

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, July 25

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, Harvard beets, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA (bring a guest, light supper and guest speaker: Kristi Anderson)

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library 10 a.m.

Summer Downtown Sip & Shop, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Treasures Amidst the Trials, Emmanuel Lutheran, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Legion Regions at Clark

Friday, July 26

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, sauerkraut, 3-bean salad, whole wheat bread.

Ferney Open Golf Tourney, 9 a.m., Olive Grove

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



Golf Course

State Teener Tournament at Garretson
Legion Regions at Clark

Saturday, July 27

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

Celebration in the Park, 1 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

State Softball Tournament in Watertown (U10B, U12)

State Teener Tournament at Garretson
Legion Regions at Clark

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

1440

Biden Addresses the Nation

President Joe Biden delivered an Oval Office address yesterday, his first speech since announcing he would end his 2024 presidential reelection bid.

In partnership with **smartasset**[™] Biden characterized his decision Sunday to exit the race as an effort to put aside ambition and pass the torch. He also touted his legacy and reiterated his endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris. The address comes amid questions about the president's mental fitness to serve. Biden says he plans to prioritize his job as president for the next six months.

The address comes as Harris has raised \$126M in three days, with over 60% of contributions coming from new donors. Separately, the Trump campaign filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission this week challenging Harris' access to donations made to the Biden campaign, arguing the transfer of \$91.5M in funds violates campaign finance limits.

HIV Prevention Breakthrough

A twice-a-year injection of the drug lenacapavir was 100% effective in preventing HIV infection in women during clinical trials, according to a study released yesterday. The drug—already used as a treatment for HIV infections—outperformed preventive treatments currently in use in regions with high HIV/AIDS mortality.

Of the roughly 2,000 HIV-negative female participants from South Africa and Uganda who received the injection, no one became infected with HIV. Fifty-five women from the other 3,000 participants who received commonly used daily pills Truvada or Descovy were infected. Experts suggest the injection could help offset adherence issues associated with the daily pill regimen, though the drug currently costs \$40K annually in the US. Results from clinical trials on the drug's efficacy on men are expected next year.

Roughly 630,000 people died from HIV/AIDS-related causes in 2023, a significant decline from the 2.1 million in 2004.

CrowdStrike's Strikeout

Texas-based cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike yesterday blamed a bug in its software for Friday's outage. In analyzing last week's crash, the company outlined its plans to prevent a reoccurrence, including staggering future software updates.

CrowdStrike's update, designed to fix a gap in malware security, was released simultaneously across all devices carrying its Falcon software. A bug in the code, however, caused an estimated 8.5 million Microsoft Windows devices to crash in what was the largest IT outage in history. The blackout led to technology failures across a variety of sectors, including hospital data systems, flights, and more, and costing Fortune 500 companies an estimated \$5.4B. The company's CEO has been called to testify before Congress.

Separately, CrowdStrike reportedly offered \$10 Uber Eats gift cards to some of its partners impacted by the outage. Some who received the vouchers found they were not redeemable, and the offer has since reportedly been rescinded.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Salt Lake City selected to host 2034 Winter Olympics, 32 years after previously hosting the games in 2002. Tennis star Coco Gauff tapped to be Team USA's female flag bearer for tomorrow's opening ceremony. NBA signs 11-year, \$76B TV and media rights deal with ABC/ESPN, NBC, and Amazon despite last-minute pitch from Warner Bros. Discovery (TNT) to continue their longtime relationship. John Mayall, 2024 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee and influential British blues musician, dies at age 90.

Science & Technology

AI models trained on AI-generated content quickly begin producing nonsensical outputs, study finds. Cloud database firm Airtable launches AI-powered Cobuilder, which creates usable apps from text prompts.

Astronomers detect the exoplanet—Earth-like planet outside the solar system—observed using the James Webb Space Telescope is roughly six times the size of Jupiter; also marks the oldest and coldest exoplanet found to date.

Neuroscientists discover brain circuitry triggered when someone experiences the placebo effect, where benefits of a drug are attributed to the patient's perception of the treatment.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -2.3%, Dow -1.3%, Nasdaq -3.6%), weighed down by underwhelming reports from Alphabet and Tesla; S&P 500 and Nasdaq record worst single-day performances since 2022.

Alphabet to invest additional \$5B in its autonomous vehicle unit Waymo over the next few years; company reports Waymo is delivering 50,000 paid rides per week, primarily in San Francisco and Phoenix.

New report shows 18% of all US venture capital firms have one or more female leaders, double from 2018; however, total capital raised by female founders dropped to \$34.4B in 2023 from \$44.2B in 2022.

Politics & World Affairs

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu advocates for ongoing US support for Israel-Hamas war in speech to joint session of Congress.

About 5,000 people protest; roughly half of congressional Democrats boycott.

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will meet with Netanyahu today.

FBI Director Christopher Wray reveals the shooter in the Trump assassination attempt researched details on the JFK assassination days before the attack, flew a drone 200 yards from the podium roughly two hours before rally.

Typhoon Gaemi hovers near the east coast of Taiwan, killing at least two people and injuring over 200 others after wreaking devastation on the Philippines.

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Jim Lane (right) and Nicholas Groeblichhoff were working on the soccer building. Several other city employees were helping on and off as Lane is redoing the outside of the building. The siding was all painted blue. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Region 6B at Clark

Groton Post 39 Walk-Off In Nail-Biter Against Hitmen Legion By GameChanger Media

It came down to the wire on Wednesday, as Groton Post 39 grabbed the victory in walk-off fashion, 5-1, over Hitmen Legion. The game was tied at one in the bottom of the eighth when Gavin Englund hit a grand slam to center field.

Hitmen Legion were the first to get on the board in the eighth when Blaze Herdman doubled, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the eighth, scoring five runs on two hits to take a 5-1 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a grand slam to center field by Englund that drove in four.

Englund led things off on the hill for Groton Post 39. They allowed five hits and one run over eight innings, striking out five and walking three. Layne Cotton started on the hill for Hitmen Legion. They allowed three hits and zero runs over six innings, striking out five and walking five.

Englund, the number seven hitter for Groton Post 39, led the way with four runs batted in. They went 1-for-2 on the day. Colby Dunker went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 in hits. Groton Post 39 had a strong eye at the plate, piling up eight walks for the game. Ryan Groeblichhoff and Englund led the team with two bases on balls each. Groton Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Herdman led Hitmen Legion with one run batted in. They went 1-for-4 on the day. Cotton led Hitmen Legion with two hits in three at bats. Hitmen Legion were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Cade Schick had the most chances in the field with seven.

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Groton Locke Electric 2024 Fall After Strong Showing By Circus Sports Bar

By GameChanger Media

Groton Locke Electric 2024 had trouble keeping up with Circus Sports Bar in a 12-3 loss on Wednesday. Circus Sports Bar were the first to get on the board in the first when one run scored on another play. In the bottom of the first inning, Groton Locke Electric 2024 went back into the lead after Alex Morris singled, and Johnny Celedonio hit into a fielder's choice, each scoring one run.

Circus Sports Bar took the lead in the top of the second. Easton Millar tripled, scoring two runs, to give Circus Sports Bar the edge, 3-2.

Ty Sieber singled, which helped Groton Locke Electric 2024 tie the game at three in the bottom of the second.

A walk by Millar gave Circus Sports Bar the lead, 4-3, in the top of the fifth.

Chad Ellingson earned the win for Circus Sports Bar. The starting pitcher allowed eight hits and three runs over six and one-third innings, striking out four and walking two. Wyatt Locke took the loss for Groton Locke Electric 2024. They went six innings, giving up eight runs (five earned) on 10 hits, striking out five and walking 11.

Groton Locke Electric 2024 collected 10 hits in the game. Morris led Groton Locke Electric 2024 with four hits in four at bats. Sieber, Morris, and Celedonio each drove in one run for Groton Locke Electric 2024. Ben Althoff collected two hits for Groton Locke Electric 2024 in five at bats. Groton Locke Electric 2024 turned one double play in the game.

Circus Sports Bar collected 17 hits in the game. Number seven hitter, Jesse Babcock, showed the depth of Circus Sports Bar's lineup, by leading them with four hits in five at bats. Millar led Circus Sports Bar with three runs batted in. They went 2-for-4 on the day. Tyler Oliver, Corey Harrell, and Ellingson each collected multiple hits for Circus Sports Bar. Circus Sports Bar had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 14 walks for the game. Oliver and Joey Wollman led the team with three bases on balls each. Babcock stole two bases. Circus Sports Bar stole four bases in the game. Circus Sports Bar turned one double play in the game. Circus Sports Bar didn't commit a single error in the field. Kelly Coates had the most chances in the field with 11.

Next up for Groton Locke Electric 2024 is a game against Merchants on Sunday.

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Circus Sports Bar 12 - 3 Groton Locke Electric 2024

📍 Home 📅 Wednesday July 24, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
CRCS	1	2	0	0	1	4	4	0	0	12	17	0
GRTN	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	1

BATTING

Circus Sports Bar	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Cox (CF)	6	1	1	0	1	0
E Millar (LF)	4	1	2	3	2	1
C Harrell (1B)	5	1	2	1	1	2
T Oliver #21 (3B)	3	1	2	0	3	0
R Ellingson (SS)	6	1	1	0	0	2
K Coates #17 (C)	5	3	1	1	1	0
J Babcock #8 (2B)	5	2	4	2	1	0
J Wollman (RF)	3	1	1	0	3	1
C Ellingson #3 (P)	4	1	3	2	2	0
Totals	41	12	17	9	14	6

2B: J Babcock 2, E Millar, C Harrell, **3B:** E Millar, **TB:** T Oliver 2, J Babcock 6, E Millar 5, C Cox, C Harrell 3, K Coates, C Ellingson 3, R Ellingson, J Wollman, **CS:** J Babcock, J Wollman, **HBP:** E Millar, **SB:** J Babcock 2, C Harrell, J Wollman, **LOB:** 17

PITCHING

Circus Sports Bar	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Ellings... #3	6.1	8	3	3	2	4	0
J Wollman	2.0	2	0	0	1	3	0
C Cox	0.2	0	0	0	1	2	0
Totals	9.0	10	3	3	4	9	0

W: C Ellingson, **P-S:** C Cox 20-12, C Ellingson 85-55, J Wollman 37-21, **BF:** C Cox 3, C Ellingson 27, J Wollman 9

Groton Locke Electric	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
D Frey #6 (LF)	5	1	1	0	0	3
T Sieber #19 (SS)	3	0	1	1	2	0
B Althoff #1 (3B)	5	1	2	0	0	1
B Hansen #37 (2B)	3	0	0	0	1	0
A Morris #13 (1B)	4	0	4	1	0	0
J Celedo... #25 (C)	3	0	1	1	1	0
W Locke #38 (P)	4	0	0	0	0	0
S Locke #15 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
C Cama... #12 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
A Sippel #5 (CF)	4	1	1	0	0	3
Totals	35	3	10	3	4	9

2B: B Althoff, A Morris 2, **TB:** J Celedonio, B Althoff 3, T Sieber, D Frey, A Morris 6, A Sippel, **CS:** T Sieber, **SB:** T Sieber, A Sippel, **LOB:** 9

Groton Locke Electric	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
W Locke #38	6.0	10	8	5	11	5	0
A Morris #13	1.0	4	4	4	2	1	0
J Celedo... #25	2.0	3	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	9.0	17	12	9	14	6	0

L: W Locke, **P-S:** W Locke 133-66, J Celedonio 32-20, A Morris 31-17, **WP:** W Locke, **HBP:** J Celedonio, **BF:** W Locke 37, J Celedonio 10, A Morris 9

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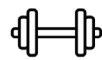
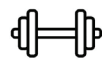
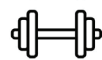
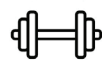
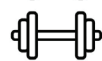
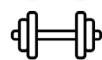
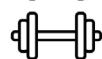
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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

World-famous Wall Drug isn't immune from challenges facing rural pharmacies

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS, KFF HEALTH NEWS - JULY 25, 2024 6:00 AM

WALL — Stacey Schulz parks in a rear lot to avoid the crowded Main Street entrances to her local pharmacy. “During the summer, it’s kind of hectic,” she said after greeting the pharmacist and technician by name. That’s because Schulz’s pharmacy is tucked inside Wall Drug, a tourist attraction that takes up almost an entire block and draws more than 2 million visitors a year to a community of fewer than 700 residents. The business is named after the town of Wall, which is just off Interstate 90 near Badlands National Park. Colorful, hand-painted billboards dot the roadside for hundreds of miles, telling motorists how far they are from Wall Drug’s free ice water, 5-cent coffee, and homemade doughnuts. Visitors can pan for gold, listen to singing animatronic cowboys, try on Western wear, and shop for souvenirs, including plush jackalopes — mythical jackrabbits with antelope horns.

Despite being part of a booming tourist attraction, Wall Drug’s pharmacy faces challenges common to independent rural pharmacies.

It’s the lone pharmacy in Wall, serving locals year-round. Some, like Schulz, live in town, while others live on ranches as far as 60 miles away. The next-nearest pharmacy is a 30-minute drive northeast.

Wall Drug also serves tourists who forget their prescriptions at home, get sick while roaming the country in their RVs, or hurt themselves while hiking through the otherworldly rock formations of the scorching Badlands, said Cindy Dinger, its sole pharmacist.

Wall has no hospital, but a clinic is open four days a week. Schulz, a medical assistant there, said she and her co-workers see a lot of summer tourists. They send them to Wall Drug to pick up prescriptions.

“And then we tell them to get fudge before they leave,” Schulz said.

Rural pharmacies, especially independent ones, closed at a higher rate from 2003 to 2021 than pharmacies in other areas, according to a study by the Rural Policy Research Institute. By 2021, the institute found, nearly 8% of rural counties were left with no pharmacy. The Wall Drug pharmacy has fewer customers than a typical city pharmacy, which can mean less profit, Dinger said.

She said some of its prices are higher because the store can’t negotiate discounts as steep as the deals suppliers grant chain pharmacies. Rural drugstores also lack leverage with insurers, and they face increasing competition from mail-order pharmacies.

Another challenge is staffing. When Dinger needs time off, she finds a fill-in from Rapid City, nearly an hour’s drive away.

“It’s a challenge getting relief if I want to go on vacation or if I need a cover so that I can go to a doctor’s appointment,” she said. “You take what you can get and try to schedule around it.”

Dinger said her pharmacy would struggle without the rest of Wall Drug.

“All this stuff around us — the poster and print shop, the boot shop, the fudge shop, the café — they pay our bills,” she said.

The pharmacy’s white facade, with stained-glass signs and windows, is modeled after that of the original drugstore, which was across the street. The window displays and top shelves inside the store are filled with vintage pharmacy supplies, including manuals, glass medicine bottles, and a suppository-making machine.

Tourists carrying shopping bags and sporting new cowboy hats stop to look at the displays. “It’s a real pharmacy,” a woman said, sounding surprised.

Dinger and Sylvia Smith, the store’s only pharmacy tech, ring customers up below a Tiffany-style light fixture and retrieve prescriptions stored behind a wooden desk and wall.

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Customer Will Lovitt said a friend advised him and his wife to stop at Wall Drug during their drive from Indiana to the Black Hills in western South Dakota. Lovitt developed a rash on the trip and ended up using the visit to get Dinger's advice on treating it.

He said it can be difficult for tourists to know where to find medical help, especially when driving through rural states like South Dakota.

"I think it's time that America gets back to the grass roots of the small-town doctor and the small-town pharmacist," Lovitt said.

Alex Davis and a friend decided to visit Wall Drug on their road trip from Kansas to Yellowstone National Park.

"Then, when I saw there was a little pharmacy, I thought I'd grab something that I needed," she said.

Davis bought Dramamine to treat car sickness on the long drive.

Dinger said she occasionally sees unusual situations, like the time several years ago when a park ranger needed antibiotics after getting bitten by a prairie dog.

"You never know what kind of diseases they might be carrying," she said of the animals, which recently were hit with an outbreak of plague.

Rick Husted is the chairman of Wall Drug. The store was opened in 1931 by his grandfather, pharmacist Ted Husted. Ted's wife, Dorothy, had the idea to advertise its soda fountain and free ice water to tourists traveling along unpaved roads during the hot years of the Dust Bowl era. Rick's father, pharmacist Bill Husted, began expanding the store in the '50s, turning it into the tourist magnet it is today.

Rick Husted didn't follow his father and grandfather's path to pharmacy school, so he had to recruit pharmacists from elsewhere.

Husted found Dinger in 2010 after writing a letter to each pharmacist in the state.

Dinger said she was living at the time in Sioux Falls, South Dakota's most populous city. But she and her husband were interested in raising their kids in a small town, the way she grew up. Dinger was also attracted by the store's limited hours: She'd be done working by 5 p.m. on weekdays and have the weekends off.

Husted said his family has never considered closing the pharmacy, even though it's not the main attraction for most visitors.

"We can't be Wall Drug without being a drugstore," he said.

Arielle Zions, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.

Defense secretary orders review of Wounded Knee Massacre medals

BY: SETH TUPPER - JULY 24, 2024 6:30 PM

The medals awarded to soldiers who participated in the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre will be subjected to a review, the U.S. Department of Defense announced Wednesday.

The department said the review's purpose is "to ensure no awardees were recognized for conduct inconsistent with the nation's highest military honor."

The move comes after years of activism by Lakota people — including descendants of massacre survivors — who want the medals rescinded.

Oliver "OJ" Semans, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, has been active in the effort with his wife, Barb, and their Four Directions nonprofit. He said it's gratifying to see some momentum after a long struggle, including failed attempts to rescind the medals through congressional legislation.

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"This issue is moving right now, and there are a lot of people involved in it," Semans said. "We're all trying to get to the same conclusion, and that's justice for the descendants."

The memorandum ordering the review is from Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. He directed his undersecretary of defense and personnel readiness to convene a panel of five experts, including two from the Department of the Interior. The panel must send a written report to Austin no later than Oct. 15 with recommendations and rationale to retain or rescind each of the medals. Austin will then provide his recommendations to the president.

The department said "approximately 20" soldiers received a Medal of Honor for participating in the massacre. Historians have noted that the records associated with some of the medals are incomplete or unclear.

In a news release, the Defense Department attributed comments to "a senior defense official" who said "it's never too late to do what's right."

"And that's what is intended by the review that the secretary directed," the official said, "which is to ensure that we go back and review each of these medals in a rigorous and individualized manner to understand the actions of the individual in the context of the overall engagement."

The massacre occurred on Dec. 29, 1890. Lakota people were camped near Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, where they were surrounded by hundreds of Army soldiers. A shot rang out while the soldiers tried to disarm the camp, and chaotic shooting ensued.

Fewer than 40 soldiers were killed (some by friendly fire, according to historians), while estimates of Lakota deaths ran from 200 to 300 or more, depending on the source. After some of the bodies froze on the ground for several days, a military-led burial party dumped them into a mass grave.

The politics and racism of the day influenced the Army's decision to support medals for some of the soldiers, even though Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles condemned the massacre. He led the Division of the Missouri, which included the soldiers who were responsible for the incident.

"I have never heard of a more brutal, cold-blooded massacre than at Wounded Knee," Miles wrote in an 1891 letter that's now held in an archive at Yale.

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

SD awards \$2M in grants for long-term care, but facilities sought \$5M more

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 24, 2024 4:30 PM

The South Dakota Department of Human Services recently awarded \$2 million in grants for technology and equipment in the long-term care industry, which has been afflicted with closures and staffing shortages.

Funding for the grants was approved by the Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem during the 2024 legislative session, after being recommended by an interim legislative committee studying the sustainability of long-term care. Lawmakers were motivated in part by the closure of more than 15 nursing homes in South Dakota since 2017.

Governmental investment will help stabilize the industry, said Good Samaritan Society Chief Operating Officer Aimee Middleton, especially on top of other recent efforts by the Legislature to provide relief. The Good Samaritan Society, owned by Sanford, plans to downsize its footprint to focus on a seven-state area in the Midwest.

"We're a large organization that operates in different states and we don't see this type of investment everywhere," Middleton said. "This is historic and appreciated."

Funded projects include food preparation and storage equipment; video monitoring and sensory technology systems, which can monitor patients remotely; telecommunications equipment; and diagnostic and interactive technology. All of which can help reduce the need for workers, industry officials say.

Long-term care facilities have struggled with staffing more than other health care fields since the coro-

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navirus pandemic, and the industry expects facilities will have to take on more patients as baby boomers age. Technological advancements that replace human workers can help bridge that gap, administrators say.

Seventy-three facilities received awards, with the Good Samaritan Society receiving \$347,465 between seven facilities — most of which are in Sioux Falls. The majority of that money is for technology-advanced food preparation, Middleton said. Good Samaritan was the only long-term care facility to invest in food preparation, according to the department.

The new technology will establish Sioux Falls as a hub to prepare patient meals days in advance and then transport the food to more rural facilities, Middleton said. The technology vacuum-seals or freezes the meal in a way that preserves the quality and nutrition before being reheated and served.

“With record unemployment rates, this is a creative solution so we can be creative in ways for residents to receive really good and high quality meals, but with less people available to us,” Middleton said.

Middleton plans to get the equipment and program up and running within nine months.

Edgewood Healthcare, based in North Dakota, has 14 long-term care facilities in South Dakota. Six locations received a total of \$189,389 to invest in sensory and diagnostic technology. Specifically, the money funds interactive technology to improve physical activity and mental stimulation for cognitively impaired residents as well as an advanced call system called CarePredict.

The CarePredict pendant system tracks residents’ location and activity, allows for communication between residents and staff, and provides fall detection. The grant will completely cover upgrades at the Spearfish, Rapid City and Pierre locations, said Rich Ostert, a regional vice president for Edgewood.

Ultimately, the health care system hopes to use the CarePredict technology to measure blood pressure, oxygen and pulse rates and more efficiently upload it into a database.

Ostert said Edgewood plans to implement CarePredict at all 65 communities within its seven-state footprint.

“This funding allows us to get this technology a lot quicker than we might have,” Ostert said.

Of the \$2 million pot, \$1.2 million was distributed among rural long-term care facilities in the state. Over \$788,000 was awarded to long-term care facilities in Sioux Falls or Rapid City.

The Department of Human Services estimates more than 4,000 South Dakotans will be impacted by the grants. The department received 104 applications totaling \$7.47 million, so nearly \$5.5 million in requests weren’t funded.

Lake Andes Senior Living, in south-central South Dakota, was awarded \$13,502 to fund a radio system integrated with an updated call light system. The new call light system, which will cost nearly \$90,000, wasn’t awarded.

“Something is better than nothing, that’s for sure,” said Clay Brouwer, Lake Andes Senior Living administrator.

Brouwer said the facility will “have to find a way to budget” for the \$90,000 call light system to take advantage of the state granted funds.

The facility’s current call light system, which alerts nursing staff when a patient needs attention, is several decades old, Brouwer said, and only lights up outside of the patient’s room with a beeping noise. Alerting staff through a radio system will improve response times for patients.

“It’s doing a lot for facilities. Any time you can get a technology grant of any sort, you just have quicker access. Anything helps,” he said.

Awarded projects must be completed within one year from the date of the award. Grants were capped at \$100,000.

Awarded 2024 long-term care technology grants

Avera Mother Joseph Manor Retirement, Aberdeen, \$40,430

Prairie Height Healthcare, Aberdeen, \$20,621.77

Diamond Care Center, Bridgewater, \$10,000

Sun Dial Manor, Bristol, \$9,571.97

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Wheatcrest Hills Healthcare, Britton, \$13,261
United Living Community Brookings, Brookings, \$66,094.94
Centerville Care and Rehab Center, Centerville, \$5,000
Sanford Health Chamberlain, Chamberlain, \$12,099
Avantara Clark, Clark, \$24,672
Fay Wookey Memorial Assisted Living, Clark, \$2,447
Roetell Senior Housing Clark, Clark, \$5,281
Good Samaritan Society , Corsica, DeSmet, Howard, Scotland, Tyndall, \$17,509
Avera Eureka, Eureka, \$18,591.63
Faulkton Senior Living, Faulkton, \$2,175
The Meadows Assisted Living, Faulkton, \$3,535
Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe Care Center, Flandreau, \$36,909
Riverview Healthcare Center , Flandreau, \$13,261
Palisade Healthcare Center, Garretson, \$52,523
Avantara Gronton, Gronton, \$24,672
Seven Sisters Living center, Hot Springs, \$60,699.60
Hudson Care and Rehab, Hudson, \$3,776.17
Sunset Manor, Irene, \$30,828.62
Lakes Andes Senior Living, Lake Andes, \$13,502.20
Avantara Lake Norden, Lake Norden, \$24,672
Bethel Lutheran Home, Madison, \$15,809.83
Tieszen Memorial Home, Inc., Marion, \$63,808.96
Avantara Milbank, Milbank, \$10,000
Wellshire Park Place, Millbank, \$20,000
Good Samaritan Society – Miller, Miller, \$11,355
Avera Brady Health and Rehab, Mitchell, \$8,320
Firestell Healthcare, Mitchell, \$15,939
Edgewood , Mitchell, Sioux Falls, Watertown, \$21,030
Mobridge Regional Hospital – Assisted Living, Mobridge, \$15,440
Avera Bormann Manor, Parkston, \$13,085
Scotchman Living Center, Philip, \$17,948.44
Silverlead Assisted Living Center, Philip, \$3,887.99
Avera Maryhouse, Pierre, \$71,200
Edgewood Pierre, Pierre, \$63,106
Clarkson Health Care, Rapid City, \$44,047
Edgewood Rapid City, Rapid City, \$77,729
Fairmont Grand Senior Living, Rapid City, \$9,485
Fountain Springs Healthcare, Rapid City, \$72,704
The Courtyard – Westhills Village, Rapid City, \$25,075.26
Avantara Redfield, Redfield, \$23,500
Lakeside Assisted Living, Redfield, \$1,000
Strand Kjorsvig Community Rest Home, Roslyn, \$9,992.85
Leisure Living Salem Independent and Assisted Living, Salem, \$69.99
Bethany Home Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls, \$10,106.79
Dow Rummel, Sioux Falls, \$10,000
Good Samaritan Society – Hearthstone Assisted Living, Sioux Falls, \$79,516
Good Samaritan Society – Luther Manor, Sioux Falls, \$97,916
Good Samaritan Society – Prairie Creek Assisted Living, Sioux Falls, \$93,916
Good Samaritan Society – Sioux Falls Center, Sioux Falls, \$97,916

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Good Samaritan Society – Sioux Falls Village, Sioux Falls, \$100,000

Meadows on Sycamore Assisted Living, Sioux Falls, \$58,389

Trail Ridge Retirement Community, Sioux Falls, \$11,370.69

Tekawitha Living Center, Sisseton, \$12,240.93

Edgewood Spearfish Senior Living, Spearfish, \$100,000

Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home, Viborg, \$49,500

Wakonda Heritage Manor, Wakonda, \$19,085.59

Avantara Watertown, Watertown, \$23,500

Jenkins Living Center, Watertown, \$27,000

Meadow Lake Assisted Living, Watertown, \$1,237.97

Bethseda Home, Webster, \$18,405

Aurora-Brule Care and Rehab, White Lake, \$14,615.00

White River Health Care Center, White River, \$16,900

Wilmot Care Center, Wilmot, \$23,814.81

Prairie View Healthcare Center, Woonsocket, \$7,904

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

'Pass the torch': Biden addresses nation on why he won't seek a second term

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JULY 24, 2024 8:33 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden explained his decision not to seek reelection during a prime-time address from the Oval Office on Wednesday, saying now is the time to turn over power to the next generation.

"I've made it clear that I believe America is at an inflection point — one of those rare moments in history when the decisions we make now will determine the fate of our nation and the world for decades to come," Biden said. "America is going to have to choose between moving forward or backward, between hope and hate, between unity and division."

The 11-minute speech was the first time Biden spoke at length on camera since releasing a letter Sunday withdrawing as the Democratic Party's presumptive presidential nominee. He will continue to serve out his term.

Biden has endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, who has received support from enough delegates to clinch the party's official nomination during a virtual roll call vote slated for early August.

Biden called into a campaign rally earlier this week, but had only given off-camera or brief remarks since announcing his decision to step aside while sidelined with COVID-19.

Calls for Biden to bow out began after his performance during the first presidential debate on June 27 raised significant concerns among Democrats and others about his age and cognitive abilities.

'Nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy'

Speaking directly to Americans in his address, Biden said he believed his record, leadership and vision for the country's future "all merited a second term."

"But nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy and that includes personal ambition," Biden said. "So I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. That's the best way to unite our nation."

Biden said that while there is "a time and a place for long years of experience in public life," there is also a time for "younger voices."

"And that time and place is now," Biden said.

During his remaining six months in office, Biden said he planned to continue pressing for gun control,

reproductive rights, voting rights and an end to all forms of violence, including political.

Biden said he wanted to secure an end to the war in Gaza and bring home the hostages that Hamas took when it attacked Israel on Oct. 7.

He said he planned to press for changes to the Supreme Court, calling it essential for democracy.

Biden also recounted the numerous laws enacted since he became president as well as his efforts to hold the NATO alliance together following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He said he hoped Americans understood how "grateful" he was for his decades as an elected official.

"I ran for president four years ago because I believed, and I still do, that the soul of America was at stake, the very nature of who we are was at stake," Biden said.

Harris, he said, has the experience, strength and capability to lead the country following the November elections.

"The great thing about America is here, kings and dictators do not rule — the people do," Biden said. "History is in your hands, the power is in your hands, the idea of America lies in your hands. We just have to keep the faith and remember who we are."

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

U.S. House panels review 'startling' allegations at Bureau of Indian Education university

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JULY 24, 2024 6:23 PM

WASHINGTON — Members of two U.S. House panels examined allegations of sexual assault, bullying and retaliation at the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education-operated Haskell Indian Nations University during a hearing this week.

Haskell, a Lawrence, Kansas, school that is the only four-year college operated by the bureau, has come under scrutiny over its response to a range of allegations from students, which were documented in a scathing report from the Bureau of Indian Education, an agency within the U.S. Interior Department.

The report says the school did not act on sexual abuse claims, lacks institutional control to prevent theft and other abuses and is unresponsive to student complaints, the Kansas Reflector summarized in an April opinion piece.

Students and other interested parties asked the bureau to release the report, which the department finalized in January 2023, but the government withheld it for well over a year.

Responding to a Freedom of Information Act request from the nonprofit Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and a federal FOIA suit, the bureau initially released an unrelated report in November 2023.

The bureau finally released the report students and PEER had requested in April 2024 — with heavy redactions.

Tuesday's hearing was scheduled after two U.S. House committees with jurisdiction over the matter — Education and the Workforce and Natural Resources — launched an investigation in early July into "allegations of misconduct" involving the university and the Department of the Interior.

The GOP committee chairs, Education Chairwoman Virginia Foxx of North Carolina and Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman of Arkansas, led a July 2 letter to Tony Dearman, director of the Bureau of Indian Education, expressing their concerns and requesting several documents to assist with their investigation.

"The students of Haskell have been deprived of what should be the No. 1 guarantee in our educational system: a safe learning environment," Rep. Burgess Owens, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, said Tuesday.

Owens' panel conducted the hearing alongside the House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcom-

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mittee on Oversight and Investigations.

The Utah Republican called the allegations in the Bureau of Indian Education's report "startling" and was especially concerned with an apparent lack of transparency.

"Perhaps more troublesome is that the report's eventual production was delayed," he said. "Evidence points to possible omissions and alterations to the final, publicly available copy."

"With each of these new developments, the academic integrity of the institution has been severely compromised," he said.

Leadership issues

The university, which was founded in 1884 as a boarding school for Native American children, has seen a revolving door of leadership recently, with eight presidents in six years.

At the hearing, Bryan Newland, the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior, said that has contributed to the school's issues.

"There have been a lot of challenges on setting clear leadership expectations at Haskell for many years," he said.

"The high turnover in Haskell presidents and leadership over the years ... has allowed some of the problems with these factions or these cliques on campus to fester," he added.

House Republicans have criticized Newland, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and other officials over claims that they ignored "Haskell students' pleas for justice."

Pressed Tuesday by Democratic Rep. Mark Takano of California on why it took multiple FOIA requests to produce the final 2023 Bureau of Indian Education report detailing the allegations at Haskell, Newland said "that report should have been disclosed."

Retaliation

Rep. Melanie Stansbury, ranking member of the Natural Resources subcommittee and a New Mexico Democrat, said she saw two issues: a "toxic work culture that needs to be fixed inside the administration and faculty of the school," and "an accountability follow-up issue" with the Bureau of Indian Education.

Ronald Graham, who was the president of Haskell from May 2020 to May 2021, said "something is terribly wrong" at both the school and the Bureau of Indian Education.

"It began long before I arrived. I uncovered it, I reported it, and I was fired for it. It (continued) after I left, and all indications are it's still continuing to this day," Graham said.

Clay Mayes, former cross country coach at the school who was fired in April 2022, felt that he had been retaliated against for accusing colleagues of theft and sexual misconduct at Haskell.

Mayes, a member of the Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes, said there is a "complete fear" to report things at Haskell due to "certain alliances."

"Certain people figure out who has the protection, so new employees will become friends with this one group because they get protection," he said. "So the culture is: Don't report it and get along with who's basically getting the most out of the system."

Reporting sexual assault on college campuses

"Indigenous students experience sexual assault at a higher rate than any other racial group," according to Emily Martin, chief program officer for the National Women's Law Center. She also noted that more than 1 in 4 women are sexually assaulted in college.

"Students often tell us they're discouraged from reporting sexual assault and harassment at their schools," Martin told the joint panel. "When they do report, they tell us they're met with delays, that the system is stacked against them, that the trauma they experienced, both from their assault and from going through the reporting and investigatory process, stays with them."

Martin said that as a federally operated educational program, Haskell is "legally required to protect its students from sex discrimination, including sexual assault."

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Steep fines set off state-federal showdown over child labor laws South Dakota among states with less restrictive laws than feds

BY: KEVIN HARDY, STATELINE - JULY 24, 2024 6:00 AM

Michelle Cox was in disbelief when a U.S. Department of Labor official told her earlier this year she was violating federal law by employing 14- and 15-year-olds past 7 p.m. on school nights.

Cox, the owner of a Subway franchise in Maquoketa, Iowa, knew the state legislature had made substantial changes to state labor laws in 2023 to allow younger teens to work later on weekdays.

The problem, as critics of last year's proposed bill pointed out during the legislative debate: Iowa's new regulations directly conflicted with federal standards. And employers must follow the strictest standards, whether they be state or federal.

Cox said she fixed the problem the day the feds informed her, eliminating later work shifts for her youngest employees. But she said she still faced a \$73,000 federal fine.

"I kept telling him I wasn't trying to break the law," she said. "I honestly thought I was following the law."

She's among several Iowa restaurateurs facing steep penalties from federal regulators following last year's state legislation.

In recent years, lawmakers in Iowa and other states have sought to roll back long-standing child labor protections as employers struggle to fill open jobs and critics complain that many safeguards on child workers are outdated. But experts say no state has recently gone as far as Iowa, setting up a trial case of the extent to which the feds will crack down in states with looser laws.

Since 2021, lawmakers in 31 states have introduced bills that would weaken child labor protections, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a think tank that examines how policies affect low- and middle-income workers. This year, EPI tracked bills weakening child labor protections that passed in eight red states: Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Among the changes are expanding eligibility for younger teens to drive to work or loosening standards on work permits for the youngest workers — items unaddressed in federal law. Other changes, including some enacted in Iowa, directly conflict with federal laws.

Jennifer Sherer, an EPI researcher who tracks the issue, said federal and state governments had for decades embraced protecting the youngest workers after eradicating the worst child labor abuses. But legislatures, backed by business groups, have recently sought to loosen standards, leading to heightened tensions over federal rules, she said.

"What we're seeing is this pretty bold and alarming all-out assault on that consensus," Sherer said.

Iowa's Republican leaders, including Gov. Kim Reynolds, are protesting what she called "excessive fines" resulting from enforcement of federal law. In a July 1 letter to federal regulators, Reynolds said some businesses were facing fines as steep as \$180,000.

In a statement, the federal Department of Labor acknowledged receiving the letter, saying officials would "respond accordingly."

"We fully support the enforcement of labor laws against businesses which employ youth in dangerous and harmful work environments," Reynolds wrote. "But a teenager working past 7 p.m. on a school night is not oppressive child labor."

SD among states with less restrictive laws

Reynolds noted that 25 other states have less restrictive laws than the feds. She said those states, including South Dakota, have not faced the same level of enforcement and fines as Iowa.

Since 1994, South Dakota has sanctioned more expansive hours for younger workers than federal law allows. But the federal labor department has not been nearly as active there, said Nathan Sanderson,

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executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association.

"They want to make an example out of Iowa," Sanderson said. "Other states that have had laws like this that have been in place for longer aren't going to be nearly as prescient for the U.S. Department of Labor, because they're viewing this as sort of a test case."

In the meantime, employers such as Cox are stuck in the middle.

She thinks the federal government is unfairly targeting Iowa, which she says was only trying to support small businesses, and should have given out warnings first. She said she often works alongside her youngest employees, who are not endangered at Subway.

"They don't run ovens. They don't run meat slicers," she said. "They make sandwiches."

Cox is appealing her fine with assistance from the state's restaurant association. She said the fine would prove ruinous for her store, which is located in an eastern Iowa town of about 6,100 people.

"I'd have to shut my doors," she said. "Do you realize how many sub sandwiches you'd have to make to make \$73,000?"

'We should not be in this position'

In Des Moines, opposition was fierce as soon as lawmakers released the draft of their bill last session. The Republican legislation sparked national headlines — and false claims that Iowa was rolling back protections to allow kids to work the floors of meatpacking plants.

"It was one of the most bizarre bills, in a way, I had ever worked on," said Republican state Rep. Dave Deyoe, the floor leader for the bill. "The PR campaign against this was huge."

But the rhetoric didn't match the substance, he said.

Deyoe viewed the bill as more of "a code cleanup," with lawmakers aiming to update some provisions of statute that hadn't been touched in more than a century. The previous state law still referenced children working in street occupations, he noted, such as selling newspapers and shining shoes.

Under the law enacted last year, younger teens are allowed to work until 9 p.m. — rather than the federal 7 p.m. cutoff — and those as young as 16 can serve alcohol. Legislation enacted this year allows driving permits for younger teens so they can drive to work.

Deyoe noted Iowa's law had already conflicted with federal law: While the federal government says 14- and 15-year-olds can only work three hours per day, the state had since the 1970s allowed them to work for four hours.

"I'm not really sure what the motive is," he said of recent federal action. "But it sure does seem over the top."

Federal enforcement has seemed to have targeted Iowa's restaurant industry, said Jessica Dunker, president and CEO of the Iowa Restaurant Association, which lobbied for last year's legislation.

The association initially celebrated the law, informing employers of the new state guidelines. But since the federal investigations began, Dunker said, her organization has been urging members to follow federal rules.

Dunker thinks Iowa is being treated unfairly since other states with conflicting laws don't seem to be facing similar enforcement. She noted the state law only changed the work times for younger teens — it didn't allow them to perform more dangerous work.

"If you are a high school student, you can volunteer at the high school concession stand and get no pay until 11 o'clock at night and nobody cares," Dunker said. "But if you go and work at Dairy Queen until 9 and get paid for your work, suddenly that's dangerous or harmful?"

Jake Andrejat, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Labor, said less restrictive state laws do not negate more restrictive federal rules.

"It is, and always has been, the obligation of the employer to maintain compliance with federal law when their states pass laws that are less restrictive," he said in a statement to Stateline.

Many of the department's investigations are based on complaints or tips. But it also performs "agency-initiated investigations," aimed at protecting the most vulnerable employees who are the least likely to complain, Andrejat said.

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"The restaurant industry has a high rate of violations and often employs vulnerable workers who may not be aware of their rights or specific employment rules such as the right to overtime and child labor laws," he said in the statement.

To Iowa state Sen. Nate Boulton, the predicament facing employers was entirely preventable. And predictable.

"This is not a situation where the federal government dropped a trap door on the state of Iowa," said Boulton, a Democrat who practices labor law in Des Moines. "This is a situation where there were all kinds of warnings and all kinds of efforts to draw attention to these conflicts. ... We should not be in this position."

Boulton was among those last year who warned Republicans that the law would conflict with federal standards. Since federal enforcement began, Iowa's entire congressional delegation has called for changes in federal law, arguing the current protections are outdated.

But Boulton said there are less harmful ways to push for change in federal rules than to pass a conflicting state law.

"What a disappointing way to approach a political issue, by putting small businesses in a position to be fined to try to put pressure on the federal government," Boulton said.

Other states take opposite approach

While youth employment rates have inched up in recent years, they remain significantly lower than previous decades. At the same time, the country has seen improved high school graduation rates, noted Betsy Wood, a historian of child labor.

She said that state policies should encourage that trajectory, not discourage it. Wood, who teaches history at Bard High School Early College in Newark, New Jersey, noted that recent rollbacks of child labor protections come during a time of skyrocketing child labor law violations.

"It is negligent and dystopian for employers — with the help of state legislatures — to balance their labor shortages on the backs of teen workers," Wood said.

Unlike the states loosening work protections, lawmakers in seven states — Alabama, Colorado, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Utah and Virginia — recently enacted legislation to strengthen some child labor standards, according to EPI. The Illinois legislature passed a similar bill, but the governor has not signed it.

Several employers in Utah faced penalties after following less strict state standards. For example, the federal labor department announced in March it had fined a Baskin-Robbins franchisee in Utah nearly \$50,000 for scheduling young workers too late in the evening and too many hours per week. The department said the owner of eight ice cream shops relied on "erroneous legal guidance" to follow the less stringent state regulations.

Utah Democratic state Sen. Karen Kwan introduced legislation in February to get state law more in line with federal rules for the youngest workers, reducing confusion for employers. It passed with little opposition.

"The intent was to make sure our employers do not get fined by the federal government," she said.

In Indiana, rules for the youngest workers were stricter than the federal regulations.

That became troublesome for employers, especially in rural areas where workforce challenges are exacerbated, said state Rep. Kendell Culp, a Republican.

After being contacted by the owner of a drive-in restaurant, Culp learned that Indiana didn't allow 14- and 15-year-olds to work past 7 p.m. in the summertime.

Legislation he sponsored changed that and eased requirements on 16- and 17-year-old workers that were not addressed under federal law.

Bringing some of Indiana's regulations more in line with federal rules will ultimately reduce confusion, Culp said.

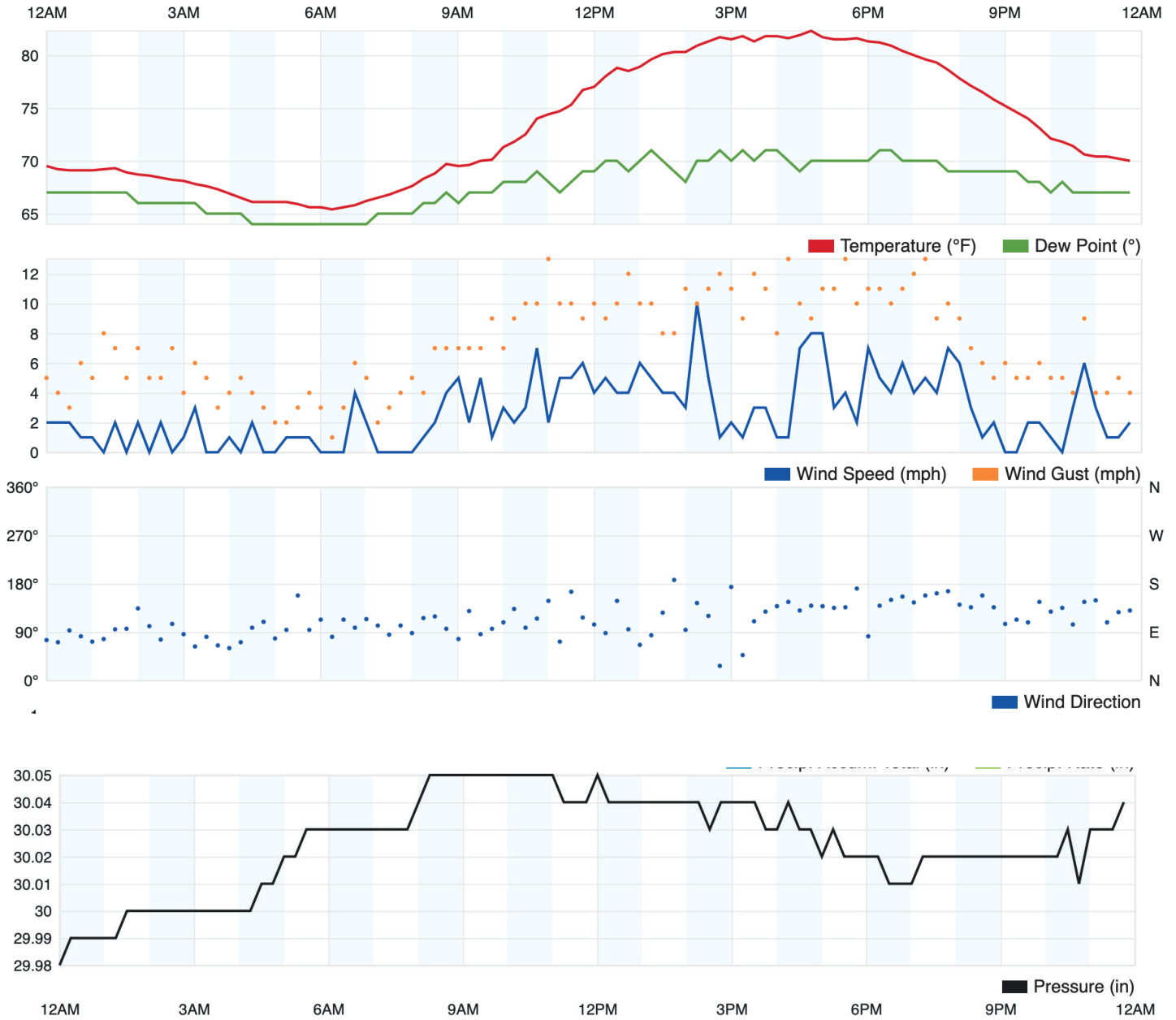
"I think from an aspect of really being business-friendly, it made sense to have the same regulations," he said. "Those regulations are there for a reason: to protect those teenagers."

Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 94 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 72 °F

Partly Cloudy
and Breezy

Friday



High: 96 °F

Hot and
Breezy

Friday Night



Low: 72 °F

Partly Cloudy
and Breezy
then Chance
T-storms

Saturday



High: 92 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms

Heat Continues

Friday



Highs: 84-101°
Lows: 69-75°

Heat Index:
up to 102°

Saturday



Highs: 89-95°
Lows: 65-72°F

Marginal risk of
severe storms



NEVER LEAVE KIDS
OR PETS UNATTENDED
IN VEHICLES!



BRING PETS INDOORS
OR PROVIDE SHADE
AND PLENTY OF WATER



A Heat Advisory has been issued for areas around and west of the Missouri River as heat index values are expected to be in the 98 to 102 degree range. Please take precautions today if you are spending time outdoors. The heat will continue into Friday and the weekend, as will milky skies due to elevated smoke. There is a marginal (1 out of 5) risk for severe storms Saturday afternoon and evening.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 4:43 PM

Low Temp: 65 °F at 6:09 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 2:51 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 2 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1931

Record Low: 44 in 1911

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.60

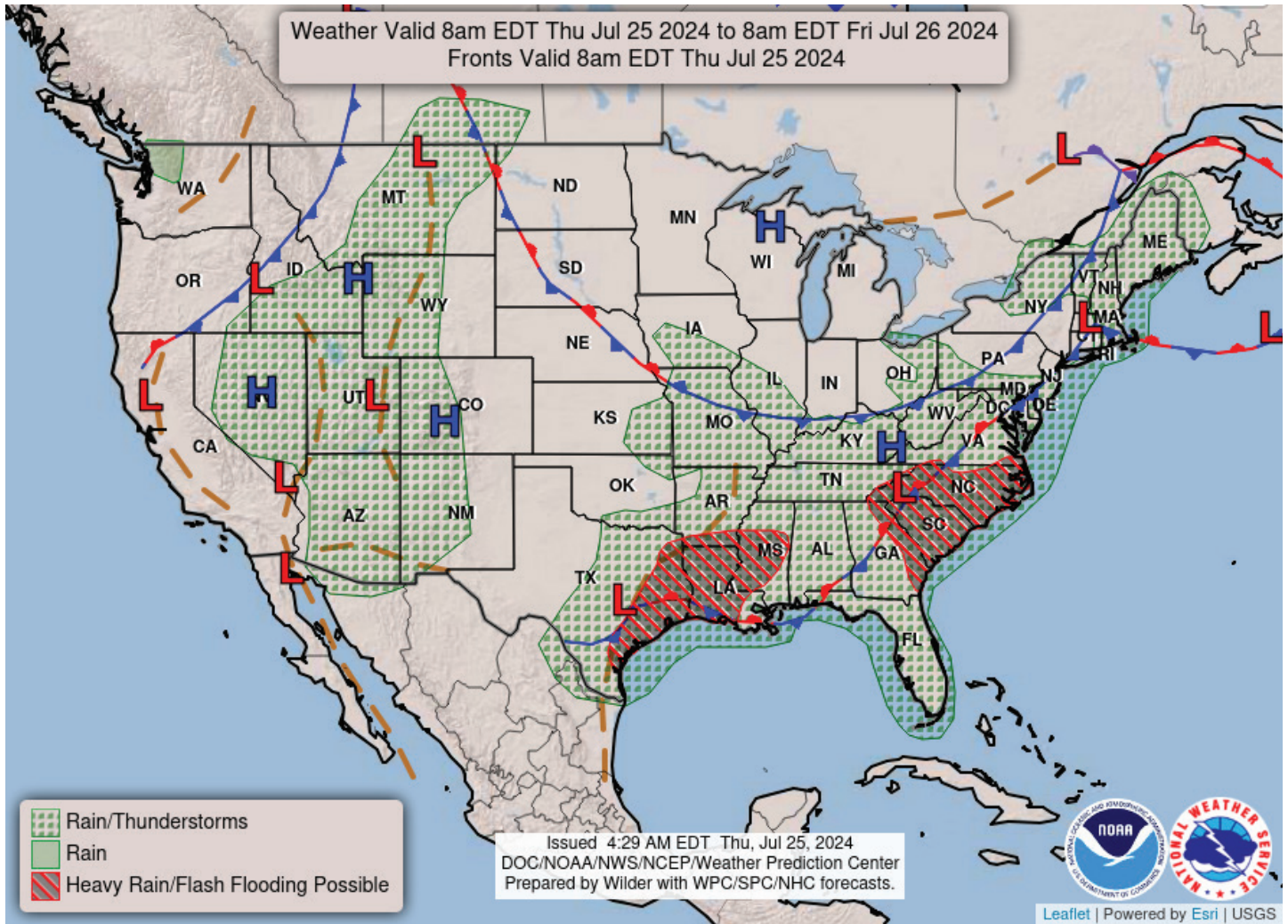
Precip to date in July: 3.56

Average Precip to date: 13.61

Precip Year to Date: 14.51

Sunset Tonight: 9:11:05 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:09:00 am



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Today in Weather History

July 25, 1961: A thunderstorm started late in the evening on the 25th and went into the early morning hours of the 26th. A sizeable area suffered 50 to 100 percent loss of crops resulting from hail over the following counties, Bison, Perkins, Faulk, Sully, and western Hand. Corn was stripped of leaves and broken off. Oats and wheat were flattened. High winds with recorded gusts of 75 to 80 miles per hour cause numerous power failures and damaged trees in Pierre.

July 25, 1972: Unofficial rainfall amounts of 8 inches caused flash flooding in Ferney and surrounding area in Brown County. Water, over two feet depth was reported in a parking area. Basements were flooded, and foundations were damaged. The torrential rains caused extensive damage to crops in the area.

July 25, 1984: Severe thunderstorms caused considerable damage to the Pierre area. Winds were gusting to 83 mph at the Pierre airport, where thirteen planes, as well as several hangars, were destroyed. In town, a home and three businesses lost their roofs, and a trailer home was destroyed. Rains of four inches in thirty minutes produced flash flooding with some streets closed for some time. Some basements were reported to have 6 to 8 inches of water in them. At Dupree, high winds caused extensive damage to the grandstand roof at the fairgrounds. Along the entire path of the thunderstorms, hail and high winds broke windows, damaged cars, downed trees, damaged crops, and caused power outages.

July 25, 1993: Lake Kampeska, near Watertown, reached near record level at 37 inches over full mark due to runoff from heavy rains in previous days. Dozens of homes and two businesses were flooded out. About 100,000 sandbags were distributed to help prevent more flood damage to lakeside property owners.

July 25, 2000: A powerful F4 tornado hit the city of Granite Falls in Minnesota. The tornado first touched down in rural parts of the county west-northwest of Granite Falls. The tornado struck the city at 6:10 pm. After tearing through the residential sections of town, the tornado lifted at approximately 6:25 PM after being on the ground for over nine miles. The tornado caused one fatality and injured more than a dozen.

1891 - The mercury hit 109 degrees at Los Angeles, CA, marking the peak of a torrid heat wave. (David Ludlum)

1936: Lincoln, Nebraska saw an all-time high temperature of 115 degrees. The low only dropped to 91 degrees and the average temperature was 103. Many people spent the night sleeping outside to escape the heat.

1956: The Andrea Doria sank in dense fog near Nantucket Lightship, Massachusetts. The Swedish-American liner, Stockholm, hit the ship forty-five miles off the coast of Massachusetts. Fifty-two persons drowned or were killed by the impact.

1986 - Tremendous hailstones pounded parts of South Dakota damaging crops, buildings and vehicles. Hail piled two feet deep at Black Hawk and northern Rapid City. Hail an inch and a quarter in diameter fell for 85 minutes near Miller and Huron, piling up to depths of two feet. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Sixteen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record high of 91 degrees, established just the previous day. It marked their fourth day in a row of 90 degree heat, after hitting 90 degrees just twice in the previous 25 years of records. The water temperature of Lake Erie at Buffalo, NY, reached 79 degrees, the warmest reading in 52 years of records. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from central Kansas to western Kentucky and southern Illinois during the day. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Union, MO, and winds gusts to 65 mph at Sedalia, MO. Five cities in Washington and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date. Medford, OR, hit 107 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early afternoon thunderstorms over west central Missouri drenched the town of Ferguson with four inches of rain. Early evening thunderstorms in Pennsylvania produced more than two inches of rain north of Avella in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: The citizens of Sand Point, Alaska saw a rare tornado touchdown on two uninhabited islands. Sand Point is part of the Aleutian Chain and is located about 570 miles southwest of Anchorage.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

TRYING TO FIND ME

A telephone salesman called a home, and a small child answered the phone just above a whisper. "Hello," he said.

"Is your mother in?" asked the salesman.

"Yes," he said in a hushed voice. "But she's busy."

"Well," the salesman continued, "is your father home?"

"Yes," came the quiet reply. "But he's busy too."

Wondering what was going on the salesman asked, "Well, what are they doing?"

"Looking for me," whispered the child. "I broke my mom's favorite vase and I'm hiding."

Hiding is the natural thing to do when we've done something we think is wrong. It has a long heritage going back to the Garden of Eden when Adam said, to God, "I heard you, so I hid." Facing the Lord is not pleasant even though we know that He loves us and will willingly forgive us if we ask.

Often when we are guilty of being disobedient or knowingly commit a sin, we fear approaching Him. But that is the time we need Him the most. We need to remember that He does not want to hurt us but to heal us. He is anxious to forgive us, restore our relationship with Him and grant us His pardon and peace. "If we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive."

Prayer: We know, Heavenly Father, that we do what is unacceptable to You when we sin. May we be swift to confess and repent and forsake what we know is wrong. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.23.24

3 9 14 26 51 21

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$306,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 26
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.24

8 11 31 36 40 6

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$5,850,000

NEXT 2 Days 14 Hrs 41
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.24

15 18 21 25 36 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 56 Mins 38
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.24

2 15 31 32 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$47,000

NEXT 2 Days 14 Hrs 56
DRAW: Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.24

4 9 20 47 51 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 25
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.24

16 42 59 63 68 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$131,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 25
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
08/02/2024 Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

News from the Associated Press

Judge's ruling temporarily allows for unlicensed Native Hawaiian midwifery

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A Hawaii judge has temporarily blocked the state from enforcing a law requiring the licensing of practitioners and teachers of traditional Native Hawaiian midwifery while a lawsuit seeking to overturn the statute wends its way through the courts.

Lawmakers enacted the midwife licensure law, which asserted that the "improper practice of midwifery poses a significant risk of harm to the mother or newborn, and may result in death," in 2019. Violations are punishable by up to a year in jail, plus thousands of dollars in criminal and civil fines.

The measure requires anyone who provides "assessment, monitoring, and care" during pregnancy, labor, childbirth and the postpartum period to be licensed.

A group of women sued, arguing that a wide range of people, including midwives, doulas, lactation consultants and even family and friends of the new mother would be subject to penalties and criminal liability.

Their complaint also said the law threatens the plaintiffs' ability to serve women who seek traditional Native Hawaiian births.

Judge Shirley Kawamura issued a ruling late Tuesday afternoon barring the state from "enforcing, threatening to enforce or applying any penalties to those who practice, teach, and learn traditional Native Hawaiian healing practices of prenatal, maternal and child care."

Plaintiffs testified during a four-day hearing last month that the law forces them to get licensed through costly out-of-state programs that don't align with Hawaiian culture.

Ki'inaniokalani Kaho'ohanohano testified that a lack of Native Hawaiian midwives when she prepared to give birth for the first time in 2003 inspired her to eventually become one herself. She described how she spent years helping to deliver as many as three babies a month, receiving them in a traditional cloth made of woven bark and uttering sacred chants as she welcomed them into the world.

The law constitutes a deprivation of Native Hawaiian customary rights, which are protected by the Hawaii constitution, Kawamura's ruling said, and the "public interest weighs heavily towards protecting Native Hawaiian customs and traditions that are at risk of extinction."

The dispute is the latest in a long debate about how and whether Hawaii should regulate the practice of traditional healing arts that date to well before the islands became the 50th state in 1959. Those healing practices were banished or severely restricted for much of the 20th century, but the Hawaiian Indigenous rights movement of the 1970s renewed interest in them.

The state eventually adopted a system under which councils versed in Native Hawaiian healing certify traditional practitioners, though the plaintiffs in the lawsuit say their efforts to form such a council for midwifery have failed.

The judge also noted in her ruling that the preliminary injunction is granted until there is a council that can recognize traditional Hawaiian birthing practitioners.

"This ruling means that traditional Native Hawaiian midwives can once again care for families, including those who choose home births, who can't travel long distances, or who don't feel safe or seen in other medical environments," plaintiff and midwife trainee Makalani Franco-Francis said in a statement Wednesday. "We are now free to use our own community wisdom to care for one another without fear of prosecution."

She testified last month how she learned customary practices from Kaho'ohanohano, including cultural protocols for a placenta, such as burying it to connect a newborn to its ancestral lands.

The judge found, however, that the state's regulation of midwifery more broadly speaking is "reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of mothers and their newborns."

The ruling doesn't block the law as it pertains to unlicensed midwives who do not focus on Hawaiian birthing practices, said Hillary Schneller, an attorney with the Center for Reproductive Rights, which rep-

resents the women. "That is a gap that this order doesn't address."

The case is expected to continue to trial to determine whether the law should be permanently blocked. The state attorney general's office said in an email Wednesday that it was still reviewing the decision.

Pentagon panel to review Medals of Honor given to soldiers at the Wounded Knee massacre

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department will review the Medals of Honor that were given to 20 U.S. soldiers for their actions in the 1890 battle at Wounded Knee to make sure their conduct merits such an honorable award.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the review by a special panel of experts after consultation with the White House and the Department of the Interior. Congress recommended such a review in the 2022 defense bill, reflecting a push by some lawmakers to rescind the awards for those who participated in the massacre on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation near Wounded Knee Creek.

An estimated 250 Native Americans, including women and children, were killed in the fight and at least another 100 were wounded.

Medals of Honor were given to 20 soldiers from the 7th Cavalry Regiment, and their awards cite a range of actions including bravery, efforts to rescue fellow troops and actions to "dislodge Sioux Indians" who were concealed in a ravine.

Native American groups, advocates, state lawmakers from South Dakota and a number of Congress members have called for officials to revoke the awards. Congress apologized in 1990 to the descendants of those killed at Wounded Knee but did not revoke the medals.

In a memo signed last week, Austin said the panel will review each award "to ensure no soldier was recognized for conduct that did not merit recognition" and if their conduct demonstrated any disqualifying actions. Those could include rape or murder of a prisoner or attacking a non-combatant or someone who had surrendered.

Austin said Army Secretary Christine Wormuth must provide the historical records and documentation for the awards for each soldier to the panel by Friday. The panel must provide a written report no later than Oct. 15, recommending that each award be either revoked or retained.

The standards for awarding the Medal of Honor have evolved over time, but the review will evaluate the 20 soldiers' actions based on the rules in place at the time. Austin said the panel of five experts can consider the context of the overall incident to assess each soldier's actions.

The dispute continues a long history of contentious relations between the tribes in South Dakota and the government dating to the 1800s. The Wounded Knee massacre was the deadliest, as federal troops shot and killed Lakota men, women and children during a campaign to stop a religious practice known as the Ghost Dance.

South Dakota athletics receives record donation of about \$5 million from ex-football player's family

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — A former South Dakota football player and his family have given Coyotes Athletics the largest private donation in program history, athletic director Jon Schemmel announced Wednesday.

Scott Jones and his wife, Lisa, donated approximately \$5 million, Schemmel told The Associated Press through a spokesman.

The football program is the primary beneficiary. The gift will endow the offensive coordinator position and increase the team's overall budget. The Coyotes enter 2024 off their best season in the Football Championship Subdivision, going 10-3 and reaching the quarterfinals of the playoffs.

Scott Jones played quarterback for the then-Division II Coyotes from 1983-87 and led the team to a 21-6 record as the starter his last two seasons. Jones was inducted into the USD Athletics Hall of Fame in 2005.

"Lisa, our four children, and I are so excited for this gift to USD and the Coyote football program! The enthusiasm and love we have for our Coyote brothers, sisters, staff, faculty, and leadership is beyond measure," Jones said. "We look forward to continuing the commitment to excellence that the university and football program have ingrained in us."

Portions of the donation will be directed to the next phase of DakotaDome renovations, general athletic scholarships and other support for the athletic department. The school is in its second decade competing in Division I.

Scott Jones graduated with a chemistry degree in 1988 and is president of Maguire Iron in Sioux Falls. His wife, Lisa, earned her degree in Arts & Sciences in 1995.

Typhoon Gaemi heads for China after leaving 25 dead in Taiwan and the Philippines

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A strong typhoon was expected to make landfall in China on Thursday after sweeping across Taiwan, where it caused landslides and flooding in low-lying areas and left three dead.

Typhoon Gaemi swept up the western Pacific, intensifying seasonal rains earlier in the week in the Philippines, where the death toll has climbed to 22.

Offices and schools in Taiwan were closed for the second consecutive day on Thursday and people were urged to stay home and away from the coastline. Two people were killed on Wednesday before the storm made landfall around midnight, and a 78-year-old man died after his home was hit by a mudslide on Thursday afternoon, Taiwan's Central News Agency said. Another 380 people were reported injured.

A third death on Wednesday — a driver pinned under an overturned excavator — was initially attributed to the typhoon but later was determined not be linked, the news agency said.

The island is regularly hit by typhoons and has boosted its warning systems, but its topography, high population density and high-tech economy make it difficult to avoid losses when such storms hit. The capital, Taipei, was unusually quiet, with light rain falling and occasionally gusting winds.

In China's coastal Fujian province, flights, trains and ferry services were canceled, and more than 150,000 people evacuated as the typhoon approached, the official Xinhua News Agency said. After hitting the coast, the storm is expected to bring heavy rains to inland areas including the capital, Beijing, over the next three days.

In the Philippines, the death toll rose due to drownings and landslides. At least three people are missing, according to police.

The Philippine coast guard reported that an oil tanker, MT Terra Nova, loaded with about 1.4 million liters (370,000 gallons) of industrial fuel oil sank off Limay town in Bataan province early Thursday and rescuers saved 15 of 16 crew members.

It's not immediately clear if the sinking was related to the bad weather and rough seas but Transport Secretary Jaime Bautista said coast guard personnel could not immediately reach the area to contain a possible oil spill because of the rough sea conditions.

The storm prompted the cancellation of air force drills off Taiwan's east coast.

Gaemi, called Carina in the Philippines, did not make landfall in that archipelago but enhanced its seasonal monsoon rains.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered authorities to speed up efforts to deliver food and other aid to isolated rural villages.

"People there may not have eaten for days," Marcos said in a televised emergency meeting.

In the densely populated region around the Philippine capital, government work and school classes were suspended after rains flooded many areas.

Israel-Hamas war latest: Cease-fire talks face delays after Netanyahu's fiery speech to Congress

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By The Associated Press undefined

Officials from Egypt, Israel, the United States and Qatar were expected to meet Thursday in Doha with the aim of resuming talks for a proposed three-phase cease-fire to end the war between Israel and Hamas and free the remaining hostages. But an Israeli official said Israel's negotiating team was delayed and would likely be dispatched next week.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed Congress in Washington on Wednesday as thousands of protesters gathered near the U.S. Capitol to denounce the war. Hamas slammed the speech Thursday and accused Netanyahu of obstructing efforts to end the war and return the hostages.

Netanyahu has signaled that a cease-fire deal could be taking shape after nine months of war, but during his fiery speech to Congress, he vowed to press forward with Israel's war until he achieves "total victory."

Palestinians displaced by the Israeli military's latest order to leave parts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis say they are sleeping in the streets. The Health Ministry in Gaza says more than 39,100 Palestinians have been killed in the war.

Here's the latest:

Israeli strikes on Khan Younis kill at least 7 Palestinians overnight

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Israeli strikes on the southern city of Khan Younis killed at least seven Palestinians overnight into Thursday, according to hospital officials and an Associated Press journalist who counted the bodies.

At the start of July, the Israeli military ordered parts of the city to be evacuated. On Monday, it added the Muwasi humanitarian zone and other parts of the crowded south to be evacuated. Renewed hostilities and mass displacement followed.

One strike hit the roof of a house in a neighborhood in eastern Khan Younis, killing three people who were inside. In another neighborhood, at least four others from the al-Attar family, who had previously fled from northern Gaza, were killed in a separate strike that hit their tent.

The bodies were taken to the Nasser Hospital and wrapped in blue and white bags. A group of women and girls wept after seeing the bodies at the hospital before funeral prayers. One girl said, "Goodbye, mother," as she cried in the arms of a woman standing next to her.

Outside the hospital, a Muslim sheikh led funeral prayers for the dead alongside a group of men. People then gathered around the bodies before they were placed on a truck and sent for burial.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began, 39,175 people have been killed and 90,403 others wounded in Gaza, according to its Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. The ministry in the Palestinian enclave also said Gaza's hospitals received 30 dead bodies and 146 wounded people over the past 24 hours.

Hamas slams Netanyahu's speech to Congress

BEIRUT — The Palestinian Hamas group slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fiery speech to the United States Congress, accusing him Thursday of obstructing efforts to end the war and return the hostages.

In his high profile visit to Washington, Netanyahu pledged to achieve "total victory" against the militant group in his nearly one-hour address in Congress, and derided protests against the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, now in its ninth month.

Hamas said Netanyahu's Washington visit was an address to improve his image after the International Criminal Court requested to issue arrest warrants against him for war crimes. The ICC also requested warrants for his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Hamas officials Mohammed Deif, Yehya Sinwar, and Ismail Haniyeh.

"He (Netanyahu) is the one who thwarted all efforts aimed at ending the war and concluding a deal to release the prisoners, despite the continuous efforts of mediators from the brothers in Egypt and Qatar despite the flexibility and positivity shown by the movement," the militant group said in a written statement, adding that the Israeli prime minister talking about intensified efforts to free the hostages is a "complete lie" to mislead public opinion.

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They also rejected Netanyahu's vision for Gaza's future — which would consist of a demilitarized civilian administration in the enclave — and accused Netanyahu of being dishonest about aid delivery into the Gaza Strip and downplaying the number of Palestinians killed in the ongoing war.

6 hostage relatives are released after being detained in Washington during Netanyahu's speech to Congress

TEL AVIV, Israel — A group representing the families of Israeli hostages held in Gaza said Thursday that six hostage relatives have been released after they were briefly detained during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the joint session of Congress.

The family members stood in the hall silently during the address Wednesday and wore yellow shirts that read "Seal the Deal Now," referring to a cease-fire deal to free the hostages, before they were removed from the House chamber by security officers. They were released a number of hours later, the Hostages Family Forum said.

"Benjamin Netanyahu spoke for 54 minutes and he did not mention once the need to seal the deal and to sign the deal now," said Gil Dickmann, whose cousin, Carmel Gat, is being held in Gaza.

The six said they were invited by members of Congress to attend the speech. Netanyahu brought to the speech rescued hostage Noa Argamani and a number of family members of the hostages as part of his official delegation.

Israel recovers 5 hostage bodies from Gaza

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Thursday it has recovered the bodies of five Israeli hostages, in the area of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, that were abducted by Hamas militants on Oct. 7.

It identified the hostages as Maya Goren, and four soldiers it says died in battle: Sgt. Oren Goldin, Staff Sgt. Tomer Ahimas, Sgt. Maj. Ravid Aryeh Katz and Sgt. Kiril Brodski. It says all five were believed to have been killed in the Oct. 7 Hamas raid that triggered the war, and their bodies were held hostage.

Kibbutz Nir Oz, one of the hardest-hit communities during Hamas' assault, said Wednesday that it was informed that the body of Goren, 56, was returned to Israel after a rescue mission, without providing additional details. Israeli authorities had said in late 2023 that she was dead.

Israel has now pronounced dead more than a third of the roughly 110 hostages who remain in Hamas captivity.

Australia sanctions 7 Israelis and a West Bank-based youth group over settler violence

SYDNEY — Australia is imposing financial sanctions and travel bans against seven Israeli citizens and financial sanctions against a West Bank-based youth group over their alleged involvement in settler violence in the occupied territory.

The sanctions announced Thursday are against Hilltop Youth and its leader Meir Ettinger, 32. Other targeted individuals are Yinon Levi, 31; Zvi Bar Yosef, 31; Neria Ben Pazi, 30; Elisha Yered, 23; David Chai Chasdai, 29; and Einan Tanjil, 22.

Australia accuses them of violent attacks on Palestinians. These include beatings, sexual assault and torture of Palestinians resulting in serious injuries and deaths, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government imposed the sanctions "because it's the right thing to do." He added that settlements in the West Bank impeded a two-state solution and were illegal under international law.

The sanctions follow the United States' decision to sanction entities and individuals connected to acts of violence against civilians in the West Bank.

Wong said Australia called on Israel to hold perpetrators of settler violence to account and cease ongoing settlement activity.

US growth likely picked up last quarter after a sluggish start to 2024, reflecting resilient economy

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By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The American economy, boosted by healthy consumer spending, is believed to have regained some momentum this spring after having begun 2024 at a sluggish pace.

The Commerce Department is expected to report Thursday that the gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — increased at a solid if unspectacular 1.9% annual rate from April through June, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet. That would be up from 1.4% annual growth in the January-March quarter.

Despite the likely uptick, the U.S. economy, the world's largest, has clearly cooled in the face of the highest borrowing rates in decades. From mid-2022 through the end of 2023, annualized GDP growth had exceeded 2% for six straight quarters.

This year's slowdown reflects, in large part, the much higher borrowing rates for home and auto loans, credit cards and many business loans resulting from the aggressive series of rate hikes the Federal Reserve imposed in its drive to tame inflation. The Fed raised its benchmark rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023, to its current 23-year peak of roughly 5.3%.

The Fed was responding to the flare-up in inflation that began in the spring of 2021 as the economy rebounded with unexpected speed from the COVID-19 recession, causing severe supply shortages. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 made things worse by inflating prices for the energy and grains the world depends on. Prices spiked across the country and the world.

U.S. inflation, measured year over year, eventually did tumble — from 9.1% in June 2022 to the current 3%. Economists had long predicted that the higher borrowing costs would tip the United States into recession. Yet the economy kept chugging along. Consumers, whose spending accounts for roughly 70% of GDP, kept buying things, emboldened by a strong job market and savings they had built up during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The slowdown at the start of this year was caused largely by two factors, each of which can vary sharply from quarter to quarter: A surge in imports and a drop in business inventories. Neither trend revealed much about the economy's underlying health. Consumer spending did slow as well, though: It grew at a 1.5% annual pace from January through March after having topped 3% in both the third and fourth quarters of 2023.

Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at tax and consulting firm RSM, said he thinks consumer spending probably bounced back to a solid 2.5% annual pace last quarter. Overall, Brusuelas predicts overall 2.4% annual growth for the quarter. But this time, he says, the expansion was probably exaggerated by an upturn in business inventories.

Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade, noted that the quarterly GDP report also contains the Fed's favored measure of inflation, the personal consumption expenditures price index.

"Maybe inflation is more important in this report than growth," North said.

The PCE index is expected to show that inflationary pressure eased in the April-June quarter after having accelerated to a 3.4% annual rate in the January-March period, from 1.8% in the final three months of 2023.

Fed officials have made clear that with inflation slowing toward their 2% target level, they're prepared to start cutting rates soon, something they're widely expected to do in September.

Brusuelas of RSM said he thinks the central bank shouldn't wait that long, given that the economy is slowing and inflation is headed down.

"We think that the Fed is missing an opportunity to get out ahead of the curve on an economy that is cooling," he wrote in a research report.

Stock market today: Global shares tumble after a wipeout on Wall Street as Big Tech retreats

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares retreated on Thursday, with Tokyo's benchmark losing more than 1,300 points at one point and closing down more than 3%, as pessimism set in over a nose-dive on Wall Street.

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France's CAC 40 slipped 1.5% in early trading to 7,400.08. Germany's DAX fell 1.2% to 18,161.70, while Britain's FTSE 100 shed 1.1% to 8,066.27.

The future for the S&P 500 fell 0.2% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.2%.

U.S. stock indexes suffered their worst losses since 2022 after profit reports from Tesla and Alphabet helped suck momentum from Wall Street's frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology.

In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 3.3% to 37,869.51, its lowest close since April.

The recently strengthening yen, which has recovered from trading above 160 Japanese yen to the dollar earlier this month, hurts profits of Japanese exporters when they are brought back to Japan. Toyota Motor Corp. shares dropped 2.6%, while Sony Group's sank 5.4%.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged down to 152.50 yen from 153.89 yen. The euro cost \$1.0844, up from \$1.0841.

The yen has been gaining against the dollar largely because of speculation the Bank of Japan will raise its near-zero benchmark interest rate soon. The central bank's next policy meeting ends on July 31.

"The major risk is that the BOJ might refuse to hike next week, causing the entire long yen trade to collapse. But that's probably just a bad thought," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, a senior analyst at Swissquote Bank.

Chinese shares fell as investors questioned a central bank decision to cut another key interest rate after several similar moves earlier this week.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng declined 1.7% to 17,021.91, while the Shanghai Composite fell 0.5% to 2,886.74.

South Korea's Kospi declined 1.7% to 2,710.65 after the government reported the economy contracted at a 0.2% rate in the last quarter.

Among the region's technology shares, Samsung Electronics fell nearly 2%, while Nintendo lost 2.4%. Tokyo Electron tumbled nearly 5%.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 1.3% to 7,861.20.

Wednesday on Wall Street, the S&P 500 tumbled 2.3% for its fifth drop in the last six days, closing at 5,427.13. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1.2% to 39,853.87, and the Nasdaq composite skidded 3.6% to 17,342.41.

Profit expectations are high for U.S. companies broadly, but particularly so for the small group of stocks known as the "Magnificent Seven." Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta Platforms, Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla need to keep delivering powerful growth after being responsible for most of the S&P 500's run to records this year.

Tesla was one of the heaviest weights on the market and tumbled 12.3% after reporting a 45% drop in profit for the spring, and its earnings fell short of analysts' forecasts.

Tesla has become one of Wall Street's most valuable companies not just because of its electric vehicles but also because of its AI initiatives, such as a robotaxi. That's a tough business to assign a value to, according to UBS analysts led by Joseph Spak, and the "challenge is that the time frame, and probability of success is not clear."

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude lost 59 cents to \$77.00 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 56 cents to \$81.26 a barrel.

Macron aims to sidestep political concerns and regain prestige with the Paris Olympics

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Emmanuel Macron has pledged to make France shine during the Olympics. Weaker than ever at home after recent elections, the French president hopes the Paris Games also will help his own star glitter again.

The Olympics are the best way to convince the world to "choose France," Macron said this week, trotting out a motto geared toward boosting foreign investment in the country. "It will promote our landscapes, our facilities, our savoir-faire as well, our gastronomy."

Macron's decision last month to call early legislative elections plunged France into a political turmoil. The

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vote left the National Assembly, the influential lower house of parliament, with no dominant political bloc for the first time in modern France.

The French president said ministers from his centrist alliance would keep handling the government's work in a caretaker role at least until the end of the Olympics to avoid creating "disorder" when the world has its eyes on France.

On Thursday, Macron plans to have lunch with about 40 foreign CEOs of some of the world's biggest companies, including Samsung, Tesla and Coca-Cola, aiming to reassure them about the political situation in France, his office said.

But that's not what he wants to talk about when he welcomes over 110 heads of state and government Friday for the Olympics' grandiose opening ceremony.

The Elysee Palace said Macron will express "the ambition of showcasing the entire France, its natural and cultural heritage, its art de vivre and its top-class athletes, to an audience of over 4 billion television viewers, including over 1 billion for the opening ceremony alone."

In addition, Macron and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach have championed a summit meant to encourage world leaders and international organizations to support sports-related initiatives in areas like education, health, equality, inclusion and sustainable development.

The Sport for Sustainable Development summit was to be held Thursday near the Louvre Museum and include 50 heads of state and government.

Macron, who has highlighted the sports he has played over the years — famously boxing as well as tennis — said welcoming the Olympics "was just a dream" when he first got elected in May 2017. Just four months later, Paris nabbed the Games.

Macron's aides said he personally was involved in preparations, spending hours in meetings and making almost 70 trips across France to encourage local sports initiatives or cities to host Olympic competitions over the past seven years.

When launching the 200-day countdown for the Games, Macron urged French nationals to work out 30 minutes a day, posting a video on his social media with him looking sweaty and in sportswear next to a punching bag.

He also got involved in setting up the opening ceremony along the River Seine — even if he refused to disclose details to keep the "surprise." He backed the idea because he wanted France to see it was important to "dare changing the rules" of an event typically held in a stadium, one of Macron's aides said.

The Elysee official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with the French presidency's customary practices.

Macron said the opening ceremony will show the values France brought to the world, with a parade of athletes on boats passing near the Bastille plaza, where the French Revolution was born in 1789, to the Trocadero district, where the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Some political rivals criticized Macron's focus on the Games, seeing it as an attempt to divert attention from voters and serve his own interests. Members of a leftist coalition have demanded the immediate right to form a government because they won the most seats at the National Assembly.

"He wants an Olympic truce ... yet we're not tired at all, we're able to do two things at the same time, like watching the final of the 400-meter hurdles and form a government," said Marine Tondelier, secretary general of the Green party.

Macron touts that the Paris Olympics are meant to be the greenest Games ever, with an ambitious target of halving their overall carbon footprint compared with the 2012 London and 2016 Rio Games.

That in part was tied to using existing or temporary venues instead of building new ones. Two new facilities built in Paris' disadvantaged northern suburbs were deemed unavoidable: The Olympic Village, to house athletes and later become housing and office space, and the aquatics center.

Some environmental advocates say the Paris Games should have gone further in reducing emissions and finding more ways to make sustainability a central fan experience. Some have also questioned the climate track record of big sponsors.

"The reality is that the organization of the Olympic Games is leading to massive overbuilding on our

natural and urban spaces, sacrificing biodiversity and the well-being of local residents,” activist climate group Extinction Rebellion said in a statement.

A social justice group also planned protests and has warned of the negative impact of the Games on the Paris area’s most marginalized people.

With projected spending of 8.9 billion euros (\$9.6 billion), the Games should cost considerably less than Tokyo’s \$15.4 billion on the pandemic-delayed 2021 Olympics.

When it comes to sports, Macron hopes French people will turn their focus on the athletes’ achievements, rather than political concerns.

“It’s a moment of shared fun that will be good for the country. We’re going to be enthusiastic and united again. The country needs it,” he said Tuesday.

One promise remains that Macron didn’t meet yet: swimming in the Seine that was cleaned up for the Olympics.

He repeated this week he’ll go, but most likely after the Games — after all, Macron has still three years until the end of his term.

Wind power can be a major source of tax revenue, but officials struggle to get communities on board

By MELINA WALLING and MARY KATHERINE WILDEMAN Associated Press

PIPER CITY, Ill. (AP) — In Scott Saffer’s science classroom, kids bake cookies in a decked-out kitchen, care for fish, turtles and a snake, and have access to a workshop full of tools. As the gifted enrichment coordinator at Tri-Point School District, Saffer is living his teaching dream, one he knew he’d need money to accomplish.

For a while, due to budgetary concerns in rural Ford County, Illinois, he moved to a neighboring school district. But when wind turbines came to town, Tri-Point had the funding to bring him back without a pay cut. There, he was one of 10 recipients of a prestigious statewide teaching award last year.

“It made a huge difference in our budgets,” Saffer said of the nearby wind farm, which went online about five years ago, that added almost a million dollars to his school’s annual operating funds. “Those kinds of numbers, they’re the difference between us being here and not.”

An Associated Press analysis of county tax data from local governments in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska — states either with many wind farms or a high potential for wind power — found wind companies rank among the biggest taxpayers in many rural communities, with their total tax bills at times outstripping that of large farms, power plants and other major businesses. While that tax income from wind power does not represent a significant percent of counties’ budgets, it totals millions of dollars some local leaders say has translated into meaningful change. But the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University, which tallies local opposition to wind power, finds efforts to block wind projects are “widespread and growing.”

The center’s June report found 395 local restrictions that could effectively block wind or solar developments, up by 73% compared to less than a year ago. Local restrictions have made it harder for wind companies to find places to build even as the U.S. has committed to tripling renewables by 2030 in order to do its part in addressing climate change.

Local officials and school superintendents, fire chiefs and community college administrators are often among the first to see the economic benefits of wind development in their communities broadly.

Denny Kingren, the fire chief of Paxton, Illinois, says he had neither positive or negative feelings about wind development to start off with — he’d just seen them crop up throughout Illinois.

Then about 13 years ago, came the funds: about \$40,000 a year since then, which has since gone toward new trucks, new equipment and more on-call firefighters. “It was a true benefit to our fire department,” he said.

This year, Ford County’s nearly 200 wind turbines owe the county \$3.8 million, representing about 10%

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of the property taxes due to the county. AP's analysis found wind farms there are three of the top four taxpayers in the county.

Farm land still contributes far more to the county's tax base than wind turbines; about 90% of the county is farm land. But wind farms can create an influx of cash for local schools: Tri-Point, where Saffer works, takes in more than \$900,000 from the local wind farms annually, representing 15% of the school district's income from local taxes, according to the district's superintendent.

Benefits like growth of local economies "are really measurable in places with a lot of installed wind energy capacity," said David Schwegman, an assistant professor at American University and co-author of a 2022 paper on wind installations and economic development.

Farmers who sign wind leases can also continue farming most of their land while adding additional revenue. Some of that money ends up funneled into the community through spending. And wind projects bring jobs — many temporary or requiring travel, some permanent — offering a new career path for community college students.

Schwegman added, however, that wind development doesn't necessarily change some of the long-term forces affecting rural economies, which have been losing population as people move to cities and suburbs for decades now.

And in some communities, local tax structures mean that a school district won't get extra money from wind for several years or even decades. In places like Iowa that have what are called tax increment financing districts, sometimes the county lends money to a wind developer in order to get a bigger windfall down the line, said Phuong Nguyen, who studies public finance as an associate professor at The University of Iowa.

It's a long wait, but when the projects end, it can boost school budgets by millions of dollars and "everybody's happy," Nguyen said. However, he thinks people can be more skeptical in the 20 years before the payoff. He noted that if Iowa tax laws were different, schools could get that money sooner.

Mike Marron, a former Illinois state representative and the current CEO of Vermilion Advantage, his county's economic development arm, says the reality of wind's benefits hit home when the money started hitting the county coffers, which were "running a pretty good budget deficit," and effectively saved him from having to increase taxes on property owners at the time, about 12 years ago.

But Marron said the pushback from anti-wind groups was so strong and so polarizing that it took the topic off the table. "As an elected official, I felt constrained to not be able to communicate the benefits of it" because of the political reality, he said.

And or the people who don't like them, no amount of investment may supersede the visual reminders of wind turbines on a landscape, Schwegman said.

"Renewable energies are ultimately community-based projects," he said. "People who tend to get negatively impacted by wind turbines tend to be a very hyper-localized group, where the benefits of wind tend to be much more dispersed over larger groups."

Despite the benefits in Ford County, the local government opted to effectively halt future wind development in 2017 by issuing a moratorium on special-use permits for wind projects, then instituting strict regulations on where the turbines can be built. Then state legislature passed a law in 2023 that limits counties' ability to restrict wind and solar projects, rendering many such local rules invalid, according to the Sabin Center.

Saffer said called such local moves a "community decision," one school districts watch closely, knowing they need the money, but can't interfere.

"If we didn't have that income, we didn't have this district here, these little towns would just cease being a community," he said.

But communities are made up of individuals. That's why Marron thinks good neighbor agreements, which compensate everyone in a given area of wind development whether they have turbines on their property or not, make sense.

"You're going to notice a check in the mail quicker than you're going to notice the fact that your property tax bills aren't going up," Marron said.

An explosion killed over 50 Ukrainian POWs in 2022. Survivors and an internal UN report blame Russia

By SUSIE BLANN and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The former prisoners of war still puzzle over the strange events leading up to the night now seared into their memories, when an explosion ripped through the Russian-controlled Olenivka prison barracks and killed so many comrades two years ago.

Among the survivors: Kyrylo Masalitin, whose months in captivity and long beard age him beyond his 30 years. Arsen Dmytryk, the informal commander of the group of POWs that was shifted without explanation to a room newly stocked with bare bunks. And Mykyta Shastun, who recalled guards laughing as the building burned, acting not at all like men under enemy attack.

“Before my eyes, there were guys who were dying, who were being revived, but it was all in vain,” said Masalitin, who is back on the frontline and treated as a father-figure by the men he commands.

The Associated Press interviewed over a dozen people with direct knowledge of details of the attack, including survivors, investigators and families of the dead and missing. All described evidence they believe points directly to Russia as the culprit. The AP also obtained an internal United Nations analysis that found the same.

Despite the conclusion of the internal analysis that found Russia planned and executed the attack, the U.N. stopped short of accusing Russia in public statements.

Of 193 Ukrainians in the barracks, less than two dozen made it back home. More than 50 died the night of July 28, 2022. Around 120 are missing and believed detained in somewhere in Russia. Russia accused Ukraine of striking its own men with U.S.-supplied missiles.

There are no active international investigations into the attack and a Ukrainian inquiry is one of tens of thousands of war crimes for investigators there, raising wider questions about whether those who committed crimes in occupied areas can ever face justice.

The U.N. has rejected Russia’s claims that Ukrainian government HIMARS targeted the men, as do the victims who returned in prisoner exchanges, like Masalitin. When the former POWs have time to reflect — rare since many have returned to the fight — they say too many things don’t add up.

In the days following the Olenivka deaths, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres launched an independent mission to investigate. Russia refused to guarantee the mission’s safety and its members never traveled to either the occupied territory in the eastern Donetsk region or to Ukrainian-held territory. It dissolved five months later.

But when survivors began to return to Ukraine in exchanges, a U.N. field team that had been in-country since 2014 sought them out.

That team analyzed 70 open-source images, 20 statements by Russian officials along with 16 survivor interviews from Russian television. They conducted in-depth interviews with 55 freed POWs who were in the barracks or elsewhere in Olenivka during the attack. Their conclusion: Russia planned and executed the attack.

The 100-page analysis circulated at the highest levels of the U.N. but was never intended to be published in full. Some of the evidence was incorporated piecemeal into broader U.N. reports on the war, including one that said the missile traveled from east to west. The Russian Federation controls the territory east of where the prisoners were kept. The UN never publicly blamed Russia.

Names on a List

The lists of names the Russians drew up in late July 2022 had no explanation, no context. All the men listed were from the Azov unit who became national heroes after holding out for months against an overwhelmingly larger Russian force in the city of Mariupol. The prisoners were told to be ready. No one knew why.

On the morning of July 27, 2022, the group was rounded up and led to an industrial section of the colony, away from the other five POW barracks. They were taken to a cinder-block building with a tin-plate roof and 100 bunks, no mattresses and a hastily dug pit toilet, multiple survivors told AP.

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"Everything in the barracks was prepared very quickly," said Arsen Dmytryk, who outranked the others and became the informal leader. The barbed wire was cheap and flimsy, and there were machine tools inside, indicating that the building was recently a workshop.

The prison director visited to tell them that their old barracks were under renovation, although plenty of other prisoners had remained. Ukrainians who have been since released said there was no renovation.

That first day, the guards dug trenches for themselves, said Shastun. Ukraine's Security Service told AP that their analysis confirmed the presence of the unusual new trenches.

On July 28, the colony management ordered the guard post moved further away, and for the first time the barrack guards "wore bullet-proof vest and helmets which they had not done before and unlike other colony personnel who rarely wore them," according to a section of the internal U.N. analysis later incorporated into public reports.

On the night of July 28 around 10:30 p.m., Dmytryk completed his checks, cut the lights, climbed into the top bunk and fell asleep at once. An explosion woke him perhaps 45 minutes later, followed by the sound of a Grad missile launcher. But he'd heard that before and drifted back to sleep.

Ukrainian POWs elsewhere in the colony told the U.N. investigators that the Grad fire muffled sounds of the bigger explosions.

Dmytryk's memories then turn apocalyptic. His body burned with shrapnel wounds. Fire raged. Men screamed in pain. And he climbed down from his bunk, he checked the pulse of the man below him. He was already dead. He and other witnesses told AP they ran outside through broken walls to beg the guards to send help for the injured.

"They fired into the air, saying 'stay away from the gates, don't come closer,'" Dmytryk recalled.

If Dmytryk's memories are a narrative of horror, Shastun's are more like disjointed film scenes. He recalled the guards just stood there laughing, tossing rags and flashlights at the panicked Ukrainians.

It took hours before POW medics were sent from the other barracks to help, around the same time as Russian forces brought in trucks and told survivors to load them with the most severely wounded.

"We carried them on stretchers, lifted them into the car, unloaded them and then ran back to get the other wounded," Shastun said. One person died in a comrade's arms. It was mid-morning when they finished, and the trucks were piled with bloody men.

Dmytryk was among them, his face caked in dried blood. He said men in another truck died before they made it to the hospital in Donetsk. The U.N. said in its public report of March 2023 that slow medical care worsened the death toll.

"The transported us like cattle, not stopping, speeding over bumps and taking sharp turns," he said.

Also among the wounded was Serhii Aliksieievych, whose wife Mariia last caught sight of him in his hospital bed in a video circulating on Russian media, slowly answering questions as he recovered from his injuries.

Back at Olenivka, Shastun was one of approximately 70 survivors with lesser injuries who were taken to two 5x5 meter (yard) cells as the last of the trucks drove away, to be isolated from the rest of the prison colony. There were wooden pallets for sleeping and a single toilet in each.

The internal U.N. analysis said their isolation was intended to prevent survivors speaking to others in the colony about what happened that night because some prisoners had access to mobile phones and had direct contact with Ukraine. It also left them unaware of the debate raging outside.

According to the analysis, other Ukrainian prisoners were then sent to the bombed barracks and ordered to remove debris and the remaining bodies. Two hours later, that group was sent into a nearby hangar, and some saw men in camouflage bringing boxes of ammunition to the blast site and setting HIMARS fragments on a blue bench nearby.

Russian officials soon arrived, accompanied by Russian journalists whose images of twisted, charred bunk beds, HIMARS fragments and bodies laid out in the sun spread across the world.

The Ukrainians in the nearby hangar said after everyone was gone, the men in camouflage returned everything to the boxes and left.

As the clock ticked down to a U.N. Security Council meeting later that day, Russia and Ukraine blamed

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each other.

Russia opened an investigation and said Kyiv did it to silence soldiers from confessing to their “crimes” and used their recently acquired American-made HIMARS rockets. Ukraine denied the charge and said Russia was framing Ukraine to discredit the country before its allies.

The international community didn’t know who to believe. That’s when the U.N. secretary general announced it would conduct its own investigation, but negotiations to access the site were long and ultimately fruitless. Guterres’ special mission was disbanded on Jan. 5, 2023, having never traveled to Ukraine.

“The members of the mission were of the view that it would be indispensable for them to be able to access all the relevant sites, materials and victims in order to fulfil its task and establish the facts of the incident,” U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told AP. Without that, the mission “was not in a position to provide any conclusions.”

But the separate Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, which had been based in the country since Russia’s first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, didn’t wait. The team combed through testimonies on Russian television from 16 survivors taken to the hospital, examined public images from the site and analyzed 20 statements made by Russian officials who visited the prison.

The mission informally shared an abridged version of its preliminary analysis with the U.N.’s newly formed Olenivka probe. Then on Sept. 22, a surprise prisoner swap gave the Human Rights Monitoring Mission its first chance to speak to witnesses and survivors. But from the date of the explosion, it would take eight months for any of that material to emerge publicly, and then only in pieces.

Dujarric did not respond to questions about the internal analysis.

In July 2023, U.N. Human Rights chief Volker Turk publicly stated what the internal report had first said nearly a year before — that HIMARS were not responsible. Three months later, the U.N. devoted a section to Olenivka in its annual report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. Again, cribbing from the internal analysis, the report noted that HIMARS were not responsible, that the fragments shown by Russian officials were not “in situ,” the scene had been contaminated and physical evidence disturbed.

The report concluded that the damage “appeared consistent with a projected ordnance having travelled with an east-to-west trajectory.” It failed to note that Russia controlled the eastern territory.

Fading hopes for justice

A Ukrainian investigation is ongoing, according to Taras Semkiv of the Ukrainian prosecutor general’s war crimes unit. The challenge is to identify the weapon used, in hopes that could lead to who ordered the attack. Semkiv said it’s been narrowed to three possibilities — artillery, planted explosives, or a grenade launcher.

The Olenivka director is named as a suspect in “conspiracy for the ill-treatment of POWs” but the investigation leaves open the probability that more people were involved. At the war crimes unit headquarters of the Ukraine Security Service, known as the SBU, meters-long charts line the walls, illustrating the hierarchy of Russian officials responsible for various sections of the front line.

Semkiv said no international investigators have requested information from the General Prosecutor’s Office since the deaths at Olenivka, including the disbanded U.N. fact-finding mission. He said initial optimism about the mission faded as soon as it became clear that they would not investigate at all if there was no access to the prison.

“Technology is advancing rapidly, and there are ways to assess the situation without the direct presence of an investigator or prosecutor at the scene,” he said.

Relatives of those missing from the bombed barracks say they’re now alone in their search for answers.

First there was hope “that the world would not turn its back on us,” said Mariia Aliksieievych, the wife of the soldier seen recovering in the Donetsk hospital video. Her letters to her husband are shots in the dark – she hands them to the Red Cross, but as far as she knows there’s never been access to the prisoners. She said Ukraine’s government gives them no help or news about whether the men could be included in any future exchanges and has ignored requests for a day of remembrance for the Olenivka victims.

Her fading hopes for an international investigation have been replaced by determination.

She and other relatives want the International Criminal Court to take up the case, but she's realistic enough to know that's a distant possibility.

Her goal in the meantime: "To save the lives of our defenders, to bring them home. Because in Russian captivity, death is not an isolated case."

With big goals and gambles, Paris aims to reset the Olympics with audacious Games and a wow opening

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris has long been a city of dreamers: Just look at the Eiffel Tower, for decades the world's loftiest structure. Audacity also underpins the French capital's plans for its first Olympic Games in a century, which open Friday with an opening ceremony for the ages.

The most sprawling and elaborate Olympic opening ever — a gala spectacular Friday evening on the River Seine that even French President Emmanuel Macron says initially felt like "a crazy and not very serious idea" — kicks off 16 days of competition that promise to be ground-breaking, with nearly every corner of the city hosting some aspect of competition.

After two toned-down, pandemic-hampered Olympics, expect a bold celebration. The heady marriage of sports and France's world-renowned capital of fashion, gastronomy and culture could also help secure the Olympics' longer-term future.

Olympic organizers were struggling to find suitable host cities for their flagship Summer Games when they settled on Paris in 2017, enticed by its promise of innovations and the potential for the city of romance to rekindle love for the Olympics, especially with younger audiences that have so many other entertainment options.

But Paris' challenges are huge, too.

Past and present sorrows hang over the Games

The city that has been repeatedly struck by deadly extremist attacks has to safeguard 10,500 athletes and millions of visitors. The international context of wars in Ukraine and Gaza add layers of complication for the gargantuan security effort. French elite special forces are part of the security detail for Israel's delegation.

Still, if all goes well, Paris hopes to be remembered as a before-and-after Olympic watershed.

The first Games with nearly equal numbers of men and women, an advance that's been a long time coming since 22 women first got accepted as Olympians 124 years ago, also in Paris, will take another step toward aligning the Olympics with the post-#MeToo world.

Paris also hopes to reassure climate-conscious Generations Z and beyond by staging Games that are less polluting, more sustainable and more socially virtuous than their predecessors. Many of the sports venues are temporary, because Paris didn't want to repeat the mistake of previous Olympic host cities that built new arenas and then had no use for them.

With iconic Paris monuments as backdrops — beach volleyball in the Eiffel Tower's shadow — and breakdancing added to a growing list of Olympic sports that target young audiences, expect plenty of viral moments on Instagram, TikTok and elsewhere.

Crowds will be back for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic forced Tokyo to push back its Games to 2021 and keep spectators away, and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022, when China was locked down.

Prize-winning French theater director Thomas Jolly is turning central Paris into an open-air stage for the opening ceremony that will run through sunset and showcase France, its people and their history. The 330-meter-tall (1,083-foot-tall) Eiffel Tower will surely feature prominently.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including 320,000 paying and invited ticket-holders, are expected to line the Seine's banks as athletes are paraded along the river on boats.

During the extravaganza, a no-fly zone extending for 150 kilometers (93 miles) around the capital will close Paris' skies, policed by fighter jets, airspace-monitoring AWACS surveillance flights, surveillance

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drones, helicopters that can carry sharpshooters and drone-disabling equipment.

Helping Parisians move past the attacks of 2015

Showcasing and celebrating Paris could be joyously cathartic for the city that was plunged into mourning by extremist attacks in 2015.

Guesses about the identity of the person or people who might get the honor of lighting the Olympic cauldron include soccer icon Zinedine Zidane and other French sporting heroes, but also survivors of Islamic State-group gunmen and suicide bombers who killed 130 people on Nov. 13, 2015.

Paris is also taking gambles in hopes of leaving an indelible impression on the Olympics' global audience of billions.

The decision not to stage the opening ceremony in the traditional setting of France's biggest stadium — the Stade de France that was among the 2015 attackers' targets and is now the venue for Olympic track and field and rugby sevens — and to host skateboarding, archery and other sports in temporary arenas in the heart of Paris have made safeguarding the Games more complex.

Rights campaigners and Games critics worry about the broad scope and scale of Olympic security, including the use of AI-equipped surveillance technology.

Paris' reach stretches to the Pacific

The furthest venue is on the other side of the world in the French Pacific territory of Tahiti, where Olympic surfers will compete on famously giant waves that first form in storm belts off Antarctica.

Up to 45,000 police and gendarmes, plus 10,000 soldiers, are safeguarding Paris and its suburbs that together are hosting most of the 32 sports that will crown Olympic champions in 329 medal events. The gold, silver and bronze medals they'll hand out are inlaid with a hexagonal, polished chunk of iron taken from the Eiffel Tower.

The Seine's banks and riverside roads and more than a dozen of its bridges were fenced off nine days ahead of the opening ceremony, creating a no-go zone for people who haven't applied in advance for passes and making it tough for Parisians and visitors to get around and see the sights in the city of 2 million. Owners of restaurants and other businesses inside the security fence are howling about fewer customers.

Leaving an Olympic legacy for Paris

Limiting new construction has saved money and, Paris organizers say, contributed to their goal of halving the Games' overall carbon footprint compared with London in 2012 and Rio in 2016. Among the new venues, an Olympic aquatics center in Seine Saint-Denis is expected to help that underprivileged suburb of northern Paris teach more children to swim.

French organizers argue that the Games will leave positive impacts on Paris long after the Olympians and Paralympic athletes who follow from Aug. 28 to Sept. 8 have departed.

A costly and complex cleanup of the long-polluted Seine, sped up by the deadline of the Games, is expected to reopen the river to public swimming next year, after Olympic marathon swimmers and triathletes have competed in it. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo took a dip this month to demonstrate that its waters are safe.

With estimated overall costs of around 9 billion euros (\$9.7 billion), more than half from sponsors, ticket sales and other non-public funding, Paris' expenses so far are less than for Tokyo, Rio and London.

Once opening ceremony fireworks have become memories, the City of Light will then become the playground of Olympians.

American gymnastics superstar Simon Biles is back. French-born basketball phenom Victor Wembanyama will carry home hopes on his 7-foot-4 (2.24-meter) frame. Ukrainian and Palestinian athletes have points they want to prove about conflict, resilience and sacrifice that go beyond the realms of sport.

The lucky few will win medals. Many will wish they had gone higher, faster and stronger.

But, together, they'll always have Paris.

In this Uganda region, most women report domestic violence.

Signed pledges are being used to end it

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

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BUNDIBUGYO, Uganda (AP) — The drunken man kicked the saucepan off the fireplace, demanding to know why dinner was not ready. Then he struck his wife with a piece of firewood, triggering a fight. They grappled before being separated.

The skit about domestic violence had been staged for the benefit of villagers in western Uganda. Some looked puzzled. Some were amused. But others watched in horror as drama mirrored reality.

Here, in a remote farming community near the border with Congo, domestic violence mostly targets women. Those acting out the skit are not immune.

Eva Bulimpikya, who played a woman who fought back, said her real husband had attacked her the previous night after coming home late.

"He was drunk. From nowhere, he said, 'Can you come and open?' Because I was almost asleep, when I delayed to open he started complaining ... Then he slapped me," she said.

Years ago, she said, she was slapped so hard that her hearing was impaired. She still gets headaches.

A local nonprofit group that staged the skit says domestic violence is so widespread in this part of Uganda that it's hard to find a woman who hasn't been affected. The mountainous district of Bundibugyo is about 400 kilometers (248 miles) from the capital, Kampala.

Representatives of the group, Ourganda, affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said they were compelled to act in 2022 when they encountered a woman and her child who had been attacked by her drunken partner. The child's head had swollen, and his mother worried he might die.

Ourganda led efforts to prosecute the offender, who was jailed for six months and is now on peaceful terms with his wife. The rare prosecution energized locals and launched the group's campaign to fight what it saw as the normalization of domestic violence. At the time, 47 of 50 women it surveyed in Bundibugyo said they had experienced violence in the previous week.

The group, working in 10 villages, focuses on instilling fear in offenders as much as educating them. An accused perpetrator is asked to sign a "reconciliation form" in which they pledge never to commit the same offense.

Signing the form prevents an escalation that might lead to police involvement, but the form is also kept as evidence for possible prosecution if the agreement is breached, said Vincent Tibesigwa Isimbwa, Ourganda's leader in Bundibugyo. Only five of about 100 people have violated the agreement so far, he said.

An expert on gender-based violence in Uganda, Angella Akoth of ActionAid Uganda, said such work targeting perpetrators is recommended, calling it "male engagement strategy."

The men who separated the fighting couple in the skit were members of a real-life "Mankind Club," one of many set up by Ourganda to respond as quickly as possible to outbreaks of violence. Thomas Balikigamba, a local man who was jailed for six months over domestic abuse, said he warns others of the harshness of incarceration. "In our drinking points, I always tell members of our group that it is very bad to fight at home," he said.

The women who sat around the couple were described as "Soul Sisters," with the role of counseling women or offering them shelter and clothing when they are kicked out of their homes.

Men who are "bleeding internally" — a euphemism for women-on-men violence — are also encouraged to seek support, Isimbwa said: "Any form of violence, we should not tolerate it."

Domestic violence is a global curse. World Health Organization figures from 2021 show that one in three women worldwide has been subjected to some form of it. In Uganda, a 2020 survey by U.N.-backed local authorities found that 95% of women and girls had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, after turning 15.

Isimbwa said he has been threatened by some locals for trying to empower women. But Ourganda aims to take its work to more villages and "create rapport" with local officials who make or break efforts to prosecute offenders, he said.

"We have created more awareness in communities. Now people tend to know what they are supposed to do. They try their level best to make sure that they don't violate other people's rights," he said.

Many in Bundibugyo who spoke to The Associated Press said domestic violence is often sparked by financial disputes and disagreements over sex — quarrels that can be intensified by alcoholism and illiteracy.

Most cases are never prosecuted. Out of 2,194 cases of teenage pregnancy in 2023 — a broad category that encompasses some forms of domestic violence — only 54 were reported to the police in Bundibugyo, said Pamela Grace Adong, the district's probation and social welfare officer. Bundibugyo is home to around 20,000 people.

"It is now going up," she said of gender-based violence. "For example, last year we got around 575 cases ... But this year — this is now June — we have around 300."

Ourganda's mediation work helps to police communities, she said.

In the town of Sara-Kihombya, a collection of mud houses across from the Seventh-day Adventist church run by Ourganda, many men congregate in bars in the morning and stay the whole day.

Domestic violence is said to rise between October and February, peak season for harvesting the cocoa plants dotting the volcanic soil. Some couples fight over how to share the earnings, many residents said.

If a man returns home from selling cocoa and the woman asks for some money, "that is war," said Linda Kabugho, a kindergarten teacher who said that until recently she was repeatedly attacked by her husband.

The 23-year-old Kabugho, who dropped out of secondary school when she became pregnant in 2022, said she would fight with her husband when he came home feeling miserable over his soccer betting losses. "He brings all the anger on me," she said. "We fight, we fight, we fight."

Last year she reached out to local officials who introduced her to Ourganda. The couple were counseled by a group of Soul Sisters, and she is now one of them. The man was warned he risked going to jail if he beat his wife again.

Kabugho said her husband had not beaten her in many months, and she thinks of him as a responsible man.

"A least now I can sleep. I can eat very well," she said. "We are somehow safe, and I am somehow safe."

Secret DEA files show agents joked about rape in WhatsApp chat. Then one of them was accused of it.

By JIM MUSTIAN and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — In a WhatsApp chat that quickly devolved into depravity, a group of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents boasted about their "world debauchery tour" of "boozing and whoring" on the government's dime. They swapped lurid images of their latest sexual conquests. And at one point they even joked about "forcible anal rape."

Within months of that jaw-dropping exchange, an agent in the group chat was accused of that very crime.

The 2018 arrest of George Zoumberos for allegedly forcing anal sex on a 23-year-old woman in a Madrid hotel room set off alarms at the highest levels of the DEA, beginning with a middle-of-the-night phone call from a supervisor to the agency's headquarters outside Washington. But U.S. officials never even spoke with the woman and made only cursory efforts to investigate.

The DEA has refused for years to discuss its handling of the arrest, instead telling The Associated Press in response to its questions that "the alleged misconduct in this case is egregious and unacceptable and does not reflect the high standards expected of all DEA personnel."

The details of the case and the graphic group chat are outlined in a trove of thousands of secret law enforcement documents obtained by the AP that offer a never-before-seen window into a culture of corruption among federal narcotics agents who parlayed the DEA's shadowy money laundering operations into a worldwide pursuit of binge drinking and illicit sex.

Zoumberos, married and 38 at the time, maintained the interaction was consensual and, after a jailhouse visit from U.S. Embassy officials, was released and flew home within hours of his arrest. A Spanish judge later dismissed the case, ruling only that the allegations were not "duly justified." The agent eventually returned to duty with a DEA letter of reprimand chiding him for "poor judgment."

"I told him very clearly that I didn't want to have sex," the woman recently told AP, which does not typically identify those who say they are victims of sexual assault.

The woman, speaking about her allegations for the first time, says her anguish led to severe panic at-

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tacks that forced her to drop out of college, and to this day she's haunted by fears her attacker will return.

"I'm very afraid," she said, her voice trembling over the phone. "He could try to find me or take revenge."

'A very fun game'

Many of the documents AP obtained focus on ongoing investigations following the scandalous 2020 arrest of José Irizarry, an agent in the group chat considered the ringleader of the debauchery and perhaps the most corrupt agent in the DEA's 50-year history.

But despite his conviction and repeated claims that dozens of others were involved in his scheme to skim millions from money laundering seizures to bankroll a junket of partying and sex, no criminal charges have been filed against any other DEA agents, supervisors or prosecutors allegedly tied to the corruption. The U.S. Justice Department did not respond to questions asking why. More than a dozen, however, have been quietly disciplined or ousted from their jobs.

Irizarry, serving a 12-year federal prison term for laundering money for the very Colombian drug cartels he was sworn to police, has maintained to AP in recent interviews that he was not a rogue agent and accountability is long overdue for the many others who joined him in a wild ride that mocked the DEA's mission.

"You can't win an unwinnable war," Irizarry said before reporting to prison. "The drug war is a game. ... It was a very fun game that we were playing."

That game revolved around the DEA's undercover money laundering operations, including one codenamed White Wash that was led by the agents in the group chat. It was shut down in 2017 before a blistering internal audit found agents' globetrotting through the bars, strip clubs and hotels of Paris, Madrid, and the Caribbean was "unacceptable" and rife with corruption.

"The agents would set up one meeting in the city of their choice but in reality were just going on vacation," reads an FBI investigative report in the files obtained by AP. Other records detailed how agents frequented the red-light district of Amsterdam for prostitutes and recorded "no enforcement operations" whatsoever during a weeklong trip to Norway, a country with one of the lowest crime rates in the world.

In the end, the DEA audit found the five-year operation could claim credit for just five convictions while agents shelled out \$900,000 on travel, and \$26,000 on meals as they partied around the world tapping a \$1.9 million government fund of lawful money laundering proceeds they referred to as their "debauchery piggy bank."

"It was all bulls---" Irizarry told the FBI, adding that White Wash was compromised from its first day by reports falsified to justify the next party spree. "It was all a novel."

An unending, degenerate party

The WhatsApp chat, recovered during the FBI's criminal investigation of DEA misconduct, included five DEA agents identified by AP, one of whom remains with the agency today, and hundreds of exchanges from 2017. Irizarry was the only agent willing to discuss the chat with AP.

The chat backed up many of his allegations that portrayed life in the DEA as an unending, degenerate party. Agents planned DEA travel around binge-drinking and sex with no fear their encrypted messages would ever be read by anyone else. And rather than reporting Irizarry's misconduct, agents pressed him for X-rated images of his exploits.

"José you're just smashing ass," one agent wrote of Irizarry in February 2017, a month into a new U.S. presidential administration. "Nothing wrong with that under Trump. ... Your good."

Before one jaunt, an agent wrote colleagues he was "hoping you've organized some welcome p---y for me tomorrow when I land."

"Tough life this war on drugs," an agent quipped in one message.

Added another: "Think of how different our experience on the job is than most."

Federal authorities' extraction of the deleted chat does not identify the author of every message, but AP identified the senders through context, federal law enforcement records and interviews. AP is only identifying two of the agents who have been accused of crimes: Irizarry and Zoumberos.

Irizarry told federal authorities in 2020 that he had direct knowledge of 15 DEA agents soliciting prostitutes. He attributed the most damning exchanges in the group chat to Zoumberos, the agent briefly jailed

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on suspicion of sexual assault in Spain.

"Irizarry stated Zoumberos talked about forcing anal sex on hookers," a Homeland Security Investigations report states.

References to anal sex were so common in the group chat that agents coined a term for it – pancaking – and often accompanied such mentions with an emoji of a stack of pancakes.

"I'm coming old school to pancake a few Colombia chicks," Zoumberos texted before one 2017 trip.

There were frequent mentions of prostitutes and at least two references to assaulting them and leaving it to an informant to "clean up" the mess.

They also joked about creating a "hooker app" in which agents would sneak prostitutes past everything from a hotel front desk to DEA internal affairs while trying to avoid federal prison.

"These are some expensive bitches," one agent wrote in an exchange that included the sharing of a prostitute's phone number. "She's telling me \$1,000 for the night."

Ben Greenberg, a former U.S. attorney in Miami who reviewed the messages at AP's request, called them "beyond inappropriate."

"In the context of such serious criminal allegations, the chats look like evidence of a crime and not just grotesque banter," he said. "U.S. law enforcement has an obligation to fully investigate this case and to hold anyone involved in criminal activity accountable regardless of their position."

The lewd texts came even as the DEA was making public promises to clean up its act following a highly publicized scandal in which agents participated in "sex parties" with prostitutes hired by Colombian cartels. That prompted the suspension of several agents and the 2015 retirement of then-DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart.

Misconduct in the 4,100-agent DEA has hardly been isolated. AP has tallied at least 16 agents over the past decade brought up on federal charges ranging from child pornography and drug trafficking to leaking intelligence to defense attorneys and selling firearms to cartel associates, revealing gaping holes in the agency's supervision.

After Administrator Anne Milgram took the reins of the DEA in 2021, the agency placed new controls on how funds can be used in money laundering stings, and warned agents they can now be fired for a first offense of misconduct if serious enough, a departure from prior administrations.

"The DEA has made significant advancements in oversight measures, disciplinary processes and accountability of personnel," the agency said in a statement to AP, adding it will "remain vigilant in our pursuit for excellence and integrity and will take decisive action should serious misconduct occur."

Quiet casualties

The FBI and a federal grand jury in Tampa have been investigating DEA misconduct in money laundering probes for years, following a roadmap sketched out by Irizarry.

Recently, an informant who traveled the world partying with the agents – and was with Zoumberos when he met his accuser at the Madrid bar – was arrested in Colombia on a U.S. warrant for failing to pay taxes on more than \$3.8 million in snitch money.

But so far, Irizarry is the only government employee to be charged. The internal records obtained by AP show the DEA disciplined or ousted at least a dozen other agents for either participating in the bacchanalia or failing to sound the alarms about it.

Among the quiet casualties was the head of the St. Louis division who retired amid allegations that he rented a New York apartment for his paramour with DEA funds. Another who quit was a veteran supervisor of the jet-setting agents who lied to the FBI about soliciting prostitutes, according to a law enforcement official who wasn't authorized to discuss the investigation.

The DEA records also contain new details about one agent, Danielle Dreyer, who was fired last year for what the Justice Department called "outlandish behavior" during a rooftop party in 2017 in Cartagena, Colombia, attended by a half-dozen DEA agents and then-federal prosecutor Marisa Darden. An internal DEA investigation found Dreyer used ecstasy and that her antics in a hot tub included squirting breast milk on colleagues, fondling Darden's breasts and grinding on her supervisor's lap.

After leaving the Justice Department, Darden was confirmed by the Senate in 2022 to be the first Black

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woman U.S. attorney in northern Ohio. She abruptly withdrew before taking the position, however, telling AP through an attorney that she did so for personal reasons.

Law enforcement records obtained by AP show Darden had been interviewed by the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General just days before she pulled out. Neither Darden nor her attorney responded to requests for comment.

'I didn't want him to do this to others'

The overseas rape accusation turned out to be the beginning of the end for Zoumberos, who more than a year after his rape arrest resigned from the DEA after invoking his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination in refusing to testify to the federal grand jury in Tampa.

Irizarry long considered Zoumberos a brother but in his interviews with investigators accused his former partner of a list of crimes, including that he used DEA snitch money to buy a personal boat.

"Zoumberos could do whatever he wanted and would not get caught because he was in charge of the AGEO," Irizarry told the FBI, using the acronym for the money laundering probes, Attorney General Exempt Operations.

Zoumberos' attorney, Raymond Mansolillo, has called Irizarry a serial liar and previously told AP that federal authorities were "looking to find a crime to fit this case as opposed to a crime that actually took place."

On the night of the alleged sexual assault in Spain in April 2018, Zoumberos and a partner ate dinner with an informant at an Irish pub in Madrid, according to DEA records, and Zoumberos told authorities the woman later approached him at the bar.

The woman told AP that, over drinks, Zoumberos showed her smartphone photos of him fishing and playing with his dogs.

"He seemed like a good person," she recalled.

The conversation was pleasant, she said, and she lost track of time. With the subway closed, Zoumberos made what seemed like a gentlemanly offer.

"He told me, 'Don't worry, you can sleep in my hotel room. We'll watch a movie and in the morning you can catch the metro,'" she told AP. "Honestly, I was a student and I didn't have 60 euros to pay for a taxi home."

Around 1:30 a.m., the two walked a few blocks to Zoumberos' government-paid hotel. The woman said she told Zoumberos she could not have sex because she was having her period. Zoumberos told the DEA that she agreed to consensual sex and was "never upset."

About 3 a.m., the woman said, police and an ambulance arrived and found her bruised around the wrists and Zoumberos very drunk. She told AP she locked herself in the bathroom before fleeing the hotel through the fire exit in a state of utter shock.

A few hours later, the DEA chief in Spain placed an urgent telephone call to the agency's command center outside Washington. Records show nearly three dozen DEA officials were eventually notified of Zoumberos' arrest, including then-acting administrator Robert W. Patterson.

Within hours, the U.S. Embassy in Madrid dispatched a small delegation to visit Zoumberos in jail. What happened next is unclear. The U.S. State Department didn't respond to repeated requests for comment and would not release any records related to its response. The DEA also denied Freedom of Information Act requests for records of Zoumberos' arrest, citing the former agent's privacy.

A day after his arrest, Zoumberos was released without bail with only an order to stay away from his accuser and he quickly caught an American Airlines flight home to Tampa. There's no record of why the judge didn't seize his passport.

Six weeks later, the case was dismissed at prosecutors' request. Judge Enrique De la Hoz Garcia determined the allegations were not "duly justified" but didn't elaborate, according to Spanish court records. He and prosecutors did not respond to emails seeking further comment.

Back in Tampa, the DEA opened an internal investigation and suspended Zoumberos from normal duties. But within a few months, his firearm and top-secret clearance were returned and Zoumberos resumed his job with a letter reprimanding him for showing "poor judgment."

"As a DEA Special Agent, you are held to a higher standard of personal conduct and must take responsibility for your actions," read the letter, which under DEA policy was to be removed automatically from the file after two years.

Zumberos, who now lives in North Carolina, did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Internal records and interviews show the DEA never spoke with the woman or attempted to reconstruct what happened the night of the alleged rape. The records indicate the ranking DEA official in Spain did not even have the accuser's contact information and make no mention of any inquiries with Spanish authorities to obtain it.

The records also don't mention any efforts to secure surveillance footage from the hotel or the results of medical examinations that the woman says would have corroborated her account.

"We dropped the ball," a law enforcement official familiar with the matter told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss internal investigations.

About a year ago, the woman said she was approached by Spanish police asking if she would be willing to speak to the FBI as part of its broader probe of misconduct in the DEA.

At first, she said yes.

"I didn't want him to do this to others," she said.

But her willingness to speak out eventually gave way to fear of the powerful man she was confronting.

"I don't want to reopen this," she said. "I want to forget it."

Oregon fire is the largest burning in the US. Thunderstorms and high winds are exacerbating it

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Powerful winds and hundreds of lightning strikes from thunderstorms rattled eastern Oregon and Idaho Wednesday afternoon, cutting power and stoking fires, including one in Oregon that is already the largest active blaze in the nation.

The Durkee Fire, burning near the Oregon-Idaho border about 130 miles (209 kilometers) west of Boise, Idaho, caused the closure of a stretch of Interstate 84 again Wednesday. Amid rapidly forming storms in the afternoon, the blaze crossed the interstate near the town of Huntington, home to about 500 people. It also merged with the Cow Valley Fire, another large blaze that had been burning nearby, Gov. Tina Kotek said.

"The wildfires in Eastern Oregon have scaled up quickly," Kotek said in a news release Wednesday evening, calling it a dynamic situation. "We are facing strong erratic winds over the region that could impact all fires. Rain is not getting through. Some communities do not have power."

She said she had deployed the National Guard to the region.

The nearly 420-square-mile (1,088-square-kilometer) blaze had prompted the evacuation of Huntington on Sunday, and on Wednesday city officials posted on Facebook that people remaining in town, especially those with "major health issues," needed to leave their homes because of wildfire smoke and the lack of power. City officials also said Wednesday that gas service to residents had been shut off until the evacuation orders are lifted.

The fire approached Alison Oszman's home in Rye Valley, a small ranching area north of Huntington, last week, but they were able to protect their property with the help of Bureau of Land Management firefighters and neighbors, using small tanker trucks and shovels. They used a small dozer to keep it away from the house, she said.

Since their property was burned and safe, her neighbor moved his horses and cattle over as the fire moved toward his ranch, she said. On Wednesday night, Oszman went to check his property and found that the fire came down a steep hillside and threatened his home.

"I went and parked our truck out in the field just in case those big trees by his house caught fire," she said. "I was making sure sparks didn't land in the dirt or the dry grass. But as the fire passed his house, it started raining." The rain helped the firefighters get on top of the blaze.

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"It was pretty scary but everything seemed to fall into place," she said. "Everybody helped everybody. It was actually pretty amazing for how crummy it really was."

The National Weather Service in Boise said the storms were capable of producing wind gusts up to 70 mph with blowing dust reducing visibility. A storm about 44 miles (71 kilometers) northwest of Huntington near Baker City on Wednesday afternoon had recorded a wind gust of 66 mph (106 kph), the weather service said.

Wind, lightning and heavy rain fell that could cause flash flooding and debris flows in recently burned areas, authorities said. Flash flood warnings were issued for Huntington and in a nearby burn scar area.

A flash flood warning was issued for the Cow Valley burn scar in Eastern Oregon at about 8 p.m. Wednesday and was expected to last until 10:30 p.m., said Les Colin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Boise, Idaho. A strong thunderstorm moved into a burned area that is especially susceptible to flooding, he said. No homes are in the area but Interstate 84 runs close by.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal's office also mobilized nearly 500 firefighters to help protect communities that could be threatened by wildfires on Wednesday.

The major electricity utility in the region, Idaho Power, warned customers to prepare for possible outages, and by late Wednesday afternoon, nearly 7,000 customers were without electricity, the utility said. The utility also cut power to customers in the Boise foothills and other nearby areas, citing extreme weather and wildfire risk.

More than 60 significant fires are burning in Oregon and Washington alone, and Oregon has been plagued with hundreds of lightning strikes from thunderstorms in recent days that have started new blazes in bone-dry vegetation.

A fire in southern California also was moving fast and threatening homes.

Evacuation orders were in effect Wednesday night in San Diego County after a wildfire began to spread fast near the San Diego and Riverside county line. Fire officials say the Grove Fire is spreading southeast through steep and challenging terrain. The fire grew to 1.3 square mile (3.4 square kilometers) within a few hours but was 5% contained just before 8 p.m., Cal Fire said on the social media platform X.

The smoke from the Durkee Fire in Oregon was choking the air in Boise and beyond. An air quality warning was in effect for the entire region on Wednesday.

Patrick Nauman, the owner of Weiser Classic Candy in the small town of Weiser, Idaho, near the Oregon border, said driving into town Wednesday morning was "like driving into a fog bank, because it's so thick and low to the road."

Nauman's shop is on the main intersection in town and is typically a popular spot to stop for lunch or a sugar fix, but customer traffic has dropped by half in the past few days as thick smoke and triple-digit temperatures dogged the region.

"Yesterday you could smell it, taste it, it just kind of hung in the back of your throat," Nauman said of the smoke.

Mike Cantin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Boise, said cooler air moving into the region Wednesday evening could stoke the Durkee and other fires. A red flag warning was in effect, and the area has been suffering through a heat wave, including many days over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius).

"With these winds showing up today, every little spark could get out of hand very easily. It could be a really hazardous situation very fast," Cantin said. "Don't light anything on fire, and be very careful around grass."

Church sues Colorado town to be able to shelter homeless in trailers, work 'mandated by God'

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

CASTLE ROCK, Colo. (AP) — Behind a church surrounded by rolling prairie on the outskirts of this Colorado town sits a donated RV that Joe Ridenour called home for a year after he lost his job during the pandemic.

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Being able to live in the RV, he said, allowed him to avoid returning to his native Kansas City, where he was afraid of backsliding into using methamphetamine again.

"Without this trailer and this church, I wouldn't be alive. The drug use would have consumed me," said Ridenour, who now has a maintenance job at the county fairgrounds and rents a room from a friend he met at The Rock church.

Last year, the town of Castle Rock ordered the non-denominational evangelical church to stop providing shelter in the RV and another camping trailer for violating zoning regulations. The church responded by suing the town, located between Denver and Colorado Springs.

Echoing arguments made by other churches trying to serve the homeless from Oregon to Ohio, the Colorado church argues that helping those in need is religious activity protected by the Constitution.

Its lawsuit is studded with references to the Bible's exhortations to the faithful to take care of those in need. It also notes that surrounding Douglas County, one of the richest in the United States, has no other shelters for the homeless.

The church's property is not zoned for residential use and regulations forbid anyone from living in an RV anywhere in Castle Rock.

On Friday, a federal judge ruled the church can continue to shelter the homeless in the campers temporarily while the lawsuit plays out.

The town, which has said it will "rigorously defend the zoning authority of communities," declined to comment on Friday's ruling. In court, the town has argued the church could find other ways to help the homeless, like opening members' homes to them or buying a property to house them in an area zoned for residential use.

Earlier this year, the church had to turn down a request to let a mother and three children under the age of 7 who had been living in a car stay in one of the trailers, pastor Mike Polhemus said.

"The word of God actually commands us to love those that are struggling and poor and to shelter them," Polhemus said. "That is our mandate. And we believe that actually goes above the county or city codes or whatever codes there are, that these are things that are mandated by God."

Nearly a decade ago, the church began sheltering homeless women and children in its gym one night a week as part of a church network that took turns opening their doors to them. In 2018 the church began allowing homeless men to stay in the trailers after interviews and background checks. The church network stopped its outreach to homeless families last year, and The Rock was only able shelter to people in the trailers.

After Friday's ruling, Jeremy Dys, senior counsel for First Liberty Institute, which is representing the church, said, "I'm sure they will welcome people back into the RVs as soon as possible."

The lawsuit is based on both the church's religious freedom under the First Amendment and a federal law intended to protect places of worship from being discriminated against in zoning decisions.

The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, passed with bipartisan support by Congress in 2000, bars governments from imposing land use regulations that put a substantial burden on religious exercise without a compelling reason for doing so. It has helped a wide range of faiths build or expand places of worship but has also been invoked in legal fights over efforts to help the homeless.

Before The Rock filed its lawsuit, a church in Bryan, Ohio, filed a similar federal case this year when its pastor was criminally charged for allowing homeless people to shelter there. The church and city officials are trying to negotiate a resolution to the lawsuit, which also alleges the city violated the 2000 federal law.

Two other recent lawsuits also alleged a violation of that law.

In March, a federal judge ruled the city of Brookings on Oregon's southern coast could not limit a church's homeless meal services. St. Timothy's Episcopal Church's lawsuit argued an ordinance limiting the program to two days a week and requiring a permit also violated its right to freely practice religion.

Last year, a Christian non-profit penalized and threatened with prosecution in the Southern California city of Santa Ana for feeding homeless people settled its lawsuit against the city after the Justice Department weighed in.

Lauren Langer, an attorney in Los Angeles who represents cities in land use cases, said lawsuits pitting

houses of worship against municipalities over care for homeless people come up periodically but they can be costly and drag on.

"Even if the church wins, it's a long road to get there," she said.

Some California communities and churches have taken a different approach — forming partnerships to set up places where people living in vehicles can park overnight while providing services like restrooms, trash pickup and security, she said.

Sonia Moran, who lives with her husband and two sons in a home bordering the Castle Rock church's property, wasn't initially concerned when she learned it was providing shelter to the homeless in the trailer. But that changed after it proposed building an affordable housing development on its 54-acre (22-hectare) property.

She doesn't believe the housing will really be for teachers and first responders, as the church says, and fears the development will bring in residents who could increase crime in her quiet, safe neighborhood.

"How are we supposed to trust them when they can't even follow their current zoning and obligations to the land use right now?" said Moran, who also thinks the church may be trying to make a profit from the project.

Polhemus denies that. The former civil engineer who worked in real estate development in Houston before taking over from his father as the church's pastor said providing workforce housing isn't the kind of project that's profitable.

Moran also said she doesn't believe Castle Rock has a homelessness problem and the church should focus on a place like Denver that does. The county, for its part, has donated \$1.1 million toward building a shelter 30 miles away in Aurora, where at least five homeless people from the county can stay.

Before he moved into the church's RV, Ridenour had been sleeping in his truck at a Target parking lot, staying in motels or with a friend temporarily. He said he lost his job in June 2020 after his truck broke down while he was on his way to Denver.

The church put the experienced carpenter to work building woodwork in its foyer. He said the money he earned helped him pay off debts and buy clothes for job interviews, and also made him feel like he was contributing to the community.

"They showed me my worth, which I had lost," Ridenour said.

Now he's preparing to move back to Kansas City, feeling that he is finally strong enough to return.

"God has made this a journey for me to be back with my family and back with my kids with a complete rewiring of me," he said.

Harris plans to continue to build presidential momentum in speech to teachers union

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is slated to continue her days-old presidential push by speaking Thursday to the American Federation of Teachers, the first labor union to formally endorse her candidacy.

Having emerged as the likely Democratic nominee after President Joe Biden exited the race, Harris plans to travel aggressively to spread her message and rally voters. The outreach occurs as the former and retooled Biden campaign, now under Harris' control, figures out its strategy for generating turnout and maximizing her time in a 100-plus day sprint to the November election against Republican Donald Trump.

But in Trump, Harris is up against the survivor of a recent assassination attempt with tens of millions of loyalists who are devoted to putting him back in the Oval Office. Just as Harris is trying to draw a contrast with Trump, he is trying to do the same with her.

Trump went on the offensive against Harris at a Wednesday rally in North Carolina, telling his crowd of thousands that she is a "real liberal" who is "much worse" than Biden. The former president said Harris had misled voters about the health of the 81-year old Biden and his ability to run for the presidency.

"For three and a half years, Harris shamelessly lied to the public to cover up Joe Biden's mental unfit-

ness, claiming that 'crooked Joe' was at the absolute top of his game," Trump said. "I don't think so. I don't think so."

The vice president's address at the union's biennial convention in Houston follows a Tuesday rally in the Milwaukee area and a Wednesday speech to a gathering of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta in Indianapolis.

"We know when we organize, mountains move," she told the thousands of sorority members on Wednesday. "When we mobilize, nations change. And when we vote, we make history."

The 1.8 million-member AFT has backed Harris and her pro-union agenda on the premise that a Trump return to the White House could result in restrictions on organized labor and a potential loss of funding for education.

Randi Weingarten, the union's president, posted on social media ahead of Harris' appearance, "We are fully committed to this fight: united, mobilized and ready to vote in this year's election."

The AFL-CIO, which represents 60 labor unions including the AFT, has backed Harris. But the vice president has yet to get the endorsement of the United Auto Workers, with its president Shawn Fain telling CNBC in a Monday interview that the decision will be made by his union's executive board.

Fain spoke at the AFT conference on Wednesday and was blistering in his criticism of Trump. The former president has relied on blue-collar voters to compete politically nationwide, but he failed to win a majority of union households in 2020 and lost to Biden, according to AP VoteCast.

"It's very clear a Donald Trump White House would be a disaster for the working class," Fain said. "Donald Trump is a scab. He stands for everything that we as union and in the labor movement stand against."

After her speech, Harris will return to Washington and meet in the afternoon with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A neurological disorder stole her voice. Jennifer Wexton takes it back on the House floor.

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

When Jennifer Wexton rises Thursday to speak on the House floor, something she has done countless times before, the congresswoman will be using a voice she thought was gone forever.

After a rare neurological disorder robbed her of her ability to speak clearly, Wexton has been given her voice back with the help of a powerful artificial intelligence program, allowing the Virginia Democrat to make a clone of her speaking voice using old recordings of speeches and appearances she made as a congresswoman. She will use that program to deliver what is believed to be the first speech on the House floor ever given via a voice cloned by artificial intelligence.

"It was a special moment that I never imagined could happen. I cried happy tears when I first heard it," Wexton told The Associated Press, seated at her dining room table in Leesburg, Virginia, the first interview she conducted using the new artificial intelligence voice clone. Wexton's voice played out of her iPad, propped up using a rainbow-colored floral case. The congresswoman types out her thoughts, uses a stylus to move the text around, hits play and then the AI program puts that text into Wexton's voice. It's a lengthy process, so the AP provided Wexton with a few questions ahead of the interview to give the congresswoman time to type her answers.

Wexton was diagnosed with progressive supranuclear palsy in 2023, an aggressive neurological disorder that impacts many aspects of life, including speech.

The congresswoman, whose runaway win in 2018 signaled the success Democrats would have that year, initially announced a Parkinson's diagnosis in April 2023, striking an upbeat tone by telling supporters they were "welcome to empathize" with her, but not to "feel sorry for me." Her tone in September 2023 was vastly different: She described her PSP diagnosis as "Parkinson's on steroids" and said she would not seek reelection in 2024.

As it became more difficult for Wexton to use her voice, Wexton turned to a traditional text-to-speech app that many people with speech disorders often use. The voice sounded more like a robot than a hu-

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man, but she used it to conduct interviews and give speeches.

ElevenLabs, a start-up with one of the most widely used AI-powered voice cloning models, saw Wexton speak using the older technology. They contacted her office several weeks ago and Wexton's aides provided the company with several recordings, mostly speeches she had given as a member of Congress.

Wexton told the AP she first used the cloned voice to speak with Joe Biden in the Oval Office earlier this month when the President signed the National Plan to End Parkinson's Act. A few days later, Wexton publicly debuted her cloned voice in a video, leading to an outpouring of support and thrusting the congresswoman into a debate over artificial intelligence.

"This is never a situation I imagined myself in," she said. "I didn't anticipate being at the forefront of a debate over the future of AI."

Using AI-powered cloning to give Wexton her voice back is one of the positive applications of this technology. However, voice cloning has also been used nefariously, like defrauding people and pushing fake political messaging.

Wexton harbors those questions, too. After she debuted her voice clone, Wexton jokingly texted a few friends the same message: "AI isn't entirely evil, just mostly." And she believes more guardrails are needed. Her team of advisers has taken precautions to make sure her likeness is protected.

Wexton also said the technology isn't perfect. Because the audio used came from speeches and public events, it isn't great for regular conversation, often making everything sound "like some big proclamation." Her two college-aged sons, she said, don't like it.

"At the end of the day, it will never be me. But it is more me than I ever could have hoped I could hear again," she said. "I plan to make the most of it."

For doctors like Jori Fleisher, the Director of Rush University Medical Center's CurePSP Center of Care, that sentiment is why this kind of technology could be life-altering for those diagnosed with the rare neurological disorder.

"To know of and already deeply respect Representative Wexton and then hear her speak so beautifully in her own voice, using her own words through this technology, it is giving me goosebumps now," she said, growing emotional.

"I want to be a voice, even an AI voice, for Americans facing accessibility challenges and other disabilities because too often people only see us for that disability," Wexton said.

Transcript: Biden's speech explaining why he withdrew from the 2024 presidential race

WASHINGTON (AP) — Transcript of President Joe Biden's address to the nation on July 24, 2024:

My fellow Americans, I'm speaking to you tonight from behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. In this sacred space, I'm surrounded by portraits of extraordinary American presidents. Thomas Jefferson wrote the immortal words that guide this nation. George Washington, who showed us presidents are not kings. Abraham Lincoln, who implored us to reject malice. Franklin Roosevelt, who inspired us to reject fear.

I revere this office, but I love my country more.

It's been the honor of my life to serve as your president. But in the defense of democracy, which is at stake, I think it's more important than any title.

I draw strength and I find joy in working for the American people, but this sacred task of perfecting our union is not about me. It's about you, your families, your futures. It's about we the people, and we can never forget that. And I never have.

I've made it clear that I believe America is at an inflection point, one of those rare moments in history when the decisions we make now will determine our fate of our nation and the world for decades to come.

America is going to have to choose between moving forward or backward, between hope and hate, between unity and division. We have to decide, do we still believe in honesty, decency, respect, freedom, justice and democracy? In this moment, we can see those we disagree with not as enemies, but as fellow Americans. Can we do that? Does character in public life still matter?

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I believe you know the answer to these questions because I know you, the American people, and I know this, we are a great nation because we are a good people.

When you elected me to this office, I promised to always level with you, to tell you the truth. And the truth, the sacred cause of this country, is larger than any one of us, and those of us who cherish that cause cherish it so much, a cause of American democracy itself must unite to protect it.

You know, in recent weeks it's become clear to me that I needed to unite my party in this critical endeavor. I believe my record as president, my leadership in the world, my vision for America's future all merited a second term, but nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy, and that includes personal ambition.

So I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. That's the best way to unite our nation. I know there is a time and a place for long years of experience in public life, but there's also a time and a place for new voices, fresh voices, yes, younger voices, and that time and place is now.

Over the next six months, I'll be focused on doing my job as president. That means I'll continue to lower costs for hard-working families, grow our economy. I'll keep defending our personal freedoms and our civil rights, from the right to vote to the right to choose. I'll keep calling out hate and extremism, make it clear there is no place, no place in America for political violence or any violence ever, period. I'm going to keep speaking out to protect our kids from gun violence, our planet from climate crisis, is the existential threat.

And I will keep fighting for my for my cancer moonshot, so we can end cancer as we know it because we can do it. And I'm going to call for Supreme Court reform because this is critical to our democracy, Supreme Court reform. You know, I will keep working to ensure America remains strong and secure and the leader of the free world.

I'm the first president in this century to report to the American people that the United States is not at war anywhere in the world. We'll keep rallying a coalition of proud nations to stop Putin from taking over Ukraine and doing more damage. We'll keep NATO stronger, and I'll make it more powerful and more united than at any time in all of our history. I'll keep doing the same for allies in the Pacific.

You know, when I came to office, the conventional wisdom was that China would inevitably surpass the United States. That's not the case anymore. And I'm going to keep working to end the war in Gaza, bring home all the hostages and bring peace and security to the Middle East and end this war.

We're also working around the clock to bring home Americans being unjustly detained all around the world. You know, we've come so far since my inauguration. On that day, I told you as I stood in that winter — we stood in a winter of peril and a winter of possibilities, peril and possibilities. We were in the grip of the worst pandemic in the century, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War, but we came together as Americans, and we got through it. We emerged stronger, more prosperous and more secure.

Today, we have the strongest economy in the world, creating nearly 16 million new jobs — a record. Wages are up, inflation continues to come down, the racial wealth gap is the lowest it's been in 20 years. We're literally rebuilding our entire nation, urban, suburban, rural and tribal communities. Manufacturing has come back to America.

We're leading the world again in chips and science and innovation. We finally beat Big Pharma after all these years, to lower the cost of prescription drugs for seniors, and I'm going to keep fighting to make sure we lower the cost for everyone, not just seniors.

More people have health care today in America than ever before. And I signed one of the most significant laws helping millions of veterans and their families who were exposed to toxic materials. You know, the most significant climate law ever, ever in the history of the world, the first major gun safety law in 30 years. And today, violent crime rate is at a 50-year low.

We're also securing our border. Border crossings are lower today than when the previous administration left office. And I've kept my commitment to appoint the first Black woman to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. I also kept my commitment to have an administration that looks like America and be a president for all Americans.

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That's what I've done. I ran for president four years ago because I believed, and still do, that the soul of America was at stake. The very nature of who we are was at stake and that's still the case. America is an idea, an idea stronger than any army, bigger than any ocean, more powerful than any dictator or tyrant.

It's the most powerful idea in the history of the world. That idea is that we hold these truths to be self-evident. We're all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. We've never fully lived up to it, to this sacred idea, but we've never walked away from it either and I do not believe the American people will walk away from it now.

In just a few months, the American people will choose the course of America's future. I made my choice. I made my views known. I would like to thank our great Vice President Kamala Harris. She's experienced, she's tough, she's capable. She's been an incredible partner to me and a leader for our country. Now the choice is up to you, the American people.

When you make that choice, remember the words of Benjamin Franklin. It's hanging on my wall here in the Oval Office, alongside the bust of Dr. King and Rosa Parks and Cesar Chavez. When Ben Franklin was asked as he emerged from the convention going on, whether the founders have given America a monarchy or republic, Franklin's response was "a republic, if you can keep it." A republic if you can keep it. Whether we keep our republic is now in your hands.

My fellow Americans, it's been the privilege of my life to serve this nation for over 50 years. Nowhere else on earth could a kid with a stutter from modest beginnings in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Claymont, Delaware, one day sit behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office as President of the United States, but here I am. That's what's so special about America.

We are a nation of promise and possibilities, of dreamers and doers, of ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things. I've given my heart and my soul to our nation, like so many others. I've been blessed a million times in return with the love and support of the American people. I hope you have some idea how grateful I am to all of you.

The great thing about America is here kings and dictators do not rule, the people do. History is in your hands. The power is in your hands. The idea of America lies in your hands. We just have to keep faith, keep the faith and remember who we are. We're the United States of America and there's simply nothing, nothing beyond our capacity when we do it together.

So let's act together, preserve our democracy. God bless you all and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

Biden delivers solemn call to defend democracy as he lays out his reasons for quitting race

By ZEKE MILLER, SEUNG MIN KIM and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday delivered a solemn call to voters to defend the country's democracy as he laid out in an Oval Office address his decision to drop his bid for reelection and throw his support behind Vice President Kamala Harris.

Insisting that "the defense of democracy is more important than any title," Biden used his first public address since his announcement Sunday that he was stepping aside to deliver an implicit repudiation of former President Donald Trump. He did not directly call out Trump, whom he has called an existential threat to democracy. The 10-minute address also gave Biden a chance to try to shape how history will remember his one and only term in office.

"Nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy," Biden said, in a somber coda to his 50 years spent in public office. "And that includes personal ambition."

It was a moment for the history books — a U.S. president reflecting before the nation on why he was taking the rare step of voluntarily handing off power. It hasn't been done since 1968, when Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek reelection in the heat of the Vietnam War.

"I revere this office," Biden said. "But I love my country more."

Trump, just an hour earlier at a campaign rally, revived his baseless claims of voter fraud in the 2020

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presidential election, which he lost to Biden. His refusal to concede inspired the Capitol insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021, which Biden called "the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War."

Biden skirted the political reality that brought him to that point: His abysmal performance in a debate against Trump nearly a month ago, where he spoke haltingly, appeared ashen and failed to rebut his predecessor's attacks, sparked a crisis of confidence from Democrats. Lawmakers and ordinary voters questioned not just whether he was capable of beating Trump in November, but also whether, at 81, he was still fit for the high-pressure job.

Biden, who said he believed his record was deserving of another term in office, tried to outlast the skepticism and quell the concerns with interviews and tepid rallies, but the pressure to end his campaign only mounted from the party's political elites and from ordinary voters.

"I have decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation," Biden said, saying he wanted to make room for "fresh voices, yes, younger voices."

He added, "That is the best way to unite our nation."

It was a belated fulfillment of his 2020 pledge to be a bridge to a new generation of leaders — and a bow to the drumbeat of calls from within his party to step aside.

Biden's address was carried live by the major broadcast and cable news networks. He spooled out an weighty to-do list for his last six months in office, pledging to remain focused on being president until his term expires at noon on Jan. 20, 2025. He said he would work to end the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, fight to boost government support to cure cancer, address climate change and push for Supreme Court reform.

The president sought to use the address to outline the stakes in the election, which both Biden and Harris have framed as a choice between freedom and chaos, but he tried to steer clear of overt campaigning from his official office.

"The great thing about America is here, kings and dictators do not rule," Biden said. "The people do. History is in your hands. The power is in your hands. The idea of America — lies in your hands."

Biden was also making the case for his legacy of sweeping domestic legislation and the renewal of alliances abroad. But the way history will remember his time in office and his historic decision to step aside is intertwined with Harris' electoral result in November, particularly as the vice president runs tightly on the achievements of the Biden administration.

His advisers say he intends to hold campaign events and fundraisers benefiting Harris, whom Biden praised as "tough" and "capable," albeit at a far slower pace than if he had remained on the ballot himself.

Harris advisers will ultimately have to decide how to deploy the president, whose popularity sagged as voters in both parties questioned his fitness for office.

Biden, aides say, knows that if Harris loses, he'll be criticized for staying in the race too long and not giving her or another Democrat time to effectively mount a campaign against Trump. If she wins, she'll ensure his policy victories are secured and expanded, and he'll be remembered for a Washingtonian decision to step aside for the next generation of leadership.

Biden said he's grateful to have served as president — nowhere else would a kid with a stutter grow up to sit in the Oval Office.

"I've given my heart and my soul to our nation," he said. "I've been blessed a million times in return."

Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday that any question of Biden resigning his office before the election — which would allow Harris to run as an incumbent — was "ridiculous."

Jean-Pierre said Biden has "no regrets" about his decision to stay in the race as long as he did, or his decision to quit it over the weekend. She said Biden's decision had nothing to do with his health.

Trump, who watched Biden's remarks from his private jet, posted on his social media platform that the president "was barely understandable, and sooo bad!"

As he spoke inside the Oval Office, Biden was joined off-camera by family members, including his wife, Jill, son Hunter, daughter Ashley and several grandchildren. Hundreds of administration aides held a watch party in the White House and gathered in the Rose Garden afterward to hear Biden thank them for their

service. Outside the gates, supporters of Biden gathered holding signs that read "We love Joe," and a brass band played.

US files details of Boeing's plea deal related to plane crashes. It's in the hands of a judge now

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

The Justice Department submitted an agreement with Boeing on Wednesday in which the aerospace giant will plead guilty to a fraud charge for misleading U.S. regulators who approved the 737 Max jetliner before two of the planes crashed, killing 346 people.

The detailed plea agreement was filed in federal district court in Texas. The American company and the Justice Department reached a deal on the guilty plea and the agreement's broad terms earlier this month.

The final version states Boeing admitted that through its employees, it made an agreement "by dishonest means" to defraud a Federal Aviation Administration group that evaluated the 737 Max. Because of Boeing's deception, the FAA had "incomplete and inaccurate information" about the plane's flight-control software and how much training pilots would need for it, the plea agreement says.

U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor can accept the agreement and the sentence worked out between Boeing and prosecutors, or he could reject it, which likely would lead to new negotiations between the company and the Justice Department.

The deal calls for the appointment of an independent compliance monitor, three years of probation and a fine of at least \$243.6 million. It also requires Boeing to invest at least \$455 million "in its compliance, quality, and safety programs."

Boeing issued a statement saying the company "will continue to work transparently with our regulators as we take significant actions across Boeing to further strengthen" those programs.

Paul Cassell, a lawyer for families of victims of the 737 Max crashes who wanted Boeing to face trial, criticized the agreement.

"The plea has all the problems in it that the families feared it would have. We will file a strong objection to the preferential and sweetheart treatment Boeing is receiving," he said.

Boeing was accused of misleading the FAA about aspects of the Max before the agency certified the plane for flight. Boeing did not tell airlines and pilots about the new software system, called MCAS, that could turn the plane's nose down without input from pilots if a sensor detected that the plane might go into an aerodynamic stall.

Max planes crashed in 2018 in Indonesia and 2019 in Ethiopia after a faulty reading from the sensor pushed the nose down and pilots were unable to regain control. After the second crash, Max jets were grounded worldwide until the company redesigned MCAS to make it less powerful and to use signals from two sensors, not just one.

Boeing avoided prosecution in 2021 by reaching a \$2.5 billion settlement with the Justice Department that included a previous \$243.6 million fine. It appeared that the fraud charge would be permanently dismissed until January, when a panel covering an unused exit blew off a 737 Max during an Alaska Airlines flight. That led to new scrutiny of the company's safety.

In May of this year, prosecutors said Boeing violated terms of the 2021 agreement by failing to make promised changes to detect and prevent violations of federal anti-fraud laws. Boeing agreed this month to plead guilty to the felony fraud charge instead of enduring a potentially lengthy public trial.

The role and authority of the monitor is viewed as a key provision of the new plea deal, according to experts in corporate governance and white-collar crime. Cassell has said that families of the crash victims should have the right to propose a monitor for the judge to appoint. The agreement calls for the government to select the monitor "with feedback from Boeing."

In Wednesday's filing, the Justice Department said that Boeing "took considerable steps" to improve its anti-fraud compliance program since 2021, but the changes "have not been fully implemented or tested to demonstrate that they would prevent and detect similar misconduct in the future."

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That's where the independent monitor will come in, "to reduce the risk of misconduct," the plea deal states.

Boeing, which is based in Arlington, Virginia, is a major Pentagon and NASA contractor, and a guilty plea is not expected to change that. Government agencies have leeway to hire companies even after a criminal conviction. The plea agreement does not address the topic.

Some of the passengers' relatives plan to ask the judge to reject the plea deal. They want a full trial, a harsher penalty for Boeing, and many of them want current and former Boeing executives to be charged.

If the judge approves the deal, it would apply to the criminal charge stemming from the 737 Max crashes. It would not resolve other matters, potentially including litigation related to the Alaska Airlines blowout.

Boeing could appeal any order the court imposes to pay restitution to victims' families — the agreement leaves restitution up to the judge. The company could also appeal if the judge indirectly increases the fine beyond \$243.6 million by failing to give Boeing credit for an identical amount it paid as part of the 2021 settlement.

O'Connor will give lawyers for the families seven days to file legal motions opposing the plea deal. Boeing and the Justice Department will have 14 days to respond, and the families will get five days to reply to the filings by the company and the government.

Harris asks for 2024 support from women of color during an address at a historically Black sorority

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris told members of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta on Wednesday that "we are not playing around" and asked for their help in electing her president in November.

"In this moment, I believe we face a choice between two different visions for our nation, one focused on the future, the other focused on the past," she said in a speech three days after launching her bid for the White House. "And with your support, I am fighting for our nation's future."

Voters in Indiana haven't backed a Democratic presidential candidate in nearly 16 years. But Harris, a woman of Black and South Asian descent, was speaking to a group already excited by her historic status as the likely Democratic nominee and one that her campaign hopes can expand its coalition.

On Wednesday, she thanked the room full of women for their work electing her vice president, and Joe Biden president. "And now, in this moment, our nation needs your leadership once again," she said.

In a memo released Wednesday, campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon pointed to support among female, nonwhite and younger voters as critical to success.

"Where Vice President Harris goes, grassroots enthusiasm follows," O'Malley Dillon wrote. "This campaign will be close, it will be hard fought, but Vice President Harris is in a position of strength — and she's going to win."

Still, Democrats face challenges as the country is nursing frustrations over higher prices following a spike in inflation, while Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, survived a recent assassination attempt that further energized his already loyal base. But the memo was more optimistic than the narrow path the campaign saw after the 81-year-old Biden delivered a disastrous debate performance in June. He quit the race on Sunday.

Harris mentioned he'd be addressing the nation later Wednesday on why he decided to step aside, and called him a "leader with a bold vision."

"We are all deeply, deeply grateful for his service to our nation," she said before turning to contrast the administration's agenda with that of Trump's.

"These extremists want to take us back, but we are not going back," she said. "All across our nation we are witnessing a full-on assault on hard-fought, hard-won freedoms and rights."

She cited the freedom to vote, to be safe from gun violence, to love whom you want to love openly, to "learn and acknowledge our true and full history," and the freedom "of a woman to make decisions about

her body and not have her government telling her what to do.”

Trump unleashed a barrage of attack lines on Harris during a rally in Charlotte, calling her his “new victim to defeat” and accusing her of deceiving the public about Biden’s health and ability to run for a second term. Trump referred to Harris as “Lyin’ Kamala” — repeatedly mispronouncing her first name — and said she is “the most incompetent and far-left vice president in American history.”

Harris landed in Houston later Wednesday, visiting the city’s emergency operations center to discuss the ongoing recovery efforts following Hurricane Beryl and to thank emergency management and first responders. She watched Biden’s Oval Office speech from Houston.

On Thursday, she’s speaking at the national convention of the American Federation of Teachers, which has endorsed her candidacy.

While the campaign will keep emphasizing what it calls its Blue Wall of states — Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania — to get the needed 270 electoral votes, Harris hopes to be competitive in North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada as well.

Trump has generally run stronger with white voters who do not hold a college degree. AP VoteCast, a comprehensive survey of voters and nonvoters that aims to tell the story behind election results, found that group made up 43% of all voters in 2020 and Trump won them by a margin of 62% to 37%, even though overall he lost the election.

For Democrats, Black women would probably make a fundamental difference in November, and Harris has already shown signs of galvanizing their support.

In the 2020 election, AP VoteCast found that Black women were just 7% of the electorate. But 93% of them voted for Biden, helping to give him narrow victories in states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

After Harris announced her candidacy, roughly 90,000 Black women logged onto a video call Sunday night for her campaign. It was a sudden show of support for an alumnus of Howard University and sister of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority who has made Beyoncé’s song “Freedom” her walk-on music at events.

In fiery speech to Congress, Netanyahu vows ‘total victory’ in Gaza and denounces US protesters

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, FARNOUSH AMIRI and ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged in a scathing speech to Congress on Wednesday to achieve “total victory” against Hamas and denounced American opponents of the war in Gaza as “idiots,” taking a combative stance in a visit the Biden administration has hoped will yield progress in negotiations to end the fighting.

Netanyahu used the high-profile address to a joint meeting of Congress to emphasize longstanding and close ties between the United States and Israel. But the speech put in sharp relief the divisions in American society stirred by the war, with dozens of Democratic lawmakers boycotting the address and thousands of protesters outside the Capitol condemning the war and the humanitarian crisis created by it.

Some of the protests near the Capitol turned chaotic. That included one within a few hundred yards of the tightly guarded Capitol grounds, at Union Station, where protesters spray-painted marble statuary and replaced American flags with Palestinian ones. Officers on streets surrounding the Capitol brawled with demonstrators, swinging batons and spraying tear gas.

Speaking for nearly an hour to frequent applause from U.S. lawmakers, as well as stony silence from many leading Democrats, Netanyahu said the U.S. has a shared interest in his country’s fight against Hamas and other Iran-backed armed groups.

“America and Israel must stand together. When we stand together something really simple happens: We win, they lose,” said Netanyahu, who wore a yellow pin expressing solidarity with the Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

But the Israeli leader soon pivoted to a darker tone as he derided those protesting the war on college

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campuses and elsewhere in the U.S., gesturing to demonstrations happening on the streets outside the Capitol. He called protesters "useful idiots" for Israel's adversaries.

Netanyahu — making his first trip abroad since the war started — made no direct mention of months of U.S.-led mediation for a cease-fire and hostage-release. His remarks did not appear to close the door on a deal but showed no sign he was eager for one.

"Israel will fight until we destroy Hamas's military capabilities and its rule in Gaza and bring all our hostages home," he said. "That's what total victory means. And we will settle for nothing less."

Hostages freed from Gaza and families of those still in captivity listened in the House chamber. At least five of them rose to display T-shirts with slogans demanding an end to the war and the freeing of remaining hostages. Security officers removed the five.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American serving Congress, went a step further, holding a sign that said "WAR CRIMINAL" on one side and "GUILTY OF GENOCIDE" on the other. Tlaib is one of Netanyahu's most strident critics in Congress and was censured for her comments last year against the Israel-Hamas war, which has killed more than 39,000 in Gaza.

She has relatives in the West Bank and represents a Michigan district with many Palestinian Americans.

Netanyahu steered away from discussing efforts by the United States and Arab allies to negotiate an end to the fighting and a release of surviving hostages seized by Hamas-led militants. He accused American protesters of the war of standing with the militants who he said killed babies.

"These protesters that stand with them, they should be ashamed of themselves," he said. Some 1,200 people in Israel were killed in the Oct. 7 attack that started the war.

Netanyahu — who is frequently accused of wading into U.S. politics in favor of conservative and Republican causes — started his remarks with praise of President Joe Biden. But he turned to lavishing praise on former president and current presidential contender Donald Trump "for all he's done for Israel."

Netanyahu is scheduled to meet with Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday, and with Trump at Mar-a-Lago on Friday.

Kentucky Republican Rep. Andy Barr praised the prime minister's speech as an exhortation to see Israeli and American interests as intertwined.

"Why should members of Congress, why should the American people defend Israel in their moment of need? Because it is in the national security interest of the United States to defeat Hamas and other Iranian proxies," Barr said.

Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Democrat from Maryland, said Netanyahu's speech was made for Trump's GOP.

"We didn't hear anything about meaningful progress towards a bilateral cease-fire in return for hostages. We didn't hear anything about peace," he said.

The families of American hostages being held in Gaza said they were "profoundly disappointed" by Netanyahu's speech. In a joint statement, the families said he "failed to commit to the hostage deal that is now on the table even though Israel's senior defense and intelligence officials have called on him to do so."

Eight Americans are believed to be held by Hamas, including three who were killed.

Former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who boycotted the speech, called Netanyahu's speech "the worst presentation of any foreign dignitary invited and honored with the privilege of addressing the Congress."

Delivering the speech during Israel's evening prime time, Netanyahu also had an eye on the audience back home. Netanyahu, whose popularity has plummeted from its pre-war levels, aimed to portray himself as a statesman respected by Israel's most important ally and welcomed in the corridors of Washington. That task is complicated by Americans' increasingly divided views on Israel and the war.

The appearance made Netanyahu the first foreign leader to address a joint meeting of Congress four times, surpassing Winston Churchill.

House Speaker Mike Johnson gave Netanyahu a warm welcome. More than 60 Democrats and political independent Bernie Sanders boycotted Netanyahu's speech. The most notable absence was right behind him: Harris, who serves as president of the Senate, said a long-scheduled trip kept her from attending.

The next Democrat in line, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, declined to attend, so Sen. Ben Cardin,

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the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, served as "senator pro tempore" in place of her.

Trump's running mate, Sen. JD Vance, was also a no-show for Netanyahu's speech, citing the need to campaign.

Support for Israel has long carried political weight in U.S. politics. But Netanyahu's visit has been somewhat overshadowed by U.S. political turmoil, including the assassination attempt against Trump and Biden's decision not to seek another term.

Many Democrats attended the address despite their criticism of Netanyahu, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who in a floor speech in March called for new elections in Israel. Schumer, of New York, said then that Netanyahu has "lost his way" and is an obstacle to peace in the region.

The United States is Israel's most important ally, arms supplier and source of military aid. The Biden administration had said it wants to see Netanyahu focus his visit on helping it complete a deal for a cease-fire and hostage-release. Growing numbers of Israelis accuse Netanyahu of prolonging the war in order to avoid a likely fall from power whenever the conflict ends.

Netanyahu's visit came under the shadow of arrest warrants sought against him by the International Criminal Court over alleged Israel war crimes against Palestinians. The United States does not recognize the ICC.

2024 Election Latest: Biden says democracy lies in the hands of voters during solemn address

By The Associated Press undefined

President Joe Biden made his first address since his decision to drop out of the 2024 presidential race.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump is holding a rally in Charlotte and Vice President Kamala Harris asked for support from women of color during an address at a historically Black sorority.

Earlier today, thousands of protesters rallied to denounce Israel's war in Gaza, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a scathing speech to Congress to defend Israel's conduct in the war and vowed "total victory" against Hamas.

He condemned American opponents while thousands of protesters rallied within sight of the Capitol building.

Follow the AP's Election-2024 coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024>.

Here's the Latest:

Biden's Oval Office address was a family affair

Biden addressed the nation from the Oval Office surrounded by family and close advisers.

As he spoke, seated off to the side and along the curved wall, were mostly relatives. They included the president's son, Hunter Biden, and his granddaughter Finnegan Biden, as well as his daughter Ashley Biden.

First lady Jill Biden was also there, as were other family members and the president's longtime adviser, Mike Donilon.

Biden's voice was very soft and sometimes barely audible, though he got a bit louder occasionally. Toward the end of remarks, Ashley Biden reached for the hand of her mother, the first lady, who was seated next to her.

Standing in the back were White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and other staff.

When Biden concluded, those assembled applauded. Jill Biden then walked to the Resolute Desk and stood next to her husband. "This has been the honor of a lifetime," the president said.

In 1968, Lyndon Johnson turned down a second term of his own

No American incumbent president has dropped out of the race so late in the process. The last president to do so was Lyndon Johnson in March of 1968. When Johnson addressed the nation from the Oval Office, he spent the majority of his remarks talking about the Vietnam War, and his duty to focus on it.

He tried to make the case that American forces were making great progress in the war, and said, "One day, my fellow citizens, there will be peace in Southeast Asia." That portrait was at odds with the politics in the Democratic Party, riven by division over the war, prompting several prominent Democrats, including

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Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy.

Johnson also acknowledged how the war was tearing the country apart. "In these times as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, of region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand. There is division in the American house now."

He then made the stunning announcement that he would not seek reelection.

"I shall not be a candidate for reelection. I have served my country long, and I think efficiently and honestly. I shall not accept a renomination. I do not feel that it is my duty to spend another 4 years in the White House."

Trump calls Biden's Oval Office address 'sooo bad'

Trump posted on his social media website that the president "was barely understandable, and sooo bad!"

During the speech, Biden called Vice President Harris "tough" and "capable."

In a separate post, Trump slammed Biden and Harris as embarrassments, noting, "THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME LIKE THIS!"

The view from Trump's campaign plane

As President Biden addressed the nation, his former opponent was among those watching.

Trump watched Biden's 10-minute address from his campaign plane as he flew out of North Carolina following a rally.

Photographs showed Trump watching Biden speak intently, his head tilted sideways.

Trump adviser Chris LaCivita subsequently posted on X a different picture showing the former president turned sideways and frowning, intently not watching as Biden spoke.

"On Trump Force One ...Hey Joe ...You're Fired!" LaCivita wrote over the picture.

Love, Jill

First lady Jill Biden posted a hand-written note after the president's speech thanking "those who never wavered, who refused to doubt." She thanked supporters for putting their trust in the president. "Now it's time to put that trust in Kamala."

She signed it: Love, Jill.

9 arrested during DC protests over the war in Gaza

Police in the nation's capital say they have arrested nine people after thousands of protesters against the war in Gaza descended on Washington to condemn Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit.

The Metropolitan Police Department said the arrests included five people taken into custody Wednesday morning on charges of crowding or incommoding. Later in the day, a 15-year-old was arrested for assaulting a police officer in front of Union Station.

Outside Washington's Union Station, protesters removed American flags, lit one ablaze and hoisted Palestinian flags in their place to massive cheers in the crowd.

Three men were also arrested for assaulting a police officer and crossing a police line in Columbus Circle, outside Union Station, police said.

Biden says he put party unity over a 'merited' second term

Defending his tenure, Biden said his "record as president, our leadership in the world, my vision for America's future all merited a second term." But, he said, "I needed to unite my party."

Contrasting himself with Trump, he added, "Nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy. And that includes personal ambition."

Biden never mentioned Trump, but his allusions were clear

Though Biden never mentioned his political rival, it was clear the Democratic incumbent was talking about the possibility of former President Trump returning for a second presidency.

"I revere this office, but I love my country more. It's been the honor of my life to serve as your president. But in the defense of democracy, which is at stake, I think it is more important than any title," Biden said in the opening minutes of his speech.

Biden called this election year "one of those rare moments in history when the decisions we make now determine the fate of our nation and the world for decades to come. Americans are going to have to choose

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moving forward or backward, between hope and hate, between unity and division. We have to decide do we still believe in honesty, decency, respect, freedom, justice and democracy."

And, he asked, "Does character in public life still matter?"

Those are many of the same critiques Biden leveled against Trump in the 2020 campaign.

Biden uses address to shape his legacy and the upcoming election

The address gave Biden a chance to try to shape how history views his one and only term in office.

It gave the public a chance to hear directly from Biden his rationale for dropping out of the 2024 after weeks of insisting he believed himself to be the best candidate to take on former President Trump, whom he has called an existential threat to the nation's democracy.

Both Biden and Harris have framed the election as a choice between freedom and chaos, but he tried to steer clear of overt campaigning from his official office and never mentioned Trump by name.

"The great thing about America is, here, kings and dictators do not rule," Biden said. "The people do. History is in your hands. The power is in your hands. The idea of America — lies in your hands."

Biden wraps 10-minute address

Biden says he's grateful to have served as president — in no other country could a kid with a stutter grow up to sit in the Oval Office.

"My fellow Americans, it's been the privilege of my life," he says.

He told Americans to "keep the faith," and "the idea of America lies in your hands."

Biden's has a busy 6 months planned

Biden says he has a busy to-do list for his final six months in office.

He says he's going to work to end the war in Gaza.

Biden also mentioned that he'll work to defend personal freedoms and lower costs for hardworking families. He says he'll continue to push for Supreme Court reform and will keep seeking to protect children from gun violence. He says he'll keep up his initiative seeking to end cancer as we know it.

Biden says it's time for 'fresh voices, yes, younger voices' in politics

President Biden is explaining why he is stepping away from the 2024 election. He says, "I revere this office, but I love my country more."

"I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. It's the best way to unite our nation," said Biden.

He said he thought it best to unite his party. Some Democrats had been calling for him to step down.

Biden supporters gather outside the White House

Supporters of President Biden have gathered outside the White House in a show of support as the president gives an Oval Office address to explain why he's stepping away from the 2024 race.

Some held signs that read: "We love Joe," and a brass band played.

Biden addresses the nation in Oval Office Address

President Joe Biden is addressing the nation from the Oval Office after his decision to step down from the 2024 race.

Dozens of his staff members filed into the White House to watch the address together.

Biden bowed to pressure from his own party to step aside following his disastrous debate performance on June 27. He posted a letter on Sunday telling the public about his decision but was sick with COVID-19 at the time and said he'd address the nation later.

Trump lays in to 'lyin' Kamala Harris'

Trump opened his remarks at a rally in Charlotte, North Carolina, saying he defeated Biden, adding the Democrats "had a very undemocratic move" and forced him out.

"Now, we have a new victim to defeat: lyin' Kamala Harris," he said, mispronouncing her name, and proceeding to attack her record on the border.

Biden to tell nation that the 'defense of democracy is more important than any title' as he explains dropping 2024 bid

President Joe Biden is giving an Oval Office address this evening where he's expected to say that he will spend the next six months doing his job as president, but that he decided the best way forward was to

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"pass the torch to a new generation."

The president bowed to pressure from his own party to step aside following his disastrous debate performance on June 27. He posted a letter on Sunday telling the public about his decision but was sick with COVID-19 at the time and said he'd address the nation later.

Biden says in excerpts of his remarks that the "great thing about America is kings and dictators do not rule. The people do."

Biden has endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris for president.

Families of American hostages in Gaza are 'profoundly disappointed' in Netanyahu

The families of the eight American hostages being held in Gaza say they're "profoundly disappointed" that Prime Minister Netanyahu did not guarantee in his speech to Congress that the hostages would be coming home.

In a joint statement, the families said that Netanyahu "failed to present any new solutions or a new path forward" and "failed to commit to the hostage deal that is now on the table even though Israel's senior defense and intelligence officials have called on him to do so."

They called on him to get the deal done "before it is too late."

Eight Americans are believed to be held by Hamas, including three who were killed.

Trump rally attendees are still feeling out JD Vance

Fans and supporters awaiting Trump in Charlotte say they are amped to meet their nominee. But his running mate? They're still waiting to learn more about him.

A handful of voters interviewed Wednesday by The Associated Press ahead of Trump's late afternoon campaign rally said they had watched the Netflix biopic about JD Vance's life, based on his bestselling book, but aside from that, they didn't know much about the freshman Ohio senator.

Trump unveiled Vance as his veep pick last week as the Republican National Convention got underway in Milwaukee. The two campaigned together over the weekend and plan to do so again this coming weekend in Minnesota.

Trump rally attendees suffer heat stress

Paramedics received eight calls about people suffering from heat stress at the arena in Charlotte, North Carolina, where attendees waited outside for hours in the sweltering heat before being allowed inside to hear the former president speak Wednesday.

At least two people were taken to a hospital, according to the Mecklenburg Emergency Medical Services Agency.

Temperatures in Charlotte were near 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) and high humidity made it feel several degrees warmer on the pavement surrounding the 8,600-seat Bojangles Coliseum.

Police remove Palestinian flags at Union Station

Police have taken down Palestinian flags that protesters hoisted outside Washington's Union Station. Protesters removed three American flags from the poles and replaced them with Palestinian flags. At least one of the American flags was burned. Police took down the Palestinian flags once the crowd began to dissipate.

Access to Union Station locked down

Amtrak Police locked down access to Union Station around 3:30 p.m. ET, closing all but one entrance to the major transportation hub.

In a message on X, formerly known as Twitter, the Virginia Railway Express notified passengers they would be required to show their tickets to get into the station, via the First Street Metrorail entrance.

Tempers flare outside Union Station as police officers take people into custody

An Associated Press reporter saw at least four people taken into custody by police during the confrontation outside Union Station. Protesters repeatedly shouted, "Let them go!" at officers.

One person grabbed a police officer's riot shield and then raised his fists in a fighting stance. An officer grabbed a Palestinian flag from a woman and tossed it aside. At least one protester appeared to be overcome by the effects of pepper spray.

Sen. Kelly: 'Every Palestinian in Gaza is not a member of Hamas'

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Sen. Mark Kelly said that Netanyahu expressed "a lot of things that many Americans are feeling," but also wished the prime minister had acknowledged the loss of life during the war. "Every Palestinian in Gaza is not a member of Hamas."

Netanyahu mentioned notifying civilians, Kelly said, but there have been a lot of civilian casualties, and there are always ways to improve. "It's important to recognize that," he said.

Over 39,000 Palestinians have been killed and another 89,800 have been wounded during Israel's offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Hostage supporters gathered in Tel Aviv to watch Netanyahu speech, demand 'deal now'

In Tel Aviv, hundreds of relatives of Israeli hostages and other supporters gathered in the city's "Hostages Square" to watch the speech on a large screen.

Many chanted "Deal now" as he spoke.

"I want to tell my Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, my grandfather could have been alive today with us. He was waiting for someone to come and save him. He was waiting for you to seal the deal," said Talya Dancyg, whose grandfather, Alex Dancyg, was pronounced dead in captivity this week by Israeli authorities.

"Seal the deal. Bring them home now," she said.

"If he didn't open with the words, 'we have a deal,' I don't care what he has to say," added Sharon Kalderon, sister-in-law of hostage Ofer Kalderon.

Protesters graffiti monument, disperse

Protesters have spray painted graffiti on a monument to Christopher Columbus outside Union Station, including the words, "Hamas is coming" in large red letters. At the base, the words "Free Gaza" are painted in green.

With the announcement over a megaphone that "the police are coming" many protestors appeared to disperse.

... But Democrats have had a more mixed response

1. Rep, Brad Schneider of Illinois, a Jewish Democrat and staunch Israel supporter said, "There's a lot of times this could have turned in different directions," expressing gratitude the speech was not partisan. "Did I agree with everything he said? No, but no one has spoken on this floor that I have agreed with everything they've said."

2. Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan said she agreed with Netanyahu that the priority is getting the hostages out also acknowledged the importance of a cease-fire. "And then there is no question Hamas has to be removed from power. I agree with that, but I don't agree that anyone who is protesting their strategy on war in Michigan are people who support Hamas."

3. Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut left dissatisfied, saying Netanyahu visited the U.S. and was "very clearly aligning himself with a host of messaging from Republicans," which he called unsurprising but also "really, really sad." Murphy said the speech was a lot of "war-sloganeering, and not much thoughtful, detailed explanation of how he's going to keep Israel safe in the long run."

Republicans have widely praised Netanyahu's speech ...

4. Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska, "The most important thing I think he did is lay out the stakes as it relates to Iran. That's where Democrats and Republicans should agree. It is Iran behind everything, and he did a great job of laying that out."

5. Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 2 Senate Republican, said Netanyahu "provided a stark reminder of what's at stake not just for the region but for us."

6. Republican House Leader Steve Scalise called the speech "moving" and said it allowed Congress to "see the cost of the war, to see what's at stake, why they're fighting and why they must win, and why it's important for the United States to stand with them."

7. Rep. Andy Barr of Kentucky, "Why should members of Congress, why should the American people defend Israel in their moment of need? Because it is in the national security interest of the United States to defeat Hamas and other Iranian proxies."

US Rep. Jamie Raskin criticizes Netanyahu's speech as one made for Trump's GOP

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Democrat from Maryland, said Netanyahu's speech was made for Trump's GOP

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"It's too bad he couldn't have come earlier in the summer. He could have given it at the Republican National Convention because the speech was really pitched to right-wing Americans, for a right-wing approach to the war and that's been rejected."

Raskin, who met with families of hostages earlier in the day, said he heard no plan from Netanyahu for their safe return and an end to the war.

"We didn't hear anything about meaningful progress towards a bilateral cease-fire in return for hostages. We didn't hear anything about peace. We didn't hear anything about a two-state solution, which has been U.S. foreign policy for decades," he said. "You had one narcissistic, indicted right-wing autocrat coming over here to speak to the followers of another narcissistic, right-wing, autocrat."

'Palestine will be free'

Protesters cheered as a fire burned what appeared to be a paper-mache likeness of Netanyahu.

The replica of the Liberty Bell outside the station has been covered in graffiti reading "Free Palestine" and in Arabic "Palestine will be free."

Officers wearing helmets and carrying riot shields are walking in a line down a street outside Union Station.

All 3 US flags at Union Station replaced with Palestinian flags

Protesters have climbed the flagpole outside Washington's Union Station and replaced the American flags outside with Palestinian flags. Dozens of law enforcement officers remain outside Union Station, which is one of the nation's busiest railroad terminals.

Cheers rang out as the final flag was raised.

Police deploy chemical agent at protestors

After being turned away by police near the Capitol, protesters wound through the Capitol Hill neighborhood for several blocks before gathering in front of Union Station.

When protestors took down one of the giant U.S. flags outside, police moved in. At least one person was arrested and police deployed chemical agents.

Protesters chanted "shame on you" as police dragged somebody away. At least two people were seen being treated for chemical agent effects on the eyes.

'I came here to thank you, America,' Netanyahu says as he wraps speech

"On behalf of the people of Israel, I came here to say thank you, America," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday as he finished his address to Congress.

Democrats subsequently filed out of the chamber while Republicans were still giving the prime minister enthusiastic applause.

Netanyahu praises Trump

The Israeli leader, frequently accused of wading into American politics in favor of Republicans, lavished praise on former president and current presidential contender Donald Trump "for all he's done for Israel."

'Israel will fight until we destroy Hamas' military capabilities

Netanyahu says he is ready to press forward with Israel's war against Hamas until he achieves "total victory."

Netanyahu told Congress that he would agree to a cease-fire if Hamas surrenders, disarms and releases all hostages it is holding.

"Israel will fight until we destroy Hamas' military capabilities and its rule in Gaza and bring all our hostages home," he said. "That's what total victory means. And we will settle for nothing less."

But he said Israel would continue to fight indefinitely until it destroys the group's military capabilities and brings home all hostages.

Critics have said Netanyahu's vow of total victory is unrealistic, as Hamas has repeatedly regrouped in areas that the Israeli military has withdrawn from.

U.S.-led cease-fire talks have dragged on for months without a breakthrough.

A tense scene between dueling protestors

At one point, late in the march, a brief scuffle broke out between different protest groups. At the corner of D Street and Delaware, a small group waving Israeli flags had set up a demonstration, claiming to be pro-Israel but anti-Netanyahu.

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As the main rally passed them, one man tried to grab the megaphone held by one of the pro-Israeli protesters.

The pair separated after a brief struggle and the situation devolved into multiple tense, but nonviolent, debates.

People wearing yellow 'Seal the deal now' T-shirts removed

Earlier in the speech, five people wearing yellow T-shirts that read "seal the deal now" were removed from the House gallery. The phrase is a rallying cry for those urging Netanyahu to reach a deal to return the hostages.

The individuals stood to prominently display the message on their shirts during moments when others were applauding but had done nothing to disrupt the speech itself.

Arrests made in House Gallery, per Capitol Police

U.S. Capitol Police say they have arrested five people who disrupted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech before Congress. Police said in a post on X that the people were in the House Gallery and were "immediately removed" and arrested.

"Disrupting the Congress and demonstrating in the Congressional Buildings is against the law," police said.

The affiliation of those arrested is not immediately clear.

Netanyahu's speech takes on more combative tone

Netanyahu's speech took on a more combative tone as he defended his country but also derided those protesting the war in Gaza, gesturing to demonstrations happening as he spoke on the streets outside the U.S. Capitol, as "useful idiots" for Israel's adversaries.

"The hands of the Jewish state will never be shackled," he said.

He drew shouts of applause from many in Congress, but also silence from leading Democrats who declined to stand and cheer.

A common thread of Netanyahu's speech is painting Israel's fight against Hamas and the region as a whole as synonymous with American interests and values.

RNC chairman says the party's electoral strategy has not changed following Harris' ascension

The head of the RNC says his party's general election calculus has not changed now that Democrats may be led by Harris and not President Biden.

RNC Chairman Michael Whatley told The Associated Press ahead of Trump's rally in Charlotte, North Carolina, later today that he feels "fantastic" about his candidate's chances in the state, which was the scene of Trump's slimmest electoral victory in 2020.

Whatley also said that he felt Vance's addition to the ticket would resonate with voters in North Carolina.

Asked about running a campaign against Harris instead of Biden, Whatley expressed confidence in his notion that Trump "has more energy and is doing more events than any presidential candidate, ever. Nobody is going to outwork Donald Trump."

Whatley was serving as chairman of the North Carolina GOP when Trump put him forth as his pick to lead national Republicans.

US Rep. Tlaib holds up sign that says 'war criminal' and 'guilty of genocide'

U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Michigan Democrat, held up a sign in the House chamber Wednesday that said "war criminal" on one side and "guilty of genocide" on the other.

Tlaib has been one of Netanyahu's most strident critics in Congress and was censured for her comments last year about the latest Israel-Hamas war.

She has relatives in the West Bank and represents a district in Michigan with many Palestinians.

Netanyahu thanks Biden for his efforts and 'heartfelt support for Israel'

Netanyahu on Wednesday said Biden stood with Israel in his darkest hour and it will "never be forgotten."

"I want to thank him for half a century of friendship to Israel," he said.

Many had expected Netanyahu to use his address before Congress to once again criticize the Democratic president but the prime minister's remarks so far have been complimentary and gracious to President Joe Biden, who stepped down days ago as the Democratic nominee for president, for "half a century of friendship to Israel."

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Police deployed pepper spray on protesters near US Capitol

Police deployed pepper spray Wednesday as a large crowd protesting Israel's war in Gaza marched toward the U.S. Capitol, where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was speaking to Congress.

Thousands of protesters descended on Washington, chanting "Free, Free Palestine" as some tried to block streets ahead of Netanyahu's speech. Police wearing gas masks blocked the crowd, which was calling for an end to the war that has killed more than 39,000 Palestinians, from getting closer to the Capitol.

U.S. Capitol Police said in a post on X that some members of the crowd had become "violent" and had "failed to obey" orders to move back from the police line.

"We are deploying pepper spray toward anyone trying to break the law and cross that line," Capitol Police said.

Netanyahu begins speech to Congress

"For the forces of civilization to triumph, America and Israel must stand together," Netanyahu said. "When we stand together something really great happens: we win, they lose.

He wore a pin with Israeli and U.S. flags on one side, and a yellow pin expressing solidarity with the Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

More than 50 congressional Dems absent from Netanyahu's address

By the time Netanyahu was set to begin his address before a joint session of Congress on Wednesday, more than fifty congressional Democrats were noticeably absent after announcing publicly that they would not be attending the speech in protest of the prime minister's handling of the war.

Protesters gather outside US Embassy in Tel Aviv ahead of Netanyahu's speech

Protests were also taking place in Israel ahead of Netanyahu's speech, with demonstrators demanding a cease-fire in exchange for the release of the roughly 120 hostages still held by Hamas. About 200 protesters gathered outside the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Tel Aviv, some holding signs reading "Bibi, enemy of Israel," referring to Netanyahu by his nickname.

US Rep. Tlaib among those attending Netanyahu's address

While many Democrats declined to attend the prime minister's speech as a way to protest how Netanyahu has led the war against Hamas, one outspoken critic of his conduct is attending.

U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Michigan Democrat, took a seat in the House chamber with a keffiyeh, which she often wears, wrapped over her shoulders. Tlaib was censured last year for her strident criticism of Israel's conduct in the war.

Netanyahu arrives on Capitol Hill, greets House Speaker Johnson

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has arrived on Capitol Hill and has greeted House Speaker Mike Johnson.

"We are certainly happy to welcome our friend," Johnson said.

"Today and every day America must stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel," Johnson said.

"Speaker Johnson, you have shown great leadership," Netanyahu said.

The two men spoke briefly, podiums side by side, at the Capitol.

'We are not playing around,' Harris tells gathering of historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta members

Vice President Kamala Harris told a gathering of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta in Indianapolis on Wednesday that "we are not playing around," in the 2024 presidential election.

And she asked them for their support in helping to elect her.

Harris said: "In this moment, I believe we face a choice between two different visions for our nation — one focused on the future, the other focused on the past.

"And with your support, I am fighting for our nation's future."

Voters in Indiana haven't backed a Democratic presidential candidate in nearly 16 years. But the biennial meeting of roughly 6,000 people, mostly women, is part of a constituency Harris hopes will turn out for her in massive numbers: women of color.

President Joe Biden stepped away from the race on Sunday.

Family members of Israeli hostages criticize Netanyahu's trip to the US

At an event with dozens of Democrats ahead of Netanyahu's speech, several family members of Israelis

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taken hostage by Hamas last year unleashed criticism at the prime minister for coming to the U.S. when he could be focused on securing a deal to free those taken captive.

"The hostage family forum back home urged Netanyahu not to come here and give this speech now at a time when a deal is so close," said Maya Roman, who had several family members taken hostage. "Because by coming here, he risks making himself the issue, turning the humanitarian issue of the hostages into a political one."

U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern, a Massachusetts Democrat, called the event a "powerful" reminder of the importance of reaching a cease-fire deal and returning the hostages.

"It's painful for them to have Netanyahu here in Washington kind of promoting himself when their loved ones are still being held hostage," he said.

Vance labels Harris an out-of-touch 'career politician'

Trump's VP pick is characterizing Harris, his running mate's possible November opponent, as an out-of-touch "career politician."

"What has she ever done for this country?" Vance asked conservative activist and host Charlie Kirk in a podcast interview Wednesday.

The 39-year-old Vance, who has begun hitting the campaign trail both solo and with Trump in recent days, also argued that his addition to the GOP ticket can help appeal to young voters.

"If you're a young voter in this economy with interest rates skyrocketing how can you possibly afford to buy a house?" Vance said. "If you want to turn the page on that ... you've got to vote for President Trump."

Vance said he sees the two top issues as the economy and U.S.-Mexico border, on both of which he argued that Biden — and now Harris — are not succeeding.

"I think we have to make a substantive argument that the Kamala Harris-Joe Biden agenda has failed for this country," Vance said. "Do we want four years even worse than the last four years?"

Senate Republicans criticize Harris over absence from Netanyahu's address before Congress

Senate Republicans are criticizing Vice President Kamala Harris for skipping Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address today before a joint session of Congress.

Harris is in Indianapolis where she's speaking to the historically Black Zeta Phi Beta sorority's biennial convention. She is set to hold private talks with Netanyahu at the White House later this week.

The vice president is the presiding officer of the Senate and would typically co-preside over such an event with the House speaker. But there have been other instances in recent history when the vice president has skipped such addresses by foreign leaders because of scheduling conflicts.

"She should be here whether she likes the prime minister of Israel or not, whether she respects him or not, she should be here," said Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, who organized a press conference with fellow Senate Republicans that largely focused on Harris' absence from the speech. "It is a disgrace."

Sen. JD Vance, the Republican vice president nominee, is also skipping the speech to campaign.

"He's not the sitting vice president of the United States," Ernst said.

2 Senate committees will hold a hearing next week on the assassination attempt on Trump

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin announced the hearing on the Senate floor Wednesday, saying that the Judiciary panel will hold the joint hearing with the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

He said the committees will conduct a bipartisan investigation into the shooting.

The panels will hear from the U.S. Secret Service and the FBI, Durbin said, and they will also have a closed-door classified briefing. Witnesses have not yet been announced.

Mother of Israeli hostage slams delaying of negotiating team to cease-fire talks

The mother of an Israeli held hostage by Hamas in Gaza has slammed the delay of the Israeli negotiating team to cease-fire talks.

"Instead of announcing in Congress that he agrees to the deal on the table, Netanyahu is preventing the deal's fruition because of personal considerations. Even if we hear of more hostages who died in the tunnels, he will continue his PR mission in the U.S. and will continue to drag his feet," said Einav Zangauker, who has been a vocal critic of Netanyahu throughout the war. Her son Matan was taken hostage on Oct. 7.

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Cease-fire negotiating team that was meant to depart has been delayed, Israeli official says
An Israeli official said Wednesday that a negotiating team meant to depart to continue cease-fire talks was delayed.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss developments in the sensitive talks, did not give a reason for the delay, saying the team would likely be dispatched next week.

More than 60 congressional Dems gather at the Capitol with families of Israeli hostages

In the bowels of the U.S. Capitol, a group of more than 60 congressional Democrats gathered with the families of Israeli hostages to bring light to their months of captivity and increase pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government to abide by the terms of the cease-fire agreement that the U.S. is helping broker.

The event was marketed as alternative planning for Democrats who didn't want to attend Netanyahu's address to Congress later Wednesday afternoon.

"It is my hope that the Prime Minister will listen to you, will listen to the families and to the countless Americans who love and who support Israel and want to see a negotiated end to the fighting that makes an enduring peace possible," said U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, a senior Democrat who is boycotting the address.

Protestors demand Netanyahu's arrest

Zeina Hutchinson, director of development for the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, on Wednesday read off the names of several Palestinian journalists killed by the Israeli military.

"We protest this homicidal maniac, his supporters and his enablers," she shouted from the stage, referencing Netanyahu. "And we demand his arrest."

She was among hundreds who gathered to protest near the U.S. Capitol.

More than 1,000 protestors line Pennsylvania Avenue

More than 1,000 people gathered Wednesday morning on Pennsylvania Avenue within sight of the U.S. Capitol building, with more streaming in from multiple directions.

Protesters carried signs branding Netanyahu a "war criminal" and several erected a large effigy of Biden with blood dripping from its mouth and devil horns.

The crowd chanted: "Biden Biden, you can't hide/We charge you with genocide."

This report has been corrected to show that the effigy was of Biden, not Netanyahu.

Netanyahu focuses on Iran in remarks at memorial for Joe Lieberman

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday pointed to Iran as the force "behind an entire axis of terror" threatening the United States and Israel.

Netanyahu used brief remarks at a memorial for the late lawmaker Joe Lieberman to focus on what the Israeli leader portrayed as danger from Iran and its nuclear program.

Netanyahu long has sought to rally support for more aggressive U.S. and Israeli action against Iran, its militia allies around the Middle East and its nuclear program. His comments at the memorial are likely to foreshadow the theme of the Israeli leader's remarks to a joint meeting of Congress later Wednesday.

Lieberman, who died in March, "knew how dangerous our world would become if Iran were ever to develop and acquire nuclear weapons," Netanyahu said. The two men often discussed "how Iran was behind the entire axis of terror that threatened both our countries."

Protestors: 'As American Jews, we don't support this war'

Across the street from Union Station in Washington, D.C., Jewish Americans gathered Wednesday morning for a prayer service led by T'ruah, an organization of rabbis calling for a cease-fire in Gaza.

Rabbi Bill Plevan, of New York, said he believed prayer could be a catalyst for peace.

"We're here to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech in Congress," he said. "We're here to say we don't stand by his policies. As American Jews, we don't support this war."

Still, many Jewish Americans view the war in Gaza as just because it came as a response to the brutal Oct. 7 Hamas attack, even if they don't outright support Netanyahu and his policies. The families of hos-

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tages taken by Hamas are also protesting, demanding Netanyahu agree to a cease-fire deal that would free their loved ones.

The scene near the Capitol

Workers erected a black metal fence around the White House as Washington braced for protests ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech before a joint session of Congress.

Multiple protests were planned for Wednesday over Israel's war in Gaza.

There was a heavy police presence, but the streets were relatively quiet in Capitol Hill on Wednesday morning. A small group of protesters walked down a street carrying Palestinian flags and signs with messages such as "anti-Israel is not anti-semitism."

Within view of the Capitol, orthodox Jews lined the streets protesting Netanyahu and the war.

As police sirens sounded in the distance, protesters carried signs that included "Jews Worldwide Condemn Israeli Bloody Brutality" and "Free Palestine." Another called for Netanyahu's arrest.

Despite some of the people and groups who were protesting, many Jewish Americans view the war in Gaza as just because it came as a response to the brutal Oct. 7 Hamas attack, even if they don't outright support Netanyahu and his policies. The families of hostages taken by Hamas are also protesting, demanding Netanyahu agree to a cease-fire deal that would free their loved ones.

Senators re-up calls for Biden and US negotiators to close cease-fire deal

Hours before Netanyahu was set to arrive, the Senate chairmen of the national security committees sent a letter to President Joe Biden, reupping calls for him and U.S. negotiators to quickly close the cease-fire deal that would end the conflict in Gaza and force the release of the hostages.

"We are under no illusion that this will be easy and we fully understand that diplomacy requires compromise. But the pre-October 7 status quo is not sustainable," Sens. Ben Cardin, Jack Reed and Mark Warner wrote Wednesday.

Marianne Williamson seeks Democratic delegate support for open convention

Author Marianne Williamson has sent a letter to Democratic delegates seeking their support ahead of their formal presidential nominating process.

Williamson asks delegates to sign her petition and "consider taking a stand for an open convention," according to a copy of the missive shared with The Associated Press. The note also includes a link for anyone wishing to submit Williamson's name for nomination.

Democrats have indicated that they will hold a virtual roll call vote by Aug. 7 to name their chosen nominee, ahead of the convention that begins 12 days later in Chicago.

That process will be open to any candidate who musters 300 signatures from delegates elected to the convention.

An AP survey of Democratic delegates indicates that Harris has secured commitments from enough of them to become her party's nominee.

Williamson challenged Biden for the nomination and suspended her campaign, but reversed herself earlier this year.

Biden's speech tonight hopes to make a case for his legacy — and for Harris to continue it

Biden will have an opportunity to make a case for his legacy — sweeping domestic legislation, renewal of alliances abroad, defense of democracy — tonight at 8 p.m. ET. when he delivers an Oval Office address about his decision to bow out of the race and "what lies ahead."

Even though the president won't be on the ballot this November, voters still will be weighing his legacy. As Vice President Kamala Harris moves to take his place as the Democratic standard-bearer, Biden's accomplishments remain very much at risk should Republican Donald Trump prevail.

How Biden's single term — and his decision to step aside — are remembered will be intertwined with Harris' electoral success in November, particularly as the vice president runs tightly on the achievements of the Biden administration.

And no matter how frustrated Biden is at being pushed aside by his party — and he's plenty upset — he has too much at stake simply to wash his hands of this election.

Read more on what to expect ahead of the address

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Protests planned around Capitol Hill

Multiple protests are planned outside the Capitol, with some condemning the Israeli military campaign overall, and others expressing support for Israel but pressing Netanyahu to strike a cease-fire deal and bring home hostages.

The largest protest is set for this morning, with organizers planning to march around the Capitol building demanding Netanyahu's arrest on war crimes charges. A permit application submitted to the National Park Service estimated at least 5,000 participants.

□ What to know about Netanyahu's visit

GOP leaders urge colleagues to steer clear of racist and sexist attacks on Harris

Republican leaders are warning party members against using overtly racist and sexist attacks against Vice President Kamala Harris, as they and former President Donald Trump's campaign scramble to adjust to the reality of a new Democratic rival less than four months before Election Day.

At a closed-door meeting of House Republicans on Tuesday, National Republican Congressional Committee chairman Richard Hudson, R-N.C., urged lawmakers to stick to criticizing Harris for her role in Biden-Harris administration policies.

"This election will be about policies and not personalities," House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters after the meeting.

"This is not personal with regard to Kamala Harris," he added, "and her ethnicity or her gender have nothing to do with this whatsoever."

Trump expected to turn his full focus on Harris at first rally since Biden's exit

Donald Trump is holding his first public campaign rally since President Joe Biden dropped out of a 2024 matchup that both major parties had spent months preparing for, leaving the former president to direct his ire toward his likely new opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Harris spoke to a roaring crowd of battleground state voters in Wisconsin yesterday

A roaring crowd of battleground state voters greeted Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday as she opened her public case against Republican former President Donald Trump by declaring November's election will be "a choice between freedom and chaos."

Harris arrived in the Milwaukee area having locked up nomination support from Democratic delegates after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid on Sunday. It was her first campaign rally since she jumped into the race just two days ago with Biden's endorsement.

The event reflected a vibrancy that had been lacking among Democrats in recent weeks, and Harris was intent on projecting a sense of steady confidence about the November election.

□ Read more about why the event in Wisconsin matters for Harris' campaign

Harris campaign sees multiple ways for her to win, ahead of vice president speaking in Indiana

Just three full days since entering the race after President Joe Biden's departure, Kamala Harris will address the annual gathering of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta in Indianapolis.

It's a moment for Harris, a woman of Black and South Asian descent, to speak to a group already excited by her historic status as the likely Democratic nominee and one that her campaign believes can help to expand its coalition.

Harris, Trump are on the campaign trail as Biden prepares to address the nation

Vice President Kamala Harris goes to the solidly Republican state of Indiana later today, but she plans to speak there to a key Democratic constituency as her campaign sees advantages with women, Black, Latino, Asian and younger voters.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden will address the nation from the Oval Office tonight on his decision to drop his 2024 Democratic reelection bid.

Democrats release more proposals for how they will formally choose a presidential nominee

The Democratic National Committee has released proposed rules that would give candidates until next week to vie for the party's nomination. But the process will almost certainly end with Vice President Harris replacing President Biden at the top of the party's ticket.

Candidates will have to qualify by the evening of July 30, according to draft rules released Tuesday.

The party previously announced proposed rules requiring that candidates submit electronic signatures of support from at least 300 delegates to its national convention, no more than 50 of which can be from a single state.

If multiple candidates qualify, it could spark multiple rounds of voting over several days. But, if Harris is the only candidate, voting would be set to begin Aug. 1. The party said last week that it would not hold voting prior to the start of next month and that the process would be completed by Aug. 7.

Biden endorsed Harris when he left the race Sunday and no other major Democrat has announced plans to challenge her. An AP survey of delegates from states across the country found that she had already exceeded the threshold of support needed to secure the nomination.

Families of Israeli hostages gather for a vigil on the National Mall

Families of some of the remaining hostages held a protest vigil Tuesday evening on the National Mall, demanding that Netanyahu come to terms with Hamas and bring home the approximately 120 Israeli hostages remaining in Gaza.

About 150 people wearing yellow shirts that read "Seal the Deal NOW!" chanted "Bring Them Home" and listened to testimonials from relatives and former hostages. The demonstrators applauded when Biden's name was mentioned, but several criticized Netanyahu — known by his nickname "Bibi" — on the belief that he has been dragging his feet or playing hardball on a proposed cease-fire deal that would return all of the hostages.

"I'm begging Bibi. There's a deal on the table and you have to take it," said Aviva Siegel, 63, who spent 51 days in captivity and whose husband Keith remains a hostage. "I want Bibi to look in my eyes and tell me one thing: that Keith is coming home."

Trump turns his full focus on Harris at first rally since Biden's exit from 2024 race

By MEG KINNARD and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Donald Trump unleashed a barrage of attack lines Wednesday against his likely new opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, whom he called his "new victim to defeat" and accused of deceiving the public about President Joe Biden's ability to run for a second term.

The rally in Charlotte, North Carolina marked his first public campaign event since Biden dropped out of the 2024 matchup and Harris became the Democrats' likely nominee. The rally concluded minutes before Biden addressed the nation to explain he dropped his reelection bid to "pass the torch" to Harris, who is 22 years younger than him.

"So now we have a new victim to defeat: Lyin' Kamala Harris," Trump said, labeling her "the most incompetent and far-left vice president in American history."

Trump called her a "radical left lunatic" and said she was "crazy" for her positions on abortion and on immigration. He also mispronounced her first name repeatedly, a denigrating approach to the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent likely to lead a major party's presidential ticket.

Trump's speech signaled the next stage for the campaign may be especially brutal and personal, even as some GOP leaders warned Republican allies not to use overtly racist and sexist attacks against Harris.

Trump has ramped up his criticism of the vice president since Biden's abrupt departure, calling Harris "the same as Biden but much more radical."

He blamed her for what he portrays as the Biden administration's failures, particularly security along the U.S.-Mexico border. On Wednesday, the speakers who appeared on stage before the Republican nominee attacked Harris' record on the border, highlighting she was tasked with leading a White House effort to tackle migration issues. Harris' name was met with boos several times during the speeches.

"She was assigned that, she was given that task, and she failed," said Brandon Judd, former president of the National Border Patrol Council, the union that represents agents.

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Trump also accused Harris of being just as responsible for Biden's policies at the U.S.-Mexico border, which saw illegal crossing arrests reach record highs at the end of 2023 and repeated his pledge to conduct mass deportations with the help of local police.

"Kamala's deadly destruction of America's borders is completely and totally disqualifying. She shouldn't be allowed to run for president with what she's done," Trump told supporters.

Harris, meanwhile, spent Wednesday in Indiana, telling members of the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta that "we are not playing around" and asked for their help in electing her president in November, an election she characterized as "a choice between two different visions for our nation, one focused on the future, the other focused on the past."

Harris' campaign released a statement after Trump's speech describing it as "unhinged, weird and rambling."

"Unity is over for Donald Trump," said campaign spokesperson Ammar Moussa, referring to unity pledges made during the Republican National Convention.

Harris is expected to make abortion a key part of her campaign, looking to present herself to voters as someone who will fight against abortion restrictions. Earlier this week, she said she "trusts women to make decisions about their own bodies."

Trump has hedged on plans for an expected debate with Harris, first saying that he wanted Fox News, not ABC, to host the matchup he had originally scheduled for September with Biden. On Tuesday, Trump appeared to tweak that message again, saying on a call with reporters that he'd like to debate Harris "more than once" but not committing to appearing at the debate currently on the books and saying he'd only agreed to debate Biden twice, not Harris.

Quietly, Republicans have spoken about how subbing Harris in for Biden nullifies a portion of their party's argument in favor of Trump's vitality and vigor.

At 81, Biden would have been the oldest presidential nominee heading into a general election. Now, the 78-year-old Trump occupies that slot. Harris, 59, has launched a campaign that at least in some corners appears to be stoking interest among the younger voters who could be key in deciding an anticipated close general election.

Trump's stop in North Carolina shows he's concerned about keeping the state in his column this November, even as his team reaches for wins in traditionally Democratic-leaning states like Minnesota, which Trump is set to visit on Saturday.

North Carolina is a state Trump carried in both his previous campaigns but by less than 1.5 percentage points over Biden in 2020, the closest margin of any state Trump won. Trump stumped heavily in North Carolina even as the COVID-19 pandemic wore on, while Biden largely kept off the physical campaign trail and did not personally visit the state in the last 16 days of the election.

This year, Trump had planned to hold his first rally since the start of his hush money trial in Fayetteville, but that event was called off due to inclement weather. Trump called in from his private plane instead.

Democrats also have been working to win North Carolina, where the party's most recent presidential win was Barack Obama's 2008 victory, despite recent GOP dominance.

Biden held a campaign event in Raleigh the day after his disastrous June debate with Trump. While he was much more forceful in that appearance than he was on the debate stage, it did not help much to quell the growing concern from members of his party about his ability to win the White House again.

Trump's Charlotte event was his second campaign rally since a July 13 assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania rally. Days later, Trump accepted the GOP presidential nomination and gave a speech at the Republican National Convention, where his ear — injured in the shooting — was bandaged.

The Charlotte rally, like one held Saturday in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was held in an indoor arena. Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said it's "to be determined" if the campaign will no longer hold outdoor rallies due to security concerns.

Thousands fill Washington's streets to protest Israel's war in Gaza

during Netanyahu visit

By ASHRAF KHALIL and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of protesters against the war in Gaza converged on Washington on Wednesday to condemn Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit, chanting "Free, free Palestine" as they marched toward the Capitol before police deployed pepper spray on some in the crowd.

Demonstrators calling for an end to the war that has killed more than 39,000 Palestinians filled several blocks as they weaved through the streets of the nation's capital carrying Palestinian flags and signs with messages such as "arrest Netanyahu" and "end all U.S. aid to Israel." Outside Washington's Union Station, protesters removed American flags and hoisted Palestinian ones in their place to massive cheers in the crowd.

"Bibi, Bibi, We're not done! The intifada has just begun!" protesters shouted, referring to Netanyahu by his nickname. "Netanyahu, you can't hide. You're committing genocide," other protesters shouted.

Throng of demonstrators rallied near the Capitol before starting their march ahead of Netanyahu's joint address to Congress, but police blocked them from getting close to the building. Police said they used pepper spray after some protesters became "violent" and "failed to obey" orders to move back from the police line.

Before Netanyahu's speech, some protesters tried to block his route to the Capitol but were removed from the street by police. After being turned away by officers near the Capitol, protesters wound through the Capitol Hill neighborhood for several blocks before gathering in front of the nearby rail station.

Nine people were arrested across Washington, including four people on charges of assaulting a police officer outside Union Station.

Outside of Union Station, protesters shouted, "Let them go!" at officers who formed a circle around several people who were arrested. One person grabbed at a police officer's riot shield and then raised his fists in a fighting stance. An officer was seen grabbing a Palestinian flag from a woman and tossing it aside. At least one protester appeared to be overcome from the effects of pepper spray.

Cheers rang out as a fire burned what appeared to be a papier-mache likeness of Netanyahu. Protesters spray painted graffiti on a monument to Christopher Columbus, including the words, " Hamas is coming" in large red letters. "Free Gaza" was scrawled in green.

Among the protesters was a group of artists from Baltimore displaying a massive papier-mache sculpture meant to depict President Joe Biden with blood on his hands and devil horns.

Mary Kaileh, a Palestinian woman who moved to the U.S. from the West Bank 17 years ago and now lives in Baltimore, said her people have been ignored and mistreated for decades. She's not convinced protests will change anything in terms of convincing American politicians to act, but she wasn't about to stay home.

"I love it, but I don't see the effects of it," she said.

While many of the demonstrators have condemned Israel, others have expressed support while pressing Netanyahu to strike a cease-fire deal in the war with Hamas and bring home the hostages still being held by the militant group.

Many Jewish Americans view the war in Gaza as just because it came in response to the brutal Oct. 7 Hamas attack, even if they don't outright support Netanyahu and his policies. The families of hostages taken by Hamas are also protesting, demanding Netanyahu agree to a cease-fire deal that would free their loved ones.

Capitol Police said in a post on X that six people who "disrupted" Netanyahu's address were removed from the House gallery and arrested.

"Disrupting the Congress and demonstrating in the congressional buildings is against the law," police said.

During Netanyahu's speech, five people wearing yellow T-shirts that read "seal the deal now" were removed from the gallery. The phrase is a rallying cry for those urging Netanyahu to reach a deal to return the hostages. The individuals stood to prominently display the message on their shirts during moments when others were applauding but had done nothing to disrupt the speech itself.

Police significantly boosted security around the Capitol and closed multiple roads for most of the week.

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Workers erected a metal fence around the White House on Wednesday morning while tall steel barriers ringed the Capitol.

Dozens of protesters rallied outside Netanyahu's hotel Monday evening after his arrival in Washington, and on Tuesday afternoon, hundreds of demonstrators staged a flashmob-style protest in the Cannon building, which houses offices of House members.

The Capitol Police said about 200 people were arrested Tuesday on charges stemming from the sit-in at the Cannon building. Jewish Voice for Peace, which organized the protest, said many more than that were arrested, rabbis among them.

After about a half-hour of protesters' clapping and chanting, officers from the Capitol Police issued several warnings, then began arresting demonstrators — binding their hands with zip ties and leading them away one by one.

Families of some of the remaining hostages held a protest vigil Tuesday evening on the National Mall, demanding that Netanyahu come to terms with Hamas and bring home the approximately 120 Israeli hostages remaining in Gaza.

Biden and Netanyahu are expected to meet Thursday, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity before a White House announcement. Vice President Kamala Harris will also meet Netanyahu separately that day.

Harris, as Senate president, would normally sit behind foreign leaders addressing Congress, but she will be away Wednesday, on an Indianapolis trip scheduled before Biden withdrew his reelection bid, which made her the likely Democratic presidential candidate.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said on Truth Social that he would meet with Netanyahu on Friday.

NBA says it has signed new 11-year media rights deal with Disney, NBC and Amazon

By TIM REYNOLDS and JOE REEDY AP Sports Writers

The NBA signed its 11-year media rights deal with Disney, NBC and Amazon Prime Video on Wednesday after saying it was not accepting Warner Bros. Discovery's \$1.8 billion per year offer to continue its long-time relationship with the league.

The media rights deals were approved by the league's Board of Governors last week and will bring the league about \$76 billion over those 11 years.

WBD had five days to match a part of those deals and said it was exercising its right to do so, but its offer was not considered a true match by the NBA. That means the 2024-25 season will be the last for TNT after a nearly four-decade run — though not long after the NBA signing was announced, WBD said it would take "appropriate action" and said it believes the NBA has to accept its offer.

"The digital opportunities with Amazon align perfectly with the global interest in the NBA," Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. "And Prime Video's massive subscriber base will dramatically expand our ability to reach our fans in new and innovative ways."

Turner Sports strongly disagreed with the NBA's move, saying it believes the league "grossly misinterpreted our contractual rights."

"We have matched the Amazon offer, as we have a contractual right to do, and do not believe the NBA can reject it," TNT Sports said in a statement. "In doing so, they are rejecting the many fans who continue to show their unwavering support for our best-in-class coverage, delivered through the full combined reach of WBD's video-first distribution platforms. ... We will take appropriate action."

TNT said it continues looking forward to the coming season, "including our iconic 'Inside the NBA.'"

Under the new deal, Amazon Prime Video will carry games on Friday nights, select Saturday afternoons and Thursday night doubleheaders that will begin after the conclusion of Prime Video's "Thursday Night Football" schedule. Prime Video will also take over the NBA League Pass package from WBD.

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"Warner Bros. Discovery's most recent proposal did not match the terms of Amazon Prime Video's offer and, therefore, we have entered into a long-term arrangement with Amazon," the league said Wednesday. "Throughout these negotiations, our primary objective has been to maximize the reach and accessibility of our games for our fans. Our new arrangement with Amazon supports this goal by complementing the broadcast, cable and streaming packages that are already part of our new Disney and NBCUniversal arrangements. All three partners have also committed substantial resources to promote the league and enhance the fan experience."

The new package on Amazon also includes at least one game on Black Friday and the quarterfinals, semifinals and championship game of the league's in-season tournament, the NBA Cup.

"Over the past few years, we have worked hard to bring the very best of sports to Prime Video and to continue to innovate on the viewing experience," said Jay Marine, global head of sports for Prime Video. "We're thrilled to now add the NBA to our growing sports lineup, including the NFL, UEFA Champions League, NASCAR, NHL, WNBA, NWSL, Wimbledon, and more. We are grateful to partner with the NBA, and can't wait to tip off in 2025."

ESPN and ABC will keep the league's top package, which includes the NBA Finals. ABC has carried the finals since 2003.

ESPN/ABC will combine for nearly 100 games during the regular season. More than 20 games will air on ABC, mainly on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons, while ESPN will have up to 60 games, mostly on Wednesday nights with some Friday games. ABC and ESPN will also combine for five games on Christmas Day and have exclusive national coverage of the final day of the regular season.

During the playoffs, ESPN and ABC will have approximately 18 games in the first two rounds each year and one of the two conference finals series in all but one year of the agreement.

The return of NBC, which carried NBA games from 1990 through 2002, gives the NBA two broadcast network partners for the first time.

NBC will have up to 100 regular-season games, including on Sunday night once the NFL season has ended. It will air games on Tuesdays throughout the regular season, while a Monday night doubleheader would be exclusively streamed on Peacock.

NBC will also have the All-Star Game and All-Star Saturday Night. During the playoffs, NBC and/or Peacock will have up to 28 games the first two rounds, with at least half on NBC.

NBC and Amazon will also carry one of the two conference finals series in six of the 11 years on a rotating basis. NBC will have a conference final in 2026-27 followed by Amazon the next season.

"The return of NBA basketball to the NBC Sports family comes with enormous benefits and excitement for our fans," Silver said. "And through its multiple platforms — especially NBC and Peacock — and its expansive resources, NBCUniversal promises to build on the deep tradition and history of the NBA on NBC."

Biden makes a case for his legacy — and for Harris to continue it — in his Oval Office address

By SEUNG MIN KIM and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even though President Joe Biden won't be on the ballot in November, voters still will be weighing his legacy.

As Vice President Kamala Harris moves to take his place as the Democratic standard-bearer, Biden's accomplishments remain very much at risk should Republican Donald Trump prevail.

How Biden's single term and his decision to step aside are remembered will be intertwined with Harris' electoral result in November, particularly as the vice president runs tightly on the achievements of the Biden administration.

Biden made a case for his legacy — sweeping domestic legislation, renewal of alliances abroad, defense of democracy — on Wednesday night when he delivered an Oval Office address about his decision to bow out of the race.

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And no matter how frustrated Biden is at being pushed aside by his party — and he's plenty upset — he has too much at stake simply to wash his hands of this election.

Biden endorsed Harris shortly after he announced Sunday that he would end his candidacy, effectively giving her a head start over would-be challengers and helping to jumpstart a candidacy focused largely on continuing his own agenda.

"If she wins, then it will be confirmation that he did the right thing to fight against the threat that is Trump, and he will be seen as a legend on behalf of democracy," said presidential historian Lindsay Chervinsky, executive director of the George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon. "If she loses, I think there will be questions about, did he step down too late? Would the Democratic Party have been more effective if he had said he was not going to run?"

What-ifs play out at the end of every presidency. But Biden's defiance in the face of questions about his fitness for office and then his late submission to his party's crisis of confidence heightens the stakes.

The last vice president to run for the top job was Democrat Al Gore, who sought to distance himself from President Bill Clinton during the 2000 campaign after the president's affair with a White House intern and subsequent impeachment.

Harris, in contrast, has spent the better part of the last three years praising Biden's doings — meaning any attempt to now distance herself would be difficult to explain. And she has to rely on the Biden political operation she inherited to win the election with just over 100 days to go before polls close.

Speaking to campaign staff on Monday, Harris said Biden's legacy of accomplishment "just over the last three and a half years is unmatched in modern history."

Harris, addressing the historically Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta in Indianapolis on Wednesday, previewed Biden's remarks, saying, "He will talk about not only the work, the extraordinary work, that he has accomplished, but about his work in the next six months."

Trump and his allies, for their part, were eager to tie Harris to Biden's record even before the president left the race — and not in a good way.

One campaign email to supporters declared "KAMALA HARRIS IS BIDEN 2.0 – Kamala Harris owns Joe Biden's terrible record because it is her record as well," calling out high inflation and border policies, among other things.

Biden this week promised the staffers of his former campaign that he was still "going to be on the road" as he handed off the reins of the organization to Harris, adding, "I'm not going anywhere."

His advisers say he intends to hold campaign events and fundraisers benefiting Harris, albeit at a far slower pace than had he remained on the ballot himself.

Harris advisers will ultimately have to decide how to deploy the president, whose popularity sagged as voters in both parties questioned his fitness for office.

The president's allies insist that no matter what, Biden's place in the history books is intact.

Biden's win in 2020 "was that election that protected us from a Donald Trump presidency," said Rep. Steven Horsford, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. "Yes, we have to do it again this November. But had Donald Trump been in office another four years, the damage, the destruction, the decay of our democracy would've gone even further."

Matt Bennett, co-founder of the center-left think tank Third Way, predicted there will be a difference between short-term recollections of Biden and his legacy if Democrats lose in November.

"It is true that if we lose, that will cloud things for him in the near-term" because Democrats will have to confront Trump, Bennett said. "In the long term, when history judges Biden, they'll look at him on his own terms. They will judge him for what he did or did not do as president, and they will judge him very favorably."

Biden's decision to end his candidacy buoyed the spirits of congressional Democrats who had been fretting that the incumbent president would drag down their prospects of retaining the Senate and retaking the House. An all-Republican Washington would threaten to do even more damage to Biden's legacy.

Already, congressional Republicans have tried to unravel pieces of the Inflation Reduction Act, a central

Biden achievement that was passed on party lines in 2022. And they could succeed next year, with a President Trump waiting to sign a repeal into law.

GOP lawmakers could also vote to reverse key federal regulations that had arrived later in the Biden administration.

"If the Republicans get dual majorities, they're going to claw back as much as they can," Bennett said. "They're going to undo as much as they can and not only will that be a disaster for America and the world, it'll be really bad for the Biden legacy."

Biden aides point to the thus-far seamless nature of Harris' takeover of his political apparatus as evidence that the president has set up his vice president to run successfully on their shared record. But the ultimate test of that organization will come in November.

No one will be cheering her on more than the president.

As Biden said to Harris: "I'm watching you, kid."

Olympic soccer gets off to violent and chaotic start as Morocco fans rush the field vs Argentina

SAINT-ETIENNE, France (AP) — The Olympic men's soccer tournament got off to a violent and chaotic start Wednesday with Morocco's shocking 2-1 win against two-time gold medalist Argentina.

The result tells only part of the story after a dramatic end to the match in Saint-Etienne, which had to be suspended for nearly two hours when furious Morocco fans ran on to the pitch and threw bottles from the stands to protest a late goal by Argentina in the 16th minute of added time.

The angry and bizarre scene sparked confusion over whether the game had been concluded or paused. The crowd was told to leave the stadium, but players remained at the venue and returned to the pitch for a final three minutes of added time in front of empty stands.

Moments before play resumed, Cristian Medina's disputed goal was disallowed by VAR for offside, and Morocco held on for the victory.

Argentina's soccer federation said it had issued a formal claim to world governing body FIFA to "take the necessary regulatory measures for such a serious event."

"Paris 2024 is working with the relevant stakeholders to understand the causes and identify appropriate actions," a spokesperson for Paris organizers said.

Morocco fans reacted furiously when they thought Medina's goal had denied the team a critical win against one of international soccer's powerhouses.

Objects were thrown and invading Morocco fans were tackled by security on the field at Stade Geoffroy-Guichard after Medina appeared to tie the game 2-2.

There were images of some Argentina players flinching when what appeared to be a flare was thrown onto the field. Bottles and cups were strewn over the pitch by the time the game was paused.

It was initially thought that the full-time whistle had been blown. Even FIFA's website declared the game over.

About an hour after the incident, organizers at the venue confirmed the match was not officially over and that VAR would review whether the goal would stand.

Players eventually re-entered the field after a long delay and began to warm up before the game could be concluded. After warmups, players from both teams stood on the field in the otherwise empty stadium while an official reviewed the video. He offered a brief explanation to Argentina while players on Morocco's bench celebrated.

Play went on for about three minutes after the resumption before the final whistle was blown.

Morocco had led the game 2-0 before Argentina's fight back. Giuliano Simeone scored in the 68th minute before Medina's effort sparked chaotic scenes.

The game was broadcast in cafes throughout Morocco, where national pride has swelled since the country advanced to the semifinal in the 2022 World Cup. During a record-breaking heat wave, tea-drinking men screamed at televisions and watched in shock as fans stormed the field.

Zak Eddakir, a 28 year-old from Rabat, said the fans' reaction had to do with soccer's importance in Morocco and a natural disappointment at a draw and the idea that a referee's call could end a game.

"In football, it's normal," he said. "When you see something like that, it's really hard for supporters. Here, football is life. Even the king supports it."

Hairdresser Khadija Seffany streamed into the street to embrace her friends and neighbors after Morocco won. She initially thought the delay in calling the goal offside suggested the referees wanted Argentina to win because Morocco is an Arab country. Every match throughout the Olympics will be important, she said.

"Here, we're one of the best in the world. We drink football. We eat football," Seffany said.

Trump rally gunman looked online for information about Kennedy assassination, FBI director says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The gunman in the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump is believed to have done a Google search one week before the shooting of "How far away was Oswald from Kennedy?" FBI Director Christopher Wray said Wednesday, revealing new details about a suspect he said had taken a keen interest in public figures but had otherwise not left behind clear clues of an ideological motive.

The July 6 online search, recovered from a laptop the FBI says is tied to 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, is a reference to Lee Harvey Oswald, the shooter who killed President John F. Kennedy from a sniper's perch in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

"That's a search obviously that is significant in terms of his state of mind. That is the same day that it appears that he registered" for the Trump rally scheduled for July 13 in Butler, Pennsylvania, Wray told the House Judiciary Committee.

The FBI is investigating the shooting, which killed one rallygoer and seriously injured two others, as an act of domestic terrorism. The investigation has thrust the bureau into a political maelstrom months before the presidential election, with lawmakers and the public pressing for details about what may have motivated Crooks in the most serious attempt to assassinate a president or presidential candidate since President Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981.

The agency has built out a detailed timeline of Crooks' movements and online activity, but the precise motive — or why Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, was singled out — remains elusive, Wray said. The FBI's assessment continues to be that Crooks, who was killed by a Secret Service counter sniper, acted alone.

"We do not know the motive. That is obviously one of the central questions in our investigation, and it's been very frustrating to us that a lot of the usual kind of low-hanging-fruit places that we would find that have not yielded significant clues about his motive," Wray said.

But, he added, the bureau has seen indications that he was interested in public figures — officials said at a private briefing last week that besides Trump, Crooks also had photos on his phone of Democratic President Joe Biden and other prominent people — and in the days before the shooting had appeared particularly consumed by Trump and the Butler rally.

Crooks is believed to have visited the rally site a week before the event, staying for about 20 minutes, and then returned on the morning of July 13. More than two hours before the shooting, Wray said, Crooks flew a drone about 200 yards from the rally stage for about 11 minutes, using the device to livestream and watch footage.

The use of the drone, which along with a controller were recovered from Crooks' car, so close to the rally site just hours before Trump took the stage add to the questions about the security lapses that preceded the shooting.

On the afternoon of the rally, Crooks attracted law enforcement scrutiny because of odd behavior around the edges of the event, including shouldering a backpack and peering into the lens of a range finder toward the rooftops behind the stage where Trump would stand within the hour.

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Using what Wray said was mechanical equipment on the ground and vertical piping, Crooks was able to hoist himself up onto the roof of a squat manufacturing building that was within 135 meters (157 yards) of the stage. Crooks fired eight shots from an AR-style rifle before he was killed. (The Warren Commission report that analyzed the Kennedy assassination assessed that Kennedy had been shot through the neck at a range of 174.9 feet to 190.8 feet, or about 53.3 meters to 58.1 meters.)

Trump's campaign said the GOP nominee was doing "fine" after the shooting, which Trump said pierced the upper part of his right ear. Wray said his understanding was that either a bullet or some shrapnel "is what grazed his ear."

He pledged that the FBI would "leave no stone unturned" in its investigation.

"I have been saying for some time now that we are living in an elevated threat environment, and tragically the Butler County assassination attempt is another example — a particularly heinous and very public one — of what I have been talking about," Wray said.

He later added, "I think this is a moment where, in the most stark way possible, all of us as Americans can see how out of control political violence is in this country, and it's an opportunity for everyone to come together and to try to show that this is not the kind of thing we're going to tolerate in this country."

The hearing had been scheduled well before the shooting as part of the committee's routine oversight of the FBI and the Justice Department. Questions about the shooting dominated the session, but other topics included the FBI's diversity efforts, election interference, the Jan 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol and whether Wray had personally observed any cognitive decline in meetings with Biden that preceded the president's announcement Sunday that he would not seek reelection.

After Wray testified that his interactions had been "completely professional," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that the FBI director he appointed in 2017 "has to resign, and NOW, for LYING TO CONGRESS!"

The FBI was not involved in ensuring security for the rally and has therefore avoided the same level of scrutiny directed at the Secret Service over the lapses that preceded the event. On Tuesday, Kimberly Cheatle resigned as the agency's director.

Even so, Wray was not entirely spared the politically charged and occasionally combative questions he typically receives from the Republican-led committee.

That's a reflection of the lingering perception among some GOP lawmakers that the FBI and Justice Department in the Biden administration have become politicized against Trump — something Wray has consistently denied.

That sentiment was made clear early in the hearing when the committee chairman, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, told Wray, "I'm sure you understand that a significant portion of the country has a healthy skepticism regarding the FBI's ability to conduct a fair, honest, open and transparent investigation."

At the conclusion of the daylong hearing, he praised Wray for having "told us some things that weren't even prompted by questions."

FACT FOCUS: A look at Netanyahu's claims about Israel, Hamas and Iran during his speech to Congress

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday defended his country's conduct in the devastating Gaza war, urged the U.S. to support the fight against Hamas and ridiculed protesters during a scathing address to Congress.

But he also cited an unverified intelligence report and ignored much of the criticism in a war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastated Gaza.

Crowds of demonstrators swelled outside the Capitol as the Israeli leader spoke, with many protesting the killings of more than 39,000 Palestinians in the war. Others condemned Netanyahu's inability to free Israeli and American hostages taken by Hamas and other militants during the Oct. 7 attack that sparked

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the conflict.

Here's a look at the facts.

CLAIM: "Israel has enabled more than 40,000 aid trucks to enter Gaza. That's half a million tons of food. And that's more than 3,000 calories for every man, woman and child in Gaza. If there are Palestinians in Gaza who aren't getting enough food, it's not because Israel is blocking it. It's because Hamas is stealing it."

THE FACTS: Israel initially imposed a complete siege on Gaza in the early days of the war and, under U.S. pressure, gradually eased it to allow the entry of food and humanitarian supplies. While Israel says it allows hundreds of truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day, the United Nations and aid groups say they are often unable to reach it or distribute it.

They say ongoing Israeli military operations and fighting with Hamas and lawlessness makes it too difficult to operate. U.N. officials say criminal gangs have targeted aid trucks. But a top U.S. envoy said Israel has presented no evidence for claims Hamas is stealing aid, adding that Israel's killing of Gaza police commanders guarding truck convoys have made it nearly impossible to distribute goods.

International experts have repeatedly warned that Gaza faces widespread severe hunger and the territory is on the brink of famine.

In April, an Israeli airstrike killed seven aid workers in an incident that Israel said was caused by human error. This month, the head of the U.S. humanitarian agency USAID said she had received pledges from Israel to improve safety and coordination for aid workers.

CLAIM: "I have a message for these protesters: When the tyrants of Tehran who hang gays from cranes and murder women for not covering their hair are praising, promoting and funding you, you have officially become Iran's useful idiots."

THE FACTS: Netanyahu provided no evidence that Iran is "funding" protesters.

The top U.S. intelligence official said this month that the Iranian government is one of several covertly encouraging American protests over Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza in a bid to stoke outrage ahead of the fall election.

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

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

Iran isn't the only country seeking to influence American discourse ahead of the 2024 election. During a briefing with reporters this month, intelligence officials said America's adversaries were looking to harness artificial intelligence to dramatically expand the reach and penetration of election misinformation.

Demonstrations over Israel's offensives in Gaza emerged on university campuses across the U.S. in recent months. The protests quickly became a factor in political campaigns and prompted concerns about antisemitism and the role of "outside agitators" as well as worries about a larger regional conflict between Israel and Iran.

CLAIM: "The (International Criminal Court) prosecutor accuses Israel of deliberately targeting civilians. What in God's green earth is he talking about? The (Israeli military) has dropped millions of fliers, sent millions of text messages, made hundreds of thousands of phone calls to get Palestinian civilians out of harm's way. But at the same time, Hamas does everything in its power to put Palestinian civilians in harm's way. They fire rockets from schools, from hospitals, from mosques."

THE FACTS: Deadly Israeli strikes on homes affect multiple members of families at a time on a nearly daily basis. Footage has shown soldiers shooting and killing Palestinians who were waving white flags or appeared to pose no threat to Israeli troops.

For most of the more than 37,000 airstrikes Israel says it has carried out during the war — along with often heavy shelling during ground operations — it is impossible to verify Israel's claims that a Hamas target is present.

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Even in strikes where the military has publicly identified Hamas members, it has been willing to inflict dozens of civilian casualties.

Israeli evacuation orders have sent more than 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians fleeing, often multiple times, to escape offensives in different parts of the territory. Israeli airstrikes and raids have repeatedly struck and caused civilian casualties inside the "humanitarian zone" where the military has told displaced Palestinians to take refuge.

WHAT NETANYAHU LEFT OUT:

The Israeli leader spoke of the bravery of soldiers on Oct. 7. But he did not delve into the massive intelligence and security blunders under his watch that allowed Hamas to breach Israel's vaunted defenses that day. He didn't discuss accusations that he believed Hamas was deterred when in fact it was preparing a major assault on Israel.

Also, Netanyahu boasted about the 135 hostages that have been freed, seven of them in rescue missions. But he left out that the vast majority of those hostages were freed during a brief cease-fire in late November, even though he has argued that military pressure on Hamas is the best way to free them.

Neither did he mention the fact that Israeli forces mistakenly killed three hostages in December. And roughly 120 hostages have languished in captivity for nearly 10 months. Of those, Israeli authorities believe a third are dead.

Dozens of Palestinians have been killed in the rescue missions staged to free the hostages, the Health Ministry in Gaza says, which Netanyahu did not mention.

And he did not describe the catastrophe that has befallen Gaza since the outbreak of the war.

Of the more than 39,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza since the start of the war, about half are women and children, Gaza's Health Ministry says. About 1.8 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced, many repeatedly in a bid to flee relentless bombing. Basic necessities like food, shelter and even diapers have either been scarce or lacking entirely. Clean drinking water is hard to find.

Netanyahu also said he was speaking on behalf of the people of Israel. It's true that Israelis largely believe in the justness of the war. But support has grown for a cease-fire, including one that would end the war entirely.

In fact, public support for Netanyahu has plummeted since Oct. 7, with many blaming Netanyahu for the Hamas attacks. Thousands attend protests calling for him to resign. Critics say he is dragging out the war for political reasons, hoping to appease his far-right governing partners who oppose a cease-fire and to maintain his grip on power.

Surprise Yellowstone geyser eruption highlights little known hazard at popular park

By MATTHEW BROWN, AMY BETH HANSON and MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A surprise eruption of steam in a Yellowstone National Park geyser basin that sent people scrambling for safety as basketball-sized rocks flew overhead has highlighted a little-known hazard that scientists hope to be able to predict someday.

The hydrothermal explosion on Tuesday in Biscuit Basin caused no injuries as dozens of people fled down the boardwalk before the wooden walkway was destroyed. The blast sent rocks, steam, water and dirt high into the air, according to a witness and a scientist who reviewed video footage of the event.

It came in a park teeming with geysers, hot springs and other hydrothermal features that attracts millions of tourists annually. Some, like the famous Old Faithful, erupt like clockwork and are well understood by the scientists who monitor the park's seismic activity.

But the type of explosion that happened this week is less common and understood, and potentially more hazardous given that they happen without warning.

"This drives home that even small events — and this one in the scheme of things was relatively small, if dramatic — can be really hazardous," said Michael Poland, lead scientist at the Yellowstone Volcano Ob-

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servatory. "We've gotten pretty good at being able to understand the signs that a volcano is waking up and may erupt. We don't have that knowledge base for hydrothermal systems like the one in Yellowstone."

Poland and other scientists are trying to change that with a fledgling monitoring system that was recently installed in another Yellowstone geyser basin. It measures seismic activity, deformations in the Earth's surface and low-frequency acoustic energy that could signal an eruption.

The hydrothermal explosions are believed to result from clogged passageways in the extensive natural plumbing network under Yellowstone, Poland said. A clog could cause the heated, pressurized water to turn into steam instantly and explode.

Tuesday's explosion came with little warning.

Witness Vlada March, who captured widely-circulated video of the explosion, said steam started rising in the Biscuit Basin "and within seconds, it became this huge thing. ... It just exploded and became like a black cloud that covered the sun."

March's tour guide, Isaac Fisher, told The Associated Press that he heard a hiss coming from Cliff Pool and told his group it was unusual. It looked like a geyser erupting 60 to 70 feet (18 to 21 meters) into the air for a few seconds and then, "Ba-boom!" he said.

"You felt the shock wave hit your chest and vibrate the bones in your chest," he said. "The explosion was so significant you felt your feet shaking. You felt the boardwalk shake and you felt everything shaking."

He estimated the whole event lasted about 25 seconds as the debris plume climbed to about 100 meters (328 feet) into the air.

"I cannot believe nobody got hurt," Fisher said. "There were rocks whizzing over our heads that were the size of basketballs."

March's mother, who was closest to the eruption, pulled her hoodie over her head and face and wasn't injured, Fisher said.

Some of the rocks hurled into the air measured about a meter (3.3 feet) across, said Poland.

Yellowstone encompasses the caldera of a huge, slumbering volcano that shows no sign of erupting any time soon but provides the heat for the national park's famous geysers, hot springs, mud pots and various other hydrothermal features. While far less common than geyser eruptions, hydrothermal explosions happen often enough in Yellowstone to be studied — and to be a safety concern.

Scientists don't know if they'll be able to devise a way to predict the blasts, Poland said.

For a geologist, seeing one in person is a payday. That's what happened in 2009, when Montana Tech geology professor Mike Stickney and several other geologists were nearby when one happened close to the scene of Tuesday's blast in the Biscuit Basin.

"It was very sudden and without any detectable warning, just standing on the boardwalk there. It was just was one 'whoosh' and it was done. No one saw it coming," Stickney said.

Though it didn't register on a sensitive seismometer at Old Faithful a couple miles (3.2 kilometers) away, he estimated the recent explosion was 10 times bigger.

In May, after scientists found a crater a few feet (1-2 meters) wide in the Norris Geyser Basin 18 miles (29 kilometers) north of Biscuit Basin, they consulted acoustic and seismic data from the basin's new monitoring system and determined a hydrothermal explosion happened April 15, just a few days before roads opened for spring tourist season.

The data included no obvious precursors, however, that could potentially be used to develop a warning system.

Long-term study of where hydrothermal explosions and other ground disruptions can happen in Yellowstone is a focus of University of Wyoming geology professor Ken Sims, who has used ground-penetrating radar and other techniques to identify problem areas.

The information is critical to building roads and bridges in Yellowstone, he said.

"Whenever you build in a super active system like that, you have to pay attention to what's going on," Sims said.

A detection system takes time and money to develop, with monitoring stations that can cost roughly

\$30,000 each.

Yet even if explosions such as the recent one in Yellowstone could be predicted, there's no feasible way to prevent them, said Poland.

"One of the things people ask me occasionally is, 'How do you stop a volcano from erupting?' You don't. You get out of the way," Poland said. "For any of this activity, you don't want to be there when it happens."

Uzbekistan loses the match but wins over crowd as soccer competition kicks off Paris Olympics

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Uzbekistan lost the match but won over the crowd on Wednesday as competition at the Paris Olympics officially began with soccer matches in Paris and Saint-Etienne.

Uzbekistan fans chanted and danced throughout a 2-1 defeat to Spain, to the rhythm of a furiously fast drum beat at Parc des Princes in western Paris — once the home of French striker Kylian Mbappé when he played for Paris Saint-Germain.

Toward the end of the game they encouraged large sections of the crowd to clap in unison with their hands raised above their heads, in the style of the Viking Thunder Clap first introduced by Iceland fans at the 2016 European Championship, which was held in France.

There was also an Uzbek version of the popular soccer song "Don't Take Me Home" — accompanied by increasingly fast drumming.

The honor of kicking off the game went to Uzbekistan captain Eldor Shomurodov, who played for Italian side Cagliari in Serie A last season. The 29-year-old Shomurodov passed the ball back to a teammate and then applauded. FIFA President Gianni Infantino met players before the game.

The first goal of the Paris Games was scored by Spain right back Marc Pubill in the 29th minute. Shomurodov equalized with a penalty late in the first half for his 41st international goal, drawing wild celebrations from Uzbekistan fans.

Argentina, playing without Lionel Messi in these Games, also got the ball rolling at 3 p.m. against Morocco in Saint-Etienne at Geoffroy-Guichard Stadium. It is nicknamed Le Chaudron (The Cauldron) for the fervent atmosphere created by passionate supporters of the local club.

Morocco was leading 2-1, with two goals from striker Soufiane Rahimi, until the 16th minute of stoppage time when Cristian Medina appeared to equalize for Argentina.

Morocco fans crashed the pitch to protest the goal, leading to an angry and bizarre scene that left the game suspended with only moments remaining.

Objects were thrown and Morocco fans were tackled by security. There were images of some Argentina players flinching when what appeared to be a flare was thrown.

And then moments before play resumed almost two hours later, the goal was disallowed by VAR for offside, meaning Morocco held on for a 2-1 victory.

Earlier, fans of Morocco and Argentina mingled outside and two Argentina fans held up a flag with a photo of the late Diego Maradona on it, along with the words "El Pibe de Oro" (the Golden Kid) — the affectionate nickname fans called the 1986 World Cup winner.

There was a joyful atmosphere in the streets leading to Parc des Princes, which is near where Olympic tennis will be played at Roland Garros, home of the French Open.

Around 150 Uzbekistan fans met outside Porte d'Auteuil subway station, waving flags, singing songs and beating a drum as they walked to the stadium accompanied by a light police presence. Uzbekistan fans, perched on the upper tier of the Boulogne section behind one the goals, made the most noise — and started chanting louder immediately after Pubill pounced from close range at the other end to put Spain ahead.

A section of Uzbekistan fans near the touchline danced and chanted "Uz-bek-is-tan" to the sound of the intensely fast drum beat for several minutes at the start of the second half. They made a huge noise when goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov saved Sergio Gomez's penalty with his legs. He was beaten a few

minutes later by Gomez's low shot.

Security was much higher with a large police presence outside the same stadium later Wednesday, when Israel played Mali in Group D amid ongoing tensions in Gaza.

Israel's national anthem was loudly jeered before the game, which finished 1-1 and saw some fans raising Palestine flags.

Eight soccer matches were played Wednesday, two days before the opening ceremony. The rugby sevens also had 12 matches, starting at 3:30 p.m., with Australia beating Samoa 21-14 at Stade de France, the national stadium, before host France drew 12-12 with the United States and then won 19-12 against Uruguay.

Archery and handball also begin play before Friday's opening ceremony, with preliminary action Thursday.

Prosecutor says the New Jersey man who stabbed author Salman Rushdie was trying to carry out a fatwa

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — A man who severely injured author Salman Rushdie in a frenzied knife attack in western New York was motivated by a Hezbollah leader's endorsement of a fatwa calling for Rushdie's death, prosecutors said Wednesday in announcing new terrorism charges.

The three-count indictment unsealed in U.S. District Court in Buffalo offered for the first time a potential motive for the 2022 attack on "The Satanic Verses" author.

Hadi Matar, a U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was attempting to carry out a fatwa, Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Kruly said. According to the prosecutor, Matar believed the call for Rushdie's death, first issued in 1989, was backed by the Lebanon-based militant group Hezbollah and endorsed in a 2006 speech by the group's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah.

"We allege that in attempting to murder Salman Rushdie in New York in 2022, Hadi Matar committed an act of terrorism in the name of Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization aligned with the Iranian regime," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a news release. "The Justice Department will prosecute those who perpetrate violence in the name of terrorist groups and undermine the basic freedoms enshrined in our Constitution."

Matar, who faces separate state charges of attempted murder and assault, pleaded not guilty to the new federal charges of terrorism transcending national boundaries, providing material support to terrorists and attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization.

"The investigation was lengthy, for the last two years, and I'm sure involved a number of different agencies, a number of different countries and a number of individuals," Matar's attorney, Nathaniel Barone, said after the arraignment. He said the federal case will be far more complex than the state charges, which focus largely on the assault on Rushdie while he was onstage and about to give a lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in August 2022.

"Federally, you're looking at more of conspiracies," the lawyer said.

Matar, he said, "plans on proceeding with a vigorous defense and maintain his innocence."

Matar, 26, has been held without bail since the attack, during which he stabbed Rushdie more than a dozen times before a stunned audience of about 1,500 people. Knife wounds blinded Rushdie in one eye. The event moderator, Henry Reese, was also wounded before bystanders subdued the assailant.

"This defendant put time and effort into traveling to the western district of New York with the intent of taking the life of another," U.S. Attorney Trini Ross said. "Only because of the brave efforts of those who were present that day, the defendant was prevented from completing his murderous intention."

Rushdie detailed the attack and his long and painful recovery in a memoir published in April.

The federal charges come after Matar earlier this month rejected an offer by state prosecutors to recommend a shorter prison sentence if he agreed to plead guilty to both state and the anticipated federal charges. Instead, both cases will now proceed to trial separately. Jury selection in the state case is set for Oct. 15.

A detention hearing in the federal case is scheduled for Aug. 7.

The author spent years in hiding after the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued a fatwa in 1989 calling for Rushdie's death over his novel "The Satanic Verses." Khomeini considered the book blasphemous. Rushdie reemerged into the public in the late 1990s.

Matar was born in the U.S. but holds dual citizenship in Lebanon, where his parents were born. He lived in Fairview, New Jersey, prior to the attack. His mother has said that her son became withdrawn and moody after he visited his father in Lebanon in 2018.

The attack raised questions about whether Rushdie had gotten proper security protection, given that he is still the subject of death threats. A state police trooper and county sheriff's deputy had been assigned to the lecture. In 1991, a Japanese translator of "The Satanic Verses" was stabbed to death. An Italian translator survived a knife attack the same year. In 1993, the book's Norwegian publisher was shot three times but survived.

The investigation into Rushdie's stabbing focused partly on whether Matar had been acting alone or in concert with militant or religious groups.

Body camera video focused national attention on an Illinois deputy's fatal shooting of Sonya Massey

By JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — A riveted nation watched video released this week of a sheriff's deputy fatally shooting Sonya Massey, a 36-year-old Black woman who called 911 for assistance, in her Illinois home.

Sean Grayson, 14 months into his career as a deputy sheriff for Sangamon County in the center of the state, is charged with murder in Massey's death, the latest example of law enforcement officers shooting Black people in their homes across the country.

Here's what we know about the shooting and the former deputy now facing years in prison if convicted. What happened that day?

At 12:50 a.m. on July 6, Massey called 911 with her fears about a prowler around her home in an unincorporated neighborhood of Springfield, 200 miles (320 kilometers) southeast of Chicago.

Video from body cameras worn by Grayson and another deputy show a search around Massey's house and in surrounding yards. They found a black SUV with broken windows in an adjacent driveway before Massey came to the front door. When Massey opened the door, she said, "Don't hurt me," seemed confused and repeated, "Please God" and said, "I don't know what to do."

It isn't clear why Massey and Grayson went inside the house, followed by the other deputy.

Grayson asked for her name to include on a report as the deputies prepared to leave. Massey was searching her purse for ID when Grayson pointed out a pot over a flame on the stove.

Massey quickly went to the stove, moved the pan toward a sink and asked Grayson, "Where are you going?" He had stepped back and remained in the living room of the small home, separated from her by a cluttered counter.

Grayson and Massey chuckled as he replied, "Away from your hot, steaming water." Massey then unexpectedly said, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus," prompting Grayson to pull his 9 mm pistol and tell her, "You better (expletive) not or I swear to God I'll (expletive) shoot you in your (expletive) face."

He repeatedly yelled at Massey to put down the pot. She apologized and ducked before Grayson fired three times, striking Massey once in the head.

What charges were filed?

A grand jury indicted Grayson on charges of first-degree murder, aggravated battery with a firearm and official misconduct. If convicted, he faces prison sentences of 45 years to life for murder, six to 30 years for battery and two to five years for misconduct.

He is being held in the Menard County Jail without bond. He pleaded not guilty and his defense attorney has declined to comment on the case.

Who was Sonya Massey?

The mother of two — 17-year-old Malachi Hill Massey and 15-year-old Jeannette "Summer" Massey —

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was from a large family with many cousins who thought of her as a sister.

"She was loving, caring. Her cousins — she loved her cousins," Malachi said. "She was just a ball of energy. We'd go anywhere; if she wanted to talk to someone, she'd go talk to them. She was just a loving person. She always helped people, too."

Massey, who was unemployed, had struggled with mental illness and undergone treatment. That might explain her puzzling statement to Grayson, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus," according to the family's lawyer, Ben Crump. But it also speaks to her strong religious faith, he said.

What have prosecutors said?

In last week's court hearing, First Assistant State's Attorney Mary Beth Rodgers said the distance between Grayson and Massey negated any perceived threat and he had "a lot of options" aside from firing his weapon if he believed he was in danger.

"At no point did this defendant show anything but callousness toward human life," said Rodgers, adding that Grayson "clearly dismissed his training as a law enforcement officer."

Massey's home in the Cabbage Patch neighborhood, named for a huge cabbage farm there more than a century ago, has an open floor plan with the living room divided from the kitchen by a counter. The video shows Grayson in the living room with Massey on the other side of the counter, several feet away.

On the video, Grayson is heard justifying his actions by saying, "What else do we do? I'm not taking hot (expletive) boiling water to the (expletive) face." He's also heard telling arriving officers that Massey "came at me" and called her "crazy."

What is Sean Grayson's background?

Grayson, 30, graduated from North Mac High School in Virden, 27 miles (43 kilometers) south of Springfield, in 2013, according to defense attorney Daniel Fultz at last week's hearing. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2014 until a general discharge in 2016.

According to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, Grayson joined the police ranks in August 2020 with the first of six jobs in four years, three part time and three full time. The Associated Press has requested his employment records from the central Illinois agencies in public records requests.

In a July 2020 employment application to the Pawnee Police Department, he said he was a mechanic and performed vehicle maintenance and recovery in the Army.

"I am a very hard worker and fast learner," Grayson wrote in the employment application. "I am looking for a department to give me a chance to show what I can do. I am a team player and great communicator."

He also wrote that he also worked as a security guard at a hospital, as a landscaper and spent three years working at a fitness center.

He joined the sheriff's department in Sangamon County, population 196,300, in May 2023. He was fired last Wednesday, the day he was indicted.

This is one of the oldest games in North America. You've likely never heard of it

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

CHOCTAW, Miss. (AP) — As the drummers walk onto the field, the players behind them smack their hickory sticks to the beat. The rhythm envelops the stands and a palpable sense of anticipation flows through the crowd.

Indigenous peoples have been playing stickball for hundreds of years, and every summer since 1975, teams have competed in Mississippi to become champion of perhaps the oldest game in North America.

A game of physicality and endurance, stickball is often referred to as the grandfather of field sports and the annual tournament in Mississippi is the game's premier event. For generations, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has been producing some of the country's best players at stickball, not to be confused with the baseball-like game played on the streets of big cities. A team from Mississippi will almost certainly be the one to beat in any tournament or exhibition game in the country.

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No pads, no timeouts, no mercy

As the July sun set on another sweltering day, hundreds of people gathered at the Choctaw Central High School football field and sat on the Indian blankets they had draped across the metal seating. Others lined their folding chairs along the chain-link fence to get a glimpse of the action.

Stickball, known as ishtaboli in the Choctaw language, is played with 30 players on the field, each carrying two netted sticks called kabotcha, and a small woven leather ball painted bright orange, called a towa.

Stickball fans say it remains pure. There are no pads, no timeouts and no mercy. Players typically don't even wear shoes. It is not uncommon for people to leave the stickball field with broken bones from full contact, or gashes from taking a stick to the face. Any player possessing the ball can expect to be tackled or torn down by their jersey or breechcloth.

"It makes your heart just beat like a drum. Just the intensity of the sport," Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Chief Cyrus Ben said. "At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what color jersey or what team, it's being Choctaw."

Although the game is high-contact, it is so respected by the Choctaw, and so central to their cultural identity, that no hit is taken personally, no matter how intense. Players often slam each other so hard that their sticks go flying through the air, and they simply get back up, nod to each other, and race down the field after the ball.

Variations on stickball have traditionally been played by several tribal nations using rules created by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Players are not allowed to hit each other with their sticks, although that happens routinely when players huddle around a loose ball. Late or early tackles are prohibited, and anything above the shoulders is off-limits.

The field is never empty

Chief Ben, like many here, was given a pair of sticks as soon as he could walk. Some recall sleeping with them above their pillows and a ball underneath. Boys and girls play together in the youth tournaments the night before the men's and women's championship games every year at the Choctaw Indian Fair. All over town you will see kids with sticks poking out of their backpacks.

The field is never empty. Children play stickball before every game — living out their fantasy of one day claiming victory on the same field. Between that, the snow-cone stand, and the almost fanatical way the assistant coaches scream from the sidelines, it's as familiar as any Friday night high-school football game.

This year, Koni Hata, the 2023 men's champion and one of the most dominant teams in the modern era of stickball, defended its dynasty in both the men's and women's title games against neighboring Choctaw communities such as Pearl River and stickball powerhouse Bok Cito.

The finals started with the women's championship, Bok Cito Ohoyo taking on Koni Hata Ohoyo, which was looking for its second threeppeat in the last seven years. Scoreless at the end of regulation play, the game was decided in sudden death when Bok Cito Ohoyo center shooter Leia Phillips scored with a running midfield shot.

"I said, 'yeah, it's my time to shine, this is my shot right here, you worked all year for this,'" Phillips, the women's tournament MVP, said after the game.

Blood, gashes and breaks

The men's game between Koni Hata and Pearl River was highly physical, and several skirmishes for the ball ended with sticks shooting through the air "like my 9-iron," one announcer said. Several players were treated by medics for a variety of injuries including a bleeding eye and a gash across the forehead. Earlier in the tournament a player suffered from a broken nose.

Pearl River had no trouble scoring during tournament play, racking up an impressive 41 points in its first three games. They scored in the first half, but the point was negated for having 31 players on the field. Koni Hata scored in the second half but that point was also taken away for having too many players on the field. But Pearl River scored late in the fourth quarter and took home the ceremonial drum presented by Chief Ben.

As the Choctaw Indian Fair was winding down, Jackie Morris, the coach of the team from the community of Bok Cito, waited in line for a hot dog. He made sure that every passing Bok Cito player had a chance to sign the drum slung over his shoulder.

"This is what we play for," he said, patting the trophy. On the field nearby, drums and sticks beat together.

Plane crashes just after takeoff from Nepal's capital, killing 18 people. Pilot is lone survivor

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A plane crashed Wednesday just after taking off from Nepal's capital, killing 18 people and injuring a pilot who was the lone survivor.

All the people aboard the Saurya Airlines flight including the co-pilot were Nepali except for one passenger, who was a Yemeni national, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said. Authorities have pulled all 18 bodies from the wreckage, police official Basanta Rajauri said.

The Bombardier CRJ 200 plane was heading to Nepal's second-most populous city of Pokhara for maintenance work and most of the passengers aboard were either mechanics or airline employees, airport officials said. They were speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.

The pilot has injuries to his eyes but his life is not in any danger, said a doctor at Kathmandu Medical College Hospital, where the pilot is being treated. The doctor spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to speak to reporters.

The plane took off from the Kathmandu airport at 11:11 a.m. local time and turned right but crashed moments later in the eastern section of the airport, the Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement.

"I came out and saw a plane had crashed and there was huge smoke and fire coming out," said Ram Kumar Khatri Chetri, who own a car parts store barely 100 meters (330 feet) from the crash site. "There was chaos and confusion."

"It was just horrible and there was no way that anyone could just go near the plane and help out when there was so much fire and even explosions," he said.

It is the monsoon rain season in Kathmandu but was not raining at the time of the crash. Visibility was low across the capital, however.

The Kathmandu airport, the main airport serving Nepal, is inside a valley surrounded by mountains that make takeoffs and landings challenging for pilots. The airport is right next to the city, and is surrounded by houses and neighborhoods.

The bodies have been taken to the T.U. Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu for autopsy. The airline manifest showed there were two pilots and 17 passengers on board.

Grieving relatives gathered at the hospital forensics department to collect the bodies of their loved ones, though they are not likely to be released for a day or two.

The co-pilot Sasant Katuwal had been flying only for the past three years after completing training in France, his uncle Dhyana Bahadur Khadka said at the hospital. He had just received a visa to go to Germany for further training and was excited about that, Khadka said.

Khadka said his nephew had a bright future in aviation. "His parents are grieving the loss of their only child," Khadka said. "He was unmarried. He was not just tall and handsome, but he was well behaved,"

Tribhuvan International Airport, the main airport in Nepal for international and domestic flights, was closed for hours as emergency crew and investigators began their work.

Saurya Airlines operates the Bombardier CRJ 200 on domestic routes.

In 2019, a Bangladeshi airliner crashed at Tribhuvan airport, killing 51 people while 20 on board survived. An investigation confirmed the plane was misaligned with the runway and its pilot was disoriented and tried to land in "sheer desperation" when the plane crashed.

In 2015, a Turkish Airlines jet landing in dense fog skidded off a slippery runway at the airport. The plane

was carrying 238 people but there were no serious injuries.

Russian man is among those arrested in plots targeting Paris Olympics

By BARBARA SURK and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French authorities have foiled several plots to disrupt the 2024 Olympics, including arresting a Russian man in one of them, officials said Wednesday, just days before the opening ceremony of the Summer Games in Paris.

France has been on high alert over the past few weeks as preparations to host the Olympics hit the final stretch. The Games officially kick off with a lavish and high-security opening ceremony on the River Seine on Friday.

Paris prosecutors said Wednesday that they had arrested a 40-year-old Russian man Tuesday at his Paris apartment on suspicion of planning to “destabilize the Olympic Games.”

He was charged with “conducting intelligence work on behalf of a foreign power” with an aim to “provoke hostilities in France,” crimes punishable with 30-year sentence in France, according to a statement from the Paris prosecutor’s office.

During an official search of the suspect’s home in Paris, police agents found items that “raised fears of his intention to organize events likely to lead to destabilization of the Olympic Games,” prosecutors said.

The Russian Embassy in Paris said it had not received any notification from French authorities about the arrest and has asked French officials for an explanation after seeing reports about it. It did not comment further.

The Games’ organizers are facing major security challenges, including cyberattack concerns, amid high international tensions because of the Russia’s war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza.

There are also elaborate disinformation campaigns orchestrated out of Russia, targeting the Olympics and France’s recent elections, according to French officials and cybersecurity experts in Europe and the United States.

“We have a list of threats on which we are particularly focused, including the cyberthreat,” Sonia Fibleuil, a National Police spokesperson, told The Associated Press.

Such threats “can consist of fake news and disinformation or online campaigns to amplify a piece of news with bots and mass circulate it,” Fibleuil said.

In an example this week, French intelligence found that a video on social media supposedly showing a Hamas threat against the Olympics was fake, generated by AI and appeared to have links to Russia, according to a French security official. The official was not authorized to be publicly named discussing intelligence matters.

A Hamas official on Telegram also denied the militant group was behind the video.

Earlier Wednesday in a separate plot, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin said in an interview with French broadcaster BFMTV that a young man was arrested in Gironde, a region in southwest France, on suspicion of “planning a violent action against the Olympic Games.”

Police arrested the 18-year-old man Tuesday on accusations that he was planning to target the “organization of the Games,” Darmanin said.

He did not give details on the suspect’s potential targets or whether they were in Paris or in other French cities hosting Olympic events that run through Aug. 11.

“We are still working on this case ... (we) avoid giving details ... but we think there is a link,” Darmanin said. “It’s been established that this person wanted to attack the Olympic Games.”

Paris has deployed 35,000 police officers each day for the Olympics, with a peak of 45,000 for the opening ceremony. In addition, 10,000 soldiers are taking part in security operations in the Paris region.

A 10,000-strong military force is patrolling streets and sites in the Paris region and carrying out other security missions.

France also is getting help from more than 40 countries that together have sent at least 1,900 police reinforcements.

Republican leaders urge colleagues to steer clear of racist and sexist attacks on Harris

By LISA MASCARO and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican leaders are warning party members against using overtly racist and sexist attacks against Vice President Kamala Harris, as they and former President Donald Trump's campaign scramble to adjust to the reality of a new Democratic rival less than four months before Election Day.

At a closed-door meeting of House Republicans on Tuesday, National Republican Congressional Committee chairman Richard Hudson, R-N.C., urged lawmakers to stick to criticizing Harris for her role in Biden-Harris administration policies.

"This election will be about policies and not personalities," House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters after the meeting.

"This is not personal with regard to Kamala Harris," he added, "and her ethnicity or her gender have nothing to do with this whatsoever."

The warnings point to the new risks for Republicans in running against a Democrat who would become the first woman, first Black woman and first person of South Asian descent to win the White House. Trump, in particular, has a history of racist and misogynistic attacks that could turn off key groups of swing voters, including suburban women, as well as voters of color and younger people Trump's campaign has been courting.

The admonitions came after some members and Trump allies began to cast Harris, a former district attorney, attorney general and senator, as a "DEI" hire — a reference to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

"Intellectually, just really kind of the bottom of the barrel," Wyoming Rep. Harriet Hageman said in a TV interview. "I think she was a DEI hire. And I think that that's what we're seeing and I just don't think that they have anybody else."

Since Biden announced he was exiting the campaign, Republicans have rolled out a long list of attack lines against Harris, including trying to tie her to the most unpopular Biden policies and his handling of the economy and the Southern border. Trump campaign officials and other Republicans have accused Harris of being complicit in a cover-up of Biden's health issues, and they have been mining her record as a prosecutor in California as they try to paint her as soft on crime.

Johnson said both Trump and Harris have records in White House policy and said voters can compare how families were doing under the Trump administration with how they're doing now under Biden.

"She is the co-owner, co-author, co-conspirator in all the policies that got us into the mess," Johnson said.

Biden announced Sunday that he was withdrawing from the race. In a memo on the state of the race Tuesday, Trump campaign pollster Tony Fabrizio argued the fundamentals of the campaign had not changed now that Harris appears increasingly likely to be the Democratic nominee.

"The Democrats deposing one Nominee for another does NOT change voters discontent over the economy, inflation, crime, the open border, housing costs not to mention concern over two foreign wars," he wrote. "As importantly, voters will also learn about Harris' dangerously liberal record before becoming Biden's partner."

In similar messaging, Hudson told members at the Tuesday meeting that the NRCC is focusing on how Harris is even more progressive than Biden and essentially "owns" all the administration's policies, according to a person familiar with the conversation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

Sen. Steve Daines, who chairs the National Republican Senatorial Committee, echoed that criticism, calling Harris "too liberal."

"She's not an Irish Catholic kid who grew up in Scranton. She's a San Francisco liberal," Daines said.

Trump offered a similar argument in call with reporters Tuesday.

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"She's the same as Biden but much more radical. She's a radical left person and this country doesn't want a radical left person to destroy it. She's far more radical than he is," he said.

"So I think she should be easier than Biden because he was slightly more mainstream, but not much," he added.

Later, in an interview on Newsmax, Trump claimed Harris "destroyed the city of San Francisco," though she left her job as district attorney there in 2011, and called her "the worst at everything."

"Kamala Harris is just as weak, failed and incompetent as Joe Biden — and she's also dangerously liberal," the Trump campaign said in a statement. "Not only does Kamala need to defend her support of Joe Biden's failed agenda over the past four years, she also needs to answer for her own terrible weak-on-crime record in California."

Trump has a long history of launching particularly caustic and personal attacks against women, from former Fox News host Megyn Kelly to his 2016 primary opponent Carly Fiorina to New York Attorney General Letitia James, who successfully sued him and his business for fraud.

In a sign of what could come, Trump in a Fourth of July message on his Truth Social network took a jab at Harris' poor performance in the 2020 Democratic primary, adding "that doesn't mean she's not a 'highly talented' politician! Just ask her Mentor, the Great Willie Brown of San Francisco." Harris dated Brown in the mid-1990s.

Strong and intelligent women who attack him seem to get especially under Trump's skin, said Stephanie Grisham, a 2016 campaign aide who served for a time as Trump's White House press secretary, before breaking with him after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"She's going to get a real rise out of him," predicted Grisham, noting that when Trump is attacked, he "punches 1,000 times harder. He's not going to be able to help himself."

When it comes to women, she added: "His go-to is to attack looks and to call women dumb. It's his go-to and I don't expect this to be any different."

Rep. Maxine Waters of California, who is a prominent member of the Congressional Black Caucus and was among the early Democrats to confront Trump, said she is well-braced for what's ahead as the Republicans turn the campaign toward Harris.

"The first thing I think about are the attacks that are going to come from the Trump, the MAGA right wing — that have already started," Waters told the AP. "They're going to be nasty they're going to be bad."

She predicted that approach might backfire on Trump.

"The danger is that he's so arrogant and egotistical that he's going to step on women and it's going to backfire," she said.

The dynamics could be heightened on the debate stage, if Trump goes through with debating Harris, as he said Thursday he would.

Republican pollster Neil Newhouse said Trump was unlikely to debate Harris in the same way he would debate Biden — or the same way he debated another female rival, Democrat Hillary Clinton, in 2016.

"I don't think Trump can approach a debate against Kamala Harris with the same tone that he approached the debate with Hillary Clinton. Kamala Harris does not have the negatives that Hillary had and she is a relatively new political face," he said. "Caution might be warranted."

Can you guess Olympians' warmup songs? World's top athletes share their favorite tunes

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Curious about which songs are fueling the Olympians competing in Paris starting this month? The Associated Press has an idea.

Some of the world's top athletes from the Olympics and Paralympics have shared their favorite warmup tracks, revealing what gets them pumped before a crucial game, meet or match. The results range from The O'Jays to the Red Hot Chili Peppers to Drake, spanning genres and eras — all of which can be found on our Spotify playlist.

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RAI BENJAMIN, USA

Before Rai Benjamin races past the competition, the sprinter and hurdler listens to a slew of musicians for the ultimate hype session.

Benjamin, 26, doesn't have one particular song. He's more about listening to particular artists like Drake and G Herbo, along with film scores including "Interstellar" and "The King."

"It gets me up here," Benjamin said, raising his hands above his head. "By the time I get out here, I got to bring it back down and be ready to do what I'm about to do."

Benjamin said he needs a baseline between upbeat and calming music.

"I get pretty amped when I get out there with the energy from the crowd and seeing everyone and wanting to do well," he said. "It's good to get the mind going and get out of your head ... just to get over those 10 barriers."

REBECCA MCGOWAN, UK

During Rebecca McGowan's preparations, the taekwondo specialist has two songs on deck before launching her roundhouse kick. The Scotland native vibes to Panic! At The Disco's "High Hopes" during warmups and walks out to "Can't Stop" by the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

"It kind of gets myself going and into my headspace to compete," McGowan, 24, said of "High Hopes."

"Don't give up and keep going," she continued. "When things get tough, that's the song I listen to. ... I just put it on and grind out the rest of the session and grind out whatever I'm doing."

As for "Can't Stop," McGowan said, "it's just a really good beat. It gets me pumped up."

LOGAN EDRA, USA

Logan Edra might be a part of the new breakdancing regime, but her foundation is built on old-school hip-hop.

Edra, a Filipina American, said she regularly presses play on Malcolm McLaren's "World's Famous" from 1983.

"I felt like I was brought back to when breaking first started," said Edra, known as B-Girl Logistx. She first found "World's Famous" while listening to an old mixtape.

Edra, 21, said the music has the ability to time travel.

"I'm starting to see how the music brings us together," she said. "The music connects the generations. Every time I can listen to it and vibe to it, I feel like a remembrance or homage to the people in the past eras."

BRADLY SINDEN, UK

Bradly Sinden always tries to put up a great fight, showcasing his strength in taekwondo matches after walking out to Kanye West's "Stronger."

"It's a fight song — a more of a pump-up song," he said of the track written by the rapper and Daft Punk.

Sinden, 25, became fascinated with song after the final fight scene in the 2008 film "Never Back Down," starring Sean Faris and Cam Gigandet.

"From that film, it's always been my favorite song," said Sinden, who won a silver medal for Britain at the Tokyo Games.

"It's just gets you into that mood. Now it's like 'I'm ready to go in there and do my business,'" he added.

VERONICA FRALEY, USA

Veronica Fraley normally vibes out to Afrobeat melodies. But when the discus thrower needs to lock in, she turns on rap music like Future's "March Madness" before stepping in the circle.

"It's a lot of things that's not safe for work," Fraley, 24, said with a chuckle. "Just something to get the blood pumping, get the anger going to be honest."

Fraley said the music she subscribes to helps her tremendously.

"It gets me in the zone," she said. "Kind of in the mood to be a fighter. It helps me come with my hardest energy."

FERNANDO DAYAN JORGE, REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM

When Fernando Dayán Jorge steps into his red-and-white canoe, the two-time Olympian listens to one

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song that matches his energy.

Anytime Jorge, 25, practices or does warmups, the canoeist turns on "Legendary" by blues rock band Welshly Arms.

"I connect with this song," Jorge said of the 2016 track, which was featured on NBC's "Shades of Blue" and the 2018 film "Den of Thieves."

Jorge, who as a Cuban rower won gold in Tokyo for the 1,000-canoe sprint, will be competing this time as a refugee. He's joined a growing number of Cuban athletes who have defected.

MCKENZIE COAN, USA

McKenzie Coan is a huge Britney Spears fan, particularly drawn to "Circus" and "Womanizer."

"Those are my two favorite pump-up songs," said Coan, a Paralympian gold medalist in swimming. Her career began with aquatic therapy in 2001 after she was diagnosed as a child with osteogenesis imperfecta, known as brittle bone disease.

Coan, 28, has a Spotify playlist, which features artists such as Spears and Rihanna.

"Some of those songs I can't listen to unless I'm getting ready to race, because it gets me so amped up," she said. "I can't even handle it. ... I listen to things I can really move to."

RACHEL GLENN, USA

When it comes to music, Rachel Glenn calls herself the ultimate "hype girl." Before she competes in the high jump and 400 hurdles, it's all about listening to several upbeat songs like Y.G.'s "Perfect Timing" with Mozzy and Blxst.

"I'm a big music person," said Glenn, 22, who listens to the likes of Snoop Dogg, Soulja Boy, Lil Vada and Tommy the Clown.

"I like to listen to music anywhere I go," she said. "I'll listen when I'm doing my homework, when I'm trying to go to sleep. It's super important. Track and field is a mental thing. If your mentality right, then you're going to compete right."

JAYDIN BLACKWELL, USA

While Jaydin Blackwell warms up, the Paralympian sprinter focuses more on motivational speakers than songs.

Blackwell's speech of choice? The inspirational intro to Madden NFL 13, which features two-time Super Bowl champion Ray Lewis.

He also listens to David Goggins, an ultramarathon runner.

Asked the kind of music that does catch his ear: "I like the mushy music when I warmup," said Blackwell, 20, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at age 6.

DANIEL ROBERTS, USA

Daniel Roberts isn't an '80s baby, but his musical taste derives from tunes created nearly two decades before he was born.

The hurdler often goes the old-school R&B route, selecting the 1979 classic "Use to Be My Girl" by The O'Jays.

"I don't listen to music that's going to get me hype, but music I enjoy," Roberts, 26, said. "If I like the music or song a lot, it's going to bring that good energy. I'm going to dance. I'm going to move."

Roberts plays a diverse range of music to help him find his ultimate groove heading into a race.

"You got to be able to get into that rhythm," he said.

CORDELL TINCH, USA

Even though Cordell Tinch hardly ever listens to music during his warmups, some songs do cause the hurdler's head to bobble with enthusiasm.

"Today, it was 'God Did.' That was the last song I listened to before I took my headphones off," Tinch said of the track by DJ Khaled, featuring Jay-Z, Rick Ross, Lil Wayne, John Legend and Fridayy.

"It was that song today, but it could be different another day," he said.

Tinch, 24, said he consumes a healthy dose of Broadway songs. Rod Wave's "Yungen" is another favorite.

SAMANTHA BOSCO, USA

During training for the Paralympics, cyclist Samantha Bosco usually leans on two songs: Pink's upbeat

"I Am Here" and the gospel-inflected "Chant" by rapper Macklemore and Australian singer Tones and I. "Those are my songs," said Bosco, who was born with a posteromedial bow of the right tibia and a calcaneal valgus foot that was corrected at the age of four by having a wedge of bone surgically removed. She first rode a bike at age six, riding to and from school with her dad.

IOC awards 2034 Winter Games to Utah and pushes state officials to help end FBI investigation

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — What was expected to be a simple coronation of Salt Lake City as the 2034 Winter Olympic host turned into complicated Olympic politics Wednesday, as the IOC pushed Utah officials to end an FBI investigation into a suspected doping coverup.

The International Olympic Committee formally awarded the 2034 Winter Games to Salt Lake in an 83-6 vote, but only after a contingent of Utah politicians and U.S. Olympic leaders signed an agreement that pressures them to lobby the federal government.

The International Olympic Committee is angry about an ongoing U.S. federal investigation of suspected doping by Chinese swimmers who were allowed to compete at the Tokyo Games despite positive drug tests. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accepted Chinese explanations for the tests, and U.S. officials are now investigating that decision under an anti-conspiracy law passed after the Russian doping scandal at the Sochi Winter Games.

President Thomas Bach wants to make sure WADA is the lead authority on doping cases in Olympic sports, especially with the Summer Olympics headed to Los Angeles in 2028. The IOC added a clause to Salt Lake's host contract, effectively demanding that local organizers — including Utah Gov. Spencer Cox — push to shut down the investigation or risk losing the Olympics.

"That was the only way that we could guarantee that we would get the Games," Cox said after the announcement. If the U.S. does not respect the "supreme authority of WADA, the governor said, "they can withdraw the Games from us."

Even in the world of Olympic diplomacy, it was a stunning power move to force government officials to publicly agree to do the IOC's lobbying.

U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee Chair Gene Sykes said some officials and athletes from other countries are worried that the anti-conspiracy law would allow the U.S. to arrest or subpoena Olympic visitors.

Some officials "have been very anxious about what it would mean to the sports figures who came to the United States, somehow they were subject to uncertainty in terms of their freedom of travel," Sykes said. "And that is always concerning to people who don't understand the United States."

The capital city of Utah was the only candidate after the IOC gave Salt Lake City exclusive negotiating rights last year in a fast-tracked process.

The campaign team presenting the bid on stage to IOC members included Cox, Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall and Alpine ski great Lindsey Vonn. Back home, a 3 a.m. public watch party gathered to see the broadcast from Paris.

The clause inserted into the contract requires Utah officials to work with current and future U.S. presidents and Congress "to alleviate your concerns" about the federal investigation into doping.

WADA's role is under scrutiny for accepting a Chinese investigation that declared all 23 swimmers were contaminated by traces of a banned heart medication in a hotel kitchen. Evidence to prove the theory has not been published. The implicated swimmers won three gold medals in Tokyo, and some are also competing in Paris.

The case can be investigated in the U.S. under federal legislation named for a whistleblower of Russian state doping at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. The IOC and WADA lobbied against the law, known as the Rodchenkov Act, which gives U.S. federal agencies wide jurisdiction of doping enforcement worldwide.

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"We will work with our members of Congress," Gov. Cox told Bach and IOC voters ahead of the 2034 vote, "we will use all the levers of power open to us to resolve these concerns."

The head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, who has often publicly feuded with WADA, Travis Tygart, said in a statement it was "shocking to see the IOC itself stooping to threats in an apparent effort to silence those seeking answers to what are now known as facts."

Salt Lake City first hosted the Winter Games in 2002. That bid was hit with a bribery scandal, which led to anti-corruption reforms at the IOC.

Future U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney was brought in to clean up the Games, which went off well despite tightened security. The Games were the biggest international sports event hosted by the U.S. following the Sept. 11 attacks five months earlier

Utah Gov. Cox confirmed Romney is already involved in the lobbying demanded by the IOC.

It is an Olympic tradition for lawmakers and even heads of state to come to an IOC meeting and plead their case to be anointed as an host city.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair made key interventions at past IOC meetings to secure Olympics for their countries. U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Copenhagen in 2009 did not help in Chicago's losing cause for the 2016 Summer Games that went to Rio de Janeiro.

For its second turn, Salt Lake City will get almost 10 full years to prepare — the longest lead-in for a modern Winter Games — amid longer-term concerns about climate change affecting snow sports and reducing the pool of potential hosts.

It will be the fifth Winter Games in the U.S. Before Salt Lake City in 2002, there was Lake Placid in 1980 and 1932, and Squaw Valley — now known as Olympic Valley — in 1960.

In a separate decision earlier in Paris, the 2030 Winter Games was awarded to France for a regional project split between ski resorts in the Alps and the French Riviera city Nice.

That project needs official signoff from the national government being formed, and the Prime Minister yet to be confirmed, after recent elections called by President Emmanuel Macron. He helped present the 2030 bid Wednesday to IOC members.

Hours later, the member list included Sykes, the USOPC chair, who became a full IOC member with an 82-3 vote.

NASA telescope spots a super Jupiter that takes more than a century to go around its star

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A super Jupiter has been spotted around a neighboring star by the Webb Space Telescope — and it has a super orbit.

The planet is roughly the same diameter as Jupiter, but with six times the mass. Its atmosphere is also rich in hydrogen like Jupiter's.

One big difference: It takes this planet more than a century, possibly as long as 250 years, to go around its star. It's 15 times the distance from its star than Earth is to the sun.

Scientists had long suspected a big planet circled this star 12 light-years away, but not this massive or far from its star. A light-year is 5.8 trillion miles. These new observations show the planet orbits the star Epsilon Indi A, part of a three-star system.

An international team led by Max Planck Institute for Astronomy's Elisabeth Matthews in Germany collected the images last year and published the findings Wednesday in the journal Nature.

Astronomers directly observed the incredibly old and cold gas giant — a rare and tricky feat — by masking the star through use of a special shading device on Webb. By blocking the starlight, the planet stood out as a pinpoint of infrared light.

The planet and star clock in at 3.5 billion years old, 1 billion years younger than our own solar system, but still considered old and brighter than expected, according to Matthews.

The star is so close and bright to our own solar system that it's visible with the naked eye in the Southern Hemisphere.

Don't bet on life, though.

"This is a gas giant with no hard surface or liquid water oceans," Matthews said in an email.

It's unlikely this solar system sports more gas giants, she said, but small rocky worlds could be lurking there.

Worlds similar to Jupiter can help scientists understand "how these planets evolve over giga-year timescales," she said.

The first planets outside our solar system — dubbed exoplanets — were confirmed in the early 1990s. NASA's tally now stands at 5,690 as of mid-July. The vast majority were detected via the transit method, in which a fleeting dip in starlight, repeated at regular intervals, indicates an orbiting planet.

Telescopes in space and also on the ground are on the hunt for even more, especially planets that might be similar to Earth.

Launched in 2021, NASA and the European Space Agency's Webb telescope is the biggest and most powerful astronomical observatory ever placed in space.

The Olympics are coming to the capital of fashion. Expect uniforms befitting a Paris runway

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Sure, they call it the City of Light. But Paris is also the City of Fashion, one of most influential fashion capitals of the world for decades, no, centuries (remember Louis XIV?)

So it's no surprise that fashion designers across the globe are busy getting their national team uniforms ready for their unique spotlight. When it comes to high-end Olympic fashion — be it for festive opening ceremonies, or for competition — all runways lead to Paris.

Stella Jean will be there, styling each of Haiti's dozen or so athletes herself. Jean, an Italian-Haitian designer based in Rome, figures she has exactly two seconds, on opening ceremony night, to make an impression on the world — an impression that may reverberate for years. "For these athletes, it's a victory just to be here," says Jean, whose vivid, colorful design is intended to highlight the cultural vitality of the Caribbean nation.

On the other end of the size (and budget) spectrum is Ralph Lauren, who will outfit hundreds of athletes of the US team at opening and closing ceremonies, for the ninth time. Lauren, who's presenting a casual look of blue jeans and blazers, is of course one of the world's richest designers, along with Giorgio Armani, who has been designing Italy's uniforms since 2012.

Countless other designers have gotten involved — including, this year, more young, "indie" labels eager to make a splash. It's also a chance to emphasize qualities such as sustainability in fashion and adaptability, too, as in designs for the Paralympics.

"Designers and manufacturers now realize this can be a huge platform for them, for many things," says Alison Brown, who co-hosts a podcast on all things Olympics, "Keep the Flame Alive." For example: "Sustainability is a huge buzzword now for this whole Olympics," she says.

And so is style — because, well, Paris.

"You always want to represent your country, and you want to represent the athletes. But it seems like this time, the pressure to do it well has been turned up a notch," Brown says.

Some emerging details on various uniform designs:

Canada: A focus on inclusivity, adaptability

During the design process, the team from Lululemon, outfitting Canada's athletes for the second time, says they listened carefully to the athletes, and how they felt in the clothes. "When you feel your best, you perform your best," says Audrey Reilly, creative director for Team Canada at the athletic apparel company.

She recalls listening to Alison Levine, a Paralympian who uses a wheelchair, and learning the athlete had

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nothing suitable to train in — so she wore medical scrubs.

"I was shocked that a professional athlete had to do that," Reilly said in an interview. So we said, "Let's investigate." One result was a "seated carpenter pant," part of a collection intended to be inclusive and adaptable. Other features include special closures to facilitate putting on and taking off garments, and pockets at the knees so an athlete like Levine can access her phone when training.

The collection covers all aspects of Team Canada's journey, from travel to the games, to opening and medal ceremonies, to training — everything except competition. To combat the expected searing Paris heat, Lululemon, which has a four-Games deal with the team, paid special attention to ventilation and wicking.

And for opening ceremonies, designers created what they call a "tapestry of pride." Hand-drawn and engineered into the fabric, it includes 10 animals — nine representing the provinces of Canada and one representing France. "We wanted to evoke all of Canada, coast to coast and north to south," Reilly says.

Haiti: "They know their bodies are a flag"

Stella Jean is used to designing beautiful clothes. But beauty for beauty's sake was not a consideration in her designs for Haiti's team. It was all about the message.

"This will be the first good news coming out of Haiti in at least the last three years," she says, the athletes' appearance a counter-message to news about political turmoil, poverty or natural disasters. "So, I felt the responsibility to say as much as I can about the country."

For that, Jean is collaborating with Haitian artist Philippe Dodard, whose vibrant painting will be incorporated into the ceremonial uniforms — a brightly hued skirt for women and pants for men, paired with traditional items like a chambray shirt. The designs have been constructed from "leftover" fabric — sustainability, yes, but not because it is trendy, says Jean, but because in Haiti it's both a tradition and a necessity.

Jean calls the Haitian athletes "ambassadors."

"These ambassadors will be there, in Paris," she says, "and they all know, even if they are very, very young, how important their presence is — and that it's not just about performance. They know their bodies are a flag."

USA: "Nothing says America like blue jeans"

For the last summer games in steamy Tokyo, Ralph Lauren outfitted athletes with something cool — literally — a technology that directed heat away through a fan device at the back of the neck.

For steamy Paris, he's introducing another type of cool: good old American jeans.

"Nothing says America like blue jeans, especially when we're in Paris," said David Lauren, the label's chief branding and innovation officer and the founder's son, upon revealing the design in June.

For its ninth turn dressing Team USA for opening and closing ceremonies, Ralph Lauren says it will be fitting each athlete personally. For the opening ceremony they'll be wearing tailored navy blazers with blue-and-white striped Oxford shirts — and those blue jeans.

For the closing ceremony, the team will wear white jeans with matching jackets in red, white and blue. Lauren called the closing ceremony looks "more graphic, more fun, a little more exciting."

India: Mixing old and new

Indian designer Tarun Tahiliani is known for his ability to meld traditional elements with a modern sensibility. And that's what he and his menswear brand Tasva has tried to do for his country's Olympic team.

Tahiliani told GQ India that when he began doing research for India's opening ceremony uniform, he noted a trend of countries incorporating their national flags into the design. So he began working on a design featuring the tricolor hues of saffron, white and green.

For men, Tahiliani began with a kurta, the typical Asian long and loose shirt. He paired that with a bundi, or traditional sleeveless jacket. He told the magazine he wears a bundi every day, inspired by his father, who was an admiral in the Indian navy.

After feedback from the Olympic committee, the designer moved away from a uniform-like look for women, opting for a sari, which he says "can flatter any body type, and that's exactly what we want for our female athletes."

All the designs incorporate embroidery of saffron and green. "The goal is to create outfits that empower

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our athletes to represent India with pride and confidence," Tahiliani said.

Italy: A mix of elegance and tradition

Italian athletes will be elegantly attired in Emporio Armani uniforms, as they have for every Olympics since 2012.

The podium tracksuit is emblazoned with "W Italia," shorthand for "Eviva Italia," or, "Long live Italy." The motto could extend to designer Giorgio Armani himself, who turned 90 on July 11.

"Seeking new solutions for the athlete's kit, which must blend elegance with practicality, is always an exciting challenge for me," Armani said last year when the national kit was presented at the Spring-Summer 2024 runway show for the youthful and sporty Emporio Armani brand.

The athletes' tracksuits are in Armani blue, which has long been the color of the designer's daily uniform, either as a T-shirt or fine pullover.

Athletes will have no excuse for not knowing the national anthem: the beginning is printed inside the collar of the polo shirts, and the entire first verse is inside the jackets.

Britain: Four nations, not one

The 60-year old British clothing brand Ben Sherman, known for its menswear, is creating Britain's Olympic uniforms for the third time, and this year wants to remind the world that Britain is four nations, not one.

Its design for the opening and closing ceremonies "represents the unity and diversity of the UK, reflecting the rich tapestry of our nation's identity," says the label's creative director, Mark Williams.

Williams described in an email his new four-nation floral motif, featuring a rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock, serving as "a nod to the unique identities and histories of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland."

Williams stresses the motif is not purely decorative, but meant to send a message of collaboration and unity. His floral motif appears in colors of blue and red — on polo shirts, worn with a bomber jacket, and also on colorful socks, in a collaboration with the Happy Socks brand.

South Korea: Inspiration from a national symbol

South Korea's athletes will sport uniforms inspired by the country's national "taegeuk" circular symbol, which occupies the center of its flag. The red-and-blue circle connotes harmony between the negative cosmic forces of the blue portion and the positive cosmic forces of the red.

The motifs on the North Face-branded uniforms also include one of the four black trigrams (groups of bars) from the flag's corners, according to Youngone Outdoor Co., an official partner of the country's Olympic committee which produces and distributes North Face clothing in South Korea. The trigram being used symbolizes water.

A uniform for medal ceremonies features a jacket depicting the indigo blue waters off the country's east coast in an ink-wash painting style, a red belt and black pants, Youngone says.

Team Korea's uniform for opening and closing ceremonies was designed by Musinsa Standard, a private-label brand run by South Korean online fashion store Musinsa. The all-light blue uniform includes a blazer, its lining engraved with traditional white and blue porcelain designs, a traditional-style belt and slacks.

Today in History: July 25, Tuskegee Syphilis Study exposed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 25, the 207th day of 2024. There are 159 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 25, 1972, the notorious Tuskegee syphilis experiment came to light as The Associated Press reported that for the previous four decades, the U.S. Public Health Service, in conjunction with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had been allowing poor, rural Black male patients with syphilis to go without treatment, even allowing more than 100 of them to die, as a way of studying the disease.

Also on this date:

In 1866, Ulysses S. Grant was named General of the Army of the United States, the first officer to hold

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the rank.

In 1943, Benito Mussolini was dismissed as premier of Italy by King Victor Emmanuel III, and placed under arrest. (He was later rescued by the Nazis and re-asserted his authority.)

In 1946, the United States detonated an atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in the first underwater test of the device.

In 1956, the Italian liner SS Andrea Doria collided with the Swedish passenger ship Stockholm off the New England coast late at night and began sinking; 51 people — 46 from the Andrea Doria, five from the Stockholm — were killed. (The Andrea Doria capsized and sank the following morning.)

In 1960, a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina that had been the scene of nearly six months of sit-in protests against its whites-only lunch counter dropped its segregation policy.

In 1978, Louise Joy Brown, the first "test tube baby," was born in Oldham, England; she'd been conceived through the technique of in-vitro fertilization.

In 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein signed a declaration at the White House ending their countries' 46-year-old formal state of war.

In 2000, a New York-bound Air France Concorde crashed outside Paris shortly after takeoff, killing all 109 people on board and four people on the ground; it was the first-ever crash of the supersonic jet.

In 2010, the online whistleblower Wikileaks posted some 90,000 leaked U.S. military records that amounted to a blow-by-blow account of the Afghanistan war, including unreported incidents of Afghan civilian killings as well as covert operations against Taliban figures.

In 2018, a study published in the journal Science revealed that a huge lake of salty water appears to be buried deep in Mars, raising the possibility of finding life on the planet.

In 2019, President Donald Trump had a second phone call with the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which he solicited Zelenskyy's help in gathering potentially damaging information about former Vice President Joe Biden; that night, a staff member at the White House Office of Management and Budget signed a document that officially put military aid for Ukraine on hold.

In 2022, on a visit to Canada, Pope Francis issued a historic apology for the Catholic Church's cooperation with the country's "catastrophic" policy of Indigenous residential schools, saying the forced assimilation of Native peoples into Christian society destroyed their cultures, severed families and marginalized generations.

Today's Birthdays: Elizabeth Francis, the oldest living American, is 114. Folk-pop singer-musician Bruce Woodley (The Seekers) is 82. Rock musician Jim McCarty (The Yardbirds) is 81. Reggae singer Rita Marley is 78. Musician Verdine White (Earth, Wind & Fire) is 73. Model-actor Iman is 69. Rock musician Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) is 66. Celebrity chef/TV personality Geoffrey Zakarian is 65. Actor Matt LeBlanc is 57. Actor Wendy Raquel Robinson is 57. Actor David Denman is 51. Actor Jay R. Ferguson is 50. Actor James Lafferty (TV: "One Tree Hill") is 39. Actor Meg Donnelly (TV: "American Housewife") is 24.