although IS appears to be under control in Iraq, it has killed dozens of government forces and SDF fighters over the past several months in Syria.

"Daesh terrorist cells continue in their terrorist operations," SDF spokesman Siamand Ali said. "They are present on the ground and are working at levels higher than those of previous years."

In northeast Syria, SDF fighters guard around 10,000 captured IS fighters in around two dozen detention facilities — including 2,000 foreigners whose home countries have refused to repatriate them.

The SDF also oversees about 33,000 family members of suspected IS fighters, mostly women and children in the heavily-guarded al-Hol camp, which is seen as a breeding center for future extremists.

Their worst attack since the group's defeat occurred in January 2022, when the extremists attacked the Gweiran Prison, or al-Sinaa — a Kurdish-run facility in Syria's northeast holding thousands of IS militants. The attack led to 10 days of fighting between SDF fighters and IS militants that left nearly 500 dead on

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 73 of 83

both sides, before the SDF brought the situation under control.

Caggins said that the U.S.-led coalition's "military advice and assistance" to Iraq Security Forces, Kurdish Iraqi fighters and the SDF "is essential to maintain dominance against ISIS remnants as well as securing more than 10,000 ISIS detainees at makeshift jails and camps in Syria."

AP picks 2024's best movies so far, from 'Furiosa' to 'Thelma,' 'I Saw the TV Glow' to 'Challengers'

By JAKE COYLE and LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writers

The movie year, jumbled a bit by 2023's strikes, might feel like it's only just getting going. The box office is, finally, booming thanks to "Inside Out 2." But at the year's midway point, a lot of terrific movies have already come out – more, maybe, than you might realize.

Not even counting some of the movies that had qualifying releases last year — two of our favorites were "La Chimera" and "Tótem" — 2024 has accumulated a wide range of standout movies big and small, with and without sandworms. Here are our favorites:

"I Saw the TV Glow"

Jane Schoenbrun's sophomore feature — a dramatic leap forward for filmmaker and a transfixing transparable — is one of the most exciting movie events of the year. The film, available for digital rental, is a chilling 1990s coming of age in which a "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"-like series called "The Pink Opaque" offers a possible portal out of drab suburban life and other suffocations. It feels chillingly, beautifully ripped out of Schoenbrun's soul — and it's got a killer soundtrack. —Coyle

"Dune: Part Two"

Its box office supremacy may have been eclipsed by some animated feelings, but "Dune: Part Two" is still the most dazzling cinematic spectacle to have graced theaters in 2024. "Dune" was always going to be a hard act to follow, but Denis Villeneuve's continuation of Paul Atreides' rise manages to be both thrilling and deeply unsettling — a cautionary tale about a would-be messiah who you can't help but root for. Thanks a lot for the moral crisis, Chalamet. —Bahr

"Robot Dreams"

Look, I don't make the rules. But it turns out that an animated movie about a dog and a robot is one of the best New York movies in years, not to mention a surprisingly mature tale of loving and losing for a movie where the effects of rust are quite central to the narrative. But "Robot Dreams," an Oscar-nominee directed by Pablo Berger, is charmingly its own thing. —Coyle

"Challengers"

It's rare when a film seems to impact the culture immediately — feeling both zeitgeisty and forward thinking, but Luca Guadagnino's sporty, sexy psychodrama did just that. It might not have broken the box office, but Zendaya, Mike Faist and Josh O'Connor ignited our imaginations, drove trends/made everyone feel like a fashion insider for a moment (Jonathan Anderson tennis core, anyone?) and anointed a new kind of internet boyfriend: The hot rodent man. —Bahr

"Furiosa"

There is just no living up to "Mad Max: Fury Road"; it's too good. But George Miller's "Furiosa" still contains some of the action best sequences of the year and very possibly Chris Hemsworth's finest hour. Maybe it's a little overlong and lacks the punch Charlize Theron brought to "Fury Road." But filmmaking like this is about as hard to come by in summer moviegoing as water is in the "Mad Max" wasteland. —Coyle

"Love Lies Bleeding"

Rose Glass's pulpy genre experiment felt like a cult classic from the beginning. This is a fairly difficult feat for a brand-new film, but a testament to her wholly original creation about female bodybuilders, toxic masculinity, featuring what Coyle aptly dubbed a "peak Kristen Stewart" performance and Ed Harris with a deeply upsetting rat tail. With otherworldly visuals and a lusty, sweaty, dangerous tone, it feels "flung out of space" to quote Carol Aird. —Bahr

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 74 of 83

"Green Border"

Polish director Agnieszka Holland's latest is easily the most searing, unforgettable and essential movie of the year so far — which doesn't exactly mean it's an easy watch. Holland's film is a refugee drama set along the two-mile-wide exclusion zone around the border between Poland and Belarus based on some of the real life experiences of migrants in recent years. Refugees, including a family from Syria, find themselves used as pawns by both countries and pushed — even literally thrown — back and forth across a barbed-wire fence in wooded borderlands. "Green Border" was the subject of intense political debate in Poland when it premiered last fall at the Venice Film Festival. But as a migrant tale of go-there-not-here, "Green Border" resonates far wider than just Eastern Europe. —Coyle

"Thelma"

I have a tendency to overuse the word delightful. But I'd take them all back to give it to "Thelma," in which June Squibb plays a 90-something grandmother on a mission to get \$10,000 back from some scammers. Squibb, now 94, is firing on all cylinders, playing her actual age with actual limitations with a fierce determination and comedic brilliance opposite the gone-too-soon Richard Roundtree. It's one of the easiest of this year's films to recommend to just about anyone — minimal explanations or justifications required. —Bahr

"Ghostlight"

The therapeutic powers of theater play a prominent role in two of the year's best movies. There's the upcoming "Sing Sing," a stunning, based-on-a-true-story film about incarcerated men rehabilitated through a drama program. (A July 12 release, it falls outside our cutoff.) And there's "Ghostlight," a sublime little gem of a movie about a Chicago family struggling to process tragedy. They're played by real-life family: Keith Kupferer (as the father), Tara Mallen (as the mother) and Katherine Mallen Kupferer (as the daughter). The dad, an unexpressive construction worker, is reluctantly coaxed into a community theater production of "Romeo and Juliet." "He's Romeo?" someone says. Directing duo Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson ("Saint Frances") insure a movie that could have turned saccharine never waivers in its sweet, everyday tenderness. —Coyle

"Evil Does Not Exist"

If "Thelma" is a sweet glass of afternoon lemonade, "Evil Does Not Exist" is a bitter, but rich, digestif. Ryûsuke Hamaguchi's film is a chilling slow-burn about a small Japanese mountain village and the big city company who wants to set up a glamping site there. While an "eco-drama" probably doesn't sound especially exciting — there's lots of talk about septic tanks and water purity — this film's power sneaks up on you building up to a haunting conclusion. —Bahr

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."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 75 of 83

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 at least 364 people and taking more than 40 hostage. Many of them are still held in Gaza.

Hila Faklro, 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!"

Russia warns it can take unspecified measures in response to US drone flights over Black Sea

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's defense minister ordered officials to prepare a "response" to U.S. drone flights over the Black Sea, the ministry said Friday, in an apparent warning that Moscow may take forceful action to ward off the American reconnaissance aircraft.

The Russian Defense Ministry noted a recent "increased intensity" of U.S. drones over the Black Sea, saying they "conduct intelligence and targeting for precision weapons supplied to the Ukrainian military by Western countries for strikes on Russian facilities."

"It shows an increased involvement of the U.S. and other NATO countries in the conflict in Ukraine on the side of the Kyiv regime," the ministry said in a statement.

It noted that "such flights significantly increase the probability of incidents involving Russian military aircraft, which increases the risk of direct confrontation between the alliance and the Russian Federation."

"NATO members will bear responsibility for that," it added.

The ministry said that Defense Minister Andrei Belousov has directed the General Staff to "make proposals on measures of operative response to provocations."

Washington and Moscow have clashed before over the issue. In March 2023, a Russian Su-27 fighter jet damaged a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone, causing it to crash into the Black Sea. It was the first direct clash between Russian and U.S. forces since the Cold War.

A repeat of such a confrontation could further fuel tensions over the war in Ukraine.

The Pentagon and U.S. European Command said after the incident that two Russian Su-27 aircraft dumped fuel on the MQ-9, which was conducting a routine surveillance mission over the Black Sea in international airspace.

The Russian Defense Ministry said then that the U.S. drone was flying near the Russian border and intruded into an area that was declared off-limits by Russian authorities.

Russia has declared broad areas near Crimea off-limits to flights. Ever since Russia's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and long before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow accused U.S. surveillance planes of flying too close to its borders while ignoring the notices issued by Russia.

Friday's Russian statement follows a Ukrainian attack on Sevastopol over the weekend with U.S.-made ATACMS missiles, which killed four and injured about 150, according to Russian authorities.

Russian officials have claimed that the U.S. was directly involved in the attack by providing intelligence and targeting and warned to take retaliatory measures.

Also Friday, the Belarusian military said it has beefed up its forces along Ukraine's northern border in response to what it described as security threats.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry said that it has deployed multiple rocket launchers in an unspecified section of the 1,084-kilometer (700-mile) border.

Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has close ties with Russia and allowed Moscow to use his country's territory to invade Ukraine in February 2022.

The Belarusian announcement came after the country's border agency claimed its troops downed a Ukrainian drone that flew across the border to gather intelligence.

Crisis in the UK's NHS shows why Conservatives are struggling after 14 years in power

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Nathaniel Dye believes he probably won't live to see Britain's next election. But the music teacher diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer is doing everything he can to make sure the Labour Party wins this one.

Dismayed by delays in his diagnosis by the National Health Service, the 38-year-old says he feels let down by the Conservative-led government, which health policy experts say has failed to adequately fund the NHS. As a result, he played a central role in the launch of Labour's election platform earlier this month, going on national television to urge voters to back the party.

"I've seen underfunding of the NHS and mismanagement of the NHS cause real problems in the way I've been treated," he told The Associated Press. "And I suppose I consider it the most natural thing in the world to talk to people on a personal level and say, 'What can we do to improve things?'"

Dye's story illustrates voters' frustration with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party, which opinion polls show is significantly trailing in parliamentary elections set for July 4.

After 14 years of Conservative-led government, voters blame the party for the litany of problems facing Britain, from sewage spills and unreliable train service to the cost-of-living crisis, crime and the rise in migrants entering the country illegally after crossing the English Channel on inflatable boats.

But no public service is as central to life in the United Kingdom as the NHS, and it is failing to deliver on its promise to provide free health care to everyone.

The NHS is creaking under the weight of an aging and growing population, years of funding constraints, and fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. That means people are waiting longer for everything from primary care appointments to elective surgery and cancer treatment. Some 52% of people were dissatisfied with the NHS last year, 29 percentage points higher than in 2020, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey, conducted annually since 1983.

That is good news for Labour, according to Tim Bale, a professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London.

"The Conservatives have got nothing to crow about," he said. "People's lived experience of the NHS is very, very negative at the moment. However, they retain a great deal of faith in the NHS, and they want to elect a government that they think is going to rescue it."

Founded by a Labour government in 1947 to fulfill the Conservatives' wartime pledge to build a fairer society for the men and women who fought to preserve democracy during World War II, the NHS has virtually untouchable status.

If you are British, chances are you were born in an NHS hospital and got your childhood vaccines from a doctor paid by the NHS. If you have a heart attack, you call NHS paramedics and are transported to the hospital in an NHS ambulance. Should you be diagnosed with cancer or any other disease, NHS specialists will likely treat you. And you will never receive a bill.

But because the NHS is so much a part of people's daily lives, it is also the most glaring example of how the social contract in Britain is fraying.

Since the Conservatives came to power in 2010, the U.K. budget has been buffeted by the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and inflation, all of which increased government expenditures, slowed economic growth and curtailed revenue.

As a result, the health care budget has grown by an average of 2.8% annually over the past eight years, compared with 3.6% over the previous 50 years.

That has squeezed the NHS at a time when demand for its services is rising. On top of that, the NHS is still recovering from the pandemic, which forced many people to defer treatment as doctors and hospitals focused on COVID-19.

In March, more than 7.54 million people in England were waiting for elective surgery such as cataract removals or hip replacements, 65% more than before the pandemic.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 78 of 83

But the problems extend far beyond elective surgery.

Newspapers are filled with stories of people waiting weeks to get appointments with their family doctors, children being hospitalized for emergency tooth extractions because they weren't able to get preventive dental care, and patients who spend hours in the back of ambulances waiting for emergency room back-ups to clear.

All of that translates to higher avoidable mortality rates than in other major developed nations except the United States, driven by below-average survival rates for many types of cancer, heart attacks and strokes, according to The King's Fund, an independent think tank devoted to improving health care.

Reversing those trends is the top priority for most voters, said Charlotte Wickens, a policy adviser at the fund.

"And it's because everyone experiences ill health and everyone needs NHS services," she said. "Whoever forms the next government will have to do something to change the situation that the health service finds itself in."

The Conservatives say many of the pressures on the NHS are out of their control and have promised to build 50 diagnostic hubs around the country and boost funding by more than inflation during each year of the next government. Labour plans to tackle the backlogs by spending 1 billion pounds (\$1.27 billion) to fund 40,000 more operations, scans and appointments each week, while pledging to train thousands of new general practitioners.

But fixing the NHS will take more than money.

It needs to rethink the way it provides care, making better use of technology and focusing on keeping people healthy, rather than treating them once they get sick, according to The King's Fund.

Without such changes, more people will have stories like Dye's.

Dye, who used to run ultramarathons, first sought medical help after he noticed that he was getting slower and slower for no apparent reason.

After blood tests and a stool sample that revealed he might have cancer, Dye experienced several delays before he began chemotherapy.

"Amongst all that is this quiet, uneasy truth that I waited over 100 days in total, from GP contact to having chemotherapy ... and the target is 62," he said. "And it's possible that that wait will shorten my life."

Tests this week found that Dye was tumor free. But he considers it a temporary reprieve because chances are high that his cancer will return. Doctors say only about 10% of patients in this situation survive for five years.

"I don't know exactly what needs to happen to give people better outcomes, but I can certainly use my example to say we really need to push for that as soon as possible," he said.

Dye hopes to do that by telling his story with dark humor that softens the ugly details.

Before becoming an advocate for Labour, Dye focused on raising money for cancer charities, including running the London Marathon while using a colostomy bag and playing a green trombone. He took requests along the route.

His playlist included "Livin' on a Prayer."

Outdoing many healthy people who weren't encumbered by musical instruments, he completed the 26.2-mile course.

"You could say that ... there's no point in me getting politically involved, I'm not going to see the result," he said. "But I don't care because I think it comes down to hope."

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) — The 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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 79 of 83

thought Thursday night, 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.

Biden doesn't allay fears about his age

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.

Trump won't condemn Jan. 6 attackers, giving Biden an opening

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.

Biden hits Trump on conviction, allegation of sex with a porn star

In what may well be a first in a presidential campaign, Trump called the president, Biden, a "criminal"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 80 of 83

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.

On abortion, Trump falsely says everyone is happy, and Biden misses an opportunity

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.

Overturning 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."

Trump blunts Biden's border progress with dark rhetoric

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 says 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 coronavirus 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.”

One of Biden’s strongest moments is about veterans

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-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.

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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 82 of 83

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."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, June 29, 2024 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 004 ~ 83 of 83

Today in History: June 29, Apple releases first iPhone to consumers

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 29, the 181st day of 2024. There are 185 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On June 29, 2007, the first version of the iPhone went on sale to the public; over 2.3 billion iPhones have been sold to date.

Also on this date:

In 1520, Montezuma II, the ninth and last emperor of the Aztecs, died in Tenochtitlan (tay-nohch-TEET'-lahn) under unclear circumstances (some say he was killed by his own subjects; others, by the Spanish).

In 1613, London's original Globe Theatre, where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed, was destroyed by a fire sparked by a cannon shot during a performance of "Henry VIII."

In 1767, Britain approved the Townshend Revenue Act, which imposed import duties on glass, paint, oil, lead, paper and tea shipped to the American colonies. (Colonists bitterly protested, prompting Parliament to repeal the duties — except for tea.)

In 1776, the Virginia state constitution was adopted, and Patrick Henry was made governor.

In 1946, authorities in British-ruled Palestine arrested more than 2,700 Jews in an attempt to stamp out extremists.

In 1967, Jerusalem was reunified as Israel removed barricades separating the Old City from the Israeli sector.

In 1970, the United States ended a two-month military offensive into Cambodia.

In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a trio of death sentences, saying the way they had been imposed constituted cruel and unusual punishment. (The ruling prompted states to effectively impose a moratorium on executions until their capital punishment laws could be revised.)

In 1978, actor Bob Crane of "Hogan's Heroes" fame was found bludgeoned to death in an apartment in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he was appearing in a play; he was 49.

In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-3, that President George W. Bush's plan to try Guantanamo Bay detainees in military tribunals violated U.S. and international law.

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff received a 150-year sentence for his multibillion-dollar fraud. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

In 2018, the Annapolis Capital Gazette newspaper in Maryland kept its promise to put out the day's paper, despite the shooting deaths of five people in its newsroom a day earlier.

In 2021, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld died at the age of 88 in New Mexico; he had been Pentagon chief during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that toppled the Taliban regime following the 9/11 attacks, and also at the start of the long and costly Iraq war in 2003.

In 2022, R. Kelly was sentenced to 30 years in prison for using his R&B superstardom to subject young fans to sexual abuse. The singer and songwriter was convicted of racketeering and sex trafficking the previous year.

Today's Birthdays: Songwriter L. Russell Brown is 84. Singer-songwriter Garland Jeffreys is 81. Actor Gary Busey is 80. Former actor and politician Fred Grandy is 76. Rock musician Ian Paice (Deep Purple) is 76. Singer Don Dokken is 71. Rock singer Colin Hay (Men At Work) is 71. Actor Maria Conchita Alonso is 69. Actor Sharon Lawrence ("NYPD Blue") is 63. Actor Amanda Donohoe is 62. Actor Judith Hoag is 61. Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter is 61. Producer-writer Matthew Weiner is 59. Actor Melora Hardin is 57. Actor Brian D'Arcy James is 56. Rap DJ and record producer DJ Shadow is 52. Actor Zuleikha Robinson is 47. Rock musician Sam Farrar (Maroon 5) is 46. Actor Luke Kirby is 46. Singer and TV personality Nicole Scherzinger is 46. Comedian-writer Colin Jost (johst) is 42. Actor Lily Rabe is 42. NBA forward Kawhi Leonard is 33. Actor Camila Mendes (TV: "Riverdale") is 30. Soccer player Jude Bellingham is 21.