

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, Aug. 14

Senior Menu: Beef stew, buttermilk biscuit, Waldorf salad, cookie.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Aug. 15

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

First day of cross country practice

First day of volleyball practice

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Do Day", 1:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 16

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Saturday, Aug. 17

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.

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.

Starbucks Boss Ousted

Starbucks announced yesterday CEO Laxman Narasimhan will step down from his position after 17 months in office as the coffee giant tackles declining sales and increasing dissatisfaction among investors. Chipotle CEO Brian Niccol is set to become the new chairman and CEO, effective Sept. 9.

The replacement comes amid several challenges faced by Starbucks, including disappointing sales in key markets such as the US—down 3% in third quarter same-store sales this year—and China, where competition from lower-cost options declined same-store sales by 14%. The company also faced pressure from activist investors demanding changes. The news comes after former CEO Howard Schultz recently wrote an open letter criticizing the company's current leadership.

Under Niccol's leadership, Chipotle has experienced accelerated growth, with a 14.3% increase in revenue in 2023. Following the new CEO announcement, Starbucks' shares closed up 24%, its best day since its 1992 initial public offering. Chipotle shares closed down 7%.

Mpox Emergency in Africa

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared a continental public health emergency yesterday over a surge in cases of a fast-spreading mpox variant in recent weeks. Over 15,000 cases and roughly 460 deaths have been recorded across 18 countries in Africa, a 160% increase over the previous year.

Known as monkeypox until 2022, the mpox virus is transmitted via close contact and has a lengthy incubation period of between three and 17 days. Early symptoms resemble a typical cold but culminate in pus-filled skin lesions around the body. Two viral strains, Clade I and II, have been endemic in Africa for decades, though variants of Clade II have evolved to be far more virulent in recent years, with a fatality rate of 3% to 4%. Only 200,000 mpox vaccines are available amid a demand for over 10 million doses.

US cases have declined after spiking to over 30,000 in 2022, though wastewater data show numbers ticking up across the country.

Kansas Newspaper Raid Charge

A former Kansas police chief has been charged with felony obstruction of justice after last year's raid on a local weekly newspaper that drew national attention and criticism from press freedom advocates.

The Aug. 11, 2023, raid involved searches of the Marion County Record's office and the home of its publisher, Eric Meyer, after the paper reportedly ran stories critical of a local restaurant owner. Former Marion Police Chief Gideon Cody initially justified the raid on suspicions of identity theft and computer crimes by the newspaper staff, which prosecutors concluded were unfounded. Meyer said the paper was actively investigating the police chief for alleged previous sexual misconduct. Cody is being accused of persuading a potential witness to withhold information during a probe into his overall conduct.

The publisher's 98-year-old mother and co-owner of the newspaper, Joan, was also present during the home raid and appeared visibly upset in police body camera footage. She died a day later of a heart attack, which her son attributes to distress.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2024 Paris Olympics brought in over 30 million viewers a day across NBC platforms, an 82% increase from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

Gymnast Jordan Chiles forced to return bronze medal in women's floor exercise final after arbitration panel denies Team USA's appeal.

Dallas Cowboys become first sports franchise worldwide to top \$10B valuation.

Frank Selvy, two-time NBA All-Star who once scored an NCAA Division 1- record 100 points in a game, dies at 91.

Fans won't be allowed outside Wembley Stadium for Taylor Swift's five-night concert stint in London in wake of Vienna terrorist threat.

MTV Video Music Awards shifted to Sept. 11 due to recently scheduled presidential debate.

Science & Technology

Google begins rolling out AI-powered voice chatbot Gemini Live to Android users, rivaling ChatGPT's Advanced Voice Mode; latest feature was announced at Google's Pixel 9 launch event.

Researchers develop first-ever thermally insulated, "smart" breathable clothing that can adapt to fluctuating temperatures; technology could help safeguard workers in hot environments.

Extinct walrus-like species discovered in the UK and Belgium; fossil of mandible, dating from 1.7 million to 2.2 million years ago, sheds light on evolution of modern walruses.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.7%, Dow +1.0%, Nasdaq +2.4%) following news wholesale prices rose 0.1% last month, below expected 0.2%; consumer price index report due this morning.

Avon files for bankruptcy to offload about \$1.3B in debt amid hundreds of lawsuits alleging cancer links to the talc found in company's eye shadows, other makeup products.

Paramount to shut down 11-year-old TV studio by end of week in cost-cutting effort in advance of merger with Skydance Media.

Politics & World Affairs

Tropical Storm Ernesto expected to strengthen into a hurricane by tomorrow after moving through the Caribbean, north of Puerto Rico, as of this writing.

Arizona and Missouri to vote on proposed amendments codifying the right to an abortion in state constitutions in November ballot initiatives.

Iran reportedly willing to refrain from vowed attack on Israel in the event of a Gaza cease-fire.

Talks to restart tomorrow; Hamas reiterates conditions reportedly agreed upon in July.

The US approves \$20B in weapons sales to Israel including fighter jets, air-to-air missiles.

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Minnehaha County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: Interstate 90, mile marker 401, two miles east of Sioux Falls City Limits
When: 10:59 p.m., Monday, August 12, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2007 Suzuki GSX-R1000
Driver 1: 29-year-old male, fatal injuries
Helmet Use: Yes

Minnehaha County, S.D.- A 29-year-old man died in a single vehicle motorcycle crash Monday evening two miles east of Sioux Falls, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2007 Suzuki motorcycle was traveling eastbound on Interstate 90 near mile marker 401. The motorcycle left the road to the right and entered the south ditch, crashed into a fence and separated the driver from the motorcycle. The driver passed away at the scene from his injuries. He was wearing a helmet.

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

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

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 14A, mile marker 21, 10 miles south of Spearfish, SD
When: 6:27 p.m., Monday, August 12, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2014 BMW S1000 RR motorcycle
Driver 1: 22-year-old male, fatal injuries
Helmet Use: Yes

Lawrence County, S.D.- A 22-year-old man died in a single vehicle motorcycle crash Monday evening 10 miles south of Spearfish, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2014 BMW motorcycle was traveling on US Highway 14A near mile marker 21 and failed to negotiate a left-hand curve. The driver lost control and left the roadway down into a wooded embankment. The driver became separated from his bike, sustaining fatal injuries. He was wearing a helmet.

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

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

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2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Final Vehicle Count

STURGIS, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) has tallied the final count for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 84th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which ran from Aug. 2-11, 2024. The final daily traffic counts at 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

Thursday, Aug. 8, 2024: 50,053 vehicles entered

Up 1.1% from the previous five-year average

Friday, Aug. 9, 2024: 44,671 vehicles entered

Down 0.5% from the previous five-year average

Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024: 34,583 vehicles entered

Up 1.7% from the previous five-year average

Sunday, Aug. 11, 2024: 19,892 vehicles entered

Down 5.1% from the previous five-year average

2024 Total Vehicles Entered: 470,987 Vehicles

Previous Five-Year Average: 488,720 Vehicles

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Tax discussion highlights tension between residential and agricultural property owners

Legislative committee continues summer meetings ahead of January session

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 13, 2024 5:46 PM

Testimony to a legislative committee Tuesday in Pierre highlighted a growing divide between the property tax payments of residential and agricultural property owners.

Lawmakers on the state's Study Committee on Property Tax Assessment Methodology heard from county directors of equalization and lobbying groups.

People who own the house they live in are described as the "owner-occupied" class of property taxpayers. Matt Krogman, lobbyist for the South Dakota Association of Realtors, said those homeowners are bearing the brunt of tax increases.

"We believe we're in the middle of a shift right now, and the shift is going on the backs of owner-occupied properties," Krogman said. "And we believe that if something isn't done to make a change, it's just going to continue to get worse."

He cited state Department of Revenue data showing that from 2017 to 2023, the share of statewide property taxes paid by agricultural landowners dropped from 28% to 22%, while owner-occupied landowners' share rose from 38% to 43%.

One factor for the disparity was the COVID-19 pandemic. South Dakota embraced an influx of remote workers and other homebuyers fleeing pandemic restrictions in other states. According to research by the Dakota Institute, high demand for houses helped push the average list price in the state 36% higher from 2020 to 2023, even after accounting for inflation.

Because tax valuations for houses are tied to the market, some South Dakota homeowners have experienced several years of double-digit valuation increases. And those steep valuation increases have driven their property taxes higher.

Krogman said another factor is that agricultural operations benefit from a productivity-based tax system adopted in 2009 and fully implemented by 2019. He said agriculture's tax relief has become homeowners' tax burden.

Scott VanderWal, president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation, defended the productivity-based assessment system for agricultural land.

"While it's not totally perfect, it's worked pretty well in the last 14 years," VanderWal said.

He said some of the explanation for rising homeowner taxes and relatively flat agricultural taxes lies with the ongoing conversion of agricultural land to residential acreages and urban sprawl.

Before the productivity-based property tax change, agricultural land was taxed based on its sale price. That led to internal ag-land disparities when land near urban areas had higher market values than rural land, despite similar productivity. So, the state shifted to a productivity-based assessment, focusing on the land's agricultural output rather than its sale price.

Some states use a similar model to protect the agricultural economy and prevent excessive tax increases driven by non-agricultural market pressures.

Options for lawmakers

In South Dakota, property taxes serve as the primary revenue source for local governments, including schools, counties and townships. Cities receive both property taxes and sales taxes, and the state receives sales taxes.

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In 2023, more than \$1.6 billion was collected in property taxes to support local governments: 56% went to schools, 27% went to counties, 13% went to cities, and townships and special assessments received 2% each.

Sanderson said two variables determine property taxes: the locally determined needs to fund schools, cities, counties and other local governments, plus the locally assessed value of owner-occupied, commercial and agricultural properties.

The property values are then taxed at a locally set rate, called a levy, to meet the local entities' needs — a result of dividing the local need by the assessed valuations.

"That's it. That's what a levy is," Sanderson said. "It is literally the last step in the process. It is the logical, mathematical outcome."

For example, if the local need is \$1 million and valuations are \$500 million, the levy is 0.2%; \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Local governing bodies such as school boards, county commissions, city councils and township boards determine the financial needs, not the state, Sanderson said. Plus, properties are assessed by local officials, not by the state.

Therefore, Sanderson told South Dakota Searchlight that options for state intervention are largely limited to shifting the tax burden to another property class or finding alternative funding sources.

The state does have multiple roles in property taxes, though. Legislators write the laws that govern the property tax system; they determine the amount of state aid sent annually to schools to reduce the burden on property taxpayers; and state law caps annual increases in property tax collections to an inflationary increase of up to 3% plus the value of new construction, unless a local taxing jurisdiction votes to opt out of those limits.

According to committee Co-Chair Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, the committee will hear from the public during its next meeting. The committee is meeting throughout the summer ahead of the next legislative session in January.

While the committee debates possible changes to the laws governing property taxes, other taxation discussions are swirling around the state. Voters will consider a ballot measure Nov. 5 that's intended to eliminate state sales taxes on groceries, but critics say the measure's wording could extend its impact to other goods and services.

That debate is happening while the state's consumers are already enjoying a two-tenths of a percentage point reduction in the overall state sales tax rate, which was adopted by lawmakers and Gov. Kristi Noem during the 2023 legislative session and is scheduled to expire in 2027.

South Dakota does not have a property tax measure on the ballot Nov. 5, but nationally, there are nearly a dozen upcoming ballot questions on property taxes, including in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, North Dakota, Virginia and Wyoming. While varying in scope, the measures all aim to reduce taxes for some or all property owners.

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.

State regulators trim and approve Montana-Dakota Utilities rate increases

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 13, 2024 5:19 PM

Montana-Dakota Utilities received permission from state regulators Tuesday to raise its rates for South Dakota natural gas and electrical customers, though not by as much as the company requested.

The decision comes after a year-long analysis of the company's request to raise its electrical rates by 17% and its natural gas rates by 11%. Those increases would have generated \$10.4 million in additional annual revenue for the company.

The state Public Utilities Commission's three elected members approved increases of about 8%, generating an estimated \$6.66 million in total additional annual revenue.

A typical residential electrical customer will see an average bill increase of \$8.26 per month, according to the commission, and a typical natural gas user will see an average bill increase of \$4.45 per month.

Commission Chairperson Kristie Fiegen said in a news release that the commission is required to "ensure that rates are reasonable and just and that the company also gets a fair rate of return."

"We often hear customers ask us not to increase their rates, but we have to abide by the law, and that's what we've done today," Fiegen said.

The release noted that the company hadn't had a rate increase in eight years, and said total inflation in that time was over 30%.

MDU cited investments made since the last rate increase and increases in operations expenses, maintenance expenses and property tax payments as being among the factors driving the rate increases.

MDU submitted applications for both rate increases on Aug. 15, 2023. New rates will go into effect Sept. 1. As part of the settlements with the commission, the company agreed to a moratorium on additional base rate increases until March 1, 2027.

The company implemented interim rate increases for customers on March 1. Because the rates approved by the commission are lower than the interim rates, the company must refund the difference, plus 7% interest, to customers as bill credits no later than Nov. 29.

MDU serves approximately 64,600 natural gas customers and 8,500 electric customers in South Dakota.

At least 12 die in motorcycle accidents before, during and after 2024 Sturgis rally

Only three are counted in official tally under state's limited criteria

BY: SETH TUPPER AND JOHN HULT - AUGUST 12, 2024 5:52 PM

Three people died in motorcycle accidents during the recently concluded Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, according to the official tally of the state Department of Public Safety, but the actual number of motorcycle-involved traffic deaths in the state from the days before, during and after the event is 12.

The department, which includes the Highway Patrol, attributes traffic deaths to the rally only if they occur in a particular area of western South Dakota during the official rally dates, up to the morning of the last day. That number this year was three deaths, down from five last year.

When the scope is expanded to motorcycle-involved crashes in all of South Dakota during not only the rally dates but also the days just before and afterward, this year's death toll is 12 and last year's was 11. Neither number includes any rallygoers who may have died in other states while traveling to or from the rally.

In other statistics, this year's rally included more arrests for drug possession and impaired driving, but fewer crashes and citations.

Law enforcement also seized \$71,504 in assets allegedly tied to criminal activity this year – more than 35 times the total from 2023 – and arrested seven men on sex trafficking charges.

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Automated traffic counters showed a slight decrease in traffic compared to the previous five-year average. The rally began Aug. 2 and ended Sunday.

Fatalities, injuries

Among the motorcycle-involved traffic deaths not included in the official tally, five occurred during the three days immediately preceding the rally's Aug. 2 start, and two occurred the day after the rally's Aug. 11 end.

Two others were omitted from the tally because one occurred during the rally but on Interstate 90 near Hartford, outside of the area of western South Dakota included in the official count; and the other occurred near Deadwood in western South Dakota on the final Sunday afternoon of the rally, after the Highway Patrol stopped counting rally statistics at 6 a.m. that day.

Ten of the people killed in this year's crashes were driving Harley-Davidsons, and two were driving other kinds of motorcycles. Two of the deceased people were from South Dakota; others were from Iowa, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota; two were from Ohio; and the residence of three of the people has not yet been released.

Three of the 12 deceased people were wearing a helmet, seven were not wearing helmets, and helmet usage remains under investigation in the other two accidents.

In addition to fatal accidents, this year's rally included 35 accidents that caused injuries and 54 that did not. Last year's totals were 64 and 58, respectively.

Motorcycle-involved traffic deaths

Motorcycle-involved traffic deaths from the days before, during and after the 2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, listed by name, age, place of residence, type of motorcycle driven, accident location, accident date and helmet status:

29-year-old male (name not yet released); 2007 Suzuki GSX-R1000; Interstate 90, mile marker 401, 2 miles east of Sioux Falls city limits; Monday, Aug. 12; helmet worn.

22-year-old male (name not yet released); 2014 BMW S1000 RR; U.S. Highway 14A, mile marker 21, 10 miles south of Spearfish; Monday, Aug. 12; helmet worn.

68-year-old male (name not yet released); 2001 Harley-Davidson FLHT; U.S. Highway 385, mile marker 120, 2 miles south of Deadwood; Sunday, Aug. 11; no helmet.

David Leon Rowe; 67-year-old male from Williamsburg, Iowa; 2017 Harley-Davidson Heritage; Interstate 90, mile marker 387, 1 mile west of Hartford; Friday, Aug. 9; helmet use under investigation.

Ricky Dale Hardin; 64-year-old male from Henry, Tennessee; 2007 Harley-Davidson STC; Interstate 90, mile marker 161, 2 miles west of Belvidere; Tuesday, Aug. 6; helmet use under investigation.

Patti Jo Craig; 69-year-old female from Watertown, Wisconsin; 2023 Harley-Davidson FLHXSE; U.S. Highway 85, mile marker 45, Spearfish; Monday, Aug. 5; no helmet.

Jeffrey Allan Brookman; 65-year-old male from Fostoria, Ohio; 2003 Harley-Davidson Electra Glide; Nemo Road and Pine Cone Avenue, 8 miles east of Nemo; Monday, Aug. 5; no helmet.

Joel Gary Erickson; 60-year-old male from Montgomery, Minnesota; 1994 Harley-Davidson Cruiser; 12445 Old Hill City Road, Hill City; Wednesday, July 31; no helmet.

Austin Eugene Dahl; 46-year-old male from Rapid City; 2010 Harley Davidson-FLTRX; Nemo Road and Estes Creek Road, 1 mile south of Nemo; Wednesday, July 31; helmet worn.

Jerry A. Shafer; 60-year-old male from Homeworth, Ohio; 2024 Harley-Davidson; U.S. Highway 18, mile marker 430 and 466th Ave.; 5 miles south of Lennox; Tuesday, July 30; no helmet.

Kimberly Lynn Welch; 53-year-old female from Rapid City; 2023 Harley-Davidson Street Glide; U.S. Highway 85, mile marker 3, 13 miles southwest of Cheyenne Crossing; Tuesday, July 30; no helmet.

James Eugene Luchi; 73-year-old male from Watford City, North Dakota; 2017 Harley-Davidson Trike; U.S. 85 and SD Highway 168, 30 miles north of Belle Fourche; Tuesday, July 30; no helmet.

Source: South Dakota Department of Public Safety

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Fewer vehicles counted

The state Department of Transportation logs the number of vehicles that enter Sturgis at any of nine traffic counters placed for the duration of the rally.

The final release from the DOT showed 470,987 vehicles hitting the counters Aug. 2-11. That was down 4% compared to the previous five-year average.

Drugs and cash

Misdemeanor drug arrests were up 14% over 2023. Felony drug arrests were up 5%.

Law enforcement wrote 24 fewer citations of all kinds but 149 more warnings than in 2023.

In terms of raw numbers, the biggest change from 2023 came in the amount of seized cash. Officers collected \$71,504 through asset forfeiture, a process by which law enforcement can seize money or property suspected of being used in crimes. In 2023, officers seized \$2,005.

The 2024 pool of allegedly ill-gotten funds was collected on three different days. Two seizures took place in the Sturgis area; a third was seized near Rapid City.

The Department of Public Safety declined to offer details on the cases linked to the seized money, but civil cases filed in Meade County offer details on two of the situations behind the total.

The first case is tied to the Aug. 4 traffic stop of South Roy, Indiana, resident Robert Alan Ruple, court documents say. Ruple allegedly admitted to having a marijuana vape pen in his backpack. A search of his backpack allegedly yielded two vape cartridges, 6 grams of methamphetamine and a plastic bag with two-hundredths of a gram of fentanyl. The backpack also housed \$11,094 in cash.

The other Meade County asset forfeiture case located by South Dakota Searchlight names Peter Christopher Colucci of Pleasantville, New York, as the alleged "owner, possessor or party of interest" for \$29,710 in cash collected after a traffic stop conducted by an unnamed agency.

The complaint says a police dog reacted to the smell of drugs during the stop, prompting a search that turned up 2 grams of steroids and a packet with 13 grams of steroid tablets. Officers also allegedly found syringes, ledgers and cash, \$2,120 in a brown paper bag and the remainder in a duct-taped safe.

As of Monday afternoon, no asset forfeiture case had yet been filed in Pennington County during the time period covered by the rally.

Sex trafficking sting

As in prior years, federal law enforcement and their local partners were involved in a sex trafficking sting during the rally. Agents with the Internet Crimes Against Children task force posed as underage children in electronic communications with people seeking to pay for sex.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the following seven men were arrested and charged with crimes as listed in the 2024 sting operation:

Brockton Dominquez, 26, Rapid City – Enticement of a Minor Using the Internet.

Eli Poorman, 20, Rapid City – Attempted Commercial Sex Trafficking of a Minor.

Dustin Day, 20, Piedmont – Attempted Commercial Sex Trafficking of a Minor.

Vance Coats, 25, Box Elder – Attempted Enticement of a Minor Using the Internet.

Brandon Bishop, 36, Rapid City – Attempted Enticement of a Minor Using the Internet.

Corey Simon, 36, Rapid City – Attempted Enticement of a Minor Using the Internet.

Aaron Ray Williams, Jr., 23, Rapid City – Attempted Enticement of a Minor Using the Internet.

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

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.

USDA to take 'additional step' in testing beef from former dairy cattle for bird flu

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - AUGUST 13, 2024 6:03 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture plans to embark on a year-long study beginning next month that will test samples for evidence of highly pathogenic avian influenza from former dairy cattle moved into meat production.

Emilio Esteban, the under secretary for food safety at the USDA, told reporters on a call Tuesday the new testing program follows three studies undertaken during the spring and summer that all found beef in the nation's food supply is safe to eat.

"However, we want to move forward with an additional step," Esteban said. "And what this means is that when those carcasses are tested, they are held and are not going to go into commerce until we get the results back."

The virus, also referred to as bird flu or H5N1, has been found in wild bird and domestic poultry flocks within the United States for years. But the ongoing outbreak in dairy cattle has forced animal and human health experts to establish testing for a new community of agriculture workers and livestock.

The news of additional testing for the country's meat supply came alongside the results of a study from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that reinforced the safety of pasteurized dairy products.

Steve Grube, chief medical officer for the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, said that the most recent round of dairy product testing included 167 foods that were processed in 27 states in June and July.

"None of the product samples contained viable H5N1, reaffirming that pasteurization is effective," he said. "The second survey was intended to address geographic and product gaps from the initial sampling of the commercial milk and dairy product supply that the FDA conducted during April and May."

Testing milk in bulk tanks

Federal officials have also launched a voluntary program for farmers to test the milk in bulk tanks for H5N1, a step that's intended to make it easier for them to move their cows between states without having to individually test each one.

Eric Deeble, deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs at USDA, said the department's Farm Service Agency has approved 23 of the 35 applications it has received so far to help ease the financial burden on dairy farmers who take their herds out of production after testing positive.

The program — known as Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish — has approved more than \$1 million in payments.

The price paid to farmers is based on a formula that includes the price of milk from the preceding month as well as the number of dairy cattle that contract H5N1.

Deeble said on the call with reporters that of the approved applications, a dozen are from Colorado, which has seen a sharp increase in the number of positive H5N1 tests within its dairy industry.

Deeble argued the uptick is due to certain factors within the state and cautioned people against assuming that if testing was increased in other areas of the country, the number of positive H5N1 tests for dairy cattle would spike.

"I don't think that it is accurate necessarily to extrapolate from the situation in Weld County, Colorado," Deeble said. "Weld County and Colorado dairy in particular is rather unique in the degree to which the dairies are all closely associated with one another; both spatially and the way in which there is a lot of movement between the facilities."

"It is a tightly integrated dairy community that's isolated from much of the rest of the state, and there is a lot of connectivity between the premises in the way in which they use vehicles, support services, milk trucks," Deeble added.

During the last 30 days, five states have had dairy cattle test positive for H5N1, including Colorado,

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Michigan, Minnesota, South Dakota and Texas.

Colorado holds a disproportionate number of cases with 26 of the dairy herds to test positive, while the other four states combined hold a total of six herds.

Other mammals diagnosed with H5N1 during the last six weeks are overwhelmingly in Colorado, which has found the virus in house mice, deer mice, domestic cats, a desert cottontail and a prairie vole.

Effect on cats

Public health officials said during the call Tuesday they are beginning to look more closely at when and why cats are being affected by the spread of H5N1.

Barn cats as well as those that hunt outside, coming into regular contact with wild birds that hold a reservoir of H5N1, have tested positive for the virus before.

But a report from the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association earlier this month noted that two of the six cats diagnosed with H5N1 in that state this year "were indoor only cats with no direct exposures to the virus."

Public health officials on the call were unable to answer a question about how indoor-only cats would have come into contact with H5N1.

Experts on the call cautioned that as fall approaches, wild birds will begin migrating and dairy farmers will likely ship their cattle at higher rates, both of which could lead to an uptick in the number of positive cases of H5N1 being reported in dairy cattle as well as other animals.

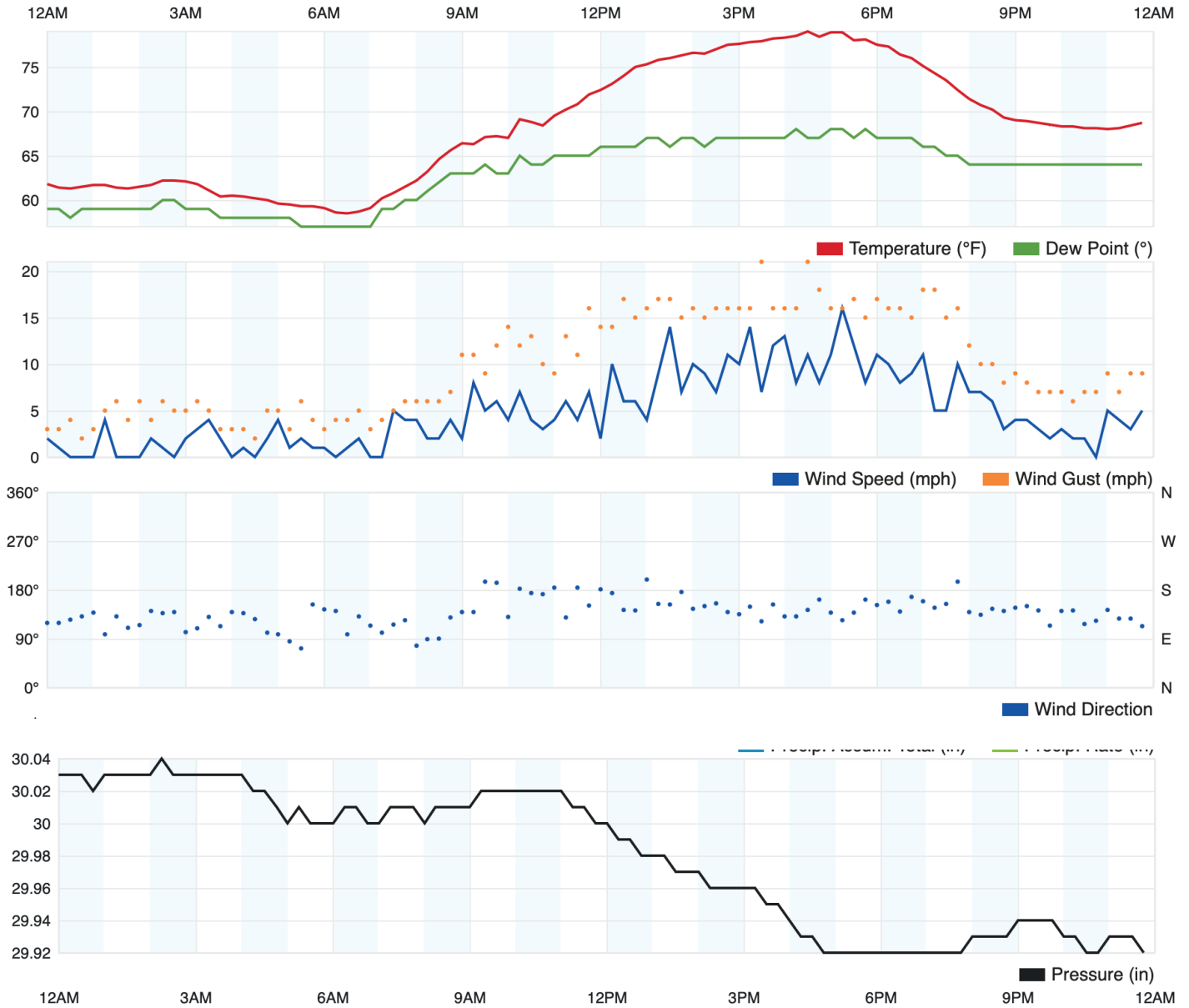
Lia Chien contributed to this report.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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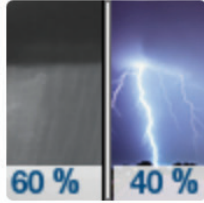
Wednesday



High: 73 °F

Chance
T-storms

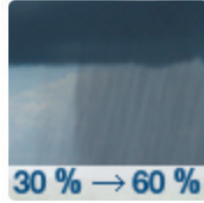
Wednesday
Night



Low: 64 °F

Heavy Rain
then Chance
T-storms

Thursday



High: 76 °F

Chance
Showers then
Showers
Likely

Thursday
Night



Low: 59 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

Friday



High: 82 °F

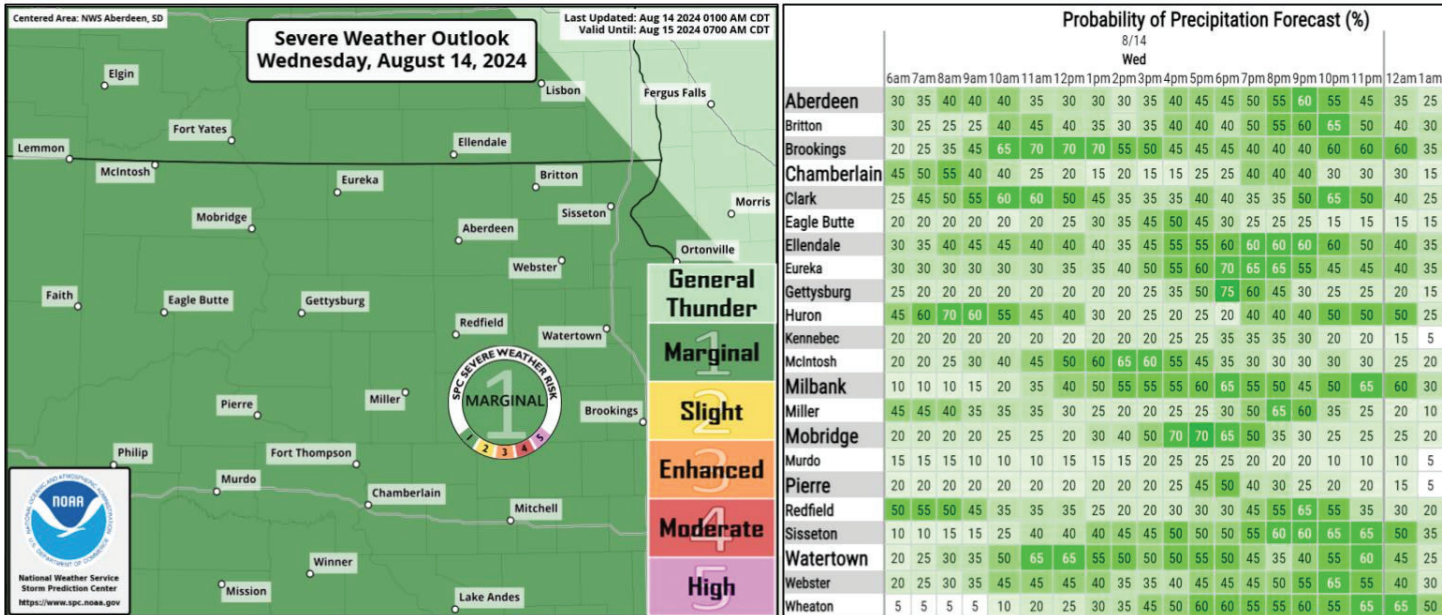
Mostly Sunny



Rain/Storm Potential For Today & Tonight

August 14, 2024
4:05 AM

Marginal Risk (1 out of 5) for hail up to 1" in diameter and damaging winds to 60 mph. The greatest potential appears to be over northern SD. Heavy rain will also be a concern with the slow moving storms. Elsewhere, expect rain showers & weak thunderstorms (See Probability of Precipitation Forecast Below For Timing)



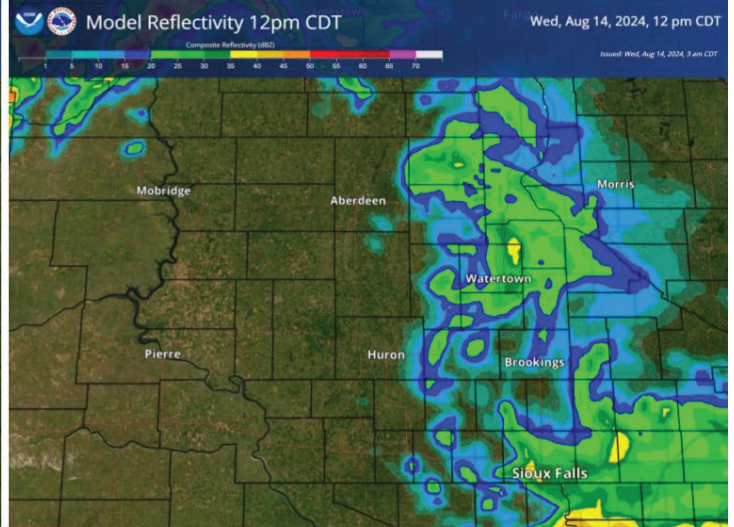
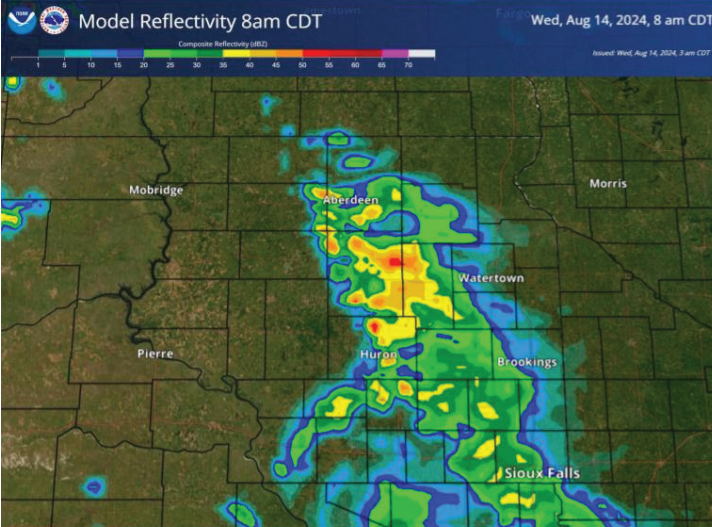
Showers and thunderstorms expected today ranging from 30 to 75 percent across the forecast area before chances diminish west to east later on tonight. Heavy rain will be a concern with the slow moving storms. There is a marginal risk (1/5) for severe storms across the area today with the greatest potential of severe storms over northern SD this afternoon and evening. Main threats include quarter sized hail and damaging wind gusts to 60mph.



Rain/Storm Timing For Today

August 14, 2024
4:17 AM

Model estimated timing and location of thunderstorms



Forecast Confidence

- Uncertainty remains in the location/intensity of the showers and thunderstorms
- This is one model's outcome out of several model solutions

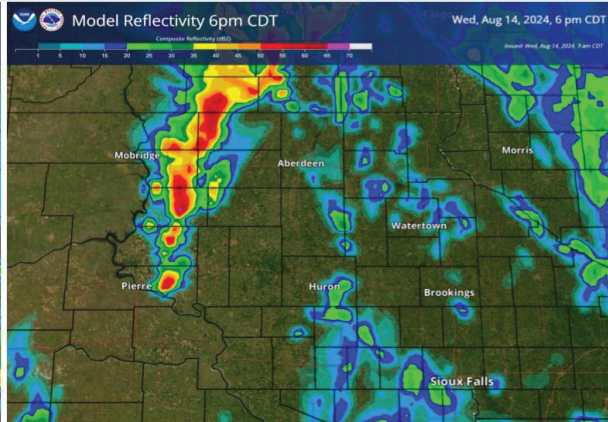
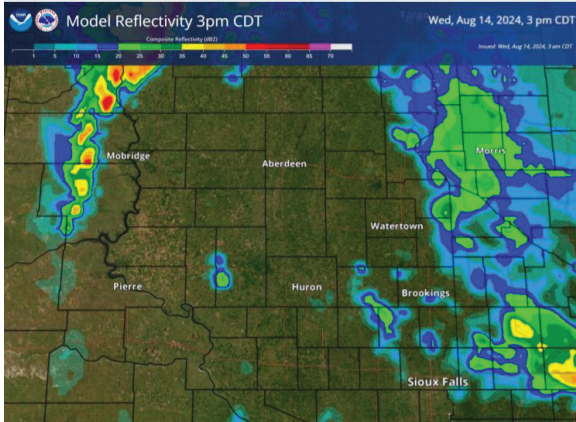
Showers and thunderstorms will affect northern to northeastern SD this morning into the midday. However, lower confidence in exact location and timing.



Rain/Storm Timing For This Evening

August 14, 2024
4:22 AM

Model estimated timing and location of thunderstorms



- Afternoon/Evening
 - Storms intensify in north central SD and move to the southeast through the evening
 - The greatest potential for severe storms appears to be over northern SD
- This is one model's outcome out of several model solutions



Make sure you have ways to receive alerts for any severe weather!

Showers and thunderstorms will affect northern to northeastern SD. However, lower confidence in exact location and timing.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 4:30 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 6:19 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 3:28 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 10 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1965

Record Low: 38 in 1968

Average High: 83

Average Low: 57

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.01

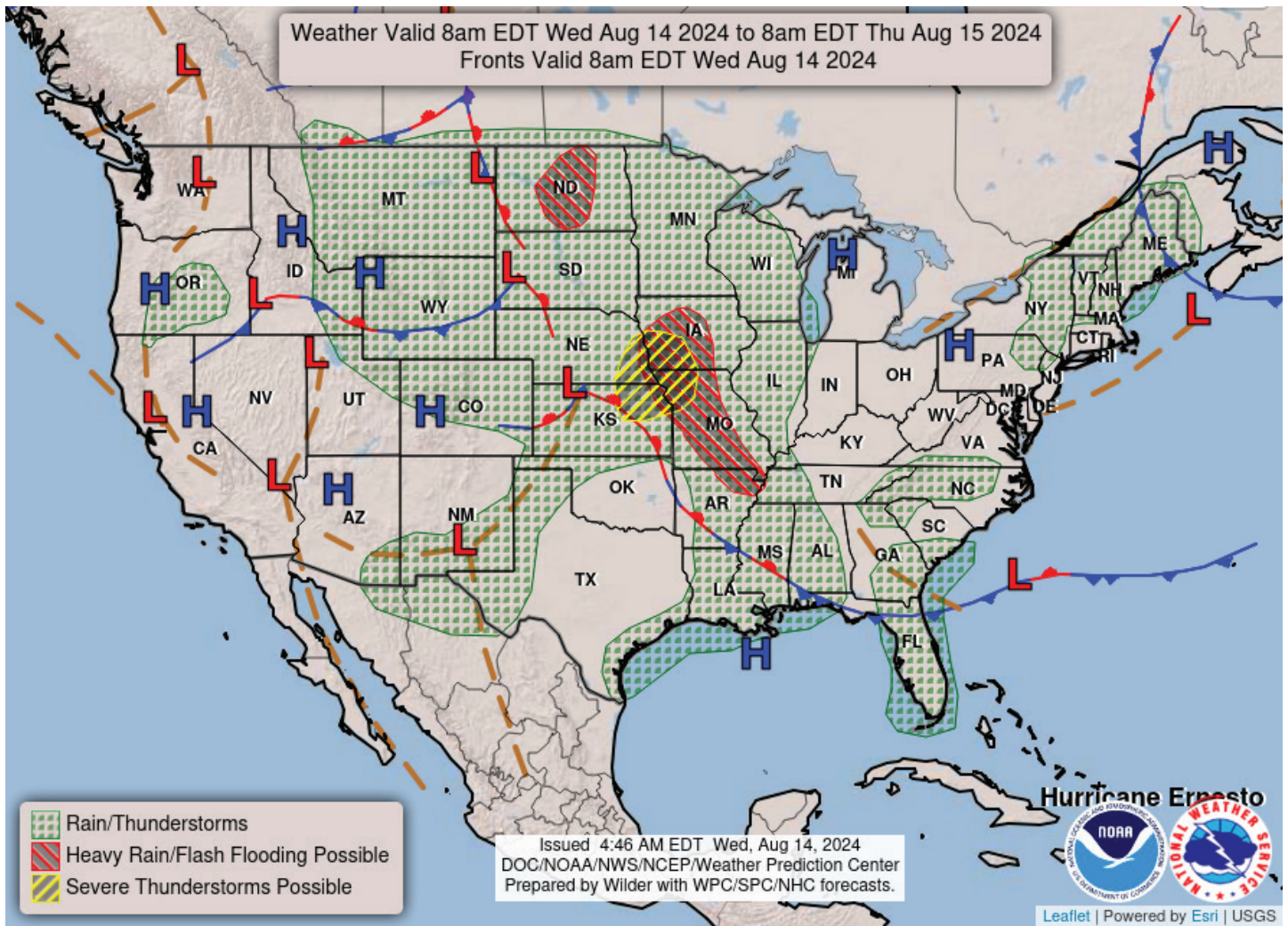
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.16

Average Precip to date: 15.11

Precip Year to Date: 16.05

Sunset Tonight: 8:42:25 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:32:40 am



Today in Weather History

August 14, 1898: A deadly, estimated F4 tornado moved southeast from 12 miles northwest of Clear Lake, passing 7 miles north of town and ending about 4 miles west of Gary. Deaths occurred on two farms. One man was killed when the kitchen of his farm house was torn off. Five members of one family were killed along with two labors on another farm as every building was swept away. Buildings suffered massive damage on eight farms. This tornado was one of the earliest, estimated F4 tornadoes on record for South Dakota.

August 14, 2008: Several severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. Large hail, some flash flooding, and a couple of weak tornadoes occurred with these storms. An EF0 tornado touched down briefly at the Brown County Fairgrounds, blowing over several tents and awnings. Another EF0 tornado touched down briefly in an open field causing no damage north of Stephan in Hyde County.

August 14, 2009: A warm front brought severe thunderstorms with large hail up to the size of golf balls along with sixty mph winds to parts of north central and northeast South Dakota. Also, very heavy rain fell across western Brown County with 2 to 4 inches of rain reported. This heavy rain brought flash flooding conditions. Numerous county roads and area fields were overrun with flowing water. The water level on Richmond Lake rose nearly a foot the next day after the event from high inflows. This rapid rise in the lake level resulted in numerous boat and fishing docks being submerged. Several boats were also trapped under lift canopies due to the high water. There were reports of several boats breaking free of their mooring and floating toward the spillway.

1898 - A deadly, estimated F4 tornado moved southeast from 12 miles northwest of Clear Lake, South Dakota, passing 7 miles north of town and ending about 4 miles west of Gary. Deaths occurred on two farms. One man was killed when the kitchen of his farm house was torn off. Five members of one family were killed along with two labors on another farm as every building was swept away. Buildings suffered massive damage on eight farms. This tornado was one of the earliest, estimated F4 tornadoes on record for South Dakota.

1936 - Temperatures across much of eastern Kansas soared above 110 degrees. Kansas City MO hit an all-time record high of 113 degrees. It was one of sixteen consecutive days of 100 degree heat for Kansas City. During that summer there were a record 53 days of 100 degree heat, and during the three summer months Kansas City received just 1.12 inches of rain. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1953: Hurricane Barbara hits North Carolina as a Category 2 hurricane. Damage from the storm was relatively minor, totaling around \$1.3 million (1953 USD). Most of it occurred in North Carolina and Virginia from crop damage. The hurricane left several injuries, some traffic accidents, as well as seven fatalities in the eastern United States; at least two were due to electrocution from downed power lines. Offshore Atlantic Canada, a small boat sunk, killing its crew of two.

1969: Hurricane Camille, a powerful, deadly, and destructive hurricane formed just west of the Cayman Islands on this day. It rapidly intensified, and by the time it reached western Cuba the next day, it was a Category 3 hurricane. Hurricane Camille was spawned on August 5th by a tropical wave off the coast of Africa. The storm became a tropical disturbance four days later on the 9th and a tropical storm on the 14th with a 999-millibar pressure center and 55 mph surface winds.

1975: In London, England, a localized torrential downpour known as The Hampstead Storm, drops 6.72 inches of rain in 155 minutes at Hampstead Heath. One died in the storm. The water floods the Underground and forces sewer covers up.

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms in Illinois soaked the town of Battendorf with 2.10 inches of rain in thirty minutes. Evening thunderstorms in Montana produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Hobson. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



MAKE YOUR PLANS LARGE!

One of my most prized possessions is my mother's Bible. Its cover is well worn - the brown leather comes through the black dye. The pages are turned up at the corners and show wrinkles from tear stains. Verses are underlined and endless notes in the margins show her thoughts and insights about different passages. There are dates next to many promises of God where she claimed them for her husband and children, missionaries and friends.

But there is one verse that sums up her undying faith in God: Ephesians 3:20. In the column next to it she wrote: "If God's your partner, make your plans large!"

Why?

Ephesians 3:20 says, "God is able to do." Well, people can "do" too. But the verse continues...

"God is able to do abundantly." Many times, however, people are limited and unable to do what needs to be done. And then Paul added something else...

"God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask." What more, if anything, is there, Paul?

"God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think!"
Is there anything beyond exceedingly abundantly?

Only asking and thinking. No wonder she wrote, "If God's your partner, make your plans large."

Prayer: How unfortunate, Father, that we limit You when we limit what we believe You can do for us and through us. Increase our faith to match Your power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Ephesians 3:20

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: 08.13.24

34 55 59 65 70 12

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$464,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.12.24

9 24 27 28 52 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$6,810,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 14 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.13.24

6 30 37 42 47 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.10.24

14 16 23 29 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.12.24

5 35 49 60 62 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 58 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.12.24

9 22 57 67 68 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 58 Mins 32 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

Americans give Harris an advantage over Trump on honesty and discipline, an AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris has a perceived advantage over former President Donald Trump on several leadership qualities such as honesty, a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds, although Americans are slightly more likely to trust Trump on the economy and immigration.

Nearly half of Americans say that “committed to democracy” and “disciplined” are attributes that better describe Harris. About 3 in 10 say these qualities better describe Trump.

About 4 in 10 say Harris is someone who “cares about people like you” while about 3 in 10 say that about Trump. About 4 in 10 say “honest” better describes Harris and 24% say that quality better describes Trump.

Both parties are racing to define Harris as she prepares to accept the Democratic nomination at the party’s convention next week. The poll suggests she carries some of the same baggage that weighed down President Joe Biden before he ended his reelection bid but has advantages over Trump when they’re compared to each other. And Democrats continue to be much happier about her candidacy than they were about Biden’s.

Trump has spent the campaign championing himself as a strong leader who is capable of handling tough crises facing the country and suggesting that foreign leaders wouldn’t respect Harris in the White House. But he doesn’t have an advantage with Americans on that characteristic, according to the survey. Four in 10 U.S. adults see Trump as a strong leader, and roughly the same share say that about Harris. About 4 in 10 say Trump is capable of handling a crisis, and a similar share say Harris is better positioned to do so.

Americans are about evenly divided between who they think is more capable of winning in November — Trump or Harris. In July, before Biden dropped out of the race, only about 2 in 10 Americans thought he was more capable of winning, while about twice as many thought that about Trump.

“Trump had a better chance when Joe Biden was running,” said Lisa Miller, a 42-year-old student in Elko, Nevada, and a Republican. “I think a lot of people who were insecure about Joe Biden are more secure with Kamala Harris’ age and cognitive abilities.”

Trump has advantages on the economy and immigration

Americans are more likely to trust Trump over Harris when it comes to handling the economy or immigration, but the difference is slight — 45% say Trump is better positioned to handle the economy, while 38% say that about Harris. The difference is similar in handling immigration. Independents are about twice as likely to trust Trump over Harris on economic issues, and they give him the advantage on immigration as well.

Howard Barnes, a 36-year-old artist in San Francisco, is a Republican who says he trusts Trump over Harris on the border.

“She doesn’t really seem to be proactive about it or even interested in it,” Barnes said.

Harris has more of an advantage over Trump when it comes to handling issues related to race and racial inequality, abortion policy, and health care. Roughly half of U.S. adults say Harris would do a better job than Trump handling each of those issues, compared with about 3 in 10 for Trump. Harris is especially strong among Democrats, independents and women on the issue of abortion policy.

Democrats and independents give her the edge on health care, as well as on issues of race and racial inequality. About two-thirds of Black adults say Harris is the candidate they trust more on that issue, as well as about half of Hispanic adults and white adults.

Harris’ strengths also accentuate two areas where Republicans give Trump relatively low marks: abortion policy and issues related to race and racial inequality. Only about 6 in 10 Republicans trust Trump over Harris on these issues.

There are possible signs of trouble for Harris in the poll, though. Only about 6 in 10 Democrats trust her over Trump to do a better job handling the war in Gaza, her lowest rating within her party on the issues asked about. About one-quarter of Democrats say they trust neither Trump nor Harris on this topic.

Democrats are more excited about the election now

About two-thirds of Democrats say "excited" describes either extremely well or very well how they would feel if Harris were to be elected.

The enthusiasm represents a sharp reversal from when Biden was the Democrats' candidate: an AP-NORC poll from March found that only 4 in 10 Democrats said "excited" would describe their feelings extremely or very well if he won another term. About 7 in 10 Democrats say "satisfied" would describe their emotions at least very well if Harris won. That's also a shift from March, when half of Democrats said this about Biden.

"There's definitely joy and there's definitely hope, and I feel like that's something that's been missing," said Meaghan Dunfee, a 33-year-old public-sector worker in Hamilton, New Jersey. "I don't think we've had that in a long time on the Democratic side."

About 2 in 10 independents say they would be either excited or satisfied by Harris being elected, an increase from their response to the Biden question in March. Roughly half of independents say excitement would describe their emotions at least "somewhat" well, up from about one-quarter in March. Similar shares of independents say they would be excited or satisfied about Trump being elected.

Israel-Hamas war latest: Israeli strikes kill at least 17 in Gaza overnight, Palestinians say

By The Associated Press undefined

Palestinian health officials say Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Wednesday killed at least 17 people, including five children and their parents.

The latest strikes came on the eve of new talks aimed at reaching a cease-fire in the 10-month-long war. The United States, Qatar and Egypt are hoping to broker an agreement, but the sides remain far apart on several issues even after months of indirect negotiations.

One strike hit a family home late Tuesday in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, which dates back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It killed five children, ranging in age from 2 to 11, and their parents, according to the nearby Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

An Associated Press reporter who saw the bodies arrive said they had been dismembered by the blast and that the 2-year-old had been decapitated.

In the nearby Maghazi refugee camp, a strike on a home early Wednesday killed four people and wounded others, the hospital said.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, the Health Ministry's emergency service said first responders recovered the bodies of four men who were killed in a strike on a residential tower late Tuesday.

Two more people were killed in an Israeli strike on a house in the northern town of Beit Lahiya, according to the emergency service. The strike also wounded five people.

Health authorities in Gaza do not say whether those killed in Israeli strikes are militants or civilians. Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas because the militants operate in residential areas. The army rarely comments on individual strikes.

Here's the latest:

Senior Biden adviser urges 'diplomatic action' to end Israel-Hamas war, fearing escalations could 'spiral out of control'

BEIRUT — A senior adviser to U.S. President Joe Biden on Wednesday said it was critical to take advantage of "this window for diplomatic action" to end the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and ongoing hostilities in Lebanon, fearing that ongoing escalations could "spiral out of control."

Amos Hochstein, who has been tasked with monthslong shuttle diplomacy between Lebanon and Israel, spoke at a news conference after meeting Lebanese Speaker Nabih Berri, as the Mideast anxiously antici-

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pates retaliatory attacks on Israel from Iran and the powerful Lebanese Hezbollah group.

"The more time goes by of escalated tensions the more time goes by of daily conflict the more the odds and the chances go up for accidents, for mistakes, for inadvertent targets to be hit that could easily cause escalation that goes out of control," Hochstein said in Beirut.

Cease-fire talks are supposed to resume in Doha on Thursday between Hamas and Israel through Qatari, Egyptian and American mediators.

Hochstein said he and Berri agreed there are "no more valid excuses from any party for any further delay" on a cease-fire based on a framework presented by Biden months ago.

"The deal would also help enable a diplomatic resolution here in Lebanon," the U.S. envoy added.

Hezbollah and Israel have traded strikes since Oct. 8, a day after the Palestinian Hamas group's surprise attack into southern Israel sparked the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the besieged Gaza Strip. Hezbollah says it will stop its attacks on northern Israel once there is a cease-fire in Gaza.

However, the initial exchanges along the battered border towns of Lebanon and Israel have since expanded and intensified.

Last month, a rare Israeli airstrike in southern Beirut killed Hezbollah's top commander who Israel accused of firing a rocket into Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 youths. Hours later, an explosion in Iran killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh that Tehran blamed on Israel.

Over the past two weeks, the region has been on a knife-edge, as diplomatic efforts continue to prevent the monthslong regional tensions from spiraling into all-out war. Iran and Hezbollah say they are committed to their retaliatory attack.

Hochstein's visit to Lebanon comes after he met with Israeli officials on Tuesday. He is scheduled to meet with caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Lebanon's army chief.

Israeli military bulldozers demolish 6 more homes in occupied West Bank, residents say

JERUSALEM — Residents of a beleaguered Bedouin hamlet in the southern reaches of the occupied West Bank say Israeli military bulldozers demolished six more homes in the community on Wednesday, leaving 28 people homeless.

The demolitions in Umm Al-Khair come after military bulldozers last month knocked down several homes in the village, leaving a quarter of the village's 200 people without shelter.

Videos sent by residents of the village to The Associated Press showed bulldozers rolling into the community on Wednesday morning, escorted by at least one military vehicle. Soldiers could be seen pushing protesters and Palestinians away from the demolition zone, and bulldozers crashed into small tent-like structures, knocking them to the ground.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of civilian matters in the West Bank, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In the past, it has alleged that many of the structures in the village were built without permits. Palestinians in these areas have long said it is virtually impossible to get construction permits from Israeli authorities.

Umm Al-Khair has also been the subject of ramped-up settler attacks over the last few months, attacks which residents say have harmed the village water supply and gone unpunished by military authorities. Small Bedouin hamlets in the West Bank are some of the most vulnerable communities to displacement caused by demolitions and settler violence, rights groups say.

Japan's Kishida announces he will not run in September, paving the way for a new prime minister

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, in a surprise move Wednesday, announced he will not run in the upcoming party leadership vote in September, paving the way for Japan to have a new prime minister.

Kishida was elected president of his governing Liberal Democratic Party in 2021 and his three-year term expires in September. Whoever wins the party vote will succeed him as prime minister because the LDP

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controls both houses of parliament. A new face is a chance for the party to show that it's changing for the better, and Kishida said he will support the new leader.

"We need to clearly show an LDP reborn," Kishida told a news conference Wednesday. "In order to show a changing LDP, the most obvious first step is for me to bow out."

"I will not run for the upcoming party leadership election," he said.

Stung by his party's corruption scandals, Kishida has suffered dwindling support ratings that have dipped below 20%.

In order to achieve policies to tackle difficult situations in and outside Japan, regaining public trust in politics is crucial, Kishida said. He called on aspiring party lawmakers to raise their hands to run for leadership and have active policy debate during the campaign.

"Once a new leader is decided, I hope to see everyone unite and form a dream team to achieve politics that can gain public understanding," he said.

Kishida said he has been mulling his possible resignation for some time but waited until he could put his key policies on track, including energy policy that calls for a return to nuclear power, a drastic military buildup to deal with security threats in the region, and improving ties with South Korea, as well as political reforms.

Speculation on potential candidates has landed on a number of senior LDP lawmakers, including party Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi, Digital Minister Taro Kono, Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa.

A winner will replace Kishida as party president, and will be endorsed as the new prime minister in a parliamentary vote soon after. LDP executives are expected to decide next week on the date for the party election.

Since the corruption scandal broke, Kishida has removed a number of Cabinet ministers and others from party executive posts, dissolved party factions that were criticized as the source of money-for-favor politics, and tightened political funds control law. Ten people — lawmakers and their aides — were indicted in January.

Despite Kishida's efforts, support for his government dwindled.

Local election losses earlier in the year eroded his clout, and LDP lawmakers have voiced the need for a fresh face ahead of the next general election. Major losses in the Tokyo metropolitan assembly by elections in July also added to the push.

The scandal centers on unreported political funds raised through tickets sold for party events. It involved more than 80 LDP lawmakers, mostly belonging to a major party faction previously led by assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The assassination surfaced a scandal over the LDP's decades-old, deep-rooted ties with the Unification Church, for which Kishida has also faced criticism.

A second Russian border region declares an emergency as Ukrainian forces press their incursion

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's Belgorod border region declared an emergency Wednesday under heavy shelling by Ukrainian forces that are pressing a major cross-border incursion into the adjacent Kursk region for a second week.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov described the situation there as "extremely difficult and tense" as the attacks destroyed homes and caused civilian casualties, unnerving local people.

Children in particular are being moved to safety, he said on his Telegram channel, adding that about 5,000 children are in camps in safe areas. He said the previous day that around 11,000 people had fled their homes, with about 1,000 staying in temporary accommodation centers.

The surprise Ukrainian charge onto Russian soil that began Aug. 6 has rattled the Kremlin. The daring Kursk operation is the largest attack on Russia since World War II and could involve as many as 10,000 Ukrainian troops backed by armor and artillery, military analysts say. An emergency was declared in Kursk

last Saturday.

A Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Tuesday that Kyiv has no intention of occupying the Russian territory it says it is holding. The goal is to stop Russia from firing missiles into Ukraine from Kursk, he said.

It was not clear how or when — or whether — Ukraine would attempt to extricate itself from the ground it has taken. The Ukrainian military claims it controls 74 settlements, believed to be villages or hamlets, in the Kursk region. Russian officials say more than 100,000 people have been evacuated, mostly from Kursk.

Ukraine's 1+1 TV channel published a video report Wednesday it said was from Sudzha, a Russian town about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the border.

The report showed burnt-out Russian military columns on roads in the area as well as Ukrainian soldiers handing humanitarian aid to local residents and taking down Russian flags from an administrative building.

Russia's predicament is whether to pull troops from the front line in Ukraine's Donetsk region, where achieving a breakthrough is currently a primary war goal for the Kremlin, to defend Kursk and stop the incursion from ballooning.

U.S. President Joe Biden said Tuesday that the developments in Russia are "creating a real dilemma" for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Biden declined to comment further on the top-secret operation until it is over.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said the incursion is unlikely to shift the dynamics of the war.

"Russian authorities will likely remain extremely averse to pulling Russian military units engaged in combat from (Donetsk) and will likely continue deploying limited numbers of irregular forces to Kursk ... due to concerns about further slowing the tempo of Russian operations in these higher priority directions," it said late Tuesday.

The operation has at least caused embarrassment for the Kremlin as Russian civilians reel from the attack.

A woman in Belgorod told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the Ukrainian shelling had been more intense for about 10 days until Monday, when it was followed by a lull.

The number of people in Belgorod who openly supported the war has decreased following the intensified Ukrainian attacks, the woman told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because of security concerns.

"When explosions started near the city, when people were dying and when all this started happening before our eyes ... and when it affected people personally, they stopped at least openly supporting" the war, the woman said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy indicated that the Kursk operation is also intended to lift the country's spirits after 900 days of war and rally people by making an emphatic statement about Ukraine's military capabilities.

"Now all of us in Ukraine should act as unitedly and efficiently as we did in the first weeks and months of this war, when Ukraine took the initiative and began to turn the situation to the benefit of our state," Zelenskyy said in his nightly address Tuesday.

"Now we have done the exact same thing — we have proven once again that we, Ukrainians, are capable of achieving our goals in any situation — capable of defending our interests and our independence," he said.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Wednesday it destroyed 117 Ukrainian drones and four missiles over eight of its regions overnight.

Thai Prime Minister Srettha is removed from office by a court order over an ethics violation

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in Thailand on Wednesday removed Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin from office over an ethical violation, further shaking up Thai politics after the court-ordered dissolution of the main opposition party a week ago.

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The Constitutional Court ruled on a case involving Srettha's appointment of a Cabinet member who had been imprisoned in connection with an alleged attempt to bribe a court official.

The court voted 5:4 against Srettha and the ruling removed him from office immediately.

The Cabinet will remain in place on a caretaker basis until Parliament approves a new prime minister. There is no time limit for Parliament to fill the position. The caretaker Cabinet could also dissolve Parliament and call a new election.

The acting PM is expected to be Phumtham Wechayachai of the Pheu Thai party. Phumtham was first deputy prime minister and commerce minister under Srettha.

If Parliament is given the task of choosing a new prime minister, it can select from a roster of candidates nominated for the post last year by the major political parties. The Pheu Thai Party, to which Srettha belongs, has two eligible candidates, including Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Another frontrunner would be Anutin Charnvirakul, head of the Bhumjaithai Party, which ran third in last year's election. He is currently a deputy prime minister and interior minister. Anuthin, a powerbroker in the vote-rich northeast whose family owns a major construction group, has served in both a military-backed government and the civilian one that it replaced.

Also in the running would be two former senior military officers: Prayuth Chan-ocha, who served as prime minister for nine years after staging a coup in 2014, and Prawit Wongsuwan, who was one of Prayuth's deputy prime ministers.

Srettha, speaking at Government House shortly after the verdict, thanked the judges for giving him the opportunity to defend himself. He said he respected the ruling and that he always sought to act ethically during his time in office.

"I'm sorry that I'd be considered as a prime minister who's unethical, but that's not who I am," he said.

Srettha had appointed Pichit Chuenban as a minister of the Prime Minister's Office in a Cabinet reshuffle in April. Pichit was jailed for six months in 2008 on contempt of court charges after he allegedly tried to bribe a judge with 2 million baht (\$55,000) in cash in a grocery bag over a case involving Thaksin, the former prime minister.

Pichit resigned from the post weeks after being appointed when controversy over the incident was revived.

The court said that although Pichit has already served his jail term, his behavior — as ruled by the Supreme Court — was dishonest.

Srettha as prime minister has sole responsibility for vetting the qualifications of his Cabinet nominations, the court ruled. It said he knew about Pichit's past but still nominated him, and therefore it ruled that he violated the ethics codes.

The petition against Srettha was initiated by former members of the military-installed Senate who had refused to approve Move Forward's prime ministerial candidate when the party was attempting to form a government after its election victory.

The petition against Srettha was seen as a move favoring a pro-military political party in his coalition government.

Thailand's courts, especially the Constitutional Court, are considered a bulwark of the country's royalist establishment, which has used them and nominally independent state agencies such as the Election Commission to issue rulings to cripple or sink political opponents.

Srettha became prime minister in August last year, despite his Pheu Thai party finishing second in the general election. After Move Forward was denied power by the Senate whose term ended in May, Pheu Thai — then the biggest partner of Move Forward — excluded it from the coalition and joined hands with parties affiliated with the previous military-controlled government to gather enough support from other parties and the Senate to approve a new prime minister.

Srettha, 62, was a real estate executive before entering politics. He prioritized opening up Thailand after almost a decade of military-backed rule, frequently traveling abroad for trade negotiations. His party pushed a populist plan for a 10,000-baht (\$286) handout policy to stimulate the economy, a key promise in its campaign last year, though it has been delayed by technicalities largely involving funding.

His government also promoted Thai cultural products through a “soft power” agency and the critical tourism sector by loosening entry requirements and other measures.

Srettha, who tried to project an image of a strong CEO, was seen by critics as an agent for Thaksin, who returned last August to submit to a plea deal his detractors say was essential to Srettha gaining the premiership.

The Constitutional Court last week ordered the dissolution of the progressive Move Forward Party over an accusation that the party violated the constitution by proposing an amendment to a law against defaming the country’s royal family. The party has already regrouped as the People’s Party.

French prosecutors investigate gender-based cyber harassment of Algerian Olympic champ Imane Khelif

PARIS (AP) — French prosecutors opened an investigation into an online harassment complaint made by Olympic boxing champion Imane Khelif after a rain of criticism and false claims about her sex during the Summer Games, the Paris prosecutor’s office said Monday.

The athlete’s lawyer Nabil Boudi filed a legal complaint with a special unit in the Paris prosecutor’s office that combats online hate speech on Friday.

Boudi said that the boxer was targeted by a “misogynist, racist and sexist campaign” as she won gold in the women’s welterweight division, becoming a hero in her native Algeria and bringing global attention to women’s boxing.

The prosecutor’s office said it had received the complaint and its Office for the Fight against Crimes against Humanity and Hate Crime had opened an investigation on charges of “cyber harassment based on gender, public insults based on gender, public incitement to discrimination and public insults on the basis of origin.”

Khelif was unwillingly thrust into a worldwide clash over gender identity and regulation in sports after her first fight in Paris, when Italian opponent Angela Carini pulled out just seconds into the match, citing pain from opening punches.

False claims that Khelif was transgender or a man erupted online, and the International Olympic Committee defended her and denounced those peddling misinformation. Khelif said that the spread of misconceptions about her “harms human dignity.”

Among those who posted misinformation about the athlete were Donald Trump, Elon Musk and J. K. Rowling.

Khelif’s legal complaint was filed against social media platforms, including “X,” instead of a specific perpetrator, a common formulation under French law that leaves it up to investigators to determine which person or organization that may have been at fault.

The Paris prosecutor’s office didn’t name specific suspects.

The development came two days after Khelif returned to Algeria, where she’s expected to meet with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and be welcomed by family in her hometown of Ain Mesbah.

Japanese are worried and confused after first-ever megaquake advisory. What does it mean?

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan, one of the most earthquake-prone nations on earth, issued its first-ever “megaquake advisory” last week after a powerful quake struck off the southeastern coast of the southern main island of Kyushu.

The magnitude 7.1 quake caused no deaths or severe damage but the advisory has led to widespread confusion and a lingering sense of worry — in a country well accustomed to regular quakes — about when the next big one will hit.

The Associated Press explains what the advisory means, what people are being told to do, and what

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could happen if a massive quake hits Japan.

What is a megaquake advisory?

The Japan Meteorological Agency issued the advisory after concluding that the magnitude 7.1 quake that struck on Aug. 8 on the western edge of the Nankai Trough increased the likelihood of another big one.

There is a 70-80% chance of a magnitude 8 or 9 quake associated with the Nankai Trough within the next 30 years, and the probability is now "higher than normal" after the latest quake, the JMA says.

But that is not a prediction that a megaquake will happen at any specific time or location, says University of Tokyo seismologist Naoshi Hirata, who heads the JMA's experts panel. He urged people to remain cautious and prepared.

What is the Nankai Trough?

The Nankai Trough is an undersea trench that runs from Hyuganada, in the waters just off the southeastern coast of Kyushu, to Suruga Bay in central Japan. It spans about 800 kilometers (500 miles) along the Pacific coast.

The Philippine Sea Plate there slowly pulls down on the Eurasian Plate and causes it to occasionally snap back, an action that could lead to a megaquake and tsunami, JMA says.

The last Nankai Trough quake off Shikoku in 1946 recorded a preliminary magnitude of 8.0 and killed more than 1,300 people.

How damaging can a megaquake be?

In 2013, a government disaster prevention team said a magnitude 9.1 Nankai Trough quake could generate a tsunami exceeding 10 meters (33 feet) within minutes, killing as many as 323,000 people, destroying more than 2 million buildings and causing economic damage of more than 220 trillion yen (\$1.5 trillion) to large swaths of Japan's Pacific coast.

What is the government doing to prepare?

As a result of the "megaquake advisory," Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida canceled his planned Aug. 9-12 trip to Central Asia and announced he would lead the government response and ensure preventive measures and communication with the public.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency instructed 707 municipalities seen as at risk from a Nankai Trough quake to review their response measures and evacuation plans.

Experts and officials have urged people to stay calm and carry on their daily social and economic activities while also securing emergency food and water and discussing evacuation plans with family members.

In a reassuring note on Monday, JMA experts said they have so far found no abnormal seismic or tectonic activity that would indicate a megaquake.

How are people reacting?

The "megaquake advisory," which is filled with scientific jargon, has worried and baffled people across the country. Some towns closed beaches and canceled annual events, which has led to challenges for travelers during Japan's Obon holiday week, a time for festivals and fireworks across the nation.

Many people have put off planned trips and rushed to stock up on rice, dried noodles, canned food, bottled water, portable toilets and other emergency goods, leaving shelves empty at many supermarkets in western Japan and Tokyo, even though the capital is outside the at-risk area.

The Summit supermarket chain said microwavable rice is in short supply and the store is limiting purchases to one pack per customer.

Yoshiko Kudo and her husband Shinya said they had trouble understanding what exactly the advisory meant, how worried they should be and what they should do.

"We are trying not to go overboard. Too much worry is not good," Yoshiko Kudo said.

"We don't know how to be prepared and to still live normally like the experts tell us," said Shinya Kudo, a caregiver in his 60s.

Yoneko Oshima, walking by a major train station in Tokyo, said: "It's scary ... They say there's a (70-80%) chance in the next 30 years, but it could be tomorrow." Her latest purchase is a portable toilet. She says water is indispensable for her diabetic husband, who needs to take medicine after every meal.

"I plan to take this opportunity to make a list and make sure we have everything at hand," Oshima said.

She hasn't changed her holiday plans this week, but her daughter canceled a planned trip to Mount Fuji. In Matsuyama city on the island of Shikoku, which has many hot springs, hotels and resorts reviewed their evacuation procedures and emergency equipment and launched a radio communication system for emergency use. They have received hundreds of cancellations since the advisory was issued, said Hideki Ochi, director of the Dogo Onsen Ryokan Association.

Rail companies serving the region said their trains are operating at slightly reduced speeds as a precaution.

A crisis management task force in the coastal town of Kuroshio in Kochi prefecture, where a tsunami as high as 34 meters (111 feet) was predicted in the government risk analysis, initially set up 30 shelters across town. But only two are still open following Monday's JMA statement that there has been no indication of an impending megaquake.

Higashi Osaka urged residents on the town website not to engage in "unnecessary and non-urgent" travel in case of a major quake.

The popular seaside town of Shirahama in Wakayama prefecture said its four outdoor hot springs, parks and other facilities would be closed for a week. Saturday's annual fireworks festival was also canceled.

The Taliban are celebrating three years in power, but they're not talking about Afghans

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban celebrated the third anniversary of their return to power at a former U.S. air base in Afghanistan on Wednesday, but there was no mention of the country's hardships or promises of hope for the struggling population.

Under blue skies and blazing sunshine at Bagram — once the epicentre of America's war to unseat the Taliban and hunt down the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks — members of the Taliban cabinet lauded achievements like strengthening Islamic law and establishing a military system that provides "peace and security."

The speeches were aimed at an international audience, urging the diaspora to return and for the West to interact and cooperate with the country's rulers.

"The Islamic Emirate eliminated internal differences and expanded the scope of unity and cooperation in the country," said deputy prime minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir, employing the term the Taliban use to describe their government. "No one will be allowed to interfere in internal affairs and Afghan soil will not be used against any country."

None of the four speakers talked about the challenges facing Afghans in everyday life.

Decades of conflict and instability have left millions of Afghans on the brink of hunger and starvation. Unemployment is high.

The Bagram parade was the Taliban's grandest and most defiant since regaining control of the country in August 2021.

The audience of some 10,000 men included senior Taliban officials like Acting Defense Minister Mullah Yaqoob and Acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani. Supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada was not at the parade. Women were barred.

The Taliban said foreign diplomats also attended, but did not specify who.

Aid agencies warn that humanitarian efforts in the country are gravely underfunded as economic collapse and climate change are destroying livelihoods.

They say that Afghans, particularly women and girls, will suffer if there isn't more diplomatic engagement with the Taliban. No country recognises the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

The parade was also an opportunity to showcase some of the military hardware abandoned by U.S. and NATO-led forces after decades of war: helicopters, Humvees and tanks.

Uniformed soldiers marched with light and heavy machine guns, and a motorcycle formation bore the Taliban flag.

The Taliban declared Wednesday a national holiday.

A new round of Gaza cease-fire talks is starting. Why is a deal so elusive?

By TIA GOLDENBERG and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — International mediators are hoping to kickstart stalled cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas with a new round of talks meant to finally clinch a deal between the sides. But the chances of a breakthrough appear slim.

The new talks are set to begin Thursday, but Israel and Hamas have been mulling an internationally-backed proposal for more than two months that would wind down the 10-month-long war and free the roughly 110 hostages still held in Gaza.

The indirect talks have not advanced substantively during that time and sticking points remain. New terms put forward have complicated progress. And Hamas has yet to say outright whether it will participate in the new round.

Meanwhile, the fighting in Gaza rages on, the hostages continue to languish in captivity, and fears of an all-out regional war involving Iran and one of its regional proxies, Hezbollah, have surged. The killing of Hamas' top leader in Tehran in an apparent Israeli attack further plunged the talks into uncertainty.

Here is a look at the proposed cease-fire deal and why talks have stalled:

What does the proposal look like?

On May 31, U.S. President Joe Biden detailed what he said was an Israeli cease-fire proposal, calling it "a road map" to a lasting truce and freedom for the hostages. It set off the most concentrated U.S. push to bring about an end to the war, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks on southern Israel.

The original proposal involved three phases. The first would last for six weeks and include a "full and complete cease-fire," a withdrawal of Israeli forces from all densely populated areas of Gaza, and the release of a number of hostages, including women, the elderly and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Palestinian civilians would be able to return to their homes and humanitarian aid would be increased.

The two sides would use that six-week period to negotiate an agreement on the second phase, which Biden said would include the release of all remaining living hostages, including male soldiers, and Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza. The temporary cease-fire would become permanent.

The third phase would kick off a major reconstruction of Gaza, which faces decades of rebuilding from the devastation caused by the war.

What are the sticking points?

Even though Biden threw his weight behind the proposal, it has not led to a breakthrough and the sides appear to have grown further apart in the weeks since.

Israel has been wary of the plan's provision that the initial cease-fire would be extended as long as negotiations continued over the second phase. Israel seems concerned that Hamas would drag on endlessly with fruitless negotiations.

Hamas has appeared concerned that Israel would resume the war once its most vulnerable hostages were returned, a scenario reflected in some of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent comments. Israel could also make demands during this stage of negotiations that were not part of the initial deal and would be unacceptable to Hamas — and then resume the war when Hamas refuses them.

Israel has added additional demands to the initial proposal in recent weeks, according to two Egyptian officials with knowledge of the talks. In a statement Tuesday, Netanyahu's office denied this, calling the additional terms "essential clarifications." It said Hamas has made 29 additions, without specifying which.

The Egyptian officials said Israel seeks to maintain control of a strip of land along Gaza's border with Egypt known as the Philadelphi corridor. Israel believes Hamas uses the area to smuggle in weapons through underground tunnels, which Egypt denies.

Israel also wants to maintain forces along an east-west route that bisects Gaza so that they can weed

out any militants crossing into the territory's north. Netanyahu's office has said Israel wants some way to ensure this, but it denied accusations that this was an additional condition. Hamas has rejected the idea, saying Israel would use it as a pretext to prevent Palestinians from returning to their homes.

The Egyptian officials and Netanyahu's office said Israel also wants veto power over the Palestinian prisoners who would be freed. Hamas refuses to compromise on the issue, they said.

Israel also wants a list of the hostages who are still alive — another condition rejected by Hamas, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the sensitive talks with the media.

What else is complicating progress?

The talks were further thrown into disarray last month when a blast killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh while he was in Tehran for the Iranian president's inauguration. The attack was widely blamed on Israel, which has not confirmed or denied it. Biden said the apparent assassination had "not helped" cease-fire efforts, and the talks were driven into a deep freeze.

That killing came just hours after Israel assassinated a top Hezbollah commander in a strike in Beirut. Both strikes drew threats of retaliation from Iran and Hezbollah, and the fear of an all-out regional war diverted international attention away from efforts to wind down the fighting in Gaza. The killings spurred a flurry of diplomatic activity and led the U.S. to direct military assets to the region.

Both Netanyahu and Hamas' new top leader, Yahya Sinwar, have incentives to continue the war.

Netanyahu's critics say he is dragging out the war for his own political survival. His far-right coalition partners have pledged to topple the government if he agrees to a cease-fire, what could trigger elections that might oust him from power. Netanyahu has said he has the country's best interests in mind.

Hamas has gained from the international condemnation that Israel has faced because of the war. And on a personal level, Haniyeh's killing has shown that Sinwar's own life could be on the line if he surfaces once the war ends.

Students who ousted Hasina are helping lead Bangladesh, from the streets to the ministries

By KRUTIKA PATHI and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Within a week of unseating Bangladesh's longest-serving prime minister, the students who drove out Sheikh Hasina were directing Dhaka's traffic.

Decked out in neon vests, their university IDs slung around their necks, they clutch sticks and umbrellas to wave cars this way and that, filling the void after police went on strike. They stopped drivers, checking their licenses and telling them off for not wearing their seatbelts. Some opened trunks of cars they deemed could belong to officials from the previous government, looking for smuggled riches.

Students have not only manned roads, two who led the charge against Hasina are settling into the interim government they ushered in just a few days after she resigned and fled to India in a military helicopter.

Before Hasina was toppled by the student movement with astonishing speed, she was seen as one of the country's most unshakeable leaders. In total, she governed for more than 20 years, most recently winning four straight terms as her rule became ever more autocratic.

The question now is what comes next in a country still reeling from the violence surrounding her removal that left hundreds dead. The students hope they can restore peace and democracy and create a "new Bangladesh," said Asif Mahmud, one of the protest leaders now in charge of the Sports and Youth Ministry.

"We've got a big responsibility," he said. "We never thought, never had an ambition, that we would take such a responsibility at this age."

"There is pressure, but confidence is also there," said 26-year-old Mahmud.

The student-led protests began with a demand to abolish a quota system for government jobs they said favored Hasina's allies but coalesced into a full-scale revolt against her and her Awami League government. Clashes with security forces, and the deaths that resulted, fueled wider outrage against Hasina's rule, and

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the students have ridden a wave of popular support.

But concerns are also simmering over their lack of political experience, the extent of their ambitions and crucially, how long it will take the interim government to organize elections. Already, the student ministers along with the protesters have said that before any vote is held, they want to reform the country's institutions — which they say have been degraded by both the Awami League and its rival, the dynastic Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Experts warn, however, that the interim government is unelected and as such it has no mandate to implement major changes.

The government, headed by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus who was chosen by the students, "must keep in mind that their main responsibility is to hold an election," said Zillur Rahman, executive director of the Center for Governance Studies, a Dhaka-based think tank. "They shouldn't take any policy decisions."

Yunus, an economist and longtime Hasina critic, is known globally for his pioneering use of microcredit to help the poorest of the poor — but also has never run a government. He's made clear that students will play a critical role in a manner never seen before: "Every ministry should have a student," he said.

Controlling traffic for a few days is one thing but potentially appointing students into ministries could make them "power hungry" at an especially sensitive time, said Rahman.

Nahid Islam, the other student-turned-minister, acknowledged that they have no governance experience but said the grit and determination they showed in pushing out Hasina was proof that they can get things done.

"We think the students who have succeeded in leading an uprising ... and the citizens are capable enough to build the nation," said Islam, who was born in 1998 and now runs the Ministry of Information and Technology.

In the wake of Hasina's ousting, students have mounted protests and issued ultimatums against authorities seen as close to her, demanding they quit. Six Supreme Court justices, including the chief justice, and the central bank governor all resigned in the past days.

"A modern government cannot be run on such a pattern," said Mahfuz Anam, the editor-in-chief of The Daily Star newspaper, while adding that there have been some steps towards a stable transition process.

Many of the students who spent the past weeks protesting agree. They want the interim government to be neutral — but insist it must also be untethered to the mainstream political parties their generation has little connection to.

Alvi Mahmud, an 18-year-old student, said that if the interim government does a good job, then "people will not want BNP or Awami League or any traditional, old parties. They will want change. They will want a new way of living."

The burning question is when new elections can be held. Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, a senior BNP leader, told reporters on Monday that the party told Yunus that it would give the interim government reasonable time to create a conducive and democratic environment for the polls.

This could create "a sense of calm in the political environment," said Anam. It could also give student leaders time to politically mobilize ahead of elections.

"We are not thinking of a political platform yet," said Islam, the new minister. "But a young generation is ready to lead this country, that generation has been built."

For now, the country and its students are trying to come to terms with the horror of the last few weeks. More than 300 people were killed and tens of thousands injured as security forces cracked down on the demonstrations.

Students are sweeping up the streets that only recently were a battleground stained by the blood of their friends. They're cleaning up debris at homes and university campuses destroyed in the violence. And though some police have returned to the streets after a strike, many students have remained beside them to help direct traffic.

At an intersection in the heart of the city, a statue of Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — Bangladesh's first leader after its independence in 1971 — used to tower over the constant flow of traffic. Swept up in both anger and joy after Hasina fled, protesters brought it down.

A few days ago, the site of the statue was defaced with graffiti against her, "Hasina you smell of dead bodies" was scrawled on the walls. Now, students have covered those words with murals depicting unity and their fight for change.

"We salute those who fought for our victory," someone wrote in red and green, the colors of the Bangladesh's flag. "We are one," read another.

The Taliban have ruled Afghanistan for 3 years. Here are 5 things to know

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — It's been three years since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. They have transitioned from insurgency to authority, imposed their interpretation of Islamic law and sought to reinforce their claim to legitimacy.

Despite no international recognition as the country's official rulers, the Taliban enjoy high-level meetings with major regional powers like China and Russia. They even attended United Nations-sponsored talks while Afghan women and civil society were denied a seat at the table. It was a triumph for the Taliban, who see themselves as the country's only true representatives.

There's no domestic challenge to their rule, and no overseas appetite to support one. Wars in Ukraine and Gaza draw the international community's focus, and Afghanistan doesn't represent the same terror threat it once did. But challenges remain.

Here are five things to know about the Taliban in power.

Culture wars and rewards

The Taliban supreme leader sits atop a pyramid-like ruling system as a paragon of virtue. Mosques and clerics are on one side. On the other is the Kabul administration, which implements clerics' decisions and meets with foreign officials.

"There are different levels of extremism, and the Taliban are in an uneasy coalition of ruling hard-liners and political pragmatists. It has put them in a culture war," said Javid Ahmad, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute.

The most controversial policies are unlikely to be reversed while supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada is in charge — and supreme leaders don't retire or resign. They lead until death.

It's wishful thinking that diverging opinions are enough to divide the Taliban, said Ibraheem Bahiss with Crisis Group's South Asia program. "The Taliban are unified and will remain a political force for many years. They rule as one group, they fight as one group."

To maintain cohesion and ensure discipline, seasoned Taliban have moved from the battlefield into bureaucracy, getting top jobs in government and provinces.

"You have to give them a reward for playing a significant role in the insurgency," Ahmad said. Other perks can include a free hand in the running of a province or permission to have a third or fourth wife, a new pickup truck, a share in customs fees or the keys to a house.

Running the country

Bahiss called this "the strongest Afghan government in modern times. They can exact a decree to the village level."

Civil servants keep the country running and are more likely to have a formal or technical education. But the Taliban leading civilian institutions have no proper knowledge of how such institutions are run. "Their qualifications come from God," Ahmad said.

The Taliban's legitimacy to govern doesn't come from Afghans but from their interpretation of religion and culture, said Leena Rikkila Tamang with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

If a government is defined by the trust and buy-in of citizens, recognition by international powers and legitimacy through processes like elections, then the Taliban do not qualify as a government, she said.

Keeping the lights on

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Afghanistan's economy has weakened. In 2023, foreign aid still made up around 30% of the country's GDP. The U.N. has flown in at least \$3.8 billion to fund international aid organizations during the past three years. The United States remains the largest donor, sending more than \$3 billion in assistance since the Taliban takeover. But the U.S. watchdog assigned to follow the money says a lot is taxed or diverted.

"The further the cash gets away from the source, the less transparency there is," said Chris Borgeson, the deputy inspector general for audits and inspections at the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

The Taliban also apply vigorous taxation. In 2023, they collected around \$2.96 billion. But that's not much in a country with huge and complex needs, and the Taliban don't have the means to stimulate the economy.

The central bank can't print money. Cash is printed abroad. Interest transactions are banned because interest is forbidden in Islam, and banks aren't lending. The Taliban can't borrow money because they're not recognized as the government, and international banking is cut off.

Natural disasters and the flow of Afghans fleeing Pakistan under pressure to return home have underlined Afghanistan's reliance on foreign aid to meet essential needs.

It's a big risk if the international community can't send that kind of aid in the future. "We know Afghanistan will start receiving less money from the international community," said Muhammad Waheed, World Bank senior economist for Afghanistan.

Another significant blow to the economy has been the Taliban's ban on female education and most employment, removing half of Afghanistan's population from the spending and taxpaying that can strengthen the economy.

In addition, the Taliban's anti-narcotics policy "has wrecked the livelihood of thousands of farmers," said Bahiss, warning that "just because the population is complacent right now, it won't stay that way."

Diplomacy and the global stage

Afghanistan is a small country in a neighborhood of giants, Bahiss said, and there's a regional consensus that it's better to have a stable Afghanistan.

But support from the West, especially the U.S., is key to unlocking billions in frozen assets and lifting sanctions.

The Taliban's links with China and Russia are important because they are permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. They have also occupied seats on the United Nations' Credentials Committee, which decides whether to withhold or bestow legitimacy on a government.

For now, Gulf nations are engaging with the Taliban to hedge their bets. "Qatar likes to be seen as leading mediation efforts and the (United Arab Emirates) has been taking that away, especially through supporting international aviation," Bahiss said.

A meeting this year between the leader of the UAE and a Taliban official facing a U.S. bounty over attacks highlighted the growing global divide on how to deal with the Taliban.

The Taliban are keen to stress how effective they are as a government and to show the country is peaceful and that services are being provided, said Weeda Mehran, an international relations lecturer at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom.

Although Afghanistan has lost dozens of media outlets due to a Taliban crackdown, the country's rulers have grasped the impact of social media. Their content is intended to normalize their approach to Islamic law, which is where Arabic-language messaging is important.

"It's a watered-down and whitewashed account of what is happening in the country," Mehran said.

Secure, but not safe

The Taliban have secured Afghanistan through checkpoints, armored vehicles and hundreds of thousands of fighters. But the country is not safe, especially for women and minorities, as civilian casualties from suicide bombings and other attacks persist.

The Islamic State group has repeatedly targeted the mostly Shiite Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood in Kabul. The police, slow to confirm attacks and casualty numbers, tell the media that investigations are underway.

but don't say if anyone is brought to justice.

A newer phenomenon is the anxiety experienced by Afghan women as the Taliban enforce decrees on clothing, work and travel and the requirement to have a male guardian when traveling.

"A message for the mainstream media is that it's OK and there is good security in Afghanistan under the Taliban," Mehran said. "My argument would be, well, whose security are we talking about?"

US Rep. Ilhan Omar, a member of the progressive 'Squad,' wins Democratic primary in Minnesota

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Democratic U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, one of the progressive House members known as the "Squad" and a sharp critic of how Israel has conducted the war in Gaza, has won her primary race in Minnesota.

Omar successfully defended her Minneapolis-area 5th District seat against a repeat challenge from former Minneapolis City Council member Don Samuels, a more centrist liberal whom she only narrowly defeated in the 2022 primary.

Speaking to supporters in Minneapolis, Omar echoed some of the themes of the Harris-Walz presidential campaign.

"We run the politics of joy," she said. "Because we know it is joyful to fight for your neighbors. ... We know it is joyful to make sure housing is a human right. We know it is joyful to fight for health care to be a human right. We know it is joyful to want to live in a peaceful and equitable world."

Omar avoided the fate of two fellow Squad members. Rep. Cori Bush lost the Democratic nomination in her Missouri district last week, and Rep. Jamaal Bowman of New York lost his primary in June. Both faced well-funded challengers and millions of dollars in spending by the United Democracy Project, a super political action committee affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which appeared to sit out the Minnesota race.

Samuels had criticized Omar's condemnation of the Israeli government's handling of the Israel-Hamas war. While Omar has also criticized Hamas for attacking Israel and taking hostages, Samuels said she's one-sided and divisive. He also stressed public safety issues in Minneapolis, where a former police officer murdered George Floyd in 2020.

Samuels said he was "very disappointed" with his loss.

"What I was hoping is that a strong ground game and an attention to the details of folks who felt left out would trump an overwhelming superiority in dollars," he said in an interview. "Clearly money matters a little more in politics than I had hoped."

Omar reported raising about \$6.2 million. Samuels raised about \$1.4 million.

Omar will face Republican Dalia Al-Aqidi, an Iraqi American journalist and self-described secular Muslim who calls Omar pro-Hamas.

Meanwhile, conservative populist and former NBA player Royce White defeated Navy veteran Joe Fraser in Minnesota's primary election for the Republican nomination to challenge Democratic U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar in November.

And former federal prosecutor Joe Teirab, supported by former President Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson and the National Republican Congressional Committee, won a contested GOP primary for Minnesota's 2nd District seat held by Democratic Rep. Angie Craig.

His opponent, defense attorney Tayler Rahm, won the endorsement at the district convention with support from grassroots conservatives.

While Rahm announced in July that he was suspending his campaign and would instead serve as a senior adviser for Trump's Minnesota campaign, he remained on the ballot.

Teirab will face Craig in what's expected to be Minnesota's most competitive House race in November.

"Tonight's definitive results send a clear message that Republicans are united and ready for change," Teirab said in a statement. "We are ready to support candidates who will strengthen our economy, secure

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the border, and restore safety in our communities.”

Craig issued a statement calling him “a guy who recently moved to the district because he saw a political opportunity.”

“He’s a guy who has spent months doing anything to win the support of Washington Republicans,” Craig said. “And he’s a guy who has made it his life’s mission to take away reproductive freedoms from families and give those decisions to politicians.”

In the U.S. Senate race, White — an ally of imprisoned former Trump aide Steve Bannon and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones — shocked many political observers when he defeated Fraser at the party convention for the GOP endorsement.

White’s social media comments have been denounced as misogynistic, homophobic, antisemitic and profane. His legal and financial problems include unpaid child support and questionable campaign spending, including \$1,200 spent at a Florida strip club after he lost his primary challenge to Omar in 2022. He argues that, as a Black man, he can broaden the party’s base by appealing to voters of color in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and others disillusioned with establishment politics.

Following his win, White said in a post on the social platform X: “Bring it on commies... The People Are Coming.”

Democratic leaders denounced him as a far-right extremist.

“While Royce White’s language and policies seek to divide Minnesotans, Senator Amy Klobuchar is focused on bringing people together to get things done, and she is consistently ranked as one of the most bipartisan and effective legislators in the Senate,” Ken Martin, the state Democratic Party chair, said in a statement. “The choice this November could not be more clear.”

Fraser said earlier that White’s confrontational style and message won’t attract the moderates and independents needed for a competitive challenge against Klobuchar, who’s seeking a fourth term. He said he offered a more mainstream approach, stressing fiscal conservatism, a strong defense, world leadership and small government. Fraser has also highlighted his 26 years in the Navy, where he was an intelligence officer and served a combat tour in Iraq.

Neither had anywhere near the resources that Klobuchar has. White last reported raising \$133,000, while Fraser took in \$68,000. Klobuchar, meanwhile, has collected about \$19 million this cycle and has more than \$6 million available to spend on the general election campaign. She faced only nominal primary opposition.

Another clash between establishment and grassroots Republicans played out in western Minnesota’s 7th District. Trump-backed GOP Rep. Michelle Fischbach, considered one of the most conservative members of Congress, defeated small businessman Steve Boyd. Boyd ran to her right on a religious platform and blocked her from getting endorsement at the district convention. Boyd reported spending \$170,000, while Fischbach spent over \$1 million.

Among the legislative primaries on the ballot Tuesday, Democrats picked former state Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart to face Republican Kathleen Fowke in a high-stakes race that will determine not only which party controls the state Senate, but whether Democrats maintain their narrow “trifecta” control of both chambers and the governor’s office. Democrats used that power to pass an ambitious agenda over the last two years that helped put Gov. Tim Walz on the radar of Vice President Kamala Harris before she picked him to be her running mate.

It will be the only state Senate seat in the November ballot. The seat in the western Minneapolis suburbs had been held by Democrat Kelly Morrison, who will face Republican Tad Jude for Minnesota’s 3rd Congressional District seat.

Presented with rise in border crossings, Harris chose a long-term approach to the problem

By DAN MERICA, NICHOLAS RICCARDI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden, watching tens of thousands of migrants from Central America reach the U.S.-Mexico border just a few months into his administration, tapped his second-in-command

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to help address the influx — a decision that has exposed Vice President Kamala Harris to one of her biggest political liabilities.

In grappling with migration, Harris proceeded cautiously. She focused her time and prestige on boosting private investment in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, the so-called Northern Triangle; her goal was to help create jobs to bolster economies and dissuade migrants from making the perilous journey to the United States.

It was a decidedly long-term — and limited — approach to a humanitarian crisis, and it has allowed Republicans to tie her to the broader fight over the border. While migration from the Northern Triangle ebbed, it surged from other nations, sparking an emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border, one that Republicans have aggressively sought to exploit at Harris' expense.

A review of Harris' work on immigration reveals a record that is more nuanced than the one presented by her critics or allies. It also provides insights into how Harris — who took over as the Democratic standard-bearer when Biden dropped out of the presidential race last month — might tackle one of the nation's most vexing concerns.

Harris was never the "border czar," or put in charge of border security or halting illegal border crossings, as former President Donald Trump, Republicans and even the occasional media outlet have claimed. Instead, she was tasked in March 2021 with tackling the "root causes" of migration from the Northern Triangle and pushing its leaders — along with Mexico's — to enforce immigration laws, administration officials said.

Harris' backers say she demonstrated leadership by leveraging her stature to win investments that might curb migration years down the road.

"She felt — and I think she was right — that what she could do the most was help basically lead the effort to draw in investment, using the confidence that a relationship with the White House would give to investors," said Ricardo Zúniga, a former State Department official who specialized in the Northern Triangle and who traveled with Harris to the region.

Critics contend that she could have done far more but chose a less risky path, ensuring the problem only worsened.

"She was like, 'nope, I'm just root causes,'" said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration. "Even if it worked, it's the sort of thing that takes generations, not one term."

He also said there was no evidence that Harris pushed Mexico and the Northern Triangle nations to enforce immigration laws.

Harris has defended her work, and her campaign began running a television ad Friday that said Harris as president would "hire thousands more border agents and crack down on fentanyl and human trafficking." Democrats have also blasted Trump for helping tank a bipartisan immigration bill earlier this year that would have increased funding for border security, including the hiring of new Customs and Border Protection personnel.

Trump "has been talking a big game on securing the border, but he does not walk the walk," the vice president said last month in Atlanta. Later, she added, "Donald Trump does not care about border security. He only cares about himself."

Immigration becomes a big political issue

Immigration has long been an issue that motivates Trump and his base of supporters, and polls show it is among the most important issues on the minds of voters. As a presidential candidate in 2016, Trump said he would build a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico and get Mexico to pay for it. Trump was not able to complete the project, and Mexico did not fund the part of the barrier that was constructed. The former president also used explosive language to describe immigrants, launching his campaign by suggesting Mexico was sending its "rapists" and criminals to the United States.

While in office, Trump sought to tightly restrict asylum, which was challenged in the courts. This time around, Trump has promised to oversee a "mass deportation" of migrants who have committed crimes in the United States.

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Migration numbers have spiked and dropped during both presidencies. Border Patrol arrests on the southern border fell in Trump's first year in office, then shot back up his next two, rising to more than 850,000 in 2019. The numbers plunged in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic before rising even higher during Biden's presidency, reaching a peak of more than 250,000 encounters in December 2023, before falling below 84,000 in June of 2024, federal statistics show.

When Biden took office, he reversed dozens of Trump's moves on immigration even as apprehension numbers began to rise.

Harris was put in a 'difficult spot'

Harris received the migration assignment when border crossings were rising, garnering considerable attention and leading to bipartisan calls for action.

Chris Newman, an immigration rights advocate in Los Angeles, said Harris was put in a difficult spot.

"She was tasked with developing a long-term policy framework rather than creating a short-term political performance project," said Newman, the legal director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network.

Biden and Harris had taken office only two months before, and Harris was under pressure to build her policy portfolio. When he was vice president, Biden had taken on a similar role on immigration. In 2021, though, Harris was dealing with an especially challenging situation given the lack of governing partners in the region. El Salvador's new president, Nayib Bukele, had a fraught relationship with the administration due to human rights questions raised by his crackdown on crime in his nation. The man who was then President of Honduras has since been convicted of drug trafficking.

The headaches for Harris began almost immediately, validating the concerns of some on her team that it was a no-win assignment.

Harris traveled to Mexico and Guatemala in June 2021, where she defended the fact she had not been to the U.S.-Mexico border during an interview with NBC's Lester Holt by saying she hadn't "been to Europe. And I mean, I don't ... understand the point that you're making."

She also drew criticism on that trip for warning migrants bluntly: "Don't come" to the U.S.

Harris decided to focus on bringing private investment to the region, tapping into a network of business and nonprofit executives and using the prestige of the White House to signal the Biden administration was backing this effort.

The work linked multinational companies — like Visa, Nestle and Meta — with smaller nonprofits and Latin American businesses, all of which pledged to increase their investments or bolster their work with at-risk communities.

Focused on private investment

The Associated Press contacted all the nearly two dozen companies the White House touted as participants in the outreach effort. Some, like Agroamerica, a sustainable food corporation, that pledged to invest more than \$100 million in six new projects, reported their work had begun and they were on track to meet their investment goals. Others, including Columbia Sportswear Company, said they would likely surpass their pledges.

Most companies, however, either declined to comment or did not respond when asked about their efforts.

The vice president's office has said Harris' efforts have generated more than \$5.2 billion in investment promises. In an illustration of how long it takes the promises to translate into concrete spending, the State Department reported that companies have plowed nearly \$1.3 billion in the region as of June 2024, the bulk of it in Guatemala and Honduras.

"We are on track to exceed our commitments," Peter Bragdon, a top executive at Columbia Sportswear Company, said of their promise to purchase up to \$200 million in products from the region. That pledge would create nearly 7,000 jobs over five years, the company said. The executive called Harris' efforts a "work in progress" but "a smart approach."

Katie Tobin, who worked as the top migration adviser at the National Security Council for three years, credited Harris' focus with spurring investment in reducing these numbers, arguing that Harris "was able to leverage her credibility" and the power of the White House to convince companies to invest in "a risky investment environment."

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"That was very much Kamala Harris," she added. "I have never seen something like that done before in this space and it made a real impact."

Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida, a sharp critic of Harris, said the vice president and White House were taking credit for investments that would have been made anyway.

The companies are "not doing it because someone asked them to," said Scott, who co-founded a major medical company. "They're doing it because it makes economic sense."

Addressed corruption

Harris also sought to address endemic corruption that has fueled migration from Central America. Before her 2021 trip to Guatemala, Harris met with a group of exiled Guatemalan prosecutors and judges in Washington.

Among them was Thelma Aldana, a former chief prosecutor who fled her country after what she said were politically motivated corruption charges.

"I came out of it convinced that she has a genuine interest in seeing things change in Central America," Aldana said.

The vice president also deserves credit for helping stop Guatemala's former president, Alejandro Giammattei, from overturning the 2023 election of his successor, Bernardo Arévalo, according to Luis Von Ahn, a U.S.-based technology entrepreneur from Guatemala.

"Giammattei didn't want to leave power, the administration of Kamala Harris came and told him 'stop (messing) around,'" said Von Ahn, the founder of the language app Duolingo. "That's a big help to Guatemala. If an extremely corrupt president doesn't want to leave it's terrible and (his exit) lets us be a better country."

Verdict is out on Harris' approach

While the Harris campaign and White House have pointed to statistics that show migration from Northern Triangle countries has dropped substantially since early 2021, there is debate over what is responsible for that drop.

Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat, said Harris and the administration deserve credit for the reduction because their efforts "worked."

Independent analysts, however, said they were skeptical that Harris' approach was responsible for the dip. They said the decrease was likely driven by regional factors, including the ascension of El Salvador's new president and his aggressive drive to combat violent crime. His government reported a 70% drop in homicides in 2023.

Julia Gelatt, associate director of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, said investment can take years to alter migration patterns — if it ever does.

"Even a whole lot of economic development doesn't curb immigration in the way countries hope it will," Gelatt said.

Arizona and Missouri will join 5 other states with abortion on the ballot. Who are the others?

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and KIM KRUESI Associated Press

Election officials in Arizona and Missouri this week announced that abortion-rights supporters in their states had gathered enough petition signatures to put proposed amendments enshrining abortion rights into their states' constitutions, bringing to seven the number of states with abortion votes set for November.

The U.S. Supreme Court removed the nationwide right to abortion with a 2022 ruling, which sparked a national push to have voters decide.

Since the decision, most Republican-controlled states have passed abortion restrictions, including 14 that ban it at every stage of pregnancy. Most Democratic-led states have laws or executive orders to protect access.

Voters in all seven states that have had abortion questions before voters since 2022 — California, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Ohio and Vermont — have sided with abortion rights supporters.

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What is on 2024 ballots?

MISSOURI

Missouri voters will decide whether to guarantee a right to abortion with a constitutional amendment that would reverse the state's near-total ban.

The secretary of state's office certified Tuesday that an initiative petition received more than enough signatures from registered voters to qualify for the general election. It will need approval from a majority of voters to become enshrined in the state constitution.

The Missouri ballot measure would create a right to abortion until a fetus could likely survive outside the womb without extraordinary medical measures, generally considered around 23 or 24 weeks into pregnancy. The ballot measure would allow abortions after fetal viability if a health care professional determines it's necessary to protect the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

ARIZONA

Voters in Arizona will decide in November whether to amend the state constitution to add the right to an abortion up to about 24 weeks into pregnancy. The Arizona secretary of state's office said Monday that it had certified enough signatures to put the measure on the ballot.

Under the proposed amendment, the state would not be able to ban abortion until the fetus is viable, with later abortions allowed to protect a woman's physical or mental health. Opponents of the proposed amendment say it goes too far and could lead to unlimited and unregulated abortions in Arizona. Supporters say it would protect abortion access free from political interference.

Abortion is currently legal for the first 15 weeks of pregnancy in Arizona.

COLORADO

Colorado's top election official confirmed in May that a measure to enshrine abortion protections in the state constitution, along with requirements that Medicaid and private health insurers cover abortion, made the ballot for the fall election.

Supporters said they gathered nearly double the required number of signatures needed.

Amending the state constitution requires the support of 55% of voters.

Abortion is already legal at all stages of pregnancy in Colorado.

FLORIDA

The state Supreme Court ruled in April that a measure to legalize abortion until viability could go on the ballot despite a legal challenge from the state. Attorney General Ashley Moody had argued that there are differing views on the meaning of "viability" and that some key terms in the proposed measure are not properly defined.

To pass, the measure needs support from at least 60% of voters, a high threshold that supporters say they are hopeful of reaching after collecting nearly a million signatures on the petition to get it on the ballot.

Abortion is currently illegal in Florida after the first six weeks of pregnancy under a law that took effect May 1.

MARYLAND

Maryland voters also will be asked this year to enshrine the right to abortion in the state's constitution. Abortion is already allowed in Maryland until viability.

NEVADA

The Nevada Secretary of State's office announced in June that a ballot question to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution has met all of the requirements to appear in front of voters in November.

Under the amendment, abortion access for the first 24 weeks of pregnancy — or later to protect the health of the pregnant person — would be protected. To change the constitution, voters would need to approve it in both 2024 and 2026.

Abortion up until viability is already allowed in the state under a law passed in 1990.

SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota voters will decide this fall on a constitutional amendment that would ban any restrictions on abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy. The measure would allow the state in the second trimester

to “regulate the pregnant woman’s abortion decision and its effectuation only in ways that are reasonably related to the physical health of the pregnant woman.” An abortion ban would be allowed in the third trimester, as long as it included exceptions for the life and health of the woman.

Opponents have sued to try to take the initiative off the ballot.

What’s on the ballot in New York?

While not explicitly preserving a right to abortion, a reproductive rights question is on the ballot in New York. The measure would bar discrimination based on “pregnancy outcomes” and “reproductive health-care,” along with sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin and disability. Abortion is currently allowed in New York until fetal viability.

The question was on the ballot, then removed in May by a judge who found lawmakers missed a procedural step when they put it there. An appeals court reinstated it in June.

Where else could abortion be on the ballot in 2024?

MONTANA

Abortion rights proponents in Montana have proposed a constitutional amendment that would bar the government from denying the right to abortion before viability or when it is necessary to protect the life or health of the pregnant person.

After a legal battle over the ballot language, the Montana Supreme Court in April wrote its version of the language that would appear on the ballot if enough valid signatures are certified. Sponsors were required to submit about 60,000 signatures by June 21. They turned in nearly twice that many — about 117,000 — and backers have said counties have validated more than enough signatures. The secretary of state has until Aug. 22 to finalize the November ballot.

Abortion is already legal until viability in the state under a 1999 Montana Supreme Court opinion.

NEBRASKA

Competing abortion measures could be before voters in November after supporters of each said this month that they turned in far more signatures than the 123,000 required for ballot access.

One would enshrine in the state constitution the right to abortion until viability. Supporters said they submitted more than 207,000 signatures.

The other would write into the constitution the current law, which bars abortions after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, with some exceptions. Its backers said they submitted more than 205,000 signatures.

The measure that gets the most votes will become part of the state constitution.

Donald Trump is going to North Carolina for an economic speech. Can he stick to a clear message?

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Donald Trump will have another opportunity Wednesday to recalibrate his presidential comeback bid, this time with a rally and speech in North Carolina that his campaign is billing as a significant economic address.

Set in a Democratic city surrounded by staunchly Republican mountain counties, the event carries both national and local implications for the former president.

Republicans are looking for Trump to focus the scattershot arguments and attacks he has made on Vice President Kamala Harris since Democrats elevated her as their presidential nominee. Twice in the last week, Trump has fumbled such an opportunity, first in an hourlong news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, then in a 2 1/2-hour conversation on the social media platform X with CEO Elon Musk.

The latest attempt comes in the state that delivered Trump his closest statewide margin of victory four years ago and that is once again expected to be a battleground in 2024. Trump won North Carolina over Democrat Joe Biden in 2020 by less than 1.4 percentage points — about 74,500 votes — and he can’t afford to have the state’s 16 electoral votes shift to Democrats for the first time since Barack Obama prevailed here in 2008.

“We look forward to welcoming President Trump to western North Carolina and talking about how he will

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restore our economy," said North Carolina Republican Chair Jason Simmons. "This visit shows Republicans understand that North Carolina is bigger than Charlotte and Raleigh — beyond I-77 and I-95 — and these communities here are important."

The question, of course, is whether Trump can stick to a tight frame on the economy rather than default to his usual stemwinding and extensive grievances.

Certainly, Trump has been hitting Harris, and Biden before her, on the economy. But he's done it mostly with hyperbole, such as exhortations of a "Kamala crash ... the likes of 1929" to go with other sweeping generalizations, like warning of "World War III" and U.S. suburbs being "overrun with violent foreign gangs." Trump made almost verbatim claims about Biden's potential election in 2020.

Trump has in recent weeks claimed that "you wouldn't have had inflation" had he been reelected, ignoring the global supply chain interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic; COVID-19 spending boosts that included a massive aid package Trump signed as president; and the global energy price effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The former president has additionally promised an immediate fix to higher prices in another term. His principal policy proposals on that front are an uptick in drilling for oil (U.S. production has reached its highest levels ever under Biden), new tariffs on foreign imports and an extension of his 2017 tax cuts that are set to expire under the next administration.

But at Mar-a-Lago, in his talk with Musk, on his own Truth Social platform and at his most recent rallies and other interviews, Trump has overshadowed his own economic agenda. He's fixated on personally attacking Harris, falsely accusing her of misrepresenting her own race and ethnicity. He's slipped back into old attacks on Biden and repeated the lie that his 2020 defeat was due to systemic voter fraud. Most recently, he's started lashing out over the size and enthusiasm of the crowds Harris is drawing on the campaign trail, even falsely claiming a photo of her rally was fabricated with AI.

Those factors have made it difficult for Trump to render a clearer policy contrast with the Democratic ticket, no matter how much his aides push the idea of such a reframing.

Announcing his speech, Trump's campaign listed the effects that inflation has had in North Carolina since Biden's inauguration in 2021. The campaign did the same thing ahead of Trump's Aug. 3 rally in Atlanta. Trump even read the statistics from the teleprompter — but did so only near the end of 91 minutes at the podium and long after a few thousand of the once-capacity crowd had left.

North Carolina, meanwhile, is another battleground state where Trump must contend with the newly emboldened Harris campaign in territory that had appeared to be trending toward Republicans with Biden as the Democratic nominee.

The Harris campaign has more than 20 offices and more than 170 staffers across North Carolina. Since the vice president became the presumptive nominee, nearly 12,000 new volunteers have signed up, the campaign said; more than 9,500 volunteers have worked a volunteer shift in some capacity in that same span, with nearly 90% of that group doing so for the first time.

State GOP spokesperson Matt Mercer said there are more than a dozen "Trump Force 47" offices in North Carolina, with more than a dozen paid staffers working to expand the volunteer base of "Trump Force 47 Captains" across the state.

Asheville and the surrounding area will prove key to the outcome. Set against the Blue Ridge Mountains, the city has a liberal cultural identity with a Bohemian feel and live music and craft beer scene that attracts left-leaning students, retirees and tourists. But the surrounding western North Carolina mountain counties have grown increasingly Republican in recent election cycles.

Longest-held Russian dissident freed in swap says 'colors get brighter by the day' in his new life

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Andrei Pivovarov knows there are about 1,000 hours in 42 days.

Doing the math in his head and quietly marking milestones left in his sentence helped the Russian op-

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position politician survive more than three years in prison, much of it spent in complete isolation.

"You have no one to talk to, so you come up with causes" for celebration, Pivovarov said in an interview with The Associated Press. A scrap of a letter from his wife fashioned into a bookmark also became precious to him.

Freed on Aug. 1 in the historic East-West prisoner swap, Pivovarov now is figuring out a new life in Germany, where he reunited with his wife, Tatyana Usmanova.

Of all the dissidents Russia released, Pivovarov, 42, spent the most time behind bars. He had only about a month left to serve when he was plucked from the prison in northern Russia and flown to Germany. Usmanova already had started readying their St. Petersburg apartment for his homecoming.

The new reality of the world around him, rapidly expanding from a small, solitary cell, overwhelmed him at first. Knowing he won't see his home country for a long time initially left him depressed.

But it's getting easier, he said, and "colors get brighter by the day."

Life inside a notorious prison

Pivovarov was arrested in May 2021 — nearly a year before President Vladimir Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine and intensified a crackdown on dissent to unprecedented levels.

He was pulled off a flight from St. Petersburg to Warsaw while the plane was taxiing on the tarmac. Authorities accused him of carrying out activities on behalf of an "undesirable organization" — an opposition group he ran — and he was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison.

Pivovarov, who was used to spending short stints in jail, said he realized shortly after his detention that this one was unlikely to be brief, so he told himself to stay focused and alert — a mental state he says helped him endure the challenges of imprisonment.

Pivovarov served his sentence in Penal Colony No. 7, a notoriously harsh facility in the Karelia region where tycoon-turned-opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky was held, as was Putin critic Ilya Dadin, whose accounts of beatings and abuse there in 2016 made international headlines.

Immediately upon arrival in January 2023, Pivovarov was isolated from other inmates, and stayed that way until his release.

He described strict conditions in which officials made him follow every regulation to the letter, even when it made no sense.

His possessions — food, books, clothes, the files of his criminal case — were weighed, making sure he didn't have more than the allowed 36 kilograms (79 pounds). Minor infractions, such as an unbuttoned shirt, brought punishment. A camera monitored his movements in the cell.

"You're given half an hour to brush your teeth. But it takes me 10 minutes to brush and shave. So I started reading a book," and a guard immediately appeared and wrote him up for "reading a book during the time allocated for brushing," Pivovarov recalled.

He also had to clean his cell for two hours every day, whether it was dirty or not.

With a laugh, Pivovarov said he became an expert at stretching pointless mopping into a process that would satisfy prison officials and "looks very natural on surveillance cameras."

A prison wedding

Last year, Pivovarov and Usmanova were married in a brief ceremony in the prison.

While not the most romantic setting, it allowed Usmanova to see him, including on longer visits when they could spend several days in an apartment-like unit at the facility.

Throughout his trial and subsequent imprisonment, Usmanova said she was told repeatedly by various officials that she was "no one to Andrei."

"I was barred from court hearings, Andrei wasn't allowed to even apply for a phone call to me," she recalled.

It took them weeks to assemble the paperwork, and in July 2023, Usmanova wore a simple white dress for the brief ceremony officiated by a registrar in the penal colony's kitchen.

Usmanova said it was the first time since his arrest over two years earlier that she was able to hug Pivovarov.

When he was brought back to his cell, he said an official told him, "Whether you're the groom or not,

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the cleaning won't take care of itself," and he resumed mopping.

A bookmark from home

What kept him going?

A bookmark with a cat he made from one of Usmanova's letters that he kept without prison officials noticing. Counting how many thousands of hours left on his sentence. Watching the news on state TV and trying to decipher what was really happening on the outside. Reading letters of support. Running circles in the prison yard for exercise.

Aided by his lawyers, Pivovarov also kept prison officials on their toes by filing or threatening complaints about their actions. The tactic often worked, he says, because penal colonies compete with each other for the fewest reprimands from authorities.

Usmanova, a former opposition activist herself, moved to Latvia after the war in Ukraine but regularly returned to Russia to send care packages to Pivovarov and visit him in prison.

She carefully selected what was in the packages to keep him healthy in a place where food is poor and natural light is scarce, getting advice from doctors and physical fitness experts.

She also was prepared for things to take a turn for the worse, even as she arranged their St. Petersburg apartment for his release in September.

"Every minute, I was expecting a call from the lawyers saying that Andrei won't be released, that there will be another criminal case against him," she said, noting a common practice with political activists.

Both intended to stay in St. Petersburg, especially since Pivovarov was set to face parole-like restrictions even after serving his entire sentence.

But the swap changed all of their plans.

Finding a clear path ahead

Just like others in the exchange, Pivovarov didn't know he was part of a swap until he was put on a bus to an airport in Moscow. His deportation was without his consent, and he said it was hard for him to see the streets of the capital from the bus window, knowing it would be the last time in a while to see them.

That sadness persisted for the first few days after the swap, he said.

"I have never in my life felt like a person who has no home, who doesn't know what's going to happen next," he added.

Usmanova also said it's a stressful time for her, even though she is now reunited with her husband. She lived with uncertainty for three years and moved to Latvia, and now it's "unclear what lies ahead" in Germany.

But as he counts the days since his release and the next steps become clearer, the future looks less scary, Pivovarov said.

He plans to resume his political activities against the Kremlin in order to make "those who expelled me regret it," he said.

He also wants to show the German government that the political risks it faces from the prisoner swap — trading convicted Russian assassin Vadim Krasikov to Moscow for the freed dissidents — were not in vain.

Pivovarov said he wants to demonstrate to his hosts that "the guy who they took in showed the authorities that expelled him that it will come back to haunt them."

Inflation likely stayed low last month as Federal Reserve edges closer to cutting rates

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — If the Federal Reserve needs any further evidence that the worst price spike in four decades is steadily easing, it's likely to come Wednesday, when the government is expected to report that inflation cooled further last month.

Consumer prices are thought to have risen just 0.2% from June to July, according to economists surveyed by FactSet, a pace only slightly above the Fed's 2% annual inflation target. Measured from a year earlier, inflation is forecast to have remained 3%, the same as in June.

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Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices are also expected to have risen 0.2% from June and 3.2% from 12 months earlier, just below the 3.3% annual increase in June.

For months, cooling inflation has provided gradual relief to America's consumers, who were stung by the price spikes that erupted three years ago, particularly for food, gas, rent and other necessities. Inflation peaked two years ago at 9.1%, the highest level in four decades.

Inflation has taken a central role in the presidential election, with former President Donald Trump blaming the Biden administration's energy policies for the price spikes. Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday said she would soon unveil new proposals to "bring down costs and also strengthen the economy overall."

Grocery prices are expected to have been largely unchanged from June to July, according to economists at UBS. Over the past year, food prices are up just 1.1%. Still, food costs have soared roughly 21% in the past three years, squeezing many family budgets.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has said he is seeking additional evidence of slowing inflation before the Fed begins cutting its key interest rate. Economists widely expect the Fed's first rate cut to occur in mid-September.

When the central bank lowers its benchmark rate, over time it tends to reduce the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses. Mortgage rates have already declined in anticipation of the Fed's first rate reduction.

At a news conference last month, Powell said that cooler inflation data this spring had strengthened the Fed's confidence that price increases are falling back to a 2% annual pace. Inflation was low in May, and overall consumer prices slipped 0.1% in June, the first decline in four years.

"It's just a question of seeing more good data," Powell said. Another inflation report will be issued next month before the Fed's Sept. 17-18 meeting, with economists expecting that report to also show that price increases remained mostly tame.

Raphael Bostic, president of the Fed's Atlanta branch, sounded more explicit about rate cuts in remarks he made Tuesday:

"Yes, it's coming," Bostic said in Atlanta to the Conference of African American Financial Professionals. "I want to see a little more data. ... We need to make sure the trend is real ... but it is coming."

Inflation has eased substantially in the past two years as global supply chains have been repaired, a spate of apartment construction in many large cities has cooled rental costs and higher interest rates have slowed auto sales, forcing dealers to offer better deals to potential car buyers.

Consumers, particularly lower-income ones, are also becoming more price-sensitive, forgoing high-priced items or shifting to cheaper alternatives. This has forced many companies to rein in price hikes or even offer lower prices.

Prices are still rising sharply for some services, including auto insurance and health care. Auto insurance costs have shot up as the value of new and used vehicles has soared compared with three years ago. Economists, though, expect those costs to eventually grow more slowly.

As inflation continues to decline, the Fed is paying increasingly close attention to the job market. The central bank's goals, as defined by Congress, are to keep prices stable and support maximum employment.

This month, the government reported that hiring slowed much more than expected in July and that the unemployment rate rose for a fourth straight month, though to a still-low 4.3%. The figures roiled financial markets and led many economists to boost their forecasts for interest rate cuts this year. Most analysts now expect at least three quarter-point rate cuts at the Fed's September, November and December meetings. The Fed's benchmark rate is at a 23-year high of 5.3%.

Still, the rise in the unemployment rate has reflected mainly an influx of job-seekers, especially new immigrants, who haven't immediately found work and so have been classified as unemployed. That is a much more positive reason for a higher unemployment rate than if it came from a jump in layoffs. Measures of job cuts remain low.

On Thursday, the government will release its latest data on retail sales, which are expected to show that consumers increased their spending modestly in July. As long as shoppers are willing to spend, businesses

are likely to hold onto their workers and may even add staff.

A strengthening Ernesto is poised to become a hurricane after brushing past Puerto Rico

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Tropical Storm Ernesto was poised to become a hurricane shortly after brushing past Puerto Rico late Tuesday as officials closed schools, opened shelters and moved dozens of the U.S. territory's endangered parrots into hurricane-proof rooms.

Ernesto is forecast to become a hurricane overnight as the center of the storm moves just northeast of Puerto Rico on a path toward Bermuda. Forecasters issued a hurricane watch for the U.S. and British Virgin Islands as well as the tiny Puerto Rican islands of Vieques and Culebra, which are popular with tourists.

"Since there is some chance of Ernesto becoming a hurricane while it is near the Virgin Islands, a hurricane watch remains in effect," the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

The storm moved over the U.S. Virgin Islands on Tuesday night. After passing Puerto Rico, it is expected to move into open waters and be near Bermuda on Friday.

Heavy rains began pelting Puerto Rico, and strong winds churned the ocean into a milky turquoise as people rushed to finish securing homes and businesses.

"I'm hoping it will go away quickly," said José Rodríguez, 36, as he climbed on the roof of his uncle's wooden shack in the Afro-Caribbean community of Piñones on Puerto Rico's north coast to secure the business famous for its fried street food.

Ernesto was about 60 miles (95 kilometers) east-northeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico late Tuesday night. It had maximum sustained winds of 65 mph (100 kph) and was moving northwest at 17 mph (28 kph).

"We are going to have a lot of rain," Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi said as he urged people to be indoors by early Tuesday evening.

He activated the National Guard as crews across the island visited flood-prone areas and older residents as part of last-minute preparations. Meanwhile, Department of Natural Resources officials who work at breeding centers for the island's only remaining native parrot, the Puerto Rico Amazon, moved them indoors.

Ernesto Rodríguez with the National Weather Service warned that the storm's trajectory could change as it approaches Puerto Rico.

"We should not lower our guard," he said.

As intermittent rain pelted Puerto Rico's northeast, residents in Piñones tried to squeeze in a couple more hours of work.

María Abreu, 25, prepared fried pastries stuffed with shrimp, crab, chicken and even iguana meat as she waited for customers.

"They always come. They buy them in case the power goes out," she said.

Down the road, Juan Pizarro, 65, picked nearly 100 coconuts from palm trees swaying in the strong breeze. He had already secured his house.

"I'm ready for anything," he said.

Forecasters have warned of waves of up to 20 feet (six meters), widespread flooding and possible landslides, with six to eight inches (15-20 centimeters) of rain forecast for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) in isolated areas. Puerto Rico has six reservoirs that already were overflowing before the storm.

Officials in Puerto Rico warned of widespread power outages given the crumbling electric grid, which crews are still repairing after Hurricane Maria razed it in September 2017 as a Category 4 storm.

Juan Saca, president of Luma Energy, a private company that operates the transmission and distribution of power in Puerto Rico, urged people to report blackouts: "Puerto Rico's electrical system is not sufficiently modernized to detect power outages."

Outages also were a concern in the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands for similar reasons, with blackouts reported on St. Thomas and St. John on Monday.

"Don't sleep on this," said U.S. Virgin Islands Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., whose administration announced early Tuesday that it was closing all schools.

The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency echoed those warnings, saying residents in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands "should be prepared for extended power outages."

Early Tuesday, Ernesto drenched the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, where officials closed several main roads and warned that the quality of potable water would be affected for several days. Meanwhile, the storm downed a couple of trees in Antigua, and knocked out power to most of the island. Ernesto also forced the cancellation of dozens of flights to and from Puerto Rico.

Ernesto is the fifth named storm of this year's Atlantic hurricane season.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year because of record warm ocean temperatures. It forecast 17 to 25 named storms, with four to seven major hurricanes of Category 3 or higher.

Israeli strikes on Gaza leave children without parents and parents without children

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Reem Abu Hayyah, just three months old, was the only member of her family to survive an Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip late Monday. A few miles (kilometers) to the north, Mohamed Abuel-Qomasan lost his wife and their twin babies — just four days old — in another strike.

More than 10 months into its war with Hamas, Israel's relentless bombardment of the isolated territory has wiped out extended families. It has left parents without children and children without parents or siblings.

And some of the sole survivors are so young they will have no memory of those they lost.

The Israeli strike late Monday destroyed a home near the southern city of Khan Younis, killing 10 people. The dead included Abu Hayyah's parents and five siblings, ranging in age from 5 to 12, as well as the parents of three other children. All four children were wounded in the strike.

"There is no one left except this baby," said her aunt, Soad Abu Hayyah. "Since this morning, we have been trying to feed her formula, but she does not accept it, because she is used to her mother's milk."

The strike that killed Abuel-Qomasan's wife and newborns — a boy, Asser, and a girl, Ayssel — also killed the twins' maternal grandmother. As he sat in a hospital, stunned into near-silence by the loss, he held up the twins' birth certificates.

His wife, Joumana Arafa, a pharmacist, had given birth by cesarean section four days ago and announced the twins' arrival on Facebook. On Tuesday, he had gone to register the births at a local government office. While he was there, neighbors called to say the home where he was sheltering, near the central city of Deir al-Balah, had been bombed.

"I don't know what happened," he said. "I am told it was a shell that hit the house."

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the strikes.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said 115 newborns have been killed in the territory since the war began.

The military says it tries to avoid harming Palestinian civilians, and blames their deaths on Hamas because the militants operate in dense residential areas, sometimes sheltering in and launching attacks from homes, schools, mosques and other civilian buildings.

But the army rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry says nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, without saying how many were fighters.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 in the Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel that ignited the war. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has often said that "they killed parents in front of their children and children in front of their parents" to illustrate the brutality of the attack, most recently in his July address to the United States Congress.

Israel's offensive has left thousands of orphans — so many that local doctors employ an acronym when registering them: WCNSF, or "wounded child, no surviving family." The United Nations estimated in February

that some 17,000 children in Gaza are now unaccompanied, and the number is likely to have grown since.

The Abu Hayyah family was sheltering in an area that Israel had ordered people to evacuate in recent days. It was one of several such orders that have led hundreds of thousands to seek shelter in an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone consisting of squalid, crowded tent camps along the coast.

The vast majority of Gaza's population has fled their homes, often multiple times. The coastal strip, which is just 25 miles (40 kilometers) long by about 7 miles (11 kilometers) wide, has been completely sealed off by Israeli forces since May.

Around 84% of Gaza's territory has been placed under evacuation orders by the Israeli military, according to the United Nations.

Many families have ignored the evacuation orders because they say nowhere feels safe, or because they are unable to make the arduous journey on foot, or because they fear they will never be able to return to their homes, even after the war.

Abuel-Qomasan and his wife had heeded orders to evacuate Gaza City in the opening weeks of the war. They sought shelter in central Gaza, as the army had instructed.

UCLA can't allow protesters to block Jewish students from campus, judge rules

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal judge ruled Tuesday that the University of California, Los Angeles, cannot allow pro-Palestinian protesters to block Jewish students from accessing classes and other parts of campus.

The preliminary injunction marks the first time a U.S. judge has ruled against a university over the demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war on college campuses earlier this year.

U.S. District Judge Mark Scarsi's ruling came in a lawsuit filed in June by three Jewish students at UCLA. The students alleged that they experienced discrimination on campus during the protest because of their faith and that UCLA failed to ensure access to campus for all Jewish students.

"In the year 2024, in the United States of America, in the State of California, in the City of Los Angeles, Jewish students were excluded from portions of the UCLA campus because they refused to denounce their faith," Scarsi wrote.

UCLA argued that it has no legal responsibility over the issue because protesters, not the university, blocked Jewish students' access to the school. The university also worked with law enforcement to thwart attempts to set up new protest camps.

Scarsi ruled that the university is prohibited from providing classes and access to buildings on campus if Jewish students are blocked from it.

Yitzchok Frankel, a UCLA law student who filed the lawsuit, celebrated the order.

"No student should ever have to fear being blocked from their campus because they are Jewish," Frankel said in a statement. "I am grateful that the court has ordered UCLA to put a stop to this shameful anti-Jewish conduct."

UCLA spokesperson Mary Osako said the ruling "would improperly hamstring our ability to respond to events on the ground and to meet the needs of the Bruin community."

The university is also considering all available options moving forward, she said.

"UCLA is committed to fostering a campus culture where everyone feels welcome and free from intimidation, discrimination, and harassment," Osako said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The ruling came after Scarsi ordered UCLA last month to create a plan to protect Jewish students. The University of California, one of the nation's largest public university systems, is also working on systemwide campus guidelines on protests.

The demonstrations at UCLA became part of a movement at campuses across the country against the Israel-Hamas war. At UCLA, law enforcement ordered in May that over a thousand protesters break up their encampment as tensions rose on campus. Counter-demonstrators had attacked the encampment overnight and at least 15 protesters suffered injuries. In June, dozens of protesters on campus were arrested after they tried to set up a new encampment.

There's an apostrophe battle brewing among grammar nerds. Is it Harris' or Harris's?

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

Whatever possessed Vice President Kamala Harris to pick Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate, it probably wasn't a desire to inflame arguments about apostrophes. But it doesn't take much to get grammar nerds fired up.

"The lower the stakes, the bigger the fight," said Ron Woloshun, a creative director and digital marketer in California who jumped into the fray on social media less than an hour after Harris selected Walz last week to offer his take on possessive proper nouns.

The Associated Press Stylebook says "use only an apostrophe" for singular proper names ending in S: Dickens' novels, Hercules' labors, Jesus' life. But not everyone agrees.

Debate about possessive proper names ending in S started soon after President Joe Biden cleared the way for Harris to run last month. Is it Harris' or Harris's? But the selection of Walz with his sounds-like-an-s surname really ramped it up, said Benjamin Dreyer, the retired copy chief at Random House and author of "Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style".

Dreyer was inundated with questions within minutes of the announcement, which came while he was at the dentist.

"I was like, 'All right, everybody just has to chill. I'll be home in a little while and I can get to my desk,'" he said.

While there is widespread agreement that Walz's is correct, confusion persists about Harris' vs. Harris's. Dreyer's verdict? Add the 's.

"To set the 's is just simpler, and then you can take your valuable brain cells and apply them to more important things," he said.

Woloshun chimed in with a similar opinion on the social platform X, where apostrophes are being thrown around like hand grenades. "The rule is simple: If you say the S, spell the S," he argued.

That puts them on the same side as The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal — and at odds with AP.

While AP style has evolved on many fronts over the years, there are no immediate plans to change the guidance on possessives, said Amanda Barrett, AP's vice president for news standards and inclusion.

"This is a longstanding policy for the AP. It has served us well, and we've not seen any real need to change," she said. "We do know that the conversation is out there and people make different choices when it comes to grammar, and that's all fine. Everyone makes a choice that works best for them."

Timothy Pulju, a senior lecturer in linguistics at Dartmouth College, said that until the 17th or 18th century, the possessive of proper names ending in S — such as Jesus or Moses — often was simply the name itself with no apostrophe or additional S. Eventually, the apostrophe was added (Jesus' or Moses') to denote possession, though the pronunciation remained the same.

"That became kind of the standard that I was taught and adhere to, even though in retrospect, I don't think it's a great standard," he said.

That's because linguists view writing as a representation of speech, and speech has changed since then. Pulju said he expects the 's form to become dominant eventually. But for now, he — along with the Merriam-Webster dictionary — says either way is acceptable.

"As long as people are communicating successfully, we say language is doing what it's supposed to be doing," he said. "If you can read it whichever way it's written, then it seems like it's working for people. They're not getting confused about whose running mate Tim Walz is."

If she wins in November, Harris would become the fourth U.S. president with a last name ending in S and the first since Rutherford B. Hayes, who was elected in 1876 — 130 years before the founding of Twitter — and was spared the social media frenzy over apostrophes. Harris is the first nominee with such a tricky last name since 1988, when Democrat Michael Dukakis lost to George H.W. Bush.

Dukakis, now 90, said in a phone interview Monday that he doesn't recall any similar discussion when he was the nominee. But he agrees with the AP.

"It sounds to me like it would be s, apostrophe, and that's it," he said.

The Harris campaign, meanwhile, has yet to take a clear position. A press release issued Monday by her New Hampshire team touted "Harris's positive vision," a day after her national press office wrote about "Harris' seventh trip to Nevada."

Russia says it thwarted a Ukrainian charge to expand its incursion. Kyiv says it won't occupy land

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia said Tuesday that its forces checked an effort by Ukrainian troops to expand a stunning weeklong incursion into the Kursk region, as a Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Kyiv has no intention of occupying Russian territory.

Russian army units, including fresh reserves, aircraft, drone teams and artillery forces, stopped Ukrainian armored mobile groups from moving deeper into Russia near the Kursk settlements of Obshchy Kolodez, Snagost, Kauchuk and Alexeyevsky, a Russian Defense Ministry statement said.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Heorhii Tykhyi said the cross-border operation was aimed at protecting Ukrainian land from long-range strikes launched from Kursk.

"Ukraine is not interested in taking the territory of the Kursk region, but we want to protect the lives of our people," Tykhyi was quoted as saying by local media.

He said Russia had launched more than 2,000 strikes from the Kursk region in recent months using anti-aircraft missiles, artillery, mortars, drones, 255 glide bombs and more than 100 missiles.

"The purpose of this operation is to preserve the lives of our children, to protect the territory of Ukraine from Russian strikes," he said.

The commander of the Ukrainian military, Oleksandr Syrskyi, said in a video posted Tuesday to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Telegram channel that Ukraine now controls 74 settlements in the Kursk region.

Ukrainian troops have continued to advance, gaining control over 40 square kilometers (15 square miles) of territory in the past 24 hours, Syrskyi said.

"Fights are ongoing along the entire front line. The situation, despite the high intensity of combat, is under control," he added.

Ukraine's Western partners have said the country has the right to defend itself, including by attacking across the border. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Tuesday that he backed the Ukrainian operation, though he said Kyiv officials did not consult him about it beforehand.

Russian military actions in Ukraine bear "the hallmarks of genocide, inhumane crimes, and Ukraine has every right to wage war in such a way as to paralyze Russia in its aggressive intentions as effectively as possible," Tusk said.

Kremlin forces intensified their attacks in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's General Staff said Tuesday that over the previous 24 hours, Russian troops launched 52 assaults in the area of Pokrovsk, a town in Ukraine's Donetsk region that is close to the front line. That's roughly double the number of daily attacks there a week ago.

Ukraine's shorthanded army has struggled to hold back the bigger, better-equipped Russian forces in Donetsk.

The Ukrainian military claims that its charge onto Russian soil that began Aug. 6 has already encompassed about 1,000 square kilometers (386 square miles) of Russian territory. The goals of the swift advance into the Kursk region have been a closely guarded military secret.

Analysts say a catalyst may also have been Ukraine's desire to ease pressure on its front line by attempting to draw the Kremlin's forces into defending Kursk and other border areas. If so, the increased pressure around Pokrovsk suggests Moscow did not take the bait.

Ukraine's ambitious operation — the largest attack on Russia since World War II — has rattled the Kremlin.

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It compelled Russian President Vladimir Putin to convene a meeting Monday with his top defense officials. Apparently, Ukraine assembled thousands of troops — some Western analysts estimate up to 12,000 — on the border in recent weeks without Russia noticing or acting.

About 121,000 people have been evacuated from Kursk or have fled the areas affected by fighting on their own, Russian officials say. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said it has seen geolocated footage indicating that Ukrainian forces advanced as much as 24 kilometers (15 miles) from the border.

The Russian Defense Ministry appeared to support that claim when it said Tuesday it had also blocked an attack by the units of Ukraine's 82nd Air Assault Brigade toward Maryinka, which is about that distance from Ukraine.

Russian state television on Tuesday showed residents from evacuated areas lining up in buildings and on the street to receive food and water. Volunteers were pictured distributing bags of aid, while officials from the country's Ministry of Emergency Situations helped people, including children and older people, off buses.

"There is no light, no connection, no water. There is nothing. It's as if everyone has flown to another planet, and you are left alone. And the birds stopped singing," an older man called Mikhail told Russian state television. "Helicopters and planes fly over the yard and shells were flying. What could we do? We left everything behind."

A motive behind Ukraine's bold dive into Russia was to stir up unrest, according to Putin, but he said that effort would fail.

The successful border breach also was surprising because Ukraine has been short of people at the front as it waits for new brigades to complete training.

Dara Massicot, an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment, said the Ukrainian breakthrough was a smart move because it exploited gaps between various Russian commands in Kursk: border guards, Ministry of Defense forces and Chechen units that have been fighting on Russia's side in the war.

Russian command and control is fractured in Kursk, Massicot said on X late Monday.

The Ukrainian Army's General Staff announced Tuesday that it was establishing a 20-kilometer (12-mile) restricted-access zone along Russian-Ukrainian border in the northeastern Sumy region, which borders Kursk.

The measures were introduced because of the increasing intensity of combat in the area and the rising presence of Russian reconnaissance and sabotage units there, a statement said.

UN expert panel sent to Venezuela blasts lack of transparency in presidential elections

By JOSHUA GOODMAN undefined

MIAMI (AP) — A panel of experts from the United Nations said Venezuela's recent presidential elections lacked "basic transparency and integrity," adding an important voice to those who have cast doubt on President Nicolás Maduro's claim he won the contest.

A four-member team sent by U.N. Secretary General António Guterres was in Caracas for over a month in the run up to the July 28 election, one of the few independent outside observers invited by Maduro's government.

While the U.N. group praised the logistic organization of the voting, it harshly criticized the National Electoral Council, or CNE, for flouting local rules and announcing Maduro the winner without tabulated results from each of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide, something it said "had no precedent in contemporary democratic elections."

"This had a negative impact on confidence in the outcome announced by the CNE among a large part of the Venezuelan electorate," the U.N. experts said in a statement late Tuesday.

The U.N. statement follows criticism by another invited observer, the Atlanta-based Carter Center, which said it could not verify the CNE's results. Venezuela's foreign minister has blasted the Carter Center, ac-

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cluding it of lying and servings as a tool of U.S. "imperialism."

While the U.N. team stopped short of validating claims by the opposition that its candidate, former diplomat Edmundo González, trounced Maduro by a more than 2-to-1 margin, it said that the voting records the anti-Maduro coalition published online appeared to exhibit all of the original security features.

"This suggests a key transparency safeguard may be available, as intended, with respect to any officially released results," the experts added, noting that electoral authorities failed to meet with the group prior to the mission's departure from Venezuela five days after voting.

Since the election, security forces have arrested more than 2,000 people for demonstrating against Maduro or casting doubt on his claims that he won a third term.

Separately on Tuesday, the U.N.'s top human rights official expressed concern over the arbitrary detentions and "disproportionate use of force" in Venezuela as part of the crackdown.

"It is especially troubling that so many people are being detained, accused or charged either with incitement to hatred or under counterterrorism legislation," U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said in a statement. "Criminal law must never be used to limit unduly the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association."

Türk's comments come as Venezuela's opposition gears up for a demonstration Saturday that it hopes will increase pressure on Maduro to recognize defeat and negotiate a political transition.

"If Maduro makes a realistic evaluation of his options, he'll understand that digging in is not sustainable," opposition leader María Corina Machado told journalists Tuesday.

Machado, who anointed previously unknown retired diplomat Edmundo González as her stand-in once she was banned from running in the presidential campaign, spoke to journalists at a virtual press conference from an undisclosed location due to safety concerns.

In her comments, she tried to temper expectations for a quick resolution of the political crisis.

"Nobody knows how long it will take, but without a doubt there are painful days that await us," Machado said.

The U.N. human rights office said that in most of the cases it has documented, detainees haven't been allowed to appoint lawyers of their choice or have contact with their families. "Some of these cases would amount to enforced disappearances," it said.

Türk called for "the immediate release of everyone who has been arbitrarily detained, and for fair trial guarantees for all detainees." He added that "the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials and the attacks on demonstrators by armed individuals supporting the government, some resulting in deaths, must not be repeated."

Türk also noted there have been reports of violence against public officials and public buildings by some demonstrators and said violence is never the answer.

On Monday, International Criminal Court prosecutors said they are "actively monitoring" events in Venezuela.

US approves \$20 billion in weapons sales to Israel amid threat of wider Middle East war

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. has approved \$20 billion in arms sales to Israel, including scores of fighter jets and advanced air-to-air missiles, the State Department announced Tuesday.

Congress was notified of the impending sale, which includes more than 50 F-15 fighter jets, Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, or AMRAAMs, 120 mm tank ammunition and high explosive mortars and tactical vehicles and comes at a time of intense concern that Israel may become involved in a wider Middle East war.

However, the weapons are not expected to get to Israel anytime soon, they are contracts that will take years to fulfill. Much of what is being sold is to help Israel increase its military capability in the long term,

the earliest systems being delivered under the contract aren't expected until the 2026 timeframe.

"The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to U.S. national interests to assist Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defense capability. This proposed sale is consistent with those objectives," the State Department said in a release on the sale.

The Biden administration has had to balance its continued support for Israel with a growing number of calls from lawmakers and the U.S. public to curb military support there due to the high number of civilian deaths in Gaza. It has curbed one delivery of 2,000-pound weapons amid continued airstrikes by Israel in densely populated civilian areas in Gaza.

The contracts will cover not only the sale of new 50 aircraft to be produced by Boeing. It will also include upgrade kits for Israel to modify its existing fleet of two dozen F-15 fighter jets with new engines and radars, among other upgrades. The jets comprise the biggest portion of the \$20 billion in sales with the first deliveries expected in 2029.

Officer faces murder charge in shooting of pregnant Black woman who was accused of shoplifting

By PATRICK AFTOORA ORSAGOS and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — An Ohio police officer was indicted Tuesday on murder and other charges in the shooting of Ta'Kiya Young, a 21-year-old pregnant Black mother who was killed after being accused of shoplifting last August.

Young was suspected of stealing bottles of alcohol when Blendon Township police officer Connor Grubb and a fellow officer approached her car. The other officer ordered her out. Instead, she rolled forward toward Grubb, who fired a single bullet through her windshield into her chest. The daughter she was expecting three months later also died.

A Franklin County grand jury indicted Grubb on charges of murder, involuntary manslaughter and felonious assault in the death of Young and her baby. He is scheduled to be arraigned in court Wednesday. A warrant for his arrest was issued as part of the indictment.

Brian Steel, president of the union representing Blendon Township police, called the indictment deeply disappointing. "Like all law enforcement officers, Officer Grubb had to make a split-second decision, a reality all too familiar for those who protect our communities," he said in a statement.

Young's grandmother, Nadine Young, said the officer never should have pulled his gun when he first confronted her.

"He took a lot from us," she said on Tuesday. "It's not fair. We don't have her or the baby."

The last year has been difficult for the family, including her granddaughter's two young sons, she said. "It's been agony, it's been like a whirlwind of hurt and pain," she said.

Family members called for the officer to be charged shortly after the Aug. 24 shooting. After viewing bodycam footage showing the officer firing the gun, the family called his actions a "gross misuse of power and authority," especially given that Young had been accused of a relatively minor crime.

In the video, an officer at the driver's side window tells Young she's been accused of shoplifting and orders her out of the car. Young protests, both officers curse at her and yell at her to get out, and Young can be heard asking them, "Are you going to shoot me?"

Seconds later, she turns the steering wheel to the right, the car rolls slowly forward and Grubb fires his gun. Moments later, after the car comes to a stop against the building, they break the driver's side window. Police said they tried to save her life, but she was mortally wounded.

Sean Walton, the family's attorney, said the law is clear on when an officer can use deadly force.

"In no scenario does someone shoplifting contribute to their murder by a police officer," he said. "She bears no responsibility."

Some departments around the U.S. prohibit officers from firing at or from moving vehicles, and law enforcement groups such as the Police Executive Research Forum say shooting in such circumstances

creates an unacceptable risk to bystanders from stray gunfire or the driver losing control of the vehicle. The Blendon Township police department's use of force policy says officers should try to move away from an approaching vehicle instead of firing their weapons. An officer should only shoot when he or she "reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the imminent threat of the vehicle, or if deadly force other than the vehicle is directed at the officer or others."

The encounter between Young and police was among a troubling series of fatal shootings of Black adults and children by Ohio officers, and followed various episodes of police brutality against Black people across the nation over the past several years.

The state's Bureau of Criminal Investigation completed its investigation into the shooting last December before a special prosecutor was appointed to oversee the case. The prosecutor then presented evidence to the grand jury over two days. Grand juries don't consider guilt but instead look at whether there's enough evidence to proceed to a trial.

Blendon Township Police Chief John Belford said the department has started a disciplinary review now that Grubb has been indicted. A full-time officer with the township since 2019, Grubb has been on paid administrative leave since the shooting. His personnel file showed he had no disciplinary history on the job, his first as a police officer.

"No one at Blendon Township has passed any judgment on whether Officer Grubb acted within the law," the police chief said in a statement. "However, since people who've been indicted may not legally possess a firearm, the indictment against him leaves us with no choice but to begin the disciplinary process."

Houston prosecutors find no evidence of efforts to sway 2022 elections but charge a county worker

By NADIA LATHAN Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — An investigation found no evidence of intent to influence 2022 election outcomes in Texas' largest county, prosecutors announced Tuesday, but they will pursue criminal charges against a county employee who was allegedly working a second job while polls ran out of paper ballots.

Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg's review is one of several to scrutinize Houston's last midterm elections, when problems at polling places prompted Republican candidates to contest defeats in local races and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott to sign a law removing the elections administrator in the county of more than 5 million residents.

Ogg, an elected Democrat, said during a news conference that her office and investigators with the Texas Rangers found no evidence that elections employees intentionally tried to sway the results. But she said the investigation found that the failures of one elections employee — whose job was to make sure polling locations had enough paper ballots — resulted in some voters being unable to cast ballots.

That employee, Darryl Blackburn, was not charged with any election-related crimes. Instead, he faces charges related to improperly claiming hours on his timesheets and filing for paid time off while secretly working a more lucrative outside job, including on Election Day as some polling locations ran out of paper ballots.

The most serious of six charges filed against Blackburn, theft by public servant, carries a potential sentence of up to 10 years in prison.

Blackburn's attorney said his client is not guilty and slammed the charges as politically driven.

"This case isn't about the election — it's about timesheets," Houston attorney Charles Flood said in a statement. "The Texas Rangers made clear that the evidence shows no intent or attempt to influence the 2022 election, so it seems Ms. Ogg's only motivation is to try and claim my client as some sort of consolation prize."

Ogg said the employee's actions undermined voter confidence.

"It is clearly extremely important to look at these crimes in a nonpartisan way," Ogg said.

Last year, an audit by the Texas secretary of state's office also found that race outcomes were not affected by the issues in Houston. But the report did fault county administrators for failures, including

insufficient training for elections staff.

After the 2022 elections, Republican lawmakers effectively dismantled Harris County's elections office and turned the job back over to the county tax assessor and county clerk, which are both elected offices currently held by Democrats.

Harris County has been at the center of battles over voting rights and access in Texas in recent years. Democrats, who have expanded their victories in the county, have attacked new restrictions and state scrutiny over Houston's elections as politically motivated.

A Texas judge last year denied efforts by losing Republican candidates to overturn election results after the 2022 midterms. But he later ordered a new election in one race that was among the closest. That case remains pending on appeal.

Auto workers union seeks NLRB investigation of Trump and Musk comments about firing striking workers

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The United Auto Workers union has filed unfair labor practice charges against Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk after the two discussed on social media about Musk supposedly firing striking workers.

In documents filed Tuesday with the National Labor Relations Board, the union alleges that both men interfered with workers who may want to exercise their right to join a union. The NLRB said it would look into the charges, which are a request for the agency to investigate.

UAW President Shawn Fain, whose union has endorsed Democrat Kamala Harris, said in a statement that Trump is anti-labor.

"Both Trump and Musk want working class people to sit down and shut up, and they laugh about it openly," Fain said.

Brian Hughes, a senior advisor with the Trump campaign, called the allegations "frivolous" and a "shameless political stunt" designed to erode Trump's strong support among American workers.

The NLRB said it would investigate the complaints, one filed against the Trump campaign and the other naming Tesla Inc., the electric vehicle, battery and solar panel manufacturer based in Austin, Texas, and led by Musk.

The charges stem from statements made by Trump Monday night during a conversation between the two men on X, the social media platform Musk now owns. The former president spent much of the discussion that lasted more than two hours focused on his recent assassination attempt, illegal immigration and plans to cut government regulations.

But during a discussion about government spending, Trump praised Musk for firing workers who went on strike. The UAW contends this could intimidate workers for the Trump campaign or at Tesla who might want to join a union.

"You're the greatest cutter," Trump told Musk. "I look at what you do. You walk in and say, 'You want to quit?' I won't mention the name of the company but they go on strike and you say, 'That's OK. You're all gone.'"

Musk said, "Yeah," and laughed while Trump was talking.

It wasn't clear what employees Trump was referring to.

In June, eight former workers at SpaceX, Musk's rocket company, sued the company and Musk, alleging he ordered them fired after they challenged what they called rampant sexual harassment and a hostile "Animal House"-style work environment at the company.

In addition, the NLRB determined that a 2018 Twitter post by Musk unlawfully threatened Tesla employees with the loss of stock options if they decided to be represented by a union.

Three judges on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld that decision, as well as a related NLRB order that Tesla rehire a fired employee, with back pay. But the full 5th Circuit later threw

out that decision and voted to hear the matter again.

Sanjukta Paul, a law professor at the University of Michigan, said the UAW charges have real substance because the comments from Trump and Musk could "chill" efforts by workers to act collectively, including union organizing, or just getting together to improve working conditions.

"You're approvingly describing, you're wholeheartedly commending the blatant violation of our main federal labor statute," she said. "It would constitute interference with protected rights."

Marick Masters, a business professor emeritus at Wayne State University who follows labor issues, said the UAW's move "puts the spotlight on Trump and attempts to put him on the defensive in terms of his attitude and demeanor toward unions." He added that the union is watching Musk's comments because it has targeted Tesla's U.S. factories for organizing drives.

Biden announces \$150 million in research grants as part of his 'moonshot' push to fight cancer

By WILL WEISSERT and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — President Joe Biden is zeroing in on the policy goals closest to his heart now that he's no longer seeking a second term, visiting New Orleans on Tuesday to promote his administration's "moonshot" initiative aiming to dramatically reduce cancer deaths.

The president and first lady Jill Biden toured medical facilities that receive federal funding to investigate cancer treatments at Tulane University. Researchers used a piece of raw meat to demonstrate how they are working to improve scanning technology to quickly distinguish between healthy and cancerous cells during surgeries.

The Bidens then championed the announcement of \$150 million in awards from the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health. Those will support eight teams of researchers around the country working on ways to help surgeons more successfully remove tumors from people with cancer. It brings the total amount awarded by the agency to develop breakthrough treatments for cancers to \$400 million.

Cancer surgery "takes the best surgeons and takes its toll on families," Biden said. He said the demonstration of cutting-edge technology he witnessed would offer doctors a way to visualize tumors in real time, reducing the need for follow-on surgeries.

"We're moving quickly because we know that all families touched by cancer are in a race against time," Biden said.

The teams receiving awards include ones from Tulane, Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University, Rice University, the University of California, San Francisco, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the University of Washington and Cision Vision in Mountain View, California.

Before he leaves office in January, Biden hopes to move the U.S. closer to the goal he set in 2022 to cut U.S. cancer fatalities by 50% over the next 25 years, and to improve the lives of caregivers and those suffering from cancer.

"I'm a congenital optimist about what Americans can do," Biden said. "There's so much that we're doing. It matters"

Experts say the objective is attainable — with adequate investments.

"We're curing people of diseases that we previously thought were absolutely intractable and not survivable," said Karen Knudsen, CEO of the American Cancer Society and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

Cancer is the second-highest killer of people in the U.S. after heart disease. This year alone, the American Cancer Society estimates that 2 million new cases will be diagnosed and 611,720 people will die of cancer diseases.

Still, "if all innovation ended today and we could just get people access to the innovations that we know about right now, we think we could reduce cancer mortality by another 20 to 30%," Knudsen said.

The issue is personal enough for Biden that, in his recent Oval Office address about bowing out of the 2024 campaign, the president promised to keep fighting for "my cancer moonshot so we can end cancer

as we know it.”

“Because we can do it,” Biden said then.

He said in that speech that the initiative would be a priority of his final months in office, along with working to strengthen the economy and defend abortion rights, protecting children from gun violence and making changes to the Supreme Court, which he called “extreme” in its current makeup during a recent event.

Both the president and first lady have had lesions removed from their skin in the past that were determined to be basal cell carcinoma, a common and easily treated form of cancer. In 2015, their eldest son, Beau, died of an aggressive brain cancer at age 46.

“It’s not just personal,” Biden said Tuesday. “It’s about what’s possible.”

The president’s public schedule has been much quieter since he left the race and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, making Tuesday’s trip stand out.

Advocates have praised Biden for keeping the spotlight on cancer, bringing stakeholders together and gathering commitments from private companies, nonprofit organizations and patient groups.

They say that the extra attention the administration has paid has put the nation on track to cut cancer death rates by at least half, preventing more than 4 million deaths from the disease, by 2047. It has done so by bolstering access to cancer treatments and reminding people of the importance of screening, which hit a setback during the coronavirus pandemic.

“President Biden’s passion and commitment to this effort has made monumental differences for the entire cancer community, including those who are suffering from cancer,” said Jon Retzlaff, the chief policy officer at the American Association for Cancer Research.

Looking ahead, Retzlaff said, “The No. 1 thing is for us to see robust, sustained and predictable annual funding support for the National Institutes of Health. And, if we see that through NIH and through the National Cancer Institute, the programs that have been created through the cancer moonshot will be allowed to continue.”

Initiatives under Biden include changes that make screening and cancer care more accessible to more people, said Knudsen, with the American Cancer Society.

For instance, Medicare has started to pay for follow-up colonoscopies if a stool-based test suggests cancer, she said, and Medicare will now pay for navigation services to guide patients through the maze of their cancer care.

“You’ve already paid for the cancer research. You’ve already paid for the innovation. Now let’s get it to people,” Knudsen said.

She also said she’d like to see the next administration pursue a ban on menthol-flavored cigarettes, which she said could save 654,000 lives over the next 40 years.

Scientists now understand that cancer is not a single disease, but hundreds of diseases that respond differently to different treatments. Some cancers have biomarkers that can be targeted by existing drugs that will slow a tumor’s growth. Many more targets await discovery.

“We hope that the next administration, whoever it may be, will continue to keep the focus and emphasis on our national commitment to end cancer as we know it,” said Dr. Crystal Denlinger, CEO of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a group of elite cancer centers.

Before lobster, Maine had a thriving sardine industry. A sunken ship reminds us of its storied past

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — An 83-foot (25-meter) motor boat that was one of the first refrigerated sardine carriers during the heyday of Maine’s sardine industry is going to be scrapped after a recovery operation to retrieve the sunken vessel.

The Jacob Pike fell victim to a storm last winter.

The 21-year-old great-great-grandson of the vessel’s namesake wants the historic wooden vessel to be preserved, and formed a nonprofit that would use it as an educational platform. But the U.S. Coast

Guard doesn't have the authority to transfer ownership of the vessel. And any new owner could become responsible for repaying up to \$300,000 for environmental remediation.

Sumner Pike Rugh said he's still hoping to work with the Coast Guard but understands the vessel's fate is likely sealed.

"It's an ignominious end to a storied vessel," said his father, Aaron Pike Rugh.

Around the world, Maine is synonymous with lobster — the state's signature seafood — but that wasn't always the case. Over the years, hundreds of sardine canneries operated along the Maine coast.

The first U.S. sardine cannery opened in 1875 in Eastport, Maine, with workers sorting, snipping and packing sardines, which fueled American workers and, later, allied troops overseas. On the nation's opposite coast, sardine canneries were immortalized by John Steinbeck in his 1945 novel "Cannery Row," which focused on Monterey, California.

Launched in 1949, the Jacob Pike is a wooden vessel with a motor, along with a type of refrigeration system that allowed the vessel to accept tons of herring from fishing vessels before being offloaded at canneries.

When tastes changed and sardines fell out of favor — leading to the shuttering of canneries — the Jacob Pike vessel hauled lobsters. By last winter, its glory days were long past as it sank off Harpswell during a powerful storm.

In recent years there's been a resurgence of interest in tinned fish, but the historic ship was already sailed — or in this case, sunk.

Sumner Rugh, a senior at the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, was halfway around the world on a tanker off the coast of South Korea when he learned that the vessel he wanted to preserve was gone. No one else seemed interested in the vessel, he said, so he started the nonprofit Jacob Pike Organization with a board that includes a former owner.

He said he hoped that the Coast Guard would hand the vessel over to the nonprofit without being saddled with costs associated with environmental remediation. Since that's not possible, he's modifying his goal of saving the entire vessel intact. Instead, he hopes to save documentation and enough components to be able to reconstruct the vessel.

The Coast Guard took over environmental remediation of fuel, batteries and other materials that could foul the ocean waters when the current owner was either unable or unwilling to take on the task, said Lt. Pamela Manns, a spokesperson based in Maine. The owner's phone wasn't accepting messages on Tuesday.

Last week, salvage crews used air bags and pumps to lift the vessel from its watery grave, and it was sturdy and seaworthy enough to be towed to South Portland, Maine.

While sympathetic to Sumner Rugh's dream, Manns said the Coast Guard intends to destroy the vessel. "I can appreciate the fact that this boat means something to him, but our role is very clear. Our role is to mitigate any pollution threats. Unfortunately the Jacob Pike was a pollution threat," she said.

Older Americans prepare themselves for a world altered by artificial intelligence

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

NORTHFIELD, Ill. (AP) — The students — most with gray hair, some with canes, all at least in their 60s — couldn't believe what they were hearing.

"Oh, my God," whispered a retired college professor.

"Does it come with viruses?" wondered a bewildered woman scribbling notes in the second row.

A 79-year-old in a black-and-white floral shirt then asked the question on many minds: "How do you know if it is fake or not?"

This is how older adults — many of whom lived through the advent of refrigeration, the transition from radio to television and the invention of the internet — are grappling with artificial intelligence: taking a class. Sitting in a classroom in an airy senior center in a Chicago suburb, the dozen students were learning about the latest — and possibly greatest — technological leap in their lives.

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And they are not alone. Across the country, scores of such classes have sprung up to teach seniors about AI's ability to transform their lives and the threats the technology poses.

"I saw ice boxes turn into refrigerators, that is how long I have been around," said Barbara Winston, 89, who paid to attend the class put on at the North Shore Senior Center in Northfield. "And I think this is probably the greatest technical revolution that I will see in my lifetime."

Older adults find themselves in a unique moment with technology. Artificial intelligence offers significant benefits for seniors, from the ability to curb loneliness to making it easier for them to get to medical appointments.

But it also has drawbacks that are uniquely threatening to this older group of Americans: A series of studies have found that senior citizens are more susceptible to both scams perpetrated using artificial intelligence and believing the types of misinformation that are being supercharged by the technology. Experts are particularly concerned about the role deepfakes and other AI-produced misinformation could play in politics.

Winston left the class to start her own AI journey, even if others remained skeptical. When she got home, the retired professor downloaded books on the technology, researched the platforms she wanted to use from her kitchen table and eventually queried ChatGPT about how to treat a personal medical ailment.

"This is the beginning of my education," she said, her floral cup of coffee nearby. "I'm not worried about protecting myself. I'm too old to worry about that."

Classes like these aim to familiarize aging early adopters with the myriad ways the technology could better their lives but also encourage skepticism about how artificial intelligence can distort the truth.

Balanced skepticism, say experts on the technology, is critical for seniors who plan to interact with AI.

"It's tricky," said Michael Gershbein, the instructor of the class in Northfield. "Overall, the suspicion that is there on the part of seniors is good but I don't want them to become paralyzed from their fears and not be willing to do anything online."

The questions in his class outside Chicago ranged from the absurd to the practical to the academic. Why are so many new shoes no longer including shoelaces? Can AI create a multiday itinerary for a visit to Charleston, South Carolina? What are the geopolitical implications of artificial intelligence?

Gershbein, who teaches classes on a range of technological topics, said interest in AI has ballooned in the last nine months. The 52-year-old teaches an AI course once or twice a week, he said, and aims to create a "safe space where (seniors) can come in and we can discuss all the issues they may be hearing bits and pieces of but we can put it all together and they can ask questions."

During a 90-minute-long session on a June Thursday, Gershbein discussed deepfakes — videos that use generative AI to make it appear someone said something they did not. When he played a few deepfakes, the seniors sat agog. They could not believe how real the fakes seemed. There are widespread concerns that such videos could be used to trick voters, especially seniors.

The threats to seniors go beyond politics, however, and range from basic misinformation on social media sites to scams that use voice-cloning technology to trick them. An AARP report published last year said that Americans over 60 lose \$28.3 billion annually to financial extortion schemes, some assisted by AI.

Experts from the National Council on Aging, an organization established in 1950 to advocate for seniors, said classes on AI at senior centers have increased in recent years and are at the forefront of digital literacy efforts.

"There's a myth out there that older adults don't use technology. We know that that's not true," said Dianne Stone, associate director at the National Council on Aging who ran a senior center in Connecticut for over two decades. Such courses, she said, are meant to foster a "healthy skepticism" in what the technology can do, arming older Americans with the knowledge "that not everything you hear is true, it's good to get the information, but you have to kind of sort it out for yourself."

Striking that balance, said Siwei Lyu, a University at Buffalo professor, can be difficult, and classes tend to either promote AI's benefits or focus on its dangers.

"We need this kind of education for seniors, but the approach we take has to be very balanced and well-designed," said Lyu, who has lectured to seniors and other groups.

Seniors who have taken such AI classes said they came away with a clear understanding of AI's benefits and pitfalls.

"It's only as good as the people who program it, and the users need to understand that. You really have to question it," said Linda Chipko, a 70-year-old who attended an AI class in June in suburban Atlanta.

Chipko said she took the class because she wanted to "understand" AI, but on her way out said, "It's not for me."

Others have even embraced it. Ruth Schneiderman, 77, used AI to help illustrate a children's book she was writing, and that experience sparked her interest in taking the Northfield class to learn more about the technology.

"My mother lived until she was 90," Schneiderman said, "and I learned from her if you want to survive in this world, you have to adjust to the change. Otherwise you are left behind."

Initiative to enshrine abortion rights in Missouri constitution qualifies for November ballot

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Missouri voters will decide in November whether to guarantee a right to abortion with a constitutional amendment that would reverse the state's near-total ban.

The secretary of state's office certified Tuesday that an initiative petition received more than enough valid signatures from registered voters to qualify for the general election. It will need approval from a majority of voters to become enshrined in the state constitution.

If passed, the Missouri initiative would "do something that no other state has done before — end a total abortion ban at the ballot box," said Rachel Sweet, campaign manager for Missourians for Constitutional Freedom, which is sponsoring the measure with significant financial support from Planned Parenthood affiliates and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Missouri will join at least a half-dozen states voting on abortion rights during the presidential election. Arizona's secretary of state certified an abortion-rights measure for the ballot on Monday. Measures also will go before voters in Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Nevada and South Dakota. While not explicitly addressing abortion rights, a New York ballot measure would bar discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes" and "reproductive healthcare," among other things.

Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft said there also were sufficient signatures to hold November elections on initiatives raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour and legalizing sports betting.

But he said an initiative authorizing a casino at the popular Lake of the Ozarks tourist destination fell short of the required threshold. Casino backers said they remain confident they got enough signature and attorneys are assessing their next steps.

The initiatives will appear on the ballot alongside candidates for top offices, including governor, U.S. Senate and the state legislature, meaning abortion is likely to become an even greater political issue in the state.

The campaign of the Republican gubernatorial nominee, Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe, denounced the abortion ballot measure on Tuesday as an "extreme proposal funded by out-of-state liberals."

"Mike Kehoe opposes the radical Left's attempts to rewrite Missouri's long history of protecting life," his campaign said in a statement.

The Democratic gubernatorial nominee, House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, praised the measure and said she would "ensure this ballot initiative gets implemented to its fullest extent."

The U.S. Supreme Court overturned a nationwide right to abortion in 2022, sparking a state-by-state battle in legislatures and a new push to let voters decide the issue. Since the ruling, most Republican-controlled states have new abortion restrictions in effect while most Democratic-led states have measures protecting abortion access.

Abortion rights supporters have prevailed in all seven states that already had decided ballot measures since 2022: California, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Ohio and Vermont.

The high court's decision overturning its Roe v. Wade precedent triggered a 2019 Missouri law to take

effect prohibiting abortion "except in cases of medical emergency." That law makes it a felony punishable by five to 15 years in prison to perform or induce an abortion, though a woman undergoing an abortion cannot be prosecuted.

Since then, almost no abortions have occurred at Missouri facilities. But that doesn't mean Missouri residents aren't having abortions. They could receive abortion pills from out of state or travel to clinics elsewhere, including ones just across the border in Illinois and Kansas.

The Missouri ballot measure would create a right to abortion until a fetus could likely survive outside the womb without extraordinary medical measures. Fetal viability generally has been considered to be around 23 or 24 weeks into pregnancy but has shifted downward with medical advances. The ballot measure would allow abortions after fetal viability if a health care professional determines it's necessary to protect the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

"The undeniable truth is this measure legalizes abortion throughout any stage of the pregnancy," said Stephanie Bell, spokeswoman for Missouri Stands with Women, which opposes the ballot measure.

The number of states considering abortion ballot measures could grow. Officials in Montana and Nebraska have yet to determine whether proposed abortion-rights initiatives qualified for a November vote. Nebraska officials also are evaluating a competing constitutional amendment that would enshrine the state's current ban on most abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy. And a legal battle is ongoing over an Arkansas initiative.

Campaign committees supporting Missouri's abortion-rights and sports betting measures each already have spent more than \$5 million, with millions more in spending expected. The sports betting initiative has been financed largely by the parent companies of DraftKings and FanDuel but also is backed by Missouri's six professional sports teams, which would control onsite betting and advertising near their stadiums and arenas.

Thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia already offer some form of sports wagering, which has expanded rapidly since the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for it in 2018. Missouri sports teams turned to the initiative process after efforts to legalize sports betting were repeatedly thwarted in the state Senate.

"Missouri is now just one step away from joining most other states in legalizing sports betting and being able to provide millions of dollars to Missouri classrooms," St. Louis Cardinals President Bill DeWitt III said in a statement Tuesday.

The minimum wage measure would increase the state's current rate of \$12.30 an hour to \$13.75 an hour in 2025 and \$15 an hour by 2026, with annual adjustments for inflation after that. It also would require employers to provide paid sick leave.

A conservative gathering provides a safe space for Republicans who aren't on board with Trump

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — At the Republican National Convention and multiple rallies since, former President Donald Trump has been greeted as a hero who narrowly escaped assassination and is destined to lead a new American golden age.

At a recent conservative conference in Georgia, there was a different vibe.

There were few, if any, red hats at "The Gathering," the annual confab hosted by influential syndicated radio host Erick Erickson, and no rousing promises to "Make America Great Again." Instead, Erickson's guests, from rank-and-file voters up to Trump's onetime vice president, spent two days critiquing the GOP's path in the Trump era. And when it came to the November election, many of them spent more time hand-wringing over a Kamala Harris presidency than celebrating the promise of another Trump administration.

The dynamics are particularly problematic for the former president's chances in Georgia, a longtime Republican stronghold that has shifted into a genuine two-party state, and a handful of other tossup states. They also serve as a reminder that despite his near-complete takeover of the GOP, Trump still has detractors and skeptics among conservatives whose decisions this fall could help determine whether he

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returns to the White House.

"I voted for him willingly in 2016, and then I held my nose and did it again in 2020," said Atlanta small business owner Barton McMillan, a four-decade resident of the city who blames Trump for recent Democratic victories in Georgia, which backed Joe Biden for president in 2020 and elected two Democratic U.S. senators.

"This time, I don't know what I'm going to do," McMillan said. "And I'm representative of a lot of the people here."

Indeed, Erickson's assembly featured consternation over federal spending, abortion policy, Trump's proposed tariffs, America's uncertain role in the international order, the former president's penchant for personal attacks, his fixation on the lie that systemic voter fraud was to blame for his 2020 loss and his false contention that his vice president at the time, Mike Pence, had the power to overturn Biden's election.

"I cannot endorse President Trump's continuing assertion that I should have put aside my oath to support the Constitution and act in a way that would have overturned the election," Pence said.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, who was recently blasted by Trump for not helping overturn the 2020 election, drew a standing ovation when he was introduced, laughter when he compared the former president to a tropical storm and more applause when he called for Republicans to focus on the future.

"We're going to use our political operation to win Georgia despite past grievances," Kemp assured Erickson without mentioning Trump by name. Trump has been indicted for his efforts to overturn the 2020 results in Georgia and elsewhere; those cases are pending.

In his criticisms, Pence pointed to the 2024 Republican platform that fails — for the first time in decades — to call for a national abortion ban and sidesteps the mounting national debt, which ballooned during Trump's four years. Pence bemoaned an increasingly isolationist and protectionist bent among the GOP base — opposition to U.S. aid to Ukraine against Vladimir Putin's invading Russian forces and Trump's promise of sweeping tariffs in a second term.

The Republican Party, Pence said, is under a spell of "populism unmoored to conservative principle."

Walter Michaelis, a 22-year-old getting ready to cast his second presidential ballot, stood and cheered the former vice president and said afterward that Trump's "America First" approach can go too far, especially on tariffs and trade.

"I understand why Trump was needed in 2016," Michaelis said. "But sometimes I do think it would be better now for the party to move on."

Michaelis, who voted for Trump in 2020, said he would not back Harris but had not yet decided whether to vote for the former president again.

Kent Kim, a 30-year-old from Alpharetta, said he has decided to go with Trump. But he added, he's withheld his vote from Trump before and said, "I know people who probably will do that this year."

A key reason for Trump's defeat was underperforming the usual Republican marks in suburban Atlanta, Philadelphia and Phoenix, areas that helped tilt Georgia, Pennsylvania and Arizona to Biden. Those same places also could boost Harris in the fall.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., during his turn on stage with Erickson, tacitly acknowledged the risks as he lamented recent Republican losses in winnable Senate contests. He said that included Georgia, where Trump-backed Herschel Walker lost to Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock in 2022 despite Republicans winning every other statewide election.

McConnell predicted a GOP Senate majority in the new Congress but sounded less confident about the presidency. Despite blaming Trump for the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, he has endorsed Trump for president.

"We all know who we hope will be the next administration," he told Erickson. Yet McConnell outlined a conservative agenda without mentioning the former president except to support extending "the Trump tax cuts" of 2017.

And, echoing Pence, McConnell scolded a nameless Republican for turning away from the traditional U.S. role on the world stage.

"We've had occasionally these isolationist moods," he said, noting that the 1930s gave rise to the original

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"America First" rallying cry. "That stopped after Pearl Harbor," McConnell said, only for some U.S. conservatives to resist the establishment of NATO and the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II.

McConnell warned that the same mistakes loom with North Korea, China, Russia and Iran "all talking to each other" as "an axis of powerful regimes." McConnell said that demands an assertive international U.S. presence and more robust defense spending across Western democracies.

"If I had a message for the next administration ... take this seriously," McConnell said.

Even some of Trump's full-throated allies offered subtle warnings.

Former Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler and Erickson talked about her loss to Democrat Raphael Warnock in January 2021, when tens of thousands of Republicans who voted for Trump the previous November stayed home in the runoff after Trump openly questioned the veracity of vote counts. Loeffler did not blame Trump, as Erickson implicitly did, but she did emphasize that Trump, as he campaigns this year, is encouraging his backers to take advantage of any voting option: mail, in-person early voting or on Election Day.

Florida Sen. Rick Scott, who is running to succeed McConnell as GOP Senate leader, said in a brief interview that Trump is "going to be fine." But when asked about Trump picking new fights within the party, Scott steered the conversation to his own success in a series of close gubernatorial and Senate contests.

"I try to make sure that, ultimately in my races, that there's a choice, and it's a policy choice. ... Just talk about the issues," he said.

Asked whether he would offer Trump that advice, Scott replied: "Well, I mean, he's going to run the race he likes to run."

A year later, sprawling Georgia election interference case against Donald Trump has stalled

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A year after a Georgia grand jury accused Donald Trump and others of illegally trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election in the state, the case has stalled with no chance of going to trial before the end of this year.

When Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis secured the indictment a year ago Thursday, it was the fourth and most sprawling of the criminal cases against the former president. Trump narrowly lost Georgia to Democrat Joe Biden, and Willis used Georgia's anti-racketeering law to allege that he and 18 others had participated in a wide-ranging scheme to subvert the will of the state's voters.

Willis' team notched some early victories in the case, but explosive allegations raised by one of Trump's co-defendants early this year have caused a delay and could even derail the prosecution.

Here are some things to know about the case.

A lengthy indictment that cast a wide net

Nearly 100 pages long, the indictment included 41 criminal counts against Trump and 18 others. High-profile people charged along with the former president include his White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani and conservative attorney Sidney Powell.

All of the defendants were charged with violating the state's anti-racketeering law and the indictment includes 161 alleged acts to support that charge. The narrative put forth by prosecutors alleges multiple people committed separate crimes to accomplish a common goal — challenging Trump's electoral loss.

The indictment includes charges related to a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call between Trump and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger during which Trump urged the state's top elections official to help him "find" the votes he needed to win. Other charges have to do with a getting a slate of Republican electors to falsely declare that Trump won the state, allegations of harassment of a Georgia election worker and a breach of election equipment in a rural south Georgia county.

The judge overseeing the case in March dismissed six counts in the indictment, including three of the 13 counts against Trump. Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee wrote that prosecutors had failed to provide enough detail about the alleged crime in those counts. Willis' team has appealed that ruling.

A first-of-its-kind mug shot

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When Trump arrived in Atlanta last August to be booked on the charges against him, he was quickly released on bond. But his brief stop at the Fulton County Jail marked the first time that a former president has had to sit for a mug shot.

While Trump and the others indicted all had to be booked at the jail, they waived their first court appearances. While his lawyers have been present and made arguments at numerous hearings over the last year, Trump has yet to set foot in a Georgia courtroom.

Early victories for prosecutors

Four of the 18 people charged along with Trump in Georgia pleaded guilty to lesser charges after reaching plea deals with prosecutors within a few months of the indictment.

Bail bondsman Scott Hall pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges in September. Prosecutors had accused him of participating in a breach of election equipment in rural Coffee County.

The following month, Powell and lawyer Kenneth Chesebro each pleaded guilty. Powell was also accused in the Coffee County breach, while Chesebro had helped organize the Republican elector plan. The two of them reached deals with prosecutors just before they were scheduled to go to trial, having asserted their rights to a speedy trial.

Days later, attorney Jenna Ellis, a vocal part of Trump's reelection campaign in 2020, entered a tearful guilty plea.

Salacious allegations upend the case

In early January, a lawyer for co-defendant Michael Roman, a Trump campaign staffer and onetime White House aide, alleged in a court filing that Willis had improperly engaged in a romantic relationship with lawyer Nathan Wade, whom she had picked to lead the prosecution against Trump and the others.

The court filing alleged that Willis benefitted financially from the case since Wade used his earnings to take her on trips. It said that caused a conflict of interest and that Willis and her office should be removed from the case. Willis and Wade acknowledged the relationship but said they had split travel and other costs.

During an extraordinary hearing, intimate details of Willis and Wade's personal lives were aired in court and broadcast live on television. Judge McAfee chided Willis for a "tremendous lapse in judgment" but found no conflict of interest that merited her removal, as long as Wade left the case. Wade resigned hours later.

Trump and other defendants have appealed McAfee's ruling. That appeal is currently pending before the Georgia Court of Appeals, which plans to hear arguments in December and then must rule by mid-March. Meanwhile, the appeals court has barred McAfee from taking any further action in the case against Trump and the others participating in the appeal while it is pending.

What's next

It's not entirely clear.

Regardless of how the Court of Appeals rules, the losing side will likely ask the Georgia Supreme Court to weigh in. That would cause a further delay if the high court agrees to hear the case.

The general election in November, in which Trump is the Republican nominee for president, provides more uncertainty. Even if the appellate courts ultimately decide that Willis can remain on the case, it seems unlikely she would be able to move forward with the prosecution against Trump while he's president if he wins the election.

Complicating things further, the U.S. Supreme Court last month ruled that former presidents have absolute immunity from prosecution for official acts that fall within their "exclusive sphere of constitutional authority" and are presumptively entitled to immunity for all official acts. They are not protected for unofficial, or private, actions.

Trump's lawyers in Georgia had already filed a motion earlier this year asserting presidential immunity. If Willis is allowed to continue her prosecution at some point, his lawyers will surely use the Supreme Court ruling to argue it should be dismissed.

Conservationists try to protect ecologically rich Alabama delta from development, climate change

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MOBILE-TENSAW DELTA, Ala. (AP) — Thousands of American lotuses carpet the water's surface, faces turned toward the morning sun. Bright yellow warblers flit among cypress trees along a creek bank. A paddlefish jumps as a motorboat rounds a bend.

The Mobile-Tensaw Delta — a lush, vibrant and surprisingly intact over 400-square-mile (1,036-square-kilometer) expanse of cypress swamps, oxbow lakes, marshland, hardwood stands and rivers — is teeming with more aquatic species than almost anywhere in North America. It's considered one of the world's most important delta ecosystems, yet its ecological riches are only a part of the even more diverse watershed that includes much of Alabama.

And the delta is the only place 77-year-old Lucy Hollings has called home.

As a kid, she swam daily across the Tensaw River, gathering a mouthful of grass to prove she'd made it to the other side. Hollings — known as "Ms. Pie" — still fishes daily for white perch and largemouth bass. She's sole proprietor of Cloverleaf Landing, a boat launch that offers anglers from far and wide access to the river and delta.

"I know I live in the most beautiful place in the world," says Hollings, who cools off in the shade of towering sweetgum trees draped with Spanish moss and watches dazzling sunsets from her deck. "It's a piece of heaven to me."

The delta is a critical conduit between the rest of Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico — "a dynamo" that continually exchanges energy between the river systems and the Gulf, says Bill Finch, director of a forest research center. Two-thirds of the state drains to the delta, which cleans water and warehouses silt that could damage Mobile Bay and its renowned fisheries. It's a spawning ground for many fish species. It's home to hundreds of bird species, rare flowers and carnivorous plants.

So residents, scientists and environmentalists are working to protect the entire Alabama ecosystem considered crucial to the survival of species and the health of the delta and, ultimately, the Gulf of Mexico.

They're acquiring property to prevent development and logging that chips away at forests, worsens flooding and threatens species — and as a buffer against climate change. They're working with federal officials to alter dams that cut off fish from historic habitat and in urban areas to protect waterways and slow stormwater runoff.

And they're trying to raise awareness of an important and unique area that many in the U.S. have never heard of and many in Alabama have never experienced.

"We can truly be protecting something that's here rather than trying to restore something that's been lost," says Mitchell Reid, director of The Nature Conservancy in Alabama. "So many of North America's systems are so altered that we're trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together."

"America's Amazon"

Glaciers that covered much of North America never reached Alabama, where the relatively warm and humid climate has helped species proliferate.

What's here astonishes biologists: American elms, decimated by disease in other parts of the country, thrive in the delta and its watershed, reflecting "this ancient, ancient heritage" of genetically hardy trees, says Finch, the forest researcher. It's central to the nation's oak diversity, with about 40 species, compared to about a dozen in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Its fish diversity is unmatched on the continent, with about 350 species, including more than 230 in the 44,000-square-mile (113,959-square-kilometer) Mobile River basin. A single small Alabama river may have more species than all of California. There are over 100 crawfish species, almost three dozen turtle species. More mussel species than all of South America.

Experts say it's impossible to protect the delta without considering the entire watershed, which reaches to Tennessee, Mississippi and Georgia. Some water begins in the Appalachian Mountains, moving through tracts of forest, urban areas and the delta until the Mobile River empties into the Gulf of Mexico at Mobile

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Bay.
"It's really a jewel of an area in terms of conservation and preservation," says Pat O'Neil, a biologist and former deputy director of Alabama Geological Survey. "There's no other watershed in the country that rivals the diversity here. ... It's phenomenal."

There still is much to discover, says Ben Raines, who has worked to spread awareness of the state's ecological importance, first as environmental reporter at Mobile's daily newspaper — where he rediscovered a crayfish thought to be extinct — and now as the environmental fellow at the University of South Alabama, where he's the writer and filmmaker in residence, and as a boat captain offering nature tours. He dubbed Alabama "America's Amazon" in a book and documentary.

"We don't even know what's here," says Raines, cutting the motor as his boat glides into a thicket of sedges in the lower delta — the high-rises of Mobile visible in the distance, boat-tailed grackles eating cones from lotuses and alligators occasionally plying the waterway. "We're losing things that haven't been discovered and there are things still here that we think are gone."

Altered ecosystem

The delta and its watershed are by no means pristine or untouched.

Forests of giant cypress and water tupelo were clear cut as recently as the 1980s by loggers who used helicopters to airlift them from swamps. Chemical plants, paper mills and a factory that made the now-banned insecticide DDT have contaminated land and water. Upstream dams altered waterflow into the delta, blocked fish passage and led to extinction of dozens of freshwater species, including fish, snails and mussels, some found only in the watershed.

Advocates say that makes their efforts imperative.

This spring, The Nature Conservancy bought 8,000 acres (3,237 hectares) of forested wetland between the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers at the top of the delta. The land, which regularly floods and is an important bird habitat and fish-spawning and feeding area, was in danger of being logged to produce wood pellets for European power plants.

"It would've been a horrible loss to the system," says Reid, who calls the land "a critical piece of the puzzle" as the conservancy works to protect the upper delta.

Environmentalists also won a victory when a coal-fired power plant agreed in January to remove 21 million tons of coal ash stored in an unlined pit near the Mobile River. The state did not require its removal, although a breach could be potentially catastrophic for the delta. The EPA recently denied the state's request to handle coal ash permits, saying its policies weren't protective enough.

But other threats are unresolved. A canal built to connect the Tennessee and Tombigbee rivers in northern Alabama could allow invasive Asian carp to reach the Mobile River system and the delta, potentially devastating native fish. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service says carp have been found and removed downstream of the canal, with biologists relying on early detection while other control measures are considered.

Stronger hurricanes and saltwater surges have caused serious erosion and killed trees, according to biologists and Hollings, the lifelong resident.

Increased rainfall and sea level rise with climate change also will push saltwater farther into the delta — potentially causing forested areas to convert to marshland and shrinking the important area where saltwater and freshwater mix. That also adds urgency to efforts to acquire more land outside the delta for species to move in the future, says Judy Haner, the Alabama Nature Conservancy's coastal programs director.

Species from the delta and its watershed could be transplanted to other states where they've been lost, says Finch the forest researcher, noting that's already happening with some plants and mussels. And Alabama's diverse, heat-tolerant species could be moved to other parts of the country as the climate changes, he adds.

"Our great asset is understanding the biodiversity of this area," Finch says. "It's about more than 'Let's save this place because it's pretty.'"

Everyone's delta

Jimbo Meador has spent a lifetime here, hunting, fishing, shrimping, crabbing, frogging and trapping. For

years, he offered boat tours for people who want to learn about the delta's ecological riches.

After 82 years, he has stories. About flocks of ducks that once blackened the skies. About hunting invasive nutria — rodents brought from Argentina for their fur — that were destroying marshes until an alligator rebound helped control them. About endless days roaming the delta with childhood friends, fishing poles ready.

"I'm blessed to have been born when I was," says Meador, known for his trademark long-billed cap, easy drawl and years of advocacy. "Each generation is losing some, but they don't know what they lost. ... Thank goodness we've got a bunch of conservation organizations."

People haven't always agreed how to preserve what's left.

A decade ago, Alabama conservationists and famed biologist Edward O. Wilson undertook an effort to make the delta a national park, but it fizzled after some groups balked at federal oversight and others feared losing access.

"There's all of these people (where) generation after generation after generation have had a camp up there or a houseboat up there, and you're going to run them out? I don't think so," says Meador.

O'Neil, the former state geological survey official, says much of the land proposed for a national park was state-owned and already protected but available for hunting and fishing.

"The thing about conservation is it's not a one-agency or a one-organization thing," says O'Neil, noting that over 95% of land in Alabama is privately owned.

The key, he says, is cooperation between private landowners, the government and nongovernmental agencies: "When they get that mix just right ... we have conservation that moves forward. We have species that are protected. We've been able to restore streams."

Plans in progress

The Nature Conservancy is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to design fish bypasses around two aging dams on the Alabama River to allow species to swim up from the Gulf and delta to historical spawning grounds.

While similar projects out West often focus on one species, Reid says, the Alabama plan could benefit about 20. Biologists hope it will lead to rediscovery of the critically endangered Alabama sturgeon, which hasn't been seen for more than 15 years, and recovery of the threatened Gulf sturgeon in the Mobile River watershed.

The conservancy also is working to restore ecosystems in urban areas as far north as Birmingham, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) from Mobile, to prevent floodwater from sending sediment down rivers that could harm the delta.

Some say the best way to get people to care is to help them experience the state's waterways, forests and delta for themselves.

"You take people up there that've never seen it before and you explain to them how important it is and hopefully it helps," says Meador, who took locals and visitors from other states and countries into the delta before suspending his business to care for his wife.

Conservationists say it's important that the state and communities improve access to waterways and other natural areas, and to convince residents to advocate for preservation.

"We're talking about this amazing, amazing place of life," Reid says. "But we also recognize that when you have so much, there's so much to lose."

Harris cautiously rolls out policy, aiming to outmaneuver Trump and address 2020 liabilities

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is trying to outmaneuver former President Donald Trump and address old vulnerabilities on her policy positions as she starts to fill in how she would govern if elected in November.

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Vice presidents rarely have policy portfolios of their own — and almost always set aside any views that differ from those of the Oval Office occupant. Now, after four years of following President Joe Biden's lead, Harris is taking a cautious approach to unveiling a policy vision in her own right.

But her surprise ascendance to the top of the ticket after Biden dropped his reelection bid also means her policy platform is being pulled together just as quickly.

When Harris inherited Biden's political operation in late July, the campaign's website was quietly scrubbed of the six-point "issues" page that framed the race against Trump, including expanding voting protections and restoring nationwide access to abortion. Instead, Harris has peppered her speeches — so far heavy on biography for herself and her running mate — with broad goals like "building up the middle class." She has called for federal laws to provide abortion access and ban assault-style weapons, but has been thin on the details of what specifically they would entail or how she would persuade Congress to make progress on some of the most hot-button political issues.

Asked by reporters on Saturday when she would unveil her policy platform, Harris promised more details this week and added, "It'll be focused on the economy and what we need to do to bring down costs and also strengthen the economy overall."

The first major window into her thinking came this past weekend, with a proposal pulled not from the policy backwaters of the Biden administration or the cutting-room floor of the legislative process but from her rival: Trump.

Harris announced that she, like Trump, wants to end federal taxation of tipped earnings for workers — with the added caveat that she would limit the plan to those in the lower- and middle incomes. The idea has drawn bipartisan support in recent months and is particularly salient in service industry-heavy Nevada.

It's also one of the most prominent ideas embraced by Trump in his 2024 bid to get back into the White House — a bonus in the view of the Harris camp, which has tried to needle the Republican into making unforced errors.

The Republican was none too amused by Harris endorsing the idea, complaining on his social media platform that "This was a TRUMP idea - She has no ideas, she can only steal from me."

Trump continued on the matter in an interview with Elon Musk on Monday night, criticizing Harris for adopting his idea after what he claimed was harassment by the Biden administration of tipped workers.

On Monday, the White House said that Biden backed the plan too, though White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre wouldn't address why Biden and Harris didn't push for it during their first three-and-a-half years in office.

"Obviously, it's a new idea," she said, but added later in response to criticism from Trump, "Why didn't they pass it during the last administration?"

In her first weeks as a candidate, Harris' most pronounced policy moves have been to back away from liberal stances she took in her failed 2020 bid for the White House, including proposals to ban fracking, establish a single-payer healthcare system and decriminalize illegal border crossings. Harris dropped out of that heated race before a single vote had been cast but recognizes that voters now could punish her for those stances if not quickly addressed.

Another complication for Harris comes from her relationship with Biden, who quickly endorsed her and handed her the keys to his political operation after he dropped out.

"The last three and a half years, they've been in sync," said Jean-Pierre. "They have been certainly on the same page. And I presume that that will continue from here."

Biden himself only began outlining detailed policy ideas for a second term during his final, frenzied effort to salvage his candidacy after his disastrous June 27 debate against Trump. He advocated for restoring abortion access, raising the federal minimum wage and passing a new surtax on billionaires. Harris has largely embraced all those priorities, including the incumbent's call for changes to the Supreme Court.

But all those plans would require congressional support, which proved elusive even when Democrats held unified control of Washington during the first two years of the Biden-Harris administration.

Harris' campaign, meanwhile, suggested that her attempted shifts to the center are reflective of how

she would try to bring consensus to government.

"While Donald Trump is wedded to the extreme ideas in his Project 2025 agenda, Vice President Harris believes real leadership means bringing all sides together to build consensus," said Harris spokesman Kevin Munoz. "It is that approach that made it possible for the Biden-Harris administration to achieve bipartisan breakthroughs on everything from infrastructure to gun violence prevention. As President, she will take that same pragmatic approach, focusing on common-sense solutions for the sake of progress."

While Trump in recent weeks has resorted to personal and racially tinged attacks on his new rival, his campaign has been working to put Harris' policy aims front and center, aiming to paint Harris as a radical liberal, pointing to old videos of her discussing policy positions during the 2020 Democratic primary.

"Kamala Harris has flip-flopped on virtually every policy she has supported and lived by for her entire career, from the Border to Tips, and the Fake News Media isn't reporting it," Trump posted Sunday. "She sounds more like Trump than Trump, copying almost everything. She is conning the American public, and will flip right back. I will MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN! There will be no flipping!!!"

Takeaways from AP's story on Alabama's ecologically important Mobile-Tensaw Delta and its watershed

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

Alabama's Mobile-Tensaw Delta is a more-than 400-square-mile (1,036-square-kilometer) expanse of cypress swamps, oxbow lakes, marshland, hardwood stands and rivers unusually rich in plant and animal diversity.

It's also a critical conduit between the rest of Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico, draining two-thirds of the state and cleaning water and warehousing silt that could damage Mobile Bay and its renowned fisheries.

But the delta — which many in the U.S. have never heard of and many in Alabama have never experienced — faces pressure from development and climate change.

So residents, scientists and environmentalists are working to protect the entire watershed, from northern Alabama to the Gulf, and to raise awareness.

Here's what to know:

Ecological diversity

The Mobile-Tensaw Delta is an important spawning ground and habitat for hundreds of fish species. There are hundreds of bird species, rare flowers and carnivorous plants.

Yet its ecological riches are only a fraction of what exists in the rest of Alabama, including the 44,000-square-mile (113,959-square-kilometer) Mobile River watershed that feeds the delta.

American elms, decimated by disease in other parts of the country, thrive in the delta and its watershed, reflecting "this ancient, ancient heritage" of genetically hardy trees, says Bill Finch, a forest researcher. Alabama is central to the nation's oak diversity, with about 40 species, compared to about a dozen in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The state's fish diversity is unmatched on the continent, with about 350 species, including more than 230 in the Mobile River basin. There are over 100 crawfish species, almost three dozen turtle species. More mussel species than all of South America.

"I know I live in the most beautiful place in the world," says 77-year-old Lucy Hollings, who has lived in the delta all her life. "It's a piece of heaven to me."

Potential threats

Yet the delta and its watershed are by no means pristine or untouched.

Forests of giant cypress and water tupelo were clear cut as recently as the 1980s by loggers who used helicopters to airlift logs from swamps. Chemical plants, paper mills and a factory that made the now-banned insecticide DDT have contaminated land and water. Upstream dams altered waterflow into the delta, blocked fish passage and led to extinction of dozens of freshwater species, some found only in the watershed.

Over 21 million tons of coal ash stored in an unlined pit near the Mobile River also present a potential threat to the delta, though the coal-fired power plant that generated the waste agreed in January to remove it. The state did not require its removal, although a breach could be potentially catastrophic for the delta. The EPA recently denied the state's request to handle coal ash permits, saying its policies weren't protective enough.

But other threats are unresolved. A canal built to connect the Tennessee and Tombigbee rivers in northern Alabama could allow invasive Asian carp to reach the Mobile River system and the delta, potentially devastating native fish. The Fish & Wildlife Service says a few carp have been found and removed downstream of the canal, with biologists relying on early detection while other control measures are considered.

Stronger hurricanes and saltwater surges also have caused serious erosion and killed trees, biologists say. Increased rainfall and sea level rise with climate change also will push saltwater farther into the delta — potentially causing forested areas to convert to marshland and shrinking the important area where saltwater and freshwater mix. That adds urgency to efforts to acquire more land outside the delta for species to move in the future, says Judy Haner, the Alabama Nature Conservancy's coastal programs director.

Plans in progress

This spring, The Nature Conservancy of Alabama bought 8,000 acres (3,237 hectares) of forested wetland between the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers at the top of the delta. The land, which regularly floods and is an important bird habitat and fish-spawning and feeding area, was in danger of being logged to produce wood pellets for European power plants.

"It would've been a horrible loss to the system," says Conservancy Director Mitchell Reid, who calls the land "a critical piece of the puzzle" as the group works to protect the upper delta by keeping large tracts intact.

The Nature Conservancy also is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to design fish bypasses around two aging dams on the Alabama River to allow species to swim up from the Gulf and delta to historical spawning grounds.

While similar projects out West often focus on one species, Reid says, the Alabama plan could benefit about 20. Biologists hope it will lead to rediscovery of the critically endangered Alabama sturgeon, which hasn't been seen for more than 15 years, and recovery of the threatened Gulf sturgeon in the Mobile River watershed.

The conservancy also is working to restore ecosystems in urban areas as far north as Birmingham, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) from Mobile, to prevent floodwater from sending sediment down rivers that could harm the delta.

The violence in Bangladesh after Hasina's ouster stirs fear within the country's Hindu minority

By KRUTIKA PATHI, AL EMRUN GARJON and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

KHULNA, Bangladesh (AP) — When a mass uprising forced Bangladesh's longtime prime minister to step down and flee the country last week, a 65-year-old retired auditor who had worked for her political party feared for his life.

Arobinda Mohalder, who is part of Bangladesh's Hindu minority, had just learned that a Hindu official working for the Awami League party in the country's Khulna district escaped after an angry mob set his home on fire.

Mohalder and his wife quickly packed clothes and passports as they fled their home to stay with a relative nearby. Later that evening, they found out their home had been torched. The attackers looted everything, including their television, refrigerator and two air conditioners.

Ever since former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India, her supporters and associates have faced retaliatory attacks by mobs who have been met by little, if any, resistance from authorities. Members of the country's Hindu minority feel the most vulnerable because they have traditionally backed

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the Awami League — seen as a secular party in the Muslim-majority nation — and because of a history of violence against them during previous upheavals.

In the week since Hasina was ousted on Aug. 5, there have been at least 200 attacks against Hindus and other religious minorities across 52 districts, according to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a minority rights group that has been tracking incidents.

But experts caution it is hard to establish the extent of and motivations for the violence in this South Asian country of 170 million.

“There may be an element of minorities, particularly Hindus, being targeted due to their faith. But many Hindus had links to the Awami League, because historically it has been the party that protected minorities, so they may have been targeted for their political affiliations,” said Thomas Kean, a senior consultant on Bangladesh and Myanmar at the Crisis Group.

Hasina’s ouster was triggered by student-led protests against a quota system for government jobs. After clashes between protesters and government forces that led to hundreds of deaths, the movement grew into a broader rebellion against the leader and her government.

Mobs rampaged across the country after Hasina fled. Some of the violence was just criminal activity, Kean said, and “we shouldn’t assume they are all due to race or religion.”

The interim government put in place after Hasina’s ouster has condemned the attacks as “heinous” and said it was working with community leaders to ensure Hindus’ safety.

Hindus, who make up 8% of the population and are the largest minority group, “are shivering,” said Kajal Debnath, a vice president of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council. “They are closing their doors, they are not opening it without confirming who is knocking. Everybody (in the Hindu minority)... from the Dhaka capital to the remote villages are very scared.”

For many, the violence has evoked painful memories of Bangladesh’s 1971 war of independence against Pakistan during which Hindus were targeted. Hindus were also attacked during the rise of Islamic groups in the 1990s, which Hasina stamped out.

Hindus have held large protests in the past week drawing thousands, demanding protection and condemning the recent spate of attacks.

Munni Ghosh, a Hindu housewife in Dhaka, said that attacks have grown since Hasina fled. “The reason (is) because she used to support us,” she said.

According to the minority groups organization, the attacks have included vandalizing and looting of Hindu homes and businesses. A few temples have been damaged. But details remain scarce, and police — whose members were also killed during the recent violence — went on strike last week.

Some analysts say many of the attacks against Hindus are politically driven and reflect resentment against Hasina’s party.

Hindus have suffered, but most attacks have been “politically motivated because the Awami League has been targeted,” said Zillur Rahman, executive director of the Dhaka-based Center for Governance Studies.

In Mohalder’s village, dozens of other Hindu homes were unscathed. And his brother-in-law’s house, which is attached to his own, was not vandalized. A temple in their family compound was also untouched.

Mohalder believes he was targeted because of his ties to the Awami League. He doesn’t know when it will be safe for him to return home. “I want to go back, but goons looted my home and because of that, I am scared.”

The issue has become increasingly sensitive for India, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over the reports of attacks last week.

But experts say the lack of credible information and official investigations into violence against Hindus has also fueled misinformation about the attacks, much of it coming from Indian news, social media and leaders, said Kean.

On Aug. 5, the day Hasina fled, a leader belonging to Modi’s party in West Bengal state, which borders Bangladesh, claimed without providing evidence that Hindus were being slaughtered. Television news channels ran headlines saying the attacks were “an act of genocide” and a “pogrom.” In another example, an

Indian outlet claimed a certain temple had been set on fire, but Prothom Alo — a leading Bengali-language daily newspaper — found that false, and reported that an Awami League office behind the temple had been burnt down.

Nahid Islam, one of the leading student protesters who was sworn in as a minister in the interim government last week, said the violence was more politically than religiously motivated and was meant to divide the country, but that Bangladesh would protect them.

"The responsible will be brought to justice... be assured that the people of Bangladesh, the government of Bangladesh will stand by you."

But for many Hindus, the biggest worry has been the lack of police since they went on strike in many parts of the country after Hasina fled.

"Anything can happen at any moment of time because there is no law and order," said Debnath. "There is no place to complain. If they kill me, if they burn my house, there is no one I can complain to."

On Monday, several police stations opened up and many people hope that will help ease tensions. But while police were on strike, students and other volunteers in Dhaka and elsewhere banded together to patrol neighborhoods and keep watch, sometimes carrying sticks and umbrellas.

Tahsim Uzzaman, a 26-year-old student in Dhaka, is one volunteer who has been patrolling Dhaka neighborhoods late at night.

"I no longer feel alright just sitting at home. I've been going out at night to guard places, especially in minority neighborhoods. We took bullets to reclaim our country, it shouldn't be for nothing, we must now keep it safe for all," he said.

News outlets were leaked insider material from the Trump campaign. They chose not to print it

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

At least three news outlets were leaked confidential material from inside the Donald Trump campaign, including its report vetting JD Vance as a vice presidential candidate. So far, each has refused to reveal any details about what they received.

Instead, Politico, The New York Times and The Washington Post have written about a potential hack of the campaign and described what they had in broad terms.

Their decisions stand in marked contrast to the 2016 presidential campaign, when a Russian hack exposed emails to and from Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, John Podesta. The website Wikileaks published a trove of these embarrassing missives, and mainstream news organizations covered them avidly.

Politico wrote over the weekend about receiving emails starting July 22 from a person identified as "Robert" that included a 271-page campaign document about Vance and a partial vetting report on Sen. Marco Rubio, who was also considered as a potential vice president. Both Politico and the Post said that two people had independently confirmed that the documents were authentic.

"Like many such vetting documents," The Times wrote of the Vance report, "they contained past statements with the potential to be embarrassing or damaging, such as Mr. Vance's remarks casting aspersions on Mr. Trump."

Whodunit?

What's unclear is who provided the material. Politico said it did not know who "Robert" was and that when it spoke to the supposed leaker, he said, "I suggest you don't be curious about where I got them from."

The Trump campaign said it had been hacked and that Iranians were behind it. While the campaign provided no evidence for the claim, it came a day after a Microsoft report detailed an effort by an Iranian military intelligence unit to compromise the email account of a former senior advisor to a presidential campaign. The report did not specify which campaign.

Steven Cheung, a spokesperson for Trump's campaign, said over the weekend that "any media or news outlet reprinting documents or internal communications are doing the bidding of America's enemies."

The FBI released a brief statement Monday that read: "We can confirm the FBI is investigating this matter."

The Times said it would not discuss why it had decided not to print details of the internal communications. A spokesperson for the Post said: "As with any information we receive, we take into account the authenticity of the materials, any motives of the source and assess the public interest in making decisions about what, if anything, to publish."

Brad Dayspring, a spokesperson for Politico, said editors there judged that "the questions surrounding the origins of the documents and how they came to our attention were more newsworthy than the material that was in those documents."

Indeed, it didn't take long after Vance was announced as Trump's running mate for various news organizations to dig up unflattering statements that the Ohio senator had made about him.

A lesson from 2016?

It's also easy to recall how, in 2016, candidate Trump and his team encouraged coverage of documents on the Clinton campaign that Wikileaks had acquired from hackers. It was widespread: A BBC story promised "18 revelations from Wikileaks' hacked Clinton emails" and Vox even wrote about Podesta's advice for making superb risotto.

Brian Fallon, then a Clinton campaign spokesperson, noted at the time how striking it was that concern about Russian hacking quickly gave way to fascination over what was revealed. "Just like Russia wanted," he said.

Unlike this year, the Wikileaks material was dumped into the public domain, increasing the pressure on news organizations to publish. That led to some bad decisions: In some cases, outlets misrepresented some of the material to be more damaging to Clinton than it actually was, said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a University of Pennsylvania communications professor who wrote "Cyberwar," a book about the 2016 hacking.

This year, Jamieson said she believed news organizations made the right decision not to publish details of the Trump campaign material because they can't be sure of the source.

"How do you know that you're not being manipulated by the Trump campaign?" Jamieson said. She's conservative about publishing decisions "because we're in the misinformation age," she said.

Thomas Rid, director of the Alperovitch Institute for Cybersecurity Studies at Johns Hopkins, also believes that the news organizations have made the right decision, but for different reasons. He said it appeared that an effort by a foreign agent to influence the 2024 presidential campaign was more newsworthy than the leaked material itself.

But one prominent journalist, Jesse Eisinger, senior reporter and editor at ProPublica, suggested the outlets could have told more than they did. While it's true that past Vance statements about Trump are easily found publicly, the vetting document could have indicated which statements most concerned the campaign, or revealed things the journalists didn't know.

Once it is established that the material is accurate, newsworthiness is a more important consideration than the source, he said.

"I don't think they handled it properly," Eisinger said. "I think they overlearned the lesson of 2016."

Trump and Musk talk about assassination attempt and deportations during glitchy chat on X

By STEVE PEOPLES and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump recounted his assassination attempt in vivid detail and promised the largest deportation in U.S. history during a high-profile return to the social media platform formerly known as Twitter — a conversation that was plagued by technical glitches.

"If I had not turned my head, I would not be talking to you right now — as much as I like you," Trump told X's owner Elon Musk.

Musk, a former Trump critic, said the Republican nominee's toughness, as demonstrated by his reaction to last month's shooting, was critical for national security.

"There's some real tough characters out there," Musk said. "And if they don't think the American president is tough, they will do what they want to do."

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The rare public conversation between Trump and Musk, which spanned more than two hours Monday night and was overwhelmingly friendly, revealed little new about Trump's plans for a second term. The former president spent much of the discussion focused on his recent assassination attempt, illegal immigration and his plans to cut government regulations.

Still, the online meeting underscored just how much the U.S. political landscape has changed less than four years after Trump was permanently banned by the social media platform's former leadership for spreading disinformation that sparked the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on Congress and undermined the very foundation of the American democracy.

Such disinformation has thrived at X under Musk's leadership, although it was largely ignored during his conversation with Trump save for a passing Trump reference to a "rigged election."

The session was intended to serve as a way for the former president to reach potentially millions of voters directly. It was also an opportunity for X, a platform that relies heavily on politics, to redeem itself after some struggles.

It did not begin as planned.

With more than 878,000 users connected to the meeting more than 40 minutes after the scheduled start time, the interview had not yet begun. Many users received a message reading, "Details not available."

Trump's team posted that the "interview on X is being overwhelmed with listeners logging in." And once the meeting began, Musk apologized for the late start and blamed a "massive attack" that overwhelmed the company's system. Trump's voice sounded muffled at times.

Trump supporters were openly frustrated.

"Not available????? I planned my whole day around this," wrote conservative commentator Glenn Beck.

"Please let Elon know we can't join," billionaire hedge fund manager Bill Ackman posted.

Ahead of the event, Musk posted on the platform that X was conducting "some system scaling tests" to handle what was anticipated to be a high volume of participants.

The rocky start was reminiscent of a May 2023 social media conversation between Musk and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. The Republican governor was using the social media platform as a way to officially announce his presidential bid, a disastrous rollout marred by technical glitches, overloaded by the more than 400,000 people who tried to dial in.

Trump's Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, noted that Trump mocked DeSantis at the time.

"Wow! The DeSanctus TWITTER launch is a DISASTER! His whole campaign will be a disaster. WATCH!" Trump wrote in a message reposted by Harris' campaign Monday.

Once the interview ended, Harris' campaign responded with a statement saying, "Trump's entire campaign is in service of people like Elon Musk and himself — self-obsessed rich guys who will sell out the middle class and who cannot run a livestream in the year 2024."

Monday's meeting highlighted the evolving personal relationship between Trump and Musk, two of the world's most powerful men, who have shifted from being bitter rivals to unlikely allies over the span of one election season.

Musk, who described himself as a "moderate Democrat" until recently, suggested in 2022 that Trump was too old to be president again. Still, Musk formally endorsed Trump two days after his assassination attempt last month.

During their talk, Trump welcomed the idea of Musk joining his next administration to help cut government waste. Musk volunteered to join a prospective "government efficiency commission."

"You're the greatest cutter," Trump told Musk. "I need an Elon Musk — I need somebody that has a lot of strength and courage and smarts. I want to close up the Department of Education, move education back to the states."

Even before his endorsement, the tech CEO had already been working privately to support a pro-Trump super PAC. The group, known as America PAC, is now under investigation by election officials for alleged misleading attempts to collect data from voters.

Meanwhile, Trump has softened his criticism of electric vehicles, citing Musk's leadership of Tesla. And

on Monday, at least, Trump returned to Musk's social media platform in force. The former president made at least eight individual posts in the hours leading up to the Musk interview.

Long before he endorsed Trump, Musk turned increasingly toward the right in his posts and actions on the platform, also using X to try to sway political discourse around the world. He's gotten in a dustup with a Brazilian judge over censorship, railed against what he calls the "woke mind virus" and amplified false claims that Democrats are secretly flying in migrants to vote in U.S. elections.

Musk has also reinstated previously banned accounts such as the conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and Trump, who was kicked off the platform — then known as Twitter — two days after the Jan. 6 violence, with the company citing "the risk of further incitement of violence." By November 2022, Musk had bought the company, and Trump's account was reinstated, although the former president refrained from tweeting until Monday, insisting that he was happier on his own Truth Social site, which he launched during the ban.

Trump's audience on X is legions larger than on Truth Social, which became a publicly traded company earlier this year. Trump has just over 7.5 million followers on Truth Social, while his mostly dormant X account is followed by 88 million. Musk's account, which hosted the interview, has more than 193 million followers.

In a reminder that the world was watching, the chat prompted a preemptive note of caution from Europe.

Thierry Breton, a French business executive and commissioner for internal market of the European Union, warned Musk of possible "amplification of harmful content" by broadcasting his interview with Trump. In a letter posted on X, Breton urged Musk to "ensure X's compliance" with EU law, including the Digital Services Act, adopted in 2022 to address a number of issues including disinformation.

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung urged the EU to "mind their own business instead of trying to meddle in the U.S. Presidential election."

Will the attacks on Walz's military service stick like they did to Kerry 20 years ago?

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In some corners of the Democratic Party, last week felt like déjà vu.

The party's vice-presidential nominee's military record was under assault from Republicans — attacks reminiscent of those leveled two decades earlier on Sen. John Kerry during his run for the White House.

Democratic strategists who lived through the Kerry onslaught, however, say the political landscape has changed so much since 2004 that they do not believe the attacks will land with the same resonance.

"It is a very different world," said Tad Devine, a senior adviser to Kerry's 2004 campaign.

Former President Donald Trump's campaign responded to the selection earlier this month of Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as the Democratic vice presidential nominee by attempting to pick apart his military record. Walz served for 24 years in the Minnesota National Guard, but Trump's campaign has criticized him for using imprecise language to describe how he carried a weapon in war and when he retired from service.

Kamala Harris' campaign has pushed back against the attacks, but some Democrats worry Republicans might succeed in turning Walz's military service into a liability. Others accused Republicans of attempting to "swift boat" Walz, a reference to the 2004 campaign and a sign of the campaign's continued relevance.

The origin of "swift boating"

Kerry's campaign was caught flatfooted in the summer of 2004 by attacks that questioned whether the presidential candidate had earned his many commendations as a commander of a swift boat during the Vietnam War. Kerry received three Purple Hearts, a Silver Star and a Bronze Star.

By 2004, America was involved in two wars — in Iraq and Afghanistan — following the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts, had made his military service a centerpiece of the hard-fought presidential primary campaign, to the point of starting his nomination speech by saying he was "reporting for duty."

Republicans sought to undermine that selling point by raising questions about his Vietnam War service. An outside political group, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, led the anti-Kerry campaign, spending millions

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of dollars on hard-hitting television ads. One spot featured men who served in Vietnam questioning Kerry's leadership and heroism, as well as his fitness to lead the country; another blasted Kerry's participation in later anti-war protests.

The ads were effective.

"I remember being in Ohio and listening to that ad. And I called my campaign headquarters and said, guys, I just heard an ad. And if I heard that ad, I wouldn't vote for me," Kerry told NPR in 2018.

Some in Kerry's campaign wanted to respond more forcefully, while others wanted to take a more cautious approach, concerned that focusing on the attacks would elevate them.

The campaign pushed back in the press but spent little money on costly television ads to address the controversy.

That trepidation, one-time Kerry advisers said, ensured that the public began to question the candidate's ability to handle national security matters.

Chris LaCivita — a top Trump campaign adviser — was one of the top Republican operatives behind the "swift boat" campaign. When Democrats compared the attacks on Walz to those on Kerry, LaCivita posted on X that the 2004 allegations "were never disproven."

"Two things you don't do is lie about the medals you received and whether or not you saw combat. Those are the two big sins. And he's guilty of at least one of them," LaCivita told The Associated Press last week.

Multiple veterans who served with Kerry refuted the accusations in 2004. Matthew Dowd, the chief strategist for the Bush campaign in 2004, said last week that the "swift boat" allegations were "nearly all lies."

Walz pushes back

The Trump campaign has sought to take a similar approach in criticizing Walz's service. Trump's running mate, Sen. JD Vance, has led the charge, accusing Walz of lying about his record. Vance, a Marine veteran, also accused Walz of abandoning his unit before it deployed to Iraq.

The Harris-Walz campaign has pushed back against the criticism. A campaign spokesperson told the AP that Walz "misspoke" in 2018 when he attempted to make a point on gun control by saying he carried weapons in a war. Walz did not see combat during his tenure in the Minnesota National Guard.

Walz's first congressional campaign in March 2005 issued a statement saying he planned to run despite a possible mobilization that might send his soldiers to Iraq. According to the Guard, Walz retired from service in May 2005. Three months later, the Army issued a mobilization order for Walz's unit. It was sent to Iraq in March 2006. The Harris-Walz campaign has pushed back against the Republican characterizations that Walz retired to avoid deploying to a war zone.

Walz achieved the rank of command sergeant major. But because he did not finish certain coursework before his retirement after 24 years in the National Guard, he retired as a master sergeant, a lower rank, for benefits purposes.

It is unclear how effective these GOP attacks will be. Democrats who worked on the Kerry campaign said they are likely not going to be as potent because so much has changed since 2004.

Flush with cash

The main reason: Campaigns are now flush with cash, making it easier to fight back.

In 2004, Kerry and President George W. Bush, the Republican nominee, took public funding, receiving \$74.6 million each from the government, barring them from private donations. The decision, said Devine and others, handcuffed a campaign that wanted to focus on its preferred message.

"We were living in a world of limited resources where we had to make decisions about should we go on the air now, should we go on later," said Steve Elmendorf, Kerry's deputy campaign manager. The Harris-Walz campaign "doesn't have those constraints."

Public funding is a thing of the past, and Harris' operation raised a staggering \$310 million in July. The Democratic campaign, aided by what President Joe Biden collected before he stepped aside, is expected to raise well over \$1 billion.

"If we were going to respond to those attacks in the paid media, we were going to need to spend money that we were going to need in October," said Devine.

Walz is not the presidential nominee

The strategists pointed to other differences in today's environment.

Whereas the "swift boat" attacks were generated by an outside group relying on advertising, Republicans have largely hit Walz on social media and in interviews. Such broadsides may reach the GOP base but not the independent voters who will decide the election.

Walz is also not the presidential nominee — as Kerry was. Voters tend to focus on the candidates at the top of a ticket, something Trump himself has noted.

And then there is the issue of Trump. Could attacks on Walz's 24 years of military service boomerang on the Republican standard-bearer? The former president has been criticized for avoiding military service over claims he suffered from bone spurs.

Despite the differences in the two campaigns, veterans of Kerry's run said Democrats should take to heart a lesson they learned the hard way: They waited too long to counterattack. Mark Mellman, Kerry's pollster, said Democrats should be particularly concerned about attacks on Walz's integrity, a key selling point of his candidacy. "To the extent that image is damaged," Mellman said, "it can be quite problematic."

Why Trump's and Harris' proposals to end federal taxes on tips would be difficult to enact

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris agree on one thing, at least: Both say they want to eliminate federal taxes on workers' tips.

But experts say there's a reason Congress hasn't made such a change already. It would be complicated, not to mention enormously costly to the federal government, to enact. It would encourage many higher-paid workers to restructure their compensation to classify some of it as "tips" and thereby avoid taxes. And, in the end, it likely wouldn't help millions of low-income workers.

"There's no way that it wouldn't be a mess," said James Hines Jr., a professor of law and economics and the research director of the Office of Tax Policy Research at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.

Both candidates unveiled their plans in Nevada, a state with one of the highest concentrations of tipped service workers in the country. Trump announced a proposal to exclude tips from federal taxes on June 9. Harris announced a similar proposal on Aug. 10.

Details have been sparse. Neither candidate's team has said whether it would exempt tips only from income taxes, only from payroll taxes or both. The payroll tax funds Social Security and Medicare.

Harris' campaign has said she would work with Congress to draft a proposal that would include an income limit and other provisions to prevent abuses by wealthy individuals who might seek to structure their compensation to classify certain fees as tips.

Her campaign said these requirements, which it did not specify, would be intended "to prevent hedge fund managers and lawyers from structuring their compensation in ways to try to take advantage of the policy." Trump's campaign has not said whether its proposal would include any such requirements.

Even so, Hines suggested that millions of workers — not just wealthy ones — would seek to change their compensation to include tips, and could even do so legally. For example, he said, a company might set up a separate entity that would reward its employees with tips instead of year-end bonuses.

"You will have taxpayers pushing their attorneys to try to characterize their wage and salary income as tips," Hines said. "And some would be successful, inevitably, because it's impossible to write foolproof rules that will cover every situation."

Republican supporters of Trump argue that Hines' concerns are overblown. Darin Miller, a spokesman for Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, said the Internal Revenue Service has a precise definition for tips and contended that reclassifying wages would be considered fraud.

Miller noted that some Democrats have signed on to co-sponsor a bill Cruz introduced in June that would

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exempt tips from federal income taxes. A bill exempting tips from payroll and income taxes has also been introduced in the House.

Though supporters say the measures are designed to help low-wage workers, many experts say that making tips tax-free would provide only limited help to those workers.

The Budget Lab at Yale, a non-partisan policy research center, estimates that there were 4 million U.S. workers in tipped occupations in 2023. That amounted to about 2.5% of all employees, including restaurant servers and beauticians.

Tipped workers tend to be younger, with an average age of 31, and of lower income. The Budget Lab said the median weekly pay for tipped workers in 2023 was \$538, compared with roughly \$1,000 for non-tipped workers.

As a result, many tipped workers already bear a lower income-tax burden. In 2022, 37% of tipped workers had incomes low enough that they paid no federal income tax at all, The Budget Lab said.

"If the issue is you're concerned about low-income taxpayers, there are a lot better ways to address that problem, like expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit or changing tax rates or changing deductions," Hines said.

In her speech in Nevada, Harris also called for raising the federal minimum wage. (The platform on Trump's campaign site doesn't mention the minimum wage.)

Changing federal tax policy on tips would also be costly. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a non-partisan group, estimates that exempting all tip income from federal income and payroll taxes would reduce revenue by \$150 billion to \$250 billion between 2026 and 2035. And it said that amount could rise significantly if the policy changed behavior and more people declared tip income.

Whether Trump or Harris wins the presidential election, tax policy will be high on Congress' agenda in 2025. That's because Trump-era tax cuts, passed in 2017, are set to expire. But Hines said he thinks Congress will be in no hurry to add "vast amounts of complexity" to the tax code.

"A presidential candidate can say whatever they want, but it's the House and Senate that have to do it," he said.

Today in History: August 14, FDR signs Social Security Act

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 14, the 227th day of 2024. There are 139 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 14, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law, ensuring income for elderly Americans and creating a federal unemployment insurance program.

Also on this date:

In 1936, in front of an estimated 20,000 spectators, Rainey Bethea was hanged in Owensboro, Kentucky in the last public execution in the United States.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, which detailed the post-war goals of the two nations.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced that Imperial Japan had surrendered unconditionally, ending World War II.

In 1947, Pakistan gained independence from British rule.

In 1994, Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the terrorist known as "Carlos the Jackal," was captured by French agents in Sudan.

In 1995, Shannon Faulkner officially became the first female cadet in the history of The Citadel, South Carolina's state military college. (However, Faulkner quit the school less than a week later, citing the stress of her court fight, and her isolation among the male cadets.)

In 1997, an unrepentant Timothy McVeigh was formally sentenced to death for the Oklahoma City bombing. (McVeigh was executed by lethal injection in 2001.)

In 2009, Charles Manson follower Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, 60, convicted of trying to assassinate

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President Gerald Ford in 1975, was released from a Texas prison hospital after more than three decades behind bars.

In 2016, Usain Bolt became the first athlete to win the 100m dash in three consecutive Olympics, taking gold at the Summer Games in Rio.

In 2021, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti, turning thousands of structures into rubble; the quake left more than 2,200 people dead and injured more than 12,000 others.

Today's Birthdays: Broadway lyricist Lee Adams ("Bye Bye Birdie") is 100. College Football Hall of Famer and NFL quarterback John Brodie is 89. Singer Dash Crofts is 84. Country singer Connie Smith is 83. Comedian-actor Steve Martin is 79. Film director Wim Wenders is 79. Singer-musician Larry Graham is 78. Actor Susan Saint James is 78. Author Danielle Steel is 77. "Far Side" cartoonist Gary Larson is 74. Actor Carl Lumbly is 73. Olympic gold medal swimmer Debbie Meyer is 72. Actor Jackee Harry is 68. NASCAR Hall of Famer Rusty Wallace is 68. Actor Marcia Gay Harden is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Earvin "Magic" Johnson is 65. Singer Sarah Brightman is 64. Actor Susan Olsen (TV: "The Brady Bunch") is 63. Actor Halle Berry is 58. Golfer Darren Clarke is 56. Actor Catherine Bell is 56. Actor Mila Kunis is 41. Actor Lamorne Morris is 41. Former NFL player Tim Tebow is 37. Actor Marsai Martin is 20.