

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 1 of 82

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Groton Dairy Queen Help Wanted](#)
- [4- GDI Fitness New Program ad](#)
- [4- Full Circle Ag Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [5- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [6- Mayo Clinic: Weight loss: 6 strategies for success](#)
- [8- Full Circle Propane Ad](#)
- [9- Groton Chamber of Commerce August Meeting](#)
- [10- West Nile Virus Update -SD](#)
- [11- Sturgis Rally Wednesday Report](#)
- [12- 2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Vehicle Count – Through Day Five](#)
- [13- Angel Tree Walking Taco Ad](#)
- [14- Discussion continues on state-licensed daycare center](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Johnson denies trying to help company shield itself from existing Roundup cancer lawsuits](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: 11-state push for EPA rule on farm chemicals includes SD](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: U.S. Education Department to gradually roll out new FAFSA form by Dec. 1](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: New bans on panhandling in medians spark debate over free speech rights](#)
- [21- SD SearchLight: Kamala Harris officially becomes the Democratic presidential nominee](#)
- [22- First Round Pairings for State Tournament in Groton Tomorrow](#)
- [23- Weather Pages](#)
- [27- Daily Devotional](#)
- [28- Subscription Form](#)
- [29- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [30- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [31- News from the Associated Press](#)

Thursday, Aug. 8

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, melon, cookie, garlic bread.
First day of football practice
Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Downtown Groton
Groton Lions Club Meeting, 104 N Main, 6 p.m.
Summer Splash at Groton High School, 7:30 p.m.

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



Friday, Aug. 9

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, peas and carrots, grape juice, cake with strawberries, dinner roll.
Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament in Groton

Saturday, Aug. 10

Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament in Groton
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 11

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 11 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament in Groton
High School Moonlight Swim, 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., Pool

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 2 of 82

1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

Starliner Stalled

NASA is preparing contingency plans for Boeing's Starliner astronauts to potentially return from the International Space Station in February 2025. The announcement yesterday is the latest setback for Boeing over the capsule's inaugural crewed mission to space.

The Starliner took off June 5, carrying veteran NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams after a series of delays for what was intended to be a nine-day mission. That mission has since extended past two months, with the capsule held for further testing amid concerns of helium leaks and thruster control. NASA's latest announcement reportedly comes amid internal dissent with Boeing, which maintains its capsule is safe to fly.

NASA's contingency plans, not finalized, would see Wilmore and Williams returning via a capsule from Boeing competitor, SpaceX. The news is the latest blow to Boeing, reeling from a series of issues with its commercial planes.

UK Protests Swell

Thousands of counterprotesters turned out across the United Kingdom yesterday in response to the country's worst riots in over a decade. Over 400 rioters had been arrested amid expanded prosecution protocols, with three people already sentenced to several years in prison.

Demonstrations primarily against migrant and Islamic communities began last week amid online posts suggesting a Muslim immigrant was responsible for the stabbing deaths of three young girls in Southport, England. The posts came despite officials identifying the suspect as a 17-year-old male born in the UK to Rwandan parents. The day after the attack, groups gathered outside a mosque in Southport, confronting police and setting cars on fire; similar protests erupted in over 15 other cities since, from London to Belfast in Northern Ireland. Dozens of officers have been injured.

The suspect was charged with three counts of murder and 10 counts of attempted murder. New reports revealed 63-year-old bystander John Hayes was stabbed as he confronted the assailant.

A Streaming World After All

Disney posted its first-ever streaming profit yesterday, with divisions including Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+ producing \$47M in operating income in Q3 this year, compared to a loss of \$512M in the same period last year.

The news comes as Disney plans to hike prices for streaming subscriptions in October. Yesterday, CEO Bob Iger also revealed the company's plans to crack down on password sharing next month. Meanwhile, Disney Studios unit posted income of \$254M—its first quarterly profit in over two years. Disney is the first studio this year to top \$3B in worldwide ticket sales, driven by box office successes "Inside Out 2" and "Deadpool & Wolverine." The unit is expected to continue its box office streak with anticipated releases like "Moana 2" later this year.

Disney's Experiences unit, however—including its theme parks and cruise line—saw domestic profit drop 6% from last year. The company lowered its revenue forecast for Q4, blaming softening tourist demand. Shares dropped over 3% on the news.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Taylor Swift cancels three upcoming Eras Tour shows in Vienna, Austria, after two men, at least one affiliated with ISIS, were arrested for allegedly plotting a terrorist attack near the venue.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 3 of 82

Hampton Morris becomes first American man to medal in weightlifting since 1984, capturing bronze.

Team USA takes on Serbia today (3 pm ET, USA) in men's basketball semifinals.

NFL preseason begins in earnest tonight; see preview for all 32 teams.

Los Angeles Chargers head coach Jim Harbaugh effectively banned from college athletics until 2028 for "unethical conduct" while serving as Michigan's head coach.

Science & Technology

China begins launching satellites as part of its "Thousand Sails" space-based internet network; reports suggest effort is meant to function similarly to SpaceX's Starlink.

New device provides first easy-to-use measurement of real-time blood pressure in any place on the body; applications may include at-home health monitoring and use in remote areas with limited access to healthcare.

Researchers attach cameras to eight endangered sea lions, map out nearly 2,000 miles of uncharted ocean floor off the coast of Australia.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -0.6%, Nasdaq -1.0%) as shares of technology companies decline.

Shopify shares close up 18% after e-commerce software giant tops Q2 revenue and earnings estimates.

Warner Bros. Discovery shares fall 10% in after-hours trading after reporting \$9B impairment charge.

Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway now holds roughly \$235B worth of investments in US Treasury bills, more than the Federal Reserve.

Politics & World Affairs

Tropical Storm Debby hovers off the coast of the Carolinas, with the region bracing for a second landfall.

5.2-magnitude earthquake strikes Bakersfield in Southern California Tuesday, causing dozens of after-shocks but no reports of deaths or damage.

Rep. Cori Bush (D, MO-1) loses to prosecutor Wesley Bell (D) in second-most expensive Democratic congressional primary in history, with \$18M spent on candidates' ads, \$8.5M from pro-Israel lobbying group AIPAC.

Russia declares a state of emergency in the border region of Kursk after Ukraine launches a rare cross-border ground assault.

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 4 of 82

Brand New Program at

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Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



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Weight loss: 6 strategies for success

Follow these proven ways to lose weight and boost your health.



By Mayo Clinic Staff

Hundreds of fad diets, weight-loss programs and outright scams promise quick and easy weight loss. But the best way to lose weight and keep it off is to make lasting lifestyle changes. These healthy changes include eating a balanced diet and moving more each day.

Here are six tips to help you start your weight-loss journey.

1. Make sure you're ready

Long-term weight loss takes time and effort. So be sure that you're ready to eat healthy foods and become more active. Ask yourself the following questions:

Do I have a strong desire to change habits to help me lose weight?

Am I too distracted by other pressures?

Do I use food to cope with stress?

Am I ready to learn new ways to cope with stress?

Do I need other support — either from friends or healthcare professionals — to manage stress?

Am I willing to change my eating habits?

Am I willing to change my physical activity and exercise habits?

Can I spend the time it takes to make these changes?

Talk with your healthcare professional if you need help taking charge of stress. Lowering stress can help you make long-term healthy lifestyle changes.

2. Find your inner drive

No one else can make you lose weight. You need to make diet and physical activity changes to help yourself. What will give you the burning desire to stick to your weight-loss plan?

Make a list of reasons why weight loss is important to you. The list can help you stay inspired and focused. Maybe you want to boost your health or get in shape for a vacation. Think of your goals on days when you don't feel like eating healthy foods or moving more. Find other ways to stay on track too. For instance, you could post an uplifting note to yourself on the refrigerator or the pantry door.

It's up to you to make the changes that lead to long-term weight loss. But it helps to have support from others. Pick people who will inspire you. They should never shame you or get in the way of your progress.

It's best to find people who will:

Listen to your concerns and feelings.

Share your goal to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Do active hobbies with you or help you make healthy menus.

Your support group can help you stick to your healthy changes.

If you prefer to keep your weight-loss efforts private, take some steps to stay on course. Track your diet and exercise in a journal or an app. Also track your weight. Review your progress and make changes as needed.

3. Set goals you can reach

Aim to lose 1 to 2 pounds (0.5 to 1 kilogram) a week over the long term. To do that, you'll need to burn about 500 to 750 calories more than you take in each day.

Losing 5% of your current weight may be a good goal to start with. If you weigh 180 pounds (82 kilograms), that's 9 pounds (4 kilograms). Even this amount of weight loss can lower your risk of some long-term health conditions. Those conditions include heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

It can help to set two types of goals. The first type is called an action goal. You can list a healthy action that you'll use to lose weight. For instance, "Walk every day for 30 minutes" is an action goal. The second type is called an outcome goal. You can list a healthy outcome that you aim to have. "Lose 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms)" is an example of an outcome goal. An outcome goal is what you want to achieve. But it doesn't tell you how to get there. An action goal does. You set action goals so that you can make healthy changes.

4. Enjoy healthy foods

To lose weight, you need to lower the total calories you take in from food and drinks. But your meals can still be tasty and simple to make.

One way that you can take in fewer calories is to eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These are known as plant-based foods. They're low in calories and high in fiber. Fiber helps you feel full. You can eat many kinds of plant-based foods to help you reach your goals.

Follow these other diet tips too:

Eat at least four servings of vegetables and three servings of fruits a day. Snack on fruits and veggies if you get hungry between meals.

Have whole grains, such as brown rice, barley, and whole-wheat bread and pasta. Eat fewer refined grains, such as white rice and white bread.

Use healthy fats, such as olive oil, vegetable oils, avocados, nuts, nut butters and nut oils. But keep in mind that even healthy fats are high in calories.

Limit foods and drinks that have added sugar. These include desserts, jellies and sodas. The natural sugar in fruit is OK.

Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

Focus on eating fresh foods. They have more nutrition than processed foods. Processed foods often come in a box or a can. And they tend to have more fat, sugar or salt.

It's a good idea to be mindful while you eat. Focus on each bite of food. This helps you enjoy the taste. It also makes you more aware of when you feel full. Try to not to watch TV or stare at your phone during meals. You may eat too much without knowing it.

5. Get active, stay active

You can lose weight without exercise, but it's harder to do. Regular physical activity helps burn off extra calories.

Exercise has many other benefits. It can lift your mood, lower blood pressure and help you sleep better. Exercise helps you keep off the weight that you lose too. Studies show that people who maintain their weight loss over the long term get regular physical activity.

How many calories you burn depends on how often, how long and how hard you exercise. One of the best ways to lose body fat is through steady aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking. Work up to at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise most days of the week. Some people may need more exercise than this to lose weight and keep it off.

Also aim to do strength training exercises at least twice a week. You could lift weights, use exercise bands or do pushups.

Any extra movement helps you burn calories. So think about ways to move more during the day. You could:

Use the stairs instead of an elevator.

Park at the far end of the lot when you shop.

Stand instead of sit while you talk on the phone or check email.

Walk laps around the room or march in place while you watch TV.

6. Change your mindset

It's not enough to eat healthy foods and exercise for just a few weeks or months. To keep off extra weight, you should make these healthy changes a way of life. Lifestyle changes start with taking an honest look at your eating patterns and daily routine.

Think about negative habits or other challenges that have kept you from losing weight in the past. Then plan for how you'll deal with them going forward.

You'll likely have some setbacks on your weight-loss journey. But don't give up after a setback. Simply start fresh the next day. Remember that you're planning to change your life. It won't happen all at once. Stick to your healthy lifestyle. The results will be well worth it.

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 9 of 82

Groton Chamber of Commerce

August 7, 2024

12pm City Hall

- Members present: Hannah Gruenwald, Katelyn Nehlich, Douglas Heinrich, Ashley Bentz, April Abeln, Carol Kutter

- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich. All members present voted aye.

- Treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$31,811.80. The bucks account balance is \$2,074.80. The report was approved by Abeln and seconded by Kutter. All members present voted aye. Our annual 990N was filed by Abeln and Nehlich donated her Dacotah Bank Give Where You Live \$300 to the chamber.

- Thank you notes were received from scholarship recipient, Emily Clark as well the Groton Community Transit. Abeln presented information from the Small Business Administration and the Olive Grove Golf Course Monday Night Football booklet.

- Hallie Perkins was the winner of the Summer Downtown Sip & Shop giveaway basket.

- Willow Cowan was the winner of a Groton shirt from the Facebook bench selfie giveaway.

- Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Kutter to order 36 banners in appropriate size with correct brackets for Main Street and Hwy 12. All members present voted aye.

- Abeln will reach out to Rustic Cuts for a quote for a 20 oz tumbler with handle.

- A prior email motion was given by Abeln and seconded by Kutter to advertise on the Groton Independent activity calendar for \$420. All members present voted aye.

- A prior email motion was given by Kutter and seconded by Babcock to sponsor foul balls for \$100 at the Groton Jr. Legion State baseball tourney. All members present voted aye.

- Abeln will reach out to BK Custom T's for an updated quantity of clothing items ordered and will re-share ordering information on Facebook. Orders are due August 14th

- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Kutter to invest \$10,000 in a CD at Dacotah Bank for 7 months. Treasurer Nehlich will be the authorized agent on that investment. Motion also included adding Bentz to the checking and bucks accounts and removing Kutter. All members present voted aye.

- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to participate in sponsorship of GDI Live for this school year for \$1,000 with a request for an updated ad. All members present voted aye.

- Motion by Nehlich and seconded by Kutter to advertise in the 2025 Glacial Lakes Official Travel Guide. All members present voted aye.

- Motion by Kutter and seconded by Heinrich to donate two \$25 chamber bucks to the Wage Memorial Library for their Homecoming scavenger hunt. All members present voted aye.

- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to donate \$100 to the Groton Lions Club for the Airport Fly In/Drive In. All members present voted aye.

- Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich to donate \$300 to the Groton Pumpkin Fest. All members present voted aye.

- Bentz will reach out to Samantha Bahr, owner of A Touch Up, for a new business welcome.

- Heinrich will contact Tim Janusz, new owner of The Jungle for a welcome as well.

- Next Meeting: September 4th, 2024, at City Hall at 12:00pm

Upcoming events

- 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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 10 of 82

West Nile Virus Update -SD

SD WNV (as of August 7):

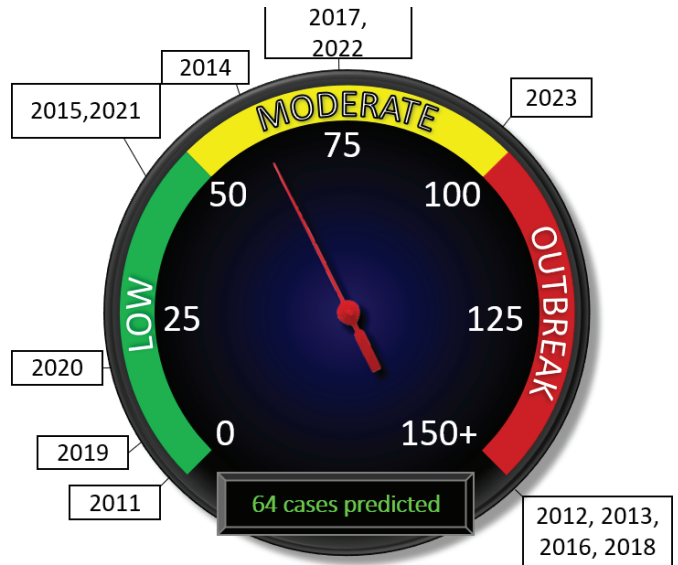
5 human cases (Beadle, Gregory, Kingsbury, Walworth, Ziebach)

1 human viremic blood donor (Brule)

9 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Codington, Davison, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha, Pennington)

US WNV (as of August 6): 103 cases (AR, AZ, CA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NV, OK, PA, SD, TN, TX, VA)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of August 7)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending August 3, 2024 (MMWR Week 31)

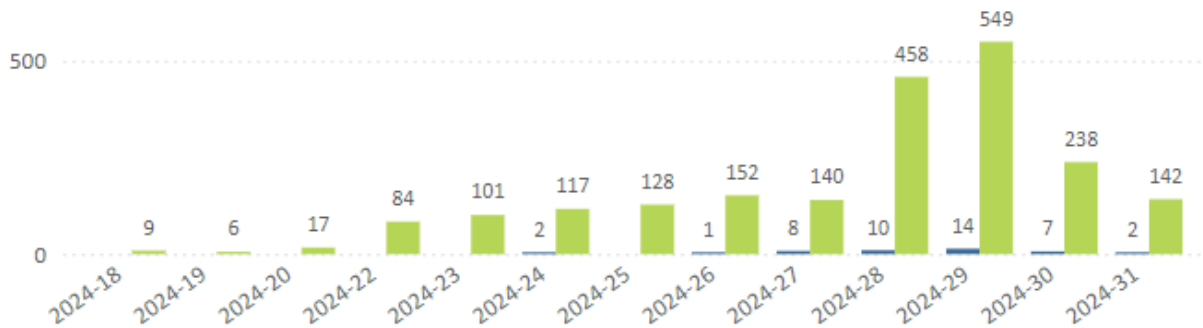
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 76

Total mosquito pools tested: 2,185

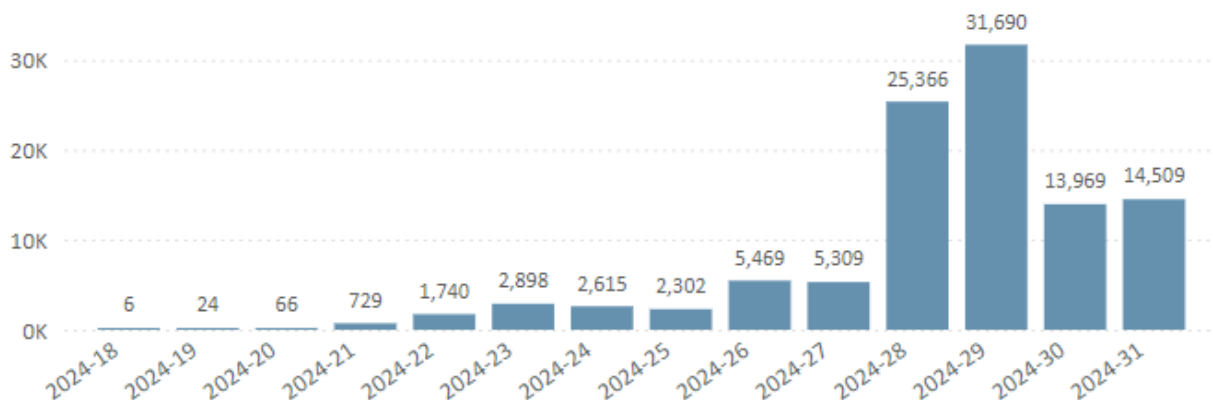
% positivity: 2.01%

Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 11 of 82

Sturgis Rally Wednesday Report

Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday, Aug 03, 2024, to 6 a.m. Wednesday August 07, 2024

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	76	7	83	71
Misd Drug Arrests	145	26	171	118
Felony Drug Arrests	82	19	101	68
Total Citations	573	263	836	793
Total Warnings	1534	751	2285	2292
Cash Seized	11,094.00	0.00	11,094.00	\$0.00
Vehicles Seized	0	0	0	0
For Drug Poss.	0	0	0	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Accidents	8	14	22	27
Injury Accidents	9	14	23	32
Fatal Accidents	1	2	3	2
# of Fatalities	1	2	3	2

Fatal Crashes:

On 08/06/2024 at 4:16 p.m., a 2007 Harley Davidson STC was traveling eastbound on I-90 near mile marker 161. The motorcycle exited the roadway and entered the median. The motorcycle traveled a short distance in the median before overturning. The driver separated from the motorcycle and received fatal injuries. Helmet use remains under investigation.

Injury Crashes:

On 08/06/2024 at 12:06 p.m., a 2011 Ford F150 was stopped in the turning lane on Glenn Street in Wall, SD, preparing to make a left turn. A 2022 Indian motorcycle was traveling northbound on Glenn Street. The Ford F150 failed to see the 2022 Indian motorcycle and turned in front of it. The driver and passenger on the 2022 Indian motorcycle were not wearing helmets and received serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the 2011 Ford F150 was wearing a seatbelt and was uninjured.

On 08/06/2024 at 3:30 p.m., a 2016 Harley Davidson FLTRX was traveling eastbound on SD 44 near mile marker 120 when the driver failed to negotiate a curve. The motorcycle exited the roadway and struck a fence. The driver was not wearing a helmet and received serious, non-life threatening injuries.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 12 of 82

On 08/06/22 at 4:11 p.m., a 2022 Jeep Cherokee was attempting to enter South 6th Street from Detroit Avenue in Hot Springs. The 2022 Jeep Cherokee stopped, then began to enter the intersection. The driver of the 2022 Jeep Cherokee failed to see a 2004 Harley Davidson traveling north on South 6th Street. The 2022 Jeep Cherokee entered the intersection in front of the motorcycle. The 2004 Harley Davidson struck the side of the 2022 Jeep Cherokee. The driver of the Harley Davidson was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries. The driver of the Jeep Cherokee was wearing a seatbelt and was uninjured.

On 08/06/2024 at 6:51 p.m., a 2006 Harley Davidson motorcycle and a 2019 Chevrolet Trax were traveling westbound on US 14A. The 2019 Chevrolet Trax slowed down and stopped to make a left turn. The driver of the 2006 Harley Davidson failed to see the 2019 Chevrolet Trax had stopped. The 2006 Harley Davidson drove into the rear of the 2019 Chevrolet Trax. The driver and passenger of the 2006 Harley Davidson were wearing helmets but received serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the Chevrolet Trax was wearing a seatbelt and was uninjured.

08/06/2024 at 10:31 p.m., a State Trooper stopped a 1999 Kawasaki VN800 for a traffic violation on SD 34 MM 37 in Sturgis. Shortly after stopping, the driver of the 1999 Kawasaki VN800 fled the scene on the motorcycle. A short distance later, the 1999 Kawasaki VN800 left the roadway and crashed in the ditch. The driver was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries. Charges are pending against the driver.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating these crashes. All information released so far is only preliminary.

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

2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Vehicle Count – Through Day Five

STURGIS, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) will provide daily traffic counts at nine locations for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 84th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally which runs from Aug. 2-11, 2024. The traffic counts to date for the nine locations entering Sturgis for the 2024 Rally are as follows:

Friday, Aug. 2, 2024: 51,179 vehicles entered

Down 1.5% from the previous five-year average

Saturday, Aug. 3, 2024: 55,127 vehicles entered

Down 2.3% from the previous five-year average

Sunday, Aug. 4, 2024: 52,182 vehicles entered

Down 12.7% from the previous five-year average

Monday, Aug. 5, 2024: 55,971 vehicles entered

Down 5.1% from the previous five-year average

Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024: 54,451 vehicles entered

Down 5.2% from the previous five-year average

2024 Total to Date: 268,910 Vehicles

Previous Five-Year Average to Date: 284,529 Vehicles

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 13 of 82



Suggested Donation: \$4



Walking Taco or Taco Salad and a drink

Free Will Donation

Proceeds go to Groton's Angel Tree
15 N Main, Ste. 103

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 8, 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. during Family Fun Fest

Discussion continues on state-licensed daycare center

by Elizabeth Varin

Those at Tuesday's City Council meeting agreed that Groton needs more daycare options. But the consensus for some council members is that a state-licensed center shouldn't be owned by the city.

Charity Hinman, who had previously spoken with the council about daycare options, proposed the city open a daycare center. She told the council she would be open to running it for them.

Hinman had owned the last state-licensed daycare center in Groton, Teddy Bear Daycare Too, but had to close it. Things like utility costs and licensing made it so that the daycare center couldn't financially continue, she said. She suggested, though, that the city could own the facility or that the daycare center could use an existing city facility, like the community center.

"I just feel like it would be something really appealing for people to have a licensed daycare facility in Groton," she said.

There are certain advantages to having your child in a state-licensed center, she said. It would allow people to utilize childcare assistance funds, and more people qualify than they realize.

A daycare center would also not have to close should a provider call in sick, she said. There are other staff members that can cover that.

Finally, a state-licensed center is highly regulated, she said. Someone can open an at-home daycare and bring in 30 kids, and that wouldn't be safe, Hinman said. A state-licensed facility is routinely checked in on to make sure they are following state requirements.

"I feel like it can be a really good thing," she said. "I feel like a town this size, there's no reason not to have a center."

Hinman suggested using the community center as that center if it isn't utilized much from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Councilwoman Karyn Babcock said the city is already paying utilities there, so if the building doesn't see much use during the days Monday through Friday, it might be an option.

"We have a building sitting there vacant, and we have a need," she said.

Councilman Brian Bahr, though, said it isn't the city's responsibility to have childcare in town. He added, he wouldn't want to take business away from at-home daycares in the city.

Babcock countered that it wouldn't take away from at-home daycares because having a state-licensed facility and the services provided there is different than what an at-home daycare can provide.

Bahr said if a state-licensed facility can be self-funded, they should be able to take a business plan to a banker or get a private investor to help fund it. It shouldn't be the city's responsibility.

"That's just me, and that's how I feel," he said.

Councilman Kevin Nehls asked for clarification on specifics related to a proposed daycare center, including how many children it could care for and who would pay employees.

The proposal at Tuesday's meeting would be care for about 30 children. And the number of staff members needed would be dependent on the ages of the children, but the center would have at least two full-time employees and two part-time employees, Hinman said.

Councilman Jon Cutler advised looking for a private investor.

"We need one, but I don't think the city should be involved in it," he said.

- Groton Lions Club President Suzie Easthouse recapped the recent Celebration in the Park. More individuals are interested in joining the service group and bringing in events like that, she said. She added she hopes more events can happen at the park as it is a beautiful facility and seems under utilized.

- The council held off on making adjustments to the assistant street superintendent wage. After executive session discussion, the council decided to revisit it when the annual wage review comes up.

- The council approved transferring the liquor license to the new owners of The Jungle. The retail on-sale license and package off-sale license were transferred from Dion and Samantha Bahr, doing business as Bahr's Jungle Lanes and Lounge, to Jillian J. Janusz and Cyprus Ltd., doing business as The Jungle.

- The council approved removing and replacing some concrete near City Hall for aesthetics and safety concerns.

- The council authorized city staff to write-off an outstanding invoice, a \$255 debt that A and H Excavating has.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Johnson denies trying to help company shield itself from existing Roundup cancer lawsuits

Questions remain about legislation's impact on future litigation

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 7, 2024 5:46 PM

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, denies allegations that a provision he helped insert into a draft of the federal farm bill would protect the maker of Roundup from pending lawsuits claiming that frequent use of the herbicide causes cancer.

"Our legislation doesn't do anything in the courts," Johnson said Wednesday in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight at the Sioux Empire Fair in Sioux Falls. "If somebody's got a legitimate claim in court today, there isn't anything that we would do to adjust their claim from a backward-looking perspective."

Questions remain about the forward impact of the legislation. The Washington Post reported in June that Bayer, the manufacturer of Roundup herbicide, is seeking a "blockade against future lawsuits."

The Post also reported that Bayer helped Johnson and Rep. Jim Costa, D-California, draft a measure that's since been included in the House version of the farm bill. Johnson declined an interview request from the Post.

On Wednesday, South Dakota Searchlight asked Johnson if he worked with Bayer on the legislation.

"Listen, anytime you're writing legislation, you need to be talking to a broad cross-section of stakeholders," Johnson said. "Shame on any member of Congress who thinks they have all of the answers and just goes in and tries to make law for the whole country without talking to people who were affected."

The measure would affirm federal authority over warning labels, which Johnson said would ensure a "science-based, evidence-based approach" aligning with federal guidelines.

He also said a national standard is necessary to prevent a patchwork of state regulations. He highlighted California as a state that has enacted its own labeling requirements.

"We can't have effective interstate commerce if we have every single state doing their own label on these herbicides, pesticides," Johnson said.

Attorneys general in 11 states, including South Dakota, took a similar position Wednesday by asking the Environmental Protection Agency to stop a patchwork of state labeling efforts. The attorneys general of Nebraska and Iowa announced the effort in Omaha, along with two farmers and state agricultural officials.

The Post's June story cited legal experts who said the farm bill provision could effectively shut down some lawsuits against Bayer. The measure would prohibit state and local governments from penalizing or



U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, greets attendees at the Sioux Empire Fair in Sioux Falls on Aug. 7, 2024. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

holding companies liable for pesticide warning rules that differ substantially from the federal government's. Currently, the EPA does not recognize glyphosate, the main ingredient in Roundup, as a carcinogen.

Roundup's uses range from residential weed control to large-scale farming. Bayer's Roundup Ready Corn, for example, is genetically modified to tolerate applications of Roundup for weed control in fields.

A 2019 report from Investigate Midwest said farmers used an estimated 287 million pounds of glyphosate in 2016. Nearly 6% of that estimated usage — about 17 million pounds — was in South Dakota.

Critics of Johnson's legislation, including environmental groups, argued in the Post story that the legislation undermines state autonomy and public health protections. They fear that by creating a single federal standard, the bill could limit the ability of plaintiffs to argue that they weren't adequately warned about the dangers of Roundup.

Bayer has faced expensive litigation from plaintiffs alleging links between Roundup and cancer. In 2020, the company agreed to pay approximately \$10 billion to settle lawsuits involving roughly 125,000 claims, without any admission of wrongdoing.

According to Open Secrets, a nonprofit that tracks money in politics, Bayer has spent \$9.7 million on lobbying during the current election cycle. Open Secrets also reports that Johnson's campaign committee received \$1,000 from political action committees affiliated with Bayer in each of 2020 and 2022.

The House has not yet scheduled a vote on the 1,000-page farm bill. The current version of the bill expires Sept. 30.

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

11-state push for EPA rule on farm chemicals includes SD

Nebraska and Iowa attorneys general announce effort

BY: AARON SANDERFORD, NEBRASKA EXAMINER - AUGUST 7, 2024 5:40 PM

OMAHA — Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers and Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird joined two farmers and state agricultural officials Wednesday in drawing a line in fertile soil.

The two ag-led states were among 11 states urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to stop a patchwork of state labeling efforts on farm chemicals.

Attorneys general in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, and South Dakota asked the EPA to issue a new rule on labeling.

Hilgers and Bird said their states typically nudge the federal government the other direction, against national regulation. This time, however, ag states are more worried about regulations being driven by California.

California's labeling decision

The Golden State has pressed to label the weed-killer glyphosate as a carcinogen, meaning a chemical that can cause cancer. Glyphosate is more commonly known by its trade name, Roundup, a weed killer.

California officials have said the move is based on science. They and others point to a 2015 decision by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer labeling glyphosate as a probable trigger of cancer in humans.

States that object to labeling the chemical a carcinogen, including Nebraska and Iowa, say that's wrong. They point to older, longer EPA studies deeming glyphosate safe in agricultural uses as long as people follow the directions for use.

"We know labeling, it's a nationwide marketplace for this particular product," Hilgers said. "The EPA has been given the authority to actually help regulate the labeling in this context."

The goal of the ag-state effort, he said, is to avoid the costs of complying with competing labeling require-



Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers speaks about an 11-state effort to get the EPA to set a national rule on labeling farm chemicals. (Aaron Sanderford/Nebraska Examiner)

review of research on the chemical has found that its risks are real, and another study cited by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found traces of the chemical in the urine of 80% of the 2,310 people surveyed nationally.

Four Nebraska farmers sued Monsanto in 2016 alleging that its use was to blame for their non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. They argued the product was mislabeled and should have contained warnings.

Farmers need reliable weed control

Glyphosate defenders say it controls weeds more cheaply and effectively than other options and point to EPA findings that the chemical can be safely used by following directions.

Bird, who said she still lives on family-owned farm ground, said ag faces enough challenges without worrying about whether one state can ban something that farmers in other states rely on to control weeds.

She said her family and Iowa farmers have been using glyphosate for decades without trouble. Bird said if they need to resort to different weed-control options it will add to the costs of farming and food.

"It kind of tells you something when, in order to keep on farming, farmers need a lawyer to stand up for them against regulations, and I'm very glad to do that," she said.

Asked why companies manufacturing glyphosate and other farm chemicals couldn't just print California's label and sell the product elsewhere Hilgers said laws in Nebraska and other states prevent deceptive and inaccurate labeling.

Bird and Hilgers questioned what would happen if other states want to attach product labels they disagree with. Bird said it's an issue of why one state should dictate to others.

"There's no way that a state like California should tell a farmer in Nebraska or Iowa how to farm," she said. "It's not their business, and it's not their place as far as the law goes."

Hilgers said farmers might also have to worry about the costs of potential lawsuits if they apply a product labeled as a carcinogen, whether that label is based on science or not.

Ag perspectives

Sherry Vinton, the director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, said farmers can't control the prices that crops and livestock fetch at market, but they try to control input costs.

"We don't need to be price-gouged on our input costs from unnecessary government regulation," she

ments from multiple states, the logistical challenges involved and potential litigation.

Fears of glyphosate

Some academic studies have found that glyphosate has contributed to cancer when people are exposed to too much or apply it incorrectly.

Bayer, which bought Round-up from Monsanto, removed glyphosate from the Round-up spray people use in their homes in 2023 after lawsuits were filed. Some farmers have said they don't want to lose the ability to use the product in their fields.

A University of Washington

said of the California labeling decision, which a court has since halted through an injunction.

Kevin Ross, a farmer from Underwood, Iowa, and a past president of the National Corn Growers Association, said farmers need the EPA to set a national rule for all to follow.

He said glyphosate is one of the most cost-effective tools he has to control weeds. Other options require more expensive chemicals that don't perform as well and might be more harmful, Ross said.

Competition is real

Mark McHargue, president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau and a Merrick County corn and soybean farmer, said there is a limit to the number of tools farmers can use to grow food.

He said American farmers often compete with growers from Argentina and other countries that use glyphosate with fewer restrictions.

McHargue said farmers aren't asking to put people at risk. They're asking to have consistent rules, grounded in science, that are set at the national level.

"There is a growing trend as new herbicides, chemicals and livestock production methods are developed and farmers start using those tools," he said. "A movement of certain people, maybe that's not scientifically based, saying, you know, 'I don't like that.'"

Hilgers and Bird said it is their job to protect farmers and ranchers from that uncertainty. Hilgers said the ag states want to encourage the EPA to do the right thing and exercise its congressionally approved authority.

If it doesn't, Hilgers said, states are prepared to pursue other options, from trying to address the issue in the farm bill to filing lawsuits. He said glyphosate is that important.

"There is no substitute for it," Hilgers said. "We don't have a substitute that is as effective and as low cost that exists."

Nebraska Examiner political reporter Aaron Sanderford has tackled various news roles in his 20-plus year career. He has reported on politics, crime, courts, government and business for the Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal-Star. He also worked as an assignment editor and editorial writer. He was an investigative reporter at KMTV.

U.S. Education Department to gradually roll out new FAFSA form by Dec. 1

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - AUGUST 7, 2024 5:13 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education said Wednesday it will use a phased rollout to launch the 2025-26 form to apply for federal financial student aid, which will make the application fully available two months later than usual.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid — better known as FAFSA — will be available to hundreds of students on Oct. 1, gradually ramping up to be available to all by Dec. 1. The staggered approach is an attempt to fix any issues before the form is open to everyone.

The phased rollout came after the 2024-25 form, which got a makeover following Congress passing the FAFSA Simplification Act in late 2020, witnessed its share of hiccups and glitches during the soft launch in December and past the official debut in January.

Though advocates expressed concerns regarding the form's failure to adjust for inflation, its formula miscalculation and its tax data errors, which prompted processing delays, the department has worked to fix these issues.

"As we rolled out the 2024-2025 FAFSA cycle, we met various challenges in its first year," U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said during a call with reporters Wednesday.

Cardona said "these challenges — rooted in a federal student aid department that was also in desperate need of modernization — resulted in frustration for many students, families, education leaders and policy makers from the Hill."

The Education secretary added that over the last 10 months, the department has "spent lots of time with these stakeholders to ensure their experience and their input influences our work moving forward," noting that the new roll-out process reflects the extensive feedback the department has received.

Jeremy Singer, who leads FAFSA strategy within the department's Office of Federal Student Aid, said hundreds of students will participate in the testing period beginning Oct. 1.

Singer said that availability will expand to thousands of students in mid-October and then to tens of thousands of students in early November, all prior to the form opening up to all students and families by Dec. 1.

Hearing from many students, families, schools and organizations, Singer said some of the most common demands included a concrete launch timeline and ability to track progress on that timeline, the launch of a form that's fully functioning and assurance that there will be no major defects once the form is launched.

Senior department officials said states and schools have told them that no determination of financial aid will be made before the system opens for all students in December.

U.S. Under Secretary of Education James Kvaal, who oversees higher education and financial aid, including the Office of Federal Student Aid, said that in March, the department received nearly 40% fewer FAFSAs than they had on the same date a year prior.

But now that gap is under 4% and they "continue to close it every week," Kvaal said.

The department is inviting volunteers to take part in the testing period and said it will release more information in the coming weeks on how students and other partners can get involved in this initial process.

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.



Close up of federal financial aid application. (Getty Images)

New bans on panhandling in medians spark debate over free speech rights

Courts have upheld some bans but struck down others

BY: TIM HENDERSON, STATELINE - AUGUST 7, 2024 8:52 AM

Despite court rulings that soliciting money is protected as free speech, some cities and at least one state are considering new restrictions on panhandling in traffic medians, arguing it's a safety hazard.

New Mexico's Democratic governor this year and an Arizona Republican lawmaker last year proposed statewide bans on asking for money on street medians, though neither passed. Wilmington, North Carolina,



A driver hands money to a man panhandling on a median in Jacksonville, Fla., where a ban on panhandling has been challenged in court. Citing public safety, other cities and the state of New Mexico are considering banning pedestrians, including panhandlers, from medians. (Dan Scanlan/Jacksonville Today)

soliciting money in the streets, and higher pedestrian deaths compared with before the pandemic. Backers of the bans argue that they promote safety, but opponents say that there's no proof such restrictions protect pedestrians and that they infringe on free speech rights. Court rulings have been mixed.

Many of the newest laws or proposed laws banning pedestrians on narrow medians followed one in Sandy City, Utah, which a federal appeals court upheld in 2019. The U.S. Supreme Court in 2020 declined to take up the case, leaving the law in place. The ordinance makes it "illegal for any individual to sit or stand, in or on any unpaved median, or any median of less than 36 inches for any period of time."

In New Mexico — which has the highest rate of pedestrian fatalities of any state, according to a Governors Highway Safety Association report based on 2023 data — Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham this year proposed a state law banning pedestrians on narrow medians. Some cities in New Mexico, including Santa Fe and Española, already have such bans. Benjamin Baker, a public safety adviser to the governor, said it makes sense to keep panhandlers and others off medians near cars.

Like other proponents of the bans, Baker acknowledged there's no clear connection between panhandling and pedestrian deaths. But he said it makes intuitive sense to ban seemingly dangerous activities such as standing on narrow medians in heavy traffic.

"Exercising free speech is not the issue," said Baker, who added that panhandling from a safe area is fine.

But lawmakers from her own party declined to sponsor Lujan Grisham's bill. And during a special session on public safety in July called by the governor, the bill's sole sponsor was Republican state Sen. Mark Moores of Albuquerque.

"The panhandling just got out of control across New Mexico and primarily Albuquerque," said Moores. "It's just unsafe. People are running back and forth through heavy traffic. We have to balance their right to free speech with public safety."

Despite her legislative defeat, Lujan Grisham continued to lobby for her proposed bill in a series of town halls across the state in July, saying she wants a statewide version of the city of Española's 2022 law banning loitering on narrow medians.

passed a similar ordinance this year, and Roanoke, Virginia, has stepped up enforcement of a law that has been on the books since last year. Advocates for homeless people have sued over a similar law in Jacksonville, Florida.

A handful of cities are turning to incentives as a solution: Oklahoma City, where courts struck down a panhandling ban, offers city cleanup work to panhandlers. Philadelphia and Fairfax County, Virginia, have similar programs, and Albuquerque, New Mexico's largest city, recently reinstated one.

The efforts have grown amid a nationwide homelessness crisis, with more people visibly

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 21 of 82

Efforts elsewhere

The American Civil Liberties Union has opposed a new law in Bangor, Maine, passed in June, that bans pedestrians from medians less than 6 feet wide in high-speed traffic areas.

Courts have overturned some similar laws. In 2020, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down an Oklahoma City ban, ruling the city had failed to prove a clear safety problem because of pedestrians in street medians. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to take up the case, leaving the ruling in place.

Scout Katovich, an attorney at the ACLU's Trone Center for Justice and Equality, said pedestrian safety is not a credible motive for the recent legislation.

"Everybody's talking about how we have to get rid of these panhandlers, 'We don't want to see unhoused people,' and then they turn around and say this is about safety. That's not going to fly," Katovich said.

In Roanoke, Virginia, a ban on panhandling on medians less than 4 feet wide has been on the books since last year and enforcement is on the rise, with about a hundred \$25 citations issued since spring, said Roanoke Police Capt. Andrew Pulley. Larger fines or jail sentences could follow for repeat offenders, he said.

Police have gotten complaints about panhandlers, and the city tries to respond to them, Pulley said. Issuing citations deters panhandling, he said, but the effect is usually temporary.

"It's like speeding. When we're there, it's better, but you go away and come back and it's there again."

In Arizona, Republican state Sen. John Kavanagh, who had sponsored anti-panhandling legislation in 2015, last year introduced a bill targeting panhandling on traffic medians. A committee approved the bill along party lines, but it didn't reach the Senate floor.

A legal challenge

In Florida, the Homeless Voice, a newspaper that employs homeless people to distribute it on the street and ask for donations, sued the city of Jacksonville over its new law banning panhandling in high-traffic areas, which prevented many of its workers from operating in the city.

Workers could make up to about \$100 a day, which was often enough to split a hotel room or even pay rent in some areas, said Sean Cononie, publisher of the Homeless Voice.

"We're going backwards in this country," Cononie said. "People think homeless people are lazy, and they are not lazy. This is hard work."

The Jacksonville Homeless Voice staff is down from 90 recently to eight, he said, as police have warned his workers to stop asking drivers for money on the street.

In the Jacksonville case, federal Judge Timothy Corrigan allowed the city to continue enforcing the law during an upcoming trial, noting that the city offered to suspend enforcement on public sidewalks and enforce it only on medians. Corrigan called it a "clash between First Amendment rights and public safety concerns," but did not say how he might rule.

In court papers, Jacksonville defended the ban, saying it's motivated by concern for pedestrian safety and that the city respects the Homeless Voice's right to ask for money on sidewalks but not "in and on the city's busiest roadways" without a required permit.

Tim Henderson covers demographics for Stateline. He has been a reporter at the Miami Herald, the Cincinnati Enquirer and The Journal News in suburban New York. Henderson became fascinated with census data in the early 1990s, when AOL offered the first computerized reports. Since then he has broken stories about population trends in South Florida, including a housing affordability analysis included in the 2007 Pulitzer-winning series "House of Lies" for the Miami Herald, and a prize-winning analysis of public pension irregularities for The Journal News. He has been a member and trainer for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since its inception 20 years ago, specializing in online data access and visualization along with demographics.

Groton Daily Independent







Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 22 of 82



2024 SDALB Junior State B Tournament

Aug 9 - Aug 11, 2024 • Tournament • Groton, SD

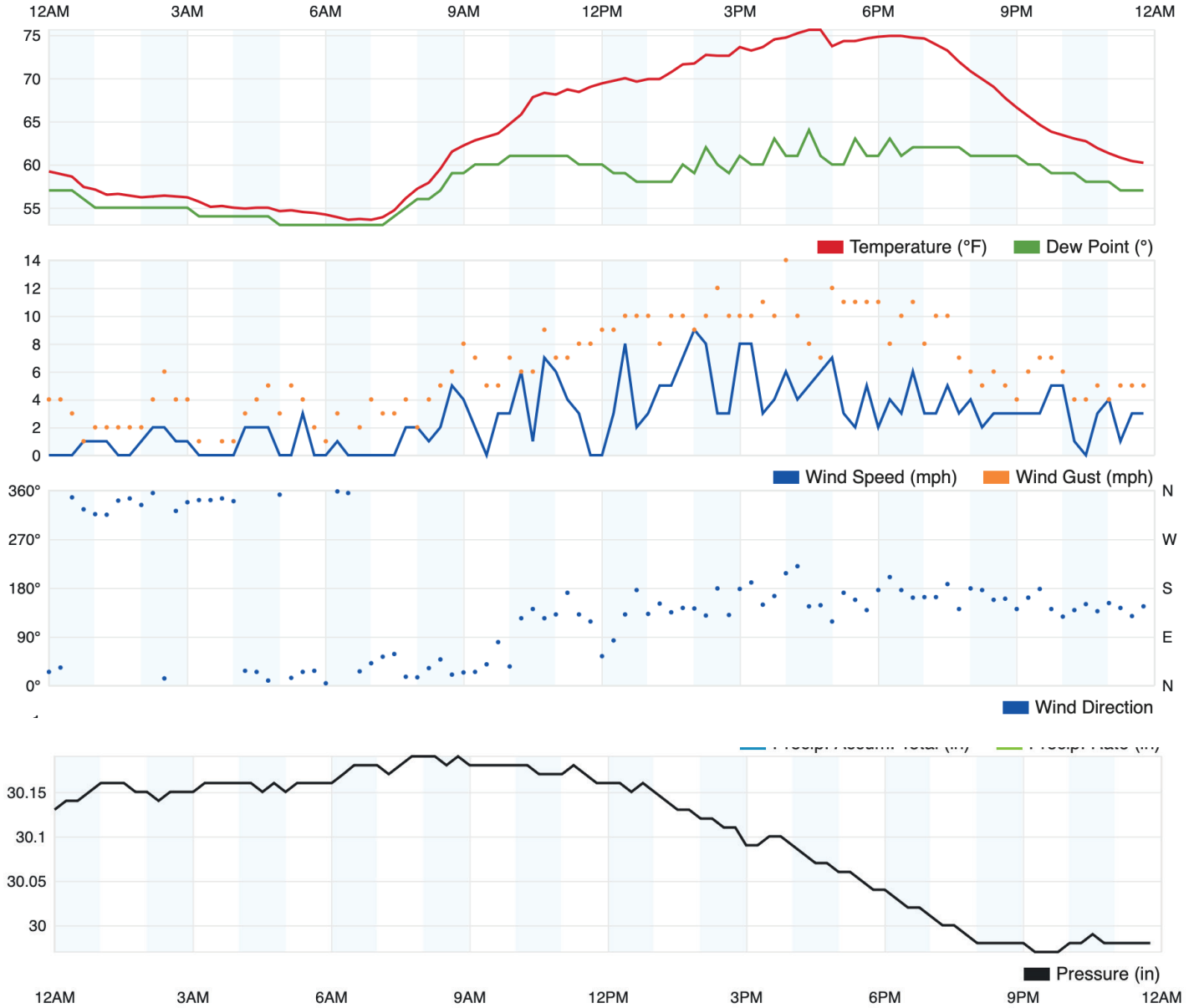
Friday August 9, 2024

- | | |
|---|------------|
|  Beresford Post 72 Jr. Legion 2024 | 10:00 AM > |
|  @ W.I.N. Jr Legion Baseball | |
|  Clark Area Jr Legion 17U | 12:30 PM > |
|  @ Winner/Colome Jr Legion | |
|  Hitmen Jr Legion | 3:00 PM > |
|  @ Lennox Post 174 Jr Legion | |

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 23 of 82

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 24 of 82

Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



High: 68 °F

Low: 47 °F

High: 70 °F

Low: 46 °F

High: 75 °F

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

Today



Highs: 64-72°F
Lows: 45-50°F

Friday



Highs: 65-77°F
Lows: 46-51°F

Saturday



Highs: 69-79°F
Lows: 48-56°F



Aberdeen, SD

Dry and cool conditions can be expected for the rest of the work week and into the first half of the weekend. High temperatures in the 60s and 70s are 10 to 15 degrees below average.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 25 of 82

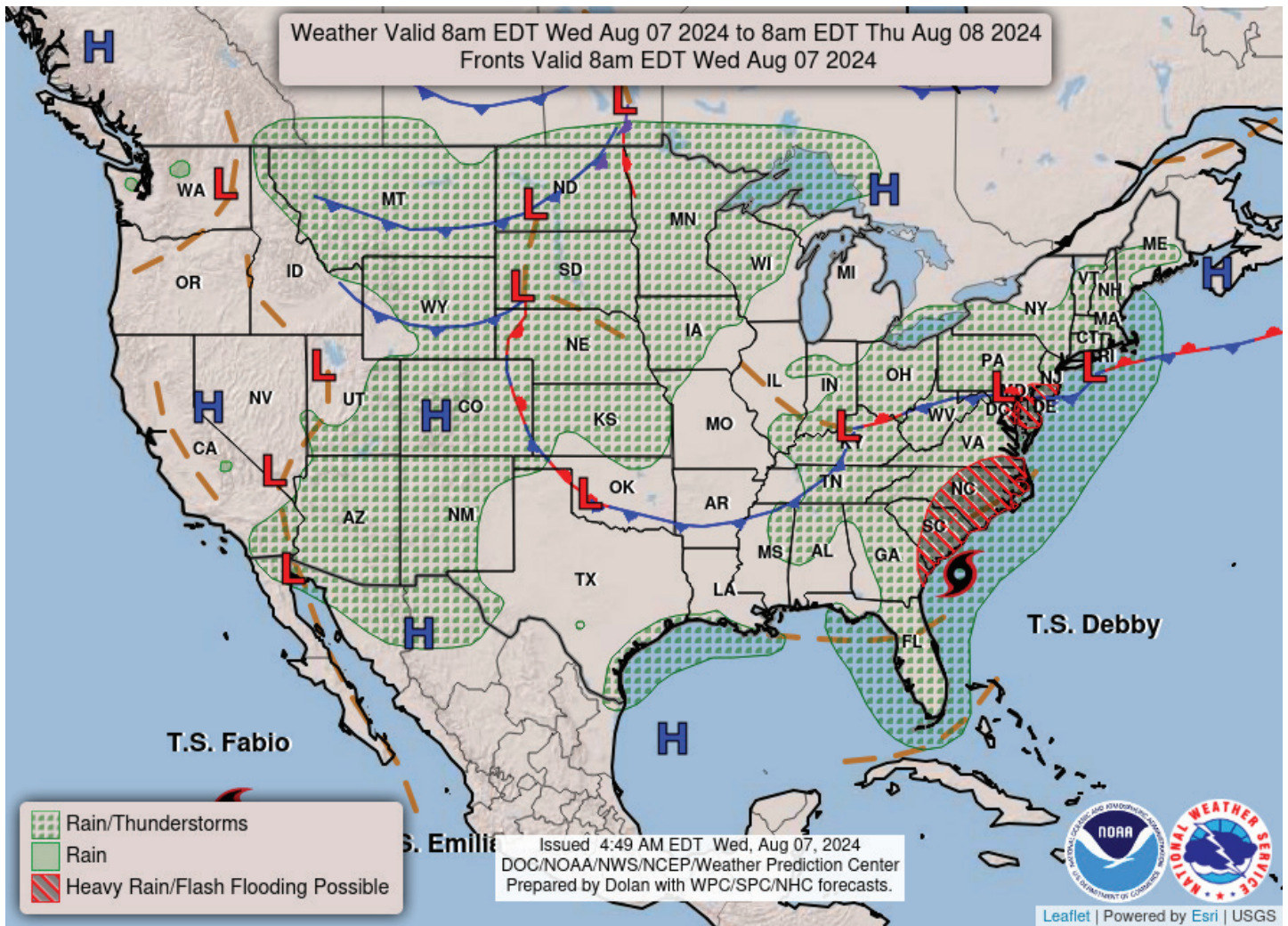
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 4:29 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 11:28 PM
Wind: 21 mph at 5:49 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 27 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1936
Record Low: 42 in 1939
Average High: 84
Average Low: 58
Average Precip in Aug.: .58
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.10
Average Precip to date: 14.68
Precip Year to Date: 15.99
Sunset Tonight: 8:51:43 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25:23 am



Today in Weather History

August 8, 2010: Thunderstorms produced damaging winds and flash flooding from heavy rain along and near the Missouri River in southeast South Dakota during the late afternoon. Bon Homme and Yankton Counties were among the hardest hit areas. Avon in Bon Homme County, thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage to trees and power lines. The tree damage included large trees uprooted or blown down, and falling trees destroyed at least two houses. The damage to power lines caused a power outage over the town which lasted about 5 hours. The winds also destroyed a large shed and damaged a camper parked in the shed. In Tyndall, thunderstorm winds of 70 mph caused tree damage, including large trees blown down. The winds also blew down power lines, damaged several small sheds, and tore shingles off roofs. Thunderstorm winds also ripped through Yankton County. Near Napa, winds overturned several campers and caused widespread tree damage, including large trees blown down at a Lewis and Clark Lake campground.

1874: Swarms of Rocky Mountain locust invaded Denver, Colorado. Millions were seen cruising through the air. The insects were picked up by a thunderstorm gust front and carried into the city. The grasshoppers ravaged crops in surrounding counties for the last month.

1881 - A cloudburst and flash flood occurred at Central Springs, CO, and Idaho Springs, CO. (David Ludlum)

1882 - An August snowstorm was reported by a ship on Lake Michigan. A thick cloud reportedly burst on the decks covering them with snow and slush six inches deep. Snow showers were observed at shore points that day. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1878 - The temperature at Denver, CO, soars to an all-time record high of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The temperature at Big Horn Basin, WY, reached 115 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorm rains in eastern Nebraska sent the Wahoo River and Ithica River above flood stage. Thunderstorm rains in western Iowa sent the Nishnabotna River over flood stage. Up to seven inches of rain deluged the Council Bluffs area Friday evening and Saturday morning. Thunderstorms produced 4.4 inches of rain in three hours Friday evening, along with golf ball size hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a slow moving cold front produced severe weather from central Kansas to southern Wisconsin late in the day. Thunderstorms in Iowa produced hail three inches in diameter at Vinton, and produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Donohue and near Mount Pleasant. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of ninety-nine cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 40 degrees. Mount Mitchell NC was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 35 degrees. Early evening thunderstorms around Las Vegas NV produced wind gusts to 116 mph. The high winds damaged or destroyed about eighty-two aircraft at Henderson Sky Harbor Airport and McCarran International Airport, causing fourteen million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2007: A tornado bounces across Staten Island and Brooklyn, New York, ripping off roofs and damaging dozens of buildings. The EF-2 twister hop-scotched through Brooklyn's Bay Ridge and Sunset Park neighborhoods around 6:30 am.



GET UP AND GO ON

Little Lola was having a hard time learning to skate. Every time she got up and started to skate, she fell down. The bruises were multiplying and covering all of the available space on her knees and elbows.

A neighbor passing by watched her try and try again. Finally, he approached her and asked, "Why don't you give up?"

"Because," she cried with tears streaming down her face, "my father didn't give me these skates to give up with but to go on with."

Our Lord gives us His gracious favor and wonder working power to "go on with." A good example of this is the Apostle Paul. God did not remove His affliction. He promised, however, to demonstrate His grace and power in and through all that he did and wherever he went.

God wants to display His grace and power in our lives through what we believe to be our weaknesses. He wants to give us courage and hope, strength and victory. When we willingly admit our weaknesses and limitations, we are forced to depend upon God for our effectiveness and accomplishments. Surrendering to Him when we need His help forces us to admit our inabilities and His abilities. Admitting our limitations enables us to develop our Christ-likeness, deepen our respect for God's presence and power in our lives and encourages us to a deeper sense of worship.

Prayer: Father, we truly need Your involvement in our lives. When we are weak - give us Your strength, when we are down - raise us with Your power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 28 of 82

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State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.06.24

23 29 36 61 70 22

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$398,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 10
Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

15 24 42 44 51 4

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,530,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 25
Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

3 9 30 45 46 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 22
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

10 20 25 27 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$62,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 40
Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

16 29 31 60 65 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 9
Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

6 19 35 47 57 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$201,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 9
Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 30 of 82

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
- Cancelled:** 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 **AP** Associated Press

Tragedy prevented by foiling apparent plot to attack Taylor Swift concerts in Austria, official says

By PHILIPP-MORITZ JENNE and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Following the cancellation of three Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna over an apparent attack plot, Austria's Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said Thursday in Vienna that "the situation was serious, the situation is serious. But we can also say: A tragedy was prevented."

The cancellations of three sold-out concerts this week devastated Swifties across the globe, many of whom had dropped thousands of euros on travel and lodging in Austria's expensive capital city for the sold-out Eras Tour shows on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the Ernst Happel Stadium, which sat empty Thursday morning aside from media filming outside.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

VIENNA (AP) — Three Taylor Swift concerts this week in Vienna have been canceled following arrests over an apparent plot to launch an attack in the area, potentially at the stadium itself, and at least one of the suspects has been linked to the Islamic State group.

Chemical substances and technical devices were found at the house of that suspect, a 19-year-old Austrian, according to Franz Ruf, the public security director at Austria's Interior Ministry.

In an interview Thursday with public broadcaster ORF's Oe1 program, Ruf said investigators are evaluating the evidence seized from the suspect's home. Just a few weeks ago, the 19-year-old had uploaded an oath of allegiance to the current leader of the Islamic State group militia to an internet account, Ruf added.

A second person was arrested in the Austrian capital. Several Austrian media reported Thursday that additional suspects were being sought — something police did not officially confirm.

The cancellations devastated Swifties across the globe, many of whom had dropped thousands of euros on travel and lodging in Austria's expensive capital city for the sold-out Eras Tour shows on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the Ernst Happel Stadium, which sat empty Thursday morning aside from media filming outside.

Europe is enamored by the American superstar, with the German town of Gelsenkirchen renaming itself "Swiftkirchen" before its mid-July concerts.

Austria's Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler wrote on social platform X: "For many, a dream has been shattered today. On three evenings in Vienna, tens of thousands of #Swifties should have celebrated life together."

"I am very sorry that you were denied this. Swifties stick together, hate and terror can't destroy that," Kogler wrote late Wednesday.

Ruf said authorities were aware of "preparatory actions" for a possible attack "and also that there is a focus by the 19-year-old perpetrator on the Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna," the Austria Press Agency reported.

The Austrian citizen is believed to have become radicalized on the internet. Ruf didn't give more details, such as the suspects' names, in line with Austrian privacy law.

Event organizer Barracuda Music said in an Instagram post late Wednesday that "we have no choice but to cancel the three scheduled shows for everyone's safety." It cited government officials' confirmation of a planned attack at the stadium.

The cancellation came hours after authorities said security measures for the Swift concerts would be stepped up. Ruf previously said that there would be a special focus among other things on entry checks, and concertgoers should plan a bit more time.

Vienna Police Chief Gerhard Pürstl said at the same time that, while any concrete danger had been minimized, an abstract risk justified raising security.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer posted on X that "the cancellation of the Taylor Swift concerts by the organizers is a bitter disappointment for all fans in Austria."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 32 of 82

"The situation surrounding the apparently planned terror attack in Vienna was very serious," he wrote. But he added that, thanks to intensive cooperation between police and Austrian and foreign intelligence, "the threat could be recognized early on, tackled and a tragedy prevented."

Barracuda Music said that "all tickets will be automatically refunded within the next 10 business days." The same wording was posted under the Vienna dates on Swift's official website.

The Vienna stadium had been sold out for the planned concerts, APA reported, with an estimated 170,000 fans expected for the concerts in Austria.

Some who posted on X lamented months of now-wasted efforts to make friendship bracelets and pick out fashionable outfits for the performance.

The cancellations came more than a week after a stabbing attack in the northwest England seaside town of Southport during a Taylor Swift-themed summer holiday dance and yoga class. The violence left three girls dead and 10 others injured. A 17-year-old has been charged with murder.

In 2017, an attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, killed 22 people. Suicide bomber Salman Abedi set up a knapsack bomb in Manchester Arena at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving. More than 100 people were injured. Abedi died in the explosion.

An official inquiry reported in 2023 that Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, didn't act swiftly enough on key information and missed a significant opportunity to prevent the bombing, the deadliest extremist attack in the United Kingdom in recent years.

Dazio reported from Berlin. Associated Press writers Geir Moulson and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin, and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, contributed to this report.

Nobel laureate Yunus arrives in Bangladesh to take over as interim leader

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh's next leader Muhammad Yunus arrived home Thursday from an overseas trip and will take office later in the day, as he looks to restore calm and rebuild the country following an uprising that ended the 15-year, increasingly autocratic rule of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Yunus landed at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Thursday afternoon and was welcomed by the country's military chief, Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman, who was flanked by navy and air force heads.

Some of the student leaders who led the uprising against Hasina were also present at the airport to welcome him. They had earlier proposed Yunus as interim leader to the country's figurehead president, who is currently acting as the chief executive under the constitution.

In his first comments after his arrival, he told a news briefing that his priority would be to restore order. "Bangladesh is a family. We have to unite it," Yunus said, flanked by the student leaders. "It has immense possibility."

He urged all to stop violence and promised not to resort to any repressive measures against anyone.

Security was tight at the airport to ensure Yunus' safe arrival, as the country has experienced days of unrest following the downfall of Hasina on Monday. President Mohammed Shahabuddin will administer the oath-taking ceremony on Thursday night when Yunus is expected to announce his new Cabinet.

Before leaving Paris, where he was attending the Olympics, Yunus appealed for calm in Bangladesh amid tensions over the country's future.

Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, who acts as an adviser to his mother, vowed Wednesday that his family and the Awami League party would continue to be engaged in Bangladesh's politics — a reversal from what he'd said earlier in the week after Hasina stepped down Monday and fled to India.

Yunus was named as interim leader following talks among military officials, civic leaders and the student activists who led the uprising against Hasina. Yunus made his first public comments in the French capital on Wednesday before boarding a plane to return home.

Yunus congratulated the student protesters, saying they had made "our second Victory Day possible,"

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 33 of 82

and he appealed to them and other stakeholders to remain peaceful, while condemning the violence that followed Hasina's resignation.

"Violence is our enemy. Please don't create more enemies. Be calm and get ready to build the country," Yunus said.

Bangladesh's military chief, Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman, said in a televised address on Wednesday that he expected Yunus to usher in a "beautiful democratic" process.

Yunus, who was awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his work developing microcredit markets, told reporters in Paris: "I'm looking forward to going back home and seeing what's happening there, and how we can organize ourselves to get out of the trouble that we are in."

Asked when elections would be held, he put his hands up as if to indicate it was too early to say.

"I'll go and talk to them. I'm just fresh in this whole area," he said.

A tribunal in Dhaka earlier on Wednesday acquitted Yunus in a labor law violation case involving a telecommunication company he founded, in which he was convicted and sentenced to six months in jail. He had been released on bail in the case.

The president had dissolved Parliament on Tuesday, clearing the path for an interim administration that is expected to schedule new elections.

Yunus has been a longtime opponent of Hasina, who had called him a "bloodsucker" allegedly for using force to extract loan repayments from rural poor, mainly women. Yunus has denied the allegations.

In a span of weeks since July 15, more than 300 people died in violence in Bangladesh. Rising tensions in the days surrounding Hasina's resignation created chaos, with police leaving their posts after being attacked. Dozens of officers were killed, prompting police to stop working across the country. They threatened not to return unless their safety is ensured. The looting of firearms was also reported in local media.

The chaos began in July with protests against a quota system for government jobs that critics said favored people with connections to Hasina's party. But the demonstrations soon grew into a broader challenge to Hasina's 15-year rule, which was marked by human rights abuses, corruption, allegations of rigged elections and a brutal crackdown on her opponents.

Joy, Hasina's son, said in a social media post on Wednesday that his family would return to politics and not give up following attacks on the Awami League party's leaders and members. Many see Joy as Hasina's successor in a dynastic political culture that dominates the South Asian nation's politics.

On Monday, Joy had said Hasina would not return to politics after she stepped down. But in a video message posted on his Facebook page on Wednesday, he urged party activists to rise up.

"You are not alone. We are here. The family of Bangabandhu has not gone anywhere," he said.

Hasina's father, independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is fondly referred to in Bangladesh as Bangabandhu, which means "friend of Bengal."

"If we want to build a new Bangladesh, it is not possible without the Awami League," he said.

"The Awami League is the oldest, democratic, and largest party in Bangladesh," Joy added. "The Awami League has not died ... It is not possible to eliminate the Awami League. We had said that our family would not engage in politics anymore. However, given the attacks on our leaders and activists, we cannot give up."

Overnight into Thursday, residents across Dhaka carried sticks, iron rods and sharp weapons to guard their neighborhoods amid reports of robberies. Communities used loudspeakers in mosques to alert people that robberies were occurring, as police remained off duty. The military shared hotline numbers for people seeking help.

The quick move to select Yunus came when Hasina's resignation created a power vacuum and left the future unclear for Bangladesh, which has a history of military rule, messy politics and myriad crises.

Many fear that Hasina's departure could trigger even more instability in the densely populated nation of some 170 million people, which is already dealing with high unemployment, corruption and a complex strategic relationship with India, China and the United States.

Hasina, 76, was elected to a fourth consecutive term in January, in an election boycotted by her main opponents. Thousands of opposition members were jailed before the vote, and the U.S. and U.K. denounced the result as not credible.

Carles Puigdemont, ex-Catalan leader, returns to Spain after nearly 7 years as a fugitive

By RENATA BRITO and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Former Catalonia leader Carles Puigdemont, who fled Spain after organizing an independence referendum in the wealthy Spanish region nearly seven years ago that was declared illegal, returned to the country on Thursday despite a pending arrest warrant.

Puigdemont defiantly appeared in Barcelona after traveling from Belgium and made a speech in front of a large crowd of supporters. He faces charges of embezzlement for his part in the attempt to break Catalonia away from the rest of Spain in 2017.

Puigdemont appeared in a central Barcelona park where several thousand separatist supporters who had gathered in expectation of his arrival waved Catalan flags. He punched the air to cheers on a bright, sunny day.

Addressing the crowd, Puigdemont accused Spanish authorities of “a crackdown” on the Catalan separatist movement.

“For the last seven years we have been persecuted because we wanted to hear the voice of the Catalan people,” Puigdemont said. “They have made being Catalan into something suspicious.”

He added: “All people have the right to self-determination.”

After his speech, Puigdemont went into an adjacent marquee tent. There, he hurried out of an exit and jumped into a waiting car that sped away, according to an Associated Press photographer who witnessed his departure. Puigdemont’s whereabouts weren’t known, and police made no immediate comment.

The 2017 referendum organized by Puigdemont was declared illegal at the time both by Spain’s central government and the Constitutional Court.

Puigdemont has dedicated his career to the goal of carving out a new country in northeast Spain — a struggle which is decades-old. His largely uncompromising approach has brought political conflict with other separatist parties as well as with Spain’s central government.

The event was organized by his political party Together for Catalonia (Junts), hours before a new regional government was to take office nearby.

Local police were deployed in a security ring around a section of the park where Catalonia’s parliament building is located behind walls. Puigdemont, wearing a dark suit, white shirt and tie, walked toward the building followed by masses of supporters.

Puigdemont had earlier announced publicly he was going back to Spain, though he gave no travel details.

Puigdemont’s presence in Spain is likely to generate renewed political tension over the smoldering issue of Catalan independence. The failed secession attempt triggered a protracted constitutional crisis.

It wasn’t immediately clear how authorities would proceed if Puigdemont was arrested.

A contentious amnesty bill, crafted by Spain’s Socialist-led coalition government, could potentially clear Puigdemont and hundreds of other supporters of Catalan independence of any wrongdoing in the illegal 2017 ballot.

But the bill, approved by Spain’s parliament earlier this year, is being challenged by the Supreme Court, which argues the pardon does not apply to embezzlement, unlike other crimes that Puigdemont had previously been charged with. Puigdemont could be placed in pretrial detention.

The former Catalan leader’s return threatened to complicate a deal brokered after months of deadlock between Salvador Illa’s Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) and the other main Catalan separatist party and left-wing Esquerra Republicana (ERC).

That deal had ensured just enough support in Catalonia’s parliament for Illa to become the next regional president in an investiture debate Thursday.

Relatives of Belarus' political prisoners complain that East-West swap didn't free their loved ones

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — A wave of disappointment swept over opposition activists in Belarus last week as the biggest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War unfolded and they learned it included none of the hundreds of political detainees who've been locked up for years by its authoritarian leader.

That dismay is especially poignant since Friday marks the fourth anniversary of the 2020 election — widely seen at home and abroad as fraudulent — that gave President Alexander Lukashenko his sixth term. That disputed balloting touched off the biggest protests and crackdown on dissent in Belarus in its post-Soviet history.

The Viasna human rights group estimates Belarus has about 1,400 political prisoners, including its founder and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski. Like many top opposition figures, Bialiatski is being held incommunicado.

"I am happy to see the Russians released, but I'm shocked that no one remembered about the fate of Belarusian political prisoners," Bialiatski's wife, Natalia Pinchuk, told The Associated Press. "I hope it was just the first round of the game involving the West, and Belarusians will also be freed following representatives of Russia."

The only prisoner freed from Belarus in the Aug. 1 swap was Rico Krieger, a German medical worker who was arrested there last year on terrorism charges. He was among 16 imprisoned Westerners and Russian dissidents traded for eight Russians held abroad.

Viasna has raised the issue with Western diplomats, listing over 30 political prisoners who need to be released as a priority, according to the group's representative, Pavel Sapelka.

He said some Western countries have held confidential discussions with Lukashenko's government, although he did not provide details.

The wait is excruciating for Pinchuk, who gets only occasional messages that Bialiatski is alive. She says his health has "significantly worsened," he is barred from getting medications and is repeatedly placed in solitary confinement in his 10-year sentence on charges of financing the 2020 protests.

At least six political prisoners have died in custody.

Western governments know the harsh conditions in which her husband and others are held, "but I'm unaware that any Belarusian names were discussed as part of the exchange," Pinchuk said.

Tatsiana Khomich, the sister of imprisoned opposition activist Maria Kolesnikova, had hoped to see her freed in the exchange.

"Obviously there was a window of opportunity for freeing Belarusians, because Minsk was involved in the scheme and took part in negotiations with Berlin regarding Krieger," Khomich told AP. "But Western politicians couldn't or didn't want to use that window."

With her short hair and vibrant smile, Kolesnikova was known for appearing at Minsk demonstrations and forming a heart with her hands. She was arrested in September 2020 after defiantly tearing up her passport at the border when authorities tried to deport her.

Khomich said she hasn't heard from her sister for 1½ years. Kolesnikova, 42, who is serving 11 years in a particularly harsh prison, underwent surgery and was gravely ill, with her weight dropping to about 45 kilograms (99 pounds), her sister said.

"It has become obvious that neither Belarus nor Belarusian prisoners are a priority for Western partners," Khomich said. "And it's a very alarming signal for us."

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett said Washington "remains deeply concerned" about Lukashenko's crackdown.

"We will continue to support the people of Belarus as they stand up for their democratic future, human rights, and freedom of expression," he said.

Kolesnikova was charged with helping organize the mass protests of the Aug. 9, 2020, election that lasted for months. Over 35,000 people were arrested and thousands were beaten. Many opposition figures were

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 36 of 82

convicted and given long prison terms, while others fled abroad.

One who was forced to leave was opposition leader-in-exile Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who said she admired Kolesnikova's courage.

"We haven't won yet, but we haven't been defeated, because people haven't given up," Tsikhanouskaya told AP. "Many Belarusians are continuing resistance, thousands are paying a price for freedom in prisons. It became clear in 2020 that Lukashenko lost support of the majority of Belarusians."

Tsikhanouskaya's husband, Siarhei Tsikhanouski, was arrested after challenging Lukashenko in the election. She ran in his place, but was forced to flee the country. Tsikhanouski was sentenced to 19½ years.

Tsikhanouskaya, who has been lobbying Western leaders against Lukashenko, also expressed disappointment that no Belarusians were freed in the swap.

"Lukashenko is afraid of freeing political prisoners; he's holding them hostage," she said. "He's probably feeling insecure and is afraid of showing weakness. He may fear that releasing political prisoners will encourage Belarusians to fight."

But she is not giving up efforts for their freedom.

"Together with Western partners, including the U.S., Germany and Poland, we are looking for mechanisms to set them free," she said. "But the pressure on the Belarusian leader may not have been enough to make him move. Repressions are only escalating."

Tsikhanouskaya said the Kremlin helped Lukashenko survive the protests and he "is now paying back for that support with the country's sovereignty."

Lukashenko, who this year marked three decades in power, allowed Russian troops to use Belarus' territory to invade Ukraine in 2022 and let Moscow deploy some tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Pavel Latushka, Belarus' former culture minister and now an exiled opposition activist, told AP he has written to German lawmakers about Belarus' human rights issues. He was convicted of various anti-government charges in absentia by a Minsk court.

Lukashenko, he said, was only fulfilling the wishes of Russian President Vladimir Putin by releasing Krieger in the swap.

"We can't communicate with Putin," Latushka said. "The single channel of communications we have is representatives of Germany and other Western governments, who are well-informed of the horrible condition of political prisoners in Belarus."

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said efforts continue to free Belarusian political prisoners, including journalist Andrzej Poczobut, a member of Belarus' sizable Polish minority.

But Belarus demanded Latushka's extradition in exchange for releasing Poczobut, said former Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Kamiński

According to Viasna's Sapelka, over 50,000 Belarusians have been subjected to political repression in the past four years.

In July, Belarusian authorities released 19 political prisoners who were gravely ill, including opposition leader Ryhor Kastusiou, suffering with cancer. But Sapelka noted that authorities "have arrested three times as many activists to fill prison cells."

"Repressions in Belarus are only intensifying, the number of police raids and arrests grows," he said. "Belarusians badly need support and solidarity from Western countries, not only in words but also in deeds."

Now that Lukashenko is seeking another term next year, analysts don't expect him to free any more prisoners anytime soon.

"Lukashenko has been unable to overcome his fear and get rid of the 2020 trauma, so next year's presidential election will be held in a tough repressive environment, amid suppression of any activism and overfilled prisons," said Valery Karbalevich, an independent analyst. "Lukashenko will use political prisoners solely for bargaining with the West and only to an extent that the Kremlin would allow."

He said the failure to include any Belarusian political prisoners in the latest exchange shows the issue is not seen as a priority by the West.

"It's obvious that Belarus has begun to disappear from the Western agenda after a four-year journey from the front pages of international media to sadly waning interest in the fate of thousands of Belarusian political prisoners," Karbalevich said.

Tropical Storm Debby makes 2nd landfall in South Carolina, heavy rain expected up the East Coast

By JEFFREY COLLINS and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

HUGER, S.C. (AP) — Tropical Storm Debby has made a second landfall in South Carolina on its way up the East Coast, where residents as far north as Vermont could get several inches of rain this weekend.

The National Hurricane Center says Debby came ashore early Thursday near Bulls Bay, South Carolina. The storm is expected to keep moving inland, spreading heavy rain and possible flooding all the way up through the mid-Atlantic and the Northeast by the weekend.

Debby first made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane early Monday on the Gulf Coast of Florida. It is now a tropical storm with maximum sustained winds at 50 mph (80 kph).

Considerable flooding is expected across parts of eastern South Carolina and southeast North Carolina through Friday, with an additional 3 to 9 inches (8 to 23 centimeters) of rain forecast, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Days of rain have forced the deluge-hardened residents of a South Carolina community to begin the near-ritualistic task of assessing damage left behind by Debby, which continued spinning over the Atlantic Ocean and influencing thunderstorms from the East Coast to the Great Lakes on Wednesday. The National Weather Service's office in Charleston also said survey teams confirmed four-Debby related tornadoes.

In Huger, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northeast of Charleston, Gene Taylor was waiting in the afternoon for a few inches of water to drain from his house along French Quarter Creek as high tide passed.

Taylor saw the potential for flooding last week and started moving belongings out or up higher in his home. It's a lesson learned the hard way — Taylor estimated that this is the fourth time he has had floodwater in his home in the past nine years.

"To save everything, we've learned from the past it's better be prepared for the worst. And unfortunately, I think we got it," Taylor said.

A few doors down, Charles Grainger was cleaning up after about 8 inches (20 centimeters) of water got into his home.

"Eight inches disrupts your whole life," Grainger said. "You don't get used to it. You just grin and bear it. It's part of living on the creek."

In Georgia, at least four dams were breached northwest of Savannah in Bulloch County, but no deaths had been reported, authorities said at a briefing.

More than 75 people were rescued from floodwaters in the county, said Corey Kemp, director of emergency management, and about 100 roads were closed.

"We've been faced with a lot of things we've never been faced with before," Bulloch County Commission Chairman Roy Thompson said. "I'm 78-plus years old and have never seen anything like this before in Bulloch County. It's amazing what has happened, and amazing what is going to continue to happen until all these waters get out of here."

For residents on Tappan Zee Drive in suburban Pooler, west of Savannah, Georgia, the drenching that Debby delivered came with a painful dose of déjà vu. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew overflowed a nearby canal and flooded several of the same homes.

Located roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers) inland from the Atlantic Ocean, with no creeks or rivers nearby, the neighborhood doesn't seem like a high-risk location for tropical flooding. But residents say drainage problems have plagued their street for well over a decade, despite local government efforts to fix them.

Debby also dumped rain on communities all the way up to the Great Lakes and New York and New Jersey. Moisture from the tropical storm strengthened another system Tuesday evening, which caused strong thunderstorms, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Scott Kleebauer.

"We had a multi-round period of showers and thunderstorms that kind of scooted from Michigan eastward," Kleebauer said.

As much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain fell in parts of New Jersey in less than four hours.

Emergency officials in New York City warned of potential flash flooding, flying drones with loudspeakers

in some neighborhoods to tell people in basement apartments to be ready to flee at a moment's notice. Multiple water rescues were reported in and near the city.

Nearly 330,000 customers remained without power in Ohio as of Wednesday afternoon, according to PowerOutage.us, following severe storms including two confirmed tornadoes. Utility officials with FirstEnergy's Illuminating Company said via social media that power restoration would take days due to the damage.

In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster said his state was just entering Act 2 of a three-act play, after more than 60 homes were damaged but roads and water systems were without significant problems.

The final act may come next week if enough rain falls upstream in North Carolina to cause major flooding along rivers as they flow to the Atlantic Ocean.

A state of emergency was in effect for both North Carolina and Virginia. Maryland issued a state of preparedness declaration that coordinates preparations without declaring an emergency.

At least six people have died due to the storm, five of them in traffic accidents or from fallen trees. The sixth death involved a 48-year-old man in Gulfport, Florida, whose body was recovered after his anchored sailboat partially sank. ____ This story has been updated to remove an incorrect reference to total rainfall amounts for the Carolinas.

Harris and Walz say they're 'joyful warriors,' narrowly avoid confrontation with Vance on tarmac

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

ROMULUS, Mich. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris declared herself and her new running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, "joyful warriors" against Donald Trump on Wednesday as they spent their first full day campaigning together across the Midwest. They got an unusual glimpse of how hotly contested the region would be when they overlapped on a Wisconsin tarmac with Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance.

The Democrats visited Wisconsin and Michigan, hoping to shore up support among the younger, diverse, labor-friendly voters who were instrumental in helping President Joe Biden win the 2020 election.

Harris told the day's first rally in Eau Claire, "As Tim Walz likes to point out, we are joyful warriors." Contributing to that feeling, the Harris campaign said it had raised \$36 million in the first 24 hours after she announced Walz as her running mate.

The vice president said the pair looks at the future with optimism, unlike Trump, the former president and Republican White House nominee, whom she accused of being stuck in the past and preferring a confrontational style of politics — even as she criticized her opponent herself.

"Someone who suggests we should terminate the Constitution of the United States should never again have the chance to sit behind the seal of the United States," Harris said, her voice rising.

Dan Miller, from Pelican Lake, Wisconsin, who was among 12,000-plus Eau Claire rally attendees, said Biden "has been an incredible president, but he just isn't the same messenger."

"And sometimes you need a better messenger," Miller said. "And that's Kamala."

Later, at an evening event in an airport hangar outside Detroit where the campaign announced a crowd of 15,000, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer — herself frequently mentioned as a future presidential candidate — declared, "We need a strong woman in the White House and it's about damn time."

"This election's going to be a fight," Harris told the same event. "We like a good fight."

The swing was especially important for Harris since Biden's winning coalition from four years ago has shown signs of fraying over the summer — particularly in Michigan, which has emerged as a focal point of Democratic divisions over Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

With the president now out of the race, leaders of the Arab American community and key unions say they are encouraged by Harris' running mate choice. Walz's addition to the ticket has soothed some tensions, signaling to some leaders that Harris had heard concerns about another leading contender for the vice presidential slot, Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania, who they felt had gone too far in his support for Israel.

"The party is recognizing that there's a coalition they have to rebuild," said Abdullah Hammoud, the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 39 of 82

mayor of the heavily Arab American community of Dearborn, Michigan. "Picking Walz is another sign of good faith."

Lingering dissensions were nonetheless on display during Harris' Michigan speech, when she was interrupted by protesters opposing Israel's fighting with Hamas. At first, Harris said to those trying to disrupt her, "I am here because I believe in democracy and everybody's voice matters."

That was a response similar to Biden's, who often said when interrupted at his rallies that protesters should be allowed to speak before being removed by security. Harris, however, then quickly pivoted to a tougher tack, continuing, "But I am speaking now." That sparked cheers from most of the audience.

"If you want Donald Trump to win, then say that," the vice president continued over the protesters. "Otherwise, I'm speaking."

Those demonstrating were eventually led away, but not before a tense confrontation between Harris supporters and protesters who screamed at one another.

Trump, meanwhile, has emphasized appealing to Midwestern voters with his choice of Vance, an Ohio senator, as his running mate. Vance bracketed the Harris-Walz ticket with Michigan and Wisconsin appearances of his own Wednesday.

He overlapped enough that while Harris was still greeting a group of Girl Scouts who came to see her arrive at Chippewa Valley Regional Airport in Wisconsin, Vance's campaign plane landed nearby and was taxiing in the distance. Harris posed for a group picture with the girls around the same time Vance was deplaning, and he began walking over to Air Force Two, trailed by his security detail.

The vice president eventually climbed into her motorcade, and it pulled away before they could interact. Still, that the pair came so close to doing so was unusual given the carefully scripted nature of campaign schedules.

"I just wanted to check out my future plane," Vance later told reporters, meaning that he'd travel on Air Force Two should he and Trump be elected in November. He also criticized Harris for not holding press conferences since she became a presidential candidate.

"If those people want to call me weird I call it a badge of honor," Vance said, responding to a moniker Walz used to describe him that made the Minnesota governor notable online in the days before Harris tapped him as her running mate.

Walz had some critical words for Vance in both Wisconsin and Michigan but trained most of his sharpest words on Trump, saying the former president "mocks our laws, he sows chaos and division amongst the people and that's to say nothing of the job he did as president."

Walz also stressed that he and Harris are promoting neighborliness and common community, even suggesting that his state's football fans were happy for Detroit's long-underperforming NFL team when it nearly made the most recent Super Bowl: "Vikings fans are proud of the Lions."

The momentum could be pivotal in Detroit, which is nearly 80% Black, where leaders for months had warned administration officials that voter apathy could cost them in a city that's typically a stronghold for their party.

Rev. Wendell Anthony, president of the NAACP Detroit branch, said the excitement in the city now is "mind-blowing." He likened it to Barack Obama's first presidential run in 2008, when voters waited in long lines to help elect the nation's first Black president.

Some Democratic leaders in Michigan had grown concerned that choosing the wrong running mate could slow that momentum, however, and fracture a coalition that has only recently started to unify.

Arab American leaders, who hold significant influence in Michigan due to a large presence in metro Detroit, had been vocal in their opposition to Shapiro due to his past comments regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Those leaders specifically pointed to a comment he made earlier this year regarding protests on university campuses, which they felt unfairly compared the actions of student protesters to those of white supremacists. Shapiro, who is Jewish, has criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while remaining a staunch supporter of Israel.

Osama Siblani, the publisher of the Dearborn-based Arab American News and a prominent leader in Michigan's large Muslim community, was among those who met with White House adviser Tom Perez in Michigan last week. Perez has maintained contact with some Dearborn leaders since he and other top officials traveled there with Biden to mend ties with the community.

Siblani said he met with Perez for over an hour on July 29 and told him that if Harris chose Shapiro, it would "shut down" future conversations.

"Not picking Shapiro is a very good step. It cracks the door open a little more for us," Siblani said.

An aid worker's airport disappearance stirs fear of repression following disputed Venezuela election

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The last time anyone heard from Edni López was Sunday. The 33-year-old political science professor and award-winning poet was preparing to board a flight to Argentina to visit a friend when she texted from the airport that something was wrong with her passport.

"Migration took my passport because it's showing up as expired," she wrote her boyfriend in the message shared with The Associated Press. "I pray to God I don't get screwed because of a system error."

What happened next remains a mystery — one contributing to the climate of fear and repression that has engulfed Venezuela following its disputed presidential election, the most serious wave of human rights abuses since Latin America's military dictatorships in the 1970s.

When López's mother, Ninoska Barrios, and her friends learned she didn't board the flight, they started frantically combing detention centers. Finally, on Tuesday — more than 48 hours later — they learned she was being held, incommunicado, by Venezuela's feared military intelligence police on unknown criminal charges, unable to see an attorney or speak with her family.

"Please, give back my daughter," a sobbing Barrios pleaded Tuesday outside Venezuela's top human rights office in a video that went viral on social media. "It's not right that a Venezuelan mother has to go through all this."

López's arrest isn't unique. Since the July 28 presidential election, security forces have rounded up more than 2,000 people for demonstrating against President Nicolás Maduro or casting doubt on his claim he won a third term despite strong evidence he lost the vote by a more than 2-to-1 margin. Another 24 have been killed, according to local human rights group Provea.

The spree of detentions — urged on by Maduro himself — is unprecedented, and puts Venezuela on pace to easily exceed those jailed during three previous crackdowns against Maduro's opponents.

Those arrested include journalists, political leaders, campaign staffers and an attorney defending protesters. Others have had their Venezuelan passports annulled trying to leave the country. One local activist even livestreamed her arrest by military intelligence officers as they broke into her home with a crowbar.

"You're entering my home arbitrarily, without any search warrant," Maria Oropeza, an opposition campaign leader in rural Portuguesa state, says in the livestream that abruptly ends after three minutes. "I'm not a delinquent. I'm just an average citizen who wants a different country."

The repression, much of it seemingly random and arbitrary, is having a chilling effect, said Phil Gunson, a Caracas-based analyst for the International Crisis Group.

"It's not just discouraging protests. People are scared to go on the streets, period," said Gunson, adding that parents of teenage boys are especially worried. "There's a sense that police have a quota to fill and anyone can be stopped and carted away as a suspected subversive."

The threats start at the top.

"They're hiding rats but we're going to grab them," ruling socialist party boss Diosdado Cabello said about several prominent opponents in an address to the Maduro-controlled legislature a day after the election.

Meanwhile, Maduro has called on Venezuelans to denounce election doubters via a government-run app originally created to report power outages and complaints about state-provided services. He also said the government was refurbishing two gang-dominated prisons to accommodate an expected surge of jailed

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 41 of 82

guarimberos — his dismissive term for middle-class protesters who barricaded themselves in the streets for weeks in 2014 and 2017.

“There will be no mercy,” Maduro said on state TV.

But complicating efforts to crush dissent is the changing face of the government’s opponents.

While demonstrations have been far smaller and tamer than during past bouts of unrest, they’re now more spontaneous, often leaderless and made up of youth — some barely teenagers — from Caracas’ hillside slums who have traditionally been a rock solid base of support for the government.

“I don’t care how many people have to die,” Cleiver Acuna, a 21-year-old tattoo artist, said at one recent grassroots march where protesters climbed up lampposts to tear down Maduro campaign posters.

“What I want is my freedom. My homeland. I want to live in the Venezuela my grandparents once told me about.”

Maria Corina Machado, the opposition powerhouse who rallied Venezuelans behind a last-minute stand-in candidate after she was barred from running against Maduro, has also urged restraint, reflecting the fear many feel.

“There are times to go out, times to meet, and demonstrate all our strength and determination and embrace each other, just as there are times to prepare, to organize, to communicate and to consult with our allies around the world, which are many,” she said in a recorded message posted online Tuesday.

“An operational pause is sometimes necessary.”

But the swiftness of the government’s clampdown does seem to be working. In just 10 days, security forces have rounded up nearly the same number of people as they did over five months in 2017, according to Provea.

“Operation Knock-Knock is a prime tool of state terrorism,” said Oscar Murillo, the head of Provea, referring to the surprise, middle-of-the-night detentions touted as a scare tactic by Cabello and others.

In the low-income Caracas neighborhood of Catia, once a ruling party stronghold, no one talks politics these days. One woman closed her business when protests began nearby and ran home. Videos of the demonstration flooded her phone over the next several hours, but she deleted them for fear the government was tracking social media posts to identify critics.

“I could get arrested just for having them,” she said.

The sudden silence is a sharp break from the hopeful mood preceding the election as emboldened opposition supporters confronted security forces who attempted to block anti-Maduro rallies. They served food, lent vehicles to opposition leader and opened their businesses to them despite knowing they would suffer retaliation from the police or have their businesses shut down.

Even before the current wave of unrest, Venezuela’s human rights record was under intense scrutiny. Maduro is the target of an investigation by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity allegedly committed in the past.

Maduro’s tactics have been likened to those in Central and South America in the 1970s when military dictatorships rounded up opponents and sometimes innocent bystanders. Many were killed, and in Argentina, some even drugged and dropped from airplanes into the ocean, with no trace of ever having been detained.

Maduro’s alleged abuses have little in common with those “Dirty War” campaigns by state security forces.

But the goal of instilling fear is the same, said Santiago Canton, an Argentine lawyer and secretary general of the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists, a watchdog group.

Canton said López’s case reminded him of the disappearance in Argentina in 1977 of a female activist pulled off a plane bound for Venezuela and never seen again. At the time, oil-rich Venezuela was the wealthiest country in South America and a democratic refuge for exiles fleeing military regimes across the region.

“What happened 50 years ago is unlikely to occur again,” said Canton, who previously led the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. “But social media is a multiplier factor that didn’t exist before so you can be more selective with the use of force and achieve the same results.”

Meanwhile, López’s friends and family are at a loss to explain why she was targeted.

Since 2020, she's been carrying out relief work in poor communities, for which she was honored as one of Venezuela's "100 Protagonist Women" by the Netherlands' Embassy in Caracas. The work is strictly humanitarian and López doesn't belong to any political movement.

Her social media profile is similarly void of any anti-government content, consisting mainly of whimsical drawings of butterflies, poems she penned and pictures of beaches and sand dunes from her travels across Venezuela.

Cristina Ramirez, who moved to Argentina from Caracas eight years ago, joining an exodus of more than 7 million Venezuelans who've fled the country, said she bought a ticket for López in May so her friend could enjoy a much-deserved vacation.

The two were looking forward to catching up after a long separation and a difficult year for López, whose family is struggling financially. She worries that her friend, who takes medicine for diabetes, is suffering in prison without knowing what led to the nightmare.

"It was going to be her first trip outside Venezuela," said Ramirez in a phone interview. "I'm still waiting for her."

The Walz record: Abortion rights, free lunches for schoolkids, and disputes over a riot response

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Gov. Tim Walz and his fellow Democrats have enacted big changes in the two years that they've had full control of the Minnesota Legislature, from expansions of abortion and LGBTQ+ rights to tax credits and other initiatives aimed at making life easier for families.

His record has delighted liberals and progressives and is a major reason why Vice President Kamala Harris chose him to be her running mate. He doesn't try to claim all the credit — strong Democratic legislative leaders also played major roles. But his record continues to draw condemnation from Republicans, who say he squandered a huge budget surplus that should have been used for tax cuts, failed to prevent hundreds of millions of dollars in fraud, and acted too slowly to quell the violence that followed the murder of George Floyd.

Here's some of what Walz has done as governor and how it might connect to the campaign now that he's on the Democratic Party ticket:

REMOVING ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

Walz signed legislation codifying abortion rights, repealing essentially all the state's restrictions and adding protections for patients who travel from states where abortion is restricted. The governor joined Harris during her visit in March to a St. Paul Planned Parenthood clinic, where she paid tribute to Minnesota's leadership in what her office said was the first time a president or vice president had toured a facility that performs abortions. Among the restrictions eliminated were a 24-hour waiting period and parental consent requirements.

LGBTQ RIGHTS

Walz and his fellow Democrats also enacted new protections for the rights of LGBTQ+ people from Minnesota and other states to receive gender-affirming health care, specifically including families coming from elsewhere for treatment for trans children. The state also banned so-called conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ children and vulnerable adults.

GEORGE FLOYD

Walz is under renewed fire for his response to the sometimes violent unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, which included the burning of a police station and numerous businesses. Former President Donald Trump has been repeating his false claim that he was responsible for deploying the National Guard to quell the violence. It was Walz who gave the order in response to requests from the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, not Trump. But within Minnesota, GOP legislators said both Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey were too slow to act. And there was finger-pointing between Frey and Walz over who was responsible for not activating the Guard faster. But

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 43 of 82

the ensuing national reckoning on racial injustice also spurred the passage of police accountability measures in Minnesota.

FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Republicans say lax oversight by the Walz administration over pandemic programs cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. That includes one of the country's largest pandemic aid fraud cases, known as the Feeding Our Future scandal. Federal prosecutors charged 70 people with defrauding programs that funded meals for kids during the pandemic out of \$250 million on Walz's watch. The Office of the Legislative Auditor, a nonpartisan watchdog, delivered a scathing report in June that said the state Department of Education "failed to act on warning signs" and was "ill-prepared to respond." Legislative Auditor Judy Randall told lawmakers that state agencies "don't necessarily approach their work with an oversight and a regulatory mindset." More recently, the administration has been criticized for payments to ineligible people for a bonus program for frontline workers, and overpayments of unemployment insurance.

BUDGET SURPLUSES

Walz has benefited from Minnesota's relatively strong economy, which generated enough tax revenues to provide decent surpluses at the start of the 2019 and 2021 budget cycles and an enormous \$17.6 billion budget surplus for 2023 that gave Democrats plenty to spend on their priorities. Those had been building up for years and included big increases for K-12 and post-secondary education. Two of his proudest accomplishments are tax credits for families with children that were aimed at slashing childhood poverty and free school meals for all kids regardless of family income. Democrats also enacted a paid family and medical leave program that has been held up as a potential model for federal legislation. Republican lawmakers say most of that surplus should have been returned to taxpayers via permanent tax cuts.

BIPARTISANSHIP

During his first term, Walz found ways to work with a Legislature that was split between a Democratic-controlled House and a Republican-led Senate. The arrangement was productive in his first year, but bipartisan cooperation frayed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, he relied on emergency powers to lead the state's response, which included lockdowns, closing schools and churches, and shuttering businesses. Once Democrats took full control of the Legislature in 2023, they didn't need Republican votes for much except for a \$2.6 billion public infrastructure package in 2023 that required supermajorities in each chamber.

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

Under Walz's watch, Minnesota became the 23rd state to legalize recreational marijuana for adults. But Minnesota still doesn't have a functioning legal marketplace. Developing the program has gone slowly, so the only places now selling non-medical marijuana legally are dispensaries on Native American reservations that aren't subject to state law. Walz's first choice to head the state's Office of Cannabis Management stepped aside just one day after her appointment last September after it was revealed that the administration's vetting process failed to discover that her business sold products exceeding state limits on THC potency, owed money to former associates and accumulated tens of thousands of dollars in tax liens. The office is still without a permanent leader.

VOTING

Walz signed legislation to make it easier to vote in Minnesota, where it was already pretty simple, and shoring up state-level protections for voting rights that federal courts had eroded. One major change was restoring the rights of convicted felons to vote as soon as they get out of prison, instead of having to wait until their supervised release ends. It was framed as an issue of racial equity. After Walz became Harris' running mate, conservatives cited it as evidence that he's soft on crime. But the Minnesota Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld the law against a challenge by conservatives who said it was unconstitutional. The law extended voting rights to at least 55,000 people who had been ineligible.

GUN SAFETY

Minnesota's first lady, Gwen Walz, used her position to back up his advocacy of gun safety measures, including legislation her husband signed in 2023 to require universal background checks for gun transfers and a "red flag" law to let authorities temporarily take guns from people ruled a risk to themselves or others.

How horses at the Spirit Horse Ranch help Maui wildfire survivors process their grief

By GABRIELA AOUN ANGUEIRA Associated Press

KANAIO, Hawaii (AP) — Fear. Anxiety. Anger. Depression. Overwhelmed.

Janice Dapitan began her second counseling session by writing those words on a whiteboard, reflecting what she felt in that moment. The day fire destroyed her hometown of Lahaina — and the struggles that have followed for nearly a year — still haunted her.

The fire killed her uncle. It burned the homes of seven family members. Her daughter narrowly escaped the blaze with her two children, but lost her house and moved to Las Vegas. The house Dapitan shares with her husband, Kalani, survived, but now it overlooks the burn zone. The view is a painful, constant reminder that the life they'd known is gone.

"There are so many triggers," she said on a blustery July day. Her long black braids fell over a tank top with the word "Lahaina" printed in gold. "We can be okay today, and tomorrow it could be different. Everything is uncertain. Every day is a different challenge. We want to stay joyful, but it's a process."

One year after the Maui fires, thousands of residents share Dapitan's struggle. They grieve the losses of loved ones and generational homes. They are haunted by their traumatic escapes and even by the guilt of surviving. They've endured months of instability — switching hotel rooms, schools and jobs. An estimated 1,500 families have left Maui, forced to start over thousands of miles from home.

But lately, Dapitan has enjoyed some relief, thanks to an equine-assisted therapy program at the Spirit Horse Ranch in Maui's rural upcountry, an hour's drive from Lahaina.

"The connection with the horses is different than connecting with machines or humans," said Dapitan. "It's almost like instant healing."

After large-scale disasters, restoring a community's mental wellness is as important as rebuilding infrastructure, experts say. And just as constructing an entire town can take years, so can healing its residents.

"We can be so focused on the bricks-and-mortar rebuild — because that's challenging enough as it is — that we don't create space for that healing," said Jolie Wills, a cognitive scientist who led the mental health response for the Red Cross after the 2010 Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand.

While some survivors need professional support to overcome their trauma, a lot of recovery can happen outside of a clinic's walls. Maui residents have leaned on programs that help them reconnect — to themselves, their community, land and culture.

Horses to process trauma

After writing down her words, Dapitan sat on a folding chair inside a horse corral. A few feet away, Maverick, a 22-year-old Tennessee Walker rolled in the dirt.

The program's founder, Paige DePonte, sat in front of her and began a technique called brainspotting. She moved a small wand in front of Dapitan's eyes to stimulate certain eye movements believed to help the brain process trauma. Later, Dapitan approached Maverick. She brushed his dark mane. After leading him once around the corral, she stopped, rested her arms over his back, and began to cry.

"He just lets you lean on him," she said. "I can feel myself healing because somebody is at least letting me lean on them."

For her husband Kalani, the ranch's quiet isolation, tucked on a hillside overlooking Maui's south coast, gives him space to process what has happened. "Before we even met the horses, I was in tears," he said. "The peacefulness really breaks your walls down."

Equine-assisted therapy participants don't typically ride horses, but the animals' presence alone can soothe people as they face their trauma. They might brush, walk and even talk to the animals, or the horses might just be nearby as facilitators take them through other methods of counseling or psychotherapy.

"Horses are incredible healers," said DePonte, who started the program on her family's cattle ranch in 2021 after observing the transformational effect the animals had on her own trauma recovery. "They are in a place of coherence all the time, not thinking about tomorrow, not thinking about yesterday."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 45 of 82

The program, now supported by grants from the Hawaii Community Foundation, Maui United Way, and other private donors, has provided more than 1,300 sessions for impacted residents.

Dapitan had already begun therapy before the fire to recover from a previous trauma, but she said time at the ranch feels different. "I think I got the most out of the horses in two days versus the year that I've been having regular counseling."

Healing through connection

Holistic programs like these have helped meet the overwhelming need for support services after the Aug. 8, 2023 fire that killed at least 102 people and displaced 12,000.

On top of the harrowing experiences of losing homes and loved ones, survivors are stressed and exhausted from the volatility of daily life — moving hotel rooms, changing schools, losing income.

"It's been a pretty significant impact on people's mental health," said Tia Hartsock, director of Hawaii's office of wellness and resilience. "Navigating bureaucratic systems while in a traumatic response has been very challenging."

In a Hawaii Department of Health survey of affected families two months after the fire, almost three-quarters of respondents said at least one person in their household had felt nervous, anxious or depressed in the preceding two weeks. At the six-month anniversary, more than half of survivors and one-third of all Maui residents surveyed by the University of Hawaii reported feeling depressive symptoms.

That's expected after a disaster of such scale, said Wills, calling it "very normal reactions to a very abnormal situation."

Providers, nonprofits, philanthropic groups and the government collaborated to reduce barriers to mental health treatment, like paying for people's therapy sessions and staffing shelters and FEMA events with mental health practitioners.

But they knew residents also needed other options. "Clinical support wasn't necessarily going to be right for everyone," said Justina Acevedo-Cross, senior program manager at the Hawaii Community Foundation.

Numerous public and private funders are supporting programs that re-engage residents with land and people, which Hartsock calls "unbelievably helpful in the healing."

Several are rooted in Native Hawaiian healing practices. Cultural practitioners with the organization Hui Ho'omalua offer lomilomi, or Hawaiian massage. Those sessions typically lead into kukakuka, or deep conversation, with Native Hawaiians trained in mental health support.

Impacted families also maintain taro patches, restore native plants and take cultural classes on protected land stewarded by the organization Ka'ehu. Aviva Libitsky and her son Nakana, 7, volunteer there at least once a week, scooping invasive snails out of kalo pools and cleaning litter from the shoreline.

Libitsky felt anxious for months after fleeing the Lahaina fire and losing the home she'd lived in since 2010. Working on the land calms her. "It helps you channel that frenetic energy and put it toward something useful."

She and Nakana recently learned how to weave bracelets from the leaves of hala trees at one of Ka'ehu's cultural workshops. They've gone to Spirit Horse Ranch, too. "We just focus on new opportunities, creating new memories."

A new wave of need

As Maui enters its second year of recovery, providers are preparing for a new wave of people to seek help.

The last families are moving out of hotels and into the interim housing meant to carry them over until Lahaina rebuilds. That sudden stillness can trigger bigger emotions, said Acevedo-Cross. "They're able to feel a bit more."

Many who weren't directly affected by the fires are now experiencing its impacts, as rents skyrocket, tourism jobs disappear, and friends and family move away.

For some, healing won't come until Lahaina is rebuilt and the community can return home.

"We don't have a hometown anymore," said Kalani Dapitan. He misses his friends and family, and most of all his daughter. He worries constantly about what will happen to Lahaina, especially as a Native Hawaiian. "We're unsure of our future, how our cultural aspect is going to pan out."

With so much still uncertain, time at Spirit Horse Ranch helps the Dapitans stay present.

At the end of her session, Janice returned to the whiteboard to write the words that summed up her feelings. "Relaxed," she wrote, and looked up. "That's all."

Majority of Americans say democracy is on the ballot this fall but differ on threat, AP poll finds

By ALI SWENSON and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Roughly 3 in 4 American adults believe the upcoming presidential election is vital to the future of U.S. democracy, although which candidate they think poses the greater threat depends on their political leanings, according to a new poll.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that most Democrats, Republicans and independents see the election as “very important” or “extremely important” to democracy, while Democrats have a higher level of intensity about the issue. More than half of Democrats say the November election is “extremely important” to the future of U.S. democracy, compared to about 4 in 10 independents and Republicans.

Democrat Pamela Hanson, 67, of Amery, Wisconsin, said she has grave concerns for the future of democracy in the country if Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump gets elected.

“His statements tend towards him being a king or a dictator, a person in charge by himself,” Hanson said. “I mean, the man is unhinged in my opinion.”

But Republican Ernie Wagner from Liberty, New York, said it’s President Joe Biden’s administration — of which Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, is a part — that has abused the power of the executive branch.

“Biden has tried to erase the student loans, and he’s been told by the courts that it’s unconstitutional to do that,” said Wagner, 85. “He’s weaponized the FBI to get at his political opponents.”

The poll findings suggest that many Democrats continue to view Trump as a threat to democracy after he tried to overturn the results of the 2020 election, embraced the rioters who attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and threatened to seek retribution against his opponents if he wins reelection.

But they also indicate that many of Trump’s supporters agree with him that Biden is the real threat to democracy. Trump and his allies have accused Biden of weaponizing the Justice Department as it has pursued charges against the former president over his effort to halt certification of the 2020 election and keeping classified documents, though there is no evidence Biden has had any involvement or influence in the cases.

Trump has framed himself as a defender of American values and portrayed Biden as a “destroyer” of democracy. He said multiple times after he survived an assassination attempt last month that he “took a bullet for democracy.”

The poll, conducted in the days after Biden dropped out of the race and Harris announced her campaign, is an early glimpse of Americans’ views of a reshaped contest.

Majorities of both Democrats and Republicans say democracy could be at risk in this election depending on who wins the presidency, responses generally in line with the findings when the question was last asked in an AP-NORC poll in December 2023.

Hanson, the Wisconsin Democrat, said she worries Trump in a second term would use the conservative-dominated U.S. Supreme Court to overrule important freedoms. She also is concerned that he would fill his Cabinet with loyalists who don’t care about the well-being of everyone in the country and defund agencies that regulate key functions of society.

But Wagner, the New York Republican, brushed off those concerns and pointed to Trump’s time in office. “When he was in the White House, we had peace, we had prosperity, we had energy independence,” he said. “What’s undemocratic about that?”

He said he didn’t think Trump’s intentions leading up to and on Jan. 6 were criminal.

“I just think he was misguided,” Wagner said.

Some independents also are carefully considering the stakes of the upcoming election on the country’s democratic future.

“I believe that this is the most important election of my lifetime,” said 53-year-old Patricia Seliga-Williams of LaVale, Maryland, an independent who is leaning toward voting for Harris.

Seliga-Williams said she's barely scraping by on \$15 an hour as a hotel breakfast attendant and remembers Trump handling the economy and immigration well. But she didn't like it when he recently quipped that he plans to be a "dictator" on day one in office.

"We all know Donald Trump could run the country," she said. "But he's just too aggressive anymore, and I don't think I can trust that as a voter."

Not everyone agrees that this year's presidential election will be an inflection point for the country's democracy, offering starkly different reasons, according to the AP-NORC poll. About 2 in 10 Americans say democracy in the U.S. is strong enough to withstand the outcome of the election no matter who wins, while another 2 in 10 believe democracy is already so seriously broken that the outcome doesn't matter.

The poll also shows the stakes of democracy in the election are felt more by older adults rather than younger ones. About half of adults 45 and older say the outcome of the election is extremely important for the future of democracy, compared to about 4 in 10 adults under 45.

"Making the claim that the other candidate is trying to destroy democracy, it doesn't really land for me," said Daniel Oliver, 26, an independent from suburban Detroit. "I think that we have things in place that should safeguard against when you kind of play at destroying democracy. We have other branches of government. We have people that believe in voting. So, it would be hard for a candidate to take over and become some kind of dictator."

He said he'll be looking for candidates to talk about issues he's more interested in, such as reducing inflation and investing in clean energy sources.

Biden and Trump spent months sparring over whose second term would be worse for democracy. The president nodded to the consequences when he ended his campaign last month, saying in his Oval Office address that "the defense of democracy is more important than any title."

Harris has focused more on the concept of "freedom" in the early days of her campaign. She has said Trump's reelection could result in Americans losing the freedom to vote, the freedom to be safe from gun violence and the freedom for women to make decisions about their own bodies. Her debut campaign ad last month was set to Beyoncé's 2016 track "Freedom," and it has become a campaign anthem for her at rallies ever since.

Harris didn't mention democracy in her first two presidential campaign rallies, but she returned to the topic in remarks to Sigma Gamma Rho sorority members in Houston last week, saying "our fundamental freedoms are on the ballot, and so is our democracy."

What to know about the controversy over a cancelled grain terminal in Louisiana's Cancer Alley

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — An agricultural company made the surprise decision Tuesday to cancel a project to build a massive grain terminal in a historic Black town in Louisiana's "Cancer Alley," a heavily industrialized stretch of land along the Mississippi River.

The company, Greenfield Louisiana LLC, and its supporters — including Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry — blamed "special interest groups", "plantation owners" and the Army Corps of Engineers for delaying construction on a grain export facility which would have brought jobs and development to St. John the Baptist Parish.

But community organizers and environmental advocates said the company had brought the problem on itself by attempting to install a 222-acre (90 hectare) facility in an area filled with nationally recognized historic sites and cultural spaces worthy of preservation and investment.

The Army Corps of Engineers said the company had chosen to build in the middle of an area with "environmental justice" and "cultural concerns" which required it to prove it could comply with a range of laws.

What Greenfield promised

Greenfield said that its \$800 million grain terminal would have generated more than 1,000 construction jobs, north of 300 permanent jobs, \$300 million in state tax revenue and \$1.4 million in direct state and

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 48 of 82

local taxes.

The company said its facility was “expected to drive transformative social and economic benefits to the local community” and play a significant role in connecting American farmers with global markets. The facility had been designed with the potential to store 11 million tons of grain.

On its website, Greenfield features testimony from a range of parish residents pledging their support for the facility and the economic growth they believed it would bring.

St. John the Baptist Parish President Jaclyn Hotard described the company’s decision as “a devastating blow to economic development” and lamented the loss of hundreds of jobs at a “state-of-the art, eco-friendly facility.”

What caused Greenfield to pull the plug?

Greenfield’s Van Davis blamed the project’s failure to advance on “the repeated delays and goal-post moving we have faced have finally become untenable, and as a result, our local communities lost.”

The company said the Army Corps of Engineers had recently extended the deadline for the fifth time, pushing a decision on the project’s permits to March 2025.

But Army Corps of Engineers Public Affairs Specialist Matt Roe disputed Greenfield’s framing in an emailed statement.

Roe said the company had to show compliance with multiple laws, including the Clean Water Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, and that “the regulations do not set forth a prescribed timeline for the process.”

Roe said the project’s location “was in a setting with many cultural resources” and that the Corps’ review has been “timely in every respect.”

The Corps has found the project would adversely impact historic sites. Greenfield had said it would take steps to preserve any historical sites or artifacts found during construction.

What was at stake?

Governor Jeff Landry pinned the blame on the Army Corps of Engineers for bringing “additional delays” by listening to “special interest groups and wealthy plantation owners instead of hardworking Louisianans.”

Opponents included the sisters Joy and Jo Banner, whose nonprofit The Descendants Project has bought land in the area — including a former plantation — to protect their town’s heritage. They gained national recognition for their efforts to invest in preserving history of enslaved people and their descendants.

But they are not the only people who thought there should be more focus on finding other avenues to bring jobs and growth to the historic Black town of Wallace and the surrounding parish.

Whitney Plantation Executive Director Ashley Rogers oversees a nearby National Register Historic District which draws 80,000 visitors a year from around the world. The area surrounding the proposed grain terminal site offers two centuries of well-documented history and culture containing “huge potential” for the community to capitalize on, she added.

There is also a National Historic Landmark, Evergreen Plantation, and the Willow Grove cemetery for descendants of the formerly enslaved which would have been adjacent to the 275-foot-high grain terminal.

“There does need to be economic development,” Rogers said. “I just think it can be done in a way that doesn’t permanently destroy the heritage, the culture and the environment and ruin people’s livelihoods and homes, right?”

Fighting in and out of the court

From Greenfield’s representatives to community activists, everyone acknowledged the fight over the project had been exhausting and brutal.

In recent months, flyers attacking local activists opposed to the grain terminal were distributed throughout the community, including images featuring racist tropes. Greenfield representatives denied the company had any connection to the flyers.

There are multiple ongoing lawsuits related to the facility filed by the Descendants Project related to zoning changes and tax exemptions for the company.

Joy Banner, of the Descendant Project, has also sued Parish Council Chairman Michael Wright in federal court for allegedly making threats against her at a council meeting. Wright did not respond to a request for comment.

Hunter Biden was hired by Romanian businessman trying to 'influence' US agencies, prosecutors say

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hunter Biden was hired by a Romanian businessman accused of corruption who was trying to “influence U.S. government policy” during Joe Biden’s term as vice president, prosecutors said in court papers Wednesday.

Special counsel David Weiss’ team said Hunter Biden’s business associate will testify at the upcoming federal tax trial of the president’s son about the arrangement with the executive, Gabriel Popoviciu, who was facing criminal investigation at the time in Romania.

The allegations are likely to bring a fresh wave of criticism of Hunter Biden’s foreign business dealings, which have been the center of Republicans’ investigations into the president’s family. Hunter Biden has blasted Republican inquiries into his family’s business affairs as politically motivated, and has insisted he never involved his father in his business.

An attorney for Hunter Biden didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Prosecutors plan to introduce evidence that Hunter Biden and his business associate “received compensation from a foreign principal who was attempting to influence U.S. policy and public opinion,” according to the filing. Popoviciu wanted U.S. government agencies to probe the Romanian bribery investigation he was facing in the hopes that would end his legal trouble, according to prosecutors.

Popoviciu is identified only in court papers as G.P., but the details line up with information released in the congressional investigation and media reporting about Hunter Biden’s legal work in Romania.

Popoviciu was sentenced to seven years in prison in 2017 after being convicted of real estate fraud. He denied any wrongdoing. An attorney who previously represented Popoviciu didn’t immediately respond to a phone message Wednesday.

Prosecutors say Hunter Biden agreed with his business associate to help Popoviciu fight the criminal charges against him. But prosecutors say they were concerned that “lobbying work might cause political ramifications” for Joe Biden, so the arrangement was structured in a way that “concealed the true nature of the work” for Popoviciu, prosecutors allege.

Hunter Biden’s business associate and Popoviciu signed an agreement to make it look like Popoviciu’s payments were for “management services to real estate prosperities in Romania.” However, prosecutors said, “That was not actually what G.P. was paying for.”

In fact, Popoviciu and Hunter’s business associate agreed that they would be paid for their work to “attempt to influence U.S. government agencies to investigate the Romanian investigation,” prosecutors said. Hunter Biden’s business associate was paid more than \$3 million, which was split with Hunter and another business partner, prosecutors say.

The claims were made in court papers as prosecutors responded to a request by Hunter Biden’s legal team to bar from his upcoming trial any reference to allegations of improper political influence that have dogged the president’s son for years. While Republicans’ investigation has raised ethical questions, no evidence has emerged that the president acted corruptly or accepted bribes in his current role or his previous office as vice president.

Hunter Biden’s lawyers have said in court papers that he has been “the target of politically motivated attacks and conspiracy theories” about his foreign business dealings. But they noted he “has never been charged with any crime relating to these unfounded allegations, and the Special Counsel should thus be precluded from even raising such issues at trial.”

Hunter Biden’s trial set to begin next month in Los Angeles centers on charges that he failed to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes over four years during a period in which he has acknowledged struggling with a drug addiction.

Prosecutors say they won’t introduce any evidence that Hunter Biden was directly paid by a foreign government “or evidence that the defendant received compensation for actions taken by his father that impacted national or international politics.”

Still, prosecutors say what Hunter Biden agreed to do for Popoviciu is relevant at trial because it “demonstrates his state and mind and intent” during the years he’s accused of failing to pay his taxes.

“It is also evidence that the defendant’s actions do not reflect someone with a diminished capacity, given that he agreed to attempt to influence U.S. public policy and receive millions of dollars” in the agreement with his business associate, prosecutors wrote.

The tax trial comes months after Hunter Biden was convicted of three felony charges over the purchase of a gun in 2018. Prosecutors argued that the president’s son lied on a mandatory gun-purchase form by saying he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs.

He could face up to 25 years in prison at sentencing set for Nov. 13 in Wilmington, Delaware, but as a first-time offender he is likely to get far less time or avoid prison entirely.

July ends 13-month streak of global heat records as El Nino ebbs, but experts warn against relief

By ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press

Earth’s string of 13 straight months with a new average heat record came to an end this past July as the natural El Nino climate pattern ebbed, the European climate agency Copernicus announced Wednesday.

But July 2024’s average heat just missed surpassing the July of a year ago, and scientists said the end of the record-breaking streak changes nothing about the threat posed by climate change.

“The overall context hasn’t changed,” Copernicus deputy director Samantha Burgess said in a statement. “Our climate continues to warm.”

Human-caused climate change drives extreme weather events that are wreaking havoc around the globe, with several examples just in recent weeks. In Cape Town, South Africa, thousands were displaced by torrential rain, gale-force winds, flooding and more. A fatal landslide hit Indonesia’s Sulawesi island. Beryl left a massive path of destruction as it set the record for the earliest Category 4 hurricane. And Japanese authorities said more than 120 people died in record heat in Tokyo.

Those hot temperatures have been especially merciless.

The globe for July 2024 averaged 62.4 degrees Fahrenheit (16.91 degrees Celsius), which is 1.2 degrees (0.68 Celsius) above the 30-year average for the month, according to Copernicus. Temperatures were a small fraction lower than the same period last year.

It is the second-warmest July and second-warmest of any month recorded in the agency’s records, behind only July 2023. The Earth also had its two hottest days on record, on July 22 and July 23, each averaging about 62.9 degrees Fahrenheit (17.16 degrees Celsius).

During July, the world was 1.48 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer, by Copernicus’ measurement, than pre-industrial times. That’s close to the warming limit that nearly all the countries in the world agreed to in the 2015 Paris climate agreement: 1.5 degrees.

El Nino — which naturally warms the Pacific Ocean and changes weather across the globe — spurred the 13 months of record heat, said Copernicus senior climate scientist Julien Nicolas. That has come to a close, hence July’s slight easing of temperatures. La Nina conditions — natural cooling — aren’t expected until later in the year.

But there’s still a general trend of warming.

“The global picture is not that much different from where we were a year ago,” Nicolas said in an interview.

“The fact that the global sea surface temperature is and has been at record or near record levels for the past more than a year now has been an important contributing factor,” he said. “The main driving force, driving actor behind this record temperature is also the long-term warming trend that is directly related to buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.”

That includes carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas.

July’s temperatures hit certain regions especially hard, including western Canada and the western United States. They baked, with around one-third of the U.S. population under warnings at one point for danger-

ous and record-breaking heat.

In southern and eastern Europe, the Italian health ministry issued its most severe heat warning for several cities in southern Europe and the Balkans. Greece was forced to close its biggest cultural attraction, the Acropolis, due to excessive temperatures. A majority of France was under heat warnings as the country welcomed the Olympics in late July.

Also affected were most of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and eastern Antarctica, according to Copernicus. Temperatures in Antarctica were well above average, the scientists say.

"Things are going to continue to get worse because we haven't stopped doing the thing that's making them worse," said Gavin Schmidt, climatologist and director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, who wasn't part of the report.

Schmidt noted that different methodologies or calculations could produce slightly different results, including that July may have even continued the streak. The primary takeaway, he said: "Even if the record-breaking streak comes to an end, the forces that are pushing the temperatures higher, they're not stopping.

"Does it matter that July is a record or not a record? No, because the thing that matters, the thing that is impacting everybody," Schmidt added, "is the fact that the temperatures this year and last year are still much, much warmer than they were in the 1980s, than they were pre-industrial. And we're seeing the impacts of that change."

People across the globe shouldn't see relief in July's numbers, the experts say.

"There's been a lot of attention given to this 13-month streak of global records," said Copernicus' Nicolas. "But the consequences of climate change have been seen for many years. This started before June 2023, and they won't end because this streak of records is ending."

Trump praised Minnesota Gov. Walz in 2020 for response to unrest over Floyd's murder, audio shows

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and DAN MERICA Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — While former President Donald Trump and running mate JD Vance have been hammering Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz over his response to the violence that erupted after George Floyd's murder, Trump told the governor at the time that he fully agreed with how Walz handled it.

"What they did in Minneapolis was incredible. They went in and dominated, and it happened immediately," Trump told Walz and other governors and officials in a phone call on June 1, 2020. The Associated Press on Wednesday obtained an audio recording of the call, which has taken on new significance now that Walz has been tapped as Vice President Kamala Harris' running mate against Trump and Vance.

Other administration officials on the call included Defense Secretary Mark Esper; Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Attorney General William Barr.

ABC News reported on the call earlier Wednesday, a day after Harris introduced Walz as her vice presidential pick. CNN posted a transcript of the call back in 2020.

Protests erupted in Minneapolis and around the world after Floyd was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a white former officer who knelt on the Black man's neck for nearly 9 1/2 minutes, on May 25, 2020. A bystander video captured Floyd's fading cries of "I can't breathe." His death forced a reckoning with police brutality and racism. Some of the protests turned violent.

Walz mobilized the Minnesota National Guard three days later to help restore order to Minneapolis after rioting that included the burning of a police station and numerous businesses. Trump offered federal help to Walz later that day, but the governor did not take him up on it.

During a May 2024 fundraiser in St. Paul, Trump repeated a claim he had been making lately that he was responsible for deploying the National Guard. "The entire city was burning down. ... If you didn't have me as president, you wouldn't have Minneapolis today," Trump told a Republican audience. Trump made similar claims at a rally in St. Cloud last month.

It was actually Walz who gave the mobilization order in response to requests from the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Although Walz came under criticism at the time for not moving faster. There was

finger-pointing between Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Walz on who bore responsibility for the delays.

Trump, in the June 1, 2020, call, described Walz as "an excellent guy" and later said: "I don't blame you. I blame the mayor." The president didn't criticize the governor at the time.

"Tim, you called up big numbers and the big numbers knocked them out so fast, it was like bowling pins," Trump said.

But Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt put a different spin on the call in a statement to the AP on Wednesday.

"Governor Walz allowed Minneapolis to burn for days, despite President Trump's offer to deploy soldiers and cries for help from the liberal Mayor of Minneapolis," Leavitt said. "In this daily briefing phone call with Governors on June 1, days after the riots began, President Trump acknowledged Governor Walz for FINALLY taking action to deploy the National Guard to end the violence in the city."

Walz did thank Trump on the call, as well as Esper and Milley, "for your strategic guidance, very helpful. ... Yeah, our city is grieving and in pain."

Tropical Storm Debby doles out repeat deluges for weather-weary residents

By JEFFREY COLLINS and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

HUGER, S.C. (AP) — Days of rain forced the deluge-hardened residents of a South Carolina community to begin the near-ritualistic task of assessing damage left behind by Tropical Storm Debby, which continued spinning over the Atlantic Ocean and influencing thunderstorms from the East Coast to the Great Lakes on Wednesday.

In Huger, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northeast of Charleston, Gene Taylor was waiting in the afternoon for a few inches of water to drain from his house along French Quarter Creek as high tide passed.

Taylor saw the potential for flooding last week and started moving belongings out or up higher in his home. It's a lesson learned the hard way — Taylor estimated that this is the fourth time he has had floodwater in his home in the past nine years.

"To save everything, we've learned from the past it's better be prepared for the worst. And unfortunately, I think we got it," Taylor said.

A few doors down, Charles Grainger was cleaning up after about 8 inches (20 centimeters) of water got into his home.

"Eight inches disrupts your whole life," Grainger said. "You don't get used to it. You just grin and bear it. It's part of living on the creek."

The National Hurricane Center warned that isolated areas could see up to 25 inches (64 centimeters) of rain from Debby. Additionally, the National Weather Service's office in Charleston said survey teams confirmed four-Debby related tornadoes.

In Georgia, at least four dams were breached northwest of Savannah in Bulloch County, but no deaths had been reported, authorities said at a briefing.

More than 75 people were rescued from floodwaters in the county, said Corey Kemp, director of emergency management, and about 100 roads were closed.

"We've been faced with a lot of things we've never been faced with before," Bulloch County Commission Chairman Roy Thompson said. "I'm 78-plus years old and have never seen anything like this before in Bulloch County. It's amazing what has happened, and amazing what is going to continue to happen until all these waters get out of here."

For residents on Tappan Zee Drive in suburban Pooler, west of Savannah, Georgia, the drenching that Debby delivered came with a painful dose of déjà vu. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew overflowed a nearby canal and flooded several of the same homes.

Located roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers) inland from the Atlantic Ocean, with no creeks or rivers nearby, the neighborhood doesn't seem like a high-risk location for tropical flooding. But residents say drainage problems have plagued their street for well over a decade, despite local government efforts to fix them.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 53 of 82

Debby also dumped rain on communities all the way up to the Great Lakes and New York and New Jersey. Moisture from the tropical storm strengthened another system Tuesday evening, which caused strong thunderstorms, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Scott Kleebauer.

"We had a multi-round period of showers and thunderstorms that kind of scooted from Michigan eastward," Kleebauer said.

As much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain fell in parts of New Jersey in less than four hours.

Emergency officials in New York City warned of potential flash flooding, flying drones with loudspeakers in some neighborhoods to tell people in basement apartments to be ready to flee at a moment's notice. Multiple water rescues were reported in and near the city.

Nearly 330,000 customers remained without power in Ohio as of Wednesday afternoon, according to PowerOutage.us, following severe storms including two confirmed tornadoes. Utility officials with FirstEnergy's Illuminating Company said via social media that power restoration would take days due to the damage.

In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster said his state was just entering Act 2 of a three-act play, after more than 60 homes were damaged but roads and water systems were without significant problems.

"We've been lucky so far. Things have not been as bad as they could have been," McMaster said.

Act 2 was to arrive overnight into Thursday when Debby moves back onshore and heavy rain returns, this time to the northern part of the coast and inland. An additional 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 centimeters) of rain could fall, said John Quagliariello, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Columbia.

"It may not be as catastrophic as what we were saying, but we still think as these rain bands develop they could sit over the same area for long periods of time, produce a lot of rainfall and a lot of flooding," Quagliariello said.

The final act may come next week if enough rain falls upstream in North Carolina to cause major flooding along rivers as it flows to the Atlantic Ocean.

The center of Debby was over the Atlantic on Wednesday evening, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) east-southeast of Charleston, the National Hurricane Center said. The storm first made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane early Monday along Florida's Gulf Coast.

A state of emergency was in effect for both North Carolina and Virginia. Maryland issued a state of preparedness declaration that coordinates preparations without declaring an emergency.

At least six people have died due to the storm, five of them in traffic accidents or from fallen trees. The sixth death involved a 48-year-old man in Gulfport, Florida, whose body was recovered after his anchored sailboat partially sank.

In Charleston, South Carolina, the Brown Dog Deli closed early Monday and couldn't open Tuesday due to a curfew decreed by local officials. On Wednesday the lunch crowd poured in after days of storm preparations and hunkering down. The first words from the person answering the phone were: "Yes, we're open."

"We've got a lot of locals walking in after being cooped up for two days looking for a good meal," kitchen manager Liz Denney said.

Some water got around the sandbags that employees placed Monday, but the restaurant has had worse flooding other times in the past year, Denney said. The standing water and the occasional interruption, she added, is just part of living on the coast.

"It comes with the territory," Denney said.

EPA issues rare emergency ban on pesticide that damages fetuses

By MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — For the first time in roughly 40 years, the Environmental Protection Agency used its emergency authority to halt the sale of a weed-killing pesticide that harms the development of unborn babies.

Officials took the rare step because the pesticide DCPA, or Dacthal, could cause irreversible damage to fetuses, including impaired brain development and low birthweight. The agency struggled to obtain vital health data from the pesticide's manufacturer on time and decided it was not safe to allow continued sale,

EPA said in an announcement Tuesday.

"In this case, pregnant women who may never know they were exposed could give birth to babies that experience irreversible lifelong health problems," said Michal Freedhoff, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

DCCA is mostly used on broccoli, cabbage and certain other crops and about 84,000 pounds were used on average in 2018 and 2020, officials said.

In 2023, the EPA assessed the pesticide's risks and found it was dangerous even if a worker wore personal protective equipment. The manufacturer had instructed people to stay off fields where the pesticide had been applied for 12 hours, but agency officials said it could linger at dangerous levels for more than 25 days.

The pesticide is made by AMVAC Chemical Corp. The company did not immediately return a request for comment late Wednesday. In comments to the EPA earlier this year, the company said new protocols could help keep people safe. It proposed longer waiting periods before workers enter fields where the pesticide was applied and limits on how much of the chemical could be handled.

Federal officials said the company's proposed changes weren't enough. The emergency order was necessary because the normal review process would take too long and leave people at risk, according to the agency's statement.

A good day, mate: Kennedy wins pole vault at Paris Games for Australia's record 18th Olympic gold

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Nina Kennedy bounced off the pole vault mats and punched the air once, twice, three times. She ran over to the Olympic crowd and took another three swings at the air.

Aussies in the stands flew the flag, shook green-and-gold banners and held up yellow inflatable kangaroos.

Kennedy didn't know at that stage she would deliver Australia an 18th gold medal at the Paris Games — a national record for the Olympics. That was just the celebration for clearing the height to take the lead.

Kennedy clinched the victory a bit later Wednesday when Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Katie Moon failed to clear 4.95 meters after a three-hour final.

Then the emotions took over. Kennedy raced back to her supporters in the crowd and the tears flowed as she hugged friends, family and discus throw bronze medalist Matthew Denny, who just happened to be walking back after his final to join the group. Then Kennedy sprang back across the track, hopping with delight.

A man in the crowd yelled: "What did you just do?"

Well, delivering Australia's fourth gold medal on Day 12 helped surpass the country's previous record total of 17 golds for a Summer Games — set at the 2004 Athens Olympics and in Tokyo three years ago. The Australians moved from 14 to 18 gold medals in about six hours, while most of the country Down Under was sleeping.

"I didn't know that, that is just insane," Kennedy said after being told of the record haul. "I can't wait to go home and watch a replay of the whole Olympics."

It was a good day — no need to abbreviate g'day for this feat — as Aussies woke up to news of the record. The productive stretch had Australia ranked third in the gold-medal standings behind the United States and China with four days of the Paris Games remaining. Australia had 18 gold, 12 silver and 11 bronze for a total of 41 medals, still well short of the record 58 it won at home at the 2000 Sydney Games.

Brisbane, Australia, is in line after the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics to host the Summer Games in eight years. The starter's gun has gone off.

The Australian team's other golds on Wednesday included a first in two decades for the men's team pursuit cycling team, which edged rival Britain at the Vélodrome National de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. Sailor Matt Wearn successfully defended the men's dinghy title and skateborder Keegan Palmer made it back-to-back Olympic golds.

It was slightly overwhelming for the 21-year-old Palmer, with skateboarding great Tony Hawk praising his work and Snoop Dogg in the bowl.

"It's an absolute honor, you know, just being able to be a part of that crew that was able to beat the record for us, with 18, it really doesn't get much better," Palmer, who grew up on Australia's Gold Coast, an hour down the road from Brisbane, said in a night-time interview. "Australia is where I learned how to walk, talk, skate, surf, do everything I know how to do.

"So that's why I also represent Australia, because that's where it all went down for me. They deserve to have a gold medal come back for the stuff they've given me."

Former Milwaukee hotel workers charged with murder after video shows them holding down Black man

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Prosecutors in Milwaukee have charged four hotel workers in connection with D'Ontaye Mitchell's death after scouring video showing them piling on top of the Black man during an incident that Mitchell's family says is disturbingly similar to George Floyd's death.

Mitchell's family spent weeks pressuring prosecutors to charge the hotel workers in the June 30 death. District Attorney John Chisholm finally filed a count of being a party to felony murder against each of them on Tuesday.

Here's what to know about Mitchell's death and the Hyatt workers, who now face sentences of up to nearly 16 years in prison if they're convicted.

How did the conflict start?

The criminal complaint charging the hotel workers offers a detailed account of the last moments of Mitchell's life based on Hyatt surveillance footage, witness accounts and a bystander's video.

Surveillance video shows Mitchell running through the downtown high-rise hotel's lobby on the afternoon of June 30, according to the complaint. He enters the gift shop and then the women's bathroom.

Two women who were in the bathroom later told investigators that Mitchell tried to lock them in the bathroom. One woman said she told him to let her out but he refused. She was eventually able to push past him.

Video shows off-duty Hyatt security guard Brandon Turner dragging Mitchell out of the bathroom. He and a hotel guest then get into a scuffle with Mitchell and drag him across the lobby, through the foyer and out into the hotel driveway. At one point Turner punches Mitchell six times.

Once outside, the hotel guest returns to the building but on-duty security guard Todd Erickson, bellhop Herbert Williamson and front desk worker Devin Johnson-Carson help Turner hold Mitchell down on his stomach for what the complaint says was eight to nine minutes.

Johnson-Carson would later tell detectives he heard Mitchell groaning and saying "stop" and "why?" and something about breathing. Erickson told Mitchell that "I don't want to hear that," followed by a profanity. Johnson-Carson also said Erickson struck Mitchell with a baton.

Williamson told investigators he put his knee on the middle of Mitchell's back, adding that Mitchell was strong, wouldn't calm down and tried to bite Erickson. Mitchell kept asking what he did wrong, Williamson said.

A bystander's video of the incident caught Mitchell yelling "please" and "I'm sorry" while breathing heavily. Erickson turns to the camera and says: "This is what happens when you go into the ladies' room."

By the time police and emergency responders arrived Mitchell had stopped moving, the complaint said. How did Mitchell die?

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office determined that Mitchell was morbidly obese and suffered from heart disease, according to the complaint, and had cocaine and methamphetamine in his system.

After watching video of the incident, Assistant Medical Examiner Lauren Decker determined that Mitchell suffered "restraint asphyxia" from the workers holding down his legs, arms, back and head. In other words, they prevented Mitchell from breathing.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 56 of 82

Decker said Mitchell might have lived had the workers moved him to his side. The medical examiner's office classified the manner of death as homicide on Friday.

What happened next?

Mitchell's family began drawing comparisons of his death to Floyd, who died in 2020 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes. The death of Floyd, who was Black, sparked a national reckoning on race relations.

Mitchell's family began pressuring Chisholm to file charges against the Hyatt employees. The Rev. Al Sharpton, a longtime civil rights activist, delivered the elegy at Mitchell's funeral. The family hired Ben Crump, a noted civil rights attorney who represented Floyd's family.

"Everybody in America, after George Floyd, should have trained their employees, especially security personnel, to not put knees on peoples' backs and peoples' necks," Crump told reporters in July.

What do the charges mean?

Chisholm's office said it was reviewing the case as a homicide but was waiting for full autopsy results. The criminal complaint concludes with a rare explanation of prosecutors' rationale for the charges, saying that the four employees' impaired Mitchell's breathing due to his weight and drug consumption and they knew it.

"The actions and words of DM, the distress that he was in, show that all four Defendants were aware that holding DM face first on the ground was 'practically certain' to cause 'impairment of his physical condition,'" the complaint says.

The charge brought against the hotel workers alleges they killed Mitchell while committing another crime — in this case, battery. They weren't charged with Wisconsin's most serious offense, first-degree intentional homicide, which carries a mandatory life sentence.

What are the hotel employees saying?

They maintain they didn't intentionally kill Mitchell.

Williamson, the bellhop, told WTMJ-TV on Tuesday after the charges were filed that hotel management told him to hold Mitchell down. He didn't tell the station who told him that but said he never committed any acts of violence against Mitchell.

"If I'm wrong for that, I mean, may God treat me in the proper way that I should be treated," he said.

Erickson's attorney, Michael Steinle, didn't return messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Erickson told investigators, however, that he knows about pressure points in the human body and couldn't remember ever striking Mitchell, even though he was very strong, kept resisting and tried to bite him, the complaint said. Erickson insisted he didn't do anything to intentionally hurt or kill Mitchell.

According to the complaint, Turner told a detective he heard women screaming in the hotel bathroom and Mitchell was trying to lock himself inside. He said Mitchell tried to reach into his pockets, called him names and swung at him first. He acknowledged punching Mitchell several times. He said he thought Mitchell was on drugs and at one point moved Mitchell's clothes off his face.

Johnson-Carson told a detective that he saw Turner fighting with Mitchell and Mitchell didn't appear to be stable mentally because he was speaking "gibberish," the complaint said. He decided to help Turner because elderly people and children were in the lobby, the on-duty staff were mostly women and Turner was smaller than Mitchell, he said.

Erickson told everyone to turn Mitchell onto his stomach and he thought Erickson was going to handcuff him, Johnson-Carson said. He didn't see anyone strangle Mitchell and none of them thought Mitchell had stopped breathing. At one point he said he told Williamson to stop applying pressure, and Williamson finally got up.

Online court records listed Turner's attorney as Matt Last, who didn't immediately return an AP message seeking comment. Williamson and Johnson-Carson's dockets didn't list any attorneys and the AP was not able to find phone listings for them.

What's next?

Arrest warrants have been issued for all four defendants. As of Wednesday, Erickson was in custody but there was no record the others had been arrested yet.

Once they are in custody, they will have to make brief initial appearances in court. Erickson made his Wednesday morning.

Preliminary hearings will follow before a judge decides whether there's enough evidence for them to stand trial.

Lin Yu-ting advances to gold-medal Olympic bout, excelling amid misconceptions about her gender

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan has advanced to the gold-medal bout in the women's featherweight division, winning her third consecutive bout while dealing with widespread scrutiny regarding misconceptions about her gender at the Paris Olympics.

One day after welterweight Imane Khelif of Algeria reached the women's welterweight final with a third straight victory in Paris, Lin defeated Esra Yildiz Kahraman of Turkey 5:0 on Wednesday night for her third win.

Lin will fight for gold on Saturday, taking on Julia Szeremeta of Poland.

"I will use everything I've learned in my life to do my best in the next match," Lin said through an interpreter.

Lin and Khelif both have won every round in all three of their Olympic bouts despite the massive distractions created by the fallout from the Olympic-banished International Boxing Association's decision last year to disqualify both fighters from the world championships for allegedly failing an eligibility test.

Both fighters have responded to this unwelcome spotlight by making two of the best tournament runs of their lengthy amateur careers. Just like Khelif, Lin has never been a dominant champion in her sport, but that hasn't stopped many observers from casting both as unstoppable boxing machines during the Olympics because the IBA disqualified them last year.

In fact, the 28-year-old Lin is a veteran amateur boxer who won world championships in 2018 and 2022 during a solid decade in the top level of the sport. She has now bounced back from an opening-round exit in Tokyo to become a medal winner in Paris.

"The feeling of entering the gold-medal match is one of gratitude to myself for making it this far," Lin said. "After going out in the first round of the Tokyo Olympics, it's been a tough journey to reach the finals."

Lin is usually taller and more slender than her opponents, and she earns most of her victories through solid technique and savvy use of her reach rather than power. That's exactly how she beat Kahraman, who attempted to force a more physical fight while Lin patiently picked her apart, mostly from distance.

After Kahraman hugged Lin and held open the ropes to allow Lin to leave the ring at Roland Garros in a typical boxing gesture of sportsmanship, Lin clapped, waved and bowed to the cheering crowd several times while leaving the floor.

While Khelif gave an exclusive interview last weekend to SNTV, a sports video partner of The Associated Press, and then spoke briefly in the mixed zone after her semifinal victory Tuesday, Lin has made little public comment about those attempting to involve her in controversy.

She has received ample support from outside the Olympics, even from former Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen — and when Lin thrust one glove in the air and walked to the ring for the opening bout on Court Philippe Chatrier, she received loud cheers from a huge crowd with pockets of roaring, flag-waving fans.

"Thank you to all the supporters who have supported and encouraged me along the way," Lin said. "I will give my utmost effort to repay them at the final."

Both Lin and Khelif have been cheered constantly during their time in the Olympic boxing rings, first in suburban Villepinte and then at this famed clay-court tennis complex.

Lin controlled her first two fights in Paris against opponents from Uzbekistan and Bulgaria despite starting relatively slowly in both bouts. She did it again when she fought Kahraman, who is more physically strong than Lin, but perhaps not as skilled.

Kahraman immediately tried to bring the fight to Lin, muscling and charging forward to get inside Lin's

persistent jab and winging shots. Lin did enough to win the round on all five judges' cards, but she also slipped and tumbled to the canvas midway through the round after a physical collision.

Both fighters heedlessly exchanged shots early in the second round, thrilling the crowd. Lin received a warning for throwing punches to the back of the head after Kahraman lunged past her, drawing whistles from the crowd.

Lin will fight for gold against the 20-year-old Szeremeta, who rallied with a dominant third round for a 4:1 victory over Nesthy Petecio of the Philippines. While Lin lost to Petecio in the Tokyo Olympics, Lin and Szeremeta have never met in the ring.

Khelif will take on Yang Liu of China in the women's 75-kilogram final on Friday night.

Israel court hears bid to close prison where soldiers are accused of sexually assaulting Palestinian

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli Supreme Court considered a petition Wednesday to shutter a desert military prison where soldiers have been accused of abusing Palestinians, as a new video emerged purporting to show the sexual assault of a Palestinian detainee.

Rights groups have been engaged in a legal battle since June to shut down the detention facility, known as Sde Teiman, where Israel has held many Palestinians detained in Gaza during the 10-month war with Hamas. The groups claim that conditions at the facility are grave and that abuse by Israeli soldiers is common, basing their claims on testimony from released detainees and Israeli whistleblowers.

Calls for the prison's closure ramped up in late July, when Israeli military police arrested 10 soldiers from Sde Teiman on suspicion of their involvement in the alleged sexual assault of a Palestinian detainee at the facility. Five of the soldiers are no longer under investigation. A physician who identified himself as the person who reported the attack said last week that the detainee appeared to have been seriously sexually abused.

The soldiers' detention triggered angry protests by supporters, and at least two government ministers demanded their release. The response underscored tensions between the military command and hard-line nationalists in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government who advocate even harsher treatment of Palestinians detained from Gaza.

Defense lawyer Nati Rom told The Associated Press that the soldiers were arrested about a month after the alleged attack and are accused of performing acts of sodomy on the detainee. He said the soldiers used force to defend themselves against a detainee who attacked them during a search, but did not sexually abuse him.

A video purporting to reveal the assault shows a group of masked soldiers wresting a detainee from the ground, where he and other Palestinians appear to be lying face down in a fenced-in pen, their arms cuffed above their heads. The soldiers take the detainee to an area of the pen they appear to cordon off using shields. Footage then shows about eight soldiers and a dog with the detainee, largely hidden from view by shields held up by some of the soldiers. Israel's Channel 12 news, which broadcast the video, said it captures the moment of the attack.

Two soldiers who formerly worked at the facility and requested anonymity for fear of retribution told the AP they believed the video had been taken at Sde Teiman. The room in which the detainees appear, a corral topped by barbed wire, matches photos of the facility shared with the AP and the description of incarceration conditions that whistleblowers have previously described.

Military prosecutors stated that evidence brought forth in the case indicates "a reasonable suspicion of the commission of the acts," the Israeli military said Tuesday. The military did not comment on the video.

U.S. officials have seen the video, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Wednesday. He called the reports of sexual abuse "horrific."

"Prisoners' human rights need to be respected in all cases and when there are alleged violations, the government of Israel needs to take steps to investigate those who are alleged to have committed abuses

and, if appropriate, hold them accountable," Miller said.

Meanwhile, more information about the case has come to light from a doctor who treated the detainee in question.

Dr. Yoel Donchin, an Israeli anesthesiologist at the field hospital for Palestinian detainees at Sde Teiman, came forward Friday as the person who reported the case to the military authorities.

In an interview with Israeli public broadcaster Kan, Donchin said the detainee's life was in danger and that he was in need of emergency surgery after the attack.

During the interview, Donchin confirmed information attributed to an unidentified medical official who said the detainee had fractured ribs, showed signs of beating and bore evidence of being sodomized, leading to a tear in the lower part of the intestines.

Donchin said the detainee's case was the most extreme he had witnessed since working at the facility.

Naji Abbas, a case manager with Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, said the detainee was transferred to a civilian hospital outside Sde Teiman about a month ago because his injuries were too severe for treatment at the military facility. Abbas received his information from a medical source with knowledge of the case.

In a written submission to the Israeli Supreme Court in advance of Wednesday's hearing, state attorneys did not mention the military's sexual assault investigation, but insisted the rights groups' claims of deplorable conditions were inaccurate.

The Israeli organization arguing in court for the military prison's closure, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, had alleged that detainees at the facility are punished with severe violence, including with attack dogs and sexual assault; made to sit on the ground blindfolded and handcuffed 24 hours a day; forbidden from moving or speaking and rarely shower or change clothes.

An investigation by the AP into the facility documented how detainees are blindfolded, handcuffed and diapered during medical treatment.

The state, in a written response, said detainees were given sufficient food and water, showered regularly, accessed medical treatment as needed, and were blindfolded and handcuffed because of concerns that they could harm staff. The state said a new wing of Sde Teiman set to open Sept. 5 would improve conditions, including adding a walking area for detainees. Additional improvements are expected to be made later this year, it said.

Following Wednesday's hearing, the court gave the state a week and a half to provide more information about conditions at the prison.

Sde Teiman was the main military prison holding Palestinians captured in large-scale raids on the Gaza Strip. Israel began moving detainees out of the facility following the rights groups' petition to shut it down. State filings show 28 detainees remain.

Under Israeli law, Palestinians from Gaza can be held at the facility, and other military detention camps, without a detention order, trial or charge for over a month. Many Palestinian detainees have spent weeks in the facility before being released back to Gaza after Israeli authorities deemed them unaffiliated with militant groups.

US abortion numbers have risen slightly since Roe was overturned, study finds

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

The number of women getting abortions in the U.S. actually went up in the first three months of 2024 compared with before the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade, a report released Wednesday found, reflecting the lengths that Democratic-controlled states went to expand access.

A major reason for the increase is that some Democratic-controlled states enacted laws to protect doctors who use telemedicine to see patients in places that have abortion bans, according to the quarterly #WeCount report for the Society of Family Planning, which supports abortion access.

The data comes ahead of November elections in which abortion-rights supporters hope the issue will drive voters to the polls. In some places, voters will have a chance to enshrine or reject state-level abor-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 60 of 82

tion protections.

Fallout from the Supreme Court's June 2022 ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* has remade the way abortion works across the country. The #WeCount data, which has been collected in a monthly survey since April 2022, shows how those providing and seeking abortion have adapted to changing laws.

The survey found that the number of abortions fell to nearly zero in states that ban abortion in all stages of pregnancy and declined by about half in places that ban it after six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant. Fourteen states are enforcing bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with some exceptions, and four others bar it after about six weeks of pregnancy.

Numbers went up in places where abortion remains legal until further into pregnancy — and especially in states such as Illinois, Kansas and New Mexico, which border states with bans.

The report estimates that if not for the post-Dobbs bans, there would have been about 9,900 more abortions per month — and 208,000 total since — in those states. The numbers were up by more than 2,600 per month in Illinois, about 1,300 in Virginia, 1,200 in Kansas and more than 500 in New Mexico.

Abortion pills and telemedicine play a key role. In March, doctors in states with laws to protect medical providers used telemedicine to prescribe abortion pills to nearly 10,000 patients in states with bans or restrictions on abortion by telehealth — accounting for about 1 in 10 abortions in the U.S.

Laws to protect medical providers who use telemedicine to prescribe abortion pills started taking effect in some Democratic-led states last year.

"It eases the burden on clinics," said Ushma Upadhyay, a University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine professor who co-leads #WeCount. "So it creates more space for the people who are coming to clinics."

Abortion opponents say the fight over the abortion drug mifepristone isn't over after a narrow Supreme Court ruling that preserved access to it for now. But so far there have not been legal challenges to shield laws.

The latest edition of the survey covers the first three months of this year, when it counted an average of just under 99,000 abortions per month, compared with 84,000 in the two months before *Dobbs*. January was the first time since the survey began that it has counted more than 100,000 abortions across the country in a single month.

The tracking effort collects monthly data from providers across the country, creating a snapshot of abortion trends. In some states, a portion of the data is estimated. The effort makes data public with less than a six-month lag, giving a picture of trends far faster than annual reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where the most recent report covers abortion in 2021.

Before the shield laws began kicking in and #WeCount started tallying them, people were still getting some pills in places with bans.

One of the states where abortions increased was Florida. That changed in April, when a ban after six weeks' gestation took effect. The data doesn't yet reflect that change.

The policy could change again through a November ballot measure that would make abortion legal until viability, generally considered to be around 23 or 24 weeks into pregnancy. It needs at least 60% approval to be added to the state constitution.

One vote against it will come from Mia Adkins, a 20-year-old senior at Florida International University.

"Instead of pushing for more abortion legal later in pregnancy, we should be pushing for laws that protect these pregnant parents and students and provide them with the support that they need," said Adkins, a senior at Florida International University.

Florida is one of six states where abortion-related measures are already on the ballot. Determinations from elections officials about adding similar questions are pending in four more states. In one, Nebraska, there are dueling amendments: One to allow access until viability and one to keep the current ban on most abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Abortion-rights supporters have prevailed in all seven abortion ballot questions in the U.S. since 2022. That tracks with public opinion polling that has shown growing support for abortion rights, including a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 61 of 82

recent Associated Press-NORC poll that found 6 in 10 Americans think their state should allow someone to obtain a legal abortion if they don't want to be pregnant for any reason.

An amendment to protect access could be on the ballot in Arizona, a political battleground state where court cases have swung abortion policy — and access — since the Dobbs ruling.

The state Supreme Court ruled in April that Arizona should enforce an 1864 ban on abortions at all stages of pregnancy, only for lawmakers to repeal that law. The state's ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy remains. The ballot measure would expand it to 24 weeks.

Natalie Harper, a 23-year-old independent who usually doesn't vote, said the potential of bringing back the Civil War-era ban "absolutely" impacts her decision to vote for the ballot measure this November. "Seeing that as a possibility really made me realize that everyone's pro-choice voices need to be heard in hopes it never goes in that direction again," she said.

In Missouri, which has outlawed almost all abortions and where nearly none were reported in the new data, election officials could soon certify whether a proposed constitutional amendment guaranteeing abortion rights received enough petition signatures to qualify for the ballot in the reliably Republican state.

University of Missouri political scientist Peeverill Squire said that if the measure is on the ballot, it could draw out enough Democratic voters to help swing a few competitive legislative races.

"They can seize on the personal freedom arguments the Republicans have generally owned over the recent elections," he said.

Paris Olympics Day 12: Quincy Hall gives Americans another come-from-behind gold

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Quincy Hall became the latest American to electrify Olympic track and field with an out-of-nowhere comeback Wednesday night at the Paris Olympics.

Hall sprinted from far behind in the 400 meters to reel in three runners and capture the gold medal. Hall, buried in fourth place as the runners rounded the last bend, outran the runner on his outside, then two more to the inside to cross the line in 43.40 seconds, the fourth-fastest time ever.

Hall then dropped to the track to do snow angels to celebrate.

Matthew Hudson-Smith of Britain finished second and Muzala Samukonga of Zambia finished third.

Hall is the first American since LaShawn Merritt in 2008 to capture gold in the one-lap race. His victory came an evening after teammate Cole Hocker came from far behind late to beat the favorites in the men's 1,500.

The win came about an hour after Noah Lyles advanced to the final of the 200 meters despite finishing second to Letsile Tebogo in his semifinal heat. Lyles will race for the gold medal Thursday.

Highlights of what happened on Day 12 of the Paris Olympics:

U.S. takes silver and almost pulls upset in steeplechase

Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco defended his title in the men's steeplechase with a .36-second win over American rival Kenneth Rooks.

Rooks had the lead heading into the homestretch and was looking to pull off a massive upset, but El Bakkali overtook him. Rooks still beat his personal best by almost 9 seconds to capture the second silver in three Olympics in the event for the United States.

Australia reaches new heights with pole vault win

Nina Kennedy's gold medal in the pole vault was Australia's 18th at the Paris Games, an Olympic record for the country.

Kennedy cleared 4.95 meters to beat defending champion Katie Moon of the U.S.

Lin Yu-ting advances to gold-medal bout

Boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan advanced to the gold-medal bout in the women's featherweight division. She won her third consecutive bout while dealing with widespread scrutiny regarding misconceptions about her gender.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 62 of 82

One day after welterweight Imane Khelif of Algeria reached her weight division's final with a third straight victory in Paris, Lin defeated Esra Yildiz Kahraman of Turkey 5:0.

Lin will fight for gold on Saturday.

Lin and Khelif have dominated all of their Olympic bouts despite the massive distractions created by the fallout from the Olympic-banished International Boxing Association's decision last year to disqualify both fighters from the world championships for allegedly failing an eligibility test.

Both fighters have responded to this unwelcome spotlight by making two of the best tournament runs of their lengthy amateur careers.

U.S. women's basketball keeps winning

A'ja Wilson scored 20 points and Jackie Young added 15 to help the United States beat Nigeria 88-74 in the women's basketball quarterfinals. The victory extended the Americans' record Olympic winning streak to 59.

Breanna Stewart also had 13 points for the Americans, who haven't lost since the 1992 Barcelona Games and are now two victories away from an unprecedented eighth consecutive gold medal. They will face a familiar foe in Australia in the semifinals on Friday night.

The loss ended a historic run by Nigeria, which became the first African country to reach the Olympic basketball quarterfinals.

Americans win gold in women's team pursuit

The American women's pursuit team had twice before raced for the Olympic gold medal, and it had been on the podium all three times the cycling event had been on the program for the Summer Games.

Successful, but never on top.

The U.S. changed that at the Olympic velodrome when road race champion Kristen Faulkner, time trial bronze medalist Chloe Dygert, Jennifer Valente and Lilly Williams finally took that last step up.

They soared to a big early lead on New Zealand in their head-to-head showdown, then held on through a ragged finish to finally win the gold medal.

The Americans led by more than a second a quarter of the way through the 4,000-meter race, and they stretched the gap at one point to nearly two seconds. When they began to come apart from their single-file, aerodynamic draft with about two laps to go, they had to fight to the finish to hold off Ally Wollaston, Bryony Botha, Emily Shearman and Nicole Shields.

In the final of the men's pursuit, Sam Welsford, Oliver Bleddyn, Conor Leahy and Kelland O'Brien of Australia beat Britain in a close final at the Vélodrome National de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines to win gold for the first time in two decades.

U.S. weight off his shoulders

Hampton Morris became the first U.S. men's weightlifter to earn an Olympic medal in four decades, taking bronze in the 61-kilogram division. It had not happened since Mario Martinez and Guy Carlton at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, notably boycotted by several communist countries.

The 20-year-old Morris, trained by his dad in the garage at their home in Marietta, Georgia, finished third in a competition won again by Li Fabin of China. Li defended his title from the Tokyo Games in 2021 and set an Olympic snatch record.

U.S. figure skaters finally get their medal

A touch of winter came to the Summer Games when the United States figure skating team finally got their gold medals as 2022 Olympic champions.

The special medal ceremony allowed the nine Americans to receive the medals exactly 2½ years after the figure skating team event ended at the Beijing Olympics. A doping saga from the winning Russian team led to the Americans being declared the winner.

All nine American skaters came to Paris: Karen Chen, Evan Bates, Nathan Chen, Madison Chock, Zachary Donohue, Brandon Frazier, Madison Hubbell, Alexa Knierim and Vincent Zhou. Seven of the eight members of the Japan team came to get their silver medals — an upgrade from their third-place result in Beijing.

A Russian appeal trying to win back the Olympic team title was dismissed at the Court of Arbitration for

Sport just before the Paris Games opened. The title had been stripped in January when a different CAS panel disqualified Russian teenager Kamila Valieva for doping with a banned heart medication. She also was banned for four years.

China dominates artistic swimming

China took gold in the artistic swimming team event, dominating in the absence of Russia, which had won every gold medal in artistic beginning with the 2000 Sydney Games.

It was a big medal for China, and also a step forward for the sport, which changed its name from synchronized swimming several years ago to update its image. Some swimmers still call it "synchro."

China finished with 996.1389 points, ahead of the United States and Spain. It was the first U.S. medal in the sport since 2004.

Men had an opportunity for the first time to compete in artistic swimming at the Olympics, but no men were picked by any of the teams. There is consideration to add a mixed duet team event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, which would create more space for men to compete.

Vance and other Trump allies amplify a false claim about Harris' racial identity

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

Ohio Sen. JD Vance, Donald Trump's running mate, defended on Wednesday a false claim the former president made about Vice President Kamala Harris' racial identity, suggesting wrongly that Harris had downplayed her Black heritage in trying to suggest she's inauthentic.

"What I took it as was an attack on Kamala Harris being a chameleon," he told reporters when asked in Michigan about the former president's suggestion that Harris, the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, had only recently identified as Black.

"I think he was observing the basic foundational reality that Kamala Harris pretends to be something different depending on what audience she's speaking to," Vance said. "She fakes who she is depending on the audience she's in front of, and that's who she is and that's who she's always been."

Vance's was the most recent of the Republican criticisms of how Harris portrays herself, in the wake of Trump's comments last week to the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago. Florida Rep. Byron Donalds, a high-profile Trump surrogate who is a Black man, echoed the claim on Sunday as a guest on ABC's "This Week."

The proliferation of Trump's falsehood by other Republicans is part of their effort to stay in his favor, said former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele.

"It's 'I'll do anything and I don't want to be on the wrong side of you,'" said Steele, a former Maryland lieutenant governor who was the first Black man to lead the RNC. "It's 'I don't want to take the heat that comes with calling out your racism, that comes with calling out your ugliness, so I will pretend that's not what it is.'"

The Harris campaign has declined to comment specifically on Trump's false claim. The vice president, speaking to a Black sorority last week, accused Trump of "the same old show: the divisiveness and the disrespect."

Harris has frequently talked about being Black in addition to being Indian American during her political career. She was the first African American to serve as California attorney general and became the first Indian American to serve as a U.S. senator and the second Black woman, after Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois.

As an undergraduate, Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation's most prominent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha.

As San Francisco's first Black district attorney, she was recognized as a "Woman of Power" by the National Urban League and received the Thurgood Marshall Award from the National Black Prosecutors Association in 2005.

She was recognized in India Abroad during her 2010 campaign for California attorney general as being potentially "the first African American as well as the first Indian-American" to hold the office.

Harris identified as both Black and Indian in an Associated Press story published that same year about the number of candidates of Indian descent running for prominent offices that year.

"I grew up in a family where I had a strong sense of my culture and who I am, and I never felt insecure about that at all," she said at the time. "Slowly, perhaps, with each of us taking on more prominent positions, people will start to understand the diversity of the people."

Harris joined the Congressional Black Caucus when she entered the Senate in 2017. And writing about her time at Howard in her 2019 memoir, "The Truths We Hold," Harris wrote: "Every signal told students that we could be anything — that we were young, gifted, and black, and we shouldn't let anything get in the way of our success. The campus was a place where you didn't have to be confined to the box of another person's choosing."

The echo of Trump's claim comes as the Republican nominee has tried to cut into Harris' fundraising and media attention following her taking over President Joe Biden's campaign after the president quit the race. Some Republican strategists have criticized Trump for making personal attacks that echo his past questioning of President Barack Obama's citizenship, instead of pivoting to issues like the economy or immigration.

Vance previously hit Harris for using what he called a "fake Southern accent" when she campaigned in Atlanta last week. And Michaelah Montgomery, a Black conservative activist who organized a widely shared Trump meet-and-greet with local college students at an Atlanta Chick-fil-A, tore into Harris at the former president's rally on Saturday, suggesting of Harris, "She's only Black when it's time to get elected."

Rashawn Ray, a national scholar on racial and social inequity and vice president at American Institutes for Research, said the criticism willfully ignores the growing number of people who identify as multiracial. "People can be both Black and Asian," Ray said.

Casting doubt on Harris' identification as Black is also an effort to use race to undermine her qualification to be president — as Trump did questioning Obama's citizenship — said Ray.

"Some people believe that by attacking the authenticity of Vice President Harris' Blackness, they can send a dog whistle that questions her Americanness and electability," Ray said. "People are often judged by what they look like rather than what they represent. Some people are banking on the shallowness of this perspective."

NASA says chances are growing that astronauts may switch from Boeing to a SpaceX ride back to Earth

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — What should have been a quick trip to the International Space Station may turn into an eight-month stay for two NASA astronauts if they have to switch from Boeing to SpaceX for a ride home.

There's lingering uncertainty over the safety of Boeing's new Starliner capsule, NASA officials said Wednesday, and the space agency is split over the risk. As a result, chances are increasing that test pilots Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams may have to watch from the space station as their Starliner is cut loose to return to Earth empty.

If that happens, NASA would leave behind two of four astronauts from the next SpaceX taxi flight in late September, with the vacant seats set aside for Wilmore and Williams on the return trip next February. The pair expected to be gone just a week or two when they launched June 5 as Starliner's first crew.

NASA is bringing in additional experts to analyze the thruster failures experienced by Starliner before it docked. At the same time, NASA is looking more closely at SpaceX as a backup,

At this point, "we could take either path," said Ken Bowersox, NASA's space operations mission chief.

During a recent meeting, "We heard from a lot of folks that had concern, and the decision was not clear," he said. A final decision is expected by mid-August.

Boeing issued a brief statement following NASA's news update, repeating its position that the capsule

could still safely bring the astronauts home.

"We still believe in Starliner's capability and its flight rationale," the company said.

Boeing will need to modify the capsule's software in case Starliner ends up returning without a crew.

No serious consideration was given to launching a separate SpaceX flight just to retrieve Wilmore and Williams, according to commercial crew program manager Steve Stich.

Tests on the ground have replicated the thrust problems, pointing to seals as one culprit. But it's still not understood how or why those seals swell when overheated and then shrink back to the proper size, Stich noted. All but one of the Starliner's five failed thrusters have since been reactivated in orbit.

These thrusters are essential for allowing Starliner to back away from the space station following undocking, and for keeping the capsule in the proper position for the deorbit.

At the same time, engineers are grappling over helium leaks in Starliner's propulsion system, crucial for maneuvering. The first leak occurred before liftoff, but was deemed isolated and stable. Then more cropped up in flight.

NASA hired Boeing and SpaceX to ferry astronauts to and from the space station, after the shuttles retired in 2011. SpaceX flew its first crew in 2020. Boeing stumbled on its first test flight without a crew and then fell further behind after a repeat demo.

Officials repeated their desire for a backup taxi service on Wednesday, A situation like this one could happen again, and "that's why we want multiple vehicles," Bowersox said.

The next crew flight will be SpaceX's 10th for NASA. On Tuesday, it was delayed for a month until late September to allow for extra time to figure out how best to handle Starliner's return. Three NASA astronauts and one Russian are assigned to the flight, and managers on Wednesday declined to say who might be bumped.

3 years after the NFL added a 17th game, the push for an 18th gets stronger

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — The debate about whether the NFL will expand the regular season once again seems to have been resolved and now it's a matter of how soon the league adds an 18th game.

Commissioner Roger Goodell has talked openly about it, union chief Lloyd Howell recently told the Washington Post that the NFLPA is open to doing it before the current collective bargaining agreement expires after the 2030 season and players seem resigned to the inevitability no matter how they might personally feel.

"I mean, I feel like we really ain't got no choice, to be honest," said Seattle Seahawks veteran receiver Tyler Lockett, who said he'd prefer adding another bye week instead of another game to give TV networks more broadcast windows without taxing the players with another game.

"I think that's more fair, but we know it's probably not going to end up like that. So, I mean you just kind of got to rock with the punches and just be able to go play."

The NFL has desired adding more games for years, along with the increase in lucrative national television windows. The league increased the regular season from 14 games to 16 in 1978 and kept it there for decades.

But Goodell and the owners pushed through a 17th game in the latest CBA negotiations leading into the 2021 season and aren't content stopping there, with Goodell saying in the spring that going to 18 games remains a priority as long as it can be done without significantly impacting player safety.

"If you'd asked me that 10 years ago, I probably would be excited about it. Now, not so excited, but it is what it is," Raiders receiver Davante Adams said. "That's the thing that's special about football and why I really wanted to play football over basketball, is that I just feel like it's a different type of feeling knowing that you only have a limited amount of opportunities out there."

Adding another game to the season would add more broadcast windows. It also could push the Super Bowl to Presidents Day weekend with a federal holiday the day after the game. That would either require not adding a second bye week — which most players said would be needed to play an extra game — or

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 66 of 82

moving the start of the season to Labor Day weekend, which the NFL has avoided since the 2000 season.

While moving the Super Bowl to a long holiday weekend might have appeal to many fans who wouldn't have to go to work the next day, it could turn an NFL season into a seven-month marathon from the start of training camp to the final game.

"I feel like a couple people are going to feel like (Nikola) Jokic, ready to go home," Raiders cornerback Nate Hobbs said, referring to the NBA star who complained about the length of that season when his Denver Nuggets won the championship in 2023. "But it takes what it takes, like the real champions are going to emerge and the real mentally strong survive. ... So, it really doesn't matter. Presidents Day and February all run into each other to me. It's all the same, I'm here now so it is what it is. I know it's for entertainment."

The NFL is getting paid more than \$113 billion over 11 years for its broadcast rights as the most valuable television property. Of the 100 most-watched TV broadcasts in 2023, 93 were NFL games, up from 61 in 2018.

But that extra revenue comes at a price borne by the bodies of the players.

"The fans, and rightfully so, shouldn't know all the injuries we go through, but they don't know what it takes to play on Sundays," said Colts center Ryan Kelly, the team's player representative. "I think it's just too many games."

When the NFL added a 17th game in 2021, the league took away one preseason game. Goodell had said that would be the plan again if the league ever went to an 18-game season.

But that raises concern from coaches about having fewer chances for younger players to prove themselves or develop and does little to ease the concerns of veterans, many of whom play few or no snaps in exhibition games.

"They talk about taking a preseason game out, which to me doesn't really matter because I play in like one preseason game," said 49ers All-Pro tight end George Kittle, who has played 37 snaps in the preseason in the past six years. "Most vets do. So that really doesn't do anything for anybody."

Other concessions would be much more important to players, whether it would be the extra bye week, a change to the offseason schedule or perhaps, most importantly, a larger share of the revenue. Players had their portion of shareable revenues rise from 47% to 48.5% under the last CBA when the season was increased to 17 games.

An 18th game would increase the size of the revenue pie and perhaps even the share that goes to players. When the season expanded to 17 games in 2021, some players were able to get an extra game check to increase their salary.

ESPN surveyed players in the offseason and found 46% were in favor of expanding the season to 18 games with stipulations, and another 8% willing to do it without any concessions.

"That's another check, right?" 49ers defensive end Leonard Floyd said when asked for his opinion about an 18th game. "More games, more checks."

Putin accuses Ukraine of a 'large-scale provocation' with its raid in southwestern Russia

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday described a Ukrainian incursion into the country's southwestern Kursk region as a "large-scale provocation" as his officials asserted that they were fighting off cross-border raids for a second day. Ukrainian officials remained silent about the scope of the operation.

Putin met with his top defense and security officials to discuss what he called the "indiscriminate shelling of civilian buildings, residential houses, ambulances with different types of weapons." He instructed the Cabinet to coordinate assistance to the Kursk region. The fighting is about 500 kilometers (320 miles) from Moscow.

Army chief of staff Valery Gerasimov told Putin at the meeting via video link that about 100 Ukrainian

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 67 of 82

soldiers had been killed in the battle and more than 200 wounded, Russian news agencies reported.

The Ukrainian shelling, meanwhile, killed at least two people — a paramedic and an ambulance driver — and injured 24, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

It was not possible to independently verify the Russian claims. Disinformation and propaganda have played a central role in the war, now in its third year. John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesman, declined to comment on the operation and said the Biden administration has reached out to the Ukrainians to better understand what happened.

The head of the region urged residents to donate blood due to the intense fighting. "In the last 24 hours, our region has been heroically resisting attacks" by Ukrainian fighters, acting Gov. Alexei Smirnov said on Telegram, adding that all emergency services were on high alert.

Smirnov said authorities had evacuated more than 200 people from areas under shelling, while several thousand others left in their own vehicles.

If confirmed, the cross-border foray would be among Ukraine's largest since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, and unprecedented for its deployment of Ukrainian military units.

Kyiv's aim could be to draw Russian reserves to the area, potentially weakening Moscow's offensive operations in several parts of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region where Russian forces have increased attacks and are advancing gradually toward operationally significant gains.

But it could risk stretching outmanned Ukrainian troops further along the front line, which is more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) long.

Even if Russia were to commit reserves to stabilize the new front, given its vast manpower and the relatively small number of Ukrainian forces engaged in the operation, it would likely have little long-term impact.

However, the operation could boost Ukrainian morale at a time when Kyiv's forces are facing relentless Russian attacks and are expected to face more in coming weeks.

Several Ukrainian brigades stationed along the border region said they could not comment. Ukraine's Defense Ministry and General Staff said they would not comment.

Russian forces have swiftly repelled previous cross-border incursions, but not before they caused damage and embarrassed authorities.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Tuesday that up to 300 Ukrainian troops, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armored combat vehicles, had crossed into Russia and suffered heavy losses.

It said Wednesday that military and border guard troops "continued to destroy Ukrainian military units in the areas alongside the border in the Kursk region."

The ministry said Russian forces backed by artillery and warplanes "didn't allow the enemy to advance deeper into the territory of the Russian Federation."

Open-source monitors have also not been able to verify the claims. The U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War could not verify whether damaged and abandoned armored vehicles shown in geolocated video 7 kilometers (4 miles) north of the border west of Lyubimovka in the Kursk region were Ukrainian.

The think tank also cast doubt on video shared by Russian military bloggers claiming to show the aftermath of the Ukrainian raids. Most of the damage shown "appears to be the result of routine Ukrainian shelling and does not indicate that there was ground activity in the area," it said in its daily report.

Responsibility for previous incursions into Russia's Belgorod and Bryansk regions has been claimed by two murky groups: the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion, which are made up of Russian citizens and have fought alongside Ukrainian forces.

Some Russian war bloggers who have proved knowledgeable about the war said that Ukrainian soldiers were in Kursk.

Rybar, a Telegram channel run by Mikhail Zvinchuk, a retired Russian Defense Ministry press officer, said Ukrainian troops had seized three settlements in the region and continued to fight their way deeper in. It also said that Ukrainian forces captured the Sudzha gas transit station, about 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the border. Russian officials have not confirmed the gains.

Another pro-Kremlin military blog, Two Majors, claimed that Ukrainian troops had advanced up to 15

kilometers (9 miles) into the region.

Neither claim could be independently verified.

The Kursk region's border with Ukraine is 245 kilometers (150 miles) long, making it possible for saboteur groups to launch swift incursions and capture some ground before Russia deploys reinforcements.

Hamas has a new leader. How will that affect the war in Gaza and cease-fire efforts?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

Yahya Sinwar's appointment as the top leader of Hamas formalizes a role he assumed in the early hours of Oct. 7, when the surprise attack into Israel that he helped mastermind ushered in the bloodiest chapter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He is seen as a hard-liner with closer ties to Hamas' armed wing than his predecessor, Ismail Haniyeh, who was killed in an explosion in Iran's capital last month that was widely blamed on Israel and could spark an all-out regional war.

Sinwar was already seen as having the final word on any cease-fire agreement for Gaza and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages still held by Hamas.

But he is deep in hiding inside Gaza, and mediators say it takes several days to exchange messages with him. That raises questions about how he would manage a sprawling organization with cadres across the Middle East.

Hamas has survived the killing of several top leaders across more than three decades, while maintaining a high degree of internal cohesion — and tapping Sinwar, who tops Israel's most-wanted list, was a show of defiance.

But Hamas has never faced a crisis of this magnitude — and the man who engineered it is now charged with managing the fallout.

An even tougher stance toward Israel

Haniyeh was a veteran of Hamas' political wing who had once served as Palestinian prime minister and in more recent years had managed the group's affairs from his base in Qatar.

While Hamas has always championed armed struggle, Haniyeh and other exiled leaders had occasionally struck a more moderate tone, even expressing openness to a possible two-state solution, although still officially refusing to recognize Israel.

Sinwar, by contrast, spent more than two decades in Israeli prisons and told interrogators he had killed 12 suspected Palestinian collaborators, gaining a reputation for brutality among people on both sides of the conflict.

He and Mohammed Deif, the shadowy head of Hamas' armed wing who Israel claims to have killed in a recent strike, spent years building up the group's military strength and are believed to have devised the Oct. 7 attack. Militants burst into Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and abducting around 250.

In recent negotiations, "Haniyeh had played a big role in trying to convince Sinwar to accept a cease-fire proposal with Israel," said Hugh Lovatt, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Sinwar has stuck to demands for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and a lasting cease-fire — even as nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the ongoing war, according to local officials, and much of the territory left in ruins.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is completely destroyed and all the hostages return home.

"The killing of Haniyeh already brought negotiations back to the drawing board," said Lina Khatib, an expert on the conflict at Chatham House, a London-based think tank. "This next chess move by Hamas makes negotiations even trickier."

Sadeq Abu Amer, head of the Palestinian Dialogue Group, a think tank based in Turkey, said that while Sinwar's elevation might appear to be a "challenge to Israel," it is still possible to make a deal.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 69 of 82

He added that Sinwar, in his new role, "might take a step that will surprise everyone."

Leading from the shadows

Predicting how Sinwar will lead Hamas is difficult because of the secrecy around him.

Sinwar has not been seen since the start of the war and even before Oct. 7 made only rare public appearances. He is likely in hiding deep inside Hamas' tunnel network and largely cut off from the outside world.

While he can be expected to set overall policy and make the final decision on any cease-fire deal, Hamas' day-to-day operations in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and elsewhere are likely to be managed by its exiled leaders in Qatar, Lebanon, Turkey and Iran.

"There are issues that he can make a decision on and there are issues and matters that his deputies and the rest of the members of the political bureau can do," said Hani al-Masri, a veteran Palestinian analyst who has met most of Hamas' leaders over the years, including Haniyeh and Sinwar.

Hamas has a long history of persevering after the killing of its top leaders — including its founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed in an airstrike in 2004.

But it has never faced a campaign of targeted killings on this scale.

Israel says it has killed scores of Hamas commanders in Gaza, including Deif, whose death Hamas has neither confirmed nor denied. Another top Hamas leader, Saleh Arouri, was killed in an apparent Israeli airstrike in Beirut in January. The string of targeted killings has likely led other Hamas leaders to limit their movements and contacts.

That could eventually degrade the organization, even as it enjoys the support of many — but not most — Palestinians.

"Israel's elimination of senior Hamas leaders who cannot easily be replaced has likely had a qualitative impact on the movement," Lovatt said. "More fundamentally, though, the killing of senior figures such as Arouri and Haniyeh appears to have tipped the movement in a more hard-line direction."

Great Barrier Reef waters were hottest in 400 years over the past decade, study finds

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ocean temperatures in the Great Barrier Reef hit their highest level in 400 years over the past decade, according to researchers who warned that the reef likely won't survive if planetary warming isn't stopped.

During that time, between 2016 and 2024, the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef ecosystem and one of the most biodiverse, suffered mass coral bleaching events. That's when water temperatures get too hot and coral expel the algae that provide them with color and food, and sometimes die. Earlier this year, aerial surveys of over 300 reefs in the system off Australia's northeast coast found bleaching in shallow water areas spanning two-thirds of the reef, according to Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Researchers from Melbourne University and other universities in Australia, in a paper published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, were able to compare recent ocean temperatures to historical ones by using coral skeleton samples from the Coral Sea to reconstruct sea surface temperature data from 1618 to 1995. They coupled that with sea surface temperature data from 1900 to 2024.

They observed largely stable temperatures before 1900, and steady warming from January to March from 1960 to 2024. And during five years of coral bleaching in the past decade — during 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022 and 2024 — temperatures in January and March were significantly higher than anything dating back to 1618, researchers found. They used climate models to attribute the warming rate after 1900 to human-caused climate change. The only other year nearly as warm as the mass bleaching years of the past decade was 2004.

"The reef is in danger and if we don't divert from our current course, our generation will likely witness the demise of one of those great natural wonders," said Benjamin Henley, the study's lead author and a lecturer of sustainable urban management at the University of Melbourne. "If you put all of the evidence together ... heat extremes are occurring too often for those corals to effectively adapt and evolve."

Across the world, reefs are key to seafood production and tourism. Scientists have long said additional loss of coral is likely to be a casualty of future warming as the world approaches the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) threshold that countries agreed to try and keep warming under in the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Even if global warming is kept under the Paris Agreement's goal, which scientists say Earth is almost guaranteed to cross, 70% to 90% of corals across the globe could be threatened, the study's authors said. As a result, future coral reefs would likely have less diversity in coral species — which has already been happening as the oceans have grown hotter.

Coral reefs have been evolving over the past quarter century in response to bleaching events like the ones the study's authors highlighted, said Michael McPhaden, a senior climate scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who was not involved with the study. But even the most robust coral may soon not be able to withstand the elevated temperatures expected under a warming climate with "the relentless rise in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere," he said.

The Great Barrier Reef serves as an economic resource for the region and protects against severe tropical storms.

As more heat-tolerant coral replaces the less heat-tolerant species in the colorful underwater rainbow jungle, McPhaden said there's "real concern" about the expected extreme loss in the number of species and reduction in area that the world's largest reef covers.

"It's the canary in the coal mine in terms of climate change," McPhaden said.

Algerians rally behind gold medal hopeful Imane Khelif amid gender misconceptions

By LOTFI BOUCHOUCHI and SAM METZ Associated Press

AIN MESBAH, Algeria (AP) — Relatives and neighbors erupted in cheers on Tuesday when Algeria's Imane Khelif advanced to the Olympic final in women's boxing, winning a clear unanimous decision over Janjaem Suwannapheng of Thailand.

In Ain Mesbah, the rural cinder block-built town where the boxer was raised, legions of supporters convened on her uncle's home to watch Khelif's match. With news camera lights shining on the gathering, they drank orange juice, waved flags and whistled as Khelif jumped around the ring in excitement about advancing to Friday's gold medal match.

"Between the quarterfinals and the semifinals, we were on edge," said Rachid Khelif, referencing the wave of uninformed speculation about his niece's gender. "We were afraid that these attacks would affect her psychologically. But thank God, we saw Imane in a good state of mind."

Few Algerians could have imagined that a 25-year-old welder's daughter from the drought-stricken Tiaret region could unite the population in such a way. But the Muslim-majority country has largely interpreted the backlash against Khelif as an attack on the nation rather than within the context of the debate underway in many Western nations about gender, sex and sports.

In the North African nation's newspapers, on television and all over social media, Khelif has become a hometown hero, celebrated for her successes and defended amid misconceptions about her gender and scrutiny over her eligibility to compete.

"Imane Khelif, the last round against hate and racism!" read a Tuesday headline in leading Algerian daily Echowrouk, which described her as "an iconic figure in national sport."

Rifka, an Algerian social media influencer with 5.4 million Instagram followers, posted earlier this week showing himself traveling from Algiers to Paris to stream Khelif's matches and reading headlines about Elon Musk's misconceptions about Khelif's gender.

"What? This man does not know Algerians," he said.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has called Khelif via telephone to cheer her on and backed her amid the criticisms.

"Thank you Imane Khelif for making all Algerians happy, with this strong and wonderful qualification for

the final," he wrote on X after her semifinal rout on Tuesday. "All Algerian women and men are with you."

Khelif earlier this week said that the spread of misconceptions about her gender "harms human dignity" and, throughout the Olympics, both family members and Algeria's leading politicians echoed that description, describing the attacks against her as misguided.

Salah Goudjil, the speaker of Algeria's Senate, lauded Khelif on Tuesday evening for "her well-deserved qualification for the 2024 Olympic final, amid a hateful racist campaign."

Khelif, who grew up with six siblings, was not always so embraced, however. In a pre-Olympics interview with Canal Algérie, she noted the challenges of growing up in a sheep farming community where many neighbors and family members were not accustomed to young girls pursuing certain sports.

"I come from a region and family that are conservative. Boxing was a sport for men only and the hardest thing for me was traveling between my village and the town where I trained," she said, recounting how she sold bread in the street.

Apart from Khelif's aunt, the audience watching her match at her uncle's home was nearly all men. But young girls continue to train at her boxing gym in nearby Tiaret, the larger town she traveled to for training during her childhood.

A flag hangs on the wall behind the gym's boxing ring, next to signs reading "Don't Give Up" and "Try Again to Win."

"We tell Imane Khelif: Continue your career and pursue your dream, which is to win the gold medal," said Yousra Messousa, a young girl who frequents the Tiaret gym. "Imane is a woman. She was born a girl, lived as a girl and boxes as a woman. Criticism and attacks don't affect her."

The controversy about Khelif's gender and eligibility stems from the Russian-dominated International Boxing Association's decision to disqualify her and a boxer from Taiwan from last year's world championships. The association said Khelif's disqualification — which came after she defeated a Russian opponent — was due to failing an unspecified eligibility test.

Its leaders and procedures have since come under fire from the International Olympic Committee, which a year ago banned the association after years of serious concerns about its financial transparency and competition governance.

The IOC has called the testing done on Khelif and Lin "impossibly flawed," and seemingly another part of a Russian-fueled defamation campaign directed at an Olympic Games from which its athletes are mostly banned from competing.

Such debates about gender identity may be animating the United States and Europe, but they're mostly foreign in Algeria. Abdelkader Bezaiz, a coach at Tiaret's boxing center, told The Associated Press, "it only strengthens Imane Khelif's determination and will to prove that she is the boxing champion of these Paris Games."

"All the Algerian people are happy. Everyone was waiting for this victory," said Khelif's cousin, Walid Djobar. "I really hope she gets the gold medal and I have a feeling she's going to bring it home."

US setter Jordyn Poulter recovers from serious knee injury to lead Americans into Olympic semifinals

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Moments before match point of the Olympic quarterfinals, Jordyn Poulter punched herself in the outer thigh.

It wasn't a motivational tactic — she's plenty good at getting herself fired up. No, the American setter was making sure blood kept flowing around her surgically repaired left knee, covered by an enormous black brace.

It has been 19 months since Poulter crumbled to the floor while playing in Italy, knowing instantly she was seriously hurt.

"I had never been in so much pain in my life," she said.

Which is why her entire left leg still needs some extra TLC.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 72 of 82

"This whole chain with the extent of the damage that was done in my knee, sometimes it gets a little tight, so I just hit it to get it loose," she said.

It's a little like the thoughtful care she received for months during her daunting comeback. At times, she would have six coaches working her out at once, something coach Karch Kiraly acknowledges with a chuckle was "what any American club would call private lessons."

A devastating knee injury

In December 2022 while playing for her Italian club, Poulter suffered a devastating knee injury that required surgery. She tore the ACL, MCL, posterior cruciate ligament and meniscus.

All this after she hurt an ankle in the final match of Olympic pool play against Italy at Tokyo three years ago but played through it. Then, in summer 2022, she got her gold medal stolen from her car but later recovered it.

This is a redemption of sorts for Poulter, who finally felt at full strength again in March. She helped the Americans defeat Poland in straight sets Tuesday to move into the semifinal round Thursday against Brazil — a rematch of the Tokyo Games gold-medal match the Americans won for the program's first ever gold.

"There's a little chip on the shoulder, for sure," she said. "All the time and effort that not only I spent but all the people who love and care about me spent to get me back to where I can compete at the Olympics in the semifinal match, I couldn't ask for anything more."

A constant reminder

The U.S. captain has a constant reminder of everything she endured to even make it back for the Paris Olympics: that big, bulky brace.

It hardly seems to hinder her game. Kiraly and the medical staff didn't know until Day 1 at these Olympics whether Poulter could even play a full match. They'd never had a chance to test her, despite knowing Poulter had put so much into improving her fitness and conditioning leading up to Paris.

She was named best setter at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago. Poulter turned 27 on July 31 after the Paris Games were underway.

"I always felt that I could get back to where I wanted to be. I didn't know if it would be the same version of myself as before or not," she said. "But that's what we do as athletes, we adapt and adjust."

Announced first among the U.S. starters during pregame introductions, Poulter runs onto the court with her arms swaying in the air. She was born in Illinois and raised in Colorado before returning to her home state to attend the University of Illinois.

"She's a stud. People don't understand all the work she did for 19 months," Kiraly said. "It brings goosebumps and tears to my eyes with all the lonely work that she did."

The day she was injured, Poulter leapt in the air and at full extension, she felt the ACL pop — "I thought the other middle blocker had kicked me, so it felt like my knee got jolted back, then on the landing my knee was hyperextended and couldn't find its place or space and everything else kind of went."

"Obviously proud of the physical side of things, and that's a lot of quiet work behind the scenes," teammate Andrea Drews said. "She's done a really good job this tournament. It doesn't look or feel maybe how she wants it to all the time, but that doesn't mean it's bad or wrong. Different is OK."

The milestones are piling up

Kiraly kept close track of every little success along the way, from when Poulter first began jumping again to when she could finally play 6-on-6 in the spring.

"Oh he's been invested with me every step of the way," she said. "He even knows some of the dates. I don't even know some of the dates. He can pull up milestones like it's nothing."

Her teammates can't quite believe how far Poulter has come, with her spirit intact.

"To have everything torn in your knee and come back like a year and a half later and play in the Olympic Games is unreal," outside hitter Kathryn Plummer said. "She's changed her lifestyle to get her back where she needs to be. For her to be here and to lead this team, it's just a testament of the person she is, too. She's just a very solid, stable person. That's what our team needs."

Extreme heat is impacting most Americans' electricity bills, AP-NORC poll finds

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — During the summer, Levena Lindahl closes off entire rooms, covers windows with blackout curtains and budgets to manage the monthly cost of electricity for air conditioning. But even then, the heat finds its way in.

"Going upstairs, it's like walking into soup. It is so hot," Lindahl said. "If I walk past my attic upstairs, you can feel the heat radiating through a closed door."

Lindahl, 37, who lives in North Carolina, said her monthly electricity bills in the summer used to be around \$100 years ago, but they've since doubled. She blames a gradual warming trend caused by climate change.

Around 7 in 10 Americans say in the last year extreme heat has had an impact on their electricity bills, ranging from minor to major, and most have seen at least a minor impact on their outdoor activities, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

As tens of millions of Americans swelter through another summer of historic heat waves, the survey's findings reveal how extreme heat is changing people's lives in big and small ways. The poll found that about 7 in 10 Americans have been personally affected by extremely hot weather or extreme heat waves over the past five years. That makes extreme heat a more common experience than other weather events or natural disasters like wildfires, major droughts and hurricanes, which up to one-third of U.S. adults said they've been personally affected by.

Sizable shares of Americans – around 4 in 10 – report that extreme heat has had at least a minor impact on their sleep, pets or exercise routine.

Jim Graham, 54, lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and worries about the safety of his dog's paws when going on walks outside, especially when it gets above 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius). To protect her feet, they head out for walks at 5:30 a.m. "This year it seems hotter than usual," said Graham. His single-level home has central air conditioning and even setting the thermostat to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius) runs him over \$350 a month in electricity bills, a big jump from what he used to pay about a decade ago.

He's not the only one watching the dollars add up: About 4 in 10 Americans say they've had unexpectedly expensive utility bills in the past year because of storms, flood, heat, or wildfires, including nearly half of homeowners.

Like Lindahl, many see a link to climate change. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults who have experienced some type of severe weather events or weather disasters in the last five years say they believe climate change was a contributing factor. Three in 10 think climate change was not a cause.

Last year Earth was 2.66 degrees Fahrenheit (1.48 degrees Celsius) warmer than it was before pre-industrial times, according to the European climate agency Copernicus. Some might perceive that increase as insignificant, but temperatures are unevenly fluctuating across the planet and can be dangerous to human health. Several regions of the U.S. set all-time temperature records this summer, and Las Vegas reached a scorching 120 degrees Fahrenheit (48.9 degrees Celsius) on July 7.

According to the poll, about 1 in 10 Americans say that extreme heat has had a major impact on their sleep in the past year, while about 3 in 10 say it's had a minor impact and 55% say it's had no impact. Hispanic Americans are more likely than white Americans to say their sleep has been affected, and lower-income Americans are also more likely than higher-income Americans to report an effect on their sleep.

The effects of extreme heat are more widely reported in the West and South. About half of people living in the West say their sleep has been impacted at least in a minor way by extreme heat, while about 4 in 10 people living in the South say their sleep has been impacted, compared to about 3 in 10 people living in the Midwest and Northeast. People living in the West and South are also more likely than those in the Northeast to say their exercise routines have been affected.

Other aspects of daily life – like jobs and commutes, the timing of events like weddings and reunions, and travel and vacation plans – have been less broadly disrupted, but their impact is disproportionately

felt among specific groups of Americans. About one-quarter of Americans say that their travel or vacation plans have been impacted by extreme heat, with Hispanic and Black Americans more likely than white Americans to say this.

Even simply enjoying time outside has become more difficult for some. The poll found that about 6 in 10 Americans say extreme heat has impacted outdoor activities for themselves or their family.

In general, people who don't believe climate change is happening are less likely to report being affected by various aspects of extreme heat compared to people who do. For instance, about 8 in 10 Americans who believe that climate change is happening say extreme heat has had at least a minor impact on their electricity bills, compared to half of Americans who aren't sure climate change is happening or don't think it's happening.

Mario Cianchetti, 70, is a retired engineer who now lives in Sedona, Arizona. His home has solar panels and heat pumps, which he installed because he was interested in lowering his electricity bills to save money. "When you retire, you're on a single fixed income. I didn't want to have to deal with rising energy costs," said Cianchetti, who identified himself as a political independent.

Cianchetti noted that temperatures feel unusually warm but said installing sustainable technologies in his house was a matter of finance. "It's not that I don't believe in climate change, yeah I believe we're going into a hot cycle here, but I don't believe that it's man-caused."

When it comes to general views of climate change, 70% of U.S. adults say climate change is happening. About 6 in 10 of those who believe climate change is happening say that it's caused entirely or mostly by human activities, while another 3 in 10 say it's caused equally by human activities and natural changes to the environment and 12% believe it's primarily caused by natural environmental change. Nine in 10 Democrats, 7 in 10 independents and about half of Republicans say climate change is happening.

Those numbers are essentially unchanged from when the question was last asked in April and have been steady in recent years, although about half of Americans say they have become more concerned about climate change over the past year.

Federal infrastructure funding is fueling a push to remove dams and restore river habitat

By MICHAEL CASEY and ERIK VERDUZCO Associated Press

BOONE, N.C. (AP) — On the whooshing Watauga River, excavators claw at the remains of Shulls Mill Dam, pulling concrete apart piece by piece and gradually opening a waterway kept in check for nearly two centuries.

Removal of this privately-owned hydropower dam in western North Carolina will be a boon for rafters, kayakers and tubers by allowing the river to flow freely for nearly 80 miles (129 kilometers). But maybe the biggest beneficiary will be a strange, ancient creature known as the eastern hellbender salamander.

Sometimes called a snot otter or Allegheny alligator, it's North America's largest salamander and can reach two feet (61 centimeters) in length. But the salamander's range in places such as southern Appalachia has shrunk and its numbers are down 70% over the past 50 years.

"What's so important about the hellbender is they need special habitat — clear, clean, cold, heavily oxygenated water," said Andy Hill, a Watagua Riverkeeper with MountainTrue, which teamed up with American Rivers to remove the dam in July. "The hellbender is kind of a keystone species for a mountain stream ecosystem, and removal of this dam will create new habitat."

Demolition of Shulls Mill Dam is part of a national trend to return rivers to their natural state by removing aging, sometimes derelict structures that once powered mills, irrigated farmland or impounded water. Aimed at boosting biodiversity, improving water quality and strengthening flood protection amid worsening storms, the campaign to demolish dams dates back several decades but has intensified with a once-in-a-generation funding infusion from the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill.

More than \$2 billion is going to federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Federal Emergency Management Agency, for maintaining,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 75 of 82

repairing and removing dams, culverts and other barriers. Of that, \$920 million has already been spent on 544 projects.

The wildlife service is getting \$200 million over five years for dam removal. In April, the agency announced plans to award \$70 million in grants, supporting 43 projects to remove dams and other river barriers in 29 states.

"It's a huge, huge uplift," said Amy Horstman, the service's National Fish Passage Program coordinator, who noted grants once capped at a few hundred thousand dollars are now into the millions of dollars.

"This is really is changing the scope and scale, even the way we can think about aquatic connectivity," she said. "People came in with bigger, more complicated projects and asked us to help shoulder a bigger slice of that pie."

States, too, are putting money into dam removals.

North Carolina — which The Associated Press in 2019 found had the second largest collection of dams in poor or unsatisfactory condition — set aside \$7.2 million for removal of Shulls Mill Dam and at least five others in the western part of the state.

Michigan's Legislature allocated more than \$43 million for dam maintenance and removals after a dam failure in 2020 displaced thousands. A dozen dams, including one on the Maple River that breached in 2023, have been removed with that funding.

"Obviously we're trying to reduce that risk to human life and property damage," said Mason Manuszak, an environmental engineer in the state's dam safety unit. "One of the things we're really trying to hammer home to people is ecological benefits of dam removal."

Serena McClain, senior director of the national dam removal program at the conservation group American Rivers, said the funding spike, especially from the infrastructure bill, is an "opportunity to get critically important projects funded."

But McClain emphasized it was only a start — many of the nation's 500,000 to 1 million dams are over 60 years old and removal costs can range from a few hundred thousand dollars to tens of millions.

"It's a great down payment on what's needed to restore and reconnect the vital river habitat all around the country," McClain said.

Among the biggest beneficiaries for dam removals are aquatic species, especially migrating fish. Studies have found removals can lower water temperatures and increase dissolved oxygen in rivers and boost populations of trout and salmon as well as freshwater mussels and American eels.

"The science is pretty good that when we have obstructions, ... it's really the whole system that suffers," said Horstman of Fish and Wildlife.

Some large dam systems are being removed, including four Klamath River dams in California — the largest removal project in history. But most dams being demolished are relatively small.

In Maine, the Remnant Mill Dam on the Sabattus River is slated for removal this summer. Along with flood protection, the project will provide passage for river herring and federally endangered Atlantic salmon. In New Hampshire, Washburn Mill Dam on the Mohawk River was removed to restore connectivity to nearly 40 miles (64 kilometers) of brook trout habitat.

In Flint, Michigan, the Hamilton Dam, built more than a century ago to power mill operations, is coming down. The dam, on the Flint River, has long been at risk of failing and flooding the city's downtown. Removal will reconnect 25 miles (40 kilometers) of upstream habitat, which will help the lake sturgeon population, according to U.S. wildlife officials. It will also strengthen flood protection, improve water quality and boost efforts to redevelop the riverfront.

Dam removal normally utilizes excavation equipment but the McKinley Lake Dam about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Missoula, Montana was blown up — with explosives transported by mules. It's one of 10 century-old dams on eight glacial lakes being removed to lower water levels and allow for return of wetland crucial to native amphibians such as the long-toed salamander and Columbia spotted frog. Native trout species in the streams below the lakes would also benefit.

"It's a rewilding, a re-naturalizing exercise," said Rob Roberts, a senior project manager with Trout

Unlimited, which partnered with government agencies on the nearly \$4 million project to remove all the dams in the next decade.

But not everyone supports removing dams, especially larger structures.

Republican lawmakers in the West, including U.S. Reps. Doug LaMalfa of California, Cliff Bentz of Oregon, Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington and Russ Fulcher of Idaho, argue the projects drain reservoirs, leaving acres of sludge, eliminating water sources for farmers and wiping out hydroelectric plant jobs.

They contend dam removal advocates don't understand that many factors cause depleted fish populations beyond spawning obstacles, including overfishing, disease and pollution.

"It's a political power play," said LaMalfa, who tried to block dam removal on the Klamath River. "They're hell-bent on tearing them out. These are trophies for these guys."

In North Carolina, dam removals along the Watauga River have been largely applauded, and advocates already are seeing cleaner water and fish swimming parts of the river disrupted for decades.

Life for hellbenders living below the dam should improve, too. Eight were captured by divers and relocated to a safer location downstream where another dam was removed in 2021.

Appalachian State University's Michael Gangloff, who is coordinating biological monitoring at the Shulls Mill site, said the free-flowing river should improve water quality and become more attractive to salamanders. Sediment will be flushed downstream, he said, exposing larger rocks and boulders where salamanders live, lay eggs and raise young.

"We should see better habitat conditions around the dam and, in 10 to 15 to 20 years, it will be hard to tell there was a dam there," Gangloff said.

No drinking and only Christian music during Sunday Gospel Hour at Nashville's most iconic honky tonk

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Robert's Western World is known as Nashville's most authentic honky tonk and synonymous with country music. But for an hour on Sundays, no one can drink alcohol; everyone must listen to Christian music.

This is "Sunday Gospel Hour" in the Tennessee capital known as Music City.

For nearly 20 years, worship at this honky tonk has been led by the Rev. Ron Blakely — a 71-year-old musician and Catholic convert who was ordained a priest in another faith tradition.

"It's been a blessing," he said of his weekly gig. He was interviewed at his log cabin in the outskirts of Nashville where he rehearsed before the Sunday service with sheet music and scripture.

"It's not like I got a board of elders and I have to meet all the money to pay the bills," he said, comparing it to regular houses of worship. "I'm just there, playing my guitar and giving the message that God puts in my heart."

On a recent Sunday, he strummed his guitar, wearing a black crucifix and white cowboy hat, while his daughter, Mimi Fischer, sang Patsy Cline's "Life's Railway to Heaven" in an angelic voice that moved some to tears. The stage was decorated with a fluttering U.S. flag.

"Her voice was just beautiful," said Sonia Davis, 53, a nurse visiting with her husband from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She didn't know about the Gospel Hour until she walked into Robert's.

"I cry a lot," she said, chuckling and wiping tears after the show-turned-worship. "I feel other people's emotions, and I felt there was a lot of emotion from hearing her, and the whole band, and the fact that she was performing with her father, and it was family."

It was past 11 a.m. on Sunday, when many Americans are in their churches, sitting on wooden pews.

At Robert's, some locals and dozens of tourists from across the nation instead found their church sitting on the barstools of this beloved honky tonk. It is on Lower Broadway across from Garth Brooks' multi-level entertainment space and just steps from the Ryman Auditorium — the so-called Mother Church of Country Music.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 77 of 82

Outside, partying bachelorettes and country lovers on a musical pilgrimage strolled through a packed Broadway of bars blasting live music. Inside, tourists and locals, including children (open to all until 6 p.m.; 21+ after), fidgeted on their chairs. Some seemed moved by the spirit, Christian/country classics — or both. So, they sang along, clapped and even prayed.

“When I sing those songs, I want for people who hear them to have a glimpse of what it is to feel and follow Jesus,” said Fischer, who was joined that Sunday by his daughter Skyler, in charge of the red tip jar that later was passed around to the audience.

Around them, posters and framed photos of musicians, neon signs for bourbon and beer and shelves lined with cowboy boots — a remnant of the locale’s previous life: a boot and clothing store called Rhinestone Western Wear. At one point the building also housed the Sho-Bud Steel Guitar Company where a then-struggling country singer and pig farm owner bought what would become the legendary guitar named Trigger before he was universally known as Willie Nelson.

These days, Robert’s is proudly known for its no frills style as one of the last bastions of traditional country music and often stands out from the many brightly lit, TV-tuning bars on Honky Tonk row. It is home of the (\$6) “Recession Special” with its famous fried bologna sandwich, Moon Pie, potato chips and a Pabst Blue Ribbon, although on Sundays drinkers must wait to get their beer after the worship service.

“You can hang for the entire service and then get a beer,” said John McTigue III, the band’s drummer and Blakley’s best friend since they met outside Robert’s more than a decade ago.

“A lot of people might come to visit or might have been there the night before. And they come back again, and they don’t even know that there’s a service going on,” McTigue said. “And once they’re in there, they realize what it is — and ... don’t feel any judgment, pressure to stay there or get up and say anything. It’s just a place to enjoy the spirit of God.”

Robert’s is owned by JesseLee Jones, a Brazil-born longtime Nashville resident and the leader of the honky tonk’s house band, “Brazilbilly.”

The devout Christian likes to say that it’s not about the building — for you can find God anywhere — and he doesn’t mind losing money for a sober hour (or two) if “Father Ron” as he still calls him, can help everyone at Robert’s have “church.”

“Having church on Sunday brings a certain spirit into this place,” Jones said at a storage space above the bar surrounded by boxes of beer.

“People say, ‘Oh, it’s bar.’ Well, I beg to differ — Robert’s is not a bar. It’s a honky tonk. Yeah, we sell beer and liquor, because we’re in business. ... But we ain’t got no televisions on the walls. It’s traditional country music from the time it opens, to the time it closes. ... You have church services on Sunday.”

Wesley Bell defeats ‘Squad’ member Cori Bush. A pro-Israel group spent \$8.5 million to help oust her

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell has defeated U.S. Rep. Cori Bush in a Democratic primary in St. Louis, marking the second time this year that one of the party’s incumbents has been ousted in an expensive contest that reflected deep divisions over the war in Gaza.

Bush, a member of the progressive congressional group known as the “Squad,” was seeking a third term in Missouri’s 1st Congressional District, which includes St. Louis city and part of St. Louis County. Bell is heavily favored to carry this overwhelmingly Democratic district in November, when his party is aiming to retake control of the U.S. House.

“I am committed to serving the St. Louis region in Congress with integrity, transparency, and dedication,” Bell said in a statement. “Together, we will tackle the challenges ahead and build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.”

Bush, in a fiery concession speech, said she still has work to do, even if she’ll no longer be in Congress.

“At the end of the day, whether I’m a congresswoman or not, I’m still taking care of my people,” Bush said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 78 of 82

Bell's campaign received a big boost from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose super political action committee, United Democracy Project, spent \$8.5 million to oust Bush. She was targeted after repeated criticism of Israel's response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attack.

It was a gameplan that worked earlier this year in New York. In June, United Democracy Project spent \$15 million to defeat another Squad member — U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman. Bowman lost to George Latimer, a pro-Israel centrist.

A statement from United Democracy Project said the wins by Bell and Latimer, along with John McGuire's defeat of U.S. Rep. Bob Good in a Republican primary last week in Virginia, "is further proof that being pro-Israel is good policy and good politics on both sides of the aisle. UDP will continue our efforts to support leaders working to strengthen the U.S.-Israel alliance while countering detractors in either political party."

Bush, in her concession speech, said she won't change.

"We will keep supporting a free Palestine," Bush said. A crowd member answered back: "Free, free Palestine."

In October, Bush called the Israeli retaliation an "ethnic cleansing campaign." Soon after the Hamas attack, Bush wrote on social media that Israel's "collective punishment against Palestinians for Hamas's actions is a war crime."

Her comments prompted backlash, even among some supporters in her district. Bell, who had been planning a Senate run against incumbent Republican Josh Hawley, instead opted to challenge Bush. He told The Associated Press last month that Bush's comments about Israel were "wrong and offensive."

Bush responded by saying that the donors behind AIPAC support former President Donald Trump and other Republicans.

"This is only the beginning," Bush told the AP. "Because if they can unseat me, then they're going to continue to come after more Democrats."

Bush and Bell both honed their leadership skills in Ferguson, Missouri, in the unrest that followed Michael Brown's death at the hands of a police officer in 2014. Friday marks the 10th anniversary of Brown's death.

Brown, a Black 18-year-old, was walking with a friend on Aug. 9, 2014, when a white officer, Darren Wilson, confronted them. Wilson said he fired in self-defense because Brown was so enraged. Some witnesses said Brown, who was unarmed, had his hands up in surrender. Wilson was cleared of wrongdoing and resigned, and Brown's death led to months of protests.

Bush, 48, became a protest leader. She was outspoken and critical of how police in Ferguson and other parts of the St. Louis region treated Black people. Her activism prompted an unsuccessful run against longtime incumbent 1st District Democrat William Lacy Clay in 2018, before she defeated him in 2020. She easily won reelection in 2022.

Bell, 49, began hosting conversations about community policing after Brown's death. The lawyer, who previously served as a municipal prosecutor and judge, ran successfully for a seat on the Ferguson City Council before defeating seven-term incumbent St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch in the August 2018 Democratic primary.

As prosecutor, Bell reopened an examination into Brown's death. He announced in July 2020 that while the investigation didn't exonerate Wilson, there wasn't enough evidence to charge him.

"My heart breaks" for Brown's parents, Bell said at the time. "I know this is not the result they were looking for and that their pain will continue forever."

Brown's father, Michael Brown Sr., was featured in an ad for Bush.

"He used my family for power," Brown says of Bell in the ad. "And now he's trying to sell out St. Louis."

Bush's campaign focused on what she's accomplished for St. Louis. She said her efforts have brought \$2 billion to the 1st District and that it was her protest on the steps of the Capitol in 2021 that helped extend the federal eviction moratorium as part of the COVID-19 pandemic, aiding thousands of St. Louisans.

Bell touted his own progressive credentials. He noted that as a prosecutor he has said he will not prosecute any abortion cases in a state that bans the procedure in most instances. He created diversion programs to point people with mental health and substance abuse problems toward treatment instead of jail. And

his office has expanded efforts to examine potential cases of wrongful convictions.

In Missouri's 3rd District, which stretches from the western outskirts of the St. Louis region through central Missouri, the candidate with Trump's endorsement won. Bob Onder, a physician and also a former state senator, defeated former state Sen. Kurt Schaefer.

Trump wrote on Truth Social last month that Onder was "an incredible America First Patriot." The former president wrote that Schaefer "is WEAK ON MAGA," adding, "That's all you have to know!"

The 3rd District is heavily Republican, and Onder will be favored against Democrat Bethany Mann, a political newcomer, in November. ____

This story has been updated to correct that Onder won in Missouri's 3rd District, not Schaefer

Amid concerns about dirty water and strong current, marathon swimmers dive into the Seine River

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — A bridge lined with ornate statues overlooks an Olympic open water course like no other. The Eiffel Tower, gold-domed Invalides and other Paris landmarks provide a stunning backdrop. Yet there was no getting around concerns about the safety of swimming in the long-polluted Seine River, not to mention contending with its strong current.

A hearty group of endurance swimmers dove into the waterway on a cloudy, cool morning Wednesday, their one and only chance to check out the river before they start handing out gold medals.

The training session received the go-ahead around 4 a.m., when World Aquatics got the results of daily testing that showed the water was within acceptable guidelines for illness-causing bacteria — one day after another test run was canceled because of less-favorable readings.

From 2016 Olympic champion Sharon van Rouwendaal of the Netherlands to Irish star Daniel Wiffen, competing in open water for the first time, it appeared that most competitors took advantage of the chance to swim the actual 1.67-kilometer (1-mile) course through the center of the French capital after doing most of their training in the pool.

The women's 10k marathon race will be held Thursday, followed by the men's race on Friday.

"I was very happy that we could train today," van Rouwendaal told The Associated Press, wrapped in a towel shortly after coming out of the chilly water. "We could see how the course is and where to swim and feel the current a little bit."

The three American competitors all took part in the training session, though none put their head under the surface. They used paddle boards to get a feel for the course without taking the chance of swallowing water that might cause an illness.

"We just wanted to mitigate the risk as much as possible of the water getting inside your body," U.S. swimmer Ivan Puskovitch told the AP. "Because even if the water is swimmable, and the levels are safe, there is still some degree of risk. And I think that it goes without saying that the risk is a little bit more significant here than most open water venues."

Before diving in, Austrian swimmers Felix Auboeck and Jan Hercog scouted the conditions from the Pont Alexandre III, the famed bridge that overlooks the starting buoy and finishing chute.

"I think if anyone's saying they're not concerned at all, they're probably lying," Auboeck said. "I am concerned. I just hope and trust the organization in the sense that they will let us in only when it's safe enough to do so. But, of course, you're concerned because no one wants to get ill."

Auboeck can certainly see the appeal of holding open water in the Seine, the river that slices through one of the world's most picturesque cities.

"It is super exciting that this is scenery where we are racing," he said, looking toward the Eiffel Tower. "That's probably the best thing we can do for the sport."

World Aquatics canceled a test run Tuesday because of concerns over fluctuating bacteria levels in the waterway. Despite massive efforts to clear the Seine, water quality has been a constant concern through-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 80 of 82

out the Games.

But officials expressed confidence that both open water races will be held without any issues, especially with the skies turning sunny in the afternoon and little chance of rain in the forecast.

"We have done the tests with the water quality and I know that's really taken care of. It's not just the results we want to have. It's the real results," said Britta Kamrau, a former open water world champion from Germany who now serves on the technical committee for World Aquatics. "I'm not afraid that the athletes will get sick."

Though, she was quick to add, the very nature of the sport — which is held in lakes, oceans and rivers around the world — always raises concerns about the quality of the water.

"After all, it's open water swimming," Kamrau said. "You never have clean water like in the pool."

Open water athletes do most of their training in the controlled conditions of a pool. Hungary's David Betlehem said he wasn't going in the river until the actual event and criticized organizers for pressing ahead with their plans despite the potential health risks.

"The athletes, we have no choice. You're a little bit like a pawn," Betlehem told the AP. "If we want to change things, we need all the athletes to say no, we don't want to swim there. But there are some athletes who say, 'OK, maybe we can do it.'"

This isn't the first time questions have been raised about the safety of the water at an Olympic open water venue. There were major concerns about the sewage-filled waters off Copacabana Beach leading up to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, but the competition was held with no serious issues.

The Seine is unique in another way: This is the first time that Olympic open water, which was introduced at the 2008 Beijing Games, is being held in a river.

Previous competition were held in the Beijing rowing basin, the Serpentine Lake in London's Hyde Park, the ocean in Rio, and Tokyo Bay.

The Seine current has been measured at 2-3 mph, a significant challenge when swimming upstream. During the training session, some swimmers looked like they were barely moving as they struggled back toward the finish line.

"When you were going the way of the current, it was great," van Rouwendaal. "You could swim on your back and you felt like you were super powerful. Then on the way back, you're like, 'Uh oh.'"

Triathlon events have already been held in the river, though the schedule was upended by the readings that are taken daily of the water quality.

Now, it's time for open water, which at least had a backup plan in place if the Seine was determined to be unsafe. The races would be shifted to Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium, site of the rowing and canoeing events.

The Seine open water course comprises a longer portion of the river than the triathlon events, starting and finishing at Pont Alexandre III. Each race is six laps.

With a few exceptions, swimming in the Seine has been prohibited since 1923 because the water has been too toxic.

Paris undertook an ambitious plan to clean up the river, with 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) in infrastructure improvements that included the construction of a giant basin to capture excess rainwater and keep wastewater from flowing into the river.

Four triathletes — of the more than 100 who competed in the men's and women's individual races last week — became sick in the following days, though it was unclear whether the water was to blame.

Belgian triathlete Claire Michel was among those fell ill, forcing her country to withdraw from the team event. Some news outlets reported that she had been sickened by E. coli after competing in the individual event and spent several days in the hospital.

In an Instagram post Tuesday, Michel said it was a virus and not E. coli that made her sick.

How Lahaina's more than 150-year-old banyan tree is coming back to life after devastating fire

By CLAIRE RUSH and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — When a deadly wildfire tore through Lahaina on Maui last August, the wall of flames scorched the 151-year-old banyan tree along the historic town's Front Street. But the sprawling tree survived the blaze, and thanks to the efforts of arborists and dedicated volunteers, parts of it are growing back — and even thriving.

One year after the fire, here's what to know about the banyan tree and the efforts to restore it.

Why is Lahaina's banyan tree significant?

The banyan tree is the oldest living one on Maui but is not a species indigenous to the Hawaiian Islands. India shipped the tree as a gift to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries to live in Lahaina. It was planted in 1873, a quarter century before the Hawaiian Islands became a U.S. territory and seven decades after King Kamehameha declared Lahaina the capital of his kingdom.

The tree is widely beloved and fondly remembered by millions of tourists who have visited Maui over the years. But for many others it is a symbol of colonial rule that has dispossessed Native Hawaiians of their land and suppressed their language and culture.

For generations, the banyan tree served as a gathering place along Lahaina's waterfront. By many accounts, it was the heart of the oceanside community — towering more than 60 feet (18 meters) high and anchored by multiple trunks that span nearly an acre.

The enormous tree has leafy branches that unfurl majestically and offer shade from the sun. Aerial roots dangle from its boughs and eventually latch onto the soil to become new trunks. Branches splay out widely, and have become roosting places for choirs of birds.

What happened to it during the fire?

The 2023 fire charred the tree and blackened many of its leaves. But it wasn't the flames so much as the intense heat that was generated that dried out much of the tree, according to Duane Sparkman, chair of the Maui County Arborist Committee. As a result of this loss of moisture, about half of the tree's branches died, he said.

"Once that section of the tree desiccated, there was no coming back," he said.

But other parts of the tree are now growing back healthy.

How was it saved?

Those working to restore the tree removed the dead branches so that the tree's energy would go toward the branches that were alive, Sparkman said.

To monitor that energy, 14 sensors were screwed into the tree to track the flows of cambium, or sap, through its branches.

"It's basically a heart monitor," Sparkman said. "As we've been treating the tree, the heart beat's getting stronger and stronger and stronger."

Sparkman said there are also plans to install vertical tubes to help the tree's aerial roots, which appear to be vertical branches that grow down toward the ground. The tubes will contain compost so as to provide the branches with key nutrients when they take root in the soil.

A planned irrigation system will also feed small drops of water into the tubes. The goal, Sparkman said, is to help those aerial roots "bulk up and become the next stabilizer root." The system will also irrigate the surrounding land and the tree's canopy.

"You see a lot of long, long branches with hundreds of leaves back on the tree," Sparkman said, adding that some branches are even producing fruit. "It's pretty amazing to see that much of the tree come back."

What other trees were destroyed in the fire?

Sparkman estimates that Lahaina lost some 25,000 trees in the fire.

These included the fruit trees that people grew in their yards as well as trees that are significant in Hawaiian culture, such as the ulu or breadfruit tree; the fire charred all but two of the dozen or so that remained.

Since the blaze, a band of arborists, farmers and landscapers — including Sparkman — has set about

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 08, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 044 ~ 82 of 82

trying to save the ulu and other culturally important trees. Before colonialism, commercial agriculture and tourism, thousands of breadfruit trees dotted Lahaina.

To help restore Lahaina's trees, Sparkman founded a nonprofit called Treecovery. The group has potted some 3,500 trees, he said, growing them in "micro-nurseries" across the island, including at some hotels, until people can move back into their homes.

"We have grow hubs all over the island of Maui to grow these trees out for as long as they need. So when the people are ready, we can have them come pick these trees up and they can plant them in their yards," he said. "It's important that we do this for the families."

Today in History: August 8, devastating Maui wildfires

Today is Thursday, Aug. 8, the 221st day of 2024. There are 145 days left in the year.

On Aug. 8, 2023, a series of wind-driven wildfires broke out on the Hawaiian island of Maui, destroying the town of Lahaina and killing more than 100 people.

In 1814, during the War of 1812, peace talks between the United States and Britain began in Ghent, Belgium.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for St. Helena to spend the remainder of his days in exile.

In 1876, Thomas Edison received a patent for his electric pen—the forerunner of the mimeograph machine.

In 1908, Wilbur Wright makes the Wright Brothers' first public flying demonstration, at Le Mans race-course in France.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft signed a measure raising the number of U.S. representatives from 391 to 433, effective with the next Congress, with a proviso to add two more when New Mexico and Arizona became states.

In 1963, Britain's "Great Train Robbery" took place as thieves made off with 2.6 million pounds in banknotes.

In 1969, photographer Iain Macmillan took the iconic photo of The Beatles that would appear on the cover of their album "Abbey Road."

In 1974, President Richard Nixon, facing damaging new revelations in the Watergate scandal, announced he would resign the following day.

In 1988, Chicago's Wrigley Field hosted its first-ever night baseball game; the contest between the Chicago Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies would be rained out in the fourth inning.

In 2000, the wreckage of the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley, which sank in 1864 after attacking the Union ship Housatonic, was recovered off the South Carolina coast and returned to port.

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in as the U.S. Supreme Court's first Hispanic and third female justice.

In 2022, FBI agents executed a search warrant for former President Donald Trump's residence at Mar al Lago in Palm Beach, Florida; over 13,000 government documents, including 103 classified documents, were seized.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Nita Talbot is 94. Actor Dustin Hoffman is 87. Actor Connie Stevens is 86. Country singer Phil Balsley (The Statler Brothers) is 86. Actor Larry Wilcox is 77. Actor Keith Carradine is 75. Movie director Martin Brest is 73. Radio-TV personality Robin Quivers is 72. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is 71. Percussionist Anton Fig is 71. Actor Donny Most is 71. Rock musician Dennis Drew (10,000 Maniacs) is 67. TV personality Deborah Norville is 66. Rock musician The Edge (U2) is 63. Rock musician Rikki Rockett (Poison) is 63. Rapper Kool Moe Dee is 62. Middle distance runner Suzy Favor Hamilton is 56. Rock singer Scott Stapp is 51. Country singer Mark Wills is 51. Actor Kohl Sudduth is 50. Rock musician Tom Linton (Jimmy Eat World) is 49. Singer JC Chasez ('N Sync) is 48. Actor Tawny Cypress is 48. R&B singer Drew Lachey (lah-SHAY') (98 Degrees) is 48. R&B singer Marsha Ambrosius is 47. Actor Lindsay Sloane is 47. Actor Countess Vaughn is 46. Actor Michael Urie is 44. Tennis player Roger Federer is 43. Actor Meagan Good is 43. Actor Jackie Cruz (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 40. Britain's Princess Beatrice of York is 36. Actor Ken Baumann is 35. New York Yankees first baseman Anthony Rizzo is 35. Pop singer Shawn Mendes is 26.