

Groton Daily Independent

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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



Sunday, Aug. 18

St. John's Lutheran: worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., and at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

Monday, Aug 19

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, green beans, vanilla pudding, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Faculty Inservice, 8 a.m.

Boys golf at Sioux Valley (Volga), 10 a.m.

6th grade welcome walk at GHS, 4 p.m.

Elementary school open house, 4 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Pantry open, Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Community Center, 1 p.m.

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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.

Medicare Slashes Drug Prices

The US government announced the reduced prices of 10 prescription drugs for Medicare users yesterday. The deal was the result of the first direct negotiations between drug companies and the agency following the passage of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

The drugs treat a range of conditions from blood cancer to diabetes and are generally high-expense with no generic competitors. The new prices, reduced by nearly 80% in some instances, will take effect in 2026. Officials project Medicare will save roughly \$100B over five years, while individual users can expect a total of \$1.5B in out-of-pocket cost savings via a potential \$2,000 annual cap. The IRA stipulates a new crop of 15 to 20 drugs will be eligible for price negotiations annually.

Since 1960, US retail drug prices per capita have risen over 1,000%, adjusting for inflation. Costs in the US are nearly three times more than those in other high-income countries.

Perry Ketamine Arrests

Five people have been charged in connection with the ketamine-related death of actor Matthew Perry. The 54-year-old "Friends" star was found unresponsive in his hot tub in October 2023. An autopsy confirmed he died from the effects of ketamine, with coronary artery disease and drowning as contributing factors.

"Ketamine Queen" Jasveen Sangha, who allegedly operated a stash house in North Hollywood, is accused of supplying the drug to individuals involved in Perry's case. Physician Salvador Plasencia is accused of selling thousands of dollars worth of ketamine to Perry's assistant and administering the drug to Perry outside his professional practice. Three others have pleaded guilty in the case, including friend Erik Fleming, personal assistant Kenneth Iwamasa, and physician Mark Chavez.

Ketamine, developed as an anesthetic in the 1960s, is a Schedule III controlled substance used to treat depression, anxiety, and pain, and can be prone to misuse. Overdose deaths solely from ketamine are rare; most related deaths are attributed to the drug being combined with other substances.

Dotcom Busted

New Zealand yesterday agreed to extradite 50-year-old Kim Schmitz—also known as Kim Dotcom—to the US. The signed order comes after 12 years of legal disputes; Dotcom has vowed to fight it.

Dotcom is the German-born founder and former CEO of the now-defunct website Megaupload. (He was also once a hacker and the No. 1 Call of Duty player in the world.) Operational from 2005 to 2012, Megaupload allowed users to share pirated movie and music files, at one point becoming the internet's 13th most popular site, responsible for 4% of all traffic. Megaupload allegedly raked in more than \$175M in revenue, powered by advertisements and premium subscription fees.

In 2012, the Justice Department indicted Dotcom on copyright infringement, money laundering, and racketeering charges, alleging his actions cost the film and music industry over \$500M. Dotcom faces a maximum US prison sentence of 55 years.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Mauricio Pochettino, former manager of Chelsea and Tottenham, to be named coach of US men's national soccer team; former coach Gregg Berhalter was fired in June after leading Team USA for nearly six years.

Gena Rowlands, "The Notebook" star and two-time Oscar nominee, dies at age 94; Rowlands was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2019

Police arrest four suspects in fatal shooting of former "General Hospital" actor Johnny Wactor.

The 2024-25 English Premier League season kicks off today; see predicted finish for all 20 teams.

NBA releases schedule for 2024-25 season, which is set to begin Oct. 22.

Science & Technology

Researchers genetically sequence 47 known and potential strains of Lyme-disease-causing bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*; research may help with development of vaccine candidates as well as improved diagnostic tests, treatments.

Dinosaur-killing asteroid likely originated beyond Jupiter, new study finds; three isotopes of the rare metal ruthenium discovered in the 66-million-year-old crater are associated with high-carbon asteroids in outer solar system.

New implantable device can detect vital signs and rapidly administer opioid-overdose reversal medication naloxone; device was 96% effective at reversing overdose effects in animal studies.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.6%, Dow +1.4%, Nasdaq +2.3%) as investors regain confidence in US economy after retail sales unexpectedly grew 1% month-over-month in July.

Cisco shares rise roughly 6%, marking best day since November 2020 after tech giant beats quarterly revenue and earnings estimates and announces it is cutting 7% of its workforce in second round of layoffs this year.

Walmart shares rise roughly 6% after nation's largest retailer beats quarterly earnings and revenue estimates, raises full-year forecast.

Politics & World Affairs

JD Vance and Tim Walz, the Republican and Democratic vice presidential nominees, respectively, to debate Oct. 1 on CBS in New York City.

Sweden confirms first case of mpox strain outside of Africa; announcement comes one day after World Health Organization declares mpox a global health emergency.

Ukraine captures Russian town of Sudzha, largest to fall since Ukraine's cross-border incursion.

US-Russian ballerina Ksenia Karelina sentenced to 12 years in Russian prison on treason charges over \$52 donation to Ukraine.

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South Dakota Receives Presidential Disaster Declaration after Historic Flooding

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that South Dakota has received a presidential disaster declaration due to the historic 1000-year flooding event that occurred between June 16 and July 8, 2024. 25 counties have received disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and four of those counties have qualified for individual assistance for residents and business owners.

“South Dakota has worked tremendously hard to get to this point and will continue working to rebuild our communities. I am so proud of our people,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “This event was unprecedented, but our response was exactly what South Dakota always does. We work together to get our neighbors back on their feet.”

Residents and business owners in the following four counties qualified for individual assistance: Davison, Lincoln, Turner, and Union. Residents must contact FEMA to register.

Disaster Recovery Center dates & locations will be announced very soon. It is not necessary to go to a center to apply for FEMA assistance. Impacted individuals located within one of these counties can go online to disasterassistance.gov, call 800-621-3362 or use the FEMA mobile app to apply.

In addition, federal funding is available to state, tribal, eligible local governments, and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the flooding in the following 25 counties: Aurora, Bennett, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Clay, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Hand, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jackson, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Sanborn, Tripp, Turner, Union, and Yankton.

As Governor Noem reiterated many times throughout this historic flooding event, for those local communities, the cost share will be 75% federal, 15% state, and 10% local. These local entities will work with state and FEMA officials to obtain this assistance.

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AGENDA

BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2024 – 7:00 PM
BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

- I. Call to Order: for Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission
- II. Roll Call: David North - Vice Chair, Dale Kurth, Patrick Keatts, James Meyers, Carrie Weisenburger, County Commissioner Mike Gage, Alternate Paul Johnson, and Stan Beckler-Chairman.
- III. Approval of August 20, 2024, Agenda: Motion: 1st _____ 2nd _____
- IV. Approval of July 16, 2024, Minutes: Motion: 1st _____ 2nd _____

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

- V. Old Business:
 1. Sign-up sheet: On the table by the door entrance, there is a Sign-up Sheet. Please legibly sign in and mark YES or NO if you want to speak to the Board on any Agenda Item.
 2. Permits: Anyone that has submitted a Variance Petition (VP) or a Conditional Use Petition (CUP) to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) is still required to get their required PERMITS from the Zoning Office before starting their project if their Petition gets approved. Penalties may be assessed per Ordinance when starting projects without proper permits in place.
- VI. New Business: Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA).
 1. Conditional Use Petition (CUP) in a Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG) described as Lot B, "Leibel First Addition" in the NE1/4 of Section 11-T123N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (13115 393rd Avenue; Bath Twp.).
 2. Conditional Use Petition (CUP) in a future Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG) described as Lot 1, "Johnson South Third Subdivision" in the NE1/4 of Section 22-T122N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (13919 386th Avenue; Warner Twp.).
 3. Variance to Building Setbacks in a Lake Front Residential District (R-3) described as Lot 2, "First Subdivision of Bauer's Outlot 1" in the SW1/4 of Section 7-T123N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (37306 132nd Street; Mercier Twp.).
 4. Variance to Building Setbacks in an Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) described as North Sixteen Acres Northwest and the East Sixteen Acres Northwest of Section 17-T124N-R62W. The NW1/4 of Section 17-T124N-R62W, Except Land Deeded, of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (12604 & 12606 395th Avenue; Cambria Twp.).
- VII. Other Business:

Completed as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) & going to Planning Commission

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AGENDA

BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2024 – 7:00 PM

BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

PLANNING COMMISSION

I. Old Business:

II. New Business: Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Planning Commission.

10. Rezone Petition for a property described as Lot 1, "Johnson South Third Subdivision" in the NE1/4 of Section 22-T124N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (13919 386th Avenue; Warner Twp.) to be rezoned from Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) to Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG).

11. Rezone Petition for a property described as proposed Outlot 2, "Aberdeen Twp 20W Outlots" in the E1/2 of Section 20-T123N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38380 W Hwy 12; Aberdeen Twp.) to be rezoned from Heavy Industrial District (H-I) to Highway Commercial District (HC).

12. Rezone Petition for a property described as "Olson's Outlot A" in the NW1/4 of Section 25-T126N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (11646 387th Avenue; Oneota Twp.) to be rezoned from Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) to Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG).

13. Preliminary & Final Plat for financial and conveyance purposes on a property described as "Aberdeen Twp 20W Outlots" in the E1/2 of Section 20-T123N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38360, 38380 & 38390 W Hwy 12; Aberdeen Twp.).

14. Preliminary Plat for review purposes on a property described as "Larkota Acres First Addition" in the N1/2 of the SW1/4 of Section 3-T121N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (Approx. 14262 385th Avenue; Warner Twp.).

15. Preliminary & Final Plat for conveyance purposes on a property described as "Houghton Cemetery First Addition Includes Blocks H, I, J, and K" in the NE1/4 of Section 7-T126N-R61W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (11305 401st Avenue; Shelby Twp.).

16. Preliminary & Final Plat for conveyance purposes on a property described as "Bergman Second Addition" in the SW1/4 of Section 11-T122N-R65W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (37804 138th Street; Highland Twp.).

17. Other Business: Executive Session if requested.

18. Motion to Adjourn: 1st

2nd

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Queen of Hearts goes out!

Kari Bartling's name was drawn Thursday night with a jackpot of \$40,266. Ticket sales for the week were \$2,970. Bartling picked card number seven, which was the Queen of Hearts. She will get half of the jackpot with the remaining half being split between the Olive Grove Golf Course and the Groton American Legion.

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We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

When the Court Has the Last Word, Who Limits the Court?

In the Constitutional Convention of 1787, delegates debated the merits and virtues of vesting in federal courts the awesome power of judicial review—the authority to strike down laws of Congress that they find to be unconstitutional. In the end, the Framers agreed to grant the reviewing power to the courts, but not without some careful soul-searching, for it was at that juncture in world history unique in the realms of law and political science. Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist No. 78 that the courts were designed to keep the legislature within constitutional limits. He observed, "The interpretation of the laws is the proper and peculiar province of the courts. A constitution is, in fact, and must be regarded by the judges as fundamental law." The judiciary, then, was charged with the duty of determining the meaning of the Constitution and policing its boundaries.

Although the function of the courts, as described by Hamilton, was clear, there were, nonetheless, concerns and reservations about the scope and exercise of the reviewing power. If the U.S. Supreme Court were to possess that authority to check and limit the powers of Congress and the president, who would check and limit the Court? John Dickinson of Delaware captured the dilemma: "He thought no such power ought to exist. He was at the same time at a loss what expedient to substitute."

The troubling aspect of judicial review, as explained by members of the Convention—those who supported it and those who opposed it—was the potential for the judiciary's abuse of power. Never mind that judicial review was a byproduct of the Court's authority to interpret the laws. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts told his colleagues that, "the judiciary, by their exposition of the laws," would have "a power of deciding on their constitutionality." Judicial review, an organic feature of the new constitutional order, would hang like a sword above the necks of the executive and legislature, an essential tool for maintaining the enumeration of powers. As John Marshall, a delegate in the Virginia Ratifying Convention, described the checking power on Congress, "If they were to make a law not warranted by any of the powers enumerated, it would be considered by the judges as an infringement of the Constitution which they are to guard. They would declare it void."

The faith of the Framers in the willingness, ability and integrity of the judiciary to guard the Constitution, as Marshall explained, was questioned during the ratification debates and, as readers will recall, at various controversial moments in our history—in the 1930s when President Franklin D. Roosevelt tried, unsuccessfully, to pack the Supreme Court, by those in the 1950s who opposed the Court's desegregation rulings, and in our time, in reaction to the Court's decision in *Trump v. United States*, to clothe the president with immunity from criminal prosecution. This Season of Discontent with the Court is thus not the first in American history, but it runs deep and is likely long-lasting. It will continue to inspire calls for judicial reform.

The increasing demands for Supreme Court reform hinge on the very concerns that fueled the Framers' dilemma—abuse of power-- as expressed by Dickinson and his colleague, Robert Yates, a delegate from

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New York who, after the Convention adjourned, took up his pen and entered the ratification debates, under the pseudonym, "Brutus," to criticize judicial review, which he regarded as one of the Constitution's great defects. He reminded readers that "the world" had never seen "a court of justice invested with such immense powers" as those vested in the Supreme Court. He pointed out that there would be no power to control their decisions. The Justices, "are authorized" to determine the powers of Congress, and "they are to give the constitution an explanation and there is no power above them to set aside their judgment." In such circumstances, and vested with full judicial independence, the new Justices would "feel themselves independent of Heaven itself."

The Framers' answer to Brutus's fear, the specter of unconstrained judicial power, was the checking and balancing instrument of impeachment. Alexander Hamilton, in Federalist No. 81, believed that the overhanging threat of impeachment would be sufficient to deter judges from "deliberate usurpations of power." Was Hamilton's assumption, correct? We explore next week the Framers' discussion of judicial impeachment.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

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SD HS Preseason Soccer Coaches Rankings

Groton girls ranked number one

August 15, 2024 - SDHSSCA Preseason Coaches Poll for Boys and Girls soccer. The soccer coaches association will be releasing our rankings every two weeks during the season. We appreciate your willingness to publish the rankings at your earliest convenience. Thank you!

2024 South Dakota HS Soccer Preseason Coaches Poll - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Boys AA

1. Sioux Falls Lincoln
2. O’Gorman
3. Sioux Falls Jefferson
4. Rapid City Stevens
5. Yankton

Receiving Votes: Aberdeen Central, Brandon Valley, Brookings, Sioux Falls Christian, Sioux Falls Washington, Spearfish, Watertown

Girls AA

1. Harrisburg
2. Aberdeen Central
3. Rapid City Stevens
4. Rapid City Central
4. Sioux Falls Lincoln

Receiving Votes: Brandon Valley, Mitchell, O’Gorman, Pierre T.F. Riggs, Sioux Falls Jefferson, Sioux Falls Roosevelt, Spearfish

Boys A

1. Vermillion
2. St. Thomas More
3. Dakota Valley
4. Belle Fourche
5. James Valley Christian

Receiving Votes: Custer, Freeman Academy, Groton Area, Hot Springs, Rapid City Christian, West Central

Girls A

1. Groton Area
2. West Central
3. Sioux Falls Christian
4. Dakota Valley
5. Vermillion

Receiving Votes: Belle Fourche, Garretson, St. Thomas More



How South Dakota, Michigan took different paths to 'election integrity'

By **STU WHITNEY**

South Dakota News Watch

DETROIT – Justin Roebuck can recall the exact moment that distrust of 2020 presidential election results impacted his status in the Republican Party.

The top election official of Ottawa County in western Michigan was speaking to a GOP women's group when he was asked who won the race between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden in the Midwest battleground state.

"When I told them that Biden won Michigan by about 154,000 votes, the gasp was audible in the room," said Roebuck, adding that he was castigated by other party members for legitimizing the results. "I think it hit home for me at that point."

Roebuck was among a group of election officials who spoke to journalists as part of the National Press Foundation 2024 Elections Fellowship in late July, assessing the state of American voting systems ahead of November.

They illustrated how unfounded claims of voter fraud, exacerbated by public frustration over social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, emboldened electoral activists seeking to overturn results and erode trust in the democratic process.

These reverberations were felt in South Dakota, where grassroots efforts from organizations such as South Dakota Canvassing Group put pressure on state legislators to address election security through post-election audits and the banning of unmonitored drop boxes.

But the heightened scrutiny of casting and counting votes was hardly unique to the Republican-run Mount Rushmore State.

Michigan, a Democratic-controlled swing state that voted for Trump in 2016 and Biden four years later, was at the center of civil unrest before, during and after the tumultuous 2020 presidential race.

The way the two states handled the fallout – with Michigan expanding voting opportunities through ballot measures and South Dakota restricting access with legislative action – reveals disparate strategies to defend the sanctity of the vote.

South Dakota House Majority Leader Will Mortenson told News Watch that, in the case of restricting drop boxes, there were questions about the "susceptibility of abuse" and whether that justified changing the law. "Or do we have to wait until there's actual abuse that we see before we address the susceptibility?" he asked.

David Becker, founder of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, which provides support and legal assistance to election workers, addressed the question by saying that ballot security measures should be based on verifiable information and not theories or speculation.

"What I'd love to see the conspiracy theorists asked is, 'Why are you putting this out on social media? Why isn't this being presented to a court of law?'" Becker said during the fellowship in Detroit. "Because still to this day, over 44 months since the 2020 election, there has not been one single shred of evidence presented to any court anywhere in this country that cast doubt on the outcome of that election."

Michigan serves as testing ground

Trump led the vote tally in Michigan well past midnight on election night in 2020. But the race shifted in the early morning hours as nearly 3 million absentee ballots were counted, many in the Democratic stronghold of the state's largest city, Detroit.

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The logistical challenge of processing mail-in ballots on Election Day delayed results and then showed Biden taking the lead, fueling anti-government distrust from conservative groups that flared earlier in the year.

In April 2020, hundreds of protestors, some armed with rifles, stormed the state Capitol in Lansing to rail against Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's stay-at-home orders and other pandemic restrictions.

In October, a month from the 2020 election, the FBI charged a group of men with hatching a plot to kidnap the governor from her northern Michigan vacation home, with ensuing trials leading to nine convictions and five acquittals.

Following Biden's victory, Michigan was at the center of a coordinated effort to subvert the election, with Republican activists submitting fraudulent documents claiming Trump won the state's Electoral College vote, a prelude to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

"Just about every election-denying scheme or stunt that gained national attention in the past four years was attempted at some point here in Michigan," said Attorney General Dana Nessel, who filed forgery and other felony charges against 16 alleged false electors.

"So they really staged their dress rehearsal in Michigan because they knew it was a good laboratory for their experimentation and to probe the kind of reception they'd get on a national level."

Ballot measure expands voter access

In June 2021, after months of investigation, a Republican-controlled Senate Oversight Committee in Michigan issued a report that found "no evidence of widespread or systematic fraud" related to the 2020 presidential election in Michigan.

But GOP lawmakers still pointed to vulnerabilities in the system and moved to pass nearly 40 bills aimed at restricting voter registration, absentee ballots, voter ID and drop boxes. Whitmer vetoed the bills and overcame a narrow Republican legislative majority, which has since shifted to a slim Democratic advantage.

In 2022, Michigan voters adopted Proposal 2, a constitutional amendment that established at least nine days of early voting, provided voters with a right to request an absentee ballot, and enshrined voter ID rules that Republicans had sought to restrict.

The measure also mandated at least one state-funded drop box for each municipality, with additional boxes for every 15,000 voters, building on absentee voting reforms passed in a similar Promote the Vote amendment in 2018.

Proposal 2, lauded by supporters as Promote the Vote II, passed with 60% of the vote, a notable mandate at a time of election-related angst in the state.

"In Michigan, you don't get 60% of the vote with Democrats or liberals alone," said Democratic state Sen. Jeremy Moss, who chaired the Senate Elections and Ethics Committee that implemented many of the reforms.

"That's a coalition of Democrats, Republicans and Independents who wanted to back away from misinformation and join other states that had early voting and other provisions that provided more access to the ballot."

Message matches the moment

South Dakota's own introspection on election access was accelerated by groups such as South Dakota Canvassing, whose founders were inspired by My Pillow founder and conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell's 2021 Cyber Symposium in Sioux Falls.

Lindell, who campaigned for Trump alongside South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, claimed to have incriminating 2020 election data showing that China hacked into U.S. voting systems to help elect Biden. He offered \$5 million to anyone who could prove him wrong, which did indeed happen, forcing him into a court battle as he tried to avoid honoring the bet.

"Fair elections equal a representative republic, but stolen elections equal slavery," Canvassing Group co-founder Jessica Pollema told followers, who put county auditors and commissioners on the defensive by echoing accusations from conservative media and demanding proof of secure systems, even in a state that Trump won by 26 points in 2020.

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For some Republicans, the message matched the moment. In a May 2024 poll co-sponsored by News Watch, more than 6 in 10 South Dakotans said they were dissatisfied with how democracy is working in the United States, including 32% who said they were "very dissatisfied."

The same poll found that 58% of Republican respondents said they accepted the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

"Election denialism presents an opportunity to build a movement around restricting voting access and turning back the clock on a variety of electoral innovations," Charles Stewart, a political science professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, told News Watch in 2023.

"The places that are generally going to be the most receptive to that message are rural-based Republican states. To put it plainly, it makes sense to hunt where the ducks are."

'Make sure that it's done right'

That was the political climate in which South Dakota's Republican leadership, in consultation with county auditors, explored the issue of election security during the 2023 state legislative session in Pierre.

Those seeking major overhauls included Rick Weible, a computer analyst and Canvassing Group adviser who supports the hand counting of ballots and criticizes South Dakota's 46-day early voting period, tied for longest in the nation.

"If you want to get rid of election deniers, you have to let them be part of the process," Weible said of his lobbying efforts.

Opportunity Solutions Project, a conservative nonprofit that advocates restrictions to absentee voting, also worked with legislators and county auditors to make it "easier to vote but harder to cheat," a mantra newly adopted by election reformists.

Some of the testimony included allegations of people dumping unauthorized ballots into drop boxes in other states, without providing proof that it happened or how it was connected to South Dakota.

The primary purpose of drop boxes is to allow absentee or early voters an opportunity to submit ballots at a time and place convenient to their schedule or circumstance. Some might use it to save postage, avoid a crowded indoor setting or merely because they're concerned about meeting the mail-in deadline for ballots.

An Associated Press survey of election officials in each state revealed no cases of fraud, vandalism or theft involving drop boxes that could have affected the results of the 2020 election.

That didn't mean it couldn't impact South Dakota in future elections, said Mortenson, who along with Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree helped pass a package of 10 election reform bills in 2023.

"Some of the news we heard inspired legislators to kick the tires and figure out if some of the allegations seen in other states would show a vulnerability in our system," said Mortenson.

"What we found is that we started out with a very secure, trustworthy system. The steps we took were to shore up security and acknowledge that if we're going to have this really long early voting window, we've got to make sure that it's done right."

SD auditors oppose drop box ban

The package included House Bill 1165, which among other measures stated that county auditors "may not establish or place ... an absentee ballot drop box within the official's jurisdiction. A completed absentee ballot may only be returned to an office of the individual in charge of the election."

The Board of Elections approved language clarifying that to mean ballots can only be returned to the physical office of the election official, as opposed to the lobby of a county building where the office is located.

Drop boxes, used in nearly 40 states in 2020, became a target for election reformists after more than 40% of voters used the boxes to return ballots in that presidential election year, compared to about 15% in 2016, according to the Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project.

A movie praised by Trump, "2000 Mules," purported to show a pattern of Democrat-aligned ballot "mules" paid to illegally collect and drop off ballots in swing states such as Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Election experts criticized the project's flawed cellphone tracking analysis, while Trump's

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efforts to establish ballot fraud through the court system proved unsuccessful due to lack of evidence.

South Dakota did not record a single case of voter fraud or other election-related crimes tied to the use of ballot drop boxes in 2020 or 2022, according to a News Watch survey of county auditors that drew responses from 58 of 66 counties, including 29 of the top 30 by population.

"I think we're trying to correct a problem that doesn't exist," said Harding County Auditor Kathy Glines, who took office in 1991 and was part of a group of auditors who testified in Pierre, South Dakota.

Election systems tested by 2004 race

South Dakota is one of at least 28 states to adopt new voting restrictions since 2020 that will be in place for this year's presidential election, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a progressive public policy institute focused on democracy and voting rights issues.

The overhaul was enabled partly by a 2013 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that rejected the principle of "preclearance" that had forced states to comply with federal provisions in the Voting Rights Act dealing with disenfranchisement of minorities.

Preclearance required states with a history of discriminatory voting policies to submit changes in election laws or district maps to the federal government for advance review before putting them into effect.

South Dakota was one of the states impacted because of legal conflicts involving voting rights in Indian Country, specifically the counties of Oglala Lakota and Todd, which traditionally vote Democratic.

Republican Chris Nelson, who served as secretary of state from 2003 to 2011, recalled the state's election integrity being tested during one of its most expensive and consequential elections – Republican John Thune's U.S. Senate triumph over incumbent Democrat Tom Daschle in 2004.

The focus on Native American reservation counties stemmed from Democrat Tim Johnson's Senate victory over Thune in 2002, when Johnson won 92% of the Oglala Lakota County vote, giving him a statewide winning margin of 524 votes when the counting ended around 9 a.m. the day after the election.

"There was a tremendous amount of stress on our county auditors for that (2004) election, particularly in Indian Country," Nelson told News Watch. "One side was concerned about, 'Is there going to be cheating out there?' The other side was saying, 'Is there going to be disenfranchisement?' I went out and personally sat in each county auditor's office in Indian Country and spent part of a day with each auditor to make sure that they had everything ready to go."

Nelson added that Daschle, Democratic Senate leader at the time, sent a lawyer from Washington to sit in the secretary of state's office in Pierre on election night to observe the process. Daschle, who lost by 4,508 votes, called Thune in the early-morning hours to concede the race, satisfied that the election was conducted fairly.

"I have a profound respect for the people of our state," Daschle said the next day. "And I respect their decision."

'Make sure no one's vote gets stolen'

On the topic of making it easier to vote and harder to cheat, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson asked for an honest assessment of which states are truly prioritizing both aims, without regard to partisan pressures.

"Democrats are oftentimes seen as trying to increase access to the vote, and Republicans are seen as prioritizing the security of the process," Benson said, speaking to journalists at the Detroit conference. "The best election administrators can and do accomplish both of those things at the same time."

Mortenson pushed back on the notion that recent legislative moves in South Dakota have restricted voting access in the state.

"We have the longest early voting window in the country, so it is arguably easier to vote in South Dakota than any other state," he told News Watch. "So in terms of the ease and convenience of voting in South Dakota, we're at the pinnacle. But we take very seriously the idea that the person whose ballot is being counted is the person who cast that ballot. And so we want to make sure that we have a lot of accountability when ballots are cast outside of a regulated election setting to make sure that no one's vote gets stolen."

Nelson, currently a member of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, said his priority as an elec-

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tion administrator, despite running for office as a Republican, was to operate from a neutral perspective. That meant maintaining and sometimes expanding the rights of voters to cast their ballot in a way that worked best for them.

Some of the actions undertaken during his stint as secretary of state included taking the notarization requirement off voter registration cards and removing the "excuse requirement" that mandated certain circumstances to get an absentee ballot rather than vote on Election Day.

"The act of registering to vote and voting is an interaction between you as a citizen and your government, and we ought to be doing everything we can to make it as easy as possible for citizens to interact with the government," Nelson said.

"When it comes to drop boxes, I was curious about where the demonstrated problem was in South Dakota because we aren't just mailing ballots out to everybody. Each individual voter has to apply for their own absentee ballot, and that voter can decide how they want to return it. They can mail it in, they can hand-deliver it to the auditor, they can send it with somebody else to the auditor, and in places where they establish a drop box, they can put it into a drop box. The government shouldn't be telling you which way to do it. You've got the right."

Finding faith in election systems

Roebuck, the Michigan election official whose statement of fact that Biden won Michigan in 2020 drew such a strong reaction, said he felt ostracized from his party at times during the post-election tumult.

But he stuck to the task of election administration, which meant treating people's concerns with respect and trying to share as much information as possible about how elections work.

"I think we're at an inflection point right now where I believe my role in particular is to listen," said Roebeck. "It's to be honest, but it's also to be introspective enough to say, 'We can do better.' Election officials are not perfect. This is not a perfect system. We should not be discrediting everything that comes at us just by virtue of the fact that someone is criticizing elections."

Becker, whose Center for Election Innovation and Research works to build trust in voting systems, agrees that shedding as much light as possible on elections is beneficial. But the former U.S. Department of Justice attorney has little patience for claims of election fraud that are not backed by facts or data.

"There's this myth that voter fraud is really hard to catch, so what we see must just be the tip of the iceberg," he said. "I'm here to tell you that voter fraud is one of the easiest crimes to catch in the United States of America. You have someone who has created a document trail, who has walked up and presented themselves in front of multiple witnesses who can testify. If you tried to cast someone else's ballot on any kind of scale, like submitting a mail-in ballot for someone else, what's going to happen is that person's going to try to vote. And the election officials will notice that someone tried to vote and also had a mail-in ballot. If that happened on any kind of scale, it would be identified."

Becker added that confidence in elections is boosted by the fact that "95% of all American voters are going to vote on paper ballots this fall, including every single battleground state."

Like in South Dakota, which uses optical scan ballots with high-speed counters, these paper ballots provide a valuable backup during recounts or audit procedures, adding integrity to the final tally.

Mortenson cites that and recent audit results as proof that "South Dakota should be proud of our elections and have a lot of faith that they are counted accurately."

Asked about those who attack the integrity of county auditors and other election officials in the state, the Republican legislator did not mince words.

"We've got a message for the local officials who run elections: South Dakota has your back," Mortenson said. "Those who cast doubt on South Dakota elections have little following and no common sense. Our auditors and poll workers should take heart and anyone who spreads lies about them should take a hike."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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'Engineering marvel': Neutrino experiment takes next step with completion of caverns

Assembling equipment in excavated space is next for project in Lead

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 15, 2024 6:42 PM

LEAD — A former gold mine in the Black Hills is a step closer to being mined for answers to fundamental questions about the universe.

Dignitaries and scientists went 4,850 feet underground Thursday at South Dakota's Sanford Underground Research Facility — formerly the Homestake Mine — to celebrate the completion of the excavation phase for one of the largest science experiments in the world.

"It is truly an engineering marvel," said Lia Merminga.

She's the director of the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia, Illinois, which is the other facility participating in the experiment.

Thursday's ceremony celebrated the completed excavation of over 800,000 tons of rock to make space for the research. To do the work, construction crews dismantled heavy mining equipment piece by piece and transported it underground, and workers reassembled the machinery to blast and relocate rock.

The excavated rock was conveyed across a street in Lead and dumped into the Open Cut, a pit left over from the Homestake mining era that's 1 mile wide and 1,250 feet deep.

The excavation resulted in three connected caverns. Two will house neutrino detectors each containing 17,000 tons of cooled, liquid argon, and the third will store other equipment. The two detector caverns are massive: 92 feet high, 65 feet wide and about one and a half football fields deep.

The project's next phase will outfit the caverns with the technology needed to house the world's largest neutrino detectors in what will be called the Long-Baseline Neutrino Facility. That will require the movement of 60 loads of material into the mine, six days a week, for approximately the next five years.

Neutrinos are subatomic particles that are sometimes compared to ghosts due to their ability to move through mass without any interaction, according to Sanford Underground Research Facility Science Director Jaret Heise.

"Neutrinos are complicated," he said. "The strangest particle we've ever seen."

Studying neutrinos could help scientists learn why matter exists, how black holes form, and if neutrinos are connected to dark matter or other undiscovered particles.

The plan for the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment is to shoot a beam of neutrinos 800 miles through the earth from Fermilab in Illinois to the detectors in South Dakota. That will allow scientists to study how neutrinos change as they travel long distances. The deep underground location shields the experiment from cosmic radiation.

The Homestake Mine was the largest and deepest gold mine in North America. After it closed in 2001, then-Gov. Mike Rounds helped to shepherd the conversion of a portion of the mine into the Sanford Underground Research Facility, which has housed other experiments beyond the one celebrated Thursday. Rounds, now a U.S. senator, attended the ceremony.

"When you have this type of investment here, not just from the federal government, but from other nations around the world, it sends a message that this is bigger than just one state or community," Rounds said.

The project is one of the largest international science collaborations ever attempted. The U.S. Department of Energy, which includes Fermilab, has estimated the total cost of the experiment to be more than \$3 billion. In 2023, the project had \$314 million of economic output in South Dakota and created 1,923 jobs in the state, according to the Department of Energy.

Thursday's event highlighted the project's global collaboration, which involves over 1,400 scientists from 35 countries.

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 attorney general says former Revenue Department employee faked titles to get loans

Revelation comes as another former state worker is under prosecution for theft

BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 15, 2024 2:42 PM

A now-deceased state employee used her position with the state Department of Revenue to create 13 fake vehicle titles, which were used to secure \$400,000 in loans, Attorney General Marty Jackley's office confirmed Thursday.

The Dakota Scout newspaper had previously reported that a woman named Sandra O'Day, a three-decade state employee, had engaged in the behavior prior to her death from cancer.

Jackley's release does not name O'Day, but says the Division of Criminal Investigation led an inquiry into the behavior of a former state employee and uncovered evidence of the fake titling scheme.

Jackley's spokesman, Tony Mangan, confirmed that the release was about O'Day.

"Since the former employee has passed away, no charges will be filed," said a statement from Jackley.

The statement did not elaborate on the impacts to the financial institutions from which O'Day obtained the loans. It said only that about \$400,000 in loans were obtained. It's unclear if O'Day been making payments on the loans.

Mangan directed some questions to the state Department of Revenue. Department spokeswoman Kendra Baucom, citing confidentiality laws pertaining to motor vehicle records, did not answer questions about lender losses and any potential liability the state might have, if any, for those losses.

The confirmation of the O'Day investigation from Jackley's office comes in the wake of a separate fraudulent scheme allegedly carried out by another former state employee, in that case one who'd worked for the Department of Social Services. Lonna Carroll, 68, is accused of pocketing \$1.78 million from Child Protection Services by requesting and approving foster care and child protections payments before pocketing the money for herself.

Carroll faces two counts of aggravated grand theft, based on more than 500 transactions over a 13-year period.

During a July 31 meeting, lawmakers on the state's Government Operations and Audit Committee grilled Auditor General Russ Olson on the protocols that may have helped Carroll perpetuate the alleged thefts, but Olson largely declined to offer details in light of the pending criminal case.

The audit committee is set to meet again in October to dive further into the details of the departmental protocols Olson said have changed since Carroll's departure. One employee can no longer request and approve payments, Olson said.

The chair and vice chair of the audit committee did not return calls seeking comment on the O'Day situation. Committee member and Sioux Falls Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba said via text that the committee "will take it up" once Jackley's office has finished its inquiry.

Mangan confirmed via email that the investigative work on the case has concluded.

Another committee member, Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, said he suspects the committee will need to take a look at the role of the Revenue Department's internal controls. As of Thursday afternoon, however, Reed hadn't spoken to many other committee members about the titling scheme.

"I don't know when we'll take that on. I would guess we would," Reed said.

As for the situation with Carroll, Reed hopes the committee will stay in open session to discuss more of the details on internal controls at the Department of Social Services.

"We're very committed to not going into an executive session for it," said Reed, using a term for a closed-door session. "You never know, because they're talking about a legal case, but we're really going to try to do everything out in the open."

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.

COMMENTARY

Legislative interest in statewide school cellphone ban underscores myth of local control

by DANA HESS ~ AUGUST 15, 2024 9:02 AM

It's like something out of one of those old Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland musicals: "Hey gang, my dad's got a barn! Let's put on a show!"

Instead of putting on a show, the state's Department of Education and some legislators are eager to follow in the footsteps of several school districts that have banned students from having cellphones in school.

"Hey gang, this sounds like a great idea! Let's make it a rule for everybody!"

The fact that the department and lawmakers are even talking about taking action on a cellphone ban for students underscores the myth of local control.

Supposedly, each local school board is in charge of making its own rules and regulations. That's true until some hot idea sweeps the Capitol, causing lawmakers and policymakers to hype each other into a frenzy and start making rules that apply to everyone, or in this case, every school district.

What got the buzz going in legislative circles is the decision in some South Dakota school districts to prohibit students from using cellphones during the school day. Gettysburg, Kimball and Platte-Geddes are among the schools that have implemented this policy.

Students' phones will be placed in pouches that need to be opened with a magnetic key. In some cases, phones will remain available to students who need an app to monitor a medical condition.

Schools are implementing this policy because, in many cases, students are too connected to social media. Administrators want their lunchrooms to be filled with student conversations, not just the sounds of chewing and tapping. (It's easy enough to consider someone else giving up their cellphone while you, ahem, read this column on your phone.)

There have been some questions raised about whether this is the right way to get students to use their phones responsibly. With the phone locked in a bag, can they be responsible to an employer who needs to tell them about a schedule change? Can they be responsible to a parent who needs them to pick up younger siblings after school? Is hiding away their phones really the right way to teach them how to use social media responsibly?

These questions aren't stopping conversations from taking place about how to implement these kinds of policies in other schools. Conversations like that taking place at the legislative level means that someone will probably come up with a one-size-fits-all bill that forces this kind of policy on school districts, whether they want it or not.

According to a story in *The Dakota Scout*, there has been talk about the school cellphone bans among members of the summer study committee on Artificial Intelligence and Regulation of Internet Access by Minors. According to Rep. Will Mortenson, a Pierre Republican, "How to bring this about while respecting local control is the part we're working through."

Yes, there's the rub: how lawmakers can inflict their will on school districts while maintaining the myth of local control.

Lawmakers love local control until they want to be the ones in control. School districts learned that lesson the hard way in the last legislative session when lawmakers decided the state's school districts needed to implement a \$45,000 minimum salary for teachers. Lawmakers mandated the salary, but failed to provide any extra funding for the 37 school districts that didn't yet meet the salary minimum.

While some school districts are scrambling to find the funding to pay their teachers the legislatively enforced minimum salary, others will be looking for money to get them started on their own school-wide cellphone ban. According to The Dakota Scout, the Gettysburg School district needed about \$4,000 to start the program.

Maybe the school cellphone ban is a good idea. It certainly has generated some interest from educators and lawmakers. But just because it's popular doesn't mean that it has to be the law in every school district.

Lawmakers should fight their baser instinct to try to make everything right by passing a new law. Instead of mandating the school cellphone ban, they could consider funding it: Leave the decision about banning cellphones up to each school district, but start a fund those schools can tap to cover their costs. That would give a leg up to what may be a good idea for some schools while allowing school boards to go on believing that they are in control.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Trump asks New York judge to delay felony sentencing past Election Day

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - AUGUST 15, 2024 2:01 PM

Former President Donald Trump asked a New York court Thursday to delay until after November's presidential election his sentencing for the 34 state felonies the court convicted him of in May.

Judge Juan Merchan scheduled a sentencing hearing for Sept. 18. But that date overlaps with early voting in the presidential election and gives Trump too little time to appeal a potential ruling against him on a request to vacate the conviction, which Merchan is scheduled to issue two days prior, attorneys Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote to Merchan in a letter dated Wednesday.

The one-page letter was not on the court's official docket Thursday morning, but Blanche provided a copy to States Newsroom and said it had been filed with the court.

Merchan's schedule is unrealistic and ignores several related issues, Trump's attorneys wrote.

A sentencing proceeding could improperly affect voters' perception of Trump leading up to Election Day, and Merchan's daughter's ties to elected Democrats could undermine the public's faith in the court, they wrote.

While Merchan has rejected three requests from Trump that he recuse himself from the case because of his daughter's employment at a company that produces advertising campaigns for Democrats, Trump's lawyers said delaying the sentencing would help mitigate any potential appearance of a conflict of interest.

Trump's Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, continue to discuss the case on the campaign trail. And the founder of the firm where Merchan's daughter works has expressed his support for Harris on social media, Blanche and Bove wrote.

Election entanglements

The Sept. 18 sentencing is also scheduled "after the commencement of early voting in the Presidential election," they wrote.

"By adjourning the sentencing until after that election ... the Court would reduce, even if not eliminate, issues regarding the integrity of any future proceedings," they wrote.

Pennsylvania law allows the earliest voting, according to a database compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Pennsylvania counties are permitted to hold early voting 50 days before Election

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Day, which is Sept. 16.

It is unclear if any counties in the key battleground state are planning to make voting available that soon. No other states allow voting before Sept. 18, according to the NCSL database. Blanche did not answer an emailed question about what early voting he was referring to in the letter.

Presidential immunity

Trump's attorneys said the sentencing hearing should also be moved to accommodate another issue in the case: Trump's presidential immunity argument.

Trump has asked for his conviction to be overturned following a U.S. Supreme Court decision that ruled presidents were entitled to a broad definition of criminal immunity for acts they take in office.

Merchan set a Sept. 16 date to rule on the request the state conviction be set aside, but Trump's attorneys said that does not leave enough time for Trump to appeal a potentially unfavorable ruling on the immunity issue.

"The requested adjournment is also necessary to allow President Trump adequate time to assess and pursue state and federal appellate options in response to any adverse ruling," they wrote.

The Supreme Court decision that established presidential immunity arose from a pretrial appeal, they wrote.

A New York jury convicted Trump in May of 34 felony counts of falsified business records, making him the first former president to be convicted of a felony. Trump was accused of sending \$130,000, through attorney Michael Cohen, to adult film star Stormy Daniels in the weeks before the 2016 election to buy her silence about an alleged sexual encounter years earlier.

Merchan initially set sentencing for July 11.

But after the Supreme Court ruled on July 1 that presidents enjoy full immunity from criminal charges for their official acts, the New York judge agreed to delay sentencing to first rule on how the Supreme Court decision affected the New York case.

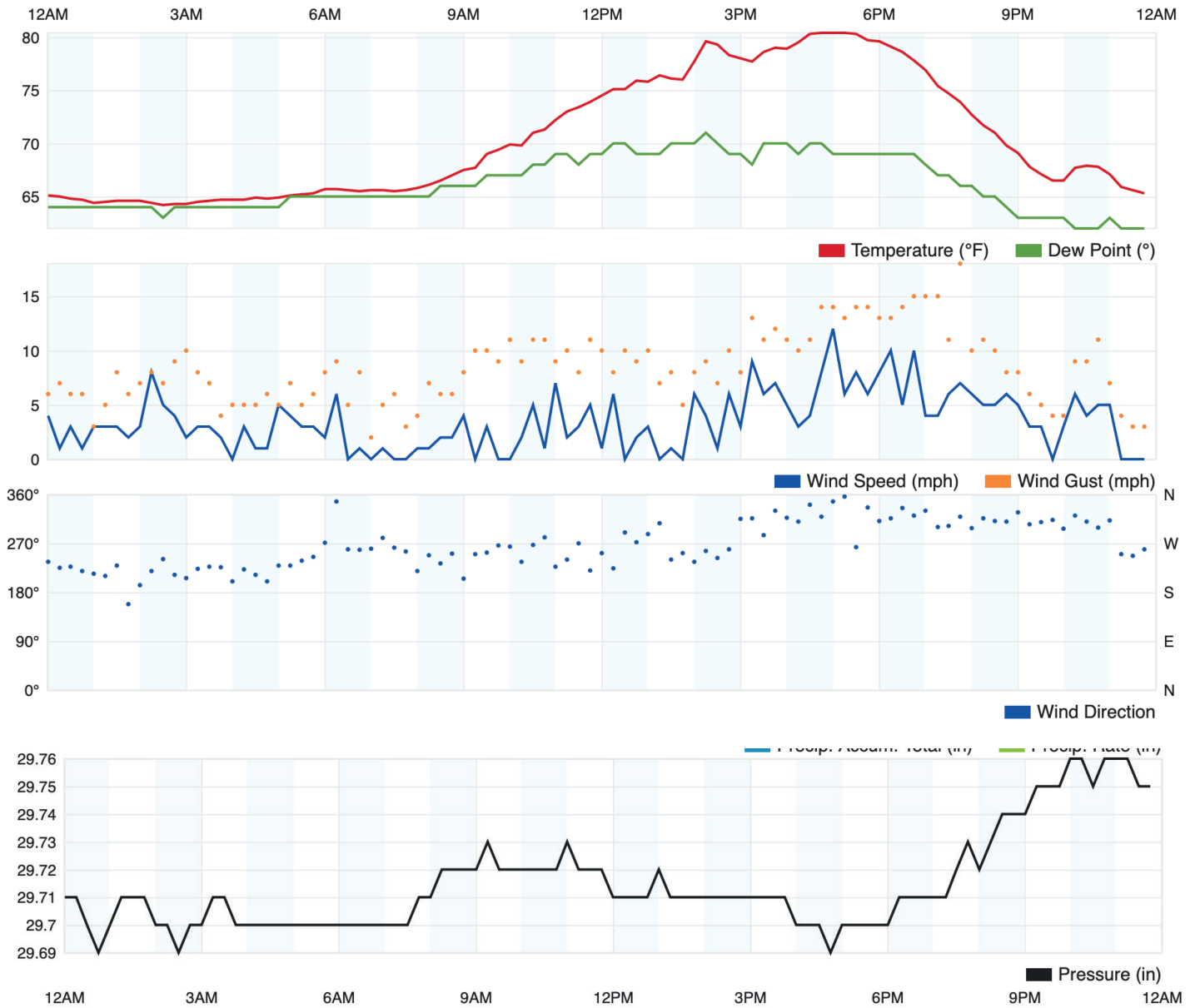
While much of the conduct alleged in the New York case took place before Trump was in office, his attorneys have argued that the prosecution also included investigations into Oval Office meetings with Cohen that could be impermissible under the Supreme Court's standard.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Friday

Friday Night

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 76 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Partly Sunny



Low: 58 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 80 °F

Sunny



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 82 °F

Sunny

Cooler Than Normal & Mainly Dry Today

Today: Mid 80s Central SD
Low 70s Eastern SD/Western MN



20-50% chance of showers on
and east of the Prairie Coteau

Wind: Eastern SD - NW 15-25 mph
Central SD - NW 5-15 MPH

Saturday: a bit warmer, dry &
comfortable



Highs: upper 70s to
near 90

Wind: Eastern SD - N 5-15 mph
Central SD - E 5-15 MPH

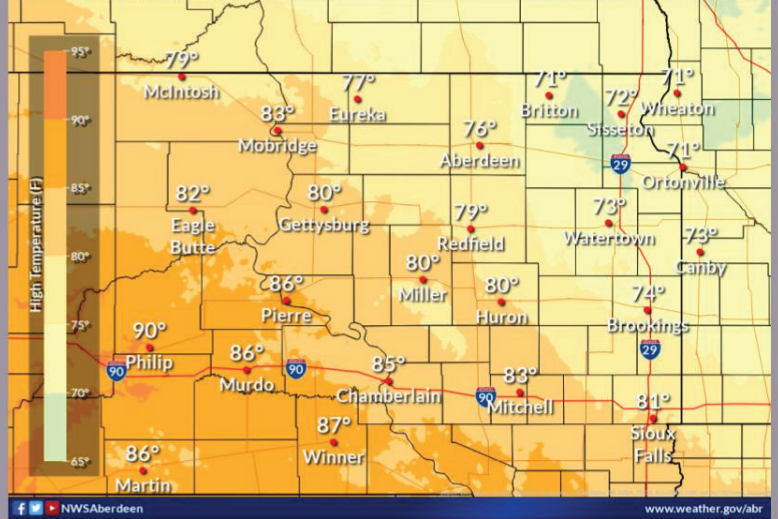
High Temperatures Today

Near Normal To As Much As 10 Degrees Below Normal

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Issued Aug 16, 2024 4:00 AM CDT



Check out your specific forecast at
weather.gov/abern



Off and on wraparound showers will persist today across far eastern South Dakota and west central MN. Generally dry conditions are then expected for Saturday throughout the region.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 4:49 PM

Low Temp: 64 °F at 2:32 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 7:38 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 5 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1988

Record Low: 42 in 1897

Average High: 83

Average Low: 57

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.15

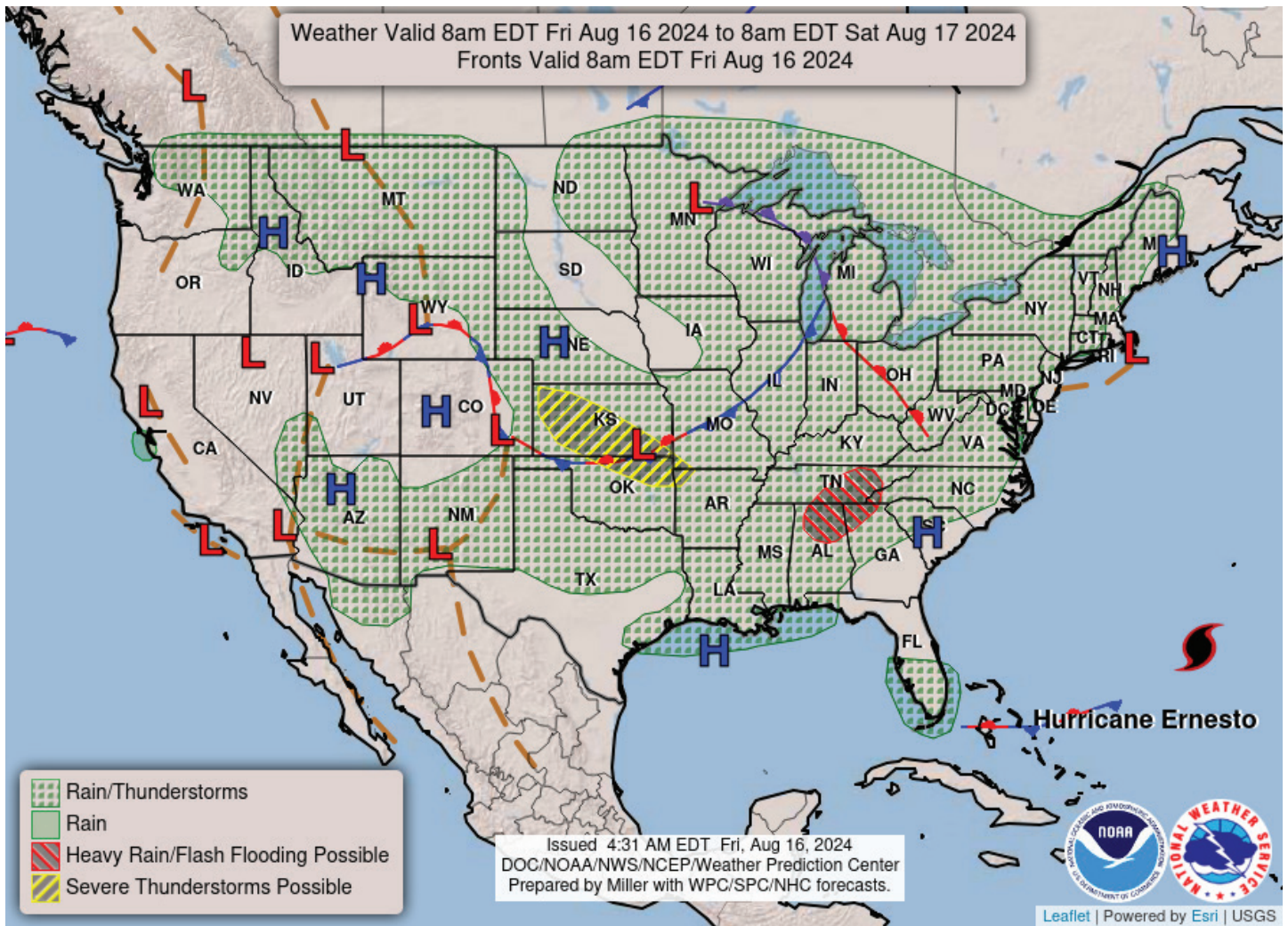
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.16

Average Precip to date: 15.25

Precip Year to Date: 16.05

Sunset Tonight: 8:39:09 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:35:06 am



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Today in Weather History

August 16, 1986: Thunderstorm winds gusted to 60 mph in Forestburg, in Sanborn County. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph uprooted trees and damaged buildings in the northern part of Hanson County. On several farms, barns, garages, silos, and small buildings were destroyed. The worst affected area was south of Epiphany where large steel sheds were damaged, and a roof was blown in.

1777: The Battle of Bennington, delayed a day by rain, was fought. The rain-delayed British reinforcements and allowed the Vermont Militia to arrive in time, enabling the Americans to win a victory by defeating two enemy forces, one at a time.

1909 - A dry spell began in San Bernardino County of southern California that lasted until the 6th of May in 1912, a stretch of 994 days! Another dry spell, lasting 767 days, then began in October of 1912. (The Weather Channel)

1916 - Altapass, NC, was deluged with 22.22 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather from Oklahoma to Wisconsin and Lower Michigan. Thunderstorms in central Illinois produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Springfield which toppled two large beer tents at the state fair injuring 58 persons. Thunderstorms also drenched Chicago IL with 2.90 inches of rain, making August 1987 their wettest month of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a slow moving cold front produced severe weather from North Dakota to Lower Michigan during the day. Nine tornadoes were sighted in North Dakota, and thunderstorms also produced hail three inches in diameter at Lakota ND, and wind gusts to 83 mph at Marais MI. Thirty-seven cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Rockford IL with a reading of 104 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the Central High Plains Region produced golf ball size hail at La Junta CO, Intercanyon CO, and Custer SD. Afternoon thunderstorms over South Texas drenched Brownsville with 2.60 inches of rain. Fair skies allowed viewing of the late evening full lunar eclipse from the Great Lakes Region to the Northern and Central Plains Region, and across much of the western third of the country. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - One of the most destructive United States hurricanes of record started modestly as a tropical wave that emerged from the west coast of Africa on August 14. The wave spawned a tropical depression on August 16, which became Tropical Storm Andrew the next day.



PULL OR PUSH: WHICH IS BETTER?

General Dwight Eisenhower is recognized as one of the greatest leaders in all of history. After a brilliant military career, he became a trusted and honored president.

On one occasion he was asked to describe the art of leadership. Rather than describing it, he decided to demonstrate it. To illustrate his point, he put a piece of string on a table and said, "Push it and it will go nowhere. Pull it and it will follow."

Few of us will ever say to others: "Look at me. I am a good example. Follow me and do as I do." But that's exactly what Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians. Quite a daring statement!

He was able to set himself up as an example, however, because he walked close to his Lord and Savior, spent much time studying God's Word, and praying and witnessing. Because he was "in Christ" he lived his life "through Christ" and could say to others, "I ask you to follow my example and do as I do." At all times and in every situation whatever Paul did is what he believed Christ would have done.

If there ever was a Christian leader who "pulled" people to the Lord, it was Paul. We see it in his faith that sustained him in situations far beyond our imagination. We are inspired by his hope that never faltered when he had no reason to hope. And his very life defined love.

Prayer: Father, it is frightening to think that others may look at us and imitate what we do because they assume we are Your examples. May our lives be worthy of imitating. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So I urge you to imitate me. 1 Corinthians 4:16

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: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.14.24

8 11 15 32 42 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$7,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 39 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.15.24

3 7 19 24 38 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.14.24

20 21 28 29 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.14.24

16 27 34 62 66 22

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.14.24

8 9 23 29 62 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$35,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 6 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

North Dakota lawmaker dies at 54 following cancer battle

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A lawmaker who was North Dakota's youngest state senator when he was elected at 24 has died at 54, a year after he began treatment for cancer.

Republican state Rep. Randy Schobinger, of Minot, died Tuesday in Delano, Tenn., according to an obituary. He had begun treatment for esophageal cancer last August, according to the Minot Daily News.

Schobinger campaigned in an aging 1972 Toyota for which he paid \$100 and he stenciled with "Vote Schobinger" before winning election. He served as a state senator from 1994 to 2006, and ran unsuccessfully for state treasurer in 1996 and 2000. His youngest-senator claim was overtaken in 2004 by Nick Hacker, who won a North Dakota Senate seat at 22.

In 2016, Schobinger was first elected to the state House, where he served on the budget-writing Appropriations Committee.

He did not seek reelection to a third term this year. District Republicans will appoint someone to serve out his term through November, district GOP chairman Jay Lundeen said.

Schobinger, who also worked as an insurance agent, served the community well for many years and was a tenacious person who worked hard to get elected, Lundeen said.

Republican House Majority Leader Mike Lefor called him a good man, a hard worker and a great debater. North Dakota's biennial Legislature is set to convene in January 2025.

Thaksin's daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra is elected Thailand's prime minister

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand's Parliament elected Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the youngest daughter of the divisive former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, as prime minister Friday.

Paetongtarn becomes Thailand's third leader from the Shinawatra family, after her father, who was ousted by coup before returning from exile last year, and her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra, who lives in exile. Paetongtarn also became Thailand's second female prime minister after her aunt and the country's youngest leader at 37.

As a sole nominee, she was confirmed by 319 votes in approval, with 145 voted against her and 27 abstained. Members of Parliament spent about an hour casting their votes in public one by one. Paetongtarn is the leader of the ruling Pheu Thai party but was not an elected lawmaker, which was not required for her to be a candidate for prime minister.

She will officially become prime minister with a royal endorsement, though the timing of that step wasn't known.

Paetongtarn received warm greetings and applause from members of her party before delivering her first speech after the Parliament vote at the party's office in Bangkok. Admitting she was very excited, she said she was very "honored and happy," and thanked members of Parliament for their votes.

"I really hope that I can make the people feel confident, that we can build the opportunity and the quality of life," she said. "I hope that I can do my best to make the country go forward."

The last prime minister was removed by the Constitutional Court two days ago over an ethics violation.

Paetongtarn's father Thaksin is one of Thailand's most popular but divisive political figures and was ousted by a military coup in 2006. He is widely seen as a de facto leader of Pheu Thai, the latest in a string of parties linked to him. His residual popularity and influence is a factor behind the political support for Paetongtarn.

Her public entry into politics came in 2021 when the Pheu Thai party announced she would lead an

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inclusion advisory committee. She was appointed as leader of Pheu Thai last year, after she was named one of its three prime ministerial candidates ahead of the polls.

When Paetongtarn was on the campaign trail for Pheu Thai, she acknowledged her family ties but insisted she was not just her father's proxy.

"I am my dad's daughter, always and forever, but I have my own decisions," she told a reporter.

However, her father's shadow is too big to be dismissed and her work will not be easy with him continuing to call political shots for Pheu Thai, said Petra Alderman, a political research fellow at England's University of Birmingham.

"Thaksin was a political force to reckon with, but he was also a liability," she said, "He has a tendency to overplay his political hand, so serving in his shadow has never been easy."

Alderman noted that, while Paetongtarn seemed to receive an overwhelming support from her party, the coalition and Pheu Thai voter base, those are not the only factors that will determine the course of her premiership.

"Who gets to govern in Thailand and for how long are questions that are often answered by unelected and unaccountable watchdog institutions, (such as) the Election Commission of Thailand and the Constitutional Court, or military coups," she said.

Paetongtarn's nomination followed the removal of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin on Wednesday after less than a year in office. The Constitutional Court found him guilty of a serious ethical breach regarding his appointment of a Cabinet member who was jailed in connection with an alleged bribery attempt.

It was the second major ruling in a week to shake Thai politics. The same court last week dissolved the progressive Move Forward party, which won last year's general election but was blocked from taking power. The party has already regrouped as the People's Party.

Pheu Thai and its predecessors had won all national elections since 2001, with core populist policies pledging to solve economic problems and bridge income equality, until it lost to the reformist Move Forward in 2023. It, however, was given a chance to form a government after Move Forward was blocked from taking power by the previous Senate, a military-appointed body.

Move Forward was excluded from the coalition by Pheu Thai, which went on to join hands with parties affiliated with the military government that ousted it in a coup.

Thaksin returned to Thailand last year after years in exile in what was interpreted as part of a political bargain between Pheu Thai and their longstanding rivals in the conservative establishment to stop Move Forward Party from forming a government.

The former senators were given special power to veto a prime ministerial candidate by the constitution adopted in 2017 under a military government. However, that power expired when their term ended in May. New members of the Senate, selected in a convoluted process last month, do not retain the veto. It means that a candidate needs just a majority from the lower house.

The coalition under the leadership of Paetongtarn could strengthen their unity because Paetongtarn possesses something that Srettha does not — a direct line to her powerful father who has the final say — said Napon Jatusripitak, a political science researcher at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

"In a strange way, it creates a clear chain of command and curbs factionalism," he said. "Paetongtarn will be given clear jurisdictions on where she can exercise her own agency and where it is a matter between her father and the coalition members."

With Move Forward dissolved and the party's only prime ministerial candidate Pita Limjaroenrat banned from political activities, Napon believes the rest of major political parties would resume a "game of musical chairs" of the premiership race that has been put on hold "with an agreement to share power, regardless of who becomes the prime minister."

"Most importantly, the overarching goal remains the same: to keep the music playing and exclude the reformists from power," he said.

Pakistan's health ministry confirms a case of mpox but more tests are being done for its variant

By RIAZ KHAN Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan's health ministry said Friday it has identified a case of mpox, but sequencing is being done to determine whether it is a new variant, days after the World Health Organization declared the spread of mpox a global health emergency.

The case, in a man who had recently returned from a Middle Eastern country, is the first in Pakistan this year but the nature of the variant was yet to be determined. The first case was reported on Thursday by authorities in Sweden.

The ministry in a statement said the man was from Mardan, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan.

It said the ministry has directed officials at border crossing points and airports to ensure strict surveillance and collect samples for medical tests if they see symptoms of the disease in any passenger returning from abroad.

It was unclear which Middle Eastern country the man had visited, and no cases of the new variant have yet been reported in that region. The United Arab Emirates, however, has had 16 confirmed cases of mpox since 2022, according to the WHO. The UAE is particularly affected by transnational outbreaks given its role as a hub connecting East and West with its long-haul carriers Emirates and Etihad.

On Wednesday, the WHO said there have been more than 14,000 cases and 524 deaths in Africa this year, which already exceed last year's figures. More than 96% of all cases and deaths have been in Congo.

The director of public health for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Irshad Roghani, said the person infected with mpox in Pakistan has mild symptoms. "Contact tracing of the affected person has been started and samples of more people are being obtained," he told The Associated Press.

Roghani said that since 2022, 300 people have been tested in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of whom two tested positive last year. This is the first case detected this year.

Thailand's new prime minister renews the legacy of her father, the divisive Thaksin Shinawatra

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The election of Paetongtarn Shinawatra as Thailand's prime minister represents a remarkable back-to-the-future moment. She is renewing the political dynasty founded by her billionaire father, Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted by a military coup in 2006.

The 37-year-old Paetongtarn, a former business executive, becomes the third close member of the Shinawatra clan to take the prime minister's job. Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra was Thailand's first female prime minister from 2011 to 2014. An in-law also served briefly in 2008.

Although Thaksin was a vastly popular politician who handily won three elections, Thailand's royalist establishment was disturbed that his populist policies threatened the monarchy at the heart of Thai identity. Their hostility helped drive both him and Yingluck out of office and into exile.

Then last year, Thaksin alienated many of his old supporters with what looked like a self-serving deal with his former conservative foes. It allowed his return from exile and his party to form the new government, but sidelined the progressive Move Forward Party, which finished first in the election but was seen by the establishment as a greater threat.

When Paetongtarn was on the campaign trail for the Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party, she acknowledged her family ties but insisted she was not her father's proxy. "It's not the shadow of my dad. I am my dad's daughter, always and forever, but I have my own decisions," she told a reporter.

As she comes to power, however, there are no signs she has carved her own niche with ideas that would distinguish her policies from those endorsed by her party or her father, a smorgasbord of economic measures including cash handouts and loosened tourist entry rules.

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And not everything has been squared away with her family's enemies. Yingluck remains in exile, and legal problems — arguably politically inspired — could see her jailed if she returns to Thailand.

However, Paetongtarn exuded confidence and empathy as she campaigned last year, travelling extensively and addressing rallies around the country while pregnant with her second child. Her son, Prutthasin, was born less than two weeks before the election.

Paetongtarn, widely known by her nickname "Ung Ing," is the youngest of Thaksin's three children, and it's clear she is the one chosen to carry on her father's legacy.

Her public entry into politics came in 2021 when the Pheu Thai Party named her chief of its Inclusion and Innovation Advisory Committee.

Asked then if she would become a politician or a candidate for prime minister, she told reporters: "I feel safer to be an adviser than a politician. I want to make my project successful. For other things, I am not ready yet."

Politics watchers, however, could read the tea leaves.

Paetongtarn's appointment showed Thaksin remained influential in Pheu Thai and has been its main decision-maker, said Kovit Wongsurawat, an associate professor in the law school at Bangkok's Assumption University.

"Previously, Thaksin let people outside his family run the party and nothing seemed to get better," Kovit said, referring to the time Thaksin was in exile. "I am not surprised that he let his daughter take this position. It is not easy for him to find someone he can really trust."

In late 2022, as Thailand geared up for elections, Paetongtarn raised her profile, speaking like a candidate for prime minister. Pheu Thai named her as one of three official candidates ahead of the polls.

"The next four years will be the years that our country will bounce back and regain our dignity and pride," Paetongtarn said at a campaign rally. "To think big and act smart will help rebuild our country and improve the livelihood of Thai people — as if it's a miracle. Only political stability will help us."

Paetongtarn outlined proposals that she said would benefit ordinary Thais, including doubling the daily minimum wage, expanding health care coverage, and reducing fares on Bangkok's public transportation system.

"All we have to do is to work together to change the country's leadership," she said.

Observers could see she learned from her father.

"She connects with the electorate, the base. She also has, I think, some talent that may have been inherited from her father in terms of going out on stump speeches, connecting with voters, speaking in front of large crowds, and running a campaign, while being pregnant," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor of political science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. "She is definitely prime minister material."

Though Thaksin, with his wealth and popularity, has remained one of Thailand's top political operators, time has weakened his grip, if only slightly.

Last year, for the first time, a party under his control failed to finish first in the election, yielding the top spot to the Move Forward Party, whose progressive policies successfully wooed younger voters.

Behind the scenes, however, with the help of the conservative forces that once brought him down, Thaksin reportedly engineered a deal allowing his return from exile and freezing out Move Forward, putting Pheu Thai at the head of a new coalition government.

When Thaksin returned to Thailand last August, Paetongtarn was the most prominent among the family members who appeared with him.

Speculation she would take a Cabinet position proved unfounded. Instead she took on the role of promoting Thailand's "soft power," highlighting such national selling points as food, culture, sports and the Pride parade in Bangkok.

Her political position strengthened significantly in October when she was chosen as leader of Pheu Thai. The move reasserted the Shinawatra family's overt domination of the party and made a future bid for the post of prime minister almost inevitable.

As it turned out, that chance came sooner rather than later.

Diplomacy intensifies to halt the Israel-Hamas war and prevent wider regional conflict

By RAVI NESSMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — International diplomacy to prevent the war in Gaza from spreading into a wider regional conflict intensified Friday, with the British and French foreign ministers making a joint trip to Israel while internationally mediated cease-fire talks in Qatar were expected to enter their second day.

The new push for an end to the Israel-Hamas war came as the Palestinian death toll in Gaza climbed past 40,000, according to Gaza health authorities, and fears remained high that Iran and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon would attack Israel in retaliation for the killings of top militant leaders.

"This is a dangerous moment for the Middle East," British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said. "The risk of the situation spiraling out of control is rising. Any Iranian attack would have devastating consequences for the region."

Lammy and French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné were expected hold a joint meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer.

"It's never too late for peace," Séjourné said. "We must at all costs avoid a regional war, which would have terrible consequences."

International mediators believe the best hope for calming tensions would be a deal between Israel and Hamas to halt the fighting and secure the release of Israeli hostages.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt began a new round of talks Thursday, meeting with an Israeli delegation in Qatar.

Hamas, which didn't participate directly in Thursday's talks, accuses Israel of adding new demands to a previous proposal that had U.S. and international support and to which Hamas had agreed in principle. Israel accuses Hamas of adding its own new demands.

White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby called the talks an important step. He said a lot of work remains given the complexity of the agreement and that negotiators were focusing on its implementation.

A U.S. official briefed on Thursday's talks called the discussion "constructive." The official was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Qatar said the talks would continue Friday.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed across the heavily guarded border on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 250 to Gaza. More than 100 were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November, and around 110 are believed to still be inside Gaza, though Israeli authorities believe around a third of them are dead.

Israel's devastating retaliatory offensive has killed 40,005 Palestinians, Gaza's Health Ministry said Thursday, without saying how many were militants. Israel's military spokesperson, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said Thursday that Israel had killed more than 17,000 Hamas militants in Gaza in the war, without providing evidence.

Diplomats hoped a cease-fire deal would persuade Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah to hold off on retaliating for the killing of a top Hezbollah commander in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut and of Hamas' top political leader in an explosion in Tehran that was widely blamed on Israel.

Kirby said that Iran has made preparations and could attack soon with little to no warning — and that its rhetoric should be taken seriously.

The mediators have spent months trying to hammer out a three-phase plan in which Hamas would release the hostages in exchange for a lasting cease-fire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Both sides have agreed in principle to the plan President Joe Biden announced on May 31. But Hamas has proposed amendments and Israel has suggested clarifications, leading each side to accuse the other of trying to tank a deal.

Hamas has rejected Israel's demands, which include a lasting military presence along the border with

Egypt and a line bisecting Gaza where it would search Palestinians returning to their homes to root out militants.

In a reminder of how the violence has spread from Gaza, masked Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank stormed the village of Jit, setting homes and cars on fire Thursday, Israeli and Palestinian media said. One Palestinian was shot dead and another critically injured by the settlers, Palestinian health officials said.

It was the latest in a series of settler attacks since the outbreak of the war. In the West Bank, 633 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire — most by Israeli raids into Palestinian cities and towns.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attack, saying it was the responsibility of the army to secure the country, and that those responsible would be apprehended and prosecuted. Israel's military said it has apprehended a civilian who took part in the violence and has opened an investigation.

Matthew Perry's death leads to sweeping indictment of 5, including doctors and reputed dealers

By ANDREW DALTON and KAITLYN HUAMANI Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nearly 10 months after the death of Matthew Perry, the long-simmering investigation into the ketamine that killed him came dramatically into public view with the announcement that five people had been charged with having roles in the overdose of the beloved "Friends" star.

Here are key things to know about the case, including the two key figures who could be headed for trial and the possibility of the steepest of prison sentences.

A sweeping set of indictments

One or more arrests had been expected since investigators from three different agencies revealed in May they had been conducting a joint probe into how the 54-year-old Perry got such large amounts of ketamine.

The actor had been among the growing number of patients using legal but off-label medical means to treat depression, or in other cases chronic pain, with the powerful surgical anesthetic.

Recent reports suggested indictments might be imminent, but few outside observers, if any, knew how wide-ranging the prosecution would be, reaching much further than previous cases stemming from celebrity overdoses.

When Michael Jackson died in 2009 from a lethal dose of the anesthetic propofol, his doctor was charged with providing it. After rapper Mac Miller died in 2017, two men who prosecutors described as a dealer and a middleman were convicted of providing fentanyl-laced oxycodone that helped kill him.

But Perry's case pulled in both, with indictments against doctors and illegal distributors who prosecutors say preyed on his long and public struggles with addiction. The investigation even went after the live-in personal assistant who prosecutors say helped him get ketamine and injected it directly into him before Perry was found dead in his hot tub on Oct. 28, 2023.

"They knew what they were doing was risking great danger to Mr. Perry. But they did it anyway," U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada said in announcing the charges.

The prosecution was well under way even before the announcement. Two people including the assistant, Kenneth Iwamasa, and a Perry acquaintance, Eric Fleming, have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute the drug. A San Diego physician, Dr. Mark Chavez, has agreed to enter a guilty plea.

That leaves prosecutors free to pursue their two biggest targets.

The doctor and the 'Ketamine Queen'

An indictment unsealed Thursday alleges Perry turned to Los Angeles doctor Salvador Plasencia when his regular doctors refused to give him more ketamine. Prosecutors allege Plasencia cashed in on Perry's desperation and addiction, getting him to pay \$55,000 in cash for large amounts of the drug in the two months before his death.

"I wonder how much this moron will pay," Plasencia texted a co-defendant, according to his indictment.

He pleaded not guilty to seven counts of distribution of ketamine in an appearance in federal court on Thursday afternoon.

Plasencia's attorney, Stefan Sacks, said outside court that he "was operating with what he what he

thought were the best of medical intentions," and his actions "certainly didn't rise to the level of criminal misconduct."

Prosecutors allege Jasveen Sangha, whom they describe as a drug dealer known to customers as the "Ketamine Queen," provided the doses of the drug that actually killed Perry, injected into the actor by Iwamasa with syringes supplied by Plasencia.

Sangha also pleaded not guilty. Her attorney Alexandra Kazarian derided the "queen" moniker as made-for-media consumption during the hearing. The lawyer declined comment on the case outside court.

Prosecutors say the other doctor in the case, Chavez, helped Plasencia obtain the ketamine he gave to Perry, while Perry's acquaintance, Fleming, helped get ketamine from Sangha to Perry.

Chavez could get up to 10 years in prison, Iwamasa up to 15 years and Fleming up to 25 years.

Multiple messages seeking comment from attorneys for the three men were not returned.

Looking ahead to trial

Sangha could get life in prison if convicted as charged, while Plasencia could get up to 120 years. Each has a trial date in October, but it is highly unlikely any would be facing a jury by then, and the two may be tried together. They also could face testimony from the co-defendants who reached plea agreements.

Magistrate Judge Alka Sagar ruled Sangha should be held without bond while awaiting trial, citing prosecutors' contentions that she had destroyed evidence and funded a lavish lifestyle with drug sales even after Perry's death.

The judge agreed to release Plasencia after he posted a \$100,000 bond.

His attorney argued the Perry case was "isolated" and the doctor should be allowed to treat patients who depended on him at his one-man practice while awaiting trial.

"I'm not buying that argument," Sagar said, but agreed Plasencia could see patients so long as they signed a document in which he acknowledged the charges.

"People have probably already heard about it from the amount of press," Sacks told the judge, noting if they hadn't, they would soon.

Records show Plasencia's medical license has been in good standing with no records of complaints, though it is set to expire in October and he could face action. He already has surrendered his federal license to prescribe more dangerous drugs.

Pushing back against ketamine

Prosecutors and police presented the Perry case as part of a major pushback against a rise in the illegal use of ketamine that has shadowed the broadening of its legal use.

Los Angeles police said in May they were working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service with a probe into how Perry got the drug. His autopsy, released in December, found the amount of ketamine in his blood was in the range used for general anesthesia during surgery.

"As Matthew Perry's ketamine addiction grew, he wanted more and he wanted it faster and cheaper. That is how he ended up buying from street dealers and stole the ketamine that ultimately led to his death," U.S. Drug Enforcement Administrator Anne Milgram said Thursday. "In doing so, he followed the arc that we have tragically seen with many others. The substance use disorder begins in a doctor's office and ends in the street."

Perry had years of struggles with addiction dating back to his time on NBC's megahit sitcom, "Friends," for 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004. Playing Chandler Bing, he became one of the biggest television stars of his generation alongside Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer.

What do marijuana, the death penalty and fracking have in common? Harris shifted positions on them

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, MICHAEL R. BLOOD and ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As California's attorney general, Kamala Harris successfully defended the death penalty in court, despite her past crusade against it.

As a new senator, she proposed to abolish cash bail — a reversal from when she chided San Francisco

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judges for making it “cheaper” to commit crimes by setting bail amounts too low.

And now, as vice president and the Democratic presidential nominee, Harris’ campaign insists that she does not want to ban fracking, an oil and gas extraction process, even though that was precisely her position just a few years ago when she first pursued the White House.

Politicians often recalibrate in the face of shifting public opinions and circumstances. Across two decades in elected office and now seeking the presidency for the second time, Harris has not hesitated to stake out expedient and — at times — contradictory positions as she climbed the political ladder. Harris’ litany of policy reversals is opening her to attacks by Republicans and testing the strength of her pitch to voters as a truth-teller who is more credible than former President Donald Trump.

Her shifts, including on matters that she has framed as moral issues, could raise doubts about her convictions as she is reintroducing herself to the public after taking the reins of the campaign from President Joe Biden, who last month dropped out of the race.

In addition to reversing course on fracking and cash bail, Harris has changed tack on issues including health care (she supported a plan to eliminate private health insurance before she opposed it), immigration and gun control.

“She is vulnerable to the charge of flip-flopping, no question about that,” said John Pitney, a professor of political science at Claremont McKenna College in California, who worked as a GOP congressional and political aide in the 1980s. “The trouble for Republicans, to put it lightly” is Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, “do not come to this issue with spotless records.”

In a statement, Harris’ campaign did not address her policy shifts. Instead, a campaign spokesman leaned into her credentials as a San Francisco district attorney and California attorney general to attack Trump.

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Nevertheless, there is ample incentive for Republicans to attack Harris along similar lines if history is a guide.

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The death penalty

One of Harris’ most pronounced shifts was over the death penalty. During a 2004 inauguration speech after her election as San Francisco’s district attorney, Harris vowed to “never charge the death penalty.” She framed her choice as a moral one.

She stuck to that pledge when a 21-year-old gang member was accused of killing San Francisco Police Officer Isaac Espinoza. Harris announced that she would not seek the ultimate punishment — a decision condemned by police and some fellow Democrats. At the officer’s funeral, Harris was forced to look on as Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein received a standing ovation when she said the death penalty was warranted.

Harris softened her approach four years later, after launching her campaign for California attorney general. Amid a tightly contested race with Los Angeles District Attorney Steve Cooley, a Republican, Harris said

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she would “enforce the death penalty as the law dictates.” While other Democrats on the ballot cruised to victory, Harris barely won.

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‘Blood and guts prosecutor’ turned progressive

As district attorney, Harris zealously approached criminal enforcement matters. While still a candidate, she blasted the progressive incumbent, Terence Hallinan, as a “do nothing prosecutor” and called for taking more aggressive steps to police the homeless. Once in office, she pursued the parents of chronically truant students, sought higher bail amounts and aggressively prosecuted drug crimes, earning her the nickname of “Copala.”

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Once elected to the Senate in 2016, however, Harris jettisoned many of those positions amid speculation she would pursue the presidency. She sought instead to portray herself as a “progressive prosecutor” and proposed sweeping reforms, including abolishing the cash bail system — which her attorneys had defended in court just months before — and imposing a moratorium on the death penalty.

In May 2020, violent protests erupted in Minneapolis over the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man. A police station was torched and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, who is now Harris’ running mate, called in the National Guard to help quell the unrest. In the days that followed, Harris took to the social media site Twitter, now known as X, and urged her followers to “chip in” to a bail fund to help those arrested post bond.

It’s unclear if Harris, who tweeted “End money bail” as a presidential candidate, still supports the idea. She abandoned her primary campaign in 2019 and was picked the next year to join Biden’s ticket. Her campaign declined to directly address the question.

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Harris also changed positions on two other hot-button issues: marijuana and gun control.

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Beyond 'childless cat ladies,' JD Vance has long been on a quest to encourage more births

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Five summers ago, Donald Trump's running mate JD Vance — then a 34-year-old memoirist and father of a 2-year-old boy — took the stage at a conservative conference and tackled an issue that would become a core part of his political brand: the United States' declining fertility rate.

"Our people aren't having enough children to replace themselves. That should bother us," Vance told the gathering in Washington. He outlined the obvious concern that Social Security depends on younger workers' contributions and then said, "We want babies not just because they are economically useful. We want more babies because children are good. And we believe children are good, because we are not sociopaths."

Vance repeatedly expressed alarm about declining birth rates as he launched his political career in 2021 with a bid for the U.S. Senate in Ohio. His criticism then of Vice President Kamala Harris, now the Democratic presidential nominee, and other high-profile Democrats as "childless cat ladies" who didn't have a "direct stake" in the country have drawn particular attention since Trump picked him as his running mate.

The rhetoric could threaten the Republican ticket's standing with women who could help decide the November election. But it's delighted those in the pro-natalist movement that has, until now, been limited largely to policy wonks, tech executives and venture capitalists.

"There's no question the discussion around family life, childbearing and pronatalism has gotten a lot more popular and gotten media attention because of JD Vance," said Brad Wilcox, the director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia and author of "Get Married." Vance once referred to Wilcox as "one of my favorite researchers."

Vance's spokespeople did not respond to messages seeking comment.

An aspiring politician's war against 'anti-child ideology'

Vance, who wrote a bestseller about his working-class upbringing, has been clear about making family formation a policy priority. He has suggested ideas such as allowing parents to vote on behalf of their children or following the example of Hungary's Viktor Orbán of giving low-interest loans to married couples with children and tax exemptions to women who have four children or more.

In a May 2021 interview with The Federalist's podcast in which he said he was exploring a Senate run, Vance described a society without babies and kids as "pretty icky and pretty gross."

"We owe something to our country. We owe something to our future. The best way to invest in it is to ensure the next generation actually exists," he said. "I think we have to go to war against the anti-child ideology that exists in our country."

Vance has suggested people without children should pay higher taxes than people who have children. That's the spirit of the existing child tax credit at \$2,000 per qualifying child, which Vance has said he'd love to see raised to \$5,000. He has also mentioned in interviews he wants to ban pornography for minors, citing it as one of the causes for why people are marrying less and having fewer children.

His anti-abortion views, he has said, are separate from his concerns on birth rates, arguing the procedure is not really driving the decline in fertility.

In several interviews, he's argued policymakers should make it easier for two-parent households to be able to live on a single wage so that one of the parents can stay home with their children.

"The ruling class is obsessed with their jobs. Even though they hate a lot of their jobs, they are obsessed with their credentials and they want strangers to raise their kids," he told then-Fox News host Tucker

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Carlson in 2021. "But middle-class Americans, whatever their station in life, they want more time with their children."

Vance had a chaotic childhood raised mainly by his grandparents in southwestern Ohio and a mother who battled substance abuse, and her "revolving door of father figures" as he described in his book. He is now married to a trial lawyer he met at Yale Law School. The couple has three young children, who he has said attend preschool. Usha Vance left the law firm where she worked shortly after her husband was chosen as Trump's running mate.

Declining births in an aging America

The U.S. was one of only a few developed countries with a fertility rate that ensured each generation had enough children to replace itself — about 2.1 kids per woman. But the number has been sliding since 2008 and in 2023 dropped to about 1.6, the lowest rate on record.

Earlier this year, Vance cited fertility rates in arguing against American support for Ukraine.

"Not a single country — even the U.S. — within the NATO alliance has birth rates at replacement level. We don't have enough families and children to continue as a nation, and yet we're talking about problems 6,000 miles away," he said.

Vance as well as researchers and experts on the pro-natalist movement also argue that immigrants can't provide a long-term fix to the decline in birth rates. He has separately blamed immigrants for crime and creating "inter-ethnic conflict."

Demographers and other experts for years had predicted declining fertility rates would pose challenges for the Social Security system as fewer workers are supporting a growing aging population.

Tech executives such as Tesla CEO Elon Musk and venture capitalist Peter Thiel, who donated millions for Vance's primary race, have also been vocal about the decline in birth rates.

"We as a nation, as a society, policymakers can't be neutral on the question of family," said Oren Cass, who founded a conservative think tank, American Compass, that is closely aligned with the senator.

Cass, a former policy adviser for U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, said he has known Vance for a decade and partnered on several events but said he was not speaking on behalf of the vice presidential nominee. He criticized how progressives have celebrated what he described as a culture of "you do you" and "all choices are equally valid," when he considered the work of forming a family and raising children an "indispensable foundation" for the country.

"That's not to say, obviously, that you mandate or criminalize the alternative, but it is to say that we shouldn't be neutral about it," he said.

Vance on the defense

Vance's views on birth rates have contributed to his rocky rollout as Trump's running mate. Democrats went from labeling Trump and his Republican allies as a collective "threat to democracy" to calling both men "weird," a strategy that coincided with Vance's comments coming to light.

Other unlikely critics have also piled on. Trump-backing influencer Dave Portnoy said Vance "sounds like a moron." Former Republican congressman Trey Gowdy tried unsuccessfully to force an apology out of Vance for his denigrating of childless women on his Fox News show, introducing him with a story about a pair of Catholic nuns he met at an airport.

Actress Jennifer Aniston, who has been open about her fertility issues, weighed in by saying she hopes Vance's daughter does not face the same problems and she "truly can't believe that this is coming from a potential VP of the United States." Vance responded by calling her Instagram reaction "disgusting."

Trump has come to his defense, accusing Democrats of spinning things and expressing empathy for people who don't get married or have children and are "every bit as good."

"He likes family. I think a lot of people like family. And sometimes it doesn't work out," Trump said in one interview. "But you're just as good, in many cases a lot better than a person that's in a family situation."

Vance's wife has also tried to do some damage control, saying Vance was not referring to those who struggle with fertility or can't get pregnant for medical reasons, though the ideas he proposes don't make that distinction.

"The reality is he made a quip in service of making a point he wanted to make that was substantive," Usha Vance told an interviewer on "Fox and Friends."

Can Vance advance this?

Wilcox, the author of "Get Married," said JD Vance now needs to focus on convincing a broader audience that his ideas are worth pursuing.

"The challenge for JD Vance is taking that attention and translating it into more of a concrete policy agenda that would be compelling to ordinary Americans and articulating a clear and positive agenda around making family formation both more affordable and more appealing," Wilcox said.

Supporters at a recent Trump rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, shrugged off Vance's assertion that parents should have more of a vote than childless adults and expressed complicated feelings about his views.

Kenneth "Nemo" Niemann, 70, said Vance might be speaking figuratively about giving parents more votes. His wife, Carol, 65, disagreed, saying Vance has been crystal clear that that is exactly what he means.

The Niemanns had children later in life — their twins are 16 — and they spent far more of their adult lives as childless adults. And while they talked about how adults with children can have more to say when it comes to policies affecting children or they can have a different worldview about the future than childless adults, they still disagreed with Vance.

"My sister never had children, but I can't imagine my vote means more than hers," Carol Niemann said.

US arrests reputed Peruvian gang leader wanted for 23 killings in his home country

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and FRANKLIN BRICENO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A reputed Peruvian gang leader suspected in 23 killings in his home country was arrested Wednesday in New York by U.S. immigration authorities.

Gianfranco Torres-Navarro, the leader of "Los Killers" who is wanted for the killings in Peru, was arrested in Endicott, New York, about 145 miles (233 kilometers) northwest of New York City, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Thursday. He is being held at a federal detention facility near Buffalo pending an immigration hearing.

Torres-Navarro, 38, entered the U.S. illegally at the Texas-Mexico border on May 16. He was arrested the same day and given a notice to appear for immigration proceedings, according to the agency, known as ICE. U.S. authorities moved to arrest Torres-Navarro after receiving information on July 8 that he was wanted in Peru.

"Gianfranco Torres-Navarro poses a significant threat to our communities, and we won't allow New York to be a safe haven for dangerous noncitizens," said Thomas Brophy, the director of enforcement removal operations for ICE's Buffalo field office.

Immigration agents also arrested Torres-Navarro's girlfriend, Mishelle Sol Ivanna Ortíz Ubillús, described by Peruvian authorities as his right hand. She is being held at a processing center in Pennsylvania, according to ICE's Online Detainee Locator System.

Online immigration detention records for Torres-Navarro and Ortíz Ubillús did not include information on lawyers who could comment on their behalf.

Peru's justice system confirmed to The Associated Press that it ordered the location and international capture of Torres-Navarro and his partner Ortiz-Ubilluz on July 3.

Col. Franco Moreno, head of Peru's High Complexity Crime Investigations Division, told the AP Thursday that they tracked phone calls, geolocations and messages from Torres-Navarro and his gang of at least 10 members.

"He is a highly dangerous criminal who believed he was untouchable and responsible for 23 murders, including other gang leaders who ended up dead along with their families, all in order to increase his criminal leadership," Moreno said.

According to Peruvian authorities, Torres-Navarro is the leader of a criminal organization known as "Los Killers de Ventanilla y Callao" that has used violence to thwart rivals seeking to cut into its core business

of extorting construction companies.

Torres-Navarro allegedly fled Peru after the killing of retired police officer Cesar Quegua Herrera and the shooting of a municipal employee at a restaurant in San Miguel in March, Peruvian media reported.

Six reputed members of "Los Killers," formed in 2022 in an area along the Pacific coast where Peru's main port is located, were arrested in a series of raids in June and accused of homicide, contract killing, and extortion, the National Police of Peru said.

Torres-Navarro was previously a member of the Los Malditos de Angamos criminal organization, Peru's Public Prosecutor's Office said. He is also known as "Gianfranco 23," a reference to the number of people he is alleged to have killed.

Torres-Navarro eluded previous attempts to hold him accountable for his alleged crimes.

In 2019, while on the run from authorities, he was sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison for illegal weapons possession. He remained at large until 2021, when he was arrested at a toll checkpoint near Peru's capital city, Lima. But even then, he didn't stay behind bars for long. After an acquittal in that case, Torres-Navarro was freed last December.

Soon after, Peruvian authorities said, "Los Killers" ramped up its violence, culminating in the shooting in San Miguel.

Gianfranco's girlfriend, Ortiz Ubillús, has a prominent role in "Los Killers," Peruvian authorities said. The Public Prosecutor's Office described her as Torres Navarro's romantic partner, lieutenant and cashier.

She also has a sizable following on the social media platform TikTok where she showed off their lavish lifestyle, including designer clothes, resort vacations and shooting targets at a gun range.

Ukraine's swift push into the Kursk region shocked Russia and exposed its vulnerabilities

By The Associated Press undefined

A daring Ukrainian military push into Russia's Kursk region has seen Kyiv's forces seize scores of villages, take hundreds of prisoners and force the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians in what has become the largest attack on the country since World War II.

In more than a week of fighting, Russian troops are still struggling to drive out the invaders.

Why the Russian military seems to have been caught so unprepared:

A long border, with defenders elsewhere

Russia's regions of Kursk, Bryansk and Belgorod share a 1,160-kilometer (720-mile) border with Ukraine. That includes a 245-kilometer (152-mile) section in the Kursk region. This frontier had only symbolic protection before Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022. It's been reinforced since then with checkpoints on key roads and field fortifications in places, but building solid defenses has remained a daunting task.

The most capable Russian units are fighting in eastern Ukraine, where they have been pressing offensives in several sectors, with incremental but steady gains. Moscow has used the regions to launch airstrikes and missile attacks on Ukrainian territory but doesn't have enough land forces there.

Because of the porous border and manpower shortages, there have been earlier forays into the Belgorod and Bryansk by shadowy groups of pro-Kyiv commandos fighting alongside Ukrainian forces before they pulled back.

Russia's drones, surveillance equipment and intelligence assets are focused in eastern Ukraine, helping Kyiv to covertly pull its troops to the border under the cover of deep forests.

Retired Gen. Andrei Gurulev, a member of the lower house of Russia's parliament, criticized the military for failing to protect the border.

"Regrettably, the group of forces protecting the border didn't have its own intelligence assets," he said on a channel of his messaging app. "No one likes to see the truth in reports, everybody just wants to hear that all is good."

The element of surprise

Ukrainian troops participating in the incursion reportedly were told their mission only a day before it

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began. That secrecy contrasted sharply with last year's counteroffensive, when Kyiv openly declared its main goal of cutting the land corridor to Crimea, which President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed in 2014. That military action failed as Ukrainian troops trudged through Russian minefields and were pummeled by artillery and drones.

Ukrainian troops faced no such obstacles entering the Kursk region.

Battle-hardened mechanized units easily overwhelmed lightly armed Russian border guards and small infantry units consisting of inexperienced conscripts. Hundreds were taken prisoner, Ukrainian officials said. The Ukrainians drove deep into the region in several directions, facing little resistance and sowing chaos and panic.

The operation resembled Ukraine's September 2022 counteroffensive in which its forces reclaimed control of the northeastern Kharkiv region after taking advantage of Russian manpower shortages and a lack of field fortifications.

Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, who led the Kharkiv operation two years ago, is now Ukraine's top military officer. Russian forces in Kursk answer to Gen. Alexander Lapin, who commanded Moscow's forces in Kharkiv in 2022 and was criticized for that debacle. But his ties to the chief of the General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, reportedly helped him survive and even get a promotion.

Syrskyi claims Ukrainian forces advanced across 1,000 square kilometers (390 square miles) of the Kursk region, although it's not possible to independently verify what exactly Ukrainian forces effectively control.

"Thus far, the Russians have demonstrated tactical and operational shock, which has led to a slow tactical response and has allowed the Ukrainians to continue exploiting their breakthrough of the Russian defensive lines," said retired Australian Maj. Gen. Mick Ryan in an analysis.

Russia responds, but slowly

The Russian military command initially relied on warplanes and helicopters to try to stop the onslaught. At least one Russian helicopter gunship was shot down and another was damaged.

At the same time, Moscow began pulling in reinforcements, which managed to slow Ukraine's advances but failed to completely block Ukrainian maneuvering through vast forests.

"Russia seems to do quite poorly when it has to respond dynamically in a situation like this," said military analyst Michael Kofman of the Carnegie Endowment in a podcast. "Russian forces do far better when they're operating with prepared defense, fixed lines, more on positional warfare."

Kofman noted the Russian reserves arriving in the Kursk area seemed to lack combat experience and had trouble coordinating with each other.

In one instance, a military convoy carelessly parked on the roadside near the fighting area shortly after the incursion began, and it was quickly hit by Ukrainian rockets.

"That's the kind of mistake the Russian forces along the line of control typically don't make," Kofman noted.

The risks of Ukraine seeking a foothold

Kyiv remains tight-lipped about whether it intends to seek a foothold in the Kursk region or pull back into Ukrainian territory. The first option is risky because supply lines extending deep into the region would be vulnerable to Russian strikes, analysts say.

"The main risk is that the Ukrainians choose to try and consolidate and hold ground that lengthens the front line," said Matthew Savill, military sciences director at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Ryan, the retired Australian general, warned that "losing a large number of forces in this scenario also makes it a strategic and political liability."

That would "squander the very positive strategic messaging that has been generated by the Ukrainian surprise attack into Russia," he said. Ukrainian forces could try to retreat to a more defensible area near the border or fully pull back to Ukraine, he said.

The incursion already has boosted Ukraine's morale and proven its ability to seize initiative and take the war to Russian soil.

"This Ukrainian operation represents a very significant effort on the part of the Ukrainians to reset the status quo in the war, and change narratives about Ukraine prospects in this war," Ryan said.

Families of hostages in Gaza hope cease-fire talks will end their nightmare

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Some families of hostages held in Gaza believe the latest round of cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas could be the last best chance to set their loved ones free after more than 300 days of captivity.

The families have advocated tirelessly to secure the release of their relatives, who were snatched on Oct. 7 during Hamas' cross-border attack that started the war.

Their hope that the latest talks could result in a breakthrough is tinged by 10 months of disappointment — and the growing fear of a wider Mideast war as Israel faces rising tensions with Iran and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group based in Lebanon.

Roughly 110 hostages remain in Gaza after about 100 were freed during a brief cease-fire in late November. More than 40,000 Palestinians have died in the war, according to Gaza health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants.

Throughout the war, the families of hostages have pushed on with anguish and despair, rallying Israelis to their cause, lobbying local and foreign lawmakers, pleading that someone put an end to their nightmare.

They've watched as multiple rounds of negotiations have crumbled. And they've increasingly directed their ire at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who they accuse of prioritizing his political survival over the fate of their loved ones.

"We need a cease-fire to get them all back," said Zahiro Shahar Mor, a nephew of Avraham Munder, 78, who was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz along with his wife, his daughter and grandson — the latter three having returned during the first and only truce deal. "Had Netanyahu wanted them here, they would have been here."

Netanyahu insists he keeps the plight of the hostages top of mind.

"The pain these families have endured is beyond words," Netanyahu told a joint session of the U.S. Congress last month. "I will not rest until all their loved ones are home."

He says the best way to free them is to keep up military pressure on Hamas, a position backed by two far-right governing partners who are critical to maintaining his grip on power. They have pledged to topple the government should Netanyahu proceed with a deal that would release hostages in exchange for freeing Palestinian prisoners convicted of serious crimes or an end to the war.

Netanyahu has also enraged some of the hostage families throughout the war with comments or actions that appeared to suggest he does not sympathize with their ordeal.

He has only recently suggested remorse for his role in the policy and security failures that led to Hamas' unprecedented attack, which led to the killing of some 1,200 Israelis. He has been accused of avoiding the families of hostages, especially those whose relatives are known to have died in captivity. In comments leaked to Israeli media, he reportedly said Hamas was under more pressure than Israel to move toward a deal because the hostages were "suffering but not dying."

In fact, more than a third of the 110 hostages still held are said to have died in captivity or on Oct. 7, their bodies taken to Gaza. Three hostages were mistakenly killed by the Israeli military. Seven hostages were freed in rescue missions, as were several bodies.

The hostage families have watched as their weekly protest in central Tel Aviv has gradually dwindled in size, with Israelis growing weary of the seemingly endless struggle. They have watched the conflict broaden, nearly tipping over into a wider regional war that could eclipse their own plight.

Still, the families have kept up their fight and in July nearly two dozen met with Netanyahu in Washington during his visit there.

Gil Dickmann, whose cousin Carmel Gat is being held in Gaza, said Netanyahu did not make any tangible promise but he left the meeting feeling optimistic that progress could come soon. Instead, weeks have passed with no movement.

"That is an eternity for the hostages," said Dickmann, who was among a group of hostage relatives who wore a yellow shirt that read "seal the deal now" in Congress during Netanyahu's speech. "Anything could happen to them during that eternity."

Dickmann said that attempts by both sides to squeeze as much out of the deal were only making it more elusive.

The families of the eight American-Israeli hostages held an hourlong meeting with both Netanyahu and President Joe Biden, but the Israeli leader did not make any firm promises on a deal to them either, said Ruby Chen, the father of Itay Chen, who was killed Oct. 7, his body taken into Gaza.

Chen said he has drawn optimism surrounding this latest round of talks from his weekly briefings with U.S. officials, who he said view the cease-fire deal as a chance to bring stability to the wider region, after the killings of two militant commanders in Beirut and Tehran sparked fears of a wider war. He urged the U.S. to publicly call out whoever it saw as obstructing the talks, although he declined to point any finger himself.

"The prime minister needs to look hard in the mirror and understand that these are the days that the history book of the state of Israel is being written," he said. "He needs to decide where he wants to be in that history book."

Other hostage relatives have had harsher words for the Israeli leader.

"Netanyahu, we know you don't want a deal. We know that if it was up to you, the hostages would rot and die in captivity," Yotam Cohen, whose brother Nimrod, 19, is being held captive, said at a protest Thursday ahead of the new round of talks. One protester chanted "their blood is on your hands".

TikTok compares itself to foreign-owned American news outlets as it fights forced sale or ban

By HAELUYA HADERO AP Business Writer

TikTok on Thursday pushed back against U.S. government arguments that the popular social media platform is not shielded by the First Amendment, comparing its platform to prominent American media organizations owned by foreign entities.

Last month, the Justice Department argued in a legal brief filed in a Washington federal appeals court that neither TikTok's China-based parent company, ByteDance, nor the platform's global and U.S. arms — TikTok Ltd. and TikTok Inc. — were entitled to First Amendment protections because they are "foreign organizations operating abroad" or owned by one.

TikTok attorneys have made the First Amendment a key part of their legal challenge to the federal law requiring ByteDance to sell TikTok to an approved buyer or face a ban.

On Thursday, they argued in a court document that TikTok's U.S. arm doesn't forfeit its constitutional rights because it is owned by a foreign entity. They drew a parallel between TikTok and well-known news outlets such as Politico and Business Insider, both of which are owned by German publisher Axel Springer SE. They also cited Fortune, a business magazine owned by Thai businessman Chatchaval Jiaravanon.

"Surely the American companies that publish Politico, Fortune, and Business Insider do not lose First Amendment protection because they have foreign ownership," the TikTok attorneys wrote, arguing that "no precedent" supports what they called "the government's dramatic rewriting of what counts as protected speech."

In a redacted court filing made last month, the Justice Department argued ByteDance and TikTok haven't raised valid free speech claims in their challenge against the law, saying the measure addresses national security concerns about TikTok's ownership without targeting protected speech.

The Biden administration and TikTok had held talks in recent years aimed at resolving the government's concerns. But the two sides failed to reach a deal.

TikTok said the government essentially walked away from the negotiating table after it proposed a 90-page agreement that detailed how the company planned to address concerns about the app while still maintaining ties with ByteDance.

However, the Justice Department has said TikTok's proposal "failed to create sufficient separation between the company's U.S. operations and China" and did not adequately address some of the government's concerns.

The government has pointed to some data transfers between TikTok employees and ByteDance engineers in China as why it believed the proposal, called Project Texas, was not sufficient to guard against national security concerns. Federal officials have also argued that the size and scope of TikTok would have made it impossible to meaningfully enforce compliance with the proposal.

TikTok attorneys said Thursday that some of what the government views as inadequacies of the agreement were never raised during the negotiations.

Separately the DOJ on Thursday evening asked the court to submit evidence under seal, saying in a filing that the case contained information classified at "Top Secret" levels. TikTok has been opposing those requests.

Oral arguments in the case are scheduled to begin on Sept. 16.

Matthew Perry's assistant among 5 people, including 2 doctors, charged in 'Friends' star's death

By ANDREW DALTON and KAITLYN HUAMANI Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Five people including his personal assistant and two doctors have been charged in connection with Matthew Perry's death in what prosecutors called a "broad underground criminal network" dedicated to getting the "Friends" star the powerful surgical anesthetic that killed him.

The doctors preyed on Perry's history of addiction in the final months of his life last year to provide him with ketamine in amounts they knew were dangerous, U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada said as he announced the charges Thursday.

"They knew what they were doing was wrong," Estrada said. "They knew what they were doing was risking great danger to Mr. Perry. But they did it anyway."

One doctor even wrote in a text message, "I wonder how much this moron will pay" and "Lets find out," according to an indictment unsealed Thursday.

Perry died in October due to a ketamine overdose and prosecutors said he received several injections on the day he died from his live-in personal assistant, Kenneth Iwamasa, who found Perry dead later that day and was the first to talk to investigators.

Ketamine has seen a huge surge in use in recent years as a treatment for depression, anxiety and pain. While the drug isn't approved for those conditions, doctors are free to prescribe drugs for so-called off-label uses.

Perry had been receiving regular ketamine infusion treatments for depression — in amounts not nearly enough to account for his death — from his regular doctors, who were not among those charged, authorities said.

When those doctors refused to give him more, he went in desperation to others.

"We are not talking about legitimate ketamine treatment," Estrada said. "We're talking about two doctors who abused the trust they had, abused their licenses to put another person's life at risk."

DEA Administrator Anne Milgram said in one instance the actor paid \$2,000 for a vial of ketamine that cost one of the physicians about \$12. Perry paid the doctors about \$55,000 in cash in the two months before his death, Estrada said.

Two of the people, including one of the doctors charged, were arrested Thursday, Estrada said. Two of the defendants, including Iwamasa, have pleaded guilty to charges already, and a third person has agreed to plead guilty.

Among those arrested Thursday are Dr. Salvador Plasencia, who is charged with seven counts of distribution of ketamine and also two charges related to allegations he falsified records after Perry's death.

Plasencia appeared in court briefly Thursday afternoon and pleaded not guilty. He can be released after

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posting a \$100,000 bond.

Plasencia's attorney Stefan Sacks asked that his client be allowed to keep seeing patients at his practice when he's released, saying he had already turned over his DEA license to prescribe dangerous drugs and that the Perry case was "isolated."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ian V. Yanniello objected, saying Plasencia had "essentially acted as a street corner drug dealer."

Magistrate Judge Alka Sagar ruled that Plasencia could treat patients only if they sign a document saying they had been informed of the charges against him.

"Ultimately, Dr. Plasencia was operating with what he thought were the best of medical intentions," and his actions "certainly didn't rise to the level of criminal misconduct," Sacks said outside the courthouse. "His only concern was to give the best medical treatment and to do no harm," Sacks said. "Unfortunately harm was done. But it was after his involvement."

The other person arraigned in the case Thursday was Jasveen Sangha, who prosecutors described as a drug dealer known to customers as the "Ketamine Queen" — a moniker her attorney derided as made-for-media consumption during her court hearing. Ketamine supplied by Sangha caused Perry's death, authorities said.

Sangha pleaded not guilty and was denied bond. She had first been arrested in the case, charged with possession of ketamine with intent to distribute and released on bond in March, with authorities keeping Perry's involvement quiet. But a new indictment unsealed Thursday alleges a direct connection to the actor's death, and the judge ruled she should remain in custody due to her concern over prosecutors' contentions that she destroyed evidence and has used money from drug sales to fund a lavish lifestyle.

Plasencia could get up to 120 years in prison if convicted, prosecutors said, and Sangha could get life in prison.

Records show Plasencia's medical license has been in good standing with no records of complaints, though it is set to expire in October.

A San Diego physician, Dr. Mark Chavez, has agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy to distribute ketamine. Prosecutors allege Chavez funneled ketamine to Plasencia, securing some of the drug from a wholesale distributor through a fraudulent prescription.

The prosecutor said the defendants exchanged messages soon after Perry's death referencing ketamine as the cause of death. Estrada said they deleted messages and falsified medical records in an attempt to cover up their involvement.

Los Angeles police said in May that they were working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service with a probe into why the 54-year-old had so much of the surgical anesthetic in his system.

Iwamasa found the actor face down in his hot tub on Oct. 28, and paramedics who were called immediately declared him dead.

The assistant received the ketamine from Erik Fleming, who has pleaded guilty to obtaining the drug from Sangha and delivering them to Iwamasa. In all, he delivered 50 vials of ketamine for Perry's use, including 25 handed over four days before the actor's death.

Perry's autopsy, released in December, found that the amount of ketamine in his blood was in the range used for general anesthesia during surgery.

But it had been 1 1/2 weeks since his previous legitimate treatment, the medical examiner said, and the drug is typically metabolized in a matter of hours.

Estrada said that Plasencia had witnessed Perry freeze up and saw his blood pressure spike after injecting him with the drug, but still left several vials with Iwamura for the actor to inject later.

Multiple requests for comment from lawyers for Chavez, Iwamasa and Fleming were not returned Thursday.

The medical examiner listed ketamine as the primary cause of death, which was ruled an accident with no foul play suspected, the report said. Drowning and other medical issues were contributing factors, the

coroner said.

Perry had years of struggles with addiction dating back to his time on "Friends," when he became one of the biggest television stars of his generation as Chandler Bing alongside Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer for 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004 on NBC's megahit sitcom.

Drug-related celebrity deaths have in other cases led authorities to prosecute the people who supplied them.

After rapper Mac Miller died from an overdose of cocaine, alcohol and counterfeit oxycodone that contained fentanyl, two of the men who provided him the fentanyl were convicted of distributing the drug. One was sentenced to more than 17 years in federal prison, the other to 10 years.

And after Michael Jackson died in 2009 from a lethal dose of propofol, a drug intended for use only during surgery and other medical procedures, not for the insomnia the singer sought it for, his doctor, Conrad Murray, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2011. Murray has maintained his innocence.

Harris zeroes in on high food and housing prices as inflation plays a big role in the campaign

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is zeroing in on high food and housing prices as her campaign previews an economic policy speech Friday in North Carolina, promising to push for a federal ban on price gouging on groceries and laying out plans to cut other costs as she looks to address one of voters' top concerns.

Year-over-year inflation has reached its lowest level in more than three years, but food prices are 21% above where they were three years ago. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has pointed to inflation as a key failing of the Biden administration.

The cost of housing is another major driver of inflation, and Harris plans to use federal resources to promote the construction of 3 million new housing units if elected, pass legislation to slow rent increases, and provide a \$25,000 in down-payment assistance for first time homebuyers.

Harris is drawing closer to President Joe Biden's legislative and economic record, casting her initiatives as an extension of the work their administration has done over the last three and a half years.

The Harris housing plan includes establishing a tax credit for homebuilders who construct starter homes for first-time homebuyers, and doubling a \$20 billion Biden administration "innovation fund" for housing construction. The down-payment assistance would significantly expand on a Biden proposal to provide federal support to first-time buyers.

Earlier Thursday, Biden and Harris celebrated their efforts to cut prescription drug prices at an event in Maryland as she made her first joint speaking appearance with Biden since she replaced him at the top of the Democratic ticket nearly four weeks ago.

They announced that drug price negotiations will knock hundreds of dollars — in some cases thousands — off the list prices of 10 of Medicare's most popular and costliest drugs. The program was created through the 2022 health care- and climate-focused Inflation Reduction Act. Harris' vote Senate vote, as vice president, helped Democrats overcome unanimous GOP opposition to make the bill law.

"The tiebreaking vote of Kamala," Biden told the audience, "made that possible."

He added that Harris is "gonna make one helluva president."

Biden undertook his own efforts to contain rising food prices, including creating a "competition council" that tried to reduce costs by increasing competition within the meat industry, part of a broader effort to show his administration is trying to combat inflation.

Asked Thursday if he was concerned Harris would seek to distance herself from his economic record, Biden told reporters, "She's not going to."

Americans are more likely to trust Trump over Harris when it comes to handling the economy, but the difference is slight: 45% say Trump is better positioned to handle the economy, while 38% say that about

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Harris. About 1 in 10 trust neither Harris nor Trump to better handle the economy, according to the latest Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

Trump, speaking Thursday at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, argued Harris is proposing "communist price controls" that would lead to shortages, hunger and more inflation. He was flanked by popular grocery store items as he sought to highlight the rising cost of food.

Harris, in her housing plan, also wants to crack down on data-sharing and price-setting tools that landlords to set rents, and to remove a tax incentive that has led investment firms to purchase wide swaths of the country's housing stock. She intends to contrast her plan with Trump, who was sued by the Justice Department for housing discrimination five decades ago.

Consumer confidence surveys show that high prices remain a persistent source of frustration for shoppers, particularly among lower-income Americans, even as inflation has cooled. Overall prices are about 21% higher than before the pandemic. Average incomes have risen by slightly more than that, boosting spending even as Americans report a gloomy outlook on the economy.

Some meat prices have risen by even more than overall inflation: Beef prices have increased nearly 33% in the 4 1/2 years since the pandemic began, while chicken prices have jumped 31%. Pork is 21% more expensive, according to government data.

Supply disruptions during the pandemic were one reason prices rose. Many meat processing plants closed temporarily after COVID-19 outbreaks among their workers.

But the Biden administration has charged that corporate consolidation in the meat processing industry has played a larger role by enabling a small number of companies to raise their prices by more than their their costs.

Four large companies control 55% to 85% of the beef, chicken, and poultry markets, the White House said in late 2021, including Tyson Foods and JBS. Several of the biggest meat companies have collectively paid out hundreds of millions of dollars to settle lawsuits accusing them of fixing prices for chicken, beef and pork, but they didn't admit any wrongdoing.

Some economists have argued that large food and consumer goods companies took advantage of pandemic-era disruptions. Economist Isabella Weber at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, called it "seller's inflation." Others referred to it as "greedflation."

Harris' proposals on price gouging come as there is some evidence that "sellers' inflation" is fading. Consumers have become more discriminating, and are passing on some higher-price purchases while seeking out cheaper alternatives.

Grocery prices, on average nationwide, have risen just 1.1% in the past 12 months, in line with pre-pandemic increases, the government said Wednesday.

The meat industry has been fending off allegations of price gouging and price fixing for years, and the major players dispute the notion that the extreme consolidation in the industry is to blame for high prices.

Kansas State University agricultural economist Glynn Tonsor said "the cost of raising the animal, the cost of converting it into meat, and the cost of getting that meat to people is higher than it was."

"Yes, consumers are seeing higher prices, but it doesn't necessarily mean somebody is gouging them," Tonsor said.

The head of the Meat Institute trade group, President and CEO Julie Anna Potts, said Harris' idea would not solve the problems of inflation driving up the price of everything.

"Consumers have been impacted by high prices due to inflation on everything from services to rent to automobiles, not just at the grocery store," Potts said. "A federal ban on price gouging does not address the real causes of inflation."

FACT FOCUS: Trump blends falsehoods and exaggerations at rambling NJ press conference

Associated Press undefined

Former President Donald Trump on Thursday gave his second news conference in as many weeks as he adjusts to a newly energized Democratic ticket ahead of next week's Democratic National Convention.

At his New Jersey golf club, the Republican nominee blended falsehoods about the economy with misleading statements and deeply personal attacks about his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

Inflation did not take the toll Trump claimed. Growth surged under Biden

TRUMP: "As a result of Kamala's inflation, price hikes have cost the typical household a total of \$28,000. ... When I left office, I left Kamala and crooked Joe Biden a surging economy and no inflation. The mortgage rate was around 2%. Gasoline had reached \$1.87 a gallon. ... Harris and Biden blew it all up."

THE FACTS: Trump made numerous economic claims that were either exaggerated or misleading. Prices did surge during the Biden-Harris administration, though \$28,000 is far higher than independent estimates. Moody's Analytics calculated last year that price increases over the previous two years were costing the typical U.S. household \$709 a month. That would equal \$8,500 a year.

Separately, the U.S. economy was growing quickly as it reopened from COVID in 2020, as Trump's term ended, and it continued to do so after Biden took office. Growth reached 5.8% in 2021, Biden's first year in the White House, as the rebound continued, faster than any year that Trump was in office. Mortgage rates were low when Trump left because of the pandemic, which caused the Federal Reserve to cut its key rate to nearly zero. Gas prices fell as the economy largely shut down and Americans cut back sharply on their driving.

'Foreign born' is not the same as 'migrants'

TRUMP: "Virtually 100% of the net job creation in the last year has gone to migrants."

THE FACTS: This is a misinterpretation of government jobs data. The figures do show that the number of foreign-born people with jobs has increased in the past year, while the number of native-born Americans with jobs has declined. But foreign-born is not the same as "migrants" -- it would include people who arrived in the U.S. years ago and are now naturalized citizens.

In addition, the data is based on Census research that many economists argue is undercounting both foreign- and native-born workers. According to a report by Wendy Edelberg and Tara Watson at the Brookings Institution released this week, native-born employment rose by 740,000 in 2023, while foreign-born rose by 1.7 million. Much of the disparity reflects the fact that the native-born population is older than the foreign-born, and are more likely to be retired. In addition, the unemployment rate for native-born Americans is 4.5%, lower than the 4.7% for foreign-born.

A thief is not allowed to steal up to \$950

TRUMP: "You're allowed to rob a store as long as it's not more than \$950. ... If it's less than \$950 they can rob it and not get charged."

THE FACTS: Trump was referring to regulations in California that allegedly allow for theft under \$950. But his claim is not correct — a 2014 proposition modified, but did not eliminate, sentencing for many nonviolent property and drug crimes.

Proposition 47 raised the minimum dollar amount necessary for theft to be prosecuted as a felony, instead of a misdemeanor, from \$400 to \$950.

Alex Bastian, then-special adviser to Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón, who co-authored Prop 47, told The Associated Press in 2021 that the minimum was raised "to adjust for inflation and cost of living," but that most shoplifting cases were already prosecuted as misdemeanors any since they didn't exceed \$400.

Prop 47 was enacted to comply with a 2011 U.S. Supreme Court order, which upheld that the state's overcrowded prisons violated incarcerated individuals' Eighth Amendment rights against cruel and unusual punishment. It instructed California to reduce its state prison population by 33,000 individuals within two

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years.

Harris has not said in this campaign she wants to defund police

TRUMP, on Harris: "You know, she wants to defund the police."

THE FACTS: Harris expressed praise for the "defund the police" movement after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, questioning whether money was being effectively spent on public safety. However, she has not said during her current campaign that she is in favor of defunding law enforcement.

The Biden administration tried to overhaul policing, but the legislation stalled on Capitol Hill, and Biden ultimately settled for issuing an executive order. It also pumped more money into local departments.

Trump did not win Pennsylvania in 2020

TRUMP: "I won Pennsylvania and I did much better the second time. I won it in 2016, did much better the second time. I know Pennsylvania very well."

THE FACTS: False. Trump did win the state in 2016, when he beat Democrat Hillary Clinton to win the presidency. But he lost the state in 2020 to President Joe Biden, a Pennsylvania native. According to the official certified results, Biden and Harris received 3.46 million votes, compared to Trump and Vice President Mike Pence with 3.38 million votes, a margin of about 80,000 votes.

Oil production in U.S. hit record under Biden

Trump says he will bring energy prices down by reversing President Joe Biden's policy of encouraging renewable energy at the expense of fossil fuels.

TRUMP: "We're going to drill baby drill, we're going to get the energy prices down, almost immediately."

THE FACTS: Oil production in the U.S. hit an all-time high under Biden's administration.

The U.S. Department of Energy reported in October that U.S. oil production hit 13.2 million barrels per day, passing a previous record set in 2020 by 100,000 barrels. Department statistics also show that the U.S. has produced more crude oil per year than any other nation — for the past six years.

Economy has shown recent signs of strength, not evidence of collapse

TRUMP: "We're going to have a crash like the 1929 crash if she gets in."

THE FACTS: The economy has shown recent signs of strength — not evidence that America is on the edge of economic collapse.

On Thursday the S&P 500 jumped 1.6%, its sixth gain in a row. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also increased Thursday, as did the Nasdaq composite.

Recent economic reports show that shoppers increased their retail spending last month and fewer workers sought unemployment benefits.

Fears the economy was slowing emerged last month following a sharp drop in hiring and higher unemployment rates. But those worries were assuaged earlier this month when better-than-expected jobless numbers led to Wall Street's best rally since 2022.

Harris was not named border 'czar'

TRUMP: "She was the border czar but she didn't do anything. She's the worst border czar in history. ... She was the person responsible for the border and she never went there."

THE FACTS: Biden tapped Harris in 2021 to work with Central American countries to address the root causes of migration and the challenges it creates. Illegal crossings are one aspect of those challenges, but Harris was never assigned to the border or put in charge of the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees law enforcement at the border.

Black unemployment is lower under Biden

TRUMP: "The Black population had the best numbers they've ever had on jobs, on income, on everything. The Hispanic population had the best numbers."

THE FACTS: It's true that Black and Hispanic unemployment fell to then-record lows under Trump, but that was upended by COVID. When Trump left office, Black unemployment had soared to 9.3% and Hispanic unemployment to 8.5%. Under Biden, Black unemployment fell to a new record low of 4.8% in April 2023, while Hispanic unemployment in September 2022 matched the all-time low of 3.9% it had reached under Trump.

Stock market today: Wall Street leaps, and S&P 500 rallies 1.6% as US shoppers drive the economy

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street rallied to one of its best days of the year Thursday after data showed the U.S. economy is holding up better than expected, with particular credit going to the country's shoppers.

The S&P 500 jumped 1.6% for its fourth-best day of the year and its sixth straight gain as the U.S. stock market rights itself following a scary few weeks. It's back to within 2.2% of its all-time high set last month after briefly falling close to 10% below it.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 554 points, or 1.4%, while the Nasdaq composite burst 2.3% higher as Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks recovered more of their stumbles from the last month.

Treasury yields also leaped in the bond market following the encouraging economic report. One said U.S. shoppers increased their spending at retailers last month by much more than economists expected, while another said fewer U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits.

A year ago, such reports could have sent the stock market reeling on worries they would push inflation higher. But good news for the economy is once again good news for Wall Street, particularly after a report showed U.S. employers pulled back on their hiring last month by much more than expected.

That dud of a jobs report raised worries the U.S. economy could buckle under the weight of high interest rates brought by the Federal Reserve, and it contributed to turmoil in stock markets worldwide. But Thursday's reports hint a perfect landing may still be possible, one where the Fed slows the economy's growth by just enough through high rates to stifle inflation but not so much that it causes a recession.

"The growth scare isn't over, but it's a little less scary," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

Inflation has also been improving since it topped 9% two summers ago, punctuated by reports earlier this week on prices at both the consumer and wholesale levels. That has cleared the way for the Federal Reserve to soon deliver the cuts to interest rates that Wall Street loves.

Walmart added to the optimism after it delivered a bigger profit for the spring than analysts expected, and its shares climbed 6.6%. The retail giant also raised its forecast for sales for the full year, indicating U.S. shoppers can keep spending. Such spending by U.S. consumers makes up the bulk of the economy.

It was just one of several big companies to join the parade of businesses topping analysts' expectations for springtime profit.

Deere & Co. rode 6.3% higher after the seller of backhoes, dozers and other equipment reported higher profit and revenue than expected. That was despite what it called challenging conditions across the agricultural and construction sectors globally.

Cisco Systems' profit and revenue for the latest quarter squeaked past analysts' forecasts, and its stock jumped 6.8% after the maker of networking equipment also said it would eliminate thousands of jobs as it shifts to faster-growing areas of technology like artificial intelligence.

Ulta Beauty's stock rose 11.2% to help lead the market after Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway revealed it has built an ownership stake in the retailer.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 88.01 points to 5,543.22. The Dow gained 554.67 to 40,563.06, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 401.89 to 17,594.50.

In the bond market, the 10-year Treasury yield clambered up to 3.91% from 3.84% late Wednesday following the strong economic data.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely follows expectations for action by the Federal Reserve, jumped to 4.09% from 3.96% late Wednesday.

Traders still widely expect the Federal Reserve to cut its main interest rate at its next meeting in September, which would be the first such cut since the 2020 COVID crash. But they're now largely expecting the Fed to lower rates by the traditional quarter of a percentage point, according to data from CME Group.

A week ago, many traders were forecasting a more severe cut of half of a percentage point because of worries at the time that the U.S. economy's growth was sliding.

The Fed has been clear about the tightrope it began walking when it started hiking rates sharply in March 2022: Being too aggressive would choke the economy, but going too soft would give inflation more oxygen and hurt everyone.

The signals of a resilient U.S. economy helped drive smaller stocks in particular on Thursday. Smaller companies can be more beholden to the strength of the U.S. economy than huge multinationals, and the Russell 2000 index of smaller stocks rose 2.5% to help lead the market.

Smaller stocks have been even jumpier than the rest of the market, rising more than the S&P 500 when data indicate the U.S. economy is doing well and interest rates are about to come down, but tumbling more sharply when pessimism rises.

In stock markets abroad, indexes also rose in much of Asia and Europe.

Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 0.8% after data showed its economy returned to growth during the spring. The U.K. economy also grew during the latest quarter, a welcome signal following a rough run, and the FTSE 100 rose 0.8% in London.

Detroit judge sidelined for making sleepy teen wear jail clothes on court field trip

By ED WHITE Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A Detroit judge who ordered a teenager into jail clothes and handcuffs on a field trip to his courtroom will be off the bench while undergoing "necessary training," the court's chief judge said Thursday.

Meanwhile, the girl's mother said Judge Kenneth King was a "big bully."

"My daughter is hurt. She is feeling scared," Latoreya Till told the Detroit Free Press.

She identified her daughter as Eva Goodman. The 15-year-old fell asleep in King's court Tuesday while on a visit organized by a Detroit nonprofit.

King didn't like it. But he said it was her attitude that led to the jail clothes, handcuffs and stern words.

"I wanted this to look and feel very real to her, even though there's probably no real chance of me putting her in jail," he explained to WXYZ-TV.

King has been temporarily removed from his criminal case docket and will undergo "necessary training to address the underlying issues that contributed to this incident," said William McConico, the chief judge at 36th District Court.

The court "remains deeply committed to providing access to justice in an environment free from intimidation or disrespect. The actions of Judge King on August 13th do not reflect this commitment," McConico said.

He said the State Court Administrative Office approved the step. King will continue to be paid. Details about the training, and how long it would last, were not disclosed.

King, who has been a judge since 2006, didn't immediately return a phone message seeking comment. At the close of his Thursday hearings, accessible on YouTube, he made a heart shape with his hands. The judge's work includes determining whether there's enough evidence to send felony cases to trial at Wayne County Circuit Court.

Till said her daughter was sleepy during the Tuesday court visit because the family doesn't have a permanent residence.

"And so, that particular night, we got in kind of late," she told the Free Press, referring to Monday night. "And usually, when she goes to work, she's up and planting trees or being active."

The teen was seeing King's court as part of a visit organized by The Greening of Detroit, an environmental group.

"Although the judge was trying to teach a lesson of respect, his methods were unacceptable," said Marissa Ebersole Wood, the group's chairperson. "The group of students should have been simply asked to leave the courtroom if he thought they were disrespectful."

VP nominee JD Vance to dissolve last vestige of mothballed charity, give its \$11K to Appalachia

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Republican vice presidential nominee U.S. Sen. JD Vance is preparing to dissolve the vestiges of a charitable effort he launched in Ohio after publication of his best-selling memoir “Hillbilly Elegy,” the Trump-Vance campaign said.

Vance formed two like-named nonprofits starting in 2016 to address problems in Ohio and other “Rust Belt” states. They were primarily supposed to focus on boosting job opportunities, improving mental health treatment and combating the opioid crisis. The original organization folded within five years and Vance put the other on hold when he ran successfully for the Senate in 2022.

He faced criticism during the race over how little the groups accomplished. Despite Vance’s stated intentions to identify and produce national solutions to those problems, the nonprofits’ only notable achievement was paying to send an addiction specialist to southern Ohio for a year who had questioned the well-documented role of prescription painkillers in the national opioid crisis. Vance has acknowledged that the groups’ efforts fell far short of his aspirations.

One of the groups — a foundation — filed paperwork in April reinstating the corporate status it had allowed to expire in 2022.

Trump-Vance campaign spokesperson Taylor Van Kirk told The Associated Press that that filing was required because the foundation still had money left in its bank account and did not signal that Vance intended to resume the foundation’s efforts. She said he plans to close out its accounts and distribute the remaining balance to causes benefiting Appalachia.

Records the group filed with the state and obtained by the AP through a public records request show it reported about \$11,000 remaining in the foundation’s account.

Vance’s first nonprofit, Our Ohio Renewal, was formed not long after “Hillbilly Elegy” was published in 2016. It was registered as a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization. Such groups are able to endorse candidates, though this one never did. Its contributions were not tax-deductible. Vance said his goal was to raise \$500,000 a year to fund its work.

A year later, he created the Our Ohio Renewal Foundation. As a 501(c)(3) charitable group, it operates with more restrictions but also allows donors to receive tax deductions for donations.

The groups failed to catch on, in part because a key organizer was diagnosed with cancer. Our Ohio Renewal reported raising \$221,000 in 2018 — \$80,000 of which was Vance’s own money. It raised less than \$50,000 a year thereafter, before being shut down in 2021, records show.

Meanwhile, the foundation appears to have raised and spent only about \$69,000 from 2017 to 2023 — although figures in its annual reports don’t all add up. Neither Jai Chabria, a Vance political adviser who formerly worked as a consultant to the foundation, nor the campaign was able to explain the discrepancies, citing the passage of time and changes in personnel.

The AP reported in 2022 that the residency funded by Vance’s charitable efforts for Dr. Sally Satel in Ironton, Ohio, was clouded by ties between her, the American Enterprise Institute, where she was a resident scholar, and OxyContin manufacturer Purdue Pharma. Satel cited Purdue-funded studies in some of her writings while being paid by the institute, which at the time was receiving funding from the drugmaker, according to reports in ProPublica.

Vance’s Senate campaign said the candidate — whose family’s experience with addiction figured heavily in his book and helped inspire his charity work — was unfamiliar with Satel’s reliance on Purdue research in her work when she was selected for the 2018 residency. But he said he remained proud of her work treating patients in one of Ohio’s hardest hit areas.

Satel said at the time that she came to her conclusions independently, and AEI said it maintains a firewall between its scholars and its donors.

What to know about Tim Walz's 1995 drunken driving arrest and how he responded

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Now that Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz is Vice President Kamala Harris' running mate, his drunken driving arrest from 1995 in Nebraska — long before he entered politics — is getting renewed scrutiny.

Walz was a 31-year-old teacher when he was stopped the night of Sept. 23, 1995, near Chadron, Nebraska. He pleaded guilty in March 1996 to a reduced charge of reckless driving.

Here's a look back at what happened, and the aftermath as Walz embarked on a political career a decade later, and last week joined the Democratic presidential ticket:

The case

According to court records, a Nebraska state trooper clocked Walz going 96 mph in a 55-mph zone. The trooper wrote that he detected a strong smell of alcohol on his breath. Walz failed field sobriety and preliminary breath tests.

He was taken to a hospital for a blood test and was booked into the Dawes County Jail. A transcript of his plea hearing on March 13, 1996, quotes the prosecutor as saying his blood test showed an alcohol level of 0.128%, compared with a legal limit of 0.10%. Walz's attorney told the court Walz thought someone was chasing him because the trooper came up fast and didn't turn on his red lights right away.

The defense attorney acknowledged that Walz had been drinking but argued for a fine, saying his blood alcohol level was "relatively low." He also noted that Walz was a teacher at a local high school and "felt terrible about this, was real disappointed, I guess, in himself."

He said Walz reported the incident to his principal, resigned from his coaching position and offered to quit his teaching job "because he felt so bad." He said the principal talked him into staying on as a teacher, and that Walz was now telling students about what happens if one gets caught for drinking and driving. Walz lost his license for 90 days and was fined \$200.

Walz has said he quit drinking alcohol after his arrest. He now prefers Diet Mountain Dew.

The incident surfaces

A Republican blogger surfaced some court documents in 2006 when Walz made his first run for Congress, in which he ultimately upset incumbent Republican Rep. Gil Gutknecht. A few news outlets in the southern Minnesota district did stories, but it didn't become a big issue in that campaign. It went largely forgotten until Walz ran for governor in 2018, when it got a mention in a broader profile by the Star Tribune of Minneapolis. He told the newspaper it was a gut-check moment, and an impetus to change his ways. His wife, Gwen, recalled to the newspaper that she told him: "You have obligations to people. You can't make dumb choices."

Distortions

The arrest resurfaced again after Harris picked Walz last week, and Republicans and media outside Minnesota started taking a closer look at his past. The main revelation was that Walz campaign staffers in 2006 gave misleading information to the few news outlets that wrote about it at the time.

His campaign manager told the Post-Bulletin of Rochester that he was not drunk. She said Walz couldn't understand what the trooper was saying to him because he had a hearing loss from his service in an artillery unit in the National Guard, and suggested that he might have had balance issues as a result. She also falsely claimed that the judge who dismissed the drunken driving charge chastised the officer for not realizing that Walz was deaf.

His campaign spokeswoman made similar statements to KEYC-TV and The Journal of New Ulm, saying, "The DUI charge was dropped for a reason: It wasn't true." She claimed he failed the field sobriety test because of his deafness, and that the trooper let Walz drive to a police station and leave on his own.

The court records don't mention any ear issues and make clear that the trooper took him to jail. The transcript showing that he acknowledged in court that he was drunk apparently didn't surface until 2022, when the conservative Minnesota site Alpha News reported on it.

The Harris-Walz campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment on why his former campaign staffers provided incorrect information.

Walz did have ear surgery in 2005 to remedy his hearing loss.

70 years after Paraguay's dictatorship, protesters see its legacy in the entrenched right-wing party

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (AP) — It was one of the first actions taken by Paraguayans in public defiance of their overthrown dictator, a military strongman who unleashed a 35-year reign of terror, killing hundreds of people and imprisoning thousands more.

In a howl of dissent, crowds massed around the newly elected socialist mayor of Asunción, Paraguay's capital, to tear down a bronze statue honoring Latin America's longest-ruling dictator, Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, two years after his 1989 ouster.

When the hulking metal finally came crashing down to a salvo of cheers, Stroessner's large brass feet stayed planted on the plinth. Residents joke it remains an unwitting symbol of his entrenched presence in Asunción — 70 years ago to the day on Thursday that he seized power in 1954 coup and secured the virtually uninterrupted dominance of his conservative Colorado party.

"Stroessner planted a seed, and that seed has germinated," said Emilio Barreto, an 84-year-old unionist's son who was among nearly 20,000 Paraguayans estimated to have been tortured and imprisoned without charge during Stroessner's rule. "Today we've been through 35 years of dictatorship and 35 years of so-called democracy."

Those who pushed the process of democratization after Stroessner's downfall said they had wanted to believe their country was on the upswing, that its civic institutions were getting stronger.

But now activists say they've increasingly seen a trend in the opposite direction.

In a rare eruption of public outrage on Thursday, hundreds of protesters streamed through downtown Asunción, raising their fists and chanting, "Never again, dictatorship."

"We're witnessing a curtailment of civil liberties," said Hugo Valiente from Amnesty International in Paraguay, citing a series of recent government moves that he said "have the clear purpose of discouraging people from exercising freedom of association."

A government spokesperson and Colorado party members did not respond to questions from The Associated Press.

Anxieties about democratic backsliding added urgency to the 70th anniversary — which also marks one year since President Santiago Peña's inauguration.

Leading Thursday's protest was Paraguay's small but passionate opposition — including Katty González, a center-left senator and vocal government critic who was summarily booted from the Senate last February.

She had garnered the third-most votes in last year's legislative elections. But in a vote that rights groups said violated due process, she was ejected by allies of former President Horacio Cartes, a powerful cigarette tycoon sanctioned by the Biden administration for corruption who remains president of the Colorado party.

"We don't see the popular will being reflected in our representative bodies," González said. "That's why we're demonstrating today."

The government has chalked her expulsion up to the will of Congress, where the Colorado party has a majority. In June, the party removed a lawmaker from its ranks who had similarly spoken out against Cartes' alleged corruption.

Last week, Paraguay even demanded that the United States accelerate the departure of its ambassador after the White House imposed sanctions on a tobacco company that it alleged had paid millions of dollars to Cartes.

Cartes denies the allegations.

When Paraguay's senate last month rushed through a contentious bill that expands government powers to audit nonprofits, the former mayor of Asunción raised alarm, recalling the symbolic triumph of 1991.

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"Let's remember the moment we knocked down the statue," Carlos Filizzola said, "for its symbolism against what the dictatorship was."

The government said the bill aims to boost scrutiny of NGO finances to counter money laundering. Critics said it mimics so-called nonprofit transparency measures in place from Russia to Venezuela that send a chill through civil society. The United Nations appealed to Paraguay's lower house to reject it.

Experts argue that the past is still present in Paraguay because the government hasn't reckoned with the legacy of Stroessner, who entrenched the small South American country's highly unequal distribution of land ownership and turned Paraguay into a smuggling hub.

His enduring influence was never more obvious than in 2018, when Paraguay elected then-President Mario Abdo Benítez, the son of Stroessner's personal secretary who had served as a pallbearer at the dictator's 2006 funeral.

"The totalitarian control of Stroessner created a real identification between political party and the state," said historian Milda Rivarola. "That's what made the Paraguayan political regime so special, the only country on the continent that never really had a progressive government."

Paraguay's left-wing opposition party held power just once — from 2008-2012 — before its president's impeachment.

"In our country, this history of the dictatorship is hidden, there's no policy of memory," said Rogelio Goiburú, who oversees efforts to recover victims' remains for the Justice Ministry and whose father was disappeared by the dictatorship.

Efforts to bring justice to those responsible for crimes against humanity have been far more extensive in neighboring Argentina, where courts have convicted hundreds of military officers of dictatorship-era crimes and forensic teams have identified 800 victims.

But in Paraguay, there have been no blockbuster trials of junta leaders. Public schools — many still decorated with plaques paying tribute to Stroessner — avoid mention of the 20th-century dictatorship in national history lessons.

The remains of just four victims have been identified with the help of Argentine researchers. Goiburú said the Justice Ministry commission has no budget or state support.

"I'm still putting up with everything because of that motto, 'Never Again.' We do this so we don't lose our memory, so this doesn't happen again," he said from a riverside park in dilapidated downtown Asunción. In 1991, Filizzola, the former mayor, named it Plaza of the Disappeared.

"That's why we have to continue," he said.

US colleges revise rules on free speech in hopes of containing anti-war demonstrations

By NICK PERRY, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As students return to colleges across the United States, administrators are bracing for a resurgence in activism against the war in Gaza, and some schools are adopting rules to limit the kind of protests that swept campuses last spring.

While the summer break provided a respite in student demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war, it also gave both student protesters and higher education officials a chance to regroup and strategize for the fall semester.

The stakes remain high. At Columbia University, President Minouche Shafik resigned Wednesday after coming under heavy scrutiny for her handling of the demonstrations at the campus in New York City, where the wave of pro-Palestinian tent encampments began last spring.

Some of the new rules imposed by universities include banning encampments, limiting the duration of demonstrations, allowing protests only in designated spaces and restricting campus access to those with university identification. Critics say some of the measures will curtail free speech.

The American Association of University Professors issued a statement Wednesday condemning "overly restrictive policies" that could discourage free expression. Many of the new policies require protesters to

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register well in advance and strictly limit the locations where gatherings can be held, as well as setting new limits on the use of amplified sound and signage.

"Our colleges and universities should encourage, not suppress, open and vigorous dialogue and debate even on the most deeply held beliefs," said the statement, adding that many policies were imposed without faculty input.

The University of Pennsylvania has outlined new "temporary guidelines" for student protests that include bans on encampments, overnight demonstrations, and the use of bullhorns and speakers until after 5 p.m. on class days. Penn also requires that posters and banners be removed within two weeks of going up. The university says it remains committed to freedom of speech and lawful assembly.

At Indiana University, protests after 11 p.m. are forbidden under a new "expressive activities policy" that took effect Aug 1. The policy says "camping" and erecting any type of shelter are prohibited on campus, and signs cannot be displayed on university property without prior approval.

The University of South Florida now requires approval for tents, canopies, banners, signs and amplifiers. The school's "speech, expression and assembly" rules stipulate that no "activity," including protests or demonstrations, is allowed after 5 p.m. on weekdays or during weekends and not allowed at all during the last two weeks of a semester.

A draft document obtained over the summer by the student newspaper at Harvard University showed the college was considering prohibitions on overnight camping, chalk messages and unapproved signs.

"I think right now we are seeing a resurgence of repression on campuses that we haven't seen since the late 1960s," said Risa Lieberwitz, a Cornell University professor of labor and employment law who serves as general counsel for the AAUP.

Universities say they encourage free speech as long as it doesn't interfere with learning, and they insist they are simply updating existing rules for demonstrations to protect campus safety.

Tensions have run high on college campuses since Oct. 7, when Hamas militants assaulted southern Israel and killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages.

Many student protesters in the U.S. vow to continue their activism, which has been fueled by Gaza's rising death toll, which surpassed 40,000 on Thursday, according to the territory's Health Ministry.

About 50 Columbia students still face discipline over last spring's demonstrations after a mediation process that began earlier in the summer stalled, according to Mahmoud Khalil, a lead negotiator working on behalf of Columbia student protesters. He blamed the impasse on Columbia administrators.

"The university loves to appear that they're in dialogue with the students. But these are all fake steps meant to assure the donor community and their political class," said Khalil, a graduate student at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs.

The university did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

The Ivy League school in upper Manhattan was roiled earlier this year by student demonstrations, culminating in scenes of police officers with zip ties and riot shields storming a building occupied by pro-Palestinian protesters.

Similar protests swept college campuses nationwide, with many leading to violent clashes with police and more than 3,000 arrests. Many of the students who were arrested during police crackdowns have had their charges dismissed, but some are still waiting to learn what prosecutors decide. Many have faced fallout in their academic careers, including suspensions, withheld diplomas and other forms of discipline.

Shafik was among the university leaders who were called for questioning before Congress. She was heavily criticized by Republicans who accused her of not doing enough to combat concerns about anti-semitism on the Columbia campus.

She announced her resignation in an emailed letter to the university community just weeks before the start of classes on Sept. 3. The university on Monday began restricting campus access to people with Columbia IDs and registered guests, saying it wanted to curb "potential disruptions" as the new semester draws near.

"This period has taken a considerable toll on my family, as it has for others in the community," Shafik

wrote in her letter. "Over the summer, I have been able to reflect and have decided that my moving on at this point would best enable Columbia to traverse the challenges ahead."

Pro-Palestinian protesters first set up tent encampments on Columbia's campus during Shafik's congressional testimony in mid-April, when she denounced antisemitism but faced criticism for how she responded to faculty and students accused of bias.

The school sent in police to clear the tents the following day, only for the students to return and inspire a wave of similar protests at campuses across the country as students called for schools to cut financial ties with Israel and companies supporting the war.

The campus was mostly quiet this summer, but a conservative news outlet in June published images of what it said were text messages exchanged by administrators while attending a May 31 panel discussion titled "Jewish Life on Campus: Past, Present and Future."

The officials were removed from their posts, with Shafik saying in a July 8 letter to the school community that the messages were unprofessional and "disturbingly touched on ancient antisemitic tropes."

Other prominent Ivy League leaders have stepped down in recent months, in large part due to their response to the volatile protests on campus.

University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill resigned in December after less than two years on the job. She faced pressure from donors and criticism over testimony at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

And in January, Harvard University President Claudine Gay resigned amid plagiarism accusations and similar criticism over her testimony before Congress.

Venezuela's opposition faces setback after countries suggest repeat of presidential election

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Venezuela's opposition was dealt a blow Thursday when countries that had been pressuring President Nicolás Maduro to release vote tallies backing his claim to victory in last month's presidential election began suggesting a repeat of the contest instead.

The proposal from the leftist governments of Brazil and Colombia, both Maduro allies, came less than three weeks after the results of the highly anticipated election came into question when the main opposition coalition revealed it has proof that its candidate defeated the president by a more than 2-to-1 margin.

The opposition categorically rejected any plan to redo the election.

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, during a virtual news conference with Argentine media, said that repeating the July 28 presidential election would be "an insult" to the people, and she asked if a second election were held and Maduro still didn't accept the results, "do we go for a third one?"

In Washington, U.S. President Joe Biden expressed support for new elections in comments to reporters that the White House later appeared to back away from.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council, whose members are loyal to the ruling party, declared Maduro the winner hours after polls closed. But unlike previous presidential elections, the electoral body has not released detailed voting data to back up its claim that Maduro earned 6.4 million votes while Edmundo González, who represented the Unitary Platform opposition coalition, garnered 5.3 million.

Meanwhile, González and Machado stunned Venezuelans when they revealed they obtained more than 80% of the vote tally sheets issued by every electronic voting machine after polls closed, that they said showed González winning by a wide margin.

Their revelation prompted governments around the world, including Colombia, Brazil and the U.S., to call on Maduro and the electoral council to publish a breakdown of results.

The opposition has consistently expressed the need for the international community's help to get Maduro to accept the unfavorable results of the election.

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Unlike many other nations that have either recognized Maduro or González as the winner, the governments of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have taken a more neutral stance by neither rejecting nor accepting it when Venezuela's electoral authorities declared Maduro the winner at the ballot box. The three countries have called on Venezuela's electoral body to release tens of thousands of vote tally sheets, considered the ultimate proof of results.

On Thursday, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said that still doesn't recognize Nicolás Maduro as the winner of the election and that his counterpart should call for a new vote. Colombian President Gustavo Petro later echoed the call for a new election.

"Maduro still has six months left in his term," Lula said in an interview with Radio T. "He is the president regardless of the election. If he has good sense, he could call upon the people of Venezuela, perhaps even call for new elections, create an electoral committee and allow observers from around the world to monitor."

Brazil is by far South America's largest nation and shares one of Venezuela's longest land borders. Under Lula, the country has been an important mediator, including in October, when Maduro's government and the opposition reached an agreement to work toward conditions for a free and fair presidential election to be held in the second half of 2024. That agreement triggered relief from U.S. sanctions.

But Maduro's government continuously tested the limits of the agreement over several months, and the U.S. reimposed the sanctions it had lifted on the oil, gas and mining sectors.

Venezuelan law allows for another vote whenever the National Electoral Council or judicial authorities annul an election found to be fraudulent or whose outcome was impossible to determine. The new election would have to take place within six to 12 months under the same conditions as the annulled vote and the same candidates must appear on the ballot.

Logistics, laws and costs aside, a new election would be a risky gamble for Maduro and his allies as July's vote and subsequent protests showed they have lost support across the country and can no longer bank on a cadre of die-hard supporters, known as "Chavistas," as well as public employees and others whose businesses or employment depend on the state to comfortably beat opponents.

In contrast to the stance of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, the U.S. government has said that the evidence is clear that González won the election.

However, when Biden was asked Thursday in Washington whether he would support new elections in Venezuela, the president said "I do." Biden did not elaborate.

A White House National Security Official who was not authorized to comment publicly later told The Associated Press that Biden was speaking to the "absurdity of Maduro and his representatives not coming clean about the July 28 elections." The official added that it is "abundantly clear" to the majority of Venezuelan people, the U.S., and other governments that González won the most votes in last month's election.

An AP review of the tally sheets released by the opposition indicates that González won significantly more votes than the government has claimed. The analysis casts serious doubt on the official declaration that Maduro won.

The AP processed almost 24,000 images representing the results from 79% of voting machines, resulting in tabulations of 10.26 million votes. The processed tally sheets also showed González receiving more votes on 20,476 receipts compared to only 3,157 for Maduro.

Petro on Thursday floated several ideas to address Venezuela's political crisis including "new free elections" and the establishment of a transitional government. The latter had already been rejected by Machado at a news conference on Tuesday.

'Hollywood Squares' host and Broadway star Peter Marshall dies at 98

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Peter Marshall, the actor and singer turned game show host who played straight man to the stars for 16 years on "The Hollywood Squares," has died. He was 98.

He died Thursday of kidney failure at his home in the Encino neighborhood of Los Angeles, publicist

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Harlan Boll said.

Marshall helped define the form of the smooth, professional, but never-too-serious modern game show host on more than 5,000 episodes of the series that ran on NBC from 1966 to 1981.

But he was often closer to a talk show host, and the tic-tac-toe game the contestants played, while real, was all an excuse for a good time. The questions Marshall posed to regulars like Paul Lynde, George Gobel and Joan Rivers were designed to be set-ups for joke answers before the real ones followed.

"It was the easiest thing I've ever done in show business," Marshall said in a 2010 interview for the Archive of American Television. "I walked in, said 'Hello stars,' I read questions and laughed. And it paid very well."

"The Hollywood Squares" would become an American cultural institution and make Marshall a household name. It would win four Daytime Emmys for outstanding game show during his run and spawned dozens of international versions and several U.S. reboots. Not only was it a forum for such character actors as Charlie Weaver (the stage name of Cliff Arquette) and Wally Cox, but the show attracted a range of top stars as occasional guests, including Aretha Franklin, Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Ed Asner and Janet Leigh.

Marshall had a warm rapport with Weaver, Lynde and others, but said that Gobel, the wry comedian, actor and variety show host, held a special place, tweeting in 2021 that it's "no secret he was my closest friend on Hollywood Squares and my absolute all-time favorite Square!"

Marshall had lived nearly an entire show business life before he took the "Squares" podium at age 40.

He had toured with big bands starting as a teenager, had been a part of two comedy teams that appeared in nightclubs and on television, appeared in movies as a contract player for Twentieth Century Fox, and had sung in several Broadway musicals when the opportunity came up after Bert Parks, who hosted the pilot, bowed out.

"I am a singer first I am not a game show host," Marshall told his hometown paper, the Herald-Dispatch of Huntington, West Virginia in 2013, "that was just a freak opportunity. I had been on Broadway with Julie Harris and was going back to Broadway when I did the audition, and I thought it was a few weeks but that turned into 16 years."

"The Hollywood Squares" was more strait-laced when it began, but early in its run a producer suggested they write jokes for Lynde, the ever-snarky comic actor who occupied the center square and would become as identified as Marshall with the show.

The first joke would set the template for the years that followed:

Marshall: "Paul, why do motorcyclists wear leather?"

Lynde: "Because chiffon wrinkles."

"That changed the whole thing," Marshall told the TV archive. "I had been a straight man. So working with comics was easy for me."

Born Ralph Pierre LaCock in Clarksburg, West Virginia, Marshall would move around the state as a child, living in Wheeling and Huntington.

His father died when Marshall was 10, and he would live with his grandparents as his mother and sister, the actress Joanne Dru, moved to New York to pursue her career in show business. Marshall would soon join them.

At 15, he toured as a singer with the Bob Chester Orchestra. He also worked as an NBC Radio page and an usher at the Paramount Theater. He was drafted during World War II and stationed in Italy, where he made his first forays onto the airways as a DJ for Armed Forces Radio. In 1949 he formed a comedy duo with Tommy Noonan, appearing in nightclubs, in theaters and on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

He became a movie contract player in the 1950s at Twentieth Century Fox, appearing in films including 1959's "The Rookie" and 1961's "Swingin' Along."

Major starring roles eluded him in Hollywood, but he would find them in musical theater.

He starred opposite Chita Rivera in "Bye Bye Birdie" in London's West End in 1962 — Lynde had played a major role in the Broadway version that he would reprise in the film — and played his first starring role on Broadway in "Skyscraper" with Julie Harris in 1965.

He would also appear in Broadway versions of "High Button Shoes," "The Music Man" and "42nd Street."

After "The Hollywood Squares," Marshall would host a few other short-lived game shows, but mostly resumed his career as a singing actor, starring in more than 800 performances of "La Cage Aux Folles" on Broadway and on tour, and singing in the 1983 film version of "Annie."

He was married three times, the last to Laurie Stewart in 1989.

The couple survived a bout with COVID-19 early in 2021. He was hospitalized for several weeks.

His four kids include son Pete LaCock, a professional baseball player for the Chicago Cubs and Kansas City Royals. Marshall is also survived by daughters Suzanne and Jaime, son David, 12 grandchildren, and nine great-great grandchildren.

White House says prescription drug deals will produce billions in savings for taxpayers, seniors

By AMANDA SEITZ and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Taxpayers are expected to save billions after the Biden administration inked deals with pharmaceutical companies to knock down the lists prices for 10 of Medicare's costliest drugs.

But how much older Americans can expect to save when they fill a prescription at their local pharmacy remains unclear, since the list cost isn't the final price people pay.

After months of negotiations with manufacturers, list prices will be reduced by hundreds — in some cases, thousands — of dollars for 30-day supplies of popular drugs used by millions of people on Medicare, including blood thinners, diabetes drugs and blood cancer medications. The reductions, which range between 38% and 79%, take effect in 2026.

"I've been waiting for this moment for a long long time," President Joe Biden said Thursday, during his first policy-oriented appearance with Vice President Kamala Harris since leaving the presidential race. "We pay more for prescription drugs, it's not hyperbole, than any advanced nation in the world."

Taxpayers spend more than \$50 billion yearly on the 10 drugs, which include popular blood thinners Xarelto and Eliquis and diabetes drugs Jardiance and Januvia.

With the new prices, the administration says savings are expected to total \$6 billion for taxpayers and \$1.5 billion overall for some of the 67 million people who rely on Medicare. Details on those calculations, however, have not been released. And the White House said it could not provide an average cost-savings for individual Medicare enrollees who use the drugs.

That's because there are a number of factors — from discounts to the coinsurance or copays for the person's Medicare drug plan — that determine the final price a person pays when they pick up their drugs at a pharmacy.

The new drug prices are likely to most benefit people who use one of the negotiated drugs and are enrolled in a Medicare plan with coinsurance that leaves enrollees to pay a percentage of a drug's cost after they've met the deductible, said Tricia Neuman, an executive director at the health policy research nonprofit KFF.

"It is hard to say, exactly, what any enrollee will save because it depends on their particular plan and their coinsurance," Neuman said. "But for the many people who are in the plans that charge coinsurance, the lower negotiated price should translate directly to lower out-of-pocket costs."

Those savings won't kick in until 2026. Until then, some Medicare enrollees should see relief from drug prices in a new rule starting next year that caps how much they pay annually on drugs to \$2,000.

Vice President Kamala Harris, however, wasted no time Thursday campaigning on the new drug deals, especially since no Republicans supported the law, called the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and it barely passed Congress in 2022.

"Two years ago, as vice president, I was proud to cast the tie-breaking vote that gave Medicare the power to negotiate," Harris said to cheering crowds. "In the two years since, we've been using this new power to lower the price of life-saving medication."

Prior to dropping out of the race, Biden had centered his reelection bid around lowering health care and drug costs. But the messaging failed to resonate deeply with Americans, in part because the savings have

not had widespread reach.

Powerful drug companies unsuccessfully tried to file lawsuits to stop the negotiations. For years, Medicare had been prohibited from such dealmaking. But the drug companies ended up engaging in the talks, and executives had hinted in recent weeks during earnings calls that they don't expect the new Medicare drug prices to impact their bottom line.

Instead, they warned Thursday that the new law could drive up prices for consumers in other areas. Already, the White House is bracing for a jump in Medicare drug plan premiums next year, in part because of changes under the new law.

"The administration is using the IRA's price-setting scheme to drive political headlines, but patients will be disappointed when they find out what it means for them," said Steve Ubl, the president of the lobbying group Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).

The criticism is ironic, health law expert Rachel Sachs of Washington University said. Drug companies have typically supported capping the price older Americans pay for drugs because they don't eat the cost — insurers or Americans who pay premiums do.

"It makes it easier for patients to afford their medications. It expands their market. They make more money," said Sachs, who helped advise the Biden administration on implementation of the law.

Zelenskyy says Ukrainian troops have taken full control of the Russian town of Sudzha

By SAMYA KULLAB and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that his country's troops had taken full control of Sudzha, the largest Russian town to fall to Ukraine's forces since the start of their cross-border incursion more than a week ago.

Although it had a prewar population of only around 5,000 people, Sudzha is the administrative center for the border area of Russia's Kursk region and is larger than any of the other towns or settlements that Ukraine says it has taken since the incursion began on Aug. 6.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine was setting up a military command office in Sudzha, which suggests that Ukraine might plan to remain in the Kursk region long-term — or just signal Moscow that it may intend to do so. He didn't elaborate on what functions the office might handle, though he said earlier this week that Ukraine would be distributing humanitarian aid to Sudzha residents.

Russia didn't immediately respond to Zelenskyy's claims, but its defense ministry said earlier Thursday that Russian forces had blocked Ukrainian attempts to take several other communities.

The surprise Ukrainian incursion has reframed the war and caused chaos in the Kursk region, leading to the evacuation of more than 120,000 civilians, according to Russian authorities, and the capture of at least 100 Russian troops, according to Kyiv.

Zelenskyy has said one of the reasons for the incursion was to protect neighboring Ukrainian regions. "The more Russian military presence is destroyed in the border regions, the closer peace and real security will be for our state. The Russian state must be responsible for what it has done," he said Tuesday.

Russia has seen previous raids of its territory in the war, but the Kursk incursion is notable for its size, speed, the reported involvement of battle-hardened Ukrainian brigades, and the length of time they have stayed inside Russia. As many as 10,000 Ukrainian troops are involved, according to Western military analysts.

The incursion also marks the first time foreign troops have invaded and held Russian territory since Nazi Germany did in World War II.

Although Russian military bloggers reported that Russian reserves sent to the Kursk region had slowed Ukrainian advances, questions remain over whether the incursion might force Moscow to move troops to Kursk from front-line positions in eastern Ukraine, where they've made slow but steady advances this year.

As Kyiv was trumpeting its gains in Kursk on Thursday, officials in the eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, which had a prewar population of about 60,000, warned civilians to evacuate ahead of rapidly approaching

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Russian troops, who were about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the city's outskirts. If Russian troops capture Pokrovsk, where they've been trying to breach Ukrainian defenses for weeks, they would further advance toward their goal of capturing Ukraine's entire Donetsk region.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Thursday that Russia had withdrawn some forces, including infantry units, from Ukraine and was shifting them to Kursk, but that the U.S. didn't know how many troops were involved.

However, a U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of not being authorized to comment publicly, said it doesn't appear that Russia has moved a sufficient number of armored battalions or other types of combat power from the front line in Ukraine to Kursk, and that Moscow will need to shift more troops to repel Kyiv's forces.

Asked Thursday if the Pentagon was considering limiting any support to Ukraine in light of the latest incursion, spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said it doesn't affect what the U.S. is sending, but that, "you've seen us modify and give different capabilities over time, and we reserve that right to continue to do that."

Russian military bloggers reported that small Ukrainian mechanized groups have continued to probe Russian defenses. And satellite images analyzed by The Associated Press on Thursday show that a Ukrainian drone attack on Russian air bases damaged at least two hangars and other areas.

Images taken Wednesday by Planet Labs PBC show that two hangars at Borisoglebsk Air Base have been struck, with a field of debris around both. It was not immediately clear what purpose the hangars served. There also appeared to be potential damage to two fighter aircraft at the base.

Separately, at Savasleika Air Base, one burn mark could be seen just off the runway in images Wednesday, though there was no apparent damage to the fighter jets and other aircraft there.

As of Thursday, the Ukrainian military claimed to be holding more than 80 towns and settlements in the Kursk region.

Kursk's acting governor, Alexei Smirnov, on Thursday ordered the evacuation of the Glushkovo region, about 45 kilometers (28 miles) northwest of Sudzha. The order suggests Ukrainian forces were gradually advancing toward the area.

At a facility receiving evacuees, Tatyana Anikeyeva told Russian state television about her ordeal fleeing from the fighting. "We were rushing from Sudzha. ... We hid in the bushes. Volunteers were handing out water, food, bread to people on the go. The sound of the cannonade continued without any break. The house was shaking."

Evacuees milled around and waited in long lines for food and other supplies. One man stroked his pet dog and tried to comfort her, while saying that he felt nauseous and had no appetite.

Russia also declared a federal-level state of emergency in the Belgorod region, a day after a regional-level declaration was made for the area. The change in status suggests that officials believe the situation is worsening and hampering the region's ability to deliver aid.

Ukraine's chief military officer, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said earlier this week that Ukrainian forces had taken 1,000 square kilometers (about 390 square miles) of the Kursk region, though his claim couldn't be independently verified. The contact lines in Kursk have remained fluid, allowing both sides to maneuver easily, unlike the static front line in eastern Ukraine, where it has taken Russian forces months to achieve even incremental gains.

Russian officials have pushed back on Syrskyi's territorial claim. Speaking to reporters Wednesday at the U.N., Russia's deputy ambassador, Dmitry Polyansky, called the incursion an "absolutely reckless and mad operation," and said Ukraine's aim to force Russia to move its troops from eastern Ukraine is not happening because "we have enough troops there."

Sudzha has a measuring station for Russian natural gas that flows through Ukrainian pipelines and accounts for about 3% of Europe's imports. There has been no indication of any disruption to the gas flow.

Donald Trump asks judge to delay sentencing in hush money case until after November election

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump is asking the judge in his New York hush money criminal case to delay his sentencing until after the November presidential election.

In a letter made public Thursday, lawyers for the former president and current Republican nominee suggested that sentencing Trump as scheduled on Sept. 18 — about seven weeks before Election Day — would amount to election interference.

Trump's lawyers wrote that a delay would also allow Trump time to weigh next steps after the trial judge, Juan M. Merchan, is expected to rule Sept. 16 on the defense's request to overturn the verdict and dismiss the case because of the U.S. Supreme Court's July presidential immunity ruling.

"There is no basis for continuing to rush," Trump lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote.

Blanche and Bove sent the letter to Merchan on Wednesday after the judge rejected the defense's latest request that he step aside from the case.

In the letter, Blanche and Bove reiterated the defense argument that the judge has a conflict of interest because his daughter works as a Democratic political consultant, including for Kamala Harris when she sought the 2020 presidential nomination. Harris is now running against Trump.

By adjourning the sentencing until after that election, "the Court would reduce, even if not eliminate, issues regarding the integrity of any future proceedings," the lawyers wrote.

Election Day is Nov. 5, but many states allow voters to cast ballots early, with some set to start the process just a few days before or after Trump's scheduled Sept. 18 sentencing date.

Merchan, who has said he is confident in his ability to remain fair and impartial, did not immediately rule on the delay request.

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which prosecuted Trump's case, declined to comment.

Trump was convicted in May of falsifying his business' records to conceal a 2016 deal to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels to stay quiet about her alleged 2006 sexual encounter with him. Prosecutors cast the payout as part of a Trump-driven effort to keep voters from hearing salacious stories about him during his first campaign.

Trump says all the stories were false, the business records were not and the case was a political maneuver meant to damage his current campaign. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is a Democrat.

Trump's defense argued that the payments were indeed for legal work and so were correctly categorized.

Falsifying business records is punishable by up to four years behind bars. Other potential sentences include probation, a fine or a conditional discharge which would require Trump to stay out of trouble to avoid additional punishment. Trump is the first ex-president convicted of a crime.

Trump has pledged to appeal, but that cannot happen until he is sentenced.

In a previous letter, Merchan set Sept. 18 for "the imposition of sentence or other proceedings as appropriate."

Blanche and Bove argued in their letter seeking a delay that the quick turnaround from the scheduled immunity ruling on Sept. 16 to sentencing two days later is unfair to Trump.

To prepare for sentencing, the lawyers said, prosecutors will be submitting their punishment recommendation while Merchan is still weighing whether to dismiss the case on immunity grounds. If Merchan rules against Trump on the dismissal request, he will need "adequate time to assess and pursue state and federal appellate options," they said.

The Supreme Court's immunity decision reins in prosecutions of ex-presidents for official acts and restricts prosecutors in pointing to official acts as evidence that a president's unofficial actions were illegal. Trump's lawyers argue that in light of the ruling, jurors in the hush money case should not have heard such evidence as former White House staffers describing how the then-president reacted to news coverage of the Daniels deal.

August's supermoon kicks off four months of lunar spectacles. Here's how to watch

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first of four supermoons this year rises next week, providing tantalizing views of Earth's constant companion.

Stargazers can catch the first act Monday as the full moon inches a little closer than usual, making it appear slightly bigger and brighter in the night sky.

"I like to think of the supermoon as a good excuse to start looking at the moon more regularly," said Noah Petro, project scientist for NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter.

August's supermoon kicks off a string of lunar spectacles. September's supermoon will coincide with a partial lunar eclipse. October's will be the year's closest approach, and November's will round out the year.

What makes a moon so super?

More a popular term than a scientific one, a supermoon occurs when a full lunar phase syncs up with an especially close swing around Earth. This usually happens only three or four times a year and consecutively, given the moon's constantly shifting, oval-shaped orbit.

A supermoon obviously isn't bigger, but it can appear that way, although scientists say the difference can be barely perceptible.

"Unless you have looked at a lot of full moons or compare them in images, it is hard to notice the difference, but people should try," Petro said in an email.

How do supermoons compare?

There's a quartet of supermoons this year.

The first will be 224,917 miles (361,970 kilometers) away. The next will be nearly 3,000 miles (4,484 kilometers) closer the night of Sept. 17 into the following morning. A partial lunar eclipse will also unfold that night, visible in much of the Americas, Africa and Europe as the Earth's shadow falls on the moon, resembling a small bite.

October's supermoon will be the year's closest at 222,055 miles (357,364 kilometers) from Earth, followed by November's supermoon at a distance of 224,853 miles (361,867 kilometers).

What's in it for me?

Scientists point out that only the keenest observers can discern the subtle differences. It's easier to detect the change in brightness — a supermoon can be 30% brighter than average.

With the U.S. and other countries ramping up lunar exploration with landers and eventually astronauts, the moon beckons brighter than ever. As project scientist for the first team of moonwalkers coming up under Apollo's follow-on program, Artemis, Petro is thrilled by the renewed lunar interest.

"It certainly makes it more fun to stare at," Petro said.

US shoppers sharply boosted spending at retailers in July despite higher prices

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans stepped up their spending at retailers last month by the most in a year and a half, easing concerns that the economy might be weakening under the pressure of higher prices and elevated interest rates.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that retail sales jumped 1% from June to July, the biggest such increase since January 2023, after having declined slightly the previous month. Auto dealers, electronics and appliance stores and grocery stores all reported strong sales gains.

The July retail sales data provided reassurance that the U.S. economy, while slowing under the pressure of high interest rates, remains resilient. It showed that America's consumers, the primary driver of economic growth, are still willing to spend.

The prospect of a still-growing economy is likely to be promoted by Vice President Kamala Harris' presi-

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dential campaign, which is preparing to roll out policies Friday to ban "price gouging" on groceries. On Wednesday, her opponent, former President Donald Trump slammed the economic record of the Biden-Harris administration, though he wildly inflated cost increases on food and monthly mortgage payments.

Other economic data released Thursday was also mostly positive, including a report on first-time applications for unemployment benefits. The figures show that businesses are mainly holding onto their workers and not increasing layoffs.

With Americans spending more, economists at Morgan Stanley have boosted their forecast for growth in the July-September quarter to a 2.3% annual rate, from an earlier estimate of 2.1%. The economy expanded at a healthy 2.8% rate in the April-June quarter.

All told, the latest data is consistent with an economy that is headed toward a "soft landing," in which the Federal Reserve raises interest rates enough to cool inflation but not so much as to cause a recession.

"The ongoing resilience of consumer spending should ease recession fears and reduce the odds markets have placed on a larger (half-point) cut" at the Fed's meeting in mid-September, said Michael Pearce, an economist at Oxford Economics. Instead, economists increasingly expect the Fed to begin cutting interest rates next month with a modest quarter-point reduction in its key rate, which affects many consumer and business loans.

Adjusted for inflation, sales rose about 0.8% last month. And excluding gas station sales, which don't reflect Americans' appetite to spend, retail purchases also rose 1%.

Consumers have been pummeled since the pandemic by high prices and elevated interest rates. Yet at the same time, average wages have also been rising, providing many households with the means to keep spending.

Inflation-adjusted wages have increased slightly from a year ago. Upper-income households have also seen their wealth increase, with stock prices and home values having jumped in the past three years. Increases in wealth can encourage more spending.

Auto sales jumped 3.6% last month, the largest increase since January 2023. It marked a rebound from the previous month, when a cyberattack involving many dealerships slowed sales.

Sales at electronics and appliances stores surged 1.6%. And they rose 0.9% at hardware stores and garden centers. Restaurant sales were up 0.3%, a sign that Americans are still willing to spend on discretionary items, such as eating out.

Financial markets had plunged earlier this month on fears surrounding the economy after the government reported that hiring was much weaker than expected in July and the unemployment rate rose for a fourth straight month.

Yet since then, economic reports have shown that layoffs are still low and that activity and hiring in services industries remains solid. Americans are also still splurging on services, such as travel, entertainment, and health care, which are not included in Thursday's retail sales report.

Still, some economists worry that much of Americans' spending now is being fueled by the increased use of credit cards. And the proportion of Americans who are falling behind on their credit card payments, while still relatively low, has been rising.

But cooling inflation may give households a needed boost. Consumer prices rose just 2.9% in July from a year earlier, the government said Wednesday. That was the smallest year-over-year inflation figure since March 2021. And core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy costs, slipped for the fourth straight month.

While Americans are still willing to spend, they are increasingly searching out bargains. On Thursday, Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, reported strong sales in the three months that ended July 31.

More Americans appear to be shopping at lower-prices outlets like Walmart. The company also boosted its sales outlook for this year and said that it hasn't seen any signs of weakness from the consumer.

Other companies are also starting to offer lower prices to entice consumers, a trend that is helping slow inflation. McDonald's said its global same-store sales fell for the first time in nearly four years in the second quarter. The company introduced a \$5 meal deal at U.S. restaurants in June; most franchisees plan to extend that deal through August.

Evan Louey-Dacus, who lives in New York City and works in corporate event planning, said that with many food prices persistently high, he has shifted his spending toward discount grocers.

"When inflation really started hitting grocery prices hard," said Louey-Dacus, 22, "my tastes just changed. Instead of getting lots of potatoes or vegetables, I started getting lots of rice. Instead of getting lots of eggs, I started getting deli meat or I started shopping more local."

Louey-Dacus has also been buying second-hand items at thrift stores and turning to open-box items, which have been previously owned. His latest purchase: A laptop in an open box at Best Buy that was discounted from around \$750 to \$600.

Arie Kotler, CEO of Arko Corp., a convenience chain based in Richmond, Virginia, said he's noticed that shoppers have cut back their spending on discretionary items like salty snacks and candy bars since May. He said he thinks people are struggling with high interest rates on credit cards, with many of them maxed out.

88-year-old victim in Boar's Head deli meat outbreak underscores risks for those most vulnerable

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

A lifelong lover of liverwurst, Sue Fleming relished the smoked sausage her husband brought home every few weeks from the grocery store deli.

Patrick Fleming always made sure to buy Boar's Head braunschweiger, the type she liked best, even though it could be costlier than other brands.

"My whole family loves braunschweiger," Sue Fleming said. "On bread with lettuce, a little mayo, a slice of pickle."

But the 88-year-old from High Ridge, Missouri, is rethinking her favorite snack after she fell ill as part of a deadly listeria food poisoning outbreak linked to a nationwide recall of 7 million pounds of Boar's Head deli meats.

The retired psychotherapist and author said she spent nine days in a hospital and 11 in a rehabilitation center last month because of what doctors confirmed was a listeria infection. She and her husband are suing Boar's Head and Schnuck Markets Inc., which sold the deli meat, according to court documents filed July 26 in a Missouri court.

As of early August, 43 people had gotten sick and three of them died — one in New Jersey, one in Illinois and one in Virginia.

"We wanted no one else to be harmed," Fleming said in an interview.

Boar's Head also faces a class action lawsuit filed Aug. 1 in federal court in New York. Rita Torres of Queens County alleges that the company improperly and deceptively marketed its products and that she would not have purchased it if the company had warned that it was contaminated with listeria.

Health officials in Maryland and New York detected listeria in unopened Boar's Head liverwurst products and later confirmed it was the same strain of bacteria that was making people sick. The company issued an initial recall on July 25 and then expanded it on July 30 to include more than 70 products, made at its plant in Jarratt, Virginia.

Fleming's illness underscores the potential severity of listeria infections in vulnerable people, particularly older people, those who are pregnant or who have weakened immune systems. Victims in the outbreak range in age from 32 to 94 — with a median age of 74, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

For most people, food poisoning caused by bacteria such as listeria is an inconvenience that may involve a few days of nausea and diarrhea. But for those most at risk, the infections can be more dangerous and even deadly, said Barbara Kowalcyk, director of the Institute for Food Safety and Nutrition Security at George Washington University.

"The pathogen can cross from your gut into your blood and cause invasive illness," Kowalcyk said.

Listeria infections cause about 1,600 illnesses each year in the U.S. and about 260 people die, according

to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Pregnant women are about 10 times more likely to contract infections caused by listeria than the general population, according to the CDC. Such infections can cause miscarriage or severe illness in babies after birth. One person who was pregnant was sickened in the outbreak, but did not lose the baby, CDC said.

Ashley Solberg of Minnesota sued Boar's Head on Aug. 7, claiming she "nearly lost her unborn child," according to documents filed in federal court. She said she was 35 weeks pregnant with her second child in May when she bought deli meat produced by Boar's Head and sold at a Publix market in Hollywood, Florida. After returning to Minnesota, Solberg became severely ill with a listeria infection that was confirmed to match the outbreak strain. She was hospitalized for six days and received antibiotics for more than a week, the lawsuit said.

In Missouri, Fleming's doctors worried about sepsis, a dangerous blood infection, or whether the bacteria had spread to her heart or her brain. As it was, the infection worsened Fleming's previous health problems, including severe spinal arthritis. She was ill for weeks and too weak to walk, her husband said.

"I became very scared on Sue's behalf and afraid of losing her," he said.

Listeria is also dangerous for older people because they may eat less diverse diets and keep foods for longer periods of time. Unlike other germs, the bacteria survive and even grow during refrigeration, Kowalczyk said. Past listeria outbreaks involving cantaloupe, for instance, harmed a larger proportion of older people who bought pre-cut cantaloupe instead of whole melon.

It can take days or weeks for symptoms of a listeria infection to appear, making it hard to pin down what caused it. Because all listeria infections must be reported, county health officials called Fleming and asked her to fill out a detailed questionnaire that included "dozens and dozens" of foods, Patrick Fleming said.

The couple narrowed down possible culprits to pre-made tuna salad and chicken salad, pepperjack cheese — and the braunschweiger.

Boar's Head urges consumers to throw away the recalled products or return them to the store for a refund. By now, deli meats affected by the Boar's Head recall should be off the shelves of local stores, Kowalczyk said. Consumers should feel free to ask deli managers whether they've complied with the recall and sanitized deli slicers.

Heating deli meat to steaming, a temperature of about 165 degrees Fahrenheit, can kill the bacteria.

But if there's any question, "throw it out," Kowalczyk said. "Is throwing away a few dollars' worth of deli meats worth preventing a serious illness?"

Ukraine gambled on an incursion deep into Russian territory. The bold move changed the battlefield

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's stunning incursion into Russia's Kursk border region was a bold gamble for the country's military commanders, who committed their limited resources to a risky assault on a nuclear-armed enemy with no assurance of success.

After the first signs of progress, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy broke his silence and spelled out Kyiv's daily advances to his war-weary public. By Wednesday, Ukrainian officials said they controlled 1,000 square kilometers (386 square miles) of enemy territory, including at least 74 settlements and hundreds of Russian prisoners of war.

But a week after it began, the overall aim of the daring operation is still unclear: Will Ukraine dig in and keep the conquered territory, advance further into Russian territory or pull back?

What is clear is that the incursion has changed the battlefield. The shock of Ukraine's thunder run revealed chinks in the armor of its powerful adversary. The attack also risked aggravating Ukraine's own weaknesses by extending the front line and committing new troops at a time when military leaders are short on manpower.

To conduct the Kursk operation, Kyiv deployed battalions drawn from multiple brigades, some of which were pulled from the hottest parts of the front line, where Russia's advance has continued unabated. So

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far, Moscow's overall strategic advantage is intact.

"The stretching of the front line for us is also stretching the front line for the enemy," said the commander of the 14th Regiment of Unmanned Aviation Systems, who participated in the opening stage of the offensive. "Only we have prepared for this operation in detail. The Russians were not prepared for this operation at all."

He spoke on condition of anonymity, using only the call sign Charlie, in keeping with the rules of the Ukrainian military.

As the offensive enters its second week, Ukrainian forces are pushing out in several directions from the Russian town of Sudzha.

Images from the battlefield showing columns of destroyed Russian weaponry are reminiscent of Ukraine's successful counteroffensives in 2022 in Kherson and Kharkiv. The photos are also a boon to national morale that deflated after the failed 2023 summer counteroffensive and months of recent territorial losses in the east.

But some analysts are reserving judgment on whether the Kursk region is the right theater to launch an offensive. Estimates of the number of troops operating there range from 5,000 to 12,000.

Within a week, Ukraine claimed to have captured almost as much Russian land in Kursk as Russian forces took in Ukraine in the last seven months, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank.

Russian authorities acknowledged the Ukrainian gains but described them as smaller. Even so, they have evacuated about 132,000 people.

Hundreds of Russian prisoners were blindfolded and ferried away in trucks in the opening moments of the lightning advance. They could be used in future prisoner swaps to free thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians in captivity.

On Wednesday, Ukrainian human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said the fighting in Kursk led his Russian counterpart, Tatyana Moskalkova, to initiate a conversation about prisoner swaps, the first time such a request has come from Moscow.

Politically, the incursion turned the tables on Russia and reset the terms of a conflict in which Ukraine increasingly seemed doomed to accept unfavorable cease-fire terms. The strike was also a powerful example of Ukrainian determination and a message to Western allies that have dithered on allowing donated weapons to be used for deeper strikes inside Russian territory.

The assault has shown that the fear of crossing Russian "red lines" that could lead to nuclear escalation "is a myth, and that Ukraine's battle-hardened military remains a formidable force," wrote Taras Kuzio, a professor of political science at the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

Presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak suggested that the incursion may also strengthen Kyiv's hand in future negotiations with Russia. Occupying part of Russian territory ahead of any cease-fire talks may give Ukraine some leverage.

Though the fighting continues, the territory currently under Ukrainian control is, by itself, of little economic or strategic value.

"There is some important gas infrastructure in the area, but its usefulness is likely to be limited other than as a minor bargaining chip. Ukrainians have also cut a railway line running from Lgov to Belgorod," said Pasi Paroinen of the Black Bird Group, a Finland-based open-source intelligence agency that monitors the war.

Major military bases are far from the current area of operations, and Ukrainian advances are expected to slow as Russia sends in more forces.

Ukrainian officials have said they do not intend to occupy Kursk, but they may seek to create a buffer zone to protect settlements in the bordering Sumy region from relentless Russian artillery attacks and to block supply lines to the northeast.

Forcing Russia to deploy reserves intended for other parts of the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line was the minimum aim, said Charlie, the commander. But so far, Moscow's focus in the Donetsk region has not changed.

Some Ukrainian troops were pulled from those very lines, where manpower shortages were a key factor that contributed to territorial losses this year.

In the strategically significant Pokrovsk area, which is the main thrust of Russia's offensive effort, soldiers have seen few improvements since the Kursk incursion.

"Nothing has changed," said a soldier known by the call sign Kyianyn, who also spoke on condition of anonymity due to military protocol. "If anything, I see the increase in Russian offensive actions."

But the Kursk operation "showed they can't defend their own territory," he said. "All of us are inspired here. Many of our soldiers wanted to go to Kursk and push them straight to the Kremlin."

Targeting Russia's Northern Grouping of Forces, which feeds the Kharkiv front, is a key goal, said Konstantin Mashovets, a Ukrainian military expert. Some Russian units have reportedly moved from Vovchansk in Kharkiv.

In the south, a small number of Russian units were redeployed from the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, said Dmytro Lykhovii, the spokesman of the Tavria operational group. But that hasn't affected Russian attacks.

"We even see an increase in (Russian) activity," Lykhovii said.

The Kursk operation has also served to draw attention away from the eastern front, where tens of thousands of Ukrainians have been killed and wounded, and where the Ukrainian military has struggled to repair cracks in its defenses.

Most territorial losses in June and July were recorded in the Pokrovsk area, which is near a logistics hub, with fighting intensifying near the towns of Toretsk and Chasiv Yar.

Russian forces dialed up those attacks to capitalize on troop fatigue and shortages. On many occasions, the losses were the result of poorly timed troop rotations and blunders that cast doubt about the overall strategy of the Ukrainian military's General Staff.

"There is no way Russia will stop its actions in the parts of the front line where they are tactically succeeding," Mashovets said. "There, they will push and squeeze until their last man is standing, no matter what." But the push into Kursk might force the Kremlin to pull reserves "from the parts of the front line that are of secondary importance."

Taliban have deliberately deprived 1.4 million Afghan girls of schooling through bans, says UNESCO

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Taliban have deliberately deprived 1.4 million Afghan girls of schooling through bans, a United Nations agency said Thursday. Afghanistan is the only country in the world that bans female secondary and higher education.

The Taliban, who took power in 2021, barred education for girls above sixth grade because they said it didn't comply with their interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law. They didn't stop it for boys and show no sign of taking the steps needed to reopen classrooms and campuses for girls and women.

UNESCO said at least 1.4 million girls have been deliberately denied access to secondary education since the takeover, an increase of 300,000 since its previous count in April 2023, with more girls reaching the age limit of 12 every year.

"If we add the girls who were already out of school before the bans were introduced, there are now almost 2.5 million girls in the country deprived of their right to education, representing 80% of Afghan school-age girls," UNESCO said.

The Taliban did not respond to requests for comment.

Access to primary education has also fallen since the Taliban took power in Aug. 2021, with 1.1 million fewer girls and boys attending school, according to UNESCO data.

The U.N. agency warned that authorities have "almost wiped out" two decades of steady progress for education in Afghanistan. "The future of an entire generation is now in jeopardy," it added.

It said Afghanistan had 5.7 million girls and boys in primary school in 2022, compared with 6.8 million in 2019. The enrollment drop was the result of the Taliban decision to bar female teachers from teaching boys, UNESCO said, but could also be explained by a lack of parental incentive to send their children to school in an increasingly tough economic environment.

“UNESCO is alarmed by the harmful consequences of this increasingly massive drop-out rate, which could lead to a rise in child labor and early marriage,” it said.

The Taliban celebrated three years of rule Wednesday at Bagram Air Base, but there was no mention of the country’s hardships, nor promises to help the struggling population.

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

How a small group of nuns in rural Kansas vex big companies with their investment activism

By TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

ATCHISON, Kansas (AP) — Among corporate America’s most persistent shareholder activists are 80 nuns in a monastery outside Kansas City.

Nestled amid rolling farmland, the Benedictine sisters of Mount St. Scholastica have taken on the likes of Google, Target and Citigroup — calling on major companies to do everything from AI oversight to measuring pesticides to respecting the rights of Indigenous people.

“Some of these companies, they just really hate us,” said Sister Barbara McCracken, who leads the nuns’ corporate responsibility program. “Because we’re small, we’re just like a little fly in the ointment trying to irritate them.”

At a time when activist investing has become politically polarized, these nuns are no strangers to making a statement. Recently they went viral for denouncing the commencement speech of Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker at the nearby college they cofounded.

When Butker suggested the women graduates of Benedictine College would most cherish their roles as wives and mothers, the nuns — who are noticeably neither wives nor mothers — expressed concern with “the assertion that being a homemaker is the highest calling for a woman.”

After all, women’s education has been a mainstay of their community, which founded dozens of schools. Many of the sisters have doctorates. Most have worked professional jobs — their ranks include a physician, a canon lawyer and a concert violinist — and they have always shared what they earned.

They invest what little they have in corporations that match their religious ideals, but also keep a bit in some that don’t, so they can push those companies to change policies they view as harmful.

This past spring and summer, when many companies gathered for annual meetings with their shareholders, the nuns proposed a string of resolutions based on stock they own, some in amounts as little as \$2,000.

The sisters asked Chevron to assess its human rights policies, and for Amazon to publish its lobbying expenditures. They urged Netflix to implement a more detailed code of ethics to ensure non-discrimination and diversity on its board. They proposed that several pharmaceutical companies reconsider patent practices that could hike drug prices.

Up until the 1990s, the nuns had few investments. That changed as they began to set aside money to care for elderly sisters as the community aged.

“We decided it was really important to do it in a responsible way,” said Sister Rose Marie Stallbaumer, who was the community’s treasurer for years. “We wanted to be sure that we weren’t just collecting money to help ourselves at the detriment of others.”

Faith-based shareholder activism is often traced to the early 1970s, when religious groups put forth resolutions for American companies to withdraw from South Africa over apartheid.

In 2004, the Mount St. Scholastica sisters joined the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment, an umbrella group run by Sister Susan Mika, a nun based at a Texas monastery who has been working

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in the field since the 1980s.

The Benedictine Coalition works closely with the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, which acts as a clearinghouse for shareholder resolutions, coordinating with faith-based groups – including dozens of Catholic orders – to leverage assets and file on social justice-oriented topics.

The Benedictines have played a key role at ICCR for years, said Tim Smith, a senior policy advisor for the center. It can be discouraging work, where the needle only moves slightly each year, but he said the sisters “have the endurance of long-distance runners.”

The resolutions rarely pass, and even if they do, they’re usually non-binding. But they’re still an educational tool and a means to raise awareness inside a corporation. The Benedictine sisters have watched over the years as support for some of their resolutions has gone from low single digits to 30% or even a majority.

Gradually environmental causes and human rights concerns have swayed some shareholders, even as a growing backlash foments against investments involving ESG (environmental, social and governance concerns).

“We don’t give up,” Mika said. “We just keep persevering and raising the issues.”

It’s a form of protest, which comes naturally to McCracken, the longtime peace activist who submits the Kansas nuns’ resolutions.

“There’s not a protest she wouldn’t go to,” said Sister Anne Shepard, who rattled off McCracken’s past involving anti-war, anti-racism, union-backing demonstrations.

McCracken, who entered the Benedictine community in 1961 and later spent a decade at a Catholic Worker house, calls herself the “odd extrovert” in monastic life, who “hates to miss a party.”

She and her sisters live by the rhythms of ancient monasticism, praying and chanting three times a day in their chapel, much as their order has done for 1,500 years.

They follow the Benedictine motto to “pray and work,” and together the sisters pool their salaries, retirement funds, inheritances and donations to support their ministries and investments.

At the core of much of what they do is the belief that the wealthy have too much, the poor have too little, and more should be shared for the benefit of everyone. Or as they say in Catholic parlance, for the common good.

“To me, it’s a continuation of Catholic social teaching,” McCracken said of their activist investing.

Catholic social teaching defies tidy American political categories. It’s against abortion and the death penalty, for the poor and the immigrant. Pope Francis has renewed his church’s call to care for the Earth through his landmark environmental writings.

The Mount St. Scholastica sisters have long had an ecological focus: Their college’s alumni include Wangari Maathai, the late Kenyan environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

One of their top concerns these days is climate change, a frequent target of their shareholder resolutions. To do their part, they use their 53 acres of land for compost, solar panels, community gardens and 18 beehives that produced 800 pounds of honey last year.

Their activism has often led to criticisms that they’re too liberal, that they’re all Democrats.

One reason for that perception is their community is “not at the forefront of opposition to abortion,” McCracken said, though she’s clear they follow church teaching on the matter. But with so many Catholic groups leading the anti-abortion movement, they find other causes to champion.

The Butker dust-up also prompted plenty of angry calls and emails to the monastery. And it particularly stung because the sisters are devoted Chiefs fans, known to file into chapel decked out in red and gold on game day.

Sister Mary Elizabeth Schweiger, the monastery’s prioress, wrote the statement’s first draft.

“We reject a narrow definition of what it means to be Catholic,” it read, in response to Butker’s denigration of “the tyranny of diversity, equity and inclusion.”

“It came from a very basic understanding of who we are and the values that we hold true,” Schweiger said later in her office. “We just thought that voice had to be heard because we believe very much in being inclusive.”

For being bold about what they believe, and wading into controversial subjects, they have both lost and gained supporters for decades.

"Living according to the gospel ... it's going to intersect with politics and economics both," McCracken said. "It's just the nature of being an active citizen."

At nearly 85, McCracken can't be as active as she once was. But shareholder activism provides her with "a sit-down job when you can't go to the streets."

The sisters of Mount St. Scholastica don't retire, not really.

"We don't use that word," McCracken said. "If we still have enough wits about us, we just keep going, you know?"

As Gaza death toll passes 40,000, corpses are buried in yards, streets, tiered graves

By JULIA FRANKEL and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Tiers of graves are stacked deep underground in a bloated Gaza cemetery, where Sa'di Baraka spends his days hacking at the earth, making room for more dead.

"Sometimes we make graves on top of graves," he said.

Baraka and his solemn corps of volunteer gravediggers in the Deir al-Balah cemetery start at sunrise, digging new trenches or reopening existing ones. The dead can sometimes come from kilometers (miles) away, stretches of Gaza where burial grounds are destroyed or unreachable.

The cemetery is 70 years old. A quarter of its graves are new.

The death toll in Gaza since the beginning of the 10-month-old Israel-Hamas war has passed 40,000, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The count does not distinguish civilians from militants.

The small, densely populated strip of land is now packed with bodies.

They fill morgues and overflow cemeteries. Families, fleeing repeatedly to escape offensives, bury their dead wherever possible: in backyards and parking lots, beneath staircases and along roadsides, according to witness accounts and video footage. Others lie under rubble, their families unsure they will ever be counted.

"One large cemetery"

A steady drumbeat of death since October has claimed nearly 2% of Gaza's prewar population. Health officials and civil defense workers say the true toll could be thousands more, including bodies under rubble that the United Nations says weighs 40 million tons.

"It seems," Palestinian author Yousri Alghoul wrote for the Institute for Palestine Studies, "that Gaza's fate is to become one large cemetery, with its streets, parks, and homes, where the living are merely dead awaiting their turn."

Israel began striking Gaza after Hamas-led militants stormed across the Israeli border on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage. Israel seeks Hamas' destruction and claims it confines its attacks to militants. It blames Hamas for civilian deaths, saying the militants operate from residential neighborhoods laced with tunnels. The fighting has killed 329 Israeli soldiers.

Even in death, Palestinians have been displaced by Israel's offensives.

Palestinians move corpses, shielding them from the path of war. Israel's military has dug up, plowed over and bombed more than 20 cemeteries, according to satellite imagery analyzed by investigative outlet Bellingcat. Troops have taken scores of bodies into Israel, searching for hostages. Trucked back to Gaza, the bodies are often decomposed and unidentifiable, buried quickly in a mass grave.

Israel's military told The Associated Press that it is attempting to rescue hostage bodies where intelligence indicates they may be located. It said bodies determined not to be hostages are returned "with dignity and respect."

Haneen Salem, a photographer and writer from northern Gaza, has lost over 270 extended family mem-

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bers in bombardments and shelling. Salem said between 15 and 20 of them have been disinterred — some after troops destroyed cemeteries and others moved by relatives out of fear Israeli forces would destroy their graves.

"I don't know how to explain what it feels like to see the bodies of my loved ones lying on the ground, scattered, a piece of flesh here and bone there," she said. "After the war, if we remain alive, we will dig a new grave and spread roses and water over it for their good souls."

Honoring the dead

In peacetime, Gaza funerals were large family affairs.

The corpse would be washed and wrapped in a shroud, according to Islamic tradition. After prayers over the body at a mosque, a procession would take it to the graveyard, where it would be laid on its right side facing east, toward Mecca.

The rituals are the most basic way to honor the dead, said Hassan Fares. "This does not exist in Gaza."

Twenty-five members of Fares' family were killed by an airstrike on Oct. 13 in northern Gaza. Without gravediggers available, Fares dug three ditches in a cemetery, burying four cousins, his aunt and his uncle. Survivors whispered quick prayers over the distant hum of warplanes.

Those who died early in the war might have been the lucky ones, Fares said. They had funerals, even if brief.

Nawaf al-Zurie, a morgue worker at Deir al-Balah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, is on the front lines of the rush of dead. Workers cover the damaged bodies in plastic to avoid bloodstains on white shrouds.

"We wipe the blood off the face so it's in a suitable state for his loved ones to bid him farewell," he said.

Following Israeli troop withdrawals, dozens of bodies are left on streets. With fuel scarce, workers collecting the dead fill trucks with corpses, strapping some on top to save gas, said civil defense official Mohammed el-Mougher.

Headstones are rare; some graves are marked with chunks of rubble.

When a corpse remains unidentified, workers place a plastic placard at the grave, bearing the burial date, identification number and where the body was found.

Searching for lost loved ones

The uncertain fate of relatives' bodies haunts families.

Mousa Jomaa, an orthopedist who lives in al-Ram in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has watched from afar as the war claimed 21 relatives in Gaza.

Jomaa's cousin Mohammed was killed in an Israeli airstrike early in the war while operating an ambulance in southern Gaza and was buried in Rafah, away from the family's home in central Gaza. The cemetery was damaged in a later offensive. There's no sign of Mohammed's body, Jomaa said.

A strike in December then destroyed Jomaa's uncle's house, killing his aunt and her children, 8-year-old Mira and 10-year-old Omar. Jomaa's uncle, Dr. Hani Jomaa, rushed home to search the rubble. Before he could find Mira's body, a strike killed him too.

Because her body has not been recovered, Mira has not been counted among the dead, said Jomaa, who showed a photo of the young girl standing beside her brother, with a rainbow handbag matching her barrette.

In July, an Israeli tank killed two more cousins, Mohammed and Baha. Baha's body was torn apart, and the shelling made it too dangerous to collect the remains for weeks.

Jomaa said that come the end of the war, he plans to visit Gaza to search for Mira's remains.

Smashed graves and cemeteries off-limits

Israeli evacuation orders cover much of Gaza, leaving some of the largest cemeteries off-limits.

Jake Godin, a Bellingcat researcher, has used satellite imagery to document destruction to more than 20 cemeteries. Sandy, bulldozed expanses appear where some cemeteries once stood. Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan graveyard is cratered. In Gaza's Eastern Cemetery, roads carved by heavy vehicles bury headstones under tire tracks, he said.

"Anywhere the (Israeli military) is active, they bulldoze and destroy the ground without regard to cem-

eteries," Godin said.

The military told the AP it does not have a policy of destroying graves. "The unfortunate reality of ground warfare in condensed civilian areas" can result in harm to cemeteries, it said, adding it found Hamas tunnels underneath a cemetery east of the southern city of Khan Younis.

Mahmoud Alkrunz, a student in Turkey, said his father, mother, two brothers, sister and three of his siblings' children were buried in the Bureij refugee camp's cemetery after Israel bombed their home.

When Israel withdrew from Bureij in January, the graves were found unearthed. Alkrunz fainted when his uncle delivered the news.

"We don't know what has happened to the bodies," he said.

Democrats trust Harris slightly more than Biden on climate change, an AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Democratic National Convention approaches, a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that Democrats have slightly higher trust in Vice President Kamala Harris' ability to address the issue of climate change than President Joe Biden.

The survey found that 85% of Democrats have "a lot" or "some" trust in Harris to address climate change, while about three-quarters say the same about Biden. That's more true of Democrats under 45: about three-quarters of this group say they have "a lot" or "some" trust in Harris to handle climate issues, compared to about 6 in 10 who say that about Biden. Older Democrats are more likely than younger ones to trust either Biden or Harris.

The finding is an early indication that Democrats may be making distinct evaluations of Harris when it comes to key issues, rather than seeing her as interchangeable with Biden on policy, including issues like climate change where many Democrats are anxious and want to see government action. It also reflects the broader satisfaction Democrats have with Harris as their party's standard-bearer, and gives her an opportunity to appeal to younger Democrats, who are particularly likely to be concerned about climate change. Harris faces Republican nominee Donald Trump in the November election.

Aaron Hash, a 43-year-old Democrat and union worker, said he listened to some of Harris' speeches after Biden stepped down and thought, "those are the right words. I'd like to see actions to follow." He believes that the Democratic Party is "still a little bit on the back foot" compared to the Republican Party when it comes to fighting for key causes, including climate change, abortion access and gun control.

But Harris, he thinks, could change that.

"I feel hopeful that we'll see some meaningful protections put back into place," said Hash, who works in chemical manufacturing in Washington state. "I would like to see Democrats hopefully maintain power in the (executive branch) and then take back Congress and pass some protections that were previously protected by Chevron," referring to the Supreme Court's recent decision that reduced the power of agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency.

The problem of climate change is broadly recognized by Democrats. The AP-NORC poll found that 9 in 10 Democrats say climate change is happening, and most say the primary cause is human activities. About 7 in 10 Democrats say they have become more concerned about climate change over the past year. And they want to see government action on the issue: About 8 in 10 Democrats say the federal government is doing too little to reduce climate change, compared to about 6 in 10 independents and about 3 in 10 Republicans.

Younger Democrats are especially likely to feel the emotional weight of climate change. About 6 in 10 Democrats under 45 say "anxious" describes their emotions extremely or very well when they contemplate climate change, compared to about one-third of older Democrats. Younger Democrats are also less likely to say they are feeling motivated or hopeful about climate change. About 7 in 10 younger Democrats say "hopeful" describes their emotions as either "not very" or "not at all" well, compared to 45% of older

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Democrats.

Alex Campbell, a 29-year-old Democrat in Philadelphia, said there is “a lot of existential dread” among Millennials and Gen Z about what the world will look like in 50 years. Campbell gives Biden credit for passing the Inflation Reduction Act, and he thinks Harris would expand on those efforts. He hopes that by having a younger Democrat at the top of the ticket, she might care more about the importance of addressing climate change immediately.

But Campbell is pessimistic that, even if elected, Harris could make significant progress on climate change without Democratic control of Congress. Like other Democrats, Campbell worries about the role of the Supreme Court in further eroding environmental protections.

“I would probably have more hope with Harris,” Campbell said. “Because she is younger, I think she will be more aggressive in her policy proposals. But at the end of the day, if there’s no House and Senate that are going to pass these bills, it doesn’t really matter.”

About half of Americans say the outcome of the presidential election in November will be extremely or very important for the issue of climate change — and the issue of climate change is especially resonant for Democrats. About three-quarters of Democrats say the result of the 2024 election will matter for climate change, compared to 44% of independents and about 2 in 10 Republicans. Older Democrats are slightly more likely than younger ones to say this election is extremely or very important for climate change.

Nikolas Ostergard, a 21-year-old construction worker in Utah, said he thinks Harris is a stronger communicator than Biden is, and he believes that will allow her to make “an even better impact” on issues that matter to Democrats, including climate change. As a Democrat who will participate in his first presidential election in November, Ostergard is still waiting to hear Harris articulate her own environmental policy plans. He is hopeful that she “will listen more” to the public than Biden did.

“At first, I thought it wasn’t going to be much better with (Harris) because she was Biden’s vice president. But, it does seem like she is taking different approaches, so my hope has gone up,” Ostergard said. “My hope for Harris’ policies is better than it was for Biden’s. And definitely way over my hope for Trump’s policies.”

The poll of 1,143 adults was conducted July 25-29, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Today in History: August 16, American music loses two legends

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 16, the 229th day of 2024. There are 137 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 16, 1977, Elvis Presley died at his Graceland estate in Memphis, Tennessee at the age of 42; forty-one years later, in 2018, singer Aretha Franklin, known as the “Queen of Soul,” died in Detroit at the age of 76.

Also on this date:

In 1777, American forces won the Battle of Bennington in what was considered a turning point of the Revolutionary War.

In 1812, Detroit fell to British and Native American forces in the War of 1812.

In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln issued Proclamation 86, which prohibited the states of the Union from engaging in commercial trade with states that were in rebellion — i.e., the Confederacy.

In 1896, gold was discovered in Canada’s Yukon Territory, sparking the “Klondike Fever” that would draw tens of thousands to the region in search of fortune.

In 1948, baseball legend Babe Ruth died in New York at age 53.

In 1954, the first issue of “Sports Illustrated” was released.

In 1962, the Beatles fired their original drummer, Pete Best, replacing him with Ringo Starr.

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In 1978, James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., told a Capitol Hill hearing he did not commit the crime, saying he'd been set up by a mysterious man called "Raoul."

In 1987, people worldwide began a two-day celebration of the "Harmonic Convergence," which heralded what believers called the start of a new, purer age of humankind.

In 2014, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, where police and protesters repeatedly clashed in the week since a Black 18-year-old, Michael Brown, was shot to death by a white police officer.

In 2020, lightning sparked the August Complex wildfire in California. More than 1,600 square miles—greater than the size of Rhode Island—would burn over the following three months.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Julie Newmar is 91. Film director Bruce Beresford is 84. Actor Bob Balaban is 79. Ballerina Suzanne Farrell is 79. Actor Lesley Ann Warren is 78. Actor Reginald VelJohnson is 72. Singer/author/TV personality Kathie Lee Gifford is 71. Singer J.T. Taylor (Kool and the Gang) is 71. Movie director James Cameron is 70. Singer/actor Madonna is 66. Actor Angela Bassett is 66. Actor Timothy Hutton is 64. Actor Steve Carell (kuh-REHL') is 62. Country musician Emily Strayer (The Chicks) is 52. Actor/filmmaker Taika Waititi is 49. Singer Vanessa Carlton is 44. Country singer Dan Smyers (Dan & Shay) is 37. Actor Rumer Willis is 36. U.S. Olympic gold medal swimmer Caeleb Dressel is 28. Tennis player Jannik Sinner is 23.