

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



## Thursday July 11

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, oriental blend vegetables, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

Softball at Webster: U8 at 5:30 p.m. (1); U10G at 6:30 p.m. (DH), U12 at 6:30 p.m. (DH)

Softball U14 at Miller, 6:30 p.m. (DH)

Legion at Clark Rotary Tournament

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library 10 a.m.

Groton Lions Club meeting, 6 p.m. 104 N Main

## Friday, July 12

Senior Menu: BBQ giblet on bun, scalloped potatoes, tomato spoon salad, watermelon, cookie.

## Saturday, July 13

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

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

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# 1440

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## Ariane 6 Blasts Off

The European Space Agency's next-generation Ariane 6 rocket lifted off for the first time yesterday from French Guiana, a French territory in northeastern South America. The long-awaited launch is part of Europe's efforts to regain independent access to space after roughly a year of relying on Elon Musk's SpaceX for missions such as satellite deployments.

The \$4.5B rocket carried a variety of satellites and experimental spacecraft, most of which were successfully deployed. However, a technical issue during the flight's final phase prevented the last batch of cargo from being released. Ariane 6's maiden voyage was set for 2020 but faced delays due to technical issues, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war. The 200-foot-tall rocket comes in two versions: Ariane 62 and Ariane 64. Both succeed Ariane 5, which retired one year ago. Ariane 5 had exploded minutes into its inaugural flight in 1996 before achieving 112 successful flights out of 117 launches.

The Ariane 6 has 30 missions lined up, including 18 to help build out Amazon's new Kuiper satellite-internet constellation.

## Athletic Brewing Grows

Upstart nonalcoholic beer producer Athletic Brewing Company raised \$50M in equity financing this week, doubling its overall value in just two years to \$800M. The company, led by former hedge fund trader Bill Shufelt, has been credited with catalyzing a boom in nonalcoholic beer options since its brightly colored cans hit stores in 2018.

Shufelt and head brewer John Walker came together in 2017 to produce a nonalcoholic brew with a comparable taste to alcoholic beers, marketing it toward customers with active lifestyles as an additional option to alcohol, not a substitute. Nonalcoholic beer accounted for roughly 2% of all US beer sales in 2022, and the industry has grown over 30% annually in recent years.

Athletic's success mirrors a broader shift toward nonalcoholic options in the US, especially among younger generations. Overall, beer sales are in decline, and health-conscious Gen Z adults reportedly drink 20% less than other generations at their age.

## Drug Pricing Probe

The Federal Trade Commission released an interim report yesterday on pharmacy benefit managers, highlighting concerns about their impact on drug pricing and accessibility. The two-year investigation found the six largest PBMs manage nearly 95% of all prescriptions filled in the US, with the top three—CVS Caremark, Express Scripts, and OptumRx—controlling about 80%.

PBMs act as pharmaceutical middlemen, deciding which drugs are covered and often setting patient out-of-pocket costs. The report suggests PBMs may be overcharging for certain drugs, imposing unfair contract terms on independent pharmacies, and steering patients toward higher-cost pharmacies. The FTC claims these practices resulted in nearly \$1.6B in revenue for the three biggest pharmacies from just two cancer drugs over three years. PBMs have disputed the report's conclusions, maintaining their practices save money for employers, the government, and patients.

The findings could potentially lead to further investigations, legal action, or increased regulatory efforts at both federal and state levels.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Spain tops France 2-1 to advance to UEFA European Championship finals.

England takes on the Netherlands this afternoon (3 pm ET, Fox) in the other semifinal.

Joe Bonsall, Country Music Hall of Famer and longtime member of The Oak Ridge Boys, dies at 76.

Doug Sheehan, prolific TV actor, dies at 75.

"The Devil Wears Prada" sequel in early development at Disney.

"Shrek 5" set for 2026 release with full main cast returning.

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## Cub Cadet®

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### Science & Technology

Researchers compile database of magnetic bacteria that reside in animals; analysis is a step toward understanding how animals sense and use the Earth's magnetic field for things like navigation.

Analysis of crystals suggests Earth's tectonic plates began moving as early as 4.2 billion years ago, more than 700 million years earlier than previous evidence suggested.

New fiber optic network transmits data at speeds above 400 terabytes per second, passing the current record by nearly 33%.

### Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +0.1%) after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell says the economy is no longer overheated, raising expectations for interest rate cuts.

Delta Air Lines partners with Saudi-based airline startup Riyadh Air, set to launch next year; Delta to provide first direct flights between the US and Saudi Arabia.

Sam Altman's OpenAI and Arianna Huffington's Thrive Global team up to launch Thrive AI Health, a new venture aimed at developing a personalized, AI-powered health coaching platform.

### Politics & World Affairs

Russian court orders the arrest of Alexei Navalny's widow, accusing her of participating in an extremist organization.

President Joe Biden kicks off NATO's 75th anniversary summit in Washington, DC, with announcement of more air defense support to Ukraine.

Former US Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) dies following a short illness at age 89; Inhofe had been Oklahoma's longest-serving senator before stepping down early last year and was partly known for being skeptical of human-caused climate change.

Congressional Democrats meet to discuss concerns over President Joe Biden's viability as a presidential candidate following CNN debate performance; discussions come after Biden sends a letter confirming he plans to stay in the race.

\*Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. † As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1320 as rated by engine manufacturer. †† As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1395 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International. \*\*See operator's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Kohler® is a registered trademark of Kohler Co. Kawasaki® is a registered trademark of KAWASAKI JUKOGYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA.



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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.





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**Here are the student interns from Agtegra who were videoing and asking questions about the pantry on Tuesday. They are making a presentation to the Agtegra board. Their names: Bridget Shishnia, Malea Moore, Taryn Kleffman. They were interested in community involvement and support. Also asked what affect a pantry would have for its residents. They donated groceries and also gave a monetary donation. (Courtesy Photo Pat Miller)**

## Veterans Burial Benefits

In June, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that they will provide a commemorative urn or plaque for a deceased veteran. Families should note that if they select the new urn or plaque option, they cannot inter their loved one at a VA National Cemetery and cannot receive a government-furnished headstone, marker, niche cover, or medallion for placement in any cemetery.

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery follows the eligibility requirements for burial in a National Cemetery, so it is important to know if the VA provides a commemorative urn or plaque for a veteran, they will not be eligible for burial at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.

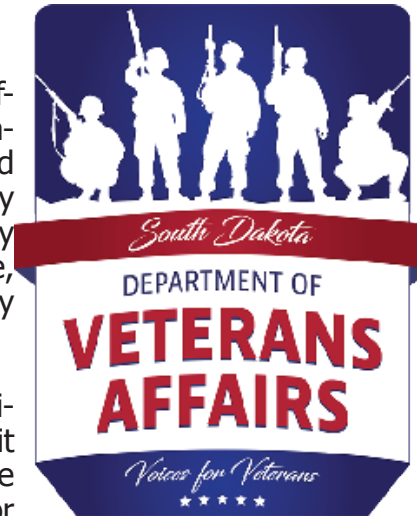
The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs wants to emphasize again that if the family chooses to receive a plaque or an urn to commemorate their veteran, the decision cannot be undone. There is no path to restore eligibility. Receipt of a commemorative urn or plaque nullifies eligibility for burial in a National Cemetery, the State Veterans Cemetery, or receipt of a government furnished headstone if the veteran is to be buried in a private cemetery.

As always, we urge all veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSO's) to learn more about this program and its implications, as well as all burial benefits.

To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



**Greg Whitlock,  
Secretary  
South Dakota  
Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

## Groton Senior Citizens

June 10-24

Groton Seniors met June 10th with 12 members present. Vice president Ruby Donovan opened the meeting with allegiance to the flag. A short meeting was held. Minutes and treasurer's report were read. Flowers were planted at the community Center. Don Hoops joined as a new member. Meeting was adjourned and cards played. The winners of the games Pinochle-Bruce Shilhank, Whist- Elda Stange, Canasta-Eunice McColister and Bev Sombke, Door prizes- Darlene Fischer, Elda Stange, Don Hoops.

June 17-24

Groton Seniors met with 11 members present. Vice president had the flag pledge, cards were played. The winners of each game. Pinochle- Julie Shilhank , Whist- Dick Donovan, Canasta--Pat Larson, door prizes- Pat Larson, Balinda Nelson, Darlene Fischer. Lunch was served by Ruby Donovan.

June 24-24

Twelve members were present at the pot luck dinner. Vice president had the flag pledge and table prayer. Bingo was played after dinner. Bev Sombke and Ruby Donovan won black out. Cards were played after bingo. Door prizes- Eunice McColister, Bruce Shilhank, and Ella Johnson. Bruce Shilhank birthday was celebrated with cake and ice cream. Bev Sombke made the decorated cake for lunch. The birthday song was sung.



## Complaining By Bryan Golden

Is complaining an effective strategy for solving problems? Will complaining improve your situation? Do others enjoy listening to you complain? The answer to all three questions is no. Then why do people complain?

There are a number of reasons a person complains. He or she may be looking for sympathy, assistance, support, or just letting off steam. There are also people who are habitual whiners who are never satisfied or content.

In the case of sympathy, there is an erroneous assumption that if enough other people feel sorry for them, it will somehow improve the complainer's situation. All that will be accomplished is that others will grow tired of their moaning and give them a wide berth. Everyone has their own problems and very few people want to spend their discretionary time listening to the tales of woe of others.

Sympathy seekers tend to dwell on their problems rather than seeking solutions. When potential solutions are presented, they invariably find fault with and summarily dismiss them. These complainers seek attention and monopolize conversations. They look for opportunities to show how their plight is worse than everyone else's.

Spending time with sympathy seekers can be draining. They are consumed with their own situation and show little or no interest in other people. Regardless of how good you may feel, a gripe session with a sympathy seeker will depress your mood.

Some complainers are looking for assistance in solving a problem. In this case they are interested in advice that will lead to a solution. The danger here is that they will indiscriminately seek guidance from anyone. In their attempt to overcome an obstacle, they will try virtually any remedy offered without considering the qualifications of the source.

Following bad advice can exacerbate a problem. Advice seekers that jump from one bad suggestion to another will become frustrated as they fail to solve their problem. The result is the erroneous conclusion that their situation has no solution.

Complainers in search of advice must be very selective in whom they approach. Only those who have successfully solved similar problems or who have appropriate expertise should be sought out. When the right person is identified, they should be asked for advice directly rather than complaining to them.

Perhaps a complainer is looking for support. They may be overwhelmed by unexpected events or overloaded with responsibilities. This type of complainer is likely looking for help rather than advice. If you are so inclined, offer to lend a hand.

Even when they are helped out, some complainers always wind up in another crisis situation. Helping them out again will only improve their situation temporarily. Without a change in strategy, they will soon become immersed in another crisis.

Complainers who are incessant whiners find fault with virtually everything. They complain about their lives, other people's lives, the weather, politics, religion, society, etc. Everything they comment on is flawed. All of life is tainted. Their glass is always half empty and probably leaking. These people are not happy unless they are unhappy.

Whiners will never be satisfied. They don't want sympathy, solutions, or help. They just want to complain. These people will never change and their minds are closed to new ideas. Your only option is to limit exposure to their griping.

Complaining is unproductive and destructive. If you have problems, find solutions. If you need help, ask. Occasional complaining to seek understanding or let off steam is ok. But don't make it a way of life or a topic of every conversation.

## Groton Jr Teeners Keep It Close Against Miller, Lose On Walkoff

By GameChanger Media

A walk-off left Groton Jr Teeners 14U on the wrong end of an 11-10 defeat to Miller on Tuesday. Miller were down 10-9 in the bottom of the seventh inning when Jason Lacomb doubled, scoring two runs.

Despite the loss, Groton Jr Teeners 14U did collect 13 hits in the high-scoring affair. Unfortunately, Miller had seven hits on the way to victory.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U opened the scoring in the first after Ryder Schelle grounded out, scoring one run.

Miller flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the second, scoring six runs on three hits to take a 6-1 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Dom Ringe after a 7-pitch at-bat that drove in two.

A single by Chase Hurd extended the Miller lead to 8-2 in the bottom of the third inning.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U flipped the game on its head in the top of the seventh, scoring five runs on three hits to take a 10-8 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Ethan Kroll that drove in two.

Miller made the score 11-10 in the bottom of the seventh after Hurd drew a walk, scoring one run, and Lacomb doubled, scoring two runs.

Cody Fanning earned the win for Miller. They surrendered five hits and two runs over four innings, striking out five and walking two. TC Schuster pitched three and one-third innings in relief for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The right-handed pitcher allowed one hit and three runs while, striking out five and walking seven. Braeden Flihs took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The right-handed pitcher went one and one-third innings, allowing four runs on three hits, striking out none and walking three.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U piled up 13 hits in the game. Schelle and Jordan Schwan were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected three hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U while hitting back-to-back. Kroll, Schelle, Shaydon Wood, and Schwan each drove in two runs for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Schuster and John Bisbee each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Bisbee stole two bases. Groton Jr Teeners 14U had a strong eye at the plate, tallying seven walks for the game.

Hurd provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Miller with three runs batted in. The center fielder went 1-for-2 on the day. Lacomb led Miller with two hits in three at bats. Miller had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 16 walks for the game. Gavin Ringe, Hurd, and Brooks Mcpack led the team with three free passes each. Fanning stole two bases.

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## First-Inning Burst Enough To Lead Miller Past Groton Jr Teeners

By GameChanger Media

Miller defeated Groton Jr Teeners 14U 11-1 on Tuesday thanks in part to seven runs in the first inning.

Miller got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Brooks Mcpack doubled, scoring one run, Cody Fanning singled, scoring one run, Preston Aesoph drew a walk, scoring one run, #74 was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and Sam Crago doubled, scoring three runs.

A walk by #74, a single by Crago, and a double by Jason Lacomb helped Miller extend their early lead in the third.

Mcpack earned the win for Miller. The starting pitcher allowed two hits and one run over three innings, striking out two and walking three. Ryder Schelle took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. The right-handed pitcher went two innings, giving up seven runs on five hits, striking out two and walking two.

Braeden Flihs and Ethan Kroll each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Flihs led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with one run batted in. The catcher went 1-for-1 on the day. Groton Jr Teeners 14U were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Flihs had the most chances in the field with five.

Crago led Miller with three hits in three at bats from the leadoff position. Lacomb collected two hits for Miller in three at bats. Aesoph led Miller with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game. Miller were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Aesoph had the most chances in the field with two.

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## Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Roll Past Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 easily dispatched Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U on Tuesday, 8-1.

A single by Jarrett Erdmann put Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 on the board in the top of the first.

Bryson Hanson grounded out, which helped Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U tie the game at one in the bottom of the second.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 jumped into the lead in the top of the third when an error scored two runs, Erdmann singled, scoring one run, and Tristin McGannon drew a walk, scoring one run.

Karsten Flihs earned the win for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher allowed one hit and one run (zero earned) over four and two-thirds innings, striking out five and walking one. LJ Crooks took the loss for Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U. They went five innings, giving up eight runs (two earned) on six hits, striking out three and walking three.

Erdmann drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with two runs batted in. They went 2-for-2 on the day. Flihs threw an immaculate inning in the fifth, striking out the side on nine pitches. Lincoln Krause stole four bases.

Hanson led the team with one run batted in. Ryder White went 1-for-1 at the plate to lead Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U in hits.

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## Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Defeat Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 were victorious against Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U 4-2 on Tuesday.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 got on the board in the top of the first inning after Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U committed an error, and Nicholas Morris doubled, each scoring one run.

Nick Groeblichhoff earned the win for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher allowed two hits and zero runs over four innings, striking out six and walking one. Max Dahlen took the loss for Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U. They went five innings, allowing four runs (two earned) on three hits, striking out two and walking six. Tristin McGannon appeared in relief for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39.

Lincoln Krause, Gavin Englund, and Morris each collected one hit for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Morris went 1-for-2 at the plate as the cleanup hitter led the team with one run batted in. Krause stole four bases. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 had a strong eye at the plate, piling up six walks for the game. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 stole six bases in the game. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 didn't commit a single error in the field. Morris had the most chances in the field with six.

Justin Muehler and Bradley Hansen each collected one hit for Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U.

Next up for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 is a game against Smittys 16U 2024 Aberdeen on Wednesday.

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **4 - 2** Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 09, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	2	0	0	1	1	4	3	0
SSST	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2

## BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (CF)	2	1	1	0	1	0
C Simon #4 (SS)	2	1	0	0	1	0
G Englund #18 (RF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
N Morris #17 (C)	2	0	1	1	1	0
J Erdmann #0 (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	2	1	0	0	1	1
G Kroll #8 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T McGa... #22 (3B)	1	0	0	0	1	1
K Fliehs #10 (DH)	1	0	0	0	1	0
N Groebli... #12 (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

**2B:** G Englund, N Morris, **TB:** G Englund 2, L Krause, N Morris 2, **CS:** L Krause, **SB:** L Krause 4, N Morris, K Antonsen, **LOB:** 5

## PITCHING

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Groe... #12	4.0	2	0	1	6	0
<b>T McGannon #20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** N Groeblichhoff, **P-S:** T McGannon 26-9, N Groeblichhoff 62-39, **HBP:** T McGannon, **BF:** T McGannon 7, N Groeblichhoff 15

Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Hansen #1 (3B)	2	0	1	0	1	0
L Crooks #4 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	1
M Dahlen #6 (P)	3	0	0	0	0	1
R Anderson #16 (C)	3	0	0	0	0	1
R White #20 (1B)	1	0	0	0	1	1
J Hamm #5 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
J Muehler #21 (CF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
J Wegener #9 (2B)	1	1	0	0	1	1
K Siriban #42 (RF)	1	1	0	0	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

**TB:** J Muehler, B Hansen, **HBP:** L Crooks, **SB:** B Hansen, **LOB:** 5

Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
M Dahlen #6	5.0	3	4	2	6	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

**L:** M Dahlen, **P-S:** M Dahlen 87-45, **WP:** M Dahlen, **BF:** M Dahlen 24

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **8 - 1** Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion 16U

📍 Away 📅 Tuesday July 09, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	1	0	4	3	0	8	6	1
SSST	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3

## BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (C)	2	2	1	0	2	0
C Simon #4 (SS)	3	1	0	0	0	0
G Englund #18 (1B)	2	2	1	0	0	1
N Morris #17 (3B)	3	2	0	1	0	0
J Erdmann #0 (CF)	2	1	2	2	0	0
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	2	0	1	1	0	0
N Groeblichhoff... #12	2	0	1	0	0	0
G Kroll #8 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
T McGan... #22 (LF)	2	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

**2B:** G Englund, **TB:** K Antonsen, L Krause, N Groeblichhoff, G Englund 2, J Erdmann 2, **SF:** J Erdmann, **CS:** K Antonsen, **HBP:** C Simon, K Antonsen, N Groeblichhoff, G Englund, **SB:** C Simon, L Krause 4, **LOB:** 6

## PITCHING

Groton Jr. Legion Post	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Flihs #10	4.2	1	1	0	1	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

**W:** K Flihs, **P-S:** K Flihs 56-37, **BF:** K Flihs 16

Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Hansen #1 (SS)	2	0	0	0	0	0
L Crooks #4 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	0
M Dahlen #6 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
R Lincoln #7 (C)	1	1	0	0	1	0
J Muehler #21 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
B Hanson #90 (3B)	2	0	0	1	0	1
C Opsal #9 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
R White #20 (1B)	1	0	1	0	0	0
T Monson #12 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

**TB:** R White, **LOB:** 1

Sisseton Post 50 Jr Legion	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Crooks #4	5.0	6	8	2	3	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

**L:** L Crooks, **P-S:** L Crooks 103-56, **WP:** L Crooks, **HBP:** L Crooks 4, **BF:** L Crooks 29

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## Department of SD VFW Baseball 14U Class B Region 1 Bracket All games to be played at Locke-Karst Field in Groton







## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **New group argues grocery tax repeal could lead to income tax; sponsor calls claim a 'fool's errand'**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 9, 2024 5:58 PM**

SIOUX FALLS — A new coalition opposed to eliminating the sales tax on groceries says if the ballot measure passes on Nov. 5, it could wipe out more than just the intended state sales tax, cause cuts to public services and even lead to a state income tax — all claims that the measure's organizer rejects.

Nathan Sanderson is a coalition member and executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association. At a Tuesday press conference announcing the coalition's formation, he said reinstating the tax after its repeal would be difficult because a two-thirds vote of the Legislature is required to raise a tax.

That means government revenue losses could be permanent, according to Sanderson.

"And so we're going to be stuck with significant funding cuts for education, health care, human services and those kinds of things," he said.

Meanwhile, the leader of the group behind the ballot measure said budget cuts were not a concern when Republican Gov. Kristi Noem tried but failed to eliminate the state sales tax on groceries in 2023.

"When Kristi Noem supported this, she didn't have any of those concerns. She didn't think any of this was going to be a problem," said Rick Weiland, chairman of Dakotans for Health.

The coalition opposing the tax cut includes the South Dakota Retailers Association, the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce, the South Dakota Education Association and other organizations. The coalition's name, "South Dakotans Against a State Income Tax" — which is also the name of the group's official fundraising committee — comes from the coalition's claim that an income tax ballot measure will follow the budget cuts.

"We believe it's only going to be a couple of years of very low to flat to negative funding before we're going to see a ballot measure that would impose an income tax on South Dakota," Sanderson said.

South Dakota has not had an income tax since the 1940s. It was imposed during a period of heightened Democratic Party power during the Great Depression.

The Legislative Research Council projects the state budgetary hole created by the ballot measure would be \$123.9 million annually.

The coalition says that doesn't account for other potential revenue losses that could grow the amount to \$176 million. The state collects \$43 million in tobacco taxes annually, the coalition says, and another \$22 million annually from a legal settlement with tobacco companies, which requires a sales tax on tobacco to collect.

The state attorney general has indicated that because the ballot measure would prohibit taxes on anything sold for "human consumption," except alcoholic beverages and prepared food, tobacco taxes could be affected.

Weiland said if coalition members are concerned about tobacco taxes, they could lobby the Legislature to amend the measure after it passes.

Concerns about sales-tax exemptions fall flat, Weiland added, when considering that the state already has \$1.4 billion worth of sales and use tax exemptions for various categories of businesses and services.

"This is about providing some relief to families," Weiland said.

Additionally, he called the income tax claim fear-mongering.

"Give me a break," he said. "That ain't going to happen. It's a fool's errand. South Dakotans would never vote for that."

In addition to the state revenue impact, the coalition says the measure would prevent cities from collecting sales taxes on groceries, further straining local budgets.

The measure targets state sales taxes only and says "municipalities may continue to impose such taxes," but coalition members said that language won't hold up.

"A city cannot collect taxes on something that the state does not also tax," said coalition member and Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, pointing to state law.

He said eliminating the tax, rather than lowering the state tax rate to 0%, is the key difference for cities between the ballot measure and the failed legislation that Noem introduced. TenHaken said Noem's legislation would have allowed city sales taxes on groceries to continue.

Weiland called that argument a farce and said again that legislators could amend the measure after it passes if they're concerned.

TenHaken also expressed concern that if the measure passes and the state's revenue streams weaken, it could hurt the state's bond rating. And because local governments depend on the state's bond rating, the interest rate for a new school or athletics facility could rise.

The coalition also says the measure would reduce funding for tribal governments through sales tax compacts — an argument tribes made against Noem's legislation in 2023.

"Noem said that's not a problem, we can renegotiate that," countered Weiland. "And most importantly, again, even if these concerns were valid, they are all issues the Republican-dominated Legislature could address. They have absolute control."

That's not a risk opponents want to take with what they call a "sloppy" ballot measure.

"You're rolling the dice that the Legislature hopefully does what is right," TenHaken said. "I'd rather kill this thing before it gets to that point."

Among the 45 states that collect a statewide sales tax, South Dakota is currently 36th in combined state and local rates, making it one of the lowest.

*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.*

## **Native American man used by Noem as alleged proof of cartel presence takes plea deal in drug case**

**Charles Merrival says governor's comments hindered his ability to receive a fair trial**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 9, 2024 5:30 PM**

Nearly two months after Gov. Kristi Noem used a photo of him as alleged proof that cartels have overrun tribal communities, a Rapid City man accepted a plea deal this week to a drug conspiracy charge.

Charles Cain Merrival, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, has been jailed in Rapid City for two and a half years and has only been free from jail for a few months since 2020, court records show.

Noem flashed a photo of Merrival during a May 17 press conference in Pierre, at which she repeated claims that cartel members are selling drugs and trafficking people on Native American reservations in the state. The photo showed Merrival in a jacket emblazoned with references to motorcycle gangs.

When contacted by South Dakota Searchlight about Noem's use of his photo, Merrival denied having any connection to drug cartels. He said he hadn't been to Pine Ridge for years, that the photo Noem used was taken at a mall in Rapid City, and that the governor's actions "destroyed my ability to get a fair trial" in a federal drug trafficking case.

His mother, Darla Merrival, told South Dakota Searchlight she believes the governor chose to make an example of her son because he's a tribal member.

Noem's office did not respond to questions from South Dakota Searchlight about her use of Merrival's

photo prior to the publication of a June 12 story on his case. Spokesman Ian Fury did not reply to messages Tuesday seeking comment for this story.

On Monday, Charles Merrival took a deal and pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance and saw his remaining charges, for distribution of a controlled substance and being a felon in possession of a firearm, dismissed.

A factual basis statement filed Monday and signed by Merrival says he voluntarily joined a conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine in the Rapid City area, and that he'd flashed a firearm in January of 2022 "in furtherance of the drug distribution conspiracy."

The conspiracy charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and a maximum sentence of 40 years in federal prison. There is no parole in the federal prison system. Merrival's plea deal stipulates an eight year sentence.

His sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 4 in Rapid City.

In a text sent to South Dakota Searchlight through a jailhouse service provider, Merrival said prosecutors had filed what he described as a gag order that would have prevented his attorney from asking jurors about the media coverage surrounding Noem's cartel claims.

"There was no way I was going to win," Merrival wrote. "Especially with them tying my hands about being able to ask jurors if they'd seen the press."

The U.S. Attorney's Office, which is prosecuting the case, filed a "motion in limine" and a document supporting the motion on July 2. A motion in limine is meant to prevent or limit the use of certain arguments or evidence in a trial. The documents that would explain what prosecutors had hoped to limit at trial were sealed by a judge at the government's request.

*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.*

## **Biden commends NATO strength, pledges more aid for Ukraine against Russia**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JULY 9, 2024 6:38 PM**

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said NATO "is more powerful than ever" in remarks Tuesday to honor the 75th anniversary of the alliance and reaffirm allied support for Ukraine one day after Russian missile strikes on a children's hospital killed dozens in Kyiv.

Biden spoke at the annual North American Treaty Organization's summit happening this week in Washington, D.C., where the 12 original member nations signed the Washington Treaty in 1949.

Heads of state fanned out across Washington, visiting lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet with U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson Wednesday afternoon. Ukraine is not one of the 32 NATO member nations, but the country is in discussions to join and the alliance has sided with Ukraine in its war with Russia.

"It's a pleasure to host you all in this milestone year, to look back with pride on all we've achieved and look ahead to our shared future with strength and resolve," Biden said during the opening ceremony.

Biden's 15-minute address came after a dozen days of near constant focus on his health and mental acuity after he flubbed his June 27 presidential debate performance against former President Donald Trump, whose criticism of NATO is well documented.

Biden spoke forcefully about the alliance's history from the stage in the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, where world leaders and hundreds of dignitaries from NATO's 32 member nations gathered, joined by other partner nations.

"Together we rebuilt Europe from the ruins of war, held high the torch of liberty during long decades of the Cold War. When former adversaries became fellow democracies, we welcomed them into the alliance," Biden said.



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"When war broke out in the Balkans, we intervened to restore peace and stop ethnic cleansing. When the United States was attacked on September 11, our NATO allies, all of you, stood with us, invoking Article Five for the first time in NATO history, treating an attack on us as an attack on all of us. A breathtaking display of friendship that the American people will never, ever, ever forget."

## Military aid

Biden used the remarks to announce a joint package of air defense systems for Ukraine in conjunction with Germany, Romania, the Netherlands and Italy. The package is expected to include donations of advanced missile launching systems known as Patriot batteries as well as other equipment, according to a joint statement issued by the White House shortly after Biden's speech.

Biden described Russian President Vladimir Putin as NATO's primary antagonist.

He praised the alliance for moving "swiftly" after Putin further invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and said "the war will end with Ukraine remaining a free and independent country." Putin previously annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula by force in 2014.

"Before this war, Putin thought NATO was going to break. Today, NATO is stronger than it's ever been in its history," Biden declared.

Biden concluded the ceremony by honoring NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## United by their objections to Trump, congressional Dems largely close ranks behind Biden

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, JENNIFER SHUTT, SHAUNEEN MIRANDA AND LIA CHIEN - JULY 9, 2024 6:15 PM**

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats appeared to quell some inner tumult over supporting President Joe Biden's reelection campaign, after highly anticipated internal meetings Tuesday showed the president retained considerable support from the Congressional Black Caucus and other lawmakers in public statements.

Speaking to reporters on Capitol Hill, Democrats from both chambers largely declined to detail their closed-door conversations. But they said they are lining up behind Biden, nearly two weeks after his debate performance set in motion prolonged speculation about his fitness for office. The party meetings among lawmakers were the first since the June 27 debate.

Biden issued a defiant letter to party members Monday saying that he will not exit the race, and Democrats interviewed by States Newsroom insisted they are uniting as the party heads toward his official nomination later this summer.

Lawmakers left open whether perfect harmony was achieved — a New Jersey Democrat at day's end joined a handful of other Democrats urging Biden to drop out — but one message was clear: They do not want to see former President Donald Trump in the Oval Office again.

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Rep. Steven Horsford of Nevada briskly exited the House chamber and said Democrats are focused on "beating Donald Trump and electing Democrats to the House majority." The CBC met with Biden virtually Monday night.

When asked whether Biden's unsteady debate performance and the anxiety it's caused presents an obstacle for House colleagues running in tight races, Horsford answered, "The president is the nominee."

## Another defection

While a steady stream of Democrats said they would back Biden, New Jersey Democrat Mikie Sherrill became the seventh House Democrat urging Biden to drop out of the race.

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"I know President Biden cares deeply about the future of our country. That's why I am asking that he declare that he won't run for reelection," Sherrill posted on social media shortly before 5 p.m. Eastern.

Those who spoke out against Biden's reelection bid in previous days included Angie Craig of Minnesota, Lloyd Doggett of Texas, Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, Mike Quigley of Illinois and Adam Smith of Washington.

Rep. Jerry Nadler, of New York, who was among those calling for Biden to exit the race in a private call on Sunday, walked back his comments Tuesday when he told reporters "we have to support him."

At the White House briefing, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said expressions of support from members of the Congressional Black Caucus were key to solidifying Biden's backing among Hill Democrats.

"We respect members of Congress," Jean-Pierre said. "We respect their view. But I also want to say there's also a long list of congressional members who have been very clear in support of this president."

Jean-Pierre cited strong statements of support from CBC members Joyce Beatty of Ohio and Troy Carter of Louisiana following the caucus' virtual meeting with Biden on Monday.

Rep. Hank Johnson of Georgia said Tuesday members had an opportunity to "express themselves" during the closed-door House Democratic meeting.

"Leadership listened, and I think what needs to happen is we need to all come together to decide that we're not going to be a circular firing squad with Joe Biden in the middle," Johnson said. "We are going to abide by his decision, and if his decision, as he has previously stated, is to stay in, then he's gonna be our nominee and we need to all get behind him."

When asked by States Newsroom whether House Democrats in vulnerable seats now face more potholes on the road to November, potentially costing the party a chance to flip the House, Johnson replied, "No, I think (Biden's) got a strong record to run on, and the opposition, Donald Trump, has to run against that strong record. So we need to start running on our record, and against the nominee of the other party. And the American people know the difference."

## 'We concluded that Joe Biden is old'

Democratic senators, leaving a nearly two-hour private lunch meeting later Tuesday, had similar comments to their House counterparts, reiterating the president is their nominee, though worries remained.

Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman said that everyone knows about Biden's age, but that alone won't lead the party to bump him out as their nominee.

"We concluded that Joe Biden is old, and we found out, and the polling came back that he's old," Fetterman said. "But guess what? We also agreed that, you know, like, he's our guy, and that's where we're at."

Delaware Sen. Chris Coons, a longtime friend and close ally of Biden, argued that Trump is a far worse choice than Biden.

"Donald Trump had a terrible debate," Coons said. "Donald Trump said things on that debate stage over and over and over that were outright lies filled with vengeance, violated the basic standards of our democracy, and yet we are spending all of our time talking about one candidate's performance and not the other. Donald Trump's performance on that debate stage should be disqualifying."

Coons said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer spoke during the meeting, saying "broadly constructive things, just sort of setting the groundwork of our discussion."

Coons said he was "not gonna get into the private conversation we just had in the caucus" when asked whether anyone at the meeting called for Biden to not be the nominee. But he added that "folks expressed a range of views in ways that I think were constructive and positive."

Vice President Kamala Harris' viability as a potential replacement for Biden didn't come up during the meeting, Coons said.

Georgia Sen. Raphael Warnock underlined his support for Biden following the meeting, saying "what I think is most important right now is what the American people think."

"We're getting feedback on that. I think it's important for the president in this moment, in any moment, to hear what the people are saying. That's what democracy is all about," Warnock said. "Donald Trump,

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on the other hand, doesn't seem to believe much in democracy. He said he wants to be a dictator on day one, and with their ruling several days ago, the Supreme Court is setting the table for him to continue to be a dictator. That's what's at stake in this election: democracy itself."

Asked whether Biden is the best person to defeat Trump, Warnock said Biden is "making that case as campaigns do" and "hearing back from the American people."

Asked whether Biden can win Georgia, he said: "I can tell you that no one thought I could win Georgia but I did."

## Project 2025 fears

Rep. Becca Balint of Vermont told States Newsroom that House Democrats' meeting led to some cohesion. "The unity as it exists is that we're all completely committed to making sure that Trump is not the next president," Balint said. "That's the unity, and the unity of wanting the president to be out campaigning vigorously on his record."

Balint, holding in her hand a copy of the Stop the Comstock Act, said, tearing up, that she worries about a nationwide abortion ban and other priorities in the far-right Project 2025 publication.

The nearly 1,000-page policy roadmap is a product of the Heritage Foundation in anticipation of Republicans gaining control of the White House and Congress. Trump and his campaign have repeatedly distanced themselves from the document.

"Trump is a demagogue, I am the child of a man whose father was killed in the Holocaust. I'm really like 'What can I do day in and day out to make sure we don't lose the House?' because we are the blue line," Balint said.

The Comstock Act is an 1873 law that could provide an avenue for a future Republican presidential administration to ban the mailing of abortion medications. Democrats in the House and Senate have introduced companion bills to repeal the sections of the law that could hinder abortion access.

New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told States Newsroom that Biden has "actively thrown weight behind the lawmaking and policy ideas of younger and progressive members," and that she remains committed to supporting him.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden said after the Democratic senators' meeting that he wasn't "even gonna get into that," when asked whether he wants Biden to remain the nominee.

"The fact is, the president has said he is running," Wyden said. "So, that's the lay of the land today."

## Swing state senators

Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey, who faces a challenging reelection bid this November, said he didn't want to characterize what other senators said about Biden during the meeting.

Casey said it's up to political pundits and analysts to determine how Biden remaining the presidential nominee might affect the Pennsylvania race as well as others.

"I've got to continue to do my work in the Senate and also to be a candidate, so I can't sit around being an analyst," Casey said.

When back home in the Keystone State, he said, voters tend to talk to him more about issues they're concerned about, including reproductive rights and the cost of living.

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly declined to comment on Democrats' meeting and referred to his prior statements about Biden.

Kelly on Monday evening told reporters that the differences between Biden and Trump "could not be clearer."

Biden, he said, has "delivered to the American people over and over again," on climate change, prescription drug prices, infrastructure, and semiconductor manufacturing.

"On the other hand, you have Donald Trump, a convicted felon and now a criminal who has no business running for president," Kelly said.

"Joe Biden is our nominee. Millions of people voted for Joe Biden to be on the ballot," Kelly said. "He's

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on the ballot, and I truly believe he's gonna win in November."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said when asked about Biden during a press conference that "as I've said before, I'm with Joe."

Schumer declined to answer questions about Democrats potentially nominating a different presidential candidate and about Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray's statement Monday night critical of Biden.

"As I've said before, I'm with Joe," Schumer reiterated.

Murray's statement said Biden "must seriously consider the best way to preserve his incredible legacy and secure it for the future."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, deferred a question about Biden's debate performance to Democratic leadership.

## Maryland, New Mexico senators comment

Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen said he had to leave the lunch early for a previously scheduled meeting with the Dutch prime minister, but said he doesn't have concerns Biden will make the right choice on whether to stay in the race.

"Look, as I've said, I trust the president's judgment, he understands the stakes in this election and he's in the best position to make this decision," Van Hollen said.

New Mexico Sen. Ben Ray Lujan said Democrats discussed several issues during the closed-door meeting, but declined to talk about what was said, though he reiterated his support for Biden's candidacy.

"I look forward to voting for President Joe Biden to be president of the United States," Lujan said.

Georgia Sen. Jon Ossoff said the meeting was "a constructive caucus discussion," and that he supports Biden's reelection campaign.

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper said he spoke during the meeting, but declined to specify what his comments were.

Colorado Sen. John Hickenlooper said the lunch went "fine," but declined to opine on where the party was moving on Biden's nomination nor his own beliefs about the president's ongoing candidacy.

Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed declined to answer any questions after the lunch.

## House Republicans: 'Democrats had misled us'

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana on Tuesday accused the Democratic Party of covering up Biden's "glaring problem."

"The Democrats had misled us. They need to be held accountable for that," he said, during the House GOP's regularly scheduled press conference.

Johnson also said the 25th Amendment "is appropriate" in this situation. If Biden's Cabinet declares he is unfit for office, Vice President Kamala Harris would take over presidential duties.

"The notion that the 25th Amendment would be appropriate here is something that most Republicans and frankly, most Americans would agree with," he said.

Majority Leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana, Majority Whip Tom Emmer of Minnesota and Elise Stefanik of New York, chair of the House Republican Conference, echoed Johnson's concerns.

Stefanik called Biden "unfit to be our commander in chief" and accused the Democratic Party of concealing Biden's mental acuity. "The cover-up is over and accountability is here."

*Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.*

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## Election audits match machine tallies in most counties, 'minimal' discrepancies in others

**Primary was first test of new state law requiring reviews**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 9, 2024 2:09 PM**

Post-election audits across South Dakota matched primary election night results from tabulator machines in most counties, according to statewide data released Wednesday by the Secretary of State's Office.

Post-election audits are a routine practice in most states to verify whether equipment used to count votes worked properly and yielded the correct result, but the review was South Dakota's first. The Legislature passed a law during the 2023 legislative session requiring the audits.

Of the state's 66 counties, 52 reported no discrepancies between their post-election audit and tabulator results. Ten other counties did not have to conduct a post-election audit because they held a recount of a race. Three counties — Mellette, Tripp and Lincoln — reported one discrepancy each.

Minnehaha County reported 52 discrepancies in the full election recount that Auditor Leah Anderson chose to conduct, but she said the list of discrepancies "looks minimal."

The state's top elections official, Secretary of State Monae Johnson, pledged during her 2022 campaign to implement post-election audits. She described the first audits as a success.

"The transparency of this process, conducted by audit board members from multiple parties, and the accuracy of the audit results should reinforce every voter's belief that their vote mattered and was counted accurately," Johnson said in a news release.

County auditors are required to hand count ballots in 5% of their county's voting precincts, though most counties reviewed more than the required amount. Some counties conducted a full hand count of their results, such as McPherson and Minnehaha counties.

Auditors across the state hope the primary post-election audit will prepare their election workers for the general election in November.

Some auditing boards had to recount races several times, one county re-audited its election results, and paperwork slowed the process down in at least one county, auditors said.

The Secretary of State's Office report did not specify how long the post-election audits took for each county or how much the audits are costing the state or counties. The Secretary of State's Office has not yet responded to requests for comment from South Dakota Searchlight.

### **Minnehaha auditor says paperwork slowed process; commissioner pushes back**

Anderson told Minnehaha County commissioners ahead of the audit that she expected to hand count the county's full 13,189 ballots in five hours. It took 12 hours.

It took about an hour for Moody County to count 104 ballots for its two audited races. Lincoln County took nearly three hours to review three races on 592 ballots.

What slowed the process down, Anderson said, was over 1,593 pieces of paper that audit board members had to print and sign their names on after each race was counted in a precinct.

"I wish there was a way to condense some of the paperwork," Anderson said. "The paperwork isn't doing much for an audit."

Minnehaha County Commissioner Joe Kippley said Anderson's full recount wasn't necessary, but did return "what you'd expect if everything is running the way you want it to be." He added that the level of time and work to run a full recount "could have been predicted."

"I don't know if you can make a 'volume of paperwork' critique when you made the choice to do 20 times the work you were asked to do," Kippley said. "When it's your first year running this new process and state statute says 'do a 5% audit,' there should be some self-checking. Maybe it's 5% for a reason."

Lincoln County's 592 audited ballots represented about 10% of ballots cast in the primary. Auditor Sheri Lund said her auditing boards only had to sign 20 pieces of paperwork.

"I don't think our paperwork was overwhelming," Lund said.

## Post-election audit meant to reinforce confidence in elections, auditors say

In McPherson County, the post-election auditing board reported that it was four ballots short in one precinct for the District 23 House race and had an extra ballot in another precinct compared to the ballots scanned by the tabulator on election night. The county conducted a full recount of its ballots.

Auditor Lindley Howard and the McPherson County state's attorney asked a judge to unseal the ballots for a re-audit of the results. In Howard's re-audit, the ballots and votes matched the tabulated results.

"We saw way more human errors through the audit process than machine discrepancies. All our discrepancies were human errors," Howard said. "I think we proved this time that the tabulators work and I don't want to do a 100% audit again."

Some of Moody County's audit workers are skeptical of the tabulators, which can be a good thing, Moody County Auditor Tawny Heinemann said. Being involved with the audit let them work with and understand the process better, she added.

"They see what marks could look like and why a ballot wasn't counted and if it wasn't counted correctly," Heinemann said. "Being able to see that the numbers matched and what some of the checks and balances are helps a lot."

Anderson doesn't believe a 5% audit is enough. She plans to audit about 25% of votes in November.

She worries that the state's post-election audit process isn't clear enough where she should stop, though, saying that she would continue to audit precincts if a race is off by one vote until she gets "clean results."

Kippley said he doesn't think a "clean results" audit is needed. The audit doesn't have any influence on the election results, unless an auditing board finds a discrepancy that changes an outcome in an election. Only minimal discrepancies were found in audits across the state.

If a race was close enough, he said, it would go to a recount board anyway, which would have more authority to review ballots.

According to the state post-election audit guide, counties are instructed to conduct a post-election audit and report their findings. They do not have to continue auditing until they get within a certain margin of error.

## Analyzing voter intent

Anderson's audit boards found a discrepancy in 52 of Minnehaha County's 570 races — most off by one vote. The Minnehaha audit also found that the tabulator machine counted a handful of ballots cast by handicapped voters that weren't properly stamped by precinct workers.

The largest discrepancy was three votes, which wasn't enough to change an outcome. Audit boards are only supposed to consider marks the tabulator would count for the audit, not voter intent, according to the post-election audit guide.

Secretary of State Johnson said in a press release that the discrepancies reported by Minnehaha County and others "appear to be due" to auditing boards considering voter intent.

Jessica Pollema, president of South Dakota Canvassing Group, which advocates for the replacement of machine tabulators with hand counting, said the state's guidelines were made to have auditing boards "think like a machine."

"That totally defies the purpose of a high end count post-election audit," said Pollema, who served as the superintendent of the Minnehaha County post-election audit board. Pollema spoke on the McPherson outcome at a recent Minnehaha County Commission meeting.

Linda Montgomery, a Lincoln County resident who served on her county's post-election audit board, told Minnehaha County commissioners she was instructed to "think like a machine" as well.

Montgomery's audit board in Lincoln County had a difference of one vote from the tabulator, Lund said. She suspects the difference was due to human error rather than the machine. Another post-election audit board in Lincoln County had to recount a race five times before agreeing on a number.

An audit of the machines is meant to make sure they're doing their job correctly, Lund said. By law,

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tabulators and resolution boards are not supposed to consider voter intent. Considering voter intent would cause an “apples to oranges” comparison. It could also open the door to bias, Lund added.

“We give you instructions for marking a ballot. In order for that vote to count, you need to mark it the way we tell you. If you mark it any other way, you’re supposed to ask for a new ballot, like instructions say,” Lund said. “We’re not going to take it and say, ‘Hey, what did you mean by this?’ or ‘I think they thought this way.’”

At least one ballot in Minnehaha County was rejected as an overcount (when a voter marks a ballot in favor of too many candidates) on election day because the voter crossed out a vote for a candidate rather than asking for a new ballot. Anderson used the example to explain that the ballot should have been diverted to a resolution board to identify the ballot as “mismarked” rather than an overcount.

Anderson said she plans to bring the findings to the state and to the election systems vendor for South Dakota, Election Systems & Software.

Kippley said Anderson’s full recount proved his faith in tabulator machines.

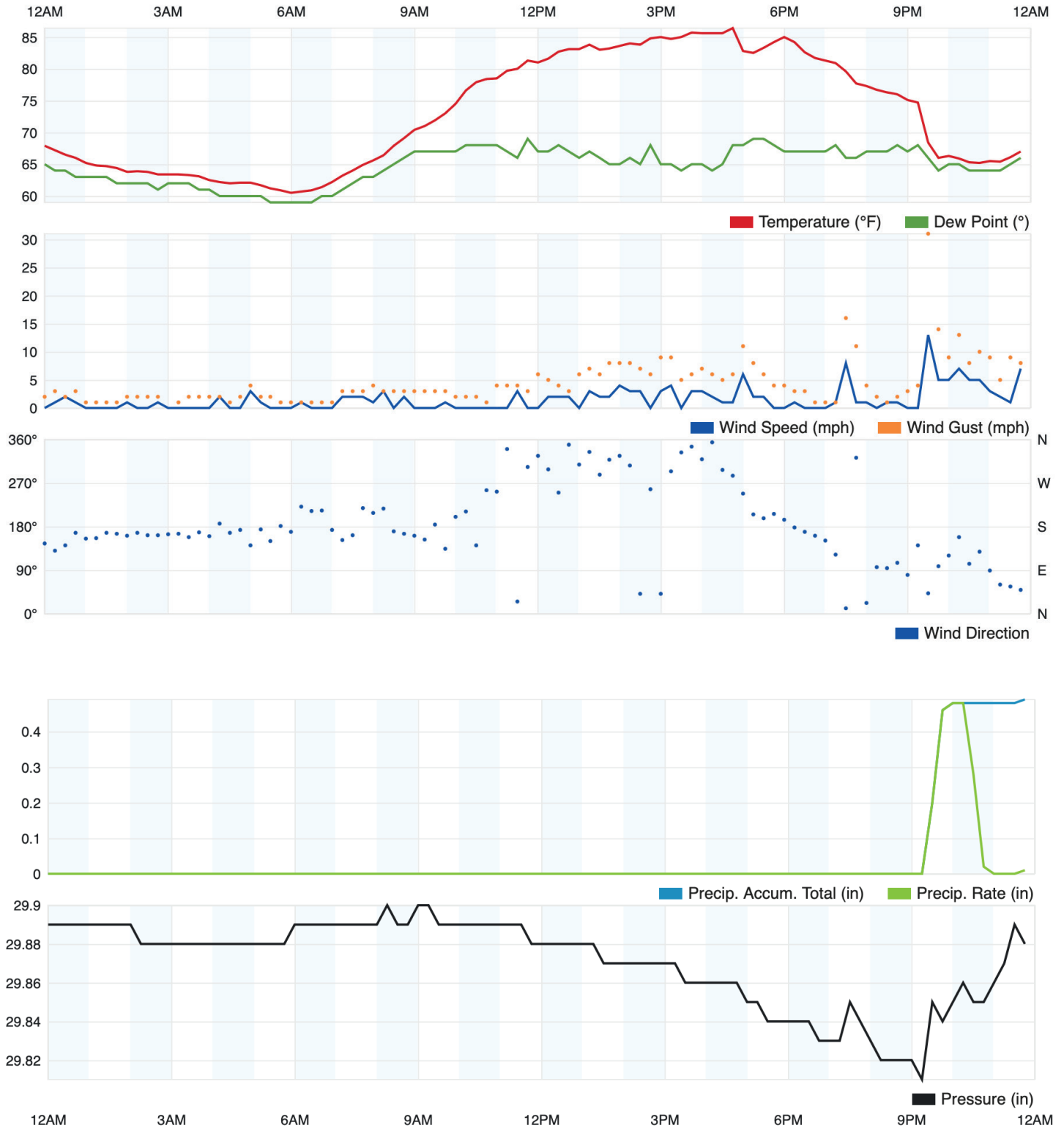
“She did a 100% audit in the June primary and it proved my point,” Kippley said. “It came out with basically the exact same results.”

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She’s spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday  
Night

Friday



High: 84 °F

Low: 61 °F

High: 87 °F

Low: 66 °F

High: 90 °F

Sunny

Clear

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Hot

## Heat & Humidity On The Increase

Today

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday



Highs:  
81-88°

Highs:  
82-91°

Highs:  
86-97°

Highs:  
90-98°

Highs:  
91-99°

Heat Index:  
92-97°

Heat Index:  
92-99°

Heat Index:  
92-100°

**\*Low Chance For An Isolated Thunderstorm**

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Over the next few days expect a steady increase in temperatures and humidity, peaking Sunday with temperatures and heat index values potentially up to 100 degrees in a few areas. Looks like the heatwave is only a few days with more seasonal temperatures to start next week.

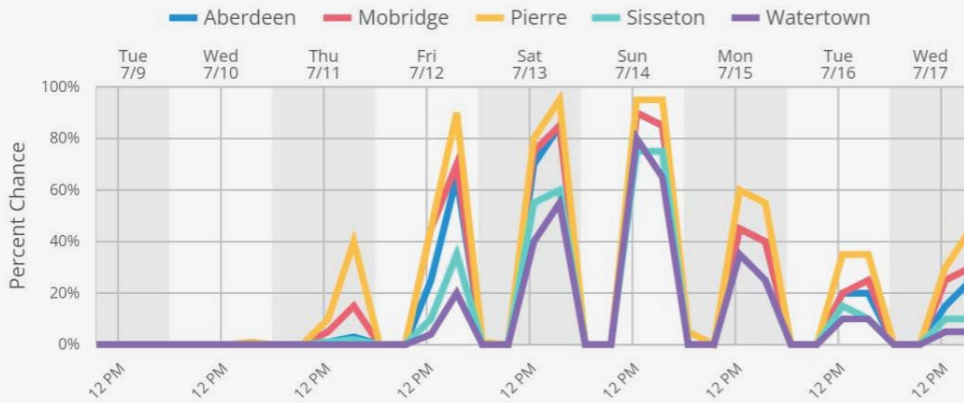
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## Chance of Apparent Temperatures Greater Than 90°F

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 ENS, GEFS and GPS ensembles. 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!
- Plans for outdoor activities should include extra water and frequent breaks.

Valid: Tue 07 am CDT - Wed 07 pm CDT

Issued: Tue, Jul 9, 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



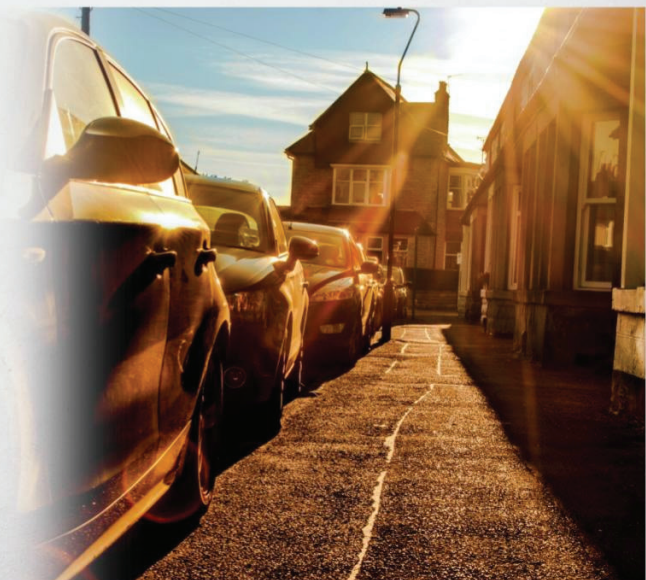
Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing



Spend time in air conditioning and in the shade



weather.gov





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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 4:37 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:05 AM

Wind: 31 mph at 9:28 PM

Precip: : 0.48

Day length: 15 hours, 29 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 114 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1945

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.15

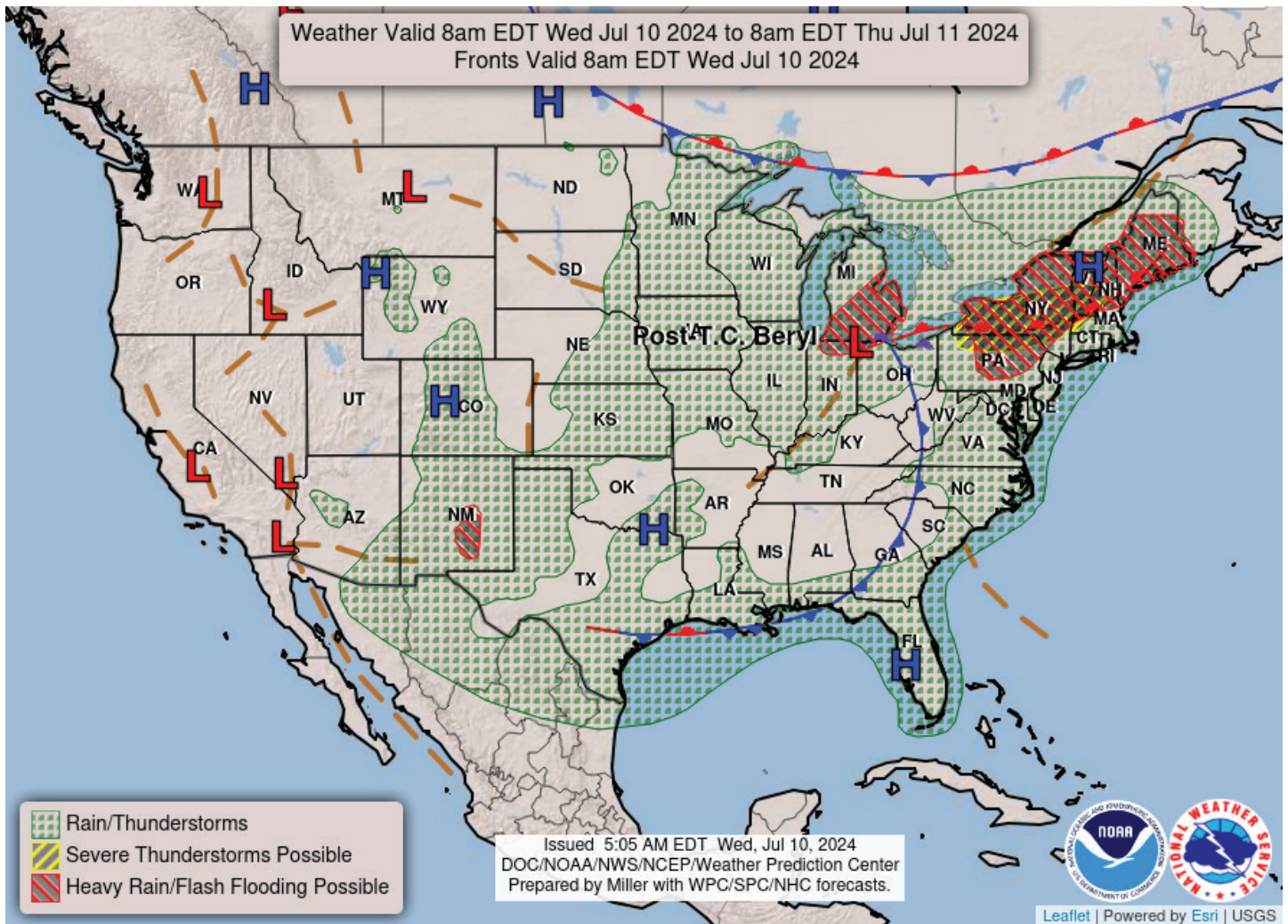
Precip to date in July: 3.55

Average Precip to date: 12.16

Precip Year to Date: 14.50

Sunset Tonight: 9:22:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53:55 am



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## Today in Weather History

July 10, 1998: Flash flooding occurred from Keldron, in Corson County, and areas south, during the late afternoon and evening as a result of up to seven inches of rain that had fallen from slow-moving thunderstorms. Willow Creek and several small tributaries went out of their banks causing the inundation of low areas and county roads. Many county roads were damaged with one farmer losing several pigs and cows as a result of the flooding.

1887: A dam breaks in Zug, Switzerland, killing 70 people in their homes and destroying a large section of the town.

1911: The mercury hit 105 degrees at North Bridgton, Maine the hottest reading of record for Maine. North Bridgton also reached 105 degrees on the 4th of July in 1911.

1913 - The mercury hit 134 degrees at Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, CA, the hottest reading of record for the North American continent. Sandstorm conditions accompanied the heat. The high the previous day was 129 degrees, following a morning low of 93 degrees. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1926: At the Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, lightning struck one of the explosives storage structures during a thunderstorm and started a fire. As a result, several million pounds of explosives detonated over a period of 2-3 days. This explosion not only structural devastation, 187 of 200 buildings destroyed but military and civilian casualties as well. Close to one hundred are injured as explosion spreads havoc within a radius of 15 miles in New Jersey. Otto Dowling was in charge at the time and received a Distinguished Service Cross for his handling of the situation.

1936 - Afternoon highs of 112 degrees at Martinsburg, WV, 109 degrees at Cumberland, MD, and Frederick, MD, 110 degrees at Runyon, NJ, and 111 degrees at Phoenixville, PA, established all-time record highs for those four states. It was the hottest day of record for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. (The Weather Channel)

1979 - The temperature at El Paso, TX, hit 112 degrees, an all-time record for that location. The next day was 110 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature in downtown Kansas City, MO, hit 109 degrees, following a sultry overnight low of 89 degrees. The daily low of 89 degrees was the warmest of record for Kansas City, and overall it was the hottest July day of record. It was the seventh of a record seventeen consecutive days of 100 degree heat, and the mean temperature for the month of 90.2 degrees was also an all-time record for Kansas City.

1987 - An early morning thunderstorm in Minnesota produced wind gusts to 91 mph at Waseca. Later that day, thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 81 mph at Ipswitch, and baseball size hail near Hayes and Capa. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms brought welcome rains to parts of the central U.S., but produced severe weather along the New England coast, in the Great Lakes Region, in North Carolina, and in the Southern Plateau Region. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting to 80 mph at Bullfrog, UT, sank three boats on Lake Powell. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Severe thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes in the northeastern U.S. A powerful (F-4) tornado struck Hamden CT and New Haven, CT, causing 100 million dollars damage at Hamden, and another 20 million dollars damage around New Haven. Forty persons were injured in the tornado. Seventy persons were injured in a tornado which traveled from Watertown, CT, to Waterbury, CT, and another powerful (F-4) tornado touched down near Ames NY injuring twenty persons along its 43.5 mile track. It was the strongest tornado of record for eastern New York State. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - Hurricane Dennis landed near Pensacola, Florida as a category 3 storm. Maximum sustained winds at the time of landfall were near 120 mph. There were nine hurricane-related fatalities in the U.S. and preliminary estimates of insured losses ranged from \$1 to \$1.5 billion.



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### FAILING IS NOT FATAL

For years Thomas Edison tried to perfect a long-lasting storage battery. During this time, he conducted thousands of experiments that were unsuccessful. One day one of his employees came to him and said, "Isn't it a shame that you have wasted all of this time? All of the tremendous labor and time that you have spent on this project has not achieved any results that will work."

"I've got plenty of results," said Edison. "You see, I've discovered several thousand that won't work!"

To his credit, Edison was able to look at what he was doing as a way of learning and solving problems. When he failed he did not look at it as final. He looked at it as a stepping stone to success. How fortunate is that person who can see beyond the moment of defeat to the joy of victory!

Often we fail to see God at work in what we are doing. We look for the approval of others believing that our rewards come from them. Scripture reminds us, however, to define success in terms of being faithful to God and what He has called us to do. God rewards us for being faithful to Him, for doing what He calls us to do even when we fail in the eyes of the world.

Struggling through difficult days and trying times proves that our trust is in God and that we look to Him for our rewards. "Fear not, I will strengthen and help you."

Prayer: It's natural, Lord, to want the approval of those around us. Often we think that they are the final authority. Remind us, however, that we labor for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10



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:  
07.09.24

21 26 54 60 64 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$203,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 30  
Mins 16 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: 16 Hrs 45 Mins 16  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.09.24

25 31 40 41 44 4

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.06.24

1 12 18 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$29,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.08.24

10 17 19 25 59 8

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 16  
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: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 16  
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

### Israeli strikes in central Gaza kill 20 Palestinians as mediators make new push on cease-fire deal

By WAFAA SHURAFa and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli airstrikes early Wednesday killed 20 Palestinians in central Gaza, including six children and three women, some of them inside a purported “safe zone” declared by the Israeli military, hospital authorities said.

This second straight night of deadly strikes in the central town of Deir al-Balah and nearby refugee camps came as U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators as well as Israeli officials came together in the Qatari capital, Doha, for talks trying to push through a long-elusive deal for a cease-fire and hostage release.

Israel and Hamas had appeared to narrow the gaps in recent days, but obstacles remain.

Strikes early Wednesday hit three houses in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing 12 people including five children, said authorities at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where the casualties were taken. An Associated Press reporter counted the bodies.

The camp, like others around Gaza, was originally erected to house Palestinians driven from their homes during the 1948 war surrounding Israel’s creation. It has grown into an urban neighborhood in the decades since.

A fourth strike early Wednesday killed four men, three women and a child when it hit a home in Deir al-Balah, an area that is located within the “humanitarian safe zone” where Israel has told Palestinians to seek refuge as it conducts offensives in multiple parts of the Gaza Strip.

The overnight bombardment came hours after Israeli warplanes struck the entrance of a school sheltering displaced families outside the southern city of Khan Younis. The toll from the strike rose to 31 people killed, including eight children, and more than 50 wounded, officials at the nearby Nasser Hospital said Wednesday.

Footage aired by Al-Jazeera television showed kids playing soccer in the school’s yard when a sudden boom shook the area, prompting shouts of “a strike, a strike!”

The Israeli army said the airstrike near the school and reports of civilian casualties were under review, and claimed it was targeting a Hamas militant who took part in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, though it provided no immediate evidence. The military blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense, urban areas. But the army rarely comments on what it is targeting in individual strikes, which often kill women and children.

In nine months of bombardment and offensives in Gaza, Israel has killed more than 38,200 people and wounded more than 88,000, according to the territory’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Nearly the entire population has been driven from their homes. Many have been displaced multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into sweltering tent camps.

Israel’s onslaught was triggered by Hamas’ cross-border raid on Oct. 7, during which militants killed 1,200 people in southern Israel, most of them civilians, according to Israeli authorities. The militants took roughly 250 people hostage. About 120 are still in captivity, with about a third said to be dead.

This week, Israeli troops have also been waging a new ground assault in Gaza City in the north of the territory — its latest effort to battle Hamas militants regrouping in areas the army previously said had been largely cleared.

Large parts of Gaza City and urban areas around it have been flattened or left a shattered landscape by previous Israeli assaults, and much of the population fled earlier in the war. But the latest incursions and bombardment prompted a new flight of people.

After Israel on Monday called for an evacuation from eastern and central parts of Gaza City, staff at two hospitals — Al-Ahli and the Patients Friends Association Hospital — rushed to move patients and shut down, the United Nations said.

The Israeli military said Tuesday that it told hospitals and other medical facilities in Gaza City they did not need to evacuate. But hospitals in Gaza have often shut down and moved patients at any sign of possible Israeli military action, fearing raids.

In the past nine months, Israeli troops have attacked at least eight hospitals, causing the deaths of patients and medical workers along with massive destruction to facilities and equipment. Israel has claimed Hamas uses hospitals for military purposes, though it has provided only limited evidence.

Only 13 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are functioning, and those only partially, according to the United Nations' humanitarian office.

International mediators were making a new concerted effort to push through a proposed cease-fire deal.

An Egyptian official said the head of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, went to Doha to join discussions over the deal. The official said U.S. and Israeli officials were also attending. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the press on the meetings.

A day earlier, CIA Director William Burns, who has led the American mediation, met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo.

Obstacles remain in the talks, even after Hamas agreed to relent on its key demand that Israel commit to ending the war as part of any agreement. Hamas still wants mediators to guarantee that negotiations conclude with a permanent cease-fire.

Israel has rejected any deal that would force it to end the war with Hamas intact. Hamas on Monday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of "putting more obstacles in the way of negotiations," including the operations in Gaza City.

## Yemen's Houthi rebels target a US-flagged container ship in the Gulf of Aden

By MICHAEL WAKIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted United States-flagged container ship in the Gulf of Aden on Tuesday, officials said, the latest assault by the group on the crucial maritime trade route.

The captain of the ship reported an explosion in close proximity to the vessel off the coast of Nishtun, Yemen, close to the country's border with Oman, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. The Joint Maritime Information Center, which is overseen by the U.S. Navy, identified the ship as the Maersk Sentosa.

The explosion took place in the farthest reaches of the waterway earlier targeted by the rebels, the center said.

It did not elaborate on what caused the explosion, though the Houthis have been known to use drones and missiles as well as bomb-carrying drone boats.

Late Tuesday night, the Houthis issued a broad claim of responsibility for three attacks, which included the Maersk Sentosa. Maersk, a Danish firm which is the world's biggest shipping company, did not immediately respond for comment. Since the latest assault, shipping or military authorities have not acknowledged any additional attacks in the region.

The last reported Houthi attack in the region took place June 28.

The rebels have targeted more than 70 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They seized one vessel and sank two since November.

In June, the number of Houthi attacks on merchant vessels increased to levels not seen since December, according to the JMIC. U.S.-led airstrikes have targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes on May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say.

The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of rebel support for the militant group Hamas in its war against Israel in the Gaza Strip. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the Israel-Hamas war — including some bound for Iran.

On June 28, five missiles landed near a Liberian-flagged tanker, Delinox, as it traveled off the coast of

the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, according to the JMIC. The following day, Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said the group was responsible for two attacks on ships in the Red Sea, but it wasn't immediately clear which ship was the one reported by the information center.

The Houthis also said they used a drone boat in a June 27 attack on a Malta-flagged bulk carrier, *Seajoy*. Meanwhile on Tuesday, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over 13 U.N. staffers and other aid workers who remain detained by the Houthi rebels and called for their immediate release.

"We remain extremely worried about the well-being of 13 U.N. staff and a number of NGO employees who have been detained for over a month now by the 'Ansar Allah' de facto authorities in Yemen. We continue to be refused access to them," the office said in a statement.

Of the 13 employees, the U.N. has said six work for the U.N.'s human rights agency.

Also on Tuesday, the U.S. Central Command issued a statement that its forces destroyed an uncrewed Houthi aerial vehicle in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

## In swing-state Pennsylvania, a Latino-majority city embraces a chance to sway the 2024 election

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

READING, Pa. (AP) — Religion and politics frequently overlap in Reading, an old industrial city in one of the most pivotal swing states of this year's presidential election.

In Pennsylvania, there is early precedent for this kind of thing. The state began as a haven for Quakers and other European religious minorities fleeing persecution. That includes the parents of Daniel Boone, the national folk hero born just miles from Reading, a town where the Latino population is now the majority.

Today, the Catholic mayor is also a migrant — and the first Latino to hold the office in Reading's 276-year history. Mayor Eddie Moran is keenly aware of the pivotal role Pennsylvania could play in the high-stakes race, when a few thousand votes in communities like his could decide the future of the United States.

"Right now, with the growing Latino population and the influx of Latinos moving into cities such as Reading, it's definitely an opportunity for the Latino vote to change the outcome of an election," Moran says. "It's not a secret anymore."

A community of spirituality — and Latinos

In Reading, the sky is dotted with crosses atop church steeples, one after the other. Catholic church pews fill up on Sundays and many stand for the services. Elsewhere, often in nondescript buildings, evangelical and Pentecostal congregations gather to sing, pray and sometimes speak in tongues.

Outside, salsa, merengue and reggaeton music (often sung in Spanglish) blast from cars and houses along city streets first mapped out by William Penn's sons — and that now serve a thriving downtown packed with restaurants proudly owned by Latinos.

This is a place where, when the mayor is told that his town is 65% Latino, he takes pride in saying: "It's more like 70%."

They believe in their political sway. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that eight in 10 Latino registered voters say their vote can make a difference.

On a recent Sunday, Luis Hernandez, 65, born in Puerto Rico, knelt to pray near the altar at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church. Later, walking out after Mass, Hernandez said he'll vote for Trump — even on the very day of the former president's criminal convictions related to hush money for a porn star.

"Biden is old," Hernandez says, and then reflects on how Trump is only a few years younger. "Yes, but you look at Trump and you see the difference. ... Biden's a good man. He's decent. But he's too old."

In the weeks after he spoke, many more Americans would join in calls for Biden to withdraw from the race after his debate debacle, which crystallized growing concerns that, at 81, he's too old.

Immigration is a key topic on people's lips

It's not just about Biden's age or debate performance. It's also, Hernandez says, about the border crisis. He says too many immigrants are arriving in the United States, including some he considers criminals. And,

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he adds, so much has changed since his Dominican-born father arrived in the 1960s — when, he says, it was easier to enter and stay in America.

For some, there are other issues as well.

"It's the economy, immigration and abortion," says German Vega, 41, a Dominican American who became a U.S. citizen in 2015. Vega, who describes himself as "pro-life," voted for Trump in 2020 and plans to do so again in November.

"Biden doesn't know what he's saying. He doesn't know what he's doing, and we have a country divided," Vega says. Trump is "a person of character. ... He looks confident. He never gives up; he's always fighting for what he believes."

Of course, there are some here who just don't favor taking sides — except if it's for Jesus. Listen to Pastor Alex Lopez, a Puerto Rican who cuts hair in a barber shop on the first floor of his home on Saturdays, and preaches on the second floor on Sundays.

"We're neutral," he says. "We just believe in God."

A city with deep industrial roots resurges

Reading was once synonymous with iron and steel. Those industries cemented the creation of the Reading Railroad (an early stop on the Monopoly gameboard) that helped fuel the Industrial Revolution and became, in the late 19th century, one of the country's major corporations.

Today, the city of about 95,000 people, 65 miles northwest of Philadelphia, is booming once again. Reading is 67% Latino, according to U.S. Census figures, and home to high concentrations of people of Dominican and Puerto Rican heritage — as well as Colombians and Mexicans, who own restaurants and other businesses around town.

Political candidates are taking notice of Reading's economic and political power. The 2020 presidential election in Pennsylvania was decided by about 82,000 votes, and — according to the Pew Research Center — there are more than 600,000 eligible Latino voters in the state.

It's true that Reading still leans mostly Democratic. But the Trump campaign doesn't want to miss out on the opportunity to turn it around. It recently teamed up with the Republican National Committee and Pennsylvania GOP to open a "Latino Americans for Trump" office in a red-brick building near the Democratic mayor's downtown office.

Moran has made a plea to Biden and other Democrats to take notice and visit Reading before the election. It's crucial, he says.

"I think that it's still predominantly Democratic," he says. "But the candidates need to come out and really explain that to the community."

One development, Moran says, is that religious leaders are now less hesitant to get involved in politics.

"Things change, even for churches," he says. Clergy "realize the importance that they hold as faith-based leaders and religious leaders and they're making a call of action through their congregations."

The message: Get out and vote

A few blocks from St. Peter's, a crowd gathers inside First Baptist Church, which dates to the late 19th century.

In a sign of Reading's changing demographics, the aging and shrinking congregation of white Protestants donated the building to Iglesia Jesucristo es el Rey (Church Jesus Christ is the King), a thriving Latino congregation of some 100 worshippers who have shared the building with First Baptist for nearly a decade.

Pastors Carol Pagan and her husband Jose, both from Puerto Rico, recently led prayer. At the end of the service, microphone in hand, the pastors encourage parishioners to vote in the election — irrespective of who they choose as the president.

"The right to vote is," Carol Pagan says before her husband chimes in: "a civic responsibility."

After the service, the congregation descends to the basement, where they share a traditional meal of chicken with rice and beans.

"I believe the principle of human rights have to do with both parties — or any party running," Carol Pagan says. "I always think of the elderly, of the health system, of health insurance, and how it shouldn't



be so much about capitalism but more rights for all of us to be well.”

Both of the Pagans make clear that they won't vote for Trump. They're waiting, like others, for circumstances that might lead Biden to withdraw, so they can support another Democratic candidate.

“It's our duty to shield that person with prayer — it doesn't matter if that person is a Democrat or a Republican,” Carol Pagan says. “We owe them that.”

## Las Vegas eyes record of 5th consecutive day over 115 degrees as heat wave continues to scorch US

By KEN RITTER and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Used to shrugging off the heat, Las Vegas residents are now eyeing the thermometer as the desert city is on track Wednesday to set a record for the most consecutive days over 115 degrees Fahrenheit (46.1 Celsius) amid a lingering hot spell that will continue scorching much of the U.S. into the weekend.

On Tuesday, Las Vegas flirted again with the all-time temperature record of 120 F (48.8 C) reached on Sunday, but settled for a new daily mark of 119 F (48.3 C) that smashed the old one of 116 F (46.6 C) set for the date in 2021. Forecasters say the city will likely hit a record fifth straight day above 115 F (46.1 C) on Wednesday.

Even by desert standards, the prolonged baking that Nevada's largest city is experiencing is nearly unprecedented.

“This is the most extreme heat wave in the history of record-keeping in Las Vegas since 1937,” said meteorologist John Adair, a veteran of three decades at the National Weather Service office in southern Nevada.

Tuesday's high temperature tied the mark of four straight days above 115 F (46.1 C) set in July 2005. And Adair said the record could be extended through Friday.

Alyse Sobosan said this July has been the hottest in the 15 years she has lived in Las Vegas. A counselor at a charter school that's on summer break, Sobosan said she doesn't step outside during the day if she can help it, and waits until 9 p.m. or later to walk her dogs.

“It's oppressively hot,” she said. “It's like you can't really live your life.”

It's also dangerously hot, health officials have emphasized.

“Even people of average age who are seemingly healthy can suffer heat illness when it's so hot its hard for your body to cool down,” said Alexis Brignola, an epidemiologist at the Southern Nevada Health District.

The searing heat wave gripping large parts of the U.S. also led to record daily high temperatures in Oregon, where it is suspected to have caused six deaths, the state medical examiner's office said Tuesday. More than 161 million people around the U.S. were under heat alerts Tuesday, especially in Western states.

Dozens of locations across the West tied or broke previous heat records over the weekend and are expected to keep doing so all week.

The heat was blamed for a motorcyclist's death over the weekend in Death Valley National Park. At Death Valley on Tuesday, tourists queued for photos in front of a giant thermometer that was reading 120 F (48.9 C).

Simon Pell and Lisa Gregory from London left their air-conditioned RV to experience a mid-day blast of heat that would be unthinkable back home.

“I don't need a thermometer to tell me that it's hot,” Pell said. “You hear about it in stories and and wildlife documentaries. But just for me, I wanted to experience what it would feel like. ... It's an incredible experience.”

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.

Record highs for the date were also hit Tuesday in parts of Oregon and Washington, with Portland

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reaching 103 F (39.4 C) and Salem and Eugene hitting 105 F (40.5 C). Triple digit temperatures were also recorded in Idaho.

Phoenix, which has averaged the hottest temperature ever for the first eight days of July in records dating to 1885, tied the daily record Tuesday of 116 F (46.6) set in 1958.

The high Tuesday of 106 F (41.1 C) in Reno, Nevada, broke the daily record of 104 F (40 C) last tied in 2017 and extended to four days the longest streak ever of 105 F (40.5 C) or higher. Before this week, at an elevation of 4,500 feet (1,372 meters), the city had never been that hot for more than two consecutive days in records dating to 1888.

The U.S. heat wave came as the global temperature in June was a 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. Most of this heat, trapped by human-caused climate change, is from long-term warming from greenhouse gases emitted by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, scientists say.

In Las Vegas, hotels and casinos keep their visitors cool with massive AC units. But for homeless residents and others without access to safe environments, officials have set up emergency cooling centers at community centers across southern Nevada.

Firefighters in Henderson, Nevada, last week became the first in the region to deploy what city spokesperson Madeleine Skains called "polar pods" used to cool a person exhibiting symptoms of heat stroke or a related medical emergency.

Skains said four vehicles, including battalion chiefs in the city of more than 330,000 residents have the devices that are similar to units first put into use a month ago in Phoenix. They can be filled with water and ice to immerse a medical patient in cold water on the way to a hospital.

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

A new blaze in Oregon, dubbed the Larch Creek Fire, quickly grew to more than 5 square miles (12 square kilometers) Tuesday evening as flames tore through grassland in Wasco County. Evacuations were ordered for remote homes about 15 miles (24 kilometers) south of The Dalles.

In California, firefighters were battling least 18 wildfires Tuesday, including a 42-square-mile (109-square-kilometer) blaze that prompted evacuation orders for about 200 residences in the mountains of Santa Barbara County. The Lake Fire was only 16% contained, and forecasters warned of a "volatile combination" of high heat, low humidity and northwest winds developing late in the day.

Northeast of Los Angeles, the 2-square-mile (5-square-kilometer) Vista Fire chewed through trees in the San Bernardino National Forest and sent up a huge plume of smoke visible across the region.

The National Weather Service said it was extending the excessive heat warnings across most of the Southwest U.S. through Saturday morning.

"It's not over yet," the service in Reno said.

## Houston residents left sweltering after Beryl with over 1.7 million still lacking power

By JUAN A. LOZANO and MARK VANCLEAVE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The return of searing heat in the Houston area has deepened the misery for people still without power after Hurricane Beryl crashed into Texas and left residents in search of places to cool off and fuel up as the extended outages strained one of the nation's largest cities.

More than 1.7 million homes and businesses still lacked electricity Tuesday night, down from a peak of over 2.7 million on Monday, according to PowerOutage.us. As frustration mounted, state officials faced questions over whether the power utility that covers much of the area had sufficiently prepared.

Nearly 36 hours after Beryl made landfall, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said that a sports and event complex would be used to temporarily hold up to 250 hospital patients who are awaiting discharge but cannot be released to homes with no power.

People were coping as best they could.

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"We can handle it, but not the kids," Walter Perez said as he arrived at celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's megachurch in Houston, which served as a cooling center and distributed 40-bottle packs of water.

Perez said his wife, 3-year-old son, 3-week-old daughter and his father-in-law retreated from their apartment after a night he described as "bad, bad, bad, bad."

An executive for CenterPoint Energy, which covers much of the Houston area, defended the utility's preparation and response.

"From my perspective to have a storm pass at 3 p.m. in the afternoon, have those crews come in in the late evening, and have everything ready by 5 a.m. to go out and get out and start the workforce is rather impressive because we're talking about thousands of crews," Brad Tutunjian, vice president of regulatory policy with CenterPoint Energy, said at a media briefing.

Highs in the Houston area on Tuesday climbed back into the 90s (above 32.2 Celsius) with humidity that made it feel even hotter. Similar heat and humidity was expected Wednesday. The National Weather Service described the conditions as potentially dangerous given the lack of power and air conditioning.

Beryl, which made landfall early Monday as a Category 1 hurricane, has been blamed for at least seven U.S. deaths — one in Louisiana and six in Texas — and at least 11 in the Caribbean.

Nim Kidd, head of the state's division of emergency management, emphasized that restoring power was the top priority.

Patrick, who is serving as acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is overseas, said nursing homes and assisted living centers were the highest priority. Sixteen hospitals were running on generator power Tuesday morning, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

For many in the Houston area it was a miserable repeat after storms in May killed eight people and left nearly 1 million without power amid flooded streets.

Patrons on Tuesday lined up on one block to eat at KFC, Jack in the Box or Denny's. Dwight Yell took a disabled neighbor who did not have power to Denny's for some food.

He complained that city and state officials did not alert residents well enough to a storm initially projected to land much farther down the coast: "They didn't give us enough warning, where maybe we could go get gas or prepare to go out of town if the lights go out."

Robin Taylor, who got takeout from Denny's, has been living a hotel since her home was damaged by the storms in May. When Beryl hit, her hotel room flooded.

"No WiFi, no power, and it's hot outside," Taylor said. "People will die in this heat in their homes."

Kyuta Allen brought her family to a Houston community center to cool down and use the internet.

"During the day you can have the doors open but at night you've got to board up and lock up — lock yourself like into a sauna," she said.

## Frustrations mount in the Houston heat after Beryl moves on and leaves millions without power

By JUAN A. LOZANO and MARK VANCLEAVE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The return of soaring heat in Houston on Tuesday deepened the misery for millions of people still without power after Hurricane Beryl crashed into Texas and left residents in search of places to cool off and fuel up as the extended outages strained one of the nation's largest cities.

Frustration mounted that Houston appeared to buckle under a storm less powerful than previous ones. State officials faced questions over whether Houston's power utility had sufficiently prepared, including one who said he would withhold judgement until after the lights are back on.

Hospitals also started to feel the pinch: Nearly 36 hours after Beryl made landfall, Texas' lieutenant governor said a sports and event complex would be used to temporarily hold up to 250 patients who are awaiting discharge but cannot be released to homes with no power.

People coped as best they could.

"We can handle it, but not the kids," said Walter Perez, 49, as he arrived early Tuesday at celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's megachurch in Houston, which served as a cooling center and distributed 40-bottle

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packs of water.

Perez said his family — including his wife, a 3-year-old son, a 3-week-old daughter and his father-in-law — retreated from their apartment after a night he described as “bad, bad, bad, bad.”

Highs in the Houston on Tuesday climbed back into the 90s (above 32.2 Celsius) and humidity that could make it feel even hotter. The National Weather Service described the conditions as potentially dangerous given the lack of power and air conditioning.

Beryl, which made landfall early Monday as a Category 1 hurricane, has been blamed for at least seven U.S. deaths — one in Louisiana and six in Texas — and at least 11 in the Caribbean.

Nearly 2 million homes and businesses around Houston lacked electricity Tuesday, down from a peak of over 2.7 million on Monday, according to PowerOutage.us. For many, it was a miserable repeat after storms in May killed eight people and left nearly 1 million without power amid flooded streets.

Food spoiled in listless refrigerators in neighborhoods that pined for air conditioning. Long lines of cars and people queued up at any fast food restaurant, food truck or gas station that had power and was open.

Patrons lined up on one block to eat at KFC, Jack in the Box or Denny’s — or just to get a few minutes in some cooler air. Dwight Yell, 54, had power at his house but took a disabled neighbor, who did not, to Denny’s for some food.

He complained that city and state officials did not alert residents well enough to a storm initially projected to land much farther down the coast: “They didn’t give us enough warning, where maybe we could go get gas or prepare to go out of town if the lights go out.”

Robin Taylor, who got takeout from Denny’s, was getting tired of the same old struggle. She has been living a hotel since her home was damaged by the storms in May. When Beryl hit, her hotel room flooded.

She was angry that Houston didn’t appear prepared to handle the Category 1 storm after it had weathered much stronger ones in the past.

“No WiFi, no power, and it’s hot outside. That’s dangerous for people. That’s really the big issue,” Taylor said. “People will die in this heat in their homes.”

Nim Kidd, head of the state’s division of emergency management, emphasized that restoring power was the top priority. CenterPoint Energy in Houston has said it aims to restore power to 1 million customers by the end of Wednesday.

But for others, getting the lights back could take several more days or longer. Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is serving as acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is overseas, said nursing homes and assisted living centers were the highest priority. Sixteen hospitals were running on generator power Tuesday morning, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Patrick urged utilities to restore power quickly and said he would evaluate later whether they did enough before the storm.

An executive for CenterPoint Energy, which covers much of the Houston area, defended the utility’s preparation and response.

“From my perspective to have a storm pass at 3 p.m. in the afternoon, have those crews come in in the late evening, and have everything ready by 5 a.m. to go out and get out and start the workforce is rather impressive because we’re talking about thousands of crews,” Brad Tutunjian, vice president of regulatory policy with CenterPoint Energy, said at a media briefing on Tuesday.

Kyuta Allen brought her family to a Houston community center to cool down and use the internet for work and the night classes she takes online.

“During the day you can have the doors open but at night you’ve got to board up and lock up – lock yourself like into a sauna,” she said.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry issued a state of emergency Tuesday afternoon for part of that state after trees were knocked down, homes were damaged and thousands lost power.

When Beryl made landfall, it was far less powerful than the Category 5 behemoth that tore a deadly path through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Beryl was the earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 in the Atlantic. 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.



## Messi's 109th goal leads defending champion Argentina over Canada 2-0 and into Copa America final

By RONALD BLUM AP Sports Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Lionel Messi and Argentina moved within one win of joining Spain as the only nations to win three straight major titles.

"It's insane what this team has done, what the Argentina national team is doing," Messi said Tuesday night after his 109th international goal sealed a 2-0 victory over Canada that earned a berth in this weekend's Copa America final. "For those who remain from the old guard, it's beyond impressive that the national team is in another final."

Julián Álvarez put the Albiceleste ahead in the 22nd minute, controlling a long pass from Rodrigo De Paul, taking two touches to get away from Moïse Bombito and slipping the ball through the legs of goalkeeper Maxime Crépeau for his ninth international goal.

Messi redirected Enzo Fernández's shot following a poor Ismaël Koné clearance in off the face of Crépeau from 4 yards in the 51st for his first goal of the tournament. Messi has 28 goals in his last 25 matches for Argentina and 14 in Copa America play, three shy of the record. He has scored against 38 different nations.

"I wasn't sure if Enzo's ball was going to get in," Messi said. "It was a reflex."

Only Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo with 130 has more international goals than Messi, who turned 37 on June 24. Iran's Ali Daei had 108 or 109 from 1993 to 2006, with a lingering dispute over whether a goal against Ecuador in 2000 occurred in a full international match.

With a victory on its independence day, Argentina extended its unbeaten streak to 10 games. The Albiceleste seek a record 16th Copa title when they play Uruguay or Colombia on Sunday at Miami Gardens, Florida.

"We have to enjoy every moment of what we're are living," Messi said. "I'm conscious that these are the last battles."

Trying to string together Copa America titles around the 2022 World Cup championship, Argentina hopes to match Spain's feat of winning the 2008 and 2012 European Championships along with the 2010 World Cup.

"These are statistics. I'm not really interested about it," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said through a translator. "The most important thing is to win."

Making his 38th Copa America appearance, Messi had missed Argentina's group stage finale with a leg injury and was subdued while playing 90 minutes in the quarterfinal win over Ecuador. He was much more agile and shot just wide in the 12th and 44th minutes.

Messi had 45 touches and a 79% pass success rate.

"They make us pay on small details," Crépeau said.

MetLife's temporary grass surface appeared heavy, with water splashing and sand popping up during dribbles.

"It's has been a very difficult Copa América," Messi said, "very competitive, bad surfaces, excessive heat."

Argentina fans gathered in Times Square on the eve of the match and filled the streets on Manhattan before heading to MetLife Stadium. The crowd of 80,102 on a night with an 82-degree temperature and 82% humidity was overwhelmingly pro-Argentina, with only a few sections dominated by red-clad Canadian supporters.

It was among the biggest games for Canadian soccer, which went 0-6 in its only World Cup appearances in 1986 and 2022 and won its only major title at the 2000 CONCACAF Gold Cup. Argentina had beaten Canada 2-0 in the tournament opener on June 20.

"The tournament caught up with us a little bit," Canada coach Jesse Marsch said. "There's been heat, there's been travel, there's been a lot of challenges. ... We're still at the beginnings of our process, right? Argentina's maybe had eight years together, seven years together with this team, and so we need to develop more players that can contribute so that we can also rotate in tournament play, because eventually

the physicality and the fatigue can catch up with you.”

Canada star Alphonso Davies limped off in the 71st minute after his right leg was caught in a clean challenge with Gonzalo Montiel.

“He’s getting an X-ray, so we’re hopeful he’s OK, but we’re not sure,” Marsch said.

Canada had two shots on target: Jonathan David was thwarted by Emiliano Martínez from close range in first-half stoppage time, and Martínez made a kick save on Tani Oluwaseyi in the 89th.

“We started getting sloppy. We started getting away from the game plan,” said defender Derek Cornelius, who exchanged jerseys with Messi.

While Messi referred to “last battles,” Scaloni and fans hold out hope Argentina and Messi will return to MetLife for the 2026 World Cup final.

“We will never be the ones to close the door,” Scaloni said. “He can be with our team for as long as he wants to be.”

## **Airstrike kills 25 in southern Gaza as Israeli assault on Gaza City shuts down medical facilities**

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli airstrike on a school-turned-shelter in southern Gaza killed at least 25 Palestinians on Tuesday, as heavy bombardment in the north forced the closure of medical facilities in Gaza City and sent thousands fleeing in search of increasingly elusive refuge.

Israel’s new ground assault in Gaza’s largest city is its latest effort to battle Hamas militants regrouping in areas the army previously said had been largely cleared.

Large parts of Gaza City and urban areas around it have been flattened or left a shattered landscape after nine months of fighting. Much of the population fled earlier in the war, but several hundred thousand Palestinians remain in the north.

“The fighting has been intense,” said Hakeem Abdel-Bar, who fled Gaza City’s Tuffah district to the home of relatives in another part of the city. He said Israeli warplanes and drones were “striking anything moving” and that tanks had moved into central districts.

The strike at the entrance to the school killed at least 25 people, according to an Associated Press reporter who counted the bodies at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis. Hospital spokesperson Weam Fares said the dead included at least seven women and children and that the toll was likely to rise.

Earlier airstrikes in central Gaza killed at least 14 people, including a woman and four children, according to two hospitals that received the bodies. Israel has repeatedly struck what it says are militant targets across Gaza since the start of the war nine months ago.

The military blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense, urban areas, but the army rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children. The Israeli army said the airstrike near the school and reports of civilian casualties were under review, and claimed the strike targeted a Hamas militant who took part in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

There was also no immediate word on casualties in Gaza City. Families whose relatives were wounded or trapped were calling for ambulances, but first responders could not reach most of the affected districts because of the Israeli operations, said Nebal Farsakh, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Red Crescent.

“It’s a dangerous zone,” she said.

After Israel on Monday called for an evacuation from eastern and central parts of Gaza City, staff at two hospitals — Al-Ahli and the Patients Friends Association Hospital — rushed to move patients and shut down, the United Nations said. Farsakh said all three medical facilities run by the Red Crescent in Gaza City had closed.

Scores of patients were transferred to the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, which itself was the scene of heavy fighting earlier in the war. “We do not know where to go. There is no treatment and no necessities for life,” said Mohammad Abu Naser, who was being treated there. “We are dying slowly.”

The Israeli military said Tuesday that it told hospitals and other medical facilities in Gaza City they did not

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need to evacuate. But hospitals in Gaza have often shut down and moved patients at any sign of possible Israeli military action, fearing raids.

The Episcopal Church in the Middle East, which operates Al-Ahli, said the hospital was "compelled to close by the Israeli army" after the evacuation orders and a wave of nearby drone strikes on Sunday.

In the past nine months, Israeli troops have occupied at least eight hospitals, causing the deaths of patients and medical workers along with massive destruction to facilities and equipment. Israel has claimed Hamas uses hospitals for military purposes, though it has provided only limited evidence.

Only 13 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are functioning, and those only partially, according to the United Nations' humanitarian office.

Israel's campaign in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, has killed or wounded more than 5% of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Nearly the entire population has been driven from their homes. Many have been displaced multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into sweltering tent camps.

The U.N. humanitarian office said the exodus in Gaza City was "dangerously chaotic," with people instructed to flee through neighborhoods where fighting was underway.

"People have been observed fleeing in multiple directions, not knowing which way may be safest," the agency said in a statement. It said the largest U.N. bakery in the city was forced to close, and that the fighting had blocked aid groups from accessing warehouses.

Maha Mahfouz, a mother of two, said she fled twice in the past 24 hours. She first rushed from her home in Gaza City to a relative's house in another neighborhood. When that became dangerous, she fled Monday night to Shati, a decades-old refugee camp that has grown into an urban district where Israel has carried out repeated raids.

She described vast destruction in the areas targeted in the latest raids. "The buildings were destroyed. The roads were destroyed. All has become rubble," she said.

The Israeli military has said it had intelligence showing that militants from Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group were regrouping in central Gaza City. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of hiding among civilians. In Shijaiyah, a Gaza City neighborhood that has seen weeks of fighting, the military said it had destroyed 6 kilometers (3 miles) of Hamas tunnels.

Hamas has warned that the latest raids in Gaza City could lead to the collapse of negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage-release deal.

Israel and Hamas had appeared to narrow the gaps in recent days, with the U.S., Egypt and Qatar mediating.

CIA Director William Burns met Tuesday with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo to discuss the negotiations, el-Sissi's office said. More talks were to be held Wednesday in Qatar, where Hamas maintains a political office.

But obstacles remain, even after Hamas agreed to relent on its key demand that Israel commit to ending the war as part of any agreement. Hamas still wants mediators to guarantee that negotiations conclude with a permanent cease-fire.

Israel has rejected any deal that would force it to end the war with Hamas intact. Hamas on Monday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of "putting more obstacles in the way of negotiations," including the operations in Gaza City.

Hamas' cross-border raid on Oct. 7 killed 1,200 people in southern Israel, most of them civilians, according to Israeli authorities. The militants took roughly 250 people hostage. About 120 are still in captivity, with about a third said to be dead.

Israel's bombardment and offensives in Gaza have killed more than 38,200 people and wounded more than 88,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

## **A double-decker bus collides with a milk truck in northern India, killing at least 18 people**

By BISWAJEET BANERJEE Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — A double-decker passenger bus collided with a milk truck in northern India on Wednesday, killing at least 18 people and injuring many others, officials said.

The collision occurred on an expressway in Uttar Pradesh state, and 19 injured people were rushed to the hospital by villagers in the area, said police officer Arvind Kumar, adding that their condition was reported to be stable. The bus was traveling from the northern state of Bihar to the capital New Delhi.

"Authorities are in the process of identifying the victims, and a probe has been launched to determine the exact cause of the accident," Kumar added.

Gaurang Rathi, a government official, said that according to a preliminary investigation the bus may have been speeding when it struck the milk truck from behind, which led both vehicles to overturn. The collision was severe enough that one side of the bus was torn off, causing passengers to be ejected from the vehicle. Images on television showed bodies scattered across the road.

India has some of the highest road death rates in the world, with hundreds of thousands of people killed and injured annually. Most crashes are blamed on reckless driving, poorly maintained roads and aging vehicles.

In May, a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims skidded and rolled into a deep gorge on a mountainous highway in Indian-controlled Kashmir, killing at least 21 people.

## **Kenya's president warns of huge consequences after his effort to address an \$80 billion debt fails**

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The ballooning debt in East Africa's economic hub of Kenya is expected to grow even more after deadly protests forced the rejection of a finance bill that President William Ruto said was needed to raise revenue. He now warns "it will have huge consequences."

Facing public calls to resign, Ruto has said the government will turn to slashing a \$2.7 billion budget deficit by half and borrowing the rest, without saying from where.

After anger over bloated bureaucracy and luxurious lives of senior officials helped to fuel the protests, Ruto also has promised funding cuts in his own office and said funding would stop for the offices of the first lady, the "second lady" — the wife of the vice president — and the wife of the prime Cabinet secretary. Almost four dozen state enterprises with overlapping roles will be closed.

Ruto has become deeply unpopular in his two years in office over his quest to introduce taxes meant to enable Kenya to repay its \$80 billion public debt to lenders including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and China.

The public debt makes up about 70% of Kenya's gross domestic product, the highest in 20 years.

How Ruto's administration will find the money to pay off debt without further angering millions of Kenyans barely getting by, and without slowing down the economy, is the key question. The economy grew 5.6% in 2023.

Economist Mbui Wagacha, a former adviser to previous President Uhuru Kenyatta, said Kenya needs a professional budget and management body like the Office of Management and Budget in the U.S. Currently, Kenya's treasury makes budget estimates and forwards them to the parliamentary finance committee, which creates the finance bills.

"Parliament has abdicated its mandate on the public finances in the Constitution and it's looking after its own interests," Wagacha said in an interview.

He said further borrowing by Kenya could be "disastrous" and proposed a strategy of using diplomacy to attract investment and restructuring the debt in an attempt to get creditors to write off some of it.

Another economist, Ken Gichinga, agreed that government borrowing will slow down Kenya's economy.



Businesses still haven't recovered from the effects of the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, he said.

"When the government borrows more, interest rates go up. And when interest rates go up, businesses slow down, the economy slows down, due to the high cost of repayment," Gichinga said.

Kenya's president has advocated self-sustainability, saying the country should raise more revenue instead borrowing. "If we are a serious state, we must be able to enhance our taxes," he said in May.

But Kenyans have rejected attempts to raise taxes as they struggle with rising prices on basic goods, even storming parliament during the recent protests.

Last week, days after announcing he would not sign the finance bill he once championed, Ruto said he had worked hard "to pull Kenya out of a debt trap" and that huge consequences lie ahead.

Wagacha said economic growth must come before the government increases revenue targets and tax collection.

"You create an expanded economy with employment and with investment, and people have money in their pockets. It's much easier for them to hear about your request for taxes," he said.

He suggested making access to low-interest credit easier for businesses in key sectors like tourism and agriculture, saying small businesses hold the key to Kenya's economic growth as they tend to absorb many employees. That could help address high youth unemployment.

The government should incentivize businesses to create jobs with low taxation and lower interest rates, Gichinga said: "At the end of the day, we need a jobs-centered economic policy. That's what we've been lacking."

The IMF, which had suggested some of the controversial tax changes, has been a target of Kenya's public dissatisfaction. Some protesters had posters with messages such as "IMF stop colonialism."

In a statement late last month, the IMF said it was monitoring the situation in Kenya, adding that its main goal was to help it "overcome the difficult economic challenges it faces and improve its economic prospects and the well-being of its people."

The IMF needs to do more for Kenya beyond focusing on debt sustainability and be a "strong development partner," Gichinga said.

## **Their Vermont homes were inundated by extreme flooding. A year later, they still struggle to recover**

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A year after catastrophic flooding inundated parts of Vermont, Lisa Edson Neveu and her two teenage sons still live in their flood-wracked home, despite unrepaired damage that festers like an open wound: torn-out walls and floors, a missing ceiling in one room and a downstairs bathroom that is no more. The family's kitchen was destroyed so they cook meals on an outdoor grill, an electric frying pan or an air fryer.

"The flood was terrible. The water was high. It was rushing off the back hillside. It was dark, it was stormy. All of this was awful but that isn't the part that's been really traumatic," said Neveu, 52. "That part everybody was amazing, neighbors helped neighbors, the community helped each other. The National Guard was incredible. What has been traumatic and just beyond anything I can even explain is how awful the last year has been."

Since last July's flooding that left the capital city of Montpelier under waist-high water, it's been "a battle with insurance companies, the adjusters, the city, the state and FEMA and the federal government and nothing is in line with anything else," Neveu said.

A year later, the family is still in limbo as the city determines which homes it can elevate — raise above the flood threat — or buy with funding allocated by the Legislature. But Neveu and her neighbor doubt the city will have enough money to do all the work and say there isn't a solid plan a year after the flooding.

They are not alone. A number of Vermonters in Montpelier, nearby Barre and elsewhere around the state remain in the throes of the flooding aftermath, waiting to hear whether their homes will be elevated or

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FEMA will buy them out, a process that could take years.

In May, Vermont became the first state to enact a law requiring fossil fuel companies to pay a share of the damage caused by extreme weather fueled by climate change. Republican Gov. Phil Scott allowed the bill to become law without his signature, saying he is very concerned about the costs and outcome of the small state taking on "Big Oil" alone in what will likely be a grueling legal fight. But he acknowledged that he understands something has to be done to address the toll of climate change.

Montpelier Mayor Jack McCullough said the small city is still showing scars from the flooding.

"It's not over for some people who are here," he said. About a dozen homes were severely damaged.

But the city has come back in several ways, he added. Most of the downtown buildings and businesses have reopened and most of the flood victims are back in their homes, he said.

"We are moving forward but it's still going to take more time," he said.

Mike Miller, the city's planning director, said Neveu's home is at the top of the list to be elevated and if the city does one this year it will be hers unless some unforeseen technical issue arises. Most will likely happen next year, he said.

"Our goal is to save as many housing units as possible," he said by email.

More than 3,160 homes statewide had enough damage to merit repair assistance from FEMA, according to Douglas Farnham, the state's chief recovery officer. Towns are still doing assessments of severely damaged homes but so far 200 homeowners are interested in buyouts, he said by email.

Ed Haggett, 70, who lived next door to Neveu, is one of them.

"I lived here 47 years," he said. "It was my retirement. I was a single parent, I raised my daughter. I sunk everything into it, paid it off and I thought I was set but I wasn't. I lost everything."

For the past year, Haggett has been living with his daughter and grandchildren and their significant others — seven adults — while he waits for a decision on whether Montpelier or FEMA will buy his severely damaged home. He can't afford the cost to repair it and plans to get a loan from the Small Business Administration to build an addition onto his daughter's home. But he said the organization lost his application in January for seven weeks, delaying the process.

Haggett's homeowners' insurance only paid for part of the damage, he said. For the last year, he's been sleeping in his daughter's den. The bureaucratic delays and uncertainty take a toll on people's health, he said.

"It's extremely, extremely, extremely frustrating," Haggett said.

McCullough said the city is hoping to have enough funds to get the homes of the some of the hardest-hit people elevated or bought out, but wasn't sure when.

In the nearby city of Barre, about 350 residential and commercial structures had some type of damage from last July's flooding, according to city manager Nicolas Storellicastro. Sixty-two applications — both residential and commercial — have been submitted for buyouts and 10 homes have been identified for elevations, Storellicastro said.

Down the road in Berlin, last July's flooding mangled the mobile home where Sara Morris, her husband, their three kids and his mother were living. For the last year, they've been staying with her mother and husband, and her brother — nine people in a three-bedroom house.

"There's no space. We're on top of each other," she said. "It's finally starting to get to where we are cracking at each other. We're snapping, we're arguing a little bit more."

She has her children in counseling because of what the family has endured.

"I feel like sometimes I've lost kind of my kids a little bit just because of everything we've gone through," she said.

Last month they were finally able to buy another mobile home and land, about 3 acres (1.21 hectare) in Middlesex. The home arrives in late August and they expect it will be ready for move-in by mid-September.

"I really wanted to make something better out of what we went through," Morris said. "And I was determined."

Neveu lives in a flood zone and had flood insurance but it only paid out half, she said. The house wasn't

damaged by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and she never expected the water to reach the first floor last year. For now, while the house is in disrepair, she and her boys have strung party lights on the walls, mounted a flat-screen TV, and hung up artwork and a beloved chiming clock. They often spend evenings out on large porch with friends and enjoy watching the wide Winooski River across the street.

The family loves seeing downtown Montpelier being rebuilt and businesses reopen but it also makes them feel left behind, she said.

"It's so bizarrely alienating because we haven't been able to move forward at all," Neveu said. "We're thrilled at any positive movement but it's really crazy a whole year later there isn't even a plan. And not because we haven't tried."

## China's landfills brim with textile waste as fast fashion reigns and recycling takes a back seat

By TIAN MACLEOD JI Associated Press

WENZHOU, China (AP) — At a factory in Zhejiang province on China's eastern coast, two mounds of discarded cotton clothing and bed linens, loosely separated into dark and light colors, pile up on a workroom floor. Jacket sleeves, collars and brand labels protrude from the stacks as workers feed the garments into shredding machines.

It's the first stage of a new life for the textiles, part of a recycling effort at the Wenzhou Tiancheng Textile Company, one of the largest cotton recycling plants in China.

Textile waste is an urgent global problem, with only 12% recycled worldwide, according to fashion sustainability nonprofit Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Even less — only 1% — are castoff clothes recycled into new garments; the majority is used for low-value items like insulation or mattress stuffing.

Nowhere is the problem more pressing than in China, the world's largest textile producer and consumer, where more than 26 million tons of clothes are thrown away each year, according to government statistics. Most of it ends up in landfills.

And factories like this one are barely making a dent in a country whose clothing industry is dominated by "fast fashion" — cheap clothes made from unrecyclable synthetics, not cotton. Produced from petrochemicals that contribute to climate change, air and water pollution, synthetics account for 70% of domestic clothing sales in China.

China's footprint is worldwide: E-commerce juggernaut brands Shein and Temu make the country one of the world's largest producers of cheap fashion, selling in more than 150 countries.

To achieve a game-changing impact, what fashion expert Shaway Yeh calls "circular sustainability" is needed among major Chinese clothing brands so waste is avoided entirely.

"You need to start it from recyclable fibers and then all these waste textiles will be put into use again," she said.

But that is an elusive goal: Only about 20% of China's textiles are recycled, according to the Chinese government — and almost all of that is cotton.

Chinese cotton is not without a taint of its own, said Claudia Bennett of the nonprofit Human Rights Foundation. Much of it comes from forced labor in Xinjiang province by the country's ethnic Uyghur minority.

"One-in-five cotton garments globally is linked to Uyghur forced labor," Bennett said.

In May, the U.S. blocked imports from 26 Chinese cotton traders and warehouses to avoid goods made with Uyghur forced labor. But because the supply chain is so sketchy, Uyghur cotton is used in garments produced in other countries that don't bear the "made-in-China" label, Bennett said.

"Many, many, many clothing brands are linked to Uyghur forced labor through the cotton," she said. They "hide behind the lack of transparency in the supply chain."

While China is a global leader in the production of electric cars and electric-powered public transit and has set a goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, its efforts in promoting fashion sustainability and recycling textiles have taken a back seat.

According to a report this year from independent fashion watchdog Remake assessing major clothing

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companies on their environmental, human rights and equitability practices, there's little accountability among the best-known brands.

The group gave Shein, whose online marketplace groups about 6,000 Chinese clothing factories under its label, just 6 out of a possible 150 points. Temu scored zero.

Also getting zero were U.S. label SKIMS, co-founded by Kim Kardashian, and low-price brand Fashion Nova. U.S. retailer Everlane was the highest-scorer at 40 points, with only half of those for sustainability practices.

China's domestic policy doesn't help.

Cotton recycled from used clothing is banned from being used to make new garments inside China. This rule was initially aimed at stamping out fly-by-night Chinese operations recycling dirty or otherwise contaminated material.

But now it means the huge spools of tightly woven rope-like cotton yarn produced at the Wenzhou Tiancheng factory from used clothing can only be sold for export, mostly to Europe.

Making matters worse, many Chinese consumers are unwilling to buy used items anyway, something the Wenzhou factory sales director, Kowen Tang, attributes to increasing household incomes.

"They want to buy new clothes, the new stuff," he said of the stigma associated with buying used.

Still, among younger Chinese, a growing awareness of sustainability has contributed to the emergence of fledgling "remade" clothing businesses.

Thirty-year-old designer Da Bao founded Times Remake in 2019, a Shanghai-based brand that takes secondhand clothes and refashions them into new garments. At the company's work room in Shanghai, tailors work with secondhand denims and sweatshirts, stitching them into funky new fashions.

The venture, which began with Da Bao and his father-in-law posting their one-off designs online, now has a flagship store in Shanghai's trendy Jing'an District that stocks their remade garments alongside vintage items, such as Levi's and Carhartt jackets.

The designs are "a combination of the past style and current fashion aesthetic to create something unique," Bao said.

Zhang Na has a fashion label, Reclothing Bank, that sells clothes, bags and other accessories made from materials such as plastic bottles, fishing nets and flour sacks.

The items' labels have QR codes that show their composition, how they were made and the provenance of the materials. Zhang draws on well-established production methods, such as textile fibers made from pineapple leaf, a centuries-old tradition originating in the Philippines.

"We can basically develop thousands of new fabrics and new materials," she said.

Reclothing Bank began in 2010 to give "new life to old things," Zhang said of her store in a historic Shanghai alley with a mix of Western and Chinese architecture. A large used clothes deposit box sat outside the entrance.

"Old items actually carry a lot of people's memories and emotions," she said.

Zhang said she has seen sustainability consciousness grow since she opened her store, with core customers in their 20s and 30s.

Bao Yang, a college student who dropped by the store on a visit to Shanghai, said she was surprised at the feel of the clothes.

"I think it's amazing, because when I first entered the door, I heard that many of the clothes were actually made of shells or corn (husks), but when I touched the clothes in detail, I had absolutely no idea that they would have this very comfortable feel," she said.

Still, she conceded that buying sustainable clothing is a hard sell. "People of my age are more addicted to fast fashion, or they do not think about the sustainability of clothes," she said.

Recycled garments sold at stores like Reclothing Bank have a much higher price tag than fast-fashion brands due to their costly production methods.

And therein lies the real problem, said Sheng Lu, professor of fashion and apparel studies at the University of Delaware.

"Studies repeatedly show consumers are not willing to pay higher for clothing made from recycled materi-



als, and instead they actually expect a lower price because they see such clothing as made of secondhand stuff," he said.

With higher costs in acquiring, sorting and processing used garments, he doesn't see sustainable fashion succeeding on a wide scale in China, where clothes are so cheap to make.

"Companies do not have the financial incentive," he said.

For real change there needs to be "more clear signals from the very top," he added, referring to government targets like the ones that propelled China's EV industry.

Still, in China "government can be a friend to any sector," Lu said, so if China's communist leaders see economic potential, it could trigger a policy shift that drives new investment in sustainable fashion.

But for now, the plastic-wrapped cones of tightly-wound cotton being loaded onto trucks outside the Wenzhou Tiancheng factory were all headed to overseas markets, far from where their recycling journey began.

"Fast fashion definitely is not out of fashion" in China, Lu said.

## **Biden to meet Wednesday with top union leaders as he seeks to reassure worried Democrats**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing pressure from within his own party to abandon his reelection campaign, President Joe Biden is relying on labor unions to help make the case that his record in office matters more than his age.

The 81-year-old Democrat is set to meet Wednesday with the executive council of the AFL-CIO, America's largest federation of trade unions.

The AFL-CIO said the president has been booked to attend the meeting for more than a year, but his participation now involves much higher scrutiny after his weak debate performance against Donald Trump raised fears about his ability to compete in November's election. His sit-down with union officials also overlaps with the NATO summit in Washington, where Biden is navigating geopolitics with other world leaders.

A person who has been involved in past executive council meetings described them as largely informal and unscripted, a sign that Biden will not be able to rely on a prepared text as he seeks to solidify support among a group of union leaders who are both loyal to his administration and pragmatic. The person insisted on anonymity to preview the private meeting.

A White House official, insisting on anonymity to preview the meeting, said that Biden intends to thank the union leaders for their support and outline his plans for the future. Biden is close to many union leaders who will be in the room, and considers AFL-CIO president Liz Shuler to be a personal friend.

The council is composed of more than 50 officials from the unions that compose the AFL-CIO, with the group representing 12.5 million union members.

So far, the unions are sticking with the Biden administration despite widespread fears that his age handicaps his candidacy after his shaky performance in the June 27 debate. But some statements of support are also worded diplomatically to suggest a degree of flexibility in case Biden chooses to drop out — saying they back the Biden-Harris administration and not just Biden personally.

"President Biden and Vice President Harris have always had workers' backs — and we will have theirs," Shuler, the AFL-CIO president, said after the debate.

After Biden was interviewed by ABC News last week in the aftermath of his poor debate, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, posted on X: "Biden is an incredible President and tonight we saw that he's on top of the details. He has my support and we're ready to keep working for Biden-Harris to win in November."

Some union leaders have been more targeted in their support for Biden and his continued candidacy.

United Steelworkers International President David McCall said before Wednesday's meeting that his union "proudly supports" Biden, saying that his "record of delivering for working people stands for itself."

Kenneth Cooper, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, was also firmly behind

Biden, saying that his union members "couldn't ask for a stronger advocate."

Wednesday's meeting has become a test of the union movement's strategy to emphasize Biden's policy agenda as a way to overcome doubts about his candidacy. Biden routinely holds his events at union halls. He has conversed regularly with several of the union leaders at Wednesday's meeting, knowing that the group is a key link at the local level to the voters that he says make him the Democrats' best candidate in November.

Over the course of his term, Biden has tied his administration to the idea that labor unions built the middle class. He visited a picket line during the auto strikes, backed the steelworkers union in objecting to Nippon Steel taking over U.S. Steel, saved pensions for union workers as part of his pandemic aid and sided with unions on a new rule to make more workers eligible for overtime pay.

Biden is so mindful of union workers that he recently canceled a speech planned for the conference of the National Education Association in Philadelphia after the union's staff announced a strike and formed a picket line.

One person familiar with the labor movement's thinking said there is an acknowledgment that Biden lost some ground among voters after the debate, but the unions have found that one-on-one conversations about Biden's agenda are mattering more to members and their families than his age and health. Their pitch is that Biden's agenda has directly helped union workers while Trump's plans could leave them worse off.

The AFL-CIO has raised 42 specific objections to Trump's time as president from 2017 to 2021. It noted that the Republican, who recently proposed making tips paid to workers tax-free, had also as president implemented a proposal to let bosses pocket their employees' tips, among other concerns about his tax cuts and efforts to restrict unionization.

Trump has also made a play for union members, having met in January with officials in the Teamsters Union and saying afterward that although Republicans generally don't get backing from organized labor, "in my case it's different because I've employed thousands of Teamsters and I thought we should come over and pay our respects."

The former president has portrayed himself as supporting blue-collar workers, with the Teamsters president Sean O'Brien later saying that there's "no doubt" that Trump enjoys some support from union members. O'Brien is scheduled to speak at the Republican National Convention next week in Milwaukee at Trump's invitation.

In 2020, AP VoteCast found that 16% of voters came from union households and 56% of them supported Biden. Biden and Trump essentially split non-union households in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, meaning that the Democrat's edge with union households was likely a critical factor in his victory.

## Trump revels in Democratic turmoil as he returns to campaign trail and teases VP pick

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday revealed in the mounting turmoil surrounding President Joe Biden's campaign in the wake of their debate and teased the expected announcement of his Republican running mate with one of the top contenders, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, in attendance.

After days spent lying low, golfing and letting Democratic infighting play out in public, Trump used his return to the campaign trail in Florida to ratchet up his attacks on both Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, indulging speculation that she could replace the president as the Democratic nominee this year and alleging, without evidence, that his son Hunter Biden is "running our government" and first lady Jill Biden "is helping." Biden has repeatedly insisted he won't withdraw from the race.

Trump rallied his supporters at one of his Miami-area golf courses as the presumptive Republican nominee nears a deadline to announce his running mate. But he appears in no rush, as much of the political world's 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.

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Trump, speaking from the 10th hole of his course, challenged Biden to another debate or even a "golf-off" reviving an offbeat argument from their debate. But mostly, he rubbed in how their meetup left Biden's campaign facing a grim prognosis.

"Our victory was so absolute that Joe's own party now wants him to throw in the towel and surrender the presidency after a single 90-minute performance," Trump said Tuesday night. "They want 'Crooked Joe' out of the race. It's a shame the way they're treating him. But don't feel sorry for him. He's a very bad guy."

James Singer, a spokesperson for Biden's campaign, responded to Trump with a series of challenges, saying in a statement: "We'd challenge Donald Trump to create jobs, but he lost 3 million. We'd challenge Donald Trump to stand up to Putin, but he bent the knee to him. We'd challenge Donald Trump to follow the law, but he breaks it."

Singer also said, "Joe Biden doesn't have time for Donald Trump's weird antics — he's busy leading America and defending the free world."

Trump laced into Harris with more specifics than usual. She has become a focus of the former president and his allies as speculation has mounted that she would replace Biden as the Democratic nominee. Trump called her "Laughing Kamala," and referred to the "Biden-Harris administration," rather than just pinning actions on Biden as he had for months, and blamed Harris for the White House's immigration policies.

"Despite all the Democrat panic this week, the truth is, it doesn't matter who they nominate because we are going to beat any one of them in thundering landslides and this November's going to be amazing," he said.

Trump, ever the showman, repeatedly played into the speculation that he might elevate Rubio to his ticket.

Rubio, a Miami native and one of the contenders for the vice presidential post, was among the Florida politicians who spoke at the event.

At one point, Trump marveled at the number of reporters in attendance and said, "I think they probably think I'm going to be announcing that Marco is going to be vice president."

Later, when he talked about his pledge to make tips tax-free, he remarked that Rubio "may or may not be there to vote for it."

Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, is seen as a potential running mate who could help Trump as he tries to secure support from Hispanic Americans, a point the senator emphasized in his remarks as he switched several times in his remarks to Spanish.

The senator did not openly acknowledge any of the speculation about him joining Trump as a running mate. He instead skewered not only Biden, whom he called "the figurehead of a left-wing government, shadow government," but Harris, whom he would need to debate head-on if he's chosen for Trump's ticket.

Rubio referred to Harris not by name at first but called her Biden's "replacement" and "a real-life, verified left-winger." At another point in his remarks, he mocked the way Harris laughs.

He notably seemed to insert himself into Trump's signature "Make America Great Again" slogan by saying: "Together, we're not just going to make it great again. We elect this man as president, we will make together America greater than it has ever been."

Thousands of people turned out in the humid summer evening for the rally. Attendees were fanning themselves and holding signs featuring Trump's mug shot, along with others that said, "You're fired!" — Trump's signature phrase on his former reality show, "The Apprentice."

Trump's youngest child who recently turned 18, Barron, also made his first-ever appearance at one of his father's rallies. Trump implored his son to stand, with the young man pumping his fist a few times as Trump said, "Welcome to the scene, Barron."

One attendee, 28-year-old Austin Stiglin, said he traveled from northern Florida to participate in his first Trump rally. He was wearing a star-patterned navy blue jacket and red pants and said he was "tired of the left telling him to vote left just because I am gay."

"I have a lot more to say than just my sexual orientation," Stiglin said. "I would like to vote for policies that support the United States."

Nicole Farrell, a 57-year-old immigrant from Trinidad, said she voted for Trump in 2020, "but I was not a strong supporter like now. I just preferred him over Biden."

Farrell said she specifically likes Trump's hardline immigration policies, which include plans for mass raids and the largest deportation operation in U.S. history.

"I am an immigrant but I came here legally. They need to come here legally," Farrell said of migrants coming to the U.S.

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."

## Chaos swirling since Biden's debate flub is causing cracks in a White House known for discipline

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Internal drama. Leaks. Second-guessing. The pressure and chaos swirling since Joe Biden's disastrous debate performance is causing cracks in a White House that until now had been marked by discipline and loyalty.

For three-plus years, the Biden administration has been mostly a restrained and staid operation, defined more by an insistence on showcasing policy and an avoidance of palace intrigue. Aides generally kept any criticism of their boss or their jobs out of the public eye. Not lately, though.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reflected Tuesday on the extraordinary moment for the president and his team, as questions about the 81-year-old's age and mental capacity threaten to torpedo his reelection dreams. "It has been an unprecedented time," she said of scrutiny of the president. "We are meeting a new moment that has never really existed before."

Biden's shaky June 27 debate performance has led to an unusually public blame game, leaks of private phone calls between the president and Democrats and questions about his son Hunter Biden's presence at the White House. It has prompted current White House officials to anonymously vent their concerns about Biden's ability to do the job and even led to the departure of a radio journalist after details emerged that the Biden campaign had fed her and another reporter interview questions.

Not to mention all the drama playing out on Capitol Hill, where a handful of House Democrats have publicly called for Biden to step aside and there is closed-door hand-wringing by others over whether to publicly come out against the president as party leaders try to bring members to heel.

Biden has been adamant that he is not leaving the race, and the chorus of criticism may be dying down, but it's not clear yet whether the White House drama has been a momentary lapse or will continue as the nation barrels toward the 2024 election.

Andrew Bates, a senior deputy press secretary, said Biden had "restored compassion, honesty, and competence to the Oval Office" and built the most diverse administration in history.

"As President Biden has fought for and delivered the strongest record of any modern administration, there wasn't a single week that Washington didn't doubt him and his team," Bates said. "The staff are deeply proud of him and each other and know the key is to focus on the work and the American people, not the noise."

The buttoned-up vibe at the White House under Biden has been intentional — he wanted his administration to be viewed as a return to normal governing operations after the leaky Trump White House, when half-baked policies ended up on the front pages and details of private meetings appeared in public sometimes while they were still underway.

It was also reflective of the deep loyalty of Biden's inner circle, where many top advisers have worked with the president for decades.



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Biden's debate performance prompted a surprising amount of public criticism from some of his biggest fans, including former White House communications director Kate Bedingfield, who was on a cable TV panel immediately after the faceoff.

"It was a really disappointing debate performance from Joe Biden. I don't think there's any other way to slice it. His biggest issue was to prove to the American people that he had the energy, the stamina — and he didn't do that," she said on CNN.

In private, aides and allies were quietly shaken over how Biden performed in the debate, and wondered whether the campaign was salvageable, particularly as the negative reviews kept pouring in.

At Camp David the weekend after the debate, Biden's family — in particular Hunter Biden and first lady Jill Biden — encouraged the president to stay in the race, and questioned whether his staff had prepared him properly. (Biden, for his part, has said firmly the debate disaster was "nobody's fault but mine.")

Not long after, the presence of Hunter Biden — awaiting sentencing on three felony convictions in a gun case — at the White House was unsettling to some people, who worried about his influence with his father, according to two Democrats close to the White House who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

And there's been the second-guessing over the long-term strategy to limit Biden's public interactions, especially with journalists, under a mandate led by senior aides. Biden has granted fewer interviews than his modern predecessors, and he's held fewer news conferences than any president since Ronald Reagan.

Bates said the strategy "is and has been for the American people to hear directly from Joe Biden." He noted Biden gave an interview Monday to MSNBC's "Morning Joe," has taken questions from reporters more than 580 times and travels the country speaking to people directly.

White House officials recently vented their concerns about the president and his abilities in stories spread across national media. One official who raised alarms on The New York Times sounded a little like "Anonymous," the Trump staffer who signaled discontent about the Trump presidency in a New York Times op-ed and later went public with his grievances.

"This is not like the last administration where we try to find out who is speaking or leaking, that's not something we do here," Jean-Pierre said when asked about the official's comments. "Everybody has their opinion."

She said she had not heard anyone voice criticisms like those appearing in publications.

In an effort to boost staff morale, Biden chief of staff Jeff Zients urged White House aides last week during an all-staff meeting to tune out the "noise" and focus on the task of governing.

There have also been public missteps. Jean-Pierre told reporters Biden had not been seen by his doctor since his physical, but the president later told campaign workers on a private call that he had been seen by his doctor after he felt sick returning from grueling back-to-back foreign trips.

White House aides declined for days to explain a neurologist's repeated visits to the White House that had sparked speculation that Biden was getting treatment, and Jean-Pierre misspoke when talking about the issue Tuesday.

On Sunday, a radio host departed her job after news that she and another interviewer at a different station had asked questions of Biden that had been fed to them by the campaign.

The interviews were meant to be part of an effort to restore faith in Biden's ability not just to govern over the next four years but to successfully campaign, but the revelation only added to criticism that he couldn't handle unscripted questioning.

After word came out that the White House had offered draft questions to reporters, former White House communications official Michael LaRosa posted withering public criticism:

"Just when you thought the President's communications teams had lost all of their credibility .... they are racing to the bottom and determined to continue humiliating the President and First Family with misguided and BAD media relations practices that erode his standing day by day."

## Ukraine opens DC weapons office and Europe bolsters defense spending as November US election looms

By TARA COPP and LORNE COOK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — NATO countries are moving to shore up their weapons production capabilities as a hedge against the November presidential vote, signing a nearly \$700 million contract for more Stinger missiles and making pledges to boost their own defense production.

Ukraine, a partner that relies on military aid from the NATO members, is opening a small office in Washington to strengthen its ties to the U.S. defense industry. Regardless of whether President Joe Biden or former President Donald Trump wins the U.S. election, the alliance and Ukraine want to be in a better position to provide more of their own defense needs.

The announcements came Tuesday at the start of the NATO summit in Washington, where leaders were focused on the need both to support Ukraine and to make sure the alliance is prepared for any future threats.

Before Russia's 2022 invasion, Oleksandr Kamyshin, Ukraine's minister of strategic industries, worked on his farm.

"I was a happy Ukrainian dealing with agriculture and knowing nothing about military things," Kamyshin said. Ukraine in 2021 produced no ammunition and started the conflict with the stocks it had on the shelves, he said.

That is quickly changing as Ukraine is developing a sophisticated drone industry, producing more weapons domestically and working to more deeply embed itself with defense companies in the U.S. and Europe.

"We are re-profiling ourselves from agricultural country to the arsenal of a different world," Kamyshin said.

Biden on Tuesday announced another major air defense package for Ukraine, and outgoing NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced that the alliance had signed the Stinger contract.

"There is no way to provide strong defense without a strong defense industry," Stoltenberg said while announcing the contract.

The Stinger is a portable surface-to-air defense system that can be carried and fired by troops or mounted onto a vehicle and used as short-range defense against aircraft.

The Raytheon-produced system was one of the first weapons the U.S. shipped to Ukraine following Russia's invasion. It is now among hundreds of types of systems, and tens of millions of rounds of ammunition, artillery and missiles, that countries have pulled from their stockpiles to help Ukraine. But the rapid push over the past two years exposed that defense firms both in the U.S. and in Europe were not set to produce at the levels needed in a major conventional war.

The NATO summit is occurring against a backdrop of uncertainty. U.S. political divisions delayed weapons for Ukraine for months and the upcoming presidential election is raising concern that U.S. backing — with weapons and troops — in case of threats against member countries may not always be guaranteed.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, has boasted during campaign speeches that he'd encourage Russia to do as it wished with NATO members that do not meet their commitment to spend 2% of their gross domestic product on defense.

Kamyshin, who spoke at a nighttime event Tuesday on the EU defense industry, said growing Ukraine's defense industry should put it in a stronger position regardless of who wins the U.S. election.

"Defense industry should be strong regardless of the elections of the parties," Kamyshin said. "But I heard that the Republicans stand for defense industry as well."

It's not just Ukraine. In both the U.S. and throughout Europe, some defense production lines were stagnant at the time of the 2022 invasion and are only now getting production numbers up. The buildup has been dependent on getting new, longer-term contracts signed to support more capital investment in the needed infrastructure.

"This is not about shifts or a bottleneck. It's building new factories," said Morten Brandtzaeg, the chief executive officer of Nammo, a Norway-based ammunition firm.

The war also spurred NATO members to increase the amount they spend on defense.

Out of 32 NATO members, 23 are expected to meet the 2% commitment this year, up from just six before Russia's invasion. That's seen as still not enough, as Russia has leveraged the sheer size of its workforce to rapidly replace weapons lost in the war.

"If you want to fight a war for a long time, you need to have an industry behind you that has the capacity for a long time," Brandtzaeg said.

Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur said Russia is now spending an estimated 7% to 9% of its GDP on defense. Estonia is spending more than 3% of its GDP on defense, but needs to do more to refill its stockpiles, Pevkur said.

Polish Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, who also serves as a deputy prime minister, said his country will commit at least 4% of its GDP to defense this year.

The war in Ukraine "exposed major weaknesses of Poland, of region and of the world at large," Kosiniak-Kamysz said.

Since the invasion, the U.S. has provided more than \$53.6 billion in weapons and security assistance to Ukraine. This support, at a time when the U.S. also is sending weapons to Israel and Taiwan, has strained the U.S. stockpile. The rest of the NATO members and other international partners have provided about \$50 billion altogether in weapons and security assistance, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, an independent research organization based in Germany.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Tuesday that for the first time ever, the NATO countries will each pledge to make plans to strengthen their own industrial defense capacity. He said this would help the alliance "prioritize production of the most vital defense equipment we would need in the event of a conflict."

The 32 members have widely varying defense industry sizes and capabilities, so each country's plan could vary widely, from partnering with industry to partnering with other countries.

## **Biden's support on Capitol Hill grimly uncertain. A seventh Democrat says he should drop out**

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The mood on Capitol Hill turned grimly uncertain Tuesday as Democrats wrestled over President Joe Biden's reelection and the extraordinary question before them — whether to stand behind his candidacy or push the president to bow out amid concerns over his ability to lead them to victory.

House and Senate Democrats met privately with tensions running high. The conversation was "dour" and "sad" in the House, lawmakers said, as they discussed their party leader who emphatically refuses to step aside and implored them in a sharply worded letter to refocus from him to the threat posed by Republican Donald Trump. In the Senate, where Biden spent a storied career, they said even less.

Late in the day, a seventh House Democrat, Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, publicly called on Biden not to run for reelection, saying with Trump seeking to return to the White House, "the stakes are too high — and the threat is too real — to stay silent."

What could become a time for Democrats to bolster their president, who remains the favorite for some despite his poor debate performance and public appearances, instead fell deeper into crisis over real fears they could lose the White House and Congress and watch the rise of a second term Trump.

Earlier, House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said members had "an opportunity to express themselves in a candid and comprehensive fashion" at a closed-door session and the discussions would continue.

It's a remarkable moment for the president and his party with Democrats in Congress seriously questioning Biden's place at the top of the ticket, weeks before the Democratic National Convention to nominate him for a second term.

Biden's supporters have been emerging as the most vocal, and at least one key House Democrat reversed course to publicly support the president. But no agreement was in sight and an undercurrent of dissent runs strong. As Senate Democrats stayed silent in public, Biden's political future was the remarkable matter in question.

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Asked if there was any consensus, Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, one of Biden's closest supporters, said the "consensus is that Donald Trump poses a threat and the focus should be on that."

One Democrat, Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado, said publicly what he told his colleagues in private — that he believes Trump "is on track win this election — and maybe win it by a landslide and take with him the Senate and the House.

Stopping short of calling for Biden to drop out, Bennet spoke forcefully on CNN about the danger of a second Trump presidency and said it's up to the president "to consider" the options. He said he did not hear any other Senate Democrat call for Biden to leave the race.

"It's not a question about politics," he said. "It's a moral question about the future of our country."

In the private House meeting Tuesday, there was a growing concern that Biden remaining in the race means the election will center on his age issues instead of Trump, according to one of the people in the room.

At least 20 Democratic lawmakers stood up to speak during the nearly two-hour session in what for many is an existential moment for their country considering a second Trump presidency.

Most of those who spoke wanted Biden to end his candidacy, said another person granted anonymity to discuss the meeting.

Among them was Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, who leads a contingent of military veterans in the House and is among the Democrats who have publicly called for Biden to step aside.

Still others dropped their private concerns in order to back Biden, for now. "He said he's going to remain in, he's our candidate, and we're going to support him," said Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, on CNN. Over the weekend was among those privately saying Biden should not run.

"I'm staying with Papa," said Rep. Adriano Espaillat, D-N.Y.. He said his constituents understand what the country went through during the COVID-19 pandemic and how Biden led through the crisis. "He was fit then and he's fit now."

Many Democrats worry that not only is the presidency in jeopardy but also their own down-ballot races for control of the House and Senate — and the party's ability to stop Trump and the conservative Project 2025 agenda with its plans to weaken the federal government.

"He just has to step down because he can't win," said Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill.

One Democratic lawmaker who declined to be named said afterward that people love Biden, but there's a real sense of helplessness over the situation and the threat of the consequences if Democrats lose the elections. The lawmaker said the situation was "sad."

After a closed-door Senate lunch meeting, most senators were reluctant to say either that they unequivocally support Biden or that they want to see him step aside.

"I think we should do our best job to defeat Trump and I'm really excited about it," said Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.

While there's now more than a handful of House Democrats that have publicly called on Biden to end his candidacy, no Senate Democrat has publicly called for Biden to leave the race.

The majority of Democratic senators who spoke during the lunch meeting expressed deep concerns about whether Biden can beat Trump in November, though they stopped short of saying he should step down from the race, according to a person familiar with the conversation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

There were also a handful of senators who defended Biden. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York repeated, "I've said before, I'm with Joe."

Some are turning more serious attention to Vice President Kamala Harris as an alternative.

Rep. Jared Huffman of California who is leading the House Democrats' task force fighting Project 2025, said Democrats need to get back to confronting Trump and can win the election with Biden at the top of the ticket.

But he said if Biden's decision to stay on changes "that's not the end of the world, in my view."

"I think we've got an excellent next up in the vice president. She's good, and she's ready to go."



Huffman said Democrats, unlike their House GOP counterparts, can “have principled disagreements without fighting like ferrets in a phone booth.”

Republicans face their own history-making political situation, poised to nominate a former president who is the first ever to be convicted of a felony — in a hush money case — and who faces federal criminal indictments, including the effort to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden.

After a slow initial response to Biden’s dismal debate, the White House and campaign team are working more furiously now to end the drama in part by gathering the president’s most loyal supporters to speak out.

Biden spent part of his Tuesday evening speaking on a virtual call with more than 200 Democratic mayors, saying he will win reelection with “basic block-and-tackling” and boasting of the thousands of calls being made to voters, doors being knocked and signs being posted in support of his candidacy, according to a readout from his campaign.

That came after the president met virtually late Monday with the Congressional Black Caucus, whose members are core to Biden’s coalition, thanking them for having his back, and assuring them he would have theirs in a second term. He was also to meet with the Congressional Progressive Caucus, whose leadership — along with that of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus — has said publicly they are sticking with the president.

Rep. Jasmine Crockett of Texas, a freshman Democrat, said there is too much at stake to turn away from Biden at this point in the campaign, saying a second Trump presidency would be extremely harmful to Black Americans across the country.

“We are not willing to risk our freedoms for somebody feeling good because there’s a different name on the ballot,” she said.

Having been on the campaign trail with Biden, Crockett added, “That is why I can feel so confident, because I have seen more than the 90 minutes that everybody is so concerned about.”

And Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., who ended his long-shot 2024 Democratic presidential bid months ago, was asked by reporters if he felt vindicated by Democrats calling on Biden to step aside. “If this is vindication, vindication has never been so unfulfilling,” he said.

## Democrats on Capitol Hill express concerns about Biden in private but stay quiet in public

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After meeting for around two hours Tuesday to discuss whether President Joe Biden should remain at the top of their presidential ticket, Senate Democrats seemed to agree on one thing — it’s best not to talk about it publicly.

Behind closed doors, several Democrats expressed deep concerns about whether Biden can win. But no Democratic senators publicly called for him to drop his reelection bid, underscoring the deep bind facing the party at a crucial juncture in the campaign. Democratic lawmakers are reeling from Biden’s calamitous performance at the debate two weeks ago, yet the president has made clear, repeatedly and forcefully, that he has no plans to step aside.

Emerging from their meeting Tuesday, senators ducked into elevators, evaded questions, joked, and stated the obvious — that they all want to defeat former Republican Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee. But very few of them would comment on Biden’s future, whether they think he should remain the Democratic candidate, or what the Senate could potentially do about it. Some of them appeared resigned.

“People are all focused on winning right now,” said Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, who is in charge of Senate Democrats’ campaign arm.

Can you win with Biden? “He’s our nominee,” Peters said.

There is “absolute unanimity” that we have to defeat Trump, said Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, who would not say if Biden is the best person to do that.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, who reached out to colleagues last week in hopes of meeting to discuss

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Biden's future, would only say the caucus lunch was a "constructive conversation." He declined to elaborate.

Senators have been sharing their anxieties about the election in private for almost two weeks since the debate, but are reluctant about the ramifications of speaking out — especially if Biden stays on the ticket. As such, it is unclear if Democrats on Capitol Hill will be able to agree, at all, on whether Biden should remain their nominee.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, like many of his colleagues, has stuck with one line all week: "As I said before, I'm with Joe." He repeated it three times in a row at a press conference after the lunch meeting, ignoring questions about whether Biden is still fit to run.

While it's not unusual for the details of the weekly Senate party luncheons to be kept private, the evasiveness was extraordinary given the magnitude of the discussions over whether to try and push their own party's president off the November ballot. Not only did senators decline to provide details of the closed-door party talks, but most also declined to give their own opinions on the subject.

Asked whether Biden should remain on the ticket, Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey said he's not a political analyst and "others might have opinions on that." Casey, who is up for re-election in a critical swing state, said he thinks he and Biden will both win in November, but acknowledged, "it's going to be hard," since he's in a close race.

As most remained quiet, one senator did decide to publicly express his views. Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet said on CNN Tuesday evening that he spoke up in the meeting and predicted that Biden can't win. "I did say that behind closed doors," Bennet said. "Donald Trump is on track I think to win this election and maybe win it by a landslide, and take with him the Senate and the House."

Several senators have said they think Biden should do more to prove that he can win, including Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the most senior Senate Democrat. Like Bennet, she stopped short of calling on him to exit the race.

"We need to see a much more forceful and energetic candidate on the campaign trail in the very near future in order for him to convince voters he is up to the job," Murray said in a statement on Monday night.

And a few senators were vocal Biden boosters, including Delaware Sen. Chris Coons, who replaced Biden in the Senate and is one of his strongest allies, and Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman, who has criticized his colleagues for doubting the president.

"Nothing's changed," Fetterman said after the meeting. "Joe Biden is our guy. He's my guy. And he's the only guy ever to kick Trump's ass."

And the mood in the room? "It was magic, like a Taylor Swift concert," Fetterman joked. But he did not answer the question.

Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., says it's important to keep the discussions private, so senators can talk honestly amongst themselves.

"It's important that as a group of individuals that have really big responsibilities, that we can have confidential conversations," Smith said. "God knows, we talk all the time, all over the place to all sorts of people. But it's also important that in our group that we can have confidential conversations."

There was a similar dynamic in the House earlier Tuesday, when Democrats met privately to discuss Biden. While several members who are supporting Biden's candidacy spoke out and said so publicly afterward, very few members have come out to say he should end his reelection bid, despite making the case in the private meeting.

Illinois Rep. Mike Quigley was one of the few Democrats to say forcefully in public that he thinks Biden should step down.

"He just has to step down because he can't win," Quigley said. "My colleagues need to recognize that."

## Iran encourages Gaza war protests in US to stoke outrage and distrust, intelligence chief says

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Iranian government is covertly encouraging American protests over Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza in a bid to stoke outrage ahead of the fall election, the nation's top intelligence official said Tuesday.

Using social media platforms popular in the U.S., groups linked to Tehran have posed as online activists, encouraged protests and have provided financial support to some protest groups, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said in a statement.

"Iran is becoming increasingly aggressive in their foreign influence efforts, seeking to stoke discord and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions," Haines said.

This effort noted by the top U.S. intelligence official is the latest evidence that America's adversaries are harnessing the internet to warp domestic debates and widen political divides ahead of the election.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said it was important to warn Americans to help them "guard against efforts by foreign powers to take advantage of or coopt their legitimate protest activities."

She also warned Iran that "meddling in our politics and seeking to stoke division is unacceptable."

In recent years, Iran, Russia and China have all refined their abilities to use online bots and networks of fake social media accounts to amplify divisive debates within the U.S. over immigration, shootings by police, COVID-19, environmental catastrophes, and even Chinese spy balloons.

In most cases, these influence campaigns exploit existing social conflicts, and Haines noted Tuesday that Americans participating in protests over Israel's conduct in Gaza have a right to express their views. But she said Americans need to know when foreign actors are trying to meddle in domestic American politics.

"Americans who are being targeted by this Iranian campaign may not be aware that they are interacting with or receiving support from a foreign government," Haines said.

Demonstrations over Israel's offensives in Gaza emerged on university campuses across the country in recent months. The protests quickly became a factor in political campaigns and prompted concerns about antisemitism and the role of "outside agitators" as well as worries about a larger regional conflict between Israel and Iran.

Iran isn't the only nation seeking to influence American discourse ahead of the 2024 election. During a briefing with reporters Tuesday, intelligence officials said America's adversaries will look to harness the latest artificial intelligence to dramatically expand the reach and penetration of election misinformation.

The officials — from agencies including the FBI and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence — spoke with reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the office of the director.

Russia remains the greatest threat, according to the officials, who said the Kremlin is mounting a government-wide effort to spread election disinformation ahead of the 2024 race. Russia has already sought to exploit debates over immigration as part of its strategy to undermine international support for Ukraine.

Russia is also seeking to cover its tracks by laundering its disinformation through supposedly independent news sites and American influencers who may not know they are parroting Russian talking points.

The officials declined to answer directly when asked if Russia preferred a particular presidential candidate but pointedly noted that the country's preference remained unchanged from prior election cycles, when Russia was assessed by the U.S. intelligence community to have worked to try to get Republican candidate Donald Trump elected.

While China mounted a sprawling disinformation campaign ahead of Taiwan's recent election, the nation has been more cautious in its use of disinformation targeting Americans this year. Officials said Tuesday that China shows no indication that it will try to influence the presidential race.

China, one official said, doesn't see a benefit in choosing between candidates who are both seen as trying to curb its power.

Sen. Mark Warner, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has said the U.S. may be more vulnerable to foreign disinformation this year than it was before the 2020 election. He thanked the intelligence

community for holding Tuesday's briefing as a way to inform the public about the threat.

"Social media, in particular, continues to be a popular vector for foreign covert influence attempts, and our adversaries remain focused on stoking social, racial, and political tensions among Americans," said Warner, D-Virginia.

## Zelenskyy says the world cannot wait until the US election in November to take action to repel Putin

By MATTHEW LEE, ELLEN KNICKMEYER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that decisive action must be taken before the U.S. presidential election in November to repel Russia's offensive against his country, using an address on the sidelines of the NATO summit to press for greater support during a pivotal but tumultuous stretch in America's political calendar.

"It's time to step out of the shadows to make strong decisions to act and not wait for November or any other months to descend. We must be strong and uncompromising all together," Zelenskyy said.

Speaking in Washington four months before an election beset by new uncertainty following President Joe Biden's shaky debate performance, he aimed his message at Republicans, whose NATO-adverse leader looks to be in an improving position to win back the presidency.

The president of the United States, Zelenskyy added, must be "uncompromising in defending democracy, uncompromising against (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his coterie."

Zelenskyy has proven to be an adept navigator of international relations in defense of his war-ravaged country, publicly cajoling and sometimes loudly complaining to get the military assistance it needs to defend itself against Russia.

This latest trip to Washington came against the backdrop of a fresh commitment of aid — Biden earlier Tuesday announced that dozens of air defense systems will be sent to Ukraine by NATO allies — but also ahead of an election that could yield a change in power. Zelenskyy said he hoped the race would not yield a policy overhaul.

The Ukrainian leader sought to minimize the potential fallout of a Donald Trump victory, who is a NATO skeptic and has criticized the Biden administration's support for Kyiv during Russia's war in Ukraine. Zelenskyy spoke at the Reagan Institute, named after Republican icon Ronald Reagan, and his appeal for support was directed at an audience of GOP heavyweights that included Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Zelenskyy will meet with lawmakers on Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

"I hope that if the people of America will elect President Trump, I hope that his policy with Ukraine will not change," Zelenskyy said in a question-and-answer session with Fox News host Bret Baier after his speech. "I hope that the United States will never go out from NATO."

Otherwise, he said, "the world will lose a lot of countries" that "count on America."

Zelenskyy, who will have a separate meeting with Biden on Thursday, said he doesn't know Trump well but had good meetings with him when he was president. He noted, however, that they did not go through the Russia-Ukraine war together, and only during a shared experience like that can one understand "if you can count on somebody or not."

As president, Trump was impeached in late 2019 by the House of Representatives after pressuring Zelenskyy to announce an investigation into Biden and his son Hunter, while withholding \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine. Biden at the time was mounting a campaign to run against Trump in the 2020 election. Trump was ultimately acquitted by the Senate.

Despite the fresh aid announced Tuesday and the warm embrace he received from the Republican-dominated audience at the Reagan Institute, Zelenskyy finds that his most coveted prize — membership in the military alliance — remains elusive. The European and North American countries making up NATO are in no hurry to admit Ukraine, especially while it is engaged in active hostilities with Russia that could drag them into a broader war.

Zelenskyy, who was feted as a champion of democracy in Washington in the aftermath of Russia's 2022



invasion but was forced to plead his case for aid to U.S. lawmakers just last year, found himself once again in the American capital as bridesmaid.

At the NATO summit, he is trying to navigate a turbulent American political landscape as Biden tries to show his strength on the world stage and ability to keep leading the alliance's most important member, despite post-debate uneasiness among some fellow Democrats about his capacity to serve another four years.

Trump, meanwhile, has criticized allies for not hitting defense spending goals and raised concerns in Europe about continued U.S. support for NATO and Ukraine. His Republican supporters in Congress were responsible for a monthslong delay in U.S. military assistance, which allowed Russia to gain ground against Ukraine's depleted forces.

At a rally Tuesday night in Florida, Trump again sought to take credit for the number of NATO member countries now meeting defense spending targets, saying that when he first addressed NATO members as president, "nobody was paying." The striking increase, however, came only after the Ukraine war began and when Biden was president.

The stakes for Zelenskyy, meanwhile, have never been higher. On Monday, Russia unleashed its heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months and one of the deadliest of the war, which leveled a wing of Ukraine's biggest children's hospital.

Against that backdrop, Biden announced that the U.S. and other NATO members will send dozens of air defense systems to Ukraine in the coming months, including at least four of the powerful Patriot systems it has been desperately seeking to help fight off Russian advances in the war.

In the coming days, Zelenskyy will hear a chorus of support from countries that have poured weapons into his country, despite the recent damaging U.S. and European lags in greenlighting more aid.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, whose country is the second-richest in NATO, says "Germany stands unwaveringly by the side of the Ukrainians, especially in these difficult times."

But an invitation to join the alliance is not in the cards even as Russia's latest strikes have galvanized support for Ukraine. NATO will not admit a new member until the conflict is resolved.

Instead, it will present Zelenskyy with what officials are calling a "bridge to membership." That is supposed to lay out specific tasks, including governmental, economic and rule-of-law reforms, that Ukraine must fulfill to join.

Many in Ukraine see NATO membership as the only way to protect against future Russian aggression if the war ends. But the yearslong conflict, which has cost thousands of Ukrainian lives, has left many frustrated and skeptical that their country will ever join the Western alliance.

While Zelenskyy has largely been a successful politician on the world stage, he struggles to maintain his popularity in Ukraine, which has decreased in part because of persistent questions about corruption, analysts say.

## **Vatican will prepare a document on the role of women in leadership in the Catholic Church**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican said Tuesday that its doctrine office will prepare a document on women in leadership roles in the Catholic Church, a new initiative to respond to longstanding demands by women to have a greater say in the church's life.

The document will be written by the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith as its contribution to Pope Francis' big church reform process, now entering its second main phase with a meeting of bishops in October, known as a synod.

The Vatican announced the details of the doctrinal document shortly after its news conference — led by four men — on the preparatory work for the October meeting, leaving journalists no chance to ask for more details about it.

A group pressing for women's ordination promptly dismissed the significance of it as "crumbs," noting

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that ordained men would once again be making decisions about women's roles in the church.

The forthcoming document was announced in a list of the members of 10 "study groups" that are looking into some of the thorniest and legally complicated issues that have arisen in the reform process to date, including the role of women and LGBTQ+ Catholics in the life of the church.

Pope Francis called the synod over three years ago as part of his overall efforts to make the church a more welcoming place for marginalized groups, and one where ordinary people would have a greater say. The process, and the two-year canvassing of rank-and-file Catholics that preceded it, sparked both hopes and fears that real change was afoot.

Catholic women do the lion's share of the church's work in schools and hospitals, and tend to take the lead in passing down the faith to future generations. But they have long complained of a second-class status in an institution that reserves the priesthood for men.

Francis has reaffirmed the ban on women priests, but has named several women to high-ranking jobs in the Vatican and encouraged debate on other ways women's voices can be heard. That has included the synod process in which women have had the right to vote on specific proposals — a right previously given only to men.

Additionally, during his 11-year pontificate, he responded to demands for ministerial jobs for women by appointing two commissions to study whether women could be ordained deacons. Deacons are ordained ministers but are not priests, though they can perform many of the same functions as priests: preside at weddings, baptisms and funerals, and preach. They cannot, however, celebrate Mass.

The results of the two commissions have never been released and in a recent interview with CBS "60 Minutes," Francis said "no" when asked if women could one day be ordained deacons.

Women's Ordination Conference, which advocates for ordaining women priests, said the relegation of the issue of women deacons to the doctrine office was hardly the mark of a church looking to involve women more.

"The urgency to affirm women's full and equal place in the church cannot be swept away, relegated to a shadowy commission, or entrusted into the hands of ordained men at the Vatican," the group said in a statement.

The doctrine office, headed by Francis' close theological adviser Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, will be preparing an "appropriate document" on "theological and canonistic questions around specific ministerial forms" that were raised during the first phase of the synod process last year, the announcement said.

"The in-depth examination of the issues at hand — in particular the question of the necessary participation of women in the life and leadership of the church - has been entrusted to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith," in dialogue with the synod organizers, it said.

Another "study group" is looking at particularly controversial issues, including the welcome of LGBTQ+ people in the church.

These study groups are working with Vatican offices and will continue their analyses beyond the October meeting, suggesting outcomes this year won't necessarily be complete.

After the 2023 session, synod delegates made no mention whatsoever of homosexuality in their final summarizing text, even though the working document going into it had specifically noted the calls for a greater welcome for "LGBTQ+ Catholics" and others who have long felt excluded by the church.

The final text merely said people who feel marginalized by the church, because of their marital situation, "identity and sexuality, ask to be listened to and accompanied, and their dignity defended."

A few weeks after the synod ended, Francis unilaterally approved letting priests offer blessings to same-sex couples, essentially responding to one of the key demands by LGBTQ+ Catholics going into the process.

## Spain beats France 2-1 to reach Euro 2024 final. Yamal sets the mark as youngest-ever scorer

By DANIELLA MATAR AP Sports Writer

MUNICH (AP) — After seeing off another one of the pre-tournament favorites to reach the Euro 2024 final, Spain coach Luis de la Fuente has warned England or the Netherlands that his team can still improve.

Spain reached the European Championship decider with a 2-1 victory over France on Tuesday, with 16-year-old Lamine Yamal becoming the youngest-ever scorer at the continental tournament.

France took an early lead when Randal Kolo Muani headed in a cross from Kylian Mbappé, who played without a mask, before Yamal's moment of brilliance in the 21st minute. Dani Olmo scored the clincher four minutes later.

"We were in a difficult stretch after not expecting to concede so early. I just took the ball and wanted to put it right there. I am very happy," Yamal said.

"I don't try to think about it too much, just enjoy myself and help the team, and if it goes my way, then I am happy (for the goal) and for the win."

Spain, which is chasing a record fourth European Championship title, will play England or the Netherlands in the final on Sunday in Berlin — the day after Yamal's 17th birthday.

"We knew they were a great team, and they proved it again tonight," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "Even though we were fortunate to open the scoring, Spain made things difficult for us.

"They were superior in terms of control and technique. The team that gave the best impression was Spain. So they deserve to win tonight."

Spain has been the best performing team of Euro 2024. It is the only team to have won all its matches and has scored 13 times, equaling a Spanish record for most goals at a European Championship and only one behind the overall record set by France in 1984.

"I'm sure the final will be totally different, against opponents who will demand the best from us," De la Fuente said. "Even though it might sound difficult, there is room for improvement."

Spain will find out its next opponent when England plays the Netherlands in the second semifinal at Dortmund on Wednesday.

There was surprise in Munich when Mbappé went onto the field without the mask he has been wearing since sustaining a broken nose in France's opening group game at Euro 2024.

Mbappé had been complaining the mask was impeding him, and ditching it appeared to have an immediate effect as he created the game's opening goal in the ninth minute with a cross to the back post that was headed in by Randal Kolo Muani.

That was the first goal France had scored at Euro 2024 that wasn't a penalty or an own-goal. Fortunately for Les Bleus they had also been exceptional at the back, allowing just one goal, a retaken penalty by Poland's Robert Lewandowski in the group stage.

But there was no stopping Yamal's stunning equalizer in the 21st minute as he became the youngest player ever to score at a men's European Championship when he curled the ball past Mike Maignan and in off the left post from 25 yards.

Spain turned the match around completely four minutes later when Olmo's goal-bound shot was turned into the net by France defender Jules Koundé. It was originally adjudged by UEFA to have been an own-goal but was later awarded to Olmo.

"It is incredible what the team is doing. We deserve to be in the final, one step from glory," Olmo said. "Whether it is my goal, or Koundé's, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that we are in the final."

France dominated possession in the second half but couldn't make it count.

Théo Hernández should have done better when he blazed a late chance over the bar, and Mbappé did similar with four minutes remaining.

Spain could have been further ahead between those chances as another powerful strike from Yamal flew narrowly over the crossbar.

## Jury is seated in Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter trial in New Mexico

By MORGAN LEE and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Sixteen jurors were seated Tuesday for Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter trial in New Mexico, where opening statements are set to start Wednesday.

Five men and 11 women were chosen by Santa Fe County special prosecutors and the actor's team of defense attorneys. Twelve will be designated as the jury and four as alternates by the court only after they hear the case.

They'll be tasked with deciding whether Baldwin committed the felony when, during a rehearsal in October 2021, a revolver went off while he was pointing it at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza. They were on the set of the Western film "Rust," at Bonanza Creek Ranch some 18 miles (29 kilometers) from where the trial is being held.

Media members were not allowed in the courtroom when attorneys used their challenges to strike jurors. Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer swore in the jury, told them to avoid news about the case and to report Wednesday morning.

Baldwin, 66, could get up to 18 months in prison if the jurors unanimously find him guilty.

The selection got off to a slow start Tuesday with a delay of over two hours due to technical problems, but the panel was selected in a single day as expected.

When Marlowe Sommer asked the pool of 70 possible jurors if they were familiar with the case, all but two raised their hands to indicate they were.

Two others indicated they would not be able to be fair and impartial and were excused.

Baldwin, the star of "30 Rock" and "The Hunt for Red October" and a major Hollywood figure for 35 years, sat in the courtroom with a team of four of his lawyers, dressed in a gray suit, dark tie, white shirt with glasses and neatly combed hair.

His wife, Hilaria Baldwin, and his brother, "The Usual Suspects" actor Stephen Baldwin, were seated in the back of the courtroom.

Under questioning from prosecutor Kari Morrissey, a potential juror said she hates firearms, but many others acknowledged owning them and few people expressed strong opinions about guns.

Baldwin's lawyer Alex Spiro in his questioning highlighted the gravity of the situation — "obviously someone lost their life" — and asked jurors to come forward with any reservations about their own ability to be fair and impartial.

"Does anyone have that view, even in the slightest?" Spiro asked the group.

He asked them to come forward if they'd shared opinions about the case online. None did.

Spiro asked if any of them had strong opinions on gun safety, and whether a person can rely on an expert to ensure the safety of a gun, not just themselves.

Several said they always treat a gun as if it were loaded. One man said he was taught to respect and treat guns the same way, but also deferred to an instructor during instruction he got for a concealed carry permit.

Spiro also asked whether jurors were comfortable questioning the judgment of law enforcement officials, even those testifying under oath.

He asked whether any knew potential witnesses, and several said they knew Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza, who is on the prosecution's witness list.

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 in recent years the state has increasingly become a hub of Hollywood production.

Baldwin and his wife arrived at the courthouse early with their youngest child, Ilaria Catalina Irena Baldwin. The couple have seven children, ranging in ages from 1 to 10.



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

Hutchins was considered a rising star in film photography when she was killed at age 42. She was the mother of a young son who grew up on a remote Soviet military base and worked on documentary films in Eastern Europe before studying film in Los Angeles and embarking on a movie-making career.

## **Biden spotlights support for NATO as he looks to use summit to help reset stumbling campaign**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden welcomed NATO leaders to Washington on Tuesday by celebrating their unity against Russia's Ukraine aggression and underscoring America's ironclad commitment to the alliance under his watch — a message that seemed aimed at bucking up his own wobbly Democratic supporters as much as allies confronting the prospect of a return to the White House of NATO skeptic Donald Trump.

Biden has been straining to persuade U.S. voters and donors that he's ready for reelection after a stumbling debate performance against Trump. He's been making his case on the campaign trail, in a defiant letter to Democratic lawmakers and now at an international summit that he's still up for four more grinding years in the White House.

"Today, NATO is more powerful than ever—32 nations strong, Biden said as he welcomed leaders at an evening event to mark the 75th anniversary of the alliance. "It's good we're stronger than ever because this moment in history calls for our collective strength," he declared head up and voice strong.

The summit comes at trying moment for Biden's presidency. Several Democratic House members have publicly called on him 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 against Trump.

Biden has no shortage of difficult substantive conversations ahead about global security over the course of the three-day NATO summit. But the White House is also looking to display to America that he has the stamina for crowded days and evenings of formal meetings, sideline chats with world leaders, long diplomatic dinners and receptions, and a summit-ending press conference.

Biden on Tuesday announced major steps the U.S. and other NATO countries are taking to beef up Ukraine's overwhelmed air defenses. The U.S., Germany, and Romania are donating additional Patriot batteries, while the Netherlands and other allies will donate additional components to operate a Patriot battery. Italy announced last month it is sending an SAMP/T defense system to help Ukraine.

Other allies, including Canada, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom will provide other systems aimed at improving Ukraine's defenses.

"This is a pivotal moment for Europe and the transatlantic community, and I might add to the world," Biden declared.

Biden also announced he was awarding outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Biden called Stoltenberg, who served in the role for 10 years and extended his tenure four times, a "consummate professional."

But looming large over the summit were Biden's own political travails with less than four months to go before Election Day.

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 confused at times.

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

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German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters Tuesday before departing Berlin for the summit that he did not have any concern about Biden's health. "From the many conversations I have had with the American president, I know that he has prepared this summit very well and very precisely together with us," Scholz said.

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. Biden is scheduled to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday on the sidelines of the summit.

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.

Still, the head of Italy's anti-migrant League Party, deputy premier Matteo Salvini, offered that Biden's "health condition does not seem very good to me." Salvini is a junior member of Premier Giorgia Meloni's right-wing government.

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. European anxiety was heightened in February when Trump warned NATO allies in a campaign speech that he "would encourage" the Russians "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 from Trump 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, 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 create a coordination center in Germany to help train, equip and coordinate logistics for Ukraine forces for its expected eventual accession into NATO.

"It could be easy to look around in Washington this week and see the unity, the resolve, the capabilities of NATO today and say, that's just the natural order of things," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said, "But it isn't just the natural order of things. It's taken work. It's taken strategy."

As for Biden's health, Ian Brzezinski, a senior fellow at the Washington think tank the Atlantic Council, said he 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's commitment to the alliance and to underscore that he brings to the table the resolve that has made NATO so successful," Brzezinski said.

## Al Sharpton to deliver eulogy for Black man who died after being held down by Milwaukee hotel guards

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Rev. Al Sharpton is scheduled deliver a eulogy for a Black man who died last month after being pinned to the ground by hotel security guards in Milwaukee, his office said Tuesday.

The death of Dvontaye Mitchell has drawn comparisons to the murder of George Floyd, a Black man killed in 2020 after a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on his neck.

Sharpton, a longtime activist and leader who serves on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, said in a news release that he'll speak at Mitchell's funeral Thursday. The Republican National Convention opens just days later, on July 15, and law enforcement agencies are bracing for political protests around the convention arena in Wisconsin's biggest city.

Sharpton said convention-goers need to know about Mitchell's death.

"We cannot watch Dvontaye Mitchell's murder be washed out by the RNC coming to town, where they will solidify a nominee whose view of justice is pure brute force," Sharpton said, referring to former President Donald Trump.

Mitchell, 43, died on June 30 at the Hyatt Regency after four security guards held him down on his stomach, media outlets have reported. Police have said Mitchell entered the hotel, caused a disturbance and fought with the guards as they were escorting him out.

Mitchell's family has hired civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who represented Floyd's family. His death spurred worldwide protests against racial violence and police brutality.

It's unclear why Mitchell was at the hotel or what happened before the guards pinned him down. The Milwaukee County medical examiner's initial report said Mitchell was homeless, but his family told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that's not correct. Sharpton said in a news release announcing his Milwaukee visit that Mitchell's mother said her son was suffering a "mental health episode."

Police officials were still investigating Mitchell's death on Tuesday, the Journal Sentinel reported. The police department responded to an Associated Press request for an update by emailing a statement saying that an unidentified individual had fought with security guards at the hotel on June 30 and was unresponsive when officers arrived.

The medical examiner's office has said the preliminary cause of death was homicide but the cause remains under investigation. No one had been charged criminally as of Tuesday.

A spokesperson for Aimbridge Hospitality, which runs the Hyatt Regency in Milwaukee, told the Washington Post that the company extends its condolences to Mitchell's family and supports the ongoing investigation.

## What cognitive tests can show -- and what they can't

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's the new chant in Washington politics: "Get a cognitive test!"

Political opponents, armchair pundits and even nervous supporters are demanding that President Joe Biden undergo such testing after his dismal debate performance — even though his physician says he gets, and passes, an annual neurologic exam.

Former President Donald Trump, who's only a few years younger, makes his own gaffes. He recently bragged about passing a 2018 cognitive test — while calling the doctor who administered it by the wrong name.

With all the concern, what can cognitive testing actually tell about a person's brain health — and what can't they answer? And presidents aside, does the average older adult need one?

What are cognitive tests?

They're brief screening tools, a 10-minute series of questions to assess different brain functions. Two of the most common are called the MMSE, Mini-Mental State Exam, and the MoCA, Montreal Cognitive Assessment.

Recalling a list of five unrelated nouns or seeing how many words beginning with F you can say in a

minute can assess short-term memory and language. Counting backward by 7s tests attention and concentration. Drawing a clock with the correct time is a clue to spatial awareness.

How reliable are cognitive screenings?

They don't diagnose health problems. A bad score is just a red flag that indicates a need for further testing to see if there is a health problem and uncover what kind, said Dr. James Galvin, a neurologist at the University of Miami.

A good score usually is good news. But the highly educated especially tend to be good test-takers even if cognitive trouble is starting to brew. So if someone scores OK yet they, a family member or the doctor sees some day-to-day concern, more testing still could be warranted.

"We simply use it as a benchmark to determine our suspicion level," Galvin said.

When and how often should cognitive screenings be done?

"A screening test is exactly a snapshot in time. So it tells you in that moment how someone does on that test," Galvin stressed. "It doesn't tell you how a person is functioning in their everyday life."

Simply reporting a concern is reason enough for a primary care doctor to perform one. But it's also supposed to be part of the annual Medicare wellness visit for those 65 and older.

Galvin wouldn't discuss Biden or Trump because he hasn't examined them — but said that generally it's a good idea for seniors to get checked yearly to spot changes. It's much like how doctors don't assume your blood pressure's still fine, they measure it.

How is a cognitive test different from a neurologic exam?

Cognitive screenings are "pencil and paper tests" usually handled by primary care doctors, while neurologic exams generally are performed by a specialist, Galvin said.

It's a very detailed physical exam. Doctors watch the patient's speech patterns and behavior, test how key nerves are functioning, check reflexes that can signal brain diseases and assess muscle tone and function.

If either kind of test signals real cognitive concerns, the next step may be more intensive neuropsychological testing — an exam that often lasts up to three hours.

After an exhaustive interview of the patient and any accompanying family members, the neuropsychologist goes through tests and tasks designed to check specific brain functions — intelligence, memory, verbal ability, problem-solving and reasoning skills, visual and auditory responses, emotion and mood. They may use puzzles, objects to rearrange, or drawing and writing tests.

Blood tests and brain scans also may be ordered. Special types of PET scans can detect Alzheimer's hallmark amyloid plaques and tau tangles in the brain. An MRI can detect past strokes, helpful in diagnosing vascular dementia.

How can you tell if cognitive concerns are a disease or just getting older?

"Age makes us do things a lot slower," Galvin said. "We move slower. We think slower. But we're still moving correctly and we're still thinking correctly — it just takes us longer."

Examples of slower cognitive "processing" might be difficulty remembering a name, numbers or specific details under pressure — but they come back to you later.

Galvin noted that sometimes, reversible health problems mimic cognitive trouble. For example, urinary tract infections are notorious for causing sudden confusion in older people. Certain medications affect memory, as can thyroid problems, depression, even poorly controlled diabetes.

Anyone who's worried about their memory should talk to their doctor, or seek a specialist, "who can reassure you that everything's OK or develop a treatment plan that's specific for you," he said.

## **Election 2024 Latest: Democratic leadership backs Biden, Trump returns to the campaign trail**

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump is getting back on the campaign trail at his flagship Miami golf resort as Democrats face tough calls over President Joe Biden's reelection chances.

Ever since his dismal debate performance, Democrats have been wrestling with whether the 81-year-old



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Biden should continue as the party's nominee. As anxious congressional Democrats returned to Washington weighing whether to work to revive his campaign or to try to edge him out, Biden Monday stood firm against calls for him to drop out of the race.

Against this backdrop of intense political drama, NATO leaders are converging on Washington starting Tuesday for a summit marking the organization's 75th year. The main focus of the summit is for NATO leaders to shore up support for Ukraine in its battle against Russia but for Biden the summit has become just as much about demonstrating he is capable of meeting the grinding demands of the presidency for four more years.

Follow the AP's Election-2024 coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024>

Follow the AP's coverage of the NATO Summit: <https://apnews.com/hub/nato>

The Latest:

President Biden welcoming world leaders to the NATO summit with lofty words about the power of global alliances

Hosting the summit has given Biden a chance to showcase his leadership on the world stage — but it's happened at an awkward time. He is simultaneously dealing with pressure to bow out of the presidential race after his shaky debate performance against Trump raised questions about his ability to do the job for another four years.

Biden, using a teleprompter, told world leaders that "NATO is more powerful than ever" on its 75th anniversary, highlighting the expansion of the alliance under his watch.

"This moment in history calls for our collective strength," he said, stressing NATO's resolve to help Ukraine fend off Russia's invasion.

In his 13-minute remarks, Biden did not nod to the domestic political drama swirling around him.

Rep. Dean Phillips: 'Vindication has never been so unfulfilling'

Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., who ended his long-shot 2024 Democratic presidential bid months ago, was asked by reporters Tuesday if he felt vindicated by Democrats calling on Biden to step aside.

"If this is vindication, vindication has never been so unfulfilling," Phillips said. "I made my case eight months ago, and I think it's time for others to share their perspectives."

Phillips was publicly and privately denounced by many in the House Democratic caucus when he launched his bid for president against Biden in late October. Phillips, a 55-year-old multimillionaire who is among the richest members of Congress, built his White House bid around calls for a new generation of Democratic leadership while spending freely from his personal fortune. But the little-known congressman ultimately failed to resonate with the party's voters.

A seventh House Democrat calls for Biden to step down

Rep. Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J., has called for President Biden to step down as the Democratic nominee, saying in a press release that the "stakes are too high and the threat is too real" for her to remain silent."

In an interview immediately after the release, the former Navy helicopter pilot told the AP that she made the difficult decision after speaking with voters in her district and hearing out her colleagues during a Tuesday morning caucus session.

"I had committed to people in my district of having the conversations I thought we needed to have. I wanted to hear from my colleagues here in Washington," she said. "I remain convinced that we need to do everything we can to defeat Trump."

She added that she would support Vice President Kamala Harris as the nominee.

Democrat leadership backs Biden, works to shift focus toward Trump

Following closed-door huddles among House and Senate Democrats Tuesday morning, party leaders have renewed their support of the president.

When questioned by reporters about Biden's candidacy, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., responded with the same refrain each time: "As I've said before, I'm with Joe."

Rep. Pete Aguilar, chairman of the House Democrats said, "Right now, President Biden is the nominee and we support the Democratic nominee that will beat Donald Trump."

"Every single member is clear-eyed about the stakes" of the 2024 presidential race, said Aguilar. "Donald

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Trump cannot be allowed near the Oval Office."

Haley releases delegates to free them for Trump support

Nikki Haley is releasing the delegates she won during this year's Republican primary so they'll be free to support Donald Trump at the GOP convention next week.

On Tuesday, Haley released the 97 delegates she won across a dozen primaries and caucuses this year. Delegate rules vary by state and it's unclear whether Haley's action will completely override them.

The former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador called for "Republican unity" at the upcoming Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

Haley wasn't invited to the convention and won't be attending, her spokesperson said.

House Dem leader still in listening mode

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries is still in listening mode as his party considers Biden's political future.

"We had a caucus meeting today that gave members an opportunity to express themselves in a candid and comprehensive fashion, and those discussions will continue throughout the balance of the week," Jeffries said.

Mental fitness vs. moral fitness?

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont is standing by Biden, but says he's concerned about the election being dominated by talk about Biden's mental fitness.

Lamont was one of the first governors to endorse Biden in the 2020 election.

He told reporters Tuesday that Biden is "just getting started when it comes to his agenda."

Still, Lamont acknowledged concerns about Biden's candidacy.

"I do worry that we're going to spend the whole time talking about President Biden's mental fitness, and we're not taking the battle to Donald Trump and talking about his moral fitness," he said.

Harris headlining outreach to Asian American voters

Vice President Kamala Harris will appear with former "Top Chef" host Padma Lakshmi at an event in Las Vegas on Tuesday.

It's the kickoff of a formal outreach campaign to Asian American voters that President Joe Biden's re-election campaign is launching this week.

Harris is the first person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president.

She will also deliver a keynote address Saturday at a town hall in Philadelphia hosted by APIAVote, an advocacy group.

The Biden campaign has already launched coalition groups focusing on Black voters and Latino voters.

Dour room

One person who was in the room described the Democratic meeting as dour.

There's growing concern that Biden remaining in the race means the election will center around Biden's age instead of Trump, according to the person who was granted anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

But the person also told AP that Democrats worry Biden can't be replaced because he's so dug in.

There could also be legal issues replacing a candidate so close to the election.

A fighting spirit, but can he win?

A few of the Democrats who have publicly called for the president to step aside came out more resolute than before, but not all.

"The fighting spirit and pride and courage that served the country so well four years ago, that helped Joe Biden win, will bring the ticket down this time," said Rep. Mike Quigley from Illinois.

"He just has to step down because he can't win," Quigley said.

But Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York seemed to reverse course after previously privately expressing that Biden should leave.

"He is going to be our nominee, and we all have to support him," Nadler said.

'Not even in the same book'

Democrats had varying views of their nearly two-hour conversation, with some saying the party is unified and others leaving even more disconcerted.

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Rep. Steven Cohen of Tennessee had a memorable answer when reporters asked him if the session got the party on the same page.

"We are not even in the same book," Cohen said.

Others like Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the caucus is united behind Biden as their nominee.

Mayors are nextup for Biden

The president will keep up his personal outreach to different factions of the Democratic Party Tuesday night.

He'll hold a virtual meeting with mayors around the country, according to a person familiar with the plans.

Biden plans to give remarks and take questions from the mayors.

It's a format similar to that used with members of the Congressional Black Caucus and with campaign donors on Monday.

Biden very effective in meetings, Yellen says

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen spoke in favor of Biden's performance on Tuesday.

She was asked by a Republican member of Congress during a House Financial Services Committee hearing whether she'd seen any "cognitive or mental decline."

"The president is extremely effective in the meetings I've been in with him," Yellen responded.

"That includes many international meetings that are multi-hour, like his meetings with President Xi."

She said there had been no discussions among cabinet secretaries about invoking the 25th Amendment. That amendment deals with presidential removal.

Harris heads to Vegas

Vice President Kamala Harris took off from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland Tuesday, headed west for a series of campaign events in Las Vegas.

Harris will meet with and rally voters in Las Vegas and Dallas this week.

She's facing extra attention among Democrats considering her prospects as a possible replacement for Biden, who is resisting calls to step aside.

Dems gather for 'family' chat

House Democrats convened for a "family" discussion behind closed doors early Tuesday.

Tensions are still high over the 2024 election and President Joe Biden's candidacy.

No cell phones. No leaks. Just what Caucus Chairman Rep. Pete Aguilar billed as a family chat among lawmakers.

So far, Biden's supporters have been the most vocal emerging from the more than hour-long chat. But discontent remains behind the scenes.

## Milk, eggs and now bullets for sale in handful of US grocery stores with ammo vending machines

By KIMBERLY CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A company has installed computerized vending machines to sell ammunition in grocery stores in Alabama, Oklahoma and Texas, allowing patrons to pick up bullets along with a gallon of milk.

American Rounds said their machines use an identification scanner and facial recognition software to verify the purchaser's age and are as "quick and easy" to use as a computer tablet. But advocates worry that selling bullets out of vending machines will lead to more shootings in the U.S., where gun violence killed at least 33 people on Independence Day alone.

The company maintains the age-verification technology means that the transactions are as secure, or more secure, than online sales, which may not require the purchaser to submit proof of age, or at retail stores, where there is a risk of shoplifting.

"I'm very thankful for those who are taking the time to get to know us and not just making assumptions about what we're about," CEO Grant Magers said. "We are very pro-Second Amendment, but we are for

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responsible gun ownership, and we hope we're improving the environment for the community."

There have been 15 mass killings involving a firearm so far in 2024, compared to 39 in 2023, according to a database maintained in a partnership of The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University.

"Innovations that make ammunition sales more secure via facial recognition, age verification, and the tracking of serial sales are promising safety measures that belong in gun stores, not in the place where you buy your kids milk," said Nick Suplina, senior vice president for law and policy at Everytown for Gun Safety. "In a country awash in guns and ammo, where guns are the leading cause of deaths for kids, we don't need to further normalize the sale and promotion of these products."

Magers said grocery stores and others approached the Texas-based company, which began in 2023, about the idea of selling ammunition through automated technology. The company has one machine in Alabama, four in Oklahoma and one in Texas, with plans for another in Texas and one in Colorado in the coming weeks, he said.

"People I think got shocked when they thought about the idea of selling ammo at a grocery store," Magers said. "But as we explained, how is that any different than Walmart?"

Federal law requires a person to be 18 to buy shotgun and rifle ammunition and 21 to buy handgun ammunition. Magers said their machines require a purchaser to be at least 21.

The machine works by requiring a customer to scan their driver's license to validate that they are age 21 or older. The scan also checks that it is a valid license, he said. That is followed by a facial recognition scan to verify "you are who you are saying you are as a consumer," he said.

"At that point you can complete your transaction of your product and you're off and going," he said. "The whole experience takes a minute and a half once you are familiar with the machine."

The vending machine is another method of sale, joining retail stores and online retailers. A March report by Everytown for Gun Safety found that several major online ammunition retailers did not appear to verify their customers' ages, despite requirements.

Last year, an online retailer settled a lawsuit brought by families of those killed and injured in a 2018 Texas high school shooting. The families said the 17-year-old shooter was able to buy ammunition from the retailer who failed to verify his age.

Vending machines for bullets or other age-restricted materials is not an entirely new idea. Companies have developed similar technology to sell alcoholic beverages. A company has marketed automated kiosks to sell cannabis products in dispensaries in states where marijuana is legal.

A Pennsylvania police officer created a company about 12 years ago that places bullet-vending machines in private gun clubs and ranges as a convenience for patrons. Those machines do not have the age verification mechanism but are only placed in locations with an age requirement to enter, Master Ammo owner Sam Piccinini said.

Piccinini spoke with a company years ago about incorporating the artificial intelligence technology to verify a purchaser's age and identity, but at the time it was cost-prohibitive, he said. For American Rounds, one machine had to be removed from a site in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, because of disappointing sales, Magers said.

Magers said much of the early interest for the machines has been in rural communities where there may be few retailers that sell ammunition. The American Rounds machines are in Super C Mart and Fresh Value grocery stores in small cities, including Pell City, Alabama, which has a population over 13,600, and Noble, Oklahoma, where nearly 7,600 people live.

"Someone in that community might have to drive an hour or an hour and a half to get supplied if they want to go hunting, for instance," Margers said. "Our grocery stores, they wanted to be able to offer their customer another category that they felt like would be popular."



## Chaos and horror at a Kyiv hospital as the city is hit with heaviest bombardment in months

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The sky was crystal clear as Oksana Femeniuk took her daughter to Ukraine's largest children's hospital for routine dialysis.

Around 10 a.m., air-raid sirens blared. Sixteen-year old Solomiia was undergoing the treatment that required her to sit still for up to five hours and could not be interrupted. Her mother had to flee to the hospital's basement shelter without her.

Hurling toward them at 700-800 kilometers (435-497 miles) per hour was a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile, according to Ukraine's security service, the United Nations and open-source investigators. Using painstaking trial and error, Russia has modified the weapon over the last year to defeat Ukraine's air defense systems by flying at low altitude and hugging terrain, according to military analysts.

Minutes later the world turned black. Neither the patient nor her mother would remember the moment the missile struck. But they remember the chaos that ensued after regaining consciousness: Femeniuk thought she would choke from the fumes. Solomiia woke to find the ceiling crumpled over her small body.

In an operating room in the next building, pediatric surgeon Oleh Holubchenko had been preparing to operate on an infant with a congenital facial defect. Covered in shrapnel wounds, he realized that the blast wave had catapulted him to the other side of the operating room.

The toll of Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months — one of the deadliest of the war — shows the devastating human cost of Russia's improved targeting tactics.

The hospital's director general, Volodymyr Zhovniir, stood at the scene of the explosion, eclipsed by the towering building with shattered windows. No children died, thank God, he said, but they lost a dear colleague, Dr. Svitlana Lukianchuk.

Lukianchuk was hurrying along the children and parents from the toxicology building, which would later be destroyed, to the shelter. She returned to empty out more rooms. And then, the explosion, Femeniuk remembers.

Solomiia was born with chronic renal failure, making hemodialysis part of her life.

After the full-scale invasion, Femeniuk left her three children and husband behind in the small village near Rivne, in western Ukraine, to live in the capital so the girl could access the treatment she needs.

Leaving her daughter during the air raid was a difficult decision. But the 34-year old mother had to project strength, she said. Her daughter was being brave by staying, knowing she could not interrupt her treatment. Femeniuk could not reveal to her daughter that she was actually terrified.

As the air-raid siren blared, the girl was on her phone watching videos. Given how long dialysis can take, she tends to get bored.

She awoke to find the ceiling in front of her eyes and the head doctor tending to her covered in blood and on her knees.

The girl's first impulse was to put her hands up to the ceiling to keep tons of concrete and debris from crushing her small body. She was trapped with a few other patients and hospital staff, and they were safely pulled out of the rubble.

"The first thing I thought about was my mom, if she is alive or not. Then I thought: 'Am I alive or not?'" she said, her fingers painted with small flowers, fidgeting as she spoke. Mother and daughter recounted their experience from the Kyiv City Children's Clinical Hospital, where Solomiia was transferred.

In the shelter, the exit was blocked and the fire blazing outside soon invaded the small space. Femeniuk called her husband, telling him she didn't know if she would survive and she didn't know if Solomiia was still alive.

Eventually, those taking shelter managed to push their way out and to their horror they realized that the very building they had been in, that some of their children had been in, was hit. Femeniuk began picking up pieces of rubble in panic, calling out her daughter's name. Then she saw the nurse who had been assisting them, covered in blood.

Solomiia had been evacuated after the blast, the nurse said. She was safe.

Meanwhile, in the operating room, it took Holubchenko fifteen minutes to realize that he was covered in shrapnel wounds. The doctor was too busy evacuating patients, starting with the 5-month old whose surgery was eventually completed elsewhere.

"My colleagues and I who were in the operating room received shrapnel wounds to the body, the face, back, arms and legs," he said. "There are glass windows in the operating room, the doors. All of it was just blown off, all destroyed."

In the hospital ward, he looked out to the street from a shattered window.

"There used to be a wall here," he said.

When he went outside and realized the toxicology building had collapsed, his mind reverted to the times he would have consultations with patients there and check-ups. Now half the building was caved in.

But he didn't dwell on the thought for long and joined a line of volunteers, health workers and emergency crews removing debris, piece by piece.

"Everyone wanted to do something," he said.

The assault hit seven of the city's 10 districts. The strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital, where 627 children were being cared for at the time, drew ire from Ukrainian officials and the international community. Two adults were killed, including a female doctor, and 50 were injured.

Russia denied responsibility for the hospital strike, insisting it doesn't attack civilian targets in Ukraine despite abundant evidence to the contrary, including AP reporting. Moscow insisted it was a Ukrainian air defense missile that struck the hospital.

Artem Starosiek, the founder of the Ukrainian group Molfar, which analyzes events based on open-source evidence, said there were overwhelming signs of Russia's culpability. The missile used in the attack bears the characteristics of the Kh-101, he said, pointing to the shape of the body, tail and location of the wings, he said.

That it was a clear blue day also played an important role, he said. Launching the modified missile during a sunny day is optimal for the weapon's optoelectronic system to recognize the target correctly, he said.

"The force of the warhead's explosion is important; an air-defense missile could not have caused such consequences," he said.

## **US-built pier will be put back in Gaza for several days to move aid, then permanently removed**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The pier built by the U.S. military to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza will be reinstalled Wednesday to be used for several days, but then the plan is to pull it out permanently, several U.S. officials said. It would deal the final blow to a project long plagued by bad weather, security uncertainties and difficulties getting food into the hands of starving Palestinians.

The officials said the goal is to clear whatever aid has piled up in Cyprus and on the floating dock offshore and get it to the secure area on the beach in Gaza. Once that has been done, the Army will dismantle the pier and depart. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because final details are still being worked out.

Officials had hoped the pier would provide a critical flow of aid to starving residents in Gaza as the nine-month-long war drags on. But while more than 19.4 million pounds (8.6 million kilograms) of food has gotten into Gaza via the pier, the project has been hampered by persistent heavy seas and stalled deliveries due to ongoing security threats as Israeli troops continue their offensive against Hamas in Gaza.

The decision comes as Israeli troops make another push deeper into Gaza City, which Hamas says could threaten long-running negotiations over a cease-fire and hostage release, after the two sides had appeared to have narrowed the gaps in recent days.

U.S. troops removed the pier on June 28 because of bad weather and moved it to the port of Ashdod in Israel. But distribution of the aid had already stopped due to the security concerns.

The United Nations suspended deliveries from the pier on June 9, a day after the Israeli military used

the area around it for airlifts after a hostage rescue that killed more than 270 Palestinians. U.S. and Israeli officials said no part of the pier itself was used in the raid, but U.N. officials said any perception in Gaza that the project was used may endanger their aid work.

As a result, aid brought through the pier into the secure area on the beach piled up for days while talks continued between the U.N. and Israel. More recently, the World Food Program hired a contractor to move the aid from the beach to prevent the food and other supplies from spoiling.

The Pentagon said all along that the pier was only a temporary project, designed to prod Israel into opening and allowing aid to flow better through land routes — which are far more productive than the U.S.-led sea route.

And the weather now is projected only to get worse.

The pier was damaged by high winds and heavy seas on May 25, just a bit more than a week after it began operating, and was removed for repairs. It was reconnected on June 7, but removed again due to bad weather on June 14. It was put back days later, but heavy seas again forced its removal on June 28.

## Daniil Medvedev beats Jannik Sinner at Wimbledon and faces defending champ Carlos Alcaraz next

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — Jannik Sinner felt ill. He was dizzy. Hadn't slept well the night before. Wimbledon's top-seeded man, who recently attained the No. 1 ranking, definitely did not want to quit playing against Daniil Medvedev in the quarterfinals, but things were not looking good.

Sinner was treated by a trainer and left the court during the third set Tuesday, then briefly surged before faltering again down the stretch, eventually losing to a more-aggressive-than-usual Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (7), 6-4, 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-3.

"I was struggling physically," said Sinner, who had won his past five matches against Medvedev, including a five-setter in the final of the Australian Open in January. "It was not an easy moment. I tried to fight with that what I had today."

It wasn't enough.

Not against the crafty Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open champion who now will face Carlos Alcaraz in the semifinals at the All England Club for the second consecutive year.

"Was a bit up-and-down match, in a way, from both sides," Medvedev said.

Alcaraz, the defending champion and No. 3 seed, took a bit of time to get going in his quarterfinal, but once he did, there was no stopping him during a 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 victory over No. 12 Tommy Paul at No. 1 Court.

"We try just to find solutions," said Alcaraz, coming off a title at the French Open last month and seeking his fourth Grand Slam trophy. "For me, obviously, it's going to be really difficult to play my best tennis every match."

Over at Centre Court, it was not immediately clear what was wrong with Sinner, who leaned back in his sideline chair, rested his head in a hand and had his heart rate checked before heading to the locker room. During a later changeover, Sinner draped a towel over his head.

While he did regain his usual verve, particularly on his booming forehand, and pushed the match to a fifth set — the 36th this fortnight and the most at any Grand Slam tournament in the Open era, which dates to 1968 — Sinner could not get over the line.

Even though he won more points (164-160), accumulated more winners (61-56), made fewer unforced errors (49-45), hit more aces (17-15) and finished with far fewer double-faults (11-4).

"It's a tough one to swallow," Sinner said.

Medvedev, a 28-year-old from Russia, began playing closer to the baseline than he often does. He found the space to deliver more winners, compiling 13 in the closing set alone, broke for a 3-1 lead in the fifth, and was on his way back to the semifinals.

"Today," Medvedev said, "a lot of tactical things worked well."

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After eliminating the 22-year-old Sinner, Medvedev now goes up against the 21-year-old Alcaraz, back-to-back tests against the two new young stars of men's tennis.

Against Paul, Alcaraz raised his level after a so-so opening set, putting together a 26-12 advantage in winners over the last three.

"When he starts building energy and building momentum ... it feels a little bit different than most of the other guys," Paul said. "He can play some seriously amazing, amazing tennis."

In the women's quarterfinals, Donna Vekic reached the final four at a major for the first time in her 43rd Slam, defeating qualifier Lulu Sun 5-7, 6-4, 6-1, and French Open runner-up Jasmine Paolini eliminated No. 19 Emma Navarro 6-2, 6-1 in less than an hour.

Navarro got past four-time major champion Naomi Osaka and reigning U.S. Open champ Coco Gauff earlier in the tournament.

"I know this isn't the last time I'm going to be in the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam," Navarro said. "I know I'll be back."

Vekic, a 28-year-old from Croatia, pondered quitting the sport on multiple occasions — including as recently as right before play began at Roland Garros in May.

"I didn't have any energy, any motivation to keep practicing, keep pushing, because I felt like the last couple months I've given everything for tennis, and I wasn't getting the results that I kind of expected," Vekic said.

"Now I'm the semifinals," Vekic said. "Not just in tennis, (but) in life, things can turn pretty fast."

Sinner was a Wimbledon semifinalist a year ago and carried a nine-match winning streak into Tuesday, including a grass-court title at Halle, Germany, last month. He moved up to No. 1 in the ATP rankings, replacing Novak Djokovic there, on June 10 after getting to the semifinals at the French Open.

His exit follows that of the No. 1 women's seed, Iga Swiatek, in the third round. It is the first time since 2018 that both the top woman and top man are gone from Wimbledon before the semifinals. That year, Roger Federer lost in the quarterfinals, and Simona Halep in the third round.

Against Sinner in Australia, Medvedev took the first two sets. But Sinner clawed all the way back to win his first Grand Slam title.

That result dropped Medvedev's career record in major finals to 1-5. Now he's one victory from a seventh such appearance.

"Hopefully I can win some more Grand Slams," Medvedev said. "I believe in myself. I believe in my tennis."

## Former US Sen. Jim Inhofe, defense hawk who called human-caused climate change a 'hoax,' dies at 89

KEN MILLER Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Former Sen. Jim Inhofe, a conservative known for his strong support of defense spending and his denial that human activity is responsible for the bulk of climate change, has died. He was 89.

Inhofe, a powerful fixture in Oklahoma politics for over six decades, died Tuesday morning after suffering a stroke during the July Fourth holiday, his family said in a statement.

Inhofe, a Republican who underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery in 2013 before being elected to a fourth term, was elected to a fifth Senate term in 2020, before stepping down in early 2023.

Inhofe frequently criticized the mainstream science that human activity contributed to changes in the Earth's climate, once calling it "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people."

In February 2015, with temperatures in the nation's capital below freezing, Inhofe brought a snowball on to the Senate floor. He tossed it before claiming that environmentalists focus attention on global warming as it kept getting cold.

As Oklahoma's senior U.S. senator, Inhofe was a staunch supporter of the state's five military installations and a vocal fan of congressional earmarks. The Army veteran and licensed pilot, who would fly himself to and from Washington, secured federal money to fund local road and bridge projects, and criticized House



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Republicans who wanted a one-year moratorium on such pet projects in 2010.

"Defeating an earmark doesn't save a nickel," Inhofe told the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce that August. "It merely means that within the budget process, it goes right back to the bureaucracy."

He was a strong backer of President Donald Trump, who praised him for his "incredible support of our #MAGA agenda" while endorsing the senator's 2020 reelection bid. During the Trump administration, Inhofe served as chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee following the death of Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

U.S. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell called Inhofe a good friend whose work benefited all the nation.

"Jim's diligent stewardship of massive infrastructure projects transformed life across the Heartland," McConnell said in a statement. "His relentless advocacy for American energy dominance unlocked new prosperity across the country and his laser focus on growing and modernizing the U.S. military strengthened the security of the entire free world."

Republican Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford called Inhofe a "true patriot" and an "institution."

"His passion for our military, aviation, energy, infrastructure, Africa, and our personal freedom was vital for our state and our nation," Lankford said in a statement.

In Oklahoma, Inhofe helped secure millions of dollars to clean up a former mining hub that spent decades on the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list. In a massive buyout program, the federal government purchased homes and businesses within the 40-square-mile (104-square-kilometer) region of Tar Creek, where children consistently tested for dangerous levels of lead in their blood.

Inhofe championed veterans and firmly believed in the "American Dream," said Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, who ordered flags on state property to fly at half staff through Wednesday.

In 2021, Inhofe defied some in his party by voting to certify Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election, saying that to do otherwise would violate his oath of office to support and defend the Constitution. He voted against convicting Trump at both of his impeachment trials.

Born James Mountain Inhofe on Nov. 17, 1934, in Des Moines, Iowa, Inhofe grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Tulsa in 1959. He served in the Army between 1956 and 1958, and was a businessman for three decades.

He won legislative seats in the '60s and unsuccessfully ran for governor and Congress in the '70s. In 1978, he became Tulsa's mayor, and held the job for three terms.

Inhofe went on to win two terms in the U.S. House in the 1980s before winning a bitter U.S. Senate race in 1994. He would be reelected five times.

Former longtime Democratic Sen. David Boren said he and Inhofe worked together in a bipartisan manner when both were in the state Legislature. He later defeated Inhofe in a race for governor.

"While we ran against each other for governor, we were opponents but never enemies and remained friends," Boren said in a statement. "I hope we can rebuild that spirit in American politics."

Inhofe lived up to his reputation as a tough campaigner in his 2008 reelection bid against Democrat Andrew Rice, a 35-year-old state senator and former missionary. Inhofe claimed Rice was "too liberal" for Oklahoma and ran television ads that critics said contained anti-gay overtones, including one that showed a wedding cake topped by two plastic grooms.

Inhofe's bullish personality also was apparent outside politics. He was a commercial-rated pilot and flight instructor with more than 50 years of flying experience.

He made an emergency landing in Claremore in 1999, after his plane lost a propeller, an incident later blamed on an installation error. In 2006, his plane spun out of control upon landing in Tulsa; he and an aide escaped injury, though the plane was severely damaged.

In 2010, Inhofe landed his small plane on a closed runway at a rural South Texas airport while flying himself and others to South Padre Island. Runway workers scrambled, and Inhofe agreed to complete a remedial training program rather than face possible legal action.

"I'm 75 years old, but I still fly airplanes upside down," Inhofe said in August 2010.

He later sponsored legislation that expanded the rights of pilots when dealing with Federal Aviation Administration disciplinary proceedings.

In 2016 Inhofe, then 81, walked away from a forced landing during severe weather in northeastern Oklahoma.

Inhofe is survived by his wife, Kay, three children and several grandchildren. A son, Dr. Perry Dyson Inhofe II, died in November 2013, when the twin-engine aircraft he was flying crashed near Tulsa International Airport.

## **NYC prosecutors intend to bring new sexual assault charges against Harvey Weinstein ahead of retrial**

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Manhattan prosecutors said Tuesday that they intend to bring new sexual assault charges against Harvey Weinstein as they anticipate a November retrial for the disgraced media mogul.

Assistant District Attorney Nicole Blumberg said in court that prosecutors are actively pursuing claims of rape that occurred in Manhattan within the statute of limitations.

She said some potential survivors that were not ready to step forward during Weinstein's first New York trial have indicated they are now willing to testify.

But when pressed by the judge, Blumberg said prosecutors have not yet brought their findings to a grand jury. She also said she could not provide the court a timeline for when their investigation will be complete.

"The People are still investigating in a trauma-informed manner," she said. "That is an ongoing process."

Weinstein's lawyer Arthur Aidala, with his client sitting next to him in a wheelchair, suggested the investigation was simply a delay tactic from prosecutors, saying something similar happened ahead of the initial rape trial.

"Once again, they're doing the '1-800-Get-Harvey,'" he said outside the courthouse following the morning hearing. "They're trying to find someone else to come forward because I guess they feel that their current case is not strong enough."

In court, Blumberg rejected the notion and said the prosecution's plan is to proceed to trial in the fall.

"There's certainly no delay tactics on our part," she said. "We're proceeding in the most expeditious manner."

When asked by Judge Curtis Farber what month she anticipated, Blumberg responded: "November would be a realistic timeframe."

Aidala said his client simply wants to get the trial going as soon as possible, noting he's in his fifth year of incarceration.

"He's suffering tremendously," Aidala said, adding that the 72-year-old suffers from macular degeneration, fluid in his lungs and heart and diabetes that is "through the roof" because of the poor diet behind bars.

"He's basically getting no treatment for any of it," Aidala said. "He's not a young man. He's a sick man."

"These tactics from prosecutors are just delay, delay, delay," he added.

Judge Farber set the next pre-trial hearing for July 19.

Among those in the packed courtroom Tuesday was Jessica Mann, the former actor Weinstein was convicted of raping his 2020 trial.

Mann did not speak to reporters but prosecutors have said she is prepared to testify against Weinstein again.

Weinstein's other accuser, Mimi Haley, did not attend Tuesday's hearing and has expressed reluctance about going through the trauma of testifying again. Her lawyer, Gloria Allred, said in an email Tuesday that her client has not yet made her decision about participating in the retrial.

The Associated Press does not generally identify people alleging sexual assault unless they consent to be named, as Haley and Mann have.

Weinstein has maintained that any sexual activity was consensual.

He's currently in custody at the city's Rikers Island jail complex where his lawyers complain he's not receiving adequate medical care and remains essentially in solitary confinement.

"He was in better shape before his case was reversed when he was upstate in a hospital facility and he was getting treatment and medication," Aidala said Tuesday after the hearing.

Behind bars, Weinstein calls his representatives nearly every day and reads "profusely," he added. His latest read is a book about 20th Century Fox and the movie industry.

In April, New York's highest court threw out Weinstein's rape conviction after determining the trial judge unfairly allowed testimony against him based on allegations from other women that were not part of the case.

The ruling reopened a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures. The #MeToo era began in 2017 with a flood of allegations against Weinstein.

Weinstein, who had been serving a 23-year sentence in New York, was also convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape and is still sentenced to 16 years in prison in California. But in an appeal filed last month in California's Second District Court of Appeal, Weinstein's lawyers argued he did not get a fair trial in Los Angeles.

## Appeals court orders release of woman whose murder conviction was reversed after 43 years in prison

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — An appellate court has ordered the release of a Missouri woman whose murder conviction was overturned after she served 43 years in prison, but the state attorney general is still trying to keep her behind bars as the case is reviewed.

Monday's ruling by a panel of appeals court judges comes after a judge ruled that Sandra Hemme's attorneys had established "clear and convincing evidence" of "actual innocence." Judge Ryan Horsman said on June 14 that she must be freed within 30 days unless prosecutors decide to retry her.

The appeals court granted Republican Attorney General Andrew Bailey's request to review Horsman's decision, but told Horsman meanwhile to establish her bail terms and set her free.

The attorney general's office, which almost always objects to wrongful conviction claims, then asked the appellate court to reconsider, saying the court didn't give them enough time to argue against her release. Bailey's office also argued that Hemme was sentenced decades ago to 12 years for violence in prison, and she would start serving that penalty now. Her attorneys responded Tuesday that keeping her incarcerated any longer would be a "draconian outcome."

Hemme, now 64, has been serving a life sentence at a prison northeast of Kansas City after she was twice convicted of murder in the death of library worker Patricia Jeschke. She's now the longest-held wrongly incarcerated woman known in the U.S., according to her legal team at the Innocence Project.

After an extensive review, Horsman found that Hemme was heavily sedated and in a "malleable mental state" when investigators repeatedly questioned her in a psychiatric hospital. Police ignored evidence pointing to a discredited fellow officer who died in 2015, and the prosecution wasn't told about FBI results that could have cleared her, so it was never disclosed before her trials.

The prosecutor at her trial agreed, four decades later, that nothing linked her to the crime other than her confession, which followed multiple contradictory statements, the judge noted.

Her attorneys described her ultimate confession in a court filing as "often monosyllabic responses to leading questions."

"She is the victim of a manifest injustice," Horsman concluded in his 118-page ruling. "This Court finds that the totality of the evidence supports a finding of actual innocence."

But Bailey then sought a delay in Hemme's release to allow an appellate court review, saying she represents a safety risk to herself or others, citing a 1990s attack on a prison worker and statements she made decades ago about enjoying violence, and arguing that the evidence she presented is not "newly

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discovered," so "Hemme did not meet the actual innocence standard as a matter of law."

The Buchanan County prosecutor's office, which tried the case, didn't respond to requests for comment. Hemme was arrested weeks after the death of Jeschke, a 31-year-old library worker who lived in St. Joseph, Missouri. After Jeschke missed work on Nov. 13, 1980, her worried mother climbed through an apartment window and discovered her daughter's nude body on the floor, surrounded by blood, with her hands tied behind her back and a telephone cord and a pair of pantyhose wrapped around her throat. A knife was under her head.

These and other details were released to the media by the St. Joseph police chief, Robert Hayes, as the crime prompted a massive investigation.

Meanwhile, the department took only a cursory look at Michael Holman, a since discredited St. Joseph police officer who was being investigated for insurance fraud and burglaries, and ended that investigation after evidence cast doubt on his alibi. Holman's plea deal included a promise not to prosecute him for any other "criminal matters now under investigation." He died in 2015, according to the judge's finding of facts.

Hemme wasn't on anyone's radar until she showed up more than two weeks after the killing at the home of a nurse who once treated her, carrying a knife and refusing to leave. Police took her back to St. Joseph's Hospital, the latest in a string of hospitalizations that began when she started hearing voices at the age of 12, and she was heavily sedated.

It turned out that Hemme had been discharged from the hospital and hitchhiked out of town hours before Jeschke was last seen alive. She showed up that evening at her parents home, more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) to the east.

Police interviewed the initial driver who provided her alibi, but this wasn't shared with the jury, the judge found.

Investigators began interrogating her as the psychiatric hospital treated her with antipsychotic drugs that triggered involuntary muscle spasms. She complained that her eyes were rolling back in her head. Detectives said Hemme seemed "mentally confused" and not fully able to comprehend their questions, her attorneys argued.

Hemme ultimately pleaded guilty to murder to avoid the death penalty, and after her plea was thrown out on appeal, she was convicted again in 1985 after a one-day trial. The prosecutor told Horsman that police never shared exculpatory evidence, including FBI tests that ruled out any connection between Hemme and crime scene evidence.

Police also didn't share key evidence pointing to their fellow officer, even though his pickup truck was seen outside the victim's apartment, he tried to use her credit card and her earrings were found in his home.

When Holman couldn't be ruled out as the source of a palm print detected on a TV antenna cable found next to the victim's body, the FBI asked for clearer prints. Police, however, didn't follow up. An FBI report also found that a hair found on the victim's bedsheet had "microscopic characteristics similar to Holman's head hair samples and he could not be eliminated as the source."

Jurors never heard these details because the police never shared them with prosecutors, the judge found. "This Court finds that the evidence shows that Ms. Hemme's statements to police are so unreliable and that the evidence pointing to Michael Holman as the perpetrator of the crime (is) so objective and probative that no reasonable juror would find Ms. Hemme guilty," Horsman concluded.

The judge also noted how police had showed Hemme crime scene photos and other details that a prosecutor later falsely told jurors only the killer would know. Chief Hayes — who died in 2010 after serving time for involuntary manslaughter — also was unusually involved, the judge noted, participating in questioning the victim's father as he described buying his daughter a pair of gold horseshoe-shaped earrings.

That those earrings were found in Holman's home is another fact the jury never heard.



## 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 still afraid Republicans might pursue a national abortion ban if they win the White House and Congress in November.

## **A rare voice box transplant helped a cancer patient speak again, part of a pioneering study**

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Massachusetts man has regained his voice after surgeons removed his cancerous larynx and, in a pioneering move, replaced it with a donated one.

Transplants of the so-called voice box are extremely rare, and normally aren't an option for people with active cancer. Marty Kedian is only the third person in the U.S. ever to undergo a total larynx transplant — the others, years ago, because of injuries — and one of a handful reported worldwide.

Surgeons at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona offered Kedian the transplant as part of a new clinical trial aimed at opening the potentially lifechanging operation to more patients, including some with cancer, the most common way to lose a larynx.

"People need to keep their voice," Kedian, 59, told The Associated Press four months after his transplant — still hoarse but able to keep up an hourlong conversation. "I want people to know this can be done."

He became emotional recalling the first time he phoned his 82-year-old mother after the surgery "and she could hear me. ... That was important to me, to talk to my mother."

The study is small — just nine more people will be enrolled. But it may teach scientists best practices for these complex transplants so that one day they could be offered to more people who can't breathe, swallow or speak on their own because of a damaged or surgically removed larynx.

"Patients become very reclusive, and very kind of walled off from the rest of the world," said Dr. David Lott, Mayo's chair of head and neck surgery in Phoenix. He started the study because "my patients tell me, 'Yeah I may be alive but I'm not really living.'"

Lott's team reported early results of the surgery Tuesday in the journal Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

The larynx may be best known as the voice box but it's also vital for breathing and swallowing. Muscular tissue flaps called vocal cords open to let air into the lungs, close to prevent food or drink from going the wrong way — and vibrate when air pushes past them to produce speech.

The first two U.S. larynx transplant recipients — at the Cleveland Clinic in 1998 and the University of California, Davis, in 2010 — had lost their voices to injuries, one from a motorcycle accident and the other damaged by a hospital ventilator.

But cancer is the biggest reason. The American Cancer Society estimates more than 12,600 people will be diagnosed with some form of laryngeal cancer this year. While today many undergo voice-preserving treatment, thousands of people have had their larynx completely removed, breathing through what's called a tracheostomy tube in their neck and struggling to communicate.

Although the earlier U.S. recipients achieved near normal speech, doctors haven't embraced these transplants. Partly that's because people can survive without a larynx — while antirejection drugs that suppress the immune system could spark new or recurring tumors.

"We want to be able to push those boundaries but do it as safely and ethically as we can," Lott said.

Head-and-neck specialists say the Mayo trial is key to helping larynx transplants become a viable option.

"It isn't a 'one-off,'" but an opportunity to finally learn from one patient before operating on the next, said Dr. Marshall Strome, who led the 1998 transplant in Cleveland.

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This first attempt in a cancer patient "is the next important step," he said.

Other options are being studied, noted Dr. Peter Belafsky of UC Davis, who helped perform the 2010 transplant. His patients at high risk of larynx loss record their voice in anticipation of next-generation speech devices that sound like them.

But Belafsky said there's "still a shot" for larynx transplants to become more common while cautioning it likely will take years more research. One hurdle has been achieving enough nerve regrowth to breathe without a trach tube.

Kedian was diagnosed with a rare laryngeal cartilage cancer about a decade ago. The Haverhill, Massachusetts, man underwent more than a dozen surgeries, eventually needing a trach tube to help him breathe and swallow — and struggled even to muster a raspy whisper through it. He had to retire on disability.

Still the once gregarious Kedian, known for long conversations with strangers, wouldn't let doctors remove his entire larynx to cure the cancer. He desperately wanted to read bedtime stories to his granddaughter, with his own voice rather than what he called robotic-sounding speech devices.

Then Kedian's wife Gina tracked down the Mayo study. Lott decided he was a good candidate because his cancer wasn't fast-growing and -- especially important -- Kedian already was taking antirejection drugs for an earlier kidney transplant.

It took 10 months to find a deceased donor with a healthy enough larynx just the right size.

Then on Feb. 29, six surgeons operated for 21 hours. After removing Kedian's cancerous larynx, they transplanted the donated one plus necessary adjoining tissues – thyroid and parathyroid glands, the pharynx and upper part of the trachea – and tiny blood vessels to supply them. Finally, using new microsurgical techniques, they connected nerves critical for Kedian to feel when he needs to swallow and to move the vocal cords.

About three weeks later, Kedian said "hello." Soon he'd relearned to swallow, working up from applesauce to macaroni and cheese and hamburgers. He got to say hi to granddaughter Charlotte via video, part of his homework to just keep talking.

"Every day it's getting better," said Kedian, who moves back to Massachusetts soon. His tracheostomy remains in place at least a few more months but "I'm pushing myself to make it go faster because I want these tubes out of me, to go back to a normal life."

And just as Lott had assured him, Kedian retained his beloved Boston accent.

## Today in History: July 10

### The Battle of Britain begins in World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 10, the 192nd day of 2024. There are 174 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 10, 1940, during World War II, the Battle of Britain began as the German Luftwaffe launched attacks on southern England. (The Royal Air Force was ultimately victorious.)

Also on this date:

In 1509, theologian John Calvin, a key figure of the Protestant Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, France.

In 1890, Wyoming was admitted as the 44th US state.

In 1925, jury selection took place in Dayton, Tennessee, in the trial of John T. Scopes, charged with violating the law by teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (Scopes was convicted and fined, but the verdict was overturned on a technicality.)

In 1929, American paper currency was reduced in size as the government began issuing bills that were approximately 25 percent smaller.

In 1951, armistice talks aimed at ending the Korean War began at Kaesong.

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In 1962, the first active communications satellite, Telstar 1, was launched by NASA.

In 1985, the Greenpeace protest ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk with explosives in Auckland, New Zealand, by French intelligence agents; one activist was killed.

In 1991, Boris N. Yeltsin took the oath of office as the first elected president of the Russian republic.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush lifted economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 2002, the House approved, 310-113, a measure to allow airline pilots to carry guns in the cockpit to defend their planes against terrorists (President George W. Bush later signed the measure into law).

In 2015, South Carolina pulled the Confederate flag from its place of honor at the Statehouse after more than 50 years.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Mavis Staples is 85. Actor Robert Pine is 83. International Tennis Hall of Famer Virginia Wade is 79. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie is 77. Baseball Hall of Famer Andre Dawson is 70. Rock singer Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) is 70. Banjo player Bela Fleck is 66. Actor Fiona Shaw is 66. Singer/actor Jacky Cheung is 63. Actor Alec Mapa is 59. Country singer Gary LeVox (leh-VOH') (Rascal Flatts) is 54. Actor Sofia Vergara is 52. Actor Adrian Grenier (grehn-YAY') is 48. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (CHOO'-ih-tehl EHJ'-ee-oh-for) is 47. Actor Thomas Ian Nicholas is 44. Singer/actor Jessica Simpson is 44. Actor Emily Skeggs is 34. Pop singer Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) is 31. Actor Isabela Merced is 23.