

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, July 9

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, au gratin potatoes 3-bean salad, pineapple/strawberry ambrosia, dinner roll.

U8 R/B hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (4 games)

Softball at Britton: U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10G at 6 p.m.m (1)

Jr. Legion at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Jr. Teeners at Miller, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Free SNAP application assistance at Groton Community Center, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Pantry Open, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

Wednesday, July 10

Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hot dish, mixed vegetables, muffin, pears.

U10 R/B at Milbank, 6 p.m. (DH)

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

Jr. Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's 16U, 4 p.m. (DH)

Emmanuel Lutheran: Circles meet, 6 p.m. potluck with joint Bible Study

Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.

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1440

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Missiles Strike Ukraine

At least 36 civilians were killed and more than 100 wounded across Ukraine after a Russian missile barrage hit multiple targets yesterday, including the country's largest children's hospital in the capital of Kyiv. The daytime attack is considered the heaviest single-day bombardment in the last four months of the Russia-Ukraine war, which is now in its 29th month.

Ukraine's air defenses shot down 30 of the 38 missiles, with officials saying the weapons consisted of aerial, ballistic, and cruise missiles. At least 50 civilian buildings were damaged across central and eastern Ukraine by Russia's airstrikes. The UN Security Council will hold an emergency meeting today to address the strikes.

Russia's latest attack comes as Western leaders will meet in Washington, DC, today to kick off a three-day NATO summit. The agenda includes discussions over Ukraine's potential membership in the military alliance and a new support package.

Skydance Takes a Bow

Paramount Global has formally agreed to merge with Skydance Media, ending months of negotiations and speculation over who would control the 112-year-old media company. The combined company is estimated to be worth \$28B once the merger is complete.

The deal—similar to one Paramount rejected last month—involves Skydance CEO David Ellison purchasing the controlling stake in Paramount from media heiress Shari Redstone's National Amusements for \$2.4B prior to the merger. Ellison, son of Oracle founder Larry Ellison, will replace a trio of CEOs who have run Paramount since April when failed talks with Skydance led to the ouster of Paramount's then-CEO Bob Bakish. The deal is set to be finalized next year, pending regulatory approval.

The deal comes after months of back-and-forth between Paramount and Skydance as well as other potential buyers, including Warner Bros. Discovery. While Paramount is one of Hollywood's oldest studios, its streaming service has struggled to find an audience, and the company has lost \$17B in value over the past five years.

Alec Baldwin Faces Trial

Jury selection begins today in the criminal trial against Alec Baldwin, almost three years after the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the film set of "Rust." Baldwin faces involuntary manslaughter charges for the October 2021 incident, when a prop gun he was handling discharged a live round, killing Hutchins and injuring director Joel Souza. Baldwin maintains he did not pull the trigger and has pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors are expected to argue Baldwin, as the film's lead actor and coproducer, was negligent by not adhering to industry safety standards, while the defense contends responsibility lay with the film's armorer, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who was sentenced in April to 18 months in prison for her role in the incident. The defense recently failed to have the case dismissed, citing damage to the gun during forensic testing.

The trial in New Mexico is expected to last 10 days. If convicted, Baldwin could face up to 18 months in prison.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

2024 UEFA European Championship semifinals kick off today with Spain taking on France (3 pm ET, Fox); see full preview.

Eighteen-player roster for Team USA men's soccer Olympic team announced.

Shaboozey becomes the first Black male artist to simultaneously top Billboard's Hot 100 and Hot Country Songs charts with "A Bar Song (Tipsy)".

Complete rosters for 94th MLB All-Star Game (July 16) announced, including 32 first time All-Stars.

Twelve-team field set for Paris Olympics men's basketball competition.

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Science & Technology

James Webb Space Telescope discovers a Jupiter-like exoplanet roughly 64 light-years away with an atmosphere predominantly made of hydrogen sulfide; compound is responsible for the "rotten egg" odor.

Ex-Meta researchers debut EvolutionaryScale, an AI-powered large language model, to predict protein structures; model was trained on 2.7 billion protein sequences and structures.

Neuroscientists capture in real time the brain activity that underlies the subjective feeling of curiosity; patients underwent brain imaging while attempting to decode depictions of ambiguous situations.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +0.3%) ahead of inflation data and batch of Q2 earnings reports; S&P 500, Nasdaq close at record highs.

Boeing to plead guilty to criminal fraud charge tied to two 737 Max crashes in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people; Boeing to pay \$244M fine, invest at least \$455M in safety and compliance programs.

Boeing in talks with US Defense Department over contracts that may be compromised due to guilty plea.

Mike Bloomberg's charity donates \$1B to Johns Hopkins University's medical school, resulting in free tuition for most medical students starting this fall.

Politics & World Affairs

Roughly 3 million people in Texas are without power as of this writing after Beryl made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane—the season's first hurricane to hit the US; at least three deaths reported in Texas.

Beryl weakens to tropical depression. Three Columbia University deans placed on indefinite leave over text messages that were allegedly antisemitic in nature; university to launch antisemitism and antidiscrimination faculty training program.

Kenyan cult leader and 94 codefendants begin trial over terrorism charges related to the deaths of more than 400 followers.

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PLEASE JOIN US IN
CELEBRATING

DROP & GO GIFT CARD
BRIDAL SHOWER FOR

*Julianna Kosel
& Isaac Moll*

Julianna is the daughter of Tina & the one & only "Paper Paul" Kosel
The wedding will take place in Florida on July 30th.

GROTON SWIMMING POOL
DROP OFF TIMES ARE: 1-8:30 M-TH
1-8 FRI-SUN

FROM: JUNE 27TH TO JULY 14TH

*The couple is also registered on Amazon if you prefer to send them a gift.



BUYING FOOD IS A **SNAP!**

FREE SNAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

**Today from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the
Groton Community Center**

WITH SNAP:



You will stretch your food dollars.



Your students qualify for free school meals.

Information needed to receive help filling out SNAP Application:

- Social Security Numbers of all household members.
- Gross monthly earned and unearned income.
- Out-of-pocket medical expenses totaling over \$35/month (**Only for those age 60+ and disabled households**).
- Amount of childcare Expenses.

Household Size	Max Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1580
2	\$2137
3	\$2694
4	\$3250
5	\$3807
6	\$4364
EACH ADDITIONAL MEMBER +\$557	



*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Assistant football coach, breakfast, lunch prices top school board meeting

The Groton Area football team will continue to operate with three paid coaches.

The school board approved an off-staff coaching agreement with Seth Erickson after members of the community raised concerns in the last month.

In June, the board approved a slew of off-staff coaching agreements for the 2024-2025 school year. Absent from that list was Erickson, who has been assistant coach for the football team since 2017.

Head football coach Shaun Wanner told the board he was caught off guard when Erickson's contract wasn't renewed. He wasn't sure if it was a money issue or a perceived lack of participation.

Most people don't realize all the things Erickson does for the Groton football program, Wanner said.

"He's been a great addition to our program," he said.

It takes a lot of eyes, whether they be volunteers for the team or coaches, to have an effective team, he said.

"There's a lot of stuff going on in a football game," he said. "When you're a parent, you're watching your son. You're not watching the 10 other kids out there."

It's not about hiring or firing Erickson, said Groton resident Tom Woods. If the district didn't hire Erickson, he's going to volunteer to coach.

"I'm a firm believer that being a good steward is more than just the financial side," Woods said. "Being a good steward is about what's best for our district and for our kids."

Erickson is "the best \$3,000 the district has ever spent," Woods said, adding the players respect him and listen to him.

"It's about setting these kids up, not about being state champions, but to be the best people they can be in the future," he said. "And Seth Erickson is a positive addition."

A decision on the off-staff coaching agreement is about more than just the position.

"We all know when you're deciding positions, it gets really sticky, especially in a small town where you know everybody and generally like everybody," said then-board President Deb Gengerke. "But what our standard has been in the past is to look at how we can best use our resources without duplicating services. In other words, it's not very exciting and sometimes may seem a little cold, but how can we minimize costs and still keep our bases covered.

"...It's always the most difficult to tell people that it's not personal because it is personal. To you, it's absolutely personal. You can say it 50 times, and it still feels personal.

"This discussion has absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Erickson," she continued. "I think we can really agree he's a really great guy. ...However, when you sit at this side of the table, you don't get to play favorites."

One thing that really disturbed Gengerke, though, was that some in the community felt the district had some sort of bait and switch, pushing for an opt-out vote and still making cuts.

"The opt-out did not win us the lottery," she said. "We still have financial responsibilities."



From left: Groton Area School District Business Manager, newly named President of the board Grant Rix and Superintendent Joe Schwan sit in the conference room during Monday evening's meeting. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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New school board member Nick Strom is sworn in during Monday evening's school board meeting.

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

Gengerke added she was planning to vote in favor of the coaching contract, as she was not comfortable with anyone thinking the district was less than forthcoming.

After pushing for the opt-out vote, turning right around and starting to make cuts may be sending the wrong message to those who supported the district during the opt-out vote, said then-vice president



Board Member Marty Weismantel is sworn in during Monday's school board meeting. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

of the board Marty Weismantel.

"We want to be as fiscally responsible as we can, but at the end of the day, we have to do what's best for the kids," he said.

Research has shown that students stay involved and even stay in school because of activities like athletics, he said.

"If we lose one kid because of this decision, we've failed miserably," he said. "Three thousand dollars is pennies in our budget. We don't want to be throwing it around, but this is money well spent."

In other coaching decisions, later in the meeting the board approved hiring Matt Baumgartner as head girls soccer coach for the 2024 season. The board also approved Kelsie Roberts as volunteer assistant boys soccer coach for the 2024 season.

Food prices tick up

School breakfast and lunch will cost an extra dime for students.

The board approved increasing breakfast and lunch rates for the upcoming school year. Students at the elementary school will be charged \$2.60 for breakfast and \$3.25 for lunch, with both increasing 10 cents from last year.

Students at the middle and high school will be charged \$3.10 for breakfast and \$3.85 for lunch, both having the same 10 cent increase from the 2023-2024 school year.

Adults will be charged \$3.50 for breakfast and \$4.75 for lunch, a 25 cent increase from last year.

Seconds for lunch will cost \$2 at both the elementary, middle and high schools.

Admission prices for events will stay the same, though Superintendent Joe Schwan said that rate will likely have to increase in the coming years. The rate has remained the same for a few years, but rising costs of things like mileage for officials and transportation costs may prompt an increase.

The board did not increase the rate for OST services, leaving it at \$3 per hour, per child for the upcoming school year.

The board approved two more rate increases: payments for substitute teachers and substitute bus drivers. The district will pay substitute teachers \$135 per day, a \$5 increase from last year. Substitute bus drivers will receive \$100 per day, a \$10 increase from last year.

• There's a new face on the school board. Nick Strom was sworn in during the annual reorganization meeting, as well as incumbent Marty Weismantel. The board elected Grant Rix as president and Nick Strom as vice president of the board.

• Business Manager Becky Hubsch told the board about a grant the district has recently received,

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totaling \$244,871 for new equipment in the health science lab. New items that will be purchased include portable force plates to help with balance research and a treadmill that will allow students to measure different movements.

- The board opted for MJ's Sinclair's gasoline bid. The district received two sealed bids, which they opened at Monday's meeting. The quote from MJ's Sinclair included \$3.20 for No. 2 diesel, \$3.43 for No. 1 diesel, \$2.916 for ethanol gasoline, \$3.10 for lead-free gasoline and \$1.97 for E-85 gasoline. The quote from Ken's SuperFair Foods included \$3.59 for No. 2 diesel, \$3.82 for No. 1 diesel, \$3.22 for ethanol gasoline and \$3.56 for lead-free gasoline.

- The district is going to have to keep an eye on the school bus fleet, with possibly replacements needed soon, said Superintendent Joe Schwan. Three buses have engines that are having problems, and it's hard to justify the cost for repairs on buses that are that old. "Just know, as we get into the year, this bus fleet is something we're going to have to start addressing," Schwan told the board.

- The board designated the Groton Independent as the district's official newspaper or record. The district received one sealed bid. The Groton Independent quote includes 31.95 cents for the legal line rate, 10 cents per work for classified ads with a \$5 minimum, and \$5 per column inch for display advertising.

- The board approved dates and times for regular school board meetings for the upcoming school year. Meetings will take place at 7 p.m. on Aug. 12, Dec. 9, Jan. 13, Feb. 10, March 10, March 24, April 14, April 28, May 12 and June 9. Two morning meetings were added to the calendar, at 7 a.m. Oct. 15 and Nov. 12. One meeting was scheduled for 6 p.m. Sept. 9 in order to not conflict with homecoming festivities.

- Sam Crank and Wyatt Wambach were hired as part-time student OST workers.

- Elizabeth Varin



Service Notice: Adrian Paulson

Funeral services for Adrian Paulson, 87, of Andover will be 10:30 a.m., Monday, July 22nd at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Adam Franken will officiate. Burial will follow in Skudesnes Lutheran Cemetery, rural Pierpont.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

Adrian passed away July 1, 2024 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.

That's Life by Tony Bender: Still feisty after all these years

My father had a penchant for wearing T-shirts until they were threadbare and spackled with tiny holes. Not enough left to make a good rag, but he wore them because it irritated my mom. One day, they met in the doorway to the kitchen and she blocked his way with a twinkle in her eye, stuck a finger in his chest right into one of the holes.

And tugged. The T-shirt began to fall apart like a cheap... uh... T-shirt. Dad protested but she kept pulling. Red-faced, half laughing, half-exasperated, he tried to escape to no avail. She ripped it off his chest. It was the worst strip show ever. Dad was no Magic Mike.

When I was a teen, my friends often said to me, "I wish I had your parents," and I didn't understand, because I loved their their parents, too. Dad was a bookie who took advantage of my friends' misplaced faith in the Dallas Cowboys, and Mom was comic relief. Plus, you could raid her refrigerator. If she didn't insult you, she didn't like you.

She must adore me, because I really get it. You can feel India and Dylan getting giddy when we get close to Frederick, SD, where I spent most of my childhood, the firstborn. I can't get the door closed before the first insults fly.

"Grandma, if Dad was so awful," Dylan asked once, "why did you keep having kids?"

"Oh, we knew could do better than that."

She's always been the spark in the family. On Aug. 26, she'll be 85. Miles per hour. We're having a "surprise" birthday party at St. Paul Lutheran Church on Saturday. Our strategy for keeping it on the down-low is not to tell my little brother Mike who has the rare blabbermouth gene. If you tell him a secret, you can watch his face get red as tries to keep it from slipping out. In his defense, he'd explode if he couldn't spill the beans.

Mom never misses an opportunity to take pot shots. India, who is Grandma's Mini-Me, got a birthday card from her a few yeas ago, extolling India's many virtues, her wit, intelligence, and good looks. "Sometimes it skips a generation," she wrote.

We have a running joke. I'll call, and say, "Hi Mom, it's your favorite son!"

"Mike!"

"Uh, no..."

"Scott!"

Groan.

"Joel?"

She never does get it right.

I may have elicited a certain amount of panic with my folks as my mischievous—and, let's face it, defiant—personality emerged. Can you imagine six kids like that? They could. So, I think there was a strategic effort to tamp down my cocky attitude. Otherwise, things could get out of hand. They needn't have worried. With the exclusion of Joel who was more of a renegade than I was, the rest of the herd was well-behaved. Still, a family of eight is a lot.

Thank goodness Mom had a sense of humor. One day after a rainstorm, Cousin Rodney and I covered our faces in mud and went trotting into my house where Mom and her coffee klatch friends howled. Across the street, Rodney got swatted by his mom, Marlene. Now, Marlene has everyone fooled, convinced that she's sweet and forgiving, but I'll bet you even money there are bodies buried in the yard.

Mom's a killer, too. When a disbelieving Grandpa Bender heard tall and true tales about what a good shot she was, he had to see for himself, so off we went, Grandpa, Mom, and I, in his maroon Chevy pickup. The first gopher ducked, unharmed.

"It shoots a little high," Mom noted.

"Yeah. I should have told you."

After that, 21 gophers straight, each punctuated by a slap to Grandpa's thigh. "Golly!" He took quite beating.

The announcement says, "no gifts," but just to make sure you don't offend a gunslinger with that much ammunition, you should give generously. Mail it to me. I'll see that she gets it. It's for your own good.

Groton Post 39 Victorious Over Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen

By GameChanger Media

Groton Post 39 outsted Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen 5-3 on Monday.

Groton Post 39 got on the board in the first inning after Colby Dunker singled, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 added one run in the second after Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen committed an error.

Phillip Zens singled, which helped Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen tie the game at two in the bottom of the eighth.

In the top of the eleventh inning, Groton Post 39 went back into the lead after Gavin Englund singled, Karsten Fliehs was struck by a pitch, and Braxton Imrie singled, each scoring one run.

Dillon Abeln earned the win for Groton Post 39. The reliever allowed two hits and one run (zero earned) over two innings, striking out three and walking none. Jared Klootwyk took the loss for Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen. They went five and one-third innings, allowing three runs on five hits, striking out three and walking one. Englund stepped on the mound first for Groton Post 39. The starting pitcher surrendered six hits and two runs (one earned) over nine innings, striking out three and walking three. Lance Siefken stepped on the mound first for Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen. The starting pitcher gave up one hit and two runs (one earned) over two innings, striking out one and walking one.

Bradin Althoff, Imrie, Dunker, and Englund each collected two hits for Groton Post 39. Imrie, Fliehs, Dunker, and Englund each drove in one run for Groton Post 39.

Brendan Livermont led Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen with two hits in five at bats. Casey Vining, Drew Salfrank, and Zens each drove in one run for Smittys Legion 2024 Aberdeen. Cooper Eisenbeisz stole three bases.

Groton Post 39 play at home on Wednesday against Lisbon Post 7 in their next game.

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Groton Area seniors Holden Sippel and Logan Ringgenberg were chosen to play in the South Dakota Football Coaches Association all-star football game at Dana Dykhouse Stadium on the campus of South Dakota State University in Brookings.

We the People

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



By David Adler

Supreme Court Defies its Platform in Service of an Imperial Presidency

For years to come, constitutional scholars and historians will long note the irony of the Supreme Court's defiance of its own intellectual platform in rendering a decision in *Trump v. United States*, on the eve of the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, that creates out of whole cloth the dangerous doctrine of executive immunity in service of an Imperial Presidency. The very concept of clothing the American Presidency with protection that placed the English King above the law, was rebuked by the Framers of the Constitution, who sought, in the words of James Madison, to "confine and define" presidential power.

The Supreme Court's ruling last week rejected the wisdom and vision of Madison and the other delegates in the Constitutional Convention and infused the presidency with unconfined and undefined authority.

In its most consequential ruling on presidential power in the nation's history the Court, in a 6-3 decision, set the Constitution on its head in holding that the president enjoys absolute immunity from criminal prosecution in the exercise of "core constitutional powers," and in the process revived the harpies of monarchical power that compelled the country's founders to declare independence and launch the American Revolution, in large part because of the English King's "injuries and usurpations" that led to the "establishment of tyranny."

The Court's ruling on this 4th of July holiday, the celebration of which in public schools includes reminders of the King's offenses against the colonists, tosses aside the exalted American principle that "no man is above the law" in exchange for a judicial invention that the president possess immunity from criminal prosecution when the courts say he possesses it.

Grounded on the false premise — textually, historically and logically — that an American president requires immunity in order to perform the duties of the office, the Court's decision will leave the nation to engage in a guessing game on the question of when the president is exercising "official" versus "unofficial" acts, whether the acts in question are core or peripheral in nature, whether the acts are a function of an ignoble purpose and whether the president might engage in a criminal act that can be saved from scrutiny by simply, and cynically, calling it "official."

The ruling loosens the restraints of the Constitution and the criminal justice system on the American Presidency, and recalls the dire warnings of Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, against converting "the chains of the Constitution into ropes of sand."

The Court's interest in protecting the presidency from prosecution represents a rebuke to both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. James Wilson, second in importance only to Madison as an architect of the Constitution, and chair of the Constitutional Convention's powerful Committee on Detail, assured Americans that the "prerogatives of the Crown" are of "no guide" to this "Republic," and laid bare the Framers' commitment to severing every tie to monarchical authority, including the precious protection for the king from prosecution. To a man, delegates to the Convention were dedicated to establishing the rule of law, not the creation of an embryonic monarchy. Wilson declared of the newly minted presidency: "not a single privilege is annexed to his character; far from being above the laws, he is amenable to them in his private character as a citizen, and in his public character by impeachment."

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This ringing endorsement of the exalted principle that, in America, all men are equal in the eyes of the law, meant that Chief Justice John Marshall, presiding over the treason trial of Aaron Burr in 1807, held that a subpoena could issue to President Jefferson, to come before a court of justice, as it could to all other citizens.

The Court's decision to engraft upon the Constitution presidential immunity from prosecution represents, not an originalist, but rather an activist approach to constitutional interpretation. An originalist method would begin with the text of the Constitution, but the Court doesn't cite the text because there is no mention of immunity, and the Justices don't cite any of the debates in the Constitutional Convention, the second pillar of originalism — because no delegate to the Convention entertained the idea of immunity for the presidency.

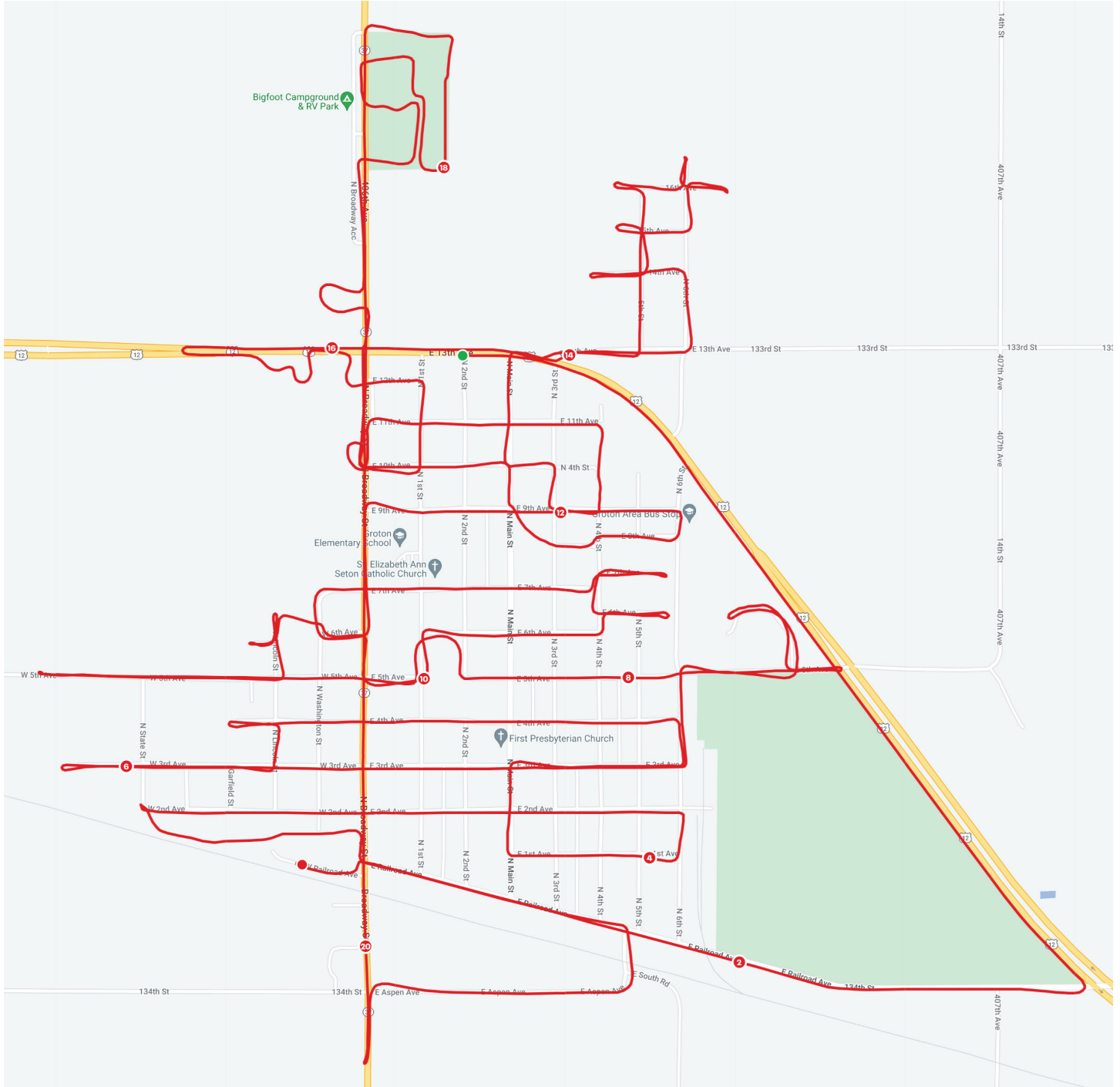
At bottom, the Court has invented a dangerous doctrine that finds no foundation in the Constitution and is antithetical to the principles of democracy.

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

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Adult Mosquito Control conducted Monday night



The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control Monday night. The wind was north, then switched to the south at 3 to 5 mph. Temperature was in the low 70s. The golf course was not done last night due to wet conditions on the course. About 5 gallons of Perm-X UL was used.



South Dakota clashes with Minnesota on clean energy, coal plant closures

By STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

SIoux FALLS, S.D. – A political border war between South Dakota and Minnesota on how to handle tax policies, abortion and the pandemic response could spill over into renewable energy and the future of coal plants.

At issue is the pace with which gas and electric companies can transition away from fossil fuels without compromising reliability and affordability for customers, and what role government plays in those calculations.

That reliability was tested several times over the past few years, including during a winter storm in January that nearly caused rolling blackouts, one South Dakota official said.

The Democratic-controlled Minnesota Legislature passed a law in 2023 requiring all electric utilities in the state to produce only carbon-free energy by 2040 using sources like solar, wind, hydroelectric and nuclear power.

Xcel Energy, whose 3.7 million electrical customers include about 100,000 South Dakotans, is based in Minneapolis, so that law applies to the utility.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, consisting of three elected Republicans, sent a letter to Xcel in January asking the company to reverse plans to close several coal-fired power plants ahead of schedule as part of its transition.

"Evidence is mounting that the premature closures ... will elevate the risk of electricity outages particularly in tight load hours, including hours of extreme cold and extreme heat, as well as those hours when wind generation is low," the letter stated. "These events are likely to pose a threat to life and property."

The company stuck to its timetable, which includes replacing the coal plants with solar projects in the next few years, a plan approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

'Massively frustrating conversation'

More recently, members of Minnesota's PUC clashed with utility company Otter Tail Power over its decision to amend its long-range plan to push back closures of coal plants – including Big Stone near Milbank, in northeast South Dakota – until at least 2040.

The Minnesota PUC approved Otter Tail's Integrated Resource Plan on May 30 after concessions that included the company no longer using its North Dakota-based Coyote Station plant for Minnesota customers beyond 2031.

Otter Tail's most recent modeling projects a retirement date of 2046 for South Dakota-based Big Stone, which started operation in 1975 and burns coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin.

"I just find this to be a massively frustrating conversation," Minnesota PUC Commissioner Joe Sullivan said at the May 30 meeting. "I sympathize with Otter Tail because you have two different jurisdictions that look at the world differently. But if (Coyote Station) were in Minnesota, we'd say, 'Otter Tail, it's time to pull out.'"

Otter Tail, which serves about 130,000 electricity customers in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, addressed the delicate balance of transitioning to renewable energy when submitting its 2022-36 plan to state PUCs.

"Shifting the generation fleet's focus to dispatchable gas resources and away from coal will help to improve operational flexibility while hedging market risk," the report said. "That said, it is also necessary to

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ensure fuel-secure generation is available for those times when self-generation is necessary to maintain reliability of the system.”

South Dakota opposes new EPA rules

Disputes about the urgency of ditching fossil fuels for clean energy start at the federal level, where the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follows protocols in line with the party that controls the White House.

The EPA released new rules April 25 that ratchet up pollution controls for the coal industry, impacting wastewater discharge, the handling of coal ash and carbon emission limits. EPA Administrator Michael Regan, appointed by Democratic President Joe Biden, called it a “defining moment” for the agency.

South Dakota joined 22 other states in asking a federal court to review the new standards, which North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley said were intentionally set “to destroy the coal industry.”

In a statement to News Watch, South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley referenced a recent Supreme Court decision that reversed the landmark 1984 Chevron ruling, eroding much of the power of federal agencies such as the EPA to interpret laws they administer, leaving that to the courts.

“The EPA’s directive and attack on fossil fuels is another example of a federal agency creating undue burdens on states and private businesses without proper authority while Congress does not act,” Jackley wrote. “The Supreme Court ruling in the Chevron case is aimed at addressing this type of action by the federal bureaucracy.”

SD 8th in per capita energy consumption

The Inflation Reduction Act passed by Congress and signed by Biden in 2022 included \$370 billion in tax credits and other support for clean energy initiatives.

South Dakota has increased its wind energy production to 55% of in-state net power generation, a larger share than in all other states except Iowa, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Other power sources include hydroelectric (29%), coal (10%), natural gas (6%), oil (0.3%) and solar (0.01%).

But South Dakota ranks eighth among U.S. states in energy consumption per capita, with 31% of households using electricity to heat their homes during frequently harsh winters.

Dependability of resources and rising energy costs are where Kristi Fiegen, chair of the South Dakota PUC, centers her concerns amid talk of climate change and reducing greenhouse gases, she told News Watch in a phone interview.

“When I talk about reliability of the grid, I want dispatchable generation of electricity for customers in South Dakota,” said Fiegen, who is up for re-election in 2024. “Non-dispatchable energy (wind and solar) is reliant on the weather. And when it’s reliant on the weather, we don’t when we turn on the lights if it’s going to be there.”

Winter storms tested the power grid

Fiegen, who was first elected to the PUC in 2011, helps regional transmission organizations (RTOs) maintain and monitor the electrical grid, which was pushed to the limit during recent winter storms that nearly caused rolling blackouts.

The 61-year-old Chancellor native holds leadership roles in the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a nonprofit organization that manages electric transmission for parts of 14 states, including South Dakota.

South Dakota is also part of the 15-state Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which helps ensure energy distribution regardless of whether a customer uses Xcel, MidAmerican Energy, Black Hills Energy, NorthWestern Energy, Otter Tail or another utility company.

Cooperation between these and other RTOs nationally was critical during Winter Storm Gerri, which brought brutally cold air and blizzard conditions to much of the Midwest in January.

“During that storm we got 7,000 megawatts (of electricity) from the East to help us keep the lights on,” said Fiegen. “If we hadn’t gotten that, we would have shut off lights in January during the first week of (legislative) session.”

A year earlier, in December 2022, Winter Storm Elliot led MISO to declare a maximum generation event due to higher-than-expected electricity consumption and loss of production from natural gas facilities due to freezing, mainly in the South. Similar problems emerged during a 2021 winter storm that rocked Texas

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and shut down power.

"Since those events, we've devoted a lot of time to resource adequacy," said Fiegen, who serves alongside fellow Republicans Chris Nelson and Gary Hanson on the PUC. "We believe in clean energy, but our No. 1 goal as commissioners in South Dakota is to have reliable and cost-effective electricity for our customers."

'It's a life and death issue, not convenience'

Coal was replaced by natural gas as the largest energy source in the United States in 2016, with natural gas now making up 39% of electricity generation compared to 20% for coal.

Transitioning to solar and wind too quickly could impact the reliability of the electrical grid in extreme conditions, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC) stated in its 2023-24 Long-Term Reliability Assessment.

"There is a need for dialogue among a broad group of stakeholders when policies and regulations have the potential to affect future electricity (capabilities)," the study said. "Regulations that have the potential to accelerate generator retirements or restrict operations must have sufficient flexibility and provisions to support grid reliability."

That report was cited by South Dakota's PUC in its letter to Xcel Energy, which responded that it shares the commission's reliability priorities and will be adding solar and wind capacity as well as dispatchable energy through nuclear and hydrogen-ready combustion turbines.

The company's stated goal is to provide customers with "100% carbon-free electricity by 2050 and reduce carbon emissions from its operations 80% from 2005 levels by 2030."

South Dakota PUC member Nelson told News Watch in April that there will always be a need for electric power generated by coal, natural gas or other sources that don't let up when the weather turns still or cloudy.

"I do expect we're going to see a pretty significant increase in the amount of solar and wind because we really need to keep a diversity of power generation sources," Nelson said. "But there's going to be times when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining, and we need to have some way to generate electricity during those times. When it's 25 degrees below zero, you want your house to stay warm because at that point it's a life and death issue, and not a convenience issue."

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Federal judge declines to intervene 'at this time' in fight over abortion ballot measure

Anti-abortion group's lawsuit proceeds in state court

BY: SETH TUPPER - JULY 8, 2024 9:46 PM

A federal judge is declining, for now, to stop a lawsuit in state court against South Dakota's abortion-rights ballot measure.

Judge Karen Schreier signed her order Friday. She said a state court should rule on a key issue in the lawsuit before she considers intervening.

But she added, "If the state court ruling contradicts a federal court order, this court will consider the issue at that time."

The anti-abortion Life Defense Fund filed its lawsuit in state court last month. The group wants to disqualify the abortion-rights measure from the Nov. 5 election.

Dakotans for Health gathered the thousands of petition signatures necessary to place the measure on the ballot. The group is defending the measure in state court, but also asked a federal judge to intervene and stop the litigation from proceeding.

One of the Life Defense Fund's allegations is that Dakotans for Health failed to abide by the requirements of a 2018 state law. The Republican-dominated Legislature adopted the law to prevent out-of-state residents from circulating ballot petitions in South Dakota. Among other things, the law required petition circulators to file a sworn statement with various pieces of information proving their residency.

The Legislature replaced that law with new restrictions in 2019 and 2020. Those laws sparked federal lawsuits from plaintiffs who successfully argued that the restrictions infringed on their First Amendment rights to political speech.

The Life Defense Fund is now arguing that while the 2019 and 2020 laws were invalidated, the 2018 law was not invalidated and is still in force. The group is arguing that because Dakotans for Health's petition circulators did not submit the sworn statements required by the 2018 law, the abortion rights measure should not be placed on the ballot.

Dakotans for Health is arguing that the lawsuits against the 2019 and 2020 laws invalidated the previous restrictions on petition circulators, and that the Life Defense Fund is trying to "flout" the federal court decisions.

Judge Schreier wrote in her order that she's not issuing an injunction against the state-court lawsuit "at this time," and that she'll wait to see how the state court rules on the enforceability of the 2018 law before she decides whether to intervene. A motions hearing in the state-court lawsuit is scheduled for next week.

Abortions are currently banned in South Dakota, except to "preserve the life of the pregnant female." The ballot measure would legalize abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy but allow the state to impose limited regulations in the second trimester and a ban in the third trimester, with exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

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

Police academy for tribal recruits should lead to regional effort, attorney general says

Sen. Rounds among voices calling for Upper Midwest training for Native American officers

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 8, 2024 5:28 PM

PIERRE — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley hopes a new basic law enforcement training course that prioritizes tribal recruits will prove the state could host regional training for Native American officers from the Upper Midwest.

Jackley and U.S. Attorney Alison Ramsdell spoke Monday at the George S. Mickelson Law Enforcement Center in Pierre, in advance of a media tour of the facility and presentations on the ongoing course.

The state's police academy has long been open to recruits from tribal law enforcement agencies. In practice, though, most attend the 13-week training through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) at a facility in Artesia, New Mexico.

After the basic course is complete, the tribal recruits will be offered an add-on course in tribal policing, which also typically takes place in Artesia and focuses on tribal policing. The BIA has offered its support to that portion of the training in South Dakota.

"The overall goal would be to not just have South Dakota tribal or South Dakota BIA officers here, but because we do such a good job, to expand it regionally," Jackley said.

Born of controversy, history of recruitment trouble

Gov. Kristi Noem threw her support behind the idea of an additional basic law enforcement course that would prioritize tribal recruits this spring amid a flurry of controversy over statements she'd made on public safety on the state's tribal lands.

Noem delivered a speech on border security during the winter legislative session that linked migration at the U.S.-Mexico border to cartel-related drug abuse and violence on reservations. Noem has claimed without evidence that some tribal leaders are "personally benefiting" from a cartel presence on the state's reservations.

Tribes have pushed back on those claims. Leaders in all nine of South Dakota's tribes have voted to ban her from their lands, citing the claims about cartels, as well as what they've described as disparaging comments Noem made about Native American children and parents.

Even so, tribal leaders have long decried a dearth of funding for public safety on reservations, which is a treaty obligation for the U.S. government.

The typical expectation that tribal recruits spend weeks away from their families in New Mexico has been a barrier to recruitment noted by tribal leaders, as well as Noem and members of South Dakota's congressional delegation.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, has called for the establishment of a Midwestern training center for the BIA, pointing to the state's Mickelson Center as a prime partnership candidate for such an endeavor.

On Monday, Jackley praised Noem for throwing her support behind the current course, now in its sixth of 13 weeks.

"I had been asking for additional classes ever since I've been attorney general, and I want to give this governor credit," Jackley said.

The new course is no different from any other basic law enforcement course offered in Pierre, aside from its goal of prioritizing the acceptance of tribal recruits.

U.S. attorney: consistent training, relationships aid prosecutions

The course, provided at no cost to local agencies, drew 11 tribal recruits from three tribes: the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. Another 13 recruits joined them from agencies across the state to make a class of 24.

Ramsdell, whose office prosecutes all felony-level crimes that occur on reservations in South Dakota, also praised the decision to hold a tribal-priority training course. She said the basic training is valuable because it brings together officers from across the state to build the kinds of relationships necessary to work across jurisdictions.

There were more than 500 prosecutions led by Ramsdell's office last year, she said, with 220 originating in tribal areas. The office also prosecuted 140 people for drug trafficking.

"Our state really leads the nation on these stats," Ramsdell said. "We're often second or third after Arizona and Oklahoma in prosecuting violent crime in Indian Country."

Ramsdell said she'd looked through the list of agencies represented by the recruits before coming to Pierre, and "over the last year and a half, we've worked with each one of them on really meaningful prosecutions."

In a state as small as South Dakota, she said, cooperation and relationships are critical to public safety.

"I think it's exemplary of the fact that everything we do starts locally, and without our local partners, we wouldn't have the success we do at the U.S. Attorney's Office," she said.

That's one of the reasons Jackley said he hopes to see the course pave a path for more tribal law enforcement training in the future.

A training ground near a recruit's home allows them to get home to their families on weekends, ensures consistency for all officers working in South Dakota's borders and builds connections between those officers.

"I think all those things make good sense as to why this should happen here," Jackley said. "I think it's why we have local officers teaching this class, why we have tribal officers and tribes willing to attend it, and why I think this is going to be a success."

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.

Sustainable jet fuel company contributes \$167K in defense of carbon pipeline law

Disclosure was made on the day of the June primary election

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 8, 2024 4:57 PM

A company aiming to produce aviation fuel from ethanol in South Dakota has contributed \$167,000 to defend a new carbon dioxide pipeline law that voters could be asked to reject in November.

The company, Gevo, made the contribution to a ballot question committee called Protect South Dakota's Ag Future. The contribution was not affected by any limits, because there are no limits on contributions to ballot question committees in South Dakota.

Voters didn't know about the contribution prior to the June 4 primary election, even though the pipeline law was a major issue in some legislative primary races.

Some opponents of the new pipeline law, including Ed Fischbach, of rural Aberdeen, allege that the reporting of the contribution was timed to avoid publicity before the primary.

"It looked like they were trying to hide it," Fischbach said.

The chairman of Protect South Dakota's Ag Future is Walt Bones, who formerly served as South Dakota's secretary of agriculture. He did not specifically address the allegation but did describe the sequence of events affecting the timing of the contribution's disclosure.

Bones said Gevo authorized the contribution on May 13, but the money had not reached the committee by the time of its required May 20 pre-primary campaign finance report. So that report showed no contributions. After the contribution arrived on June 3, the committee disclosed it in a supplemental campaign finance report filed on June 4, the day of the primary election.

Bones said the money is being used to inform voters about the importance of a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline and the benefits of the new pipeline law. Public records on file with the Federal Communications

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Commission show the effort has included television advertising.

"This committee is about more than just the pipeline. That's just part of it," he said. "We see this whole debate as a threat to all value-added agriculture going forward."

Kent Hartwig is the treasurer of Protect South Dakota's Ag Future and director of state government affairs for Colorado-based Gevo, which wants to build its Net-Zero 1 sustainable aviation fuel plant at Lake Preston. The plant would contribute carbon dioxide to a pipeline proposed by another company, Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions. Hartwig said Gevo wants to educate South Dakotans about the pipeline's importance to the future of the farm economy.

"In addition to our work bringing people together, Gevo has invested dollars in trying to get the message out to ensure South Dakota's agriculture industry remains competitive and open to opportunities," he said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight.

The Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem adopted the new pipeline law last winter. It includes protections for landowners and local governments. It also preserves a path toward regulatory approval for Summit and its proposed \$8.5 billion pipeline.

The pipeline would capture carbon dioxide from the aviation fuel plant and dozens of existing Midwestern ethanol plants, and transport the carbon to an underground storage site in North Dakota. Federal tax credits available for the project are intended to incentivize the removal of heat-trapping carbon from the atmosphere. Critics have pointed out that the sequestration site is near oilfields, and carbon dioxide can be injected into aging oil wells to make them more productive.

Some opponents of the pipeline, including some landowners along the route, view the new state law as a concession to Summit. The law does not prevent the company from using eminent domain, which is a legal process to gain access from unwilling landowners.

"Everything in that bill is stuff landowners and counties already could have — or did — negotiate with Summit," Fischbach said. "Summit got everything they wanted in that bill. There was no compromise."

Opponents of the law formed a ballot question committee called SD Property Rights and Local Control Alliance. They collected about 28,000 petition signatures — over 10,000 more than the number required to refer the law to the Nov. 5 election — and submitted the signatures last month to the Secretary of State's Office. The office is reviewing the validity of the petition and signatures.

The committee raised about \$11,000 from 21 individual contributions, according to its most recent campaign finance report.

Another controversial aspect of the new pipeline law is its language regarding the Public Utilities Commission's authority to override local "setbacks" — laws mandating minimum distances between pipelines and existing features such as homes and businesses.

State law formerly said the commission could choose to override local setbacks while considering a permit for a carbon pipeline. The new law says a permit from the commission automatically overrides local setbacks unless the commission says otherwise.

The law includes several other provisions, such as requiring carbon pipeline companies to submit an agricultural impact mitigation plan and authorizing a pipeline surcharge to benefit affected landowners and counties. It mandates that pipeline companies, not landowners, are liable for any damages resulting from the projects.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Biden tells congressional Dems he is staying in the race, urges end to speculation

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JULY 8, 2024 12:10 PM

President Joe Biden pledged Monday to stay in his race for reelection, even after a weekend in which a growing number of Democrats asked for him to withdraw and a key U.S. House Republican called for an investigation into the president's doctor.

In a letter to congressional Democrats, Biden argued that the calls for him to drop out of the presidential race — with just 119 days until Election Day — ignored the results of Democratic primaries and caucuses that he handily won and said he remained the best candidate to defeat former President Donald Trump.

The two-page letter ended with a call for party unity and an end to the public back-and-forth among Democrats over whether Biden should leave the race, after a June 27 debate performance that shook some high-ranking Democrats' confidence in his ability to overcome his polling deficit against Trump.

"The question of how to move forward has been well-aired for over a week now," Biden wrote. "And it's time for it to end. We have one job. And that is to beat Donald Trump."

Comer seeks interview with Biden doctor

Congress returns Monday from a weeklong July Fourth recess after several days in which members of both parties continued to press the issue of Biden's fitness for office.

Republicans also began pressing for more details. House Oversight and Accountability Chair James Comer on Sunday called for Biden's physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, to submit to a transcribed interview about his assessments of Biden and O'Connor's business dealings with James Biden, the president's brother.

The Kentucky Republican said Biden and the White House had sent mixed messages about recent medical examinations of the president.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters last week that Biden had not been examined by a doctor since his regular checkup in February.

But Biden told a group of Democratic governors the same day that he was "checked out by a doctor" following the debate, Comer wrote.

Following the debate, Biden, attempting to explain a low, raspy voice, said he'd had a cold.

Comer also questioned if O'Connor could accurately report Biden's health, or if he was compromised by a conflict of interest because of his involvement with James Biden's rural health care company, Americore. James Biden has testified to the committee that he sought O'Connor's counsel for the business.

The White House did not respond to a message seeking comment about Comer's request.

More Democrats call for withdrawal

The holiday weekend also saw more U.S. House Democrats join a list of those asking Biden to step aside rather than seek reelection.

In a written statement on Saturday, Minnesota's Angie Craig became the first member from a competitive district to call on the president to quit the race. Craig is the fifth member to publicly call for the president's withdrawal.

Additional members are making private calls, according to media reports.

Four Democrats who lead House committees — Jerry Nadler of New York on the Judiciary Committee, Adam Smith of Washington on the Armed Services Committee, Mark Takano of California on the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Joe Morelle of New York on the House Administration Committee — said during a caucus leadership call on Sunday that Biden should withdraw, according to reports.

Other accounts reported more members on the call, including Susan Wild of Pennsylvania and Jim Himes of Connecticut, also opposed Biden's continued candidacy. Wild later told the Pennsylvania Capital-Star she expressed concerns about Biden's electability.

In an impromptu call in to the MSNBC show "Morning Joe" on Monday, Biden insisted again he was

staying in the race and called for any opponents he had to “challenge” him at the party’s convention in Chicago next month.

Biden, who has secured enough pledged delegates through primary and caucus wins to clinch the nomination, would be heavily favored in a contested convention. Democratic Party rules mandate pledged delegates “shall in all good conscience reflect the sentiments of those who elected them,” but are not legally required to cast their convention vote for their pledged candidate.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Confusion, clinic closures may have caused big declines in contraception use, study shows

But in South Dakota, rate of prescriptions increases

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - JULY 8, 2024 6:00 AM

Clinic closures in the wake of the Dobbs decision and questions about the legality of emergency contraceptives, including disinformation that some are abortion drugs, may have contributed to a sharp drop in the rate of prescriptions for contraceptives in states with the most restrictive abortion bans, according to a University of California Los Angeles study.

The decline was significant in most states with restrictive bans following Dobbs in June 2022 that returned regulation of abortion procedures to the states, the study found. The group of researchers, led by pharmacy professor Dima Qato, used data from national prescription audit databases to estimate the monthly volume of prescriptions dispensed at pharmacies nationwide and state-by-state. It represents estimates from more than 93% of retail pharmacies.

“Given that abortion would be restricted in many states even more after Dobbs, I wondered whether now more people would get covered through contraception to prevent pregnancy and the need for an abortion,” Qato said.

Over the past six months, especially in states with near-total abortion bans, lawmakers have discussed proposals that would protect access to contraception, but those efforts have largely failed because of concern over whether that would include emergency contraception. Some anti-abortion organizations call Plan B, which is an emergency contraceptive designed to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex, an abortion drug because it can prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg.

The researchers think those conversations have led to confusion among residents who aren’t sure if emergency contraceptives are still legal in their state. That confusion could also extend to pharmacists. While Plan B is available over the counter at many retail stores and pharmacies, including Amazon, it can also be obtained by prescription, which is the only data point the study captured. According to the research, the rate of obtaining it through prescription between 2021 and 2023 dropped more than 70% in four states with near-total bans — Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and Tennessee. It declined by about 60% in Missouri.

The increases peaked in July 2022 and then dropped to levels lower than the pre-Dobbs period, Qato said.

“For patients that are seeking emergency contraception but can’t get it prescribed or filled, that’s where it matters,” Qato said. “They want to take it, they know it’s an option, and now they’re faced with hesitant prescribers and pharmacies.”

Prescriptions increase in South Dakota and Idaho

A Kaiser Family Foundation poll released in early 2023 found that more than 30% of adults surveyed were unsure if Plan B was legal in all 50 states and over the counter — and half of women living in states with abortion bans were under the impression that emergency contraceptives were illegal or were unsure if they were legal.

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Conversely, in two states with near-total bans, Idaho and South Dakota, the rate of prescriptions for emergency contraceptives increased by 148% and 182%, respectively. Those numbers were attributed to increases in ulipristal, which is also known as Ella, rather than levonorgestrel, known as Plan B. Ella can be effective at preventing pregnancy up to five days after unprotected sex, while Plan B is most effective within three days and is also less effective in people who weigh more than 165 pounds, while Ella does not have that limitation.

Between the 12 states with the most restrictive bans, the combined decline of emergency contraceptive prescriptions was 60%, and the decline for oral contraceptives was 24%.

Qato said she expected to see lower rates of emergency contraceptive use in the most restrictive states, particularly with the conversations likening them to abortion drugs, but she wasn't expecting to also see a drop in monthly oral contraceptive prescriptions. Among states with the most restrictive bans, the largest decrease of 28% was in Texas, while most other states had decreases of about 20%, including Kentucky, Louisiana, Alabama and Tennessee.

Qato also theorized that the closure of abortion clinics in those states with bans contributed to the decreases, since most clinics that provided abortions prior to Dobbs also offered prescriptions for oral and emergency contraceptives, IUDs and other family planning services such as screenings for sexually transmitted diseases. The study found no change in the use of IUDs and other forms of contraception such as the patch or vaginal ring.

Over-the-counter options only help certain people

In her research, Qato noted that two years after Iowa imposed Medicaid coverage restrictions on family planning clinics that provided abortions, the use of contraceptives declined by two-thirds.

A report from the Guttmacher Institute released this week showed 42 clinics that provided abortions nationwide closed their doors between 2020 and 2024. The number of abortions have also increased during that time, and more than 80% still take place at brick-and-mortar clinics rather than via telehealth or by mail.

While Plan B and Opill — an oral contraceptive — are available over the counter, Qato said those options are still untenable for some people who need contraceptives the most, including low-income women and women of color.

"Opill is convenient for those who don't want to go to the doctor and have that discretionary income to purchase it, but low-income women relied on clinics that are now closed, they relied on prescriptions that they now don't have," Qato said. "Those options are accessible, but not affordable to women who could really benefit from it."

While Qato said there should be a focus on restoring and protecting access to abortion, there should also be efforts to protect contraception in the most restrictive states. She is alarmed to see initial increases after Dobbs and then such steep declines.

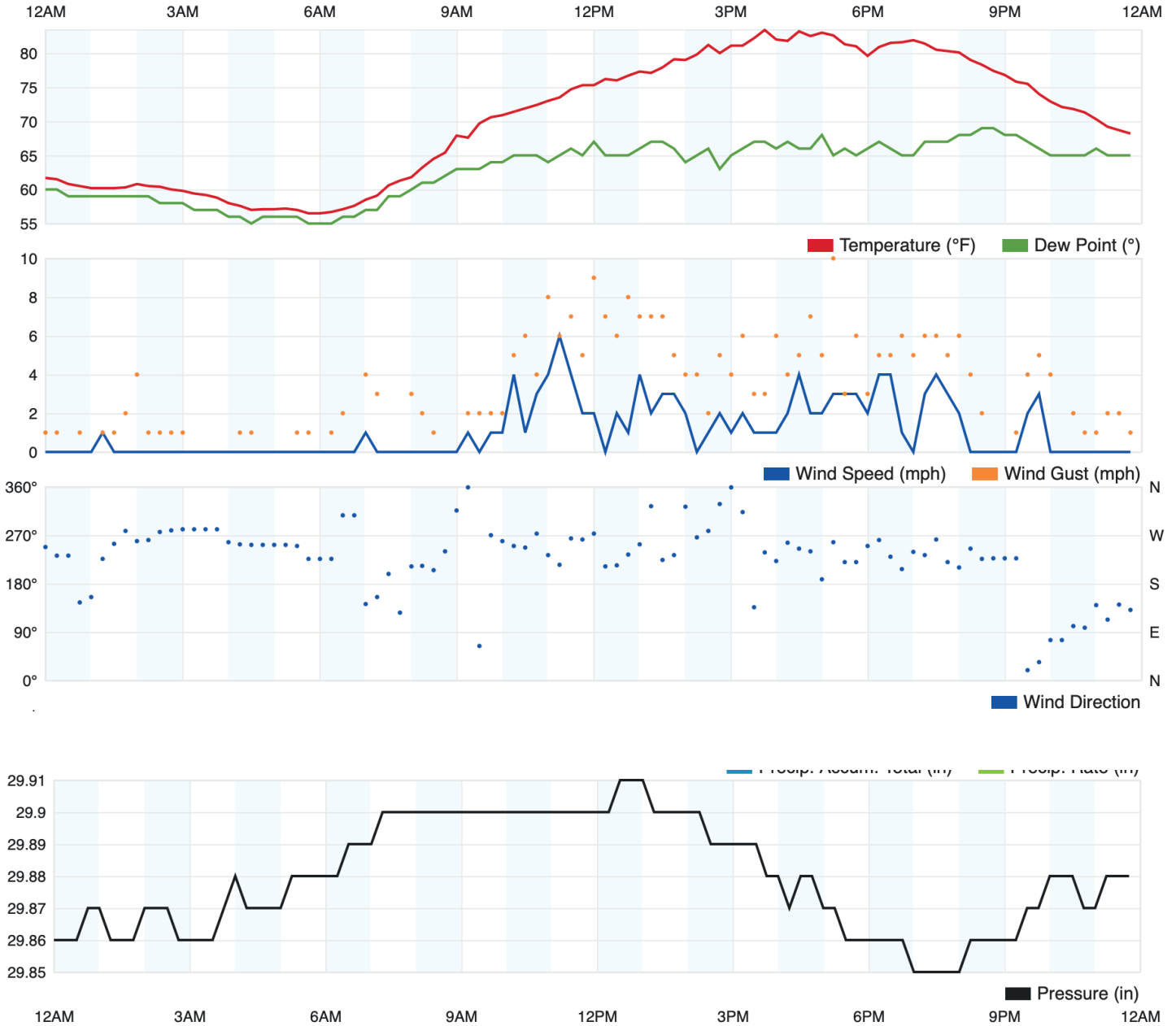
"It suggests that we may observe increases in live births from unintended pregnancies in women who were forced to have a child that wasn't planned because the state didn't protect or introduced fear of criminalization or liability for patients, doctors, or pharmacists," she said. "A woman may not feel safe choosing emergency contraception in those states anymore."

Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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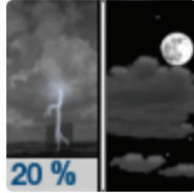
Today



High: 86 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
Showers

Tonight



Low: 61 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 84 °F

Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 62 °F

Clear

Thursday



High: 87 °F

Sunny



Forecast Highlights

July 9, 2024
3:14 AM

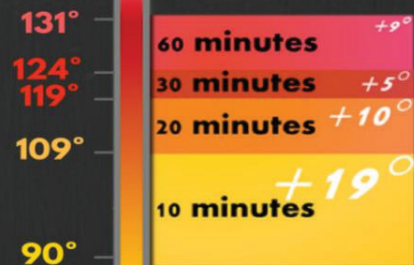
Key Messages

- Isolated heat of the afternoon storms today and Wednesday
- Steady warming trend over next several days
- Heat & Humidity peaks this upcoming weekend
- Highs/Lows Friday - Sunday 5-10 degrees above normal
- Heat Index values in the mid/upper 90s to near 100 degrees Saturday & Sunday afternoon



Look Before You Lock

The Truth... The fastest heating rate inside a car occurs in the first **30 minutes!**



When the Outside Air Temperature is 90 Degrees

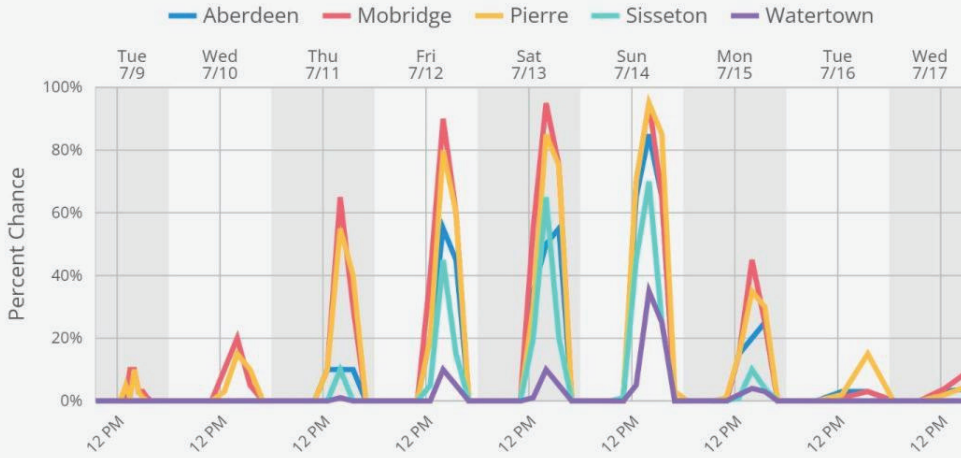
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

We continue to track heat building to the west, that will combine with humidity over the area later in the week. This heat will most likely persist through and peak this weekend.



Chance of Temperatures Greater Than 90°F

Tuesday Morning, Jul 9 - Wednesday Evening, Jul 17



Information:

The line chart shows the percent chance of a weather event occurring based on model predictions from the National Blend of Models. A higher number means greater certainty.

Additional Details

What To Know:

- Warmer temperatures on the way by week end!
- Sat & Sun are expected to be the warmest days.
- Locations west of the James River Valley have the highest probabilities of exceeding 90 degrees.
- Areas further east (Watertown/Sisseton) are less likely to experience 90 degree heat.
- Humidity will be high across the whole region however!
- Plans for outdoor activities should include extra water and frequent breaks.

Valid: Tue 07 am CDT - Wed 07 pm CDT

Issued: Mon, Jul 8, 2024, 3 pm CDT



Warmer temperatures on the way for week end. Locations west of the James River have a high (80%+ chance) of seeing temperatures greater than 90 degrees. Areas further east (Watertown or Sisseton) are less likely to experience 90 degree heat. Humidity will be high across the region however.

Heat can escalate quickly.

Warm temperatures can quickly become dangerous. Heat is one of the most deadly weather hazards — don't underestimate it.



NEVER leave people or pets alone in a closed car



Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty



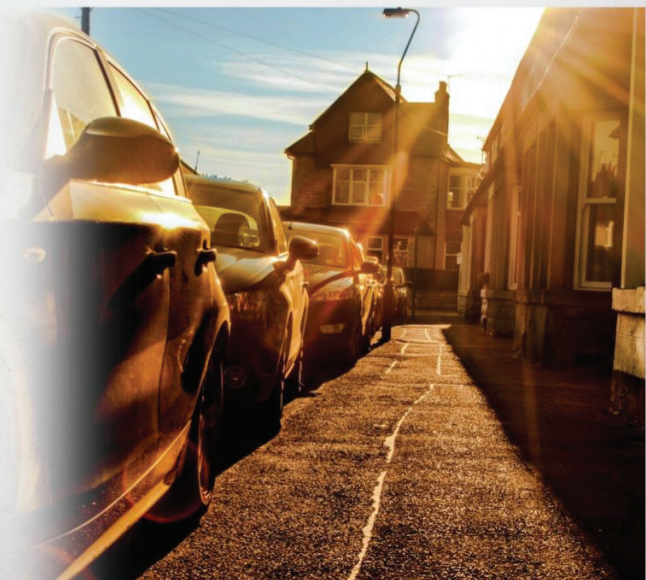
Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing



Spend time in air conditioning and in the shade



weather.gov



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 5:08 PM

Low Temp: 56 °F at 5:48 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 11:34 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 31 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 115 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1981

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.05

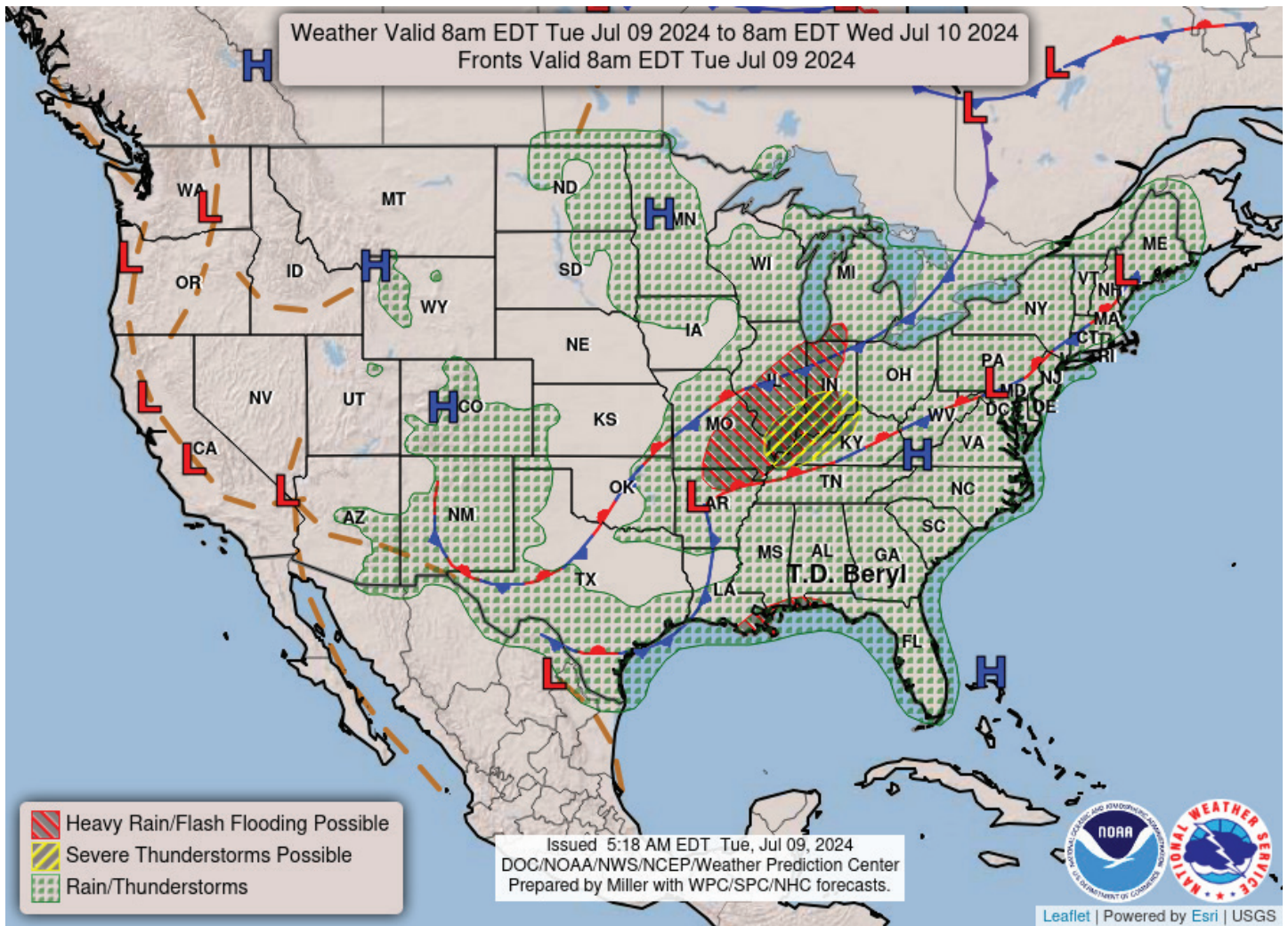
Precip to date in July: 3.07

Average Precip to date: 12.06

Precip Year to Date: 14.02

Sunset Tonight: 9:23:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53:04 am



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Today in Weather History

July 9, 1938: A deadly, estimated F4 tornado moved ESE across the eastern edge of Andover to the north of Bristol. Seventeen buildings were destroyed at Andover, and at least one home was completely swept away. Seven homes and a church also suffered damage. One person was killed at the western edge of Andover, and a couple died in a house at the southern side of town. About two hours later, another estimated F4 tornado moved ENE from 2 miles northeast of White, South Dakota in Brookings County to Hendricks, Minnesota. Only one person was injured from this storm.

July 9, 1972: Wind gusts up to 89 mph caused considerable damage in the Pierre and Oahe Dam area. A drive-in movie screen was destroyed. A camper trailer was turned over pinning seven members of a family inside. Five of them were hospitalized. Numerous trees were uprooted at the Oahe Dam campground. A tourist information building was caved in. Hail broke out car windows on ten vehicles.

July 9, 2009: Severe storms developed over Fall River County and moved eastward across southwestern and south central South Dakota. The thunderstorms produced large hail and strong wind gusts. Two tornadoes were observed in Todd County, and two tornadoes touched down in southern Tripp County. A small EF-1 tornado tracked across Dog Ear Township from 311th Avenue to near the intersection of 289th Street and 312th Avenue, or a little over a one-mile track. The storm blew down large cottonwood trees.

July 9, 2013: A pair of severe storms moved across northeastern South Dakota during the evening hours of the 9th. These storms caused extensive damage to crops, mainly west of Frederick in Brown County where beans and corn fields were destroyed. As the storms moved from Barnard, through Columbia, and into the Groton area, the hail increased to baseball size. There was also some structural damage to siding along with broken windows.

1860 - A hot blast of air in the middle of a sweltering summer pushed the mercury up to 115 degrees at Fort Scott and Lawrence, KS. (David Ludlum)

1882 - Ice formed on the streets of Cheyenne, WY, during a rare summer freeze. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature hit an all-time record high of 106 degrees at the Central Park Observatory in New York City, a record which lasted until LaGuardia Airport hit 107 degrees on July 3rd in 1966. (The Weather Channel)

1968 - Columbus, MS received 15.68 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1979: Hurricane Bob was born in the Gulf of Mexico, becoming the first Atlantic Hurricane to be given a male name.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Michigan. A tornado near Munising, MI, destroyed part of a commercial dog kennel, and one of the missing dogs was later found unharmed in a tree top half a mile away. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Alpena, MI, and Buffalo, NY, suffered through their sixth straight day of record heat. The percentage of total area in the country in the grips of severe to extreme drought reached 43 percent, the fourth highest total of record. The record of 61 percent occurred during the summer of 1934. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms produced very heavy rain in southern Lower Michigan and northern Indiana. Up to 5.6 inches of rain was reported in Berrien County, MI. Sioux Falls SD reported a record high of 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997: Torrential rains in the Carpathian Mountains caused severe flooding in the Czech Republic, Poland, and German. In all, 104 people died as a result of the deluge. In the aftermath, authorities from each country blamed the others for the extent of the disaster.

2007: The Argentine capital experiences its first major snowfall since June 22, 1918, as wet snow spreads a thin white mantle over the area. The storm hits on Argentina's Independence Day holiday thus adding to a festive air. Thousands of Argentines cheer the event, throwing snowballs in the streets. Local radio stations dust off an old tango song inspired by the 1918 snowfall: What a night!

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DOWN, BUT NOT OUT!

Packy East began his professional career as a lightweight boxer. He ended his career as one of the world's best-known ambassadors. What started in a ring ended on a stage.

Packy entered the ring in Cleveland, Ohio, one evening for a boxing match he intended to win. It was not to be. At the end of the second round, he was knocked down and carried to his dressing room.

But that setback did not hinder him. It actually helped him and changed his career. He eventually became a comedian, traveled the world entertaining large audiences and was very generous with his time to visit American troops wherever they were stationed. He was not known as "Packy the Performer." He changed his name and was known as Bob Hope, the comedian.

It's not being knocked down that destroys us - it's staying down. When we are down, it is time to look up and to look out! We need to look up to God to see what He has in store for us and then look out into His world to see where He would have us serve Him.

Jesus said that "everything is possible if a person believes." He did not mean that anything was possible with "positive thinking." He did want us to know, however, that nothing is impossible for God to do in our lives if it is in keeping with His will for us.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be open and alert to what is going on around us and discover what You would have us to do to serve and honor You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." Mark 9:23



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.05.24

6 15 32 54 67 4

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$181,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.24

5 21 22 40 46 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,780,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 5 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.24

2 9 27 37 48 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 20 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.06.24

1 12 18 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$29,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 20 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.24

10 17 19 25 59 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 49 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.24

20 22 31 33 45 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$41,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 49 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- 08/02/2024 Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close

News from the Associated Press

Becky Hammon's careerlong 'underdog' mentality has helped defending champion Aces get back on track

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP) — Becky Hammon has had to prove she belongs among the best in basketball throughout her career.

She was a consensus All-American in 1999 at Colorado State but went undrafted that year. Though Hammon became a multiple WNBA All-Star, she was never part of the U.S. Olympic player pool.

The mentality of having to earn respect helped drive Hammon to a Hall of Fame playing career, It continues to drive her as coach of the two-time defending WNBA champion Las Vegas Aces.

"If you want to put me as an underdog, I'm perfectly comfortable in that role," Hammon said. "I'm not somebody who has gotten here by luck. I've had to work. I'm not afraid to work. I enjoy working and I enjoy working hard.

"I don't like sucking at anything."

She coaches with much the same mindset. What's helped her in Las Vegas is Hammon and her players are a reflection of each other.

A'ja Wilson has turned not being named MVP last season into a crusade that has carried over to this year with a historic stretch of games. Kelsey Plum said she told her coach in their first meeting to "kick rocks" when it was suggested Plum come off the bench. And point guard Chelsea Gray is as gifted a passer as any in the WNBA, but she won't hesitate to put the team on her back by taking game-deciding shots as she did in being named the 2022 finals MVP.

That shared mindset has created their championship chemistry, rewarding owner Mark Davis' decision to offer Hammon the league's first \$1 million-a-year coaching contract in 2022 to leave the San Antonio Spurs' bench after eight seasons.

"She's as competitive as they come," Plum said of her coach. "If you've seen her play cornhole, it's a scary sight. Her journey and not having things handed to her is what has made her her. Becky is someone that's always going to win. She's going to figure it out."

Championship DNA: Hammon and Dawn Staley

Hammon has had to figure some things out this season. The Aces started the year with a 6-6 record, the same number of losses they had all of last regular season. But since Gray returned from injury, Las Vegas has won seven of its last eight games.

Regardless of their record, though, as the defending champs Hammon expects everyone to get up to play against the Aces.

"We just have to understand that other teams are going 110 (mph) against us," Hammon said. "It's not a good time for us to be on cruise control, and I think we've been on cruise control a little bit."

That comment doesn't surprise Wilson, who compares Hammon's candor to South Carolina coach Dawn Staley. Wilson said both will be brutally honest in their assessments, but that they also will go to the mat to defend their players.

"It makes my job a lot easier because I know I'm never alone," said Wilson, who leads the league in scoring (27 points per game), blocks (2.7) and is second in rebounding (10.9). "Her and Coach Staley are so familiar in that sense. It's like, 'I'm going to coach you and I'm going to push you hard. At the same time, I'm going to love you even harder.' And I love that because it allows me to make mistakes and allows me to not be perfect.

"In some cases, I try to be perfect and they always bring me back down to earth."

Being a former All-Star herself has helped Hammon relate to players. The 47-year-old has acknowledged that her lack of size and speed forced her to excel in other areas.

"She had to work hard for everything that was given to her," said New York Liberty coach Sandy Brondello,

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who coached Hammon in San Antonio. "I think she just has a good feel for the game. They say not all point guards make great coaches, but a lot of them do. She's been through so many experiences as a coach."

Hammon, Aces shooting for history

Hammon was the three-time Western Athletic Conference Player of the Year at Colorado State, leading the Rams to the Sweet 16 in 1999.

Then despite going undrafted, Hammon made the Liberty's roster and played in New York for eight seasons — her last three as the starting point guard. The Liberty traded Hammon to San Antonio in 2007, and she played an additional eight seasons and averaged 15.6 points and 5.1 assists, twice making first-team all-league.

The Silver Stars moved to Las Vegas in 2017 and were rebranded as the Aces. Hammon's No. 25 jersey hangs in the rafters at the Aces' home arena.

Her playing career earned Hammon induction into the Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame last year, and on hand to watch her speech was San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, a fellow inductee. Through tears, Hammon thanked Popovich "for doing what no one else in professional sports had done."

She was rehabbing from a torn ACL in 2013 and asked Popovich if she could watch some practices. Soon, Popovich was asking Hammon to not only see every practice, but sit in on coaches' meetings and attend home games.

Popovich offered her a job on his bench a year later.

He handed Hammon the keys to the Spurs' Summer League team in 2015. Hammon became the first woman to coach a team to the title.

"That was the first time I was actually in charge of the team," Hammon said. "As an assistant, you're trying to help Pop make the best decisions, but ultimately the decisions fall back on him. Good or bad, he's the one that takes the hit. So when I did summer league, it was a big deal."

Hammon made more history on Dec. 30, 2020, when Popovich was ejected in the second quarter of a game against the Los Angeles Lakers. Hammon then took charge to become the first woman to coach an NBA team.

She could one day return to the NBA and make more history as a full-time head coach.

Hammon, however, insists that foremost on her mind is the Aces possibly joining Houston as the only teams to win three consecutive WNBA titles (the Comets actually won four in a row).

"So if that doesn't excite you, that opportunity?" Hammon asked rhetorically, "then just the plain old simple fact that I hate losing."

Group files petitions to put recreational marijuana on North Dakota's November ballot

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Organizers of a ballot initiative to legalize recreational marijuana in North Dakota submitted petition signatures on Monday, likely setting up another statewide vote on the issue that voters and state lawmakers have previously defeated.

The New Economic Frontier measure group submitted more than 22,000 signatures, sponsoring committee chairman Steve Bakken said. The initiative needs 15,582 valid signatures to make the Nov. 5 general election ballot. Secretary of State Michael Howe's office has until Aug. 12 to review the petition signatures.

Bakken, a Burleigh County commissioner and former Bismarck mayor, said the measure is an effort to preclude any one from out of state that might be potentially unmanageable.

"A lot of what we don't want to see is what's going on in some of the other states, and we think that this is a measure that fits the conservative nature of North Dakota," Bakken told reporters in an office where Howe's staff unboxed petitions. Also, law enforcement resources should focus more on opioids and fentanyl, not minor marijuana offenses, he said.

The 20-page statutory measure would legalize recreational marijuana for people 21 and older to use at their homes and, if permitted, on others' private property. The measure also outlines numerous production

and processing regulations, prohibited uses — such as in public or in vehicles — and would allow home cultivation of plants.

The measure would set maximum purchase and possession amounts of 1 ounce of dried leaves or flowers, 4 grams of a cannabinoid concentrate, 1,500 mg of total THC in the form of a cannabis product and 300 mg of an edible product. It would allow cannabis solutions, capsules, transdermal patches, concentrates, topical and edible products.

Marijuana use by people under 21 is a low-level misdemeanor in North Dakota. Recreational use by anyone older is not a crime — but possessing it is, with penalties varying from an infraction to misdemeanors depending on the amount of marijuana. Delivery of any amount of marijuana is a felony, which can be elevated depending on certain factors, such as if the offense was within 300 feet (91 meters) of a school.

Last year, 4,451 people statewide were charged with use or possession of marijuana, according to North Dakota Courts data requested by The Associated Press.

North Dakota voters previously rejected legalization measures in 2018 and 2022.

In 2021, the Republican-led state House of Representatives passed bills to legalize and tax recreational marijuana, which the GOP-majority Senate defeated. Opponents decried what they called the harmful physiological and societal effects of marijuana.

Voters approved medical marijuana use in 2016. The state-run program has nearly 10,000 active patient cards.

In 2019, the state's Pardon Advisory Board approved a new process to ease pardons for low-level marijuana offenses. Republican Gov. Doug Burgum granted 100 such pardons from 2019 to 2023, according to his office.

Twenty-four states have legalized recreational marijuana for adults. Ohio did so most recently, by initiative in November 2023. Measures will be on the ballot in Florida and South Dakota in November.

In May, the federal government began a process to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug.

South Dakota Gov. Noem's official social media accounts seem to disappear without explanation

Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Longstanding official social media accounts belonging to South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem appear to have been deleted without explanation.

The accounts on Facebook, Instagram and X, the site formerly known as Twitter, had reached hundreds of thousands of followers. As of Monday, links to them on the governor's official website led to pages that said the accounts were no longer active.

A fourth link from the governor's website to her official YouTube page remained active, as did Noem's personal accounts on Facebook, Instagram and X.

A new X account for the governor's office was created this month and had just over 300 followers as of Monday morning, far fewer than the roughly half-million of her old account.

Noem spokesperson Ian Fury pointed The Associated Press to that account as the source for official updates from the governor's office but declined to answer questions about her old accounts, including whether they were deleted by Noem or her office.

Noem, once thought to be a vice presidential contender for former Republican President Donald Trump's 2024 ticket, has been the target of a steady stream of hateful messages for killing a rambunctious puppy since The Guardian in April revealed the details she wrote in her new book.

She tried to reframe the story from two decades ago as an example of her willingness to make tough decisions. She wrote on social media that the 14-month-old wirehaired pointer named Cricket had shown aggressive behavior by biting.

Noem also has faced backlash from within South Dakota for comments she made earlier this year about tribal leaders benefitting from drug cartels. Several tribes have banned Noem from their reservations.

Kyiv mourns as rescuers make last-ditch efforts at children's hospital hit by Russian missile

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Rescue operations stretched into a second day at a major Kyiv children's hospital struck by a Russian missile, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday, adding that 38 people were killed and almost 200 injured in an intense daytime barrage that smashed into cities across the country.

Zelenskyy said on the social platform X that 64 people were hospitalized in the capital as well as 28 in Kryvyi Rih and six in Dnipro — both in central Ukraine.

It was Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months and one of the deadliest of the war, hitting seven of the city's 10 districts. The strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital, which interrupted open-heart surgery and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors, drew an international outcry.

Kyiv city administrators declared Tuesday an official day of mourning. Entertainment events were prohibited and flags lowered in the capital.

Russia denied responsibility for the hospital strike, insisting it doesn't attack civilian targets in Ukraine despite abundant evidence to the contrary, including Associated Press reporting.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday repeated that position, pointing to a Russian Defense Ministry statement that blamed a Ukrainian air defense missile for partially destroying the hospital.

The Russian onslaught Monday came on the eve of a NATO summit in Washington where alliance countries are expected to pledge new military and economic support for Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, was hosting India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Moscow. New Delhi's importance as a key trading partner has grown since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Zelenskyy was deeply critical of Modi's visit, saying on X late Monday: "It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day."

House keys carry symbolic weight for Gaza families repeatedly displaced by war

By MOHAMMED JAHJOUH and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

MUWASI, Gaza Strip (AP) — On his key chain, Hassan Nofal keeps the keys to two homes. One is to the house of his grandparents in what is now southern Israel, which his family was driven out of by Israeli forces in 1948 and to which they've never been able to return.

The other is to Nofal's house in northern Gaza that he had to flee last year after Israel launched its campaign of bombardment and offensives in the territory.

Over the nearly nine months since, Nofal and his family have been uprooted four times, driven back and forth across the Gaza Strip to escape the onslaught. Nofal said he is determined to make sure his key doesn't become a keepsake like his grandparents'.

"If my house key becomes just a memory with me moving forward, then I don't want to live anymore," he said. "I must return to my house ... I want to stay in Gaza and settle in Gaza with my children in our house."

Israel has said Palestinians will eventually be allowed to go back to their homes in Gaza, but it is not clear when. Many homes have been destroyed or heavily damaged.

Israel's assault in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, has driven some 1.9 million of the territory's prewar population of 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Most of them have been uprooted repeatedly since then, fleeing over and over across the length of the strip to escape a series of ground offensives.

Each time has meant a wrenching move to a new location and a series of crowded, temporary shelters — whether at the homes of extended family, U.N. schools, or tent camps. Along the way, families have

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struggled to stay together and keep a few possessions. In each new site, they must find new sources of food, water and medical treatment.

In the latest exodus, people have been escaping eastern districts of the southern city of Khan Younis and parts of Gaza City in the north after Israel ordered evacuations there. Almost all of Gaza's population is now crammed into an Israeli-declared "humanitarian safe zone" covering about 60 square kilometers (23 square miles) on the Mediterranean coast, centered on a barren rural area called Muwasi.

Despite its name, Israel has carried out deadly airstrikes in the "safe zone." Conditions are squalid in sprawling camps of ramshackle tents set up by the displaced — mostly plastic sheeting and blankets propped up on sticks. With no sanitation systems, families live next to open ponds of sewage and have little access to drinkable water or humanitarian aid.

Nofal, a 53-year-old employee of the Palestinian Authority, said he, his wife and six children fled their home in the northern refugee camp of Jabaliya in October. First they went to the central town of Deir al-Balah, then to Gaza's southernmost city Rafah. They had to flee again when Israel launched an offensive there in May and moved to Khan Younis. Last week, they fled Khan Younis to a tent in Muwasi.

"Being displaced to a new place, it's hard to deal with bugs and living on sandy ground," he said. "We get sick because it gets hot during the day and slightly cold in the night."

But the first move, leaving his home in Jabaliya, was the hardest, he said. He held up his key chain with the keys to his home and to his grandparents' home in what was once the Palestinian village of Hulayqat, just outside what is now Gaza. Nothing remains of Hulayqat -- the precursor to the Israeli military seized the village and nearby ones in early 1948, forcing out inhabitants.

Such old keys are prized possessions for the descendants of Palestinians who were expelled or fled during the conflict that surrounded Israel's creation. Many in Gaza fear that, as in that past war, they will not be allowed back to their homes after this one.

Ola Nassar also holds onto the keys to her home in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya. For her, they symbolize "safety, stability, freedom. It's like my identity."

Her family had just moved into the house with a newly renovated kitchen when the Gaza war began. Now it has been heavily burned, along with clothes and decorations she had to leave behind when they fled in October. She misses a treasured set of plates that was a gift from her brother and shattered during an airstrike.

She, her husband and their three children have been displaced seven times during the war, fleeing from town to town. From Rafah, they came to their current shelter — a tent in Muwasi.

"Every displacement we experienced was hard because it takes time to cope. And by the time we cope we'd have to move again," she said. Finding food was often difficult because of skyrocketing prices. "There were days we'd eat only one meal," she said.

As they rushed out of their homes, many left behind almost everything, grabbing only some essentials. Nour Mahdi said she took only her house keys, the deed to her apartment to prove ownership and a photo album of her seven children. The album later got ruined in the rain, so she said she used it as kindling for a fire to cook with.

"This was very hard because it was very important for me as it contained memories involving my children," she said.

Omar Fayad kept a picture of his daughter and one of himself when he was 10 years old. But after multiple moves — "each place worse than the other" — he wishes he'd never left his home. "It would've been better for me if I stayed in my house there and died," the 57-year-old said, longing for his home in Beit Hanoun in north Gaza.

The Hamas militants that attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7 killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. Israel's response has killed more than 38,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

Muhammed al-Ashqar, also from Beit Lahiya, said he has been displaced six times with his four daughters, four sons and his grandchildren.

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Along the way, the family got separated. Al-Ashqar's brother stayed in the north because his wife was pregnant and not healthy enough to move. Soon after, shrapnel from an airstrike hit her in the head and killed her, but the baby was saved.

One of al-Ashqar's sons went to the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza to stay in his wife's family home. The son was in the kitchen cooking one day when an airstrike hit the home, killing his wife and four of his children in the living room. The son's leg was amputated, and two of his surviving children now live with al-Ashqar. Another son was killed in a separate strike in Nuseirat.

After all that, it is not possessions that the 63-year-old misses.

"There is nothing to cry over after leaving everything behind and seeing all these dead people and all this suffering."

Stock market today: Global stocks mostly rise, with Japan's Nikkei 225 index logging record close

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares were mostly higher Tuesday, with Tokyo's benchmark hitting another record. France's CAC 40 lost 0.5% in early trading to 7,590.35, while Germany's DAX fell 0.3% to 18,418.81. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.2% to 8,209.03. The future for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.1% and that for the S&P 500 rose 0.2%.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped 2.0% to finish at a record high 41,580.17. It briefly topped previous intraday trading highs.

Technology-related shares led gains, with computer chip maker Tokyo Electron surging 3.8% and chip testing equipment maker Advantest up 4.1%. Precision tools maker Disco Corp. rose 2.5% and Shin-Etsu Chemical, which supplies silicon for chips, among other materials, was up 2.7%.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.9% to 7,829.70. South Korea's Kospi edged up 0.3% to 2,867.38. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was little changed, inching down less than 0.1% to 17,523.23, while the Shanghai Composite surged 1.3% to 2,959.37.

"Risk-taking will still likely be more measured ahead of the Federal Reserve Chair's testimony and the key U.S. inflation release this week," Yeap Jun Rong, a market analyst at IG, said in a commentary.

On Monday, stocks wavered to a mixed close on Wall Street, nudging the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq composite to more records. The Dow gave up an early gain and fell 0.1%.

Traders are looking ahead to several earnings reports this week including updates from Delta Air Lines on Thursday.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell addresses Congress on Tuesday and Wednesday. The central bank has kept its benchmark interest rate at its highest level in more than two decades in an effort to tame inflation.

The Fed's goal is to cool inflation back to 2% without slowing economic growth too much. Inflation is still squeezing consumers, but it has fallen significantly from its peak two years ago. Economic growth has slowed this year, but it remains relatively strong amid a solid jobs market and consumer spending.

"The first day of the testimony is always the most important day as we will get to catch the overall tone and the key messages. Some expect Powell to sound cautious regarding the progress on inflation and tell the U.S. politicians to be patient until the Fed gathers enough evidence that inflation is on a solid path toward their 2% target," said Ipek Ozkardeska, senior analyst at Swissquote Bank.

The central bank will get more updates on inflation at the consumer level on Thursday. Wall Street expects the latest government report to show inflation easing to 3.1% in June from 3.3% in May.

A report for inflation at the wholesale level, before costs are passed on to consumers, is expected Friday. In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude fell 44 cents to \$81.89 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, edged down 40 cents to \$85.35 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 161.02 Japanese yen from 160.80 yen.

The euro cost \$1.0818, down from \$1.0827.

Tourists still flock to Death Valley amid searing US heat wave blamed for several deaths

By TY O'NEIL, CLAIRE RUSH and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

DEATH VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of Europeans touring the American West and adventurers from around the U.S. are still being drawn to Death Valley National Park, even though the desolate region known as one of the Earth's hottest places is being punished by a dangerous heat wave blamed for a motorcyclist's death over the weekend.

French, Spanish, English and Swiss tourists left their air-conditioned rental cars and motorhomes Monday to take photographs of the barren landscape so different than the snow-capped mountains and rolling green hills they know back home. American adventurers liked the novelty of it, even as officials at the park in California warned visitors to stay safe.

"I was excited it was going to be this hot," said Drew Belt, a resident of Tupelo, Mississippi, who wanted to stop in Death Valley as the place boasting the lowest elevation in the U.S. on his way to climb California's Mt. Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. Kind of like walking on Mars."

Park Superintendent Mike Reynolds cautioned visitors in a statement that "high heat like this can pose real threats to your health."

The searing heat wave gripping large parts of the United States also led to record daily high temperatures in Oregon, where it is suspected to have caused four deaths in the Portland area. More than 146 million people around the U.S. were under heat alerts Monday, especially in Western states.

Dozens of locations in the West and Pacific Northwest tied or broke previous heat records over the weekend and are expected to keep doing so into the week.

The early U.S. heat wave came as the global temperature in June was record warm for the 13th straight month and marked the 12th straight month that the world was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times, the European climate service Copernicus said.

In Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland, the medical examiner is investigating four suspected heat-related deaths recorded on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, officials said. Three of the deaths involved county residents who were 64, 75 and 84 years old, county officials said in an email. Heat also was suspected in the death of a 33-year-old man transported to a Portland hospital from outside the county.

Portland broke daily record temperatures on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and was on track to do so again on Monday with a forecast high of 102 F (38.9 C), National Weather Service meteorologist Hannah Chandler-Cooley said. High temperatures were expected in Portland through Tuesday evening.

The temperatures aren't expected to reach as high as they did during a similar heat wave in the Pacific Northwest in 2021, which killed an estimated 600 people across Oregon, Washington and western Canada. But the duration could be problematic because many homes in the region lack air conditioning.

Heat illness and injury are cumulative and can build over the course of a day or days, officials warn. In San Jose, California, a homeless man died last week from apparent heat-related causes, Mayor Matt Mahan reported on the social platform X, calling it "an avoidable tragedy."

In eastern California's sizzling desert, a high temperature of 128 F (53.3 C) was recorded Saturday and Sunday at Death Valley National Park, where a visitor, who was not identified, died Saturday from heat exposure. Another person was hospitalized, officials said.

They were among six motorcyclists riding through the Badwater Basin area in scorching weather, the park said in a statement. The other four were treated at the scene. Emergency medical helicopters were unable to respond because the aircraft cannot generally fly safely over 120 F (48.8 C), officials said.

More extreme highs are in the near forecast with a high of possibly 130 F (54.4 C) around midweek,

The largest national park outside Alaska, Death Valley is considered one of the most extreme environments in the world. The hottest temperature ever officially recorded on Earth was 134 F (56.67 C) in July 1913 in Death Valley, though some experts dispute that measurement and say the real record was 130 F (54.4 C), recorded there in July 2021.

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"It's impressive," Thomas Mrzliek of Basel, Switzerland, said of the triple digit heat. "It like a wave that hits when you get out of the car, but it's a very dry heat. So it's not as in Europe."

Across the desert in Nevada, Las Vegas set a record high of 120 F (48.8 C) on Sunday and was forecast to hit a record high of 115 F (46.1 C) on Monday. The National Weather Service forecast a high of 117 F (47.2 C) in Phoenix.

Extreme heat and a longstanding drought in the West has also dried out vegetation that can fuel wildfires

In California, a wildfire in the mountains of Santa Barbara County grew to more than 34 square miles (88 square kilometers) by Monday night. More than 1,000 firefighters were on the lines of the Lake Fire, and areas under evacuation orders included the former Neverland Ranch once owned by the late pop star Michael Jackson. The blaze was just 8% contained.

A small but smoky blaze, dubbed the Royal Fire, burned through more than 150 acres (60 hectares) of forest west of Lake Tahoe and sent ash raining down on the tourist town of Truckee, California. There was no containment Monday night.

Rare heat advisories were extended even into higher elevations including around usually temperate Tahoe area, with the weather service in Reno, Nevada, warning of "major heat risk impacts, even in the mountains." For the third straight day, the town of South Lake Tahoe, California, hit a high of 91 F (32.7 C), beating the previous record of 89 F (31.6 C) set in 2017.

And for the first time in records dating to 1888, Reno reached 105 F (40.5 C) for the third consecutive day. A short time later on Monday, the city set a record high of 106 F (41.1 C), leap-frogging the previous mark of 104 F (40 C) set in 2017.

People flocked Monday to the beaches around Lake Tahoe, especially Sand Harbor State Park, where the record high of 92 F (33.3 C) set on Sunday smashed the old record of 88 F (31.1 C) set in 2014. For the fifth consecutive day, Sand Harbor closed its gates within 90 minutes of opening at 8 a.m. because it had reached capacity.

"It's definitely hotter than we are used to," Nevada State Parks spokesperson Tyler Kerver said.

Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter trial begins with jury selection

By MORGAN LEE and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Alec Baldwin's trial in the shooting of a cinematographer is set to begin Tuesday with the selection of jurors who will be tasked with deciding whether the actor is guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Getting chosen to serve in a trial of such a major star accused of such a major crime would be unusual even in Los Angeles or Baldwin's hometown of New York. But it will be essentially an unheard-of experience for those who are picked as jurors in Santa Fe, New Mexico, though the state has increasingly become a hub of Hollywood production in recent years.

Baldwin, 66, could get up to 18 months in prison if jurors unanimously decide he committed the felony when a revolver he was pointing at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza during a rehearsal for the Western film "Rust" in October 2021 at Bonanza Creek Ranch, some 18 miles (29 kilometers) from where the trial is being held.

Baldwin has said the gun fired accidentally after he followed instructions to point it toward Hutchins, who was behind the camera. Unaware the gun contained a live round, Baldwin said he pulled back the hammer — not the trigger — and it fired.

The star of "30 Rock" and "The Hunt for Red October" made his first appearance in the courtroom on Monday, when Judge Mary Marlowe Summer, in a significant victory for the defense, ruled at a pretrial hearing that Baldwin's role as a co-producer on "Rust" isn't relevant to the trial.

The judge has said that the special circumstances of a celebrity trial shouldn't keep jury selection from moving quickly, and that opening statements should begin Wednesday.

"I'm not worried about being able to pick a jury in one day," Marlowe Summer said. "I think we're going

to pick a jury by the afternoon.”

Special prosecutor Kari Morrissey, however, was dubious that Baldwin’s lawyers, with whom she has clashed in the run-up to the trial, would make that possible.

“It is my guess that with this group of defense attorneys, that’s not gonna happen,” Morrissey said at the hearing.

Baldwin attorney Alex Spiro replied, “I’ve never not picked a jury in one day. I can’t imagine that this would be the first time.”

Dozens of prospective jurors will be brought into the courtroom for questioning Tuesday morning. Cameras that will carry the rest of the proceedings will be turned off to protect their privacy. Jurors are expected to get the case after a nine-day trial.

Attorneys will be able to request they be dismissed for conflicts or other causes. The defense under state law can dismiss up to five jurors without giving a reason, the prosecution three. More challenges will be allowed when four expected alternates are chosen.

Before Marlowe Sommer’s ruling Monday, prosecutors had hoped to highlight Baldwin’s safety obligations on the set as co-producer to bolster an alternative theory of guilt beyond his alleged negligent use of a firearm. They aimed to link Baldwin’s behavior to “total disregard or indifference for the safety of others” under the involuntary manslaughter law.

But the prosecution managed other wins Monday. They successfully argued for the exclusion of summary findings from a state workplace safety investigation that placed much of the blame on the film’s assistant director, shifting fault away from Baldwin.

And the judge ruled that they could show graphic images from Hutchins’ autopsy, and from police lapel cameras during the treatment of her injuries.

Women gradually rise in Japanese politics but face deep challenges

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Eight years ago, Yuriko Koike became the first woman to lead Tokyo, beating her male predecessor. She won her third term as governor Sunday, and one of her closest rivals was a woman.

Multiple women competing for a top political office is still rare in Japan, which has a terrible global gender-equality ranking, but Koike’s win highlights a gradual rise in powerful female officials and a society more open to gender balance in politics. That said, even if a woman eventually becomes prime minister, politics here is still overwhelmingly dominated by men, and experts see a huge effort needed for equal representation.

“There are growing expectations for women to play a greater role in politics,” said parliamentarian Chinami Nishimura, a senior official with the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan. “In politics or parliament, which are still largely considered men’s work, it is extremely meaningful for women to show their presence and have our voices heard.”

Nishimura, who also heads the opposition party’s gender-equality promotion team, hopes to have women make up 30% of her party’s candidates in the next national election. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s conservative Liberal Democratic Party last year vowed to achieve 30% female representation within 10 years and is working to recruit more female candidates.

Finding aspiring female candidates, however, isn’t easy. Women in Japan are still often expected to be in charge of childrearing, elderly care and other family responsibilities.

National parliamentarians are also expected to regularly travel between Tokyo and their home constituencies, which makes it especially difficult for female lawmakers trying to balance a career and family. Nishimura says former female colleagues have quit national politics and returned to local assemblies because of such demands.

Nishimura began her political career in her hometown Niigata’s prefectural assembly in 1999, the first

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woman to serve there in decades. The 53-member assembly now has five women.

A growing number of women are now seeking political careers, but they are still in the minority, especially in national politics where electoral decisions are largely determined by closed-door, male-dominated party politics, and outspoken women tend to be targets.

One of Koike's top rivals was a woman, Renho, a veteran former parliamentarian who goes by one name and who finished third. Renho told reporters last month that she often saw headlines about the Tokyo governor's race that trumpeted "A battle of dragon women."

"Would you use that kind of expression to describe a competition between male candidates?" she asked.

Koike, a stylish, media-savvy former television newscaster, was first elected to parliament in 1992 at age 40. She served in several key Cabinet posts, including as environment minister and defense chief, for the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party, before becoming Tokyo governor in 2016.

Renho, known for asking sharp questions in parliament, was born to a Japanese mother and Taiwanese father. A former model and newscaster, she was elected to parliament in 2004 and served as administrative reform minister in the government led by the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan.

Attacks on Renho's aggressive image were a clear example of gender bias in a society that expects female candidates to be "motherly or cute," said Chiyako Sato, a Mainichi Shimbun editorial writer and a commentator on politics.

Because of a small female presence in politics, powerful women tend to get excessive attention. Their presence in Tokyo governor's election "conveyed a positive message that women can become political leaders, but a large amount of the noise about them also reflected Japan's sad reality," said Mari Miura, a Sophia University professor and expert on gender and politics.

For instance, a survey of national and local lawmakers in 2022 conducted by a civil group showed one-third of about 100 female respondents faced sexual harassment during election campaigns or at work.

Earlier this year, a gaffe-prone former prime minister, Taro Aso, was forced to apologize for describing Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, a woman, as capable but not beautiful.

Women make up about 30% of the Tokyo assembly, and their presence in town assemblies in urban areas is also growing. On average, female representation in more than 1,740 Japanese local assemblies doubled to 14.5% in 2021 from 20 years ago. There are growing calls for more female voices in politics.

But in rural areas, where more traditional gender roles are more usual, 226, or 13% of the total, had "zero women" assemblies last year, according to the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office.

In parliament, where conservative Liberal Democrats have been in power almost uninterruptedly since the end of World War II, female representation in the lower house is 10.3%, putting Japan 163rd among 190 countries, according to a report by the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union in April.

In 1946, the figure wasn't much different — only 8.4% — when a first group of 39 women were elected to parliament, according to the Gender Equality Bureau.

"There have been changes starting from regional politics, but the pace is too slow," Sato said, proposing a mandatory quota for women.

One woman in a Cabinet of about 20 ministers was standard in the 1990s. Lately, two is usual. Maintaining an increased number of female ministers is a challenge because of a shortage of women with seniority. Women are also given limited leadership chances, which delays gender equality laws and policies.

"Because of the absence of leadership change, the metabolism is bad in Japan. Because of that, politics does not change despite changes in the public view," Miura said.

Koike became the first female candidate to run in the LDP leadership race in 2008. Two others, Sanae Takaichi and Seiko Noda, ran in 2021 against Kishida.

Most recently, Kamikawa, the foreign minister, is seen as having a chance, because the LDP wants change as it struggles with dwindling support ratings and corruption scandals.

The winner, determined by a vote among LDP lawmakers and party members, automatically becomes prime minister because of the LDP's dominance in parliament.

Under the Japanese system, however, having a female prime minister doesn't necessarily mean progress in gender equality because of overwhelming male political influence. But it could be a crucial step forward,

even if symbolic, said Sato, the political commentator.

"Having role models is very important ... to show gender equality and that women can also aim for a top job," Sato said. "Women in politics are no longer expected to be wallflowers."

Trump returns to campaign trail with VP deadline nearing amid calls for Biden to withdraw

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Former President Donald Trump is getting back on the campaign trail Tuesday, rallying voters in his home state at his flagship golf resort in a celebratory mood as Democrats face tough calls over President Joe Biden's reelection chances.

Trump is nearing a deadline to announce his running mate but appears in no rush as much of the attention is still centered on questions about Biden's ability to govern for another four-year term. Some Democrats have started calling for Biden to step down as their presumptive nominee following his dismal debate performance last month.

Both Biden, 81, and Trump, 78, are at least two decades older than most American presidents have been, according to the Pew Research Center, which said the median age for all U.S. presidents on their first inauguration is 55 years old. But that has not stopped Trump from arguing he is stronger than Biden, who repeatedly stumbled, paused and could not complete sentences at times during the June 27 debate. Trump was criticized by Democrats for making false statements during the debate about the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol and suggesting immigrants entering the U.S. illegally were taking so-called "Black jobs" and "Hispanic jobs."

In an interview Monday with Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity, Trump said he thought Biden "might very well stay in" the race. "Nobody wants to give that up that way," Trump added. "He is going to feel badly about himself for a long time. It's hard to give it up that way, the way where they're trying to force him out."

In the Miami suburb of Doral, Trump will underscore his strong support in a former battleground state that has now shifted toward the GOP. U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, a Miami native and one of the contenders for the vice presidential post, will be attending the rally along with other Florida politicians.

Kevin Cabrera, a Miami-Dade County commissioner who was Florida state director for Trump's 2020 reelection campaign and is set to speak at the rally, said to expect an "overwhelming show of unity."

"The rally will display our unified front, showcasing a stark contrast to the Democrats, who are lost and fighting with each other over Biden's health and ability to continue," Cabrera said.

The presumptive GOP nominee will also touch on Biden's handling of immigration and the economy, highlighting the rise in home prices and goods. Trump will also talk about how Florida is affected by the increasing arrivals of immigrants as the final destination for many people illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

The leadership crisis among Democrats has perhaps given Trump a reason to wait for his VP announcement so as to not draw attention away from Biden's woes. Senior advisers and key allies say they still don't know whom Trump will choose as his running mate, and many believe the choice is still in flux.

Speaking on MSNBC Monday, Biden criticized Trump for not having held events since the debate and suggested he had been "riding around in his golf cart."

Biden looks to make the case at the NATO summit that he is still up for the job

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — NATO leaders gathering in Washington starting Tuesday plan to shore up transatlantic support for Ukraine in its battle against Russia. But for host President Joe Biden, the summit has

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become just as much about demonstrating he is capable of meeting the grinding demands of the presidency for four more years.

Heads of state from Europe and North America are confronting the prospect of the return of NATO skeptic Donald Trump as Biden tries to save his reelection campaign, which has been in a tailspin following a disastrous June 27 debate performance against Trump.

The president said his work at the summit, where NATO is celebrating 75 years, would be a good way to judge his continued ability to do the job. He points to his work rallying NATO members in its stiff response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a prime example of his steady leadership and among the reasons he deserves another four years in the White House.

"Our allies are looking for U.S. leadership," Biden said in an MSNBC interview Monday. "Who else do you think can step in here and do this? I expanded NATO. I solidified NATO. I made sure that we're in a position where we have a coalition of ... nations around the world to deal with China, with Russia, with everything that's going on in the world. We're making real progress."

Biden is in a blitz to persuade voters, Democrats and donors that he's still up to the job. He's been making his case on the campaign trail, in a defiant letter to Democratic lawmakers and during friendly media interviews over the last several days. Still, he faces skepticism from some longtime allies.

Six Democratic House members have publicly called on Biden to quit his campaign, other lawmakers in private conversations have urged him to step aside, and several high-profile donors have raised concerns about his viability in the race.

The White House hopes to display to wobbly Democrats that Biden still has what it takes during what's expected to be a busy few days of formal summit meetings, sideline chats with leaders, long diplomatic dinners and receptions, and a summit-ending press conference.

Several senior administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations say the president displays a strong grasp of the broader issues — Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the threat posed by China — but on specific and incremental actions that countries or groups may take when it comes to these conflicts, Biden has appeared to be at worst confused or has not seemed to have a keen grasp on how to handle them.

However, the officials say there isn't — at least not yet — a crisis in confidence over Biden's general mental state.

The summit will give Biden his first chance to meet face-to-face with new British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Biden called Starmer last week to congratulate him on his win and plans to host him Wednesday for talks at the White House.

The Labour Party leader had no concerns about Biden's mental acuity during their phone call, according to a spokesman for the prime minister who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private call.

The gathering of the leaders from the 32 NATO countries — plus Pacific partners Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, as well as Ukraine — is expected to be one of Biden's last appearances at an international forum before Election Day and comes before next week's Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

Biden has sought to spotlight his commitment to the alliance while making the case to voters that Trump would turn his back on NATO if he were to return to the White House.

Trump has repeatedly criticized fellow NATO members who failed to meet an agreed-upon goal of spending at least 2% of gross domestic product on defense spending. European anxiety was heightened in February when Trump warned NATO allies in a campaign speech that he "would encourage" Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" to countries that don't meet defense spending goals if he returns to the White House.

Trump has criticized Biden for providing an "endless flow of American treasure" to Ukraine. The Republican more recently has expressed openness to lending money instead and has said Ukraine's independence is important to the United States.

Biden aides have pushed back, noting NATO's announcement last month that 23 of 32 member nations are hitting the alliance's defense spending target this year. Nine member nations were meeting the goal

when Biden took office in 2021.

Biden also has taken credit for the expansion of NATO. Both Finland and Sweden have joined in the aftermath of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

"That's not by accident," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said. "That's because of leadership. That's because of a constant stewardship of the alliance and other partnerships around the world. The president's record speaks for itself."

NATO is expected to announce details of Ukraine's pathway to membership into the alliance during the summit. NATO, which is built around the foundational agreement that an attack on one member is an attack on all members, has maintained it will not bring Ukraine into the fold until after the conflict with Russia ends.

Kirby said leaders also will discuss efforts to stand up a coordination center in Germany to help train, equip and coordinate logistics for Ukraine forces for its expected eventual accession into NATO.

The U.S. and allies plan to unveil steps during the summit to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses and military capabilities to help it deter Russian aggression, Kirby said.

Ian Brzezinski, a senior fellow at the Washington think tank the Atlantic Council, said Biden needs to use the summit to "significantly reverse the impression" that he left with his poor debate performance.

"This is an immense opportunity for him to lead with vigor and energy, to underscore his commitment, the administration's commitment, for that matter Congress' commitment to the alliance and to underscore that he brings to the table the resolve that has made NATO so successful," Brzezinski said.

Some power restored in Houston after Hurricane Beryl, while storm spawns tornadoes as it moves east

By MARK VANCLEAVE and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Power started to come back for some of the millions of homes and businesses left in the dark when Hurricane Beryl slammed into the Houston area, while the weakened storm moved east, spawning suspected tornadoes and causing more damage.

Beryl was blamed for killing several people in Texas on Monday and at least one person in Louisiana, officials said.

After a peak Monday of more than 2.7 million customers around Houston without power, the numbers improved to more than 2.4 million homes and businesses lacking electricity by Monday night, according to PowerOutage.us. The lack of cooling to people's homes, downed power lines and non-functioning traffic lights led officials to ask residents to stay home if possible.

"Houstonians need to know we're working around the clock so you will be safe," Houston Mayor John Whitmire said Monday at a media briefing, urging residents to also know the dangers of high water, to stay hydrated and to check on their neighbors.

Beryl later Monday weakened into a tropical depression with maximum wind speeds of about 35 mph (56 kph). The storm still packed a punch, and the National Weather Service confirmed on social media Monday evening that tornadoes had been spotted in northeastern Louisiana. Bossier Sheriff Julian Whittington said in a Facebook post that a woman was killed in the Benton area when a tree fell on her home.

Dozens of tornado warnings were issued in Louisiana and Arkansas on Monday evening and they continued into the night.

While weakened, Beryl threatened to unleash harsh weather over several more states in coming days.

Texas state and local officials warned it could take several days to fully restore power after Beryl came ashore as a Category 1 hurricane and toppled 10 transmission lines and knocked down trees that took down power lines.

Beryl on Tuesday was far less powerful than the Category 5 behemoth that tore a deadly path of destruction through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean last weekend. But its winds and rains were still powerful enough to knock down hundreds of trees that had already been teetering in water-saturated earth, and

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strand dozens of cars on flooded roadways.

"We're not past any difficult conditions," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is out of the country.

Patrick said CenterPoint Energy was bringing thousands of additional workers to restore power, with top priorities including nursing homes and assisted living centers.

At least two people were killed when trees fell on homes in Texas, and a third person, a civilian employee of the Houston Police Department, was killed when he was trapped in flood waters under a highway overpass, Whitmire said.

The loss of power was an all-too familiar experience for Houston: Powerful storms had just ripped through the area in May, killing eight people, leaving nearly 1 million without power and flooding numerous streets.

Residents without power after Beryl were doing their best.

"We haven't really slept," said Eva Costancio as she gazed at a large tree that had fallen across electric lines in her neighborhood in the Houston suburb of Rosenberg. Costancio said she had already been without power for several hours and worried that food in her refrigerator would be spoiled.

"We are struggling to have food and losing that food would be difficult," she said.

Power crews were working to restore service as quickly as possible, an urgent priority for homes also left without air conditioning in the middle of summer. Temperatures in the 90s (above 32.2 Celsius) were expected Tuesday. The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory that said the area heat index could reach 105 F (40.5 C).

The state was opening cooling centers as well as food and water distribution centers, said Nim Kidd, chief of state emergency operations.

Beryl's rains pounded Houston and other areas of the coast on Monday, reclosing streets in neighborhoods that had already been washed out by previous storms. Television stations on Monday broadcast the dramatic rescue of a man who had climbed to the roof of his pickup truck after it got trapped in fast-flowing waters. Emergency crews used an extension ladder from a fire truck to drop him a life preserver and a tether before moving him to dry land.

Houston officials reported at least 25 water rescues by Monday afternoon, mostly for people with vehicles stuck in floodwaters.

Many streets and neighborhoods throughout Houston were littered with fallen branches and other debris. The buzz of chainsaws filled the air Monday afternoon as residents chopped up knocked-down trees and branches that had blocked streets and sidewalks.

Patrick warned that flooding could last for days as rain continued to fall on already saturated ground.

"This is not a one-day event," he said.

President Joe Biden was getting regular updates on the storm after it made landfall and called the Houston mayor on Monday, the White House said. He told the mayor his administration will make sure Texans have the resources they need to get through the storm and recovery.

Several companies with refineries or industrial plants in the area reported that the power disruptions necessitated the flaring of gases at the facilities.

Marathon Petroleum Corp. said it conducted a "safe combustion of excess gases" at its Galveston Bay Refinery in Texas City, but did not provide information on the amount of gas flared or how long it would continue. Formosa Plastics Corporation and Freeport LNG also reported flaring related to Beryl, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Companies have 24 hours to share emissions data after the flaring stops, a representative from the TCEQ said in an email.

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. In Jamaica, officials said Monday that island residents will have to contend with food shortages after Beryl destroyed over \$6.4 million in crops and supporting infrastructure.

Beryl was forecast to bring more strong rain and winds into additional states over the coming days. One

of those, Missouri was already dealing with a wet summer. Heavy rains unrelated to the storm prompted several water rescues around the city of Columbia, where rivers and creeks were already high ahead of Beryl's expected arrival on Tuesday.

Support for legal abortion has risen since Supreme Court eliminated protections, AP-NORC poll finds

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A solid majority of Americans oppose a federal abortion ban as a rising number support access to abortions for any reason, a new poll finds, highlighting a politically perilous situation for candidates who oppose abortion rights as the November election draws closer.

Around 6 in 10 Americans think their state should generally allow a person to obtain a legal abortion if they don't want to be pregnant for any reason, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's an increase from June 2021, a year before the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to the procedure, when about half of Americans thought legal abortion should be possible under these circumstances.

Americans are largely opposed to the strict bans that have taken effect in Republican-controlled states since the high court's ruling two years ago. Full bans, with limited exceptions, have gone into effect in 14 GOP-led states, while three other states prohibit abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy, before women often realize they're pregnant.

They are also overwhelmingly against national abortion bans and restrictions. And views toward abortion — which have long been relatively stable — may be getting more permissive.

Vincent Wheeler, a 47-year-old Republican from Los Angeles, said abortion should be available for any reason until viability, the point at which health care providers say it's possible for a fetus to survive outside the uterus.

"There's so many reasons as to why someone may want or need an abortion that it has to be up to that person of what they have to do in that specific circumstance," Wheeler said, acknowledging that some fellow Republicans might disagree.

Likely Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has declined to endorse a nationwide abortion ban, saying the issue should be left up to the states. But even that stance is likely to be unsatisfying to most Americans, who continue to oppose many bans on abortion within their own state, and think Congress should pass a law guaranteeing access to abortions nationwide, according to the poll.

Seven in 10 Americans think abortion should be legal in all or most cases, a slight increase from last year, while about 3 in 10 think abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.

Robert Hood, a 69-year-old from Universal City, Texas, who identifies as an "independent liberal," has believed that abortions should be allowed for any reason since he was an 18-year-old high school senior, because "life is full of gray situations." He recalls reading stories as a teenager about women who died trying to get an abortion before the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision provided a constitutional right to the procedure.

"Pregnancy is complicated," he said. "Women should make the choice with the advice of their doctor and family, but at the end of the day it's her choice and her body and her life."

He said he would support national protections for abortion rights.

Views on abortion have long been nuanced and sometimes contradictory. The new AP-NORC survey shows that even though the country is largely antagonistic to restrictions on abortion, a substantial number of people hold opinions and values that are not internally consistent.

About half of those who say a woman should be able to get an abortion for any reason also say their state should not allow abortion after 24 weeks of pregnancy and about one-quarter say their state should not allow abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

But the vast majority of Americans — more than 8 in 10 — continue to say abortion should be legal in extreme circumstances, such as when a patient's life would be endangered by continuing the pregnancy. About 8 in 10 say the same about a pregnancy caused by rape or incest or when a fetal anomaly would

prevent the child from surviving outside the womb.

National bans on abortion are broadly unpopular: Around 8 in 10 Americans say Congress should not pass a federal law banning abortion. About three-quarters say there should not be a federal law banning abortion at six weeks, and 6 in 10 oppose a federal law banning abortion at 15 weeks.

Most Republicans — about two-thirds, according to the survey — say a nationwide abortion ban should not happen.

On the campaign trail, Trump has courted anti-abortion voters by highlighting his appointment of three Supreme Court justices who helped overturn Roe. But his strategy on abortion policy has been to defer to the states, an attempt to find a more cautious stance on an issue that has become a major vulnerability for Republicans since the 2022 Dobbs decision.

Despite Trump's statements, Penny Johnson, 73, from Sherman Oaks, California, said she is deeply afraid Republicans might pursue a national abortion ban if they win the White House and Congress in November.

"We'll have a lot of women who'll die," she said.

Here's what to know about Boeing agreeing to plead guilty to fraud in 737 Max crashes

By DAVID KOENIG and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

Boeing will have a felony conviction if it follows through on an agreement with prosecutors to plead guilty to fraud in connection with approval of its 737 Max before two of the planes crashed, killing 346 people off the coast of Indonesia and in Ethiopia.

The American aerospace giant has apparently made the calculation that admitting to a crime is better than fighting the charge and enduring a long public trial.

The plea deal is not yet a sure thing, however.

Relatives of some of the passengers who died have indicated they will ask a federal judge in Texas to throw out the agreement, which they say is too lenient considering the lives that were lost. They want a trial, they want a huge fine, and they want Boeing leaders to face charges.

In a legal filing late Sunday — minutes before a midnight deadline — the Justice Department disclosed the agreement and said the fraud charge was "the most serious readily provable offense" it could bring against Boeing. Prosecutors say Boeing will pay another \$243.6 million fine, matching a fine it paid in 2021 for the same crime.

The Justice Department says a conviction for fraud will hold Boeing accountable for "misstatements" it made to regulators who certified the 737 Max in 2017. The crashes took place less than five months apart in 2018 and 2019.

The company still faces investigations into the blowout of a panel from an Alaska Airlines Max in January, increased oversight by the Federal Aviation Administration, and accusations from current and former employees about poor workmanship and retaliation against whistleblowers.

Here is what to know about the case and what could be next for Boeing:

What did Boeing admit?

Boeing agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy to defraud the United States — in this case, deceiving the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Justice Department first filed that charge in 2021, but it agreed not to prosecute Boeing if it paid a fine and successfully completed three years of a form of corporate probation under what is called a deferred-prosecution agreement.

In May, however, the department determined that Boeing had not lived up to that agreement, setting in motion the events that led to Sunday's plea deal.

The plea deal could help Boeing resolve a black mark on its reputation — the felony charge that the American aerospace giant deceived regulators who approved the airplane and the pilot-training requirements to fly it safely.

What did Boeing agree to do?

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Boeing will pay another fine, bringing the total to \$487.2 million, which the Justice Department says is the legal maximum for the fraud charge. The deal also requires the company to invest at least \$455 million to improve safety. It will be on court-supervised probation for three years, and the Justice Department will name an independent monitor to oversee Boeing's compliance with terms of the plea agreement.

Boeing's board of directors will be required to meet with families of the victims.

Can the judge block the deal?

Yes. There will be a hearing before U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor in Fort Worth, Texas. He can accept the agreement, in which case he can't change terms of Boeing's punishment. Or he can reject it, which would likely lead to new negotiations between Boeing and prosecutors. A date for the hearing has not been set.

Deals in which the defendant and the federal government agree on a sentence are controversial in legal circles.

"Judges don't like them. They feel that it usurps their authority," said Deborah Curtis, a former Justice Department lawyer.

O'Connor, however, has shown deference before to the Justice Department's power. When families of the crash victims tried to undo the 2021 deferred-prosecution agreement, the judge criticized what he called "Boeing's egregious criminal conduct" but ruled that he had no authority to overturn the settlement.

How are relatives of the crash victims reacting?

Many are outraged by the agreement.

Zipporah Kuria, a 28-year-old London woman whose father, Joseph, was on the Ethiopian Airlines Max that crashed in March 2019, wanted a trial that she thinks would have unearthed new details about what led up to the crashes.

Now, with the likelihood that there will never be a trial, "the opportunity to continue digging, the opportunity to continue finding out what has gone wrong here and what is wrong, is kind of taken away from us," Kuria said. "So yet again, they (the victims) have been robbed of their dignity, and we have been robbed of our closure."

Javier de Luis, an MIT aeronautics lecturer whose sister, Graziella, died in the Ethiopia crash, also finds the punishment for Boeing to be inadequate.

"If you look at the elements that make up this plea agreement, they're pretty much typical for what you would expect to see in a white-collar fraud investigation – not in the case of a crime that led directly to the deaths of 346 people," he said.

Nadia Milleron, a Massachusetts resident whose 24-year-old daughter, Samya Stumo, died in the same crash, wants Boeing's current and previous CEOs to face charges.

"After the Indonesian crash, they knew that something was wrong with this plane, and they knew it could crash," she said. "They gambled with people's lives, and they are gambling right now."

What effect would a conviction have on Boeing?

Boeing's business has never fully recovered from the crashes. After the renewed scrutiny that followed the Alaska Airlines incident, the company failed to book any new orders for the Max in April and May. It has fallen even farther behind European rival Airbus in production and deliveries of new planes, which means less revenue is coming in.

All of this is happening while Boeing looks for a new CEO to replace David Calhoun, who says he will step down at the end of the year.

That said, the share price of the company's stock rose slightly Monday.

Will Boeing lose government contracts?

Probably not.

Government contractors can be suspended or disbarred for criminal convictions, but agencies generally have leeway to grant exceptions.

Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said the Justice Department notified the Defense Department about Boeing's plea deal.

The Defense Department "will assess the company's remediation plans and agreement with the Department of Justice to make a determination as to what steps are necessary and appropriate to protect the federal government," Ryder said.

In 2006, the Air Force cited "compelling national interest" to let Boeing keep competing for contracts even after the company admitted charges that included using stolen information to win a space-launch contract and paying a \$615 million fine.

Does the plea affect other investigations into Boeing?

It would only resolve the fraud charge filed after the two deadly crashes. The FBI told passengers on the Alaska Airline Max that suffered a panel blowout while flying over Oregon that they might be victims of a crime.

The National Transportation Safety Board is also investigating that incident, and the Federal Aviation Administration is looking into Boeing's manufacturing quality.

What happened in the crashes?

Boeing added new flight-control software to the Max that could push the nose of the plane down if a sensor indicated the plane could be approaching an aerodynamic stall. It didn't initially tell pilots or airlines about the software, known by the acronym MCAS.

The system activated before both crashes based on faulty readings for the single sensor on each plane, according to investigations of the Oct. 29, 2018, crash of a Lion Air Max off the coast of Indonesia and the March 10, 2019, crash of an Ethiopian Airlines Max near Addis Ababa. Other factors contributed to the Lion Air crash, and the Ethiopian pilots were aware of MCAS but still couldn't regain control after the nose began pitching down without their input.

Afghan sprinter Kimia Yousofi ready to run at her 3rd Olympics after being selected for Paris Games

SYDNEY (AP) — Afghan sprinter Kimia Yousofi is preparing to compete at her third Olympics after being selected for the Paris Games from her training base in Australia.

Yousofi, Afghanistan's flag bearer at the opening ceremony for the Olympics in Tokyo, has been living in Australia since 2022.

The Australian Olympic Committee on Tuesday congratulated Yousofi on her selection for the women's 100-meter sprint.

"It's an honor to represent the girls of my homeland once again," she said in a statement released by the Australian committee. "Girls and women who have been deprived of basic rights, including education, which is the most important one.

"I represent the stolen dreams and aspirations of these women. Those who don't have the authority to make decisions as free human beings — they don't even have the permission to enter a park."

She said she's "deeply grateful to all those who have stood by me on this journey and made this possible ... who helped us for every step, for coming to Australia and joining together and chasing our dreams and making a new life,"

Yousofi was among the athletes and families who were resettled in Australia, in her case via Iran, after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan and imposed harsh restrictions on women and girls.

Dozens of other Afghan athletes, including members of the women's cricket and soccer teams, have moved to Australia.

AOC chief executive Matt Carroll said Yousofi's story is "one of inspiration for women and girls in Afghanistan, and anywhere in the world, who are denied basic rights, including the right to freely practice sport."

Afghanistan Olympic Committee president Yonus Popalzay said there'd be three women on the team for Paris.

"We are delighted having three female athletes for the first time in an Olympic Games," Popalzay said in a statement. "We highly appreciate the AOC for the support extended to Kimia Yousofi."

The Afghan National Olympic Committee operates outside of Afghanistan to support and encourage

athletes.

John Quinn, Yousofi's Australian-based coach, will travel to the Olympics as head coach of Afghanistan's track and field team.

He said when he started working with Yousofi they had to communicate via a translation app because they didn't speak the same language, "so we've come a long way in less than two years."

The Olympics in Paris will be "a Games where she's not really running for herself, she's running for women from Afghanistan and she's showing what's possible," Quinn said. "She provides, for them, hope. And she shows what optimism looks like."

Quinn said Yousofi has improved vastly on the track in a technical sense but also made strides outside of the sports arenas.

"When you consider everything else she has had to juggle — training, a new language, getting her family here, all those things," he said, "she has been amazing."

Tourists still flock to Death Valley amid searing US heat wave blamed for several deaths

By TY O'NEIL, CLAIRE RUSH and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

DEATH VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of Europeans touring the American West and adventurers from around the U.S. were still drawn to Death Valley National Park on Monday, even though the desolate region known as one of the Earth's hottest places is being punished by a dangerous heat wave blamed for a motorcyclist's death over the weekend.

French, Spanish, English and Swiss tourists left their air-conditioned rental cars and motorhomes to take photographs of the barren landscape so different than the snow-capped mountains and rolling green hills they know back home. American adventurers liked the novelty of it, even as officials at the park in California warned visitors to stay safe.

"I was excited it was going to be this hot," said Drew Belt, a resident of Tupelo, Mississippi, who wanted to stop in Death Valley as the place boasting the lowest elevation in the U.S. on his way to climb California's Mt. Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. Kind of like walking on Mars."

Park Superintendent Mike Reynolds cautioned visitors in a statement that "high heat like this can pose real threats to your health."

The searing heat wave gripping large parts of the United States also led to record daily high temperatures in Oregon, where it is suspected to have caused four deaths in the Portland area. More than 146 million people around the U.S. were under heat alerts Monday, especially in Western states.

Dozens of locations in the West and Pacific Northwest tied or broke previous heat records over the weekend and are expected to keep doing so into the week.

The early U.S. heat wave came as the global temperature in June was record warm for the 13th straight month and marked the 12th straight month that the world was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times, the European climate service Copernicus said.

In Oregon's Multnomah County, home to Portland, the medical examiner is investigating four suspected heat-related deaths recorded on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, officials said. Three of the deaths involved county residents who were 64, 75 and 84 years old, county officials said in an email. Heat also was suspected in the death of a 33-year-old man transported to a Portland hospital from outside the county.

Portland broke daily record temperatures on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and was on track to do so again on Monday with a forecast high of 102 F (38.9 C), National Weather Service meteorologist Hannah Chandler-Cooley said. High temperatures were expected in Portland through Tuesday evening.

The temperatures aren't expected to reach as high as they did during a similar heat wave in the Pacific Northwest in 2021, which killed an estimated 600 people across Oregon, Washington and western Canada. But the duration could be problematic because many homes in the region lack air conditioning.

Heat illness and injury are cumulative and can build over the course of a day or days, officials warn.

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In San Jose, California, a homeless man died last week from apparent heat-related causes, Mayor Matt Mahan reported on the social platform X, calling it "an avoidable tragedy."

In eastern California's sizzling desert, a high temperature of 128 F (53.3 C) was recorded Saturday and Sunday at Death Valley National Park, where a visitor, who was not identified, died Saturday from heat exposure. Another person was hospitalized, officials said.

They were among six motorcyclists riding through the Badwater Basin area in scorching weather, the park said in a statement. The other four were treated at the scene. Emergency medical helicopters were unable to respond because the aircraft cannot generally fly safely over 120 F (48.8 C), officials said.

More extreme highs are in the near forecast with a high of possibly 130 F (54.4 C) around midweek,

The largest national park outside Alaska, Death Valley is considered one of the most extreme environments in the world. The hottest temperature ever officially recorded on Earth was 134 F (56.67 C) in July 1913 in Death Valley, though some experts dispute that measurement and say the real record was 130 F (54.4 C), recorded there in July 2021.

"It's impressive," Thomas Mrzliek of Basel, Switzerland, said of the triple digit heat. "It like a wave that hits when you get out of the car, but it's a very dry heat. So it's not as in Europe."

Across the desert in Nevada, Las Vegas set a record high of 120 F (48.8 C) on Sunday and was forecast to hit a record high of 115 F (46.1 C) on Monday. The National Weather Service forecast a high of 117 F (47.2 C) in Phoenix.

Extreme heat and a longstanding drought in the West has also dried out vegetation that can fuel wildfires

In California, a wildfire in the mountains of Santa Barbara County grew to more than 34 square miles (88 square kilometers) by Monday night. More than 1,000 firefighters were on the lines of the Lake Fire, and areas under evacuation orders included the former Neverland Ranch once owned by the late pop star Michael Jackson. The blaze was just 8% contained.

Rare heat advisories were extended even into higher elevations including around usually temperate Lake Tahoe, on the border of California and Nevada, with the weather service in Reno, Nevada, warning of "major heat risk impacts, even in the mountains." For the third straight day, the town of South Lake Tahoe, California, hit a high of 91 F (32.7 C), beating the previous record of 89 F (31.6 C) set in 2017.

And for the first time in records dating to 1888, Reno reached 105 F (40.5 C) for the third consecutive day. A short time later on Monday, the city set a record high of 106 F (41.1 C), leap-frogging the previous mark of 104 F (40 C) set in 2017.

People flocked Monday to the beaches around Lake Tahoe, especially Sand Harbor State Park, where the record high of 92 F (33.3 C) set on Sunday smashed the old record of 88 F (31.1 C) set in 2014. For the fifth consecutive day, Sand Harbor closed its gates within 90 minutes of opening at 8 a.m. because it had reached capacity.

"It's definitely hotter than we are used to," Nevada State Parks spokesperson Tyler Kerver said.

The White House faces many questions about Biden's health and medical history. Here are some answers

By JOSH BOAK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's terrible performance at the June 27 presidential debate has raised concerns about his age, health and ability to lead the federal government.

Administration officials have blamed his confused and at times indecipherable answers at the debate with Republican Donald Trump on a head cold, jet lag and poor preparation at Camp David. But at 81, Biden has found his health to be a key issue for many voters going into November's election. Dr. Kevin O'Connor, Biden's physician, issued his first comment since the debate late Monday, after White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre struggled to address questions about the president's health at Monday's news briefing.

How often does the president see a doctor?

Biden has extensive yearly physical exams, Jean-Pierre said. She added that most Americans don't un-

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derstand the extent of the medical care provided to the president, as many people are lucky if they get to see their doctors once or twice a year. By contrast, the president's medical unit is "just steps down from the residence" at the White House. "A couple times a week," Biden does a "verbal check-in with his doctor while he's exercising," Jean-Pierre said, adding that he had a check-in on Monday.

There has been confusion as to whether Biden saw his doctor about his cold after the presidential debate on June 27. The White House initially said there was no medical exam, but it later said there was a "short verbal check-in" and it was determined that no exam was needed.

Has the president seen a neurologist?

"He has seen a neurologist three times," said Jean-Pierre. "Not more than that."

The White House spokesperson repeated the phrase "three times" in 17 instances during the Monday briefing. She stressed that all three meetings with a neurologist were tied to the president's annual physical exams. But Jean-Pierre declined to say where Biden had seen the neurologist — whether the visits were at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center or elsewhere. "I don't have anything to state as to location," she said.

Have Biden's physical exams found signs of Parkinson's or other neurological diseases?

Not according to the report of the president's most recent physical, issued in February. Jean-Pierre cited that document Monday in response to reporters' questions.

That letter said "an extremely detailed neurologic exam was again reassuring" in that there were no findings consistent with a stroke, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or ascending lateral sclerosis. The letter added that no tremors or "motor weakness" were detected. Written by Biden's physician, O'Connor, the letter added that Biden "demonstrates excellent fine motor dexterity."

Why has a neurologist specializing in Parkinson's visited the White House?

Visitor logs show that Dr. Kevin Cannard, a neurologist who has conducted research into Parkinson's, went to the White House eight times between July 2023 and this past March.

Jean-Pierre declined to confirm the name of the doctor or say why he was going to the White House. She told reporters this was due to security reasons and noted that the White House medical unit treats more people than just the president. "There are thousands of military personnel who come on to this White House," Jean-Pierre said. "Many of them get the care from the White House medical unit and so we need to be super careful."

Jean-Pierre encouraged the public to "connect the dots."

Later Monday, O'Connor released a letter with the permission of both Biden and Cannard and confirmed that Cannard had been the neurologist who evaluated the president at each of his three physicals since he took office.

But most of Cannard's visits to the White House were pursuant to his role as a specialist attached to the White House Medical Unit, treating patients there for a wide array of neurological issues over a dozen years, O'Connor said.

Cannard made similar trips to the White House during the Obama administration, according to visitor logs, and during the Trump administration — which did not publish visitor logs — according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Cannard did have one visit with Biden's personal physician this January in the White House Residence clinic, weeks before the president's physical in February. O'Connor repeated that the findings of that physical that didn't detect signs of any neurological disorder.

"President Biden has not seen a neurologist outside of his annual physical," O'Connor said in his letter.

Could Biden waive his rights and make his full medical records public?

At Monday's news briefing, Jean-Pierre was asked whether Biden could choose to release his full medical records. She said the president had "shared a comprehensive medical report that is pretty detailed" and in line with what was provided by former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush. Sen. John McCain, in 2008, allowed reporters to review more than 1,100 pages of his medical records when he was running for president at 71, which would have made him the oldest elected president at the time.

The plane is ready, the fundraisers are booked: Trump's VP search comes down to its final days

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The future Republican vice presidential candidate's plane is currently parked in an undisclosed hangar, an empty spot on its fuselage where a decal featuring his or her name will soon be placed.

Fundraisers have been planned.

All that's left: an announcement from former President Donald Trump unveiling his pick.

Senior advisers and longtime allies insist they still don't know whom the presumptive GOP nominee will choose to join him on the ticket — with many believing the name is still in flux.

"I haven't made (a) final decision. But I have some ideas as to where we're going," Trump said in an interview with Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity that aired Monday night.

The decision will come at an unprecedented time of upheaval in the presidential race. President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party continue to grapple with his dismal debate performance and the intensifying calls for the 81-year-old president to step aside in favor of a younger candidate.

The Democrats' crisis has given Trump little incentive to change the subject with a VP announcement that would be sure to draw a flurry of attention and focus.

Trump has also been waiting to see how things shake out with Biden.

"A little bit, you know, we wanted to see what they're doing, to be honest. Because, you know, it might make a difference," he told Hannity.

Opportunities to announce

But Trump will have plenty of opportunities this week to ratchet up the speculation about a process that his team has kept extraordinarily close to the vest.

"It could happen anytime this week," Trump senior adviser Jason Miller said in an appearance on "Fox & Friends."

Trump has two rallies planned. The first is scheduled for Tuesday evening at his golf club in Doral, Florida, near Miami. The primetime scheduling and location would seem to provide an ideal opportunity to unveil his pick if it is Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a Miami native who is one of his top contenders.

Rubio will be in attendance at the event, according to an adviser familiar with the senator's plans, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity about the selection process.

On Saturday Trump will travel to the critical battleground state of Pennsylvania for another rally at the Butler Farm Show. The venue, outside Pittsburgh, is not far from the border of Ohio, which is home to Sen. JD Vance, another potential pick.

Also on Trump's short list is North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, who has grown close to the former president since he dropped his own bid for the nomination before voting began.

Trump doesn't need a rally to unveil his pick. He could simply announce the news on his Truth Social platform at any moment between now and the Republican National Convention, which kicks off in Milwaukee on July 15. Or he could wait until the convention opens to make a grand, onstage curtain reveal reminiscent of his days as the host of the "The Apprentice" reality TV show.

He said Monday the announcement will come "probably a little before the convention, but not much. It could even be during the convention that we'd do it. I'd love to do it during the convention. ... It would make it even more exciting."

Trump has spent months now teasing his choice.

Late last month, before the debate, Trump told NBC News at a campaign stop in Philadelphia that he'd already made a decision.

"In my mind, yeah," he said.

But less than a week later, he told a local Virginia television station that his decision was still in flux.

"Well I have people in mind. I have so many good people. We have such a deep bench," he said. "But we'll be making a decision sometime early convention or before convention."

The front-runners say they don't know yet

"(A)nyone telling you they know who or when President Trump will choose his VP is lying unless that person is named Donald J. Trump," Trump adviser Brian Hughes said in a statement he has issued repeatedly.

That includes the front-runners for the job.

On CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, Rubio said he remained in the dark.

"Look, I've heard nothing, I know nothing, and you probably know more than I do about it," he said. "Donald Trump has a decision to make. He'll make it when he needs to make it. He'll make a good decision. I know for certain that I will be out there over the next three or four months, working on behalf of his campaign in some capacity."

He also dismissed questions about whether he has discussed changing his residence from Florida if he's chosen as "presumptuous." The Constitution bars the president and vice president from hailing from the same state.

"We'll confront those issues when they come," he said. "But we're not there yet. But we will be soon, one way or the other."

On NBC's "Meet the Press," Vance, too, said he has not received news one way or the other: "I have not gotten the call."

"But most importantly," he went on, "we're just trying to work to elect Donald Trump. Whoever his vice president is — he's got a lot of good people he could choose from — it's the policies that worked and the leadership style that worked for the American people."

A top ally is still pushing for Tim Scott

On CBS's "Face the Nation," Sen. Lindsey Graham, a longtime Trump ally, continued to push for his fellow South Carolinian, Sen. Tim Scott, the only Black Republican in the Senate.

"I don't think he's decided," he said, adding that Scott would be a particularly smart choice if Biden were to be replaced at the top of the ticket by Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve in the office.

"If I were President Trump, I would make sure I pick somebody that could add value in 2024. Expand the map," he said.

Biden has insisted he won't drop out and said only "the Lord Almighty" could get him to change his mind.

Biden gets support from key lawmakers as he tells Democrats he won't step aside after debate

By LISA MASCARO, ZEKE MILLER and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden stood firm Monday against calls for him to drop his reelection candidacy and called for an end to the intraparty drama that has torn apart Democrats since his dismal debate performance last month, as key lawmakers expressed support for him to remain in the 2024 presidential race.

As anxious congressional Democrats returned to Washington weighing whether to work to revive his campaign or to try to edge him out, Biden sent them an open letter aiming to silence their skepticism of his fitness to lead the country for another four years. He insisted he wasn't leaving the race and stressed that the party has "one job," which is to defeat presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in November.

After a week of false starts, a coordinated effort by Biden and his campaign to shore up Democratic support appeared to be paying off, though he had by no means silenced his doubters. By late Monday, a sudden rush of public support from Democrats emerged — or at least some tempering of criticism — as Biden allies appeared to be trying to overpower the public and private voices calling on him to step aside.

Biden wrote in the two-page letter that "the question of how to move forward has been well-aired for over a week now. And it's time for it to end."

"We have 42 days to the Democratic Convention and 119 days to the general election," Biden said in the letter, distributed by his reelection campaign. "Any weakening of resolve or lack of clarity about the

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task ahead only helps Trump and hurts us. It's time to come together, move forward as a unified party, and defeat Donald Trump."

Biden followed up the letter with a phone interview with MSNBC's "Morning Joe" show, in which he insisted that "average Democrats" want him to stay in the race and said he was frustrated by the calls from party officials for him to step aside.

"They're big names, but I don't care what those big names think," Biden said.

He threw the gauntlet at his critics, saying if they're serious they ought to "announce for president, challenge me at the convention" or rally behind him against Trump. Later, Biden joined a call with members of his national finance committee, while first lady Jill Biden campaigned for her husband in a three-state swing focused on engaging veterans and military families.

"For all the talk out there about this race, Joe has made it clear that he's all in," she told a military crowd in Wilmington, North Carolina. "That's the decision that he's made, and just as he has always supported my career, I am all in, too."

Democratic voters are split on whether Biden should remain the Democratic Party's nominee for president, or whether there should be a different Democratic nominee, according to a New York Times/Siena College poll.

On Capitol Hill, more prominent voices lined up behind Biden, including the chair of the House's Congressional Progressive Caucus, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, who was not ready to cast aside the president, saying that the threat of a second Trump presidency remains too high. Yet one of the most endangered Democrats this election cycle, Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, said in a statement, "President Biden has got to prove to the American people — including me — that he's up to the job for another four years."

However, Biden's letter left some House Democrats, who want to hear directly from Biden himself, furious, according to one House aide granted anonymity to discuss the situation. Lawmakers particularly bristled at being cast as out of touch with voters since representatives in particular have been home in their districts listening to voters.

Biden met virtually Monday with the Congressional Black Caucus — one of his staunchest blocs of supporters in Congress — for 30 minutes. He told the group about his policy proposals for a second term, expressed gratitude to members for their support and repeatedly criticized Trump, according to a person familiar with the call and granted anonymity.

While not every member of the Black caucus spoke up, no one spoke out against the president, the person said.

Biden is also expected to meet this week with members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said Jayapal.

Meanwhile, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden had undergone three neurological exams while in the White House as part of his annual physical exams — and no more — and said the president has not been diagnosed with or treated for Parkinson's.

The drama is playing out with just over a month until the Democratic National Convention and just a week before Republicans gather in Milwaukee to renominate Trump as their presidential pick.

Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., part of a newer generation of progressive lawmakers, said she backed Biden and expressed worry that Democrats were taking their eye off defeating Trump. "We're losing the plot here," she said.

Another prominent voice in the Congressional Black Caucus, Rep. Maxine Waters of California, said those opposing Biden "can speak for themselves or what they want to do, but I know what I'm doing because I'm a big Biden supporter."

And Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, said: "I'm tired of all this speculation. I just want to concentrate on the fact that we have to defeat Trump."

Trump, for his part, predicted that Biden would remain in the race. "It looks to me like he may very well stay in," he told Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity on Monday. "He's got an ego and he doesn't want to quit. He doesn't want to do that."

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House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who has publicly stood by Biden even as he weighs how to address the concerns of many in his conference, said "same answer" Monday after an evening meeting at the Capitol when asked if he supported Biden.

At the same time, other House Democrats almost ran from questions. Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., told reporters as she exited a leadership meeting that she was off to another meeting about the Great Lakes, and a group of House Democrats, including Reps. Abigail Spanberger of Virginia and Lauren Underwood of Illinois, changed the subject, declining to answer question as they ducked into an elevator.

Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, went public Monday with his call for Biden to step aside, saying it would be "a mistake" if Biden continues his campaign. "I'm calling on President Biden to step down," Smith said on social media.

Biden's allies said they expected more direct engagement from the president with lawmakers — like the CBC virtual meeting — as he scrambles to shore up his candidacy. On a call Saturday with his campaign co-chairs, Biden repeatedly asked them who else needs to hear from him, who else he needs to engage with and who still has unanswered questions or concerns, according to Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del.

"He is out there doing his job as a candidate and doing his job as president," Coons said.

Rep. Annie Kuster of New Hampshire, the chair of the New Democrat Coalition, has asked House leadership to invite Biden to speak to the entire Democratic caucus.

If the president's going to stay in the race, "then help us respond to questions from our constituents," she said. "And it's so much easier to say, I was with him."

Rep. Nanette Barragan of California, the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, who supports Biden and campaigned recent with the first lady in Pennsylvania, said Biden "should talk to as many members as possible."

Senators returning to Washington Monday were generally reluctant to criticize Biden, and many said they were waiting for the Democratic caucus meeting on Tuesday to hear concerns. It was still unclear if any Senate Democrats would publicly call for Biden to go, even as many have expressed deep concerns in private conversations over the last 10 days.

"He ran an excellent campaign, and he's been an excellent president," said Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet. "And I think what everybody is trying to satisfy is that's the same trajectory and path that we're on today."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer would not answer questions about Biden's reelection as he entered the Capitol on Monday, but he told reporters, "As I've said before, I'm for Joe."

Another Democrat, Sen. Alex Padilla of California, said it was "time to quit the hand-wringing and get back to door knocking."

While some deep-pocketed donors may be showing discomfort, strategists working on House and Senate races said they have posted record fundraising as donors view congressional Democrats as a "firewall" and last line of defense against Trump.

Gavin Newsom works to bolster Biden in a swing-state tour that could boost both their ambitions

By STEVE PEOPLES and HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

HOOKSETT, N.H. (AP) — For years, Gavin Newsom stayed far away from New Hampshire by design.

The ambitious California governor understood that any visit to a bastion of presidential politics would fuel speculation that he might be eyeing President Joe Biden's job. But on Monday, with Biden fighting an existential political crisis, the embattled president dispatched Newsom to New Hampshire to help rescue his flailing campaign.

It was the latest and perhaps most significant stop in a multi-state tour for Newsom, who has emerged as Biden's most prominent battleground-state defender.

"I decided instead of just rolling over and giving up, that I would step up and pick up the fight," Newsom told reporters at a highway rest stop in his first public appearance in the state as an elected official. He said of Biden, "He's going to be our nominee."

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It's a pivotal moment both for Newsom and his Democratic Party, which has been consumed by infighting and uncertainty in the wake of Biden's disastrous debate performance just 11 days earlier.

Biden insisted again Monday that he would not suspend his campaign. But a growing number of elected Democrats in Washington and even here in New Hampshire are calling on the 81-year-old president to step aside, warning that he is too weak to defeat former President Donald Trump this fall and may not be able to lead the country effectively for another four years even if he wins.

Many Democratic officials believe Vice President Kamala Harris is best positioned to replace Biden. But the short list of top-tier alternatives is led by Newsom, a big-state governor with big ambitions who is as comfortable talking policy as he is mixing it up with leading Republicans.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore are also part of the replacement debate playing out privately among donors, strategists and elected officials. All of them have been vocal Biden advocates in recent days.

Speaking ahead of a closed-door fundraiser for New Hampshire Senate Democrats, Newsom said the party's current divisions were unhelpful and distracting.

He also brushed aside a question about whether he would seek the party's nomination at next month's national convention should Biden leave the race.

"I think that's a legitimate question and I respect it, but it's also exactly the question that Donald Trump is hoping everyone asks as he's out on the golf course," Newsom said. "So to me, that is not a question I'm going to respond to, because Joe Biden is our nominee, he's our president. ... And I look forward to voting for him."

At the most vulnerable moment of his presidency, Biden has never kept Newsom so close.

Since the debate June 27, Newsom has campaigned on Biden's behalf in Michigan, Pennsylvania and now New Hampshire, which is known both for its traditionally early primaries and as a tiny swing state in general elections with four Electoral College votes.

Earlier Monday, Newsom was featured on an all-staff Biden campaign conference call in which he insisted voters continue to care deeply about Biden despite their fears and anxiety.

Newsom and his team have been overwhelmingly deferential to Biden. In recent days, Newsom's staff referred all questions about his travel schedule and political plans to the Biden campaign.

Within both camps, the Biden-Newsom relationship is viewed as mutually beneficial.

Newsom, 56, offers Biden credibility and excitement as one of the Democratic Party's brightest rising stars with close ties to California's powerful donor network. And Biden offers Newsom a platform on the biggest stage in U.S. politics to help boost his brand ahead of a potential 2028 presidential bid of his own.

But there are risks, especially for Newsom.

Former New Hampshire State House Speaker Steve Shurtleff said he's "very impressed" by Newsom and sees him as top-tier presidential prospect. But Shurtleff, once Biden's chief supporter in the state, now believes the president must step aside and wondered aloud whether Newsom is picking the wrong side in what he described as "a profile-in-courage moment" for party leaders.

"He's shown that he's been very loyal to the president and the administration. And that, I think, could hurt him," Shurtleff said of Newsom.

Overall, few New Hampshire Democratic officials have called for Biden to leave the race, but it is no secret that Biden's relationships in the state may be strained.

It was Biden who pushed the Democratic National Committee to bypass New Hampshire earlier this year as the opening contest on the presidential primary calendar for the first time in decades.

Even before the historic shift, New Hampshire Democrats weren't Biden's biggest supporters.

He finished in fifth place in the state's 2020 primary behind the likes of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, now-Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Biden did, however, defeat Trump here in the general election by 7 points.

State Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley said Newsom electrified a sold-out crowd at the evening fundraiser, where the California governor touted Biden's record.

"New Hampshire Democrats are not bedwetters," Buckley said. "We are strong, united and determined

to reelect Joe Biden.”

Still, Biden’s Democratic critics have been increasingly vocal.

“The party needs to honor and thank the president for his five decades of service, but swiftly embrace new leadership before it is too late,” said New Hampshire attorney Jay Surdukowski, who is active in Democratic politics, pointing to a “deep bench” that includes Newsom, Harris, Whitmer and Buttigieg.

He referenced Biden’s halting debate performance and his subsequent statement that he’d limit his events after 8 p.m.

“Democrats like to say President Trump is a threat to democracy,” Surdukowski said. “A president who can’t form coherent sentences and goes to bed at 8 p.m. may be the greater threat.”

There was no sign of such criticism at the rest stop off Interstate 93, where Biden’s campaign had invited a handful of local party officials to attend Newsom’s unannounced appearance.

One of the invitees, Jennifer Buck, 78, chair of the Webster town Democrats, said she likes what Newsom has done in California. But she doesn’t think he should replace Biden on the ticket.

If Biden does step aside or is “pushed out,” she said, Harris should be the party’s nominee.

In that, Newsom may agree.

The California governor predicted that the vice president would beat Trump in a hypothetical matchup when asked.

“I have no doubt about that. And that’s from someone that’s also known her longer than most, before we were both in politics,” he said. “But I don’t expect it’s going to come to that.”

Russia’s heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in 4 months kills at least 31 and hits a children’s hospital

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles blasted cities across Ukraine on Monday, damaging the country’s largest children’s hospital and other buildings in a fierce assault that interrupted heart surgeries and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors. At least 31 people were killed, officials said.

The daytime barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities with more than 40 missiles of different types, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media. Ukraine’s air force said it intercepted 30 missiles. More than 150 people were wounded.

It was Russia’s heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months, hitting seven of the city’s 10 districts. At least seven people were killed in the capital, including two staff members at the hospital. Strikes in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy’s birthplace in central Ukraine, killed 10.

The attack on the Okhmatdyt children’s hospital caused debris to fall into heart patients’ open chests in the middle of surgery. Cancer patients had their beds wheeled into parks and onto the streets.

“It is very important that the world should not be silent about it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing,” Zelenskyy said.

Russia denied attacking the hospital and said the strikes hit military targets.

The assault unfolded a day before Western leaders who have backed Ukraine were scheduled to begin a three-day NATO summit in Washington to consider how they can reassure Kyiv of the alliance’s unwavering support and offer Ukrainians hope that their country can survive Europe’s biggest conflict since World War II.

Zelenskyy said during a visit to Poland that he hopes the summit will provide more air defense systems for Ukraine.

In a statement, U.S. President Joe Biden called Monday’s missile strikes “a horrific reminder of Russia’s brutality.”

“It is critical that the world continues to stand with Ukraine at this important moment and that we not ignore Russian aggression,” the statement said.

At the hospital in Kyiv, rescuers searched for victims under the rubble of a partially collapsed, two-story wing of the facility. At the main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out, and walls were blackened. Blood was spattered on the floor in one room. The intensive care unit, operating theaters and

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oncology departments all were damaged, officials said.

At the time of the strike, three heart operations were being performed, leading to the contamination of the patients' open chests with blast debris, Health Minister Viktor Liashko said.

The hospital lost water, light and oxygen, and the patients were transferred to other hospitals, he told Ukrainian television.

Rescuers formed a line, passing bricks and other debris to each other as they sifted through rubble. Smoke rose from the building, and volunteers and emergency crews worked in protective masks.

Some mothers carried their children away on their backs, while others waited in the courtyard with their children as calls to doctors' phones rang unanswered.

A few hours after the initial strike, another air-raid siren sent many of them hurrying to the hospital's shelter. Led by a flashlight through the shelter's dark corridors, mothers carried their bandaged children in their arms, and medical workers carried other patients on gurneys. Volunteers handed out candy to try to calm the children.

Marina Ploskonos said her 4-year-old son had spinal surgery Friday.

"My child is terrified," she said. "This shouldn't be happening, it's a children's hospital," she said, bursting into tears.

"Among the victims were Ukraine's sickest children," said Volker Türk, the U.N. human rights commissioner. A U.N. team visited the hospital shortly after it was hit and saw the children receiving cancer treatments in hospital beds set up outdoors, he added.

"This is abominable, and I implore those with influence to do everything in their power to ensure these attacks stop immediately," Türk said.

Kyiv city administrators declared July 9 a day of mourning, when entertainment events are prohibited and flags are lowered.

Ukraine's Security Service said it found wreckage from a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile at the site and opened proceedings on war crime charges. The Kh-101 is an air-launched missile that flies low to avoid detection by radar. Ukraine said it shot down 11 of 13 Kh-101 missiles launched Monday.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Monday's missile strikes "particularly shocking," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting on the attacks for Tuesday at the request of France and Ecuador. Russia, which holds the council's rotating presidency this month, will preside at the meeting.

The International Criminal Court's founding charter says it is a war crime to intentionally attack "hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives."

Late last month, the court issued arrest warrants for Russia's former defense minister and its military chief of staff for attacking Ukraine's electricity network.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the strikes targeted Ukrainian defense plants and military air bases and were successful. It denied aiming at any civilian facilities and claimed without evidence that pictures from Kyiv indicated the damage was caused by a Ukrainian air defense missile.

Since early in the war that is well into its third year, Russian officials have regularly claimed that Moscow's forces never attack civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, despite abundant evidence to the contrary, including Associated Press reporting.

More than 1,600 medical facilities have been damaged since the start of the war and 214 have been ruined completely, according to Ukrainian Health Ministry statistics published last month.

Col. Yuri Ignat of the Ukrainian air force said Russia has been improving the effectiveness of its airstrikes, equipping its missiles with enhancements, including so-called heat traps that evade air-defense systems.

In Monday's attack, the cruise missiles flew as low as 50 meters (160 feet) off the ground, making them harder to hit, he said in comments sent to AP.

About three hours after the first strikes, more missiles hit Kyiv and partially destroyed a private medical center. Four people were killed there, Ukraine's Emergency Service said.

In the capital's Shevchenkivskiy district, a three-story section of a residential building was destroyed.

Emergency crews searched for casualties, and AP reporters saw them remove three bodies.

The powerful blast wave scorched nearby buildings, shattered windows and flung a dog into a neighboring yard, resident Halina Sichievka said.

"Now we don't have anything in our apartment, no windows, no doors, nothing. Nothing at all," the 28-year-old said.

The Ukrainian air force said some of the weapons used in the attack were Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, which are among the most advanced Russian weapons. They fly at 10 times the speed of sound, making them hard to intercept.

Three electricity substations were damaged or destroyed in two districts of Kyiv, energy company DTEK said.

Beryl weakens to tropical depression after slamming into Texas as Category 1 hurricane

By MARK VANCLEAVE and JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — After Hurricane Beryl slammed into Texas early Monday, knocking out power to nearly 3 million homes and businesses, unleashing heavy rain and killing at least three people it moved east and later weakened to a tropical depression, the National Hurricane Center said Monday evening. The fast-moving tempest threatened to carve a harsh path over several more states in coming days.

Texas state and local officials warned it could take several days to restore power after Beryl came ashore as a Category 1 hurricane and toppled 10 transmission lines and knocked down trees that took down power lines.

Beryl later weakened into a tropical storm and then a tropical depression, far less powerful than the Category 5 behemoth that tore a deadly path of destruction through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean last weekend. But the winds and rains of the fast-moving storm were still powerful enough to knock down hundreds of trees that had already been teetering in water-saturated earth, and strand dozens of cars on flooded roadways.

As it moved inland, the storm threatened to spawn tornadoes and the National Weather Service confirmed on social media that tornadoes had been spotted in northeastern Louisiana. Bossier Sheriff Julian Whittington said in a Facebook post that a woman was killed in the Benton area when a tree fell on her home.

"We're not past any difficult conditions," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is out of the country, warning it would be a "multiple day process to get power restored."

Houston took a hard hit as CenterPoint Energy reported more than 2 million homes and businesses without power in and around the nation's fourth-largest city. Patrick said the company was bringing in thousands of additional workers to restore power, with top priority for places such as nursing homes and assisted living centers.

At least two people were killed when trees fell on homes, and the National Hurricane Center said damaging winds and flash flooding would continue as Beryl pushes inland. A third person, a civilian employee of the Houston Police Department, was killed when he was trapped in flood waters under a highway overpass, Houston Mayor John Whitmire said. There were no immediate reports of widespread structural damage, however.

The loss of power was an all-too familiar experience for Houston: Powerful storms had just ripped through the area in May, killing eight people, leaving nearly 1 million without power and flooding numerous streets.

Residents without power after Beryl were doing their best.

"We haven't really slept," said Eva Costancio as she gazed at a large tree that had fallen across electric lines in her neighborhood in the Houston suburb of Rosenberg. Costancio, 67, said she had already been without power for several hours and worried that food in her refrigerator would be spoiled.

"We are struggling to have food and losing that food would be difficult," she said.

Houston and Harris County officials said power crews would be sent into the area to restore service as quickly as possible, an urgent priority for homes also left without air conditioning in the middle of sum-

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mer. Temperatures, which had cooled slightly with the storm, were expected to reach back into the 90s as early as Tuesday. The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory that said the area heat index could reach 105 degrees Fahrenheit (41 degrees Celsius).

The state will be ready to open cooling centers as well as food and water distribution centers, said Nim Kidd, chief of state emergency operations.

Beryl's rains pounded Houston and other areas of the coast on Monday, reclosing streets in neighborhoods that had already been washed out by previous storms. Television stations on Monday broadcast the dramatic rescue of a man who had climbed to the roof of his pickup truck after it got trapped in fast-flowing waters. Emergency crews used an extension ladder from a fire truck to drop him a life preserver and a tether before moving him to dry land.

Houston officials reported at least 25 water rescues by Monday afternoon, mostly for people with vehicles stuck in floodwaters.

"First responders are putting their lives at risk. That's what they're trained for. It's working," Houston Mayor John Whitmire said.

Javier Mejia was one of about 20 people who gathered near the pickup truck rescue site to take pictures of other submerged vehicles sitting on the flooded highway.

"If you don't have a way through, you're going to get stuck like that," Mejia said.

Having experienced previous storms in Houston, Mejia stocked up on food and water before Beryl hit, but forgot gas for his portable generator. He planned to spend the day looking for some.

"I don't want it to go bad," he said of the food, adding that if he can't find gas, "We can just fire up the grill."

Many streets and neighborhoods throughout Houston were littered with fallen branches and other debris. The buzz of chainsaws filled the air Monday afternoon as residents set to work chopping up knocked-down trees and big branches that had blocked streets and sidewalks.

Patrick warned that flooding could last for days as rain continued to fall on already saturated ground.

"This is not a one-day event," he said.

President Joe Biden was getting regular updates on the storm after it made landfall, the White House said. The U.S. Coast Guard and FEMA had prepared search and rescue teams, and FEMA collected bottled water, meals, tarps and electric generators in case they are needed.

Several companies with refineries or industrial plants in the area reported that the power disruptions necessitated the flaring of gases at the facilities.

Marathon Petroleum Corp. said it conducted a "safe combustion of excess gases" at its Galveston Bay Refinery in Texas City, but did not provide information on the amount of gas flared or how long it would continue. Formosa Plastics Corporation and Freeport LNG also reported flaring related to Beryl, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Companies have 24 hours to share emissions data after the flaring stops, a representative from the TCEQ said in an email.

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. In Jamaica, officials said Monday that island residents will have to contend with food shortages after Beryl destroyed over \$6.4 million in crops and supporting infrastructure.

In Louisiana, heavy bands of rain were expected all day Monday and "the risk is going to be for that heavy rainfall and potential for flash flooding," National Weather Service meteorologist Donald Jones said in a Monday morning Facebook Live briefing.

The weather service in Shreveport issued tornado warnings across northwest Louisiana. The agency confirmed on social media that multiple tornadoes had been spotted in that corner of the state. Information on whether those weather events have caused any significant damage was not immediately available.

Beryl was forecast to bring more strong rain and winds into additional states over the coming days. One of those, Missouri was already dealing with a wet summer. Heavy rains unrelated to the storm prompted several water rescues around the city of Columbia, where rivers and creeks were already high ahead of Beryl's expected arrival on Tuesday.

Brazil's police say Bolsonaro embezzled \$1.2 million in undeclared jewelry from Saudi Arabia

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil's Federal Police allege former President Jair Bolsonaro embezzled jewelry worth 6.8 million Brazilian reais (about \$1.2 million) during his time in office, according to the investigative report unsealed Monday by the Supreme Court.

Bolsonaro was indicted last week charging embezzlement, asset laundering and criminal association in connection with the luxury jewelry from Saudi Arabia. The investigation adds pressure on the far-right leader who governed in 2019-2022 before losing his reelection bid to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He has already lost his political rights until 2030.

Bolsonaro hasn't commented on the indictment, but has previously denied any wrongdoing involving the jewelry.

The police report alleges there was "a criminal association for the embezzlement of high-value gifts that were received due to the position of former President Jair Bolsonaro." The jewelry included diamond-encrusted Rolex and Patek Philippe watches, a necklace, rings and cufflinks, among other items. The report says some of the presents were given to government staffers acting on Bolsonaro's behalf during international trips.

The Associated Press reported Bolsonaro's indictment Thursday based on information given by two sources with knowledge of the investigation, but the unsealing of the report by Brazil's Supreme Court provided a complete view of the allegations.

Brazil's prosecutor-general, Paulo Gonet, will analyze the police report and decide whether to file charges and force the far-right leader to stand trial.

The jewelry would have been tax exempt had it been a gift from Saudi Arabia to the nation of Brazil, but not Bolsonaro's to keep for himself. Rather, it would have been incorporated into the presidential collection.

The police report said Bolsonaro's family received "revenue obtained through the illegal sale" of the jewelry. The investigation found the funds were incorporated by the former president without the use of Brazil's banking system as a way to hide the origin, the report said.

During his first public speech after the accusations came to light, at a conservative conference in southern Brazil on Saturday, the 69-year-old former army captain did not address the issue. But he and his lawyers have previously denied any wrongdoing in the case as well as in other of his actions that are under investigation.

Argentine President Javier Milei, one of Bolsonaro's allies, accused Brazil of promoting a legal witch hunt against the former president.

Bolsonaro's indictment in the jewelry case followed another formal accusation in March accusing the former leader of falsifying his COVID-19 vaccination certificate. He is also the target of an investigation into possible involvement in inciting a January 2023 uprising in the capital of Brasilia that sought to oust his successor.

The police report unsealed Monday indicts 10 others, including two of Bolsonaro's lawyers, a retired army general and a former energy minister of his administration.

The document recounts one exchange between Bolsonaro and a former top aide to suggest the Brazilian leader was aware that some of the jewelry in question was about to be auctioned in the U.S. Federal Police said Bolsonaro's phone included other references to Fortuna Auction, the auctioning company.

Police said a second package of luxury jewelry seized in customs was also addressed to Bolsonaro, whose administration made repeated efforts to secure their release. The then president received the package on Nov. 29, 2022, the report said.

Judge decides Alec Baldwin's role as co-producer not relevant to trial over fatal 2021 set shooting

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

Alec Baldwin's role as a producer of the Western film "Rust" isn't relevant to the involuntary manslaughter trial over a fatal shooting on set, a New Mexico judge decided Monday.

The move is a major setback for prosecutors just as trial was about to begin. They had planned to present evidence that showed how Baldwin bore a special responsibility — as co-producer, well beyond that of the actor holding the gun — for the dangerous environment that led to the deadly shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal.

"I'm having real difficulty with the state's position that they want to show that as a producer he didn't follow guidelines and therefore as an actor Mr. Baldwin did all of these things wrong that resulted in the death of Ms. Hutchins because as a producer he allowed these things to happen," Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer said. "I'm denying evidence of his status as a producer."

Special prosecutor Erlinda Ocampo Johnson argued unsuccessfully that Baldwin was "keenly aware" of his safety obligations as a producer, in an attempt to bolster an alternative theory of guilt beyond negligent use of a firearm. The prosecution has tried to link Baldwin's behavior on set to "total disregard or indifference for the safety of others."

In the courtroom Monday, Baldwin sat between lead attorneys Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro. He appeared to listen intently, taking occasional notes on a yellow legal pad and handing written messages to an attorney. Baldwin wore glasses and close-cropped hair.

The trial starts Tuesday with jury selection and is scheduled to last 10 days.

Last week, the judge cleared the way for crucial firearms experts for the prosecution to testify about Baldwin's handling of the revolver and whether the gun was functioning properly prior to the fatal shooting.

On Monday, the judge sided with prosecutors to exclude at trial the summary findings from a state workplace safety investigation that places much of the blame on assistant director Dave Halls. Halls has pleaded no contest to negligent use of a firearm and may be called to testify at Baldwin's trial.

Prosecutors say the workplace safety investigation was incomplete, unreliable and glossed over Baldwin's responsibilities in the fatal shooting.

Rust Movie Productions paid a \$100,000 fine to resolve violations of state safety regulations that were characterized as "serious" but not willful, under a 2023 settlement agreement. Several witnesses to the workplace safety investigation are likely to be called to testify at Baldwin's trial.

Prosecutors also will be able to present at trial graphic images of Hutchins' injuries from an autopsy report, over objections from the defense, as well as police lapel camera video of the immediate aftermath of the shooting as medics arrived on set to treat the wounded Hutchins and Souza.

Baldwin is charged with a single felony count of involuntary manslaughter punishable by up to 18 months in prison if he's convicted.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armorer on set, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in Hutchins' death and sentenced to 18 months in prison. She is appealing the conviction.

In October 2021, Baldwin was rehearsing a cross-draw maneuver with the revolver when the gun went off, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.

Baldwin has pleaded not guilty and claims the gun fired accidentally after he followed instructions to point it toward Hutchins, who was behind the camera. Unaware the gun contained a live round, Baldwin said he pulled back the hammer — not the trigger — and it fired.

Baldwin's attorneys successfully sought to bar discussion at trial of fatal gun incidents on movie sets, including actor Brandon Lee's death from a shot to the abdomen while filming a scene from "The Crow" in 1993. In that instance, a makeshift bullet was mistakenly left in a gun from a previous scene and struck Lee while filming a scene that called for using blank rounds.

Prosecutors have agreed not to elicit testimony about "The Crow," but also contend that Baldwin knew

about safety risks posed by guns — even when live rounds are not present.

Marlowe Sommer said she'll allow just a single reference at trial to the fact that blank rounds without a projectile can be fatal. Attorneys for Baldwin argue that it was inconceivable that live rounds would wind up on set.

The judge sided with prosecutors in excluding from trial a letter signed by crew members that disputes the characterizations of the "Rust" set as chaotic or dangerous prior to the fatal shooting.

Another pretrial motion might defuse sniping between the prosecution and defense teams. Prosecutors want the judge to preclude accusations of "prosecutorial misconduct" and "personal attacks."

Marlowe Sommer said discussion at trial of prosecutorial misconduct will be limited to testimony and expert analysis of the gun in the fatal shooting and FBI forensic testing that damaged the firing mechanism. Defense attorneys argue that may have destroyed possible exculpatory evidence.

The judge ruled evidence and arguments designed to garner sympathy for Baldwin also won't be allowed at trial, including indications of remorse or the impact of events on his family. Prosecutors say those arguments have no bearing on determining guilt.

Baldwin is a three-time Emmy winner who has gone from star and leading man to bit player to scene stealer, at times going years without a major role in a hit film or show. But he's remained a household name for nearly 35 years, largely on the strength of his real-life personality: as an outspoken liberal, talk-show guest and the king of all "Saturday Night Live" hosts.

Republicans move at Trump's behest to change how they will oppose abortion

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Republican National Committee moved Monday to adopt a party platform that reflects former President Donald Trump's position opposing a federal abortion ban and ceding limits to states, omitting the explicit basis for a national ban for the first time in 40 years.

Trump imposed his priorities on the RNC's platform committee as he seeks to steer clear during his campaign of strict abortion language, even while taking credit for setting up the 2022 reversal of *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court. Trump appointed three of the six justices who voted in the majority to overturn the 1973 precedent that established a national right to have an abortion.

The scaled-down platform — just 16 pages and with limited specifics on many key Republican issues — reflects a desire by the Trump campaign to avoid giving Democrats more material for their warnings about the former president's intentions if he wins back the White House. President Joe Biden's campaign has repeatedly highlighted the "Project 2025" document produced by Trump allies as well as Trump's own promises to impose wide-ranging tariffs, replace thousands of government workers with party loyalists and stage the largest deportation operation in U.S. history.

The policy document sticks to the party's longstanding principle that the Constitution extends rights to fetuses, but removes language maintaining support for an "amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to children before birth," a passage in the party platform first included in 1984.

It asserts, "We believe that the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees that no person can be denied life or liberty without due process." The document also noted "that the states are, therefore, free to pass laws protecting those rights."

The abortion language was first reported by The New York Times.

Anti-abortion advocates who had criticized the Trump campaign's efforts leading up to the platform committee's meeting largely fell in line Monday.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA Pro-Life America, praised the committee for reaffirming "its commitment to protect unborn life through the 14th Amendment."

Dannenfelser stopped short of endorsing the document's reflection of Trump's view that the matter rests

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entirely with states. Under the 14th Amendment, "it is Congress that enacts and enforces its provisions."

The platform committee began its meeting Monday, a week before the start of the Republican National Convention in Wisconsin where Trump is scheduled to accept his third straight nomination for president.

The platform is a statement of first principles traditionally written by party activists. In 2016, the platform included an endorsement of a 20-week national ban. Trump had supported federal legislation in 2018 that would have banned abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy, though the measure fell short of the necessary support in the Senate.

Trump this year has faced months of Democratic criticism over abortion as Biden's reelection campaign has highlighted that Trump nominated half of the Supreme Court majority that struck down the nationwide right to abortion in 2022.

In promoting the platform document, the campaign released a statement highlighting 20 issues it addresses, including immigration, the economy, energy, taxes and crime, but omitted any mention of abortion in the subject titles.

Among the vocal abortion opponents on the platform committee, some say the aspiration of a federal ban on abortion after a certain stage in pregnancy must remain a party principle, even if it's not an immediately attainable policy or one that necessarily helps the Trump campaign in November.

"I see that as problematic. We still need these principles clearly stated. Some of these battles are not over," said Iowa state Rep. Brad Sherman, a platform committee member who supported Trump's winning Iowa caucus campaign in January and also supports a federal limit on abortion.

Conservative activists who were accustomed to having a seat at the table fumed beforehand over what they said was a secretive process for selecting committee members and the meeting taking place behind closed doors.

"For 40 years, the Republican Party and the GOP platform have massively benefitted from an open and transparent process," said Tim Chapman, the incoming president of Advancing American Freedom, a foundation headed by Trump's former Vice President Mike Pence.

Trump's campaign has sought to reshape the Republican National Committee into a campaign vessel. It signaled in a memo last month from senior campaign advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles that "textbook-long platforms ... are scrutinized and intentionally misrepresented by our political opponents."

Trump ally Russ Vought is serving as the policy director of the Republican Party's platform writing committee while also leading the effort to draft the 180-day agenda for Project 2025, a sweeping proposal for remaking government that Trump said Friday he knew "nothing about" despite having several former aides involved.

After the 2022 midterm elections, Trump blamed Republicans who held strict anti-abortion positions for the party's failure to secure a larger House majority. He has since been critical of the most stringent abortion bans in individual states.

An AP-NORC poll conducted in June 2023 found that about two-thirds of Americans think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. The poll also found that 6 in 10 Americans think Congress should pass a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

Taylor Fritz beats Alexander Zverev at Wimbledon. Novak Djokovic gets into it with the crowd

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — After Taylor Fritz deposited a backhand that Alexander Zverev didn't even chase, wrapping up the American's comeback from a two-set hole in Wimbledon's fourth round Monday, the men met at the net for what turned into a longer-than-usual chat.

Zverev, playing with a bone bruise in his right knee, said he was bothered by some of the cheering coming from Fritz's guest box in the fifth set. When Fritz began to move away, Zverev stuck his chest to block the path and continued the mostly one-sided exchange.

It wasn't the 13th-seeded Fritz's only noteworthy postmatch interaction at the All England Club this

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fortnight — he told an earlier opponent to “have a nice flight home” — but he shrugged this one off, more interested in thinking about the way he turned things around to defeat two-time Grand Slam finalist Zverev 4-6, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (3), 6-3 and reach the quarterfinals.

“It was amazing,” said Fritz, a 26-year-old from California, “to do that on Centre Court (at) Wimbledon, two sets down.”

Zverev said later that his issue wasn’t with Fritz or his two coaches, but rather with others in the winner’s support group “that are not maybe from the tennis world, that are not maybe (used to) watching every single match; they were a bit over the top.”

“He’s totally allowed to be annoyed if they were being annoying. ... That’s one of the things I asked him at the net, ‘Who was it?’” said Fritz, who next meets 25th-seeded Lorenzo Musetti, a first-time Slam quarterfinalist. “It’s not a big thing. It’s all good.”

The implication from Zverev was that there was no need for the entourage to be acting quite so excited when his knee, which was covered by a gray sleeve after a fall in the previous round, was such a significant factor in Monday’s outcome.

“I was playing on one leg,” Zverev said. “It was fairly obvious that I wasn’t 100% today, right? I wasn’t moving, really, the entire match. I wasn’t running for drop shots. If I was running for a drop shot, I was limping there more than running.”

The 3 1/2-hour match, played with the main stadium’s retractable roof shut, was the 35th to go five sets at Wimbledon this year, tying the record for the most at any Slam event in the Open era, which began in 1968. Fritz’s comeback is the 11th from a two-set deficit in this edition of the grass-court tournament, more than in any other year.

This will be Fritz’s fourth major quarterfinal and second at Wimbledon, where he lost to Rafael Nadal in 2022. He is 0-3 at that stage; the other two setbacks came against Novak Djokovic.

“This will be my first quarterfinal where I’m the more experienced person,” Fritz said.

Fritz joins good pal Tommy Paul in the final eight, giving the United States two men that deep in the tournament for the first time since 2000. The other quarterfinal on the bottom half of the men’s draw will be No. 9 Alex de Minaur against seven-time Wimbledon champion Djokovic, who dismissed No. 15 Holger Rune 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in Monday night’s last match on Centre Court.

Spectators often let out loud noises that sounded like “Ruuuuuune” — the young Dane often gets saluted that way during matches — but Djokovic thought the folks in the stands were saying “Boooooo,” and he let them know he was not pleased.

Musetti gave Italy three singles quarterfinalists at a major for the first time — he got there with No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the men’s bracket; No. 7 Jasmine Paolini is still in the women’s field — by beating Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-2. De Minaur eliminated Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.

Winners in women’s fourth-round matches included 2022 champion Elena Rybakina, No. 21 seed Elina Svitolina — who wore a black ribbon on her shirt to mourn victims of Russian missile attacks on her home country, Ukraine — and 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko. Rybakina faces Svitolina in the quarterfinals, and Ostapenko’s next opponent will be 2021 French Open winner Barbora Krejckova.

Rybakina moved on when No. 17 Anna Kalinskaya stopped playing because of a wrist injury, Svitolina overwhelmed Wang Xinyu 6-2, 6-1, Krejckova defeated No. 11 Danielle Collins 7-5, 6-3, and Ostapenko was a 6-2, 6-3 winner against Yulia Putintseva, who beat No. 1 Iga Swiatek in the third round.

The fourth-seeded Zverev was the runner-up to Carlos Alcaraz at the French Open last month — after blowing a 2-1 lead in sets. Zverev also lost in the final of the 2020 U.S. Open against Dominic Thiem — after wasting a two-set lead and a match point.

The German entered Monday having won all nine sets he played at Wimbledon this year and having held in all 41 of his service games — not even facing a single break point since the first round.

The key stat, then, was this: Fritz accumulated four break points and converted two — once in the third set and once in the fifth — while only getting broken once himself.

Fritz hit 15 aces, with zero double-faults, and they combined for 124 winners (69 by Fritz) and 56 un-

forced errors (23 by Fritz).

He's now 10-1 on grass in 2024 and is on an eight-match winning streak that includes a title at a tuneup event in Eastbourne the week before Wimbledon began.

"What I enjoy the most on grass," Fritz said, "is just when you hit a good shot, you're rewarded for it."

Alice Munro's daughter alleges sexual abuse by the late author's husband

By ROB GILLIES and HILLEL ITALIE Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The daughter of the late Nobel laureate Alice Munro has accused the author's second husband, Gerard Fremlin, of sexual abuse, writing that her mother remained with him because she "loved him too much" to leave.

Munro, who died in May at age 92, was one of the world's most celebrated and beloved writers and a source of ongoing pride for her native Canada, where a reckoning with the author's legacy is now concentrated.

Andrea Robin Skinner, Munro's daughter with her first husband, James Munro, wrote in an essay published in the Toronto Star that Fremlin sexually assaulted her in the mid-1970s — when she was 9 — and continued to harass and abuse her until she became a teenager. Skinner, whose essay ran Sunday, wrote that in her 20s she told the author about Fremlin's abuse. Munro left her husband for a time, but eventually returned and was still with him when he died, in 2013.

"She reacted exactly as I had feared she would, as if she had learned of an infidelity," Skinner wrote. "She said that she had been 'told too late,' she loved him too much, and that our misogynistic culture was to blame if I expected her to deny her own needs, sacrifice for her children and make up for the failings of men. She was adamant that whatever had happened was between me and my stepfather. It had nothing to do with her."

Skinner wrote that she became estranged from her mother and siblings as a result. Shortly after The New York Times' magazine published a 2004 story in which Munro gushed about Fremlin, Skinner decided to contact Ontario Provincial Police and provided them letters in which Fremlin had admitted abusing her, the Toronto Star reported in a companion news story also published Sunday. At 80, he pleaded guilty to one count of indecent assault and received a suspended sentence — one that was not widely reported for nearly two decades.

The news stunned and grieved the literary world, although some readers — and Skinner herself — cited parallels in the author's work, for which she was awarded the Nobel in 2013 and dubbed a "master of the contemporary short story" by the judges.

Author Margaret Atwood, a fellow Canadian and longtime friend of Munro's, told the Star that she didn't know about Skinner's story until after Fremlin had died and Munro was struggling with dementia.

"The kids probably wondered why she stayed with him," Atwood said. "All I can add is that she wasn't very adept at real (practical) life. She wasn't very interested in cooking or gardening or any of that. She found it an interruption, I expect, rather than a therapy, as some do."

The owners of Munro's Books, a prominent independent store in Victoria, British Columbia, issued a statement Monday expressing support for Skinner and calling her account "heartbreaking." The author co-founded the store in 1963 with first husband and Skinner's father, James Munro, who continued to run the store after their 1971 divorce. Two years before his 2016 death, he turned the store over to four staff members.

"Along with so many readers and writers, we will need time to absorb this news and the impact it may have on the legacy of Alice Munro, whose work and ties to the store we have previously celebrated," the store said in a statement issued Monday.

In Skinner's account, she wrote that she had told her father — with whom she lived for most of the year — of the initial assault, but he told her not to tell her mother and continued to send her to Munro and Fremlin for summers.

"The current store owners have become part of our family's healing, and are modelling a truly positive response to disclosures like Andrea's," reads a statement from Skinner and other family members posted on the store's website. "We wholly support the owners and staff of Munro's Books as they chart a new future."

Although Skinner spent many years estranged from her siblings, they have since reconciled and her family spoke with the Toronto Star in support of Skinner. While they felt the world needed to know of the coverup and that sexual violence must be talked about, the Star reported, Munro's children believe her acclaimed literary reputation is deserved.

"I still feel she's such a great writer — she deserved the Nobel," daughter Sheila Munro told the Star. "She devoted her life to it, and she manifested this amazing talent and imagination. And that's all, really, she wanted to do in her life. Get those stories down and get them out."

Sheila Munro, also an author, wrote of her mother in the 2002 book "Lives of Mothers & Daughters: Growing Up With Alice Munro," a project suggested by Alice Munro. Sheila makes no reference to the abuse of Skinner, but does observe that her mother often drew upon her private life and that she struggled to separate Munro's fiction "from the reality of what actually happened."

Munro biographer Robert Thacker noted to The Associated Press that such Munro stories as "Silence" and "Runaway" center on estranged children. In "Vandals," a woman grieves over the loss of a former boyfriend, Ladner, an unstable war veteran who we learn assaulted his young neighbor, Liza.

"When Ladner grabbed Liza and squashed himself against her, she had a sense of deep danger inside him, a mechanical sputtering," Munro wrote, "as if he would exhaust himself in one jab of light, and nothing would be left of but black smoke and burnt smells and frazzled wires."

Thacker, whose "Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives" came out in 2005 — the same year Fremlin was convicted — told the AP that he had long known of Fremlin's abuse but omitted it from his book because it was a "scholarly analysis of her career."

"I expected there to be repercussions one day," said Thacker, who added that he even spoke to the author about it. "I don't want to get into details but it wrecked the family. It was devastating in lots of ways. And it was something that she spoke deeply on."

New parents in Baltimore could get a \$1,000 'baby bonus' under a proposal to fight child poverty

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — New parents in Baltimore could receive a \$1,000 "baby bonus" if voters approve a proposal that aims to help reduce childhood poverty from birth with a modest one-time cash payment.

A group of Baltimore teachers is behind the effort. Organizers recently secured the necessary 10,000 signatures to bring the question to voters as a ballot initiative in November. Their campaign relied on extensive canvassing efforts and a cute logo: a flying cartoon stork with a bag of money in its beak.

The proposal is loosely modeled on a program implemented this year in Flint, Michigan, where women receive \$1,500 during mid-pregnancy and \$500 per month for the first year after giving birth. Officials said the Flint program was the first of its kind in the U.S.

Countries in Europe and Asia have experimented with larger cash payments, but those programs are meant to encourage more people to have more kids, not address child poverty. Italy, which has one of the world's lowest birth rates, provides baby bonus checks and other benefits aimed at increasing the population.

Organizers behind the Baltimore campaign say more systemic change is needed on a national level to help lift families out of poverty, but giving new parents a modest financial boost could prove an important first step.

"If we're going to spend a limited amount of money, where do you get the most bang for your buck? Research says at birth," said Nate Golden, a high school math teacher who helped found the Maryland Child Alliance, which is pushing for the ballot initiative. "This could literally have a lifelong impact on a kid."

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Golden said he also hopes the program will demonstrate to elected leaders in Baltimore and beyond that there's a real appetite among voters for implementing policies that help vulnerable children succeed.

The issue is particularly urgent in Baltimore, where an estimated 31% of school-aged children are experiencing poverty, according to census data. Nationally, childhood poverty fell during the pandemic thanks to federal relief programs, but it has since climbed again to about 12% in 2022.

It's incredibly hard for the poor to move up the economic ladder, especially among communities of color. Research shows that most American children born into the lowest income bracket will remain at roughly the same socioeconomic status for the rest of their lives.

Golden said he sees similar scenarios playing out in his classroom every school year — with students who are experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, gun violence and countless other challenges.

"When you see what they're going through outside school, I'm still going to demand their best in the classroom but it's just not enough," he said. "We have to take care of these underlying needs before we can get kids to focus on learning."

If the ballot initiative is approved, all new parents in Baltimore will receive a one-time payment of at least \$1,000.

An estimated 7,000 children are born in Baltimore each year, so the program would cost about \$7 million annually, which is roughly 0.16% of the city's annual operating budget, according to supporters. The initiative won't result in higher taxes, but it will be up to Baltimore's City Council to allocate funds if it passes.

Advocates say taking a blanket approach to distributing the funds ensures that no one falls through the cracks. It also means some of the money goes to affluent parents who don't need assistance, but Golden said it's worth including them to avoid leaving out the poorest families.

Considering the payments are relatively small, the universal approach makes sense because researching and developing a qualification system could add significant costs and delay implementing the program, said Christina DePasquale, associate professor of economics at the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School.

Above all, DePasquale said, the initiative will raise awareness about childhood poverty and could lead to more comprehensive changes down the road.

"It's worthwhile in the sense that it gets people thinking about it," she said. "It's something to build off of. Even if you don't have something perfect, the less perfect version of it is better than not having it at all."

While no one contends that \$1,000 is a life-changing amount of money, it could help cover some of the many costs that come with having a baby, including paying for diapers, formula, strollers, cribs and more. And for new parents living on society's margins, that could make a real difference, said Nadya Dutchin, executive director of the Baltimore-based organization ShareBaby, which distributes free diapers and other baby essentials.

"I don't think people really pay enough attention to the material insecurities that contribute to parental stress," she said. "If you don't have enough money to purchase diapers to keep your child dry, safe and healthy, you're going to be stressed and your baby is going to be stressed."

She said requests for supplies increased a huge amount last year amid rising inflation and stagnant wages.

The largest federal program aimed at addressing childhood poverty is the child tax credit, which was temporarily expanded during the pandemic. Although shown to be effective, advocates say it leaves out some families because of necessary paperwork and qualification requirements.

In Maryland, Gov. Wes Moore campaigned on a promise to help the state's youngest and most vulnerable residents. He led one of the nation's largest poverty-fighting organizations before he took office as Maryland's first Black governor. Moore signed legislation this year that will provide grant funding for community organizations in areas with high concentrations of child poverty.

Baltimore also launched a two-year pilot program in 2022 providing guaranteed income assistance payments of \$1,000 per month to a select group of young parents using federal COVID-relief money. A recent report evaluating the ongoing pilot found that participants had experienced more housing stability and improved mental health during the first year.

Elections in Europe, Iran show authoritarian march may have slowed, not halted

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — At first glance, elections in France and Britain were a triumph for leftists and reformers over authoritarians and the right.

Even Iran — where Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say on all matters of state — elected Masoud Pezeshkian, a lawmaker long associated with the reformist movement.

In France, a leftist coalition beat the far right into third place in legislative elections. The U.K.'s center-left Labour Party swept back to power in a landslide after 14 years of Conservative rule. Iranian voters, offered a limited choice in a circumscribed presidential election, opted for the more moderate of two candidates to replace the late hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi.

But with voters in many countries still divided and disillusioned against a backdrop of economic gloom, analysts say the march of the right may only have been slowed, not halted.

"This is a crisis delayed, not averted," said Eurasia Group analyst Mujtaba Rahman of the outcome in France, where voters repudiated the far-right National Rally -- but also turned their ire on centrist President Emmanuel Macron, who called the surprise election. Macron's centrist grouping ended in second place after Sunday's second round of voting, ahead of the far-right National Rally.

The outcome was a major disappointment for Marine Le Pen's National Rally, which led after the first round on June 30. But with no political bloc holding a majority and no easy path to a durable government, it leaves France in turmoil at a time of European and global instability.

"It's not a good situation for France, for Europe or indeed NATO," said Rahman, Eurasia Group's managing director, Europe. "France is a G-7 member, a permanent (U.N.) Security Council member ... Anything that weakens Emmanuel Macron, anything that forces him to pay more attention to domestic affairs ... is of course going to subtract from his own influence, and also France's influence, in the world."

In contrast, Britain's new government is vowing to re-engage with the world after years that saw the U.K. sidelined and distracted by its exit from the European Union.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party won a huge majority in Thursday's election, taking 412 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons. The Conservatives, who had governed since 2010, were reduced to 121 seats, the worst result in the party's 190-year history.

Labour will be able to implement its policies, but the picture is more unstable than that majority suggests. Labour's victory was built on shifting sands: anger at the Conservatives, tactical voting to kick them out, and an insurgent party on the right, Reform U.K., that ate into Conservative support.

Reform won only five seats but took almost 14% of votes. Its leader, Nigel Farage, says his plan is to take over the role of true opposition to the Labour government from the diminished and demoralized Conservatives before the next election, which must be held by 2029.

Europe in general is trying to deal with gradual loss of confidence on the part of the electorate in the government's ability to deal with globalization and the winners and losers that resulted, said Robin Niblett, former director of the Chatham House think-tank.

"We're just in a very, very bumpy period of domestic politics. So, I don't think it's the return of the left either," he said. "We're in a very unstable and risky period, but one in which I'd say the parties of moderation still have the whip hand if they can be creative."

Meanwhile, Le Pen and her party in France "may bide their time and just wait," said Philippe Marlière, professor of French and European politics at University College London.

"Of course it is a setback for National Rally, but they can say, 'We were defeated because all the other parties ganged up against us ... without that funny tactical voting we would have prevailed,'" he said.

"In particular if the situation gets messy, which is a possibility, they will bide their time. And in three years' time, you've got the presidential election and Le Pen would be in a strong position to win."

In Iran, which held a presidential election after a May helicopter crash killed Raisi, two rounds of voting saw the country elect Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon and longtime lawmaker.

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He has been associated with a movement that aims to change the country's Shiite theocracy from the inside while seeking better relations with the West – including Iran's arch-enemy the United States

The first round of Iran's election saw the lowest turnout since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The theocracy selected the candidates and no internationally recognized monitors watched the vote.

Iranians – and international watchers – hoping for major change may be disappointed. Pezeshkian has firmly stated he believes in Khamenei having the final say on all matters of state, and has honored Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which is labelled a terrorist organization by the United States.

Pezeshkian "faces extensive restraints on his authority by Khamenei and his top aides and allies, all of whom are hardline conservatives," the New York-based Soufan Center said in an analysis Monday.

"Khamenei issued a call for unity and continuity after the results were declared, advising the president-elect to continue the path set by Raisi – an indirect warning to Pezeshkian not to push the limits on his authority," the analysis reads.

Underlying elections in many countries is an anti-politics mood in which anger towards incumbent governments remains strong.

Rob Ford, professor of politics at the University of Manchester, said that around the world, voters hammered by soaring inflation and a cost-of-living squeeze have "expressed a great deal of discontent with the performance of government."

"Ideology is systematically overrated by those whose job it is to explain elections," he said. "A lot of the time what you see with voting is what Ronald Reagan correctly identified: 'Are you better off now than you are four years ago?' If the answer is 'no,' do you stop and think through the various ideological aspects of why that might be? No, you don't. You just kick out whoever is in charge."

A Russian playwright and a theater director sentenced to prison on charges of advocating terrorism

A Russian court on Monday convicted a theater director and a playwright of terrorism charges and sentenced them to six years each in prison, the latest in an unrelenting crackdown on dissent across the country that has reached new heights since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine.

Zhenya Berkovich, a prominent independent theater director, and playwright Svetlana Petriyчук have already been in jail for over a year awaiting trial.

Authorities claimed their play "Finist, the Brave Falcon" justifies terrorism, which is a criminal offense in Russia punishable by up to seven years in prison. Berkovich and Petriyчук have both repeatedly rejected the accusations against them.

In one hearing, Berkovich told the court that she staged the play in order to prevent terrorism, and Petriyчук echoed her sentiment, saying that she wrote it in order to prevent events like those depicted in the play.

The women's lawyers pointed out at court hearings before the trial that the play was supported by the Russian Culture Ministry and won the Golden Mask award, Russia's most prestigious national theater award. In 2019, the play was read to inmates of a women's prison in Siberia, and Russia's state penitentiary service praised it on its website, Petriyчук's lawyer said.

The case against Berkovich and Petriyчук elicited outrage in Russia. An open letter in support of the two artists, started by the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper, was signed by more than 16,000 people since their arrest.

The play, the letter argued, "carries an absolutely clear anti-terrorist sentiment."

Dozens of Russian actors, directors and journalists also signed affidavits urging the court to release the two from custody pending investigation and trial.

Immediately after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin unleashed a sweeping campaign of repression, unparalleled since the Soviet era. It has effectively criminalized any criticism of the war, with the authorities targeting not only prominent opposition figures who eventually received draconian prison terms, but anyone who spoke out against it, publicly or otherwise.

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Pressure mounted on critical artists in Russia, too. Actors and directors were fired from state-run theaters, and musicians were blacklisted from performing in the country. Some were slapped with the label "foreign agent," which carries additional government scrutiny and strong negative connotations. Many have left Russia.

Berkovich, who is raising two adopted daughters, refused to leave Russia and continued working with her independent theater production in Moscow, called Soso's Daughters. Shortly after the start of the war in Ukraine, she staged an anti-war picket and was jailed for 11 days.

U.S. to expand control of land sales to foreigners near 56 additional military sites

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. wants to expand a Treasury committee's jurisdiction to review land sales near U.S. military sites where foreigners are the buyers.

New Treasury rulemaking would expand the U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States' powers to review land sales near 56 additional military sites, bringing the overall number to 227 military sites.

A 2018 law granted the committee authority to review real estate transactions near sensitive sites across the U.S.

The U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States is a little-known but powerful government committee also known as CFIUS — tasked with investigating corporate deals for national security concerns that holds power to force companies to change ownership structures or divest completely from the U.S.

It is made up of members from the State, Justice, Energy and Commerce departments among others.

The Monday rulemaking announcement comes after President Joe Biden in May issued a divestment order blocking a Chinese-backed cryptocurrency mining firm from owning land near a Wyoming nuclear missile base, calling its proximity to the base a "national security risk."

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement that the Biden administration is "committed to using our strong investment screening tool to defend America's national security, including actions that protect military installations from external threats."

In May 2023, rulemaking began to give CFIUS the power to review land sales near military bases after controversy arose over plans by the Fufeng Group to build a \$700 million wet corn milling plant about 12 miles from the Grand Forks Air Force Base, which houses air and space operations.

The proposed rule will be open for public comment for 30 days.

The U.S. has already issued major new tariffs on electric vehicles, semiconductors, solar equipment and medical supplies imported from China.

The far right seemed to have a lock on France's legislative elections. Here's why it didn't win

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Seemingly so close, and yet still so far away.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen looked to be nearer to power than ever last week after her National Rally party, strengthened by new allies, triumphed in the opening round of legislative elections. Its first place wasn't a hole-in-one but looked like an impressive position to possibly win or get close to an absolute parliamentary majority in the decisive runoff.

But what Le Pen hoped would be a watershed victory turned into another setback. Although her party won more National Assembly seats than ever, it yet again hit a wall of voters who don't believe the National Rally should govern France or has shed its links to racism, antisemitism and the country's still painful World War II past of collaboration with Nazi Germany.

"The tide is rising," Le Pen said. "It did not rise high enough this time."

France's 'Republican front' again blocks Le Pen's way

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This was by no means the first time that French voters and the far-right's political rivals maneuvered strategically between voting rounds to block its path in a runoff.

The same thing happened most notably to Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in the presidential elections of 2002. The fiery ex-paratrooper, a co-founder of what was then called the National Front, which initially included Nazi-era collaborators, had multiple convictions for antisemitic hate speech, having repeatedly described the Holocaust's gas chambers as "a detail" of WWII history.

Yet he stunned France and its partners in Europe and beyond by advancing from the election's first round into the winner-takes-all runoff against Jacques Chirac. There, horrified French voters massively said, "Non!" They overwhelmingly rejected Le Pen, with even leftists voting to put Chirac, a conservative, in the presidential Elysee Palace.

That so-called "Republican front," the process of French voters temporarily putting their political allegiances aside solely to keep the far right from power, has worked repeatedly since. It helped defeat Marine Le Pen in two presidential runoffs, in 2017 and 2022, losing to Emmanuel Macron in both, and again blocked her party's path to hoped-for victory in the legislative runoffs this weekend.

Macron's narrower but still comfortable victory in 2022 and a breakthrough for Le Pen's by-then re-branded National Rally in follow-up legislative elections, where it won an unprecedented 89 seats, were both interpreted as signals that the "Republican front" was starting to crack and that it might just be a question of time before it gives way completely.

But it functioned with surprising effectiveness Sunday and in the week leading up to the decisive vote. A coalition of left-wing parties that banded together for these elections to counter the far-right surge and Macron's centrist alliance withdrew dozens of candidates who advanced to round two but did not look like winning.

The strategy helped concentrate votes on remaining candidates in head-to-head runoff contests against far-right opponents, contributing to defeats for hundreds of them. The National Rally and its allies won 104 runoffs — fewer than 1-in-4 of those they contested and way short of their expectations.

Their total of 143 first- and second-round victories still gives the National Rally an unprecedented presence in the 577-seat National Assembly. But it's still only the third-largest bloc, behind the leftist coalition and Macron's alliance, in the new and hung parliament where none came close to an absolute majority.

Jordan Bardella, Le Pen's 28-year-old protégé who she'd been hoping to install as prime minister, grumbled that "the alliance of dishonor" between the National Rally's rivals kept it from power.

National Rally spokesman Laurent Jacobelli spoke of "a democratic hold-up."

Pollster Brice Teinturier said the "Republican front" was "even more powerful" than had been anticipated, showing that despite Le Pen's yearslong efforts to sanitize the image of her party, it still "causes fear, worry that has mobilized people."

"They repel more than they attract," said French analyst François Heisbourg, who specializes in defense and security questions at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"And the closer they get to the goal, the more the repelling factor weighs in."

Voters react against National Rally's casting errors'

The National Rally ran a polished campaign heading into the elections, toning down its platform and rhetoric and pushing social-media heavyweight Bardella to the fore.

But scrutiny of the party's candidates by French media and concerned citizens raised embarrassing questions about their suitability to potentially serve as lawmakers.

After Ludivine Daoudi qualified for round two, winning nearly 20% of the vote in her Normandy district in the first round, the National Rally announced it was withdrawing her when a photo of her wearing a Nazi officer's cap, with a swastika, emerged on social media.

Some candidates struggled to answer elementary policy questions. French media background checks on others found that one woman once held a town employee hostage at gunpoint and that another appeared ineligible to serve as a lawmaker because he was subject to a court-ordered guardianship.

Others faced scrutiny for right-wing extremist affiliations and unsavory comments. The National Rally stuck by a candidate who'd reportedly once tweeted that "gas brought justice to the victims of the Shoah,"

saying his post was taken out of context.

"We made some mistakes, we acknowledge it," said National Rally lawmaker Bruno Clavet, who won his seat in northern France outright in round one.

"We made some casting errors, regional party officials did not do their job properly," he said.

Read the letter President Biden sent to House Democrats telling them to support him in the election

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden wants Democrats in Congress to know he has no intention of exiting this year's election, sending them a letter on Monday on his personal letterhead.

Here is Biden's letter to the congressional Democrats whose backing he likely needs:

Fellow Democrats,

Now that you have returned from the July 4th recess, I want you to know that despite all the speculation in the press and elsewhere, I am firmly committed to staying in this race, to running this race to the end, and to beating Donald Trump.

I have had extensive conversations with the leadership of the party, elected officials, rank and file members, and most importantly, Democratic voters over these past 10 days or so. I have heard the concerns that people have — their good faith fears and worries about what is at stake in this election. I am not blind to them. Believe me, I know better than anyone the responsibility and the burden the nominee of our party carries. I carried it in 2020 when the fate of our nation was at stake. I also know these concerns come from a place of real respect for my lifetime of public service and my record as President, and I have been moved by the expressions of affection for me from so many who have known me well and supported me over the course of my public life. I've been grateful for the rock-solid, steadfast support from so many elected Democrats in Congress and all across the country and taken great strength from the resolve and determination I've seen from so many voters and grassroots supporters even in the hardest of weeks.

I can respond to all this by saying clearly and unequivocally: I wouldn't be running again if I did not absolutely believe I was the best person to beat Donald Trump in 2024.

We had a Democratic nomination process and the voters have spoken clearly and decisively. I received over 14 million votes, 87% of the votes cast across the entire nominating process. I have nearly 3,000 delegates, making me the presumptive nominee of our party by a wide margin.

This was a process open to anyone who wanted to run. Only three people chose to challenge me. One fared so badly that he left the primaries to run as an independent. Another attacked me for being too old and was soundly defeated. The voters of the Democratic Party have voted. They have chosen me to be the nominee of the party.

Do we now just say this process didn't matter? That the voters don't have a say?

I decline to do that. I feel a deep obligation to the faith and the trust the voters of the Democratic Party have placed in me to run this year. It was their decision to make. Not the press, not the pundits, not the big donors, not any selected group of individuals, no matter how well intentioned. The voters — and the voters alone — decide the nominee of the Democratic Party. How can we stand for democracy in our nation if we ignore it in our own party? I cannot do that. I will not do that.

I have no doubt that I — and we — can and will beat Donald Trump. We have an historic record of success to run on. From creating over 15 million jobs (including 200,000 just last month), reaching historic lows on unemployment, to revitalizing American manufacturing with 800,000 jobs, to protecting and expanding affordable health care, to rebuilding America's roads, bridges, highways, ports and airports, and water systems, to beating Big Pharma and lowering the cost of prescription drugs, including \$35 a month insulin for seniors, to providing student debt relief for nearly 5 million Americans to an historic investment in combatting climate change.

More importantly, we have an economic vision to run on that soundly beats Trump and the MAGA Republicans. They are siding with the wealthy and the big corporations and we are siding with the working people of America. It wasn't an isolated moment for Trump to stand at Mar-A-Lago and tell the oil industry

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they should give him \$1 billion and he will do whatever they want.

That's whose side Trump and the MAGA Republicans are on. Trump and the MAGA Republicans want another \$5 trillion in tax cuts for rich people so they can cut Social Security and Medicare. We will never let that happen. Its trickle-down economics on steroids. We know the way to build the economy is from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down. We are finally going to make the rich and big corporations pay their fair share of taxes in this country. The MAGA party is also still determined to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which could throw 45 million Americans off their coverage. We will never let that happen either. Trump got rich denying rental housing to Black people. We have a plan to build 2 million new housing units in America. They want to let Big Pharma charge as much as they want again. What do you think America's seniors will think when they know Trump and the MAGA Republicans want to take away their \$35 insulin — as well as the \$2,000 cap on out-of-pocket prescription costs we Democrats just got them? Or what do you think American families are going to think when they find out Trump and the MAGA Republicans want to hit them with a new \$2,500 national sales tax on all the imported products they buy.

We are the ones lowering costs for families — from health care to prescription drugs to student debt to housing. We are the ones protecting Social Security and Medicare. Everything they're proposing raises costs for most Americans — except their tax cuts which will go to the rich.

We are protecting the freedoms of Americans. Trump and the MAGA Republicans are taking them away. They have already for the first time in history taken away a fundamental freedom from the American people by overturning Roe v. Wade. They have decided politicians should make the most personal of decisions that should be made by women and their doctors and those closest to them. They have already said they won't stop there — and are going after everything from contraception to IVF to the right to marry who you love. And they have made it clear they will ban abortion nationwide. We will let none of that happen. I have made it clear that if Kamala and I are reelected, and the nation elects a Democratic House and Senate, we will make Roe v. Wade the law of the land again. We are the ones who will bring real Supreme Court reform; Donald Trump and his majority want more of the same from the Court, and the chance to add to the right-wing majority they built by subverting the norms and principles of the nomination and confirmation process.

And we are standing up for American democracy. After January 6th, Trump has proven that he is unfit to ever hold the office of President. We can never allow him anywhere near that office again. And we never will.

My fellow Democrats — we have the record, the vision, and the fundamental commitment to America's freedoms and our Democracy to win.

The question of how to move forward has been well-aired for over a week now. And it's time for it to end. We have one job. And that is to beat Donald Trump. We have 42 days to the Democratic Convention and 119 days to the general election. Any weakening of resolve or lack of clarity about the task ahead only helps Trump and hurts us. It is time to come together, move forward as a unified party, and defeat Donald Trump.

Sincerely,

Joe Biden

Joseph R. Biden Jr.

President of the United States of America

Chief prosecutor defends Vatican's legal system after recent criticism of pope's absolute power

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The Vatican's chief prosecutor has strongly defended the integrity and fairness of the city state's justice system following criticism that Pope Francis' absolute power and his interventions in the so-called "trial of the century" last year violated the defendants' fundamental rights.

Prosecutor Alessandro Diddi's defense comes as the Vatican tribunal finalizes its written reasonings for

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its December 2023 verdicts. The tribunal convicted a cardinal and eight others of various financial-related crimes related to the Holy See's 350 million euro investment in a London property, but has not yet explained its decisions.

Diddi published an essay last month in a peer-reviewed Italian journal, "Law and Religion," though he was not identified as the Vatican's top criminal prosecutor in the online article. Legal experts said such a publication in an academic journal was unusual, since Diddi is a party to the trial.

He was essentially replying to two academics — and lawyers representing some of the 10 defendants — who have raised questions about whether the two-year trial and preceding investigation were fair.

Their critiques have raised questions about whether a fair trial is even possible in an absolute monarchy where the pope wields supreme legislative, executive and judicial power — and used it in this case.

These critics have cited Pope Francis' role in the trial, since he secretly issued four decrees during the investigation that changed Vatican procedures to benefit prosecutors. And they have called into question the independence and impartiality of the tribunal itself since its judges swear obedience to Francis, who can hire and fire them at will.

Francis recently named several friendly cardinals — none with experience in Vatican law — to sit as judges on the Vatican's highest court of appeal and issued new rules on judges' salary and pension benefits.

In his essay, Diddi argued the trial and Vatican system itself were most certainly fair. He insisted that the tribunal and its judges were fully independent and that the defense had every opportunity to present its case. He said the pope's four decrees merely filled regulatory loopholes in the Vatican's peculiar legal code and had no impact on the outcome of the trial or the rights of the defendants.

"Even though the Holy See isn't a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, it doesn't place itself outside the international community and doesn't renege on the principles that inspire it," Diddi wrote.

The four secret executive decrees were signed by the pope in 2019 and 2020, giving Vatican prosecutors wide-ranging powers to investigate, including via unchecked wiretapping and to deviate from existing laws in allowing them to detain suspects without a judge's warrant. The decrees only came to light right before trial, were never officially published, provided no rationale or timeframe for the surveillance or detention, or oversight by an independent judge.

Diddi denied the decrees impacted the suspects' rights. He said they merely provided an "authentic interpretation" by the pope to Vatican norms.

He argued that regardless, the decrees only "disciplined some particular aspects of the investigation," and "and did not determine any failure in the guarantees offered to the suspects."

Geraldina Boni, a canon lawyer who provided a legal opinion for the defense of Cardinal Angelo Becciu, has written that the decrees represented a clear violation of the right to a fair trial since the suspects didn't know about the broad powers granted to prosecutors. One defendant who came in for questioning was jailed for 10 days by prosecutors.

Diddi noted that Swiss and Italian courts have previously recognized the independence and impartiality of the Vatican City State's legal system in agreeing to provide judicial assistance in freezing assets of the suspects.

Those rulings, however, were issued before the current trial ended and the decrees' existence known. Additionally, a British judge ordered the assets of one of the suspects released because he found "appalling" misrepresentations and omissions in Diddi's case.

Questions about the fairness and impartiality of the Vatican City State's legal system could have implications for the Holy See down the road, since the Vatican relies on other countries to cooperate in law enforcement investigations and implement its sentences.

Additionally, whenever the Holy See signs commercial contracts with non-Vatican entities, it insists that any contract dispute be handled by its own tribunal. That contractual clause could become difficult to negotiate if there are questions about whether the other side will be treated fairly by the Vatican court.

Less hypothetically, the Holy See is subject to periodic review by the Council of Europe's Moneyval commission, whose evaluators analyze the effectiveness of the judicial system in fighting money laundering

and terrorist financing.

In a related development, the Vatican's No. 3 official on Monday wrapped up three days of testimony in a London court in a spinoff counter-suit brought by one of the Vatican defendants.

Raffaele Mincione, a London-based financier, is seeking to have the British High Court declare that he acted "in good faith" in his dealings with the Vatican over the London property. He is hoping to clear his name and repair the reputational harm he says he and his firm have endured as a result of the Vatican trial.

Mincione has also filed a complaint with the U.N. human rights office in Geneva, claiming that the pope violated his rights by authorizing surveillance via the decrees. The Vatican has rejected the claim, saying in a press statement that the investigation followed all relevant laws and international agreements and that no surveillance was actually ordered for Mincione.

Mincione, and the other defendants, have announced appeals.

Scorched by history: Discriminatory past shapes heat waves in minority and low-income neighborhoods

By RYAN DOAN-NGUYEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ruben Berrios knows the scorching truth: When it comes to extreme heat, where you live can be a matter of life and death.

The 66-year-old lives in Mott Haven, a low-income neighborhood in New York's South Bronx, where more than 90 percent of residents are Latino or Black. Every summer, the South Bronx becomes one of the hottest parts of the city, with temperatures 8 degrees (4.5 degrees Celsius) higher than on the Upper West and East sides — lush, majority-white neighborhoods less than a mile away.

The heat isn't just uncomfortable. It's the top cause of weather-related fatalities nationwide, quietly killing an average of 350 New Yorkers each year, according to a city mortality report. As he took a break from his pool game at an apartment complex and older adult community center that serves as a designated cooling space, Berrios recalled a recent heat wave: "I lost two persons. They were close to me."

Tens of millions of Americans are facing major heat waves, with temperatures consistently exceeding 90 degrees (32 degrees Celsius). But in big cities, the heat hits hardest for people of color and low-income residents. In New York, Black residents die from heat stress at double the rate of white residents.

"Only a quarter of New York City's population is African American, but half of the deaths from heat are African Americans," said Bill Ulfelder, executive director of the Nature Conservancy in New York. "So there is something wildly disproportionate."

Mortality records from cities across the country have shown that heat kills along socioeconomic and racial lines.

In 1995, a deadly heat wave killed 739 people in Chicago. Most of the victims were poor, elderly and Black. Last year, Black people made up 11 percent of heat-related fatalities in Maricopa County, Arizona, which includes Phoenix, despite the fact that Black residents are just 6.8 percent of the county population.

During heat waves in Memphis, Tennessee, in the 1960s and 1980s, "there were people who were too poor to turn on their air conditioning" and died, said David Jones, a professor and historian of science at Harvard University. Some older adults in housing projects died at night because they feared burglars and were unwilling to open their windows or go outside to sit on their porches.

Environmental justice advocates trace this inequality back to decades of discriminatory housing policy, especially redlining — the 1930s government practice of rating neighborhoods' investment worthiness using race as a determining factor and denying mortgages to minority buyers.

The labeling of minority neighborhoods as risky restricted resources for generations. It also starved those areas of parks and trees and affected how residents experience heat today. Comparing 1930s redlining maps with recent heat vulnerability maps by New York City's health department reveals stunning correlations between how areas were categorized and where residents are most likely to die from heat.

"Those heat islands — they really are in those historically redlined neighborhoods, and that's where the

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trees need to go," Ulfelder said, referring to the urban heat island effect, where heavily paved areas with sparse vegetation trap more heat than outlying areas.

In the 1930s, the Home Owners' Loan Corp. assigned Mott Haven a "D" grade, the lowest possible, for "hazardous." For the adjacent neighborhood of Morrisania, the agency listed "Negro and Puerto Rican infiltration" and "obsolete homes" as "detrimental influences."

Today, the South Bronx has some of the city's lowest per-capita green space and is crisscrossed by power plants, waste stations and highways that cause severe noise and air pollution. Residents face high rates of infant mortality, cognitive issues, heart disease and asthma — so much so that Mott Haven is sometimes nicknamed "asthma alley." These conditions heighten heat vulnerability.

"Environmental racism in the South Bronx is in full view," said Arif Ullah, executive director of the environmental justice group South Bronx Unite.

Similar inequities have been identified across the country. In 2022, a Boston University analysis of 115 metropolitan areas from San Jose, California, to Louisville, Kentucky, and Hartford, Connecticut, found that air conditioning was less likely to be available in places with more residents who identify as either Black or African American or Hispanic or Latino.

In a bid to combat climbing temperatures, New York City Mayor Eric Adams activated the city's heat emergency plan on June 18 for a week, designating hundreds of locations as air-conditioned facilities where residents can cool off during the day.

New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol said the city is distributing "cool kits" and indoor thermometers. He urged more funding for a program that helps low-income residents with heating and cooling needs. It has already received 21,000 applications this year.

For individuals with limited mobility, installing air conditioning — which actually raises outdoor temperatures — or reaching cooling centers may not be possible. In areas such as Brownsville, the South Bronx and East Harlem, residents also report that going outside to cool off means risking encounters with crime and drug activity.

Selene Olivaria, who has lived in the South Bronx for nine years, brought her two grandchildren, 9 and 4, to cool off in the fountains at Willis Playground. She said the opioid epidemic has resulted in drug users shooting up in the bathrooms. She worries that a child could pick up a needle.

Environmentalists say one solution to beating the heat in sprawling cities is planting more trees, creating green spaces like parks and meadows and covering rooftops with plants.

"Lower-income, communities of color, often immigrant communities — that's where we need to be focusing," Ulfelder said. Majority people-of-color neighborhoods have 33 percent less tree canopy than predominantly white neighborhoods. That can make them up to 13 degrees hotter (7 degrees Celsius) than neighborhoods 2 miles away.

Last fall, the New York City Council passed laws adding trees to the city charter's sustainability plans and requiring the city to develop an urban forest plan to increase tree cover from 22 to 30 percent by 2035.

On a recent sweltering day, Howard Shillingford, a 58-year-old janitor who grew up in the South Bronx, said he has "never felt the heat like this." It's especially bad when he cleans school stairwells, which often have windows that don't open.

"Oh my god, those staircases are like ovens," Shillingford said while reading news on a computer at Mott Haven's public library, another cooling center.

Residents of heat-vulnerable neighborhoods are resourceful. Berrios keeps a wet towel on the back of his neck. Olivaria sprays her grandchildren with toy water guns. Jorge Morales, a 54-year-old graffiti artist and South Bronx native, showers twice a day and rinses his chihuahua, Buggsy, in the sink. Sometimes residents unscrew fire hydrants, letting water gush across sidewalks and into the streets.

"I don't like the waste of water, but it's what people here do. It's a survival technique," said Morales, who is Puerto Rican and Cuban, as he charged his phone at the same library.

Extreme heat is likely to become the new normal, experts say, and it must not be underestimated. Last year, the U.S. experienced the most heat waves since 1936.

"The way things are going, the heat waves in 2044 are going to be so much worse than they are now," said Jones, the science historian. "This isn't an anomalous heat wave. This is the taste of what's to come."

Ukraine's Zelenskyy discusses further NATO support with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday that he expects the upcoming NATO summit to provide specific steps to strengthen his country's air defenses against Russia, hours after a Russian missile attack killed at least 31 people and wounded 154 others in various locations, including a children's hospital in Kyiv.

Zelenskyy met with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in Warsaw to discuss further support for Ukraine from NATO, as well as signing a bilateral cooperation and defense document.

"We would like to see greater resolve in our partners and hear resolute responses to these attacks," Zelenskyy told a joint news conference, stressing that Ukraine will take its own retaliatory steps.

"I can see a possibility for our partners to use their air defense systems in a way to hit .. the missiles that are carrying out attacks on our country," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy stopped in Warsaw en route to a NATO summit, which begins Tuesday in Washington, marking the Western defense alliance's 75th anniversary. Leaders are expected to discuss ways of providing reliable long-term security aid and military training for Ukraine more than two years after Russia's full-scale invasion.

At the start of the news conference with Tusk, Zelenskyy asked those gathered to observe a moment of silence for the victims of Monday's airstrikes.

Tusk offered every available form of help for the children evacuated from the bombed hospital.

The two leaders signed a cooperation and defense agreement that spells out Poland's continued support for Ukraine in defense, especially air defense, energy security for Ukraine, and Poland's participation in reconstruction.

A legion of Ukrainian volunteers currently abroad will be trained in Poland with the aim of joining the defense effort on Ukraine's soil, Zelenskyy said.

Poland will be represented at the NATO summit by President Andrzej Duda, who was scheduled to meet with Zelenskyy later Monday. Poland is among the staunchest supporters of Ukraine and has offered around \$4 billion in military equipment, training and other items for defense. It is also offering humanitarian, political and economic support.

An initiative likely to be endorsed at the three-day summit is NATO taking more responsibility for coordinating training, and military and financial assistance for Ukraine's forces, instead of the U.S. Europeans also are talking about giving Ukrainians a greater presence within NATO bodies, though there's no consensus yet on Ukraine joining the alliance.

Tusk said that Poland will "continue to advocate among our allies that this path for Ukraine to reach the EU and NATO membership should be as fast as possible."

Americans are split over whether Trump should face prison in the hush money case, AP-NORC poll finds

By BILL BARROW and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are about evenly split on whether former President Donald Trump should face prison time for his recent felony conviction on hush money charges, according to a new poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Among U.S. adults, 48% say the former president and presumptive Republican nominee should serve time behind bars, and 50% say he should not. About 8 in 10 Democrats think Trump should face prison time, while independents are divided. About half, 49%, of independents say he should, and 46% say he should not.

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Most Republicans believe that Trump was mistreated by the legal system and say he should not face jail time. Democrats, conversely, are generally confident that the prosecutors, the judge and members of the jury treated Trump fairly as a defendant.

The results underscore the partisan divide in opinions about the case, which was the first brought against a current or former U.S. president. Both Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden have made the trial central to how they campaign to their respective bases: Biden frequently pointing out that Trump became the first former president to be convicted of a felony; Trump arguing that Democrats orchestrated the case against him for political purposes.

Trump's sentencing was delayed from Thursday, three days before the Republican National Convention opens, to September at the earliest — when early voting in multiple states will already be underway.

"I thought it was all a sham to begin with," said Dolores Mejia, a 74-year-old Republican in Peoria, Arizona, who has been closely following the trial. "I wasn't surprised he got convicted because the court was in New York, a very blue state. ... It seemed like it was thoroughly stacked against him."

A small but notable slice of Republicans have a different view from the rest of their party. The poll found that 14% of Republicans approve of Trump's conviction, while 12% believe he should spend time behind bars.

"I knew he had a big ego and questionable values when I voted for him the first time in 2016, but I thought the mantle of the presidency would be a humbling experience for him, and I was wrong," said Leigh Gerstenberger, a Pennsylvania Republican who said he agreed with jurors' finding in the New York case and believes Trump should spend at least some time behind bars.

"I could not be more disappointed in his conduct both in office and out of office," the 71-year-old retiree said. "There are plenty of Americans who have spent time behind bars for lesser offenses. President Trump should not be treated any differently."

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults are extremely or very confident that Trump has been treated fairly by either the jurors, the judge or the prosecutors. Slightly less than half, 46%, approve of the conviction in the case, in line with an AP-NORC poll conducted in June, while about 3 in 10 disapprove, and one-quarter are neutral.

Some Americans do not believe Trump should be imprisoned but reject his arguments that he's been treated unfairly by the justice system.

"I don't think the particular crime deserves time," said Christopher Smith, a 43-year-old independent in Tennessee. "I see what he did, lying on business records because of an affair, as more of a moral crime," Smith said, explaining that he believes prison should be a punishment for crimes that involve a convicted person actively harming another person.

The poll found that Americans are less divided about another recent high-profile case. Last month, Biden's son, Hunter Biden, was convicted of three felonies in federal court for lying about drug use when purchasing a gun. Six in 10 U.S. adults approve of Hunter Biden's conviction, with much smaller political differences: About 6 in 10 Democrats approve, as do around 7 in 10 Republicans.

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults believe Hunter Biden should be sentenced to serve time in prison because of his conviction in this case, with Republicans slightly more likely than Democrats to agree that prison time is warranted.

The poll of 1,088 adults was conducted June 20-24, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

CLIMATE GLIMPSE: Heat and a hurricane descend on the U.S., other wild weather around the world

By The Associated Press Associated Press

As Hurricane Beryl batters Texas and extreme heat blankets much of the U.S. South and West, the world is set for another week of wild weather that human-caused climate change makes more likely.

Beryl made landfall around the middle the Texas coast near Matagorda with a dangerous storm surge and strong winds in the early hours of Monday. The powerful storm previously devastated parts of Mexico and the Caribbean.

It's the earliest a storm has ever reached the wind speeds of a Category 5 hurricane, fueled by the ocean being as warm in June as it typically would be in September after months of summer sun.

Beryl is just one example of extremes that are fueled by climate change. Here's what's happening related to extreme weather and the climate right now:

— A persistent heat wave is lingering into Monday in parts of the U.S. with an excessive heat warning — the National Weather Service's highest alert — in effect for about 36 million people, or about 10% of the population. Several heat records have already been shattered by this latest heat wave, with several parts of Northern California hitting 110 Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius).

— That heat is part of a global trend of hotter weather: June marks the 13th straight month to shatter a monthly heat record, according to Europe's Copernicus climate service. That streak might end soon, but not the chaos that comes with a warmer planet, scientists say.

— The hot weather doesn't affect everyone equally. A New York City mortality report found Black residents die from heat stress at double the rate of white residents. The Associated Press took a deep dive into how heat exacerbates other socioeconomic inequalities in cities.

— Elsewhere, landslides on Indonesia's Sulawesi island following torrential rain have killed at least 11 people and left dozens missing at an illegal gold mining operation. Rain has been pounding the region since Saturday.

— Monsoon rains in India are continuing to cause havoc across the country, reaching the western city of Mumbai. Last week, over a dozen people died in landslides and flooding in northeastern Assam state.

— South Africa is bracing for a week of damaging storms, with weather authorities warning that Cape Town and surrounding areas are expected to be hit by multiple cold fronts until at least Friday, bringing torrential rain, strong winds and flooding. The worst-hit areas are expected to be the poor, informal settlements on the edge of the city.

— And finally, if you've seen some unfamiliar weather terms in the news lately, or if you are wondering why some storms are classed as hurricanes, typhoons or tropical storms, check out this glossary of extreme weather terms.

QUOTABLE: "When you step out of your vehicle, it's like stepping your entire body out into an oven." — Matthew Lamar, Park Ranger at Death Valley National Park, where temperatures reached 128 Fahrenheit (53.3 Celsius) on Saturday and Sunday.

Is it a hurricane or a tropical storm?

Here's a breakdown of extreme weather terms

By The Associated Press Associated Press

Hurricane Beryl is barreling through Texas Monday after devastating parts of Mexico and the Caribbean. The storm regained hurricane strength over the weekend as it traveled over the Gulf of Mexico. It had previously been downgraded to a tropical storm as it weakened over land.

So what's the difference between a hurricane and a tropical storm? What about a typhoon or a cyclone? Here is a breakdown of some commonly used weather terms and their definitions, which rely on material from the National Weather Service:

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atmospheric river — Long and wide plumes of moisture that form over an ocean and flow through the sky over land.

blizzard — Wind speeds of 35 mph or more and considerable falling and/or blowing of snow with visibility of less than one-quarter mile for three or more hours.

cyclone — A storm with strong winds rotating about a moving center of low atmospheric pressure. The word is sometimes used in the United States to mean tornado and in the Indian Ocean area to mean a tropical cyclone, like a hurricane.

derecho — A widespread and usually fast-moving straight-line windstorm. It is usually more than hundreds of miles long and more than 100 miles across.

El Nino, La Nina — El Nino is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that starts with unusually warm water in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific and then changes weather worldwide. The flip side of El Nino is La Nina, which is an occasional but natural cooling of the equatorial Pacific that also changes weather worldwide.

hurricane or typhoon — A warm-core tropical cyclone in which the minimum sustained surface wind is 74 mph or more. Hurricanes are spawned in the North Atlantic and central and eastern North Pacific Ocean. Typhoons develop in the northwest Pacific. They are known as cyclones in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific.

microburst — Occurs when a mass of cooled air rushes downward out of a thunderstorm, hits the ground and rushes outward in all directions.

polar vortex — Usually refers to the gigantic circular upper air weather pattern in the Arctic region, enveloping the North Pole (but it can apply to the South Pole, too). It is a normal pattern that is stronger in the winter and keeps some of the coldest weather bottled up near the North Pole. The jet stream usually pens the polar vortex in and keeps it north. But at times some of the vortex can break off or move south, bringing unusually cold weather south and permitting warmer weather to creep up north.

snow squall — An intense but short-lived period of moderate to heavy snowfall, with strong winds and possible lightning.

storm surge — An abnormal rise of water above the normal tide, generated by a storm.

tornado — A violent rotating column of air forming a pendant, usually from a cumulonimbus cloud, and touching the ground. On a local scale, it is the most destructive of all atmospheric phenomena. Tornadoes can appear from any direction, but in the U.S. most move from southwest to northeast. Measured on F-scale from EF0 to EF5, which considers 28 different types of damage to structures and trees. An EF2 or higher is considered a significant tornado.

tornado warning — National Weather Service issues to warn public of existing tornado.

tornado watch — Alerts public to possibility of tornado forming.

tropical depression — A tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind is 38 mph (33 knots) or less.

tropical storm — A warm-core tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface winds range from 39 to 73 mph (34 to 63 knots).

tsunami — A great sea wave or seismic sea wave caused by an underwater disturbance such as an earthquake, landslide or volcano.

nor'easter — The term used by the National Weather Service for storms that either exit or move north along the East Coast, producing winds blowing from the northeast.

waterspout — A tornado over water.

wind chill factor — A calculation that describes the combined effect of the wind and cold temperatures on exposed skin.

wind shear — A sudden shift in wind direction and/or speed.

Is college worth it? Poll finds only 36% of Americans have confidence in higher education

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

Americans are increasingly skeptical about the value and cost of college, with most saying they feel the U.S. higher education system is headed in the "wrong direction," according to a new poll.

Overall, only 36% of adults say they have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education, according to the report released Monday by Gallup and the Lumina Foundation. That confidence level has declined steadily from 57% in 2015.

Some of the same opinions have been reflected in declining enrollment as colleges contend with the effects of the student debt crisis, concerns about the high cost of tuition and political debates over how they teach about race and other topics.

The dimming view of whether college is worth the time and money cuts across all demographics — including gender, age, political affiliation. Among Republicans, the number of respondents with high confidence in higher education has dropped 36 percentage points over the last decade — far more than it dropped for Democrats or independents.

"It's so expensive, and I don't think colleges are teaching people what they need to get a job," says Randy Hill, 59, a registered Republican in Connecticut and a driver for a car service. His nephew plans to do a welding apprenticeship after graduating high school. "You graduate out of college, you're up to eyeballs in debt, you can't get a job, then you can't pay it off. What's the point?"

The June 2024 survey's overall finding — that 36% of adults feel strong confidence in higher education — is unchanged from the year before. But what concerns researchers is shifting opinion on the bottom end, with fewer Americans saying they have "some" confidence and more reporting "very little" and "none." This year's findings show almost as many people have little or no confidence, 32%, as those with high confidence.

Experts say that fewer college graduates could worsen labor shortages in fields from health care to information technology. For those who forgo college, it often means lower lifetime earnings — 75% less compared with those who get bachelor's degrees, according to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. And during an economic downturn, those without degrees are more likely to lose jobs.

"It is sad to see that confidence hasn't grown at all," says Courtney Brown, vice president at Lumina, an education nonprofit focused on increasing the numbers of students who seek education beyond high school. "What's shocking to me is that the people who have low or no confidence is actually increasing."

This year's survey added new, detailed questions in an effort to understand why confidence is shrinking.

Almost one-third of respondents say college is "too expensive," while 24% feel students are not being properly educated or taught what they need to succeed.

The survey did not specifically touch on the protests this year against the war in Gaza that divided many college campuses, but political views weighed heavily on the findings. Respondents voiced concerns about indoctrination, political bias and that colleges today are too liberal. Among the respondents who lack confidence, 41% cite political agendas as a reason.

Among other findings:

More than two-thirds, or 67%, of respondents say college is headed in the "wrong direction," compared with just 31% who feel it's going in the right direction.

Generally when people express confidence in higher education, they are thinking of four-year institutions, according to Gallup. But the survey found that more people have confidence in two-year institutions. Forty-nine percent of adults say they have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in two-year programs, compared with 33% of Americans who feel that way about four-year colleges.

California college student Kristen Freeman understands why.

"It's about saving money. That's why I went to a two-year. It's more bang for your buck," says Freeman, 22, a sociology major at Diablo Valley Community College with plans to transfer to San Jose State University for the final two years of college.

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Freeman understands the concerns about indoctrination and whether college prepares students for life and work but also feels the only way to change structural problems is from the inside. "I am learning about the world around me and developing useful skills in critical thinking," Freeman says. "I think higher education can give students the spark to want to change the system."

Today in History: July 9, 14th Amendment ratified

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, July 9, the 191st day of 2024. There are 175 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified, granting citizenship and "equal protection under the laws" to anyone "born or naturalized in the United States," including formerly enslaved people.

Also on this date:

In 1850, President Zachary Taylor died of gastrointestinal illness after consuming a large amount of cherries and iced milk on a hot day five days earlier; Vice President Millard Fillmore was sworn in as president the following day.

In 1896, William Jennings Bryant delivered his famous "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

In 1918, 101 people were killed in a train collision in Nashville, Tennessee in the deadliest US rail disaster in history.

In 1937, a fire at 20th Century Fox's storage facility in Little Ferry, New Jersey, destroyed most of the studio's silent films.

In 1943, during World War II, the Allies launched Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily.

In 1944, during World War II, American forces secured Saipan as the last Japanese defenses fell.

In 1947, the engagement of Britain's Princess Elizabeth to Lt. Philip Mountbatten was announced.

In 1965, the Sonny & Cher single "I Got You Babe" was released by ATCO Records.

In 1982, Pan Am Flight 759, a Boeing 727, crashed in Kenner, Louisiana, shortly after takeoff from New Orleans International Airport, killing all 145 people aboard and eight people on the ground.

In 2004, a Senate Intelligence Committee report concluded the CIA had provided unfounded assessments of the threat posed by Iraq that the Bush administration had relied on to justify going to war.

In 2010, the largest U.S.-Russia spy swap since the Cold War was completed on a remote stretch of Vienna airport tarmac as planes from New York and Moscow arrived within minutes of each other with 10 Russian sleeper agents and four prisoners accused by Russia of spying for the West.

In 2011, South Sudan officially became an independent nation.

In 2018, President Donald Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh to fill the seat left vacant by the retirement of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Today's Birthdays: Artist David Hockney is 87. Author Dean Koontz is 79. Actor Chris Cooper is 73. Musician and TV personality John Tesh is 72. Country singer David Ball is 71. Business executive/TV personality Kevin O'Leary (TV: "Shark Tank") is 70. Singer Debbie Sledge (Sister Sledge) is 70. Actor Jimmy Smits is 69. US Senator Lindsey Graham is 69. Actor Tom Hanks is 68. Singer Marc Almond is 67. Actor Kelly McGillis is 67. Rock singer Jim Kerr (Simple Minds) is 65. Actor-rock singer Courtney Love is 60. Actor Pamela Adlon is 58. Actor Scott Grimes is 53. Actor Enrique Murciano (TV: "Without a Trace") is 51. Musician/producer Jack White is 49. Rock singer-musician Isaac Brock (Modest Mouse) is 49. Actor-director Fred Savage is 48. Actor Linda Park (TV: "Star Trek: Enterprise") is 46. Actor Megan Parlen is 44. Animator/writer/producer Rebecca Sugar is 37. Actor Mitchel Musso is 33. Actor Georgie Henley (Film: "The Chronicles of Narnia") is 29.