

Groton Daily Independent

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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 (See scheduled on Page 6)

STOP BEING AFRAID
of what could go wrong.



START BEING EXCITED
about what could go right!

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

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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.

Ukraine's Cross-Border Push

Ukrainian armed forces have pushed through two defensive lines in Russia's southwestern Kursk Oblast since the operation began Tuesday. The cross-border incursion—9 miles into Russia—is Ukraine's largest since the war began 30 months ago, involving an estimated 1,000 soldiers in dozens of armored vehicles.

The operation comes amid mostly stalemate conditions along the two countries' 600-mile front line. Analysts say Ukraine has captured roughly 50 square miles of territory, including a Gazprom-owned gas metering station, the Russian town of Sudzha, and at least 11 other settlements. Images showed US-made equipment in use in the operation, though American officials stated the incursion did not violate its policies around the use of US weapons in the war.

Analysts say the sudden move into Russian territory could be designed to divert forces from current hot spot areas of the conflict. A Ukrainian adviser has indicated the move was designed to help Ukraine's position in potential negotiations with Russia.

Olympics Final Countdown

The 2024 Paris Olympics are in the final stretch, with a few days of competition remaining before Sunday's closing ceremony.

Botswana's Letsile Tebogo won the men's 200-meter race yesterday, a surprise upset for Team USA's Noah Lyles, who won the 100-meter race this week but took bronze yesterday after testing positive for COVID-19. Meanwhile, American Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone broke her own world record to take gold in the 400-meter hurdles.

Tomorrow, the US men's basketball team faces off against France for gold after defeating Serbia 95-91 yesterday. The US women's soccer team will also have a shot at gold in its match-up tomorrow with Brazil, a potential redemption arc for the four-time World Cup champions after an early loss in that tournament last year. On Sunday, the women's volleyball team will compete against Italy for gold after defeating Brazil yesterday.

Sunday Night Lights

The Perseid meteor shower is expected to peak Sunday night into early morning Monday. During the annual event, which runs from July 14 to Sept. 1, some stargazers can expect to see up to 100 meteors per hour under optimal conditions.

The popular celestial event, first recorded in 36 CE by Chinese observers, gets its name because the meteors appear to stream from the constellation of Perseus. In reality, the shower occurs when the Earth passes through the debris of the Swift-Tuttle comet. As the tiny particles, often no larger than grains of sand, enter the atmosphere at speeds averaging 37 miles per second, they burn up, creating bright streaks across the sky.

This year brings favorable viewing conditions due to the moon being about 50% illuminated and setting around midnight, allowing for dark skies until dawn. The best viewing areas will be in clear, dark areas away from city lights.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Chi Chi Rodriguez, Hall of Fame golfer and eight-time PGA Tour winner born Juan Antonio Rodriguez, dies at age 88.

Paramount Global to lay off 15% of its US workforce in preparation for merger with Skydance Media.

Colin Jost ends stint as Olympics correspondent in Tahiti after sustaining foot injury resulting in a staph infection.

Science & Technology

Apple reportedly to release its smallest desktop to date, using the company's in-house built M4 chip.

NASA discovers two new "super-Earth" exoplanets located dozens of light years away.

Chemists discover new reaction to develop polymers for use in drug delivery, electronics, and more.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +2.3%, Dow +1.8%, Nasdaq +2.9%); S&P 500 notches best day since 2022 following latest labor market data.

US weekly jobless claims fall to 233,000 for week ending Aug. 3; figure is lower than estimates and largest drop in 11 months.

Palantir shares close up 11% after announcing partnership with Microsoft; will sell secure cloud, analytics, and AI capabilities to US defense and intelligence agencies.

Bumble shares fall to all-time low in intraday trading after slashing annual revenue forecast.

US mortgage rates fall to 15-month low, with average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage at 6.47%; total application volume rises 1% week-over-week.

Politics & World Affairs

Former President Donald Trump, Vice President Kamala Harris agree to participate in Sept. 10 presidential debate on ABC; Trump says he has proposed two more debates on Fox and NBC.

Japan issues major earthquake warning after 7.1-magnitude earthquake strikes off eastern coast of southern Japanese island of Kyushu.

Tropical Storm Debby makes second US landfall in South Carolina, with flood threat expanding to northeast US; death toll rises to seven as of this writing.

Barcelona police search for former Catalonia leader Carles Puigdemont, who returned to Spain despite an outstanding arrest warrant over his failed 2017 independence bid; two officers arrested for allegedly assisting in his getaway.

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There was a good crowd that showed up at the annual Family Fun Night event held in downtown Groton. (Photo by Paul Kosel)







2024 SDALB Junior State B Tournament



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

Friday, August 9

 Beresford P...egion 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 Pos...4 Jr Legion	

 Martin Post 240 Jr	6:00 PM
 Groton Jr. L...ion Post 39	



Women's Softball Team wins division, goes undefeated in league play

The Women's softball team (K&H Electric, Lagers & Dominos) won the Hub City Tournament. They are part of the Wednesday night league. However, the team will get bumped to the Tuesday night league next year. The Tuesday night league is a level up and more competitive. Sue Fjeldheim said that she has been playing on the team for 24 years and this is the first year the team went undefeated in league play.

Pictured in back, left to right, are Tonya Senger, Sue Fjeldheim, Jenna Strom, Chelsea Hanson, Alyssa Voeller and Laura Huber; in front, left to right, are Stacy Kramer, Carly Guthmiller, Aspen Johnson, Maddie Huber, Anna Fjeldheim and Rylee Voeller; not pictured are Tasha Dunker, Rachael Crank, Jackie Iverson and Carla Tracy. (Courtesy Photo)

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting August 12, 2024 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of July 8, 2024 and July 29, 2024 school board meetings as drafted.
2. Approval of July 2024 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of 2024 Annual School Transportation Report.
4. Approval of Open Enrollment Applications #25-16.
5. Approval of Open Enrollment Application #25-17.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approve price change for adult lunches from \$4.85 to \$5.00 for the 2024-25 school year.
3. Buildings, Grounds, and Transportation Committee Report
4. Personnel, Policy, and Curriculum Committee Report
5. Adoption of 2024-2025 School Board Goals and Priorities.
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve budget amendment #FY25-01.
2. Approve Sourcewell bus bid from Harlow's and authorize Business Manager to issue payment.
3. Approve resignation/retirement of Kim Weber, OST Coordinator/Paraprofessional effective August 9, 2024.
4. Approve resignation of Tasha Dunker, Elementary Librarian/Rtl Paraprofessional, effective immediately.
5. First reading of coaching handbook amendments.
6. First reading of Federal Grants Manual.
7. First reading of recommended policy changes: BDDC Agenda Preparation and Dissemination (Amendment), BDDC-E(2) Introduction to Public Forum (New), KLB Public Complaints About the Curriculum or Instructional Materials (Amendment), KLB-E(1) Request for Consideration of Instructional Materials (Amendment), KLB-E(2) Library Materials Opt-Out Form (New), IIAC Library Materials Selection and Adoption (Amendment), JFC Student Conduct (Amendment), JEC School Admissions (Amendment), JOA Student Directory Information (Amendment), DLC Expense Reimbursement (Amendment), DLC-R Expense Reimbursements (Delete), DLB Salary Deductions (Amendment)
8. Approve sixth grade participation in the sport of Junior High Cross Country.
9. Approval of volunteer coaches for fall 2024:
 - a. Volleyball: Jenna Strom and Carla Tracy
 - b. Football: Dalton Locke and Scott Thorson
10. Approve inter-district transportation requests pursuant SDCL 13-29-4
 - a. Webster Area School District
 - b. Langford Area School District

ADJOURN

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JULY 29 – AUGUST 4, 2024

We had a busy week in Washington to close out our summer work period. I was able to meet with several South Dakotans this week, speak at an artificial intelligence event, cast votes on the Senate floor and introduce legislation to offer a new loan option for students

paying for higher education. We also said goodbye to our summer interns in the DC office. Now, I'm back in South Dakota for our in-state work period. I'm looking forward to spending this month making visits all across the state to hear more about the issues that are important to you. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:



South Dakotans I met with: South Dakota members of Christians United for Israel; Ryman LeBeau, Chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe; Dr. Vance Thompson of Vance Thompson Vision in Sioux Falls; the South Dakota Council of Administrators of Special Education; and Major General Mark Morrell, Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard.

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Box Elder, Twin Brooks, Dakota Valley, Eagle Butte, Lennox, Sioux Falls and Sturgis.

Other meetings: Matthew Sannito, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-4; a delegation of leaders from Rwanda; leaders from Gevo; Steve Forthuber and Dr. Greg Sorensen, leaders from RadNet; Alan Garber, Interim President at Harvard University; Neel Kashkari, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; Ukrainian Members of Parliament; and Charlie Scharf, CEO of Wells Fargo.

I attended an AI summit, where I spoke with attendees about my work on artificial intelligence, as well as the future of AI regulation in the United States. I attended our weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast, where my friend Senator Angus King of Maine was our speaker.

Votes taken: 11 – many of these were on nominations to positions within the Department of State and judge positions in Maine, New York and Pennsylvania. We also voted on a package of bills that contained the Kids Online Safety Act and the Children and Teens Online Privacy Protection Act. I voted yes on these pieces of legislation that would expand both privacy and safety for kids online.

In addition, we voted on legislation which would have increased the amount of refundable Child Tax Credits available to people who are not paying taxes, but would have eliminated tax credits for almost 27 million Americans who are paying taxes. I voted no because I believe we have to address other tax policies which are expiring next year, and these proposals should be part of that discussion. Members on both sides of the aisle also voted no, recognizing the need to do a more comprehensive approach that would address the upcoming tax policies that will be expiring. We expect a major tax reform bill to be forthcoming either after the election or after the first of the year.

The Affordable Future Loan Program: This past week, I introduced legislation that would offer a new affordable loan option. Under this proposal, credit unions and banks would be allowed to make direct loans to students which would be guaranteed up to 98% by the federal government. The federal government would pay the interest on these loans while the individual is a full-time student. The student could attend a college or a technical school.

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This would be very similar to the guaranteed loan program that was successful in the 1960s through the early 2000s. Once the student graduated, they would begin repaying the loan at a lower interest rate than many of them have today, and could extend the payment period out to 15 years. This was a very successful program and was replaced when the Obama administration eliminated the direct loan program and required all of these loans to be made through the federal government, which has been a bureaucratic nightmare. My proposal does not eliminate any of the existing subsidized plans, but rather adds an additional plan based on the previous successful program that would provide loans to middle income families.

You can read more about the program along with the full text of the bill here.

Hearings: I attended one hearing this week in the Senate Armed Services Committee, where we heard from leaders from the Commission on the National Defense Strategy. You can watch a clip of my questions for them here.

Classified briefings: I attended four classified briefings this week. One was part of my work on the Select Committee on Intelligence, while one was related to my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee. I also attended our bi-weekly cyber education seminar, and a briefing with the Strategic Forces Association.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen and Olivet

Steps taken this past week: 55,524 steps or 27.52 miles

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Sturgis Rally Thursday Report

Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday, Aug 03, 2024, to 6 a.m. Thursday August 08, 2024

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	89	11	100	79
Misd Drug Arrests	170	28	198	151
Felony Drug Arrests	97	19	116	119
Total Citations	667	325	992	947
Total Warnings	1981	959	2940	2715
Cash Seized	11,094.00	0.00	11,094.00	\$2005.00
Vehicles Seized	0	0	0	0
For Drug Poss.	0	0	0	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Accidents	8	18	26	32
Injury Accidents	9	17	26	41
Fatal Accidents	1	2	3	3
# of Fatalities	1	2	3	3

Fatal Crashes:

None

Injury Crashes:

On 08/07/24 at 8:18 a.m., a 2023 Buick Envision Avenir was traveling east on Spring Creek Road and stopped at the intersection of SD 79. After stopping, the driver of the Buick attempted to turn north onto SD 79. A bicyclist, on a Trek bicycle, was traveling west on Spring Creek Road. The bicyclist failed to stop prior to entering SD 79 and drove into the side of the turning Buick. The bicycle rider was wearing a helmet and received minor injuries. The driver of the Buick was wearing a seatbelt and was uninjured.

On 08/07/24 at 2:29 p.m., a 2018 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling east on SD 44 near mile marker 115 and hit a bump in the road. The driver lost control of the motorcycle and entered the ditch. The driver separated from the motorcycle in the ditch. The driver was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries.

On 08/07/24 at 2:53 p.m., a 2002 Harley Davidson FXDWG was traveling north on Leaky Valley Road. The driver of the 2002 Harley Davidson FXDWG briefly looked away from the road, then struck a small dip in the road, lost control and overturned. The driver was not wearing a helmet and received minor injuries.

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 Six

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

Wednesday, Aug. 7, 2024: 52,878 vehicles entered

Down 3.6% from the previous five-year average

2024 Total to Date: 321,788 Vehicles

Previous Five-Year Average to Date: 339,359 Vehicles



Anti-abortion group: Amendment G can make ballot and still be discounted

By **STU WHITNEY**

South Dakota News Watch

The deadline for printing ballots for the November 2024 election presents a daunting timetable for an anti-abortion group seeking to keep an abortion rights amendment from being decided at the polls.

But Life Defense Fund now says as part of its lawsuit that even if Amendment G makes the Nov. 5 ballot, the South Dakota Secretary of State's office could make a public announcement that "no votes for or against the measure will be counted or have any impact."

That's part of an amended complaint filed in state circuit court in Minnehaha County after the South Dakota Supreme Court on Aug. 2 reversed the lower court's dismissal of the lawsuit. Life Defense Fund contends that Amendment G's sponsor, Dakotans for Health, violated state laws with improper petition circulation.

At the same time, the Supreme Court denied Life Defense Fund's request to expedite the matter in circuit court. That makes it highly unlikely that the matter will be resolved by Aug. 13, the deadline for the secretary of state to certify copies of all ballot questions to county auditors for ballots to be printed.

The suggestion that Amendment G appear on the ballot but voters be instructed to disregard it would be an extremely rare occurrence in the state, if not unprecedented, said Michael Card, emeritus professor of political science at the University of South Dakota.

He noted that there have been scenarios in other states where candidates died after ballots were printed, but the votes still counted and some of those candidates even ended up winning.

Sara Frankenstein, the Rapid City lawyer representing Life Defense Fund, told News Watch that the anti-abortion group is trying to meet the Aug. 13 deadline but has looked at other options if that's not possible.

"It's not unprecedented for measures to be disqualified after they are printed on the ballot," said Frankenstein. "For instance, the South Dakota marijuana measure, Amendment A, was voted on and passed (in 2020), yet the court still disqualified it."

Gov. Kristi Noem's administration challenged that recreational marijuana effort, saying it violated the state's requirement that constitutional amendments deal with just one subject. That argument prevailed in a 4-1 decision at the South Dakota Supreme Court.

That's different from a court telling the secretary of state to proclaim that a constitutional amendment on the ballot will not be counted, said Rick Weiland, co-founder of Dakotans for Health, a grassroots organization that pushes for progressive policy through petition efforts.

"There's no provision in South Dakota law that allows that," Weiland told News Watch. "They've been saying all along that this (Aug. 13) deadline is a hard stop, and now they're saying, 'Well, don't accept anything we said about that. The court can just dictate to the secretary of state not to count the votes.' It just looks like another in a series of desperate measures from them."

Secretary of State Monae Johnson and Deputy Secretary of State Tom Deadrick declined to comment on the legal and logistical challenges involved in the scenario proposed by Life Defense Fund.

Case heads back to circuit court

The Supreme Court reversal gives Life Defense Fund another chance to plead its case in front of Circuit Court Judge John Pekas, this time with specific allegations of petition misconduct on the table. The group had sought to remove Pekas from the proceedings, but the Supreme Court decision rejected that argument.

On July 15, Pekas ruled in favor of Dakotans for Health by granting a motion to dismiss the lawsuit. Rather

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than examine itemized charges in the complaint, the judge noted the importance of following election law and questioned why the secretary of state's office wasn't named as a party in the lawsuit.

The amended complaint from Life Defense Fund now lists Secretary of State Johnson as a defendant, a nod to Dakotans for Health's argument that the state's top elections official is an indispensable party in the proceeding. That indicates a party whose presence and participation in court are required in order for the lawsuit to proceed.

Frankenstein told News Watch that the group's complaint is not focused on Johnson's certification of Amendment G but rather on the actions of Dakotans for Health organizers and petitioners in gathering signatures to make the ballot.

Life Defense Fund, led by Republican state legislator Jon Hansen and longtime anti-abortion advocate Leslee Unruh, seeks a ruling that the amendment is "disqualified, invalid, and/or has not been validly submitted pursuant to South Dakota law."

Hansen is also vice president of South Dakota Right to Life, a powerful anti-abortion lobbying force in the state.

Life Defense Fund also seeks an expedited scheduling order and for Dakotans for Health organizers and petition circulators to be banned from "performing any work for any ballot question committee for a period of four years."

Unruh referred to Weiland's group, which uses paid petition circulators, in a statement last week as a "paid posse" that has "broken laws, tricked South Dakotans into signing their abortion petition, left petitions unattended, and much more."

Weiland responded that "to try to ban any entity from working with citizens of the state to address concerns that they have about their government is really beyond the pale."

Amendment set for Nov. 5 ballot

South Dakota is currently under a 2005 state trigger law activated in June 2022 when the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and left it up to states to determine their stance on abortion rights.

South Dakota's law makes it a Class 6 felony for anyone "who administers to any pregnant female or prescribes or procures for any pregnant female" a means for an abortion, except to save the life of the mother.

If passed, Amendment G would prevent the state from regulating abortions during the first trimester, following a similar framework as Roe. During the second trimester, the state could regulate the abortion decision, but any regulation must be reasonably related to the physical health of the mother. During the third trimester, abortion could be prohibited except if it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the pregnant woman, according to her physician.

On May 16, the secretary of state's office certified the measure for the Nov. 5 ballot, saying that a random sample showed 46,098 of the 54,281 submitted signatures were deemed valid, well over the threshold of 35,017.

Nearly a month later, Life Defense Fund filed a complaint in state circuit court asking that the amendment be disqualified.

A statewide poll co-sponsored by News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota conducted in May showed that 53% of respondents support Constitutional Amendment G, compared to 35% opposed and 11% undecided.

Federal judge declined to intervene

One of the lawsuit's claims is that Dakotans for Health petition circulators violated a residency affidavit requirement introduced into state law in 2018, sponsored by former Republican state Rep. Mark Mickelson.

Coined the "Mickelson Law" by Life Defense Fund, it created a state registry of petition circulators and required them to submit personal information and wear ID badges. It included a provision that an affidavit be filed with the secretary of state's office with information attesting to residency of each circulator.

That law was later superseded by Senate Bill 180, which was halted in federal court in January 2023 as part of a permanent injunction signed by U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol, an action upheld by the

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U.S. Court of Appeals.

Life Defense Fund argues that because “no bill amending the Mickelson Law is currently in force, the Mickelson Law stands in its original form, unamended. The Mickelson Law is the current law in effect in South Dakota.”

Dakotans for Health filed a motion in federal court to enforce the permanent injunction and halt Life Defense Fund’s lawsuit. But U.S. District Judge Karen Schreier on July 5 ruled that state court proceedings should be allowed to continue before determining if federal intervention was warranted.

In its federal filing, Dakotans for Health included a document showing lawyers for the state acknowledging in writing to the plaintiffs on Jan. 24, 2023: “The permanent injunction includes the 30-day residency requirement challenged in your lawsuit.”

‘People should be able to vote’

The lawsuit also outlines allegations of signature-gathering misconduct, recasting points of controversy that emerged during the petition campaign and 2024 legislative session.

Among those accusations are that circulators left petitions unattended, failed to provide a circulator handout as required by law, and purposely confused the public with a “bait and switch” involving the grocery tax and abortion measures.

Attorney General Marty Jackley sent a letter to Dakotans for Health on Oct. 31, 2023, that mentioned “video and photographic evidence” of such encounters and warned of potentially illegal actions taken by petition circulators. No charges were filed.

Leach called the allegations “deceptive and overblown” in a February interview with News Watch. During a later interview, he stressed that it was important to let the people have their say at the ballot box as part of South Dakota’s longstanding initiative process.

“People want to vote,” he said. “People signed petitions to vote. (Life Defense Fund) is saying that people shouldn’t be able to vote. Well, this is America. People should be able to vote.”

Pekas dismissed Life Defense Fund’s complaint at a July 15 hearing at the Minnehaha County Courthouse, saying from the bench that “I don’t know how Dakotans for Health can control the secretary of state. They submitted the (petition) information to the state of South Dakota and it has been accepted.”

In appealing to the state Supreme Court two days later, Frankenstein called that a misinterpretation of state law, which states that a summons and complaint “shall be served on each petition sponsor as a party defending the validated petition being challenged.”

Supreme Court nixes fast-track request

The appeal stated that “the circuit court failed to apply the statute requiring Life Defense Fund to file a summons and complaint against Dakotans for Health. The court should move swiftly to reverse and remand the case to permit discovery to commence and the case to proceed forward over the next four weeks.”

The Supreme Court ruling on Friday stressed that “the Court has not decided and expresses no opinion on any issues raised by the parties, including whether the Secretary of State is an indispensable party to this action. Any such issues can be resolved ... by the circuit court on remand.”

The high court also rejected the expedited timeline, noting that “this exceptional level of supervision over a circuit court’s calendar is not supported by the current state of the record.”

Weiland told News Watch that he views Life Defense Fund’s legal gambit as another in a series of attempts to block the measure from reaching voters, from “Decline to Sign” protests to challenging the measure’s language to Hansen spearheading a state law allowing residents to revoke petition signatures.

“I’ve thought all along that this was a bridge too far for them to think they could dismiss 55,000 South Dakotans based on some petitioner residency requirement that’s not on the books,” Weiland said. “Every time they’ve tried to disrupt this and make it about something other than letting the people vote, they’ve been unsuccessful.”

Unruh countered that her group is “thrilled” that the matter has been sent back to state court, “where our case can be heard and thoroughly examined.”

The next hearing in Pekas’ courtroom has not yet been scheduled.

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

McCook Lake victims still 'in the dark,' waiting for FEMA help nearly seven weeks after flood

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 8, 2024 5:05 PM

Nearly seven weeks after the devastating June 23 flood at McCook Lake, victims are still in limbo about the possibility of federal aid, and some feel abandoned by government officials.

Renae Hansen is a flood victim and works with the McCook Lake Izaak Walton League, which has tried to fill some of the leadership and organizational gaps in the flood response.

"We have no idea what's happening or what to expect," Hansen said. "It feels like we're being kept in the dark."

The flood destroyed or severely damaged at least 40 homes and some infrastructure in the McCook Lake area. Some flood victims — including some who lack flood insurance — are staying in hotels or with family or friends as they wait for news about possible help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Hansen also described the confusion and lack of coordination on the ground in McCook Lake, noting that the Izaak Walton League was filling recovery roles beyond its expertise because no other institution was doing it. She recently moved away from that effort to resume handling the organization's primary obligations.

"We were just trying to help," she said. "But we didn't have any official support or direction. We had volunteers trying to log damages without any guidance from the city or state."

FEMA wait explained

Some residents expressed their frustration about the wait for federal assistance on Monday during a North Sioux City Council meeting. More than a month passed between the flood and Republican Governor Kristi Noem's July 26 request to the president for a major disaster declaration, and there has been no word yet on a presidential declaration that would trigger FEMA aid.

Hansen wants to know why it took that long and is calling for more state action.

"We have residents on the brink of homelessness," Hansen said. "We need answers, but we also need support."

In Iowa, which also experienced flooding from the same historically heavy rainstorms in late June, President Joe Biden approved that state's disaster declaration on June 24. However, Iowa had already been working with FEMA regarding other storms that began on June 16.

Tony Mayne is a media relations specialist with the FEMA Region 8 Office. He said South Dakota took the "standard" route for its disaster declaration, and Iowa chose the "expedited" route.

"South Dakota determined the process that would be best for the state," he said.

Mayne said the expedited route is for disasters where officials are confident they know the extent of the damages — because if an overestimation is submitted, the state pays the difference. Mayne did not speak for the state of South Dakota but said flood damage across the 25 affected counties varies widely in comparison to McCook Lake.

"Sure, damage to that one area is obvious," he said. "It's not just that one area."

In response to questions about the process from South Dakota Searchlight, Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, pointed to a previous press release comment by Kristi Turman, director of the Division of Emergency Services at the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

"This thorough damage assessment was normal protocol for a presidential disaster declaration," Turman said, "and it's an important part of the process to make sure all eligible counties and citizens are included."

As flood victims wait on assistance, some contractors who assisted with the flood preparations and re-

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sponse are being paid. During the North Sioux City Council meeting, council members approved several pay requests for the flood, including a \$59,000 payment to The Blue Cell, a contractor based in Colorado. North Sioux City's mayor said state officials advised hiring Blue Cell to help manage the disaster. Todd Manns, Blue Cell's owner, did not respond to an interview request.

Noem: 'Everything we can to help'

Hours before the McCook Lake flood on June 23, Noem held a press conference in North Sioux City where neither she nor any of the other public officials in attendance expressed any grave concerns about McCook Lake, even though a record crest was already projected on the nearby Big Sioux River.

The main focus of the press conference was a voluntary evacuation order for nearby Dakota Dunes and the construction of a temporary levee, which neither Noem nor anyone else at the press conference clearly explained was intended to divert water toward McCook Lake. Authorities hoped water wouldn't reach the lake and assumed that if it did, the lake would swell manageably, and excess water would drain toward the Missouri River. Instead, floodwaters slammed into the lake on the evening of June 23 and caused catastrophic damage.

Following the June 23 afternoon press conference, Noem flew to a speaking engagement for a county Republican Party fundraiser in Tennessee while the floodwaters ravaged McCook Lake that night.

From June 23 to 27, Noem shared over a dozen posts on her personal X (formerly Twitter) profile, mostly about the southeastern South Dakota flooding. Two linked to videos of press conferences that have since been deleted. Posts show she visited the region in that timeframe.

"My heart goes out to the families on McCook Lake whose homes were destroyed by this flooding," she shared. "We'll keep doing everything we can to help with the situation."

"Everything" did not include deploying the National Guard, which Noem declined to do.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell joined Noem in McCook Lake to survey the devastation days after the flood. "I am going to do everything I can to get assistance to our communities ASAP and help these families start to recover their lives," Noem wrote in posts featuring photos with Criswell.

South Dakota U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson told South Dakota Searchlight on Wednesday that he thinks FEMA aid will be approved soon.

"This is a no-brainer," said Johnson, a Republican. "This is not a close call. This was a devastating event."

However, Mayne, the spokesperson for FEMA, said the agency can't do much for the people who lost their homes. FEMA's Individual Assistance program is designed to meet basic needs and help households recover, but it typically covers only essential expenses such as temporary housing and minor repairs.

"We're not going to make you whole, we're not going to rebuild your house," he said, advising residents to turn to local organizations and nonprofits.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, said it's unlikely the congressional delegation will be able to secure federal funding beyond the FEMA aid.

"We'll look at what other options might be out there, but it's going to be challenging," he said.

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.

South Dakota Democratic leaders vote to oppose open primaries ballot measure

Both major parties pushing back against 'top two' proposal to be decided Nov. 5

BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 8, 2024 2:21 PM

The executive board of the South Dakota Democratic Party voted on Thursday to oppose Constitutional Amendment H, a ballot measure that would open up primary elections to all voters regardless of party affiliation.

Currently, Democrats and Republicans conduct their own party primaries to choose their nominees for the general election. Democrats allow independents to cast ballots in their primaries; Republicans do not.

If passed Nov. 5, Amendment H would allow all voters to vote in primary contests that include all candidates, regardless of party. In races where one winner is chosen on the general election ballot, the top two vote-getters in the primary would advance. In races with two general election winners, such as races for state House of Representatives, the top four would advance from the primary.

The state Republican Party came out against open primaries in 2023, GOP Chairman John Wiik told South Dakota Searchlight. Party leaders refer to it as a "jungle primary" and say it stands as an attempt to let those outside the party influence candidate selection.

Democratic leaders have voiced concerns, as well. The state Democratic Party Executive Director Dan Ahlers and its Chairman Shane Merrill told The Dakota Scout newspaper in June that the measure would hurt the minority party by making all-Republican general election contests more likely.

On Thursday, the party's leadership agreed, formally placing Democrats on the opposing side of the measure. A press release on the executive committee vote points to all-GOP ballots as a reason for its opposition to Amendment H.

California and Washington state have open primaries, the release said, and the minority parties in those states are regularly absent from general election ballots as a result.

Backers pitch Amendment H as a move to get South Dakotans to the polls in primaries, but state Democrats say it won't work and point to 2022 as an example.

"In 2022, California and South Dakota had the same primary turnout at 29%," the press release reads. "Wyoming, which has a closed primary, had 42% voter turnout."

Joe Kirby, the Sioux Falls civic activist who leads the Amendment H charge, told South Dakota Searchlight that the news of party opposition is further evidence that the parties are more concerned with holding power than empowering voters.

"Party bosses" like Ahlers and GOP Chairman John Wiik, Kirby said, "don't like Amendment H because it would take political power back from them and return it to the voters where it belongs."

"South Dakota voters are tired of unfair elections where few voters turn out to vote, like the recent state primaries," Kirby said over email. "Open primaries will allow all voters to participate, including the 150,000 independent voters who currently have little to no voice in hiring the people who govern the state."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

As wildfire season becomes more threatening, experts are turning to AI

BY: PAIGE GROSS - AUGUST 8, 2024 9:07 AM

With climate change driving hotter, drier summers across the West, the intensity of recent fire seasons is outpacing workers' ability to track and analyze fires with the traditional methods.

"There simply aren't enough boots on the ground, or eyes in pairs of binoculars to cover the base and the extent of what we've been dealing with and that's been true across the western U.S. and across the world," said Sarvesh Garimella, the chief scientist and chief technical officer at weather app MyRadar.

But government agencies and private sector companies like Garimella's are adapting artificial intelligence technologies in their wildfire monitoring and fighting strategies.

Increase in number and reach of wildfires

The Environmental Protection Agency's data shows that wildfires have become more common and spread further over the last few decades.

The 1990s was a "period of transition" for climate cycles that tend to change every few decades, and this shift may have contributed to "warmer, drier conditions," the EPA reports, which make wildfires easier to spread in the Western US. Between 1981 and 2021, the amount of land involved in wildfires and suffered severe damage has risen from 5% to 22%.

Changing climate conditions are just one of the contributing factors, said Michael Pavolonis, a physical scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Center for Satellite Applications and Research. He added that land management practices, a century of fire suppression that left forests overgrown and combustible, and human activities have greatly changed the fire landscape in the U.S.

The Western Fire Chiefs Association says that nearly 90% of all wildfires are caused by human activities, like discarding a cigarette, leaving campfires unattended or through an equipment malfunction.

Fire activity for 2024 is already above average from the last decade, the New York Times reported this week.

Oregon firefighters worked on what was at the time the biggest fire in the country, in late July which spread across nearly 270,000 acres and threatened evacuation for thousands of residents. A week after the initial response from EMS, residents of the state were still dealing with smokey, unhealthy air conditions. And late last week, Coloradans faced evacuation orders for a blaze along the state's Front Range, which killed one person.

Zach Tolby, director and lead scientist at NOAA's fire weather testbed said living with wildfires is "nerve wracking." The now Colorado-based weather expert said while living in Reno, Nevada, there were a few years where the wildfires kept people from being outside nearly all summer.

Incoming threat of fire or the residual smoke often upends social gatherings, interrupts work and school schedules and can keep people from feeling safe in their communities.

"Once you do have wildfires, there's a lot of, you know, kind of PTSD from the effects of being around them," Tolby said.

AI in fire detection

Weather science is all about data, climate experts say, but viewing, logging and processing that data is an overwhelming task. It's where the AI comes in: the bread and butter of AI models lies in the processing and sorting of mass amounts of information.

In the case of wildfire prevention, if you can automate the sorting of fire information, more humans are freed up to make decisions, call for resources and be deployed on a scene to stop a wildfire from spreading.

That's the intention behind NOAA's Next Generation Fire System, which uses an AI model to identify fires from the department's geostationary satellites. The program, and a location to test fire prevention systems,

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was developed via funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by the Biden administration.

NOAA's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES) are the "workhorses" of weather monitoring of the entire United States from space, Pavlonis told States Newsroom. The satellites are able to record an image as often as every 30 seconds, which generates an overwhelming amount of information, Pavalonis said.

"So humans stare at all of these images and look for the fires themselves," he said. "They do that and they do catch some of them. But it's impossible to stare at every image."

The AI model, which was built through academic partnerships, automatically scans those images and uses heat detection to look for features of an emerging fire. It then pipes the information to a situational dashboard that allows those monitoring it — whether it's the National Weather Service or a land management partner — to determine that a fire could use their attention.

The Next Gen Fire System has been in development for a few years, and NOAA piloted the technology at the Colorado-based fire testbed in June. Tolby, director of the center, said they tested the technology with a few existing systems, like the National Weather Service, to see if they could identify fires and weather phenomena with enough accuracy to be used in real-world situations to issue public alerts.

Tolby and Pavalonis stressed that humans are still at the helm of decision-making. The pilot at the fire testbed provided a realistic operational environment that allowed NOAA to understand how new capabilities would work when the agencies have to make real decisions.

"Science and technology are essential, but they're not sufficient," Pavalonis said. "You need to also work closely with decision makers throughout the development and testing process."

Some states that experience a lot of wildfires, like California, have camera systems to monitor the spread of fires. But more rural and lower-population areas can be vulnerable to wildfires going unchecked. The satellite systems, developing AI tools and cross-department collaborations are valuable tools for those communities, Tolby said.

"If you can get to a fire when it's ... only a couple of trees, you've got a much better chance of putting it out than you do when it's 10 acres or 100."

Modeling future fires

A project from the University of Southern California aims to use AI to improve the effort to fight fires once they start, predicting their possible spread and behavior. The research team at the university, headed by Professor Assad Oberai, uses a physics-informed approach to predict the spread of wildfires.

The team uses a generative AI model called conditional Wasserstein Generative Adversarial Network (cWGAN) and trained it, informed by data from past wildfires, satellite images and from data assimilation, or a method of combining different data sources, to predict future fire spread.

They've spent months testing their algorithm with simulated wildfire data that was built upon traits of real fires that occurred from 2020 to 2022. They then compared their model's predictions against how those fires actually spread to understand the accuracy of its prediction abilities.

The generative AI works similarly to a chatbot like ChatGPT, Oberai said. ChatGPT gives text responses based on a prompt provided by the user, and the USC model will show predictive imaging about wildfire spread.

"You can think of the satellite measurement as a prompt, right," Oberai said. "And you can think of sort of the image of the spread of the wildfire as the response to that prompt from this generative algorithm."

The USC team's algorithm differs from other fire prediction tools in that it generates several predictions, and gives a user the likelihood of each outcome, similar to the graphs used to predict the possible course of a hurricane. Their model is also relying on data from these simulated wildfires to help piece together what will likely happen.

Bryan Shaddy, a Ph.D. student and researcher on the team, said possible next steps for the team include folding in more variables. Right now, the algorithm focuses on predicting the likelihood of fire progression,

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but they could train the cWGAN on others, like how terrain might affect spread. The team will continue training and adding variables, and could foresee the technology being adapted into existing fire prediction tools.

Private sector technologies

While many industries are just considering how AI can be incorporated into their work, climate scientists have been early adopters to supercomputing and big data processing in general, MyRadar's Garimella told States Newsroom.

The weather monitoring app offers high-definition radar, NOAA weather alerts, temperatures, forecasts, flight tracking and disaster warnings. Some users depend on it just for their daily weather updates, while others have business reasons, like for wedding planners or sports coaches planning an event, Garimella said.

Activities are heavily affected by environmental events, he said, and climate change has made weather harder to pin down and predict over the last several decades.

The company's Orbital Wildfire Resilience solution was just chosen to advance in the XPRIZE wildfire competition, which is seeking to revolutionize wildfire technologies.

MyRadar will launch its AI system via four satellites in February. The technology is "edge deployed," meaning the AI processing happens in the satellites themselves rather than in computers back on the ground, and it takes less power to transmit those messages back down to Earth. It allows for smaller satellites and quicker message times.

The obvious attraction is more information for their app users, Garimella said, but eventually, they can feed the data into data streams that government agencies, like NOAA, would use to monitor and fight fires.

AI technologies are also being used for on-the-ground response to fires. Autonomous machines, often called drones, are being tested across the country as a resource for emergency responders.

One example is public safety technology company BRINC's Responder drone. Right now, it's being used for structure fires, but the company's vice president of strategy and growth, Andrew Cote, said he believes the future of AI and machine learning will allow for more predictive analytic capabilities in firefighting.

The Responder drone is used by emergency response teams to cut significantly down on response times to a scene, and to monitor via cameras how a fire scene is developing. It can help firefighters identify safer places of entry into a structure and can drop resources like survival kits or flotation devices down onto a scene.

Cote said this method not only gets resources to a scene faster, but also helps EMS teams deploy them in a more efficient and cost-effective way.

"We're long overdue for new types of techniques, at least to give them a try," Cote said. "And they're not that expensive, as opposed to new, new water tankers, new aircrafts and all the other things that we try and currently use."

It will be several months before NOAA's and MyRadar's AI models are in regular use, but we'll likely continue to see more AI technologies being adapted in weather prediction and fire monitoring in the coming years.

Firefighting methods haven't changed much in the last 50 years or so, the climate scientists said. So new technologies that can streamline systems, provide early intervention and potentially provide more information to government agencies and everyday people are a win, they said.

"This is another tool in the toolkit," Garimella said. "But it's also one of the most powerful ones that have ever been invented."

Paige Gross is a Philadelphia-based reporter covering the evolving technology industry for States Newsroom. Her coverage involves how congress and individual states are regulating new and growing technologies, how technology plays a role in our everyday lives and what people ought to know to interact with technology.

Trump agrees to Sept. 10 debate with Harris, claims two more upcoming

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - AUGUST 8, 2024 3:53 PM

WASHINGTON — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said Thursday he has agreed to debate Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris on Sept. 10, a reversal from his position last week that he would not participate in the ABC News event.

During a press conference at Trump's Mar-A-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, the former president said he had also agreed to debates on Sept. 4 and Sept. 25.

The first debate would be hosted by Fox News, he said.

He initially misspoke and said the Sept. 10 debate would be on NBC, with ABC hosting the debate on Sept. 25. His campaign later clarified the ABC News debate would be Sept. 10, the date Trump and President Joe Biden agreed to with ABC before Biden dropped out of the race, with NBC hosting the final debate.

ABC News confirmed that Trump and the Harris campaign have agreed to the network's debate.

"I think it's very important to have debates," Trump said.

He then quickly moved on to disparaging Harris.

The Harris campaign, Fox News and NBC did not respond to States Newsroom's requests for comment.

In a press release, the Harris campaign called Trump's press conference a "public meltdown," but did not mention if Harris would participate in the Fox News or NBC debate.

Biden was the presumptive Democratic nominee but dropped out of the race following a disastrous performance at the first 2024 general election debate on June 27.

Following Biden's withdrawal, Harris quickly clinched the nomination and kicked off a campaign tour with her newly tapped running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

Peaceful transfer of power

During Thursday's press conference, a reporter asked if there would be a peaceful transfer of power if Trump lost the election.

"Of course, there'll be a peaceful transfer and there was last time and there'll be a peaceful transfer," Trump said. "I just hope we're going to have honest elections."

The 2021 transfer from the Trump to Biden presidencies was among the most chaotic and violent in the country's history.

On Jan. 6, 2021, a group of pro-Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in an effort to stop Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election results. Congress impeached Trump for a second time due to his role in inciting the insurrection.

In September of 2020, Trump didn't commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he lost that election.

Trump said that the hundreds of people the U.S. Justice Department has charged and convicted in their role in the Jan. 6 attack, were not being treated fairly.

"Nobody was killed on January 6," Trump said, which is not true. "I think that the people of January 6 were treated very unfairly."

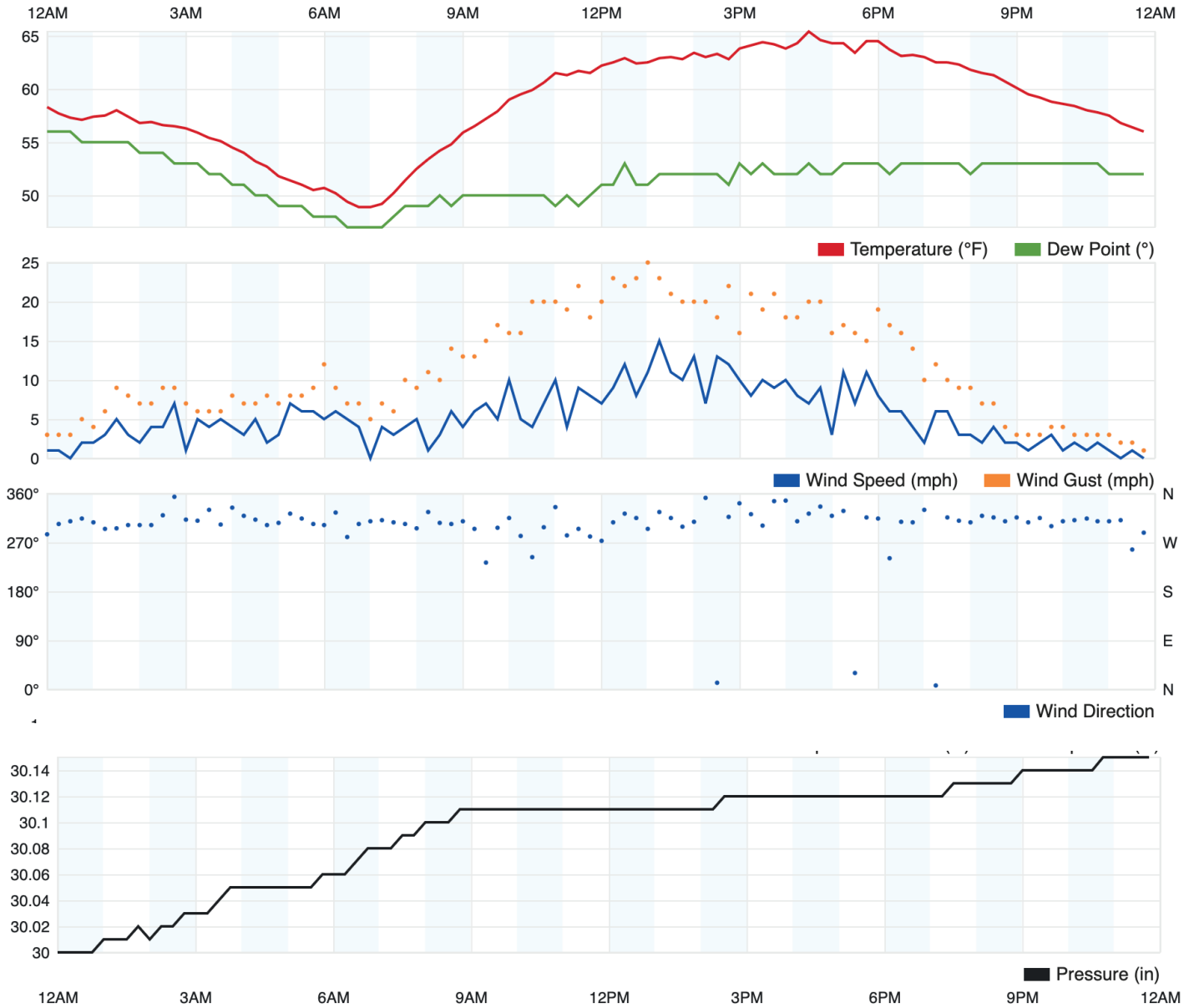
Two police officers, Howard Liebengood of the U.S. Capitol Police and Jeffrey Smith of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, died by suicide after Jan. 6. A woman, Ashli Babbitt, was shot and killed by a Capitol police officer as she tried to breach the Speaker's Lobby adjacent to the U.S. House floor.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 70 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 44 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 74 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 76 °F

Partly Sunny

Below Normal Temperatures Through Mid-Week

Today



Highs:
67 to 75°

Saturday



Highs:
71 to 80°

Sunday



Greatest % Of
Moisture Central SD

Highs:
73 to 76°

Rainfall
Chance
20-70%

Monday



Highs:
73 to 76°

Tuesday



Highs:
76 to 85°

Rainfall
Chance
30-50%

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Through the next several days temperatures will remain below normal, with mostly dry conditions prior to Sunday.

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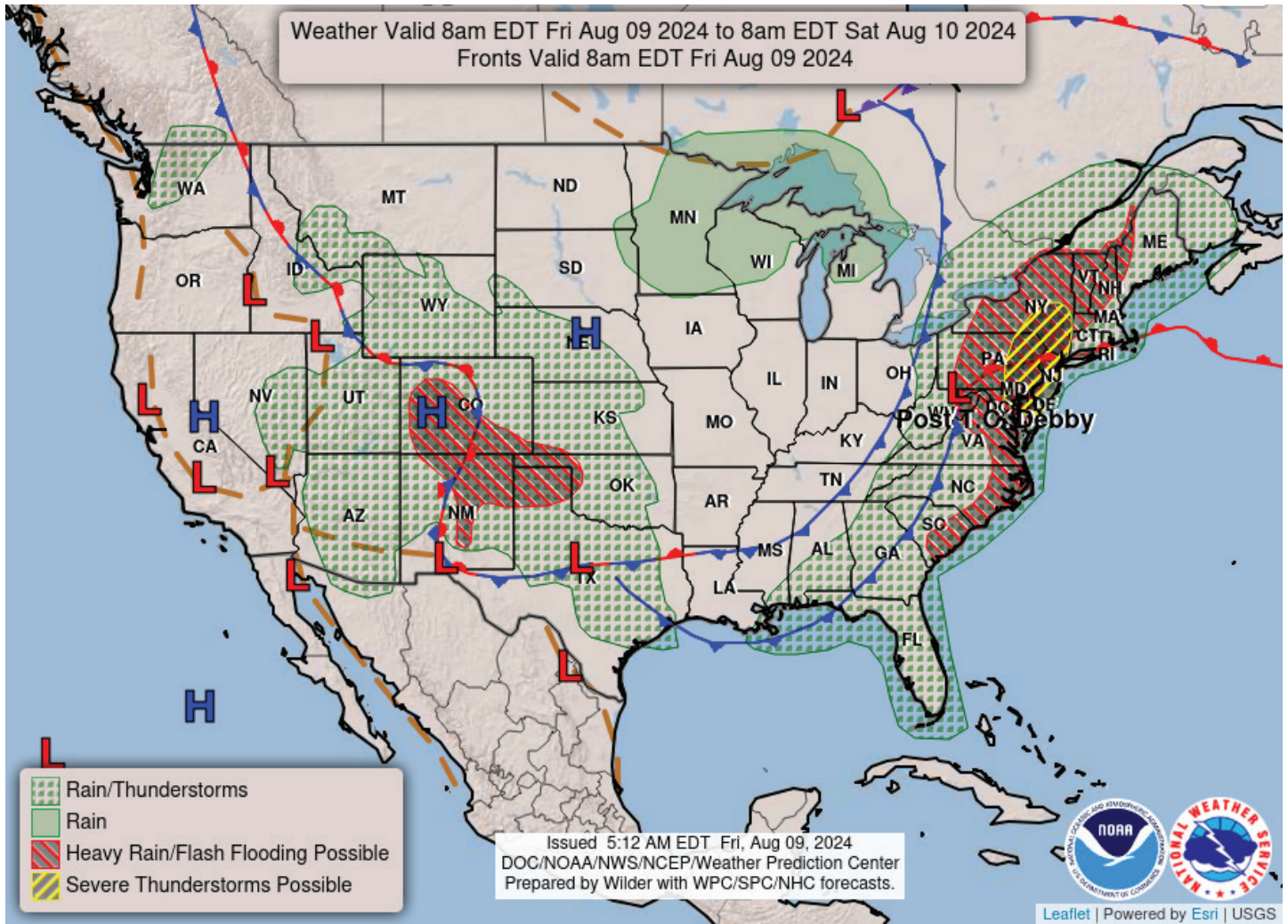
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 65 °F at 4:29 PM
Low Temp: 49 °F at 6:52 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 12:54 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 24 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1947
Record Low: 41 in 1927
Average High: 84
Average Low: 58
Average Precip in Aug.: .66
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.10
Average Precip to date: 14.76
Precip Year to Date: 15.99
Sunset Tonight: 8:50:13 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26:36 am



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Today in Weather History

August 9, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado touched down east of Bristol, South Dakota, and moved NNE. The tornado was said to look like a long snake in a spiral, smashing barns into kindling.

August 9, 1992: A tornado packing winds estimated between 113 and 157 mph caused significant damage to the town of Chester, in Lake County. Shortly after 7 pm CDT a tornado tore right through the heart of Chester causing considerable damage. Four businesses were destroyed, three others had significant damage, and five had minor damage. An elevator and new grain bin were leveled, and another bin was heavily damaged. Most of the building housing the fire department was demolished. Also, many houses and vehicles sustained damage, and large trees were uprooted or broken off. In one instance a steel beam was thrust through a garage and into the car inside. One mile north of Chester, an entire house was moved off the foundation. The town had to be evacuated for 19 hours after the tornado because the tornado damaged a 12,000-gallon ammonia tank releasing 4,000 gallons of the liquid gas into the air. The ammonia was a health hazard forcing residents out. To the south of Chester, the storm destroyed a new convenience store and blew two fuel tanks over 100 yards.

1878: The second deadliest tornado in New England history struck Wallingford, Connecticut, killing 34 persons, injuring 100 others, and destroying thirty homes. The tornado started as a waterspout over a dam on the Quinnipiac River. It was 400 to 600 feet wide and had a short path length of two miles. The deadliest New England tornado occurred in 1953 when an F4 killed 90 people in Worcester, Massachusetts.

1969: An F3 tornado hit Cincinnati, Ohio, killing four persons and causing fifteen million dollars property damage. The tornado moved in a southeasterly direction at 40 to 50 mph.

1987 - Florida baked in the summer heat. Nine cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Jacksonville with a reading of 101 degrees. Miami FL reported a record high of 98 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Tropical Storm Beryl deluged Biloxi with 6.32 inches of rain in 24 hours, and in three days drenched Pascagoula MS with 15.85 inches of rain. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern Plains Region and over the Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced wind gusts to 92 mph at Harrah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in Arizona deluged Yuma with record torrential rains for the second time in two weeks. The rainfall total of 5.25 inches at the Yuma Quartermaster Depot established a state 24 hour record, and was nearly double the normal annual rainfall. Some of the homes were left with four feet of water in them. Seventy-six cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lake Charles LA equalled their record for August with a low of 61 degrees. Canaan Valley WV was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 32 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



GIVING IN OR GROWING IN HIM?

We all have had days filled with discouragement and disappointments. Perhaps more than we care to recall. Often they can be used by the devil to defeat and destroy us.

Think about discouragement. It comes from being dissatisfied with things in the past, a distaste of the present or quite possibly a distrust of the future. When we allow ourselves to become discouraged, we are surrendering our courage to what we have allowed to overcome us. Discouragement is a signal from God that the devil is trying to take away the hope He has given us in Christ. When we feel discouraged we need to take away the "d" and replace it with an "H" and call for "His-courage" to enable us to be victorious.

We also need to realize that our disappointments are, in fact, His-appointments! Nothing enters our life by chance - only by and through Christ. Often when things do not go as we intended them to go, we consider them to be one of life's disappointments. However, what we need to realize is that God Himself is intervening in our life. He is attempting to get our attention. He wants us to make an adjustment to what we are doing with our lives that is not in line with the plans He has for us.

Not everything that happens to us can be considered "good" - but everything will eventually be "good" for us.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to believe that You love us too much to abandon us, care for us too much to harm us and too gracious to keep what we need from us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that God causes everything to work together[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.06.24

23 29 36 61 70 22

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$398,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Mins 37 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: 1 Days 16 Hrs 36 Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.08.24

3 4 9 33 44 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 51 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

10 20 25 27 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$62,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 51 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.07.24

16 29 31 60 65 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 20 Mins 37 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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 20 Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- 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

15 states sue to block Biden's effort to help migrants in US illegally get health coverage

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Fifteen states filed a federal lawsuit Thursday against the Biden administration over a rule that is expected to allow 100,000 immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children to enroll next year in the federal Affordable Care Act's health insurance.

The states are seeking to block the rule from taking effect Nov. 1 and providing people known as "Dreamers" access to tax breaks when they sign up for coverage. The Affordable Care Act's marketplace enrollment opens the same day, just four days ahead of the presidential election.

The states filed suit in North Dakota, one of the states involved. All have Republican attorneys general who are part of a GOP effort to thwart Biden administration rules advancing Democratic policy goals.

The lawsuit argues that the rule violates a 1996 welfare reform law and the ACA. They also said it would encourage more immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally, burdening the states and their public school systems. Many economists have concluded that immigrants provide a net economic benefit, and immigration appears to have fueled job growth after the COVID-19 pandemic that prevented a recession.

The lawsuit comes amid Republican attacks on Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, the presumed Democratic presidential nominee, as weak on curbing illegal immigration. Border crossings hit record highs during the Biden administration but have dropped more recently.

"Illegal aliens shouldn't get a free pass into our country," Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach said in a statement. "They shouldn't receive taxpayer benefits when they arrive, and the Biden-Harris administration shouldn't get a free pass to violate federal law."

Kobach is an immigration hardliner who began building a national profile two decades ago by urging tough restrictions on immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, and he helped draft Arizona's "show your papers" law in 2010. Besides Kansas and North Dakota, the other states involved in the lawsuit are Alabama, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Virginia.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services officials did not immediately respond Thursday to an email seeking comment about the lawsuit. But Biden said in May in outlining the rule that he was "committed to providing Dreamers the support they need to succeed." The Biden administration is shielding them from deportation.

The "Dreamers" and their advocates have said they're young people who had little or no choice in coming to the U.S. and years later are fully integrated into their communities. At least 25 states, including Kansas, Nebraska and Virginia, allow them to pay the lower tuition rates reserved for their residents, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

In May, Biden said: "I'm proud of the contributions of Dreamers to our country."

The "Dreamers" have been ineligible for government-subsidized health insurance programs because they did not meet the definition of having a "lawful presence" in the U.S. The states filing the lawsuit said declaring their lawful presence by rule is "illogical on its face," given that they'd face deportation without Biden administration intervention.

"Subsidized health insurance through the ACA is a valuable public benefit that encourages unlawfully present alien beneficiaries to remain in the United States," the lawsuit said.

In past lawsuits against the Biden administration, states have sometimes struggled to persuade judges that the harm they face from a new rule is direct, concrete and specific enough to give them the right to sue. Of the 15 states involved in the lawsuit, only Idaho and Virginia run their own health insurance marketplaces instead of relying on a federal one.

But the states argue that they all face higher costs from increased illegal immigration. They rely on a

2023 report from the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which not only argues for stronger laws against illegal immigration but sharp curbs on legal immigration.

Baby's body found by worker at South Dakota recycling center

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The body of a baby boy was found at a South Dakota recycling center, and police are trying to determine how the child died and how the body ended up at the center.

An employee of Millennium Recycling in Sioux Falls called police Tuesday morning. The exact age of the child was unknown, said police spokesman Sam Clemens. It wasn't clear how long the body had been at the recycling center.

A statement from Millennium Recycling said the company is "providing full support to our staff," but declined comment on the investigation.

3rd person in custody over foiled plot targeting now-canceled Taylor Swift shows in Vienna

By PHILIPP-MORITZ JENNE, STÉFANIE DAZIO and KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — A third teenager has been arrested in connection with a foiled attack on now-canceled Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna, Austria's interior minister said Friday.

Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said an 18-year-old was taken into custody Thursday evening in Vienna after allegedly being in contact with the main suspect. Karner announced the arrest during an unrelated news conference Friday.

Investigators are scrutinizing the "networks" of the suspects, the Austrian interior ministry told The Associated Press on Friday, adding in a statement that investigators have turned to evaluating physical and electronic evidence.

The 19-year-old main suspect and a 17-year-old were arrested Tuesday, while a 15-year-old was also interrogated but was not arrested. Officials said Thursday afternoon that no additional suspects were being sought. They did not immediately offer further details Friday.

Authorities say the plot appeared to have been inspired by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. Investigators found bomb-making materials at one of the suspects' homes. Officials say one suspect has confessed to planning to "kill as many people as possible outside the concert venue."

Officials say the main suspect and the 18-year-old arrested Friday both pledged "oaths of allegiance" to the Islamic State group.

"He had been in contact with the main perpetrator, but is not directly connected to the attack plans," Karner said. "But, as was found out a few days ago, he took an oath of allegiance specifically to the IS on Aug. 6."

The 18-year-old "comes from the social environment" of the main suspect, Karner said.

Three sold-out concerts were canceled Wednesday because of the plot, devastating Swifties from across the globe. Many of them had dropped thousands of euros (dollars) on travel and lodging in Austria's expensive capital city to attend the Eras Tour shows at the Ernst Happel Stadium, which sat empty Thursday morning.

Europe is enamored with the American superstar: The German town of Gelsenkirchen renamed itself "Swiftkirchen" before its mid-July concerts.

Concert organizers in Austria said they had expected up to 65,000 fans inside the stadium at each concert and as many as 30,000 onlookers outside, where authorities said the suspects planned to strike. The foiled attack was planned for Thursday or Friday, according to Austria's interior minister, Gerhard Karner.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer defended the decision to cancel the concerts, saying the arrests of the suspects took place too close to the shows, scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

"I understand very well that those who wanted to experience the concert live are very sad," Nehammer told a news conference Thursday. "Moms and dads are looking after their daughters and sons, who were

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full of enthusiasm and anticipation for this concert. But it's also important that in such serious moments as now, it's inevitable that safety comes first."

Swift is also scheduled to perform at London's Wembley stadium in five concerts between Aug. 15 and 20 to close the European leg of her record-setting Eras Tour.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan said that while he understood Vienna's reasons for canceling, "We're going to carry on." Khan said the capital's authorities were prepared for shows there following lessons learned from a 2017 attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, that killed 22 people.

A suicide bomber had set up a knapsack with explosives in Manchester Arena. The bomb detonated at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving.

Last month, an attacker in England killed three girls and wounded 10 people in a knife attack during a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga class. Swift at the time said she was "completely in shock" over the violence.

In Austria, the main suspect confessed that he had started planning the attack in July, authorities said. The 19-year-old just a few weeks ago uploaded to the internet an oath of allegiance to the current leader of the Islamic State group.

He was "clearly radicalized in the direction of the Islamic State and thinks it is right to kill infidels," said Omar Haijawi-Pirchner, head of the Directorate of State Security and Intelligence.

Haijawi-Pirchner added that the suspect "wanted to carry out an attack in the area outside the stadium, killing as many people as possible using the knives or even using the explosive devices he had made."

During a raid of the suspect's home in Ternitz, south of Vienna, investigators found chemical substances and technical devices that indicated "concrete preparatory acts," said Franz Ruf, director general for public security at the Ministry of the Interior.

Authorities said they also found Islamic State group and al-Qaida material at the home of the second suspect, who is 17. That suspect, who has so far refused to talk, was employed a few days ago by a company providing unspecified services at the venue for the concerts.

Both teens were arrested Tuesday. Neither of their names was released, in line with Austrian privacy rules.

The suspects had undergone clear social changes recently, authorities said. The 19-year-old had quit his job but said he "still had big plans," while the other broke up with his girlfriend. Neither suspect appeared to have a ticket to any of the shows, Haijawi-Pirchner said.

Karner said that Austria's intelligence service had worked closely together with foreign intelligence services to capture the two teens. He did not identify the agencies, but added that the help was needed because Austrian investigators, unlike some foreign services, can't legally monitor text messages.

The CIA declined to say Thursday whether U.S. intelligence agencies played any role in the investigation. The U.S. State Department and the broader U.S. government have been in contact with Austrian officials about the alleged plot, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

No other suspects are being sought, though a 15-year-old who had been in contact with both suspects was also interrogated by police, Karner said.

"The situation is serious. But we can also say: A tragedy was prevented," he said.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music said in an Instagram post late Wednesday that it had "no choice but to cancel the three scheduled shows for everyone's safety."

Barracuda said all tickets would be refunded. The same message was posted under the Vienna dates on Swift's official website. Austrian rail operator OeBB in the meantime said that it would reimburse fans for unused train tickets for the concerts.

Swift has not spoken publicly about the plot or canceled shows. "Taylor Nation," a verified Instagram page widely believed to be run by her team, reposted the announcement from Barracuda Music in a "story," which is only visible for 24 hours. Her main account has not posted anything.

Swift's biggest fear has always been that such large-scale violence could take place at her concerts, the superstar told Elle magazine in 2019 ahead of her Lover Tour, which was ultimately canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. The attack at Grande's concert, as well as a 2017 mass shooting at an outdoor

country music festival on the Las Vegas Strip where 58 people were killed, worried Swift as she prepared to circle the globe.

"I was completely terrified to go on (the Lover Tour) this time because I didn't know how we were going to keep 3 million fans safe over seven months," she told the magazine. "There was a tremendous amount of planning, expense, and effort put into keeping my fans safe."

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 Manchester bombing, the deadliest extremist attack in the United Kingdom in recent years.

Terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp, based at the Swedish Defense University in Stockholm, told The Associated Press by phone that any mass public event constitutes a potential threat now.

"So we shouldn't be surprised that these extremely popular iconic popstars that attract a massive audience will also attract terrorists that want to create fear and destruction and mayhem," he said.

Veteran human rights advocate freed in swap says Russia is sliding back toward Stalinist times

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A human rights activist since the 1980s, Oleg Orlov thought Russia had turned a corner when the Soviet Union collapsed and a democratically elected president became leader.

But then Vladimir Putin rose to power, crushing dissent and launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Finally, the 71-year-old Orlov was himself thrown in prison for opposing the war. Freed last week in the largest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War, he was forced into exile — just like the Soviet dissidents of his youth.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday in Berlin, Orlov decried the scale and severity of repressions under Putin, with people imprisoned for merely criticizing the authorities, something unseen since the days of dictator Josef Stalin.

And he's vowing to continue his work to free the many political prisoners in Russia and keep their names in the spotlight.

"We're sliding somewhere into Stalin times," said Orlov, who at times showed signs of fatigue from a hectic schedule of media interviews in the week since his release.

He was sentenced to 2½ years in prison in February for writing an anti-war article. When he was unexpectedly moved last month from a jail in central Russia for what eventually led to the Aug. 1 prisoner swap, he was waiting to be transferred to a penal colony after losing an appeal.

The move came as a complete surprise, he told AP.

First, he was told to write a request for clemency addressed to Putin — something he said he flatly refused. Days later, he was put in a van and driven, to his astonishment, to an airport in Samara and flown to Moscow.

"To find yourself on a plane, among free people, straight from a prison — a very weird feeling," Orlov said.

Three more days followed in Moscow's notorious Lefortovo Prison, isolated in his cell, where he wrote a complaint that he was denied access to his lawyer. Then, he was shown a document saying he had been pardoned. He was put on a plane again, this time out of Russia, with other freed dissidents, and was greeted in Germany by Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

He broke into a smile when he recalled seeing familiar faces on the bus to the airport — artist and musician Sasha Skochilenko, imprisoned for a small anti-war protest, opposition politician Andrei Pivovarov, and others.

"So when a state security operative was announcing (on the bus) that it was a swap, we already understood it perfectly well," he said.

While held at Lefortovo, however, Orlov suspected another criminal case was being prepared against him. As for what charges the authorities could file, he said, "They would find (one) without a problem."

"The repressive machine ... has been put in motion and it runs on its own," the veteran human rights

advocate said. "The machine works to sustain itself and can only intensify the repressions, make them harsher."

Memorial, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning rights group Orlov co-founded, says more than 760 political prisoners remain jailed in Russia. Another prominent rights group, OVD-Info, says over 1,300 are currently imprisoned in politically motivated cases.

Some of them face isolation, without access to lawyers or doctors, often on orders from authorities, Orlov said.

Opposition politicians, such as the late Alexei Navalny or the recently swapped Vladimir Kara-Murza, were held in such isolated conditions in remote penal colonies, and their health deteriorated.

"My experience was much easier than that of many others," Orlov said. Prison officials "never exercised complete lawlessness toward me," he added, "I wasn't singled out from the crowd."

Still, it's important to support the growing number of those prosecuted on political grounds, he said, from keeping their plight in the headlines to sending them letters, and care packages, and helping their families.

In prison, "there is always this feeling of concern for your family. If you know that your family is going to be all right, it really helps to feel peace. And in prison it is the most important thing — not to despair and feel peace of mind," Orlov said.

In the harried days since beginning his new life in exile that he never sought, Orlov has had little time to process his newfound freedom, and he is yet to reunite with his wife.

But he is determined to carry on his work with Memorial, and he says there are things advocates can still do from outside Russia, such as maintaining the database of political prisoners and coordinating assistance to those behind bars

Stopping the repressions altogether, however, will only take place when Putin's "repressive, terrorist regime" ceases to exist, he says.

Asian stocks track Wall Street gains after encouraging US jobs data calm jitters over the economy

By The Associated Press undefined

Asian stocks were higher Friday after U.S. stocks rallied Thursday in Wall Street's latest sharp swerve after a better-than-expected report on unemployment eased worries about the slowing economy.

U.S. futures and oil prices were little changed.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 index closed 0.6% higher at 35,025.00. The yen erased earlier losses in morning trading and extended its fourth consecutive day of gains against the dollar, with Japanese equities then losing momentum as it often falls when the yen rises.

Earlier this week, weaker-than-expected employment data from the U.S. raised concerns about a slowing economy where the Federal Reserve has kept the high interest rates that aim to stifle inflation for too long. That triggered a sell-off in global markets, with the scale of the declines amplified as investors unwound their yen carry trade positions.

On Friday trading, the U.S. dollar fell to 147.16 Japanese yen from 147.28 yen. The euro cost \$1.0926, up from \$1.0918.

China's inflation came in higher than expected in July, with the consumer price index rising 0.5% compared to the same period a year earlier, boosted by food prices which are no longer dragging on inflation and were flat last month.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 1.3% to 17,117.03 and the Shanghai Composite index edged down 0.1% to 2,867.21.

In South Korea, the Kospi jumped 1.2% and ended at 2,588.43, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 advanced 1.3% to 7,777.70.

Elsewhere, Taiwan's Taiex picked up 2.9%, with chip maker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. gaining 4.2%, tracking Big Tech stocks' rally on Wall Street. The SET in Bangkok was up 0.1%.

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On Thursday, the S&P 500 jumped 2.3% to 5,319.31, for its best day since 2022 and shaved off all but 0.5% of its loss from what was a brutal start to the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.8% to 39,446.49, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 2.9% to 16,660.02 as Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks helped lead the way.

Treasury yields also climbed, signaling that investors are feeling calmer about the economy after a report showed fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week. The number was better than economists expected.

So far, the S&P 500 is still down nearly 10% from its all-time high set last month. Such drops are regular occurrences on Wall Street, and "corrections" of 10% happen roughly every year or two. After Thursday's jump, the index is within about 6% of its record.

Still, the market's swings look more like a "positioning-driven crash" caused by too many investors piling into similar trades and then exiting them together, rather than the start of a long-term downward market caused by a recession, according to strategists at BNP Paribas.

They say it looks more similar to the "flash crash" of 2010 than the 2008 global financial crisis or the 2020 recession caused by the pandemic.

In the meantime, big U.S. companies continue to turn in profit reports for the spring that are mostly better than analysts expected.

Eli Lilly jumped 9.5% to help lead the market after it delivered stronger profit and revenue than Wall Street had forecast. Sales of its Mounjaro diabetes treatment and its Zepbound weight-loss counterpart are booming, and the company raised its financial forecast for the year.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 3.99% from 3.95% late Wednesday.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude added 1 cents to \$76.20 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 7 cents to \$79.09 a barrel.

Debby bringing heavy rain, flooding and possible tornadoes northeast into the weekend

By MAKIYA SEMINERA, JOHN MINCHILLO and ALLEN G. BREED Associated Press

LUCAMA, N.C. (AP) — The remnants of Debby picked up the pace Friday, moving north and northeast from the Carolinas and still packing a punch with heavy rains, flash flooding and the threat of tornadoes.

The Mid-Atlantic states and parts of New York and New England will see significant rainfall that could cause dangerous flooding into the weekend, such as on parts of Interstate 95 near bigger cities, said Jon Porter, Accuweather's chief meteorologist. From eastern Virginia up to Vermont there may be an active stretch of tornadoes on Friday, he said.

"There will be multiple threats in Debby's final chapter, and it's a dangerous one," he said.

The already drenched parts of northern Vermont that were hit by flash flooding twice last month were bracing for the possibility of more on Friday. Flooding that hit the northeastern part of the state on July 30 knocked out bridges, destroyed and damaged homes, and washed away roads in the rural town of Lyndon. It came three weeks after after deadly flooding in the north and center of the state from the remnants of Hurricane Beryl.

Debby was a tropical depression by late Thursday afternoon, the National Hurricane Center said. It made landfall early Monday on the Gulf Coast of Florida as a Category 1 hurricane. Then, Debby made a second landfall early Thursday in South Carolina as a tropical storm.

At least seven people have died related to Debby.

On Thursday, tornadoes spawned by Debby leveled homes, damaged a school and killed one person, as the tropical system dropped heavy rain and flooded communities across the Carolinas.

It only took 15 seconds for a tornado to devastate Genesis Cooper's home in Lucama, North Carolina, a small town about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Raleigh. He almost slept through it — if not for an alert on his wife's phone.

He, his wife and their 20-year-old son huddled in a bathroom with blankets. They felt vibrations and

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heard glass shattering before hearing a sudden boom.

"I can't even describe it. It's like, suction, that's what it felt like," Cooper said. "Like something is squeezing, like your ears are popping."

The tornado was one of at least three reported in North Carolina, and perhaps the most devastating. One person was found dead in a home damaged by the Lucama tornado, Wilson County spokesperson Stephen Mann said.

The superintendent of Wilson County Schools confirmed damage at Springfield Middle School, where sections of the walls and roof are gone or compromised.

Drone footage showed portions of the school's roof ripped off, exposing rafters and duct work. A section of wall had crumbled onto the soggy green lawn, which was strewn with twisted pieces of metal roof and shredded insulation.

Tornado warnings continued to be issued throughout North Carolina and Virginia into the night Thursday. A tornado watch was in effect for over 17 million people in parts of Washington, D.C., Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia until 7 a.m. on Friday.

Meanwhile, a dam north of Fayetteville, North Carolina, broke Thursday morning as Debby drenched the area. Between 12 and 15 homes were evacuated, but no one was injured and no structures were damaged, Harnett County spokesperson Desiree Patrick said.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said at a briefing Thursday that the state had activated more National Guard troops and added additional vehicles that can rescue people in floods.

About 100 miles (161 kilometers) south of Lucama, deputies in Bladenboro posted photos of a patrol car damaged by a fallen tree, as well as roads that had been washed out.

Townpeople had helped fill sandbags Wednesday before up to 3 feet (91 centimeters) of floodwaters backed into the downtown overnight.

Forrest Lennon, the owner of Diamond Dave's Grill in Bladenboro, was counting his blessings even though 5 inches (13 centimeters) of floodwater made its way into the restaurant. He and his wife have owned the place since September. The previous owner said 3 feet of water inundated the building during the last two serious hurricanes, Matthew and Florence.

"It could have been a lot worse," Lennon said, adding that they did everything they could to prepare for the storm.

More flooding was expected in North and South Carolina. Up to 6 more inches (15 centimeters) of rain could fall before Debby clears those states. Parts of Maryland, upstate New York and Vermont could get similar rainfall totals by the end of the weekend, the weather service said.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster warned Thursday that Debby's effects weren't completely over because rain falling in North Carolina could swell rivers and cause flooding downstream.

"We've passed some dangers, but there's still plenty," McMaster said. "So don't let your guard down yet."

Timeline of events in Ferguson, Missouri, after a police officer fatally shot Michael Brown

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

FERGUSON, Mo. (AP) — On Aug. 9, 2014, Michael Brown and a friend were walking in the middle of Canfield Drive, a two-lane street in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, when a police officer drove by and told them to use the sidewalk.

After words were exchanged, the white officer confronted the 18-year-old Brown, who was Black. The situation escalated, with the officer and Brown scuffling. The officer shot and killed Brown, who was unarmed.

This story is part of an AP ongoing series exploring the impact, legacy and ripple effects of what is widely called the Ferguson uprising, which was sparked a decade ago after the fatal shooting of Brown.

Friday marks the 10th anniversary of the shooting that was a pivotal moment in the national Black Lives Matter movement, and helped spur a reckoning of how Black people in Ferguson and elsewhere in the St. Louis region were treated by police and the courts.

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A timeline of key events that followed the shooting:

AUG. 9, 2014: Brown's bloodied body remains in the street for four hours in the summer heat. People in the neighborhood later lash out at police, saying they mistreated the body.

AUG. 10, 2014: After a candlelight vigil, people protesting Brown's death smash car windows and carry away armloads of food, alcohol and other stolen items from stores. Some protesters stand on police cars, taunting officers. A QuikTrip convenience store on West Florissant Avenue, just blocks from where Brown was shot, is ransacked and burned. Other businesses are damaged or destroyed. It's the first of several nights of unrest. The protests help solidify the Black Lives Matter movement formed in the wake of the 2012 death of Black teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida and the acquittal of the neighborhood watch volunteer who shot him.

AUG. 11, 2014: The FBI opens an investigation into Brown's death, and two men who said they saw the shooting tell reporters that Brown had his hands raised when the officer fired repeatedly. That night, police in riot gear fire tear gas and rubber bullets to try to disperse a crowd of protesters.

AUG. 14, 2014: The Missouri State Highway Patrol takes control of security, relieving Ferguson and St. Louis County officers of their law enforcement authority after days of unrest. The shift in command comes after images from the protests show many officers equipped with military-style gear, including armored vehicles, body armor and assault rifles. In photos circulated online, officers are seen pointing their weapons at demonstrators.

AUG. 15, 2014: Police identify the officer who shot Brown as Darren Wilson, who had been with the department since 2011. They also release surveillance video that shows Brown grabbing large amounts of cigarillos from behind the counter of the Ferguson Market and pushing a worker who confronts him as he leaves the convenience store. Police say Brown took almost \$50 worth of cigarillos. The release of the video upsets protesters.

AUG. 16, 2014: Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon declares a state of emergency and imposes a curfew in Ferguson.

AUG. 18, 2014: Nixon calls the National Guard to Ferguson to help restore order. He lifts the curfew.

AUG. 20, 2014: U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder visits Ferguson to offer assurances about the investigation into Brown's death and to meet with investigators and Brown's family. A grand jury begins hearing evidence to determine whether Wilson should be charged.

AUG. 21, 2014: Nixon orders the National Guard to withdraw from Ferguson.

SEPT. 25, 2014: Ferguson Police Chief Tom Jackson releases a videotaped apology to Brown's family and attempts to march in solidarity with protesters. The move backfires when Ferguson officers scuffle with demonstrators and arrest one person moments after Jackson, who is white, joins the group.

NOV. 17, 2014: Nixon declares a state of emergency and activates the National Guard again ahead of a decision from a grand jury. He places Ferguson police in charge of security in Ferguson, with orders for them to work as a unified command with other departments.

NOV. 18, 2014: Nixon names 16 people to the Ferguson Commission, an independent panel charged with examining race relations, failing schools and other social and economic issues. Nine of its members are Black. Seven are white.

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NOV. 24, 2014: St. Louis County prosecutor Bob McCulloch announces that the grand jury has decided not to indict Wilson. Protests that were passionate but peaceful earlier in the day turn violent. At least a dozen buildings and multiple police cars are burned, officers are hit by rocks and batteries, and reports of gunfire force some St. Louis-bound flights to be diverted.

NOV. 29, 2014: Wilson announces his resignation from the Ferguson Police Department effective immediately.

MARCH 4, 2015: The U.S. Department of Justice announces that it will not prosecute Wilson in Brown's death but releases a scathing report that finds racial bias in the way police and courts in the community treat Black people.

MARCH 11, 2015: Jackson resigns effective March 19. The police chief is the sixth employee to resign or be fired after the Justice Department report. He is replaced on an interim basis by his top commander, Lt. Col. Al Eickhoff, who is also white.

MARCH 12, 2015: Two St. Louis-area police officers are shot in front of the Ferguson Police Department during a demonstration by protesters. Three days later, a 20-year-old man is charged with first-degree assault in the shootings.

APRIL 7, 2015: In Ferguson's first municipal election since Brown's death, two of the three City Council members elected are Black. Black people now hold three of six seats, compared with one seat prior to the election.

APRIL 23, 2015: Lawyers for Brown's family sue the city of Ferguson, Wilson and Jackson.

MAY 20, 2015: The large makeshift memorial that sat in the middle of Canfield Drive for months, in the same spot where Brown's body had been, is cleared out on what would have been his 19th birthday, giving way to a permanent plaque installed nearby in his memory.

JUNE 9, 2015: Ferguson hires a new municipal judge and interim city manager, both of them Black.

JULY 10, 2015: Nixon signs into law legislation limiting cities' ability to profit from traffic tickets and court fines, the first significant step taken by state lawmakers to address concerns raised after Brown's death. Among other things, the law lowers the percentage of revenue most cities can collect from traffic fines and fees from 30% to 20%.

JULY 22, 2015: Andre Anderson, a Black, longtime police administrator in suburban Phoenix, is introduced as Ferguson's new interim police chief.

SEPT. 14, 2015: The Ferguson Commission releases its report addressing the economic and racial factors that contributed to the unrest after Brown's death.

JAN. 27, 2016: Ferguson announces a tentative deal with the Justice Department to reform the city's policing and municipal court. The recommended overhaul follows seven months of negotiations.

FEB. 9, 2016: Ferguson's City Council unanimously votes to revise the agreement with the Justice Department, proposing seven amendments that the mayor says were formulated after an analysis showed

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the deal was so expensive it could lead to the dissolution of Ferguson. The Justice Department responds by suing Ferguson.

MARCH 2016: Former Miami police officer Delrish Moss, who is Black, is appointed Ferguson police chief following a nationwide search.

APRIL 19, 2016: Ferguson and the Justice Department reach an agreement that ends the lawsuit and requires sweeping reforms of the city's police and court systems.

APRIL 4, 2017: Incumbent Mayor James Knowles III, who is white, is reelected to a third three-year term, overcoming opposition from Ella Jones, a Black city councilwoman.

JUNE 20, 2017: A federal judge in St. Louis approves a wrongful-death lawsuit settlement that awards Brown's parents \$1.5 million.

JULY 26, 2017: The Ferguson Community Empowerment Center opens at the site where the QuikTrip convenience store burned the day after Brown's death. The center houses the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, the Salvation Army and other offices.

SEPT. 15, 2017: Former St. Louis city police officer Jason Stockley, who is white, is acquitted in the 2011 death of 24-year-old Anthony Lamar Smith, who was Black. Smith was suspected of making a drug transaction and killed after a car chase with police. The massive protests that follow Stockley's acquittal are the largest in the St. Louis region since the immediate aftermath of Brown's death.

AUG. 7, 2018: In a stunning upset, Ferguson City Councilman Wesley Bell defeats 28-year incumbent McCulloch in the Democratic primary for St. Louis County prosecutor. Bell, who is Black, was unopposed in the November election and took office in January 2019. McCulloch, who is white, was seen as an old-school, law-and-order prosecutor who drew criticism for his handling of the Wilson investigation. Bell ran on a platform of reforms, saying he would work to reduce incarcerations and start a unit to investigate shootings involving officers.

APRIL 2, 2019: Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden, loses her bid for a Ferguson City Council seat. She finishes third in a three-way race in Ferguson's 3rd Ward. She vows to stay active in the community.

JULY 23, 2019: New Police Chief Jason Armstrong is sworn in. Counting interim chiefs, Armstrong, who is Black, becomes Ferguson's fifth chief since Jackson resigned in 2015.

JUNE 2, 2020: City Council member Ella Jones is elected mayor of Ferguson, becoming the city's first Black mayor. Knowles, the three-term incumbent, could not seek a fourth three-year term due to term limits.

AUG. 4, 2020: Cori Bush, who earned notoriety for her leadership during protests in Ferguson, upsets longtime U.S. Rep. William Lacy Clay in Missouri's 1st District Democratic primary. Bush went on to win easily in November 2020.

AUGUST 2021: Frank McCall is promoted to police chief to replace Armstrong, who left for another job.

APRIL 2023: Ella Jones is reelected mayor, winning by 21 votes.

APRIL 2023: Troy Doyle is named police chief, replacing McCall, who resigned. Doyle spent more than three decades with the St. Louis County Police Department.

___ AUG. 6, 2024: Bell, the St. Louis County prosecutor, defeats Bush in Missouri's 1st District Democratic primary. Pro-Israeli groups spent millions to unseat Bush, who had been an outspoken critic of Israel's response to the October attack by Hamas.

A win for the Harris-Walz ticket would also mean the country's first Native American female governor

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

If Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, are elected this fall, not only would a woman of color lead the country for the first time, but a Native woman also would govern a state for the first time in U.S. history.

Peggy Flanagan, the lieutenant governor of Minnesota and a citizen of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, is poised to serve as the state's next governor should Walz step down to accept the role of U.S. vice president. Her rise to power has been watched closely by Indigenous peoples in Minnesota and across the country who see her as a champion of policies that positively affect Native Americans.

In recent years, Minnesota has integrated tribal consultation into numerous aspects of the state government, created one of the country's first state offices for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives and strengthened its laws protecting Native children in the adoption system. Many Indigenous leaders point to Flanagan as the driving force behind these changes, as well as a significant rise in respect for tribal sovereignty and autonomy in state policy.

Flanagan has been the nation's highest-ranking Native American statewide official since she was elected as lieutenant governor in 2018. That position is often performed behind the scenes, but Walz and Flanagan have said they chose instead to govern as partners. Their administration has bolstered government-to-government relationships with tribal nations in Minnesota and many in Indian Country see Flanagan as a key figure in a new era of politics with Native women at the forefront.

President Joe Biden made a difficult decision to step down and let Harris take his place as the Democratic presidential nominee, Flanagan said.

"He created space for a woman of color to lead. And to be really honest with you, quite frankly, that's what Tim Walz did for me," she said.

Her rise to the governor's office would solidify her place among Indigenous female leaders including Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland, Congresswoman Shaurice Davids and a growing list of Native women in statehouses.

Thirty-six state women lawmakers nationwide who identify as Native American were elected to office in 2023, a record, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

When Flanagan was first elected to the state House in 2015, there were far fewer Native women in seats of power.

"For my daughter, and for so many other young Native people across the country, their reality right now is totally different than how I grew up," Flanagan said. "Representation matters."

The number of Native women in the Minnesota Legislature has doubled since she took office, from two to four, and Flanagan said having more people from under-represented populations is the "secret sauce" to better governing.

"It allowed us to be able to speak on our own behalf on the floor, and to really be in a place where, frankly, decisions had to be made with us at the table in a way that had just never happened," she said.

Flanagan first met Walz when she worked at an organization that did grassroots training for progressive political candidates. She helped prepare Walz, a social studies teacher, for his first congressional race and the two became close friends and political allies. He later chose her as his running mate, supporting her numerous efforts to strengthen the voices of Indigenous peoples in the state government.

Walz was the first Minnesota governor to make diplomatic trips to the 11 tribal nations in the state. An executive order he passed in 2019 requires state agencies to consult with tribal governments, take training

to improve those relationships and hire liaisons to work directly with tribal partners.

Louise Matson, executive director of the Division of Indian Work, a nonprofit that supports Native Americans living in urban areas, attributes those gains to Flanagan's influence.

Flanagan was raised in Minneapolis, an urban hub for Indigenous activism including the American Indian Movement, and those who know her well say she has always focused on creating better outcomes for Native people, particularly children.

Matson, also a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, worked with Flanagan more than 20 years ago when, as a new college graduate, she got her first job advocating for Native families in the public education system. Matson recalled Flanagan was determined and not afraid to face challenges.

"I don't know if she always felt that confident, but I loved that she just jumped right into this job having to navigate a system that hasn't always been friendly to our people," Matson said.

Just a few years later, Flanagan ran for a position on the Minneapolis Board of Education. That's where she met Robert Lilligren, another member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe and the first Native person elected to the Minneapolis City Council. Lilligren said she reached out to him for campaign advice.

"I was like: 'This woman could be governor someday. Hell, she could be president someday.' I mean, she was just that impressive," Lilligren said.

The work Flanagan did on Walz's executive order requiring tribal consultation within state departments underscored her political influence and tenacity. The order has increased Indigenous visibility and respect for tribal sovereignty, Lilligren said.

"That is because Peggy's there," he said.

Flanagan's father, the late White Earth activist Marvin Mannypenny, spent many years agitating for Native land rights, which included holding his own tribe's government to task. He often said Native people have the inherent right to govern themselves, and Flanagan said she incorporates that into much of the work she does today.

"He was a troublemaker and rabble rouser, and an expert in our tribal constitution," she said. "He taught me to take up space at the table and to tell the truth, even if it makes people uncomfortable."

Ferguson marks 10 years since Michael Brown's death. While there's some progress, challenges persist

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

FERGUSON, Mo. (AP) — Michael Brown once told his father the "world is going to know my name," words Michael Brown Sr. still takes to heart.

Friday marks 10 years since the 18-year-old was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, turning the St. Louis suburb into the focal point of the national reckoning with the historically tense relationship between U.S. law enforcement and Black people.

The elder Brown now devotes his time to the Michael Brown Sr. Chosen for Change Organization, a foundation that helps fathers, mothers and children come to grips with tragedy in their lives. It's a legacy he feels obligated to pass on under the name he shares with his son.

"He was going to shake the world," Brown said of his son. "So, I guess that's what we're doing. He's still doing the work from the grave."

Brown's death catalyzed massive change in Ferguson. In 2014, every city leader was white in the majority-Black city. Today, the mayor, police chief, city attorney and other leaders are Black. The mostly-white police force of a decade ago now has more officers that are Black than white.

The municipal court system that once brought in millions of dollars in fines and fees, often for relatively minor traffic offenses — paid mostly by poor residents — now collects only a fraction of that.

But problems persist. The current and former mayor acknowledge that race still divides the community of 18,000 residents. Some are concerned that police, wary of criticism, aren't enforcing traffic laws, since serious and sometimes fatal wrecks are common.

What happened on Aug. 9, 2014

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Michael Brown and a friend were walking along Canfield Drive when Officer Darren Wilson drove up and told them to get on the sidewalk. A fight ensued and fearing for his life, the teenager ran.

Though Brown was unarmed, Wilson described Brown as menacing at 6-foot-4 and claimed he came at the officer. But some nearby residents said Brown had his hands up in surrender when Wilson shot him.

Activist Zaki Baruti recalled the horror and fear that other Black residents felt after Brown's death.

"There was a sense of shock, not knowing what to do," Baruti said.

James Knowles III, who was mayor in 2014, believes that the widespread anger about Brown's death was driven by several factors. Social media allowed information — and sometimes misinformation — to spread quickly, he said. Neighbors were incensed when Brown's body was left in the street for over four hours on that hot August afternoon.

The night after Brown's death, thousands of protesters marched along West Florissant Avenue, near Canfield. A QuikTrip convenience store was torched, and goods were stolen from many businesses. Months of fierce protest, at which demonstrators were tear gassed, soon thrust the city into the national spotlight.

When St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch announced in November 2014 that Wilson would not be charged, protests erupted again.

What changed in Ferguson

In 2015, an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice also found no grounds to prosecute Wilson. But the report gave a scathing indictment of the police department — raising significant concerns about how officers treated Black residents, and about a court system that created a cycle of debt for many residents. A year later, the city agreed to a federal consent decree requiring sweeping changes. The decree is still ongoing.

Missouri lawmakers stepped in, too. In 2016, legislators passed a law limiting the amount of revenue that municipal courts could collect from fines.

In 2013, Ferguson collected \$2 million in court fines and fees, according to data from ArchCity Defenders, a St. Louis-based civil rights law firm. In 2023, the city collected about \$97,000 — a decline of more than 95%.

'A new look' for policing

Troy Doyle was a veteran St. Louis County police officer who worked in Ferguson during the 2014 protests. Nearly a decade later in April 2023, Doyle, who is Black, was hired as Ferguson's chief — the latest of several hires since Tom Jackson resigned in 2015, following the Justice Department report.

Back in 2014, Ferguson had roughly 50 white officers, but just three Black officers. Today, 22 of Ferguson's 41 officers are Black. Only four officers who were on staff in 2014 remain. Officers today are trained on implicit bias, de-escalation and community relationship building.

Doyle said he has worked hard to change the mindset of officers who might be resistant to the court-imposed requirements. He even replaced uniforms and changed the look of patches, badges and police cars, worried that the old look was "triggering" for many residents.

"For some people who live in the community, every time they saw a Ferguson police officer, it brought back memories," Doyle said. "I wanted to give us a new look, but part of that new look was to let people know it was a new police department."

Michael Brown Sr. said he's noticed the change.

"It's a weight that's been lifted up off the Black community in terms of stop-and-frisk and assessing tickets," Brown said. "There's a lot of things that still need to get done. Those things are not promised overnight. It's a process."

More jobs and a helping hand

Some companies and organizations stepped in to create jobs and opportunities after the unrest in Ferguson, which brought more awareness of economic challenges in the community.

Centene Corp. opened a managed care service center in Ferguson in 2016, creating about 250 jobs. But after the COVID-19 pandemic and a move to virtual work, the center closed. In April, Centene donated the \$25 million building to the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis for early childhood programs, workforce

assistance and other services.

Bob Clark, founder of the St. Louis-based construction company Clayco, in 2015 created the Construction Career Development Initiative. Since then, 175 people have been placed in jobs in the construction industry. Among them is Malik Johnson. He was a high school student who was homeless at the time of Brown's death.

"My reality was divorce. My reality was mom with breast cancer, homeless, going hungry," Johnson, 28, recalled. "Not knowing what tomorrow looks like." Now, he's married, employed as a pipefitter and planning a family.

But challenges remain

After serving three terms as mayor, Knowles left office in 2020 due to term limits.

Knowles frequently meets for breakfast with Ella Jones, who was elected as Ferguson's first Black mayor in 2020 and reelected last year. They both acknowledge that race relations remain a struggle.

"The city is turning back," Jones told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "It really is. Everything here is along racial lines." The City Council has four white members and three Black members, and little gets done, she lamented.

Knowles sees that, too. He also worries about public safety as many drivers — aware police are less likely to pull them over — flaunt traffic laws.

He also believes too much money is being spent on the consent decree — money he believes would be better spent on fixing streets, hiring more officers and restoring crumbling parks.

The place where Black Lives Matter took off

Karla Scott, communications professor and former African American Studies program director at St. Louis University, said Ferguson will survive because its residents are resilient and proud of their community, even after all it has gone through.

"But I think it will always be the sort of epicenter for many of us who can remember where we were when we heard the news, or for people who went out there to stand in solidarity, to march in solidarity, to make their voices heard," Scott said. "It will always be that place where the Black Lives Matter movement really took off."

Harris and Walz head to Arizona, where a VP runner-up could still make a difference

By GABRIEL SANDOVAL and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris and her new running mate will hold a rally in Arizona on Friday as part of their tour of electoral battlegrounds, visiting a state where Harris passed over a prominent Democrat in favor of Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, a former astronaut and gun control advocate, had been a top contender for running mate. He's won two tough races in politically divided Arizona.

In passing over Kelly, Harris may have also lost the chance to win over people like Gonzalo Leyva, a 49-year-old landscaper in Phoenix. Leyva plans to vote for former President Donald Trump, a Republican, but says he would have backed a Harris-Kelly ticket.

"I prefer Kelly like 100 times," said Leyva, a lifelong Democrat who became an independent at the beginning of Trump's term in office. "I don't think he's that extreme like the other guys."

In Arizona, every vote will be critical. The state is no stranger to nail-biter races, including in 2020 when President Joe Biden bested Trump by fewer than 11,000 votes. Both parties are bracing for a similar photo finish this year.

"These last few months are going to feel like years, and it is tough to see anyone winning by a large margin," said Constantine Querard, a veteran Republican strategist in the state.

Democrats profess confidence that Harris is in solid shape in the state even without Kelly on the ticket. The senator is expected to remain a strong advocate for Harris and is already mentioned for possible

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Cabinet posts or other prominent roles should the vice president ascend to the Oval Office.

"Not picking Kelly hasn't put the brakes on support for Harris," said Stacy Pearson, a Democratic strategist in Phoenix. She said she feels the same enthusiasm for the new ticket that has led to giant crowds greeting Harris and Walz at prior stops on their tour, including the home of another running mate also-ran, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro.

Another Democratic strategist in Arizona, D.J. Quinlan, agreed. "There's a ton of enthusiasm on the ground. It's the closest thing to me to what 2008 felt like," he said, referring former President Barack Obama's first run, which electrified Democratic voters.

Arizona is something of a magnet for Midwesterners seeking to escape the cold. So, several observers say, Walz may still play well there. Scott Snyder, who moved to Phoenix three years ago from Detroit, wasn't too familiar with Kelly's background or his politics, but said Harris made the right choice with Walz.

"He reminds me a lot of my dad," said Snyder, an electrician. "You see pictures of him out there coaching high school football. That's something that resonates with me. You see him out there duck hunting. Same thing. That's fairly common in Michigan, where I'm from."

Arizona was reliably Republican until Trump's combative approach to politics went national.

In 2016, Trump won Arizona, then quickly started feuding with the late Republican Sen. John McCain, a political icon in the state. That sparked a steady exodus of educated, moderate Republicans from the GOP and toward Democrats in top of the ticket contests.

In 2018, Democrats won an open Senate race in the state, foreshadowing Kelly's 2020 win and Biden's victory there as well. In 2022, Kelly won again, and Democrats swept the top three statewide races for governor, attorney general and secretary of state, defeating Republican candidates who hewed to Trump's style and his lies about fraud costing him the 2020 presidential election.

Chuck Coughlin, a Republican strategist and former McCain staffer, said the same voters who tipped the state to Democrats in the past few cycles remain lukewarm, at best, on Trump.

"Trump's not doing anything to embrace that segment of the electorate," he said.

The campaign is already being fought over familiar turf in Arizona — its border with Mexico. Trump and his allies have been hammering Biden over the influx of migrants during his term and are shifting their attacks to Harris.

"It's very easy for us to segue and switch our sights and focus on her," said Dave Smith, Pima County's Republican party chairman.

Kari Lake, who is running against Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego for an open Senate seat in Arizona, unveiled an ad late last week bashing Gallego for supporting what the ad calls Biden and Harris' "radical border agenda," featuring repeated clips of the vice president chortling.

On Thursday, Lake argued to reporters that Harris is less popular in Arizona than Biden. "They like Kamala Harris even less," Lake said. "They understand that she hasn't done anything on the border."

Meanwhile, Harris is targeting the state's fast-growing Latino population with her own ad highlighting how Harris, the daughter of immigrants from India and Jamaica, rose to the highest echelons of American politics.

Harris' background and comparative youth have put Arizona and other Sun Belt states back in play in a presidential race that had been narrowing to the trio of "blue wall" swing states, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Though it has a robust younger population, Arizona is also known for its vast swaths of retirement communities. Pearson contended that Biden's age — 81 — put him at a disadvantage in the state.

"Fellow retirees were the first to say this is not OK," Pearson said of Biden's age. "I'm so much more optimistic with Harris and Walz at the top of the ticket."

Interim leader Muhammad Yunus takes the helm in Bangladesh, to seek peace and prepare elections

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus took the oath of office as head of Bangladesh's interim government Thursday after protests forced out former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina this week.

The key tasks for Yunus now are restoring peace in Bangladesh and preparing for new elections following the ouster of Hasina, who fled to India after weeks of student protests over job quotas grew into an uprising against her increasingly autocratic 15-year rule.

The figurehead President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath to Yunus for his role as chief adviser, which is the equivalent to a prime minister, in the presence of diplomats, civil society members, top businessmen and members of the former opposition party at the presidential palace in Dhaka. No representatives of Hasina's party were present.

The 16 other members of the interim Cabinet were drawn mainly from civil society and include two of the student protest leaders. The Cabinet members were chosen in discussions this week among student leaders, civil society representatives and the military.

The protests began in July against a quota system for government jobs that critics said favored people with connections to Hasina's party. But she resigned and fled to India on Monday after the protests coalesced into a movement against her government and more than 300 people including students and police officers were killed in the spiraling violence.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent his best wishes to Yunus in a statement on social media platform X, and alluded to reports that Hindus in Muslim-majority Bangladesh had been targeted during the violence.

"We hope for an early return to normalcy, ensuring the safety and protection of Hindus and all other minority communities," Modi said. "India remains committed to working with Bangladesh to fulfill the shared aspirations of both our peoples for peace, security and development."

Yunus, who was awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his work developing microcredit markets, was in Paris for the Olympics when he was chosen for the interim role. He called for calm and an end to partisan violence before he returned home earlier Thursday.

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 student leaders. "It has immense possibility."

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.

On Wednesday, a tribunal in Dhaka 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 the interim administration.

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

Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, who acts as an adviser to his mother, has vowed that his family and the Awami League party would remain engaged in Bangladesh's politics despite what he said have been attacks on the Awami League party over the past week. Many observers see Joy as Hasina's successor in a dynastic political culture that dominates the South Asian nation's politics.

"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."

Hasina, 76, was elected to a fourth consecutive term in January, but the vote was boycotted by her main opponents, thousands of opposition members were jailed beforehand, and the U.S. and U.K. denounced the result as not credible. Hasina's critics say her administration increasingly was marked by human rights

abuses and corruption.

The chaos on Bangladesh's streets continued after her resignation on Monday. Dozens of police officers were killed, prompting police to stop working across the country. They threatened not to return unless their safety is ensured.

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, and police remained off duty. The military shared hotline numbers for people seeking help.

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

China and the United States have both welcomed the new government.

"We think the interim government will play a vital role in establishing long-term peace and political stability in Bangladesh," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters. He also reiterated that the government's decisions "should respect democratic principles, rule of law, and the will of the Bangladeshi people."

China said it stood ready to work with Bangladesh to promote bilateral cooperation and advance their strategic partnership. "We respect Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and the development path independently chosen by the Bangladeshi people," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

US and other frustrated mediators call on Israel, Hamas to resume Gaza talks, saying, 'no excuses'

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Leaders of the United States, Egypt and Qatar jointly demanded Israel and Hamas return to stalled talks on the war in Gaza next week, saying Thursday that "only the details" of carrying out a cease-fire and hostage release remain to be negotiated. "There is no further time to waste, nor excuses from any party for further delay," they said in a joint statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday, "Pursuant to the proposal by the U.S. and the mediators, Israel will — on 15 August — send the negotiations team to a place to be determined in order to finalize the details of the implementation of the framework agreement."

President Joe Biden, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Qatari Emir Tamim al-Thani, mediators in indirect negotiations to end 10 months of devastating war in Gaza, set the talks for Aug. 15, to take place in either Doha, Qatar, or Cairo.

A senior U.S. official, speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss the push by mediators, said only four or five areas of disagreement over implementation remained to be resolved between the two opponents.

The official cited the timing of a planned swap of Palestinian detainees held by Israel, and hostages held by Hamas, as an example.

Egypt, the U.S. and Qatar said they have a proposal ready to present at next week's talks to resolve the remaining issues.

Critics of Netanyahu accuse him of slow-rolling talks to end the war in Gaza, which began Oct. 7 when Hamas-led militants killed about 1,200 people in Israel. Israel's offensive in Gaza since then has killed nearly 40,000 people.

There was no immediate response to the offer by Hamas. Last week's killing of its top political leader in Tehran raised tensions across the region, an escalation widely seen as a blow to cease-fire talks. The killing was widely ascribed to Israel, although Israel has not commented.

U.S. officials have said they believe Hamas can resume negotiations despite the July 31 assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, who had been presiding over the talks for Hamas.

Hamas military chief Yahya Sinwar, who is believed to be sheltering from Israeli attack in underground

bunkers beneath Gaza, took over as the group's political leader. Hamas had other representatives besides Haniyeh attending the talks who can step in for the slain official, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

A deadly tornado, flooding rains and swollen rivers plague residents in the path of Debby

By MAKIYA SEMINERA, JOHN MINCHILLO and ALLEN G. BREED Associated Press

LUCAMA, N.C. (AP) — Tornadoes spawned by Debby leveled homes, damaged a school and killed one person early Thursday, as the tropical system dropped heavy rain and flooded communities across North and South Carolina.

It only took 15 seconds for a tornado to devastate Genesis Cooper's home in Lucama, North Carolina, a small town about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Raleigh. He almost slept through it — if not for an alert on his wife's phone.

He, his wife and their 20-year-old son huddled in a bathroom with blankets. They felt vibrations and heard glass shattering before hearing a sudden boom.

"I can't even describe it. It's like, suction, that's what it felt like," Cooper said. "Like something is squeezing, like your ears are popping."

The tornado was one of at least three reported overnight in North Carolina, and perhaps the most devastating. One person was found dead in a home damaged by the Lucama tornado, Wilson County spokesman Stephen Mann said in an email. No further details on the person were immediately provided.

Parts of the roof and walls of Cooper's house were torn off, while the side windows were busted out. But Cooper was calm, saying they were in God's hands.

"This is just stuff. It can be replaced," he said.

The superintendent of Wilson County Schools confirmed damage at Springfield Middle School, where sections of the walls and roof of the 6th and 7th grade halls are gone or compromised.

Drone footage showed portions of the school's roof ripped off, exposing rafters and duct work. A section of wall had crumbled onto the soggy green lawn, which was strewn with twisted pieces of metal roof and shredded insulation.

Tornado warnings continued to be issued throughout North Carolina and Virginia into the night. A tornado watch was in effect for over 17 million people in parts of Washington, D.C., Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia until 7 a.m. on Friday.

Meanwhile, a dam north of Fayetteville, North Carolina, broke Thursday morning as Debby drenched the area. Between 12 and 15 homes were evacuated, but no one was injured and no structures were damaged, Harnett County spokesperson Desiree Patrick said in an email.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said at a briefing Thursday that the state has activated more National Guard troops and added additional vehicles that can rescue people in floods.

About 100 miles (161 kilometers) south of Lucama, deputies in Bladenboro posted photos of a patrol car damaged by a fallen tree, as well as roads that had been washed out. Standing water a few feet deep covered parts of the tiny North Carolina town.

Townpeople had helped fill sandbags Wednesday before up to 3 feet (91 centimeters) of floodwaters backed into the downtown overnight. When the sun came up, water could still be seen bubbling out of manhole covers.

Forrest Lennon, the owner of Diamond Dave's Grill in Bladenboro, was counting his blessings even though 5 inches (13 centimeters) of floodwater made its way into the restaurant. He and his wife have owned the place since September. The previous owner said 3 feet of water inundated the building during the last two serious hurricanes, Matthew and Florence.

"It could have been a lot worse," Lennon said, adding that they did everything they could to prepare for the storm.

"We just came in here and got everything we could as high as we could up off the ground ... and we

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just left and prayed for the best," he said.

Debby was a tropical depression by late Thursday afternoon, with maximum sustained winds around 35 mph (55 kph), the National Hurricane Center said. It made landfall early Monday on the Gulf Coast of Florida as a Category 1 hurricane. Then, Debby made a second landfall early Thursday in South Carolina as a tropical storm.

At least seven people have died due to the tropical weather.

Still, more flooding was expected in North and South Carolina. Up to 6 more inches (15 centimeters) of rain could fall before Debby clears those states. Parts of Maryland, upstate New York and Vermont could get similar rainfall totals by the end of the weekend, the weather service said.

Central parts of North Carolina up through Virginia were forecast to receive 3 to 7 inches (8 to 18 centimeters) of rain, with isolated areas getting up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) through Friday. The hurricane center warned of the potential for flash flooding.

Some residents of southeast Georgia were warned to brace for additional flooding Thursday even after Debby had cleared out for the Carolinas, as rivers swollen with rainfall overflowed their banks.

The Ogeechee River west of Savannah was forecast to reach its major flood stage Thursday night and crest early Sunday. Emergency officials in Effingham County called for some residents near the river to evacuate.

Officials in neighboring Chatham County, which includes Savannah, allowed residents to decide whether to leave, although rescue teams with boats had already retrieved 17 people from homes threatened by river flooding.

Chatham County Commission Chairman Chester Ellis said at a news conference to expect water where it hasn't been seen before.

"If you have a substantial amount of water in your yards, I would say evacuate now while you still have a chance," he added.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster also warned Thursday that Debby's effects aren't completely over because rain falling in North Carolina could swell rivers and cause flooding downstream.

"We've passed some dangers, but there's still plenty," McMaster said. "So don't let your guard down yet."

Back on the coast, Robert Chesnut stood in nearly a foot of water inside his Isle of Palms home with a rented industrial pump that looked like a fire hose. After more than three hours, only about an inch (2.5 centimeters) of water had been pulled out of his house on the barrier island near Charleston.

And once the water is gone, there is still a lot of work to do.

"This is contaminated water," Chesnut said. "These houses are on septic tanks. I hate to say it, but that's fecal matter. You have to disinfect everything."

FACT FOCUS: A look at claims made by Trump at news conference

The Associated Press undefined

In his first news conference since Vice President Kamala Harris became the Democratic nominee for president, former President Donald Trump said he would debate her on Sept. 10 and pushed for two more debates. The Republican presidential nominee spoke for more than an hour, discussing a number of issues facing the country and then taking questions from reporters. He made a number of false and misleading claims. Many of them have been made before.

Here's a look at some of those claims. ____

CROWD SIZES

CLAIM: "The biggest crowd I've ever spoken — I've spoken to the biggest crowds. Nobody's spoken to crowds bigger than me. If you look at Martin Luther King when he did his speech, his great speech, and you look at ours, same real estate, same everything, same number of people, if not we had more. And they said he had a million people, but I had 25,000 people."

THE FACTS: Trump was comparing the crowd at his speech in front of the White House on Jan. 6, 2021, to the crowd that attended Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech on Aug. 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial.

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But far more people are estimated to have been at the latter than the former.

Approximately 250,000 people attended the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, at which King gave his speech, according to the National Park Service. The Associated Press reported in 2021 that there were at least 10,000 people at Trump's address.

Moreover, Trump and King did not speak in the same location. King spoke from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, which looks east toward the Washington Monument. Trump spoke at the Ellipse, a grassy area just south of the White House.

JAN. 6

CLAIM: "Nobody was killed on Jan. 6."

THE FACTS: That's false. Five people died in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot and its immediate aftermath. Pro-Trump rioters breached the U.S. Capitol that day amid Congress' effort to certify Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 election victory.

Among the deceased are Ashli Babbitt, a Trump supporter shot and killed by police, and Brian Sicknick, a police officer who died the day after battling the mob. Four additional officers who responded to the riot killed themselves in the following weeks and months.

Babbitt, a 35-year-old Air Force veteran from San Diego, was shot and killed by a police officer as she climbed through a broken part of a Capitol door during the violent riot. Trump has often cited Babbitt's death while lamenting the treatment of those who attended a rally outside the White House that day and then marched to the Capitol, many of whom fought with police.

DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION

CLAIM: "The presidency was taken away from Joe Biden, and I'm no Biden fan, but I tell you what, from a constitutional standpoint, from any standpoint you look at, they took the presidency away."

THE FACTS: There is nothing in the Constitution that prevents the Democratic Party from making Vice President Kamala Harris its nominee. That process is determined by the Democratic National Committee.

Harris officially claimed the nomination Monday following a five-day online voting process, receiving 4,563 delegate votes out of 4,615 cast, or about 99% of participating delegates. A total of 52 delegates in 18 states cast their votes for "present," the only other option on the ballot.

The vice president was the only candidate eligible to receive votes after no other candidate qualified by the party's deadline following President Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the race on July 21.

THE ECONOMY

CLAIM: Suggesting things would be different if he had been in office rather than Biden: "You wouldn't have had inflation. You wouldn't have had any inflation because inflation was caused by their bad energy problems. Now they've gone back to the Trump thing because they need the votes. They're drilling now because they had to go back because gasoline was going up to 7, 8, 9 dollars a barrel."

THE FACTS: There would have been at least some inflation if Trump had been reelected in 2020 because many of the factors causing inflation were outside a president's control. Prices spiked in 2021 after cooped-up Americans ramped up their spending on goods such as exercise bikes and home office furniture, overwhelming disrupted supply chains. U.S. auto companies, for example, couldn't get enough semiconductors and had to sharply reduce production, causing new and used car prices to shoot higher. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in March 2022 also sent gas and food prices soaring around the world, as Ukraine's wheat exports were disrupted and many nations boycotted Russian oil and gas.

Still, under Biden, U.S. oil production reached a worldwide record level earlier this year.

Many economists, including some Democrats, say Biden's \$1.9 trillion financial support package, approved in March 2021, which provided a \$1,400 stimulus check to most Americans, helped fuel inflation by ramping up demand. But it didn't cause inflation all by itself. And Trump supported \$2,000 stimulus checks in December 2020, rather than the \$600 checks included in a package he signed into law in December 2020.

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Prices still spiked in countries with different policies than Biden's, such as France, Germany and the U.K., though mostly because of the sharp increase in energy costs stemming from Russia's invasion.

IMMIGRATION

CLAIM: "Twenty million people came over the border during the Biden-Harris administration — 20 million people — and it could be very much higher than that. Nobody really knows."

THE FACTS: Trump's 20 million figure is unsubstantiated at best, and he didn't provide sources.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports 7.1 million arrests for illegal crossings from Mexico from January 2021 through June 2024. That's arrests, not people. Under pandemic-era asylum restrictions, many people crossed more than once until they succeeded because there were no legal consequences for getting turned back to Mexico. So the number of people is lower than the number of arrests.

In addition, CBP says it stopped migrants 1.1 million times at official land crossings with Mexico from January 2021 through June 2024, largely under an online appointment system to claim asylum called CBP One.

U.S. authorities also admitted nearly 500,000 migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela under presidential authority if they had financial sponsors and arrived at an airport.

All told, that's nearly 8.7 million encounters. Again, the number of people is lower due to multiple encounters for some.

There are an unknown number of people who eluded capture, known as "got-aways" in Border Patrol parlance. The Border Patrol estimates how many but doesn't publish that number.

CLAIM: Vice President Kamala Harris "was the border czar 100% and all of a sudden for the last few weeks she's not the border czar anymore."

THE FACTS: Harris was appointed to address "root causes" of migration in Central America. That migration manifests itself in illegal crossings to the U.S., but she was not assigned to the border.

NEW YORK CASES

CLAIM: "The New York cases are totally controlled out of the Department of Justice."

THE FACTS: Trump was referring to two cases brought against him in New York — one civil and the other criminal.

Neither has anything to do with the U.S. Department of Justice.

The civil case was initiated by a lawsuit from New York Attorney General Letitia James. In that case, Trump was ordered in February to pay a \$454 million penalty for lying about his wealth for years as he built the real estate empire that vaulted him to stardom and the White House.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a state-level prosecutor, brought the criminal case. In May, a jury found Trump guilty on 34 felony counts in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to a porn actor who said the two had sex.

Maui remembers the 102 lost in the Lahaina wildfire with a paddle out 1 year after devastating blaze

By AUDREY MCAVOY and MENGSHIN LIN Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Dozens of Maui surfers, canoe paddlers and boat riders made their way into the ocean off Lahaina on Thursday to remember the 102 people killed when the nation's deadliest wildfire in more than a century destroyed the historic town one year ago.

The "paddle out" gathering is a ritual observed in Hawaii in honor of loved ones. So many spectators packed a beach park to watch the surfers that there was little room to move. People blew conch shells both from shore and the water as others dropped flower petals in the ocean.

"Today we're remembering the 102 loved ones we lost, the many injured, those who lost their homes," Gov. Josh Green said at a news conference. "We are grieving for them, still."

Here's what else you need to know about the first anniversary of the Aug. 8, 2023 wildfire:

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Where are people living?

The wildfire destroyed more than 2,200 homes and left 12,000 people without housing. Thousands spent the past year in hotels and have slowly been moving into rental apartments, houses and temporary modular homes while permanent housing is built.

The county has started issuing building permits for lots in the burn zone, but rebuilding is expected to take years. Residents of Paradise, California, were still rebuilding their homes five years after a wildfire destroyed their town in 2018.

The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement estimates at least 1,500 Lahaina households — about one quarter of those who lost homes — have left Maui since the fire. A chronic housing shortage predating the fire has exacerbated the challenges of recovery.

How are the trees doing, including the banyan?

Arborists believe Lahaina lost about 25,000 trees in the fire, including fruit trees like mango, avocado, lychee and breadfruit in people's yards.

The town's single best known tree, however, was the majestic, sprawling 150-year-old banyan tree on historic Front Street. It survived, thanks to the dedication and hard work of arborists.

Arborists also saved breadfruit trees, called ulu in Hawaiian. Ulu were among the edible plants Polynesian voyagers brought to Hawaii around 1,000 years ago.

The plant was once so important to Lahaina, which was formerly known as Lele, that the center of town was known as Malu ulu o Lele, or "the shaded breadfruit grove of Lele."

What are the environmental consequences of the fire?

Hawaii's Department of Health has determined it's safe to surf and swim in waters off Lahaina after reviewing water samples collected by researchers. Scientists are still studying how chemicals and metals from burned plastics, lead paint and lithium-ion batteries might affect offshore coral reef ecosystems.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency workers removed toxic debris soon after the fire. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers then spent months clearing charred rubble and ash from over 1,300 residential and 60 commercial lots. It expects to be done by year's end.

The debris removed by the Army Corps is being stored at a temporary site in Olowalu, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of Lahaina, but environmentalists and local residents have raised concerns about it staying there long-term. Maui County has selected a site next to an existing landfill for permanent disposal.

What's next?

The Maui Fire Department has received funding to add 29 firefighters to its force, and the Maui Emergency Management Agency is getting 13 more workers. The county has been more assertive in sending police officers door-to-door to notify residents when there's a need to evacuate, Maui Mayor Richard Bisen said at a news conference.

"We are taking those steps to, again, get ahead of these types of fires that have been happening," Bisen said.

Green told The Associated Press in an interview last week that the state needed to accelerate the construction of transitional housing over the next year, and the county will need to approve more building permits.

"This is the 12-month period where a ton of housing will be authorized. In fact, one of the bigger challenges we're going to have is, can we get enough construction workers? Because it's a lot of work," he said. Finding housing for the workers amid the ongoing shelter shortage will be one of the difficulties.

Trump recommits to a Sept. 10 debate and lashes out at Harris at news conference

By JILL COLVIN, MICHELLE L. PRICE and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Donald Trump recommitted to debating Vice President Kamala Harris after recently backing out, holding a lengthy news conference Thursday in which he taunted his new rival, boasted of his crowd on Jan. 6, 2021, and lashed out at questions about the enthusiasm her campaign

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has been generating.

As the Republican presidential nominee addressed reporters at his Palm Beach, Florida, estate, ABC announced that Trump and Harris, the Democratic nominee, have agreed to a Sept. 10 debate, setting up a widely anticipated faceoff in an already unparalleled election. Trump said he had proposed three debates with three television networks in September.

Trump again wrongly insisted there had been a "peaceful transfer" of power in 2021 and renewed attacks on Republican rivals like Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, whom Trump has harshly criticized since Kemp refused to go along with his false theories of election fraud.

In taking questions from reporters for more than an hour, Trump tried to draw a contrast with Harris, who has not held a news conference since President Joe Biden's withdrawal from the race.

Another key moment in the election is set

Trump's decision to go on ABC sets up a high-stakes moment in an election where Biden's catastrophic performance in the last debate set in motion his withdrawal.

Just five days earlier, he had declared he would not debate on ABC and said his agreement with the network had been "terminated." He wrote on his social media site that if Harris wouldn't appear on Fox News on Sept. 4 instead, "I won't see her at all."

On Thursday, he announced a change of heart — and tried to pressure Harris to agree to two more September debates on Fox and on NBC.

Asked what he will do if a Harris only agrees to the ABC debate, he said: "I don't know how that's gonna work out. We'd like to do three debates. We think we should do three debates."

A few hours after the news conference, Harris told reporters she was "glad he has finally committed" to debate her on ABC on Sept. 10, the date that had originally been set for a Biden faceoff against Trump and which her campaign has long stuck to.

"I'm looking forward to it and hope he shows up," she said.

Thursday's event was Trump's first public appearance since Harris selected Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate. Trump called Walz a "radical left man."

"Between her and him, there's never been anything like this," Trump said. "There's certainly never been anybody so liberal like these two."

He repeatedly suggested Harris was not intelligent enough to debate him. Harris, for her part, has tried to goad Trump into debating and told an audience in Atlanta recently that if he had anything to say about her, he should "say it to my face."

Trump grew visibly perturbed when pressed on Harris' crowds and newfound Democratic enthusiasm, dismissing a question about his lighter campaign schedule as "stupid."

Trump says he has not "recalibrated" his campaign despite facing a new opponent, a dynamic some Republican strategists have quietly complained about.

When asked what assets Harris possessed, Trump said: "She's a woman. She represents certain groups of people."

Trump has repeatedly — and falsely — accused Harris, the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, of previously downplaying that she is Black.

Trump acknowledges weakness with Black women

Trump recognized some changing patterns with his new opponent, acknowledging he may not be as popular with Black women, one of Democrats' key voting blocs. He expressed a lot of confidence in his support from Black men.

"It could be I'll be affected somewhat with Black females but we're really doing well," he said. "And I think ultimately they'll like me better because I'm going to give them security, safety and jobs. I'm going to give them a good economy."

Trump campaign officials told reporters ahead of the news conference they believe Harris is currently enjoying a honeymoon period.

They argued the fundamentals of the race have not changed and the mood of the country remains sour, with Americans frustrated by the state of the economy, the administration and the country's directions.

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They say that while Harris has energized the Democratic base, she will not be able to win over Republicans or convert independents or the persuadable voters they are focused on targeting.

Trump's campaign plans to spend the next three months hammering Harris as "failed, weak and dangerously liberal," blaming her for every one of the the Biden administration's unpopular policies and mocking her mannerisms and speaking style.

Trump takes questions about abortion

Trump suggested abortion will not be a major issue in the campaign and the outcome in November.

He insisted that the matter "has become much less of an issue" since the Supreme Court ended the federal constitutional right to abortion services and returned control of the matter to state governments. But the issue is widely seen as a general election liability, and Trump named states such as Ohio and Kansas that have since voted to protect abortion rights.

Trump also said he expected Florida "will go in a little more liberal way than people thought" when it votes to repeal an abortion ban later this year, but he did not respond to questions asking how he would vote.

Trump argued that Democrats, Republicans and "everybody" are pleased with the results of the 2022 ruling that overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision.

Trump's actions within the GOP, however, suggest he knows that Democrats already have capitalized on Republican opposition to abortion rights and could do so again this fall. Trump single-handedly ensured that the Republican Party platform adopted at the 2024 convention in Milwaukee does not call for a national ban on abortion, and he has said repeatedly that hardliners in the party could cost the GOP in November.

The court's decision, issued months ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, is widely cited as a reason that Democrats fared much better than expected in House and Senate contests. And Democrats have hammered Trump in paid advertisements blaming him and the justices he appointed for ending Roe.

Trump again makes false claims on Jan. 6

Trump falsely claimed during the press conference that "nobody was killed on Jan. 6," the date in 2021 when pro-Trump rioters breached the U.S. Capitol amid Congress' effort to certify Biden's 2020 election victory after Trump refused to concede.

Ashli Babbitt, a 35-year-old Air Force veteran from San Diego was shot and killed by a police officer as she climbed through a broken part of a Capitol door during the violent riot that breached the building.

To be sure, Trump has often cited Babbitt's death while lamenting the treatment of those who first attended a rally outside the White House that day, then marched to the Capitol, many of whom fought with police and entered the building.

"I think those people were treated very badly. When you compare it to other things that took place in this country where a lot of people were killed," Trump said Thursday.

He also falsely claimed more people attended his speech at a "Stop the Steal" rally before the riot than the famous March on Washington in 1963, the iconic event at which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Trump was asked about Biden's comments in a CBS interview that he was "not confident" there would be a peaceful transfer of power if Trump were to lose.

"He should have brought this up at the debate if he had a problem. Of course there'll be a peaceful transfer, and there was last time."

While Biden was inaugurated on schedule, Washington was on lockdown that day, with the streets patrolled by military personnel and domestic police two weeks after Trump's supporters had attacked the Capitol. ____

Associated Press writers Will Weissert in Washington and Darlene Superville in Romulus, Mich. contributed to this report.

US men's basketball team rallies to beat Serbia at Paris Olympics, will face France for gold medal

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

PARIS (AP) — Down by 11 in the fourth quarter, against what looked like overwhelming odds, the U.S. Olympic men's basketball team got a spark.

Six points in two seconds.

Kevin Durant and Devin Booker provided that wild sequence to start the comeback, Stephen Curry had a scoring night like almost none other in U.S. Olympic history, and the Americans will play for gold at the Paris Games. Curry scored 36 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 2:16 left, and the U.S. beat Serbia 95-91 in a semifinal classic on Thursday night.

LeBron James had the fourth triple-double in Olympic history for the U.S., which trailed by 17 points in the first half and faced an 11-point halftime deficit — the biggest one successfully overcome by an American team since NBA players were added to the Olympic mix in 1992.

"I've seen a lot of Team USA basketball," Curry said. "And that was a special one."

Serbia led by 11 with 7:19 left. The rest of the way, it was all U.S. The Americans won a game where they led for 3 minutes, 25 seconds. Serbia led for 35:12 — nearly 90% of the game.

But it'll be the U.S. against host France for gold in a dream matchup for the host nation on Saturday, while Serbia will face Germany earlier Saturday for bronze. The gold-medal game is a rematch from the Tokyo Games three years ago, where the Americans prevailed 87-82.

"I'm really humbled to have been a part of this game," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said, tipping his hat multiple times to Serbia. "It's one of the greatest basketball games I've ever been a part of. They were perfect. They played a perfect game. Our coaches were saying Villanova-Georgetown, for all of our older readers and viewers out there.

"But they played the perfect game, and they forced us to reach the highest level of competition that we could find. And our guys were incredible in that fourth quarter, and they got it done."

Joel Embiid scored 19 points on 8 for 11 shooting and James added 16 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for the U.S., which is now assured of its 20th medal in 20 Olympic appearances.

"Joel was everything," said James, who has two of the four triple-doubles in Olympic men's history; he also had one in 2012, while the Soviet Union's Aleksander Belov in 1976 and Slovenia's Luka Doncic in 2021 had the others. "Made every big shot."

Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 20 points for Serbia, which got 17 from Nikola Jokic and 15 from Aleksa Avramovic. The Serbians were 0-3 against the U.S. this summer, getting blown out in the first two meetings and then looking poised for a win of their own on Thursday.

The whole game changed in the fourth after a wild sequence saw the U.S. score six points in two seconds. Durant made a 3-pointer while Anthony Davis was getting fouled. The U.S. got another possession because of the foul, and Booker immediately made another 3-pointer.

Just like that, a 78-67 lead for Serbia was down to 78-73. The comeback was on, and Curry's 3 put the U.S. up for good. He added a pair of free throws with 8.2 seconds left to make it a two-possession game and the Americans escaped.

Curry's 36 points were the second-most in a game by a U.S. men's player in Olympic history, one shy of Carmelo Anthony's record 37 against Nigeria in 2012. And Anthony, sitting courtside, was Curry's biggest cheerleader. When the Americans tied it with about 3:35 left, Curry gave Anthony a big smile. When the go-ahead 3 rattled home, Anthony leaped from his seat. And when it was over, the two shared a long embrace.

"That was a godlike performance," Durant said of Curry.

Serbia coach Svetislav Petic kept saying the same thing all summer, that the team the U.S. put together for the Paris Games was better than any in Olympic history. Even the Dream Team, he insisted. His mind wasn't changed after this one.

"They're that good," he said.

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A barrage of Serbian 3-pointers had the Americans squarely on the ropes, until the game changed in the fourth. But in the end, the U.S. improved to 144-6 all-time in Olympic play, 63-4 since NBA players were added to the Olympics in 1992.

"Perseverance, hard work dedication, Chef Curry and Joel 'Process' Embiid," James said. "Big-time win for us. We knew we were going to be challenged. We knew it was going to be the toughest game to date. Total effort."

Gold is the goal, but that didn't keep the U.S. from celebrating upon returning to the team hotel. Down 42-25 at one point, down 11 in the fourth, the Americans outscored the Serbians 32-15 in the final quarter.

"I know we want to win the gold, but you've got to celebrate the small moments, too," Durant said in a video distributed by USA Basketball well after midnight as he grabbed a postgame meal next to his mother, Wanda. "Guarantee you, everybody in here, they'll never forget this night. Everybody in here will remember this night for the rest of their lives. That's how special this is."

The comeback kept Durant's hopes of becoming the first four-time Olympic men's gold medalist very much alive and gave the U.S. a chance to return to the international basketball mountaintop. The Americans were fourth at the World Cup last summer, a result that spurred some NBA stars like James and Curry to be part of this team.

And of all the U.S. semifinal moments, this was like few others. The four-point final margin was the second closest in American history in the Olympic semifinals; the U.S. beat Lithuania by two in the 2000 semifinals in Sydney, on the way to gold there.

They're one win away from another.

"I'm 39 years old, going into my 22nd season, I don't know how many opportunities and moments I'm going to get like this to compete for something, compete for something big and play in big games," James said. "And tonight was a big game."

Harris and Walz show their support for organized labor with appearance at Detroit union hall

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WAYNE, Mich. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, played up their support for organized labor at a Detroit-area union hall on Thursday, with the Democratic nominee saying "we're all in this together" as the new ticket lavishes attention on a crucial base of support.

Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, and Walz, who joined the ticket on Tuesday, spoke Thursday to about 100 United Auto Workers members at Local 900 Hall, which represents Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant. The stop occurred shortly after Republican nominee Donald Trump held a press conference in Palm Beach, Florida.

As she proclaimed that it was "good to be in the house of labor," Harris described the value of unions, saying they were "about understanding that no one should be made to fight alone" and that "hard work is good work."

"We have fun doing hard work, because we know what we stand for," she said. "When you know what you stand for, you know what to fight for. We know what we stand for, and we stand for the people and we stand for the dignity of work, and we stand for freedom. We stand for justice. We stand for equality.

She continued: "And so we will fight for all of it."

Walz, riffing off a favorite line of President Joe Biden, told the labor crowd that "we know that unions built the middle class.

"The rest of America has to," Walz added.

The members at Local 900 were the first Ford workers to strike in 2023 when the union's contract with the company expired. Workers at the assembly plant went on strike Sept. 15 and remained on the picket lines until Oct. 25, when the union announced a tentative agreement with Ford.

After President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign last month and endorsed his vice president, organized labor quickly rallied around Harris. The AFL-CIO endorsed her after having first backed Biden.

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The UAW formally backed her last week.

Harris and Walz have been highlighting their support for working people during their first joint appearances this week in some of the most closely contested states that will help decide whether she becomes the first female U.S. president or whether Trump returns to the White House and brings along Sen. JD Vance of Ohio as his vice president.

Trump, Vance and other Republicans have increasingly criticized Harris for not engaging extensively with journalists and taking questions during the early days of her candidacy. In a brief exchange with reporters before leaving Michigan, Harris said she has talked with her aides and wants to schedule an interview before the end of the month.

She also re-confirmed that she would participate in a Sept. 10 debate on ABC News — which Trump had backed out of before recommitting to it earlier Thursday during his Palm Beach press conference — and said she would be “happy” to discuss subsequent debates after that one occurs.

The Democrats visited Wisconsin and Michigan on Wednesday, hoping to shore up support among the younger, diverse, labor-friendly voters who were instrumental in helping Biden get elected in 2020.

Two new polls of likely voters in Wisconsin and Georgia, another key state, show close races in both. Several Georgiapolls conducted earlier in the summer found Trump slightly ahead in the state, which Biden won narrowly in 2020.

UAW President Shawn Fain told The Associated Press last week that Harris’ leading the Democratic ticket boosts the party’s chances of winning Michigan and keeping the White House in November. Fain said Trump is beholden to billionaires, knows nothing about the auto industry and would send the labor movement into reverse in a second term.

On Thursday, Fain welcomed the ticket to “labor’s house” and rallied the union crowd by exclaiming: “Kamala Harris is one of us. Gov. Tim Walz is one of us” and praising their pro-labor records.

“This isn’t about opinions. This election is not about party politics,” Fain said. “All we have to do is look at these candidates in their own words and actions. That’s all the facts we need.”

Fain also spoke Wednesday at Harris’ campaign rally at a Detroit-area airport hangar. The UAW leader has become a top nemesis of the Republican presidential nominee, who frequently rails against Fain at rallies and in speeches.

Vance made his own stops in Michigan and Wisconsin on Wednesday, intent on showing that Republicans will compete in the “blue wall” of Midwestern states. He called Walz a “crazy radical” and said that Harris’ decision to pick him as a running mate shows that she “bends the knee to the far left of the Democratic Party.”

As Harris spoke to an estimated 15,000-person crowd at the airport, she was interrupted by protesters opposed to Israel’s war in Gaza 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.”

But Harris lost patience as the shouting continued, with protesters accusing her of supporting genocide in Gaza. That led her to deliver a sharper rejoinder.

“If you want Donald Trump to win, then say that,” she said, talking over the protesters. “Otherwise, I’m speaking.”

Metro Detroit, home to one of the largest Arab American populations in the United States, has become a focal point of tension and unrest due to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Shortly after her remarks Wednesday, Harris won the backing of Assad I. Turfe, the deputy Wayne County executive, who is the highest-ranking Arab American official in Michigan’s largest county. Turfe told The Associated Press he spoke with Harris backstage at the event before his endorsement.

“Kamala Harris embodies the America we deserve — an America that stands for strength, inclusivity and unwavering commitment to justice,” Turfe said in a statement. “I wholeheartedly endorse Kamala Harris, as she represents the true spirit of our nation and the values we hold dear.”

Turfe also pressed the need for a cease-fire in Gaza, but said that Harris “gives us the best chance of achieving peace in that region moving forward.”

Union members attending the rally said they supported Harris.

Jeanne Ruff of Livonia, Michigan, whose husband is a longtime UAW member, said she hoped Harris would visit a union shop in Michigan to show her support.

"I want her to make sure skill trades are back in schools so that the next generation can understand what unions are about. What solidarity is and how strong we can be together, working as one," Ruff said.

Could 2 NASA astronauts be stuck at the space station until next year? Here's what to know

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA is wrestling over how and when to bring two astronauts back from the International Space Station, after repeatedly delaying their return aboard Boeing's troubled capsule.

Do they take a chance and send them home soon in Boeing's Starliner? Or wait and bring them back next year with SpaceX?

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams have been up there since early June, their planned eight-day mission at the two-month mark and possibly surpassing eight months.

Testing continues, with Boeing expressing confidence in its spacecraft but NASA divided. A decision is expected next week.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BOEING'S STARLINER?

This is Boeing's first time launching astronauts, after flying a pair of empty Starliners that suffered software and other issues. Even before Wilmore and Williams blasted off June 5, their capsule sprang a leak in propulsion-related plumbing. Boeing and NASA judged the small helium leak to be stable and isolated, and proceeded with the test flight. But as Starliner approached the space station the next day, four more leaks erupted. Five thrusters also failed.

The capsule managed to dock safely, and four of the thrusters ultimately worked. But engineers scrambled, conducting thruster test firings on the ground and in space. After two months, there's still no root cause for the thruster malfunctions. All but one of the 28 thrusters seem OK, but the fear is that if too many conk out again, the crew's safety could be jeopardized. The thrusters are needed at flight's end to keep the capsule in the right position for the critical deorbit burn.

ARE THE TWO ASTRONAUTS STRANDED?

NASA bristles at suggestions that Wilmore and Williams are stranded or stuck. NASA has stressed from the get-go that in an emergency at the space station — like a fire or decompression — Starliner could still be used by the pair as a lifeboat to leave. A former NASA executive said Thursday the astronauts are "kind of stuck," although certainly not stranded. They're safe aboard the space station with plenty of supplies and work to do, said Scott Hubbard.

If NASA decides to go with a SpaceX return, Starliner would be cut loose first to open up one of two parking spots for U.S. capsules. Before that happens Wilmore and Williams would fashion seats for themselves in the SpaceX Dragon capsule currently docked at the space station. That's because every station occupant needs a lifeboat at all times. Once Starliner's docking port is empty, then SpaceX could launch another Dragon to fill that slot — the one that Wilmore and Williams would ride.

WHY MIGHT THEY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR?

Like Boeing's Starliner, SpaceX's Dragon is meant to carry four astronauts. To make room for Wilmore and Williams, NASA said Wednesday it could bump two of the four astronauts due to launch to the space station next month with SpaceX. The empty seats would be reserved for Wilmore and Williams, but they would have to remain up there until February. That's because station missions are supposed to last at least six months. Some have lasted a year. Two Russians up there right now will close out a yearlong stint when they return in a three-seat Soyuz capsule in September alongside a NASA crewmate. There's no thought given to ordering up a special SpaceX express, and the Dragon at the station now is the ride home next month for four residents.

This isn't the first time a U.S. astronaut has had their stay extended. NASA astronaut Frank Rubio and

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his two Russian crewmates ended up spending just over a year in space after their docked Soyuz capsule was hit by space junk and leaked all its coolant. An empty Russian capsule was sent up to bring them back last September.

WHAT DO THE ASTRONAUTS THINK ABOUT ALL THIS?

Wilmore and Williams are both retired Navy captains and longtime NASA astronauts who already have long space station missions behind them. Wilmore, 61, and Williams, 58, said going into this test flight that they expected to learn a lot about Starliner and how it operates. At their only news conference from space in July, they assured reporters they were keeping busy, helping with repairs and research, and expressed confidence in all the Starliner testing going on behind the scenes. There's been no public word from them yet on the prospects of an eight-month stay.

IS THERE ENOUGH FOOD, WATER AND AIR?

Wilmore and Williams' suitcases were removed from Starliner before liftoff to make room for equipment urgently needed for the space station's urine-into-drinking-water recycling system. So they made do with spare clothes already up there. A supply ship finally arrived this week with their clothes, along with extra food and science experiments for the entire nine-person crew. More supplies are due in a few more months. As for air, the space station has its own oxygen-generating systems. Despite the fat reserves, NASA would like to get back to normal as soon as possible. Besides Wilmore and Williams, there are four other Americans and three Russians on board.

WHY IS NASA STICKING WITH STARLINER?

NASA deliberately hired two companies to get its crews to and from the space station, just as it did for delivering cargo. The space agency considered it an insurance policy of sorts: If one crew or cargo provider was grounded, the other could carry the load. "You want to have another alternative both for cost reasons and for safety reasons and options. So NASA needs Boeing to be successful," said Hubbard, who served on the Columbia Accident Investigation Board in 2003.

Even with the latest setbacks, NASA insists it wants to keep using Boeing Starliners for astronaut rides. The goal is to send up one Dragon and one Starliner every year with crews, six months apart, until the station is retired in 2030. SpaceX has been at it since 2020.

WHAT DOES BOEING SAY?

Boeing insists its capsule could still safely bring the astronauts home. But the company said Wednesday it would take the steps necessary to bring the capsule back empty if that's NASA's decision. Last week, the company posted a list of all the tests that have been done on the thrusters since liftoff.

"We still believe in Starliner's capability and its flight rationale," the company said.

A longtime space contractor, Boeing has had to overcome multiple Starliner problems over the years. The company had to launch an empty Starliner twice before committing to a crew, repeating the initial flight test because of bad software and other issues. The delays have cost the company more than \$1 billion.

Hubbard questions whether NASA and Boeing should have launched the crew with the original helium leak, which cascaded into more.

"Whatever happens with the Starliner, they need to find out what the problem was and fix it," he said, "And give everybody confidence they are still in the aerospace business in a major way."

Here's a look at questions about Tim Walz's military record

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — Republicans are questioning Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's military record after Vice President Kamala Harris named him as her running mate this week.

Here's a look at the issue:

He retired before his unit's deployment to Iraq

Walz served a total of 24 years in various units and jobs in the Army National Guard. But it's his retirement in 2005 that's prompting criticism from some Republicans who are suggesting he abandoned his team to pursue a campaign for Congress.

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As he ramped up for a congressional bid in 2005, Walz's campaign in March issued a statement saying he still planned to run despite a possible mobilization of Minnesota National Guard soldiers to Iraq. According to the Guard, Walz retired from service in May of that year.

In August 2005, the Department of the Army issued a mobilization order for Walz's unit. The unit mobilized in October of that year before it deployed to Iraq in March 2006.

There is no evidence that Walz timed his departure with the intent of avoiding deployment. But the fact remains that he left ahead of his unit's departure. In a statement, the Harris campaign pushed back on GOP characterizations of Walz's service, and also noted that he advocated for veterans once he was elected to the U.S. House.

"After 24 years of military service, Governor Walz retired in 2005 and ran for Congress, where he chaired Veterans Affairs and was a tireless advocate for our men and women in uniform — and as Vice President of the United States he will continue to be a relentless champion for our veterans and military families," the campaign said.

Before leaving Detroit, where she and Walz played up their support for organized labor, Harris on Thursday responded to a question about the criticism of her running mate's record.

"Listen, I praise anyone who has presented themselves to serve our country," she said. "And I think that we all should."

Walz didn't serve in a combat zone

Earlier this week Harris' campaign circulated on X a 2018 clip of Walz speaking out against gun violence, and saying, "We can make sure that those weapons of war, that I carried in war, is the only place where those weapons are at." That comment suggests that Walz portrayed himself as someone who spent time in a combat zone.

According to the Nebraska Army National Guard, Walz enlisted in April 1981 — just two days after his 17th birthday — and entered service as an infantryman, completing a 12-week Army infantry basic training course before graduating from high school.

While attending the University of Houston in 1985, he was reclassified as a field artillery cannoner as a member of the Texas Army National Guard, later serving as an instructor with the Arkansas Army National Guard.

In 1987, Walz returned to Nebraska's Guard detachment, continuing field artillery assignments while he completed a college degree. By 1996, he transferred to the Minnesota Army National Guard. In 2003, he deployed to Italy in a support position of active military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. But he was not in a combat zone himself.

"Do not pretend to be something that you're not," Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance said Wednesday as he campaigned in Michigan. "I'd be ashamed if I was saying that I lied about my military service like you did."

Vance enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating high school, serving four years as a combat correspondent, a type of military journalist, and deploying to Iraq in that capacity in 2005.

Neither Trump nor Harris has served in the U.S. military. Trump received a series of deferments during Vietnam, including one attained with a physician's letter stating that he suffered from bone spurs in his feet.

The Harris campaign statement said Walz "would never insult or undermine any American's service to this country" and "thanks Senator Vance for putting his life on the line for our country. It's the American way."

What about his rank?

Harris' campaign has referred to Walz as a "retired Command Sergeant Major," one of the top ranks for an enlisted soldier. He did in fact achieve that rank, but personnel files show he was reduced in rank months after retiring. That left him as a master sergeant for benefits purposes.

Minnesota National Guard officials have said that Walz retired before completing coursework at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, along with other requirements associated with his promotion.

France back in men's basketball gold medal game after win over Germany in Paris Olympics

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — With blue, white and red flags waving in the stands and cheers blaring around them, France's players took in the moment.

Matthew Strazel erupted in dance. Evan Fournier ripped his jersey off and skipped around. Later, the team gathered in a circle at center court as fans erupted in an encore of, "Allez Les Bleus!" — "Let's go Blue!" — to serenade them.

Yes, the hometown team is headed back to the Olympic gold medal game. On Saturday they host a rematch of the 2021 Tokyo Games won by the U.S. The Americans advanced after rallying from 17 down to beat Serbia 95-91 in the other semifinal on Thursday.

"We just want to win," said Guerschon Yabusele, who scored 17 points in France's 73-69 victory over Germany. "Whoever, we're going to figure it out."

Isaia Cordinier added 16 points and Victor Wembanyama finished with 11 points and seven rebounds to help France — which won the silver medal in Tokyo three years ago — reach its second straight Olympic final.

The raucous crowd at Bercy Arena was engaged from the very beginning, hanging on every basket. And when the buzzer sounded, it sent fans into a frenzy. After a postgame handshake with their German opponents, the entire team ran to the baseline and saluted the crowd — which seemed to get louder to acknowledge the tribute.

"It was insane tonight," said France's Nicolas Batum. "I can't imagine what it's going to be Saturday. I can't wait."

Dennis Schroder led Germany with 18 points. Franz Wagner added 10 points and eight rebounds.

The loss ended the incredible run the Germans have been on over the last two years. Dating back to winning last year's World Cup, they had won 12 consecutive games in major international competition.

"After the first quarter, they kind of took us out of our rhythm," Wagner said.

With French and German basketball icons Tony Parker and Dirk Nowitzki sitting side-by-side at courtside, France outscored Germany 38-25 in the second and third quarters to take a 56-50 advantage into the fourth.

Germany didn't go down quietly.

It closed within 69-65 on a layup by Schroder with under a minute to play. Following a free throw by Frank Ntilikina, Germany cut the deficit to 70-68 on a deep 3-pointer by Wagner.

France dribbled the shot clock down, but Nicolas Batum came up empty on a 3-point attempt. Wagner got the rebound, but tumbled out of bounds as he tried to turn and dribble up the court. Germany was forced to foul Wembanyama.

The 20-year-old stepped to the line and missed his first free throw, then calmly dropped in the second to give France a three-point lead with 10 seconds remaining.

France opted not to allow Germany a shot at 3-pointer and possibly tie the game, fouling Schroder and sending him to the line. He also connected only 1 of 2, leaving France up by two. Cordinier was fouled and hit both free throws to seal the game.

France stayed with the same modified starting lineup it deployed during its quarterfinal win over Canada, opening the game with Wembanyama, Yabusele, Cordinier, Nicolas Batum and Ntilikina. Evan Fournier and Rudy Gobert began the game on the bench for the second straight game.

It didn't yield the same initial success this around, as Germany took a 12-2 lead.

It forced France coach Vincent Collet to change things up less than four minutes in, inserting Fournier and later Mathias Lessort to help settle things down. They did, and France got back within seven points heading into the second quarter.

France kept that momentum going, outscoring Germany 15-8 over the next 10 minutes to send the game to halftime tied at 33.

The flurry included a two-handed, poster-ready dunk by Wembanyama over Daniel Theis that brought

French fans to their feet.

Wall Street rallies to its best day since 2022 on encouraging unemployment data; S&P 500 jumps 2.3%

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks rallied Thursday in Wall Street's latest sharp swerve after a better-than-expected report on unemployment eased worries about the slowing economy.

The S&P 500 jumped 2.3% for its best day since 2022 and shaved off all but 0.5% of its loss from what was a brutal start to the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 683 points, or 1.8%, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 2.9% as Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks helped lead the way.

Treasury yields also climbed in the bond market in a signal investors are feeling less worried about the economy after a report showed fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week. The number was better than economists expected.

It was exactly a week ago that worse-than-expected data on unemployment claims helped enflame worries that the Federal Reserve has kept interest rates at too high of an economy-slowng level for too long in order to beat inflation. That helped send markets reeling, along with a rate hike by the Bank of Japan that sent shockwaves worldwide by scrambling a favorite trade among some hedge funds.

At the worst of it, at least so far, the S&P 500 was down nearly 10% from its all-time high set last month. Such drops are regular occurrences on Wall Street, and "corrections" of 10% happen roughly every year or two. After Thursday's jump, the index is back within about 6% of its record.

What made this decline particularly scary was how quickly it happened. A measure of how much investors are paying to protect themselves from future drops for the S&P 500 briefly surged toward its highest level since the COVID crash of 2020.

Still, the market's swings look more like a "positioning-driven crash" caused by too many investors piling into similar trades and then exiting them together, rather than the start of a long-term downward market caused by a recession, according to strategists at BNP Paribas.

They say it looks more similar to the "flash crash" of 2010 than the 2008 global financial crisis or the 2020 recession caused by the pandemic.

Of course, markets have been quick to turn over the past week regardless of any long-term predictions.

"Today's jobless claims data may ease some of the concerns raised by last week's soft jobs report," said Chris Larkin, managing director, trading and investing, at E-Trade from Morgan Stanley. "But with inflation data due out next week and the stock market still working through its biggest pullback of the year, it's unclear how much this will move the sentiment needle."

In the meantime, big U.S. companies continue to turn in profit reports for the spring that are mostly better than analysts expected.

Eli Lilly jumped 9.5% to help lead the market after it delivered stronger profit and revenue than Wall Street had forecast. Sales of its Mounjaro diabetes treatment and its Zepbound weight-loss counterpart are booming, and the company raised its financial forecast for the year.

Big Tech stocks also rose to claw back some of their sharp losses from the last month.

After a handful of them almost singlehandedly drove the S&P 500 to dozens of all-time highs this year, the group known as the "Magnificent Seven" lost momentum last month amid criticism their prices soared too high in investors' frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology.

How this handful of stocks performs carries extra impact on the S&P 500 and other indexes because they're by far the market's most valuable companies. Nvidia, which has become the poster child for the AI trade, rose 6.1% to trim its loss for the week so far to 2.1%, and it was the day's strongest single force pushing upward on the S&P 500.

Gains of 1.7% for Apple and 4.2% for Meta Platforms were also big propellants, along with Eli Lilly.

They helped offset a drop of 11.3% for McKesson, which topped analysts' expectations for profit in the

latest quarter but fell short on revenue. It said growth slowed in its medical-surgical business.

Bumble, the Texas-based dating app, lost more than a quarter of its value, 29.2%, after its forecast for revenue in the third quarter came in well below Wall Street's.

All told, the S&P 500 rallied 119.81 points to 5,319.31. The Dow gained 683.04 to 39,446.49, and the Nasdaq composite rose 464.22 to 16,660.02.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 3.99% from 3.95% late Wednesday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed across Asia and Europe. In Japan, which has been home to some of the wildest moves in global markets, the Nikkei 225 ticked down by 0.7%. That looked like a ripple following its tidal swings of down 12.4% and up 10.2% to start the week.

Utah bans 13 books at schools, including popular "A Court of Thorns and Roses" series, under new law

By AMY BETH HANSON and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

Thirteen popular books have been banned from all public schools in Utah in the first wave of bans expected under a new law that prohibits books when at least three of the state's 41 school district boards claim they contain pornographic or indecent material.

Allowing just a few districts to make decisions for the whole state makes the law one of the most lenient for book banning in the United States, according to PEN America, an organization that advocates for free speech and tracks book banning around the U.S.

The state education board released its first list of banned books this month, which includes a popular young adult novel series by author Sarah J. Maas called "A Court of Thorns and Roses" and books by Judy Blume and Margaret Atwood. The state's two largest school districts, which are located in conservative parts of the state, led the charge to ban the books. The Davis School District voted to ban all 13 books on the list, while Alpine School District banned seven of them, including Maas' series.

The books are still available at public libraries.

Utah's actions come amid a renewed push in recent years to ban more books by conservatives around the country despite concerns from free speech advocates and some educators and parents.

"The state's no-read list will impose a dystopian censorship regime across public schools and, in many cases, will directly contravene local preferences," said Kasey Meehan, Freedom to Read program director at PEN America.

"Allowing just a handful of districts to make decisions for the whole state is antidemocratic, and we are concerned that implementation of the law will result in less diverse library shelves for all Utahns," Meehan said.

At least three other states — Tennessee, Idaho and South Carolina — are moving toward putting the state government in the book-banning business, rather than leaving the issue to local communities, PEN America said.

Under Tennessee's law, a complaint by one person to a school board could be escalated to a textbook commission that could ban the book in school libraries statewide if the commission finds the book unsuitable for the age and maturity level of students.

Idaho's law requires school and public libraries to move material deemed "harmful to minors" to an adults-only section or face lawsuits. The new law uses Idaho's current definition of "obscene materials," which includes any act of homosexuality.

Utah's law went into effect on July 1 and required school districts to report to the Utah Board of Education which books they have banned from their school libraries that would fit under the criteria set in the new law. It's likely more books will follow, Meehan said.

Two books by Ellen Hopkins are also on Utah's list, with all but one of the banned books written by female authors.

"A trend that we see playing out nationwide is this suppression of books that depict and discuss sex, that

share stories of sexual violence, often against women," as well as issues facing the LGBTQ+ community and people of color, Meehan said.

Under the law, public school libraries have to get rid of the books, They cannot be sold or distributed, the state said.

"You have to actually throw out books," Meehan said. "That I think is just an alarming image for where we're at."

Only a member of the Utah Board of Education can appeal by asking the full board to hold a hearing within 30 days of a book being placed on the ban list to vote on whether to overturn the ban. So far, no appeals have been lodged, said Sharon Turner, spokesperson for the Utah Board of Education.

Natalie Cline, who sits on the board, is happy with the move, but said the list of banned books falls far short. Cline is an outgoing board member who lost in the Republican primary this year after she questioned the gender of a high school basketball player.

"Removing only those 13 books when there are hundreds more that are just as explicit, that also need to go, is problematic," said Cline, saying that tests for literary value in books is "absurd" and "subjective."

Cline added that all sexually explicit content, including in science or medical classes that the new law permits, should be out of K-12 schools, citing the state's criminal code.

Another board member, Carol Lear, thinks the new law is overbearing in allowing some parents' concerns to govern the choices of other parents across the state.

"I don't think it makes me pro-pornography to say the parents should have the right to choose with their children what they want to read," said Lear, adding that there are other, less restrictive options, including parents being notified what their kids check books out of the library.

Across the country, book challenges and bans have soared to the highest levels in decades. Public and school-based libraries have been inundated with complaints from community members and conservative organizations such as as Moms for Liberty. Increasingly, lawmakers are considering new punishments — crippling lawsuits, hefty fines and even imprisonment — for distributing books some regard as inappropriate.

The trend comes as officials seek to define terms such as "obscene" and "harmful." Many of the conflicts involve materials featuring racial and/or LGBTQ+ themes, such as Toni Morrison's novel, "The Bluest Eye," and Maia Kobabe's memoir, "Gender Queer." And while no librarian or educator has been jailed, the threat alone has led to more self-censorship. Already this year, lawmakers in more than 15 states have introduced bills to impose harsh penalties on libraries or librarians.

Some Republicans are seeking penalties and restrictions that would apply nationwide. Referring to "pornography" in the foreword to Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation's blueprint for a possible second Donald Trump administration, the right-wing group's president, Kevin Roberts, wrote that the "people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned. Educators and public librarians who purvey it should be classed as registered sex offenders."

Third person dies in listeria outbreak tied to Boar's Head deli meats

By DEVNA BOSE AP Health Writer

Three people have now died in a listeria food poisoning outbreak linked to Boar's Head deli meats, federal food safety officials announced Thursday, and the overall number of people sickened rose to 43.

The additional death happened in Virginia, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a news release Thursday. The other two deaths were in New Jersey and Illinois. The CDC also said nine more cases were reported since a July 31 release about the outbreak, which started in late May.

Boar's Head recalled 7 million pounds of deli meats on July 30, expanding an initial recall on July 25 after a liverwurst sample collected by health officials in Maryland tested positive for listeria. The CDC said Thursday that a New York health officials tested a liverwurst sample and confirmed the same strain of listeria.

The recall includes more than 70 products — including liverwurst, ham, beef salami and bologna — made at the company's plant in Jarratt, Virginia.

Boar's Head already faces two lawsuits over the outbreak, one in a Missouri court and the other a class action suit in federal court in New York.

The meat was distributed to stores nationwide, as well as to the Cayman Islands, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Panama. Consumers should not eat the recalled meats and should discard them or return them to the store for a refund. Listeria bacteria can survive and grow in the refrigerator, so officials say people who had recalled products should thoroughly clean and sanitize the fridge to prevent contamination.

The CDC estimates 1,600 people a year get listeria food poisoning and about 260 of those people die. The most common symptoms include fever, muscle aches and fatigue, though infections may also cause confusion and convulsions. Infections are most dangerous for people older than 65, people with weak immune systems and pregnant people. Symptoms may not appear for weeks after eating contaminated food.

Suspects in foiled attack on Taylor Swift shows were inspired by Islamic State group, officials say

By PHILIPP-MORITZ JENNE, STEFANIE DAZIO and KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Both suspects in a foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift shows in Vienna appeared to be inspired by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida, Austrian authorities said Thursday, and investigators found bomb-making materials at one of their homes. Officials said one of the two confessed to planning to "kill as many people as possible outside the concert venue."

Three sold-out concerts were canceled Wednesday because of the plot, devastating Swifties from across the globe. Many of them had dropped thousands of euros (dollars) on travel and lodging in Austria's expensive capital city to attend the Eras Tour shows at the Ernst Happel Stadium, which sat empty Thursday morning.

Europe is enamored with the American superstar: The German town of Gelsenkirchen renamed itself "Swiftkirchen" before its mid-July concerts.

Concert organizers in Austria said they had expected up to 65,000 fans inside the stadium at each concert and as many as 30,000 onlookers outside, where authorities said the suspects planned to strike. The foiled attack was planned for Thursday or Friday, according to Austria's interior minister, Gerhard Karner.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer defended the decision to cancel the concerts, saying the arrests of the suspects took place too close to the shows, scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

"I understand very well that those who wanted to experience the concert live are very sad," Nehammer told a news conference Thursday. "Moms and dads are looking after their daughters and sons, who were full of enthusiasm and anticipation for this concert. But it's also important that in such serious moments as now, it's inevitable that safety comes first."

Swift is also scheduled to perform at London's Wembley stadium in five concerts between Aug. 15 and 20 to close the European leg of her record-setting Eras Tour.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan said that while he understood Vienna's reasons for canceling, "We're going to carry on." Khan said the capital's authorities were prepared for shows there following lessons learned from a 2017 attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, that killed 22 people.

A suicide bomber had set up a knapsack with explosives in Manchester Arena. The bomb detonated at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving.

Last month, an attacker in England killed three girls and wounded 10 people in a knife attack during a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga class. Swift at the time said she was "completely in shock" over the violence.

In Austria, the main suspect confessed that he had started planning the attack in July, authorities said. The 19-year-old just a few weeks ago uploaded to the internet an oath of allegiance to the current leader of the Islamic State group.

He was "clearly radicalized in the direction of the Islamic State and thinks it is right to kill infidels," said Omar Haijawi-Pirchner, head of the Directorate of State Security and Intelligence.

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Haijawi-Pirchner added that the suspect "wanted to carry out an attack in the area outside the stadium, killing as many people as possible using the knives or even using the explosive devices he had made."

During a raid of the suspect's home in Ternitz, south of Vienna, investigators found chemical substances and technical devices that indicated "concrete preparatory acts," said Franz Ruf, director general for public security at the Ministry of the Interior.

Authorities said they also found Islamic State group and al-Qaida material at the home of the second suspect, who is 17. That suspect, who has so far refused to talk, was employed a few days ago by a company providing unspecified services at the venue for the concerts. The 19-year-old is an Austrian with North Macedonian roots. The 17-year-old is an Austrian with Turkish and Croatian roots.

The North Macedonian Interior Ministry released a statement Thursday saying that it had received a request from Austria to look into the 19-year-old.

Both teens were arrested Tuesday. Neither of their names was released in line with Austrian privacy rules.

The suspects had undergone clear social changes recently, authorities said. The 19-year-old had quit his job but said he "still had big plans," while the other broke up with his girlfriend. Neither suspect appeared to have a ticket to any of the shows, Haijawi-Pirchner said.

Karner said that Austria's intelligence service had worked closely together with foreign intelligence services to capture the two teens. He did not identify the agencies, but added that the help was needed because Austrian investigators, unlike some foreign services, can't legally monitor text messages.

The CIA declined to say Thursday whether U.S. intelligence agencies played any role in the investigation. The U.S. State Department and the broader U.S. government have been in contact with Austrian officials about the alleged plot, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

No other suspects are being sought, though a 15-year-old who had been in contact with both suspects was also interrogated by police, Karner said.

"The situation is serious. But we can also say: A tragedy was prevented," he said.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music said in an Instagram post late Wednesday that it had "no choice but to cancel the three scheduled shows for everyone's safety."

Barracuda said all tickets would be refunded. The same message was posted under the Vienna dates on Swift's official website. Austrian rail operator OeBB in the meantime said that it would reimburse fans for unused train tickets for the concerts.

Swift has not spoken publicly about the plot or canceled shows. "Taylor Nation," a verified Instagram page widely believed to be run by her team, reposted the announcement from Barracuda Music in a "story," which is only visible for 24 hours. Her main account has not posted anything.

Swift's biggest fear has always been that such large-scale violence could take place at her concerts, the superstar told Elle magazine in 2019 ahead of her Lover Tour, which was ultimately canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. The attack at Grande's concert, as well as a 2017 mass shooting at an outdoor country music festival on the Las Vegas Strip where 58 people were killed, worried Swift as she prepared to circle the globe.

"I was completely terrified to go on (the Lover Tour) this time because I didn't know how we were going to keep 3 million fans safe over seven months," she told the magazine. "There was a tremendous amount of planning, expense, and effort put into keeping my fans safe."

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 Manchester bombing, the deadliest extremist attack in the United Kingdom in recent years.

Terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp, based at the Swedish Defense University in Stockholm, told The Associated Press by phone that any mass public event constitutes a potential threat now.

"So we shouldn't be surprised that these extremely popular iconic popstars that attract a massive audience will also attract terrorists that want to create fear and destruction and mayhem," he said.

Ex-Catalan leader Puigdemont, a fugitive since 2017, returns to Spain. But then he vanishes again

By RENATA BRITO and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Police launched a manhunt in Barcelona on Thursday for fugitive Carles Puigdemont, a celebrated campaigner for Catalan independence who made a sensational return to Spain and an equally sensational getaway from a speech in the city with the alleged help of local police officers.

The events took place nearly seven years after the ex-Catalonia leader fled Spain after a failed independence bid, with an outstanding arrest warrant pending against him.

Puigdemont had previously announced his intention to be in Spain on the day that Catalonia's parliament proclaimed a new president. The 61-year-old initially lived in Belgium after bolting from Spain in 2017, but his latest place of residence wasn't known.

Puigdemont kept his travel plans secret before setting out to the wealthy Catalan region in northeastern Spain. He gave a speech in front of a large crowd of supporters in central Barcelona under the noses of police officers, who made no attempt to detain him.

After his speech, in a cloak-and-dagger moment, 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.

Catalan police arrested two of their own officers for their alleged involvement in Puigdemont's getaway, suspecting that the former leader used the private car of one of them, the force's press office told The Associated Press. No further details were available.

After Puigdemont vanished, Catalan police — called Mossos d'Esquadra — checked vehicles across the city of around 1.6 million people and others heading on highways to neighboring France in an effort to nab him. The checks were called off hours later.

Puigdemont shared later a video of his speech on Instagram with the message "We're still here. Long live free Catalonia."

Officers initially held back from swooping to arrest Puigdemont out of concern the move might "cause public disorder," a police statement said. Officers tried to stop the fleeing vehicle, but were unable to do so, it said, though it added that further arrests were expected. The statement didn't elaborate.

The Catalan police force operates separately from Spain's Policía Nacional. At the time of the 2017 ballot, the Spanish government suspended the Mossos' chief and placed the force under investigation for failing to stop the vote. The chief and his staff were eventually exonerated.

Puigdemont faces charges of embezzlement for his part in an attempt to break Catalonia away from the rest of Spain in 2017. As regional president and separatist party leader at the time, he was a key player in the independence referendum that was outlawed by the central government but went ahead anyway.

Those events triggered a political crisis that roiled Spain for months.

Puigdemont's appearance in Barcelona, Catalonia's capital, and his game of cat-and-mouse with police, stole the show on a day when a new president was being proclaimed at the regional parliament.

Local police were deployed in a security ring around a section of the park where Catalonia's parliament building is located behind walls, and where Puigdemont was expected to go after his speech. Meanwhile, the politician, wearing a dark suit, white shirt and tie, walked with supporters to the nearby stage where he gave his speech.

Addressing the crowd in the park and at times pumping his fist, 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."

The gripping turn of events, broadcast live on Spanish television channels, was likely to bring political recriminations.

The leader of the Popular Party, the main opposition to Spain's left-of-center coalition government which

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has long rebuffed Catalonia's independence movement, condemned Puigdemont's return. Alberto Núñez Feijóo posted on X that Puigdemont's reappearance was an "unbearable humiliation" that damaged Spain's reputation.

Spain's government encouraged 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 ensured just enough support in Catalonia's parliament for Illa to become the next regional president Thursday with 68 votes in the 135-seat chamber.

Illá's new government is the first non pro-independence government in 14 years, since the PSC last held power.

Speaking to Catalan lawmakers before the vote, Illa called for reconciliation and respect for a controversial amnesty bill that could eventually clear Puigdemont of wrongdoing but which is being challenged in court. He vowed to govern for all Catalans after years of bitter divisions between those in favor of independence and those against it.

Puigdemont has dedicated his career to carving out a new country in northeast Spain, and has often thumbed his nose at authorities. His largely uncompromising approach has brought political conflict with other separatist parties as well as with Spain's central government.

The contentious amnesty bill, crafted by Spain's Socialist-led coalition government, could potentially clear hundreds of supporters of Catalan independence of any wrongdoing in the 2017 ballot. Spain's central government and the Constitutional Court declared at the time that the referendum was illegal.

But the bill, approved by Spain's parliament earlier this year, is being challenged by Supreme Court judges who say its provisions should not protect Puigdemont from prosecution over embezzlement charges that have been lodged against him.

Puigdemont could be placed in pretrial detention if he is arrested.

DNA on weapons implicates ex-U.S. Green Beret in attempted Venezuelan coup, federal officials say

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Federal investigators say they found the DNA of a decorated former U.S. Green Beret on some of the 60 automatic weapons he allegedly smuggled from Florida to South America as part of a failed 2020 coup attempt against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The allegations were detailed in court papers filed days after Jordan Goudreau's arrest last week and contain the strongest evidence yet linking him to illegal arms trafficking that facilitated the amphibious raid, which ended with several fighters killed and two of Goudreau's former U.S. Special Forces colleagues locked away for years in Venezuela.

The plot, exposed by The Associated Press two days before the incursion, was carried out by a ragtag group of Venezuelan army deserters whom Goudreau allegedly helped arm and train in neighboring Colombia. Goudreau later claimed responsibility for the putsch, but said he was acting in concert with the Venezuelan opposition to protect democracy. He also said he was in touch with then-President Donald Trump's administration, which made no secret of its desire to see Maduro gone, even though there's no evidence U.S. officials blessed the invasion.

After Goudreau's arrest in New York last week, a federal magistrate initially allowed filmmaker Jen Gatien to put up her \$2 million Manhattan loft as bond to secure Goudreau's release. But prosecutors appealed and now it's up to a judge in Tampa, Florida, where Goudreau was indicted, to determine whether he should remain behind bars pending trial.

Prosecutors arguing that Goudreau is a flight risk presented what they called "overwhelming" evidence that he knowingly violated U.S. arms control laws, and that he tried to hide after learning he was under investigation. Those efforts including moving his bank accounts into cryptocurrency, obtaining a Mexican driver's license and allegedly sneaking back and forth across the U.S. border into Mexico and Canada, where he was born and lived until emigrating and enlisting in the U.S. Army.

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Internet searches on Goudreau's cell phone allegedly included "how to run and stay hidden from the feds," "how to be a successful fugitive on the run" and "what happens if I run from the law."

Although the 48-year-old has no criminal record and was a three-time Bronze Star recipient in Iraq and Afghanistan, prosecutors argued he was both a danger to the public and a flight risk because of his firearms expertise, access to a sailboat at an Air Force base in Tampa and \$10,000-a-month in military retirement disability income.

"Goudreau thoroughly researched, and acted on, illegally leaving the United States and evading law enforcement detection," prosecutors wrote. "Now that he has been charged with serious violations that carry significant prison sentences, Goudreau has every incentive and wherewithal to flee — this time for good."

Gustavo Garcia-Montes, an attorney for Goudreau, pushed back on prosecutors' portrayal of his client and pointed out that Goudreau voluntarily met with federal investigators prior to his arrest.

"He is attending school, has attended court several times, depositions, and lives at an air force base," Garcia-Montes said. "He is not a flight risk."

Prosecutors said evidence to be presented at Goudreau's trial includes sales records for firearm sound suppressors, night vision devices and laser sights — some of which have serial numbers that match weapons seized in Colombia by police when the plot began to unravel. All require a U.S. government export license Goudreau didn't have.

While prosecutors didn't say how they obtained Goudreau's DNA, they say it was found on two of the approximately 60 automatic weapons that were assembled at the Melbourne, Florida, warehouse where Goudreau was living and his company, Silvercorp, was based.

From there, Goudreau and a co-defendant, Yacsy Alvarez, a Venezuelan living in Colombia, allegedly arranged to transport the weapons to Colombia on a private plane owned by Alvarez's boss, a Venezuelan businessman with close ties to the government of the late Hugo Chávez.

Prosecutors allege Goudreau also spent \$90,000 on a yacht he used to transport ammunition, body armor plates and magazines for AR-15 rifles. Some of the weapons never made it because the yacht sank in the middle of the Caribbean. Goudreau and an unnamed associate had to be rescued by a passing natural gas tanker.

Goudreau's odyssey is the subject of a forthcoming documentary titled "Men of War," co-directed by Gatien and Miami-based filmmaker Billy Corben.

Gatien registered a Florida production company with Goudreau in 2021 and is described in court records as his girlfriend. His attorney at the bond hearing said the two have lived together for two years while Goudreau attends the New York Film Academy. But upon being handcuffed outside Gatien's apartment, Goudreau used an expletive to tell the FBI she wasn't his girlfriend.

If convicted, Goudreau faces between 10 and 20 years in prison.

Breanna Stewart, other moms on US women's basketball team enjoy rare moments chasing Olympic history

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Sports Writer

Breanna Stewart and the other moms on the US women's basketball team are enjoying some special moments while chasing Olympic history.

In addition to trying to become the first Olympic team — male or female — to win eight consecutive gold medals, they are having a rare bonding experience at the Paris Games.

The Americans will play Australia on Friday in the semifinals, looking to extend the program's winning streak to 60 straight games and reach Sunday's gold medal game.

But they have an important appointment before the game: A birthday party Stewart's daughter Ruby, who turns 3 on Friday.

"There's a ton of kids with our Team USA group," said Stewart, a two-time gold medalist. "So I'm sure we'll find something fun. Very Paw Patrol-like, but it'll just be a great day for her. And, you know, for us, we'll just be continuing on our journey."

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These games are very different than the last Olympics. The 2021 Tokyo Games were held under strict pandemic protocols, and these women aren't the only parents who've brought their children with them to Paris.

In Tokyo, the U.S. women's basketball team had only two mothers on the team: Diana Taurasi and Skylar Diggins-Smith. Now there's five parents: four moms and one "Pops" as two-time gold medalist Brittney Griner prefers to be called as the newest member with her wife giving birth to a boy just a couple weeks before the team headed to Europe.

Napheesa Collier said the children are making the Paris Games even more special. With families and nannies helping, the children held their own Olympics when the team was busy in group play. Collier's 2-year-old daughter, Mila Bazzel, missed out on competing.

"My daughter was sleeping, so we missed it," Collier said. "It was during that time. But it's really fun to have all of them ... around."

Chelsea Gray and her wife have a baby boy. Taurasi and wife — former Australian Olympian and WNBA All-Star Penny Taylor — have two children: a boy and a girl. Stewart also has two children with her wife, retired Spanish basketball player Marta Xargay with baby boy Theo their second.

With the U.S. women staying in Paris and commuting to Lille for group games, tipoff coincided with bedtime. Now that the medal-round games are in Paris, Taylor brought their children to Wednesday night's win over Nigeria sitting a few rows behind the U.S. bench and Taurasi.

For Stewart, the best part is knowing this isn't the last time these children will hang together. And not just at future USA Basketball events or possible upcoming Olympics.

"They're just going to continue to grow with one another," Stewart said. "But also, we all feel the same mom life as well. So like being great on and off the court and understanding, you know, how difficult that is."

That's the lesson Olympic newcomer Sabrina Ionescu — who doesn't have a child herself but is a self-described "kid magnet." She appreciates how her teammates regularly manage work and childcare.

These women have their children around while competing not only against the world but history. The only other team to win seven straight gold medals were the U.S. men's basketball program between 1936 and 1968.

The U.S. has the challenge of sustaining a standard started after its last Olympic women's basketball loss in Barcelona in 1992. Ionescu said it's been amazing to watch these moms chase gold, then immediately flip the switch from work to parenting.

"They go back to the hotel, and they're full-time moms," Ionescu said. "Like they don't get a break. And it's really, really like amazing. You can't really put into words like how strong these women are."

Collier is using her cell phone constantly to document this experience knowing her daughter won't remember anything.

"I take so many pictures and videos of her and us here, to help tell the story of that. ... the best I can," Collier said. "She'll know what the Olympics is. so it'll be easy to explain that part. But for her, it'll be normal."

For U.S. coach Cheryl Reeve, this is part of basketball's evolution of supporting women on and off the court. The coach of the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx has seen that league and players negotiate for better policies helping players with maternity leave and child care.

"We're evolving as a society I think in terms of what's acceptable, what women can do, and women are obviously showing us that we can be anything," Reeve said. "And we do. The harder it is, the more women are stepping up and doing it."

Having children along with families eases the tension of the high expectations on the court and feeling like the world is waiting for a U.S. misstep. Most of the children have better things to do than watch mom play.

"I think they'd rather go to a playground or something," Stewart said, "but it's it's great to have them here."

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 Thursday.

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). Copernicus had previously identified July 21 and 22 as the hottest days, but changed that based on updated data.

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 dangerous 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."

For Haiti, the Paris Olympics is about more than just winning gold

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — As he coasted along Paris' Seine River during the Olympic opening ceremony, one word came to Haitian swimmer Alexandre Grand'Pierre's mind.

"Iconic."

For the seven athletes competing for Haiti, participating in the Paris Games has always been about more than just winning gold. For athletes like Grand'Pierre, the third of his siblings to compete for Haiti in the Olympics, it's about sending a message of hope to a nation reeling from gang violence and political turmoil.

"It's showing that we are still capable of being on a world stage and being a positive image in spite of all the turmoil and instability that's going on, to give a beacon of hope to the younger generations, especially young athletes, that they can get to the Olympics as well," Grand'Pierre, 21, told The Associated Press.

"Representing the country has always been bigger than me," he added.

The symbol of pride for many in Haiti, the athletes hope to change the narrative around the Caribbean country, long portrayed as a victim. It's also in part about reclaiming their history from France, the former colonizer that bankrupted Haiti for more than a century.

But the path to France hasn't been easy.

Haiti is at an inflection point. Following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, a toxic slate of gangs seized control of much of the nation. As daily life in the capital, Port-au-Prince, has come to a halt, so too have sports.

Haiti's Olympic team came together through sheer force of will, said Fritz-Gérald Fong, head of the Haitian Olympic delegation.

Like much of Port-au-Prince, gangs have overtaken the area around Olympic training facilities. Lower-level athletes in the country have been killed, Fong said. Haiti's national Olympic committee said it has lost 80% of the coaches they've trained to ongoing emigration.

"This is a message for Haitian people, for the nation and for the world. Giving up was not an option," said Fong. "People have no hope. And for months they've been waving the flag and saying, 'Let's go Haiti.' We were making some hope for those people."

Government collapse meant that up until the Games, the team had no money to fund athletes. Just before the Olympics, Fong said, the Haitian government finally released \$74,600 — a fraction of their \$405,000 budget.

If that wasn't enough, earlier this year, the country was once again thrown under siege by gangs. Flights were blocked out of Haiti, inhibiting travel to Olympic qualifiers, Fong said.

So, similar to other crisis-stricken national Olympic committees like the Palestinian and Ukrainian teams, Haiti's relied entirely on athletes living abroad — like Grand'Pierre.

Born in Canada and training in the United States, Grand'Pierre grew up speaking Haitian Creole and eating Haitian dishes as his parents made an effort to preserve their culture, visiting before Haiti began to spiral.

"Growing up in the United States, it's very easy to lose that side of yourself. But they made sure we grew up and stayed connected," he said. Today, it's classic Haitian Creole music bumping in Grand'Pierre's ears before he rockets into the pool.

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He's joined in Paris by six other athletes competing in track, gymnastics, judo, boxing and swimming. While none has medaled, 25-year-old Christopher Borzor was among those to make it to the second round of the men's 100-meter sprint.

"Fund-wise, we don't have a lot of money for us to compete, travel and get put in hotels. Most of the money has come out of my pocket, flying around trying to compete for Haiti," said Borzor, who left Haiti at the age of 6. "But I told myself one day I would get here."

For some, Haiti's presence in France is a political point.

A former French colony, Haiti became the first to successfully gain independence through a slave revolt, in 1804. France demanded Haiti pay it back for lost income of slavers — what became a financially crippling \$21 billion sum paid, The New York Times calculated. One Parisian bank, Crédit Industriel et Commercial, guzzled millions from Haiti — as it helped finance the Eiffel Tower.

That's why for Haitian-Italian designer Stella Jean, who created the team's vibrant ceremonial uniforms, the athletes' entrance into the Games was so meaningful — floating down the Seine in the shadow of that same tower.

It was only maybe nine seconds, Jean recalled the next morning, during which Haiti held the world's attention as TV cameras turned to its boat.

"But in these nine seconds I think Haiti made history — even more than that, it reverted the tides of history," said Jean. These "young people paraded under the Eiffel Tower — the very Eiffel Tower that Haiti contributed to pay for."

When Jean got the call to design Haiti's uniforms, she knew the job had little to do with fashion — and everything to do with history and identity. Being "pretty" was not the goal; it was to tell a story, with trousers and skirts patterned with Haitian artist Philippe Dodard's creations, bold prints reminiscent of those seen in the Caribbean nation.

"It was a kind of counter-colonization," Jean said. "But we did it with joy."

For others, though, like Marjorie Chouloute, mother of 14-year-old swimmer Mayah Chouloute, it's more about "changing the narrative" to look toward the future.

"On French TV, during the opening ceremony, all they could talk about when our boat was passing by was how downtrodden we are. ... It's not untrue," she said. "But Haiti is more than its problems."

In recent months, Haiti has chosen a new prime minister and welcomed a United Nations-backed mission to beat back the gangs. As the country takes small steps toward stability, the Olympic team has left many Haitians in and out of the nation welling with pride. Athletes said family group messages have bustled with news of the Olympians being talked about on TV and radio.

Back in Port-au-Prince, 24-year-old Marc Andre is among those rooting for them, despite the time difference and electric blackouts. The team, he said, has given him hope.

"Haiti has a lot of young, talented kids, but we don't have the opportunity ... due to lack of resources," he said. Still, he said, "I would love to see them living in Haiti, training in Haiti. ... It would be for me, more authentic."

Fong also expressed sadness over the lack of Olympians living in Haiti, but said the team was the first step in a long road. He doesn't see organized athletics coming back to Haiti for at least three years.

In the meantime, Jowee Omicil, a Haitian-Canadian musician, beamed at Grand'Pierre, Chouloute, their coach and families as they walked out of the Olympic swimming venue Saturday, after Chouloute's first race. Cloaked in red and blue flags, they spoke in a mix of French, Creole and English.

"Bless you. I was looking for my flag," Omicil said, voice cracking. "This is history."

Wearing a vintage Haiti shirt and a necklace in the shape of the country, Omicil said he had flown from Montreal to see the team compete.

"I want you guys to know people are watching, and I am one of them and there are thousands behind me," he told them. "People are so proud of you guys."

The Perseids are here. Here's how to see the 'fireballs' of summer's brightest meteor shower

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Perseids are back to dazzle the sky with bursts of light and color.

The annual meteor shower, active since July, peaks before dawn Monday. It's one of the brightest and most easily viewed showers of the year, producing "bright blue meteors — and lots of them," said University of Warwick astronomer Don Pollacco.

More than 50 meteors per hour are expected, according to the American Meteor Society. The shower lasts through Sept. 1.

Here's what to know about the Perseids and other meteor showers.

What is a meteor shower?

Multiple meteor showers occur annually and you don't need special equipment to see them.

Most meteor showers originate from the debris of comets. The source of the Perseids is the comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle.

When rocks from space enter Earth's atmosphere, the resistance from the air makes them very hot. This causes the air to glow around them and briefly leaves a fiery tail behind them — the end of a "shooting star."

The glowing pockets of air around fast-moving space rocks, ranging from the size of a dust particle to a boulder, may be visible in the night sky.

The Perseids result from "bigger particles than a lot of other showers," said NASA's Bill Cooke, giving them the appearance of "bright fireballs" — easier to spot than many others.

How to view a meteor shower

Meteor showers are usually most visible between midnight and predawn hours.

It's easier to see shooting stars under dark skies, away from city lights. Meteor showers also appear brightest on cloudless nights when the moon wanes smallest.

The Northern Hemisphere will have the best view of the Perseids. This year's peak coincides with a moon around 44% full.

When is the next meteor shower?

The meteor society keeps a list of upcoming large meteor showers, including the peak viewing days and moonlight conditions.

The next major meteor shower will be the Orionids, peaking in mid-October.

Those Samsung smartphones given to Olympic athletes? They may violate sanctions on North Korea

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean officials on Thursday said providing Samsung smartphones to North Korean athletes at the Paris Olympics would violate U.N. Security Council sanctions against the country over its nuclear and missile program.

The South Korean technology giant is a major Olympic partner, and its newest Galaxy Z Flip 6 smartphones are being given to all athletes competing at the Games.

The International Olympic Committee confirmed that the phones were sent to the Olympic village, then later said the North Korean athletes had not received them. It's unclear where the phones might have went.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said smartphones are among the items banned under Security Council Resolution 2397 passed in 2017, which prohibits the supply, sale or transfer to North Korea of "all industrial machinery."

The resolution doesn't make a distinction between North Korea's government and its people, and South Korean officials made clear the smartphones would be banned however they entered the country.

Lee Jaewoong, the ministry's spokesperson, said it would be "critical to prevent the prohibited items

from going into North Korea.”

He said the Seoul government was making “necessary diplomatic efforts” to ensure sanctions are upheld but refused to provide details.

The issue also arose during the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, where the North Koreans refused to receive Samsung devices that the organizing committee had offered under condition that they return them before heading home, according to South Korean officials.

North Korea sent 16 athletes to the Paris Games to compete in seven sports, including wrestling, swimming, table tennis and boxing.

North Korea did not participate in the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo in 2021 because of the country’s self-imposed lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic. The IOC then barred the country from participating in the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing as punishment for refusing to send a team to Tokyo.

Majority of US adults say democracy is on the ballot but they differ on the threat: AP-NORC poll

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 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.

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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."

Today in History: August 9, U.S. bombs Nagasaki

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 9, the 222nd day of 2024. There are 144 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 9, 1945, three days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, a U.S. B-29 Superfortress

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code-named Bockscar dropped a nuclear device over Nagasaki; the bombing and subsequent radiation poisoning killed an estimated 74,000 people.

Also on this date:

In 1173, construction began on the campanile of Pisa Cathedral—better known as the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

In 1854, Henry David Thoreau's "Walden," which described Thoreau's experiences while living near Walden Pond in Massachusetts, was first published.

In 1936, Jesse Owens won his fourth gold medal at the Berlin Olympics as the United States took first place in the 400-meter relay.

In 1969, actor Sharon Tate and four other people were found brutally slain at Tate's Los Angeles home; cult leader Charles Manson and a group of his followers were later convicted of the crime.

In 1974, Gerald Ford took the oath of office to become US president after Richard Nixon's resignation; in a speech following, Ford declared that "our long national nightmare is over."

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan nominated Lauro Cavazos to be secretary of education; Cavazos became the first Hispanic to serve in the Cabinet.

In 2014, Michael Brown Jr., a Black 18-year-old, was shot to death by a police officer following an altercation in Ferguson, Missouri; Brown's death led to sometimes-violent protests in Ferguson and other U.S. cities, spawning a national "Black Lives Matter" movement.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Cousy is 96. Tennis Hall of Famer Rod Laver is 86. Jazz musician Jack DeJohnette is 82. Comedian-director David Steinberg is 82. Actor Sam Elliott is 80. Singer Barbara Mason is 77. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player John Cappelletti is 72. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Doug Williams is 69. Actor Melanie Griffith is 67. Actor Amanda Bearse is 66. Rapper Kurtis Blow is 65. Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan., is 64. Hockey Hall of Famer Brett Hull is 60. TV host Hoda Kotb (KAHT'-bee) is 60. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Deion Sanders is 57. Actor Gillian Anderson is 56. Actor Eric Bana is 56. Producer-director McG (aka Joseph McGinty Nichol) is 56. NHL player-turned-coach Rod Brind'Amour is 54. TV journalist Chris Cuomo is 54. Actor Thomas Lennon is 54. Rapper Mack 10 is 52. Actor Nikki Schieler Ziering is 53. Latin rock singer Juanes is 52. Actor Liz Vassey is 52. Actor Kevin McKidd is 51. Actor Rhona Mitra (ROH'-nuh MEE'-truh) is 49. Actor Texas Battle is 48. Actor Jessica Capshaw is 48. Actor Ashley Johnson is 41. Actor Anna Kendrick is 39.