

# Groton Daily Independent

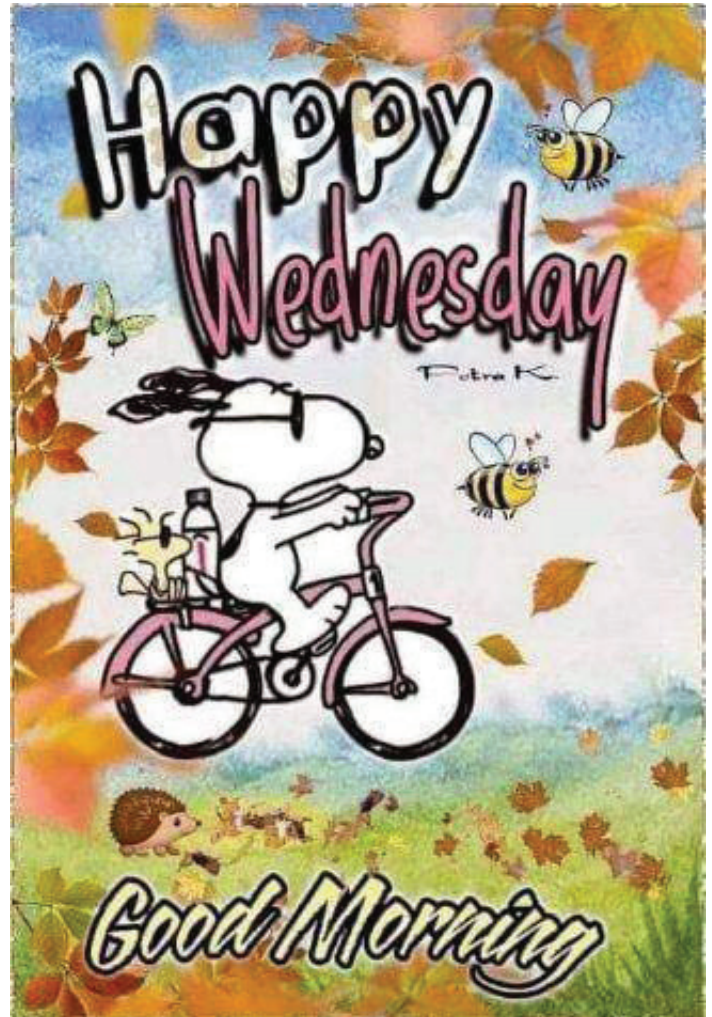
Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 1 of 94

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Bracket for Jr. Teener Tournament - continues today in Groton](#)
- [4- Groton Jr Teeners Fall After Strong Showing By Britton Jr Teeners](#)
- [6- Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Take Lead And Never Look Back In Win Over Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U](#)
- [7- Bradin Althoff's Clutch Hitting Propels Groton Post 39 To Victory Over Milbank](#)
- [7- Bradin Althoff Drives In 4 To Lead Groton Post 39 Past Milbank](#)
- [8- Groton Lions Car Show Photos](#)
- [15- Abeln's 50th Anniversary](#)
- [16- Security concerns delay approval of alcohol sales at Celebration in the Park](#)
- [18- GDI Fitness New Program ad](#)
- [19- Yankton County Fatal Crash](#)
- [20- Names Released in Moody County Fatal Crash](#)
- [21- Weekly Round\[s\] Up](#)
- [22- Adult Mosquito Control tonight](#)
- [23- Christ School of Theology Receives ATS Accreditation](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: Some legislators lukewarm on Noem's plan to spend \\$81 million surplus on prisons](#)
- [25- SD SearchLight: Rural hospitals built during baby boom now face baby bust](#)
- [28- Weather Pages](#)
- [32- Daily Devotional](#)
- [33- Subscription Form](#)
- [34- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [35- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [36- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Wednesday, July 17

Senior Menu: Roast turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, 7 layer salad, fruit whole wheat bread.

Pro-Am Tourney at Olive Grove  
Legion Auxiliary Salad. Buffet and Dessert Bar, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. American Legion  
Groton CM&A: Family Fun Night, 7 p.m.



## Thursday, July 18

Senior Menu: Baked cod, parsley buttered potatoes, creamy coleslaw, tapioca pudding mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Legion hosts Clark, 5:30 p.m. (1)

Jr. Legion hosts Clark, 7:30 p.m. (1)

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library 10 a.m.

Middle School (upcoming 6th graders) Moonlight Swim, 8:30-10:30 p.m., Swimming Pool

## Friday, July 19

Senior Menu: Ham salad on bun, cauliflower/pea carrots, salad, fresh fruit, cookie.

Jr. Legion hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 2 of 94

# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset](#)

## Menendez Found Guilty

New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez (D) was convicted of bribery, fraud, and extortion in New York's Southern District Court yesterday, prompting calls for his immediate resignation. The three-term senator was found guilty on all 16 felony counts and could face decades in prison at his sentencing scheduled for Oct. 29.

The 70-year-old and two businessmen were found guilty of a bribery scheme in which Menendez—the former head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—received payments in gold and cash to influence New Jersey criminal investigations and provide intel to Egyptian officials. The senator's wife, Nadine, faces similar charges in a trial that was indefinitely postponed yesterday amid her breast cancer treatment.

Menendez is seeking a fourth six-year term in the US Senate after announcing last month he would run as an independent. Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and New Jersey's governor both called for Menendez to step down in light of the verdict.

## 'Apex' Heads to Auction

A 161-million-year-old stegosaurus fossil, dubbed "Apex" and the largest of its kind to be found, will be auctioned by Sotheby's in New York today as part of its Geek Week series. Apex is expected to fetch between \$4M and \$6M.

The nearly complete fossil—measuring 11 feet tall and 27 feet long—is twice the size of "Sophie," previously the most intact stegosaurus uncovered and currently on display in London's Natural History Museum. A commercial paleontologist discovered Apex in May 2022 on private land near Dinosaur, Colorado (named for its proximity to Dinosaur National Monument). The fossil features iconic pointy dorsal plates resembling a "coloring book dinosaur." The remains also show signs of arthritis, indicating the stegosaurus reached an advanced age.

Past dinosaur fossils sold at auction include the T. rex "Stan," which garnered a record \$31.8M in 2020, and the T. rex "Sue," which Chicago's Field Museum bought for \$8.4M in 1997.

## North Korean Defector

A senior North Korean diplomat stationed in Cuba has defected to South Korea, Seoul's National Intelligence Service confirmed yesterday. Ri Il Kyu, who defected in November with his family, is believed to be the highest-ranking North Korean diplomat to escape to South Korea since 2016.

The 52-year-old counselor was responsible for political affairs at the North Korean Embassy in Cuba. Ri's role reportedly involved preventing Cuba from establishing diplomatic ties with South Korea—he defected before the two formalized relations in February. Ri told South Korean media his decision to defect stemmed partially from disappointment with North Korea's leadership.

The news comes at a time of heightened tension between the two Koreas over trash- and leaflet-filled balloons and follows South Korea's first North Korean Defectors' Day ceremony Sunday. Since the Korean War, approximately 34,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Hillbilly Elegy" tops Amazon's bestseller list one day after its author Sen. JD Vance (R-OH) is tapped as former President Donald Trump's vice presidential candidate.

Joe "Jellybean" Bryant, former NBA player and father of Kobe Bryant, dies at age 69.

Evan Wright, journalist and author known for "Generation Kill," dies at age 59.

Los Angeles Police Department investigating Richard Simmons' death; the TV fitness icon was found dead at his home Saturday at age 76.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 3 of 94

## Science & Technology

Electric vehicle maker Lucid says its new Air Pure sedan is the most efficient ever made; car reportedly achieves 5 miles per kilowatt-hour, the equivalent of 146 miles per gallon of fuel, with a range of 420 miles.

Neuroscientists reveal how propofol, a common anesthetic, knocks out patients; drug prevents the brain from controlling overly excited neurons, forcing it into an unconscious state.

Astronomers discover 21 separate pairs of neutron stars—the ultradense cores of dead stars too small to form black holes—orbiting stars similar to the sun.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +1.9%, Nasdaq +0.2%) with the Dow seeing its best day in a year.

Gold price jumps to record high of over \$2,460 an ounce on expectations of September interest rate cuts.

Elon Musk to move SpaceX and X headquarters from California to Texas, citing new law; California's first-in-the-country law forbids school districts from requiring staff to notify parents if a child changes their gender identification.

Ozy Media cofounder and CEO Carlos Watson is convicted of fraud for lying to investors about the now-defunct company's finances and touting fake deals with Google and Oprah Winfrey; Watson faces up to 37 years in prison.

## Politics & World Affairs

Secret Service officials reveal former President Donald Trump's security detail had been increased in recent weeks due to an Iranian assassination threat; threat believed to be unrelated to Saturday's attempt.

Investigators continue to search for motive in Saturday's attack; see latest details.

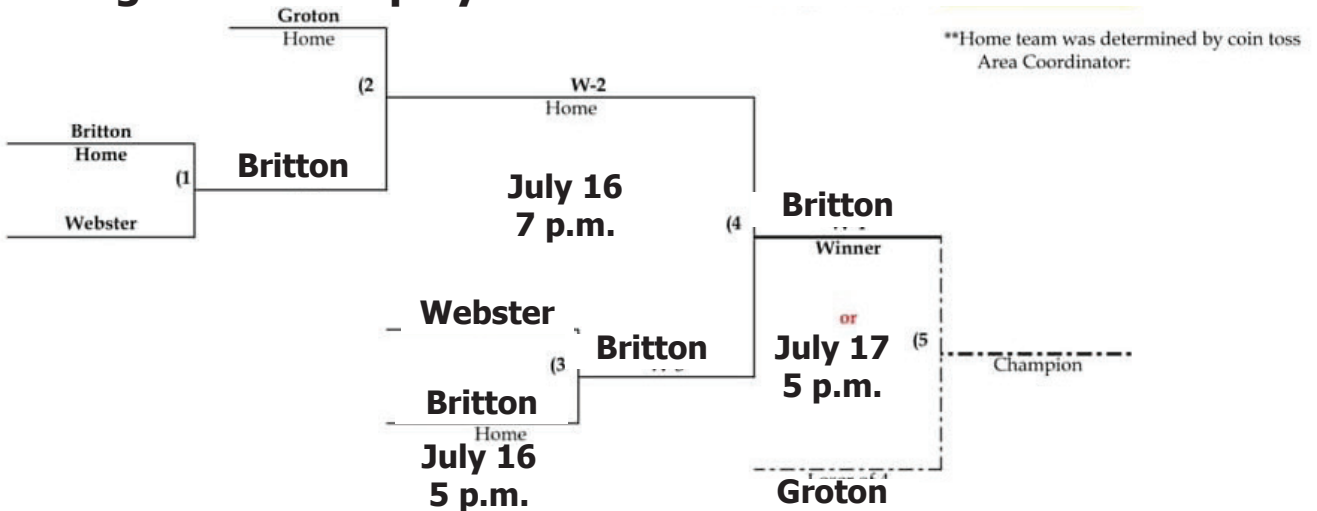
Israeli airstrikes kill more than 60 people in southern and central Gaza, per Hamas-run Health Ministry, including areas Israel had declared safe zones.

Student protests in Bangladesh erupt into clashes, leaving at least five people dead; university students have been protesting quotas reserving 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans in the country's 1971 war for independence.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 4 of 94

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



### Groton Jr Teeners Fall After Strong Showing By Britton Jr Teeners By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr Teeners couldn't keep up with Britton Jr Teeners and fell 11-1 on Tuesday. Groton had defeated Britton on Monday, 10-1. The loss on Tuesday forces a second game between Groton and Britton on Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Britton Jr Teeners got on the board in the top of the third inning after Drew Heitmann drew a walk, scoring one run, and Lincoln Kilker singled, scoring two runs.

Ben Suther earned the win for Britton Jr Teeners. The starting pitcher gave up four hits and one run over six innings, striking out 11 and walking three. Jordan Schwan took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. They went four and two-thirds innings, surrendering six runs (five earned) on three hits, striking out three and walking nine.

Ethan Kroll, Sam Crank, Ryder Schelle, and Alex Abeln each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. Abeln led Groton Jr Teeners with one run batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Crank stole two bases.

Lofton Heer went 1-for-1 at the plate as the leadoff hitter led the team with two runs batted in. Chaz Viotor, Britton Jr Teeners's number seven hitter, led the team with two hits in four at-bats. Heer led Britton Jr Teeners with four walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 17 walks for the game. Britton Jr Teeners were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Colton Chapin made the most plays with 11.



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**Outfielders take a break as their pitcher warms up. L-R Kolton Antonsen, Jordan Schwann, and John Bisbee.**

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 5 of 94



**Ryder Schelle starts to pitch while Braden Flihs at first base looks on.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Jordan Schwan throws as the starting pitcher in the second day of the Groton Region Tournament.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**TC Schuster at bat in the 6th inning.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

## Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 Take Lead And Never Look Back In Win Over Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U

By GameChanger Media

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 won big over Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U 11-3 on Monday.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 got on the board in the top of the first inning after Gavin Englund walked, Jarrett Erdmann singled, and Gavin Kroll walked, each scoring one run.

A fielder's choice by Kroll extended the Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 lead to 4-1 in the top of the third inning.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 scored five runs on four hits in the top of the fifth inning. Kroll singled, scoring two runs, Lincoln Krause singled, scoring one run, Carter Simon drew a walk, scoring one run, and Nicholas Morris singled, scoring one run.

Nick Groeblichhoff earned the win for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. They surrendered seven hits and three runs (two earned) over five innings, striking out eight and walking five. Hunter Bimger took the loss for Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U. The starting pitcher went four innings, allowing six runs (four earned) on three hits, striking out three and walking six.

Kroll, the number eight hitter for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39, led the way with three runs batted in. They went 1-for-2 on the day. Karsten Flihs and Morris each collected two hits for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Simon paced Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 with three walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up nine walks for the game. Krause, Simon, and Tristin McGannon each stole multiple bases for Groton Jr. Legion Post 39. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 stole 12 bases in the game. Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Bimger, E Falk, and Micah Zasrow each drove in one run for Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U. T Neuwar led Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U with two hits in four at bats. Jacob Schmitt stole two bases. Redfeild Clay Kiser Jr. Legion 17U turned one double play in the game.

Groton Jr. Legion Post 39 welcome Clark Area Jr Legion 17U on Thursday for their next game.

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

By GameChanger Media

Bradin Althoff drove in four runs on one hit to lead Groton Post 39 past Milbank 12-9 on Tuesday. Althoff doubled in the first inning, scoring three runs, and walked in the fourth inning, scoring one.

Groton Post 39 jumped out to the lead in the top of the first inning after Althoff doubled, scoring three runs, and Ryan Groeblinghoff singled, scoring one run.

A double by Colby Dunker, and a single by Groeblinghoff helped Groton Post 39 extend their early lead in the second.

Groton Post 39 scored five runs on three hits in the top of the fourth inning. Braxton Imrie singled, scoring two runs, Dillon Abeln was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Brevin Fliehs drew a walk, scoring one run, and Althoff drew a walk, scoring one run.

Jarret Erdmann earned the win for Groton Post 39. They gave up three hits and three runs over five innings, striking out seven and walking seven. Josh Pederson took the loss for Milbank. They went one inning, giving up six runs on three hits, striking out none and walking four. Althoff collected the save. Abeln and Imrie each appeared in relief for Groton Post 39.

Groton Post 39 piled up 10 hits in the game. Groeblinghoff led Groton Post 39 with four hits in five at bats. Groton Post 39 had patience at the plate, collecting nine walks for the game. Abeln, Fliehs, and Teylor Diegel led the team with two walks each. Diegel stole three bases. Groton Post 39 were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Abeln had the most chances in the field with seven.

Reece Rabe led Milbank with three runs batted in. Tanner Hallquist, Dillen Scheeley, Joe Schulte, Nolen Scheely, Pederson, Mason Miester, and Mac Koplín each collected one hit for Milbank. Pederson led Milbank with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 14 walks for the game.

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## Bradin Althoff Drives In 4 To Lead Groton Post 39 Past Milbank

By GameChanger Media

Bradin Althoff drove in four runs on two hits to lead Groton Post 39 past Milbank 11-1 on Tuesday. Althoff doubled in the third inning, scoring three runs, and singled in the second inning, scoring one.

Groton Post 39 won thanks in part to six runs in the second inning. Dillon Abeln singled, scoring two runs, Althoff singled, scoring one run, Colby Dunker doubled, scoring one run, and an error scored two runs.

Milbank got on the board in the first inning after Tanner Hallquist was struck by a pitch, driving in a run.

Groton Post 39 scored five runs on five hits in the top of the third inning. An error scored one run, Althoff doubled, scoring three runs, and Dunker doubled, scoring one run.

Korbin Kucker earned the win for Groton Post 39. The right-handed pitcher surrendered zero hits and one run over three innings, striking out six and walking eight. Dillen Scheeley took the loss for Milbank. The right-handed pitcher went three innings, surrendering 11 runs (eight earned) on nine hits, striking out one and walking three.

Althoff, Abeln, and Dunker each collected two hits for Groton Post 39. Groton Post 39 were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Karsten Fliehs made the most plays with six.

Hallquist led Milbank with one run batted in. Milbank had a strong eye at the plate, collecting eight walks for the game. Joe Schulte and Josh Pederson led the team with two bases on balls each.

Groton Post 39 play at home on Thursday against Clark/Willow Lake Senators in their next game.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 8 of 94

## Groton Lions Car Show (Photos courtesy April Abeln)



People's Choice & 1st Place Chevy- Doug & Jill McHugh



Show cars fill the park Sunday for the Lions 8th Annual Summer Fest event.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 9 of 94



1st Place Ford- Terry Holland



1st Place Mopar- Jerry Hornseth



1st Place Olds, Buick, Pontiac- Brad & Kelly Green



1st Place Street Rod- Mike Wiltfang



1st Place Truck- Drew Lucklam



1st Place Youth- Corbin Weismantel

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 10 of 94



2nd Place Chevy- Dick & Wendy Neitzel



2nd Place Ford- Bob & Lois Krueger



2nd Place Mopar- Rick LaBay



2nd Place Olds, Buick, Pontiac- Ricky & Bonnie VanderVorst

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 11 of 94



2nd Place Open- Bob & Tammy Schweigert



2nd Place Street Rod- Don Nordstrom



2nd Place Truck- Corey Kiefer



2nd Place Youth- Joshua Schaunaman

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 12 of 94



69 show cars were registered at Summer Fest July 14th.



April Abeln is not an official Lions Club member but enjoys her time volunteering with them. Here she is being interviewed by Dakota Broadcasting.



Best of Show & 1st Place Open- Garret & Tara Holler



Bruce Babcock takes a break from volunteering to check out the show cars.



Christian Missionary & Alliance Church led the outdoor service Sunday morning.



Fruit Fusion owners Tom & Ashley Bentz served beverages and bbqs. Other food vendors included Garry's Kettle Corn, Scotty D's BBQ and Incredible Edibles.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 13 of 94



Groton American Legion Post provided the color guard for the Summer Fest opening ceremony. L-R Bruce Babcock and Dave McGannon.



Lions Club members Elizabeth Varajas, Suzie Easthouse and Karyn Babcock volunteered for the day.



Jump Zone Inflatables were free again this year due to the generous sponsorship of the Groton Legion.



Lions Member Topper Tastad announces the show car winners using Groton's new park sound system.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 14 of 94



Lions President Suzie Easthouse gets interviewed by Adam St Paul of Dakota Broadcasting.



Mayor Scott Hanlon visits with fellow car owners. Scott is also a member of the Groton Lions Club.



Mayor Scott Hanlon welcomed spectators Sunday morning.



Over a dozen miscellaneous vendors were set up along with walking path at the south end of the park.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 15 of 94



**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**

## Security concerns delay approval of alcohol sales at Celebration in the Park

By Elizabeth Varin

A final say on whether new business owners will be able to sell alcohol at the Groton City Park is not clear as alcohol use and security concerns were brought to the City Council meeting Tuesday evening.

The first "Celebration in the Park" event is scheduled for Saturday, 27. The event, hosted by the Groton Lions Club with sponsorship from area businesses, is slated to include a rib cook-off, cornhole tournament, kids games, Lizzy Hofer karaoke and, contentiously, beer for sale.

Earlier this month, the council gave provisional approval for a special event liquor license, contingent on approval from Police Chief Stacy Mayou.

On Tuesday, two factions filled the council meeting to express their concerns or support for the event.

Joyce Grenz asked the council to reconsider approving the special event liquor license.

"It seems to us that the city park should be a safe place for children, teens and families to enjoy without the use of alcohol," she said. "There may be many unsupervised children and teens at this event. We feel it sends a mixed message to them, especially if they've gone through the DARE program that is promoted in our schools. It also seems the compromise the safety within the park atmosphere."

Glenna Remington reiterated those concerns.

"We believe the Groton park should be for children and family fun, and not for selling alcohol," she said. "In the summer, children ride their bikes to the park. What kind of example will that show when we sell alcohol in a place they normally play?"

Remington also read a letter from Pastor Josh Jetto of the Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, who was out of town during the Tuesday meeting.

"The park is a place primary for children and families to come and play, where the whole community comes together to enjoy wholesome gatherings for all ages," he wrote. "We should not be turning the city park into a location for, essentially, a 21+ age drinking party."

"This event and its sales benefit a private business at the expense of the good of the community as a whole," the letter continued. "I do not believe this is good or right use of the public property. I have no problem with a celebration in the park or with karaoke, as long as the songs aren't vulgar. My issue is with allowing the sale and consumption of alcohol at any event in the park, a place that should always be a place that is safe for all ages for the whole community."

Suzie Easthouse, president of the Groton Lions Club, said the layout of the event should keep any area with alcohol away from the family and children area. She added that she couldn't speak about the alcohol sales specifically because the Lions Club is not involved in that part of the event. However, there have been other events around town that received special event liquor licenses.

The idea of having an area to sell alcohol is to keep it controlled and monitored, said Jason Schaunaman, one of the new owners of the Jungle Lanes & Lounge.

"For us, this was an opportunity to try and be a part of a community event, and obviously there is the profit side of it, but it was again brought up as an idea to make this more of a fun celebration," he said. "Obviously I know alcohol doesn't need to be part of an event to make it a fun celebration. But it does tend to be part of it when it comes to adult events."

"The way I look at it, it's almost better when it's being sold because you're monitoring who's buying it and who's consuming it."

There will be TAM (Techniques of Alcohol Management)-certified individuals checking IDs and people monitoring the area to keep issues from escalating, he said. There will also not be hard liquor sold, but rather one or two beer products and a hard seltzer.

Fellow owner Tim Janusz added that while he understands the concerns from a Christian standpoint and as a former alcoholic, if the proper methods are in place to check IDs and serve responsibly, there should be no negative impact on kids in the area.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 17 of 94

"We want to be part of this community," he said. "We live in Aberdeen. We wanted to show this community that we're not, from Aberdeen, going to come here, make a profit and move back."

There will be insurance policies in place to cover the event should something happen, he added.

The idea of moving the event to downtown Groton was floated, but Easthouse with the Groton Lions Club dismissed the idea, saying the event is not set up to be a street dance downtown.

"We have a beautiful park that is underutilized," she said.

There are only two major events at the park each year: Summer Fest and Pumpkin Fest, she said.

Police Chief Stacy Mayou, who emphasized he is not the official granting a special event liquor license, said his concern is public safety. He suggested the council require certified law enforcement officers be hired as security at the event, as they are trained to deal with situations that others are not equipped to handle.

"There's a reason we're certified to do what we do," he said.

There is only one officer scheduled to be on duty in Groton during the scheduled event, and if an emergency like a vehicle accident were to happen, that officer would have to respond to that call, taking them away from the park.

Mayor Scott Hanlon said he respects everybody's feelings about the event. He emphasized, though, that having alcohol at an event like this can show kids that people can drink responsibly.

Grenz, feeling the shift in the room, said she was "disappointed with the way the conversation seems to be going, but I'm not surprised in this day and age."

Remington added, "do we have to have alcohol to have fun?"

Hanlon replied, "just because someone has a beer or two, that doesn't make them a bad person."

Remington quickly replied, "that's not what I'm saying."

Hanlon continued that an event like this can be used as a way to teach children to be responsible with alcohol.

"I understand," he said. "I really do. But the park is for the big kids too. We need to teach our kids ... not our kids, but our parents, responsibility and respect.

"...What I should do it outlaw these things," he said while holding up his cell phone.

Parents bring their kids down to the park and don't play with them, but rather sit and stare at their phones.

"I get it," he said, "but we have to teach our kids respect and responsibility."

Hanlon later asked if those opposed to the alcohol permit had seen the movie "Footloose," adding that those banned from dancing in the fictional town ended up doing it anyway.

"We have the right to have a beer or two," he said.

There were still concerns about certified officers being on site should something happen.

"If they can only get one, I don't think we can allow it," said Councilman Brian Bahr. "I'm leaning more in to giving them a shot if they have two certified officers."

It remains to be seen whether two certified officers will be able to be hired in time for the late-July event. The new business owners have until 5 p.m. July 23 to inform the city that it has hired two certified officers for the event. The business owners will also have to provide copies of the officers' certification documents to the city and police chief.

## Brand New Program at

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Downtown Groton

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Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



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Groton

24/7 access to the facility ~ Cancel any time

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- 🏋️ Improved cognitive function
- 🏋️ Increased energy levels and productivity
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- 🏋️ Better blood flow circulation
- 🏋️ Strengthened bones and muscles
- 🏋️ Reduced risk of heart disease and other illnesses

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Call/Text Tina at 605-397-7285

## Yankton County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 50, mile marker 375, seven miles west of Yankton, SD

When: 5:31 a.m., Tuesday, July 16, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2008 Chevrolet Cobalt

Driver 1: 30-year-old male, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt

Driver 2: 52-year-old male, life-threatening injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Yankton County, S.D.- A 30-year-old man suffered fatal injuries this morning in a two-vehicle crash seven miles west of Yankton, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2008 Chevrolet Cobalt was traveling westbound on SD Highway 50 near mile marker 375. At that location, a deceased deer was laying in the westbound roadway. The driver hit the deer and lost control of the vehicle and entered the eastbound lane. At the same time, the driver of a 2010 Chevrolet Cobalt was approaching from the opposite direction and collided with the first vehicle. Both vehicles came to rest in the south ditch.

The driver of the 2008 Cobalt sustained fatal injuries from the crash. The driver of the 2010 Cobalt sustained life-threatening injuries. Both were wearing their seatbelts at the time of the crash.

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

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

## Names Released in Moody County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 32, mile marker 416, five miles west of Flandreau, SD

When: 2:34 p.m., Saturday, July 13, 2024

Vehicle 1: 1999 Peterbilt Conventional 379

Driver 1: Taylor James Zeutenhorst, 30-year-old male from Valley Springs, SD, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 1999 GMC C1500

Driver 2: Morgan Bree Thompson, 18-year-old female from Estelline, SD, minor injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Passenger 1: Davina Marie Darveaux, 18-year-old female from Pipestone, MN, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Moody County, S.D.- An 18-year-old woman died Saturday afternoon when the pickup truck she was in collided with a semi near Flandreau, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Taylor J. Zeutenhorst, the driver of a 1999 semi-truck and trailer was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 32 near mile marker 416. Morgan B. Thompson, the driver of a 1999 GMC pickup truck was traveling the same direction behind the semi. As the driver of the semi initiated a right-hand turn onto 475th Avenue, the driver of the pickup swerved to the left and struck the semi-trailer.

Zuetenhorst was not injured. Thompson had minor injuries and the passenger in the pickup, Davina M. Darveaux, sustained fatal injuries from the collision.

Alcohol does not appear to be a factor in the crash.

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

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 21 of 94



July 8-14, 2024

Welcome back to the Weekly Round[s] Up. I wanted to take a moment to remember my good friend and former colleague Senator Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, who passed away early last week. I spent a lot of time last week reflecting on all of my great memories with Jim, from

day-to-day events on the Hill like Armed Services committee hearings and weekly Senate prayer breakfast, to some of our bigger meetings like trips to Africa. I also had the honor of sharing a few words about Jim on the Senate floor this week. Jim was a true ambassador for his home state of Oklahoma, his country and most importantly, Jesus. He often said that real friendship did exist in the Senate, even if the media wouldn't show it.

I would also like to take a moment to discuss this weekend's events at former President Trump's rally in Pennsylvania. I was relieved to hear that the former President is doing fine in the days following the attempted assassination, and incredibly sad to hear of the rally attendee who was killed. I ask that you all join me in continuing to pray for those in attendance and the families of those who were killed and injured. Please also continue to pray for our nation, particularly in the months ahead as we approach November. Political violence has no place in our democracy, ever. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakotans I met with: South Dakota representatives from the National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias; South Dakota School Superintendents; Scott VanderWal, President of the South Dakota Farm Bureau; Dzenan Berberovic, Chief Philanthropy Officer at Avera Health; and South Dakota Association of Rural Water Systems.

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Custer, Faith, Madison, Pierre, Sioux Falls and Volga.

Other meetings: This past week, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) held its annual summit in DC. As a result, I was able to meet with many leaders from NATO countries, including Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania; Mickey Spajic, Prime Minister of Montenegro; and Hristijan Mickoski, Prime Minister of North Macedonia. We also met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.

I also met with Kirsten Hillman, Canada's Ambassador to the United States; Rick Wurster, President of the Charles Schwab Corporation; Dee Choubey, CEO of MoneyLion; and Tonya Wilkerson, Nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security. I spoke at a breakfast hosted by the Digital Dialogue Forum. I had our Senate Bible Study, where we studied 1 Corinthians 13. I also attended our Senate Prayer Breakfast, where Senator Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire was our speaker this week.

Hearings: I attended five hearings this past week. Two were with the Senate Banking Committee. We had our semi-annual hearing with Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. I asked him about the high inflation rates being a direct cause by President Biden's policies. You can watch a clip of that hearing here. We also had a nominations hearing, where we heard from Christy Goldsmith Romero, nominee to be the new Chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. I asked her about the Basel III Endgame proposal and the impact of the Supreme Court's overturning of the Chevron Doctrine on the relationship between executive branch agencies and Congress. You can watch that exchange here.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 22 of 94

I attended two hearings in the Select Committee on Intelligence, one of which was closed; however, we also had one open hearing this week, which doesn't happen often! I discussed Havana Syndrome with officials from the Department of Defense and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. You can watch that exchange [here](#).

Lastly, I attended a nominations hearing in the Senate Armed Services Committee, where I gave the introduction for Dr. Michael Sulmeyer, nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy. I've worked with Dr. Sulmeyer during my time as Ranking Member of SASC's Cybersecurity Subcommittee, and I believe he is well-qualified for this position and will do an excellent job of serving our country in this role. You can hear more about Dr. Sulmeyer and watch my full introduction [here](#).

Votes taken: 11 – many of these were on nominations to positions on the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and Federal Labor Relations Authority and judge nominations in Illinois and the District of Columbia. We also voted on the Reproductive Freedom for Women Act, a Democrat attempt to return control over abortion to the federal government, rather than with the states where it belongs. I voted no.

Classified briefings: I had a classified briefing as part of my work on the Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Brookings, Chamberlain, Claremont, Isabel, Wall, Webster and Winner.

Steps taken this past week: 41,621 steps or 20.74 miles



**The City of Groton will be doing adult mosquito control Tonight.**

## Christ School of Theology Receives ATS Accreditation

(Brookings, SD, July 15, 2024) – The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) awards the Brookings-based Christ School of Theology full accreditation and ATS membership, accrediting all its programming: M.A., M.Div., M.M. M.C.M., D.Min. and Ph.D. In granting accreditation, ATS commended the Christ School of Theology on both its Global Awareness and Outreach and its faithfulness to its Mission Statement. ATS, which accredits only seminaries and graduate schools, is the gold-standard for theological education in North America, and the Christ School of Theology is only the second institution in the entire five state area – South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana – to achieve ATS-accreditation.

The Christ School of Theology is a division of the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), whose undergraduate school, Christ College, is accredited by the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). All courses of the Christ School of Theology and Christ College are delivered in real-time online. The Christ School of Theology presently has 115 active students with 28 Ph.D. students studying either philosophical, systematic, historical or Biblical theology. We are presently admitting new students for fall. Find us as "Christ School of Theology" at the ATS site, as "Institute of Lutheran Theology" at the ABHE site, or at [cst.ilt.edu](http://cst.ilt.edu) or at [ilt.edu](http://ilt.edu).

By Dennis Bielfeldt, Ph.D.  
President, ILT  
Chancellor, Christ School of Theology



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Some legislators lukewarm on Noem’s plan to spend \$81 million surplus on prisons

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 16, 2024 5:03 PM

Some South Dakota legislators aren’t sure they’re ready to support Gov. Kristi Noem’s plan to devote an \$81 million budget surplus to prison construction.

The future women’s prison in Rapid City is estimated to cost \$87 million, and already has funding from the Legislature.

The state has also allocated \$567 million from state and federal funds for a new men’s prison about 15 miles south of Sioux Falls in rural Lincoln County. Lawmakers expect to receive a guaranteed maximum price from a contractor this fall. Last year, the cost was roughly estimated at \$707 million.

Noem announced the 2024 fiscal year-end budget surplus in a Monday news release, along with her “intention to set aside the surplus to offset the cost of prison construction.” The state’s fiscal years begin in July.

Noem can recommend how to spend the money but can’t decide how to spend it on her own. State lawmakers will consider what to do in January when they convene for their annual legislative session.

Legislators who draft the state budget serve on the Appropriations Committee. One of its co-chairs is Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, whose 24 years in the Legislature will end in January after she lost to a fellow Republican in the June primary election.

Hunhoff said South Dakota’s low 2% unemployment rate is driving up wages and could force state government to pay its employees more to remain competitive with the private sector.

Additionally, she said a Nov. 5 ballot measure that aims to eliminate the state’s sales tax on groceries could affect the state budget. The Legislative Research Council has estimated the measure would cost the state \$124 million annually in lost revenue.



The site plan for a women’s prison in Rapid City, as displayed at a groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 16, 2023. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 25 of 94

Hunhoff suggested the surplus might be needed in other areas as legislators work on the budget. "It's just too early to say when we still have questions regarding what could happen after this election," she said.

Another Appropriations Committee member, Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said other priorities could use the one-time funding.

"Let's be mindful of the other projects that need attention in this state," he said.

Karr said he is not convinced the state has considered all its options for creating new prison space, like expanding current facilities.

"We're consistently underestimating the cost of these sorts of projects, and they just keep coming back with a bigger and bigger bill," he said.

In 2022, the new men's prison was projected to cost \$339 million, Hunhoff said, while the women's prison was projected to cost \$28 million in 2022 and \$64 million in 2023.

"I think from the original estimate, we went up about \$60 million," she said. "Inflation was eating away at what we had projected."

Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, also serves on the Appropriations Committee. He said it makes fiscal sense to set aside money and avoid taking on debt to finance prison construction.

"The goal all along has been to pay cash for as much of the construction as possible," Venhuizen said. "What the governor is proposing, to continue to set aside funds for that purpose, is a good idea and consistent with that plan."

Dirt-moving has begun at the future site of the women's prison in northeastern Rapid City. The facility is intended to ease overcrowding at the existing women's prison in Pierre.

The future men's prison is designed to largely replace the Sioux Falls state penitentiary, parts of which date to 1881. Some landowners neighboring the proposed site in rural Lincoln County are suing to block the project by attempting to subject the state's plans to local zoning rules. The lawsuit awaits a judge's decision.

*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.*

## Rural hospitals built during baby boom now face baby bust

**BY: TONY LEYS, KFF HEALTH NEWS - JULY 16, 2024 10:28 AM**

OSKALOOSA, Iowa — Rural regions like the one surrounding this southern Iowa town used to have a lot more babies, and many more places to give birth to them.

At least 41 Iowa hospitals have shuttered their labor and delivery units since 2000. Those facilities, representing about a third of all Iowa hospitals, are located mostly in rural areas where birth numbers have plummeted. In some Iowa counties, annual numbers of births have fallen by three-quarters since the height of the baby boom in the 1950s and '60s, when many rural hospitals were built or expanded, state and federal records show.

Similar trends are playing out nationwide, as hospitals struggle to maintain staff and facilities to safely handle dwindling numbers of births. More than half of rural U.S. hospitals now lack the service.

"People just aren't having as many kids," said Addie Comegys, who lives in southern Iowa and has regularly traveled 45 minutes each way for prenatal checkups at Oskaloosa's hospital this summer. Her mother had six children, starting in the 1980s, when big families didn't seem so rare.

"Now, if you have three kids, people are like, 'Oh my gosh, are you ever going to stop?'" said Comegys, 29, who is expecting her second child in late August.

These days, many Americans choose to have small families or no children at all. Modern birth control methods help make such decisions stick. The trend is amplified in small towns when young adults move away, taking any childbearing potential with them.

Hospital leaders who close obstetrics units often cite declining birth numbers, along with staffing challenges and financial losses. The closures can be a particular challenge for pregnant women who lack the reliable transportation and flexible schedules needed to travel long distances for prenatal care and birthing services.

The baby boom peaked in 1957, when about 4.3 million children were born in the United States. The annual number of births dropped below 3.7 million by 2022, even though the overall U.S. population nearly doubled over that same period.

West Virginia has seen the steepest decline in births, a 62% drop in those 65 years, according to federal data. Iowa's births dropped 43% over that period. Of the state's

99 counties, just four — all urban or suburban — recorded more births.

Births have increased in only 13 states since 1957. Most of them, such as Arizona, California, Florida, and Nevada, are places that have attracted waves of newcomers from other states and countries. But even those states have had obstetrics units close in rural areas.

In Iowa, Oskaloosa's hospital has bucked the trend and kept its labor and delivery unit open, partly by pulling in patients from 14 other counties. Last year, the hospital even managed the rare feat of recruiting two obstetrician-gynecologists to expand its services.

The publicly owned hospital, called Mahaska Health, expects to deliver 250 babies this year, up from about 160 in previous years, CEO Kevin DeRonde said.

"It's an essential service, and we needed to keep it going and grow it," DeRonde said.

Many of the U.S. hospitals that are now dropping obstetrics units were built or expanded in the mid-1900s, when America went on a rural-hospital building spree, thanks to federal funding from the Hill-Burton Act.

"It was an amazing program," said Brock Slabach, chief operations officer for the National Rural Health Association. "Basically, if you were a county that wanted a hospital, they gave you the money."

Slabach said that in addition to declining birth numbers, obstetrics units are experiencing a drop in occupancy because most patients go home after a night or two. In the past, patients typically spent several days in the hospital after giving birth.

Dwindling caseloads can raise safety concerns for obstetrics units.

A study published in JAMA in 2023 found that women were more likely to suffer serious complications



**Obstetrician and gynecologist Taylor Swartz uses an ultrasound scanner to check the health of Addie Comegys' baby on May 30, 2024. Comegys, who was seven months pregnant, had traveled 45 minutes for her prenatal appointment at Mahaska Health in Oskaloosa, one of a few rural hospitals in Iowa still offering labor and delivery services.**

(Tony Leys/KFF Health News)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 27 of 94

if they gave birth in rural hospitals that handled 110 or fewer births a year. The authors said they didn't support closing low-volume units, because that could lead more women to have complications related to traveling for care. Instead, they recommended improving training and coordination among rural health providers.

Stephanie Radke, a University of Iowa obstetrics and gynecology professor who studies access to birthing services, said it is almost inevitable that when rural birth numbers plunge, some obstetrics units will close. "We talk about that as a bad event, but we don't really talk about why it happens," she said.

Radke said maintaining a set number of obstetrics units is less important than ensuring good care for pregnant women and their babies. It's difficult to maintain quality of care when the staff doesn't consistently practice deliveries, she said, but it is hard to define that line. "What is realistic?" she said. "I don't think a unit should be open that only delivers 50 babies a year."

In some cases, she said, hospitals near each other have consolidated obstetrics units, pooling their resources into one program that has enough staffers and handles sufficient cases. "You're not always really creating a care desert when that happens," she said.

The decline in births has accelerated in many areas in recent years. Kenneth Johnson, a sociology professor and demographer at the University of New Hampshire, said it is understandable that many rural hospitals have closed obstetrics units. "I'm actually surprised some of them have lasted as long as they have," he said.

Johnson said rural areas that have seen the steepest population declines tend to be far from cities and lack recreational attractions, such as mountains or large bodies of water. Some have avoided population losses by attracting immigrant workers, who tend to have larger families in the first generation or two after they move to the U.S., he said.

Katy Kozhimannil, a University of Minnesota health policy professor who studies rural issues, said declining birth numbers and obstetric unit closures can create a vicious cycle. Fewer babies being born in a region can lead a birthing unit to shutter. Then the loss of such a unit can discourage young people from moving to the area, driving birth numbers even lower.

In many regions, people with private insurance, flexible schedules, and reliable transportation choose to travel to larger hospitals for their prenatal care and to give birth, Kozhimannil said. That leaves rural hospitals with a larger proportion of patients on Medicaid, a public program that pays about half what private insurance pays for the same services, she said.

Iowa ranks near the bottom of all states for obstetrician-gynecologists per capita. But Oskaloosa's hospital hit the jackpot last year, when it recruited Taylor Swartz and Garth Summers, a married couple who both recently finished their obstetrics training. Swartz grew up in the area, and she wanted to return to serve women there.

She hopes the number of obstetrics units will level off after the wave of closures. "It's not even just for delivery, but we need access just to women's health care in general," she said. "I would love to see women's health care be at the forefront of our government's mind."

Swartz noted that the state has only one obstetrics training program, which is at the University of Iowa. She said she and her husband plan to help spark interest in rural obstetrics by hosting University of Iowa residency rotations at the Oskaloosa hospital.

Comegys, a patient of Swartz's, could have chosen a hospital birthing center closer to her home, but she wasn't confident in its quality. Other hospitals in her region had shuttered their obstetrics units. She is grateful to have a flexible job, a reliable car, and a supportive family, so she can travel to Oskaloosa for checkups and to give birth there. She knows many other women are not so lucky, and she worries other obstetrics units are at risk.

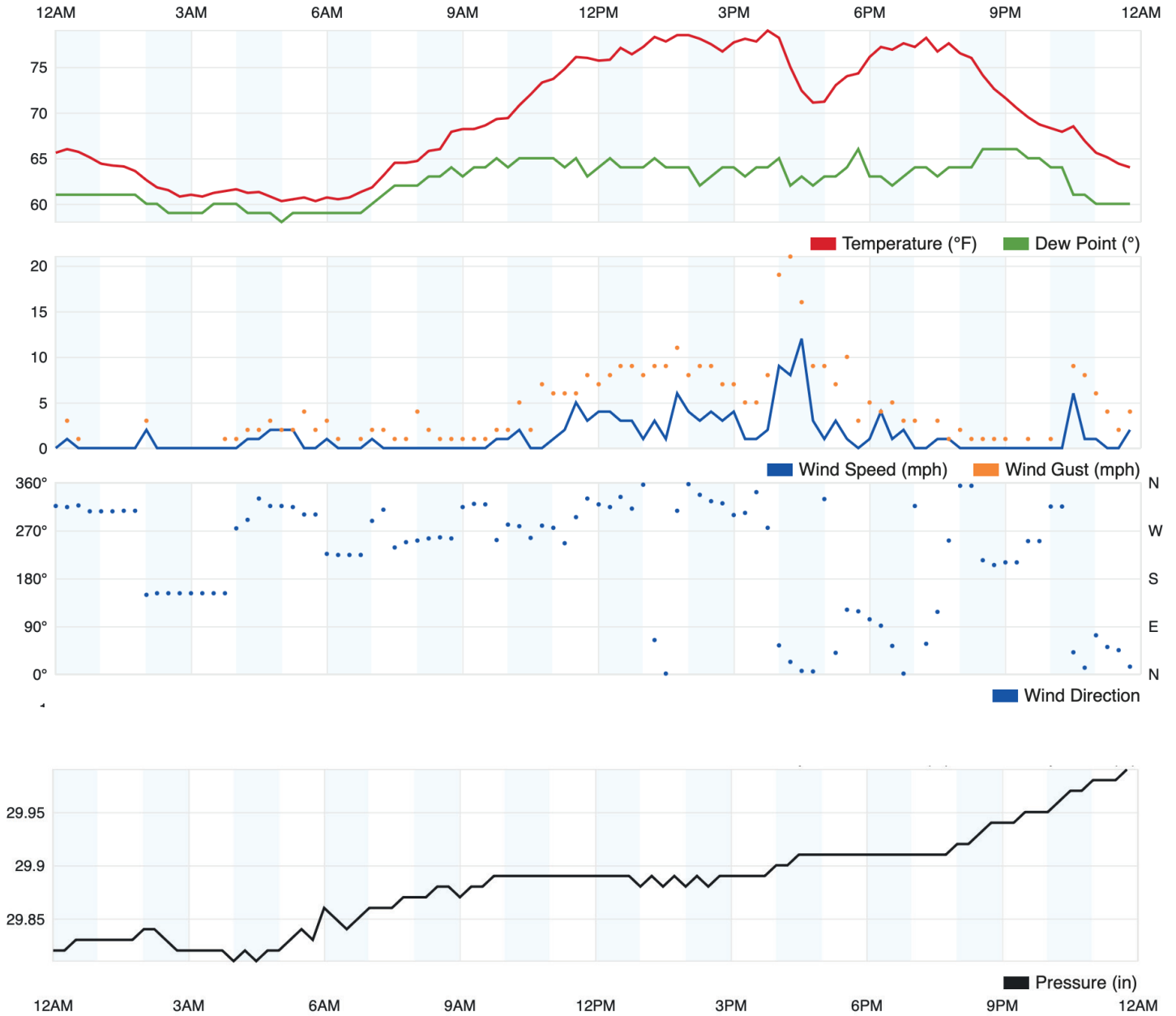
"It's sad, but I could see more closing," she said.

*Tony Leys, rural editor/correspondent, is based in Des Moines, where he worked 33 years as a reporter and editor for the Des Moines Register. Tony was the Register's lead health care reporter for more than 20 years and served four terms as a board member for the Association of Health Care Journalists. He is an alum of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Knight Science Journalism program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 28 of 94

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 29 of 94

Today



High: 77 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 53 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 84 °F

Sunny

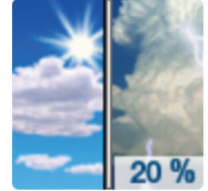
Thursday  
Night



Low: 61 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 85 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Slight  
Chance  
T-storms



## Rest of the Week

July 17, 2024  
4:05 AM

Today



Mostly Sunny

Highs:  
72-84°

Thursday



Mostly Sunny

Highs:  
78-89°

Friday



20 to 45% chance of  
showers and  
thunderstorms  
- Highest chances  
over central SD

Highs:  
78-87°



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Today and Thursday will be dry with comfortable temperatures ranging in the 70s and 80s, with the warmest temperatures around and west of the Missouri River. Showers and thunderstorms return to the forecast area Friday (20-45% chance).

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 30 of 94

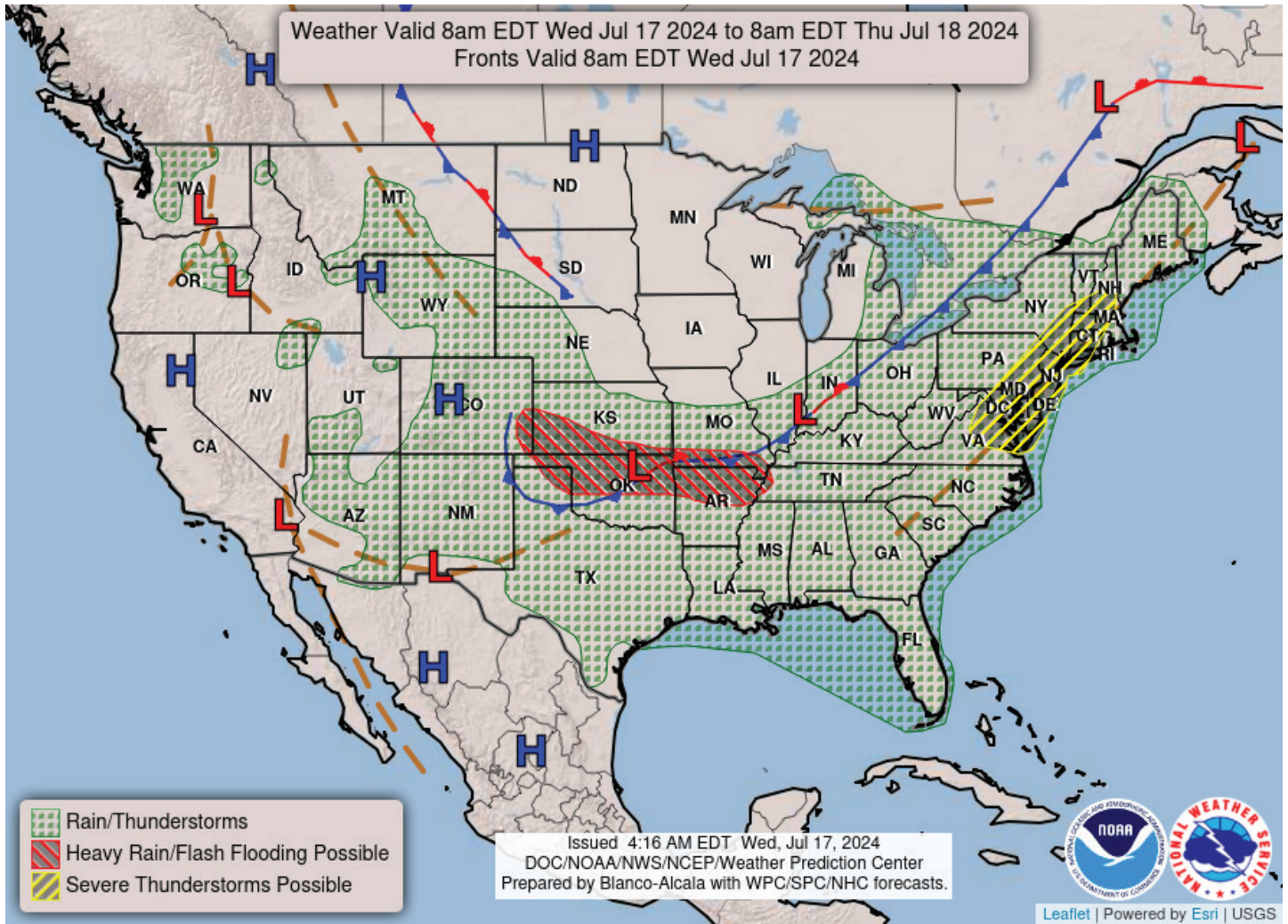
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 80 °F at 3:53 PM**  
**Low Temp: 60 °F at 4:57 AM**  
**Wind: 21 mph at 4:12 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 18 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1936  
Record Low: 44 in 1895  
Average High: 85  
Average Low: 60  
Average Precip in July.: 1.90  
Precip to date in July: 3.56  
Average Precip to date: 12.91  
Precip Year to Date: 14.51  
Sunset Tonight: 9:17:48 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6 :00:29 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 31 of 94

## Today in Weather History

July 17, 1985: An F1 tornado touched down, ten miles east of Raymond, in Clark County, destroying two cattle sheds and damaged several buildings. A garage was moved off its foundation. Heavy rains, high winds and hail up to 2.75 inches in diameter produced considerable damage to farm buildings between Raymond and Garden City. Rainfall amounts of three to six inches caused additional crop losses from erosion. In the city of Clark, some basement flooding occurred, and water ran across Highway 212 west of Clark. Some storm total rainfall amounts include; 3.77 inches in Clark; 3.15 in Clear Lake; 2.85 in Redfield; and 2.31 inches in 3 miles NE of Raymond. This thunderstorm began near Kennebec, in Lyman County, where winds gusted to 80 mph, and small hail was observed. A few trees were uprooted, and numerous branches were downed. Several car windows were broke from the winds and small hail. A half inch of rain fell in ten minutes, filling ditches. High winds continued into Spink County where extensive damage to a farm estate east of Redfield occurred. Heavy rains of three to five inches caused road and basement flooding. A damage path from wind and hail continued to Clear Lake, to the south of Gary and into Minnesota to the east of Canby. Winds gusted to 70 mph, and hail ranged from one to almost two inches in diameter. In Clear Lake, four businesses were damaged, and power poles were downed. One building had the fiberglass siding and roofing torn off. A second building had a metal roof blown off. Highway 77, south of Clear Lake was impassable due to hail on the ground.

July 17, 1993: Torrential rains of three to seven inches fell in Grant County resulting in the overflow of Lake Farley into the city of Milbank. The dam held, but an emergency dike broke on the evening of the 17th releasing water into residential streets and a trailer court in Milbank. The broken barrier forced the evacuation of at least 200 people. Damage included 120 mobile homes, and 26 houses were affected by floodwaters. Also, a man died when his pickup truck hit a washout on a gravel road south of Milbank and was swept into the floodwaters of a nearby creek.

July 17, 2010: Several supercell thunderstorms moving southeast across the region brought large hail up to softball size along with damaging winds to parts of northeast South Dakota. Numerous homes, vehicles, along with thousands of acres of crops were destroyed. Hail up to the size of softballs occurred near Westport, in Brown County. Golf ball to baseball size hail fell at the National Weather Service office causing damage to several vehicles. The rear window was broken out of one of the vehicles. A supercell thunderstorm was tracking southeast across Clark County produced anywhere from a quarter to baseball size hail along with wind gusts over 70 mph from Crocker to Clark to Naples to Vienna. The large hail and winds caused extensive damage to homes, outbuildings, vehicles, and thousands of acres of crops. Many trees and gardens were also damaged or destroyed by the hail and high winds. The storm entered western Hamlin County. Winds measured at 90 mph in Hayti along with some large hail broke numerous windows out of several homes and vehicles, damaged several roofs, and downed many trees. A concrete silo was also destroyed. The highway shop lost half of its roof along with severe damage to the ceiling of a trucking business in Hayti.

1942: A great flood developed over the Smethport area in Pennsylvania, resulting in an estimated 34.50 inches of rain in just one day, including 30.60 inches in only six hours, setting a world record. The official observing site, Smethport Highway Shed, reported only 13.08 inches for the entire month because the flood consumed the gauge after 6.68" of rain. The total results from the substitution of the officially estimated amount for the amount measured.

1981: Severe thunderstorm winds ripped a 10,000 square foot hole in a 90-foot high pavilion at Sea World in Orlando, FL. The storm panicked a crowd of 550 tourists. One death occurred due to injury and heart attack, and 15 people were injured. The canopy was made of fiberglass and Teflon, designed to withstand 120 mph winds.

1987: Slow moving thunderstorms caused flooding on the Guadalupe River in Texas resulting in tragic loss of life. A bus and van leaving a youth summer camp stalled near the rapidly rising river, just west of the town of Comfort, or about 50 mile northwest of San Antonio. The powerful surge of water swept away 43 persons, mostly teenagers. Ten drowned in the floodwaters. Most of the others were rescued from treetops by helicopter.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### ROOM FULL OF LONELY

It seemed as though the night would never end. Little Luke tossed and turned trying to get comfortable and fall asleep. Finally, he gave up and came wandering out of his bedroom with his favorite blanket and teddy bear.

His father heard his footsteps and went upstairs. Picking him up he asked, "What's the matter? Why can't you sleep?"

"It's my room," he replied.

"Your room? What's wrong with your room?" asked his Dad.

"It's full of lonely," said Luke.

It is a well-known fact that loneliness is one of the biggest problems in society today. Though we are surrounded by family and friends, loneliness grips the hearts and minds of countless millions. Medications and endless activities do not seem to fill the vacuum.

God has promised in His Word that "He will never leave us nor forsake us." If that's true, then, why do so many feel lonely?

Could it be that we have left God and He wants us to return? Has He created those feelings of loneliness to get us to return to Him? Have we become so involved with so many "things" that we have crowded Him out of our days? Must He use the darkness of a lonely night to get our attention to return to Him?

Prayer: We ask You, Father, to do whatever it takes, to draw us so close to You that we will feel Your presence and power wherever we are, night or day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So we can say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" Hebrews 13:6



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



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 33 of 94

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 34 of 94



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.16.24

5 35 42 58 66 22

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$251,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 36 Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.15.24

1 7 10 40 41 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$5,190,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 51 Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.16.24

21 26 31 34 40 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 6 Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.13.24

1 8 10 25 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$35,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 6 Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.15.24

3 13 41 55 61 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 35 Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.15.24

9 31 39 40 45 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$75,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 35 Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 35 of 94

## 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

### Money from Washington's landmark climate law will help tribes face rising seas, climate change

By GENE JOHNSON and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Tens of millions of dollars raised by a landmark climate law in Washington state will go to Native American tribes that are at risk from climate change and rising sea levels to help them move to higher ground, install solar panels, buy electric vehicles and restore wetlands, Gov. Jay Inslee announced Tuesday.

The money — \$52 million — comes from the 2021 Climate Commitment Act, which auctions off allowances for heavily polluting companies to emit carbon, with the revenue invested in education, transportation and other programs. Conservative critics who blame it for increased gas prices are seeking to repeal the law in November.

Nearly every Native American tribe in Washington is receiving money. Among them is the 3,000-member Quinault Indian Nation on the Pacific coast of the Olympic Peninsula, which is getting \$13 million to help relocate its two main villages to higher ground, away from the tsunami zone and persistent flooding. Part of one of the villages is below sea level, separated from the roaring ocean by a seawall, and high tides and storm surges have flooded homes and government buildings.

"The Quinault is a perfect example of two things: people who are threatened by climate change, and people who are willing to do something about it and are confident in our ability to do something about it," Inslee said. "So when I think about what you're doing, it's very inspirational to me."

The tribe has spent at least a decade on the relocation effort, but so far a patchwork of federal and state grants has fallen far short of the expected cost.

The money will help fund a new building to house child and elder services, an emergency shelter and a new water tank and pump house on high ground to serve residents, government buildings and a relocated public school. It will also help pay for the development of a master plan and architectural drawings for a new museum and cultural center.

"We are incredibly grateful for this funding allowing us to take a big step forward in our mission to get our people, our homes and our critical infrastructure out of harm's way," Quinault President Guy Capoeman said in a statement issued by the state Commerce Department. "It will allow us to serve our elders and children, our most precious resource, in a safe space while providing an emergency shelter and operations base when we need to respond to inevitable flooding and other natural disasters that are part of life on the coast."

Inslee, a Democrat who is in his third and final term as governor, has frequently touted the Climate Commitment Act. Washington is in the process of connecting its carbon market with California and Quebec, which also have emission allowance auctions, but the law faces a ballot-box challenge in Initiative 2117, backed by conservative hedge fund executive Brian Heywood.

Inslee joined Capoeman and Commerce Director Mike Fong for a news conference Tuesday in Taholah, one of the Quinault villages being relocated, to announce the grants.

Twenty-eight federally recognized tribes in Washington, plus four others that are based elsewhere but have land in the state, are receiving at least \$750,000 each.

The Legislature made the \$52 million available in the 2023-25 budget, and the Commerce Department worked with the tribes to figure out how they wanted to use the money.

For the Skokomish Tribe north of Olympia, it's \$2 million to weatherize homes. For the Makah Tribe on the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula, it's \$620,000 to install solar panels and battery backup at a community warming center.

The Lummi Nation in northwestern Washington will use some of its money to restore salmon in the Nooksack River, and the Spokane Tribe in eastern Washington is looking to improve energy efficiency.

The Shoalwater Bay Tribe, on a small peninsula at the mouth of a harbor on the Pacific coast, was also awarded funding to help plan a relocation to higher ground, about \$2.8 million.

## UK's new Labour government says it will turn the page on cost-of-living crisis and boost economy

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's new Labour Party government campaigned on a promise to bring bold change at modest cost. Prime Minister Keir Starmer got a chance to show how he aims to reconcile those two aims on Wednesday when the government announced its plans for the coming year.

King Charles III arrived at Parliament in a horse-drawn carriage to deliver the King's Speech, written for him by the government. Starmer said the legislation announced in the speech would "take the brakes off Britain" and "create wealth for people up and down the country" by spurring economic growth.

The speech said Labour would get more houses and infrastructure projects built, strengthen workers' rights and create a new industrial strategy.

The king said the goal is to "see rising living standards in all nations and regions of the United Kingdom."

Labour won Britain's July 4 election by a landslide, as voters eager for change after years of political and economic pain ousted the Conservative Party after 14 years in office.

The King's Speech is the centerpiece of the State Opening of Parliament, an occasion where royal pomp meets hard-nosed politics, as Charles dons a diamond-studded crown, sits on a gilded throne and announces the government's legislative agenda.

Starmer said the speech would be a "down payment on our plans for the next five years," which center on getting the U.K.'s stuttering economy growing. He has promised to patch up the country's aging infrastructure and frayed public services, but says he won't raise personal taxes and insists change must be bound by "unbreakable fiscal rules."

The government said Wednesday's speech will include more than 35 bills – the Conservatives' last speech had just 21 – ranging from housebuilding to nationalizing Britain's railways and decarbonizing the nation's power supply with a publicly owned green energy firm.

"It looks like it's going to be very ambitious and very wide-ranging," said Jill Rutter, senior research fellow at the Institute for Government think tank.

There will be moves to give more powers to local government, and a law to ensure all government budgets get advance independent scrutiny. Rutter called that the "anti- Liz Truss bill," referring to the Conservative prime minister whose package of unfunded tax cuts in 2022 rocked the British economy and ended her brief term in office.

Also expected are new measures to strengthen border security, following on from Starmer's decision to scrap the Conservatives' plan to send people arriving in the U.K. across the English Channel on a one-way trip to Rwanda. The contentious scheme faced multiple legal challenges and cost the U.K. several hundred million pounds (dollars), without a single flight taking off.

There is also expected to be a law regulating the development of artificial intelligence, a possible break from the previous government's light-touch approach to governing AI.

The government may also announce significant changes to the U.K.'s political system, including lowering the voting age from 18 to 16, one of Labour's election promises.

It might even tackle an issue that has foxed previous governments: reforming the House of Lords. The unelected upper chamber of Parliament is packed with almost 800 members – largely lifetime political appointees, with a smattering of judges, bishops and hereditary aristocrats. Starmer has said he would like to remove the hereditary nobles and set a Lords retirement age of 80.

While much of Starmer's agenda marks a break with the defeated Conservative government of former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Starmer may revive Sunak's plan to stop future generations from smoking by gradually raising the minimum age for buying tobacco.

Wednesday's address is the second such speech delivered by Charles since the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September 2022. For all its royal trappings – including lords in ermine-trimmed robes and an official known as Black Rod -- it is the King's Speech in name only.

"The king has zero agency in this," Rutter said.

## Traces of cyanide are found in the blood of Vietnamese and Americans found dead in a Bangkok hotel

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and NAPAT KONGSAWAD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Initial autopsy results showed traces of cyanide in the blood of six Vietnamese and American guests at a central Bangkok luxury hotel and one of them is believed to have poisoned the others over a bad investment, Thai authorities said Wednesday.

The bodies were found Tuesday in the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, a landmark at a central intersection in the capital busy with malls, government buildings and public transit.

The six had last been seen alive when food was delivered to the room Monday afternoon. The staff saw one woman receive the food, and security footage showed the rest arriving one by one shortly after. There were no other visitors, no one was seen leaving and the door was locked. A maid found them Tuesday afternoon when they failed to check out of the room.

Upon entering the room, hotel staff found that food ordered from the previous day was left untouched, with some servings of fried rice still under plastic wrap. While the food was untouched, several used tea-cups were on a nearby table, next to two thermoses.

Lt. Gen. Trairong Piwpan, chief of the Thai police force's forensic division, said there were traces of cyanide in the cups and thermoses police found.

Initial results from autopsies of the six bodies, performed at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn Hospital, were shared later Wednesday. Kornkiat Vongpaisarnsin, head of the forensic medicine department at Chulalongkorn University's medical school, said at a news conference that there was cyanide found in the blood of all six, and a CAT scan showed no signs of blunt force trauma, reinforcing the hypothesis that they had been poisoned.

Chulalongkorn's dean of medicine, Chanchai Sittipunt, said the team knew enough from the cyanide to determine it was likely the cause of death.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang identified the dead as two Vietnamese Americans and four Vietnamese nationals, and said they were three men and three women. Their ages ranged from 37 to 56, according to Noppasin Punsawat, Bangkok deputy police chief. He said the case appeared to be personal and would not impact the safety of tourists.

A husband and wife among the dead had invested about 10 million baht (\$278,000) with two of the others, and that could be a motive, said Noppasin, citing information obtained from relatives. The investment was meant to build a hospital in Japan and the group might have been meeting to settle the matter. Police say one killed the rest but did not say which of the six was the suspect.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang said Tuesday that four bodies were in the living room and two in the bedroom. He said two bodies appeared to have tried reaching for the door but collapsed before they could.

Noppasin said Wednesday that a seventh person whose name was part of the hotel booking was a sibling of one of the six and left Thailand on July 10. Police believe the seventh person had no involvement in the deaths.

The Vietnamese and United States embassies have been contacted over the deaths, and the American FBI was en route, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said.

"This wasn't an act of terrorism or a breach in security. Everything is fine," he said.

Trairong said a mass suicide was unlikely because some of them had arranged future parts of their trip, such as guides and drivers. He added that the bodies being in different parts of the hotel room suggested they did not knowingly consume poison and wait for their deaths together.

U.S. State Dept. spokesperson Matthew Miller in Washington offered condolences to the families of the dead. He said the U.S. is closely monitoring the situation and would communicate with local authorities. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with his Thai counterpart Tuesday, but Miller said he thought that call happened before the deaths were reported and he didn't know if it came up in their conversation.

The five-star Grand Hyatt Erawan is one of Bangkok's landmark hotels. The eponymous Erawan Shrine

that sits on the corner of its block has been a major tourist draw ever since it was erected on the advice of astrologers during the hotel's construction in 1956 to ward off bad karma.

Visitors worship the shrine, requesting divine intervention on issues from relationship troubles to exam preparation. The shrine was the target of a 2015 bombing that killed 20 people and injured more than 100.

In 2023, Thailand was rocked by reports of a serial killer who poisoned 15 people with cyanide over a span of years. Sararat Rangsiwuthaporn, or "Am Cyanide" as she would later be called, killed at least 14 people who she owed money to and became the country's first female serial killer. One person survived.

## Paris mayor dips into the Seine River to showcase its improved cleanliness before Olympic events

By TOM NOUVIAN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — After months of anticipation, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo took a dip in the long-polluted Seine River on Wednesday, fulfilling a promise to show the river was clean enough to host open swimming competitions during the 2024 Olympics — and the opening ceremony on the river nine days away.

Clad in a wetsuit and goggles, Hidalgo plunged into the river near the imposing-looking City Hall, her office, and the Notre Dame Cathedral. Paris 2024 chief Tony Estanguet and the top government official for the Paris region, Marc Guillaume, joined her, along with swimmers from local swimming clubs.

"The Seine is exquisite," said Hidalgo from the water. After emerging, she continued to rave, "The water is very, very good. A little cool, but not so bad." She also said today was "a dream" and a "testimony that we have achieved a lot of work," referencing the city's "swimming plan" that was launched in 2015.

They swam down the river for about 100 meters, switching between crawl and breaststroke.

"After twenty years of doing sports in the river, I find it admirable that we are trying to clean it up," said Estanguet, who has three Olympic gold medals in canoeing.

It's part of a broader effort to showcase the river's improved cleanliness ahead of the Summer Games which will kick off July 26 with a lavish open-air ceremony that includes an athletes' parade on boats on the Seine. Daily water quality tests in early June indicated unsafe levels of E. coli bacteria, followed by recent improvements.

Swimming in the Seine has been banned for over a century. Since 2015, organizers have invested \$1.5 billion to prepare the Seine for the Olympics and to ensure Parisians have a cleaner river after the Games. The plan included constructing a giant underground water storage basin in central Paris, renovating sewer infrastructure, and upgrading wastewater treatment plants.

Originally planned for June, Hidalgo's swim was postponed due to snap parliamentary elections in France. On the initial date, the hashtag "jchiedanslaSeine" ("I'm pooping in the Seine") trended on social media as some threatened to protest the Olympics by defecating upstream.

That didn't deter Hidalgo, who carefully entered the river Wednesday using a ladder on an artificial pond, set up for the event. Seven security boats were deployed for the occasion.

They swam down the river for about 100 meters, switching between crawl and breaststroke.

The upper banks were crowded with curious spectators.

"I wouldn't have missed that for anything in the world," said Lucie Coquereau, who woke up early to get the best view of Hidalgo's up from the Pont de Sully bridge that oversees the swimming site.

Enzo Gallet, a competitive swimmer who has taken part in France's national open-water championship, was among athletes invited to test the Seine alongside the Paris mayor.

The 23-year-old swam just a few meters from Hidalgo. "Her crawl form was pretty good," he said, emerging from the water. "It's pretty special to be among those who swam in the middle of Paris for the first time in a long, long time."

After the officials had left the Seine river banks, many swimmers were still in the water, some playing catch with a ball and others practicing their dives from the artificial pond — all in a very festive mood.

Other politicians have promised to clean up the Seine. Jacques Chirac, the former French president, made a similar pledge in 1988 when he was Paris mayor, but it was never realized.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 40 of 94

Hidalgo followed in the footsteps of French Sports Minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, who swam in the Seine on Saturday wearing a full-body suit.

Concerns over the Seine's flow and pollution levels have persisted, prompting daily water quality tests by the monitoring group Eau de Paris. Results in early June indicated unsafe levels of E. coli bacteria, followed by recent improvements.

The Seine will host several open water swimming events during the Games, including marathon swimming at the Olympic Games and the swimming legs of the Olympic and Paralympic triathlons.

## Government urges Bangladesh's universities to close after 6 die in protests

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Authorities in Bangladesh urged all universities to close on Wednesday, the day after at least six people died in violent protests over the allocation of government jobs and police raided the headquarters of the main opposition party.

Dhaka University, at the center of the violence, decided to suspend classes and close its dormitories indefinitely, a university official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to media.

The University Grants Commission asked all public and private universities to close until further notice, in order to protect students, but the request did not have legal force and it was not immediately clear how many universities would comply.

Authorities said that at least six people were killed on Tuesday in violence across the country as student protesters clashed with pro-government student activists and with police, and violence was reported around the capital, Dhaka, the southeastern city of Chattogram and the northern city of Rangpur.

Overnight, Dhaka police raided the headquarters of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, accusing it of playing a role in the violence.

Detective chief Harun-or-Rashid told reporters that police had arrested seven members of the party's student wing in connection with two buses that were set on fire Tuesday. He added that detectives found 100 crude bombs, 500 wooden and bamboo sticks, and five to six bottles of gasoline in the raid.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, a senior BNP leader, accused the government of "staging" the raid to divert attention from protests.

The protests began late last month, demanding an end to a quota that reserves 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence in 1971, but turned violent on Monday as protesters at Dhaka University clashed with police and counter-protests organized by the student wing of the governing Awami League party, leaving 100 people injured.

Violence spread overnight to Jahangir Nagar University in Savar, outside Dhaka, and was reported elsewhere around the country on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, stray protests took place at Dhaka University and elsewhere in the country. Police were deployed on the campus, while paramilitary border forces patrolled the streets in Dhaka and other big cities.

Protesters argue the veterans' families quota is discriminatory, and argue it benefits supporters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement. Ruling party leaders accuse the opposition of backing the protests. Protesters have said they are apolitical.

The quota system also reserves government jobs for women, disabled people and members of ethnic minorities, but protesters have only sought to end the quota for families of veterans.

While job opportunities have expanded in Bangladesh's private sector, many people prefer government jobs because they are seen as stable and high-paying. Each year, nearly 400,000 graduates compete for 3,000 such jobs in the civil service exam.

The quota system was temporarily halted in 2018, following a court order that followed an earlier wave of mass student protests in 2018. But last month, Bangladesh's High Court nullified that decision, angering students and triggering renewed protests.

Last week, the Supreme Court suspended the High Court's order for four weeks, as the chief justice



asked students to return to classes. But the protests continued.

Hasina defended the quota system Tuesday, saying that veterans deserve the highest respect for their sacrifice in 1971 regardless of their current political affiliation.

"Abandoning the dream of their own life, leaving behind their families, parents and everything, they joined the war with whatever they had," she said during an event at her office in Dhaka.

## **Aging bridges in 16 states will be improved or replaced with the help of \$5B in federal funding**

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Dozens of aging bridges in 16 states will be replaced or improved with the help of \$5 billion in federal grants announced Wednesday by President Joe Biden's administration, the latest beneficiaries of a massive infrastructure law.

The projects range from coast to coast, with the largest providing an additional \$1.4 billion to help replace two vertical lift bridges over the Columbia River that carry Interstate 5 traffic between Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington. The bridges, which also received \$600 million in December, are "the worst trucking bottleneck" in the region, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said.

Other projects receiving \$500 million or more include the Sagamore Bridge in Cape Cod, Massachusetts; an Interstate 10 bridge project in Mobile, Alabama; and the Interstate 83 South bridge in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which Buttigieg planned to highlight Wednesday with a visit.

"These bridges affect whole regions and ultimately impact the entire U.S. economy," Buttigieg said. "Their condition means they need major urgent investment to help keep people safe and to keep our supply chains running smoothly."

The grants come from a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law signed by Biden in 2021 that directed \$40 billion to bridges over five years — the largest dedicated bridge investment in decades. Biden has been touting the infrastructure law while campaigning for reelection against former President Donald Trump.

But even Wednesday's large grants will make only a dent in what the American Road & Transportation Builders Association estimates to be \$319 billion of needed bridge repairs across the U.S.

About 42,400 bridges are in poor condition nationwide, yet they carry about 167 million vehicles each day, according to the federal government. Four-fifths of those bridges have problems with the substructures that hold them up or the superstructures that support their load. And more than 15,800 of the poor bridges also were listed in poor shape a decade ago, according to an Associated Press analysis.

The nation's poor bridges are on average 70 years old.

Bridges fulfill a vital role that often goes overlooked until their closure disrupts people's commutes and delays commerce. That was tragically highlighted in March when a cargo ship crashed into a support column of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Maryland, causing the bridge to crumple into the water and killing six road crew workers. Maryland officials have said it could take four years and up to \$1.9 billion to rebuild the bridge.

Some of the projects announced Wednesday include multiple bridges, such as a \$251 million grant to improve 15 bridges around Providence, Rhode Island. That project is separate from one to replace the Interstate 195 Washington Bridge over the Seekonk River, which was suddenly closed to traffic late last year because of structural problems.

In Florida, Miami-Dade County will receive \$101 million to replace 11 Venetian Causeway bridges that are nearly a century old.

Other bridge projects receiving funding include the Interstate 55 bridge over the Mississippi River connecting Arkansas and Tennessee; the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge in Wilmington, North Carolina; four bridges carrying Interstate 95 over Lake Marion in South Carolina; the U.S. 70 bridge over Lake Texoma in Oklahoma; two bridges carrying Interstate 25 over Nogal Canyon in New Mexico; the 18th Street bridge in Kansas City, Kansas; and the Market Street bridge over the Ohio River connecting Steubenville, Ohio, with East Steubenville, West Virginia.

## Biden aims to cut through voter disenchantment as he courts Latino voters at Las Vegas conference

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — President Joe Biden is trying to shore up support among disenfranchised voters key to his reelection chances as he meets Wednesday with members of a Latino civil rights organization in the battleground state of Nevada.

Biden is set to deliver an address to the UnidosUS annual conference in Las Vegas, where he'll announce that beginning Aug. 19 certain U.S. citizens' spouses without legal status can begin applying for permanent residency and eventually citizenship without having to first depart the country, according to the White House. The new program, first announced by Biden last month, could affect upwards of half a million immigrants.

Biden is also expected to use the speech to spotlight that the Latino unemployment rate is near a record low, more people in the community have been able to obtain health insurance and the federal government has doubled the number of Small Business Administration loans to Latino business owners since 2020.

The visit with Latino activists comes as Republicans are hosting their national convention in Milwaukee and as Biden struggles to steady a reelection campaign that's been listing since his dismal June 27 debate performance against Republican nominee Donald Trump. The campaign has been further complicated by a failed assassination attempt on Trump by a 20-year-old shooter on Saturday in Pennsylvania.

Biden is counting on strong support from Black and Latino voters — two groups that were key parts of his winning 2020 coalition but whose support has shown signs of fraying — to help him win four more years in the White House.

Biden, in an interview with BET News on Tuesday, insisted that he still has plenty of time to energize voters.

"Whether it's young Blacks, young whites, young Hispanics, or young Asian Americans, they've never focused till after Labor Day," Biden said in the interview. "The idea that they're intently focused on the election right now is not there."

But the headwinds for Biden had been building even before his flop on the debate stage led to a wave of Democratic lawmakers and donors calling on him to exit the campaign.

Hispanic Americans have a less positive view of Biden now than they did when he took office. Forty-five percent of Hispanic adults have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of Biden, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in June, down from around 6 in 10 in January 2021. In the June poll, half of Hispanic adults had an unfavorable view of Biden.

Biden on Tuesday delivered remarks in Las Vegas to the annual NAACP convention in which he made the case that Trump's four years in the White House were "hell" for Black Americans. He lashed at Trump for mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, skyrocketing unemployment early in the pandemic, and divisive rhetoric that he said needlessly tore at Americans.

He also mocked Trump for saying that migrants who have entered the U.S. under the Democratic administration are stealing "Black jobs."

"I know what a Black job is. It's the vice president of the United States," Biden said of Vice President Kamala Harris. He added that she "could be president."

Biden also noted his appointment of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to serve on U.S. Supreme Court and his service as vice president under Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president.

The UnidosUS conference gives Biden another opportunity to contrast his approach on immigration with Trump's. The Republican's approach to immigration includes a push for mass deportations and rhetoric casting migrants as dangerous criminals "poisoning the blood" of America.

That new Biden administration plan was announced weeks after Biden unveiled a sweeping crackdown at the U.S.-Mexico border that effectively halted asylum claims for those arriving between officially designated ports of entry. Immigrant-rights groups have sued the Biden administration over that directive, which the administration officials say has led to fewer border encounters between ports.

Biden is also expected to sign an executive order establishing a White House initiative on advancing opportunities at what are known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions, a group of some 500 two-year and four-year colleges around the country that have prominent Hispanic populations.

## 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?

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."

## Three days after attempted assassination, Trump shooter remains an elusive enigma

By MICHAEL BIESECKER, MARTHA BELLISLE, JIM MUSTIAN and PETER SMITH Associated Press  
BETHEL PARK, Pa. (AP) — After three days, an enigmatic portrait emerged of the 20-year-old man who came close to killing former President Donald Trump with a high-velocity bullet: He was an intelligent loner with few friends, an apparently thin social media footprint and no hints of strong political beliefs that would suggest a motive for an attempted assassination.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 45 of 94

Even after the FBI cracked into Thomas Matthew Crooks' cellphone, scoured his computer, home and car, and interviewed more than 100 people, the mystery of why he opened fire on Trump's rally Saturday, a bullet grazing the GOP nominee's ear, remained as elusive as the moment it happened.

"He sat by himself, didn't talk to anyone, didn't even try to make conversation," said 17-year-old Liam Campbell, echoing the comments of classmates who remembered the shooter in this quiet community outside of Pittsburgh. "He was an odd kid," but nothing about him seemed dangerous, he added. "Just a normal person who seemed like he didn't like talking to people."

So far, there has been no public disclosure the shooter left any writings, suicide note, social media screed or any other indicator explaining his reasons for targeting Trump. A law enforcement official briefed on the ongoing investigation told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity that Crooks' phone had not immediately yielded any meaningful clues related to motive, or whether he acted alone or with others.

Crooks' political leanings were also hazy. Crooks was registered as a Republican in Pennsylvania, but federal campaign finance reports also show he gave \$15 to a progressive political action committee on Jan. 20, 2021, the day Democratic President Joe Biden was sworn into office.

The absence of a satisfactory explanation has led Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to recount the lengthy federal investigation into the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, the deadliest such attack in the nation's history. That probe closed after 17 months without finding any motive for what drove the 64-year-old gunman to spray more than 1,000 rounds into a crowd of concertgoers other than to "attain a certain degree of infamy."

Crooks, with a slight build, wire-rimmed glasses and thin hair parted in the middle, went by "Tom." He was described by classmates at Bethel Park High School as smart but standoffish, often seen wearing headphones and preferring to sit alone at lunch looking at his phone. Some said he was often mocked by other students for the clothes he wore, which included hunting outfits, and for continuing to wear a mask after the COVID pandemic was over.

"He was bullied almost every day," said classmate Jason Kohler. "He was just an outcast."

After graduating from high school in 2022, Crooks went on to the Community College of Allegheny County, earning an associate's degree with honors in engineering science in May. He also worked at a nursing home as a dietary aide.

A 1997 Secret Service study into those who had attempted assassinations since 1949 found there was no single indicator that a person might seek to take the life of a public figure. However, two-thirds of all attackers were described as "social isolates."

Like Crooks, few had any history of violent crime or criminal records. Most attackers also had histories of handling weapons, but no formal weapons or military training, according to the study.

As a freshman, Crooks had tried out for his high school rifle team but was rejected for poor marksmanship, the AP previously reported. Through his family, he was a member of the Clairton Sportsmen's Club, a shooting range about 11 miles (17 kilometers) east of Bethel Park.

"We know very little about him," club president Bill Sellitto told the AP. "That was a terrible, terrible thing that happened Saturday — that's not what we're about by any means."

The club has an outdoor range for high-powered rifles with targets set at distances of up to 170 meters (187 yards).

Crooks was well within that range when he opened fire on Trump Saturday from about 135 meters (147 yards) from where Trump was speaking, unleashing two quick volleys of rounds at the former president with an AR-15 style rifle.

His father, Matthew Crooks, bought the gun in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, in 2013 from Gander Mountain, a retail outdoors chain.

The day before the shooting, Thomas Crooks went to the sportsman's club and practiced on the rifle range, according to a federal intelligence briefing obtained by the AP. On the day of the attack, he purchased 50 rounds of 5.56mm ammo for his rifle from a local gun shop and drove alone to Butler, Pennsylvania, the site of the Trump rally.

He parked at a gas station lot about a third of a mile from the event. He wore a gray T-shirt with the

logo of a popular YouTube channel dedicated to firearms, camo shorts and a black belt.

Witnesses and law enforcement officials say Crooks walked around for at least a half-hour before climbing onto the roof of a building adjacent to the Butler Farm Show grounds, where Trump was speaking. As spectators screamed for police to respond, Crooks opened fire, letting loose two quick bursts. A Secret Service counter sniper fired back within about 15 seconds, killing Crooks with a shot to the head.

Trump said this week that one bullet clipped his right ear, and that only a last-second turn of his head kept him from potentially being mortally wounded. One of the bullets aimed toward Trump killed 50-year-old firefighter Corey Comperatore, a spectator who was in the bleachers. Two others were seriously wounded.

Without clear insight into what drove Crooks, many on both sides of the American political divide tried to fill the void with their own partisan assumptions, evidence-free speculations and conspiracy theories in the days since the shooting.

Some Republicans have pointed at Democrats for labeling Trump a threat to democracy. Democrats, in turn, pointed to Crooks' GOP registration and to Trump's own long history of provocative rhetoric, including his continued praise of the Jan. 6 rioters.

Access to the Crooks home remained blocked by yellow police tape, with officers keeping watch and preventing reporters from approaching.

Melanie Maxwell, who lives in the neighborhood, was dropping off "Trump 2024" lawn signs at another neighbor's home.

Like the others, she didn't know the Crooks family well. She said she was appalled by the assault and said any security lapses should be fully investigated.

"The hand of God protected President Trump," she said.

## Ukraine faces twin challenges of fighting Russia and shifting political sands in the US

By BARRY HATTON and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — After almost 30 months of war with Russia, Ukraine's difficulties on the battlefield are mounting even as its vital support from the United States is increasingly at the mercy of changing political winds.

A six-month delay in military assistance from the U.S., the biggest single contributor to Ukraine, opened the door for the Kremlin's forces to push on the front line. Ukrainian troops are now fighting to check the slow but gradual gains by Russia's bigger and better-equipped army.

"The next two or three months are going to be probably the hardest this year for Ukraine," military analyst Michael Kofman of the Carnegie Endowment said in a recent podcast.

Lurking in the background is another nagging worry for Ukraine: how long will Western political and military support critical for its fight last?

On Monday, former President Donald Trump chose Sen. JD Vance of Ohio as his running mate for the Republican ticket in November's U.S. election, and Vance wants the United States to attend to its own problems — not necessarily a war thousands of miles away on a different continent, even though he has said Putin was wrong to invade.

That view dovetails with Trump's own stance. Trump has claimed that if elected, he would end the conflict before Inauguration Day in January. He has declined to say how.

Meanwhile, Hungary's pro-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán — whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency — recently infuriated other EU leaders by holding rogue meetings with Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Europe's biggest war since World War II has already cost tens of thousands of lives on both sides, including thousands of civilians. There is no sign of it ending any time soon.

And Putin wants to draw out the war in the hope of sapping Western willingness to send billions more dollars to Kyiv.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 47 of 94

Here's a look at Ukraine's major challenges:

## The battlefield

Russia holds 18% of Ukrainian territory, after defensive forces pushed it out of half of the area it seized following its full-scale invasion in February 2022, the Council on Foreign Relations, a U.S. think tank, said in May. In 2014, Russia seized Ukraine's Crimea.

Russia hasn't accomplished a major battlefield victory since taking the eastern stronghold of Avdiivka in February. But its forces are now pushing in border regions: Kharkiv in northeast Ukraine, Donetsk in the east and Zaporizhzhia in the south.

To buy time, Ukraine has employed an elastic defense strategy by ceding some territory to wear down Russian troops until Western supplies reach brigades. But, analysts warn, Russia will undoubtedly win a lengthy war of attrition, unless Ukraine can strike using an element of surprise.

Russia claimed Sunday its forces had taken control of the Donetsk village of Urozhaine, but Ukrainian officials said there was still fighting there. Moscow's army is aiming to take the nearby strategic hilltop city of Chasiv Yar, which could allow it to drive deeper into Donetsk.

Ukraine's forces are largely holding back the Russian push around northeastern Kharkiv city, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank. The Kremlin's troops have been trying to get within artillery range of the city and create a buffer zone in the region to prevent Ukrainian cross-border attacks.

Meanwhile, Russia is firing missiles into rear areas, hitting civilian infrastructure. Last week it conducted a massive aerial attack that killed 31 civilians and struck Ukraine's largest children's hospital in Kyiv.

## The power grid

Crippling Ukraine's electricity supply has been a key goal of Russia's relentless long-range missile and drone attacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the bombardment has destroyed 80% of Ukraine's thermal power and one-third of its hydroelectric power.

A hard winter likely lies ahead for Ukraine, analysts say.

Ukraine is such a large country that massive air defenses would be needed to protect it all. The country needs 25 Patriot air defense systems to fully defend its airspace, Zelenskyy said Monday.

## Ammunition

New deliveries of ammunition to Ukraine are trickling to units along the line of contact, shrinking Kyiv's heavy disadvantage in artillery shells and allowing it to start stabilizing the front line.

But it will take time for Kyiv's army to fully replenish its depleted stocks. Ukraine won't be able to assemble a counteroffensive until late this year at the earliest, military analysts estimate.

Russia, meanwhile, is spending record amounts of money on defense to finance its grinding war of attrition.

## Fortifications

Russia's go-to tactic is to smash towns and villages to pieces, rendering them unlivable and denying Ukrainians defensive cover. Powerful glide bombs flatten buildings. Then the Russian infantry moves in.

Ukraine was late to build defensive lines but its fortifications have improved in recent months, according to analyst reports.

The Russian army has made creeping progress at eastern and southern points along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line but has not recently made any significant breakthrough and its advances have been costly, Ukrainian officials say.

## Expanded military conscription

Ukraine in April adopted an expanded military conscription law that aimed to replenish its depleted and exhausted forces.

Zelenskyy said Monday the drive is going well, though the country doesn't have enough training grounds for the new troops. Also, 14 brigades haven't yet received their promised Western weapons.

## Weaponry

NATO countries have taken steps this month to ensure that Ukraine keeps receiving long-term security aid and military training.

Alliance leaders attending a summit in Washington last week signed a deal to send more Stinger missiles, a portable surface-to-air defense system.

Ukraine is also preparing to receive the first F-16 warplanes donated by European countries.

Even so, Zelenskyy is frustrated. He says Ukraine cannot win the war unless the U.S. scraps its limits on the use of its weapons to attack military targets on Russian soil.

## **The stepped-up security around Trump is apparent, with agents walling him off from RNC crowds**

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — On the floor of the Republican National Convention Tuesday evening, vice presidential candidate JD Vance greeted and shook hands with excited delegates as he walked toward his seat.

It was a marked contrast from former President Donald Trump, who entered the hall a few minutes later and was separated from supporters by a column of Secret Service agents. His ear still bandaged after an attempted assassination, Trump closely hugged the wall. Instead of handshakes or hellos for those gathered, he offered fist pumps to the cameras.

The contrast underscores the new reality facing Trump after a gunman opened fire at his rally in Pennsylvania Saturday, raising serious questions about the agency that is tasked with protecting the president, former presidents and major-party candidates. Trump's campaign must also adjust to a new reality after he came millimeters from death or serious injury — and as law enforcement warns of the potential for more political violence.

Trump campaign officials declined to comment on the stepped-up security and how it might impact his interactions going forward.

"We do not comment on President Trump's security detail. All questions should be directed to the United States Secret Service," said Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, whose agency oversees the Secret Service, said Monday that he could not discuss "specifics of the protection or the enhancements made, as they involve sensitive tactics and procedures. I can say, however, that personnel and other protective resources, technology, and capabilities have been added."

The Secret Service had already stepped up Trump's protection in the days before the attack following an unrelated threat from Iran, two U.S. officials said Tuesday. But that extra security didn't stop the gunman, who fired from an adjacent roof, from killing one audience member and injuring two others along with Trump.

The FBI and Homeland Security officials remain "concerned about the potential for follow-on or retaliatory acts of violence following this attack," according to a joint intelligence bulletin by Homeland Security and the FBI and obtained by The Associated Press. The bulletin warned that lone actors and small groups will "continue to see rallies and campaign events as attractive targets."

Underscoring the security risks, a man armed with an AK-47 pistol, wearing a ski mask and carrying a tactical backpack was taken into custody Monday near the Fiserv Forum, where the convention is being held.

The attack has led to stepped-up security not only for Trump. President Joe Biden's security has also been bolstered, with more agents surrounding him as he boarded Air Force One to Las Vegas on Monday night. Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also received Secret Service protection in the shooting's wake.

Trump's campaign has also responded in other ways, including placing armed security at all hours outside their offices in Florida and Washington, D.C.

Trump has already scheduled his next rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Saturday. That's where he will appear with Vance for their first event as a presidential ticket.

But the new posture complicates, at least for now, the interactions Trump regularly has with supporters as he signs autographs, shakes hands and poses for selfies at events and on airplane tarmacs.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 49 of 94

In many cities he visits, the campaign assembles enthusiastic supporters in public spaces like restaurants and fast food joints. Sometimes Trump stops by unannounced. The images and video of his reception and interactions — circulated online by his campaign staffers and conservative media — have been fundamental to his 2024 campaign.

During the GOP primaries, in particular, his easy interactions served as a contrast to his more awkward top rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

But those events can get rowdy and chaotic. While he was in New York during his criminal hush money trial, Trump aides arranged a series of visits to a local bodega, a local firehouse and a construction site.

Before his arrival at the bodega in Harlem, thousands of supporters and onlookers gathered behind metal barricades for blocks to watch his motorcade arrive and cheer. But others in the neighborhood were frustrated by the visit, including people being dropped off at a bus stop just in front of the store, and others trying to enter their apartments after work.

At one point, an individual who lived in the building started shouting from a window that was just above the entrance where Trump would eventually stand and give remarks to the cameras and answer reporters' questions.

Long before the shooting, convention organizers had clashed with the Secret Service over the location of protest zones at the convention. RNC leaders repeatedly asked officials to keep protesters farther back than had been originally planned, arguing that an existing plan "creates an elevated and untenable safety risk to the attending public."

One person familiar with the dispute said that the original plan would have put protesters "a softball throw away" from delegates and close enough to throw projectiles over the fence.

The protest area was eventually moved, but the episode still raises frustrations and suspicions among some Trump allies.

## **Judge's order dismissing Trump classified docs case won't be final word as long court fight awaits**

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A judge's stunning decision to dismiss the classified documents case against Donald Trump brought an abrupt halt to what experts have considered the strongest and most straightforward of the prosecutions of the former president. But it's hardly the final word.

Special counsel Jack Smith's planned appeal of U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon's order is expected to tee up a court fight that might reach the U.S. Supreme Court and could result in the reinstatement of the indictment and even conceivably the reassignment of the case to a different judge.

There's no scenario in which a revived prosecution could reach trial before the November election — and it presumably won't take place at all in the event Trump is elected president and orders his Justice Department to dismiss it. Still, Cannon's order ensures many more months of legal wrangling in a criminal case that became snarled over the last year by interminable delays.

"The only good thing about this is that it is finally a decision," said Nancy Gertner, a former federal judge in Massachusetts who was nominated to the bench by President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. "The difficulty with Judge Cannon has been that she has made no decisions. She has simply sat on the case. And since she has made no decisions, there was nothing to appeal."

The judge's 93-page order held that Smith's selection as special counsel violated the Constitution because he was named to the position directly by Attorney General Merrick Garland instead of being appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Prosecutors vigorously challenged that argument when it was raised by Trump's lawyers.

It's impossible to say whether the opinion will stand or be reversed on appeal, though other judges in other districts in recent years have reached opposite conclusions of Cannon, upholding the constitutionality of special counsels who were appointed by Justice Department leadership and funded by a permanent

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 50 of 94

indefinite appropriation.

The Supreme Court, in a 50-year-old opinion involving President Richard Nixon, held that the Justice Department had the statutory authority to appoint a special prosecutor.

And even though Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas raised questions this month about the legality of Smith's appointment, no other justice signed onto his concurring opinion in a case that conferred broad immunity on former presidents.

The Smith team is likely to point to all of those court holdings in casting Cannon to the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals as an outlier who made not just a bad decision but "an irreversibly bad decision," said Michael Gerhardt, a University of North Carolina law school professor.

A spokesman for Smith's office, in announcing Monday that the Justice Department had authorized an appeal, said the opinion "deviates from the uniform conclusion of all previous courts to have considered the issue that the Attorney General is statutorily authorized to appoint a Special Counsel."

But Jesse Panuccio, a former associate attorney general in the Trump administration Justice Department, said anger over Cannon's opinion — which he called a "careful and scholarly" analysis — was misplaced.

"If you took out of the equation the derangement that comes from anyone analyzing anything that has to do with Trump and you just asked legal scholars 10 years ago, 'Hey, are there any issues involving independent counsels, special counsels?'" he said, the answer would be yes.

Panuccio added: "I think this is a very serious issue, and it's an issue frankly that when I was at the Justice Department, I had reservations about."

Trump on Monday said the dismissal "should be just the first step" and the three other cases against him, which he called "Witch Hunts," should also be thrown out.

Cannon, a Trump appointee, has exasperated the Justice Department since even before the indictment was filed, meaning if prosecutors do seek her removal, they could presumably cite a laundry list of grievances with her handling of the case.

Weeks after the FBI searched Mar-a-Lago for classified documents in August 2022, Cannon granted a Trump team request to appoint an independent arbiter to review the seized records — a decision later overturned by a unanimous federal appeals panel.

It is unclear if Smith's team will seek to have Cannon reassigned in the event that the appeals court reinstates the case. A Smith spokesperson declined to comment Tuesday on that possibility. It's an unusual request and one prosecutors in this case had avoided making.

But there is precedent for appeals courts taking that step, including in the same judicial district where the Florida case was charged.

"I think it would be quite a statement if the Circuit Court removes her from the case, but I think in this instance it would be warranted," said Cheryl Bader, a Fordham University law school professor and former federal prosecutor. "There does seem to be a pattern of Judge Cannon bending over backwards to create delay and obstacles."

In 1989, the 11th Circuit reinstated a criminal case in Florida of a man charged with trafficking counterfeit Rolex watches and reassigned the case to another judge after the trial judge described the case as "silly" and a waste of taxpayers' money.

The court laid out three considerations for deciding whether to assign a case to a different judge, including whether such a move is "appropriate to preserve the appearance of justice" and "whether the original judge would have difficulty putting his previous views and findings aside."

Gerhardt, the North Carolina professor, said he did not see a downside to Smith's team making such a request.

"Judges do make bad decisions sometimes," he said. "But not good judges do it more often than they should, and she's done it more often than any judge should."

But Panuccio said he didn't think Cannon's order gave Smith's team a sufficient basis to complain, especially given that Cannon's position was backed by a member of the Supreme Court opinion.

"I think Jack Smith would be flirting with fire if he were to make that request based on this opinion simply because he lost an issue," he said.

## 'I can't breathe': Eric Garner remembered on the 10th anniversary of his chokehold death

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Wednesday marks 10 years since the death of Eric Garner at the hands of New York City police officers made "I can't breathe" a rallying cry.

Bystander video showed Garner gasping the phrase while locked in a police chokehold and spurred Black Lives Matter protests in New York and across the country. More demonstrations followed weeks later when Michael Brown, an 18-year-old Black man, was fatally shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, on Aug. 9, 2014.

Six years later, George Floyd was recorded uttering the exact same words as he begged for air while a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck, sparking a new wave of mass protests.

Garner's mother, Gwen Carr, planned to lead a march honoring her son Wednesday morning on Staten Island, the borough where Garner died after being restrained by Officer Daniel Pantaleo. Carr told TV station NY1 that she is still trying to keep her son's name relevant and fighting for justice.

Garner died after a July 17, 2014, confrontation with Pantaleo and other officers who suspected that he was selling loose, untaxed cigarettes on the street.

Video showed Pantaleo, who is white, wrapping an arm around the neck of Garner, who was Black, as they struggled and fell to the sidewalk. "I can't breathe," Garner gasped repeatedly, before losing consciousness. He was pronounced dead at a hospital.

Authorities in New York determined that Pantaleo had used a chokehold banned by the New York Police Department in the 1990s, and the city medical examiner's office ruled Garner's death a homicide, but neither state nor federal prosecutors filed criminal charges against Pantaleo or any of the other officers who were present.

"Even if we could prove that Officer Pantaleo's hold of Mr. Garner constituted unreasonable force, we would still have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Officer Pantaleo acted willfully in violation of the law," Richard Donoghue, then the U.S. attorney in Brooklyn, said in announcing in 2019 that no federal civil rights charges would be brought.

Pantaleo was fired in 2019 after a police disciplinary proceeding.

Garner's family settled a lawsuit against New York City for \$5.9 million but continued to seek justice in the form of a judicial inquiry into Garner's death in 2021.

The judicial proceeding, which took place virtually because of the pandemic, was held under a provision of the city's charter that lets citizens petition the court for a public inquiry into "any alleged violation or neglect of duty in relation to the property, government or affairs of the city." The purpose of the inquiry was to establish a record of the case rather than to find anyone guilty or innocent.

One of the attorneys representing Garner's family was civil rights lawyer Alvin Bragg, who was then campaigning for Manhattan district attorney, a post he won in November of that year.

Bragg, who successfully prosecuted former President Donald Trump for hush money payments to a porn actor this year, praised Carr and other members of Garner's family on Tuesday.

"While I am still deeply pained by the loss of Eric Garner, I am in awe of his family's strength and moved by their commitment to use his legacy as a force for change," Bragg said. "Their courage continues to inspire me as district attorney, and I pledge to always honor Mr. Garner's memory by working towards a safer, fairer and more equal city."

Mayor Eric Adams, a former police officer, said during a news conference Tuesday that he remembered Garner's death "like yesterday."

Adams, who was serving as Brooklyn borough president when Garner died, said he prays that there will never be another "Eric Garner situation" again.

## **JD Vance, Trump's pick for vice president, will introduce himself to a national audience at the RNC**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, WILL WEISSERT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Donald Trump's running mate JD Vance will introduce himself to a national audience Wednesday as he addresses the Republican National Convention.

The Ohio senator's headlining address will be his first speech as the Republican vice-presidential nominee. He's a relative political unknown who rapidly morphed in recent years from a severe critic of Trump to an aggressive defender.

Vance, 39, is positioned to become the next potential leader of the former president's political movement, which has reshaped the Republican Party and busted many longtime political norms. The first millennial to join a major party ticket, he joins the race when questions about the age of the men at the top of the tickets — 78-year-old Trump and 81-year-old President Joe Biden — have been high on the list of voters' concerns.

Trump, as the presidential nominee, is expected to speak Thursday, the convention's final night.

Vance is expected to lean into his biography, as someone who grew up in hardscrabble Kentucky and Ohio and became a Marine, an Ivy League graduate, a businessman and a bestselling author with his memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy." The book exploring his blue-collar roots made him a national name when it was published in 2016 and was seen as a window into some of the cultural forces that propelled Trump to the White House.

Vance, though, was a harsh critic of Trump at the time, referring to him in interviews as "noxious" and someone who "is leading the white working class to a very dark place." He even once referred to him as "America's Hitler."

He began warming to Trump over the years, especially as he sought in 2022 to run for the U.S. Senate. Vance won Trump's endorsement, which helped him secure the party's nomination for the Ohio Senate seat.

Vance has become one of Trump's most aggressive defenders as the former president has sought the office a third time, sparring with journalists, campaigning on his behalf and appearing with the candidate at his trial in New York.

In his first interview after accepting Trump's offer to join the ticket, Vance sought to explain his metamorphosis. Vance said in a Fox News Channel interview Monday that Trump was a great president and changed his mind.

"I think he changed the minds of a lot of Americans, because again he delivered that peace and prosperity," Vance said.

Donald Trump Jr., the former president's son and a close friend of Vance, is also slated to speak Wednesday, according to a person close to Trump Jr. who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official speaking schedule has yet to be released.

Beyond Vance's prime-time speech, the Republican Party intends to focus on a theme of American global strength.

Republicans contend that the country has become a "global laughingstock" under Biden's watch and are expected to make a case Wednesday hitting on their theme to "Make America Strong Once Again." That's expected to include Trump's "America First" foreign policy that redefined relationships with some allies and adversaries.

Democrats have sharply criticized Trump — and Vance — for questioning U.S. support for Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion.

## Global rights group finds Hamas-led militants committed war crimes on Oct. 7

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Hamas-led armed groups committed numerous war crimes during the Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that precipitated the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, according to a global human rights group report released Wednesday.

Human Rights Watch said the acts of the Palestinian fighters, who killed around 1,200 people and kidnapped more than 250 during the attack, met the international legal definition for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The group's report found that five different Palestinian armed groups, led by Hamas' Qassam Brigades, engaged in war crimes and violated international law by killing, torturing, taking hostages, looting and committing crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence. The New York-based rights group said its researchers were unable to independently verify claims of sexual violence and rape but that they relied on a separate report by a special U.N. envoy who found "reasonable grounds" to believe Hamas fighters committed sexual violence during the attack.

The 230-page HRW report focuses only on the Oct. 7 attacks and does not examine the actions taken by Hamas or Israel during the subsequent war in Gaza. More than 38,400 people have been killed in Israeli ground offensives and bombardments in Gaza since the war began, according to the territory's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

The militants committed a crime against humanity because they launched a "widespread attack directed against a civilian population," said Belkis Wille, an associate director at HRW who arrived in Israel days after Oct. 7 and spent a month researching the attack with local staff. The researchers examined Palestinian attacks on 26 civilian sites in southern Israel, including kibbutzim, cities, two music festivals and a beach party, and they spoke with nearly 100 survivors, and 50 experts and first responders.

"The killing of civilians and taking of hostages were all central aims of the planned attack, and not actions that occurred as an afterthought or as a plan gone awry, or as isolated acts, for example, perpetrated by unaffiliated Palestinians from Gaza," Wille said.

After reviewing hundreds of photos and videos, the researchers determined that the majority of the Palestinians who took part in the attack were affiliated with armed groups and were not random civilians who took advantage of the open fence.

"That was a claim that was made very early on, it was made by Hamas in order to distance its own fighters from the abuses, and it was made by Israel to justify attacks on civilians in Gaza," she said.

HRW observed footage of fighters, including those in civilian clothes with no military insignias, communicating with walkie-talkies and taking orders from commanders, leading them to conclude that the fighters who carried out the worst abuses, especially in the early hours of the attack, belonged to armed factions.

In a nine-page response to the HRW report, Hamas said the Qassam Brigades planned and led the Oct. 7 attack, not the Hamas political movement, and that fighters were instructed not to target civilians. HRW said they found the Hamas response "false" and that "the intentional killing and hostage-taking of civilians was planned and highly coordinated."

The organization called on Hamas to immediately release the approximately 120 hostages and bodies of hostages still being held in Gaza, and for all sides to adhere to international law and agree to a cease-fire as soon as possible.

Human Rights Watch has a strained relationship with Israel, which it has accused of violating international law in multiple cases. In April, an HRW investigation found that an Israeli strike in October in central Gaza that killed 106 Palestinians constituted a war crime because there was no apparent military target. Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames the deaths on Hamas because the militants operate in dense, residential areas. The group also accused Israel of violating international law by striking residential buildings in Lebanon with white phosphorus, a chemical munition. The Israeli military said it upholds international law regarding munitions and that it used white phosphorus as a smokescreen, not to target civilians.

## 'Shogun' could rise and 'The Bear' may feast as Emmy nominations are announced

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — With no clear successor to "Succession," the drama field could be wide open when nominations for the Emmy Awards are announced on Wednesday morning.

"The Bear," meanwhile, could be in for a familiar feast on the comedy side.

None of last year's top three nominees — "Succession," "The White Lotus" and "The Last of Us" — all from HBO, are in the competition. "Succession," the dominant winner three of the past four years, is finished and the other two are series between seasons.

Taking advantage of the opening could be FX upstart "Shogun" and Netflix Emmy perennial "The Crown."

"Shogun" shook up the drama race when its makers said in May that despite reaching the end of the story of James Clavell's historical novel about political machinations in early 17th century Japan, they would explore making more than one season. That shifted the critical darling from the limited series category to the more elite drama category, where it immediately became the favorite.

If "Shogun" does dominate, FX could be this year's HBO, with "The Bear" set to clean up in comedy and " Fargo" likely to get plenty of nominations in the limited or anthology series categories.

"The Bear" is eligible for its second season, in which chef and lead Carmen "Carmie" Berzatto, played by Emmy winner Jeremy Allen White, attempts to transform a shoddy sandwich shop into an elite restaurant. The series created by Christopher Storer could easily top the 13 nominations and six wins it got last time around.

The nominations announcement from Emmy winners Sheryl Lee Ralph and Tony Hale will come just six months after the last Emmy Awards, which were delayed by last year's writers and actors strikes.

Getting back to its traditional schedule, the show will be held Sept. 15 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles and air on ABC.

"The Crown," a seasonal Emmy favorite that many felt had a subpar fifth season, had what most agreed was a bounce-back year in its sixth and final season. Elizabeth Debicki could be the closest thing to a sure-thing in the best supporting actress in a drama category for playing Princess Diana in episodes that depicted her final days and death in 1997.

"The Morning Show" from Apple TV+ could also shine in nominations in the absence of "Succession." Many consider Jennifer Aniston the favorite to win a best actress in a drama Emmy to go with the comedy actress trophy she won for "Friends."

On the comedy side, competing with "The Bear," are frequent nominees "Hacks" — one of the few key competitors this year from HBO and Max — and ABC's "Abbott Elementary," which remains the lone standout for broadcast networks at the Emmys.

Novel and notable nominations may abound. Many Oscar-winners are likely to get nods, including the reigning winners of best actress and best supporting actor, Emma Stone for "The Curse" and Robert Downey Jr. for "The Sympathizer."

Meryl Streep could get a nomination for "Only Murders in the Building," and her fellow multiple Oscar winner Jodie Foster could get one for "True Detective: Night Country."

## With Haitian migration growing, a Mexico City family of doctors is helping out

By MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

CIUDAD NEZAHUALCOYOTL, Mexico (AP) — Last year, the Hernández Pacheco family began to notice a number of Haitians arriving at an apartment across the street from their medical clinic on the outskirts of Mexico City.

Their two-story, mint-green office sits on a small street in working class Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl. The Haitians stood out among the tamal vendors and street merchants, sitting out in the sun to warm up in

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 55 of 94

the chilled high-elevation air.

One day, Dr. Sarahí Hernández Pacheco, who speaks French, approached a 15-year-old Haitian boy who often looked sad and bored. "I have two nephews, do you want to play with them?" she asked.

Nearly a year later, Haitian migrants make up a good portion of the medical practice of the clinic, which is staffed by Hernández Pacheco and her mother and two of her siblings who are also doctors.

The Bassuary clinic offers free consultations, and the family also began giving food to the Haitians, and eventually helped some find work, including at the clinic.

Hernández Pacheco wants the clinic to be a safe haven for Haitian migrants whether they are planning to stay in Mexico or continue the journey north to the U.S. border.

"I can't even imagine what it must be like to be in another country where there are so many limitations," she said. "My clinic's doors are open to help them in everything we can. Not just as a doctor, but as a friend."

One of these patients, Bellantta Lubin, 23, originally came to the doctor when she had stomach pain.

Shortly after, Lubin came back looking for work. She told the doctor and her sister, Dr. Hosanna Berenice Hernández Pacheco, that she was struggling. She didn't speak Spanish, so no one would hire her. They offered her a job cleaning at the clinic three times a week.

Using a mix of Spanish, French and Creole, Lubin and the doctors have engaged in a dance of dialects the last eight months.

"We became very close. She started teaching me words in Creole and she says we're friends," said Berenice. "She's really opened up to me."

Political unrest and natural disasters have led to periods of migration through Mexico over the last decade. Many Haitians initially emigrated to South America, including Brazil, and then moved north after economies struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Surging gang violence in Haiti has displaced nearly 580,000 Haitians internally since March, according to a recent report from the U.N. migration agency.

A recent clearing of migrant camps in Mexico City as well as stepped up efforts to intercept migrants in Mexico before they can reach the U.S. border have alarmed Haitians in the capital. Those fears were compounded by new restrictions on seeking asylum at the border announced by the Biden administration last month.

More migrants like Lubin have been stuck in Mexico for months waiting for asylum appointments through U.S. Customs and Border Protection's online app, CBP One.

The Hernández Pacheco sisters are following in the footsteps of their parents, who both came from poor backgrounds and were the first doctors to practice medicine in the rural neighborhood. They opened the family's first clinic in 1963.

Sarahí Hernández Pacheco, who studied medicine at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, opened her own private clinic in 2014 to provide free medical care for the low-income residents of her community. It's across the street from her parents' practice, still open today. A brother, Marco Antonio, currently treats patients there.

The private clinic is not funded or subsidized by any institution. They sometimes receive donations from non-governmental organizations and work to keep their costs low for patients in the area.

Her 83-year-old mother, younger sister Berenice and brother also work as doctors at the Bassuary clinic. Two nieces assist as nurses.

Over time, they have noticed a number of health issues common to their Haitian patients.

"They had lower back problems because most of them sleep on the floor. Dealing with the cold was difficult for them," Berenice said. "They also had stomach issues because their diet was completely different from the Mexican (diet)."

One of their patients, Gabriel Toussaint, 50, was one of the Haitians living in the small apartment across the street. Originally from the Haitian town of Dessalines, Toussaint was a school principal and history teacher for 28 years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 56 of 94

He made the difficult decision of leaving his four children with relatives to try to join his wife in Florida. He crossed Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala to reach Mexico.

After arriving in Mexico City, he got by thanks to his studies in Spanish back home. He came to the clinic for treatment of high blood pressure and pain in his eyes.

"I really like Mexico, but there's a bit of a problem here," he said. "There's no work, and the pay is bad."

Mexico's humanitarian visa can give Haitians benefits like work authorization. Last year Haitians were the highest among all nationalities to request these visas, at over 37,000, according to the International Organization for Migration. In the first five months of this year, however, Mexico received fewer than 4,000 requests from Haitians for humanitarian visas.

"Since December 2023, the National Immigration Institute has restricted the distribution of this document," said Alejandra Carrillo of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Mexico.

"Now we're seeing a significant number of Haitians working in the informal economy, with all the risks involved," she added.

Consequently, many Haitians like Toussaint struggle while waiting months for a humanitarian visa in Mexico or a CBP One appointment in the United States.

He had gigs in a factory and as a mechanic, but nothing consistent. Finally, after eight months, Toussaint and three of his roommates secured CBP One appointments.

For Dr. Sarahí Hernández Pacheco, their departure on June 20 was cause for celebration. Before their trip she invited the men over for a farewell meal. She prepared burgers and fries, their favorite.

"You should eat more than one!" she exclaimed as they crowded around a table in the clinic's courtyard. "It's a long journey."

"This is la famille," Toussaint said, motioning to the doctors and the other three Haitian men around him during their meal. "This is a family."

For others, like Lubin, the wait continues.

She arrived in Mexico last year fleeing violence in Port-Au-Prince, taking a flight to Nicaragua then crossing through Honduras and Guatemala to reach Mexico.

"My family has been a victim of insecurity," she said. "Bandits seized our home and my mother's cars. I really suffered because of that."

As the eldest in her family she left behind three siblings and her parents, as well as her dream to attend medical school in Haiti.

Now she works at the clinic along with another young Haitian woman, Phenia. They live in a small room a five-minute walk away.

"It's safe here and that makes me feel comfortable," Lubin said. "At the clinic, I've made very, very, deep friendships."

Sarahí Hernández Pacheco says Haitians deserve more from the international community.

"What I'm doing is just a grain of sand," she said. "I would ask the government what they could do to speed up their procedures and get them where they feel safe."

## **In a media world that loves sharp lines, discussions of the Trump shooting follow a predictable path**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

There aren't a lot of facts. There are, however, an avalanche of conclusions.

So it goes in many corners of the news media and among its frequent commentators in the aftermath of the assassination attempt on Donald Trump.

Authorities haven't established why a 20-year-old Pennsylvania man attempted to assassinate the former president — and, now that the gunman is dead, may never know. That hasn't stopped media figures and politicians from robust speculation. President Joe Biden, Democrats and left-leaning media have all been blamed, with no proof. Then there's the ever-popular, amorphous, definition-in-the-eye-of-the-beholder target — "they."



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 57 of 94

"They tried to incarcerate him, now they tried to assassinate him," said Jacob Chaffetz, a Fox News contributor.

Taken together, it's a reflection of what breaking-news coverage in a modern media world was built for — drawing sharp lines, leaning into epic stories, leaving little room for middle ground or sometimes even the truth.

Various assertions of varying credibility

Some of the assertions have been specific. "The Republican district attorney in Butler County, Pa., should immediately file charges against Joseph R. Biden for inciting an assassination," U.S. Rep. Mike Collins of Georgia wrote on social media. "The Democrats and the media are to blame for every drop of blood," said Rep. Marjorie Taylor Green.

"The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs," Ohio Sen. JD Vance posted, two days before being selected as Trump's running mate. "That rhetoric led directly to President Trump's attempted assassination."

Talk show host Erick Erickson blamed MSNBC. "These people have wanted Donald Trump assassinated," he said on his radio show. "You can't tell me they haven't." Charlie Kirk, founder of Turning Point USA, said that "the Democrats have been inviting this for quite some time."

Many news organizations have reported clues surrounding attempted assassin Thomas Matthew Crooks — party registration, political donations, lawn signs at his home — but refrained from drawing conclusions.

For many politicians and opinionated media figures, there's little incentive for restraint, said Nicole Hemmer, a political historian at Vanderbilt University and author of "Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics."

"Because there is so much competition in the world of right-wing radio and podcasts, the pressure to be the loudest and most over-the-top and angriest voice is even higher than it was in an earlier era," Hemmer said.

They're serving a specific audience, and "they don't believe there will be forgiveness among that target audience if they don't super-serve them," said Michael Harrison, publisher of Talkers, a trade publication for political talk shows.

Blaming Democrats, Hemmer said, also blunts that party's line of attack against Trump in the current presidential campaign — accusing the Republican of inciting political violence in the past, like before the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection.

Biden's 'bullseye' comment

Following the assassination attempt, Biden has called for greater unity and for cooling down political rhetoric. But the president was left vulnerable following his debate with Trump, when he told donors that it was "time to put Trump in a bullseye" for untrue statements onstage. The choice of phrase sounds damning in retrospect, and Biden told NBC's Lester Holt on Monday that saying it was a mistake.

Speculative rhetoric in the wake of tragedy is neither new nor one-sided. Right-wing media and political figures were quick to be excoriated following the 2011 shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona. The New York Times apologized and was later sued for libel for falsely tying to the Giffords shooting a map put out by former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin that put Democratic-controlled congressional districts in electoral crosshairs.

Anger toward mainstream or liberal media figures has been palpable following the Trump shooting; one supporter at the Pennsylvania rally held a middle finger at television cameras watching Trump being hustled away by Secret Service agents.

Feeding that anger is easy — and, for some news operations, lucrative. There are few guardrails against indulging in such speculation, Hemmer said.

"The only effective guardrail is lawsuits with major damages," she said, like Fox News faced before settling with Dominion Voting Systems about claims made following the 2020 presidential election, or jury verdicts against Alex Jones for his false claims about the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut.

But those cases involved very specific accusations, not a general statement of "you caused this," Hem-

mer said.

"They don't need to be specific," she said. "All you need is the 'they' and that does all the work."

Politicians are more apt to join in blame and speculation than they did in the past because the ones who do it successfully, like Greene, have used it to raise money, Hemmer said. Party leaders have less power to stop them because the threat of withholding campaign donations is becoming more toothless, she said.

"The media and politicians definitely buttress one another," Hemmer said. "More than that, the lines between the two roles have eroded so much that it's not a surprise to see office-holders and media personalities saying the same things."

## As Gaza's doctors struggle to save lives, many lose their own in Israeli airstrikes

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Dr. Hassan Hamdan was one of the few trained plastic surgeons in Gaza, a specialist in wound reconstruction. His skills were vitally needed as Israel's military onslaught filled hospitals with patients torn by blasts and shrapnel, so the 65-year-old came out of retirement to help.

Earlier this month, an Israeli airstrike killed him along with his wife, son, two daughters, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, six grandchildren and one other person, as his family sheltered in their home in an Israeli-declared "safe zone."

Israel's 9-month-old war with Hamas in Gaza has decimated the territory's medical system. It has not only wreaked physical destruction on hospitals and health facilities, it has devastated Gaza's medical personnel. More than 500 health care workers have been killed since October, according to the U.N.

Among them were many specialists like Hamdan.

Dr. Ahmed al-Maqadma, also a reconstructive surgeon and a former fellow at U.K. Royal College, was found shot to death alongside his mother, a general practitioner, on a street outside Gaza City's Shifa hospital after a two-week raid on the facility by Israeli forces in April.

One of Gaza's most prominent fertility doctors, Omar Ferwana, was killed along with his family in a strike on his home in October. The territory's only liver transplant doctor, Hamam Alloh, was killed in a hit on his home in Gaza City.

Israeli strikes in November on a northern Gaza hospital killed two doctors working with Doctors Without Borders. They are among six staffers killed from the international charity, which focuses on reconstructive and orthopedic surgeries, physiotherapy and burn care in Gaza.

Israel has detained doctors and medical staff. At least two have died in Israeli detention, allegedly of ill-treatment: the head of Shifa's orthopedics department, Adnan al-Bursh, and the head of a women's hospital, Iyad al-Rantisi. Israel has not returned either man's body. Hundreds of other medical workers have been displaced or left Gaza altogether.

Along with the personal toll, their deaths rob Gaza's medical system of their skills when they have become crucial.

Since the Hamas attack against Israel on Oct. 7 — which left some 1,200 people dead and 250 kidnapped — Israel's campaign has killed more than 38,000 people in Gaza and wounded more than 88,000, according to local health officials. Malnutrition and disease have become widespread as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians cram into squalid tent camps.

Dr. Adam Hamawy, a former U.S. Army combat plastic surgeon who volunteered in Gaza in May, said Hamdan's death "leaves a significant void that will be hard to fill."

Like many in Gaza, he believes Israel is deliberately destroying the health system, pointing to how Israeli forces have raided hospitals, destroyed medical complexes, fired on medical convoys and hit ambulances. Israel says it is targeting Hamas, which it says uses hospitals as command centers and ambulances for transport. The military has provided limited evidence for its claims.

Twenty-three of Gaza's 36 hospitals are out of service, and the rest are only partially functioning, according to the latest U.N. figures. Only five field hospitals out of nine are operational. And more than 60%

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 59 of 94

of Gaza's primary health facilities have shut down.

Hamdan's death leaves only one other specialist in reconstructive plastic surgery in Gaza. Other doctors have had to learn the skills of repairing major wounds on the job amid relentless daily waves of maimed patients.

Hamawy saw firsthand the need during his work in Gaza as part of an international medical team that came to help the territory's health workers.

During three weeks at the European General Hospital in Khan Younis, he said he performed 120 surgeries, more than half of them on children, and all but one of them for treatment and reconstruction of war wounds. Two colleagues at the hospital were killed in strikes on their homes while he was there, and he spoke to doctors who had been released from Israeli detention and described being tortured, he said.

Hamawy said a general surgeon at the hospital stepped in to fill the demand for plastic surgeons, but he had no formal training. Five medical students volunteered with him.

They "are doing their best to fill in the gap," Hamawy said.

On July 2, the European General Hospital evacuated its staff and patients, fearing it would be attacked. That left Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah and a field hospital in Rafah as the only facilities able to offer reconstructive surgery, said Dr. Ahmed al-Mokhallalati, Gaza's last reconstructive plastic surgery specialist.

Al-Mokhallalati said he has been rushing between hospitals, at one point overseeing treatment for 400 patients in one and 500 in another. At the Rafah field hospital, he was doing up to 10 surgeries a day.

"It is a very critical situation," he said.

Hamdan founded the burns and plastic surgery department in Khan Younis' Nasser Medical complex in 2002, after serving at the territory's first such unit, at Shifa hospital. He headed the department at Nasser until 2019, when he retired.

When the Israeli army invaded Hamdan's home city of Khan Younis in December, he returned as a volunteer at Nasser, Gaza's second largest hospital, said his son Osama Hamdan, an orthopedic surgeon. His colleagues said he was cool under pressure. "The smile never left his face," said Dr. Mohamad Awad, a surgeon who worked with him.

Soon after, Israeli forces besieged and raided Nasser Hospital, forcing its evacuation. Hamdan was displaced, taking shelter in the home of one of his daughters in Deir al-Balah, further north.

Troops occupied Nasser hospital for weeks, wreaking extensive damage. After they withdrew, the facility was rehabilitated. In mid-June, Hamdan returned home and was discussing returning to work with hospital officials.

On July 2, Israel ordered another evacuation of Khan Younis. Hamdan and his family fled again, returning to his daughter's home in Deir al-Balah.

Only hours after they arrived, an airstrike hit the building on July 3 – "a direct hit with two rockets on my sister's apartment," Osama Hamdan said. He said no one in the family was affiliated with militant groups.

The Israeli military did not respond to requests for comment on the strike.

Osama was on duty in the emergency room at Nasser hospital when he received the call. His wife and two sons – 3 and 5 years old – were among those killed.

"I was only able to collect some body parts of my kids and their mother because of how huge the explosion was," he said.

One of his sisters died days later in the hospital from her wounds. Another sister remains in intensive care.

Osama is feeling partially responsible. "I had pressed him to leave Khan Younis," he said in a text message, marked with two broken hearts emojis.

## Guatemalan family seeks return of relative's body more than a decade after he disappeared in Mexico

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Nearly a decade after Guatemalan authorities were told that Mexico had sent the wrong body to a Guatemalan family searching for their missing teenage relative, that unidentified body is still buried in Guatemala and the family's relative is lying in a Mexico City morgue.

The family, which declined to comment through its lawyer, wants 17-year-old Yovanny back, but also wants the body it buried exhumed, identified and returned to their relatives.

Standing in the way appears to be Guatemala's Attorney General's Office.

Their Mexican counterparts requested the exhumation in April, but according to Rosmery Yax, the family's attorney, and the Forensic Commission — a body made up of experts from Mexico's Attorney General's Office, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, various civic organizations and relatives of missing migrants — there has been no answer from Guatemala's Attorney General's Office.

A spokesman for Guatemala's Attorney General's Office did not respond to a request for comment.

It is another example of the slow, often troubled process of identifying and repatriating migrants who go missing on their way to the United States, despite cooperation agreements between governments.

"This was a very serious error that jeopardized the family's rights, the victim's identification," Yax said this week.

Yovanny left home in March 2011, bound for the United States where he hoped to find work to support his family, according to Yax and the Foundation for Justice, a Mexican organization pushing for better cooperation and efforts to identify missing migrants.

A week later, he told his family he was in Tamaulipas state, which sits across the Rio Grande from Texas. But Yovanny never made it to the river.

His body was found among nearly 200 others in dozens of clandestine gravesites discovered around the town of San Fernando in April and May 2011. That followed the 2010 massacre of 72 migrants in the same town. A drug cartel was carrying out forced recruitment and killing migrants that could potentially join the ranks of its rivals.

In the process of recovering the many remains, Yovanny's were incorrectly tagged, according to the Foundation for Justice.

The following year a body was sent to Yovanny's family in Guatemala. The family buried it in a local plot without ever being allowed to see the remains.

"With respect to Yovanny's case, (the Forensic Commission) identified and later confirmed that the profile of the body handed over in 2012 did not coincide with his relatives," the Foundation for Justice said. "However, it did match one of the bodies held in Mexico City."

The family, which has remained anonymous, declined through its attorney to discuss the case.

"This doesn't happen in these Indigenous towns, they've damaged the social fabric," Yax said. "Because of its customs and traditions, the family says they not only want Yovanny to be brought back, but also that, at the same time, the other body be taken and that Yovanny occupies the site where they chose to bury him."

Yovanny's is not an isolated case. About a hundred victims of massacres between 2010 and 2012 have still not been identified and the process has been plagued by mistakes.

Fabienne Cabaret, deputy director of the Foundation for Justice, said that they were awaiting identification results on some remains sent to Brazil and others in Guatemala that also may have been mixed up.

She also noted that there were some half-dozen victims who had been identified, but had not been handed over to their families because the Committee for Attention to Victims, the governmental body charged with carrying out the process, lacked the resources to do so.

Still, Cabaret maintained that the work of the Forensic Commission was the best vehicle despite the many challenges of collaboration between countries.

Guatemala's government was notified of the error in 2015, but the family was not told until 2019, ac-

ording to Yax and the Foundation for Justice.

The family hopes for some resolution under the new administration of President Bernardo Arévalo, but he has remained at loggerheads with the Attorney General's Office since his election victory last year.

## **A Gaza father mourns his baby boy, killed in bed by an Israeli airstrike**

By ABDEL KEREEM HANA, WAFAA SHURAF, and DREW CALLISTER Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The dead Palestinian toddler's limbs were pale and cold despite the sweltering summer heat in Gaza. Outside the hospital, his father cradled the boy in his arms, unable or unwilling to say goodbye. Flies circled and landed in the child's soft hair.

"What did he do wrong, my God? What did he do wrong?" screamed Mahmoud Mikdad, his voice hoarse, lifting his face toward the sky.

His son, Yaman, was killed by an Israeli airstrike. Israeli strikes killed more than 60 Palestinians in southern and central Gaza from Monday night into Tuesday, according to hospital records and health officials. Israel has said it is pursuing Hamas militants who are hiding among civilians after offensives uprooted underground tunnel networks.

It had been a regular afternoon for Mikdad. He put his daughter and Yamam down for a nap in the apartment where the displaced family was sheltering.

The strike killed the boy instantly. He wasn't yet 2 years old.

Mikdad carried Yamam's body through central Gaza from Nuseirat camp to Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah. Yamam's bare legs dangled limply from beneath a white sheet soaked with blood.

Mikdad and two others, one with his head wrapped in bandages, caressed and kissed the boy's body outside the morgue. The child in his lap was "more precious than the whole world," Mikdad told an Associated Press photojournalist. He sat against the hospital wall for a while, crying.

Later, a dozen or so men held a funeral prayer over Yamam's body wrapped in a white shroud. Bystanders, some of them children, watched in silence.

## **Donald Trump is feted by his former rivals in a show of Republican unity after rally shooting**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON, ALI SWENSON and CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Donald Trump was celebrated Tuesday at the Republican National Convention by former rivals who just months ago leveled harsh critiques about him, a show of unity that contrasts with the divisions increasingly ripping through the Democratic Party.

Nikki Haley, the former U.N. ambassador who was Trump's final challenger in the GOP primary, directly addressed her supporters after taking the stage to a mix of cheers and boos.

"My message to them is simple: You don't have to agree with Trump 100% of the time to vote for him," Haley said.

She was followed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a onetime Trump ally turned primary rival who has worked to rebuild his relationship with the former president since dropping out of the primary.

"Donald Trump has been demonized. He's been sued. He's been prosecuted. And he nearly lost his life," DeSantis told the crowd. "We cannot let him down. And we cannot let America down."

Such overtures are typical in political conventions, where the purpose is often to bring a party together after bitter primaries. But the Haley and DeSantis appearances were particularly notable given the personal animosity that defined this year's GOP contest — much of that being directed by Trump at Haley and DeSantis.

The displays of unity stood in stark contrast to the dynamic facing Democrats, many of whom are increasingly uncertain that President Joe Biden is the right choice to take on Trump in the November election.

DeSantis was once seen as best positioned to challenge Trump's position at the top of the party. As a presidential candidate, he was slow to criticize Trump directly before eventually accusing him of repeatedly

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 62 of 94

failing to follow through on his promises.

Haley, meanwhile, painted Trump as chaotic and suggested the 78-year-old was too old to serve another term. Unlike DeSantis, she did not immediately endorse Trump after she dropped out, instead waiting a few months to announce he had her vote.

Biden's campaign resurrected Haley's criticisms Tuesday. Austin Weatherford, a spokesperson for the campaign, said in a statement, "Ambassador Haley said it best herself: someone who doesn't respect our military, doesn't know right from wrong, and 'surrounds himself in chaos' can't be president."

Immigration was a key theme on Tuesday

Several speakers spotlighted immigration, a key element of former Trump's political brand that helped endear him to the GOP base when he began his first campaign in 2015.

Trump has criticized the unprecedented number of migrants entering the country illegally through the U.S. border with Mexico. The numbers of unauthorized crossings have fallen abruptly after Biden issued a rule suspending many asylum claims at the border.

At rallies and other campaign events, Trump has pointed to examples of migrants who committed heinous crimes and has blamed migration for the trafficking of drugs like fentanyl, even though federal data suggests many people smuggling fentanyl across the border are U.S. citizens. He has vowed to carry out the largest deportation operation in U.S. history.

Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric has also strayed into talking points not backed by evidence, including unfounded claims that migrants are entering the country to vote in the 2024 election.

Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the House majority leader, made that statement in his remarks, declaring, "Biden and Harris want illegals to vote now that they've opened up the border."

The convention's programming has featured people the campaign has referred to as "everyday Americans." On Tuesday, they included people who had lost loved ones to fentanyl overdoses or in violent crimes linked by authorities to immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

Among the speakers was Michael Morin, whose sister was Rachel Morin, a Maryland woman whom prosecutors say was killed and raped by a fugitive from El Salvador.

"Joe Biden and his designated 'border czar' Kamala Harris opened our borders to him and others like him, empowering them to victimize the innocent," Morin told the audience.

Peer-reviewed academic studies have generally found no link between immigration and violent crime, though conclusions vary based on the data examined.

The recent attempt on Trump's life lingers over convention

Trump's survival of an attempted assassination Saturday at a rally in Pennsylvania was on the minds of many inside the hall. One of the delegates in the crowd could be seen with a folded white piece of paper over his ear — an apparent tribute to the bandage Trump wore when he entered the hall Monday to a roaring crowd.

Trump was again wearing a bandage when he arrived Tuesday night, appearing even earlier in the arena than he did the night before. Trump entered a few minutes after his newly chosen running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

Scalise, who was injured in a politically motivated shooting in 2017 while he was practicing for a charity baseball game, spoke of his own experience when he touched on Trump's attack.

"While I was fighting for my life, Donald Trump was one of the first to come to console my family at the hospital. That's the kind of leader he is. Courageous under fire, compassionate towards others," Scalise said.

In the wake of Saturday's attempt on Trump's life, there was a heightened focus on security at the convention, which drew thousands of people to downtown Milwaukee, including a number of high-profile elected officials.

A man armed with an AK-47 pistol and wearing a ski mask was taken into custody Monday, the convention's first day, near the Fiserv Forum where the convention is being held, a federal law enforcement official said Tuesday. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

On Tuesday, five Ohio police officers who were in Wisconsin for the convention shot a man who was in a knife fight near the convention, killing him, Milwaukee's police chief said.

There's growing anticipation for Trump's speech

Trump and Vance were expected to appear in the hall each night of the convention. Vance is slated to speak Wednesday and Trump will speak Thursday.

Trump, who has long decried rivals with harsh language and talked about prosecuting opponents if he wins a second term, seemed poised to deliver a more toned-down speech. His eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., said in an Axios interview outside the RNC that he spent three or four hours going through his father's convention speech with him, "trying to de-escalate some of that rhetoric."

"I think it lasts," the younger Trump said of the change in his father's rhetoric. "There are events that change you for a couple minutes, and there are events that change you permanently."

But there were also hints in Tuesday's programming of some of Trump's old grievances, including several references to Trump's disproven theories of election fraud. One of the primetime speakers, Madeline Brame, railed against Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whose office prosecuted Trump for illegally orchestrating a hush money scheme to influence the 2016 election. That made Trump the first former president convicted of a felony crime.

Brame accused Bragg of having mishandled the cases against the people accused of killing her son. Of Trump, she said, "He's been a victim of the same corrupt system that I have been and my family has been."

Then she echoed a version of a line he has delivered at his rallies for years.

"They're after us," she said. "He's just standing in the way."

## **Out-of-state officers shot and killed a man wielding two knives blocks away from the RNC, police say**

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Ohio police officers in Wisconsin for the Republican National Convention shot and killed a man who was wielding two knives near the convention, Milwaukee's police chief said Tuesday.

Five members of the Columbus, Ohio, police department fired on the man, who had a knife in each hand, refused police commands and charged at an unarmed man before police fired, Milwaukee Chief Jeffrey Norman said at a news conference. Two knives were recovered from the scene, the chief said.

Police released body camera footage that showed officers on bikes talking before one of them says, "He's got a knife."

Several officers then yell "Drop the knife!" as they run toward two men standing in a street. When the armed man moved toward the unarmed man, police fired their weapons.

"Someone's life was in danger," Norman said. "These officers, who were not from this area, took it upon themselves to act and save someone's life today."

Thousands of officers from multiple jurisdictions are in Milwaukee providing additional security for the convention that began Monday and concludes Thursday.

The shooting fueled anger from residents who questioned why out-of-state officers were in their neighborhood located about a mile from the convention site.

The Columbus Division of Police, as well as the chief of staff for Milwaukee's mayor and a spokesperson for the convention's joint command center, all said there was nothing to suggest the shooting was related to the convention itself.

A cousin and others identified the man killed as 43-year-old Samuel Sharpe.

Milwaukee residents and activists quickly converged on the site of the shooting, many of them expressing outrage about the involvement of a police department in town because of the convention.

About 100 people held a vigil and march without incident on Tuesday night, pausing for a moment of silence at the blood-stained spot where Sharpe was killed.

"They came into our community and shot down our family right here at a public park," said Linda Sharpe, a cousin of the man who was killed. "What are you doing in our city, shooting people down?"

Linda Sharpe said her cousin lived in a tent encampment across the street from King Park, where the shooting occurred.

Residents said the encampment was a long-standing feature of the neighborhood, which is home to several social service clinics and a shelter. Some said Milwaukee police officers are familiar with many of those living in the tents and might have been able to deescalate the situation.

David Porter, who said he knew Samuel Sharpe and is also homeless, was angry that officers from outside of Milwaukee were in his neighborhood.

"If MPD would have been there, that man would still be alive right now," Porter said, referring to Milwaukee police.

Norman, the Milwaukee chief, said 13 officers who were part of a bicycle patrol from Columbus were within their assigned zone having a meeting when they saw the altercation.

"The officers observed a subject armed with a knife in each hand, engaged in an altercation with another unarmed individual," Norman said. They only fired after the armed man ignored multiple commands and moved toward the unarmed man, the chief said.

"This is a situation where somebody's life was in immediate danger," Norman said.

The Columbus Division of Police has received attention because of its special unit deployed to Milwaukee that works to improve police-community relationships and had a visible role in guiding the largely uneventful protests on Monday.

The shooting happened near King Park, roughly a mile from the convention center, where a small group of protesters gathered before marching on Monday. That demonstration was followed by dozens of Columbus police officers, wearing blue vests that read: "Columbus Police Dialogue."

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office said an autopsy was scheduled for Wednesday.

## Unity at the RNC, knocks on Trump's prosecutions and Senate politics: Takeaways from day 2

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Republican National Convention marched into its second day Tuesday, showcasing classic GOP themes like border security and public safety that have become the centerpieces of former President Donald Trump's campaign.

With Trump's primary rivals speaking, it was also an occasion for the GOP to demonstrate its unity, a sharp contrast to the Democratic party's mounting concerns over the viability of President Joe Biden.

Here are some takeaways from the convention's second day.

Republicans sought to show they are united — unlike Democrats

Donald Trump isn't known for easily moving past a grudge. He was so frustrated that some of his fellow Republicans dared to challenge his bid for this year's nomination that he wouldn't participate in the party's debates.

But on Tuesday, Trump watched from his box inside the convention hall as two of his most prominent primary challengers — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley — urged the party to unite behind its nominee.

Such moves aren't entirely unusual at a political convention, where much of the purpose is to bring together the party after a bruising primary. Bernie Sanders moved to nominate Hillary Clinton after their contentious 2016 contest. After a bitter primary, John McCain delivered a gracious speech in support of George W. Bush at the Republican convention in 2000.

But the appearances by Haley and DeSantis weren't notable solely because of their overtures to Trump. They represented the type of unity that seems increasingly out of reach for Democrats, who are openly questioning whether President Joe Biden is the right person to lead them into what both parties view as a historically consequential election in November.

Still, the GOP's efforts to demonstrate unity only went so far. Haley acknowledged that there are many voters who don't agree with Trump all the time and encouraged Republicans to appeal to a broader audi-



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 65 of 94

ence.

"We must not only be a unified party," she said. "We must also expand our party."

DeSantis, meanwhile, delivered red meat to a crowd that greeted him with a more enthusiastic response than it allowed for Haley.

"Let's send Joe Biden back to his basement and let's send Donald Trump back to the White House," DeSantis said as soon as he took the stage. "Donald Trump has been demonized, he's been sued, he's been prosecuted and he nearly lost his life. We can't let him down and we can't let America down."

The party praised law enforcement. But they railed against Trump's prosecutions

The theme of Tuesday's RNC festivities was "Make America Safe Once Again," which offered a central message of restoring "law and order," standing up for law enforcement and ending a "senseless crime spree."

"We believe in the rule of law," former GOP presidential hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy thundered from the rostrum.

That sentiment apparently does not extend to Trump or the long list of his associates and allies who have been indicted, imprisoned and — in some cases — pardoned by Trump.

Trump himself was convicted in May of 34 felonies related to a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor, becoming the first former president to be convicted of a crime.

His longtime ally Steve Bannon is currently serving a four-month contempt sentence for defying a congressional subpoena. Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, two Trump political advisers, were pardoned by Trump during his final weeks in office — Stone for witness tampering and lying to Congress, Manafort for financial crimes.

Then there's the web of people indicted in Trump's scheme to overturn the 2020 election, which Trump falsely insisted was stolen, a claim rejected in more than 60 court cases and by his own attorney general.

"We have a two-faced justice system," Savannah Chrisley, whose reality TV star parents are serving time for bank fraud and tax evasion, told the gathering of GOP delegates. "Just look at what they are doing Trump ... while Hunter Biden is roaming around free."

Like Trump, Hunter Biden, the president's son, was recently convicted of a crime. Also like Trump, he is free while he decides whether to appeal the case ahead of his sentencing date.

Let's not forget the Senate

The presidential race was obviously on the top of everyone in Milwaukee's minds. But Republicans also want to flip the Senate, and they highlighted seven of their candidates hoping to nab seats from Democrats.

Only one of them was greeted with significant applause. That was Kari Lake of Arizona, a strong Trump supporter who became a conservative celebrity when she denied that Trump had lost his 2020 race or that she'd been defeated in her bid for governor. All the Senate hopefuls had a common approach — slam Biden for his stewardship of the country and then link their opponent to the president.

"Americans are waking up to the truth about the disastrous Democrat policies pushed by Joe Biden and his favorite congressman, my opponent Ruben Gallego," Lake said.

"Tammy Baldwin called the Biden administration the most successful in generations," said Eric Hovde, naming Wisconsin's senior Democratic senator, whom he hopes to unseat.

"Sherrod Brown votes with Biden virtually 100% of the time," said Bernie Moreno of Ohio of that state's senior Democratic senator. "I don't know if I agree with my wife 100% of the time. But Sherrod and Joe seem to have a very close relationship."

The candidates had only a brief time to speak. Only one — Sam Brown of Nevada, whose face is scarred from a grave injury he suffered while serving in Afghanistan — sparked a reaction with his own story.

Overall, the Senate candidates didn't sketch out much of an individual agenda, instead hoping to tie their races to the presidential one. With most Senate elections going to the winner of the state's presidential election, and Republicans bullish on Trump's odds, it's not an unreasonable calculation.

## **6 Vietnamese and American guests found dead in a hotel room in Bangkok, with poisoning a possibility**

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and NAPAT KONGSAWAD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The bodies of six people were found Tuesday in a luxury hotel in downtown Bangkok and their deaths may have been caused by poisoning, police and officials said.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang identified the dead as two Vietnamese Americans and four Vietnamese nationals, and said there were three males and three females. Investigators said the bodies were foaming at the mouth, an officer from the Lumpini police station said on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to release information.

The victims had booked several rooms at the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel under seven names, and some were staying on a different floor from the room where they were found dead, Thiti said. Police are still looking for the seventh person included in the booking, Thiti said at a news conference at the hotel.

He said there were no signs of a struggle. The residents of the room where the bodies were found were supposed to have checked out earlier Tuesday and their luggage had already been packed, he said. The bodies were discovered by a maid who went to the room after they failed to check out and found it locked from the inside, Thiti said.

There was food that had been ordered earlier from room service that was left uneaten, but drinks had been consumed, Thiti said. He would not confirm a cause of death, but said the deaths appeared to have occurred about 24 hours before police arrived on the scene Tuesday evening after being called by hotel staff.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin went to the hotel in the evening, and later told journalists that the incident was neither a robbery nor a random assault, and that it should not affect Thailand's lucrative tourism industry.

Pending the results of autopsies, "Our hypothesis is that they ingested something that killed them," Srettha said.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said U.S. officials are aware of the reports of the deaths of two U.S. citizens in Bangkok.

"We offer our sincere condolences to the families on their loss. We are closely monitoring the situation and stand ready to provide consular assistance to those families," he told reporters in Washington.

## **Violence plagued all levels of American politics long before the attempt on Trump's life**

By JOHN HANNA, CAROLYN THOMPSON, GEOFF MULVIHILL and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press  
BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Long before a would-be assassin wounded former President Donald Trump, the fuse of political violence had been burning across America.

Members of Congress have been shot. One lawmaker's staffers in Virginia were attacked with a baseball bat. In Louisville, a bullet grazed the mayor's sweater after someone stormed into his campaign office. Someone put a tracking device on the Reno mayor's car. Officials in South Carolina received death threats over a solar panel plant. And outside Buffalo, a man threw a dummy pipe bomb through the window of a county clerk candidate's home — with a message reading: "If you don't drop out of this race, the next pipe bomb will be real."

"There are people who've come to me and said, 'I contemplated running for my town office, and I could never imagine my family going through what you did, so I chose not to,'" said Melissa Hartman, who was targeted in the pipe bomb episode and ran for county clerk after serving as town supervisor in Eden.

The attempt on Trump's life was the latest and most stunning example of political violence and harassment playing out regularly across America, shaking the foundations of democracy and causing grave concern the atmosphere will worsen as Election Day nears. Trump and President Joe Biden each called for unity after the shooting, with the president telling the nation, "We can't allow violence to be normalized."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 67 of 94

Intense partisanship, punctuated by violence, has long been a part of American politics. In 1798, congressmen from opposing parties brawled in the U.S. House chamber, beating each other with a cane and fireplace tongs. Four presidents have been killed by assassins, with other presidents and candidates wounded or targeted. Yet the attack on Trump evoked memories of more recent incidents.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords was wounded in a 2011 shooting outside an Arizona grocery store. Republican U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, now House majority leader, was shot in 2017 while practicing for a charity baseball game. Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan was the target of a foiled kidnaping plot uncovered in 2020.

Even after the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol shocked the world, political violence continued.

A man with a hammer bludgeoned the husband of then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, in their San Francisco home in 2022. Last year, a man with a history of mental illness went to the Fairfax, Virginia, district office of Democratic U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, looking to kill him with a baseball bat. Connolly wasn't there, so the man attacked two staffers.

And there are dozens of stories from far lesser-known political officials like Hartman.

She lost her county clerk race and hasn't sought elective office since in her town of 7,700. The man who threw the dummy pipe bomb pleaded guilty. Hartman said he was paid to do it by a neighbor, and she remains skittish two years later.

In York County, South Carolina, a suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina, County Council Chairwoman Christi Cox said that after the attempt on Trump, she felt compelled to speak about a letter she recently received. She'd sent her kids to get the mail and read it while they were nearby — a threat to kill her unless she stopped a solar panel manufacturer from building a \$150 million plant receiving council-approved incentives. Cox is a Republican; an additional letter threatening the council's only Democrat came to county offices.

"Our country is in a very dangerous and dark place right now, and I feel like some of that is spilling over to our community," she said at the council's Monday meeting. "The level of anger, hate, lies, accusations, fearmongering — it is rampant."

In Reno, Nevada, a far-right movement has targeted local politicians. Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve doesn't know whether someone in that movement had the tracking device put on her vehicle, and she tries to avoid going to public places alone.

"I think people really forget that we're human beings," she said.

In Louisville, Kentucky, in 2022, a man burst into Mayor Craig Greenberg's campaign headquarters, firing shots. A bullet grazed his sweater. Staffers were unharmed.

"Absolutely no good came from Saturday's heinous act," Greenberg said Monday. "But let's hope it's finally the wake-up call."

Michigan state Sen. Jeremy Moss called the assassination attempt a moment to "reset." Moss, who's Jewish and gay, faced personal threats over the years, including one from a man charged with using social media to threaten the lives of Jewish state officials.

"I hope this is a moment that all of us on all sides of the political spectrum can say we all were saved by that bullet missing President Trump," Moss said.

The attack came a day after governors at a National Governors Association meeting in Salt Lake City committed to collaborating on public service announcements and other campaigns to show voters they can get along with political rivals. The association's outgoing chair, Republican Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, warned "there is nothing that says that we aren't going to continue to tear ourselves apart," if "we don't do the work."

"We can disagree without hating each other," he said.

Cooling the political climate will require both a change in messaging at the top and a willingness of rank-and-file voters to move closer to those who disagree with them, said Austin Doctor, of the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center.

"It takes a lot of work and consistent commitment to the values of democracy," Doctor said. "The question that we have to continue to ask is: How do we veer out of this potential spiral?"

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 68 of 94

In Oklahoma, Pat McFerron, a pollster and GOP consultant, said closed-party primaries in safe districts encourage candidates to use extreme rhetoric. It would be toned down, he argued, in a single open primary.

"Most of the candidates I know, in their heart of hearts, are people who want to make a difference, who prefer an environment that wants consensus," McFerron said. "If you're going to be successful, you have to play the game that's in front of you."

Some Republicans — including vice presidential nominee JD Vance — quickly blamed Biden and other Democrats for portraying Trump as a threat to democracy. On Facebook, Alabama's GOP lieutenant governor, Will Ainsworth, held "the radical left" responsible and said its agenda attacks Christianity and is "evil incarnate."

Social media has helped fuel threats. In a 2021 survey of 112 public officials, the National League of Cities found the overwhelming majority — about 4 in 5 — experienced harassment, threats or violence. Most said it happened through social media; more than half said it also occurred at public meetings.

Threats of violence were amplified starting in 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic, as public health officials imposed restrictions. Ohio's state health director resigned after armed protesters came to her house; the health officer for Orange County, California, quit after weeks of criticism and threats over requiring face coverings in public.

And Trump's false narrative that the 2020 election was stolen has spawned threats against local election officials, making some miserable or anxious enough to quit. Many are closely watching the upcoming election.

"It's hard to imagine there is not an election jurisdiction in the country that now is not on high alert for the potential for political violence in the 2024 election," said David Levine, a former local election official in Idaho.

## **Israel's military will begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men on Sunday. It could rattle the government**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military on Tuesday said it would begin sending draft notices to Jewish ultra-Orthodox men on Sunday — a step that could destabilize Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

The announcement followed a landmark Supreme Court order for young religious men to begin enlisting for military service. Under long-standing political arrangements, ultra-Orthodox men had been exempt from the draft, which is compulsory for most Jewish men.

The exemptions created resentment among the general public in Israel, especially after more than nine months of war against Hamas militants in Gaza. The army summons is the beginning of a monthslong enlistment process that could be difficult to enforce if there is large-scale refusal to comply. The army did not say when it expects ultra-Orthodox men to begin serving or how many it expects to enlist.

The court ruled that the system of exemptions, which allow religious men to study in Jewish seminaries while others are forced to serve in the army, was discriminatory. Ultra-Orthodox leaders say religious study is equally important for the country's future and that their generations-old way of life will be threatened if their followers serve in the army.

Netanyahu's government relies on the support of ultra-Orthodox parties that oppose changes to the system. Religious leaders have not said what steps they will take. If they leave the ruling coalition, the government would likely topple and the country would be plunged into early elections two years ahead of schedule.

Past attempts to enlist ultra-Orthodox men have triggered mass protests in ultra-Orthodox communities.

Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox men blocked a main highway in central Israel for several hours on Tuesday in the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv. Police on horseback pushed the crowd back, and officers dragged protesters away. Police said nine people were arrested.

"The army is not an army for fighting. It's an army with indoctrination" against religion, said Yona Kay, a protester. "Therefore our children, our boys — and I have a son over here — will not go to the army, not for one minute."

On Monday night, dozens of ultra-Orthodox surrounded the cars of senior military commanders who were meeting with local rabbis in Bnei Brak to discuss an ultra-Orthodox unit in the army. The crowd threatened the officers, calling them "murderers" and throwing bottles, according to Israeli media.

## **Biden says cooling political rhetoric doesn't mean he'll 'stop telling the truth' about Trump**

By AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — President Joe Biden returned to the campaign trail on Tuesday for the first time since the attempted assassination of Donald Trump, continuing his calls to calm the divisive rhetoric on both sides but also arguing that doing so "doesn't mean we should stop telling the truth" about his Republican rival.

Addressing the NAACP convention in Las Vegas, Biden said curbing political violence in the country should mean combating all kinds of bloodshed — including reducing police brutality and banning weapons like the AR-style rifle used in the weekend attack on the former president.

"Our politics have become too heated," Biden said.

That didn't stop him from tearing into Trump, though, listing why the former president's administration was "hell" for Black Americans, including his mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, skyrocketing unemployment amid early lockdowns and attempts to, as Biden put it, erase Black history.

"Just because we must lower the temperature in our politics as it relates to violence doesn't mean we should stop telling the truth," Biden told the crowd that often broke into chants of "Four more years!"

The president is aiming to showcase his administration's support for Black voters who are a tentpole of the Democratic coalition and of his personal political support. As part of his swing in Nevada, he did an interview with BET and was set to address on Wednesday the Hispanic advocacy group UnidosUS, another crucial Democratic-leaning bloc.

Asked during the BET interview about waning enthusiasm for his reelection among Black Americans, Biden said such voters should turn out for him "because they know where my heart is. They know where my head is."

He added that many Americans, especially young voters, weren't watching the election closely until recently and "we're just getting down to gametime now."

For the NAACP crowd, Biden seized on Trump recently referencing "Black jobs," drawing big applause by joking, "I love the phrase."

"I know what a Black job is. It's the vice president of the United States," Biden said of Vice President Kamala Harris, who he added "could be president." He also referenced Barack Obama as the nation's first Black president, and his own appointment to the Supreme Court of its first Black and female justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Biden's trip comes as Democrats have been engaged in a weeks-long crisis of confidence over his candidacy after his devastating debate with Trump last month. The president's shaky performance inflamed voter concerns about his age, fitness for office and capacity to defeat Trump once again.

Republicans, for their part, are demonstrating that they are more coalesced than ever around Trump amid their national convention in Milwaukee.

The 81-year-old Biden has rejected a flurry of calls from within his party to step aside, restating his belief that he is the best-positioned Democrat to beat Trump. He has relied heavily on his support among Black and Latino elected officials.

The president made indirect reference to unrest in his own party on Tuesday, recalling President Harry S. Truman famously saying, "If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog."

"After the last couple of weeks, I know what he means," Biden said.

Biden promised to use the first 100 days of a second term to oversee congressional approval of a dra-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 70 of 94

matic expansion of voting rights — something he's been unable to so far. He also renewed earlier promises to "end medical debt."

"I know the good Lord hasn't brought us this far to leave us now," Biden told the convention, offering overtly religious tones.

Trump has tried to appeal to both Black and Latino voters, hoping to capitalize on Biden's sagging favorability. While it's not clear that the loss of enthusiasm for Biden has helped Trump's approval with those groups, any marginal loss of support for Biden could prove pivotal in a close race.

The president and his campaign hit pause on their criticisms of Trump in the immediate aftermath of the shooting Saturday at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania, where the Republican candidate was injured in the ear, a rallygoer was killed and two others seriously injured.

In an Oval Office address on Sunday night, Biden called on Americans to reject political violence and for political leaders to "cool it down." In a Monday interview with NBC News he allowed that he made a "mistake" when he told campaign donors that he wanted to put a "bull's-eye" on Trump, but argued that the rhetoric from his opponent was more incendiary.

"Look, how do you talk about the threat to democracy, which is real, when a president says things like he says?" Biden said. "Do you just not say anything because it may incite somebody?"

NAACP President Derrick Johnson, in an interview, sidestepped questions about whether Biden should bow out of the race. He instead focused on the need for Black voters to hear "solutions" on issues like inflation, education and attacks on civil rights, which are among the top concerns for Black communities in this election.

"We want to focus on the policy goals of whoever occupies the White House in the next term," Johnson said. He added that Black voters would dismiss candidates "concerned with personality and sound bites."

Later, speaking at an economic summit hosted by Congressional Black Caucus Chair and Rep. Steven Horsford at the College of Southern Nevada's campus in North Las Vegas, Biden announced that the regional housing authority and municipal officials would receive a \$50 million federal grant to build 400 affordable housing units — playing up his attempts to lower rents in a state where housing costs are a critical political issue.

The president also talked about his administration's efforts to ease the effects of extreme heat on the workforce, while continuing to lay into his opponent in November's election.

"Trump says he doesn't believe climate change is real. Maybe he should step out here in Vegas, where it's 120 degrees, in his bare feet," Biden said as the crowd hooted.

Biden also stopped briefly at Mario's Westside Market, a grocery store in a predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhood.

The president is also proposing to cap rent increases at 5% for tenants whose landlords own over 50 units. If landlords hiked rents by more than that, they would lose access to some tax write-offs. But doing that would require congressional approval that Biden is unlikely to receive with a House Republican majority.

Trump has also used Nevada to float new economic policies. He said he would end taxes on the tips received by workers in the service-industry focused state, a concept that has since been endorsed by Nevada's Democratic senators, Jacky Rosen and Catherine Cortez Masto.

## Amazon Prime Day is a big event for scammers, experts warn

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon Prime Day is here, and experts are reminding consumers to be wary of scams.

Deceptions such as phony emails from people impersonating online retailers like Amazon are nothing new. But phishing attempts increase amid the heavy spending seen during significant sales events, whether it's Black Friday or Prime Day, according to the Better Business Bureau.

"This is a huge moment on the retail calendar," Josh Planos, vice president of communications and public relations at the Better Business Bureau, previously told The Associated Press. "And because of that, it represents an enormous opportunity for a scammer, con artist or even just an unethical business or

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 71 of 94

organization to capitalize on the moment and separate folks from their hard-earned money.”

Prime Day, a two-day discount event for Amazon Prime members, kicks off on Tuesday and runs through Wednesday. In updated guidance published last week, the Better Business Bureau reminded consumers to watch out for lookalike websites, too-good-to-be-true social media ads, and unsolicited emails or calls during sales events this month.

Consumers might need to be more vigilant this year than ever before. In June, the Better Business Bureau published a report that said it received a record number of phishing reports in 2023. Reports are also trending up so far this year, the organization said.

Meanwhile, in a report released this month, the Israel-founded cybersecurity company Check Point Software Technologies said more than 1,230 new websites that associated themselves with Amazon popped up in June. The vast majority of them were malicious or appeared suspicious, according to Check Point.

Scott Knapp, director of worldwide buyer risk prevention at Amazon, identifies two areas that the company has seen hoaxes around come Prime Day in recent years: Prime membership and order confirmations.

Last year, for example, more than two-third of scams reported by Amazon customers claimed to be related to order or account issues, Knapp wrote in an emailed statement. People reported getting unsolicited calls or emails saying there was something wrong with their Prime membership and seeking bank account or other payment information to reinstate the accounts, Knapp explained.

Urging consumers to confirm an order they didn't place is also a common tactic at this time of year, he added. Scammers might pick something expensive, like a smartphone, to get attention — and again ask for payment information or send a malicious link. They might also try to lure in consumers with promises of a giveaway, or by using language that creates a false sense of urgency.

Amazon is attempting “to ensure scammers are not using our brand to take advantage of people who trust us,” Knapp wrote, adding that customers can confirm their purchases and verify messages from the company on its app or website.

Additional scams are probably out there, but it's hard to know what form they might take before this year's Prime Day begins. Still, experts note that the same shopping scams tend to resurface year after year.

“Typically, the bones remain the same,” Planos said, pointing to fake delivery scams, email phishing and other repeated methods. “It's always a ploy to separate consumers from (their) personal and payment information.”

But online hoaxes are also constantly evolving to become more sophisticated, Planos and others warn. That means images might look more legitimate, text messages may sound more convincing and fake websites that look very similar to real shopping destinations.

Amazon's Knapp has said that with artificial intelligence “starting to leak in,” the scams targeting e-commerce shoppers follow the same approach but with a machine populating an email or text instead of a person.

According to data from the Federal Trade Commission, consumers reported losing about \$10 billion to fraud in 2023, a 14% jump from 2022. Online shopping scams were the second most-reported form of fraud, following impostor scams, the FTC said.

Both the FTC and Better Business Bureau provide consumers with tips to avoid scams year-round. Guidance includes blocking unwanted messages, not giving financial information to unsolicited callers and checking links before clicking — secure websites, for example, will have “HTTPS” in the URL, Planos notes, never “HTTP.”

Scammers will often pressure you to act immediately, experts say. It's important to pause and trust your gut. Experts also urge consumers to report scams to regulators.

Beyond scams that impersonate companies or retailers, it's also important to be cautious of counterfeit products and fake reviews on the sites of trusted retailers. Just because you're shopping on Amazon, for example, doesn't mean you're buying from Amazon. The online shopping giant, like eBay, Walmart and others, has vast third-party marketplaces.

The quality and look of counterfeit products has significantly increased over recent years, Planos notes, making the activity difficult to police. A good rule of thumb is looking at the price tag — if the product is

being sold for less than 75% of its year-round market rate, "that's a pretty big red flag," he says.

Sketchy sellers can show up on different platforms, including sites like Amazon, "all the time" Planos said, urging consumers to check out companies on the Better Business Bureau's website. Like other scams, counterfeit products may increase around high spending periods.

Amid increasing pressure to tackle counterfeit products, Amazon has reported getting rid of millions of phony products in recent years. The company said it also blocked billions of bad listings from making it on to its site. In 2023, Amazon said more than 7 million counterfeit items were "identified, seized and appropriately disposed of." The online retailer has also filed multiple lawsuits against fake review brokers.

Amazon notes customers can also report fake reviews and other scams on its website. If a shopper purchases a counterfeit item detected by the company, Amazon has said it will "proactively contact" the customer and provide a refund.

## **Biden seriously considering proposals on Supreme Court term limits, ethics code, AP sources say**

By COLLEEN LONG and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is seriously considering proposals to establish term limits for U.S. Supreme Court justices, and an ethics code that would be enforceable under law amid growing concerns that the justices are not held accountable, according to three people briefed on the plans.

It would mark a major shift for Biden, the former head of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who has long resisted calls to reform the high court, though since taking office he has been increasingly vocal about his belief that the court is abandoning mainstream constitutional interpretation. The details were first reported by The Washington Post.

Any changes would require congressional approval, which would be unlikely in a divided Congress. But with Republican nominee Donald Trump bragging about putting the three justices on the high court who are now part of the conservative majority, Biden's call for major changes could help animate his voters.

Biden is also considering calling for a constitutional amendment that would eliminate the broad immunity for presidents granted by the court in its most recent term, after Donald Trump claimed he was immune from prosecution for his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters violently descended on the U.S. Capitol.

The people were not authorized to speak publicly about proposals that have not been finalized and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The consideration of such proposals comes in response to growing outrage among Democrats about high court opinions that overturned landmark decisions on abortion rights and federal regulatory powers that had stood for decades. There have also been increasing questions surrounding the ethics of the court after revelations about some of the justices, including that Clarence Thomas had accepted luxury trips from a GOP megadonor.

Biden in an interview with BET on Tuesday predicted "there are probably going to be two more appointments" in the coming four years when justices retire and blamed Trump for nominating three conservative justices who helped overturn Roe v. Wade. "Just imagine if he has two more appointments, what that means," he said.

The Supreme Court did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the proposal.

Biden, speaking in a weekend call with the Congressional Progressive Caucus, talked about the possibility, the people said. Biden often tells voters they need more Democrats in Congress and a Democrat in the White House to counter the impact of the conservative-leaning court, but these proposals would go much further.

"And by the way, I'm going to need your help on the Supreme Court, because I'm about to come out. I don't want to prematurely announce it, but I'm about to come out with a major initiative on limiting the court and what we do and — I've been working with constitutional scholars for the last three months, and I need some help," he said, according to a transcript of the call.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 73 of 94

About 2 in 3 Americans say they favor term limits or a mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court justices, according to a 2022 poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

According to June survey on the court, confidence remains low: 4 in 10 U.S. adults say they have hardly any confidence in the people running the Supreme Court.

The survey found that 7 in 10 Americans think the high court's justices are more influenced by ideology, while only about 3 in 10 U.S. adults think the justices are more likely to provide an independent check on other branches of government by being fair and impartial.

In November, the court adopted its first code of ethics. The policy, agreed to by all nine justices, does not appear to impose any significant new requirements and leaves compliance entirely to each justice.

Republicans have focused for years on remaking the federal judiciary and Supreme Court. When Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was the majority leader, he refused to even meet in 2016 with Obama's pick for the high court — current Attorney General Merrick Garland, a federal judge at that time. The nomination stalled until a Republican president, Trump, took over.

Establishment GOP operatives backed Trump because of his pledge to name as many judges to the bench as possible. Their gamble worked. Trump ended up with three Supreme Court nominees and 54 federal appeals court judges, reshaping the courts for a generation.

Democrats are now finally understanding the power of judges as a voting tool, and Biden has made judicial nominations a priority, appointing a record number of judges for a president at this point in his first term, including some of the most diverse picks yet to the judiciary. Biden often speaks about those accomplishments during his reelection campaign, but Democrats have pushed him to go further.

Trump, in a post on his Truth Social platform, panned the possible Biden move, saying: "The Democrats are attempting to interfere in the Presidential Election, and destroy our Justice System, by attacking their Political Opponent, ME, and our Honorable Supreme Court. We have to fight for our Fair and Independent Courts, and protect our Country."

## **Biden and Trump offer worlds-apart contrasts on issues in 2024's rare contest between two presidents**

By SEUNG MIN KIM, JILL COLVIN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden and Donald Trump are two presidents with unfinished business and an itch to get it done.

Their track records and plans on abortion, immigration, taxes, wars abroad — you name it — leave no doubt that the man voters choose in November will seek to shape the landscape of American life in ways wholly distinct from the other.

The recent assassination attempt against Trump left Biden and his opponent both urging national unity in a rare moment of overlap. But it's unclear how long that will last: Biden has largely built his reelection campaign around criticizing Trump as a menace to democracy and the nation's founding principles; the former president has long been a sharp Biden critic who relishes bombast and is known for holding political grudges.

On nearly every issue, the choices — if the winner gets his way — are sharply defined.

The onward march of regulation and incentives to restrain climate change, or a slow walk if not an about-face. Higher taxes on the super rich, or not. Abortion rights reaffirmed, or left to states to restrict or allow as each decides. Another attempt to legislate border security and orderly entry into the country, or massive deportations. A commitment to stand with Ukraine or let go.

At no time in living memory have two presidents, current and former, competed for the office. Not since Presidents Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, both Republicans, in 1912, and that didn't work out for either of them — Democrat Woodrow Wilson won that three-way race.

More than a century later, voters again get to judge two presidents on their records alongside their promises for the next four years. Here's where they stand on 10 of the top issues:

ABORTION

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 74 of 94

**BIDEN:** The president has called for Congress to send him legislation that would codify in federal law the right to an abortion, which stood for nearly 50 years before being overturned by the Supreme Court. He has also criticized statewide bans on abortion in Republican states and says he will veto any potential nationwide ban should one come to his desk. In the absence of legislation, his administration has taken narrower actions, such as proposals that would protect women who travel to obtain abortions and limit how law enforcement collects medical records.

**TRUMP:** The former president often brags about appointing the Supreme Court justices who overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending the constitutional right to an abortion. After dodging questions about when in pregnancy he believes the procedure should be restricted, Trump announced in April that decisions on access and cutoffs should be left to the states. He said he would not sign a national abortion ban into law. But he's declined to say whether he would try to limit access to the abortion pill mifepristone. He told *Time* magazine that it should also be left up to states to determine whether to prosecute women for abortions or to monitor their pregnancies.

## CLIMATE/ENERGY

**BIDEN:** In a second term, Biden could be expected to continue his focus on implementing the climate provisions of his Inflation Reduction Act, which provided nearly \$375 billion for things like financial incentives for electric cars and clean energy projects. Biden is also enlisting more than 20,000 young people in a national "Climate Corps," a Peace Corps-like program to promote conservation through tasks such as weatherizing homes and repairing wetlands. Biden wants to triple the group's size this decade. Despite all this, it's unlikely that the U.S. will be on track to meet Biden's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

**TRUMP:** His mantra for one of his top policy priorities: "DRILL, BABY, DRILL." Trump, who in the past cast climate change as a "hoax" and harbors a particular disdain for wind power, says it's his goal for the U.S. to have the cheapest energy and electricity in the world. He'd increase oil drilling on public lands, offer tax breaks to oil, gas and coal producers, speed the approval of natural gas pipelines and roll back the Biden administration's aggressive efforts to get people to switch to electric cars, which he argues have a place but shouldn't be forced on consumers. He has also pledged to re-exit the Paris Climate Accords, end wind subsidies and eliminate regulations imposed and proposed by the Biden administration targeting energy-inefficient kinds of lightbulbs, stoves, dishwashers and shower heads.

## DEMOCRACY/RULE OF LAW

**BIDEN:** Protecting democracy has been the *raison d'être* behind Biden's decision to run for reelection. In a symbolic nod to the Revolutionary War, Biden delivered his first campaign speech of 2024 near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where he spoke of George Washington's decision to step down as the leader of the Continental Army after American independence was won. During the Jan. 5 speech, Biden said this year's presidential contest is "all about" whether U.S. democracy will survive and he regularly condemns Trump's denial that he lost the 2020 general election. Biden has called the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol a "day that we nearly lost America — lost it all."

**TRUMP:** The former president, who famously refused to accept his loss to Biden in 2020, has not committed to accepting the results this time. "If everything's honest, I'll gladly accept the results," Trump told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "If it's not, you have to fight for the right of the country." He has said he will pardon the Jan. 6 defendants jailed for assaulting police officers and other crimes during the attack on the Capitol. He vows to overhaul the Justice Department and FBI "from the ground up," aggrieved by the criminal charges the department has brought against him. He also promises to deploy the National Guard to cities such as Chicago that are struggling with violent crime, and in response to protests, and has also vowed to appoint a special prosecutor to go after Biden.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

**BIDEN:** The Biden administration is already taking steps to make it harder for any mass firings of civil servants to occur. In April, the Office of Personnel Management issued a new rule that would ban federal workers from being reclassified as political appointees or other at-will employees, thus making them easier to dismiss. That was in response to Schedule F, a 2020 executive order from Trump that reclassified tens

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 75 of 94

of thousands of federal workers to make firing them easier.

TRUMP: The former president vows an overhaul of the federal bureaucracy, which he has long blamed for stymying his first term agenda: "I will totally obliterate the deep state." He plans to reissue the Schedule F order stripping civil service protections. He'd then move to fire "rogue bureaucrats," including those who "weaponized our justice system," and the "warmongers and America-Last globalists in the Deep State, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the national security industrial complex." He's pledged to terminate the Education Department and wants to curtail the independence of regulatory agencies like the Federal Communications Commission.

## IMMIGRATION

BIDEN: The president continues to advocate for the comprehensive immigration bill he introduced on his first day in office, which would grant an eight-year pathway to citizenship for immigrants in the U.S. without legal status, with a faster track for young immigrants living in the country illegally who were brought here as children. That legislation went nowhere in Congress. This year, facing large numbers of people crossing the border illegally, the president backed a Senate compromise that included tougher asylum standards and billions more in federal dollars to hire more border agents, immigration judges and asylum officers. That deal collapsed on Capitol Hill due to Trump's opposition. Biden instead issued two major executive actions on the border in recent months, one tightening U.S. asylum restrictions and the other offering potential citizenship to hundreds of thousands of immigrants without legal status in the U.S.

TRUMP: The former president promises to mount the largest domestic deportation in U.S. history — an operation that could include detention camps and the National Guard. He'd bring back policies he put in place during his first term, like the Remain in Mexico program and Title 42, which placed curbs on migrants on public health grounds. And he'd revive and expand the travel ban that originally targeted citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, he pledged new "ideological screening" for immigrants to bar "dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs." He'd also try to deport people who are in the U.S. legally but harbor "jihadist sympathies." He'd seek to end birthright citizenship for people born in the U.S. whose parents are both in the country illegally.

## ISRAEL/GAZA

BIDEN: The war in Gaza, more than other national security considerations, has defined Biden's foreign policy this year, with significant political implications. He has offered full-throated support for Israel since Hamas militants launched a surprise deadly assault on Oct. 7. But as the death toll in Gaza rose sharply, Biden faced massive backlash at home. In May he proposed a three-phased hostage for extended cease-fire deal that aims to bring all remaining hostages and Israeli dead home. Biden believes the deal could lead to a permanent end to the grinding nine-month war. He also calls for a two-state solution, which would have Israel existing alongside an independent Palestinian state.

TRUMP: The former president has expressed support for Israel's efforts to "destroy" Hamas but he's also been critical of some of Israel's tactics. He says the country must finish the job quickly and get back to peace. He has called for more aggressive responses to pro-Palestinian protests at college campuses and applauded police efforts to clear encampments. Trump also proposes to revoke the student visas of those who espouse antisemitic or anti-American views.

## LGBTQ+ ISSUES

BIDEN: The president and White House officials regularly denounce discrimination and attacks against the LGBTQ+ community. Shortly after he took office, Biden reversed an executive order from Trump that had largely banned transgender people from military service, and his Education Department issued a rule that says Title IX, the 1972 law that was passed to protect women's rights, also bars discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. That rule was silent on the issue of transgender athletes.

TRUMP: The former president has pledged to keep transgender women out of women's sports and says he will ask Congress to pass a bill establishing that "only two genders," as determined at birth, are recognized by the United States. He promises to "defeat the toxic poison of gender ideology." As part of his crackdown on gender-affirming care, he would declare that any health care provider that participates in the "chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth" no longer meets federal health and safety standards

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 76 of 94

and won't get federal money. He'd take similarly punitive steps in schools against any teacher or school official who "suggests to a child that they could be trapped in the wrong body." Trump would support a national prohibition of hormonal or surgical intervention for transgender minors and bar transgender people from military service.

## NATO/UKRAINE

**BIDEN:** The president has spent much of his time rebuilding alliances unraveled by Trump, particularly NATO, a critical bulwark against Russian aggression. Since the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Biden has pledged unceasing support to Kyiv and he made an unannounced visit there in February 2023 in a show of solidarity. His administration and Congress have sent tens of billions of dollars in military and other aid to Ukraine. The latest tranche of aid totaled \$61 billion in weapons, ammunition and other assistance and is expected to last through this year. Continued U.S. assistance is critical, Biden says, because he argues that Russian leader Vladimir Putin will not stop at invading Ukraine.

**TRUMP:** The former president has repeatedly taken issue with U.S. aid to Ukraine and says he will continue to "fundamentally reevaluate" the mission and purpose of the NATO alliance if he returns to office. He has claimed, without explanation, that he will be able to end the war before his inauguration by bringing both sides to the negotiating table. (His approach seems to hinge on Ukraine giving up at least some of its Russian-occupied territory in exchange for a cease-fire.) On NATO, he has assailed member nations for years for failing to hit agreed-upon military spending targets. Trump drew alarms this year when he said that, as president, he had warned leaders that he would not only refuse to defend nations that don't hit those targets, but "would encourage" Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" to countries that are "delinquent."

## TARIFFS/TRADE

**BIDEN:** This is where Biden and his protectionist tendencies — in a continued appeal to working-class voters — have some similarities with Trump. Biden is calling for a tripling of tariffs on Chinese steel, a move that would shield U.S. producers from cheaper imports. His administration in May said it would raise the tariff rate on steel and aluminum to 25% from 7.5%. Biden has also said he opposes the proposed acquisition of U.S. Steel by Japan's Nippon Steel, because it is "vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated."

**TRUMP:** The former president wants a dramatic expansion of tariffs, proposing a levy of perhaps 10% or higher on nearly all imported foreign goods. Penalties would increase if trade partners manipulate their currencies or engage in other unfair trading practices. He would also urge Congress to pass legislation giving the president authority to impose a reciprocal tariff on any country that imposes one on the U.S. Much of his trade agenda has focused on China. Trump has proposed phasing out Chinese imports of essential goods including electronics, steel and pharmaceuticals and wants to ban Chinese companies from owning U.S. infrastructure in sectors such as energy, technology and farmland. Whether higher tariffs come from a Biden administration or a Trump one, they are likely to raise prices for consumers who have already faced higher costs from inflation.

## TAXES

**BIDEN:** The president has proposed raising the corporate tax rate to 28% and the corporate minimum tax to 21% as a matter of "fundamental fairness" that will bring in more money to invest in Americans. The current corporate rate is 21% and the corporate minimum, raised under the Inflation Reduction Act, is at 15% for companies making more than \$1 billion a year. Biden also wants to require billionaires to pay at least 25% of their income in taxes and to restore the child tax credit that was enacted under his 2021 COVID-19 relief package, but has since expired.

**TRUMP:** The former president has promised to extend the 2017 tax cuts that he signed into law and are set to expire at the end of 2025. That package cut the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% and roughly doubled the standard deduction and child tax credit. Those elements will remain until and unless a new law changes them, but many other tax cuts in Trump's package will lapse without further action by Congress. Trump says he wants to trim the corporate tax rate further — to as low as 15% — and repeal any tax increases that occurred under Biden. Trump also promised to eliminate taxes on tipped income — though doing so would probably require congressional approval.

## Sen. Bob Menendez guilty of taking bribes in cash and gold and acting as Egypt's foreign agent

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez was convicted of all charges Tuesday in a sweeping corruption trial in which he was accused of accepting bribes of gold and cash from three New Jersey businessmen and acting as an agent for the Egyptian government.

A jury in Manhattan deliberated for parts of three days before finding the Democrat guilty of 16 crimes, including bribery, extortion, honest services fraud, obstruction of justice and conspiracy.

Prosecutor said he abused the power of his office to protect allies from criminal investigations and enrich associates, including his wife, through acts that included meeting with Egyptian intelligence officials and softening his position toward that country as he speeded its access to millions of dollars in U.S. military aid.

Menendez, 70, looked toward the jury at times and appeared to mark a document in front of him as the verdict was read. Afterward, he sat resting his chin against his closed hands, elbows on the table. He vowed to appeal as he left the courthouse.

"I have never violated my public oath. I have never been anything but a patriot of my country and for my country. I have never, ever been a foreign agent," Menendez said before a collection of microphones before walking briskly to a waiting car.

Menendez did not testify at the nine-week trial, but insisted publicly that he was only doing his job as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He said gold bars found in his New Jersey home by the FBI belonged to his wife, Nadine Menendez. She too was charged, but her trial was postponed so she could recover from breast cancer surgery. She has pleaded not guilty.

The verdict potentially dooms Menendez's chances of winning reelection as an independent.

The trial's outcome prompted a chorus of Democrats to call on Menendez to resign, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, New Jersey's junior senator, Corey Booker, and the party's nominee to replace Menendez, Rep. Andy Kim.

"In light of this guilty verdict, Senator Menendez must now do what is right for his constituents, the Senate, and our country, and resign," Schumer's statement said.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, who would appoint Menendez's replacement, urged the Senate to expel him if he doesn't resign. It's not clear whether Schumer would be willing to hold those votes. Expulsion requires a two-thirds majority. A senator has not been removed from office in over a century.

Curtis Bashaw, the Republican candidate for the seat, also called on Menendez to quit, saying New Jersey deserves better than "corruption and made-for-tv political scandals, courtesy of Bob Menendez and the Democratic machine."

The Senate Ethics Committee, meanwhile, will complete its own investigation of Menendez "promptly" and consider a "full range of disciplinary actions," according to a statement from Democrat Chris Coons and Republican James Lankford, the committee's chairman and vice-chairman.

Menendez faces the possibility of decades in prison. Judge Sidney H. Stein scheduled sentencing for Oct. 29, a week before Election Day.

This was the second corruption trial for Menendez. An earlier prosecution on unrelated charges in 2017 ended with a deadlocked jury.

"This case has always been about shocking levels of corruption, hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes in the form of cash, gold bars, a Mercedes-Benz. This wasn't politics as usual, this was politics for profit. And now that a jury has convicted Bob Menendez, his years of selling his office to the highest bidder have finally come to an end," U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said outside the courthouse.

Two co-defendants were also convicted. The New Jersey businessmen, Wael Hana and Fred Daibes, were accused of paying bribes. A third businessman, Jose Uribe, pleaded guilty prior to trial and testified against the others.

Hana's lawyer, Lawrence Lustberg, said he would file motions to set aside the verdict. The American system of justice "has, in his view, let him down," Lustberg said. Daibes' lawyer, César de Castro, also

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 78 of 94

promised an appeal, saying: "We think the result was wrong."

The trial took place in a federal courthouse a little more than a block from the state courthouse where former President Donald Trump was convicted in May of falsifying business records. The two powerful men were on trial simultaneously for weeks.

The jury's decision followed a lengthy probe that included a June 2022 FBI raid on Menendez's home in Englewood Cliffs, a wealthy community just across the Hudson River from New York City. FBI agents seized nearly \$150,000 worth of gold bars and \$480,000 in cash, mostly in stacks of \$100 bills, stuffed in boots, shoeboxes and jackets. In the garage was a Mercedes-Benz convertible.

Prosecutors argued that the gold, cash and car were bribes. Menendez's lawyers disputed that, arguing that the gold belonged to his wife and she had kept him in the dark about financial troubles so grim that she nearly lost the home to foreclosure. They said the senator habitually hoarded money because his parents escaped Cuba in 1951 with only the cash they had hidden in a grandfather clock.

More shocking, though, were allegations that Menendez had earned some of the treasure by using his powerful perch on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to benefit Egypt, an important U.S. ally but one often subject to American criticism over alleged human rights abuses.

Prosecutors said Nadine Menendez held herself out as a conduit to her powerful husband, exchanging texts with an Egyptian general and helping to arrange a Washington visit by the chief of Egypt's intelligence service. To one general she texted, "Anytime you need anything you have my number and we will make everything happen."

Sen. Menendez, prosecutors said, took actions to ingratiate himself with Egyptian officials, including providing them with information about the staff at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and ghostwriting a letter to fellow senators encouraging them to lift a hold on \$300 million in military aid. The senator also told his wife to let her Egyptian contacts know he planned to sign off on \$99 million in tank ammunition.

Prosecutors said serial numbers on the gold bars and fingerprints on tape that bound together the stacks of cash were traced to Hana and Daibes.

Prosecutors said Menendez took numerous actions to benefit the businessmen, including protecting Egypt's decision to award Hana a lucrative monopoly to certify that meat sent to Egypt met Islamic dietary requirements. Menendez asked a U.S. agriculture official to drop his opposition to the monopoly deal despite concerns it would drive up prices.

Uribe testified at the trial that he paid for Nadine Menendez to get a Mercedes-Benz convertible in exchange for the senator's help assuring that his insurance business would not be affected by New Jersey criminal probes of a trucking company belonging to his friend.

Prosecutors also said Sen. Menendez attempted to interfere in a federal criminal prosecution of Daibes, a politically influential real estate developer accused of bank fraud. The U.S. attorney for New Jersey, Philip Sellinger, testified at the trial that Menendez questioned him about the Daibes prosecution and said he believed he was "being treated unfairly."

Prosecutors also presented evidence that Menendez took actions favorable to Qatar's government to help Daibes secure a multimillion-dollar deal with a Qatari investment fund.

Menendez's political career began in 1974 when, only two years out of high school, he was elected to the education board in Union City, New Jersey. He later served in the state legislature, then was elected to the U.S. House in 1992. He became a U.S. senator in 2006.

Menendez had the dubious distinction of being the only U.S. senator indicted twice.

In 2015, he was charged with letting a wealthy Florida eye doctor buy his influence through luxury vacations and campaign contributions. After a jury couldn't reach a unanimous verdict in 2017, New Jersey federal prosecutors dropped the case rather than put him on trial again.

Voters accepted the mistrial as an exoneration and returned Menendez to the Senate.

After his second indictment last summer, Menendez claimed he was being persecuted, saying some people "cannot accept that a first-generation Latino American from humble beginnings could rise to be a U.S. Senator."

## Educators wonder how to teach the writings of Alice Munro in wake of daughter's revelations

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For decades, Robert Lecker has read, taught and written about Alice Munro, the Nobel laureate from Canada renowned for her short stories. A professor of English at McGill University in Montreal, and author of numerous critical studies of Canadian fiction, he has thought of Munro as the “jewel” in the crown of her country’s literature and source of some of the richest material for classroom discussion.

But since learning that Munro declined to leave her husband after he had sexually assaulted and harassed her daughter, Lecker now wonders how to teach her work, or if he should even try.

“I had decided to teach a graduate course on Munro in the winter of 2025,” Lecker says. “Now I have serious questions whether I feel ethically capable of offering that course.”

Andrea Robin Skinner, daughter of Munro and James Munro, wrote in the Toronto Star earlier this month that she had been assaulted at age 9 by Munro’s second husband, Gerard Fremlin. She alleged that he continued to harass and abuse her for the next few years, losing interest when she reached her teens. In her 20s, she told her mother about Fremlin’s abuse. But Munro, after briefly leaving Fremlin, returned and remained with him until his death in 2013. She would explain to Skinner that she “loved him too much” to remain apart.

When Munro died in May at age 92, she was celebrated worldwide for narratives which documented rare insight into her characters’ secrets, motivations, passions and cruelties, especially those of girls and women. Admirers cited her not just as a literary inspiration, but as a kind of moral guide, sometimes described as “Saint Alice.” A New York Times essay that ran shortly after her death, by Canadian author Sheila Heti, was titled “I Don’t Write Like Alice Munro, But I Want to Live Like Her.”

“No one knows the compromises another makes, especially when that person is as private as she was and transforms her trials into fiction,” Heti wrote. “Yet whatever the truth of her daily existence, she still shines as a symbol of artistic purity.”

Educators in Canada and beyond are now rethinking her life and work. At Western University in London, Ontario, Munro’s alma mater, the school has posted a statement on its website saying that it was “taking time to carefully consider the impact” of the revelations. Since 2018, Western University has offered an Alice Munro Chair in Creativity, with a mission to “Lead the creative culture of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, serving as a mentor and a model.” That chair, held for the past academic year by Heti, will be left unfilled as “we carefully consider Munro’s legacy and her ties to Western,” according to the school.

Requests with Heti’s agent and publicists for comment were not immediately answered.

For the fall semester at Harvard University, authors and faculty members Laura van den Berg and Neel Mukherjee will be co-teaching “Reading for Fiction Writers,” a review of literary works ranging from the science fiction of Octavia Butler to the “realist” fiction of Munro. Van den Berg, a prize-winning writer whose books include the story collection “The Isle of Youth” and the novel “State of Paradise,” says that Munro’s failure to support Skinner has forced her to rethink her approach to the class.

“I’ll never read Munro the same way again, and won’t be teaching her the same way,” she says. “To me, what was so painful about what Andrea Skinner has been through is the silence. And feeling that she could break her silence after her mother was gone. To me, to just stand in front a group of students and read the lecture I had originally prepared would feel like a second silencing.”

A former student of Lecker’s, Kellie Elrick, says she is still figuring out how Munro should be taught and how to think of her work. Munro’s stories have enriched her life, she says, and she doesn’t regret reading them. Elrick, entering her fourth year at McGill, sees parallel narratives, “difficult to reconcile,” of “Munro the writer” and “Munro the mother.”

“I think that it’s perhaps both productive and dangerous to read an author’s work biographically,” she added. “It may allow us (the readers) to think we may understand things, but there are things we can never truly know about the lives and intentions of writers.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 80 of 94

One of the Munro stories that van den Berg and Mukherjee plan to teach is "Friend of My Youth," narrated by a woman long estranged from her mother, whose "ideas were in line with some progressive notions of her times, and mine echoed the notions that were favored in mine." Mukherjee, a Booker Prize finalist in 2014 for the novel "The Lives of Others," is unsure about how, or whether, to work in the recent news about Munro when teaching "Friend of My Youth," which the author had dedicated to her own mother.

He believes in separating the "art from the artist, that we all have done bad things." He considers himself "very conflicted," sharing van den Berg's horror that Munro chose her husband over her daughter, but also finding that her work may have gained "richer depth, now that we know something in her life that she may have been trying to come to terms with."

"I don't see writers as would-be saints," he says.

## A dam fails after rain, wind, tornadoes pound the Midwest.

### The Chicago area is cleaning up

By MELISSA PEREZ WINDER, ED WHITE and JIM SALTER Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Hundreds of people in a southern Illinois town were ordered to evacuate Tuesday as water rolled over the top of a dam, just one perilous result of severe weather that raged through the Midwest overnight with relentless rain and tornadoes and hit the Chicago area especially hard.

Hundreds of thousands of people lost power, and even weather forecasters had to briefly scramble for safety. The National Weather Service cited a tornado in Des Moines, Iowa, one in Chicago and at least four others in the Chicago area as storms rolled through Monday afternoon and into the night. Police responded to calls about utility poles that snapped in two. A woman in Indiana died after a tree fell on a home Monday night.

"We kind of heard a gust of wind that came up quick and we decided — my uncle decided — that we'd all go into the basement," said Mihajlo Jevdovic, 16, in Norridge, Illinois, where residents swapped stories of the storm and watched a crew clear a tree. "And as we went in the basement, we heard a big thump and the tree fell on the house."

The weather service's Chicago office said preliminary findings indicated that an EF-1 tornado struck an area of Chicago that included the western portions of the Loop on Monday night. The weather service said EF-1 tornadoes struck two other areas of suburban Chicago in Illinois. EF-0 twisters were reported in Illinois and Indiana suburbs of Chicago.

Water overtopped a dam near Nashville, Illinois, and first responders fanned out to ensure everyone escaped safely. There were no reports of injuries in the community of 3,000, southeast of St. Louis, but a woman was rescued after reporting that she was in water up to her waist in her home, said Alex Haglund, a spokesperson for the Washington County Emergency Management Agency.

About 300 people were in the evacuation zone near the city reservoir, officials said. The rest of Nashville was not in imminent danger from the dam failure, but flash flooding on roads created worries about water rescues.

Water began to recede in Nashville by Tuesday afternoon. But Haglund said those evacuated won't be allowed back into their homes until Wednesday at the earliest. The good news: None of the homes appeared to have obvious structural damage, Haglund said.

The office manager at Zapp's Repair in Nashville said 10 vehicles were stranded at the auto shop. A dumpster behind the business floated down Highway 15.

"I can tell you there was 3 feet (1 meter) of water in the office," Delsa King said. "I was going to move some vehicles, but I couldn't find the keys in the floodwater. ... The owner has been there over 30 years and never seen water in the shop."

The National Weather Service said 5 to 7 inches (12.7 to 17.8 centimeters) of rain fell over an eight-hour period. Additional heavy rain was in the forecast. A long stretch of Interstate 64 in the Nashville area was closed.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 81 of 94

The 89-year-old dam was last inspected in 2021 and categorized as a "high hazard" dam, which means a failure is likely to result in the loss of at least one life, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The condition of the dam was not available in the online data.

As the storms swept the Chicago area late Monday, employees at a suburban weather service office had to pass coverage duties to a Michigan post for five minutes. The agency reported wind speeds in the region as high as 75 mph (120 kph).

"We did have an area of rotation," meteorologist Zachary Yack said, referring to extreme rotating wall clouds. "And it kind of developed right near our office here in Romeoville, Illinois. ... We went and took cover. We have a storm shelter here."

Carol Gillette said she heard a crash that sounded "like a bomb" as trees smashed cars and houses in Oswego, Illinois.

"I haven't called the insurance yet. I don't know where to start," Gillette told WBBM-TV.

By noon, 215,000 customers lacked power in Illinois, though the number was much higher hours earlier, according to PowerOutage.us. Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports reported dozens of flight cancellations Tuesday morning.

A 44-year-old woman died in Cedar Lake, Indiana, in the southern fringes of the Chicago area, after a tree fell on her house, the Lake County coroner's office said. The exact cause of death was unknown.

The Chicago Fire Department said on the social media site X that there was only one serious injury in the nation's third-largest city, a person who was hurt when a tree fell on a car.

The storms also cut power to thousands in Ohio and Pennsylvania and caused damage to property, trees and power lines. No injuries were reported.

## Who is Usha Vance? Yale law graduate and wife of vice presidential nominee JD Vance

By OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press/Report for America

WASHINGTON (AP) — Usha Chilukuri Vance, Yale law graduate and trial lawyer, was thrust into the spotlight this week after her husband, JD Vance, was chosen as Donald Trump's running mate in the 2024 presidential election.

Chilukuri Vance, 38, was raised in San Diego, by Indian immigrants. Her mother is a biologist and provost at the University of California at San Diego; her father is an engineer, according to JD Vance's campaign. She received an undergraduate degree at Yale University and a master of philosophy at the University of Cambridge through the Gates Cambridge scholarship.

After Cambridge, she met her husband back at Yale, where the two studied law. In his 2016 memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy," JD Vance said the two got to know each other through a class assignment, where he soon "fell hard" for his writing partner.

"In a place that always seemed a little foreign, Usha's presence made me feel at home," he wrote.

They graduated in 2013 and wed the following year.

After law school, Chilukuri Vance spent a year clerking for Justice Brett Kavanaugh when he served as an appeals court judge in Washington, followed by a year as a law clerk to Chief Justice John Roberts.

She has since become a trial lawyer for the Munger, Tolles and Olson law firm at its San Francisco and D.C. offices. Chilukuri Vance left the law firm where she worked shortly after her husband was chosen as Trump's running mate.

"Usha has informed us she has decided to leave the firm," Munger, Tolles & Olson said in a statement. "Usha has been an excellent lawyer and colleague, and we thank her for her years of work and wish her the best in her future career."

Chilukuri Vance was not available Tuesday for comment, according to a spokeswoman for JD Vance's campaign.

In his memoir, Vance credited part of his success and happiness to his wife.

"Even at my best, I'm a delayed explosion—I can be defused, but only with skill and precision," Vance wrote. "It's not just that I've learned to control myself but that Usha has learned how to manage me."

Voter records show that as of 2022, Chilukuri Vance was a registered Republican in Ohio, and voted in the Republican primary that year — the same election that her husband was running in the Republican senate primary.

JD and Usha Vance live in Cincinnati, and have three children: Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel. Outside of work, she served on the Cincinnati Symphony Board of Directors from September 2020 to July 2023.

## JD Vance charted a Trump-centric, populist path in Senate as he fought GOP establishment

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Ohio Sen. JD Vance traveled to the Munich Security Conference earlier this year, he wasn't there to reassure Europe and other global allies that America would aid Ukraine in its war against Russia, as all of the other senators were.

Instead, Vance was there to deliver what he called a "wake-up call."

In a fiery speech, the freshman senator said that just because Russian President Vladimir Putin is a "bad guy" doesn't mean that America's own interests shouldn't come first.

"There are a lot of bad guys all over the world, and I'm much more interested in some of the problems in East Asia right now than I am in Europe," Vance said, arguing that the U.S. doesn't have the money or the manufacturing capacity to help Ukraine enough to win the war.

Now elevated into the national spotlight as former President Donald Trump's running mate, Vance's short Senate career reflects the forces transforming the Republican Party. In just a year and a half, he has carved out a unique role fighting traditional Republican establishment figures, including Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, particularly on foreign policy and aid to Ukraine. The 39-year old has been unafraid to challenge his fellow senators, many of them decades older, espousing a populist vision and defending Trump when many of his Republican colleagues stayed quiet.

"He was not afraid to go and speak his opinion to people who didn't necessarily agree with him," said Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, a senior Republican in the Senate, of Vance's Munich trip. Barrasso, who who has grown close to Vance and advised him when he first came to Washington, said it was a "sign of boldness."

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, a Republican who has long opposed aid for foreign conflicts, celebrated Vance's selection. "It's great to have an opponent of endless wars and more aid to Ukraine on the ticket," he wrote on X.

Vance, who served in Iraq as a Marine and is the author of the memoir "Hillbilly Elegy," was once a caustic critic of Trump, but became a fierce ally during his 2022 Senate race, landing Trump's crucial endorsement in the final weeks of a crowded GOP primary.

He then entered the Senate as one of Trump's most vocal supporters, endorsing him in a January 2023 op-ed when many of his colleagues thought the former president's political future was over. Vance argued that a series of foreign conflicts had failed to serve America's interests, and "very few were ever challenged by a leader of national significance. That is, of course, until Donald Trump came along."

Vance's views on America's role in the world put him in conflict with McConnell, despite significant financial help from the McConnell-backed Senate Leadership Fund in the final months of Vance's campaign. As McConnell pushed for the last aid package to Ukraine, approved in April, Vance was its loudest Senate opponent.

"Why are we so obsessed with this? It is a fetish, Steve. I can't pretend to understand it," Vance said on Steve Bannon's podcast in February.

Vance's outspoken views on Ukraine prompted concerns across that region on Tuesday. "If this couple (Trump and Vance) wins, it will not be easy for us. It will not be easy for Europe. It will not be easy for

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 83 of 94

the US," posted Ukraine analyst Yurii Bohdanov on his Telegram channel.

At a press conference in Kyiv, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that while most of the Democratic Party supports Ukraine, there are varying positions among Republicans, some of whom are "more right-wing and radical."

"If Mr. Donald Trump becomes president, then we will work with him" Zelenskyy said. "I am not afraid of it."

Concerns about what Vance's ascension might mean for U.S. foreign policy extend beyond Ukraine.

European diplomats were loath to comment Tuesday on Vance, citing a desire not to be seen as interfering in American politics. But two U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private diplomatic conversations said they had gotten queries from counterparts in Europe asking how the Biden administration's commitment to the continent's security might be preserved if Trump were elected.

Vance has also defended Trump's actions after the 2020 election, when the former president pressured states and Congress to try and overturn President Joe Biden's legitimate victory. Vance denies that Trump tried to overturn the election and said he is "truly skeptical" that former Vice President Mike Pence's life was in danger on Jan. 6, 2021, when Trump's supporters violently besieged the Capitol as Congress certified Biden's victory. Some were chanting "hang Mike Pence" because Pence wouldn't go along with Trump's efforts.

Biden campaign chairwoman Jen O'Malley Dillon said that Trump picked Vance "because Vance will do what Mike Pence wouldn't on January 6: bend over backwards to enable Trump and his extreme MAGA agenda, even if it means breaking the law."

Vance's quick rise to popularity in Trump's inner circle was hardly assured, especially after he'd been critical of then-candidate Trump in 2016.

Donors didn't initially want to talk to Vance as he ran for Senate, said a Republican familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it. Then wealthy entrepreneur Peter Thiel, a tech donor some see as a mentor to Vance, swooped in with millions for the primary race before the Senate Leadership Fund helped Vance in the general election.

As Vance turned himself into the "soul of MAGA" in the Senate, as the Republican called him, a key turning point for both Trump and Vance was a trip to East Palestine, Ohio, in early 2023 after a train full of toxic chemicals derailed there. As Biden initially stayed away, some Republicans credited the visit with boosting Trump's own flagging campaign.

Vance later allied with Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown, his Ohio colleague, to introduce legislation that would force railroads to follow new safety rules. The bill has since stalled, opposed by other Republicans, including McConnell, who think it is too favorable to unions and oppose new regulations on industry.

Like the railroad bill, Vance has teamed with Democrats on other issues that reflect his more populist vision. He worked with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., on legislation that would claw back compensation for bank executives in the event of a bank failure, for example, and he was a critic of Boeing after a safety incident on one of their planes earlier this year.

"JD can really speak to this whole group of Democrats who have been left out, left behind by their party," Barrasso said.

Still, Vance is largely untested on the national stage. And while his views may help the Trump ticket among white working-class voters in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, he could potentially turn off others in the swing states of Arizona, Nevada and Georgia.

Republican colleagues say his youth and conviction will ultimately win out.

Alabama Sen. Katie Britt, who was also elected in 2022, says Vance has distinguished himself in the GOP conference because he "is unafraid to enter any room." And as a fellow parent of younger children, "we come at it with a different perspective and a different energy," she said.

"He has a lot of self confidence," says Texas Sen. John Cornyn, whom Vance once worked for as a law clerk on the Senate Judiciary Committee. "JD really represents the next generation of leaders — he's obviously only 39 years old but I think he's prepared for the job."

## Self-exiled Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui convicted of defrauding followers after fleeing to US

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Guo Wengui, a self-exiled Chinese business tycoon whose criticism of the Communist Party won him legions of online followers and powerful friends in the American conservative movement, was convicted by a U.S. jury Tuesday of engaging in a massive multiyear fraud that ripped off some of his most devoted fans.

Once believed to be among the richest people in China, Guo was arrested in New York in March of 2023 and accused of operating a racketeering enterprise that stretched from 2018 through 2023.

Over a seven-week trial, he was accused of deceiving thousands of people who put money into bogus investments and using the money to preserve a luxurious lifestyle. He was convicted of nine of 12 criminal counts, including racketeering conspiracy.

Guo's lawyers said prosecutors hadn't proven he'd cheated anyone. After the verdict, one of his attorneys declined to comment.

In a statement after the verdict, U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said Guo's interrelated fraud schemes were "all designed to fleece his loyal followers out of their hard-earned money so that Guo could spend his days in his 50,000 square foot mansion, driving his \$1 million Lamborghini, or lounging on his \$37 million yacht."

He added: "Thousands of Guo's online followers were victimized so that Guo could live of a life of excess."

Guo, who is also known by the name Miles Kwok, left China in 2014 during an anticorruption crackdown that ensnared people close to him, including a top intelligence official.

Chinese authorities accused him of rape, kidnapping, bribery and other crimes, but Guo said those allegations were false and designed to punish him for publicly revealing corruption as he criticized leading figures in the Communist Party.

He applied for political asylum in the U.S., moved to a luxury apartment overlooking Central Park and joined former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago golf club in Florida.

While living in New York, Guo developed a close relationship with Trump's onetime political strategist, Steve Bannon. In 2020, the two announced a joint initiative to overthrow the Chinese government.

Prosecutors say hundreds of thousands of people were convinced to invest more than \$1 billion in entities Guo controlled. Among those businesses and organizations was Guo's media company, GTV Media Group Inc., and his so-called Himalaya Farm Alliance and the Himalaya Exchange.

In a closing argument at the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan Finkel said Guo "spouted devious lies to trick his followers into giving him money."

He said Guo made hundreds of broadcasts and videos in which he promised followers that they would not lose money if they invested with him.

"I'm rich. I'll take care of you," the prosecutor said Guo told them.

Then, he said, Guo spent millions from investors on a lavish lifestyle for himself and his family that included a \$1.1 million tortoise-shell jewelry box and some candlesticks, a million dollar chandelier, \$36,000 mattresses, a \$40,000 coffee table and a \$250,000 antique rug, items kept at a family home in Mahwah, New Jersey.

Defense lawyer Sidhardha Kamaraju told the jury that prosecutors had presented a case "long on rhetoric but short on specifics, long on talk, but short on evidence."

Kamaraju said Guo was the "founder and face" of a pro-Chinese democracy movement that attracted thousands of political dissidents. Kamaraju urged jurors to think about whether Guo would intentionally cheat his fellow movement members for money. He said prosecutors had failed to prove that "Mr. Guo took a penny with the intent to undermine the political movement he invested so much in."

The lawyer did not deny that his client lived lavishly, with a luxury apartment that took up an entire floor in Manhattan; a home in Greenwich, Connecticut; a yacht and a jet. But he said prosecutors wanted jurors to take "leaps in logic" to find Guo guilty.

"It's not a crime to be wealthy," Kamaraju said. "It is not a crime to live in luxury or to spend money on nice things. It's not a crime to have a yacht or a jet or to wear nice suits. It may not be our lifestyle. It may be odd. It may even be off-putting to some, but it's not a crime."

The prosecutor, Finkel, said everyone agreed that Guo was targeted by China's Communist Party, but that did not give Guo "a license to rob from these people."

Finkel said Guo also created a "blacklist" of his enemies and posted their personal information online. When the Securities and Exchange Commission investigated him, Guo organized protests against the agency and claimed that it had been infiltrated by China's Communist Party. And when a bankruptcy trustee was appointed by a judge to represent Guo's creditors, Finkel said Guo's followers protested outside the home of the trustee's children and outside an elementary school where one of them taught.

## **A Trump-owned company sells \$299 sneakers with an image of his bloodied face after rally shooting**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A company is now selling \$299 sneakers showing an image of Donald Trump with streaks of blood on his cheek and pumping his fist in the air after he was the target of an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania.

The white high tops are being sold as "FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT High-Tops" for \$299 on a website that sells Trump-branded shoes that is run by CIC Ventures LLC, a company that Trump reported owning in his 2023 financial disclosure. The company says the new shoes are limited edition with only 5,000 pairs available and estimated to ship in September or October. It also said 10 pairs will be randomly autographed.

"These limited edition high-tops, featuring Trump's iconic image with his fist raised, honor his unwavering determination and bravery," it says. "With only 5,000 pairs available, each one is a true collector's item. Show your support and patriotic pride with these exclusive sneakers, capturing a defining moment in history."

CIC Ventures is the same company that debuted "Never Surrender High-Tops," shiny gold sneakers with an American flag detail on the back, for \$399.

The sale is another sign the former president's allies intend to capitalize on how Trump reacted after the shooting at a Saturday rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump got back to his feet and pumped his fist toward the crowd, mouthing "fight, fight."

On Monday, Trump got a hero's welcome at the Republican National Convention's opening night, appearing visibly emotional with a bandage over his right ear as musician Lee Greenwood sang "God Bless the USA."

Supporters are hoping those moments help him pave his path straight back to the White House as he challenges Democratic President Joe Biden's reelection. Biden has been trying to reassure his own party that he is capable of serving another four years, but there are worries and calls to nominate another candidate after his debate performance last month.

Earlier this year, Trump made an unusual stop at "Sneaker Con" to introduce the shiny gold high tops.

CIC Ventures' website says it is not political and has no connection to a political campaign, though Trump campaign officials have promoted it in online posts.

## **Amazon Prime Day deals are almost here.**

### **Should you take advantage of them?**

BY HALELUYA HADERO AND CORA LEWIS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It's summertime, and the bargains seem easy at a time when many consumer prices are high.

July sales events have become a seasonal revenue driver for the retail industry since Amazon launched its first Prime Day back in 2015. While consumers may be enticed by the advertised can't-miss savings on some products, personal finance experts say shoppers should be careful not to fall for potentially mislead-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 86 of 94

ing marketing or give in to impulse buys.

Amazon has drummed up expectations in recent weeks for its 10th Prime Day event, which will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday and is open only to customers who pay \$14.99 per month, or \$139 per year, to receive free shipping and other perks as Prime members.

Rival retailers tried in the past to capture some of the Prime Day excitement by offering their own discounts during the two-day event. This year, Walmart, Target, Kohl's, and newcomers TikTok Shop and Temu launched summer promotions ahead of Amazon, hoping to siphon off some of the e-commerce giant's savings-hungry shoppers. Meanwhile, Macy's will be rolling out what it calls its "best summer deals" during an eight-day discount event that begins on Tuesday.

Why are retailers offering so many summer discounts?

July sales help retailers attract customers who are looking to get a head start on back-to-school shopping, which is the industry's second-most important shopping season behind the winter holiday period. The markdowns also pull in some discretionary spending from shoppers who've had their eyes on gadgets, household products and seasonal items, such as a bikini or a new summer dress.

Discounts can help retailers combat "a summer lull in retail spending" as consumers shift their spending to summer vacations and services, like going out to eat at restaurants, according to John Mercer, the head of global research at Coresight Research.

"It drives a bit of excitement in that mid-year period," when retailers may otherwise struggle to generate more revenue, Mercer said. Companies also have relied on discounts to drive consumer spending during the recent period of inflation and high interest rates, he said.

Amazon doesn't disclose how much revenue it pulls in from Prime Day, but it has given some indications of its success. The company said last year's event resulted in the "single largest sales day" in the company's history, with customers purchasing more than 375 million items.

An estimate from market research firm Emarketer indicated Amazon's global sales on Prime Day went up to \$12.5 billion in 2023. The firm forecasts sales to jump roughly 7% this year.

Are the prices on offer really deals or something else?

It depends on who you ask.

Retailers hype up their promotions to pull people in. But the New York Times-owned product review website Wirecutter published an article this month saying most of Amazon's early deals this year so far "stink."

Santa Clara University business professor Kirthi Kalyanam, who is writing a book about Amazon, said Prime Day offers have been good, historically. That's because the company was able to source discounts from well-known brands such as Apple and to incentivize third-party sellers to lower their prices by promising to feature them prominently on the Amazon website, according to Kalyanam.

But Prime Day discounts may matter less these days because customers are getting accustomed to the ultra-cheap products sold by Amazon competitors Shein and Temu, which were both founded in China.

"Many of (the) deals may not be as competitive compared to Temu and Shein," Kalyanam said.

At the same time, he noted rival retailers will most likely be looking at Amazon's prices and trying to match them overnight. Last week, he said he saw Best Buy discount two products after Amazon revealed some of its early deals.

Consumer data company Numerator reported that a majority of the roughly 5,000 Prime Day shoppers it surveyed after last year's event saw product discounts of up to 40%. Survey respondents said they saw a quarter of items selling at a discount of 60% or more.

Some shopping experts have said that some past Prime discounts were not as big as they appeared.

What are some bargain-hunting and budgeting tips?

If you're watching your budget, personal finance experts say you should exercise caution before you buy.

"Avoid the false sense of urgency of manufactured holidays," advises Mark Elliot, chief customer officer at financial services company LendingClub. "The idea that 'The more you spend, the more you save' — that's just definitionally not true."

Dan Egan, a vice president at financial advising and investment company Betterment, says shoppers

should make a list of what they need before the sales begin to be intentional about purchases. He also encourages consumers to avoid shopping late at night or out of boredom.

"Once you have a list, it's less likely you'll get distracted by things you don't need," Egan said. "If that list contains almost nothing, I would say to delete the (retailers') apps off your phone for the next week or two. Or you're going to get lots of notifications."

Any shopper already carrying a credit card balance should keep in mind that the interest paid on that balance could end up cancelling out any perceived savings from a summer sale purchase, he added.

"A deal is not a deal if you have to pay interest on it," Egan said.

While it may make sense for shoppers to try out free or temporary memberships to qualify for the best deals during the summer sales, those programs typically charge a fee to the customer's credit card on file after a short period of time, noted Erin Witte, the Consumer Federation of America's director of consumer protection.

"Set a calendar reminder to cancel if you don't want to go through with that subscription," Witte said. "Think about it right at the beginning. And remember that these companies design this product to make it easy to sign up, but more difficult to cancel."

Consumer Reports also offers a few tips: Download Amazon's app, sign-up for invite-only deals available for a select group of shoppers, and join the waitlist on limited-time offers that are already sold out.

Don't forget to shop around

Filling up an online Amazon cart is tempting for Prime members since they are paying for access to Prime Day deals. But it's always a smart idea to compare prices across multiple websites before completing a purchase.

Unlike Prime Day offers, Walmart's discount event this month was open to everyone. However, the company sweetened the deal for its Walmart+ members by offering them early access.

Target only offered discounts to shoppers enrolled in its Target Circle loyalty program and used the weeklong event to promote a new membership program that aims to rejuvenate sales and traffic.

TikTok Shop, the e-commerce arm of the popular video-sharing app, opened its summer sales event to everyone. The event started on July 9 and runs until Wednesday.

## **Battered by Hurricane Idalia last year, Florida village ponders future as hurricane season begins**

By DORANY PINEDA and REBECCA BLACKWELL Associated Press

HORSESHOE BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Lisa Bregenzer's waterfront home was her "little slice of heaven." She watched sunsets and migrating birds from the porch, the Gulf of Mexico in the distance. There, she felt close to God and her late father.

When Hurricane Idalia tore through Florida in late August, Bregenzer lost everything in the northwest fishing village of Horseshoe Beach. For months, she and her husband slept where they could with friends, neighbors and family: in Tennessee, Georgia, West Virginia, eastern Florida.

For nearly 11 months, Bregenzer felt she was no better off than after the storm.

"I'm spent. I'm tired. I'm weak. And I'm weary," Bregenzer said in May inside a temporary, state-issued camper she lives in several miles away. "Everyday I am reminded of the storm."

Almost a year later, many people in Horseshoe are asking themselves: Do I sell and move? Should I buy a recreational vehicle to live in on my property? Do I have the means to rebuild on stilts, as code requires? As they ask these questions, U.S. officials predict this year's hurricane season in Florida will be busier than usual.

Coastal climate impacts

In the U.S., more than 128 million people – nearly 40% of the nation's population – live in coastal counties along the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, as well as the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. These seaside communities produce \$10 trillion in goods and services annually, employ 54.6 million people, and pay \$4 trillion in wages, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 88 of 94

To live along the coast in a time of climate change is to contend with increasing vulnerabilities. Seas are rising and warming up, eroding coastlines, intensifying storms and making floods a more frequent occurrence.

In Horseshoe, those who lost homes to Idalia have few options. They can either rebuild on pricey stilts — up to 19 feet (5.8 meters) above sea level as required for buildings closest to water — or live in RVs they can move from a hurricane's path.

Located 70 miles (113 kilometers) west of Gainesville, Horseshoe is a quiet town in Dixie County. Residents zip around in golf carts and move with the days' rhythms — lounging when it's hottest, fishing when the tide is right, watching sunsets, beers in hand. Less than 200 full-time residents, both recent retirees and long-timers, as well as weekenders and seasonal tourists, are spread over an area about three-quarters of a mile long and wide. There is one church, one firehouse and one restaurant. There is no gas station or grocery store, and only one road goes in and out.

Horseshoe residents say they are proud of strong community bonds and sunsets that paint the sky brilliant hues. Homes approaching \$1 million are interspersed with some as low as \$50,000. Historically, it's a place where a blue collar worker could live by the sea.

Many residents are still reeling from last summer's Category 3 storm that pummeled homes, businesses and other infrastructure, leaving debris and rubble in its wake. Recovery for some has been long and slow. Elevated homes withstood severe damage. Homes with little elevation were destroyed. Many weren't insured, and those who did have flood insurance were not covered for repairs from wind-driven water. Scientists have said that Gulf waters warmed by climate change helped Idalia rapidly intensify

Today, the signs of destruction remain. A house lies flat like a pancake. Abandoned homes with shattered windows — some boarded up with wood — stand askew. Inside, washers and driers are turned on their sides. A tattered American flag flaps where a house was swept away and flags reading "Horseshoe Strong" hang from balconies, made after Idalia by a local who lost her business.

### Storms reshape Horseshoe

People talk about keeping Horseshoe unchanged, but before Idalia storms had begun reshaping the town's character and landscape.

Hurricane Hermine in 2016, and before that, the so-called Storm of the Century in 1993, caused widespread damage. People sold their properties. Some houses went up on stilts. In 1993, Tina Brotherton lost her marina and the cafe next door, and had to replace the floors and beds at her inn. Most of the damaged buildings were on the waterfront, she recalled.

### Idalia dealt another blow.

Brotherton, 88, said she doesn't plan to rebuild this time. Her business, Tina's Dockside Inn, was completely destroyed, as was her home that she planned to put on the market days before the storm. She says she is tired and it's expensive to rebuild.

"Once I got all my cats out, I don't care to go back," she said inside her home a couple of miles away, where she lives with her son and more than a dozen cats. "There's nothing there for me anymore."

### Long road to recovery

By midcentury, more than 48,000 properties could be below the high tide lines, mostly in Louisiana, Florida and Texas, according to a 2022 study by Climate Central.

While Horseshoe residents say they know storms and flooding will continue, it's hard to think about that when trying to survive the present.

Eileen Lilley, 75, is living in a camper after 5 feet (1.5 meters) of water damaged her home. On a recent day, she spoke of her late husband and missing the screened porch where she liked to paint. Despite the longing, she feels safe knowing her mobile home can be moved when another hurricane strikes.

"It's better for me at my age to get somebody who can pull me out of here and move me to another area," she said, while at her side snoozed Katy the cat and Kelly the dog laid at her feet.

Some residents are waiting to know if they qualify for state or federal loans and grants to help them rebuild. Mayor Jeff Williams said insuring new property will also be cost prohibitive for many. "In a town when you're in a flood zone, you pay the highest rate," he said. "And the rate of insurance over the last



two to three years has just skyrocketed.”

All this added to Bregenzer’s anxiety. To rebuild they needed financial help. Her husband had a stroke and back surgery years ago, and medical bills and income loss sapped their savings. She’s grateful to have a roof over her head.

“It’s humbling,” she said.

They want to be homeowners again, she said while sitting inside her camper, tears in her eyes. To have a house to show for their lives’ work. For nearly a year, she didn’t know if that would happen or when. And she wondered: is it even worth it?

Then just last week, Bregenzer finally found hope. Her family was approved for a program that will help them build a new home. If all goes as planned, they’ll move into an stilted two-bedroom house on their lot by year’s end.

“After 11 months of what seemingly felt and appeared to be a nightmare, I just,” she said over the phone in July, her voice trailing off. “I lack words.”

## **Will the Seine be clean enough by the Olympics? Not even the experts know yet**

By TOM NOUVIAN and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — With the Paris Olympics less than two weeks away, a question hangs over the Games: Will the Seine River be clean enough for athletes to swim in?

Triathlon and marathon swimming are scheduled to take place in the Seine, where it has been illegal to swim for more than a century. Despite the city’s efforts to clean up the long-polluted river, the water has tested unsafe for humans in recent weeks, and cleaner on other days. The Games run from July 26-Aug. 11.

To clean up the river, Paris invested 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) in building infrastructure to catch more stormwater when it rains — the same water that contains bacteria-laden wastewater that enters the river during periods of heavy rain and makes it unsafe to swim in.

In May, Paris officials inaugurated a giant underground water storage basin next to the Austerlitz train station aimed at collecting excess rainwater and stopping wastewater from entering the Seine. The basin can hold the equivalent of 20 Olympic swimming pools of dirty water that will now be treated and is the centerpiece of major infrastructure improvements that the city has rushed to finish in time for the Games, but to also ensure that Parisians have a cleaner Seine in years to come.

But a few spells of heavy rain could push E. coli levels beyond the limit of 900 colony-forming units per 100 milliliters that the World Triathlon Federation has determined as safe for competitions.

“The Seine is not a special case,” said Metin Duran, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Villanova University who has researched stormwater management. “It really is a complicated and very costly problem.”

Paris, like many old cities around the world, has a combined sewer system, which means that the city’s wastewater and stormwater flow through the same pipes. With heavy or prolonged periods of rain, the pipes’ capacity is reached, which means raw wastewater flows into the river instead of a treatment plant.

On a daily basis, the monitoring group Eau de Paris has tested the river water, yielding results that showed unsafe E. coli levels in recent weeks followed by results in early July that showed improvement.

Paris Olympic organizers have said that if heavy rain affects the Seine’s flow during the Games, the triathlon would no longer feature the swimming portion — and the marathon swimming competition would be relocated to the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium in the greater Paris region.

“It’s not very common, but it has happened a few times,” said Ollala Cernuda, head of communications at World Triathlon, an international body for the sport, about the possibility of the swim portion being cancelled.

“And it’s always linked with water quality issues,” Cernuda said.

But organizers remain optimistic that drier, sunnier weather than what the French capital experienced in

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 90 of 94

June will allow the events to go as planned — buffeted by the infrastructure upgrades. The sun's ultraviolet rays kill bacteria like E. coli in water.

An AP analysis of weather data showed that in 2024, Paris has seen the second-most days with rain than any year since 1950, surpassed only by 2016.

Importantly for the Seine's water quality, there have also been few stretches of days without rain.

Paris only experienced one weeklong dry spell this year — in early June, whereas between 1950 and 2020, it was typical for the city to have at least three such periods by the end of June, according to the analysis.

"Predictions of rainfall have become much more accurate up to a week in advance," said Jennifer Francis, a scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Massachusetts. "But the seasonal patterns of past decades no longer provide reliable guidance in our warmer world."

With the Games approaching, the feverish debate over the cleanliness of the Seine River has become a source of frustration for some athletes like Léonie Périault, a French triathlete who won a bronze medal in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"Every time I meet someone, they worry that I'm going to swim in the Seine," Périault said. "But I've been swimming in this river for several years now. In youth competitions, we swam regularly in the Seine and never had problems."

Last year, Périault took part in a test event in the Seine.

"The setting was incredible with the Eiffel Tower as a backdrop and the water conditions were not worse than anywhere else in the world," she said.

On Saturday, the French Sports Minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra took a plunge to demonstrate that the famed river is clean enough. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has also said she would swim in the Seine this week.

Dan Angelescu, the founder and CEO of Fluidion, a Paris and Los Angeles-based water-monitoring tech company, said there have been improvements observed in the river since the city's new infrastructure came online, but that the Seine's water quality remained fragile. His company has measured the Seine's contamination levels for several years.

Angelescu said it's hard to predict, using previous years' data, what might happen later this month — since the water storage basin and other infrastructure were not operational until a few months ago.

"It's difficult to tell," Angelescu said, speaking in early July after the Seine's water had tested cleaner than in several weeks prior.

"To see such a drastic improvement and so rapidly could be a sign that something is working," he said.

## **At least 72 people are killed in a militia attack near Congo's capital in a conflict over land**

Associated Press undefined

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — At least 72 people, including nine soldiers and a soldier's wife, were killed when armed men attacked a village in western Congo, local authorities said, as violence intensifies between rival communities.

Saturday's attack took place in the village of Kinsele, around 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Kinshasa, the capital. Because of insecurity and poor infrastructure in the region, attacks can take days to be reported.

Kinsele is in the Kwamouth territory, where conflict has raged for two years between the Teke and Yaka communities, leading to hundreds of civilian deaths.

The attackers were with the Mobondo militia, a group presenting itself as defenders of the Yaka people.

"The search continues to find other bodies in the bush," David Bisaka, the provincial deputy for the Kwamouth territory, told The Associated Press in a phone interview. He added that the army had "succeeded in routing this militia" for the second time in a week. The Mobondo militia first tried to attack the village on Friday.

Following Saturday's attack, the dead included nine soldiers and the wife of a soldier, the head of a nearby village, Stanys Liby, told U.N.-funded Radio Okapi.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 91 of 94

The conflict over land and customary claims in the Kwamouth territory erupted in June 2022 between so-called "native" and "non-native" communities, according to the advocacy group Human Rights Watch. Tensions flared between the Teke, historical inhabitants of the region, and farmers from various other ethnic groups including the Yaka, who settled near the Congo River more recently.

Despite a cease-fire in April 2024 in the presence of Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi, clashes between the communities have continued and even intensified in recent weeks.

Congo's defense minister, Guy Kabombo Muadiamvita, on Monday visited Kwango province, where the attacked village is located, to "feel the reality on the ground," the ministry said on social media platform X.

"The province of Kwango is the last security barrier to access the city province of Kinshasa," the ministry said, adding that the minister "promised to spare no effort" against the militia.

Congo's army also struggles to contain more widespread violence in the vast country's east, which has seen decades of fighting between government forces and more than 120 armed groups. Many seek a share of the region's gold and other resources.

Violence in the east has worsened in recent months. Earlier this month, a militia attack on a gold mine in northeastern Congo killed six Chinese miners and two Congolese soldiers.

## **JD Vance is a relative political unknown.**

### **He's been asked to help Donald Trump avenge his 2020 loss**

By STEVE PEOPLES, THOMAS BEAUMONT and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — JD Vance is supposed to help Donald Trump win the Midwest this fall.

But almost immediately after the Ohio senator was announced as Trump's vice presidential pick on Monday, one thing became clear: Vance, a 39-year-old Republican with less than two years in Congress, is not well-known among many in his party, even in the swing states Trump hopes he'll deliver.

Michigan Republican Party Chairman Pete Hoekstra offered a blunt response when asked about Trump's pick minutes after it was announced: "We don't know him."

"If he's from Ohio, he understands our state and the other northern battlegrounds," Hoekstra said, standing on the floor of the Republican National Convention. "But we haven't had a chance to take his measure yet."

Trump's team now has less than four months to strengthen Vance's profile in the states that matter most this fall in his 2020 rematch against Democratic President Joe Biden. Already, a collection of political foes — Democrats and Republicans — is working to fill the void by seizing on Vance's inexperience in government, his nationalist views and his critical comments about Trump himself.

"I'm not sure he helps him in the campaign," said veteran Republican pollster Neil Newhouse, suggesting Vance may be better positioned to help Trump enact his agenda on Capitol Hill if given the chance. "He's not that well-known even in Ohio. ... This isn't a campaign pick. It's a policy pick, a governing pick."

Republican strategist Kellyanne Conway, who served as Trump's chief counselor while in the White House, had encouraged Trump to pick a different running mate in the weeks leading up to his announcement.

"I thought Rubio or (Virginia Gov. Glenn) Youngkin could get him more voters," Conway said, noting that Trump would also need "young America First fighters like Vance in the U.S. Senate."

"Every time I was asked," Conway added, "I told President Trump this was his decision alone to make and his instincts are second to none."

Vance, who quickly developed a reputation as a MAGA firebrand in his short time on Capitol Hill, earned modest applause when he entered the packed convention hall for the first time Monday as Trump's running mate. The Republican senator posed for selfies, shook hands and signed posters. Later in the night, the crowd was more excited as he greeted Trump — who entered the room with a bandage covering his right ear, injured in Saturday's assassination attempt — for the ticket's first public appearance.

Recent polling confirms the notion that most voters don't know Vance.

Just 13% of registered voters said they had a favorable opinion of Vance with 20% an unfavorable one, according to a CNN poll conducted in late June. The majority said they had never heard of him or had no

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 92 of 94

opinion.

Trump's vice-presidential pick is arguably the most important decision of his 2024 campaign. Vance, who is literally half the 78-year-old Trump's age, and has the least political experience on a short list that included Rubio and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum.

Sensing an opportunity, Trump's critics in both parties quickly went after him.

"Almost any other choice might have expanded the map for them, but Trump needed a candidate who looked like him, talked like him, and thought like him. He needed a candidate who would grovel," former New Hampshire Republican Party chair Jennifer Horn wrote on X. "JD Vance was the least experienced, least qualified, most obsequious, psychopathic, servile candidate on the list."

But Trump made up his own mind based on a different set of criteria.

Trump especially liked Vance's performance on television, where he has become a fixture on conservative media. The former president also likes Vance's looks, saying he reminded him of "a young Abraham Lincoln."

Trump is also hopeful Vance can draw from his life story growing up in Appalachia to help appeal to Midwestern voters. Vance has experienced poverty and addiction up close in a way that is uncommon among leading Republican officials.

Vance also had another advantage: his chemistry with Trump. The first-term senator has developed a strong rapport with Trump, his son Donald Trump Jr. and leading MAGA figures during his recent rise in Republican politics.

Vance is an Ivy League-educated author, former Marine and businessman. He is known for his aggressive questioning of Biden administration officials.

Biden's campaign hosted a conference call Monday denouncing the pick, focusing especially on his limited record on abortion and the economy and his support for Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

Vance previously said he would support a national abortion ban at 15 weeks of pregnancy. He also said he would not have voted to certify the 2020 election results, as former Vice President Mike Pence did over Trump's objections.

"I will certainly take that matchup any day of the week and twice on Sunday," said Jen O'Malley Dillon, the Biden campaign chairwoman. "Because while Trump and Vance have an agenda focused on themselves and their wealthy donor friends, President Biden and Vice President Harris are fighting for the American people."

One of Biden's greatest assets in his campaign against Vance might be what Vance previously said about Trump.

During the early stages of Trump's political career, Vance cast Trump as "a total fraud," "a moral disaster" and "America's Hitler."

"If you go back and listen to the things that JD Vance said about Trump ... he said some things about me, but see what he said about Trump," Biden told NBC's Lester Holt in an interview Monday.

Vivek Ramaswamy, once considered a potential Trump running mate as well, described Vance as "a major asset" on the ticket whose evolution on Trump would ultimately help him connect with swing voters.

"He's also somebody who can say, 'You know what, in 2016, I may not have voted for Donald Trump either, but here's why I am with him to the fullest today,'" Ramaswamy said.

But for now, Vance joins the Trump presidential ticket as a mystery to many voters and elected officials alike.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Vance was one of the few vice-presidential prospects that he "really haven't crossed paths with."

"I don't know that much about him," Kemp said.

## New deal establishes a hotline

### Chinese and Philippine presidents can use to stop clashes at sea

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A recently signed agreement will open a direct line of communication between the presidential offices of China and the Philippines to help prevent any new confrontation from spiraling out of control in the disputed South China Sea, according to highlights of the accord seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

China and the Philippines have created such emergency telephone hotlines at lower levels in the past to better manage disputes, particularly in two fiercely disputed shoals where the Philippines has accused Chinese forces of increasingly hostile actions and China says Philippine ships have encroached despite repeated warnings.

The territorial disputes, however, have persisted since last year, sparking fears of a larger armed conflict that could involve the United States, which has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, a key Asian treaty ally, if Filipino forces come under attack in the disputed waters.

U.S. Gen. Charles Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner in Manila on Tuesday and discussed ways to further boost defense ties, enhance the militaries' ability to operate jointly and ensure regional ability, the Philippine military said.

During a confrontation between Chinese and Philippine forces at the Philippines-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in August 2023, the Philippine government said it was unable to reach Chinese officials through an established "maritime communication mechanism" for several hours. That emergency telephone hotline was arranged after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in January 2023.

Chinese and Philippine officials dealing with the territorial disputes held talks in Manila on July 2, following a violent confrontation at the Second Thomas Shoal in which Chinese coast guard personnel reportedly wielded knives, an axe and improvised spears and Philippine navy personnel were injured. The Chinese forces also seized seven Philippine navy rifles, said Brawner, who demanded China return the firearms and pay for damages.

Both sides "recognized the need to strengthen the bilateral maritime communication mechanism on the South China Sea" and signed an arrangement "on improving Philippines-China maritime communication mechanisms," the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said in a statement after the talks in Manila, but did not provide a copy or details of the agreement.

A copy of the agreement's highlights, seen by the AP, said it "provides several channels for communication between the Philippines and China, specifically on maritime issues, through the representatives to be designated by their leaders."

The hotline talks could also be done "through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs counterparts, including at the foreign minister and vice foreign minister levels or through their designated representatives," it said, and added without elaborating that Philippine officials were "in discussions with the Chinese side on the guidelines that will govern the implementation of this arrangement."

There was also a plan to set up a new communication channel between the Chinese and Philippine coast guards "once the corresponding memorandum of understanding" between them is concluded, according to the agreement.

During the talks in Manila, China and the Philippines agreed on two other confidence-boosting steps to intensify "cooperation between their respective coast guard authorities" and the possible convening of a maritime forum between Chinese and Philippine scientists and academic leaders.

"Both sides recognized that there is a need to restore trust, rebuild confidence and create conditions conducive to productive dialogue and interaction," the Philippine department of foreign affairs statement said. It added that China and the Philippines "affirmed their commitment to de-escalate tensions without prejudice to their respective positions."

It said that "there was substantial progress on developing measures to manage the situation at sea," but acknowledged that "significant differences remain."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 03 ~ 94 of 94

## Today in History: July 17, Disneyland's opening day

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 17, the 199th day of 2024. There are 167 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 17, 1955, Disneyland opened in Anaheim, California after its \$17 million, year-long construction; the park drew a million visitors in its first 10 weeks.

Also on this date:

In 1862, during the Civil War, Congress approved the Second Confiscation Act, which declared that all slaves taking refuge behind Union lines were to be set free.

In 1902, Willis Carrier produced a set of designs for what would become the world's first modern air-conditioning system.

In 1918, Russia's Czar Nicholas II and his family were executed by the Bolsheviks.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War began as right-wing army generals launched a coup attempt against the Second Spanish Republic.

In 1944, during World War II, 320 men, two-thirds of them African-Americans, were killed when a pair of ammunition ships exploded at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine in California.

In 1945, following Nazi Germany's surrender, President Harry S. Truman, Soviet leader Josef Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill began meeting at Potsdam in the final Allied summit of World War II.

In 1975, an Apollo spaceship docked with a Soyuz spacecraft in orbit in the first superpower link-up of its kind.

In 1981, 114 people were killed when a pair of suspended walkways above the lobby of the Kansas City Hyatt Regency Hotel collapsed during a tea dance.

In 1996, TWA Flight 800, a Europe-bound Boeing 747, exploded and crashed off Long Island, New York, shortly after departing John F. Kennedy International Airport, killing all 230 people on board.

In 2014, all 298 passengers and crew aboard Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 were killed when the Boeing 777 was shot down over rebel-held eastern Ukraine; both Ukraine's government and pro-Russian separatists denied responsibility.

In 2020, civil rights icon John Lewis, whose bloody beating by Alabama state troopers in 1965 helped galvanize opposition to racial segregation, and who went on to a long and celebrated career in Congress, died at age 80.

In 2022, a report said nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to a mass shooting that left 21 people dead at a Texas elementary school, but "egregiously poor decision-making" resulted in a chaotic scene that lasted more than an hour before the gunman was finally confronted and killed.

Today's Birthdays: Sportscaster Verne Lundquist is 84. Queen Camilla of the United Kingdom is 77. Rock musician Terry "Geezer" Butler is 75. Actor Lucie Arnaz is 73. Actor David Hasselhoff is 72. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel is 70. Film director Wong Kar-wai is 66. Television producer Mark Burnett is 64. Singer Regina Belle is 61. Country music artist Craig Morgan is 60. Rock musician Lou Barlow is 58. Actor Bitty Schram (TV: "Monk") is 56. Actor Jason Clarke is 55. Movie director F. Gary Gray is 55. Country singer Luke Bryan is 48. Film director/screenwriter Justine Triet is 46. R&B singer Jeremih (jehr-uh-MY') is 37. Actor Billie Lourd is 32. NHL center Connor Bedard is 19.