

Groton Daily Independent

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



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.

Sunday, July 14

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

United Methodist: Worship: Conde at 8:30 a.m.; Groton at 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

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

Groton CM&A: Church in Park at 9 a.m. No worship in the church.

Summer Fest/Car Show at City Park, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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1440

In partnership with smartasset™

Ambani Wedding

Celebrities, politicians, and other public figures are gathering in India this weekend for what is considered the year's most lavish wedding event. Anant Ambani (the youngest son of Asia's richest person, Mukesh Ambani) and Radhika Merchant (the daughter of a billionaire pharmaceutical tycoon) tied the knot in India Friday as part of four-day-long celebrations.

The wedding—estimated to have cost as much as \$300M alone—comes after a marathon of prewedding festivities that first kicked off in March. Celebrity performances have included Rihanna, Katy Perry, Pitbull, Justin Bieber, The Backstreet Boys, and opera singer Andrea Bocelli. The price tag for the overall monthslong wedding celebrations is seen as a drop in the bucket for Mukesh Ambani, who is among the top 12 richest people in the world and is estimated to have a net worth of \$123B.

The guests in attendance this weekend include John Cena, Mark Zuckerberg, Kim Kardashian, and former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter case dismissed.

A judge in New Mexico threw out Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter charges related to the October 2021 fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the film set of "Rust". The judge cited misconduct by police and prosecutors for withholding evidence from the defense as the reason for dismissal. The case cannot be filed again.

Jury deliberations begin in corruption trial of US Sen. Bob Menendez.

The New Jersey Democrat, who is running for reelection as an independent, has been on trial for federal bribery charges since May. His wife, Nadine, was also charged and will begin trial in August due to her battle with cancer. The couple has been accused of accepting bribes from three wealthy businessmen in exchange for influencing deals benefiting the governments of Egypt and Qatar.

Judge tosses out Rudy Giuliani's Chapter 11 bankruptcy case.

A New York judge dismissed former New York Mayor Giuliani's bankruptcy case Friday, clearing the way for two Georgia poll workers to collect \$148M in defamation damages. A jury in December held Giuliani liable for falsely claiming the two poll workers committed ballot fraud during the 2020 presidential election.

AT&T says hackers stole data of nearly all US customers.

The call and text message records of 109 million US customers from May 1, 2022, to Oct. 31, 2022, as well as some from Jan. 2, 2023, were exposed. Hackers downloaded the data in April from AT&T's third-party cloud service, the company announced Friday. Roughly 127 million devices are connected to AT&T's network. At least one person has been arrested in connection to the breach.

SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket suffers malfunction for first time since 2016.

The rocket's upper stage encountered an issue that forced it to disintegrate while deploying 20 Starlink satellites in lower-than-intended orbit. The Falcon 9 has had over 300 successful launches since its first failure in 2016, when it exploded on the launchpad. The Falcon 9 remains grounded until the Federal Aviation Administration approves SpaceX's investigation into the incident.

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New mission sets off to map Titanic wreckage in 3D detail.

An expedition team set sail for the Titanic Friday to capture the most detailed photos of the wreckage site using remotely operated vehicles. The team also seeks to compare how much of the site has changed since their last expedition in 2010. The mission comes a year after five people were killed in the OceanGate submersible accident while on their way to tour the site.

Carlos Alcaraz, Novak Djokovic head to Wimbledon men's final again.

No. 3 Alcaraz, who won the 2024 French Open, is vying for his second consecutive Wimbledon title after defeating No. 2 Djokovic in a five-set thriller last year that lasted more than four-and-a-half hours. Djokovic is a seven-time Wimbledon champion and seeks his 25th Grand Slam title at the Wimbledon men's final Sunday (9 am ET, ESPN+).

Hallmark to launch new streaming service in September.

Hallmark Movies Now will rebrand itself as Hallmark+, with a launch set for mid-September. Monthly and yearly subscriptions to the streaming service will rise from \$5.99 and \$59.99 to \$7.99 and \$79.99, respectively. Hallmark's streaming service rebrand will include reality competition shows and holiday-themed mini-series.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Rick P. in St. George, Utah.

"Through a crazy series of events at the Las Vegas airport, our passports ended up in our carry-on bag that needed to be checked at the gate. When we connected in Miami and realized our bag with the passports was already loaded into the plane, we definitely thought our vacation nightmares were just beginning."

"The agent at the kiosk contacted the baggage handler, who managed to secure our bag and bring it to the gate where we were able to retrieve the passports. I can't imagine how many bags he had to unload from the plane to eventually find ours. Because of his incredible act of selflessness, we made the flight, and on time. Every time we talk about the vacation we will always remember this amazing person who made it possible."

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PLEASE JOIN US IN
CELEBRATING

**DROP & GO GIFT CARD
BRIDAL SHOWER FOR**

*Julianna Kosel
& Isaac Moll*

**Box also
at Lori's
Pharmacy!**

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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**50th Wedding Celebration
Honoring Neal & Wynella Abeln
Saturday, July 20, 2024
Food & Visiting 6 pm – 8 pm
Barn Dance 8 pm – 11 pm
AT: Tim & Lacey Grabow's
15689 456th Ave
South Shore, SD 57263
FUN FOR ALL
No gifts please**

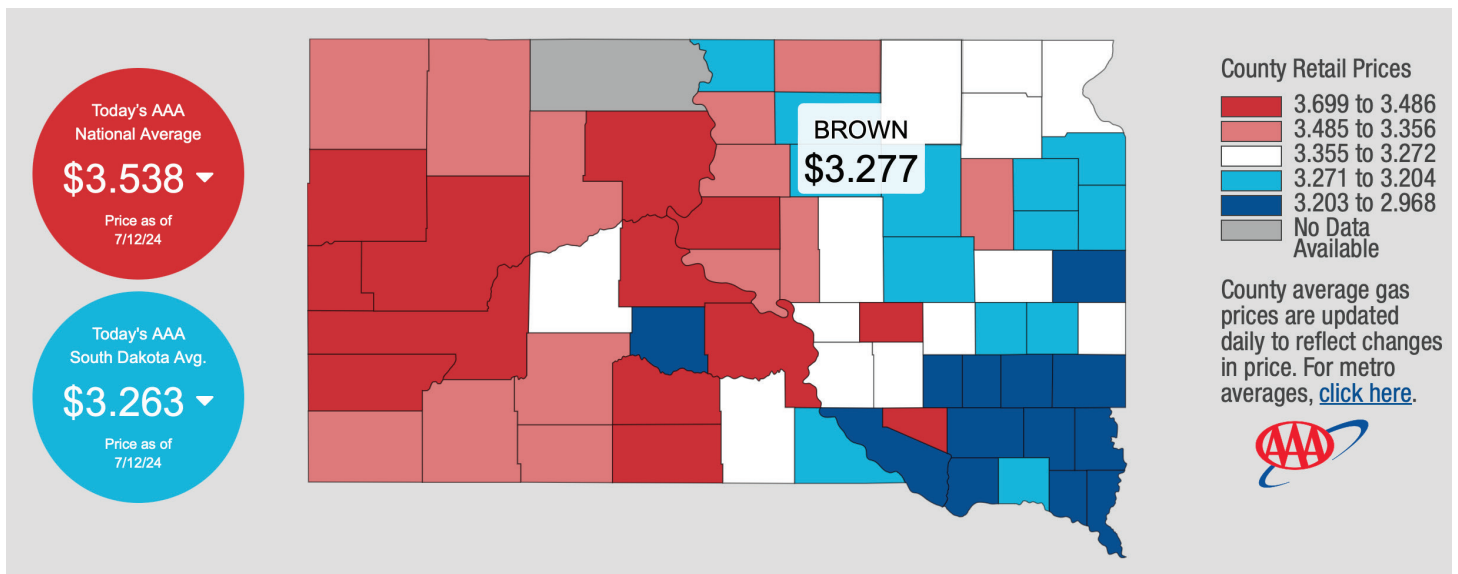
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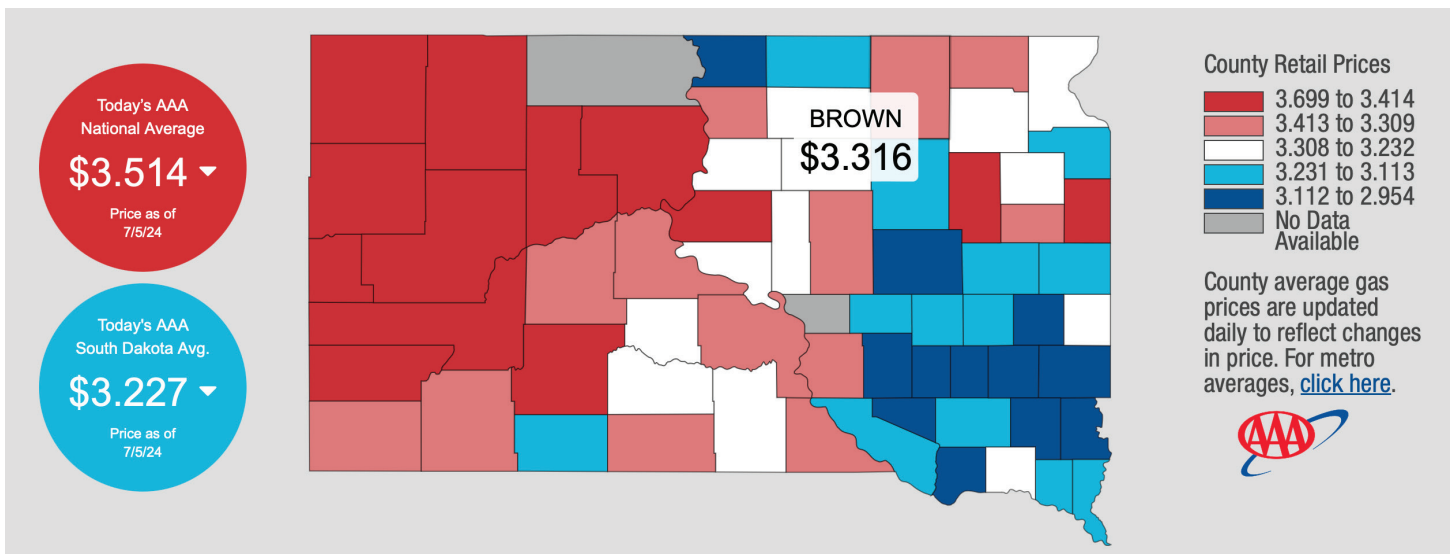
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.263	\$3.456	\$3.871	\$3.480
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.271	\$3.450	\$3.878	\$3.477
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.227	\$3.443	\$3.876	\$3.466
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.265	\$3.438	\$3.874	\$3.410
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.489	\$3.646	\$4.137	\$3.670

This Week



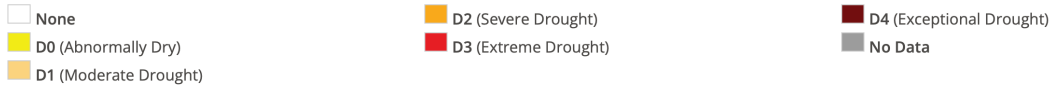
Last Week



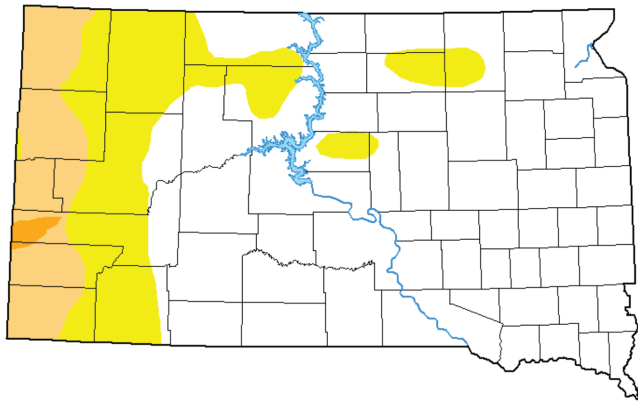
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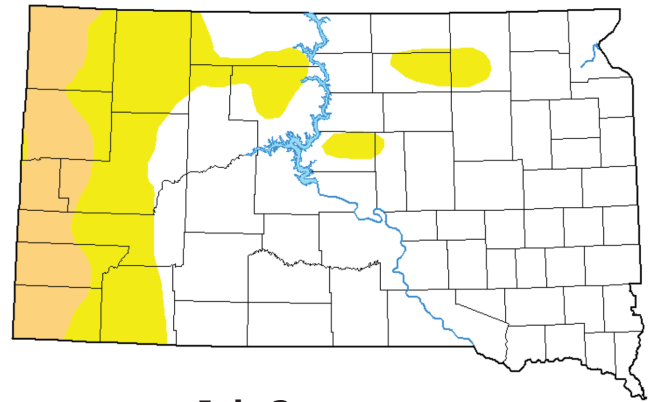
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



July 9



July 2

Like the Midwest, most of the region recorded precipitation during the week with pockets of heavier rains in Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota and southeast Colorado. Cooler-than-normal temperatures dominated the region with almost all areas below normal for the week. The greatest departures were in Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming with temperatures 6-8 degrees below normal. With much of the region drought free, there were pockets of improvement over Nebraska, western Kansas and southeast Colorado where abnormally dry and moderate drought areas were reduced. Dryness in the Black Hills of South Dakota remained, and some expansion of severe drought took place this week. The driest areas remained in eastern Wyoming and eastern Colorado, where most places did not record much precipitation this week and moderate and severe drought conditions expanded along with more abnormally dry areas.

Social Security Announces Upcoming Changes to Accessing Online Services

Agency Transitioning Authentication Services to [Login.gov](https://login.gov)

The Social Security Administration announced that customers who created an online account (e.g., my Social Security account) before September 18, 2021, will soon be required to transition to a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account to continue access to their online services. Over five million of these account holders have already transitioned to [Login.gov](https://login.gov).

The agency is making the changes to simplify the sign-in experience and align with federal authentication standards while providing safe and secure access to online services.

"my Social Security is a safe and secure way for people to do business with us," said Social Security Commissioner Martin O'Malley. "We're excited to transition to [Login.gov](https://login.gov) to access our online services, streamlining the process and ease of use for the public across agencies."

Account holders are encouraged to sign-in now. When the user logs in, they will be presented with an option to easily transition to [Login.gov](https://login.gov). Once their account is successfully linked, a confirmation screen will appear, and they will have immediate access to their personal my Social Security services or other service that they were attempting to access.

Existing [Login.gov](https://login.gov) or [ID.me](https://id.me) account holders do NOT need to create a new account or take any action.

my Social Security accounts are free, secure, and provide personalized tools for everyone, whether receiving benefits or not. People can use their account to request a replacement Social Security card, check the status of an application, estimate future benefits, or manage the benefits they already receive. For more information visit [Create an Account](#) | [my Social Security](#) | [SSA](#).

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Stymied By LaMoure Post 19

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 had trouble keeping up with LaMoure Post 19 in a 10-1 loss on Friday at the Clark Tournament.

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

LaMoure Post 19 jumped back into the lead in the bottom of the first inning after Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 committed an error, Colby Thielges singled, and Mason Warcken hit a sacrifice fly, each scoring one run.

LaMoure Post 19 added to their early lead in the bottom of the second inning after Blase Isaacson singled, Connor Johnson singled, and Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 committed an error, each scoring one run.

LaMoure Post 19 added to their early lead in the bottom of the third inning after Avery Kramer singled, Gunner Thielges doubled, Isaacson grounded out, and Johnson grounded out, each scoring one run.

Nicholas Morris stepped on the mound first for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. The starting pitcher gave up eight hits and 10 runs (four earned) over three and one-third innings, striking out two and walking three. Owen Lesko stepped on the hill first for LaMoure Post 19. The starting pitcher surrendered six hits and one run over four innings, striking out five and walking two.

Englund led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with one run batted in. The 3-hole hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Carter Simon went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 in hits.

Isaacson, Thielges, and Johnson each collected two hits for LaMoure Post 19. Isaacson led LaMoure Post 19 with two runs batted in. They went 2-for-3 on the day. LaMoure Post 19 turned one double play in the game. LaMoure Post 19 were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Warcken had the most chances in the field with five.

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Storm Back To Defeat Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U

By GameChanger Media

Despite trailing by as many as five runs, Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 rallied to best Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U 6-5 on Friday at the Clark Tournament.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 didn't take the lead until later in the game. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 were down 5-4 in the top of the seventh inning when Nick Groeblichhoff doubled, scoring two runs.

Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U opened the scoring in the first after Michael Severson homered to right field, scoring three runs.

Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U added to their early lead in the bottom of the third inning after Jack Helkenn singled, and Josh Kannegieter grounded out, each scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 made the score 6-5 in the top of the seventh after an error scored one run, and Groeblichhoff doubled, scoring two runs.

Gavin Englund opened the game for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. They surrendered six hits and five runs (three earned) over six innings, striking out six and walking three. Tyson Huber started on the mound for Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U. The starting pitcher surrendered five hits and three runs over four innings, striking out eight and walking four. Jarrett Erdmann appeared in relief for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39.

Groeblichhoff led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with three runs batted in. The first baseman went 2-for-4 on the day. Carter Simon, Englund, and Groeblichhoff each collected two hits for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Lincoln Krause led Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying six walks for the game.

Michael Severson drove the middle of the lineup, leading Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U with three runs batted in. They went 1-for-2 on the day. Jack Helkenn led Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U with two hits in three at bats. Jack Helkenn stole two bases. Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U ran wild on the base paths, amassing six stolen bases for the game.

Next up for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 is a game at LAW Rattlers Legion on Saturday.

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Fourth-Inning Burst Enough To Lead LAW Rattlers Legion Past Groton Post 39

By GameChanger Media

LAW Rattlers Legion defeated Groton Post 39 11-2 on Friday thanks in part to seven runs in the fourth inning.

LAW Rattlers Legion got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after an error scored two runs, Collin Goettle grounded out, scoring one run, and Levi Keeney grounded out, scoring one run.

LAW Rattlers Legion scored seven runs on five hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Berkley Frantz singled, scoring one run, an error scored one run, Keeney doubled, scoring two runs, Blake Goebel singled, scoring two runs, and Justin Bosch drew a walk, scoring one run.

Ryan Groeblichhoff opened the game for Groton Post 39. The starting pitcher allowed six hits and nine runs (five earned) over three and one-third innings, striking out none and walking four. Jace Nitschke led things off on the mound for LAW Rattlers Legion. They allowed five hits and two runs over five innings, striking out three and walking one.

Bradin Althoff led Groton Post 39 with one run batted in. The number three hitter went 1-for-3 on the day. Carter Simon led Groton Post 39 with two hits in two at bats.

Frantz provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led LAW Rattlers Legion with three runs batted in. The outfielder went 2-for-3 on the day. Connor Kosiak led LAW Rattlers Legion with three hits in four at bats. LAW Rattlers Legion had patience at the plate, accumulating six walks for the game. Parker Salwei and Bosch led the team with two walks each. Frantz stole two bases.

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **1 - 11** LaMoure Post 19

📍 Away 📅 Friday July 12, 2024

	1	2	3	4	R	H	E
GRTN	1	0	0	0	1	6	5
LMRP	3	3	4	1	11	9	0

BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (RF)	1	1	1	0	1	0
C Simon #4 (SS)	2	0	2	0	0	0
G Englund #18 (3B)	2	0	1	1	0	0
N Morris #17 (P)	1	0	0	0	1	0
J Erdmann #0 (CF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
N Groebl... #12 (1B)	2	0	1	0	0	0
G Kroll #8	2	0	0	0	0	2
K Flihs #10 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
T McGan... #22 (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
CR: T Schuster #3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	17	1	6	1	2	5

2B: J Erdmann, **TB:** N Groeblinghoff, J Erdmann 2, G Englund, L Krause, C Simon 2, **LOB:** 6

PITCHING

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris #17	3.1	9	11	4	3	2	0
Totals	3.1	9	11	4	3	2	0

L: N Morris, **P-S:** N Morris 88-58, **BF:** N Morris 26

LaMoure Post 19	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
G Thielg... #20 (SS)	3	2	2	1	0	0
B Isaacson #7 (CF)	3	2	2	2	0	0
C Johnson #3 (2B)	3	2	2	1	0	0
O Lesko #8 (P)	3	1	0	1	0	0
C Thielges #2 (3B)	2	1	1	1	1	0
M Warcken #6 (C)	1	0	0	1	1	0
C Ness #21 (1B)	1	1	0	0	1	0
J Regan #36 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
D Ketter... #26 (RF)	3	1	1	1	0	1
A Kramer #10 (LF)	2	1	1	1	0	1
J Kramer #24 (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
CR: R Exner #4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	22	11	9	9	3	2

2B: G Thielges 2, C Johnson, **TB:** G Thielges 4, C Johnson 3, D Ketterling, C Thielges, B Isaacson 2, A Kramer, **SF:** M Warcken, **SB:** O Lesko, C Thielges, **LOB:** 3

LaMoure Post 19	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
O Lesko #8	4.0	6	1	1	2	5	0
Totals	4.0	6	1	1	2	5	0

W: O Lesko, **P-S:** O Lesko 78-48, **BF:** O Lesko 19

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Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 **6 - 5** Clark-Willow Lake Senators 18U

📍 Away 📅 Friday July 12, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	6	9	3
CLRK	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	X	5	7	2

BATTING

Groton Jr. Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (RF)	2	1	0	0	2	2
C Simon #4 (SS)	4	1	2	0	0	2
T Schus... #3 (SS)	0	0	0	0	0	0
G Englund #18 (P)	4	0	2	1	0	2
N Morris #17 (3B)	3	1	0	1	1	0
J Erdmann #0 (CF)	3	1	1	0	1	2
N Groebl... #12 (1B)	4	0	2	3	0	1
K Fliehs #10 (C)	4	0	1	1	0	2
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	2	0	0	0	1	1
G Kroll #8 (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
T McGan... #22 (LF)	1	1	0	0	1	1
Jordan... #11 (LF)	1	1	1	0	0	0
CR: A Abeln #23	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	31	6	9	6	6	14

Clark-Willow Lake Senators	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Cooper P... #1 (3B)	4	2	1	0	0	0
Jack Helk... #7 (1B)	3	2	2	1	0	1
Jakob Ste... #21 (C)	3	0	1	0	0	1
Michael Seve... #13	2	1	1	3	1	0
Josh Kan... #2 (2B)	2	0	0	0	1	0
Conner M... #3 (SS)	2	0	0	0	1	1
Waylan... #44 (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	2
Collin Ga... #16 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
Ernesto... #39 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Parker... #28 (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Damian Sev... #61	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bryce Kl... #22 (DH)	2	0	1	0	0	0
Tyson Hu... #11 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	1
CR: Will Hovde #10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	28	5	7	4	3	7

2B: N Groeblinghoff 2, **TB:** N Groeblinghoff 4, Jordan Schwan, K Fliehs, C Simon 2, G Englund 2, J Erdmann, **SB:** Jordan Schwan, **LOB:** 10

2B: Jack Helkenn, **HR:** Michael Severson, **TB:** Jakob Steen, Cooper Pommer, Michael Severson 4, Bryce Klancke, Damian Severson, Jack Helkenn 3, **CS:** Will Hovde, Damian Severson, **SB:** Cooper Pommer, Michael Severson, Bryce Klancke, Josh Kannegieter, Jack Helkenn 2, **LOB:** 5

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

July 16, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. First Reading of following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #273 - Rezone
 - b. Ord. #274 – Rezone
5. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for Northern Electric
 - b. R-O-W for Northwestern Energy
 - c. Department Update
6. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign following Temporary Alcoholic Beverage Permits
 - a. Stacy Gossman, DBA/Flying Pig for Sept. 14th
 - b. Stacy Gossman, DBA/Nacho Business for Sept. 21st
7. Karly Winters, States Attorney
 - a. Discuss RFP for Court Appointed Attorneys (Indigent Counsel)
8. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of Post-Election Audit Minutes of July 9, 2024
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Request
 - e. Set Hearing Date & Authorize Advertising for Temporary Special Event Malt Beverage License – Boys & Girls Club of Aberdeen Area
 - f. Local Emergency Management Performance Grant (LEMPG) 3rd Qtr. Report
 - g. Acknowledge Resignation of Lee Koch from BCF Board
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

2025 Budget Work Session following the Commission Meeting

Brand New Program at

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460

Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



\$20 Monthly Membership

- ☞ for people 60 years of age and older
- ☞ for those who need equipment for physical therapy!



Downtown
Groton

24/7 access to the facility ~ Cancel any time

**Staying fit and practicing healthy nutrition
can be linked to benefits, such as:**

- ☞ Reduced levels of stress and anxiety
- ☞ Improved cognitive function
- ☞ Increased energy levels and productivity
- ☞ Controlled blood pressure
- ☞ Better blood flow circulation
- ☞ Strengthened bones and muscles
- ☞ Reduced risk of heart disease and other illnesses

Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605-397-7285

State Fire Marshal Granting \$5.0 Million to Local Volunteer Fire Departments

Pierre, S.D.- Governor Noem signed HB1127 during the 2023 Legislative Session approving a new grant program to support local volunteer fire departments purchase \$5.0 million of personal protective Equipment (PPE). The Department of Public Safety (DPS) in partnership with the South Dakota Firefighters Association create the grant program to support local VFDs. DPS recently delivered a progress report to the Legislature's interim committee on appropriations announcing 116 VFDs thus far have received \$2.27 million in grant funding as additional VFDs continue to submit their requests.

Over 250 volunteer fire departments were approved for funding from the new grant program. Awards ranged from \$720 to \$40,500 depending on the applications and need. Karl Moser, Leola Fire Chief, spoke on behalf of his department. "We needed to upgrade our PPE to keep our firefighters safe. We just didn't have the funds to do it," Moser said. "I'd like to thank our elected officials and the Governor for making this grant possible."

PPE includes items such as bunker gear, boots, gloves, helmets, and self-contained breathing apparatus. The grant program was administered by the South Dakota Firefighters Association and the State Fire Marshal's Office.

"Volunteer fire departments are essential in protecting communities and maintaining public safety through their prompt and committed response to emergencies," stated State Fire Marshal, Paul Merriman. "They form a fundamental part of the state's firefighting and disaster management system."

The State Fire Marshal's Office is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

The Andover Volunteer Fire Department requested \$43,200 and was awarded \$21,600.
The Bristol Volunteer Fire Department requested \$80,000 and was awarded \$33,300.
The Claremont Volunteer Fire Department requested \$22,105 and was awarded \$16,357.70
The Columbia Volunteer Fire Department requested \$32,400 and was awarded \$16,200.
The Frederick Volunteer Fire Department requested \$73,575 and was awarded \$22,500.
The Groton Area Volunteer Fire Department requested \$101,817.75 and was awarded \$22,500.
The Hecla Volunteer Fire Department requested \$37,800 and was awarded \$15,120.
The Langford Volunteer Fire Department requested \$38,000 and was awarded \$19,000.
The Pierpont Volunteer Fire Department requested \$188,575 and was awarded \$33,300.
The Stratford Volunteer Fire Department requested \$19,814.54 and was awarded \$14,662.76.
The Turton Volunteer Fire Department requested \$65,000 and was awarded \$22,500.
The Warner Volunteer Fire Department requested \$70,547 and was awarded \$22,500.

Dynamic leadership helps shape our creative culture

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

People are the generators that energize the arts throughout South Dakota. In communities across the state, your neighbors are finding innovative ways to encourage, advocate and participate in the arts. Our organization has been fortunate enough to have many of those individuals on our board of directors, helping to shape the future of the creative culture in South Dakota. It's my pleasure to welcome three of these leaders to our board this month.

Returning to our board is South Dakota Artist Laureate Dale Lamphere. A former member of the South Dakota Arts Council and founding member and past president of Arts South Dakota, Dale has received the Anna Hyatt Huntington award from the Artists Professional League, the South Dakota Governor's Award in the Arts in 2013, the Artistic Achievement Award from the South Dakota Art Museum in 1991 and was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1987. We're excited to have him back.

Rapid City Arts Council executive director Jacqui Dietrich is sharing her experience and expertise as a new member of the Arts South Dakota board. She previously held a variety of leadership positions in the public and private sector focused on innovative approaches to economic development and community building to promote creativity. At the Downtown Denver Partnership in Colorado, Dietrich managed a community center in a public-private partnership with the City and County of Denver to foster entrepreneurship and new business creation.

Patrick McGowan joins our board with a background in health care innovation and enhancement programs in integrated health systems. He spearheaded a CMS Innovation Award to integrate behavioral health in primary care across 33 clinics in three years. He also led the design and implementation of team-based practices in primary care, designed telehealth programs and advanced service line innovation and best practices. He is currently Head of Growth and co-founder of Commonly Well in Sioux Falls.

We're proud to have these South Dakotans on our board! To learn more about them and about our organization, visit ArtsSouthDakota.org.



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National and South Dakota Legislative News Connection

Washington- This week, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the fourth in a series of updates to the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act). The proposed "Fair and Competitive Livestock and Poultry Markets" rule aims to strengthen P&S Act enforcement by establishing a framework for evaluating claims of "unfair practices" by family livestock producers affected by meatpackers.

The "unfair practices" rule addresses unfair, unjustly discriminatory, or deceptive practices under the P&S Act. It aims to clarify whether proof of competitive injury is necessary for conduct to be considered "unfair," showing harm to individual producers and the entire industry. The USDA has defined "unfair practice" with respect to both "market participants" and "markets."

The full text of the proposed regulation and a fact sheet detailing the proposal are available. NFU will review the rule and submit public comments before the August 27, 2024, deadline. For questions or input, contact NFU's Government Relations team.

Washington- The USDA has released a Request for Information (RFI) seeking input on measuring greenhouse gas reductions in crops grown for biofuels, specifically Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). The agency wants to develop standards to verify and report climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices on farms and production facilities. This aligns with implementing the 45Z tax credit for SAF fuels and other uses.

The current guidelines for climate-smart practices in SAF production are complex and applicable only in certain areas, which limits the participation of many farmers. This leads to an uneven playing field and fails to account for diverse agricultural conditions across the country.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) advocates for tailored and accessible guidelines for CSA practices that consider farmers' varying capabilities and conditions nationwide rather than making them a strict requirement. The USDA has recognized a range of CSA practices already in use, and simplifying these requirements and offering more support for farmers will be crucial for broader participation.

NFU will submit comments on the RFI by the deadline of July 26.

South Dakota News

Pierre - The South Dakota Farmers Union attended Tuesday's South Dakota Animal Industry Board meeting. The topics discussed included Animal Disease Traceability, Captive Non-Domestic/Cervid Health/CWD, Small Ruminant Health, the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), and Trichomoniasis. Updated numbers were presented on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

The total outbreak number of cases in South Dakota of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Commercial Flocks is 100. There have been 20 cases in backyard flocks, affecting a total of 5,377,880 birds in this outbreak. No new cases have been reported since March 12th.

The total outbreak number of cases in South Dakota of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in livestock is 5 herds. The last detection in livestock was on May 31st.

The South Dakota Animal Industry Board is responsible for protecting and preserving the health of the state's livestock to enhance productivity and provide safe products for the public. This includes interstate commerce, import/export, disease surveillance, testing, permitting, and disease response plan activities.

South Dakota Planting & Production Progress

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

Corn Silking- 4%

Corn Condition- 2% very poor, 5% poor, 21% fair, 54% good, 18% excellent

Soybeans Blooming- 14%

Soybean Condition- 3% very poor, 7% poor, 22% fair, 53% good, 15% excellent

Sorghum Headed- 10%

Sorghum Condition- 19% fair, 71% good, 10% excellent

Winter Wheat Harvested- 9%

Spring Wheat Headed- 82%

Spring Wheat Condition- 2% poor, 23% fair, 69% good, 6% excellent

Pasture and Range Condition- 1% very poor, 6% poor, 28% fair, 44% good, 21% excellent

Days Suitable for Fieldwork- 4.5

Topsoil Moisture Condition- 1% very short, 5% short, 76% adequate, 18% excellent

Subsoil Moisture Condition- 1% very short, 8% short, 75% adequate, 16% surplus

Midwest Nice Art Exhibition Now Open at Northern State University's JFAC Gallery

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University is excited to announce the opening of the Midwest Nice Art exhibition, Nice; 02, now on display at the JFAC Gallery. This annual national call exhibition, presented by Midwest Nice Art and hosted by Northern State University, showcases 50 captivating works of art from artists across the country.

The exhibition is open to the public and will run until Sept. 15, 2024. We invite art enthusiasts, community members, and visitors to explore the diverse collection during two special receptions:

Summer Reception: July 15, 2024, from 5 to 7 p.m., held in conjunction with the AEI annual conference.

Closing Reception: Sept. 13, 2024, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Both receptions offer a unique opportunity to meet some of the talented artists behind the works, as well as Northern State University students who were juried into the show. Guests can enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres and refreshments while mingling and appreciating the art.

"This exhibition is a testament to the vibrant artistic community we foster here at Northern State University," said Tim Rickett, assistant professor of 3D media and gallery director at NSU's School of Fine Arts. "We are thrilled to host this event and provide a platform for artists to share their work with a wider audience."

Admission to the exhibition and receptions is free, and all are welcome to attend. For more information about the exhibition and to view the featured artworks, please visit the Midwest Nice Art exhibition website: midwestnice.art/exhibitions/nice02.

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POET – Groton Awards \$4,000 in Grants to Two Local Organizations

GROTON, S.D. (July 11, 2024) – POET Bioprocessing – Groton awarded a total of \$4,000 in grants to two local organizations: the Langford Area Ag Department and FFA Chapter and the Aberdeen Area Foster Closet. The funds were given through POET’s 2024 Community Impact Grant Program.

The Langford Area Ag Department and FFA chapter were awarded a \$2,000 grant to purchase raised beds, tools, fertilizers, plants, and other materials for the school garden plot and greenhouse. The fresh produce grown will be donated to the school, as well as to students and their families struggling with food insecurity.

The Aberdeen Area Foster Closet received a \$2,000 grant, which will be used to create foster care kits for children first coming into foster care. Funds will also be used to help offset the cost of immediate needs of foster families, such as beds, mattresses, clothing, diapers, and baby wipes.

“Both of these organizations provide an important service to our local communities,” said Kelly Kjelden, General Manager at POET Bioprocessing – Groton. “POET is proud to support groups that share our mission to make the world a better place and support those most in need.”

Through POET’s annual Community Impact Grant Program, individuals and organizations are invited to apply for funding for projects aimed at changing their community for the better. The next grant cycle will open in the spring of 2025. For more information, visit poet.com/grants.



The Langford Area Ag Department and FFA Chapter were awarded a \$2,000 grant from POET. (Courtesy Photo)

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AGENDA BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS

TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024 – 7:00 PM
BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

- I. Call to Order: for Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission
- II. Roll Call: David North - Vice Chair, Dale Kurth, Patrick Keatts, James Meyers, Carrie Weisenburger, County Commissioner Mike Gage, Alternate Paul Johnson, and Stan Beckler-Chairman.
- III. Approval of July 16, 2024, Agenda: Motion: 1st _____ 2nd _____
- IV. Approval of June 18, 2024, Minutes: Motion: 1st 2nd

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

- V. Old Business:
 1. Sign-up sheet: On the table by the door entrance, there is a Sign-up Sheet. Please legibly sign in and mark YES or NO if you want to speak to the Board on any Agenda Item.
 2. Permits: Anyone that has submitted a Variance Petition (VP) or a Conditional Use Petition (CUP) to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) is still required to get their required PERMITS from the Zoning Office before starting their project if their Petition gets approved. Penalties may be assessed per Ordinance when starting projects without proper permits in place.
 3. Postponed Item from June 18, 2024, Meeting:
Conditional Use Petition (CUP) in an Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) described as "Shawn Gengerke's Outlot 2" in the NW1/4 of Section 19-T124N-R60W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (40605 127th Street; Riverside Twp.).
 4. Postponed Item from June 18, 2024, Meeting:
Appeal to Standard Approach Width in a Heavy Industrial District (H-I) described as "Mead's Outlot D" in the E1/2 of Section 20-T123N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38390 West Highway 12; Aberdeen Twp.).
- VI. New Business: Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA).
 1. Variance to Building Setbacks in a Lake Front Residential District (R-3) described as Lot 31, "Lutgen's West Addition" in the NE1/4 of Section 23-T124N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (127116 West Shore Drive; Ravinia Twp.).
- VII. Other Business:

Completed as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) & going to Planning Commission

AGENDA
BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS
TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024 – 7:00 PM
BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

PLANNING COMMISSION

- I. Old Business:
- II. New Business: Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Planning Commission.
 10. Rezone Petition for a property described as proposed Lot 1, "Palmyra Farmhouse Second Addition" in the SW1/4 of Section 18-T128N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (10260 373rd Avenue, Palmyra Twp.) to be rezoned from Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) to Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG).
 11. Preliminary & Final Plat for conveyance purposes on a property described as "Palmyra Farmhouse Second Addition" in the SW1/4 of Section 18-T128N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (10260 373rd Avenue, Palmyra Twp.).
 12. Preliminary Plat for review purposes on a property described as "Johnson Airport Subdivision" in the SW1/4 of Section 22-T123N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (Approx. 1349 S 391st Avenue, Bath Twp.).
 13. Preliminary & Final Plat for financial purposes on a property described as "Gengerke Richmond Lake Addition" in the NW1/4 of Section 13-T124N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (126365 North Bridge Road, Ravinia Twp.).
 14. Preliminary & Final Plat for financial purposes on a property described as "Haugen First Subdivision" in the NE1/4 of Section 23-T124N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (127250 W Shore Drive; Ravinia Twp.)
15. Other Business: Executive Session if requested.
16. Motion to Adjourn: 1st 2nd



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Tribe disbands security task force, cites financial struggles **Crow Creek had launched effort after homicide and amid concerns about federal law enforcement**

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 12, 2024 2:17 PM

FORT THOMPSON — The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe has disbanded a security task force formed a year ago after the homicide of a young man in Fort Thompson.

Task force members were not sworn law enforcement officers, but responded to public safety incidents to de-escalate situations and provide aid.

The Crow Creek tribe doesn't have its own police force. Many of South Dakota's tribes do have their own police departments, but Crow Creek is among the tribes without one.

Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek said the hope was to transition the task force into a federally funded, tribally managed police force.

"That was one of the goals of this," said Lengkeek, who added that the tribe remains interested in moving toward a local force.

Officers with the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Justice Services provide law enforcement services for Crow Creek and the neighboring Lower Brule Reservation. But Crow Creek leaders have argued that BIA officers aren't always able to respond to calls in a timely fashion. The tribe declared a state of emergency after the killing of a young man in 2023 and launched its task force.

Task force members were paid by the tribe and received training from a private security firm headquartered on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The dissolution of the task force follows the election of three new members last month to the tribe's seven-member council. Lengkeek, who retained his seat, confirmed this week that the security task force has been disbanded.

In May, Lengkeek told South Dakota Searchlight he'd hoped to be able to fund the force through the tribe's marijuana dispensary business and its farming operations. But he also said that "we need to get some funding" to keep the force going.

This week, Lengkeek said the endeavor was not fiscally sustainable without federal support.

Lengkeek said he met with the state's congressional delegation, and "made them well aware of the situation in the state of emergency and asked them to take the state of emergency where it needs to go for consideration and funding."

"None of this has happened and no communication has come back to the tribe on the status of this," Lengkeek said.

Congressional reaction

The Department of Interior's BIA, Lengkeek said, has yet to address the issue. Questions sent by South Dakota Searchlight to the BIA on the matter early this week had not been returned as of Friday.

Members of the state's congressional delegation have addressed public safety in tribal areas directly in several forums and formats over the past year.

Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson and Republican Senators John Thune and Mike Rounds asked Interior Secretary Deb Haaland for more public safety funding for tribes in a June 2023 letter.

Rounds sent another letter to Interior in December, and another to the Government Accountability Office in March, in that case asking a series of pointed questions about budgets and calls for service he said

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have been left unanswered by Interior. In April, he sent a letter requesting a meeting on a regional BIA law enforcement training center, and he signed on to a bipartisan letter from senators in May asking for a budget increase for tribal public safety.

Also in May, he talked about tribes setting up their own ad hoc security forces during a congressional hearing.

"In response to the police shortages, some residents of tribal communities have even resorted to establishing citizen patrols to look out for crime," Rounds told Assistant Interior Secretary Bryan Newland during a May oversight hearing by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Rep. Johnson had a virtual meeting with Crow Creek leadership last August. A spokesperson for his office pointed out that while the emergency declaration had no specific ask for funding, Johnson has also pushed for a regional law enforcement training center, and has called for a congressional field hearing on tribal land.

"Tribal communities are desperate for relief ... The federal government [should honor] the commitment we made and work to meet the law enforcement needs of Indian Country," Johnson said in a press release on the field hearing request.

Johnson's office also referenced letters to the House Interior Appropriations Committee that directly referenced public safety emergency declarations from Crow Creek and the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Backdrop of controversy

The launch of Crow Creek's task force came about seven months before Gov. Kristi Noem gave a speech to lawmakers linking illegal border crossings to alleged drug cartel activity on reservations. Lengkeek and other tribal leaders pushed back on the speech and Noem's later comments suggesting that some tribal leaders are "personally benefiting" from a drug cartel presence on their lands.

Yolanda Aguilar, Crow Creek tribal secretary, was a member of the task force and remains a member of the tribe's suicide response team, a volunteer group that came before the security task force and will continue on in its wake.

Aguilar said it's unfortunate that the task force is over, but said she and other members won't waste their training. If she sees a situation and she feels that she can help, she doesn't plan to ignore it.

"I'm still going to help out," she said. "It's about being a good neighbor."

Jennifer Wounded Knee, who lives near the location of the 2023 homicide that preceded the task force's creation, said it's a shame the group has disbanded. Wounded Knee didn't see it as an adequate replacement for law enforcement, but it helped.

"When they would drive by, people would kind of disperse," Wounded Knee said.

Fort Thompson resident Alphonso Drapeau said in the end, the force wasn't able to move the needle on violence in the community.

"We've still got gang violence over here," Drapeau said.

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.

State conservation officers honored for flood rescues

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 12, 2024 1:46 PM

State officials honored South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks conservation officers Friday for responding to over 30 rescue calls and saving about 60 people from flooding last month in the southeastern part of the state.

"Many of the individuals who were rescued from rising floodwaters were quite literally pulled from dangerous situations," said GF&P Secretary Kevin Robling.

The officers were recognized during a GF&P Commission meeting at Good Earth State Park near Sioux

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Falls. Conservation officers, formerly known as game wardens, are typically tasked with enforcing hunting and fishing laws and regulations.

The flood was triggered by three days of historically heavy rain across southeast South Dakota, northwest Iowa and southwest Minnesota. The downpour caused the Big Sioux River to crest at a record 44.98 feet in North Sioux City.

The deluge flooded many roads and basements across a large area and destroyed about 30 homes in the community of McCook Lake.

Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden lauded the officers' actions.

"South Dakota is a special place, and we have a lot of special people," Rhoden said. "And at the top of that list are the people that will put themselves in harm's way to defend others."

GF&P employees honored

The list of employees honored for their actions during flooding:

Trey Kelderman

Dan Altman

Matt Talbert

Craig Fishel

Justin Harman

Jared Hill

Christopher Schiera

Tony Stokely

Taylor Etherington

Tanner Pietz

Alex Osborn

Dylan Urban

Shane Pedersen

Jeremy Roe

Taylor Kirchner

Don Allaway

Josh Vanden Bosch

— Source: Department of Game, Fish and Parks

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.

Resident v. nonresident dispute yields plan limiting out-of-state hunting licenses

Proposal affects Black Hills spring turkey season

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 12, 2024 1:16 PM

SIoux FALLS — A state commission is refereeing a dispute over who should have access to a prime hunting opportunity in South Dakota's picturesque Black Hills.

In-state residents say they're tired of competing with nonresidents for turkey hunting spots in the spring. A group representing them recently proposed limiting nonresident licenses to 661 through a draw system, which would be a drastic reduction from the unlimited system that awarded licenses to 3,170 nonresidents this year.

Some state officials say the proposal goes too far. So, on Friday during a meeting at Good Earth State

Park, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission endorsed what some members described as a more reasonable limit of 2,225 nonresident licenses. That proposal is open for public comment and could be finalized during the commission's September meeting.

In-state residents obtained 346 fewer licenses than nonresidents for Black Hills spring turkey hunting this year. Black Hills Sportsmen Club President Cody Hodson spoke in support of limitations on nonresidents to create better opportunities for residents.

"We have quite a few members that have brought forth concerns about losing hunting opportunities, having random, out-of-state license plates at every roosting tree here in the Black Hills throughout the hunting season," Hodson said.

The original proposal sought to mirror existing restrictions for prairie spring turkey licenses, which limit nonresidents to an average of 22% of the licenses issued.

According to South Dakota Wildlife Federation Executive Director Dana Rogers, who introduced the proposal on behalf of the group's thousands of resident members, the change is necessary due to a decline in turkey numbers in the Black Hills and increasing nonresident pressure. He said nonresidents killed 69% of spring turkeys harvested this year in the Black Hills.

"These are our public trust resources. We pay for everything year-round. We live here," Rogers told the commission. "If people worry about money, and I hope this never comes up, then they should probably consider increasing those tag fees. Tourism should never be a reason for tag allocations."

Despite the 7-1 vote Thursday against the original proposal — with the lone vote of approval coming from Commissioner Travis Bies — the commission acknowledged that action is necessary. The commission and the Game, Fish and Parks Department committed to exploring alternative measures to strike a balance.

"We don't want our residents thinking we've forgotten about them," said Commissioner Stephanie Rissler. "We know who they are, what they do for our state, and they are first and foremost who we represent. But we also welcome our nonresidents."

On Friday, the department offered and the commission endorsed the alternative proposal.

While it's less than petitioners wanted, Rogers and others described the move as a step in the right direction.

"It's a start, but I don't believe it will provide most residents with the desired results," Rogers said of the new proposal. "I do want to express our sincere appreciation to the commissioners for taking this initial step."

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.

Republican National Convention launches Monday amid some grumbling over abortion stance

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY - FRIDAY JULY 12, 2024 4:20 PM

WASHINGTON — Thousands of Republicans will gather in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, beginning Monday for the party's presidential nominating convention — an opportunity for the GOP to showcase its candidates up and down the ballot and unify behind Donald Trump.

The RNC released its trimmed-down party platform the week prior to the convention, after forgoing one entirely in 2020. And while many Republicans in Congress said during interviews they either support it, or hadn't read it, some were critical it adopts Trump's position that abortion access be left up to states — one of the top issues in the presidential race.

The platform wraps in traditional party goals as well as others tied to Trump. But it also competes with attention drawn to the Heritage Foundation's massive far-right Project 2025 policy agenda, which Trump

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has repeatedly disavowed.

Democrats and President Joe Biden's reelection campaign have targeted the Project 2025 document spearheaded by former Trump administration officials — which says the president should work with Congress on abortion policy — as an example of an extreme GOP agenda.

The Heritage Foundation is scheduled to host an all-day "policy fest" on Monday at the RNC Convention, headlined by conservative media personality Tucker Carlson and former Utah Congressman Jason Chaffetz, among others.

The RNC convention could also be the showcase for Trump announcing his running mate, after months of speculation about who would get the nod. As of Friday, Trump had not revealed his pick, though speculation centered around Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum.

There was also little information available ahead of the convention as to the lineup and schedule of speakers in official sessions throughout the week, which culminates with the nomination of Trump on Thursday and his speech.

Unhappiness over abortion stance

GOP members of Congress said in interviews they would have liked to have seen a national abortion ban in the platform.

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, the top Republican on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said he preferred the GOP's last official platform, which called for a nationwide abortion ban after 20 weeks.

"I'm pro-life and I like the way it was previously," Cassidy said.

Iowa Republican Sen. Joni Ernst said while she hadn't read the full platform, she had read the section about abortion, as well as a few others.

"I am pro-life and I am always going to be adamantly pro-life," Ernst said. "And I think what we're going to have to do is work very hard to educate the American people on the value of life. So would I like to see more robust (language) in the platform? Certainly. But that's not the way it's going to be. So we're just going to have to continue fighting for life."

Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford said the platform places a "new emphasis on the states" to regulate abortion access, largely as a result of Trump pressing for that structure in an attempt to appeal to independent voters, though Lankford said it won't bind Republicans in Congress.

"Obviously, this is a platform that's wrapped around him, it's a new model for presidential platforms to be wrapped around the candidate," Lankford said.

Trump has shifted the GOP platform away from pressing for a nationwide law, in part, because he doesn't believe the votes are there at the moment, Lankford said. But that doesn't mean Republican lawmakers will stop talking about their beliefs or working to build support for a nationwide law.

"It's a common ground statement," Lankford said of the platform. "But for those of us that believe in the value of every single child — and we should do whatever we can to be able to protect the lives of children — we will continue to be able to speak out on those things."

Mike Pence, former Indiana governor and vice president during Trump's first term in office, released a statement saying the "RNC platform is a profound disappointment to the millions of pro-life Republicans that have always looked to the Republican Party to stand for life."

"Unfortunately, this platform is part of a broader retreat in our party, trying to remain vague for political expedience," he wrote.

Pence called on delegates attending the RNC convention to "restore language to our party's platform recognizing the sanctity of human life and affirming that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed."

Shorter, vaguer

The 16-page platform is much shorter than years past and is at times vague about the goals the Republican Party hopes to accomplish if voters give them unified control of the federal government during

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the next two years.

The official document was put together behind closed doors.

It says that after nearly 50 years, "because of us," the ability to regulate abortion has "been given to the States and to a vote of the People."

"We will oppose Late Term Abortion, while supporting mothers and policies that advance Prenatal Care, access to Birth Control, and IVF (fertility treatments)," the new RNC platform states.

The 2016 Republican Party platform, by contrast, was 66 pages long and mentioned abortion more than 30 times, calling for Congress to pass legislation that banned abortion after 20-weeks gestation.

That previous platform also said that the RNC respected "the states' authority and flexibility to exclude abortion providers from federal programs such as Medicaid and other healthcare and family planning programs so long as they continue to perform or refer for elective abortions or sell the body parts of aborted children."

'Nothing going to happen up here in the Senate'

Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas said that it's extremely unlikely either political party gets the 60 votes needed to advance abortion legislation through the legislative filibuster in the Senate, making the states the more practical place to enact laws.

"There's not 48 votes on this issue one way or the other up here, let alone 60," Marshall said. "There's nothing going to happen up here in the Senate in the near future, if forever."

Marshall said that Republicans "won" in getting the Supreme Court to overturn Roe v. Wade and that the issue is now left up to voters.

Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley said a full GOP platform shorter than in previous years is a good development, since people might actually read it.

"Nobody's gonna read the Sears catalog, like previous ones," Grassley said. "And I think if we can get people to read the Republican platform, it'll be a great thing for the campaign. I think it'd be a great thing for government generally."

Grassley said he couldn't make a judgment about the new abortion language, since he didn't remember the language from the 2016 platform.

Voters expect all of GOP on same page

Alabama Sen. Katie Britt said she hadn't read through the platform, but that she was encouraged some anti-abortion groups expressed support for the new language.

"I'm proud to be pro-life and proud to support the party and President Trump," Britt said.

Voters, she said, expect to hear from a unified Republican Party during convention week as well as from one that focuses on policy.

"I think people want a secure border, they want stable prices, they want a more secure world," Britt said. "And I think we need to talk about those things — talk about not only where we are, but our vision for moving forward."

Sen. Steve Daines of Montana, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, didn't directly answer a question about whether he supports removing a nationwide abortion ban from the party's platform.

"Look, I think they did good work on the platform," Daines said. "We're a party that believes in life, we're a pro-life party. I think they did a good job."

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said that voters want to hear Republicans unified at the convention.

"I think they want to hear a unifying message for the future," Capito said. "I think they want to hear how things will be different and better, especially on the economy and border and international. And I just think, you know, a united front is probably the most important."

Arkansas Sen. John Boozman said the GOP should emphasize how it differs from Democrats during the

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RNC Convention.

"I think that they need to hear a message of unity and the contrast between what Republicans can accomplish on inflation and border," Boozman said.

National treasures, women's sports

The RNC's new platform includes familiar GOP policy goals as well as some that came along after Trump became the party's nominee eight years ago.

For example, it calls for Republicans to "promote beauty in Public Architecture and preserve our Natural Treasures. We will build cherished symbols of our Nation, and restore genuine Conservation efforts."

It also calls on GOP lawmakers to "support the restoration of Classic Liberal Arts Education," though it doesn't detail that particular issue.

The rest of the platform is pretty standard for the types of initiatives and policy goals that Republicans have traditionally pursued.

For example, it calls on Republicans to slash "wasteful Government spending," "restore every Border Policy of the Trump administration," make provisions from the 2017 tax law permanent and "will keep men out of women's sports."

Trump running mate

The RNC convention could also include Trump announcing who will campaign with him at the top of the ticket.

His last running mate, Pence, began distancing himself from Trump after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, which included calls from the mob to kill Pence, and the construction of a scaffold for public hangings on the National Mall.

Pence was in the Capitol building that day and was removed from danger by his security detail as the pro-Trump mob beat police officers, broke into the building and disrupted Congress' certification of Biden as the country's next president.

Trump, without revealing his vice presidential selection, wrote Thursday on social media that he is "looking very much forward to being in Milwaukee next week."

"The great people of Wisconsin will reward us for choosing their State for the Republican National Convention. From there we go on to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN! See you next week," he posted on Truth Social, his online platform where he regularly publishes comments and statements.

The vice presidential candidate typically gives a speech on Wednesday night, so Trump is expected to make his announcement before then.

Project 2025

Conservative operatives striving to elect Trump to the White House have been circulating the 922-page Project 2025 plan for nearly 15 months.

Spearheaded by the Heritage Foundation, in conjunction with more than 100 organizations, the policy agenda titled "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise" presents a roadmap should Trump win in November.

The "goal is to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained, and prepared conservatives to go to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State," according to the organization's description of the mandate.

The lengthy mandate sets forth core promises to "restore the family" and overhaul government agencies.

The document states that "(i)n particular, the next conservative President should work with Congress to enact the most robust protections for the unborn that Congress will support while deploying existing federal powers to protect innocent life and vigorously complying with statutory bans on the federal funding of abortion."

The mandate is just one pillar under the multi-pronged "Project 2025: Presidential Transition Project"

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that also includes a presidential administration training academy and a 180-day “playbook” aimed “to bring quick relief to Americans suffering from the Left’s devastating policies.” The project is led by two former Trump administration officials.

The Biden-Harris campaign and Democrats have repeatedly criticized Project 2025 in comments and campaign emails.

“If implemented, Project 2025 would be the latest attempt in Donald Trump’s full on assault on reproductive freedom,” Vice President Kamala Harris said at a rally in North Carolina on Thursday.

Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said during a press conference Thursday that the plan is “dangerous, it’s dastardly and it’s diabolical.”

“Project 2025, the Trump and extreme MAGA Republican agenda, will criminalize abortion care and impose a nationwide ban on reproductive freedom,” Jeffries said.

Trump and his campaign deny any connection to the project.

“I know nothing about Project 2025. I have not seen it, have no idea who is in charge of it, and, unlike our very well received Republican Platform, had nothing to do with it,” Trump wrote Thursday on his social media platform Truth Social.

“The Radical Left Democrats are having a field day, however, trying to hook me into whatever policies are stated or said. It is pure disinformation on their part,” he continued. “By now, after all of these years, everyone knows where I stand on EVERYTHING!”

Trump has delivered keynote speeches at Heritage Foundation events multiple times. An analysis by CNN showed 140 former Trump administration staffers were involved in the project. Kevin Roberts, Heritage Foundation president, told the New York Times in April 2023 that Trump had been briefed on the project.

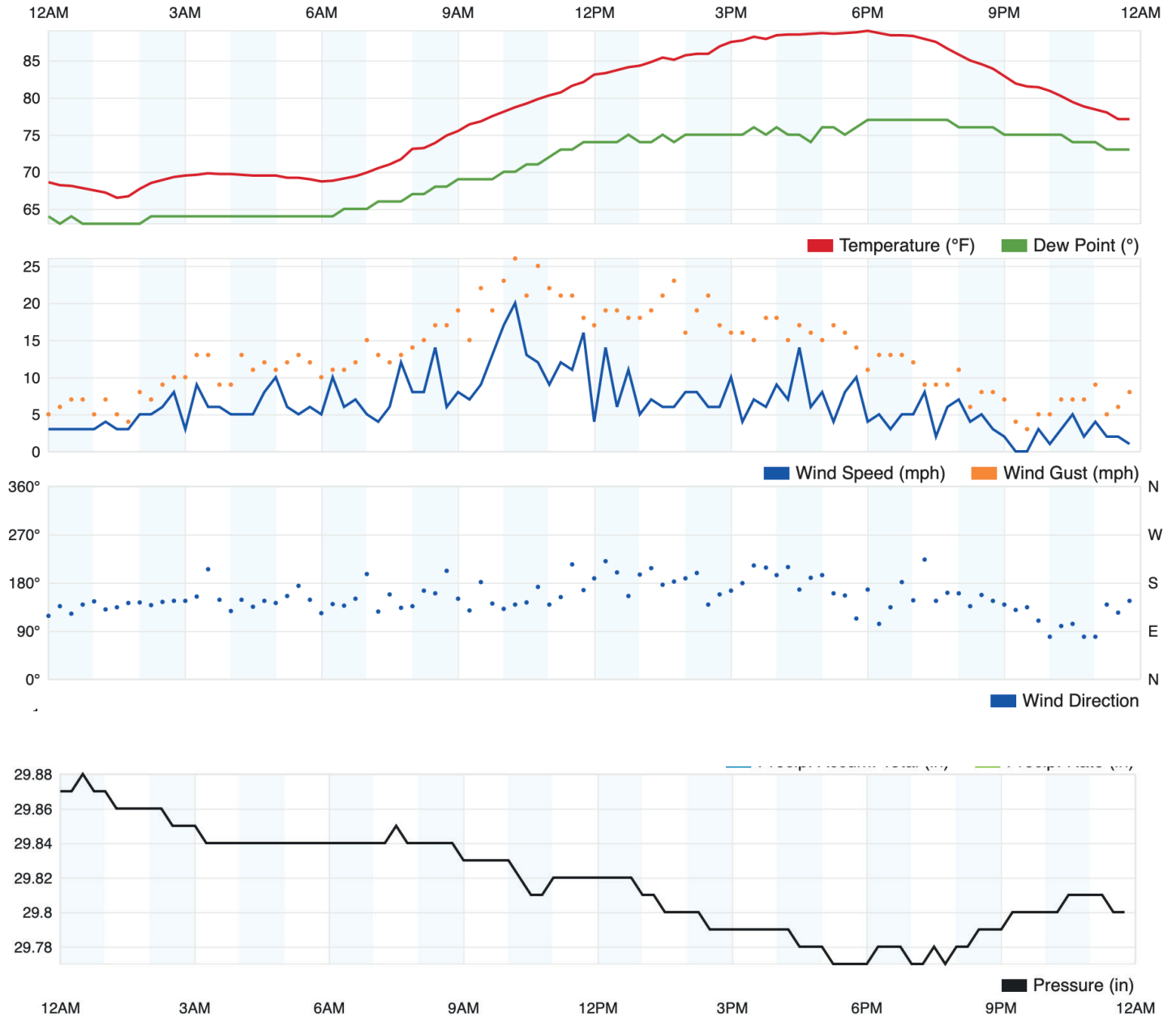
Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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

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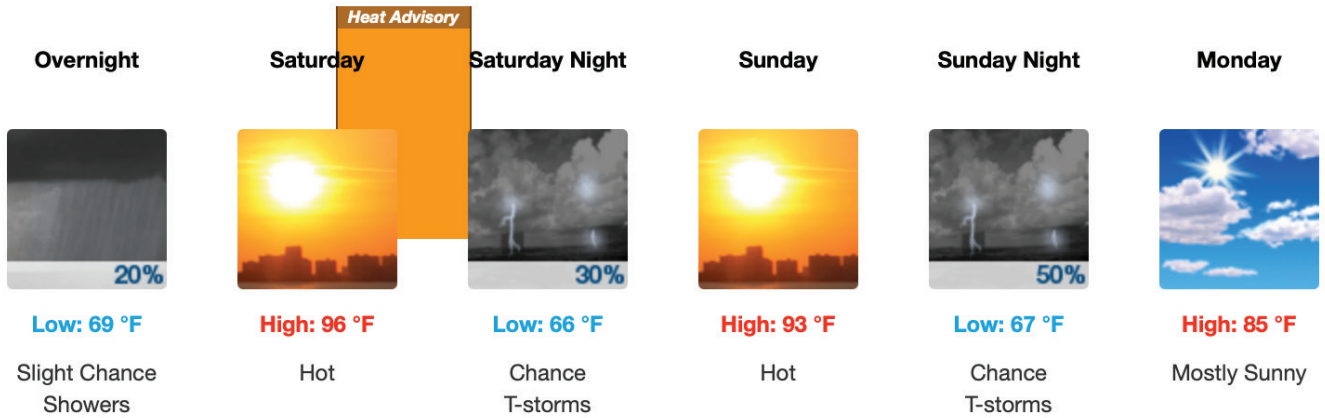
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Hot and Humid

July 13, 2024
4:38 AM

Key Messages

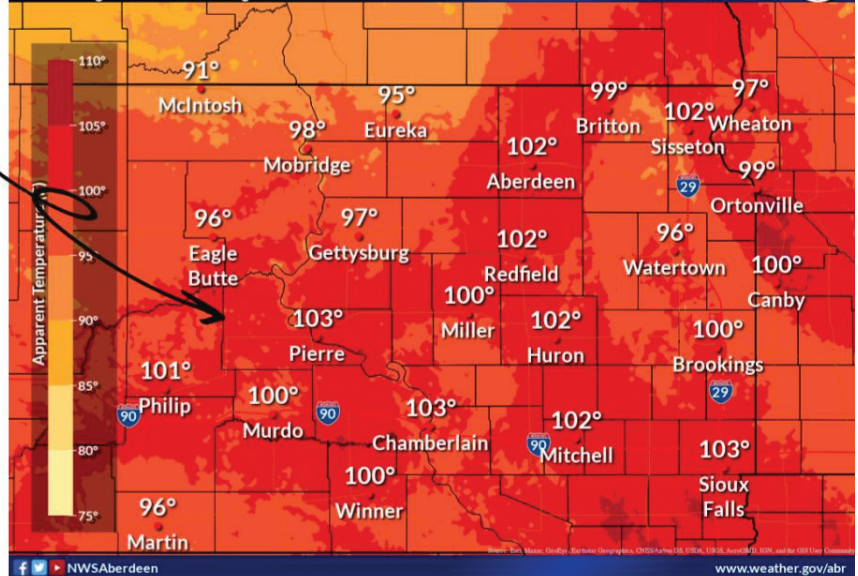
- This weekend, high temperatures will be in the 90s, potentially reaching 100 degrees in some places this afternoon. Heat indices will approach or exceed 100 degrees for many areas
- A Heat Advisory remains in effect for much of central and northeast SD, valid from 1 PM CDT to 8 PM CDT today
- 20-40+% chances for showers and thunderstorms last through the next several days
- Temperatures will become more moderate with lower humidity for the first half of next week.

Make sure to have plenty of water if working outside!!!

High Heat Index Values Today!

Values As High As 100F To 105F Degrees

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Jul 13, 2024 4:17 AM CDT



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Heat Advisory remains in effect for much of central and northeast SD today from 1 PM to 8 PM CDT with temperatures potentially reaching 100 degrees and heat indices reaching over 100 degrees. Stay safe in the heat!

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Pet Safety

During Extreme Heat

- NEVER leave your pet in the car!
- Exercise early in the morning or late in the evening. Limit the duration.
- Protect from sunburn by keeping pets inside when the sun is high.
- Avoid any/all hot pavement to prevent paw damage.
- Provide unlimited supply of water.
- If outdoors, provide a shady spot to rest.



Keep these tips in mind when taking care of your pets over the next couple of days. For more safety tips and tricks, visit [weather.gov/safety/heat](https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat)



Severe Thunderstorm Threat This Evening And Sunday

July 13, 2024
5:07 AM

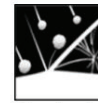
Key Messages

- A few thunderstorms are possible this evening/night and Sunday evening/night along frontal boundaries across the region. Strong wind-producing storms are a concern.
- Monitor the weather and have a plan if severe weather strikes your area

Severe Thunderstorm Coverage



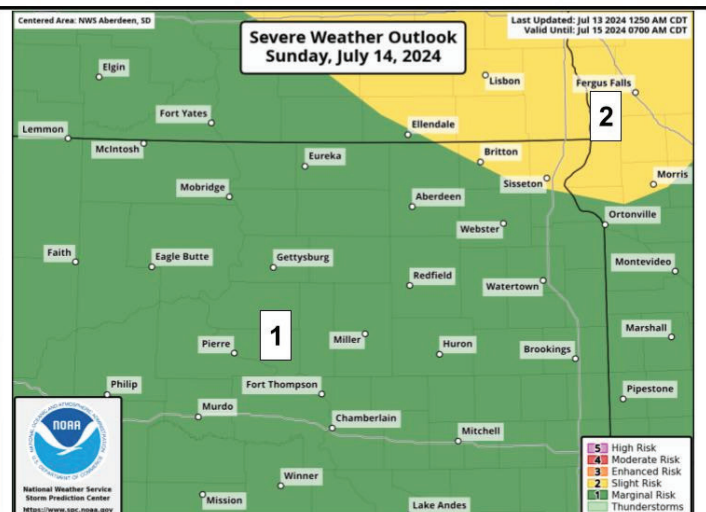
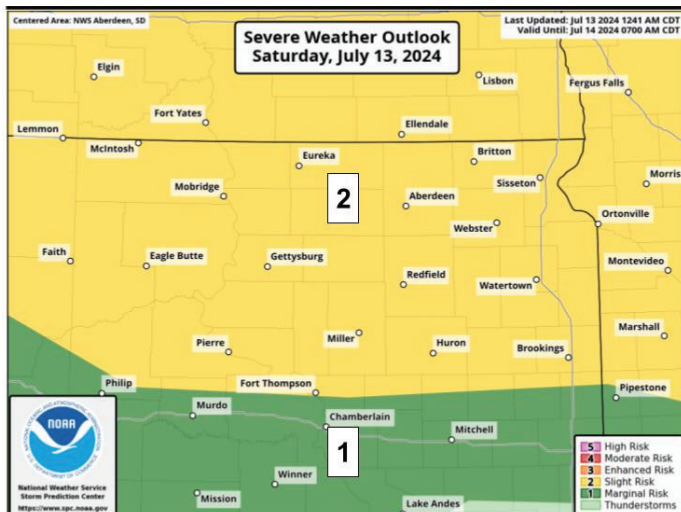
Main Threats:



Quarter size hail or larger



Wind 70-80+ mph



Chances for isolated showers and thunderstorms continue over the next couple of days. The probability of a daytime thunderstorm today is low. However, thunderstorm development over portions of Minnesota and Montana are a bit higher by this afternoon. If storms can get going out over eastern Montana and the western Dakotas, they could grow to become strong to severe with the main threat overnight being strong wind gusts in excess of 70 mph.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 6:00 PM

Low Temp: 66 °F at 1:31 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 10:12 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 25 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 44 in 1987

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.48

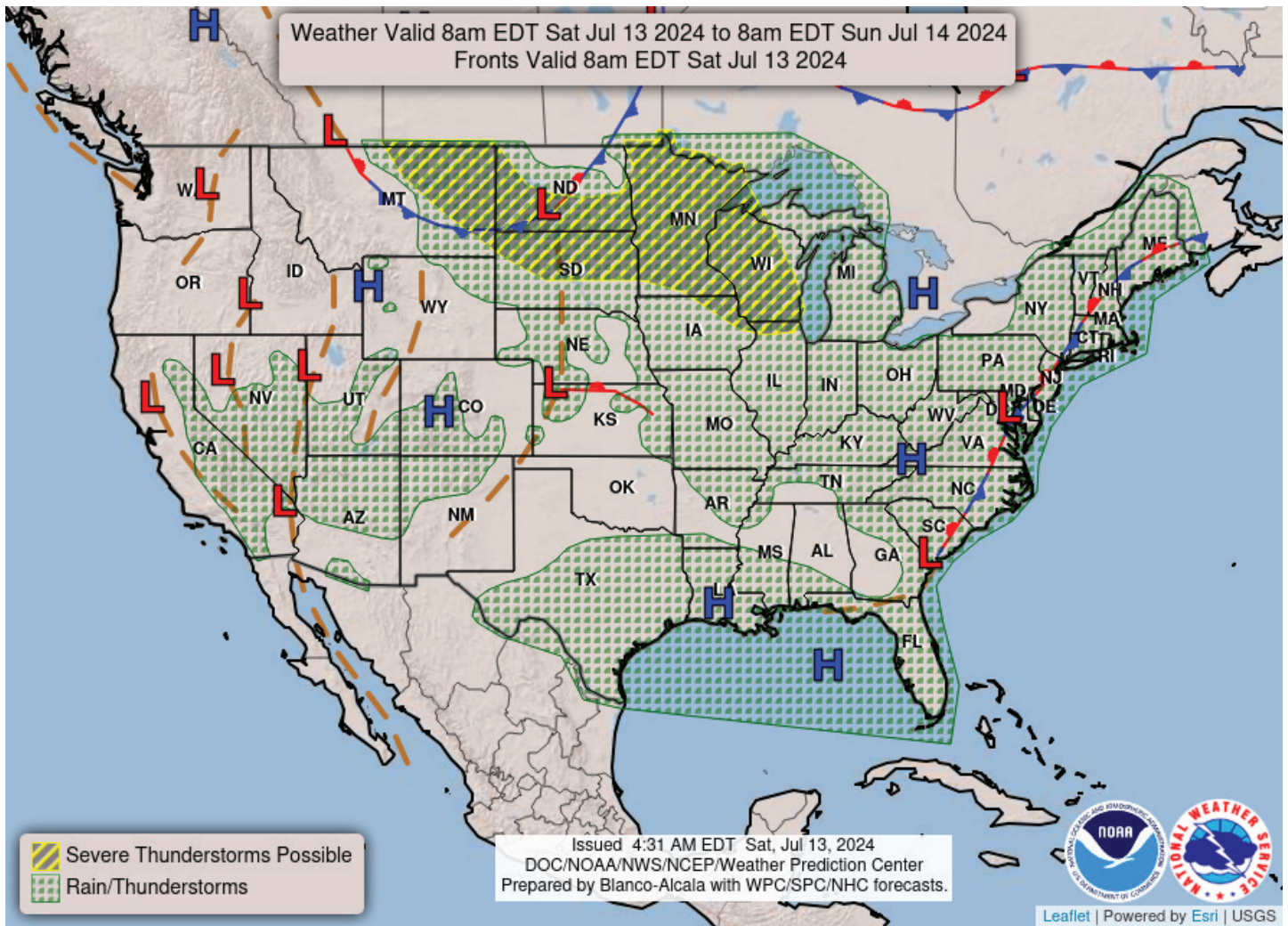
Precip to date in July: 3.56

Average Precip to date: 12.49

Precip Year to Date: 14.51

Sunset Tonight: 9:20:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:56:37 am



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Today in Weather History

July 13, 1964: Early morning low temperatures dropped into the lower to mid-30s across the northern half of the state. Some low temperatures include 32 degrees at Castlewood, 33 in Andover and 4 miles NW of Onida.

1895 - A tornado struck Cherry Hill in New Jersey causing fifty thousand dollars damage. It also descended into the Harlem and Woodhaven areas of New York City killing one person, and finally ended as a waterspout in Jamaica Bay. (David Ludlum)

1951: Rivers across eastern Kansas crest well above flood stage, causing the most significant destruction from flooding in the Midwestern United States at that time. Five-hundred-thousand people were left homeless, and 24 people died in the disaster.

1975 - Dover, DE, was deluged with 8.50 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Lightning struck a key electrical transmission line in Westchester County of southeastern New York State plunging New York City into darkness. (David Ludlum)

1980 - Afternoon highs of 108 degrees at Memphis, TN, 108 degrees at Macon, GA, and 105 degrees at Atlanta, GA, established all-time records for those three cities. The high of 110 degrees at Newington, GA, was just two degrees shy of the state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed across the Midwest. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Casper, WY, with a reading of 39 degrees. By way of contrast, record heat was reported in the eastern U.S., with highs of 93 degrees at Burlington, VT, and 101 degrees around Miami, FL. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - There were just three reports of severe weather across the country, and just one record high temperature reported. Thunderstorms brought much needed rains to the Tennessee Valley area, producing nine inches at Senatobia, MS. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A thunderstorm at Albany, GA, produced 1.40 inches of rain in forty minutes, along with wind gusts to 82 mph. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Corpus Christi, TX, 110 degrees at Tucson, AZ, and 114 degrees at Phoenix, AZ, equalled records for the date. Greenwood, MS, reported 55.65 inches of precipitation for the year, twice the amount normally received by mid July. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

IT'S A CHARLIE BROWN BASEBALL TEAM

Lucy and Linus were talking to their coach, Charlie Brown, at home plate. Kicking the dirt in disgust, Charlie Brown said, "Our team is no good. We have lost every game. There is nothing good about our team!"

"But," protested Lucy, "Schroder almost hit a home run. And we almost won a couple of games. Once we almost made a double play. Don't forget that you almost made it to first base before the ball, once."

"If it's any consolation, Charlie Brown," interrupted Linus, "we did lead the league in almosts."

"Almosts" are part of everyone's life. Some "almosts" work to our advantage. For example, there are times when we almost slipped and fell. Or, we almost had an accident while driving home after a difficult day at work. Then there might have been occasions when we almost got that promotion at work. "Almost" is "very nearly" but "not quite." So the almosts are the same as it never really happened at all.

On one occasion Paul was witnessing to King Agrippa. He appealed to the facts of Scripture in his conversation with the king and said, "I know these facts are not hidden from you and that you do believe them!"

But sadly the king replied, "Paul, you almost persuaded me to become a Christian."

Prayer: We pray today, Father, for those who might almost be convinced to become a Christian. We ask for Your grace to work in them through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains." Acts 26



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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.12.24

15 35 48 53 68 8

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$226,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.10.24

6 21 25 42 51 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,980,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 13 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.12.24

1 2 27 34 44 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 13 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.10.24

7 18 21 34 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$32,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 13 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.10.24

16 17 33 56 66 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 14 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.10.24

7 11 12 27 46 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$54,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 13 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
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 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
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

News from the Associated Press

Federal judge refuses to block Biden administration rule on gun sales in Kansas, 19 other states

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A federal judge in Kansas has refused to block the nationwide enforcement of a Biden administration rule requiring firearms dealers to do background checks of buyers at gun shows, leaving Texas as the only state so far where a legal challenge has succeeded.

U.S. District Judge Toby Crouse's ruling this week came in a lawsuit brought by Kansas and 19 other states, three individual gun collectors and a Wichita, Kansas-based association for collectors. They sought an order preventing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives from enforcing the rule that took effect in May through the trial of their lawsuit.

Twenty-six states with Republican attorneys general, gun owner groups and individual gun collectors filed three federal lawsuits in May against the Biden administration. The rule is an attempt to close a loophole allowing tens of thousands of guns to be sold every year by unlicensed dealers without checks to see whether buyers are legally prohibited from having firearms. It applies not only to gun shows but also to other places outside brick-and-mortar firearms stores.

Critics contend the new rule violates gun rights protected by the Second Amendment and that Democratic President Joe Biden's administration doesn't have the legal authority to issue it. They also argue that the rule will depress gun sales, making firearms less available to collectors and costing states tax revenues.

But Crouse, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, said in his ruling Wednesday that predictions of harm to the states, gun collectors and groups are too speculative and create doubts that they actually have grounds to sue. He said such doubts undermine their argument that they are likely to win their lawsuit — a key question for the courts in deciding whether to block a rule or law ahead of a trial.

"While they may ultimately succeed on the merits, they have failed to make a strong showing that they are substantially likely to do so," Crouse wrote.

Crouse's ruling contrasts one from another Trump appointee in Texas before the rule took effect. U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk blocked its enforcement in that state and against members of four groups, including Gun Owners of America. But Kacsmaryk didn't block it in three other states that joined Texas in its lawsuit — Louisiana, Mississippi and Utah.

Florida filed a lawsuit in federal court there, but a judge has yet to rule.

The states also sued U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, the U.S. Department of Justice and the ATF's director. The DOJ declined to comment Friday on Crouse's ruling.

Phil Journey, one of the gun collectors involved in the Kansas case, said he doesn't know whether Crouse's ruling will be appealed.

"I am confident the rule and perhaps the underlying statute will ultimately be voided," Journey, a former Kansas state senator who's now a state district court judge in Wichita, said in a text.

Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach also said in a statement that he expects the rule ultimately to be struck down.

"This is a very early stage in a case that is likely to continue for a long time unless President Trump is elected and immediately rescinds the rule," Kobach said.

In the lawsuit before Crouse, Kansas was joined by Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Montana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

The lawsuit originally was filed in federal court in Arkansas, with that state also suing. But in ruling just days after the rule took effect, U.S. District Judge James Moody Jr., an appointee of former President Barack Obama, said Arkansas had no standing to sue because its argument that it could lose tax revenue was too speculative. Moody then transferred the case to Kansas.

Rescuers recover first body from 2 buses that were hit by landslide and fell into a river in Nepal

By BINAJ GURUBCHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Rescuers in Nepal recovered Saturday the first body after a landslide swept away two buses, pushing them into a raging river a day earlier, authorities said.

The buses, carrying more than 50 people, fell into the Trishuli river which was swollen by continuous rainfall over the past few days as heavy monsoon downpours turned their waters murky brown, making it even more difficult to see the wreckage.

The body was that of a man and was found some 50 kilometers (31 miles) from where the buses fell, said government administrator Khima Nanda Bhusal. He added rescuers found a bank card and were in the process of identifying the man whose body was transported to a nearby hospital.

Rescuers are now expanding their search area toward the southern region from the landslide area where the man's body was found, Bhusal said.

Weather conditions improved Saturday and search teams were able to cover more ground in the hunt for the missing buses and passengers. Heavy equipment had cleared much of the landslides from the highway, making it easier to reach the area.

Soldiers and police teams were using rubber rafts, divers and sensor equipment to try and locate the buses, which were pushed off the highway into the river by a landslide.

Three people were ejected from the buses and were being treated in a nearby hospital.

Nepal's rivers generally are fast-flowing due to the mountainous terrain. Heavy monsoon downpours in the past few days have swollen the waterways and turned their waters murky brown, making it even more difficult to see the wreckage.

The buses were on the key highway connecting Nepal's capital to southern parts of the country when they were swept away Friday morning near Simaltal, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of Kathmandu.

A third bus was hit by another landslide Friday morning a short distance away on the same highway. Authorities said the driver was killed but it was not clear if there were any other casualties.

Monsoon season brings heavy rains to Nepal from June to September, often triggering landslides in the mountainous Himalayan country.

The government has imposed a ban on passenger buses traveling at night in the areas where weather warnings are posted, according to the Home Ministry.

The son of Asia's richest man gets married in the year's most extravagant wedding

By RAFIQ MAQBOOL and RAJANISH KAKADE Associated Press

MUMBAI, India (AP) — The youngest son of Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, married his longtime girlfriend early Saturday in what many dubbed the wedding of the year, attended by global celebrities, business tycoons and politicians, highlighting the billionaire's staggering wealth and rising clout.

The wedding rituals, including exchanging garlands by the couple and walking around the sacred fire, began Friday and were completed past midnight.

The celebrations of Anant Ambani marrying Radhika Merchant took place at the Ambani-owned Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai and the family home. The marriage culminated months of wedding events that featured performances by pop stars including Rihanna and Justin Bieber.

The four-day wedding celebrations began Friday with the traditional Hindu wedding ceremony and will be followed by a grand reception to run through the weekend. The guest list includes former British Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Boris Johnson; Saudi Aramco CEO Amin H. Nasser; and Adele, Lana Del Rey, Drake and David Beckham, according to local media. The Ambani family did not confirm the guest list.

Television news channels showed celebrities like Kim Kardashian in a red ensemble and professional wrestler and Hollywood actor John Cena arriving.

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Kardashian sisters Kim and Khloé took a ride in a motorized rickshaw through bustling Mumbai streets Friday before joining the wedding ceremonies, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

International guests wore traditional clothes by major Indian fashion designers. They put on embroidered sherwanis — long-sleeved outer coats worn by men in South Asia. Cena came in a sky-blue sherwani and white pants. Nick Jonas wore a pink sherwani and white pants.

Bollywood icons Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and Ranbir Kapoor attended the wedding and danced to popular Hindi movie songs. Indian cricketers, including icons Sachin Tendulkar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav, were among the invitees.

Police imposed traffic diversions around the wedding venue from Friday to Monday to handle the influx of guests who flew to Mumbai, where heavy monsoon rains have caused flooding and flight disruptions for the past week.

The extravaganza and the display of opulence that comes with the wedding has led many to raise questions about rising inequality in India, where the gap between rich and poor is growing. The event has also sparked anger among some Mumbai residents, who say they are struggling with snarled traffic.

"It affects our earnings. I don't care much about the wedding," said Vikram, a taxi driver who uses only one name.

The father of the groom, Mukesh Ambani, is the world's ninth-richest man, with a net worth of \$116 billion, according to Forbes. He is the richest person in Asia. His Reliance Industries is a conglomerate reporting over \$100 billion in annual revenue, with interests that include petrochemicals, oil and gas, telecoms and retail.

The Ambani family owns, among other assets, a 27-story family compound in Mumbai worth \$1 billion. The building contains three helipads, a 160-car garage and a private movie theater.

The groom, 29-year-old Anant, oversees the conglomerate's renewable and green energy expansion. He also runs a 3,000-acre (about 1,200-hectare) animal rescue center in Gujarat state's Jamnagar, the family's hometown.

The bride, Radhika Merchant, also 29, is the daughter of pharmaceutical tycoon Viren Merchant and is the marketing director for his company, Encore Healthcare, according to Vogue.

Ambani's critics say his company has relied on political connections during Congress Party-led governments in the 1970s and '80s, and under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rule after 2014.

The Ambani family's pre-wedding celebrations have been lavish and star-studded from the start.

In March, they threw a three-day prenuptial bash for Anant that had 1,200 guests, including former world leaders, tech tycoons and Bollywood megastars, and performances by Rihanna, Akon and Diljit Dosanjh, a Punjabi singer who shot to international fame when he performed at Coachella. The event was also attended by tech billionaires Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates.

It was the start of lavish, months-long pre-wedding celebrations that grabbed headlines and set off a social media frenzy.

In May, the family took guests on a three-day cruise from Italy to France, which included Katy Perry singing her hit song "Firework" and a performance by Pitbull, according to media reports.

The family also organized a mass wedding for more than 50 underprivileged couples on July 2 as part of the celebrations.

Last week, Justin Bieber performed for hundreds of guests at a pre-wedding concert that included performances by Bollywood stars Alia Bhatt, Ranveer Singh and Salman Khan.

Ambani also made headlines in 2018, when Beyoncé performed at pre-wedding festivities for his daughter. Former U.S. Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry were among those who rubbed shoulders with Indian celebrities and Bollywood stars in the western Indian city of Udaipur.

Inside the courtroom as case dismissed against Alec Baldwin in fatal shooting of cinematographer

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A nearly three-year legal saga for Alec Baldwin in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer ended Friday without a verdict but with tears of relief for the actor and a small coterie of family who had settled into a somber daily routine on wooden benches inside a windowless New Mexico courtroom at trial.

In the morning, 16 jurors had filed into the courtroom for a third day of scrawling notes and listening with steepled hands to testimony in the involuntary manslaughter trial against Baldwin in the 2021 shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, only to be released for the day as the trial took an unscheduled detour.

"Have a great weekend," Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer said.

Outside the jury's view, the criminal case against Baldwin was teetering as defense attorney's for Baldwin accused local investigators and prosecutors of concealing evidence that might shed light on the unconfirmed origin of live ammunition on the set of "Rust."

It was Baldwin's fifth day in court. He arriving each morning in a black SUV with his wife, Hilaria Baldwin, to a phalanx of outdoor media cameras. Inside the courtroom Monday, at the start, an energetic Baldwin whispered to an attorney, scrawled on a legal pad and passed post-it notes to his legal team.

The defense won an early victory as the judge ruled Baldwin could not be held criminally liable for his role as co-producer on "Rust." The case would focus on Baldwin's handling of a gun as lead actor.

Come Tuesday, the defendant's younger brother, Stephen Baldwin, arrived in the back of the courtroom for jury selections. He would return each day, all day. Among a pool of 70 potential jurors, all but three were familiar with the "Rust" shooting case. By day's end, a jury of five men and 11 woman were seated for trial.

For opening statements Wednesday, the courtroom was packed to capacity, with half of the gallery reserved for news media, from local network TV to the Times of London, and a few designated photographers. Attorneys and the public filled the other half, some friends and relatives of Baldwin along with local curiosity seekers and traveling amateur trial aficionados.

Seated in court, Baldwin trained his eyes downward on a notepad, away from the jury as prosecutors gave opening statements and overhead video monitors show the aftermath of the fatal shooting at a movie set ranch.

Prosecutors said Baldwin violated the cardinal rules of firearm safety in pointing a real gun toward Hutchins while playing make believe. Defense attorneys argued Baldwin was just doing his job as an actor, reasonably relying on other professional to ensure gun safety, though with tragic consequences.

Baldwin's older sister, Elizabeth Keuchler, shed tears in court as the statements unfolded. She greeted her brother with an embrace across a courtroom banister and would sit close behind him thereafter.

A prominent critic of Baldwin also took her seat in the front of the court gallery: victims' rights attorney Gloria Allred, who is representing the sister and parents of Hutchins in a civil trial seeking damages.

Baldwin's every expression at trial registered on a video feed of the trial transmitted by CourtTV and The Associated Press. There was a restrained and attentive gaze during a first full day of witness testimony Wednesday from the A-list actor with a decades-long career in films and television, from "The Hunt for Red October" to "30 Rock" and as a fixture on "Saturday Night Live."

Baldwin darted from the courtroom once, but otherwise paced slowly and deliberately through the courtroom and the courthouse, where impromptu interviews and photographs were prohibited.

On Friday afternoon, Baldwin's outward demeanor changed little, but tension was building in the courtroom, where Marlowe Sommer weighed a motion to dismiss the case and probed revelations that investigators failed to disclose the receipt of ammunition in March by a man who said it could be related to Hutchins' death.

Prosecutors said they deemed the ammunition unrelated and unimportant, while Baldwin's lawyers al-

leged they "buried" it.

During an afternoon break, Baldwin took deep, measured breaths as he walked painstakingly from the courtroom. The air whistled slightly as he breathed out with lips pursed. Hilaria Baldwin took his arm and rubbed his back as they paced the hallway.

Back inside, the audience chuckled as defense attorney Alex Spiro sparred with the ammunition supplier for "Rust," Seth Kenney, who had forged a cooperative relationship with investigators in the aftermath of the shooting.

But the courtroom fell silent amid the clatter of laptop keyboards as the judge questioned a sheriff's detective about the decision to place the ammunition in an evidence file, separate from the "Rust" shooting case, and whether lead prosecutor Kari Morrissey knew about that.

"When you say that there were discussions and the decision was made by all of you to put that ammo in a separate file, was Ms. Morrissey part of that discussion?" Marlowe Sommer said.

"Yes," the detective responded.

The case was collapsing. The courtroom gasped as Morrissey acknowledge her co-prosecutor had just resigned.

Tears welled in Baldwin's eyes, followed by sobbing, as the judge outlined her decision: "The sanction of dismissal is warranted in this case."

Houston community groups strain to keep feeding and cooling a city battered by repeat storms

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The deafening hum of a generator was a welcome noise Thursday evening at a Houston independent living center where several dozen seniors had lost power in the wake of Hurricane Beryl.

Joe and Terri Hackl, who had pulled up with the backup electricity source after delivering hundreds of meals all day, estimate they've spent at least 18 hours daily this week filling service gaps around the wind-torn city.

The couple is part of a volunteer network called CrowdSource Rescue, designed during 2017's Hurricane Harvey to connect first responders to people in need.

Likeminded community efforts have brought relief in the form of fresh food and cool air for some of the millions who sweltered this week without electricity. Beryl knocked power out across one of the nation's largest cities, pressuring electric utility CenterPoint Energy as outages endured days after the Category 1 storm had passed.

While nonprofit and mutual aid organizations have honed their disaster services in a city frequently battered by severe weather, some now find themselves drained by repeat deadly events. A May storm already strained food and energy supplies with hurricane-force winds that similarly left electricity lacking.

It's been a challenge for CrowdSource Rescue to allocate generators with such great need, executive director Matthew Marchetti said.

The organization has just 30 compared to the 300 it bought after money poured in during Texas' record winter freeze in 2021. Many storms have since depleted resources, and donations are harder to come by, he said.

"The banner cry has been 'Houston Strong,'" he said. "I kind of want to be 'Houston Normal' for a while."

It's difficult to make people whole when shocks come frequently, West Street Recovery co-Director Ben Hirsch said. The environmental justice organization repairs homes and navigates federal assistance for families in some of northeast Houston's most vulnerable parts.

Government money to fix damage from the May storm only just arrived and people haven't had time to recover. Mutual aid can only do so much to alleviate systemic barriers to resilience, Hirsch said.

"Mutual aid is really good at giving out hot meals and mucking out houses," he said. "But we need to bury our power lines and build massive flood infrastructure."

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Experts forecast unprecedented ocean heat will help make this one of the busiest Atlantic hurricane seasons on record and climate change is intensifying the strongest hurricanes.

Worried that damaging hurricanes are brewing so early, Sally Ray, director of domestic funds at the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, said donors should more strategically be "supporting these communities in the long term to make them better prepared for what may come next."

During times of crisis, preestablished community ties become especially important for nonprofits, which often have the deepest connections with some of the hardest-hit communities, Ray said.

That includes groups like Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston. About six dozen drivers deliver 2,000 hot meals daily through its Meals on Wheels program, checking in on homebound residents, operations Director Matthew Wright said.

The nonprofit also provides people with five shelf-stable meals each in June ahead of hurricane season. Beryl hit so early that Meals on Wheels plans to deliver another round soon.

Annie Jones, 62, received an emergency box before the weekend. No longer working after breaking her hip, the lifelong Houston resident said she had just fixed May wind damage to her roof.

"I know it's coming," she said of the frequent storms. "But you don't get used to it. It's still devastating."

The successive extreme weather events are worrying even the most established nonprofits. Houston Food Bank, which serves 18 southeast Texas counties through more than 1,600 community partners, tries to collect over 40 tractor trailer loads of disaster relief supplies before hurricane season begins in June, said Brian Greene, the organization's president.

But the May storm hit when they were still stocking up, forcing them to pull boxes from other food banks as far as Minnesota and Tennessee. That's feasible when there is only one extreme weather event hitting the country. But he said the nationwide Feeding America network is concerned about the increased prevalence and severity of these scenarios.

A "disaster-level volume" of supplies — more than 400,000 pounds (181,400 kilograms) — moved Wednesday, Greene said, and he doesn't want to let down Houston residents who have come to rely on that output.

"I worry that our ability to meet those expectations, if this is happening with more frequency, it's going to be really tough," Greene said.

The Hackls hadn't even stopped to clear the debris littering their yard before they were back delivering food, drinks, ice and cleaning supplies Friday.

Before leaving the independent living center the day prior, Terri Hackl had some advice for what to do with any extra supplies bought by staff.

"Keep it," she said. "I can almost guarantee that there will be more storms this year."

UN chief urges funds for Palestinians, saying Israel is forcing Gazans 'to move like human pinballs'

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations chief appealed for funding Friday for the beleaguered U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees in Gaza and elsewhere in the Middle East, accusing Israel of issuing evacuation orders that force Palestinians "to move like human pinballs across a landscape of destruction and death."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a donor's conference that the agency, known as UNRWA, faces "a profound funding gap."

UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini said at the start of the conference that the agency only had funds to operate through August.

At the end, he told reporters that, while the total amount in pledges won't be known until next week, he is confident there will be enough new money in its \$850 million annual budget to keep the agency running until the end of September.

UNRWA's 30,000 staff provide education, primary health care and other development activities to about 6 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

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In the coming months, Lazzarini said UNRWA will be seeking funds to keep its operations going through December — and for emergency appeals for \$1.2 billion for the Gaza war and \$460 million for the Syria crisis, both of which are only 20% funded.

Without financial support to UNRWA, secretary-general Guterres said “Palestinian refugees will lose a critical lifeline and the last ray of hope for a better future.”

The U.N. chief reserved his harshest words for Israel’s ongoing military offensive in Gaza, which has affected its entire Palestinian refugee population.

“The extreme level of fighting and devastation is incomprehensible and inexcusable — and the level of chaos is affecting every Palestinian in Gaza and all those desperately trying to get aid to them.

“Just when we thought it couldn’t get any worse in Gaza — somehow, appallingly, civilians are being pushed into ever deeper circles of hell,” the secretary-general said.

Guterres said Israel’s latest evacuation orders in Gaza City have come with more civilian suffering and bloodshed.

Nothing justifies Hamas’ Oct. 7 attacks in southern Israel, he said, and “nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.”

The Hamas attack killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and led to the abduction of about 250 people. Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,300 people in Gaza, according to the territory’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

Guterres said UNRWA hasn’t been spared: “195 UNRWA staff members have been killed, the highest staff death toll in U.N. history.”

For years, UNRWA has been underfunded, but this year was dire following Israeli allegations that 12 of the agency’s 13,000 workers in Gaza participated in Hamas’ Oct. 7 surprise attack that sparked the ongoing war in Gaza. UNRWA immediately suspended them.

As a result of the allegations, 16 countries halted funding for UNRWA, amounting to about \$450 million.

Lazzarini told reporters that 14 donors have officially resumed funding and he believes “very soon” a 15th country — the United Kingdom — will come back.

The 16th country is the United States, which had been the biggest donor to UNRWA. The U.S. Congress has prohibited any payments to the agency until March 25, 2025.

Just before the conference opened, Slovenia Foreign Minister Tanja Fajon announced that 118 countries had signed a declaration of strong support for UNRWA, which Lazzarini welcomed.

He said the United States was among the signatories, though it didn’t attend the conference. “But it was a very good sign ... which indicates that they are also providing the necessary political support to the agency,” Lazzarini said.

A Taiwan-based Buddhist charity attempts to take the founding nun’s message of compassion global

By HUIZHONG WU and DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan (AP) — When a 7.4-magnitude earthquake ripped through Taiwan in April, it took about 30 minutes for the region’s most ubiquitous charity to set up an emergency response center.

Tzu Chi, an international Buddhist organization led by an 87-year-old nun, the Venerable Cheng Yen, and her followers, sprang into action. They prepared hot meals and assembled necessities for survivors and rescue teams, from drinking water and energy drinks to blankets, beds and tents.

The nuns reside in the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, the quake’s epicenter on the island’s east coast. It is also the spiritual home of the global organization, which is supported by millions of members across 67 countries, including the United States.

In 1966, Cheng Yen — touched by lack of access to basic health care in the beautiful yet economically underdeveloped region — started Tzu Chi, inviting local housewives to save 50 Taiwanese cents each month.

Today, the charitable foundation organizes relief operations globally. In Taiwan, it runs hospitals, a medical

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school and its own cable television channel. During the COVID-19 pandemic, amid a nationwide scramble to get people immunized on the island of 23 million, the foundation used its members' influence across health care and other business sectors to buy 5 million vaccines.

Within Taiwan, Tzu Chi is known for its earthquake relief efforts. Globally, it has built a network of movers and shakers whose work ranges from disaster relief and building schools, houses of worship, homes and hospitals, to refugee resettlement and feeding the hungry. The organization has had a significant presence in the U.S. since 1989 with programs in 80 locations run by paid staff and about half a million volunteers.

They ran relief operations after Sept. 11, 2001, and during Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. More recently, they were on hand to support survivors and families of a 2022 mass shooting in the predominantly Asian city of Monterey Park in Southern California. They donated \$1.5 million to relief efforts after the 2023 Maui fires in Hawaii that claimed more than 100 lives.

Stephen Huang, executive director of Tzu Chi's global volunteers based in Southern California, became Cheng Yen's disciple 35 years ago, during a time of personal grief — days after his older brother's sudden demise. Huang understands why those unfamiliar with Tzu Chi might wonder how a petite, soft-spoken nun functioning in a patriarchal society and who rarely leaves her humble abode in Hualien could have built this global organization.

"She is an ordinary person who does extraordinary things," he said. "The heart behind all the work she has done over the last 60 years can be described in one word: compassion."

The organization exists because of its fundraising. Much of its work is dependent on its commissioners, members who have undergone extensive training and who raise funds monthly. There is no minimum amount required, but members must raise money from at least 40 people while also making donations themselves.

"The more the better, there's no minimum or upper limit," said Cheng Mei-yue, a schoolteacher and Tzu-Chi commissioner in Taipei.

This model helps fund Tzu Chi's work in Taiwan and abroad. Its most recent annual report from 2022 shows that Tzu Chi raised 5.6 billion New Taiwan Dollars (\$175 million) through fundraising efforts, which made up 61% of its budget.

Still, the organization has not been immune to scrutiny or scandal. Public criticism over lack of transparency spurred leaders to post Tzu Chi's annual reports and financials online. The organization has also raised eyebrows for recruiting well-heeled commissioners, and for the sheer number of resources at its disposal to advance its causes.

In 2005, the organization's attempt to rezone and develop land designated for environmental conservation in Taipei's picturesque Neihu district was met with public outrage. Tzu Chi relented in 2015 after a decade-long administrative battle with local residents and environmentalists who led the charge to preserve the land.

Tzu-Chi CEO Po-wen Yen — the former head of the United Microelectronics Corporation, a major semiconductor manufacturer in Taiwan — is well aware of the criticism about the organization's wealth. He came on board as CEO right after the Neihu scandal, vowing to be more open with the public.

"You can say that all the resources we gathered is to help to the fullest extent possible when disaster strikes," he said, adding that their budget also funds other global chapters.

While the nonprofit is supported by wealthy benefactors, he said, most of the members still belong to the middle class.

The organization straddles a fine line between an aid organization and a Buddhist sect that has forged its own religious identity under Cheng Yen's leadership.

Julia Huang, professor of anthropology at National Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan, traced the evolution of Tzu Chi from a grassroots initiative to global nonprofit in her book, "Charisma and Compassion." She says Cheng Yen's teaching emphasizes walking the path of Bodhisattva, a compassionate person who postpones their own enlightenment to save suffering beings.

Tzu Chi's humanitarian aid efforts are inextricable from the faith, said Joe Hwang, the organization's head of volunteer affairs — though it's a departure from traditional Buddhism, which espouses a retreat

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from the world.

Religion, he said, is a way to guide people toward good and equip them to help others. "That's what I think engaged Buddhism is, that we are engaged in this world."

Tzu Chi is also unique in the way it "sanctifies secular fields," Julia Huang said. Buddhist symbols can be found in their hospitals. The hospital in Hualien has a giant mosaic of the Buddha caring for a sick monk. "In Tzu Chi, the hospital itself is an embodiment of Buddhist canon," she said.

Cheng Yen also supports the donation of bodies to medicine, teaching devotees that human beings do not own their bodies after they die. The nun draws from stories, including one where the Buddha is said to have given his body to a starving tigress unable to feed her cubs.

And yet, Tzu Chi has volunteers from all major religions. The superintendent of its hospital in Hualien is a devout Christian. The organization has funded the construction of churches in Haiti, Ecuador and Mexico, and mosques in Indonesia, which has the largest population of Muslims of any country in the world.

"Although we start from Buddhism, that doesn't limit who we help," CEO Yen said.

Tzu Chi is currently constructing schools and homes in Mozambique; helping with resettlement of Syrian refugees in Turkey; building Indonesia's largest university; training Ukrainian refugees in Poland to do relief work; and constructing homes in Bodhgaya in India, the town where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Stephen Huang says the nun even spent thousands of dollars to repair an antique Quran. He said the largest number of Tzu Chi's projects are in China, with an emphasis on promoting vegetarianism and building schools, housing and water wells in arid regions.

In 2010, Tzu Chi became the first overseas religious nonprofit to get permission to set up an office in China, where it identifies as a charity rather than as a religious group. Julia Huang said members in China do "walk on eggshells" to maintain a presence in that country, where the government requires each religion to be loyal to the Communist Party and its policies. To that end, Tzu Chi has had to rethink how they refer to sacred rituals such as tea ceremonies and remain apolitical, she said.

While the organization has struggled to make a dent in countries where political stability is an issue — such as Afghanistan, Nepal and parts of South America — it has seen success in other countries from Indonesia and Mozambique.

Franky Widjaja heads the Indonesia chapter with 2.3 million members, of whom 85% are Indonesian and Muslim. He has had a close master-devotee relationship with Cheng Yen since 1998, when his father introduced him to the nun. He has been involved in disaster relief efforts since and has overseen the construction of schools and hospitals in and around Jakarta. Widjaja says Cheng Yen compares the organization's structure to the thousand arms of Guanyin, the Buddhist goddess of mercy and compassion.

"She says if 500 of you go out to help, that's 1,000 hands," he said. "When you believe in that purpose and you walk the talk, you will see the impact for yourself."

In Mozambique, Dino Foi and his wife Denise Tsai run a \$70-million project to build 3,000 homes and 23 schools in the region that was ravaged by Cyclone Idai in 2019. Tsai, who is Taiwanese, met and married Foi when he was a student in Taipei. The couple leads Tzu Chi's Mozambique chapter, conducting a wide range of programs including hot meals, care for older adults, teen pregnancy prevention, child nutrition, vocational training and English language classes.

"We started small, we continue small, but we believe the future will be bright," Tsai said.

At the heart of Tzu Chi's work is the belief in karma and reincarnation. Buddhists believe that each intentional action — good or bad — gives rise to karma, and that a person's rebirth depends on their thoughts and actions in prior lives.

Stephen Huang says he has not only found his purpose in Tzu Chi's mission to help people, but has also witnessed the positive effects of good karma.

When the earthquake struck Hualien in April, members from as far away as Mexico City said they wanted to raise money to help those affected halfway across the world. Displaced Syrian refugees — who are rebuilding their lives and have no money or resources for themselves — also offered assistance.

"We are all connected by compassion," Huang said. "That's the power of love."

Historically Black Cancer Alley town splits over a planned grain terminal in Louisiana

By SHARON JOHNSON and STEPHEN SMITH undefined

WALLACE, La. (AP) — Sisters Jo and Dr. Joy Banner live just miles from where their ancestors were enslaved more than 200 years ago in St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana. Their tidy Creole cottage cafe in the small, river-front town of Wallace lies yards away from property their great-grandparents bought more than a century ago.

It's a historic area the sisters have dedicated themselves to keeping free of the heavy industry that lines the opposite shore of the Mississippi River.

"We have all these little pockets of free towns surrounding these plantation cane fields. It's such a great story of tenacity and how we were able to be financially independent and economically savvy," Joy Banner said.

Today, miles of sugar cane border homes on Wallace's west side. Eastward, two plantations tell the story of formerly enslaved people: One has more than a dozen slave quarters, the other a memorial commemorating a slave revolt.

Directly across the Mississippi, refineries and other heavy industry crowd the view, showing Wallace residents exactly what the Banners are fighting against taking over their side of the river. Together they created a nonprofit called The Descendants Project to preserve Black Louisianans' culture. The immediate goal is to stop a 222-acre (89.8-hectare) proposed grain export facility from being built within 300 feet (91 meters) of the Banners' property and near several historic sites.

"It would essentially pave the way for the whole entire West Bank area that doesn't have any heavy industry on it to just be industrialized," Jo Banner said. "We have a lot of heritage and that's going to be decimated if we get these plants."

Their sentiments echo those of residents who live in other towns along Louisiana's Cancer Alley, an 85-mile (135-kilometer) corridor running along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. It's filled with industrial plants that emit toxic chemicals, including known carcinogens.

The Descendants' Project has tangled with Greenfield Louisiana LLC, the company proposing the grain terminal, as well as the local St. John the Baptist Parish Council for nearly two years, seeking to prevent the Greenfield Wallace Grain Export Facility from being built.

The facility would receive and export grain byproducts via trucks, trains and barges. While some town residents support the project, the Banners and other neighbors fear it will eradicate historic landmarks and pollute the area.

"We already have issues with industry from the other side of the river," said Gail Zeringue, whose husband's family purchased their property in the late 19th century. "To add to that with a grain elevator is just piling it on."

The parish council recently rezoned nearly 1,300 acres (526 hectares) of commercial and residential property for heavy industry. Another swath along a residential zone was redesignated for light industry. All the tracts are owned by the Port of Louisiana and have been leased to Greenfield Louisiana LLC.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found the grain facility could adversely affect several historic properties in and around Wallace, including the Evergreen, Oak Alley and Whitney plantations. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said the terminal could add to the "many existing manufacturing industries and other existing sources of environmental burden for the St. John the Baptist Parish community."

After nearly two years, Greenfield is still waiting for the permitting process to be complete.

"It appears to me that the Army Corps wants to make sure that everyone is heard," said Lynda Van Davis, counsel and head of external affairs for Greenfield Louisiana. "Before we did anything, we talked to the community first, and so our system is safer and it's green."

The facility will be used for transportation and there will be no chemicals or manufacturing on site, which Greenfield representatives said sets them apart. They also plan multiple dust collection systems to minimize emissions.

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They are aware of Wallace's historical significance, Van Davis said.

"We had testing done. We made sure that there were no remains of any prior slaves that were maybe buried in the area," Van Davis said. "In the event that we do find any remains or maybe some artifacts, we would stop and make sure that the right people come in and preserve any artifacts that are found."

Specifically, Greenfield said the State Historic Preservation Office would step in. The Amistad Research Center, the Louisiana Civil Rights Museum and the state park system are also potential partners to help decide what to do with any artifacts or remains that might be discovered.

Some neighbors are more worried about Wallace's future than its past. They're concerned the town's prosperity hangs on whether the facility is approved. Wallace doesn't even have a gas station, and school enrollment has been declining.

"The only changes I've seen in my community are people leaving. We have absolutely nothing on our West Bank," said Willa Gordon, a lifelong resident.

"It automatically meant to me jobs coming into my community and economic development and growth, so I was very excited. I'm disappointed that, years later, it's still not here," Nicole Dumas said.

Greenfield plans to create more than 1,000 new jobs during construction and 370 permanent positions once the site opens. The company also has promised to host local job fairs, training and certification programs.

St. John the Baptist Parish council members Virgie Johnson and Lennix Madere Jr., the elected officials who represent Wallace, declined to comment on the proposed construction. Both voted in favor of the zoning change.

The tug-of-war between past and present is a similar one across the country, with small, historic Black towns dwindling due to gentrification, industry or lack of resources.

Through their nonprofit, the Banners want to create a network of historic communities and economic opportunity. They recently moved a plantation house their ancestors once lived in to their property in hopes it can be designated a historical marker and prevent any industrial building on their land.

"We are doing what we can to protect and to hold on, but it's so crucial that we keep these plants out," Jo Banner said.

Deeply Democratic Milwaukee wrestles with hosting Trump, Republican National Convention

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Milwaukee loves its Miller Beer, Brewers baseball and "Bronze Fonz" statue.

The deepest blue city in swing state Wisconsin, Milwaukee also loves Democrats.

So it can be hard for some to swallow that Milwaukee is playing host to former President Donald Trump and the Republican National Convention next week while rival Chicago, the larger city just 90 miles to the south, welcomes President Joe Biden and Democrats in August.

It didn't help smooth things over with wary Democrats after Trump used the word "horrible" when talking about Milwaukee just a month before the convention that begins Monday.

Adding to the angst, Milwaukee was supposed to host the Democratic National Convention in 2020, but it didn't happen due to COVID. Owners of local restaurants, bars and venues say the number of reservations that were promised during the RNC aren't materializing. And protesters complained the city was trying to keep them too far away from the convention site to have an impact.

"I wish I was out of town for it," Jake Schneider, 29, said as he passed by the city's statue of Fonzie, the character played by Henry Winkler in the 1970s sitcom "Happy Days" that was set in Milwaukee. "I'm not super happy that it's the Republican Party coming to town."

Schneider, who lives in a apartment downtown, said Trump "sabotaged himself" with his comments about Milwaukee.

"I hope he's proven wrong and sees how wonderful of a city it is," Schneider said.

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Ryan Clancy, a self-described democratic socialist who is a state representative and serves on the Milwaukee County Board, puts it more bluntly: "It is shameful that we rolled out the red carpet for the RNC."

Still, Democratic and Republican convention boosters point to the potential economic boon and chance to show off Milwaukee and Wisconsin during the convention that runs through Thursday.

"Folks are ready to have the convention and have it be successful and elevate Milwaukee to the next level," said Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson, a Democrat. "Donald Trump, regardless of where it happens, is going to be the Republican nominee. So it didn't matter if it happened in Milwaukee. It didn't matter if it happened in Mar-a-Lago."

Milwaukee has been in the national spotlight more in recent years, following the Bucks winning the national NBA championship in 2021 and the airing this spring of the latest season of "Top Chef," a reality TV show that was filmed in the city and featured a Milwaukee chef who made the finals.

And as Trump's "horrible" comment showed, Milwaukee has also long been a target for conservative Republicans who have pointed to its crime, low-ranking schools and financial struggles as an example of poor Democratic leadership.

"I hope this convention shows off all the best things about Milwaukee," said Wisconsin Republican Party Chairman Brian Schimming. "But it is a city, like many other Democrat-run cities, that has extraordinarily significant issues."

Democrats picked Milwaukee for the party's last convention, but the 2020 DNC became an online event because of the pandemic.

The city's back-to-back selection by Democrats and Republicans speaks to the swing state's importance.

Wisconsin is one of a handful of battleground states likely to determine this year's presidential race. It was one of the so-called "blue wall" states that Democrats once relied on, but Trump narrowly won in 2016, paving the way for his surprise victory. Biden flipped the state back in 2020, and both campaigns are targeting it heavily this year.

But there's nothing swing about Milwaukee. It voted 79% for Biden in 2020. After his loss that year, Trump fought unsuccessfully to disqualify thousands of voters in Milwaukee, falsely portraying late-arriving returns driven by heavy absentee turnout as fraud.

Republicans say staging the convention in Milwaukee will energize their base. While the city itself is Democratic, the outlying suburbs are a battleground within a battleground state. Once deeply red, Democrats have made inroads since 2016 as suburban women, in particular, drift away from Trump and the conservative agenda.

Before the city was even chosen to host the convention, Clancy and other Democrats urged Milwaukee to drop out of the running, as Nashville did after Democrats there objected to hosting Republicans.

But by far the biggest kerfuffle came in June when Trump used the word "horrible" in talking about Milwaukee during a closed-door meeting with Republicans in Congress. While those in attendance disagreed over whether Trump was talking about crime, election concerns or something else, and he later said in a Wisconsin rally that he "loved" Milwaukee, for some Democrats it only reaffirmed earlier concerns about playing host to Republicans.

Mobcraft, a Milwaukee-based brewery, showed off the city's Midwestern sense of humor and love of beer by releasing a "(not so) Horrible City IPA."

As the convention nears, some local business owners are questioning estimates that the convention will bring in \$200 million in revenue.

Only one of the six venues run by the Pabst Theater Group in Milwaukee is booked for the week of the convention, said Gary Witt, the group's president and CEO. Witt said he will lose more than \$100,000 by not having venues used, and he's concerned about the impact the convention will have on other Milwaukee businesses.

"Once these people are all gone, we're meaningless to them anyway," Witt said of convention attendees.

Demonstrators are trying to spread counterprogramming throughout the week, but have argued they're being kept too far from the convention sites.

Omar Flores, chairman of the March on the RNC Coalition, said he's confident the protests will be peaceful

and take advantage of the national platform they will have. He said the coalition had to fight to get a march route that will be in sight and sound of the convention, after Milwaukee's Democratic leaders "completely sold us out, completely sold out the city and refused to listen to what any of the residents had to say."

Clancy, the Democratic state representative, said he hoped having the convention in the city where he was born and raised would motivate liberals.

"I hope that having a critical mass of people in our city who hate us will be enough to mobilize folks for the primary in August and in November," he said.

Biden's supporters want to 'let Joe be Joe' — but his stumbles are now under a bigger spotlight

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is on a public and private blitz to shake off concerns about his cognitive capacities.

But with public doubts about his fitness to serve unabating, Biden's every move is now under a withering microscope as any potential stumble risks becoming magnified and delivering another blow to his candidacy.

To wit: As he introduced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a NATO summit event Thursday, Biden flubbed and called him "President Putin," prompting audible gasps from the audience. He corrected himself, saying, "I'm so focused on beating Putin" before ceding the lectern. Shortly after, at a news conference, Biden errantly referred to "Vice President Trump" — a gaffe that overshadowed what his aides felt was otherwise a commanding performance.

And a significantly hyped interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos a week earlier was meant to show Biden could handle scrutinizing questions from the media but only flared more concerns from Democrats about whether he could continue to serve as the party's nominee.

"If you are going to raise the stakes on one interview, it can't be another example of you being hard to understand — not because he's soft, not because he's mumbling, but because his train of thought doesn't make sense," former Obama White House aide Jon Lovett said on his podcast, "Pod Save America," this week, referring to the Stephanopoulos interview.

Lovett continued: "Everyone is saying, why isn't he out there, why isn't he out there, why isn't he out there? He goes out there, and he offers this middling performance and it ends up being the absolute worst of both worlds."

Still, getting Biden out there in more unscripted settings has been one consistent plea from Democrats who were rattled by his 90-minute debate on June 27 and are seeking assurances that the performance was an unusual blip and not a sign of broader mental decline. They want to see the handshakes, the glad-handling, the lengthy exchanges with journalists that had been characteristic of Biden, particularly during his 36 years in the Senate.

He's hopped from one event to another since: chatting up supporters at a Detroit restaurant; rallying voters in Wisconsin; stopping at a coffeeshop in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; taking some questions from donors, lawmakers and mayors in private virtual calls. He's hosted Democratic governors at the White House while picking up his pace of news interviews, including with Stephanopoulos, the Houston Chronicle and NBC News, which will air Monday.

"There's a number of us that since before the debate were encouraging the campaign, pushing the campaign to let Joe be Joe," said Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., one of the lawmakers who spoke privately with Biden following his disastrous debate performance.

Padilla added, "Get him out there, unscripted — whether it's town hall formats, or rallies, whatever it is — that's at his best, that's the Joe Biden most people in America have come to know and love."

Yet some of his recent outings and meetings have left puzzling results.

In the Stephanopoulos interview, Biden said, "I don't think so, no" when asked whether he watched a replay of the debate. To the governors, he remarked on his need to sleep more and curtail evening events

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— a remark that, even if said in jest, did not project an image of an energetic commander in chief.

During an interview with WURD radio in Philadelphia, Biden tripped up and said, "I'm proud to be, as I said, the first vice president, the first Black woman to serve with a Black president" — scrambling some of his often-used lines about his pride in serving with the first Black president and choosing the first Black woman to be vice president. The slip came even after it was revealed that the interviewer had asked questions specifically offered up by the Biden campaign.

By no means has Biden been known as an error-proof politician during his decades in public life; rather, his gregarious political style has often been marked by verbal gaffes. But having Biden be out there more is a risk that his advisers are gambling is worth taking.

"Joe Biden has been making gaffes for 40 years. He made a couple last night. He'll probably continue to do so," Michael Tyler, the Biden campaign's communications director, said on Air Force One as the president traveled to Detroit on Friday. "Our opponent is somebody who every single day out on the stump is calling for a bloodbath if he loses, who's pleading to rule as a dictator on day one, and who's pledging to ban abortion nationwide across the country."

Biden's allies and aides contend that his direct engagement since the debate — whether it's voters in unscripted stops during his travels or with scores of mayors from across the country, none of whom voiced concerns about his fitness for office — have proven that the president is still up for the job.

On a call with mayors Wednesday evening, Lansing, Michigan, Mayor Andy Schor noted that although many mayors had their hands raised on the Zoom call, Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego ended the session after taking only three questions. Still, Schor noted that Biden was "rattling off thing after thing," all what mayors wanted to hear, and "he wasn't really doing it with notes."

"He's going to be running, and I think that we all need to be supporting him," Schor told The Associated Press.

Satya Rhodes-Conway, the mayor of Madison, Wisconsin, said she was struck by how much detail Biden went into on policy issues, adding, "I didn't realize that the president was a policy wonk."

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., has also stressed that Biden must do more to convince voters that his debate performance was a one-off.

"I don't think he or the campaign should be reticent at all in directly engaging with voters or the media in an unscripted way," he said. "Joe Biden's occasional gaffes have, in part, been what has made him so endearing and so popular because he's willing to talk in an authentic, off-the-cuff manner that a lot of politicians aren't willing to do."

During Biden's rally in Madison, Lisa Gellings and her son, Tim, were in an overflow room watching his remarks. Then the president popped in for a surprise visit. For them, seeing Biden in person was completely different than viewing his halting performance at the Atlanta debate.

"He isn't the best on TV," he said. "He's much better like this, talking to us."

Mental health clinics across the US are helping Latinos bridge language and access barriers

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA Associated Press

Michelle Mata wasn't diagnosed with a mental illness until she was 23, after years of suffering. She knew very little about who to ask for help, having grown up in a Latino family in San Antonio that didn't talk about mental health. At appointments, she was terrified of telling the truth.

"I didn't want to tell (doctors) that because I knew that as soon as I disclosed what I was feeling my freedom was going to be taken away from me and I was going to be put into the hospital," said Mata, 53, who talked about her mental health to The Associated Press in the hope of helping others. She now works at the San Antonio chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness as she copes 30 years later with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health showed that just over one-fifth of Hispanic adults

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reported having a mental illness, defined in the report as a diagnosed mental, behavioral or emotional disorder that may have interfered with their lives. That's slightly less than white Americans (24.6%) but more than Black Americans (19.7%) and Asian Americans (16.8%).

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story includes discussions of mental health. If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to the national suicide and crisis lifeline at 988, or the National Alliance on Mental Illness by calling 1-800-950-6264 or texting "NAMI" to 741741.

The same survey showed Hispanic adults were less likely to receive treatment than multiracial adults and white adults. Mental health experts, community clinics and politicians are increasingly calling attention to barriers Latinos might face in seeking treatment — like the lack of mental health professionals who are Latino and speak Spanish or other languages — and working to create new programs to address access issues.

"The more we talk about it and we hear it and we understand it we can do something about it," said Mata, who is hopeful that younger generations won't have to struggle like she did. "People don't understand asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Asking for help is something courageous."

SOMOS Community Care in New York City started doing mental health screenings for all patients regardless of the reason for the appointment, said Riquelmy Lamour, the director of behavioral health and social work.

Many of the patients live in heavily Latino neighborhoods in upper Manhattan and the South Bronx, and Lamour said that it can be easier for someone to lower their guard when a doctor who's been treating the family for generations sets them up with a mental health professional. The organization also conducts screenings at street fairs, providing an immediate connection to a provider and resources to find other appropriate services.

"You go to a doctor but a doctor that looks like you, that speaks like you, that understands your culture, your language, the nuances," she said.

An American Psychological Association interactive tool shows about 8% of psychologists identified as Latino in 2021, the most recent data available. Dr. Julia Macedo, a psychiatrist in Pittsburgh and a fellow with the National Hispanic Medical Association, said patients are less likely to seek help if they don't have someone who can understand their experiences, such as the anxiety and fear of having a family member deported.

The national suicide and crisis hotline, 988, offers voice, text and chat services in Spanish. Congressional Democrats have put forth two bills that would help with education and outreach around mental health for Latinos. One introduced in the Senate in 2023 hasn't received a committee hearing. The other, introduced in May by Colorado Rep. Yadira Caraveo, focuses specifically on young Latinos.

The 2022 federal survey showed 1.2 million Hispanic people ages 12 to 17 suffered a major depressive episode but only half received mental health treatment. Talking about mental health in schools as early as kindergarten would help young Latinos understand that "(mental health) is not bad, it is just an illness," said SOMOS psychiatrist Dr. Fernando Taveras.

Oregon Rep. Andrea Salinas is a cosponsor on the recent bill, which hasn't gotten a committee hearing yet. She said she grew up in a Latino household where mental health was not spoken about, and said it's vital for Latino youth to have the resources they need.

"It's about giving people hope and letting them know that even though we may not be able to pass something right now people are listening," she said. "I feel like that alone can hopefully save a life or encourage someone to ask for help."

Servicios de la Raza is one of the few behavioral health centers in Colorado that has a diverse Spanish-speaking staff and resources in Spanish. Doctors around the state refer people to the organization, which started in 1972 with mental health as a focus, said Ana Belen Vizoso, vice president of health and wellness. The organization sees about 10,000 patients a year for mental health services, but she said the needs are constantly growing for a community that makes up nearly 19% of the state's population.

Vizoso said the stigma around seeking mental health help in the Latino community still exists, but there's been a shift. Her organization has seen more people looking to get care, but asking for help and getting help are two different things, she added.

"It is the first time a lot of individuals open up and share about their experiences in a behavioral health setting," Vizoso said that patients have written in exit surveys. "If they did not have access to our services, they would not have the opportunity to. Everyone in our community should have access but that is not the case for everybody."

The Department of Mental Health in Los Angeles County, California, started expanding mental health care services for the county's 4.8 million Latinos during the pandemic. That included the creation of the speaker's bureau, where licensed clinicians provided reliable information on COVID-19 and now give "clinically, culturally and linguistically" appropriate information about mental health and other topics, said Sandra Chang, who is the program manager for the county's mental health clinical program.

The county also started Promotores de Salud (Mental Health Promoters), a peer-to-peer hub that provides mental health information; a 10-week program focused on empowering Latinas; and an effort using the Mayan community's traditional forms of healing.

The support groups are making a difference based on the feedback Chang said she has received, adding that people are learning "to seek out goals and focus on their personal needs, discovering themselves for the first time in terms of admiring themselves, finding their self-worth, being able to speak of their needs openly, not being afraid of asking for help, fighting the stigma."

Trump heads to Pennsylvania for pre-convention rally as VP announcement looms

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump will have one last chance Saturday to unveil his vice presidential pick on a rally stage before the Republican National Convention kicks off in Milwaukee next week.

Trump's rally in western Pennsylvania, at the Butler Farm Show just outside Pittsburgh, comes as the former reality TV star and tabloid hound continues to tease his pick, working to drum up maximum attention and hype.

With President Joe Biden's reelection campaign and the Democratic Party engulfed in crisis over a dismal debate performance that has sparked calls for him to step aside, Trump has been keeping mostly out of the spotlight, making only a few public appearances over the last two weeks.

But that hasn't stopped him from feeding speculation.

"It's like a highly sophisticated version of 'The Apprentice,'" he said in a radio interview Friday afternoon, referring to the show he once hosted that featured him firing contestants on camera.

Trump has made clear in recent days that his preference is to dramatically reveal his pick live at the convention — something the ratings-obsessed former president has said would make the proceedings more "interesting" and "exciting."

"I'd love to do it during the convention ... or just slightly before the convention, like Monday," he said in an interview Friday on "The Clay Travis & Buck Sexton Show."

Other opportunities have come and gone.

At a rally Tuesday night at his Doral golf club, he at one point marveled at the number of reporters in attendance.

"I think they probably think I'm going to be announcing that Marco is going to be vice president," he said of Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a top contender, who was sitting in the front row.

Excerpts of his speech released by his campaign that night included the line, "So tonight, I am officially" — ending the sentence there. And his campaign has sent frequent fundraising emails like one with the subject line "Will I announce my VP pick in 60 mins?" before he spoke.

Saturday's venue, in a critical battleground state, sits about an hour from the border with Ohio, home to Sen. JD Vance, one of the presumptive nominee's top contenders — which had sparked another round

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of speculation.

But none of the men who are considered Trump's top contenders — Vance, Rubio and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum — are expected to attend the rally, according to two people familiar with the schedule who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the plans.

Could he reenact 'The Apprentice' on a convention stage?

Most presumptive major party nominees have chosen their running mates before their respective conventions began. But both Ronald Reagan in 1980 and George H.W. Bush in 1988 waited to announce their picks at the party gatherings.

Trump has repeatedly acknowledged the challenges of waiting until the last possible moment, saying, "it makes it easier" to break the news ahead of time. But he has also spoken wistfully of the "old days" and the attention a grand unveiling would bring.

There are logistical challenges that come with a late announcement. The future pick will need to deliver the most important speech of their career at the convention Wednesday night as they accept the party's nomination. They'll also need to clear their schedule for rallies, events and debate preparations.

Some Trump allies have been encouraging him to wait until the convention nonetheless.

"RNC should make first night of the convention an Apprentice," former Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal posted on X. "VP live show. Trump could fire each contender not chosen one at a time."

To that end, the RNC made a change to its rules Thursday, which is expected to be adopted Monday, that will make it easier for Trump to announce at the last minute.

Trump has also raised the idea of waiting until later in the week and pushing the announcement, he told the hosts, to Tuesday or Wednesday.

Trump has spent months now testing the field, assessing how they perform on television, at fundraisers and on rally stages. Several, including Burgum and Vance, joined him at his criminal hush money trial in New York. Others were there at the debate last month, where Biden's disastrous performance upended his campaign, leading to widespread calls for him to step aside in favor of a younger candidate.

The crisis embroiling Democrats has given Trump little incentive to announce his pick early since it would inevitably draw attention away from Biden.

He also suggested the possibility of Biden being replaced had weighed on his thinking.

"A little bit, you know, we wanted to see what they're doing, to be honest. Because, you know, it might make a difference," he said in an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity earlier this week.

Trump has offered conflicting answers since the primaries on whether he has made up his mind, but said Friday he had four or five top contenders.

"I have some really, really good candidates. And you know, I may be leaning one way and that changing sometimes — you know all of a sudden you see something that you like or you don't like and you lean a little bit differently ... but we have a very good bench," he said.

Trump dishes on his reported top contenders

Each of the finalists has pluses and drawbacks.

Earlier this week, Trump was quizzed on some in a Fox News Radio interview.

Was Vance's beard a strike against him, he was asked, following a report in The Bulwark that that was a concern?

"No, never heard that one," the clean-shaven Trump said with a laugh. Vance "looks good. He looks like a young Abraham Lincoln."

What about the highly restrictive limits that Burgum signed in law North Dakota banning nearly all abortions?

"Well, it's a little bit of an issue. It's a pretty strong ban," said Trump. "You know, I think Doug is great, but ... the state has. So it's an issue. Everything's an issue."

And what about Rubio's "Florida problem"? Would the fact that Rubio would likely have to move stop Trump from picking him?

"No, but it does make it more complicated," he said. "There are people that don't have that complication."

Now it's fairly easily fixed, but you have to do something with delegates or there has to be a resignation, you know, etc., etc. So it's not like picking some people where it's very easy, where there is none of that."

In 'blue wall' push, Biden defiantly says he's 'not going anywhere' as he slams Trump, Project 2025

By ZEKE MILLER, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday forcefully defied the growing number of critics in his own party who have called on him to exit the race, pivoting to warnings about a second Donald Trump term and declaring he was "not done yet."

As a raucous Detroit crowd chanted "don't you quit!" and "we got your back!" Biden said — again — that he was still running for reelection and vowed to "shine a spotlight on Donald Trump" and what the Republican would do if he returned to the White House. Biden lambasted an expansive far-right policy agenda crafted by conservative think tanks that Trump has scrambled to distance himself from, while ticking off several items on his own wish list for the first 100 days of his second term.

At the same school where, four years ago, then-candidate Biden positioned himself as a bridge to the next generation of Democratic leaders, the embattled president, who has been under pressure for more than two weeks to step aside, made it clear he was going nowhere.

"You made me the nominee, no one else — not the press, not the pundits, not the insiders, not donors," Biden said, to cheers. "You, the voters. You decided. No one else. And I'm not going anywhere."

The show of force from Biden at the evening rally was part of his team's relentless sprint to convince fretting lawmakers, nervous donors and a skeptical electorate that at the age of 81, he is still capable of being president. But a spate of travel to battleground states, interviews with journalists and a rare solo news conference have not tamped down the angst within the party about Biden's candidacy and his prospects against Trump in November.

So far, one Democratic senator and roughly 20 House Democrats have publicly called on Biden to step aside. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries told Democrats he had met privately with Biden after the news conference, sharing the "full breadth" of views from lawmakers about the path forward in the president's campaign for reelection. Earlier Friday, in a virtual meeting with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Biden was told directly by California Rep. Mike Levin that he should step down as the Democratic nominee, according to three people familiar with that call who were granted anonymity to discuss it.

But the support Biden retains among Democrats was clear among the hundreds of supporters at the rally, who waved signs that read "Motown is Joetown" and enthusiastically cheered the president's remarks — and jeered at any mention of Trump.

"He inherited millions of dollars only to squander it. He's filed for bankruptcy six times," Biden said. "He even went bankrupt running a casino. I didn't think that was even possible. Doesn't the house always win in a casino?"

He also singled out Project 2025, a massive proposed overhaul of the federal government drafted by long-time allies and former officials in the Trump administration that Trump has insisted he knows "nothing" of.

"You heard about it? It's a blueprint for a second Trump term that every American should read and understand," Biden said, accusing his opponent of trying to run from the plan "just like he's trying to distance himself from overturning Roe vs. Wade because he knows how toxic it is. But we're not gonna let that happen."

Biden also criticized the media, claiming was focusing on his errors and not on Trump's. It prompted his supporters to boo reporters in the room — a staple of Trump rallies — though Biden tried briefly to calm the jeers, saying "no, no, no."

He smiled, though, when the audience repeatedly chanted "lock him up" in reference to Trump, who was convicted on felony charges in New York relating to his hush money payments to an adult film actress around the 2016 election. Trump frequently encouraged the same chant regarding his political opponents.

The Biden campaign and the White House did not immediately respond when asked if Biden condoned

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the chant.

Biden's campaign has indirectly acknowledged that Biden's route to the White House is narrowing, saying the so-called "blue wall" of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania is now the "clearest pathway" to victory even while insisting other battleground states like Arizona and Nevada are not out of reach.

That strategy is reflected in how Biden is redoubling his efforts in the Midwestern states, hitting Detroit nearly one week after he campaigned in Madison, Wisconsin; Philadelphia; and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Rallying enthusiasm in Detroit and among its sizable Black population could prove decisive for Biden's chances of winning Michigan, which Biden reclaimed in 2020 after Trump won it four years prior by just over 10,000 votes.

Campaign aides underscored the enthusiasm for Biden after his news conference at the conclusion of this week's NATO summit. Communications director Michael Tyler said donations "exploded," saying there were 40,000 contributions on Thursday night — a clip that was seven times the average.

But at a critical juncture when Biden needs to consolidate support, key Democratic leaders in the state were notably absent Friday.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who is co-chair of Biden's campaign, was out of the state. Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, and Rep. Elissa Slotkin, who is vying for Michigan's open Senate seat, were also not there. United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, whom Biden actively courted during last year's strikes, was traveling for a conference.

Rep. Hillary Scholten, who is seeking reelection in a battleground district in western Michigan, is among the lawmakers who've called on Biden to step aside.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, one of the more prominent Democratic leaders appearing with Biden on Friday, refused to say whether she believed Biden should still be the party's presidential nominee.

"I'm just focused on making sure people know what's at stake this year and know how to exercise their vote," she said.

But in a swing state that he won by close to 3 percentage points in 2020, Biden continued to command support. Michigan Rep. Debbie Dingell, Rep. Haley Stevens, Rep. Shri Thanedar and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler accompanied Biden on Air Force One from Washington to Detroit, in Biden's fourth trip to the state this year. Also attending was Academy Award-winning actress Octavia Spencer. And over a dozen Detroit-area state lawmakers signed onto a joint letter Thursday "to express our unwavering support" for Biden.

After the rally, Ken Jacobs, 71, said Biden's speech, which stretched to over 30 minutes, should put to rest any talk that he couldn't handle another four years in office.

"He should repeat that exact speech at the Democratic convention," said Jacobs. "It shows that he has the stamina for this."

Anne Baxter, 62, said Biden is correct in staying in the race and decried the media, celebrities and other Democratic leaders calling on him to step down.

"I'm glad he's not listening to these knuckleheads, because it's not the base," the retired teacher said. "You heard these people here."

In 2016, Trump won Michigan by a thin margin attributed in part to reduced turnout in predominantly Black areas like Detroit's Wayne County, where Hillary Clinton received far fewer votes than Barack Obama did in previous elections.

Biden reclaimed much of that support four years ago, when he defeated Trump in Michigan by a 154,000-vote margin, but he has work to do. Detroit, which holds a population that is nearly 78% Black, saw a 12% turnout in the Feb. 27 primary, almost half that of the 23% total turnout in the state.

Key parts of Biden's coalition in Michigan are also upset with him over Israel's offensive following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. Michigan holds the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the nation, contributing to over 100,000 people voting "Uncommitted" in Michigan's Democratic primary in February.

World's first hydrogen-powered commercial ferry to run on San Francisco Bay, and it's free to ride

By TERRY CHEA Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The world's first hydrogen-powered commercial passenger ferry will start operating on San Francisco Bay as part of plans to phase out diesel-powered vessels and reduce planet-warming carbon emissions, California officials said Friday, demonstrating the ship.

The 70-foot (21-meter) catamaran called the MV Sea Change will transport up to 75 passengers along the waterfront between Pier 41 and the downtown San Francisco ferry terminal starting July 19, officials said. The service will be free for six months while it's being run as part of a pilot program.

"The implications for this are huge because this isn't its last stop," said Jim Wunderman, chair of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority, which runs commuter ferries across the bay. "If we can operate this successfully, there are going to be more of these vessels in our fleet and in other folks' fleets in the United States and we think in the world."

Sea Change can travel about 300 nautical miles and operate for 16 hours before it needs to refuel. The fuel cells produce electricity by combining oxygen and hydrogen in an electrochemical reaction that emits water as a byproduct.

The technology could help clean up the shipping industry, which produces nearly 3% of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions, officials said. That's less than from cars, trucks, rail or aviation but still a lot — and it's rising.

Frank Wolak, president and CEO of the Fuel Cell & Hydrogen Energy Association, said the ferry is meaningful because it's hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vessels.

"The real value of this is when you multiply out by the number of ferries operating around the world," he said. "There's great potential here. This is how you can start chipping away at the carbon intensity of your ports."

Backers also hope hydrogen fuel cells could eventually power container ships.

The International Maritime Organization, which regulates commercial shipping, wants to halve its greenhouse gas releases by midcentury.

As fossil fuel emissions continue warming Earth's atmosphere, the Biden administration is turning to hydrogen as an energy source for vehicles, manufacturing and generating electricity. It has been offering \$8 billion to entice the nation's industries, engineers and planners to figure out how to produce and deliver clean hydrogen.

Environmental groups say hydrogen presents its own pollution and climate risks.

For now, the hydrogen that is produced globally each year, mainly for refineries and fertilizer manufacturing, is made using natural gas. That process warms the planet rather than saving it. Indeed, a new study by researchers from Cornell and Stanford universities found that most hydrogen production emits carbon dioxide, which means that hydrogen-fueled transportation cannot yet be considered clean energy.

Yet proponents of hydrogen-powered transportation say that in the long run, hydrogen production is destined to become more environmentally safe. They envision a growing use of electricity from wind and solar energy, which can separate hydrogen and oxygen in water. As such renewable forms of energy gain broader use, hydrogen production should become a cleaner and less expensive process.

The Sea Change project was financed and managed by the investment firm SWITCH Maritime. The vessel was constructed at Bay Ship and Yacht in Alameda, California, and All-American Marine in Bellingham, Washington.

The collapse of a school in northern Nigeria leaves 22 students dead, officials say

BY DYEPKAZAH SHIBAYAN Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — A two-story school collapsed during morning classes Friday in north-central Nigeria, killing 22 students and sending rescuers on a frantic search for more than 100 people trapped in the rubble, authorities said.

The Saints Academy college in Plateau state's Busa Buji community collapsed shortly after students, many of whom were 15 years old or younger, arrived for classes.

A total of 154 students were initially trapped in the rubble, but Plateau police spokesperson Alfred Alabo later said 132 of them had been rescued and were being treated for injuries in various hospitals. He said 22 students died. An earlier report by local media had said at least 12 people were killed.

Dozens of villagers gathered near the school, some weeping and others offering to help, as excavators combed through the debris from the part of the building that had caved in.

One woman was seen wailing and attempting to go closer to the rubble as others held her back.

Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency said rescue and health workers as well as security forces had been deployed at the scene immediately after the collapse, launching a search for the trapped students.

"To ensure prompt medical attention, the government has instructed hospitals to prioritize treatment without documentation or payment," Plateau state's commissioner for information, Musa Ashoms, said in a statement.

The state government blamed the tragedy on the school's "weak structure and location near a riverbank." It urged schools facing similar issues to shut down.

Building collapses are becoming common in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with more than a dozen such incidents recorded in the last two years. Authorities often blame such disasters on a failure to enforce building safety regulations and on poor maintenance.

Alec Baldwin weeps in court as judge announces involuntary manslaughter case is dismissed midtrial

By MORGAN LEE and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A New Mexico judge on Friday brought a sudden and stunning end to the involuntary manslaughter case against Alec Baldwin, dismissing it in the middle of the actor's trial and saying it cannot be filed again.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer dismissed the case based on misconduct of police and prosecutors over the withholding of evidence from the defense in the 2021 shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the set of the film "Rust."

Baldwin cried, hugged his two attorneys, gestured to the front of the court, then turned to hug his crying wife, Hilaria, the mother of seven of his eight children, holding the embrace for 12 seconds. He climbed into an SUV outside the Santa Fe County courthouse without speaking to the media.

"The late discovery of this evidence during trial has impeded the effective use of evidence in such a way that it has impacted the fundamental fairness of the proceedings," Marlowe Sommer said. "If this conduct does not rise to the level of bad faith it certainly comes so near to bad faith to show signs of scorching."

The case-ending evidence, revealed during testimony Thursday, was ammunition that was brought into the sheriff's office in March by a man who said it could be related to Hutchins' killing. Prosecutors said they deemed the ammo unrelated and unimportant, while Baldwin's lawyers alleged they "buried" it and filed a motion to dismiss the case.

The judge's decision ends the criminal culpability of the 66-year-old Baldwin after a nearly three-year saga that began when a revolver he was pointing at Hutchins during a rehearsal went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza.

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"Our goal from the beginning was to seek justice for Halyna Hutchins," District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwhies said in a statement. "We are disappointed that the case did not get to the jury."

The career of the "Hunt for Red October" and "30 Rock" star and frequent "Saturday Night Live" host — who has been a household name for more than three decades — had been put into doubt, and he could have gotten 18 months in prison if convicted. It's not clear what opportunities will await him now, but he and his wife signed an agreement for a reality show on their large family in June.

Baldwin and other producers still face civil lawsuits from Hutchins' parents and sister, and from crew members. Hutchins' widower and young son had agreed to settle their own lawsuit about a year after the shooting, with the widower becoming an executive producer on the then-unfinished film.

But that settlement was reportedly in jeopardy before the trial, and the lawyer who filed it, Brian Panish, now said in a statement that "we look forward to presenting all the evidence to a jury and holding Mr. Baldwin accountable for his actions in the senseless death of Halyna Hutchins."

"Rust," an independent Western, was completed in Montana. It has not found a distributor or been seen by the public.

Prosecutors did get one conviction for Hutchins' death: Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the film's armorer, was sentenced to 18 months in prison on an involuntary manslaughter conviction.

She is appealing, and her attorney Jason Bowles said he would file a motion to dismiss his client's case on the same basis as Baldwin's.

Marlowe Sommer put a pause on the trial earlier Friday and sent the jury home so she could hear testimony and arguments on the dismissal motion.

Troy Teske, a retired police officer and a close friend of Gutierrez-Reed's father Thell Reed, who is a gun coach and armorer on movies, was the person who appeared with the ammunition on the same day the guilty verdict in her case was read.

Teske and the ammunition had been known to authorities since a few weeks after the shooting, but they determined it was not relevant.

The evidence was collected but crucially was not put into the same file as the rest of the "Rust" case, and it was not presented to Baldwin's team when they examined ballistics evidence in April.

The issue came up during defense questioning of crime scene technician Marissa Poppell, who acknowledged receiving the ammunition, a moment that the judge watched on a police supervisor's body camera Friday.

Morrissey argued that the emergence of the evidence was part of an attempt by Reed to shift blame away from his daughter.

"This is a wild goose chase that has no evidentiary value whatsoever," Morrissey said. "This is just a man trying to protect his daughter."

The evidence might not have mattered in Baldwin's case were it included. The charges against him did not allege that he was responsible for the deadly rounds being on set. But the defense's lack of access to it was deemed egregious enough for a dismissal.

The trial's other special prosecutor, Erlinda Ocampo Johnson, who delivered the state's opening statement just two days ago, resigned from the case Friday, a move that would have been stunning in itself were it not followed moments later by the dismissal. Baldwin attorney Alex Spiro asked Morrissey whether Johnson quit based on the evidence issues, and Morrissey said she believed it was over the holding of the public hearing itself.

Morrissey said she respects the judge's decision but that there was no reason to believe the undisclosed evidence was related to the movie set.

The trial was over after it had barely begun. Prosecutors had only started to make their case, and none of the eyewitnesses from the set had testified yet.

Baldwin's younger brother Stephen Baldwin and older sister Elizabeth Keuchler, both actors themselves, sat behind him in the gallery next to his wife each day of the trial, which was streamed live by AP and Court TV. Reporters from both coasts filled the small courtroom and patio outside.

The judge dealt a serious blow to the prosecution's case when on the eve of the trial on Monday when she ruled that Baldwin's role as a producer on the film was not relevant and had to be left out.

Still, prosecutors forged ahead, painting Baldwin in their openings as a reckless performer who "played make-believe" while flouting basic gun safety rules.

Spiro, the defense lawyer, argued that his client did only what actors always do on the "Rust" set and that the necessary safety steps must be taken before a gun reaches a performer's hand.

Baldwin was first charged with involuntary manslaughter along with Gutierrez-Reed in January 2023. The charges were dismissed a few months later, but a new team of special prosecutors got a grand jury indictment against the actor this year.

The 16 jurors, including alternates, went home Friday thinking they would return Monday for one of the most high-profile trials in state history. They were instead informed by the court that their service had ended.

What's next for Alec Baldwin after involuntary manslaughter case dismissal

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A New Mexico judge dismissed the involuntary manslaughter case against Alec Baldwin over the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins in a sudden move Friday.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer dismissed the case based on the misconduct of police and prosecutors over the withholding of evidence from the defense. She said the case cannot be filed again.

Baldwin, the lead actor and co-producer of the film "Rust," was pointing a gun at Hutchins during a rehearsal on the set outside Santa Fe in October 2021 when the gun went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza. Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer — but not the trigger — and the gun fired.

He and other producers still face civil lawsuits from Hutchins' parents and sister, which white collar defense attorney Mark Sedlander told The Associated Press are more common for workplace accidents like the fatal shooting.

"By civil law standards, it is common for someone like Mr. Baldwin to be held responsible for what happened, but it is relatively unusual in the criminal context," Sedlander said in an interview before the case was dismissed.

Whether "Rust" will be released is still unclear. The plot follows Baldwin as a Western outlaw who works to break his grandson out of prison after he is convicted of an accidental murder. Filming wrapped in 2023, and producers have said finishing the film was meant to honor Hutchins' artistic vision and generate money for her young son.

The career of the "30 Rock" star and frequent "Saturday Night Live" host — who has been a household name for more than three decades — had been put into doubt, and he could have gotten 18 months in prison if convicted.

In June, amid the looming trial, Baldwin and his wife, Hilaria, announced they would appear in a reality series about their large family. He shares seven young kids with Hilaria and one adult daughter, Ireland Baldwin, with his ex-wife, Kim Basinger.

The TLC series, tentatively titled "The Baldwins," is set to release in 2025.

Emergency workers uncover dozens of bodies in a Gaza City district after Israeli assault

By WAFSA SHURAFSA Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Civil defense workers on Friday dug bodies out of collapsed buildings and pulled them off rubble-covered streets, as they collected dozens of Palestinians killed this week by an Israeli assault in a district of Gaza City.

The discovery of the bodies came after Israeli troops reportedly pulled out of parts of the Tal al-Hawa and Sinaah neighborhoods following days of bombardment and fighting there. The Israeli military launched an

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incursion into the districts earlier this week to fight what it said were Hamas militants who had regrouped.

The grisly scenes of the dead underscored the horrifying cycle nine months into the Gaza war.

After invading nearly every urban area across the tiny territory since October, Israeli forces are now repeatedly re-invading parts as Hamas shifts and maintains capabilities. Palestinians are forced to flee over and over to escape the changing offensives – or to remain in place and face death. Cease-fire negotiations push ahead, nearing but never reaching a deal.

Videos circulating on social media showed civil defense workers wrapping bodies, including several women, in blankets on the rubble-strewn streets of Tal al-Hawa and Sinaah. A hand poked out of the smashed concrete where workers dug into a collapsed building. Other video showed burned-out buildings.

About 60 bodies have been found so far, including entire families who appeared to have been killed by artillery fire and airstrikes as they tried to flee, said Mahmoud Bassal, the director of civil defense in Gaza. Some bodies had been partially devoured by dogs, others burned inside homes and others remained unreachable in rubble, he said.

The director of nearby Al-Ahli Hospital, Fadel Naem, said at least 40 bodies found in the districts had been brought to the facility, though he didn't have a precise number.

The Israeli military said it could not comment on the discovery of the bodies.

Israel's assault on the district began after it issued an evacuation order for the area on Monday. In a statement Friday, the military said its troops targeted the abandoned headquarters of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, where it said Hamas had set up operations.

UNRWA left the compound in October, early in the war. The military said Friday that troops had battled Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters in the compound and discovered material for building drones and stashes of weapons. It issued photos of some of the discovered material, though the claims could not be independently confirmed.

On Friday, troops had withdrawn from most of the area, but snipers and drones continued to open fire, said Salem Elrayyes, a resident who fled months ago to the south but spoke to family members still in the neighborhood.

He said that during the days of the offensive, troops set fire to many homes — including that of one of his uncles — and carried out wide-scale arrests, taking people for interrogation inside the UNRWA compound. At least 11 of his relatives were detained, he said.

Two were released after being severely beaten, while the rest are still missing. His family was searching for other relatives still unaccounted for — “some may be detained, and some may have lost communication. Others may be killed,” Elrayyes said.

A day earlier, civil defense workers said they found dozens of bodies in Shijaiyah, another Gaza City district from which Israeli troops withdrew in recent days after a two-week offensive.

Most of the population of Gaza City and the surrounding areas in the north fled earlier in the war. But the U.N. estimates that some 300,000 people remain in the north. With each new assault, people often flee to other parts of the north, since so far Israel has not allowed those who flee south to return to the north.

An airstrike early Friday hit an aid warehouse in Muwasi, part of an Israeli-declared “humanitarian safe zone” covering parts of south and central Gaza, a U.K.-based aid group Al-Khair Foundation said. Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad, the group's director in London, said one of its staffers, an engineer, was killed in the strike along with three staffers from other humanitarian groups using the warehouse.

The Israeli military said Husam Mansour, the Al-Khair Foundation member who was killed, was in fact a senior Hamas militant. Israel said he used his position with the humanitarian group to raise money for Hamas.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250.

Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,300 people in Gaza and wounded more than 88,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. More than 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been

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driven from their homes, and most are now crowded into squalid tent camps, facing widespread hunger.

Meanwhile in Cairo, U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators continued to push to narrow gaps between Israel and Hamas over a proposed deal for a three-phase cease-fire and hostage release plan in Gaza.

The U.S.-backed proposal calls for an initial cease-fire with a limited hostage release and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from populated areas in Gaza. At the same time, the two sides will negotiate the terms of the second phase. Phase two is supposed to bring a full hostage release in return for a permanent cease-fire and complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

But obstacles remain.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel won't agree to any deal that would prevent it from resuming its military campaign until Hamas is eliminated. On Thursday, he indicated that Israel intends to keep a hold of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, which would contradict a full withdrawal from Gaza.

Hamas dropped its demand that Israel commit ahead of time to reach a permanent cease-fire. But a Hamas political official told The Associated Press that the group still wants written guarantees from the mediators that negotiations will continue until a permanent cease-fire is reached.

Otherwise, "Netanyahu can stop the negotiations and thus resume the aggression" at any time, said Ahmed Abdul-Hadi, the head of Hamas' political office in Lebanon.

Abdul-Hadi also said that Hamas does not expect to resume its role as the sole ruling party in Gaza after the war but wants to see a Palestinian government of technocrats.

"We do not want to rule Gaza alone again in the next phase," he said. Israeli officials have suggested they will demand Hamas' removal in the talks for the second phase.

Netanyahu is under growing pressure both domestically and internationally. Relatives of hostages are marching to Jerusalem to demand a deal and the release of their loved ones as Israeli politicians, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, call for a broad government investigation into the conduct of Israel's leaders.

A risk of regional escalation remains. Israel's military said Friday that one of its soldiers was killed in northern Israel, where the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israel continue to trade border fire.

Pelosi and Democratic leaders try to guide their party through Biden uproar

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nancy Pelosi's phone lit up the night of President Joe Biden's debate performance with a question that has yet to be fully resolved: Now what?

Calls kept coming the morning after Biden's agonizing face-off against Republican Donald Trump, and anxious lawmakers surrounded Pelosi later on the House floor.

Two weeks on, the situation shows no signs of letting up.

The uproar that has shaken the 2024 election, and siphoned attention away from Trump and his MAGA agenda, leaves Democrats at a painful standstill, at odds over whether to stick with Biden as their presumptive nominee or press on with the once-unthinkable option of trying to persuade the president to end his reelection campaign.

Pelosi as the former House speaker, along with Rep. Jim Clyburn, a veteran leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, are playing oversized roles as generational allies of the 81-year-old president but also trusted voices from Capitol Hill who can bring frank concerns to Biden. Their work, in public and private, is giving space to the current congressional leadership headed by House Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to navigate the Biden question and the party's political future.

Watching in disbelief at what the past weeks have brought, Democrats fear not only the White House, but control of the House and Senate in Congress, could be wiped out this November, leaving them essentially powerless to confront Trump and the far-right Project 2025 agenda, which they warn is a dire threat to American democracy.

Democrats believe they have a solid message to bring to voters, but worry that Biden, despite all he has done to bring their policy victories, may not be the best messenger to deliver it.

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Biden insists he's staying in the race to "finish this job" because so much is at stake, and his team is working steadily to move on from the debilitating debate and return the political gaze back to Trump, as Republicans prepare for their nominating convention next week in Milwaukee.

After a more satisfactory performance by Biden in a much-anticipated press conference Thursday evening, the president hit the campaign trail to battleground Michigan and engaged Friday in private talks with lawmakers, including members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Biden's advisers understand there is more to be done to shore up support, and additional public events and private outreach are scheduled.

But the mood on Capitol Hill is not at all settled. Several more Democrats spoke out publicly Friday that Biden should step aside from the race — including Rep. Mike Levin of California who in a remarkable moment told Biden directly that he should bow out during the call with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, according to people familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

Levin said in a statement later, "The time has come for President Biden to pass the torch."

The congressman warned that Democrats "must prevail against the incalculable threat Donald Trump poses to the American institutions of freedom and democracy." He said Trump "actively seeks a bleak authoritarianism and the overthrow of the values which have guided" the country for nearly 250 years.

While the floodgate of dissent that was expected from House Democrats did not open after Biden delivered what for many was a more than competent performance in his Thursday evening news conference, it also did not slam shut.

All told, almost 20 House Democrats are calling on Biden to bow out, a mix of younger and older lawmakers, those in some of the most competitive districts for reelection but also senior lawmakers who worry about the party's ability to win in fall. One Democratic senator has joined the chorus, so far.

The Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill are confronting a situation like no other, testing a new era of leadership, helmed by Schumer and Jeffries, both New Yorkers, who are saying little publicly other than that they stand with Biden as they balance the competing views of their caucuses.

Jeffries, who is in line to become House speaker if Democrats win the majority in November, met privately with Biden Thursday night at the White House, and "expressed the full breadth of insight, heartfelt perspectives and conclusions about the path forward that the caucus has shared in our recent time together."

In a letter to colleagues, he said House Democrats have had an "extensive discussion" about the country's future. And the conversation has been, as he said earlier in the week, "candid, clear-eyed and comprehensive."

Schumer, with a slim Senate majority at stake this election, is also encouraging senators to personally dial up the president and his team to share their views, according to a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

In his own conversations, including with senators and donors, Schumer has not foreclosed on any options.

The Senate leader invited Biden's team to meet privately with Senate Democrats this week in a session that was heated at times with strong questions and opinions, but little assurances for senators from the president's staff about the path forward.

What is most telling from the Democratic leaders is that they are having these conversations at all: It lays bare the reality that Democrats have not closed the door on an alternative to Biden.

The leaders are all being bombarded with advocates from all sides, on and off the Hill, pressing them to take action.

Pelosi, because of her stature as the party's formidable former speaker, and Clyburn as the leader who helped deliver the presidency for Biden in 2020, have particular clout, among those who could bring their influence to bear on the president.

Having twice led Democrats to taking back control of the House majority, Pelosi is trusted by lawmakers for her political insight, strategy and timing — as happened this week when she appeared on Biden's preferred news show, MSNBC's Morning Joe, and said "it's up to the president" to decide what to do, when Biden had already emphatically declared he's staying in the race.

Pelosi is also known for doling out advice often in public catch phrases — Don't agonize, organize. Start with a feather, end with a sledgehammer — all of which could be applicable at this moment.

Republicans are gathering in Milwaukee to nominate Donald Trump again. Here's what to expect

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

For all the usual stagecraft, the Republican National Convention that opens Monday is different from Donald Trump's previous nominating affairs.

In 2016 and 2020, Trump was the underdog heading into fall and faced criticism from within his own party. This year, he will accept the Republican nomination with his party in lockstep behind him and Democrats in turmoil over President Joe Biden's viability.

There will be the usual convention tasks throughout the four days. Delegates, almost 2,400 of them, must approve a platform and formally designate the presidential ticket: Trump and his yet-to-be-named running mate. They'll hear from both national candidates and a slew of others rallying support for Trump and taking aim at Democrats.

The GOP expects a triumphant moment.

"The political environment is not only great for Donald Trump, but it's really great for Republicans running for Senate, governor, House seats, all the way down," said Henry Barbour, an influential Republican National Committee member who has sometimes criticized Trump in the past.

Here are some questions going into the convention.

Are there any dissenters left in the 'Trump National Committee'?

Trump has buried his opponents and taken over the party. Voters get fundraising mail with "Trump National Committee" stamped above the RNC's Capitol Hill address. Trump's closest primary rival, Nikki Haley, will not see the convention stage. Instead, delegates will hear from, among others, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who ended his presidential campaign after the Iowa caucuses and immediately endorsed Trump.

"I don't think there's any comparison to his previous campaigns," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Trump ally.

Most importantly, Trump is on offense against Biden and confident enough that his campaign promised in a convention preview that "President Donald J. Trump will usher in a new golden age for America."

Who will be the pick for vice president?

Ever the showman, Trump has strung out his choice of running mate. The most-mentioned possibilities are North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance. Trump has mused that he'd love to withhold his pick until the convention begins — but he admits that idea frustrates his aides who want to preview the rollout. All three men, along with other contenders Trump has considered, are expected to address delegates at some point.

Will Trump reach for the middle or for his base?

Conventions are mostly about firing up core supporters. But they draw large television and online audiences that include the broader electorate. Trump's campaign has outlined daily messaging aimed at both audiences, with themes that riff on Trump's red-hat motto: "Make America Great Again."

Monday's theme is economics: "Make America Wealthy Once Again." Trump has outlined an agenda of sweeping tariffs and ramped-up production of oil and gas, even though it already hit a record under Biden. He argues that his plans to deport millions of immigrants in the U.S. illegally will bring down inflation, which has fallen from higher levels earlier in Biden's presidency.

Tuesday, it's immigration and crime: "Make America Safe Once Again." Trump and Republicans believe the border debate is among their strongest issues. They have arranged speeches for the family members of slain people in which immigrants in the U.S. illegally face criminal charges, as part of Trump's broader attempts to blame crime on border policies.

Wednesday is national security day: "Make America Strong Once Again." Delegates and the viewing audience can expect to hear arguments that Biden is a "weak" and "failed" commander in chief and head of state. This is the day, typically, that vice presidential nominees address the convention.

Thursday will culminate with Trump himself: "Make America Great Once Again."

Will Trump focus on Biden and the future or on election lies?

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The takeaway for most observers, regardless of all the careful planning and choreography, will be what Trump himself says in his acceptance address. In 2016 in Cleveland, Trump offered a dark indictment of American life and insisted, "I alone can fix it." The populist, nationalistic pitch enraptured his backers but did not necessarily help him expand his appeal.

Republicans across the party want Trump to take advantage of Biden's struggles by explaining his ideas for a second presidency. That means sidestepping his most incendiary, racist rhetoric. And, yes, it would mean not repeating his lies that the 2020 election was fraudulent or spending time complaining about the criminal prosecutions against him.

"He needs to avoid the politics of division," said Barbour.

Of course, that would also mean Trump taking a decidedly un-Trump approach.

Will the party go along with Trump's wishes on abortion?

If there is any notable dissent on the floor, it may come over the platform provision stating that abortion policy should be left to state governments. That's what Trump wants two years after the conservative U.S. Supreme Court majority he helped cement overturned the precedent establishing a federal right to abortion services.

Anti-abortion activists — and Trump's former vice president, Mike Pence — want Republicans to call for federal restrictions on abortion. There's no question that Trump controls the votes to ratify the proposed platform. A public fight would play into Democrats' contention that the GOP wants to effectively ban abortion access nationwide — part of their wider argument that a second Trump administration would be extreme on many policy matters.

What role will Melania Trump and other family play?

Trump family members are expected to speak at some point. Donald Trump Jr. has been a top surrogate and forceful defender for his father in recent months. But daughter Ivanka Trump has been much quieter since leaving her role as White House adviser during Trump's term. Former first lady Melania Trump is expected to be in Milwaukee but it was not clear as of early Friday whether she will speak. She has been notably absent from the 2024 campaign, a stark contrast to first lady Jill Biden's role for her husband.

Will the protesters outside matter?

Protest groups won't be permitted inside the security zone established around the convention arena by the Secret Service. But they'll get as close as they can and attract at least some media attention.

Principles First, which describes itself as a nationwide grassroots movement of pro-democracy, anti-Trump conservatives, is holding a rally Wednesday. Speakers include former Republican Party Chairman Michael Steele.

The Democratic National Committee is holding events in Milwaukee as well, promising daily news conferences, counterprogramming and voter outreach in the Democratic-dominated city. Democrats intend to highlight Biden's accomplishments on the economy and juxtapose the president's advocacy for democracy and international alliances with Trump's criticism of NATO, praise of authoritarian leaders and quips about being a dictator on "day one."

Democratic-aligned groups, including United We Dream Action, the Service Employees International Union and America's Voice, are going even further, with bilingual mobile billboards around the RNC site urging voters to reject "Trump's fascist agenda."

SpaceX rocket accident leaves company's Starlink satellites in wrong orbit

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A SpaceX rocket has failed for the first time in nearly a decade, leaving the company's internet satellites in an orbit so low that they're doomed to fall through the atmosphere and burn up.

The Falcon 9 rocket blasted off from California on Thursday night, carrying 20 Starlink satellites. Several minutes into the flight, the upper stage engine malfunctioned. SpaceX on Friday blamed a liquid oxygen

leak.

The company said flight controllers managed to make contact with half of the satellites and attempted to boost them to a higher orbit using onboard ion thrusters. But with the low end of their orbit only 84 miles (135 kilometers) above Earth — less than half what was intended — “our maximum available thrust is unlikely to be enough to successfully raise the satellites,” the company said via X.

SpaceX said the satellites will reenter the atmosphere and burn up. There was no mention of when they might come down. More than 6,000 orbiting Starlinks currently provide internet service to customers in some of the most remote corners of the world.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the problem must be fixed before Falcon rockets can fly again. It was not known if or how the accident might impact SpaceX’s upcoming crew flights. A billionaire’s spaceflight is scheduled for July 31 from Florida with plans for the first private spacewalk, followed in mid-August by an astronaut flight to the International Space Station for NASA.

The tech entrepreneur who will lead the private flight, Jared Isaacman, said Friday that SpaceX’s Falcon 9 has “an incredible track record” and as well as an emergency escape system.

The last launch failure occurred in 2015 during a space station cargo run. Another rocket exploded the following year during testing on the ground.

SpaceX’s Elon Musk said the high flight rate will make it easier to identify and correct the problem.

Jury ends first day of deliberations in US Sen. Bob Menendez’s corruption trial without a verdict

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City jury finished its first three hours of deliberations Friday without reaching a verdict in the corruption trial of U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, who is accused of taking bribes and being a foreign agent for the Egyptian government.

As he left the courthouse and headed to his waiting car, Menendez told reporters: “I have faith in God and in the jury.”

On Friday morning, hours before jurors began deliberating, a buoyant Menendez entered the courtroom singing quietly to himself, keeping up the tune as his lawyers chatted nearby at the defense table. Asked what he was singing, he said it was “a whole medley of songs,” including “Amazing Grace.”

Over a nine-week trial, federal prosecutors in New York have sought to convince the jury that the New Jersey Democrat and his wife accepted gold, cash and a Mercedes-Benz convertible from three businessmen from 2018 to 2023 in exchange for Menendez carrying out a variety of corrupt acts.

They say some bribes were for taking actions benefiting the government of Egypt, including speeding the delivery of U.S. military aid. Prosecutors also say Menendez, 70, tried to interfere with multiple criminal investigations and helped a businessman protect a monopoly awarded by the Egyptian government pertaining to the certification of U.S. meat exports to Egypt.

Menendez’s lawyers have argued that the senator did nothing wrong in his dealings with the businessmen and that nearly \$150,000 in gold bars and over \$480,000 in cash found at the couple’s Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, home in a 2022 FBI raid were not bribe proceeds.

Two of the businessmen, Fred Daibes and Wael Hana, are on trial with Menendez. His wife’s trial has been postponed while she recovers from breast cancer surgery. All of the defendants have pleaded not guilty.

Menendez did not testify, but he has insisted publicly that he took no bribes and did no special favors for Egypt.

Judge Sidney H. Stein instructed the jury on the law Friday morning so they would have a roadmap to follow during their deliberations. U.S. citizens may act as agents of a foreign government if they properly register as such, but not public officials like sitting U.S. senators.

Jurors began deliberating shortly after 2 p.m. They were sent home just after 5 p.m. Deliberations will resume on Monday morning.

To reach a verdict, jurors were expected to sift through the testimony of numerous witnesses, along with

hundreds of emails, text messages, financial records and other documents, including some which prosecutors say show that serial numbers on some of the gold bars prove that they came from the businessmen.

The jury is also expected to consider the testimony of Jose Uribe, a businessman who pleaded guilty to charges in a cooperation deal with the government. Uribe testified that he helped Nadine Menendez, the senator's wife, get a luxury car in exchange for her husband's help pressuring prosecutors to change the way they were handling criminal investigations involving two of Uribe's associates.

Menendez is also accused of trying to use his clout to influence a criminal case involving Daibes, who faces bank fraud charges.

Among witnesses called by the defense was Menendez's sister, Caridad Gonzalez, who recalled how family members fled Cuba in 1951 with only the cash they had hidden in a grandfather's clock before moving to New York City, where the future senator was born. He was raised across the Hudson River in the New Jersey cities of Hoboken and Union City.

Menendez's lawyers have argued that it was not unusual for the senator to store large amounts of cash at home given his family's history.

Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic will meet in the Wimbledon men's final again

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — Carlos Alcaraz is only a couple of months past his 21st birthday, and yet this whole Grand Slam success thing is already a bit been-there, done-that for him.

Moving a step closer to a second consecutive Wimbledon trophy and fourth major championship overall, Alcaraz overcame a shaky start Friday to beat Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (1), 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in the semifinals at Centre Court.

"I feel like I'm not new anymore. I feel like I know how I'm going to feel before the final. I've been in this position before," Alcaraz said. "I will try to do the things that I did well last year and try to be better."

Like last year, his opponent in Sunday's title match will be Novak Djokovic, who advanced with a 6-4, 7-6 (2), 6-4 victory against No. 25 seed Lorenzo Musetti. Djokovic won 15 of 16 points when he went to the net in the first set and finished 43 for 56 in that category.

It'll be the first time the same two men meet in consecutive Wimbledon finals since Djokovic beat Roger Federer in 2014 and 2015.

"He's as complete a player as they come," Djokovic said about Alcaraz, who won the 2023 final in five sets. "It's going to take the best of my abilities on the court overall to beat him."

Djokovic, who hadn't reached a final at any tournament all season and needed surgery in June for a torn meniscus in his right knee, will be vying for his eighth championship at the All England Club. That would tie Federer's mark for the most by a man — and put him one behind Martina Navratilova's record of nine — while making the 37-year-old from Serbia the first player in tennis history with a career total of 25 Grand Slam titles.

"I know what I have to do," Alcaraz said. "I'm sure he knows what he has to do to beat me."

Late in Djokovic's semifinal, as he let his first three match points slip away, fans hoping for a longer match began chanting "Lo-ren-zo!" One yelled out during a point, bothering Djokovic, who soon was wiping away fake tears mockingly after Musetti failed to convert a break chance in the last game.

The No. 2-seeded Djokovic — who got a walkover in the quarterfinals when his opponent, Alex de Minaur, withdrew with a hip injury — eventually worked his way into his 10th final at Wimbledon and 37th at a major.

"I don't want to stop here," Djokovic said. "Hopefully I'll get my hands on that trophy."

Musetti said it didn't look as if Djokovic was hampered at all by his knee, which was covered by a gray sleeve.

"He showed that he's really in great shape, not only in tennis, but physically," said Musetti, who was appearing in a major semifinal for the first time.

After a so-so opening set against Medvedev, Alcaraz transformed back into the energetic, attacking,

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crowd-pleasing force who already was the first teenager to be No. 1 in the ATP rankings and is the youngest man to have won a major trophy on three surfaces: grass, clay and hard courts.

Now the Spaniard is one victory away from joining Boris Becker and Bjorn Borg as the only men in the Open era, which began in 1968, with multiple championships at the All England Club before turning 22.

Alcaraz also triumphed at the U.S. Open in 2022 and the French Open last month and is 3-0 in major finals.

"We're going to see a lot of him in the future, no doubt," Djokovic said. "He's going to win many more Grand Slams."

On a cloudy afternoon, the No. 3-seeded Alcaraz went through some ups and downs against No. 5 Medvedev, a 28-year-old from Russia.

"I started really, really nervous," Alcaraz said. "He was dominating the match."

Indeed, Medvedev grabbed an early 5-2 lead, but then got into trouble with his play and his temper.

Alcaraz broke to get within 5-4 with a drop shot that chair umpire Eva Asderaki ruled — correctly, according to TV replays — bounced twice before Medvedev got his racket on the ball. He voiced his displeasure, and Asderaki, after climbing down from her seat to huddle with tournament referee Denise Parnell during the ensuing changeover, issued a warning to Medvedev for unsportsmanlike conduct.

"I said something in Russian. Not unpleasant, but not over the line," Medvedev said at his news conference.

He regrouped quickly and was just about perfect in that set's tiebreaker.

Then it was Alcaraz's turn to get headed in the right direction, which didn't take long. He got the last break he would need for a 4-3 edge in the fourth when Medvedev sailed a backhand long, then sat in his sideline chair, locked eyes with his two coaches and started muttering and gesticulating.

"I was playing well," Medvedev said, "and just it was not enough."

Nearly every time Alcaraz emitted one of his "Uh-eh!" two-syllable grunts while unleashing a booming forehand, spectators audibly gasped, regardless of whether the point continued. Often enough, it didn't: Alcaraz had 24 forehand winners, 20 more than Medvedev.

In addition to the Wimbledon men's final, Sunday's sports schedule features the final of the men's soccer European Championship in Germany, where Spain will meet England.

When Alcaraz alluded to that in his on-court interview by saying, "It's going to be a really good day for the Spanish people, as well," he drew boos from the locals — perhaps his biggest misstep all day.

Alcaraz smiled and added: "I didn't say Spain is going to win. I just said that it's going to be a really fun, fun day."

Just a Category 1 hurricane? Don't be fooled by a number — it could be more devastating than a Cat 5

By BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

Here's a troubling phrase hurricane forecasters hate but often hear: "It's just a Category 1. Nothing to worry about."

Or even worse: "Tropical storm? Just some wind and rain."

But look at Hurricane Beryl, which hit Texas this week as a "mere" Category 1 storm — far weaker in wind strength than when it swept through the Caribbean as a Cat 5 just days earlier — yet still knocked out power to 2.7 million customers. The storm has been blamed for eight deaths in the U.S.

Beryl is not the only example. By the numbers, Tropical Storm Fay in 2008 didn't even register on the scale of dangerous storms before it made four separate landfalls in Florida. In this case, it was not Fay's strength, but its speed — or lack thereof — that turned out to be the key. The listless storm parked itself over the state for days, dumping as much as 25 inches (64 centimeters) of rain in some places. Floods killed crops and destroyed homes. Roads were so flooded that alligators swam alongside first responders as they rescued people stranded in their homes.

What's in a number?

The Saffir-Simpson Scale — which measures the strength of a hurricane's winds on a scale of Category

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1 to Category 5, with 5 being the strongest — was introduced to the public in 1973, the year that gas prices spiked from 39 cents to 55 cents a gallon and Tony Orlando and Dawn had the #1 hit of the year with “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree.”

In other words, times have changed, and so should the way people think about how dangerous a storm is when it’s heading their way.

Or think about it in terms of your health: While it’s important to check your blood pressure, it’s only one of many measures that determine how fit you are.

When monitoring storms, “Don’t focus on the category,” advises Craig Fugate, former director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency who also was emergency management director in Florida during some of the state’s worst storms. “We really need to talk about the hurricane’s impacts, not a number” that applies only to wind strength.

Forecasters developed the Saffir-Simpson scale — and other tools such as flood maps and storm prediction cones — as a type of shorthand to easily and quickly convey a storm’s severity and reach, but they have taken on oversized roles, Fugate said.

“We’re finding that there’s a lot of things in emergency management where we didn’t really think through how we’re going to communicate, and we ended up stuck with these legacy descriptions that are hard to shake,” he said.

The circumference of a storm, how fast it’s moving and the amount of rain it delivers are all factors that matter, as is the place where it hits: its geography, its population and the quality of its infrastructure. Also, it’s important to remember that tornadoes can form regardless of a storm’s size.

It’s not just about strength

A Category 5 storm that’s compact and moving quickly could cause far less damage than a weaker, wetter storm with a huge circumference that stalls over a populated area, Fugate notes.

For example, Hurricane Charley and Hurricane Ida were both Category 4 storms. But Charley, which struck Florida’s southwest Gulf Coast in 2004, was compact and lost strength quickly as it moved inland. Ida, which came ashore in Louisiana in 2021, spawned deadly tornadoes and catastrophic flooding as far away as the northeastern United States. Sixty people were killed in New York and New Jersey alone. It also turned out to be the second-costliest storm in U.S. history, surpassed only by Hurricane Katrina.

“Charley was a Cat 4 and was very devastating where it made landfall, but Hurricane Ida was a much bigger storm and caused much more widespread devastation,” Fugate noted.

Stay local

It’s fine to follow The Weather Channel and watch updates from the National Hurricane Center when a storm forms and starts making its way toward land, but the closer it gets, the better it is to seek out local weather information, Fugate says.

“Everyone focuses on the Hurricane Center,” he said. “They’re responsible for storm intensity and track. They’re not necessarily going to have all the local impacts.”

A better place to go as a storm approaches, Fugate says, is the National Weather Service’s homepage, where you can type in a ZIP code and see what’s happening in your area.

“Your (regional) National Weather Service office is taking all that information and they’re localizing it so they can tell you what kind of wind you can expect, what kind of flooding you can expect,” Fugate says. “Are you in a storm surge area? When are the high tides?”

Don’t make assumptions

Relying on FEMA flood zone maps to determine a storm’s potential impact is as ill-advised as depending solely on the Saffir-Simpson scale, Fugate warns.

“People think, ‘Well, it’s a flood map. If I don’t live in the zone, I don’t flood.’ No! It’s an insurance rate map. Not being in that special risk area doesn’t mean you don’t flood, it just means the insurance is cheaper.”

Also, don’t be fooled by the term “100-year-flood zone.” It does not, as many assume, mean that the zone only floods every 100 years; rather that there is a 1% risk of flooding, Fugate notes.

Finally, don’t be misled by the forecast cone.

The cone — which for a reason is called the “cone of uncertainty” — shows where the center of a hurricane might go, but not how far out storm-force winds will extend.

People can be injured, killed or have heavy property losses outside the cone — a lesson that residents in the Northeast learned during Ida.

One mistake is to look at the graphic and think, “I’m not in the cone, I’m good,” Fugate says. “That’s not what it means!”

Extreme heat and some medicines can be a risky combo. Here’s what to know

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Extreme heat can raise the danger of heat-related illnesses and threaten health in a more subtle way — by amplifying the side effects of many common medications.

Hot weather, too, can damage medicines such as insulin that require refrigeration. Inhalers can explode. Epinephrine injectors such as EpiPens can malfunction. Meds delivered in the mail can deteriorate.

A look at common problems and solutions related to heat and medicine:

Which medicines could cause problems in the heat?

Blood pressure pills that reduce fluid in the blood can lead to dehydration. Beta blockers for heart conditions can decrease blood flow to the skin and make you less aware of dangerous heat.

Some antidepressants can hinder your ability to stay cool. Aspirin and other over-the-counter pain relievers decrease fluid and sodium levels, making it harder to deal with high temperatures.

On top of that, the combination of heat and drug side effects can lead to lightheadedness and falls. Alcohol increases the danger, said pharmacist Bradley Phillips of the University of Florida College of Pharmacy.

You can learn more about your medications’ side effects and storage requirements at the National Library of Medicine’s MedlinePlus website.

Or talk to your doctor or pharmacist, Phillips said. Ask about how much water you should be drinking if you’re on medications that increase dehydration.

He recommends staying hydrated and “not relying on your body’s ability to tell you that you’re thirsty.”

Some medicines — antibiotics, antifungals and acne drugs — can heighten sensitivity to the sun, causing rashes and sunburns. If you’re taking them, stay under an umbrella or wear sun-protective fabrics and sunscreen, said Dr. Mike Ren, a family physician at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

“You might be on antibiotics, not think too much of it, go down to the beach and then come back with a whopping sunburn,” Ren said.

How should medications be stored for travel?

Medication generally should be kept in a cool, dry place, unless it needs refrigeration. That can be challenging while traveling.

Before a summer road trip, check labels for the storage requirements of your meds. Carry medicine in a cooler when traveling by car, even if it doesn’t require refrigeration. The car’s trunk or glove box could get too hot for even room temperature storage.

Traveling by plane? It’s always best to keep medications in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is delayed or lost, and it can get too cold in the cargo hold.

What about prescriptions delivered by mail?

Mail-order pharmacies are responsible for keeping your drugs at safe temperatures during storage and transit. The best practice is to ship sensitive medicine in special packaging with ice packs and temperature monitors.

But that doesn’t always happen. Or a delivery can come at a bad time, said Ren, who recently helped his vacationing mother by bringing her delivery of supplements into her Houston home as the region faced soaring heat.

“If you know you’re going to be at work all day, or if you’re on vacation, and you get medications deliv-

ered, you definitely don't want that sitting outside in the hot 100-degree sun," Ren said. If you think your mail-order medication has been damaged by the heat, call the pharmacy to report the problem.

Is more research needed?

Yes. Researchers in the U.S. and Australia say some of the common warnings about heat and drugs don't have a lot of scientific evidence behind them. Ollie Jay at the University of Sydney found backing for only four of the 11 medication categories that the World Health Organization lists as concerns with high heat.

He suggests changing behavior, not medications, like staying out of the heat. "Be a bit more cautious," he said.

Dr. Renee Salas, an emergency room physician at Massachusetts General Hospital, said as climate change accelerates, there's a need to know which medicines are the riskiest in the heat.

"We don't have that answer yet, and it's one that we need to rapidly figure out," Salas said.

Russian assassination plots against those supporting Ukraine uncovered in Europe, official says

By AAMER MADHANI and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Western intelligence agencies have uncovered Russian plots to carry out assassinations, arson and other sabotage in Europe against companies and people linked to support for Ukraine's military — one of the most serious being a plan to kill the head of a German arms manufacturer, a Western government official said.

The plots have sometimes involved recruiting common criminals in foreign countries to conduct the attacks, said the official, who is familiar with the situation but not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity. One major plot recently uncovered had targeted Armin Papperger, CEO of defense company Rheinmetall, the official said.

The official declined to offer any details on other plots, which were first reported by CNN. The CNN report said the U.S. informed Germany, whose security services were able to protect Papperger and foil the plot.

Rheinmetall is a major supplier of military technology and artillery rounds for Ukraine as it fights off Russian forces. The company last month opened an armored vehicle maintenance and repair facility in western Ukraine and also aims to start production inside the country.

White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson declined to comment on the alleged plot to kill Papperger but said, "Russia's intensifying campaign of subversion is something that we are taking extremely seriously and have been intently focused on over the past few months."

"The United States has been discussing this issue with our NATO allies, and we are actively working together to expose and disrupt these activities," Watson added. "We have also been clear that Russia's actions will not deter allies from continuing to support Ukraine."

Neither Rheinmetall nor the German government would comment Friday on the reported plot against Papperger. The Interior Ministry can't comment on "individual threat situations," spokesperson Maximilian Kall said, but he added that more broadly, "we take the significantly increased threat from Russian aggression very seriously."

"We know that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's regime wants above all to undermine our support for Ukraine in its defense against the Russian war of aggression, but the German government won't be intimidated," Kall said.

He noted that German security measures have increased significantly since 2022 and that "the threats range from espionage and sabotage, through cyberattacks, to state terrorism."

European officials gathered for the NATO summit in Washington this week spoke of dealing with an escalation of "hybrid" attacks that they blame on Russia and its allies.

That includes what authorities called suspicious recent fires at industrial and commercial sites in Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom, Germany and other nations, and charges that Russia-allied Belarus was sending large numbers of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa to the borders of Poland, Latvia and other countries belonging to NATO.

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When asked at a news conference at the NATO summit Thursday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he could not comment on the CNN report. He did note a widespread campaign by Russian security services to conduct "hostile actions" against NATO allies, including sabotage, cyberattacks and arson.

"These are not standalone instances. These are part of a pattern, part of an ongoing Russian campaign. And the purpose of this campaign is, of course, to intimidate NATO allies from supporting Ukraine," Stoltenberg said.

In April, German investigators arrested two German-Russian men on suspicion of espionage, one of them accused of agreeing to carry out attacks on potential targets, including U.S. military facilities, in hopes of sabotaging aid for Ukraine.

Germany has become the second-biggest supplier of weapons to Ukraine after the United States since Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than two years ago.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed the report of a plan to kill Papperger. "All of this is again presented in the fake style, so such reports cannot be taken seriously," he told reporters Friday.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to his Russian counterpart, Andrei Belousov, on Friday, their second call in less than a month, Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh announced at a briefing Friday. The call was initiated by the Russian defense minister, Singh said.

She did not have further details to share, including whether the two leaders spoke about the accusations that Russia had attempted to assassinate top officials of Western defense firms producing weapons systems that are sent to Ukraine, but said "maintaining lines of communication is incredibly important right now."

For at least a decade Quinault Nation has tried to escape the rising Pacific. Time is running out

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

TAHOLAH, Wash. (AP) — Standing water lies beneath the home Sonny Curley shares with his parents and three children on the Quinault reservation a few steps from the Pacific Ocean in Washington's Olympic Peninsula. The back deck is rotting, and black mold speckles the walls inside, leaving the 46-year-old fisherman feeling drained if he spends too much time in the house.

"You can tell your body's not right; it's fighting," said Curley, standing in the family's kitchen. "You're using your energy to fight something that's not supposed to be there."

These are the effects of an ocean that has moved ever closer since Curley's parents bought the house about 15 years ago in Taholah, the tribe's largest village, where the Quinault River empties into the Pacific. He estimates the ocean was about 30 feet away back then. Now waves sometimes top a 15-foot seawall, and the family's been forced to evacuate three times in the past four years, just as Curley's 84-year-old mother struggles with advancing dementia.

"It's scary," said Hannah Curley, Sonny's sister, who lives three blocks away and hasn't had to evacuate. "Nights when it's really stormy, I'll go and check on them a couple times during the night, and then I have cameras up too, so we can see if it's getting really bad."

Faced with rising sea levels and increasing flooding, the Quinault Indian Nation has spent at least a decade working to relocate hundreds of residents and civic buildings in Taholah to higher ground. There's also the threat of an earthquake and tsunami from a major offshore fault line. But that relocation depends on money, and a patchwork of federal and state grants has fallen far below the estimated more than \$400 million needed.

"Where are we going to go if the house does get in a state where it's not livable?" Sonny Curley wondered. "Where are my parents going to go and where are my kids going to go?"

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of a series of on how tribes and Indigenous communities are coping with and combating climate change.

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Across the U.S., tribes suffer some of the most severe impacts of human-caused climate change but typically have the fewest resources to respond. Along the coasts, where a federal report has predicted seas will rise 10 to 12 inches (0.25 to 0.3 meters) by 2050, tribes have taken key steps toward relocation. That includes the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe, just 91 miles (146 kilometers) south of Quinault, and Newtok Village on the western coast of Alaska.

"When you move people to marginal lands and you marginalize them within society, you layer climate change on top of that ... they're vulnerable to climate," said Michael Spencer, who researches and teaches on social work and public health among Indigenous people at the University of Washington.

The Quinault, historically known as skilled fishers and hunters who traveled the water for trading, ceded millions of acres to the U.S. government more than 150 years ago in exchange for a roughly 200,000-acre reservation on the coast. The tribe was promised peace and a permanent home, tribal leadership have said. But now a key section is threatened.

Taholah is close to the ocean and rests on estuary soils and fill that are infiltrated more easily by saltwater. With tidal ranges that average 9 feet, the sea level rise that is expected to accelerate in coming years will have significant impact, said John Callahan, climate scientist for NOAA.

Quinault has made flooding-related disaster declarations 26 times from 1957 to 2022, and they have become more frequent. About one-quarter have come since 2016, despite the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers raising the seawall by about 4 feet (1.22 meters) in 2014.

The flooding has left some homes plagued by mold and destroyed several outbuildings. Likely worse is in store: Taholah is expected to see a sea level rise of 1 to 2.6 feet by the year 2100, according to a 2018 Washington Coastal Resilience Project report.

"We've seen the ocean come over the berm and actually come up against and even on top of the roofs of homes. In my 50-something years, I've never seen something like that," said Quinault President Guy Capoeman.

The more than 3,000-member tribe has an economy powered by the timber industry, its seafood store and a beach resort and casino. About one-fourth of the people live below the poverty line, according to Census data.

The tribe published a relocation plan in 2017, and laid out 59 residential lots with sidewalks, street signs and fire hydrants on a site about a half-mile away and 130 feet above sea level. Around 300 dwelling units are planned. They've already moved their Generations building, which includes elders programs, Head Start and day care.

The new village is planned as a climate-resilient space, with a farm to provide food if they are cut off during a disaster and solar and biomass for energy.

But progress has been slow. More than half of \$25 million awarded by the Interior Department — most of it planned for building the first homes -- has been held up for a lengthy process of submitting planning and design documents.

"I guess when being awarded the funds, you're thinking: 'Let's get this going. We have the money, we're ready to do this. Let's move,'" said Alyssa Johnston, project developer for the relocation. "But after a few months of being in this position, you just kind of learn that there's a lot more to it, to acquiring the funding."

They've gotten \$12 million through Washington state's Climate Commitment Act, but most will go toward relocating another Quinault village, Queets, which also has flooding issues. A small amount has been earmarked to study salmon declines due to glacier melt and rising river temperatures. The tribe relies on the fish for everything from food to jobs to cultural traditions.

In 2020, Quinault took an \$8 million loan for the Generations building and has continued to search for additional funding. But last year the tribe was turned down for two key federal grants.

Tribal leaders say no one will be forced to move, and some residents don't want to.

From his small home perched 17 feet off the ground, James DeLaCruz Sr. has watched the landscape change over the past 30 years. He once planned to build a sitting area on the beach outside his door, but it's no longer wide enough.

Yet DeLaCruz, 75, calls the ocean his "happy place," finding comfort from the sound of waves. He even

enjoys storms.

"At any day, the earth can split out there; a great big wave. If that's our calling, that's our calling. So I don't worry about it," he said. "I've lived next to the ocean for 75 years. I'm still here."

And he worries about the cost. So does the Curley family, with the parents afraid of starting over with a new mortgage long after retiring. They'd be doing it without Sonny's help; declining salmon numbers have sharply cut his income, and he recently had to stop contributing to payments.

But Sonny and Hannah know it's time to go.

"It's kind of a love-hate relationship that all of us have in this area, because we are a people of the water, of the ocean, the river," Hannah Curley said.

"But on the other hand, the ocean has a mind of its own and you can't change things."

Data of nearly all AT&T customers downloaded to a third-party platform in security breach

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

The data of nearly all customers of the telecommunications giant AT&T was downloaded to a third-party platform in a security breach, the company said Friday, as cyberattacks against businesses, schools and health systems continue to spread globally.

The breach, most of which took place over five months in 2022, hit customers of AT&T's cellular customers, customers of mobile virtual network operators using AT&T's wireless network, as well as its landline customers who interacted with those cellular numbers.

Approximately 109 million customer accounts were impacted, according to AT&T, which said that it currently doesn't believe that the data is publicly available.

"The data does not contain the content of calls or texts, personal information such as Social Security numbers, dates of birth, or other personally identifiable information," AT&T said Friday.

The compromised data also doesn't include some information typically seen in usage details, such as the time stamp of calls or texts, the company said, or customer names. AT&T, however, said that there are often ways using publicly available online tools to find the name associated with a specific telephone number.

Cyber security experts concurred, saying that such data can be used to trace users.

"While the information that was exposed doesn't directly have sensitive information, it can be used to piece together events and who may be calling who. This could impact people's private lives as private calls and connections could be exposed," Thomas Richards, principal consultant at Synopsys Software Integrity Group, said in an emailed statement. "The business phone numbers will be easy to identify and private numbers can be matched to names with public record searches."

An internal investigation determined that compromised data includes AT&T records of calls and texts between May 1, 2022 and Oct. 31, 2022.

AT&T identified the third-party platform as Snowflake and said that the incident was limited to an AT&T workspace on that cloud company's platform and did not impact its network.

Cyber security experts say the sheer volume of data held by companies on cloud platforms can create its own perils.

"The AT&T data breach underscores the growing risks associated with the vast amounts of data companies now store on cloud and SaaS platforms," said Roei Sherman, Field Chief Technology Officer at Mitiga, a threat detection and investigation company that focuses on cloud technology. "As organizations increasingly rely on these technologies, the complexity of detecting and investigating breaches has risen sharply."

AT&T's investigation is ongoing and it has engaged with cybersecurity experts to understand the nature and scope of the criminal breach. At least one person has been apprehended so far, according to the company.

Compromised data also includes records from Jan. 2, 2023, for a very small number of customers. The records identify the telephone numbers an AT&T or MVNO cellular number interacted with during these

periods. For a subset of records, one or more cell site identification number(s) associated with the interactions are also included.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said that it has worked collaboratively with AT&T and the Justice Department "through the first and second delay process, all while sharing key threat intelligence to bolster FBI investigative equities and to assist AT&T's incident response work."

The Department of Justice said Friday that it became aware of the breach early this year, but that it met the security standard for a delayed filing by AT&T with the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission, a filing that was made public Friday.

The DOJ said an earlier disclosure of the breach would "pose a substantial risk to national security and public safety."

The Federal Communications Commission is also investigating.

The year has already been marked by several major data breaches, including an earlier attack on AT&T. In March AT&T said that a dataset found on the "dark web" contained information such as Social Security numbers for about 7.6 million current AT&T account holders and 65.4 million former account holders.

Some auto dealerships are still using pens and paper to close deals after back-to-back cyberattacks last month on a company that supplies them with software. That company, CDK Global, is still attempting to reestablish normal operations.

Alabama's education superintendent said earlier this month that some data was "breached" during a hacking attempt at the Alabama State Department of Education.

Cybersecurity experts are warning that hospital systems around the country, which have already been targeted, are at risk for more attacks and that the U.S. government is doing too little to prevent breaches.

AT&T customers can visit att.com/DataIncident for more information.

Shares of AT&T Inc., based in Dallas, fell slightly on Friday.

Actor Ashley Judd, a Democratic activist, adds her voice to those calling on Biden to leave the race

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Actor Ashley Judd is adding her voice to calls for President Joe Biden to step aside from the presidential race following his performance in last month's debate, arguing that she worries he could lose to Republican Donald Trump in November.

In an opinion piece for USA Today published on Friday, Judd called on Biden to "voluntarily, gracefully step aside" so that his party can support a "talented, robust Democrat" for the presidency. She described Biden during the debate as "incapable of countering Trump, while he, unchecked, gushed a firehose of galling lies."

Judd, who has been an outspoken supporter for Biden and other Democrats across the country, noted the political activism that has accompanied her multi-decade Hollywood career. Her allegations against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein helped spark the #MeToo movement.

Warning that she fears Trump "would wield the power of the presidency with unprecedented, incalculable cruelty and unfairness" if voters return him to the White House, Judd said that time is of the essence for Democrats to replace Biden with a candidate who can defeat him.

"We do not have another day for distraction or division among ourselves," she said.

Judd did not posit a possible replacement for Biden atop the ticket, and a representative did not immediately return a message seeking comment as to whom she might suggest.

Her call comes as Democrats consider whether they want Biden to remain as his party's nominee, following concerns over his age and ability to win the general election against Trump.

Earlier this week, movie star and lifelong Democrat George Clooney said in a New York Times opinion piece that he loves Biden but the party would lose the presidential race as well as any in Congress with him as the nominee. He cited what he characterized as a diminished Biden during interactions around a Los Angeles fundraiser last month.

Judd was at the White House in April to help the Biden administration promote its new national strategy to prevent suicide, to which she lost her mother, singer Naomi Judd, in 2022. The Biden campaign did not immediately return a message seeking comment on Ashley Judd's piece.

Two weeks that imperiled Biden's presidency left him on probation in the court of Democratic opinion

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's tribulations were previewed in Hollywood days before he got on the debate stage.

At a fundraiser organized by George Clooney and packed with luminaries including former President Barack Obama, Biden was a listless figure, perhaps merely jet-lagged after flying straight from Italy but clearly not the man they knew.

Oh brother, where art thou? Clooney wondered.

It was a flashing-light moment for the actor, producer and prodigious Democratic donor and for others in the crowd. Then came the debate debacle, which set off 50 shades of panic among Democrats and pitted Biden loyalists against those now convinced a successor should take the party into November.

Two weeks after debate night, more than 15 Democratic lawmakers have gone out on a limb and called publicly for a president they've long supported to exit the race. Many more kept their newfound alarm about Biden semi-private. Mega-donors froze in the moment, wondering if they were plowing fortunes into a lost cause.

The bleeding of support continued past Biden's NATO news conference Thursday night. Immediately afterward, Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, posted on X that Biden should end his campaign. Several others did as well.

From Michael Moore to James Carville to Rob Reiner, voices from the intelligentsia and liberal Hollywood pitched in over the past two weeks to tell the president he should go. He said hell no.

It's been an excruciating reckoning for all in the family, and it's not over.

Lawmakers were furious that the White House kept Biden in such a bubble for so long that Americans could be blindsided by how bad he was on the stage with Trump. Biden's camp was furious at the public show of disloyalty by those who want him replaced on the ticket and the relentless focus on Biden's every word and step.

Most stayed with Biden over those two weeks as dissent alternately flared, faded and sparked anew, like tamped-down embers in a dry forest. Democrats on both sides of the Biden divide were left fearing the prospects of a Donald Trump win.

"I think we could lose the whole thing and it's staggering to me," Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado told CNN, speaking for many others as well as himself. He meant the presidency, the Senate and the House, in what he worries may be a Trump landslide.

On Friday, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York told colleagues in a letter that he met Biden after the press conference the night before and "directly expressed the full breadth of insight, heartfelt perspectives and conclusions about the path forward that the Caucus has shared in our recent time together."

How did Democrats get here? Some boiling points and turning points along the way:

June 27

With the calendar rushing toward the Democratic convention in August, the debate in Atlanta upended Democratic officials, lawmakers and voters. Biden was befogged from the first words he uttered, or muttered. Voters had long felt Biden, now 81, was too old to be effective but they had never seen him like this. More than 51 million people watched it.

Biden hadn't been on his game for some time before June 27. He appeared pale and his movements were slow after the Group of Seven summit in Italy nearly two weeks earlier.

After the long flight from Europe, Biden was unable to turn it on for his 30-minute onstage conversa-

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tion with late-night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel and Obama at the June 15 fundraiser. It's not often a popular former president and the brightest Hollywood stars join to rally behind a candidate, and donors and other Democrats hoped the event would get Biden's motor running. He was conspicuously lackluster.

"It is devastating to say so," Clooney wrote in *The New York Times* this week, but the event convinced him that Biden, a man he loves, should go: "He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate."

The White House, in the first of its shifting explanations for Biden's troubling demeanor, said he was sick with a cold or the like when going into the debate. (The White House initially said Biden did not see a doctor, then said he had. Its explanation for Biden's frailty evolved to jet lag.)

The debate left even some of Biden's aides questioning privately whether his campaign could be salvaged. Some longtime Biden supporters called immediately for him to exit the campaign. But the prevailing view in the party was that he should stay for now and prove himself fit for the race, and fast.

He was, essentially, placed on probation in the court of Democratic opinion. At his NATO news conference, he acknowledged he has fears to try to put to rest. "I've got to finish this job," he said. "I've got to finish this job."

He was not gaffe-free at the NATO summit. In a pair of passing name jumbles, he referred to the Ukrainian president as Putin and his own vice president as Trump. But he displayed a wide-ranging and detailed command of policy that had been lacking in the debate.

The 'bedwetting brigade'

The morning after the debate, the illness cited by Biden's people seemed to have disappeared. He was spirited in scripted remarks at a North Carolina rally, but many Democrats weren't shaking off what they had seen the night before.

After watching the debate, "I had to take a few more antidepressants than usual," cracked Rep. Ritchie Torres of New York.

The most prominent Democrats talked up the past — Biden's accomplishments — and the strength of the team supporting the president. Democratic leaders said people should focus instead on the lies Trump told. But it never goes very far when elites tell people what they should be talking about.

In an early sign of trouble, one Democratic senator did not presume that Biden would hang in for the election. "It's his decision what he wants to do going forward," Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed told WPRI-TV.

That weekend, the Biden campaign emailed supporters about a "flash poll" purporting to show that Biden was best positioned among potential replacements to defeat Trump. Actually, like other public polls, it showed no clear advantage for Biden over other possible candidates. Other public polling released in the immediate aftermath of the debate found that most watchers thought Trump outperformed Biden, although neither candidate's favorability ratings shifted meaningfully.

In the email, deputy campaign manager Rob Flaherty branded the Biden doubters the "bedwetting brigade." More sheets were about to be soiled.

The 'freak-out'

On the Sunday news shows, Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman stepped up to offer a defense of the president. He, too, had epically flopped in a debate.

Five months after a stroke, Fetterman was hopelessly muddled against his sprightly Republican opponent, Mehmet Oz. As with Biden, Fetterman's people wondered why the candidate, on a long road to recovery, had ever agreed to go on that stage just days before the 2022 midterms.

"Same kind of a freak-out," he said. "And I smoked Oz by five points."

With no chance of recovering from being 81 to 85 in the next four years, Biden saw the cracks in his support widen, but, crucially, Democrats as a whole did not rush to judgment.

Old as he may be, Biden has had time on his side in this late-in-the-game crisis. With each tick of the clock, it becomes harder for Democrats who want him out to replace him.

But on July 2, former Speaker Nancy Pelosi lent credence to the doubts about Biden, saying she was hearing mixed opinions on whether he should stay. "I think it's a legitimate question to say, is this an episode or is this a condition?" she said on MSNBC.

The first cracks

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Within hours, Rep. Lloyd Doggett of Texas became the first lawmaker to say Biden should go. "I am hopeful that he will make the painful and difficult decision to withdraw," he said.

For days, Democrats had been imploring Biden to get out more, call more lawmakers and put himself in unscripted situations to show what he can do. "Come on, pick up the phone," said Rep. Nanette Barragan of California, chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and a Biden supporter.

Biden's dilemma was clear. The more he was encouraged to do in public, the more he increased the chances of making a mistake. Still, he agreed to sit down for questions with ABC's George Stephanopoulos later that week.

But first, as scattered defections were picking up, Biden spoke in person and remotely in a closed session with Democratic governors. Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, firmly behind Biden, called it a "bitch session" by unnerved governors.

In large measure, governors came away sounding supportive of Biden or at least quiet about discontent, and reported that he seemed on top of things.

Yet the session played into public perceptions of Biden as stretched thin, as he acknowledged he needs to get more sleep and limit evening events so he can go to bed earlier. The president joked that his health was fine and it was his brain that was the problem. The crack fell flat.

Panic 2.0

In 22 minutes with Stephanopoulos on July 5, Biden avoided another debacle like his debate — a matchup that had been proposed by his campaign and accepted by Trump's. But the ABC interview left few Democrats reassured.

Biden's ill-timed pauses, meandering moments and garbled words made some even more alarmed than they were before, because now the debate could not be written off as just one bad night. The ground shifted.

An architect of Obama's two presidential election victories, David Axelrod, said it was all too much. Biden, he said, is "dangerously out-of-touch with the concerns people have about his capacities moving forward and his standing in this race."

Rob Reiner, the Hollywood director, Democratic Party donor and "Meathead" of long-ago "All in the Family" fame, posted an expletive on X with his opinion that "It's time for Joe Biden to step down."

Michael Moore, the Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker who forecast Trump's 2016 victory when most others on the left (and the right and the center) figured he would lose, appealed to Biden to not "let your enablers hound you into doing what your body is begging you not to do."

Among governors, those who have been floated as presidential prospects voiced firm support for Biden, surely in part to avoid being seen as pretenders to the throne. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan and Gavin Newsom of California left no daylight between the president and themselves.

In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear told a news conference Thursday, "I support him as long as he is our nominee" but the Biden campaign needs to set "an aggressive campaign schedule" and provide "the information on his health that I think people have been asking for."

For all that, the debate among Democrats over what to do in the aftermath of June 27 has been most pronounced in Congress, where Biden made career-long friendships in his decades as a senator. It's the place where Biden, as president, has scored improbable wins for some of the top items on his agenda.

In inconclusive Capitol Hill meetings this week, more Democrats spoke up for Biden than against him, even as many suggested the private feelings were moving swiftly away from the president. The Congressional Black Caucus offered unqualified support and other groups circled the wagons, too. The list of Democratic House members who called for him to get out of the race grew, but the floodgates didn't open.

On Monday, Biden sent a forceful open letter to congressional Democrats declaring: "Any weakening of resolve or lack of clarity about the task ahead only helps Trump and hurts us. It's time to come together, move forward as a unified party, and defeat Donald Trump."

Gone Fishing

Alaska Rep. Mary Peltola was off fishing. She'd stepped back from the fray and headed home to spend the week packing fish into freezers for the winter, her summer ritual. "There's nothing quite like being out

on the water," she posted on X on Monday with photos of her wharf-side.

With Biden's allies stepping up pressure, the ground appeared to shift again, this time in his favor. One of those who had urged him to quit, Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York, walked that back. There was a lull in defections. But only for a blink of time.

On Wednesday, Pelosi again weighed in. Her words were exquisitely measured but instantly taken as a setback for Biden. On MSNBC's "Morning Joe," she dodged when asked if he should run for president again, instead saying it's his decision to make.

Days earlier, Biden had vowed only the "Lord Almighty" would make him quit. Pelosi did not take that yes as his answer.

In short order, Sen. Peter Welch of Vermont became the first senator to call openly for Biden to quit the campaign. This, after several others had held back from such an announcement while leaving no doubt in their public comments that the president had become a liability in their minds.

Sen. Patty Murray of Washington was among them. "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," she said Monday. "President Biden must seriously consider the best way to preserve his incredible legacy and secure it for the future."

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, who took steps early on to bring colleagues together to assess the damage from the debate, said Biden needed to burst out of his protective bubble and "hear directly from a broader group of voices."

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, the longest serving Democrat in Oregon's House delegation, became the ninth House Democrat to ask Biden to exit the campaign, followed Thursday by more.

The naysayers, though a distinct minority, aren't outliers. Rather they are a mix of senior Democrats and some newer members who won closely watched races in swing districts and feel especially vulnerable now. They have given voice to many more who have said, whether publicly or privately, that Biden puts Democrats on a path to defeat.

Among the veterans, Rep. Adam Schiff of California, while stopping short of urging Biden to quit the campaign, said people are rightfully asking whether the president has the vigor to defeat Trump.

"There's only one reason it is close," he said of the 2024 race. "And that's the president's age."

He added, "Everything is riding on this."

2 buses carrying more than 50 people were swept into a river by a landslide in Nepal

By BINAJ GURUBCHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A landslide swept two passenger buses carrying more than 50 people into a swollen river in central Nepal early Friday, while continuous rain and more landslides were making rescue efforts difficult.

Three survivors apparently swam to safety, but rescuers by late morning had not found any trace of the buses, which likely were submerged and swept downstream in the Trishuli River. Nepal's rivers generally are fast-flowing due to the mountainous terrain. Heavy monsoon downpours in the past few days have swollen the waterways and turned their waters murky brown, making it even more difficult to see the wreckage.

Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane told parliament 51 passengers were missing and more than 500 rescue personnel have been assigned to the search operation.

Elsewhere in the country, 17 people have died and three more people were injured due to landslides in different districts in the past 24 hours, he said.

The buses were on the key highway connecting the capital to southern parts of Nepal when they were swept away around 3 a.m. near Simaltal, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of Kathmandu.

More landslides blocked routes to the area in several places, government administrator Khima Nanada Bhusal said. Additional rescuers and security forces were sent to help with the rescue efforts. Police and army personnel were searching using rubber rafts. Divers with scuba gear were also dispatched, accord-

ing the Chitwan district police.

The three survivors were being treated in the hospital, Bhusal said, adding that they reportedly jumped out of the bus and swam to the banks, where locals found them and took them to a nearby hospital.

A third bus was hit by another landslide on Friday morning a short distance away on the same highway. Bhusal said the driver was killed but it was not clear if there were any other casualties.

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal said he was saddened by the news and expressed concern over recent flooding and landslides. He added that several government agencies were searching for the missing, in a post on the social media platform X.

On Thursday night, a landslide buried a hut and killed a family of seven near the resort town of Pokhara. The family were asleep when the landslide crushed their hut and damaged three more houses nearby.

Monsoon season brings heavy rains to Nepal from June to September, often triggering landslides in the mountainous Himalayan country.

Meanwhile, the government has also imposed a ban on passengers buses travelling at night in the areas where weather warnings have been issued, according to the Home Ministry.

Increasingly popular 'parametric insurance' helps farmers and others hit hard by extreme weather

By BILL SPINDLE, Cipher News undefined

MINDANAO, Philippines (AP) — Joemar Flores, a spindly 28-year-old, gestured across his family's farmland, nestled between a steep hill and a river, and expressed gratitude for the rice paddies in the distance.

They're still there, producing food and an income for him, thanks in part to a novel form of insurance that is increasingly being used to help vulnerable populations build resilience to climate change.

Back in 2022, the young father of a toddler and a newborn faced ruin when heavy rains and violent winds decimated his rice crop.

"We were very discouraged," he recalled, as he pointed to a photo of the destroyed paddies.

Flores had borrowed 30,000 Philippine pesos (a little more than \$500 at today's exchange rates) to purchase the rice seedlings and fertilizer he needed for the crops that provide his family's livelihood. Without the harvest he wouldn't be able to pay back the loan or have any money to replant.

Luckily for Flores, the local cooperative where he had borrowed the money had an emergency fund bolstered by the experimental insurance. The co-op was able to forgive part of the loan and extend Flores another one, which allowed him to replant.

Typically, insurance payouts after a disaster are based on the actual damages, as determined by an on-site inspection by an assessor. This usually involves a lot of paperwork, bureaucracy and waiting, sometimes for years.

But Flores' co-op has a unique insurance policy: a Luxembourg-based company working with a local Philippines-based insurer pays policyholders based solely on the amount of rainfall and wind speed in a defined area, as measured by satellites. The policies are designed to protect against flooding, drought and typhoons, as well as heat waves.

No damage assessment or site visit is required. The payments are based purely on predetermined statistical thresholds. When a threshold is met, it triggers an automatic payment.

Recipients of the payouts, in this case the co-op, are notified in days and money is deposited directly into the co-op's bank accounts within a week or two.

These mechanical triggers, or parameters, give the insurance product its moniker, "parametric insurance."

The quick, straightforward payouts of these policies could encourage the use of insurance in vulnerable areas that have long lacked coverage, especially emerging markets, says Arup Kumar Chatterjee of the Asian Development Bank, which has overseen several pilot projects in the region.

"It's a good solution," he said.

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More than simply putting money in victims' pockets, the rapid payments get rebuilding under way quickly after catastrophes. Workers and suppliers almost immediately know there will be money to pay them.

Parametric insurance isn't perfect and can't provide complete protection. Co-ops say covering a full range of contingencies is too expensive, and the satellite-based payouts sometimes don't directly correlate with actual damage on the ground. That's why Flores' co-op has an emergency fund; if the co-op gets an insurance payout that its members don't need, the money gets saved for the next time its members do need financial support and the co-op might not receive a payout.

Though not a new concept, parametric insurance has taken off with advances in satellite weather monitoring and computerized data processing. That has made it easier to deploy widely and inexpensively in hard-to-access communities. These policies spread risk, like traditional insurance, but sidestep many of the overhead cost and time needed to assess actual damage.

They have been used in developed countries, such as the U.S. and Europe. But advocates hope the novel approach to disaster coverage — part of a wider rethinking of the global insurance industry in the face of climate change — will especially improve insurance coverage in poorer, remote areas that are especially vulnerable to growing threats from climate change.

"We really want to make sure that our farmers are not left behind," said Noel Raboy, president of CLIMBS, a Philippines based insurer that underwrites and sells parametric policies, including to Flores' co-op.

The policies are spreading in both the economically developed and developing world, and they're often being used in novel ways. They can be used to help address new varieties of risks associated with climate change that are difficult to insure against — such as loss of income from heat stress.

In India, they've been paired with workplace guidelines that shut down assembly lines when temperatures rise above safe levels. The insurance partially covered payments to day laborers who otherwise would have lost all their income for that day. In Bangladesh, they've covered crop damage from sea water intruding into fields, based on automated soil humidity measurements taken remotely.

About \$13 billion worth of parametric insurance policies were written last year worldwide, a figure that could surpass \$29 billion by 2031, according to Allied Market research.

The Philippines, largely rural, poor and fragmented into more than 7,000 islands with more than 100 languages and dialects, has long lagged the world in the use of catastrophic insurance to cover natural disasters, according to research by the Swiss Re Institute released earlier this year.

Yet the country is among the world's most vulnerable to the fallout from climate change, with hundreds of destructive typhoons each year bringing damage from floods and violent winds. Severe heat waves and droughts are also on the rise.

That vulnerability is expected to rise dramatically as climate change worsens. And yet Filipinos have less insurance coverage than any other country, said the Swiss Re Institute, a think tank associated with one of the world's largest insurers.

The government of the Philippines is developing a plan with the Asian Development Bank to deploy parametric insurance for 10 cities across the country. If that program works, the hope is it can be expanded to cover more of the urban population.

The CLIMBS insurance cooperative, based in the city of Cagayan de Oro on the island of Mindanao, began working with Luxembourg-based IBISA to design parametric insurance to its mostly rural member cooperatives about four years ago.

The product, launched in 2021 with 14 cooperatives representing about 3,600 farmers in 15 provinces, now is being deployed by 126 cooperatives covering the loans of more than 85,000 farmers in 61 of the Philippines 82 provinces.

The insurance was first offered to co-ops in some of the country's most vulnerable provinces, which meant premiums and payouts have been high. But CLIMBS believes both will fall as more co-ops sign up in areas that are less vulnerable. CLIMBS' policies have covered heavy rainfall and high winds, and are now beginning to cover droughts.

The policies were in place just before a severe typhoon in 2022. Payouts from that storm helped bolster

the emergency fund at the Carmen Samahang Nayan cooperative on the island of Bohol.

"When the farmers said they needed money, then the co-op could provide right away," said Eufemio Abaniel, head of the co-op.

Joel Diccion, a 47-year-old single father to two teenage daughters, wasn't a member of the co-op then. His rice fields were damaged, along with a fish farming pond he'd just constructed and a building where he hoped to start a school to teach younger farmers new agricultural techniques. He wasn't able to rebuild.

After that experience he joined the co-op, in part for the insurance for the next disaster, which he's convinced will inevitably come.

"It's very difficult," he said of the increasing threats from climate change. "It's good we have this insurance."

Hungary's Orbán faces backlash over his rogue 'peace mission' meetings with Western adversaries

By JUSTIN SPIKE and LORNE COOK Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has made a Trumpian vow to "Make Europe Great Again" during his country's six-month presidency of the European Union. As a first step last week, he astonished his allies by making a surprise trip to Ukraine -- his first since Moscow invaded the country -- followed by similarly unannounced visits to Russia and China for talks with two of the EU's primary adversaries.

The EU's longest-serving leader — who has endorsed former President Donald Trump and is known as having the warmest relations with Vladimir Putin in the bloc — wrapped up a NATO summit in Washington on Thursday before traveling to Trump's Mar-a-Lago compound — his latest stop on what he calls a "peace mission" aimed at brokering an end to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Orbán shared a photo of himself and Trump on social media with the caption: "We discussed ways to make peace. The good news of the day: he's going to solve it!"

On his own social media site, Trump posted: "Thank you Viktor. There must be PEACE, and quickly."

But Orbán's talks with Putin last week in Moscow, the first such visit by any EU leader since 2022, and his meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing, have angered the bloc's leaders and prompted attempts to contain Hungary during the next six months of its EU presidency.

"As the president country, one must act as an honest broker and not give the impression that you are speaking for other countries," Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told reporters at the NATO summit on Thursday. "(Orban) in reality is abusing the EU presidency and hijacking it for his own purposes."

Péter Krekó, an analyst with the Budapest-based think tank Political Capital, said that Hungary's rotating presidency has thus far been an exercise in "troll diplomacy," and that Orbán's self-declared "peace mission" will only isolate him further from his Western partners who increasingly regard him as working against EU and NATO interests and undermining their efforts to assist Ukraine.

"He's marginalizing himself more and more in EU politics, and it's a foreign policy of self-destruction," Krekó said.

He continued: "Orbán could have used the opportunity of the rotating presidency to get a bit closer to the European mainstream and organize high-level meetings in Budapest that could bring him some recognition in a period where he desperately needs it. Instead, he just got further from the mainstream."

Orbán has long confounded his Western partners by pursuing warm ties with Putin, a relationship that was rendered more alarming when Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He has also vigorously lobbied for Chinese investments and a more China-friendly economic policy while most EU countries seek to limit Beijing's influence.

His recent meetings with Putin, Xi and Trump, which he did not announce in advance to any of his EU partners, drew significant backlash from European capitals and led some governments to consider boycotting or limiting participation in a series of upcoming informal meetings in Budapest related to the rotating

presidency.

One EU diplomat, who requested anonymity to discuss the highly sensitive political issue, said this week that Orbán's actions so early in Hungary's presidency mean that "tensions are high" and "expected to be even higher" as those meetings approach.

"There is growing concern in the capitals about the self-attributed role of Mr. Orbán in the so-called 'peace mission,' where it should be clear he is only representing his own country," the diplomat said. "Instead, he has intentionally left a lot of ambiguity."

On Wednesday, János Bóka, Hungary's EU affairs minister, downplayed reports that some countries would boycott meetings in Budapest in protest of Orbán's visit with Putin, saying he was unaware of "any official initiative" to undermine Hungary's role in the presidency.

But on Thursday, Kristersson, the prime minister of the newest NATO member Sweden, said that ministers from his country along with Finland and the Baltic countries "will not participate in the informal meetings during the summer."

The backlash reflects a growing unwillingness in the EU and NATO to tolerate Orbán's conduct. He has routinely acted as a spoiler in EU efforts to assist Kyiv and impose sanctions on Moscow for its war in Ukraine, and has long broken with his allies to argue for an immediate cessation of hostilities without outlining what that might mean for Ukraine's territorial integrity or future security.

The EU has held up over \$20 billion in funds to Budapest over allegations that Hungary has violated the bloc's standards on democracy, the rule of law and corruption.

Krekó, the analyst, said that Orbán's recent secret meetings with the West's adversaries shows he "has lost his ambition to seem like a loyal ally, and he's more and more openly a destructive force within the EU and NATO."

His meeting with Trump, a NATO critic, is another sign of Orbán's "troll diplomacy," Krekó added.

On Thursday, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan signaled concern that the Trump-Orbán meeting runs counter to Ukraine's interests, saying, "The U.S. position — the Biden administration position — is nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine."

"Whatever adventurism that is being undertaken without Ukraine's consent or support," Sullivan told reporters, "is not something that's consistent with our policy."

Orbán has hinted that his disruptive foreign policy — something he has characterized as a "sliver under the fingernail, a spoke in the wheels" — stems from Hungary's modest political, economic and military weight on the international stage.

"If a country with no relative advantages wants to pursue an independent foreign policy, that country must take a radical position," he said in a speech in December.

But Orbán's recent provocative meetings are "a big show that he's an autonomous foreign policy actor," Krekó said, adding that not even Orbán "believes that Hungary will change the course of big geopolitical affairs in the world."

"It's more about this selfish game to elevate his own weight and political position in the eyes of the Hungarian public and in the eyes of the global public," Krekó said.

A Dutch court rejects a claim the government is evading export ban on F-35 parts to Israel

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A Dutch court on Friday rejected a claim from a group of human rights organizations that the Netherlands is dodging a court order to stop sending F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel which could use them in Gaza.

The Hague District Court ruled that Oxfam Novib, Pax Nederland and The Rights Forum had not shown any evidence that the Dutch government was ignoring the earlier ruling.

In February, an appeals court told the Dutch government to halt the export of F-35 fighter jet parts to

Israel, citing a clear risk of violations of international law if they are used in strikes on Gaza. The Dutch government appealed that ruling to the Supreme Court, but said it was abiding by the order in the meantime by halting direct exports to Israel.

The aid groups went back to court last month, arguing the Netherlands was evading the ban by sending the parts to the United States, which was then sending them on to Israel. They demanded a fine for the alleged breach.

The groups are "giving too broad an interpretation" to the earlier judgment, the court wrote in Friday's ruling.

The organizations said they disagreed with the decision and were considering further legal action. "It is unacceptable that the Netherlands remains knowingly complicit in violations of the laws of war by Israel in Gaza," they said in a joint statement.

During a hearing in June, the Dutch government said it was unable to track the parts after they left the Netherlands and warned against placing further restrictions. Reimer Veldhuis, a lawyer representing the government, cautioned that seeking to prevent more exports of F-35 parts to nations other than Israel could put at risk supplies to militaries around the world who operate the advanced fighter jets at a time of soaring international tensions.

The Netherlands is home to one of three F-35 European regional warehouses.

The war in Gaza began with Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others as hostages.

Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,000 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

The war has caused massive devastation across the besieged territory and displaced most of its 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Israeli restrictions, fighting and the breakdown of law and order have curtailed humanitarian aid efforts, causing widespread hunger and sparking fears of famine.

The Dutch Supreme Court will take up the larger case in September.

More than 6 in 10 U.S. adults support protecting access to IVF, AP-NORC poll finds

By COLLEEN LONG and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Relatively few Americans fully endorse the idea that a fertilized egg should have the same rights as a pregnant woman. But a significant share say it describes their views at least somewhat well, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The new survey comes as questions grow around reproductive health access in the continued fallout from the decision by the Supreme Court to end federal abortion protections. The poll found that a solid majority of Americans oppose a federal abortion ban as a rising number support access to abortions for any reason.

But anti-abortion advocates are increasingly pushing for broader measures that would give rights and protections to embryos and fetuses, which could have massive implications for fertility treatments and other areas of health care.

The poll suggests that when it comes to more nuanced questions about issues like in vitro fertilization, or IVF — which may be affected by the restrictive climate in some states, even though they were not previously considered as part of "abortion" — there is general support for reproductive health protections. But the poll also shows some uncertainty, as Americans are faced with situations that would not have arisen before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned.

According to the poll, about 6 in 10 U.S. adults support protecting access to IVF, a type of fertility treatment where eggs are combined with sperm outside the body in a lab to form an embryo. Views on banning the destruction of embryos created through IVF are less developed, with 4 in 10 adults expressing

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a neutral opinion.

"I believe that it's a woman's right to determine what she wants to do with her pregnancy, and she should be cared for. There should be no question about that," said John Evangelista, 73. "And IVF, I mean, for years, it's saved a lot of people grief — because they want to have a child. Why would you want to limit this for people?"

Earlier this year, Alabama's largest hospital paused in vitro fertilization treatments, following a court ruling that said frozen embryos are the legal equivalent of children. Not long after, the governor signed legislation shielding doctors from potential legal liability in order to restart procedures in the state.

But the political damage was done. Democrats routinely cite IVF concerns as part of a larger problem where women in some states are getting worse medical care since the fall of Roe. They link delayed IVF care to cases in states with abortion restrictions, where women must wait until they are very sick in order to get care. Democrats say these issues show how GOP efforts to overturn Roe have profoundly affected all facets of reproductive care.

On the other hand, protections for IVF are supported by Americans across the political spectrum: About three-quarters of Democrats and 56% of Republicans favor preserving access to IVF, while about 4 in 10 independents are in favor and just under half, 46%, neither favor nor oppose protecting access. For some, their views have been shaped by personal experience with the procedure.

"I'm about to go through IVF right now, and you're trying to get as many embryos as you can so you can have more chances at having one live birth, or more than that, if you're lucky," said Alexa Voloschenko, 30. "I just don't want people to be having more trouble to access IVF; it's already hard enough."

But the poll found that about 3 in 10 Americans say that the statement "human life begins at conception, so a fertilized egg is a person with the same rights as a pregnant woman" describes their views on abortion law and policy extremely or very well, while an additional 18% say it describes their views somewhat well. About half say the statement describes their views "not very well" or "not well at all."

This view is in tension with some aspects of IVF care — in particular, fertility treatments where eggs are fertilized and develop into embryos in a lab. Sometimes, embryos are accidentally damaged or destroyed, and unused embryos may be discarded.

Republicans are about twice as likely as Democrats or independents to say that the statement about fertilized eggs having the same rights as a pregnant woman describes their views extremely or very well. About 4 in 10 Republicans say that compared with about 2 in 10 Democrats and independents.

And views are less clear overall on a more specific aspect of policy related to IVF — making it illegal to destroy embryos created during the process. One-quarter of U.S. adults somewhat or strongly favor banning the destruction of embryos created through IVF, while 4 in 10 have a neutral view and about one-third somewhat or strongly oppose it.

"Human life begins at a heartbeat," said Steven Otey, 73, a Republican who doesn't believe created embryos should be destroyed. "Embryos ... can become babies, we shouldn't be destroying them."

About 3 in 10 Republicans and roughly one-quarter of Democrats favor banning the destruction of embryos created through IVF. Four in 10 Republicans — and nearly 6 in 10 independents — have a neutral view.

The poll of 1,088 adults was conducted June 20-24, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

Today in History: July 13, Live Aid concerts

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 13, the 195th day of 2024. There are 171 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 13, 1985, the "Live Aid" benefit rock concerts were held simultaneously in London and Philadel-

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phia, raising millions for famine relief in Ethiopia.

Also on this date:

In 1793, French politician, physician and journalist Jean-Paul Marat was assassinated by Charlotte Corday, who stabbed him to death in his bath.

In 1863, deadly rioting against the Civil War military draft erupted in New York City. (The insurrection was put down three days later.)

In 1923, a sign consisting of 50-foot-tall letters spelling out "HOLLYWOODLAND" was dedicated in the Hollywood Hills to promote a subdivision (the last four letters were removed in 1949).

In 1930, the first FIFA World Cup began in Uruguay.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy won the Democratic presidential nomination on the first ballot at his party's convention in Los Angeles.

In 1973, former presidential aide Alexander P. Butterfield revealed to Senate Watergate Committee staff members the existence of President Richard Nixon's secret White House taping system.

In 1999, Angel Maturino Resendiz, suspected of being the "Railroad Killer," surrendered in El Paso, Texas.

In 2013, a jury in Florida cleared neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman of all charges in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed black teenager whose killing unleashed furious debate over racial profiling, self-defense and equal justice.

In 2018, a grand jury indictment, sought by special counsel Robert Mueller, alleged that the Russian government was behind a sweeping conspiracy to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

In 2020, Washington's NFL franchise dropped the "Redskins" name and logo amid pressure from sponsors; the move followed decades of criticism that the name and logo were offensive to Native Americans. (The team was eventually renamed the Commanders.)

Today's Birthdays: Game show announcer Johnny Gilbert (TV: "Jeopardy!") is 96. Author and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka is 90. Actor Patrick Stewart is 84. Actor Harrison Ford is 82. Singer-guitarist Roger McGuinn (The Byrds) is 82. Rubik's Cube inventor Erno Rubik is 80. Actor-comedian Cheech Marin is 78. Actor Daphne Maxwell Reid is 76. Sportswriter and talk show host Tony Kornheiser is 76. Actor Didi Conn is 73. Actor Gil Birmingham is 71. Singer Louise Mandrell is 70. Former boxing champion Michael Spinks is 68. Actor-director Cameron Crowe is 67. Comedian Tom Kenny is 62. Actor Ken Jeong is 55. Singer Deborah Cox is 50. Actor Aya Cash is 42. Former St. Louis Cardinals catcher Yadier Molina is 42. Actor Colton Haynes is 36. Actor Steven R. McQueen is 36. Soul singer Leon Bridges is 35. Actor Hayley Erin (TV: "General Hospital") is 30.