

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 1 of 72

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 Headline News](#)
- [3- Dairy Queen Ad](#)
- [4- West Nile Virus Update -SD](#)
- [5- Obit: Arnold Bahr](#)
- [6- Facebook quote gets a spot on the walls](#)
- [7- SD News Watch: Armour shop owner jailed over nuisance property ruling](#)
- [12- Lyman County Fatal Motorcycle Crash](#)
- [13- Name Released in Beadle County Fatal Motorcycle Crash](#)
- [14- Ways to Save Money at the State Fair](#)
- [15- South Dakota Seal of Biliteracy available to high school graduates](#)
- [16- Changes Coming to National Weather Service Cold Season Products and Services](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: At long last, Lewis and Clark water arrives for Madison](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Thune calls Trump's across-the-board tariff strategy 'a recipe for increased inflation'](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: It's Thune's job to say it, but financial worry didn't start with Biden](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: U.S. House Dems ask OSHA to respond to reports that state agencies tipped off employers](#)
- [22- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [30- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Thursday, Aug. 22

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, oriental blend vegetables, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelet

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes. Boys golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

## Friday, Aug. 23

Senior Menu: BBQ riblet on bun, scalloped potatoes, tomato spoon salad, watermelon, cookie.

School Breakfast: Pancake on a stick.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, green beans.

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

## It's Thursday

*Heavenly Father,*

We come again to thank You for Your amazing grace, and for allowing us to make it through the night and wake up to another beautiful sunrise.

Please guide our footsteps and go before us to make all crooked paths straight. Shield us from the fiery darts of the enemy so we won't fall into temptation.

We ask forgiveness for all of our sins, known and unknown. We thank You for Your many blessings, miraculous healings, and divine protection, In the name of Jesus, Amen.

God's Spoken  
Word Ministries

## Saturday, Aug. 24

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

## Sunday, Aug. 25

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 2 of 72

# 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.**

## Jobs Data Revision

The US government reduced the estimated number of annual jobs added by 818,000 yesterday. The new figure, still preliminary, suggests 2.1 million jobs were added from April 2023 to March 2024, a 28% revision from the 2.9 million previously reported.

Annual revisions have recently averaged about 173,000 jobs added or subtracted and come as the Bureau of Labor Statistics reconciles preliminary survey data with later-to-come state unemployment records. This year's adjustment is by far the largest over the past decade; the next largest was for the year ending in March 2019, with job growth revised down by 489,000. Hospitality, retail, and professional services saw the largest downward revision yesterday, though almost all sectors saw drops.

The new data suggest job growth began to cool earlier than previously believed. They also reinforce expectations the Federal Reserve will lower interest rates next month. Finalized figures are expected in February.

## A Sea of Magma on the Moon

Soil tests of the moon's south pole conducted by India's trailblazing Chandrayaan-3 mission last August confirmed theories the moon was once covered in magma, according to new research yesterday. The study builds on mineral tests from NASA's Apollo era, where similar tests indicated the presence of magma in the crust at the moon's equatorial regions.

The lunar magma ocean theory builds on the hypothesis a Mars-sized planet collided with Earth 4.5 billion years ago, releasing a massive debris field, which coalesced into a magma-covered moon. As denser minerals sank in the roughly 100-mile ocean, lighter so-called anorthosites rose to the surface. Chandrayaan's Pragyan rover identified a variety of anorthosites at the moon's south pole as it traversed more than 300 feet over two weeks not far from the moon's largest crater, the South Pole-Aitken Basin.

Chandrayaan-3 became the first rover to successfully land at the moon's south pole. India is one of four countries to have landed a spacecraft on the moon, alongside China, Russia, and the US.

## Chick-Fil-A Spreads Its Wings

Chick-fil-A is planning to launch its own streaming service this year, a report from Deadline revealed yesterday.

The fast-food company's platform would be marketed as family-friendly, with an emphasis on reality television. The company has reportedly placed a 10-episode order for a game show from the companies behind NBC's "The Wall" and 2015 Oscar-winning film "Spotlight." Budgets for other reality TV programs are estimated at \$400K per half-hour. The company is also reportedly looking to develop scripted and animated projects. The news comes after Chick-fil-A posted a job listing last year for an entertainment producer.

If Chick-fil-A pursues the project, it would follow other crossovers into media: Lyft last year launched a gameshow on its YouTube channel and Airbnb produced a 2019 documentary.

Chick-fil-A operates over 3,000 restaurants in the US, reportedly bringing in over \$21B in revenue last year. The company leads the fast-food chicken industry in systemwide sales.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Al Attles, Basketball Hall of Famer who was one of the first Black head coaches in the NBA, dies at 87. Fitness guru Richard Simmons' July death revealed to have been accidental due to complications from "recent falls and heart diseases".

U2 announces "V-U2," an immersive concert film of the band's recent residency at the Sphere in Las Vegas; it is the first film shot with the Sphere's "Big Sky" high-resolution camera.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 3 of 72

Social media influencer Andrew Tate's home in Romania raided amid allegations of human trafficking and money laundering; Tate is already awaiting trial on separate rape and human trafficking charges.

## Science & Technology

First direct imaging of valence shell electrons—the outermost electrons circling an atom, responsible for most chemical bonding—made; approach may lead to new pharmaceutical products and consumer goods.

Brazil begins construction on Latin America's first maximum-security bio lab; facility will study some of the world's most dangerous pathogens native to the region.

Researchers discover new way the body clears dead cells from tissue; study identifies how hair follicle stem cells sense and identify which nearby cells are dying.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.4%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq +0.6%) after summary from Federal Reserve's policy meeting last month spurs hope for September rate cut.

Ford Motor to cancel three-row electric SUV, expects to record roughly \$1.9B in related expenses; also delays electric version of its bestselling F-150 pickup.

Japanese tobacco company JT Group, which also owns Camel outside the US, to buy Vector Group for \$2.4B.

Federal judge strikes down Federal Trade Commission rule banning most US employers from using noncompete clauses, concludes agency exceeded its authority; roughly 30 million workers have signed noncompete agreements.

## Politics & World Affairs

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (D) headlines night three of the Democratic National Convention with Vice President Kamala Harris scheduled to speak tonight;

see updates.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. reportedly to drop independent presidential campaign, endorse former President Donald Trump in speech tomorrow.

Italian rescuers retrieve five bodies from wreckage of Sicily superyacht.

Houthi attack leaves Greek-flagged ship ablaze and drifting in the Red Sea after being hit by four projectiles, per UK military.

Telecom company Lingo that transmitted AI deepfake of former President Joe Biden's voice to New Hampshire voters earlier this year to pay \$1M in settlement with Federal Communications Commission.

# NOW HIRING

Blizzard® Wizzards & Smile Makers

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**Looking for reliable, energetic people with smiling faces who love people and Free Food! This is a great job for anyone - high school and college students, adults, moms whose kids are going back to school.**  
**We'll work around your schedule!**  
**Stop in for an application.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 4 of 72

## West Nile Virus Update -SD

SD WNV (as of August 21):

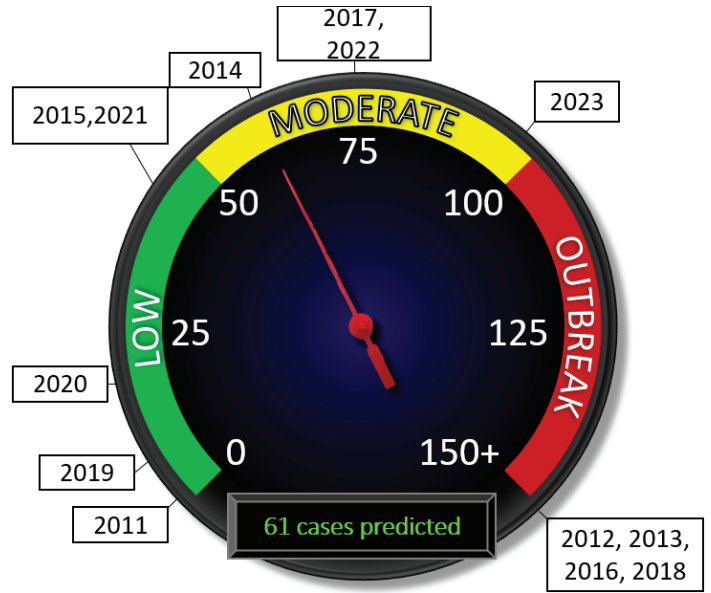
9 human cases (Beadle, Davison, Gregory, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Potter, Walworth, Ziebach )

3 human viremic blood donors (Brule, Pennington, Sanborn)

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

US WNV (as of August 20): 216 cases (AR, AZ, CA, CT, FL, GA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OK, PA, SD, TN, TX, VA, WI)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of August 21)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending August 17, 2024 (MMWR Week 33)

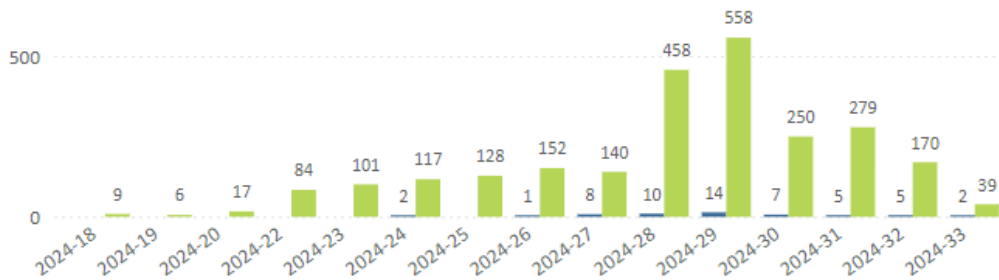
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 76

Total mosquito pools tested: 2,562

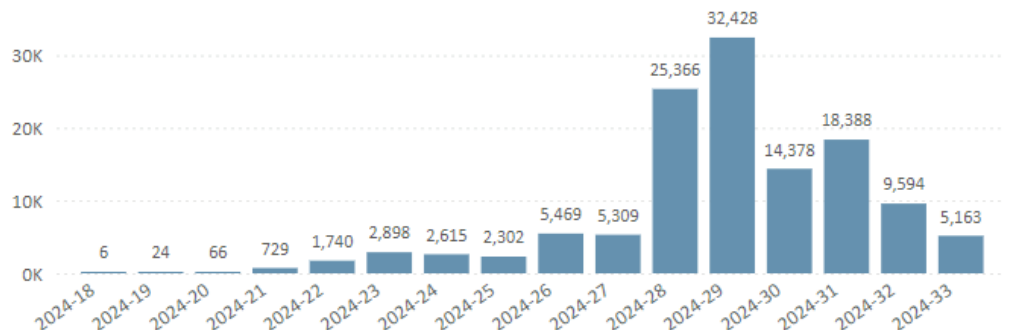
% positivity: 2.11%

Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative

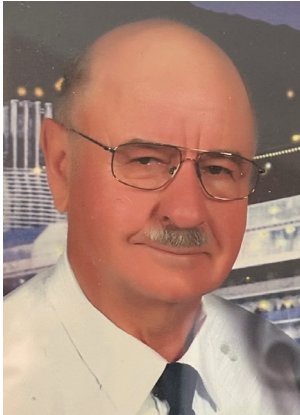


Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week





## The Life of Arnold Bahr



Services for Arnold Bahr, 81, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, August 23rd at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ferney. Rev. Larry Johnson will officiate. Burial will follow in St. Paul's Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the church for two hours prior to services on Friday.

Arnie passed away August 19, 2024 at Prairie Heights Healthcare in Aberdeen.

Arnold Albert Bahr was born on February 11, 1943 at home near Groton to Albert R. and Elda C. (Sombke) Bahr. He was baptized and confirmed at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ferney. Arnie attended and graduated from Groton High School in 1961. Following graduation, Arnie farmed on the family homestead; a homestead that has been in the family before South Dakota became a state. Arnold was the clerk for the Hanson Township for many years. He had many interests and hobbies, including hunting, bowling, snowmobiling and dancing. Arnie was also instrumental in building Olive Grove Golf Course. On March 6, 2009, he was

united in marriage with Beverly A. (Lembke) Brehmer and together they enjoyed traveling.

Arnold was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ferney. He was active in many areas of the church, including building the present church building.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Beverly, his brothers-in-law, James Dobberpuhl of Aberdeen, Walter Lembke of West Bend, WI, a sister-in-law, Eleanor Janichek of Hartford, WI and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Preceding him in death were his parents, his sister Belva Dobberpuhl and brother, Wallace Bahr.

Honorary Casketbearers will be nephews of Arnold and Beverly.

Casketbearers will be Dan Schinkel, Tom Paepke, Cody Lindgren, Craig Dunker, Steve Dunker and Charlie Dirks.

## Facebook quote gets a spot on the walls

What started as a Facebook share among the Fellowship of Christian Students group page, turned quickly into having the quote painted in the Groton Elementary and Middle School Hallways before the school year began. A few adult leaders worked with the school administrators for approval, supplies were provided, and some students completed the project on Sunday afternoon, August 18th.



**Kyree Yeigh working on the quote.**

(Courtesy Photo)



**Pictured left to right are Anna Bisbee, Ashlynn Warrington, Teagan Hanton and Emerly Jones. (Courtesy Photo)**

Other students not pictured: Libby Cole, Addison Hoeft, Tori Schuster, Jace Johnson





## Armour shop owner jailed over nuisance property ruling

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

ARMOUR, S.D. – Businessman Dudley Schroeder was convicted of a crime and spent two days in jail. The infraction? His downtown auto shop was declared a nuisance property and he didn't clean it up as ordered by a judge.

Schroeder's transmission repair service is located on U.S. 281 on the southern end of this small town 45 miles southwest of Mitchell. City leaders said they had tried for many years and attempted far less invasive methods to get him to clean it up before resorting to legal action.

Unless Schroeder, 65, removes the vehicles, old transmissions and other debris that have accumulated in the front of his business and on the 1.5 acres behind the building, he will spend 28 more days in jail due to his October 2022 public nuisance conviction. The city also filed a civil lawsuit in May that could require the property to be forcibly cleaned up and Schroeder assessed for the cost and court fees.

"It's been a nightmare," Schroeder told News Watch. "I'm not trying to buck the system, but I still don't know why I was put in jail. When they took me down there, nobody at the jail even knew what I was there for."

The ongoing legal cases in Armour are just a small sample of how property code violations and enforcement remain a major point of contention in many small towns and cities across South Dakota. The disputes often pit property owners seeking to assert their individual rights against municipal officials trying to spruce up struggling communities trying to attract new residents and commerce.

Advocates for stricter code enforcement said poorly kept properties located within municipal boundaries can draw rodents, reduce neighboring property values and lead to lower community standards that allow others to let their properties deteriorate.

But as News Watch reported in July, code enforcement crackdowns can go awry in some communities, such as in Faith, where residents became so angry that the city council rescinded a new, stricter code enforcement plan.

Schroeder acknowledges that his property had been unkempt for quite some time before the legal consequences began, and he said he has tried over the past couple years to comply with city directives. But it has been challenging, he said, as he has tried to maintain a viable business while battling health



**Dudley Schroeder in front of his business, Transmission Depot, on Aug. 8, 2024, in Armour, S.D. He was jailed and now has been sued in civil court by the city because the property was declared a public nuisance. Schroeder acknowledges that the shop was much messier earlier this year.** (Photo: Bart Pfankuch/

South Dakota News Watch)





**The area behind Dudley Schroeder's transmission shop on Aug. 8, 2024, in Armour, S.D., remains covered by used transmissions and other debris, but the items are now blocked from public view by the structure and a metal fence.** (Photo: Bart Pfankuch/ South Dakota News Watch)

Fink said.

Schroeder pleaded guilty to the misdemeanor charge in August 2022 but wasn't jailed until November 2023, a time frame during which several court hearings were held and multiple extensions were allowed to give Schroeder time to comply, according to court records.

Armour city ordinances passed in 2010 prohibit nuisances and refer to South Dakota Statute 9-19-3 that allows for fines of up to \$500 or imprisonment up to 30 days for violating a municipal ordinance that are considered Class 2 misdemeanors.

Fink said it is a "very rare occasion" in which someone convicted of a nuisance property charge ends up in jail because most offenders get their properties cleaned up once they realize incarceration could result from inaction.

"The judge basically put him on probation and said, 'If you clean the place up, you don't have to do any jail time,'" Fink said. "And I don't know if I've ever had a case that had as many reviews and extensions as this one."

### Finances and health impacted

Schroeder and his family members said city officials in Armour and the legal system in Douglas County have gone too far by using criminal laws and the threat of jail time to push Schroeder to bring his property up to what they claimed is an unrealistic standard of cleanliness for a transmission business.

"It's an older place, an old gas station when he bought it, used for mechanic work, and I think he has done things to clean it up," said Marci Schroeder, Dudley Schroeder's sister, who lives in Las Vegas. "He is a reasonable guy, a good guy, but they want his place to be all tulips and rainbows."

Dudley Schroeder said he grew up on his family's farm near Armour and returned to the area about 25 years ago after spending time as a successful transmission shop owner in Las Vegas, where he once had 17 employees. With his son, he also has a car racing team that ran in Nevada and still runs occasionally there and in South Dakota.

conditions that include prostate cancer, meningitis and long-COVID, which he said he contracted while in jail.

Schroeder said his illnesses have sapped his strength and left him with more than \$250,000 in medical debt. The code enforcement cases have cost him more than \$20,000 in legal fees, and he said some former clients no longer want to do business with him.

### 'An extreme eyesore for years'

However, the city attorney for Armour said a county judge felt he had no choice other than to throw Schroeder in jail because all other legal options were exhausted.

Attorney Mike Fink, who serves as prosecutor in the criminal and civil cases against Schroeder, said Schroeder was given multiple opportunities to clean up his property long before being charged and well after being convicted.

"It was an extreme eyesore for many years, and it's only after all other efforts have proven fruitless that I got involved,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 9 of 72

He said the code enforcement crackdown by the city has limited his ability to make a living, especially since he is unable to allow customers to park cars out front while they wait for service.

"People would drop their cars off and say, 'Just get around to repairing it when you can,'" Schroeder said. "I probably had 20 or 30 cars here waiting for work to be done at one point."

As a result of the code crackdown, Schroeder said he now requires customers to remove their faulty transmissions themselves and bring only the mechanism and not the entire vehicle to his shop for repairs. He said he has lost business from individuals and government agencies following disputes over the condition of his shop.

Schroeder said he also mainly works on older-model vehicles, so he needs to maintain a stockpile of used transmissions to pull from on his property. He said car and truck manufacturers no longer make the transmissions or new replacement parts for older models.

The entire experience of trying to manage his health, maintain his family's farm and run the transmission business while dealing with the court cases has left him physically and emotionally drained, Schroeder said.

"It's not so much that I'm angry, but at my age, why do I have to worry every day if somebody is going to be serving me court papers or whatever?" he asked. "I'm too old to be worried about minor things like that. But I guess it's not minor here any more."

After Schroeder served two days in jail in late 2023, he returned to court and the judge held off on further jail time but ruled that the case will remain open through December 2024. The remaining 28 days of his formal sentence could be imposed if he fails to get the property cleaned up by year's end.

"They put a 65-year-old man in jail for two days, to do what? I don't understand what that did?" Marci Schroeder said. "If you want to do something, fine him or help him out. And now they're going to threaten him with the other 28 days in jail? You'd have to laugh if it wasn't so damn serious."

## Mayor: Junk hurts entire town

In an interview with News Watch, Armour Mayor Travis Sparks said he did not want to discuss the specifics of the ongoing legal cases involving Schroeder. But Sparks, who has served two intermittent terms as mayor, said town leaders have tried for more than a decade to encourage Schroeder to clean up the property, both in verbal conversations and through written warnings.

"It's been going on for at least 15 years," Sparks said. "He didn't want to work with us, so we ended up going the legal route."

Sparks said Schroeder is not the only resident of Armour who has been warned over code enforcement violations. He said the city of about 700 people contracts with an independent code enforcement firm to uphold city ordinances because the city wants to portray a positive image to both existing and potential residents or employers.

During a visit in early August, a News Watch reporter noticed one downtown building with peeling



**The front of Dudley Schroeder's transmission shop in Armour, S.D., when photographed March 30, 2022, by a code inspector before he was jailed for possessing a nuisance property.** (Photo: Courtesy of Code Enforcement Specialists)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 10 of 72



“The judge basically put him on probation and said, ‘If you clean the place up, you don’t have to do any jail time.’ And I don’t know if I’ve ever had a case that had as many reviews and extensions as this one.”

Attorney Mike Fink, who serves as prosecutor in the criminal and civil cases against Dudley Schroeder

paint and debris stored outside almost directly across the street from Armour City Hall. Meanwhile, a body shop on U.S. 281 nearby had several vehicles parked out front, including some with obvious body damage, and also had tires and other debris piled along a side wall and clearly visible to the public.

"It comes down to aesthetics," Sparks said. "When people drive through town and see dilapidated buildings or properties with junk all over them, they're not going to want to stop or do any business in the town."

The mayor said he rejects claims Schroeder has made publicly that the city is trying to force him off his property or that it wants to take ownership of the land. The only goal of the enforcement and legal actions is to bring the property into compliance with local

codes, Sparks said.

"The courts have ruled in our favor and it's up to Dudley to get the work done," he said. "If he gets the work done, it will be signed off on and we'll be good to go."

## Using jail time as a 'hammer'

Fink, who serves as a contract city attorney for a handful of central South Dakota cities and is the state's attorney in McCook County, said he has handled code enforcement legal issues for years. He said some municipalities take a hard line on code enforcement while others are more lax. He put Armour roughly in the middle of that spectrum.

His typical approach to code enforcement cases is not to levy fines but rather to take scofflaws into court and pursue legal consequences up to and including jail time. The "hammer" of a potential jail sentence, Fink said, is almost always enough to get defendants to comply and clean up their properties, which is the end goal of the process.

Fink said both he and the judge were not persuaded by Schroeder's apparent attempts to "mask" the debris at the property, including construction of what Fink called a "half-assed" fence that partly toppled soon after being installed.

"It was an extremely ramshackle fence that was put up. And the first time the wind blew it was falling over on itself, so there was really no effort there," he said.

As far as Schroeder's medical and financial challenges, Fink said those factors do not play into a charging decision but can affect how he or a judge proceeds at sentencing. Ultimately, however, all defendants should be treated equally and with the same expectations for compliance, he said.

"There are a lot of people in Armour who have medical issues and who have had tough things happen to them in their lifetime, and it doesn't lead them to commit a crime," Fink said. "There are many people in Armour who have it just as bad as Dudley but who have figured out how to get the assistance of others to make (their properties) look nice."

## Code enforcer reported progress

That is the ultimate goal, said Joel Johnson, whose company, Code Enforcement Specialists of Burke, contracts with Armour and about 80 other South Dakota cities to perform code enforcement inspections. Johnson said he revisited Schroeder's property in late July and reported that some progress had been



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 11 of 72

made.

"Finally, the family got together and it looks like they have done a couple things," Johnson said. "It looks a lot better because in the past it was just a disaster."

Johnson said he mostly performs his code enforcement work without incident, but he noted that some property owners get heated when they know he is there to examine whether their properties meet local ordinance.

"I don't mean to cast aspersions on anybody. But quite frankly there is some mental stuff that goes on in the majority of these cases, and people need some help," he said.

## **Not sure what comes next**

Fink said the civil order he filed against Schroeder is pending as he, the city and the code enforcement officer monitor Schroeder's progress in getting the property up to code.

Comparing photos from 2022 to the transmission shop now, it is clear that Schroeder has taken several steps to clean up.

He found a metal broker to haul away 50-gallon drums that contained scrap metal. He removed several cars and trucks from the front of the property. And he secured the metal fence with wood and screws to block the rear of his property from public view.

Schroeder said he doesn't consider himself a "hoarder," though he acknowledges that he is somewhat unorganized and doesn't like to throw away things that can be used or reused.

The rear of his property remains messy with cars, trucks and snowmobiles as well as car parts and other debris strewn about. And while it isn't part of the court cases, the inside of his shop is cramped tight with auto parts, papers and other materials stacked on floors, shelving and a desk.

Schroeder said the messiness resulted from moving things from outside storage into the shop office.

And yet, he's hopeful – though uncertain – if he has done enough to keep the city, courts and code enforcement officer at bay. Schroeder said he has never felt completely comfortable with what he is required to do to stay out of court and out of jail.

"How do I know when it's over or it's not over?" he said. "Do I just walk around on pins and needles every day and can't sleep at night because I'm wondering what is next?"

Despite the uncertainty, Schroeder's plan is to work a couple more years until he qualifies for Social Security and then hang up his transmission tools and close the shop. Meanwhile, he's sure of only one thing: "I do not want to go back to jail."

*This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact content director / investigative reporter Bart Pfankuch at [bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org).*



**Dudley Schroeder's transmission shop is not the only well-worn property in Armour, S.D. This former veterinary office on the corner of Main and First streets on Aug. 8, 2024, shows cracking paint and debris next to the building that sits almost directly across the street from Armour City Hall.** (Photo: Bart

Pfankuch/ South Dakota News Watch)

## Lyman County Fatal Motorcycle Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash  
Where: SD Highway 248, mile marker 238, Presho, SD  
When: 2:01 p.m., Monday, August 19, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2023 Harley Davidson motorcycle  
Driver 1: 59-year-old male, fatal injuries  
Helmet Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2016 Dodge Ram 1500  
Driver 2: 39-year-old male, no injuries  
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Lyman County, S.D.- A 59-year-old man died in a two-vehicle motorcycle crash early Monday afternoon in Presho, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2023 Harley Davidson motorcycle had exited Interstate 90 and continued northbound on 305th Avenue, where he failed to stop at the stop sign at the intersection of SD Highway 248. As the driver entered the intersection, he collided with the driver of a 2016 Dodge Ram who was traveling westbound on SD 248. The motorcycle entered into a yaw and proceeded into the north ditch where it rolled and the driver was separated from the motorcycle. He was wearing a helmet.

The driver of the motorcycle was transported to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The driver of the Dodge truck did not have any injuries.

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

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

## Name Released in Beadle County Fatal Motorcycle Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: 3rd Street and Westpark Avenue, Huron, SD city limits

When: 3:37 a.m., Saturday, August 17, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2007 Honda CBR1000RR

Driver 1: Matthew John Walker, 31-year-old male from Huron, SD, fatal injuries

Helmet Use: Yes

Beadle County, S.D.- A 31-year-old man died in a single vehicle motorcycle crash early Saturday morning in Huron, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Matthew J. Walker, the driver of a 2007 Honda motorcycle, was traveling northbound on Westpark Avenue in Huron, SD, and left the roadway, entering the east ditch. Walker was separated from the motorcycle. The motorcycle then caught on fire. Walker died from injuries sustained in the crash. He was wearing a helmet.

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

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



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 14 of 72

## Ways to Save Money at the State Fair

HURON, S.D. – The South Dakota State Fair offers several simple ways to save money during the fair.

Save time and money at the admission gates by purchasing daily gate admission in advance! All daily gate admission purchased on or before Wednesday, Aug. 28 will be sold at a 20 percent discount. Those tickets can be taken directly to the scan and go lines at the admission gates so you can skip the lines! Daily gate admission can be purchased online at [www.sdstatefair.com](http://www.sdstatefair.com), or at the State Fair Office located in the Nordby Exhibit Hall (1060 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD 57350).

All admission on Channel Seeds Opening Day will be sold at the advanced rate.

Save on gate admission by purchasing your grandstand tickets on or before Tuesday, Aug. 27. Grandstand tickets purchased prior to the opening day of the fair include gate admission! Grandstand tickets can be purchased by calling 866.605.3247, online at [www.sdstatefair.com](http://www.sdstatefair.com), or at the grandstand ticket office.

Gate admission is free after 8 pm Wednesday through Sunday and after 3 pm on Monday.

On Thursday, Aug. 29, the State Fair is hosting a "Salute to Veterans" program on the Northwestern Energy Freedom Stage at 10:30 a.m. with keynote speaker Colonel Stacy Kooistra. All Veterans and active military members receive free gate admission. 4-H youth also receive free gate admission on Aug. 29 by showing their 4-H card, which can be obtained from county 4-H offices.

Coupons for \$2 off gate admission on Friday, Aug. 30 are available at Olympic Motors on east Highway 14 in Huron. The Olympic Motors coupons are valid on Friday, Aug. 30 only.

Stock the Shelves on Monday, Sept. 2, by bringing a non-perishable item to any admission gate between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. for \$2 off gate admission.

Pay It Forward Day is on Monday, Sept. 2. Businesses and organizations band together to sponsor gate admission passes for those in need and to randomly hand out at the gate admission entrances. Fairgoers attending the fair on Monday could be the lucky recipient of a 'Pay It Forward' pass.

There are plenty of ways to save money at the carnival throughout the week. All rides on Wednesday, Aug. 28, are only \$2! The Weekly Passport to Fun pass offers a carnival ride pass for all six days of the fair. Advanced passes can be purchased at Olympic Motors for \$52. Big Jim 93.3 and Taco Johns are offering a \$3 off coupon for daily ride bands on Thursday, Friday, and Monday. Coupons can be picked up at Taco Johns.

The 2024 South Dakota State Fair will run from Wednesday, August 28, through Monday, September 2. Channel Seeds Opening day will be Wednesday, August 28. For more information on State Fair events, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit [www.sdstatefair.com](http://www.sdstatefair.com), or find them on Facebook, Instagram, and X.

## South Dakota Seal of Biliteracy available to high school graduates

PIERRE, S.D. -- South Dakota students who are on track to graduate from high school are now able to earn the South Dakota Seal of Biliteracy. This recognition, developed by the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE), is available for those students who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English and another language. The seal is provided by the DOE to schools that request them for their students' diplomas.

The program employed a "soft launch" last spring, with five districts participating. This year will be the first full year of the program. One of the school districts that participated in spring 2024 was the Sioux Falls School District.

Dr. Andy McKay, the K-12 Spanish Immersion Program specialist for the Sioux Falls School District, said the seal will distinguish students as having valuable proficiencies for schools and employers. "Fundamentally, it provides clear information to both future employers and post-secondary institutions about what students can do across two languages," said McKay.

"The Seal of Biliteracy recognizes those students who have put in the effort to become proficient in more than one language," said Sec. of Education Joe Graves. "A biliterate student is one who will be an asset to any organization that operates internationally or serves people who speak languages other than English. The biliterate student is also one who has met the classical obligation of the truly educated person, one who has demonstrated true mastery of more than his or her native tongue."

For a student to have the Seal of Biliteracy affixed to his or her diploma, the student must demonstrate proficiency in both English and a second language.

More information about the South Dakota Seal of Biliteracy can be found on the DOE [website](#).

## Changes Coming to National Weather Service Cold Season Products and Services

On October 1, the National Weather Service will be consolidating and changing the names of some of the cold season products and services we provide. The primary reason for the change is to account for the cold, with or without wind, and the fact that cold weather itself, with or without wind, can be dangerous. The changes will be:

Wind Chill Watch...will become...Extreme Cold Watch  
Wind Chill Warning...will become...Extreme Cold Warning  
Wind Chill Advisory...will become...Cold Weather Advisory

Issuing criteria by county will be:

Extreme Cold Warning:

Stanley, Sully, Hughes, Hyde, Hand, Jones, Lyman, Buffalo: Actual temperature or wind chill  $\leq -35^{\circ}\text{F}$   
Corson, Dewey, Campbell, Walworth, Potter, McPherson, Edmunds, Faulk, Brown, Spink, Marshall, Day, Clark, Roberts, Grant, Codington, Hamlin, Deuel, Traverse, Big Stone: Actual temperature or wind chill  $\leq -40^{\circ}\text{F}$

Cold Weather Advisory:

Stanley, Sully, Hughes, Hyde, Hand, Jones, Lyman, Buffalo: Actual temperature or wind chill  $\leq -25^{\circ}\text{F}$   
Corson, Dewey, Campbell, Walworth, Potter, McPherson, Edmunds, Faulk, Brown, Spink, Marshall, Day, Clark, Roberts, Grant, Codington, Hamlin, Deuel, Traverse, Big Stone: Actual temperature or wind chill  $\leq -30^{\circ}\text{F}$

We have never issued Hard Freeze Watches or Hard Freeze Warnings so there is no change for us there. Freeze Watch remains Freeze Watch and Freeze Warning remains Freeze Warning.

Lastly, a technical change is that cold weather headlines will now be sent under the Non-Precipitation Warnings / Watches / Advisories (NPW) product identifier instead of the Winter Weather Warnings / Watches / Advisories (WSW) product identifier. The VTEC for Extreme Cold Warning will be EC.W and Cold Weather Advisory will be CW.Y. This technical detail is most likely only a concern if you have computer code set to search for different products.

Remember:

A WATCH means that a possible weather or water event could be a threat to life and property (there is still uncertainty)

A WARNING means that a significant weather or water event is expected to be a threat to life and property (there is high probability)

An ADVISORY is for less serious weather or water events that, if caution is used, should have little to no significant impacts to life and property.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### At long last, Lewis and Clark water arrives for Madison

**City is final South Dakota connection for sprawling pipeline**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 21, 2024 5:17 PM**

MADISON — After waiting nearly 35 years, Madison is the last South Dakota city to connect to the tri-state Lewis and Clark Regional Water System. Local leaders, South Dakota's three congressmen and economic leaders gathered to celebrate the city's connection on Wednesday.

Madison's roughly 6,000 residents tapped into the system earlier this month.

The pipeline delivering the water covers 310 miles and spans southeastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. The roughly \$700 million water system serves about 350,000 people.

The connection means better water quality in the city and economic development, because it increases water capacity, especially for agriculture surrounding Madison, said state Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison.

"This just means a higher capacity for growth that otherwise wouldn't exist," Crabtree said.

South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds told attendees of Thursday's celebration that "water development is economic development." He compared the Lewis and Clark system to the expansion of electricity and broadband in rural parts of the country.

"We're continuing to make it so that young people want to come back in and stay in the rural parts of our country — not just in the communities themselves but in the ag areas as well," Rounds said. "It would not happen if it wasn't for this type of development across multiple states."

The city will blend its existing water sources with pipeline water to ensure resiliency in supply during droughts and other disasters.

Sibley, Iowa, will be the last to connect to the pipeline. Lewis and Clark Executive Director Troy Larson expects to hook up to Sibley in the fall.

The final step in construction of the "base" water system is to build out a water treatment plant in Vermillion and reach a water capacity of 44.19 million gallons a day, Larson said.

The majority of the pipeline is funded through the federal government. It was supposed to be completed in 2016 but fell behind schedule because of poor funding, Larson said.

The pipeline is now planned to be completed in 2028, after receiving a \$152.5 million boost from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Commissioner Roque Sánchez represented the Biden administration at the celebration, touting the federal government's role in aiding the project and other rural investments across the country.

None of South Dakota's U.S. congressional delegates voted for the bill.

"While it took a long time because of federal funding to get where we are," Larson said, "the last few years we've been sprinting to the finish line."

Larson said Lewis and Clark started construction on the water system's first expansion in 2022, which is expected to be completed in 2030 and expand water capacity to 60 million gallons a day. The nonprofit expects the second expansion will start shortly after to more than double the system's capacity as the population grows.

The regional system has "paved the way" for similar water systems in the state and country, Larson said. Fledgling efforts in western, northern and eastern South Dakota are vying for Missouri River water for their communities.

It's to be expected, since cities and rural water systems across the state are maximizing their groundwater sources and realize other states are looking to tap into the Missouri River, Larson said. South Dakotans want to get there first.

"The only source of really untapped, reliable water in the state is the Missouri River," Larson said. "What we're all waking up to is that we need to fully utilize this resource we have."

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

## Thune calls Trump's across-the-board tariff strategy 'a recipe for increased inflation'

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 21, 2024 4:49 PM

MITCHELL — U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, criticized former President Donald Trump's sweeping trade policy proposals on Wednesday at Dakotafest, calling them "a recipe for increased inflation."

"There clearly is a different philosophy that is expounded by former President Trump and some of the folks who share the view he does about tariffs," Thune said.

A tariff is a tax imposed by a government on imported goods.

Thune made the remarks to reporters following a panel appearance alongside the rest of the state's congressional delegation.

Trump recently called for a 10% tariff on all imports and a 60% tariff specifically on Chinese goods, policies he argues would help protect American industries from unfair foreign competition.

"What's been suggested by some in my party is just uniform, across-the-board tariffs, and I don't subscribe to that view," Thune said. "I get concerned when I hear we just want to uniformly impose a 10% or 20% tariff on everything that comes into the United States."

Thune said the blanket measures would likely backfire.

"Generally, that's a recipe for increased inflation," he said.

Republicans have traditionally argued that tariffs are a tax on consumers because they raise the costs of imported goods, leading to higher prices for everyday products.

Thune said targeted tariffs can be necessary to address specific threats.

"For example, our trade relationship with China, if they're cheating, the use of tariffs in a selective way to sort of punish that bad behavior makes sense to me," he said. "But it's selective. They're targeted, as opposed to uniform."

Economists with the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan nonprofit, estimate that Trump's 10% tariff on all imports could raise \$300 billion in revenue over a decade, or lose as much as \$50 billion — depending on the share of Chinese imports replaced with domestic goods. The Tax Foundation, another nonpartisan organization, estimates the plan would shrink the U.S. economy by 1.1% and threaten more than 825,000 U.S. jobs.

The committee also says the proposed 60% tariff on Chinese imports would result in an 85% reduction in trade with China, ultimately decreasing overall federal tax revenues and causing a net loss for the U.S. government.

Thune has long been a proponent of free trade and voiced concerns about the direction of U.S. trade policy under both Democrats and Republicans. He's said roughly 20% of jobs in South Dakota are directly tied to international trade.

During the Dakotafest panel discussion, Thune told the audience trade has been "dramatically, profoundly overlooked by the current administration." The nation had a roughly \$17 billion agricultural trade deficit last year, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Thune pointed out that this year's has been estimated at \$30.5 billion.

"And what that means is, we aren't winning the war when it comes to competing and getting access for our commodities to markets around the world," he said, which also drives down the demand for ag commodities, and therefore the price farmers and ranchers can charge.

Plus, Thune said undemocratic nations are filling the void left where the U.S. decides not to do trade.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 19 of 72

"What's happening, because we're not present, is China is sucking up all the countries in the Indo-Pacific into their market, into their orbit," he said.

Thune's position reflects a broader division within the Republican Party over trade policy. While Trump's protectionist approach has gained significant support among the GOP base, Republicans like Thune continue to advocate for a more free trade approach.

*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.*

## **COMMENTARY**

### **It's Thune's job to say it, but financial worry didn't start with Biden**

**KEVIN WOSTER**

**AUGUST 21, 2024 7:28 AM**

A couple days back I was sifting through my emails when I happened upon a recent column by Sen. John Thune. He was lamenting how American families are being hurt by the "reckless spending" of the Biden-Harris administration and Democrats in Congress.

In the column, Thune wrote that "it costs a typical family \$13,000 more per year just to maintain the same standard of living it enjoyed when President Biden took office" and that "nearly every aspect of daily life is more expensive in the Biden-Harris economy."

In addition, Thune wrote, a third of Americans are "worried about paying their bills," people are "pulling back on their spending and putting more on their credit cards" and some people are "taking on extra work just to get by."

And, as Thune tells it, it's all pretty much because of Biden, Harris and the "Biden-Harris economy."

Now first, to give him credit, Thune's opinion piece was a lot gentler than the end-of-times rhetoric we get from the leader of his party, former President Donald Trump. Thune didn't call anyone crooked or crazy or communist or low-IQ incompetent, nor did he label America as a "third-world country" as Trump likes to do when he's not president.

But Thune's column was still pretty gloomy. And it probably needs some further consideration.

Thune doesn't provide a source for his assertion that a typical family is paying \$13,000 more a year for the same standard of living it had when Biden took office. Maybe that's true. But it's not the whole story.

I don't think my wife and I are paying anywhere near \$13,000 more each year, but we don't have kids at home or kids in college or mortgage payments to fret about. We do have plenty of family members who do, however. And while some struggle mightily, most seem to be getting by OK and others are doing quite well.

I had to smile slightly when I read what Thune wrote about a third of Americans being worried about paying their bills. Only a third? I would have expected at least that many were worried about paying the bills long before Biden and Harris took office. I was worried about paying the bills for most of my working life as a reporter, which began in the 1970s. I'm pretty sure that wasn't Biden's fault.

And it's certainly not new that we as a people lean on our credit cards more than we should, often out of necessity, sometimes not. As for "taking on extra work just to get by," well, that was going on long before Joe Biden and Kamala Harris took office, too.

No question COVID-related inflation, supply chain complications and price spikes in gas (think "war in Ukraine") and groceries have been a problem. A big one. So have things like increased interest rates for credit-card debt and home mortgages, along with rising home prices.

Did increased government spending add to the inflation? Maybe. Probably, at least some. It also helped get us through and recover from a devastating pandemic, save and create jobs, reduce child poverty and begin long-overdue infrastructure improvements, among other benefits.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 20 of 72

But Thune doesn't mention any of that or the fact that millions more Americans are working today than were working when Biden took office. Wages are up significantly overall, as is household income.

Last January the U.S. Treasury Department concluded, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, that the growth in real earnings for the typical American worker rose more than prices since before the pandemic. That left those workers financially able to "afford the same goods and services as they did in 2019, with an additional \$1,400 to spend or save each year," the Treasury report said.

Like the Thune numbers, the Treasury Department numbers are open to qualification and debate. And there's no question many people continue to struggle financially. But many others are doing pretty well.

And for a couple of retirees like my wife and me, heavily dependent as we are on the condition of our IRAs and 401ks, things are probably better than they were 3 1/2 years ago.

Not all retirees are as fortunate, of course. Almost two-thirds of us age 65 to 74 still carry significant debt. But you really can't blame that on Biden or Harris. The percentage of retirees with a debt load has been increasing since 1989.

My wife and I were fairly comfortable financially during the Trump years, although we were very uncomfortable in a lot of other ways. And we've been fairly comfortable financially during Biden's term, and a lot less worried about the future of our democracy.

We must never forget that it's still a grinding financial struggle for some. But the reduction and downward trend in inflation is good news, especially the latest report for overall inflation in July at 2.9 percent, the lowest since 2021.

And with hopes rising for a Federal Reserve interest rate cut in the not-too-distant future, there's quite a bit to feel good about.

I understand that it's not John Thune's job to mention any of the good stuff about the Biden-Harris years. In fact, his job these days as Senate Republican whip and as a promoter of Donald Trump's presidential campaign (something Thune does, I like to believe, while still holding Trump in general disregard) is the exact opposite of mentioning any of the good.

So it seemed only fair that someone mention it for him.

*Kevin Woster grew up on a farm near Reliance and worked for decades as a journalist, including stops at the Brookings Register, Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Rapid City Journal, KELO-TV and South Dakota Public Broadcasting, plus freelance assignments for outdoors and agricultural magazines. He lives in Rapid City.*

## **U.S. House Dems ask OSHA to respond to reports that state agencies tipped off employers**

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - AUGUST 21, 2024 1:35 PM**

WASHINGTON — Leading Democrats on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and its Workforce Protection Subcommittee demanded answers on Tuesday from Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su regarding allegations that certain state Occupational Safety and Health Administration agencies possibly misused federal funds and gave advance notice to employers of workplace safety inspections.

The letter from the respective ranking members of the committee and subcommittee — Reps. Bobby Scott of Virginia and Alma Adams of North Carolina — came in response to recent news reports over allegations surrounding the state OSHA agencies and employers in California and South Carolina.

"Workers deserve to be protected, not exploited," Scott and Adams said in a statement Tuesday.

"If these allegations are true, it means that our federal funds, meant to ensure safe and fair workplaces, might be enabling exactly the opposite," the two said, adding that it's "crucial that we get to the bottom of this and hold those responsible accountable."

Scott and Adams highlighted a February report from Cal Matters documenting allegations that staff from the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health might be tipping off employers about when inspections are going to occur.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 21 of 72

Debra Lee, chief of the state agency who was acting chief at the time of the report, expressed concerns about these allegations and wanted the agency to be informed in order to take appropriate action, according to Cal Matters.

The lawmakers also underscored a series of reports from the New York Times on migrant children working dangerous jobs upon coming to the United States, including a story that sheds light on the dangers for those in roofing — a job that is illegal under the age of 18.

Scott and Adams pointed to the Times' interview with a crew boss who reportedly "admitted violations of not only federal child labor rules but also OSHA standards that are notionally enforced by South Carolina's state plan agency."

The two called this account "particularly alarming," writing in their letter that "if the employer in this news account is to be believed, this story raises questions not only about South Carolina's compliance with the OSH Act's requirements for state plan enforcement but also about the possibility of federal funds being used to help employers evade detection for child labor trafficking and oppressive child labor violations."

Holly Beeson, counsel to the Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs at the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, told States Newsroom that "whenever a hazard or lack of compliance with an OSHA standard is reported, SC OSHA vets the complaint to determine whether an inspection should follow."

"Both state and federal law prohibit prior notification of this inspection to an employer, and SC OSHA strictly adheres to this legal mandate," Beeson said.

## Worker safety

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration — part of the Department of Labor — was created through the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. The agency is tasked with ensuring that workers have "safe and healthful working conditions free from unlawful retaliation."

Several states, including California and South Carolina, have their own OSHA-approved state plan.

As the agency notes, "OSHA covers most private sector employers and workers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the other United States (U.S.) jurisdictions — either directly through OSHA or through an OSHA-approved State Plan."

Scott and Adams are asking for a response from the Department of Labor by Sept. 20 regarding questions such as how they would address any allegations of unlawful advance notice of inspections and challenges facing the department when trying to monitor and enforce state plans' compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

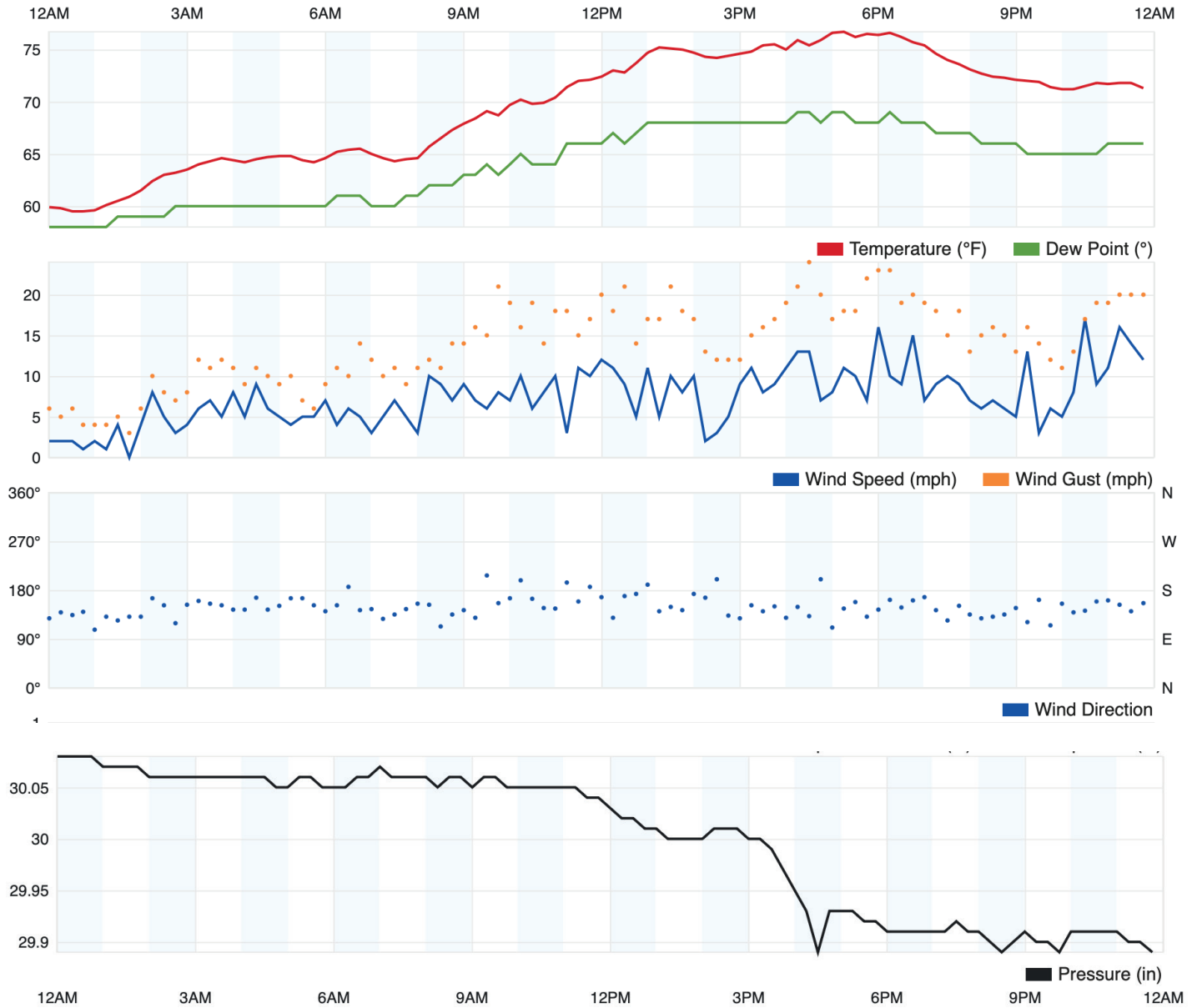
The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration did not respond to a request for comment by time of publication on Tuesday.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 22 of 72

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Broton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 23 of 72

Thursday

Thursday  
Night

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



High: 83 °F

Low: 63 °F

High: 87 °F

Low: 65 °F

High: 88 °F

Chance  
T-storms and  
Breezy then  
Partly Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Sunny



## Severe Weather Threat Overview

August 22, 2024  
3:59 AM

This Morning Into This Afternoon

### Timing/Location

Storms will mainly affect locations along and east of the Prairie Coteau, mainly before 3 PM CDT.

**Primary Threats** for the **GREEN** areas

### Tornado Potential

**Very Low** Low Medium High

### Max Hail Size

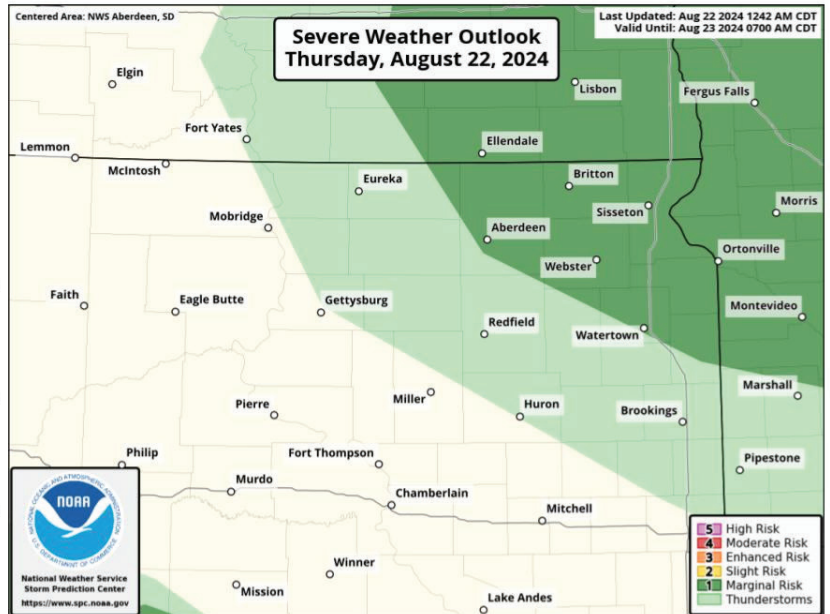
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

### Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

### Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

There is a Marginal Risk of Severe storms this morning through early afternoon, mainly over and east of the Prairie Coteau. Primary threats today include Quarter sized hail, Winds of 60-70 miles per hour, and heavy rainfall.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 24 of 72

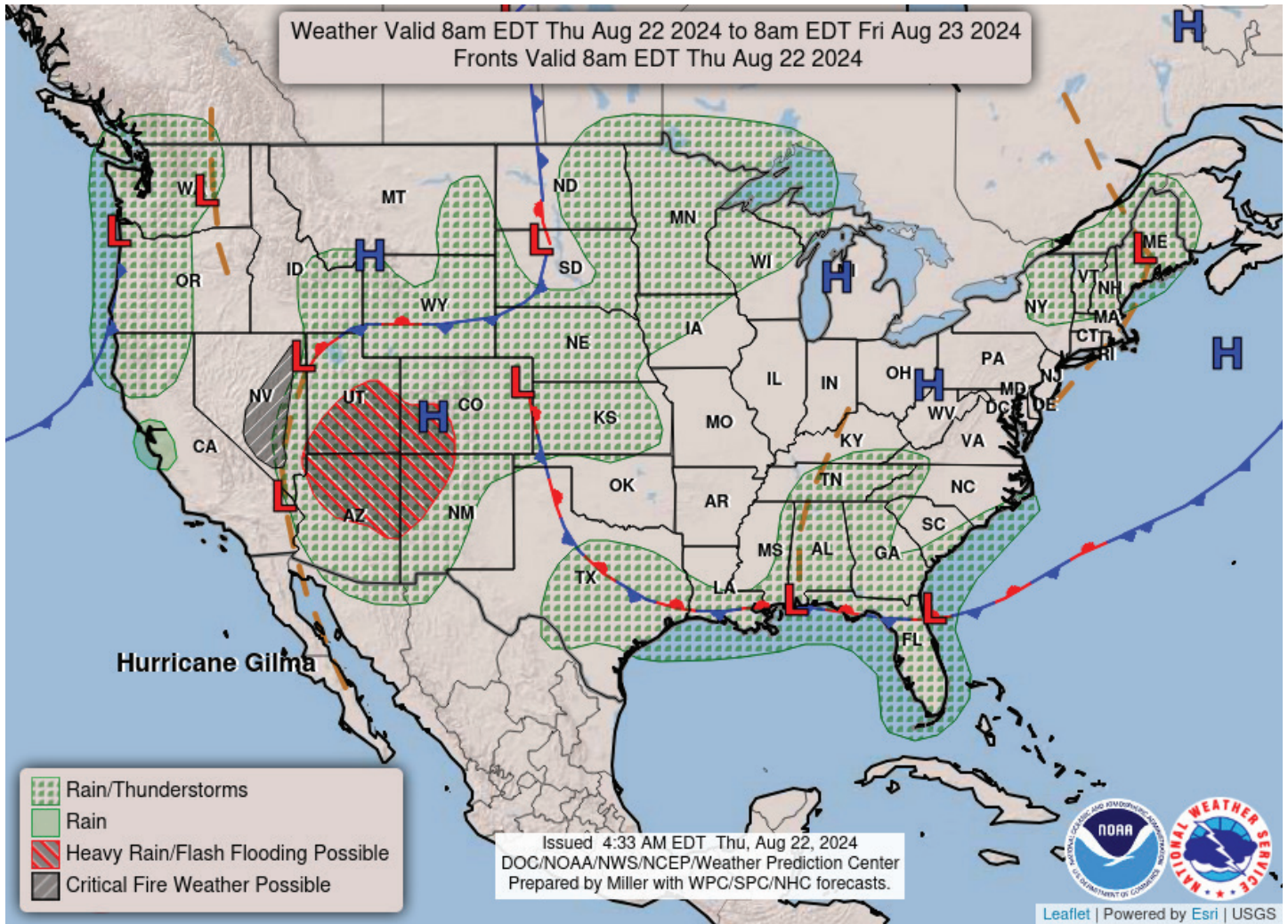
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 77 °F at 5:07 PM**  
**Low Temp: 60 °F at 12:28 AM**  
**Wind: 24 mph at 4:23 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 47 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1971  
Record Low: 36 in 1904  
Average High: 82  
Average Low: 55  
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.59  
Precip to date in Aug.: 4.25  
Average Precip to date: 15.69  
Precip Year to Date: 19.14  
Sunset Tonight: 8:28:58 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:42:25 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 25 of 72

## Today in Weather History

August 22, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from near Shadehill Reservoir in northwest South Dakota late in the evening of the 21st, to northern Brown County after sunrise on the 22nd. These thunderstorms produced high winds, large hail, rain, and lightning. Considerable crop and property damage were caused mainly by the strong winds and hail. Winds gusts ranged from 55 mph at Mobridge to 60 mph in and around Akaska. Winds of 70 mph were reported at Onaka and Faulkton. The strongest wind gust was reported in Hoven with a peak gust of 72 mph. Widespread damage was reported throughout the area. Many mobile homes, storage sheds, silos, and roofs were damaged or destroyed. Nine miles south and four miles west of Keldron, over two inches in diameter hail fell for 40 minutes, breaking windows and piling in ditches to a depth of four feet. These intense thunderstorms also produced brief heavy rainfall ranging from three-quarters of an inch to over four inches.

August 21, 2011: The Missouri River at Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Chamberlain/Oacoma fell throughout August as releases on the Oahe Dam were slowly decreased. The Missouri River at Chamberlain/Oacoma fell below flood stage on August 22nd. The extensive damage to homes and roads began to surface as the water receded. The river continued to fall into September.

1893: Four hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic Ocean at the same time. Over a century would pass, 1998 before four hurricanes would again rage together in the Atlantic.

1816 - The growing season for corn was cut short as damaging frosts were reported from North Carolina to interior New England. (David Ludlum)

1923 - The temperature at Anchorage, AK, reached 82 degrees, a record for August for the location which was later tied on the 2nd in 1978. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front lowered temperatures 20 to 40 degrees across the north central U.S., and produced severe thunderstorms in Ohio and Lower Michigan. An early morning thunderstorm near Sydney MI produced high winds which spun a car around 180 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon highs of 88 degrees at Astoria, OR, and 104 degrees at Medford, OR, were records for the date, and the number of daily record highs across the nation since the first of June topped the 2000 mark. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced golf ball size hail at May City IA, and wind gusts to 66 mph at Balltown IA. Lightning struck a barn in Fayette County IA killing 750 hogs. Evening thunderstorms in Montana produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Havre. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - Hurricane Andrew makes landfall in Southern Florida as a Category 5 storm with wind gusts estimated in excess of 175 m.p.h. Estimated damages exceeded \$20 billion, more than 60 people were killed and approximately 2 million people were evacuated from their homes. (University of Illinois WW2010)

1994: Hurricane John, about 345 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii had winds of 175 mph and pressure at 920 millibars or 27.17 inches of mercury, making it one of the strongest hurricanes ever in the Central Pacific. The 31-day existence made John the longest-lasting tropical cyclone recorded in both the Pacific Ocean and worldwide, surpassing both Hurricane Tina's previous record in the Pacific of 24 days in the 1992 season and the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane's previous world record of 28 days in the 1899 Atlantic season. John was also the farthest-traveling tropical cyclone in both Pacific Ocean and worldwide, with distance traveled of 7,165 miles, out-distancing previous record holders Hurricane Fico in the Pacific of 4,700 miles in the 1978 season and Hurricane Faith worldwide of 6,850 miles in the 1966 Atlantic season.

2003: The Okanagan Mountain fire reaches its destructive peak, destroying 250 homes. Nearly 40,000 residents have been evacuated or are on evacuation alert. The Okanagan Mountain Park Fire is estimated to be 17,000 hectares and continues to grow.





## THE GREATEST OFFERING

It was the final night of the annual missionary conference. Many missionaries from many nations had gathered to tell of the work of God all around the world. Hearts were deeply touched, and many lives were changed.

The pastor concluded the final service with an offering that was to be shared among the speakers. The plates were filled with money and checks. But in one plate was a note that simply read, "Myself." Underneath the word "Myself" was the name and phone number of the person who signed it.

The next day the pastor called the young man who signed it and asked, "What do you mean, James?"

"I'm giving myself to become a missionary," he said. And then he added, "I'm willing to go anywhere and do anything at any cost to serve the Lord."

James made an important gift to God: his body. Unfortunately, many Christians believe that God is only concerned about our souls. Not so! We need to realize that our bodies belong to God just as much as our souls. When we give Him our souls He expects our bodies as well.

The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and is the only instrument through which the Holy Spirit works. So, Paul says, "Take your body and think of all that it does each day – the skills, tasks and the abilities – and offer it to God; and when you do, follow Him where He leads You."

Prayer: May we realize, Father, that You expect us to give our bodies to You just as Your only Son did. May we not limit what You can do because we fail to surrender. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Romans 12:1

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 27 of 72

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.20.24

5 20 26 49 51 24

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$527,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 34  
DRAW: Mins 45 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.21.24

6 25 41 45 46 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$7,540,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 49  
DRAW: Mins 45 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.21.24

9 16 26 42 45 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 17 Hrs 4 Mins 45  
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.21.24

4 11 12 25 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 4  
DRAW: Mins 45 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.21.24

2 3 28 52 69 3

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 45 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.21.24

27 31 33 38 67 3

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$34,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 45 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 29 of 72

## 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

### **Israel-Hamas war latest: Israeli strike kills 3 in occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials say**

By The Associated Press undefined

The Palestinian Health Ministry says three people have been killed in an Israeli strike on a home in the occupied West Bank.

It said the apparent strike was carried out overnight into Thursday in the Tulkarem refugee camp, a built-up residential area dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It did not say whether those killed were fighters or civilians.

The Israeli military said aircraft struck "several" militants in Tulkarem as ground forces searched for buried explosives in an operation that was still ongoing.

The West Bank has seen a surge of violence since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza ignited the war there. Israeli forces carry out near-daily raids in the West Bank that often ignite gunbattles with Palestinians. Palestinian militants have carried out a series of attacks against Israelis.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says at least 637 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the start of the war.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three for a future state. Israel has built scores of settlements across the West Bank that are home to over 500,000 Jewish settlers. They have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under Israeli military rule, with the Palestinian Authority administering population centers.

Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar seeking to secure a cease-fire in the war in Gaza, even as Hamas and Israel signaled that challenges remain. Diplomatic efforts have redoubled as fears grow of a wider regional war after the recent targeted killings of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, both blamed on Israel, and threats of retaliation.

Meanwhile, key mediator Egypt expressed skepticism Wednesday as more details emerged of the proposal meant to bridge gaps between Israel and Hamas.

Hamas is believed to still be holding around 110 hostages captured during the Oct. 7 attacks that started the war. Israeli authorities estimate around a third are dead. During the Oct. 7 attack, militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count. The war has caused widespread destruction and forced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents to flee their homes, often multiple times.

Here's the latest:

Rights groups express renewed concerns about humanitarian situation in Gaza as Israel issues more evacuation orders

BEIRUT — Rights groups on Thursday expressed renewed concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza after Israel's latest evacuation orders in parts of the overcrowded central city of Deir al-Balah.

The polio virus has been circulating in the battered Palestinian enclave for the first time in 25 years, relief organization the International Rescue Committee said in a statement. It said the spread resulted from the destruction of hospitals and water infrastructure, along with overcrowded living conditions.

"The news of polio in Gaza should be an alarm bell that more infectious diseases are on the way," Dr. Jude Senkugu, the group's emergency health coordinator in the territory, said in the statement. "Without clean water, it is nearly impossible to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, as people do not have enough to drink, leaving them with no other choice but to drink contaminated water."

Meanwhile, international medical organization Doctors Without Borders warned that shrinking living spaces would cause diseases to spread faster.

The majority of Gaza's population of about 2 million have been displaced in the ongoing Hamas-Israel

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 31 of 72

war since Oct. 7, often more than once. Israel has scaled up its evacuation orders over the past month. "There is no room to put tents up. The overcrowding, severe lack of water, and minimal sanitation services are fueling the spread of diseases," Doctors Without Borders' project coordinator Jacob Granger said in a statement. "We are unable to keep up with the overwhelming needs."

Both organizations have echoed calls from global aid agencies for an immediate cease-fire.

French destroyer in EU mission rescues 29 mariners from oil tanker stricken in Red Sea attacks

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A French destroyer rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker that came under repeated attack in the Red Sea, officials said Thursday, while also destroying a bomb-carrying drone boat in the area.

Yemen's Houthi rebels are suspected to have carried out the assault on the Sounion, though they have yet to claim responsibility for the attack.

The Sounion is now at anchor in the Red Sea and no longer drifting, the European Union's Operation Aspides said. However, it wasn't clear if the vessel was still ablaze. The vessel had been staffed by a crew of Filipinos and Russians.

Military officials did not name the French destroyer involved in the rescue.

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill at least 17

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Israeli tank and drone strikes in Gaza on Wednesday killed at least 17 people, according to hospital staff and Associated Press journalists who counted the bodies.

In Khan Younis in the south, nine bodies, among them a woman and child, were rushed to Nasser Hospital. Meanwhile, the Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah received eight bodies.

The strikes in Deir al-Balah come as the Israeli military called for Palestinians in some parts of the central city to evacuate.

U.N. says Israel's evacuation orders are pushing Palestinians into unsafe areas

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. humanitarian office is warning that mass evacuation orders by the Israeli military this month are pushing Palestinians into overcrowded and unsafe areas along the Gaza coast.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters that the latest orders issued Wednesday for part of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza and Khan Younis in the south affect 115 sites with more than 150,000 displaced men, women and children, including U.N. and many informal and makeshift shelters.

The orders also impact offices, warehouses and residences of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, and have made three water wells serving tens of thousands of people inaccessible, he said.

"In Deir al Balah, the water supply has decreased by 70%, and there are also critical shortages of sanitation and hygiene materials," Dujarric said.

The U.N. spokesman said Israel has issued 11 evacuation orders so far in August affecting about 250,000 people. Before August, he said, the U.N. estimated that some 90% of Gaza's 2.1 million people had been displaced at least once since Hamas' attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7 that sparked the ongoing conflict.

The Israeli orders have also cut off sections of the main Salah al-Din road, a key route for delivering humanitarian aid, Dujarric said.

Outgoing head of Israeli military intelligence says he's haunted by the failures of Oct. 7

JERUSALEM — The outgoing head of Israeli military intelligence says the failures of Oct. 7 will haunt him for the rest of his life.

Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva said Wednesday that he bore responsibility for the intelligence breakdowns that allowed Hamas to carry out the cross-border attack that day that sparked Israel's ongoing war against the militant group.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and kidnapped 250 others in the deadliest attack in Israeli history. The army has come under heavy criticism in Israel for its failure to predict the attack and its slow response that day.

Haliva announced his resignation in April.

Speaking at a handover ceremony with his successor, Haliva said the bitter memories of Oct. 7 weigh on his conscience "day and night and will do so for the rest of my days."

"We did not fulfill our most important mission, giving a warning of war" he added, breaking down in



tears at one point while he spoke about his family. "The ultimate responsibility for the failure of the intelligence division rest with me."

Blinken tells Jordan a cease-fire deal is urgently needed

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has discussed with Jordan's deputy prime minister, Ayman Safadi, "the urgent need to finalize the cease-fire deal" between Israel and Hamas, the State Department said.

The call Wednesday came the same day Blinken returned from a series of stops across the Middle East to talk with Israeli officials and other negotiators Egypt and Qatar about urging the sides to accept a proposal meant to bridge gaps in cease-fire talks.

Blinken noted that the bridging proposal "addressed the remaining gaps in a manner that allows for swift implementation of the deal," the State Department said.

But Egyptian officials have expressed skepticism, saying Hamas won't agree to the proposal for a number of reasons — ones in addition to the long-held wariness over whether a deal would truly remove Israeli forces from Gaza and end the war.

Mediators are scheduled to meet Thursday and Friday in Cairo for more talks on the proposal, before submitting it officially to Hamas.

## **Labor dispute stops Canadian freight railroads and could cause major economic disruption in US**

By ROB GILLIES and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Both of Canada's major freight railroads have come to a full stop because of a contract dispute with their workers, an impasse that could bring significant economic harm to businesses and consumers in Canada and the U.S. if the trains don't resume running soon.

Canadian National and CPKC railroads both locked out their employees after the deadline of 12:01 a.m. Eastern Thursday passed without new agreements with the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference that represents some 10,000 engineers, conductors and dispatchers.

All rail traffic in Canada and all shipments crossing the U.S. border have stopped, although CPKC and CN's trains will continue to operate in the U.S. and Mexico.

Billions of dollars of goods each month move between Canada and the U.S. via rail, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"If rail traffic grinds to a halt, businesses and families across the country will feel the impact," Jay Timmons, president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, said in a statement. "Manufacturing workers, their communities and consumers of all sorts of products will be left reeling from supply chain disruptions."

There will be other impacts as well, including on the more than 30,000 commuters in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal who will be scrambling to find a new way into work because their trains won't be able to operate over CPKC's tracks while the railroad is shut down.

Business groups had urged the government to intervene, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has declined to force both sides into arbitration yet.

CN said it was waiting for a response on one final offer made late Wednesday when it locked the workers out. CPKC spokesperson Patrick Waldron said the union rejected its last offer that CEO Keith Creel made at the table in person. Both railroads have said they would end the lockout if the union agreed to binding arbitration.

"Despite the lockout, the Teamsters remain at the bargaining table with both companies," the union said in a statement.

CN had been negotiating with the Teamsters for nine months while CPKC had been trying to reach an agreement for a year, the unions said.

Many companies across all industries rely on railroads to deliver their raw materials and finished products, so without regular rail service they may have to cut back or even close.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 33 of 72

That's why the U.S. government kept rail workers from going on strike two years ago and forced them to accept a contract despite their concerns about demanding schedules and the lack of paid sick time.

Canada's railroads have sometimes shut down briefly in the past during contract negotiations — most recently CPKC was offline for a couple days in March 2022 — but it is rare for both railroads to stop at the same time. The impact on businesses will be magnified because both CN and CPKC have stopped.

Both CN and CPKC had been gradually shutting down since last week ahead of the contract deadline. Shipments of hazardous chemicals and perishable goods were the first to stop, so they wouldn't be stranded somewhere on the tracks.

As the Canadian contract talks were coming down to the wire, one of the biggest U.S. railroads, CSX, broke with the U.S. freight rail industry's longstanding practice of negotiating jointly for years with the unions. CSX reached a deal with several of its 13 unions that cover 25% of its workers ahead of the start of national bargaining later this year.

The new five-year contracts will provide 17.5% raises, better benefits and vacation time if they are ratified. The unions that have signed deals with CSX include part of the SMART-TD union representing conductors in one region, the Transportation Communications Union, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen and the Transport Workers Union. TCU President Artie Maratea said he's proud that his union reached a deal "without years of unnecessary delay and stall tactics."

Trudeau has been reluctant to force arbitration because he doesn't want to offend the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference and other unions, but he urged both sides to reach a deal Wednesday because of the tremendous economic damage that would follow a full shutdown.

"It is in the best interest of both sides to continue doing the hard work at the table," Trudeau said to reporters in Gatineau, Quebec. "Millions of Canadians, workers, farmers, businesses, right across the country, are counting on both sides to do the work and get to a resolution."

Numerous business groups have been urging Trudeau to act.

Trudeau said Labor Minister Steven MacKinnon met with both sides in the CN talks in Montreal on Tuesday and would be on hand for the CPKC talks in Calgary, Alberta. MacKinnon later said he wrapped up his meetings with the rail companies and the Teamsters.

"Workers, farmers, commuters and businesses can't wait. Canadians need urgency at the table. The parties need to get deals done now," he posted on the social platform X.

The negotiations are stuck on issues related to the way rail workers are scheduled and concerns about rules designed to prevent fatigue and provide adequate rest to train crews. Both railroads had proposed shifting away from the existing system, which pays workers based on the miles in a trip, to an hourly system they said would make it easier to provide predictable time off.

The railroads said their contract offers have included raises consistent with recent deals in the industry. Engineers make about \$150,000 a year on Canadian National while conductors earn \$120,000, and CPKC says its wages are comparable.

Similar quality-of-life concerns about demanding schedules and the lack of paid sick time nearly led to a U.S. rail strike two years ago until Congress and President Joe Biden intervened and forced the unions to accept a deal.

Manufacturing companies may have to scale back or even shut down production if they can't get rail service, while ports and grain elevators will quickly become clogged with shipments waiting to move. And if the dispute drags on for a couple weeks, water treatment plants all across Canada might have to scramble without new shipments of chlorine.

"If railways are not picking up the goods that are coming in by ships, then pretty soon your terminals get filled up. And at that point you cannot take any vessels at the terminal anymore," said Victor Pang, chief financial officer at the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority.

He pointed to the 13-day strike by 7,400 British Columbia dockworkers last summer, which manufacturers said blocked the flow of \$500 million Canadian (US\$368 million) worth of goods each day.

Some companies would undoubtedly turn to trucking to keep some of their products moving, but there's no way to make up for the volume railroads deliver. It would take some 300 trucks to haul everything just one train can carry.

## In Mexico, an Indigenous Triqui artist embraces his roots through contemporary rap

By MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Backstage at a celebration of Indigenous peoples in Mexico City's sprawling central square, Carlos CGH traced his fingers across a black and red "gabán," which is similar to a poncho.

The garment, native to the Triqui people in western Oaxaca, is a source of pride for the 24-year-old rapper and reserved for special occasions. Its textured surface was decorated with intricate needlepoint patterns of multicolored corn husks.

As the rapper — whose full name is Carlos Guadalupe Hernández — prepared for his performance, Oaxacan muralist Alberto Sebastián Bautista Figueroa brainstormed details. He crafted a drawing with the word "RAICES," or "ROOTS," in twisting strokes, for a mural he planned to create during the performance.

"We're always proud," Guadalupe later said on stage, wearing the gabán. "This goes out to all craftspeople who are here, people don't know all the history and all the resistance behind one garment."

Such details are an important part of his identity as a musician, representing his origins as a descendant of the Triqui nation. His verses are reflective of his culture, and he aims to conserve his native tongue, Triqui, through contemporary rap.

Triqui is one of many Mixtec languages spoken in Oaxaca and has four variants. One variant, Xnánj nú a, is particular to Guadalupe's hometown of San Juan Copala.

"To my Triqui brothers — farmworkers, students, doctors and all the women," Guadalupe rapped in Spanish. "We fight every day for a better future." He held up a shirt that said "Triqui Nation Resists!" while his DJ dropped a series of trap horns.

The Indigenous Triqui people, numbering about 20,000, have struggled with political and social conflicts going back more than 80 years. The area also has become a hot spot for arms trafficking, drug trafficking and illegal logging.

Growing internal disputes for territorial control, including dozens of killings, have led to forced displacement for many in the community.

Many Triquis have moved to Mexico City but push to return to their homes. Guadalupe is originally from the municipality of Santiago Juxtlahuaca, which many Triquis were forced to leave. At the age of 6, he relocated to another Oaxacan city, Huajuapán de León, about two hours away.

He got his start in music at age 12 as a percussionist with a local band, surrounded by Oaxaca-Mixteca artists he admired. He started rapping in 2013, inspired by the local scene. "Like love at first sight," he recalled after seeing local lyricists perform.

He sees rap as a way to conserve his mother tongue.

"It's a language that is at risk of disappearing. Parents and grandparents are no longer teaching it to their kids," he said. "We learned that through rap we can make songs that would interest the new generations to speak it (Triqui) again."

In Oaxaca, the variety of rap is abundant. To mark the 50th anniversary of hip-hop's birth, Oaxaca's Sound Archive, an independent project to demonstrate the state's musical diversity, created a "sonic" map of the region's most influential rappers earlier this year. Carlos CGH was among them.

With about a dozen Indigenous languages, Oaxaca has nurtured a diverse scene. Among Guadalupe's peers are rappers who take pride in rapping in Mixtec, Zapotec, Cuicatec and other languages.

But the scene has suffered from the violence in Oaxaca. Last month, Rosty Bazendu, a passionate lyricist in the Zapotec language, was killed.

"When you look up the Triqui community on the internet, a lot of things are going to come up regarding some of the problems we have," Guadalupe said. "Here in Mexico City, I come to talk about what's within my community — the celebrations, the craftsmanship, the children, everyone who has stood out."

On stage, Guadalupe's vision of Triqui culture comes to life.

"Where are my people from the Triqui nation?" he shouted. A family in the front row raised their hands. His last song, dedicated to the people of Santiago Juxtlahuaca, opened with playful arrangements of

traditional Oaxacan banda music.

The crowd cheered for "El Baile del Diablo," or "Devil's Dance," a traditional dance from the Oaxacan coast. The muralist Bautista exchanged his cans of spray paint for the traditional garb of the devil, wearing a handcrafted wooden mask and stomping across the stage.

Throughout the track, Guadalupe seamlessly wove Spanish verses with Triqui rhymes.

"I will never forget my culture, tradition and language," he said with pride at the end.

## Parents of American held by Hamas appeal for hostages' release during Democratic convention

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

The parents of a 23-year-old American taken hostage by Hamas during the Oct. 7 attack on Israel gave a moving speech Wednesday at the Democratic National Convention, pleading for the release of the dozens of people who continue to be held captive in Gaza.

"This is a political convention. But needing our only son — and all of the cherished hostages — home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue," said Jon Polin, whose son Hersh Goldberg-Polin lost part of his left arm and was kidnapped from Israel by militants who attacked the music festival he was attending.

Polin and his wife, Rachel Goldberg-Polin, were greeted with an extended ovation and chants of "bring him home" by the thousands of Democratic delegates in Chicago.

They steered clear of politics in their 10-minute speech, but Jon Polin said the families of the American hostages meet regularly in Washington and are heartened to see bipartisan support for securing the release of their loved ones. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, he said, are "both working tirelessly" for a deal between Israel and Hamas for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of the remaining hostages.

"Hersh, if you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive," Rachel Polin-Goldberg said.

She and her husband wore stickers with the number 320, drawing attention to the number of days their son has been held.

The speech put an emotional and human face on the Israel-Hamas conflict, a sensitive issue for Democrats, who face pressure from pro-Palestinian protesters to more forcefully press Israel to end the siege that has leveled much of the Gaza Strip and killed tens of thousands of people, according to the Gaza health ministry, which does not distinguish in its death count between militants and civilians.

Delegates of the "uncommitted" movement, which was sparked by dissatisfaction with President Joe Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war, announced to reporters late Wednesday that officials denied their request for a Palestinian to speak during the convention. The group of 36 delegates has outsized influence as they stem from pivotal battleground states like Michigan, which is part of the so-called "blue wall" critical to Democratic chances in November.

The movement's leaders had negotiated for weeks with the Harris campaign and convention organizers, and were given a panel Monday afternoon to discuss family members lost or maimed in Israel's offensive.

"I have asked for the vice president to call us back and tell us that the suppression of Palestinian Americans does not belong in the Democratic Party and a Palestinian speaker will speak on this stage," Uncommitted National Movement co-founder Abbas Alawieh said. "I'm waiting for the call."

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez called on convention organizers to make space for a Palestinian speaker.

"Just as we must honor the humanity of hostages, so too must we center the humanity of the 40,000 Palestinians killed under Israeli bombardment," the New York lawmaker wrote on the X platform. "To deny that story is to participate in the dehumanization of Palestinians."

More than 100 hostages remain in Gaza, though some are believed to have died. Family members of six of the eight American hostages still held by Hamas were in Chicago to raise awareness about their loved ones' plight.

Ronen and Orna Neutra, the parents of hostage Omer Neutra, were given a speaking slot at the Repub-



lican National Convention last month.

"Time is running out," Ronen Neutra told The Associated Press at the Democratic convention. "And all leaders must work together in a bipartisan fashion to put pressure on both Hamas and the Israeli government and reach a deal that is so much overdue, so much overdue."

On Tuesday, multiple pro-Palestinian demonstrators were arrested after clashing with police during a protest that began outside the Israeli consulate and spilled out onto the surrounding streets.

Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday as the United States presses Israel and Hamas to agree to a "bridging proposal" that could lead to a cease-fire in the war in Gaza.

## **Explosion and fire at a pharmaceutical plant in India kill at least 15 workers and injure 40**

By OMER FAROOQ Associated Press

HYDERABAD, India (AP) — A big explosion triggered a fire in a pharmaceutical plant in southern India, killing at least 15 workers, police said Thursday.

An additional 40 people were injured in the blast and the fire in the chemical reactor of the plant in Andhra Pradesh state Wednesday and were hospitalized, police officer M. Deepika said, adding that some of them were in critical condition.

The Press Trust of India news agency reported distressing scenes with the skin of several workers peeling off. Ambulances transported them to the hospital.

Officials suspect the cause was related to the electricity at the plant. State authorities have ordered an investigation.

The explosion occurred at the Escientia Company in Anakapalle district. The plant is about 350 kilometers (220 miles) northeast of Amaravati, the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The 5-year-old company manufactures intermediate chemicals and active pharmaceutical ingredients.

As the news of the blast spread, hundreds of workers' family members and relatives rushed to the plant to learn what happened to their loved ones.

Around 380 employees work two shifts at the plant. Many workers escaped because they were on lunch break when the explosion started the fire.

The plant is in the state's special economic zone at Atchutapuram village, which was established in 2009 with over 200 companies. Anakapalli is adjacent to the port city of Vishakhapatnam, a highly industrialized area with many mishaps, including hazardous chemical leakages.

In the most extensive industrial mishap in the region, 22 people were killed when a blast occurred in the refinery of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation in Visakhapatnam in 1997.

Fires are common in India, where builders and residents often flout building laws and safety norms. Some don't even install firefighting equipment.

In 2019, a fire caused by an electrical short circuit in a New Delhi factory producing handbags and other items killed 43 people.

## **Walz's night, Bill Clinton's dig at Trump, influencers flexing clout. DNC Day 3 takeaways**

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The Democratic National Convention's third night showcased a familiar former president, Bill Clinton, and introduced more Americans to Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, little known outside his state until Vice President Kamala Harris selected him as her running mate.

Walz, with his background as a former teacher and football coach, used his speech to put a small-town spin on the Democrats' agenda of protecting individual freedoms and rejecting what they paint as the intrusive policies of Republican Donald Trump.

Wednesday's program also highlighted plenty of up-and-coming Democratic politicians and media mogul

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 37 of 72

Oprah Winfrey, who gave an energetic speech in support of the party's ticket.

Here are some takeaways from the third night of the DNC.

Walz offers himself as Midwestern everyman

For years, Republicans have caricatured Democrats as coastal elites who have little in common with ordinary Americans.

Walz tried to use his biography as a hunter, teacher, football coach and national guardsman from the Midwest to disarm those attacks, which Republicans in the past have wielded with merciless efficiency.

His presence on the ticket offers a counterweight in a year when Republicans are trying to paint Harris as a California liberal with dangerous ideas.

During his speech, Walz sought to turn Republican arguments on their head while making an appeal for common sense rooted in his Midwestern values.

"When they were banning books from their schools, we were banishing hunger from ours," he jabbed.

It's a pitch aimed at constituencies that Democrats have struggled to connect with in recent years, namely rural, white voters who have increasingly abandoned the party.

Walz was introduced by Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who asked, "Who better to find common ground than a guy with Midwestern common sense?"

The Big Dog in twilight turns the age question toward Trump

Clinton has spoken at 13 straight Democratic National Conventions, going back to 1976. On Wednesday night he confessed, "I have no idea how many more of these I'll be able to come to."

It was a striking admission from a politician whose dominance earned him the nickname The Big Dog. Clinton, who just turned 78, didn't shrink from his age, instead turning it into a poke at the GOP nominee, declaring, "I'm still younger than Donald Trump."

In his 27-minute speech, Clinton leaned into what he's seen over the decades and the burdens of history. He warned the convention crowd that, however good they feel, the campaign will be tough.

"You should never underestimate your adversary," Clinton said. It could be taken as an allusion to watching his wife, Hillary Clinton, fall just short of the presidency in 2016.

'Bring them home'

In a deeply polarized country, there was one group that was welcomed with loud applause at both the Republican and Democratic conventions — the parents of young men taken hostage after Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7.

Last month in Milwaukee, Ronen and Orna Neutra, told the gathering about the kidnapping of their adult son, Omer, and led the crowd in a chant of "bring them home!" On Wednesday, Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg-Polin, whose 23-year-old son Hersh Goldberg-Polin was kidnapped on Oct. 7, walked onstage to the same chant.

"This is a political convention," Jon Polin said. "But needing our only son and all of the cherished hostages home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue."

At the RNC, several speakers — though not the Neutras — slammed President Joe Biden and Harris for not deterring Hamas from its attack and for neglecting the hostages. Polin and Goldberg, for their part, said they've spoken repeatedly with the president and vice president and praised their efforts.

While the Republican convention framed Hamas as a threat to the United States, the Democratic convention has been comparably quiet about the war, even as pro-Palestinian protests demonstrate outside the hall demanding the administration stop supporting Israel.

Jan. 6 insurrection back in the spotlight

The Jan. 6 insurrection of 2021 has been a key part of Democratic campaigns ever since the attack on the U.S. Capitol shocked the country. Democrats gave it a place of prominence Wednesday night.

The centerpiece was a video showing Trump urging his supporters to march to the Capitol, the attacks on police officers and the Republican nominee's pledges to pardon those who were prosecuted. That last bit drew chants of "lock him up" from the Democratic delegates.

Democrats want to step carefully, though, lest an attack on American democracy become just another partisan issue.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 38 of 72

To that end, the segment kicked off with Republicans speaking about their worries about Trump. Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan recalled threats from Trump supporters when he refused to accede to the then-president's demands in 2020 to declare him the winner in Georgia rather than Biden.

Duncan told fellow Republicans that if they vote for Harris, "You're not a Democrat. You're a patriot."

Dems give freedom an expansive definition

Wednesday night's convention theme was "Freedom." Backed by Beyoncé's song of the same name, which the musician has authorized the Harris campaign to use, the word flashed on the video screen and in speech after speech at the United Center.

Democrats firmly tied it to the fight over reproductive rights that went into overdrive after the fall of Roe v. Wade. But they also used the freedom argument to slam Republicans on other social issues, from gay rights to the spread of book bans in schools.

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, a gay man raising two children with his husband, tied it to the conservative Project 2025. The agenda was developed by the conservative Heritage Foundation and is seen as a potential blueprint for a second Trump term, although Trump says it is not related to his campaign.

"Project 2025 would turn the entire federal government into a massive machine, it would weaponize it to control our reproductive choices," Polis said.

And in one of the evening's most electrifying speeches, Winfrey said of freedom, "Every now and then, it requires standing up to life's bullies."

Democrats, long associated with Hollywood, look to online influencers

The Democratic Party boasts a cache of celebrity supporters who have repeatedly lent their glamor and opened their wallets to the party. Now they're teaming up with those who have attained renown in a decidedly 21st-century way: online.

More than 200 content creators and influencers have been granted access to the DNC's backstage events this week. And with tens of millions of followers, their coverage of the events can do more to get politicians' messages out than traditional media and celebrity endorsements.

On TikTok, influencers like Deja Foxx post "OOTD," or outfit of the day, videos on the DNC's blue carpet. Her Wednesday fit included a matching khaki set, a pair of Nike Air Force Ones, and an oversized Prada jacket with giant pockets to hold all her equipment, "because slay," she tells her 141K followers.

The creator has already interviewed Harris on her social media pages and spoke on behalf of Arizona's delegation at the DNC.

Carlos Eduardo Espina, a Spanish-speaking influencer with 10.2 million followers on TikTok, addressed the convention Wednesday night, part of an appeal to young Latino voters who are crucial to getting Harris elected.

Espina seamlessly joined a senator, a border congresswoman and a Texas sheriff as defenders of the Biden-Harris stance on immigration. "To be pro-immigrant is to be pro-America," he said.

The Democratic and Republican playlists play to their bases

The playlist at the Republican convention in Milwaukee last month was dominated by classic rock. Now, as the Democrats gather in Chicago, the musical offerings have been far more diverse.

The dueling soundtracks are a reflection of the two parties' dramatically different voting bases. The GOP convention leaned heavily on the radio rock that was popular when much of their older, whiter base was young in the 1960s and 1970s. The Democrats' musical offerings, meanwhile, include rap, R&B, indie rock, country, Americana — and, yes, some classic rock — in keeping with the party's multi-racial coalition.

Across the first two nights at the DNC, there were appearances by Atlanta rapper Lil Jon and Americana singer-songwriter Jason Isbell. The Wednesday lineup included R&B stars Stevie Wonder and John Legend, the latter covering the songs of Minnesota icon Prince. Pop star Pink is slated to perform on the final night.

The GOP convention featured a house band that belted out covers of Aerosmith, Cheap Trick and Lynyrd Skynyrd tunes. The house band also backed up country singer Lee Greenwood, who performed "God Bless the USA." Rap-rocker Kid Rock, an avowed conservative, also performed.

## Harris' running mate Tim Walz talks of 'bringing the joy' in his national introduction at DNC

By WILL WEISSERT and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz accepted his party's nomination for vice president Wednesday night, using his Democratic National Convention address to thank the packed arena for "bringing the joy" to an election transformed by the elevation of his running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris.

"We're all here tonight for one beautiful, simple reason: We love this country," Walz said as thousands of delegates hoisted vertical placards reading "Coach Walz" in red, white and blue.

Many Americans had never heard of Walz until Harris made him her running mate, and the speech was an opportunity to introduce himself. He leaned into his experiences as a football coach, his time in the National Guard and his recounting of his family's fertility struggles — all parts of his biography that Republicans have questioned in the days since Harris picked him.

While it's unclear if the speech will attract new voters, he further charmed Democratic supporters with his background and helped to balance Harris' coastal roots as a cultural representative of Midwestern states whose voters she needs this fall.

The Harris campaign said Walz had worked on his speech for multiple days and he used a teleprompter for the first time, practicing to ensure he was prepared. He told the crowd, "I haven't given a lot of speeches like this but I've given a lot of pep talks."

"Some folks just don't understand what it takes to be a good neighbor," Walz said. "Take Donald Trump and JD Vance."

Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, bashed the convention as a "charade" earlier Wednesday and noted that he has been a frequent topic of conversation. He also singled out his predecessor, former President Barack Obama, for a highly critical convention speech Tuesday night, saying Obama had been "nasty."

Walz lays out his biography

Walz described his upbringing in Nebraska and teaching and coaching football in Minnesota and told the crowd, "Thank you for bringing the joy to this fight."

But he also criticized Trump and his running mate, JD Vance, and took several swipes at Republican policies. "While other states were banning books from their schools, we were banishing hunger from ours," he said.

Walz has been accused of embellishing his background. His wife this week clarified that she did not undergo in vitro fertilization, as Walz has repeatedly claimed, but used other fertility treatments. Republicans also have criticized Walz for a 2018 comment he made about carrying weapons in war. Though he served in the National Guard for 24 years, he did not deploy to a war zone.

Walz has made his family's struggle with fertility a central part of his narrative, a tangible way to connect with voters alarmed at the erosion of reproductive rights in the U.S. But Gwen Walz on Tuesday issued a statement that detailed the experience more comprehensively and disclosed that they relied on a different process known as intrauterine insemination, or IUI.

"If you've never experienced infertility, I guarantee you know someone who has," Tim Walz said Wednesday.

His daughter, Hope, made a heart with her hands and held it over her chest.

His son, Gus, openly wept throughout the speech, wiping his eyes with tissues while watching from the front row.

Through tears he mouthed, "That's my dad."

The Bill and Oprah Show

Two prominent Harris boosters on Wednesday were people Trump has crossed paths during their shared decades in public life: Bill Clinton, the nation's 42nd president, and Oprah Winfrey, the iconic talk-show host.

Ironically, she suggested years ago that Trump could be president one day, while Clinton was once close enough to Trump that he attended his 2005 wedding to his wife Melania.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 40 of 72

In a convention designed to needle Trump, Clinton and Winfrey portrayed Trump as selfish and Harris as focused on the needs of everyday Americans rather than her own.

"We've got a pretty clear choice it seems to me. Kamala Harris, for the people. And the other guy who has proved, even more than the first go-around, that he's about me, myself and I," Clinton said.

Clinton returned to a place he knows well, the Democratic convention stage, firing up his party with his trademark off-the-cuff flourishes. He spoke about 10 minutes longer than Walz did in the headliner's spot.

Now 78 — the same age as Trump — Clinton's delivery was sometimes halting, his movements slower, and he mispronounced Harris' first name twice. His left hand often shook when he wasn't using it to grip the lectern.

Still, he delivered several memorable, homespun pronouncements including asking: "What does her opponent do with his voice? He mostly talks about himself. So the next time you hear him, don't count the lies, count the I's."

Winfrey — who long filmed her famous talk show in Chicago — offered a full-throated endorsement of Harris and characterized her campaign by singing out, "Joy!"

"Decency and respect are on the ballot in 2024," she said, adding, "Let us chose common sense over nonsense."

A focus on 'freedoms'

The night's theme was "a fight for our freedoms," with the programming focusing on abortion access and other rights that Democrats want to center in their campaign against Trump. Speaker after speaker argued that their party wants to defend freedoms while Republicans want to take them away.

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis used a prop that has become a convention staple, an oversized book meant to represent the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, a sweeping set of goals to shrink government and push it to the right, if Trump wins. Polis even ripped a page from the ceremonial volume and said he was going to keep it and show it to undecided voters.

Florida Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz told the story of a woman in her state, which enacted new abortion restrictions after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, who was forced to carry to term a child with a fatal illness, only to watch the newborn die just hours after birth.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi spoke about the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. He chaired a congressional committee that investigated the mob overrunning the Capitol, saying, "They wanted to stop the peaceful transfer of power for the first time in American history."

"Thank God they failed," Thompson said.

Democrats also recognized the hostages still being held by Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed. Jon and Rachel Goldberg-Polin brought some in the arena to tears as they paid tribute to their son Hersh, who was abducted in the attack.

Freeing hostages "is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue," Jon Goldberg-Polin said, adding that "in a competition of pain there are no winners."

The Israel-Hamas war has split the Democratic base, with pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrating outside the United Center and several speakers this week acknowledging civilian deaths in the Israeli offensive in Gaza. More than 40,000 people have died in Gaza, according to local health authorities.

The man from Hope talks about joy

Some of the loudest cheers of the night were for Clinton, who seemed to relish being a warmup act for Walz. A two-term president and generational leader of his party, he noted that he attended his first convention in 1976 — then corrected himself by saying it was actually 1972.

"I have no idea how many more of these I'll be able to come to," Clinton said.

Still, he implored delegates about the Harris-Walz ticket, "If you can get them elected and let them bring in this breath of fresh air, you will be proud of it for the rest of your life."

"Your children will be proud of it," he said. "Your grandchildren will be proud of it."

## India's Modi visits Ukraine this week, after a recent trip to Moscow. Here's what it could mean

By KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a historic visit Friday to Ukraine, a month and a half after he traveled to Moscow to hold talks with President Vladimir Putin.

Officials in India and Ukraine have said the visit will focus on boosting economic ties and cooperation in defense, science and technology.

But analysts say the visit could also be an attempt to have India strike a more neutral stance after what has been seen as a lean toward Russia, given Modi's recent Moscow visit, his country's historic, Cold War-era relationship with Russia and New Delhi's avoidance of directly criticizing Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

Why is Modi visiting Ukraine?

Modi's landmark visit is the first to Ukraine from a prime minister of India since the country established diplomatic relations with Ukraine over 30 years ago. He will arrive in Kyiv after a two-day visit to Poland.

Analysts say the timing of the trip is aimed at controlling fallout from the Indian leader's July 8-9 trip to Russia.

That trip coincided with a NATO leaders gathering in Washington and Russian missile strikes on a hospital in Ukraine that killed scores of people, drawing strong criticism from Zelenskyy. The Ukrainian leader called Modi's meeting "a huge disappointment" and "a devastating blow to peace efforts" after the Indian leader was seen hugging Putin.

While Modi did not address the missile strikes directly, he alluded to the bloodshed while sitting next to Putin, and condemned any attack that harms innocent people.

This week's Ukraine trip represents India "trying to balance the situation" after being seen as "tilting towards Russia," said K C Singh, a strategic affairs expert and former diplomat.

Indian officials are downplaying any connections with the Moscow trip. "This is not a zero-sum game ... these are independent, broad ties," Secretary (West) Tanmaya Lal said this week.

Despite pressure from the West, New Delhi has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion or voting against it in U.N. resolutions. It has avoided taking sides and urged Ukraine and Russia to resolve the conflict through dialogue.

"Modi's visit is designed to some extent to show that New Delhi's strategic orientation remains non-alignment, and as such, to keep balance in its foreign policy," said Derek Grossman, an Indo-Pacific analyst at the RAND Corporation.

What are India's ties to Russia?

India and Russia have had strong ties since the Cold War, and New Delhi's importance as a key trading partner for Moscow has grown since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

India has joined China in becoming a key buyer of Russian oil following sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies that shut most Western markets off to Russian exports.

Modi's visit to Moscow was seen by analysts as reinforcing their partnership, especially since Russia remains a crucial trade and defense partner. Some 60% of India's military systems and hardware is of Russian origin, and New Delhi now gets more than 40% of its oil imports from Russia.

Trade between the two has also seen a sharp increase, touching close to \$65 billion in the 2023-24 financial year, according to India's foreign ministry.

What about India's ties to Ukraine?

Bilateral trade between India and Ukraine is much lower, at about at \$3 billion before the invasion, but Modi and Zelenskyy have interacted since at the sidelines of global events and the Ukrainian foreign minister also visited New Delhi earlier this year.

India has also provided several consignments of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the invasion.

Analysts say Zelenskyy is unlikely to raise Modi's meeting with Putin - at least publicly.

But Modi's Moscow visit and the India-Russia relationship will be a "strong undertone" to his Ukraine trip,

even if it not explicitly mentioned in public statements, added Chietigj Bajpae, who researches South Asia at the Chatham House think tank.

How will this trip be perceived?

The trip is likely to be well-received in the U.S. and other Western countries that had been critical of Modi's meeting with Putin in July, Grossman said.

For Modi, this trip is an opportunity "to engage Zelenskyy and secure Indian interests there, push back against Russian overreach and placate the West," Grossman added.

But while the trip will offer some reassurance to the West, it will remain clear that India maintains a closer relationship with Moscow and "Modi's visit will not change this perception," Bajpae said.

Modi is unlikely to use this visit to seek a role for India as a peacemaker in the conflict, which some had speculated it would do at the onset of the war given New Delhi's ties to Russia and emerging stature globally.

"Indian behavior... has been to try to stay out of resolving it, and to only occasionally comment against further aggression," said Grossman, adding that India — unlike China or Turkey — hasn't come forward with a peace plan, for example.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin will be observing Modi's visit, "but short of any statements that are highly critical of Russia, it is unlikely to be concerned," Bajpae said.

## **Poorly trained recruits contribute to loss of Ukrainian territory on eastern front, commanders say**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Some new Ukrainian soldiers refuse to fire at the enemy. Others, according to commanders and fellow fighters, struggle to assemble weapons or to coordinate basic combat movements. A few have even walked away from their posts, abandoning the battlefield altogether.

While Ukraine presses on with its incursion into Russia's Kursk region, its troops are still losing precious ground along the country's eastern front — a grim erosion that military commanders blame in part on poorly trained recruits drawn from a recent mobilization drive, as well as Russia's clear superiority in ammunition and air power.

"Some people don't want to shoot. They see the enemy in the firing position in trenches but don't open fire. ... That is why our men are dying," said a frustrated battalion commander in Ukraine's 47th Brigade. "When they don't use the weapon, they are ineffective."

The accounts come from commanders and soldiers who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to speak freely about sensitive military matters. Others spoke on the condition that they be identified only by their call signs in keeping with Ukrainian military protocol.

Commanders say the recruits have contributed to a string of territorial losses that enabled Russia's army to advance, including near the city of Pokrovsk, a critical logistics hub. If it falls, the defeat would imperil Ukraine's defenses and bring Russia closer to its stated aim of capturing the Donetsk region. Russian soldiers are now just 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) away.

Adding to Ukraine's woes are Russia's huge advantage in manpower and its willingness to accept staggering losses in return for capturing small objectives.

The recently conscripted Ukrainians are a far cry from the battle-hardened fighters who flocked to join the war in the first year of the full-scale invasion. The new troops lack even a minimal level of training, commanders and soldiers from four brigades defending the Pokrovsk area said.

They described having to plan operations with infantry who are unable to shoot targets and uninformed about basic topography. Some recruits simply lacked faith in the battle plans of their superiors and walked away from prepared positions.

Frustrated with the quality of the new conscripts sent to the front line by territorial recruitment centers, commanders are now seeking to conduct their own mobilization drives to better screen and train new fighters, multiple commanders and soldiers said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 43 of 72

"The main problem is the survival instinct of newcomers. Before, people could stand until the last moment to hold the position. Now, even when there is light shelling of firing positions, they are retreating," said a soldier with the 110th Brigade.

Not everyone is turning around and running away from battle, he added.

"No, there are motivated people, but they are just very, very few," he said. "The position is held as far as there are these people who are motivated and committed."

Following the implementation of a controversial mobilization law in May that established clearer regulations for territorial recruitment centers, Ukraine is reportedly drafting tens of thousands of fighters per month. Demand is highest in the infantry.

But there are logistical hurdles to train, equip and pay so many incoming people, and commanders constantly demand new soldiers. To ease that pressure, military leaders have had to take units from brigades in one region and transfer them to different areas to stabilize weak spots.

Some point the finger back at commanders who single out recent recruits for losses.

Viktor Kevliuk, a military expert with the Ukraine-based Center for Defense Strategies think tank, said the training offered to recruits is adequate. He said brigade commanders "are looking for an explanation for tactical failures."

"Likewise, the brigade commander has the appropriate tools to influence morale. If all these processes are established in the brigade, there will be no significant problems. If these mechanisms fail, we read about the negativity in social networks," he added.

And in intense fights such as the one in Pokrovsk, "it is the timely tactical decisions of commanders that make the difference, Kevliuk said.

In some instances, terrified new recruits have fled from the fight.

"This fear creates panic and chaos," said the battalion commander in the 47th Brigade. "This is also the reason we have lost."

The loss of the village of Prohres last month in the Pokrovsk region is the most recent example of territorial loss blamed on new recruits, commanders said. Units from the 31st Brigade left in a poorly coordinated frenzy, prompting the 47th Brigade to enter the battle and attempt to stabilize the line. A similar scenario unfolded in the village of Ocheretyne in May.

Not enough is done to train newcomers, the battalion commander said. "They don't receive even the lowest standard of training required for our (combat) actions," he said.

The new men do not have enough practice assembling and shooting their rifles, he said. They also have not learned how to coordinate combat tasks in small groups or to use even simple tactics, he added.

"From the command point, I would like to issue orders to small (infantry) groups, but I am not sure if they are capable of executing these orders because they lack coordination and communication," he said, adding, "Sometimes, I want to shoot myself."

Ukraine's sudden foray into Russia initially stirred hopes that the Kremlin might be forced to divide its military resources to respond. But so far, Russian forces have not wavered in their push toward Pokrovsk and other potential conquests.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's lightning advance into Russian territory has slowed after two weeks, making only small gains, a possible sign that Moscow is counter-attacking more effectively.

Commanders in the east report that battles have only intensified since the incursion. Local authorities on Monday ordered Pokrovsk's nearly 53,000 residents to evacuate within two weeks. In the neighboring town of Myrnohrad, even closer to Russian positions, residents were given only days.

The capture of Pokrovsk would undermine Ukrainian supply routes to the Donetsk region and ease Russia's advance to the eastern cities of Sloviansk and Kostiantynivka. It would also mark Russia's first major strategic win after months of painfully fought marginal gains.

In the last three months, the majority of Ukrainian territorial losses were recorded in the Pokrovsk area, according to three open-source monitoring groups, with fighting intensifying in the vicinity of the towns of Toretsk and Chasiv Yar. Russian forces dialed up the attacks in an attempt to capitalize on troop fatigue



and shortages.

The offensive has also come at a huge cost to Moscow, with an estimated 70,000 troops lost in two months, according to the U.K. Defense Ministry, which posted the projection last month on X. Heavy losses have continued as Russian forces gradually approach Pokrovsk from the east and southeast.

Another challenge for Ukraine is a new tactic in which Russia deploys recurrent waves of smaller infantry units of two to four men. That has flummoxed Ukrainian drone operators, who find it difficult to target them, according to a drone operator with the 25th Brigade who uses the call sign Groot.

"This is one of the main reasons for (Russia's) success in Pokrovsk," he said. "It's harder to detect them," especially under the cover of leafy trees.

"As soon as the infantry get under the tree lines, it's really hard to get them out of there with drones, and that's why we depend a lot on our infantry."

## Arrests in fatal Texas smuggling attempt climb 2 years after 53 migrants died in tractor trailer

By SONIA PÉREZ D. and JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

Arrests following the 2022 deaths of 53 migrants in Texas who were left in a sweltering tractor-trailer have climbed to more than a dozen, and now stretch to Central America, following years of investigations into the deadliest smuggling attempt from the U.S.-Mexico border.

Guatemalan officials announced the arrests of seven people accused of helping smuggle the migrants. They included the alleged ringleader of a smuggling operation whose extradition has been requested by the United States, Interior Minister Francisco Jiménez told The Associated Press.

The Justice Department was scheduled to hold a news conference Thursday in San Antonio to discuss a "significant" arrest in the case but did not provide details.

Jiménez said the arrests were made possible after 13 raids in three of the country's departments. Police also seized vehicles and cash and rescued other migrants during the operations, Guatemalan officials said in a statement.

"This is a collaborative effort between the Guatemalan police and Homeland Security, in addition to other national agencies, to dismantle the structures of human trafficking, one of the strategic objectives of the government President Bernardo Arévalo in order to take on the phenomenon of irregular migration," Jiménez said.

Six people were charged previously.

They include Homero Zamorano Jr., who authorities say drove the truck, and Christian Martinez, who were arrested shortly after the migrants were found. Both are from Texas. Martinez has since pleaded guilty to smuggling-related charges, while Zamorano pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial.

Four Mexican nationals were also arrested in 2023.

Authorities say the men were aware that the trailer's air-conditioning unit was malfunctioning and would not blow cool air to the migrants trapped inside during the sweltering, three-hour ride from the border city of Laredo to San Antonio.

When the trailer was opened in San Antonio, 48 migrants were already dead. Another 16 were taken to hospitals, where five more died. The dead included 27 people from Mexico, 14 from Honduras, seven from Guatemala and two from El Salvador.

Authorities allege that the men worked with human smuggling operations in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, and shared routes, guides, stash houses, trucks and trailers, some of which were stored at a private parking lot in San Antonio.

Migrants paid the organization up to \$15,000 each to be taken across the border. The fee would cover up to three attempts to get into the country.

The arrests in Guatemala include Rigoberto Román Mirnado Orozco, the alleged ringleader, who was arrested in the department of San Marcos, on the border with Mexico. The other arrests occurred in Huehuetenango and Jalapa departments.

Several of those arrested are related and carry the Orozco surname, officials said. Guatemalan officials accuse the group of housing and transferring hundreds of migrants to the United States over several years.

## Harris' family members are popping up around Chicago this week during the DNC. Here's who's who

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Kamala Harris has a husband, Doug Emhoff, who could make history as America's first gentleman spouse. Two stepchildren who call her "Momala." A politically connected sister who is a top adviser and sounding board. A brother-in-law who temporarily stepped away from a top private sector gig to help elect her. A niece who is the mother of two daughters that Harris dotes on. There's also her husband's ex-wife, who defends Harris and Emhoff and their blended family.

They've been popping up around Chicago and on social media this week during the Democratic National Convention, where Harris will formally accept the party's presidential nomination.

A look at members of Harris' blended family:

Doug Emhoff: Husband

He would become America's first first gentleman if his wife is elected president.

Emhoff, 59, is already the first second gentleman of the U.S. and the first Jewish spouse of a U.S. president or vice president. He has been a leader of the Biden administration's efforts against antisemitism. Emhoff gave up a lucrative career as an entertainment and intellectual property lawyer in California to avoid conflicts of interest and support his wife after she became vice president.

In a speech to the Democratic National Convention on Tuesday night, Emhoff told the story of how he and Harris met on a blind date in 2013; she was California's attorney general at the time. They wed in 2014, her first marriage and his second. Emhoff has two adult children, Ella and Cole, from a previous marriage and they call Harris "Momala."

Ella Emhoff: Stepdaughter

Ella, 25, is the daughter of Emhoff and his first wife, Kerstin.

Ella is an artist, model and fashion designer who lives in New York. Her parents named her after jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald. She's a 2021 graduate of The New School's Parsons School of Design in New York. She made her debut at the annual Met Gala in 2021 in a red mesh bodysuit and matching pants by Stella McCartney. After her dad's convention speech, she flashed a heart figure made with her hands. Ella recently drew criticism after posting on a personal social media account a fundraising link to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

Cole Emhoff: Stepson

Cole, 29, is the son of Emhoff and his former wife.

Cole is a film assistant and producer at Plan B Entertainment, a production company in Los Angeles that was co-founded by Brad Pitt. His parents named him after saxophonist John Coltrane. He introduced his father to the convention on Tuesday night as "the glue that keeps this family together." Cole graduated from Colorado College in 2017 with a degree in psychology. Harris officiated in October 2023 when Cole married longtime girlfriend Greenley Littlejohn.

Maya Harris: Sister

Maya, 57, is the vice president's younger sister and her only sibling. She talked about her sister's "fighting spirit" and instinct to protect the people she's close to in a brief video shown during the convention. Maya is a lawyer, policy advocate, speaker and writer who chaired her sister's 2020 presidential campaign. She then became a national surrogate for the Biden-Harris ticket after her sister became Joe Biden's running mate. In 2016, she was a senior adviser for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Maya lives in California and New York with her husband, Tony West.

Tony West: Brother-in-law

West, 59, recently went on leave from his job as Uber's chief legal officer to work on Harris' campaign.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 46 of 72

West spoke about his sister-in-law at the convention on Wednesday night, telling delegates that she is motivated "by a belief in equal opportunity." He has advised Harris' campaigns since her race for San Francisco district attorney in 2003, and has accompanied her on some recent trips. A graduate of Stanford University law school, West was general counsel of PepsiCo before he joined Uber in 2017. He served in the Justice Department under Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. West and Maya Harris met at Stanford and married in 1998.

Meena Harris, Alexander Hudlin, Jasper Emhoff, Arden Emhoff: Nieces and Nephews

Meena, 39, is Maya Harris' daughter from a previous relationship. She is the founder and CEO of Phenomenal, a consumer and media company. Meena is also a lawyer, author and theater producer who worked on her aunt's 2020 presidential campaign. She lives in the California Bay Area with her husband, Nikolas Ajagu, and their daughters Amara, 8, and Leela, 6. The vice president likes to dote on her young nieces and recently took them for ice cream at model Tyra Banks' new shop in Washington, D.C. Meena and the vice president share an Oct. 20 birthday.

Hudlin and Jasper Emhoff and Arden Emhoff spoke about their "auntie" at the convention on Wednesday night. Hudlin called her a "baller" and said "she'll lift us up." Jasper Emhoff said Kamala Harris will make time "for what matters" even though "no one is busier than my auntie." Arden Emhoff said Harris will treat everyone with respect because, "even as a kid, auntie made me feel that I was seen, that my words are important, that I am important and loved."

Kerstin Emhoff: Doug's former wife, Ella and Cole's mother

Kerstin, 57, is a film producer and co-founder and CEO of a commercial production company and a creative studio in California. She is attending the Democratic convention and produced a short introductory film about her former husband that was shown before he spoke at the convention on Tuesday night, according to her social media posts. Kerstin and Doug married in 1992 and split in 2009, but remain on good terms. Ella, their daughter, has described the Emhoffs and Harris as a "three-headed parenting machine." Kerstin has stood up for their blended family and recently defended Harris after Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance's previous comments resurfaced about "childless cat ladies" who run the U.S. government. She also defended Doug after he acknowledged an extramarital affair that he said contributed to the breakup of their marriage.

Shyamala Gopalan and Donald Harris: Kamala's and Maya's parents

Gopalan was a renowned breast cancer scientist who came to the United States from India at 19. She earned a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964. She and Donald Harris, who was born in Jamaica, met there as graduate students who participated in the civil rights movement. They got married in 1963 and had two daughters, but had divorced by the time Kamala Harris was 7. Gopalan died of cancer in 2009 at age 70.

Donald Harris, 85, became a prominent economist. He was an economics professor at Stanford University from 1972 to 1998, and currently is a professor emeritus. He also was an economic consultant to the government of Jamaica and several of its prime ministers.

Republicans have tried to tie Donald Harris' writings on Marxist theories to their own false claims that the vice president is a communist. But his academic work also had a more pragmatic bent about options for achieving growth.

## From cybercrime to terrorism, FBI director says America faces many elevated threats 'all at once'

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. (AP) — The country is facing heightened threats from many corners at a time when law enforcement agencies are struggling, FBI Director Christopher Wray said in an exclusive interview, adding that he is "hard pressed to think of a time in my career where so many different kinds of threats are all elevated at once."

Wray spoke Wednesday with The Associated Press while visiting the Minneapolis field office to talk about

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 47 of 72

partnerships between law enforcement agencies and also with other entities. His remarks come as the FBI confronts heightened concerns over terrorism, both domestic and international, as well as Chinese espionage and intellectual property theft and foreign election interference.

"I worry about the combination of that many threats being elevated at once, with the challenges facing the men and women in law enforcement more generally," Wray said at the office in the suburb of Brooklyn Center. "And the one thing that I think helps bridge those two challenges is partnerships. That's how we get through. It is by all working together."

Wray's assessment of an elevated threat landscape is consistent with alarm bells he has sounded for months. Soon after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in Israel, Wray began warning that the rampage could serve as an inspiration to militants, "the likes of which we haven't seen since ISIS launched its so-called caliphate years ago."

The FBI has also scrambled to deal with security concerns related to the United States' southern border, with officials revealing in June that eight people from Tajikistan with suspected ties to the Islamic State group were arrested and were being held on immigration violations.

Officials are also dealing with the specter of foreign election interference. The FBI and other federal agencies announced Monday that Iran was responsible for a hack targeting the Trump campaign and for an attempted breach of the Biden-Harris campaign, part of what officials portrayed as a brazen and aggressive effort to interfere in American politics.

Wray declined to talk about any specific investigation or threat but said investigations into cyberattacks, including against election infrastructure, candidates or campaigns, require help from the private sector.

"One of the things that we have been doubling down on with every passing day is, is on partnerships, because ultimately you're talking about the ability to connect the dots, whether it's against some kind of election influence threat or some other kind of threat," Wray said. "You need to have partners sharing information with each other to put the two pieces together to see the bigger picture."

Law enforcement officers are being killed in the line of duty at a rate of about one every five days, Wray said, noting that four first responders have died in Minnesota alone in 2024. They include a Minneapolis officer killed in May while trying to help someone, and two officers and a paramedic who died in Burnsville in February when a heavily armed man opened fire.

Such violence "breaks my heart every single time," the director said.

The FBI has not been spared such attacks: Days after agents searched Donald Trump's Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, to recover classified documents, a gunman who called on social media for federal agents to be killed "on sight" died in a shootout after trying to get inside the FBI's Cincinnati office.

Wray said the FBI has been working to beef up traditional partnerships with state and local law enforcement, while also creating other ones with business and academia to help counter threats against cybersecurity or intellectual property. In Minneapolis and other offices, he said, authorities are cooperating with the likes of school resource officers and mental health professionals to help at-risk teenagers in hopes of heading off future threats.

Working with industry is important for protecting innovation and artificial intelligence from foreign threats, Wray added.

"AI is in many ways the most effective tool against the bad guys' use of AI," he said. "So we need to work closely with industry to try to help make sure that American AI can be used to help protect American people from AI-enabled threats coming the other way."

## School choice and a history of segregation collide as one Florida county shutter its rural schools

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Fla. (AP) — Tens of thousands of students have left Florida's public schools in recent years amid an explosive expansion in school choice. Now, districts large and small are grappling with the harsh financial realities of empty seats in aging classrooms.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 48 of 72

As some districts are being forced to close schools, administrators are facing another long-avoided reckoning: how to integrate students in buildings that remain racially and economically segregated.

In the Florida panhandle, one tiny district plans to consolidate its last three stand-alone elementary schools into one campus because there aren't enough students to cover the costs of keeping the doors open. But the Madison County School District's decision to do so has exposed tensions around race in a community where for years some white families have resisted integrating public schools.

"It's the elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about," county school board member Katie Knight told The Associated Press.

"At the end of the day, these kids are going to have to interact with all people of races, skill sets, personality types," she said. "Trying to segregate our children is not an option."

Segregation, integration, consolidation

Shirley Joseph is a product of Florida's segregated schools — and was a Black student in some of the first integrated classes at one of the local high schools.

Now, as superintendent of Madison County's public schools, it's her job to close some of them.

There are fewer than 1,700 students left in traditional public schools in this rural county in the state's old cotton belt. Many families have moved away to places with more jobs and housing — or chosen other kinds of schooling. For those who remain, the schools provide more than just an education: All of Madison's students qualify for free meals because of the county's poverty rate. One in three children there live in poverty.

"If we are to survive as a district," Joseph said, "we have got to make the hard decisions."

Earlier this month, Joseph walked the halls of the elementary campuses on their last first day of school, pointing out classroom after empty classroom.

One of the schools slated to close is Greenville Elementary, which has fewer than 100 students — roughly a third of the school's capacity. When Florida schools were officially segregated, Joseph attended classes there at what was then called the Greenville Training School.

Generations of Black residents cherish the school's legacy in the tiny town of Greenville where music legend Ray Charles grew up.

More than 50 years after desegregation, the school remains 85% Black. Class sizes have dwindled as the school struggles to hold onto certified teachers. State ratings of the school have fluctuated, but Greenville has been rated an "F" five times over the past decade for low rates of student achievement.

Fourth grade teacher Mannika Hopkins had just eight students in her class when an Associated Press reporter visited recently.

"I hate it that it's closing. This is my heart. This is our community. ... This is us," Hopkins said. "Who wants to move into a community that doesn't have a school that's close by?"

Starting next year, Greenville will consolidate with Lee and Pinetta Elementary Schools, which are predominantly white. All those students will be sent to Madison County Central School, a majority Black K-8 campus that's a 15- to 20-minute drive from the outlying elementary schools. The district hasn't announced yet which teachers will move to the consolidated school and which ones will be out of job.

School choice fuels declining enrollment

Madison County sits an hour east of Tallahassee in a region once dominated by cotton and tobacco plantations. A statue of a Confederate soldier still towers over the central park in the county seat of Madison.

The area has been losing students for years as birth rates decline, businesses close and families move to places with more jobs other than in the timber industry, trucking and working at the nearby state prison.

Other families have stayed but simply left the public schools.

For decades, Aucilla Christian Academy in neighboring Jefferson County has attracted some of the area's wealthiest families. Established in 1970, Aucilla opened as a wave of new private schools sprang up across the South, founded by white people who opposed integration. Researchers call these "segregation academies," and many of them remain mostly white. As of the 2021-2022 school year, Aucilla's student body was more than 90% white, according to federal data.

Madison families have pushed back against consolidation in the past: In 1998, the U.S. Department of

Education's Office for Civil Rights stepped in when residents resisted plans to send students from predominantly white Lee Elementary to Central, the school that will soon receive the county's elementary schoolers. After the department got involved, the district went ahead with the plan.

Today, it's arguably never been easier to leave Florida's public schools. The chaos of COVID-19 pushed many families to try homeschooling or microschooning — tiny, private learning environments that often serve multiple families. And now, under Gov. Ron DeSantis, all Florida students can qualify for taxpayer-funded vouchers worth about \$8,000 a year to cover private school tuition, regardless of household income.

For families opposed to Madison's consolidation, Aucilla is a possible destination, along with Madison Creative Arts Academy, a public charter school.

Nine-year-old Noel Brouillette's parents hope she gets a seat at the Academy. It's not about race, mom Nicole Brouillette said, but rather the majority Black Central school's reputation of having more fights. If Noel doesn't get into the charter school, the family might leave Madison County entirely.

The fourth grader says she's heartbroken she can't stay at Pinetta Elementary.

"If I never went here, I would have never met my best friend," she said.

Other parents are considering homeschooling, like Alexis Molden. She said her sons love going to Lee Elementary, but she's heard rumors about Central — that multiracial kids like hers get bullied there.

"I've heard that ... it's pretty much segregated," Molden said. "You've got the white kids, the Black kids and then the mixed kids pretty much have to decide which side they're going to."

Katie Knight, the school board member, said that if she had a dollar for every rumor she heard about Central, she could retire.

Still, the county has a history.

When now-Superintendent Shirley Joseph taught at Madison County High School a couple of decades ago, she said her students would sort themselves when they filed into her classroom — white kids on one side, Black kids on the other — until she'd make them change seats.

"Somehow we've got to find out: How do we mesh the communities?" Joseph said.

There's always talk about leaving the public schools, Joseph said, but she believes most families will stay. In the meantime, she's focused on delivering the best education possible for the students she has — the ones who can't leave.

\_\_\_ Kate Payne is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## One woman's custody battle highlights the challenges facing same-sex couples in China

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — It's been more than four years since Zhang Peiyi last saw her son, one of two children from her former marriage.

Denied custody of both kids, Zhang finally settled in June for visitations with her daughter. But after seeing her only once, Zhang's ex-wife called the meetings off indefinitely. What Zhang thought was the end of a yearslong legal battle is facing yet another hurdle, as she has to go through court again to ask them to enforce her visitation rights.

"These types of disputes are not well protected in our country," said Gao Mingyue, the lawyer representing Zhang. "This is a reminder that we have to be self-sufficient."

LGBTQ+ families like Zhang's have no law to cite when faced with situations like custody or divorce, as same-sex marriage is not recognized in China, meaning the outcome of each case is uncertain and inconsistent.

For straight couples — regardless of marriage status — both are recognized as custodians by law. If the two split, the court decides who gets custody based on factors like the parent's financial resources, the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 50 of 72

child's desire and the home environment — operating from the principle of making the best decision for the child.

But for same-sex couples who have children via surrogacy or in vitro fertilization, nothing is guaranteed. Zhang, a Shanghai resident, knows this firsthand. She's been fighting to see her children since 2020, after a difficult separation.

The two women went to the United States to be legally married and give birth to their children. Zhang's ex provided the eggs, and Zhang gave birth to a girl and her ex birthed a boy. Back in China, a few years later when the relationship ended, Zhang's ex took both children and cut off all communication.

When Zhang turned to the law, she discovered just how little protections there were for LGBTQ+ couples in China, where there's no legal standard for two mothers or two fathers. The law around families is written exclusively for cases of a mother and a father.

While surrogacy is not illegal, hospitals are forbidden from selling eggs or sperm, so laws don't address issues of parentage where surrogacy is involved. And the courts have so far avoided making any legal precedent; Zhang's court granted custody to the biological mother, while another court in another case denied custody to the biological mother.

Gao represented both cases.

Zhang's case, which landed in a Beijing court, granted her ex custody and Zhang visitation of the child she birthed. But because the outcome was reached through a settlement, there is no legal precedent set. Although China is not a precedent-dependent country in the way the U.S. is, legal judgements can still have an impact that lawyers and academics cite.

In the other case, in the southern coastal city of Xiamen, the court's 2020 ruling said the woman suing, who provided the egg that her partner carried, "had no legal basis" for her argument and that it could not affirm that she was the child's mother. Further, it said, "the defendant and plaintiff are same-sex partners, and this is not regulated by our country's marriage law or any other civil laws."

No DNA testing was done for the case, but Gao wanted to prove that his client was the genetic mother. They provided medical evidence and the opposing side admitted it was his client's egg, but the court didn't want to make a ruling, he said. "They just said there's no way to prove you're the genetic mother, but even if you had no way to affirm the parent-child relationship, the law actually allows the court to make this judgement," he said.

"It's quite messy, and different courts at different times and different places have come to different solutions," said Darius Longarino, a senior fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School.

The case drew criticism from one of China's top legal experts on civil law.

"We can put aside the issue of surrogacy or same-sex couples, when a child is born, that's a human being," Yang Lixin, a professor at Renmin University's law school in Beijing said in an online commentary when the Xiamen case issued a first judgement in 2020.

He said that the court's decision was basically "nonsense," adding that the child's "rights and his position must be protected."

Some LGBTQ+ couples are trying to stave off the legal ambiguities with a legal agreement, similar to how a prenup works, outlining what would happen to their children if they broke up.

"For same-sex partners, when they decide to have kids, we advise them to sign an agreement on the births," said Gao. He said some 30 couples have come to his practice inquiring about drafting agreements that establish the identity of the parents, their mutual agreement to have children, and the responsibility, financial and otherwise, to raise the kids.

He's drafted eight or nine, but none have had a chance to be tested yet, so it's unclear how the courts will receive them.

In July, when Zhang got her first legally guaranteed visit to see her daughter for the first time in more than four years, it was a subdued occasion.

"I felt very calm, in those four hours," she said. "I couldn't cry then. I didn't even have time to have a happy reaction, but I was satisfied that at least in those four hours, I was in the same space as her."

The People's Court in Beijing's Fengtai district granted Zhang the right to see her daughter once a month, four hours per visit, which is common in cases with young children. Zhang traveled up from Shanghai and then drove to Hebei province, two hours outside of Beijing, to a home that her ex-partner owns.

Her ex-partner, the only other person present during the visit, required their daughter to wear a face mask, and the girl spent the time doing homework, Zhang recalled. But there were moments when the little girl would sneak looks at the woman sitting with her in the quiet house. They didn't talk at all, Zhang said, partly because she didn't know what to say.

It was only after Zhang walked out of the house, she said, that she burst into tears.

Now, Zhang doesn't know when she'll see her daughter again. Her ex-partner is denying visitation on the claim that Zhang violated the children's privacy. The woman's lawyer, Tian Yuanyuan, said his client would not give any interviews as the court requested that both sides refrain from talking to media. He also said The Associated Press was violating their privacy by calling.

"We'll be telling the court about this," he said.

With few options left, Zhang says she will keep fighting by recording all that has happened to her, while taking what precautions she can such as keeping the children's names and ages private.

"The children have the right to know what happened. And so I wanted to give my greatest effort. One day, maybe after they know, they know, 'Our mom really tried her best and gave it her all,'" Zhang said. "I want to take 99 steps forward, and the children, after they see I've taken these 99 steps, they can take one step toward me."

## **Mexico to bring charges against capo, not for drugs, but for turning over another drug lord to US**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The strange saga of how two Mexican drug lords were detained after landing in a plane in the United States in July just got stranger.

The Mexican government now says it is bringing charges against Joaquín Guzmán López, but not because he was a leader of the Sinaloa drug cartel founded by his father, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Instead, Mexican prosecutors are bringing charges against the younger Guzmán for apparently kidnapping Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada — an older drug boss from a rival faction of the cartel — forcing him onto the plane and flying to an airport near El Paso, Texas.

The younger Guzmán apparently intended to turn himself in to U.S. authorities, but may have brought Zambada along as a prize to sweeten any plea deal.

Federal prosecutors issued a statement saying "an arrest warrant has been prepared" against the younger Guzmán for kidnapping.

But it also cited another charge under an article of Mexico's criminal code that defines what he did as treason. That section of the law says treason is committed "by those who illegally abduct a person in Mexico in order to hand them over to authorities of another country."

That clause was apparently motivated by the abduction of a Mexican doctor wanted for allegedly participating in the 1985 torture and killing of Drug Enforcement Administration agent Kiki Camarena.

Nowhere in the statement does it mention that the younger Guzmán was a member of the "little Chapos" faction of the Sinaloa cartel, made up of Chapo's sons, that smuggles millions of doses of the deadly opioid fentanyl into the United States, causing about 70,000 overdose deaths each year.

The federal prosecutors' statement also included an unusually harsh and revealing description about evidence presented by prosecutors in the northern state of Sinaloa that has since proved to be false.

Sinaloa state prosecutors were apparently trying to distance the state's governor, Rubén Rocha, from the killing of a local political rival, Hector Cuén, who was at a meeting that was used as a pretext for luring Zambada to the abduction site. Zambada has said he expected the governor to be at that meeting; Rocha has said he made a trip out of the state that day.

To play down reports of the purported meeting, state prosecutors published a video of an apparent shooting during what they claimed was a botched robbery at a local gas station. They said Cuén was killed



there, not at the meeting site, where Zambada said Cuén was murdered.

While federal prosecutors stopped short of saying the gas station video was a fake, they earlier noted that the number of gunshots heard on the video didn't match the number of gunshot wounds on Cuén's body.

On Wednesday, the federal prosecutors went further, saying the video "is unacceptable, nor does it have sufficient value as evidence to be taken into account."

Zambada has said that Guzmán, who he trusted, had invited him to the meeting to help iron out the fierce political rivalry between Cuén and Rocha. Zambada was known for eluding capture for decades because of his incredibly tight, loyal and sophisticated personal security apparatus.

The fact that he would knowingly leave that all behind to meet with Rocha means that Zambada viewed such a meeting as credible and feasible. The same goes for the idea that Zambada, as the leader of the oldest wing of the Sinaloa cartel, could act as an arbiter in the state's political disputes.

The governor has denied he knew of or attended the meeting where Zambada was abducted.

The whole case has been an embarrassment for the Mexican government, which didn't even know about the detentions of the two drug lords on U.S. soil until after the fact.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has long viewed any U.S. intervention as an affront, and has refused to confront Mexico's drug cartels. He recently questioned the U.S. policy of detaining drug cartel leaders, asking, "Why don't they change that policy?"

## **Trump speaks from behind bulletproof glass at first outdoor rally since his attempted assassination**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

ASHEBORO, N.C. (AP) — At his first outdoor rally since last month's attempted assassination, Donald Trump spoke from behind bulletproof glass Wednesday in North Carolina at an event focused on national security. On politics, he called his predecessor Barack Obama "nasty" for his comments the night before at the Democratic National Convention.

Trump blamed President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for the deadly Afghanistan withdrawal and for wars in Ukraine and the Middle East while returning repeatedly in his remarks to the Democratic gathering in Chicago, where speaker after speaker has assailed Trump as a threat to the country should he return to the White House.

The former president, now the GOP nominee, asked the crowd gathered at the North Carolina Aviation Museum & Hall of Fame whether they had seen the speeches given Tuesday by former President Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama.

"He was taking shots at your president. And so was Michelle. You know, they always say, 'Sir, please stick to policy. Don't get personal.' And yet they're getting personal all night long, these people," he said, asking: "Do I still have to stick to policy?"

Trump, who is facing Harris in the November election after Biden stepped aside, spoke from behind a podium surrounded by panes of bulletproof glass that formed a protective wall across the stage — part of ramped-up security measures aimed at keeping him safe after the attack by a Pennsylvania gunman on July 13.

Storage containers were stacked around the perimeter to create additional walls and block sight lines. Snipers were positioned on roofs at the venue, where old aircraft were sitting behind the podium and a large American flag was suspended from cranes.

The event, billed as focused on national security issues, was part of Trump's weeklong series of counterprogramming to the Democratic National Convention, which is underway in Chicago. Allies have been urging him to focus on policy instead of personal attacks against Harris as he struggles to adjust to Biden's departure from the race.

The second night of the Democrats' convention Tuesday was a highly energized affair that featured speeches from both Obamas, who went after Trump in particularly biting terms.

"His limited and narrow view of the world made him feel threatened by the existence of two hardwork-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 53 of 72

ing, highly educated, successful people who happen to be Black," Michelle Obama said.

Barack Obama mocked Trump's obsession with his crowd sizes and called Trump "a 78-year-old billionaire who hasn't stopped whining about his problems since he rode down his golden escalator nine years ago."

"It's been a constant stream of gripes and grievances that's actually gotten worse now that he's afraid of losing to Kamala," the former president said.

After mentioning the Obamas early on in his speech, Trump came back around to the former president's comments.

"He was very nasty last night," Trump said. "I try and be nice to people, you know. But it's a little tough when they get personal."

He then polled the crowd on whether he should listen to advisers who he said have told him, "Please, sir, don't get personal. Talk about policy."

"Should I get personal or should I not get personal?" he asked. The crowd overwhelmingly chose the former.

Trump also mocked the convention and its frequent references to him, calling it a "charade."

In his remarks, Trump derided Harris as "the most radical left person ever to run for high political office in our country," and said the woman he now calls "Comrade Kamala" will destroy the country if she is elected to the White House.

While Trump has acknowledged the race is closer than before Biden dropped out, his aides believe that Harris remains relatively unknown and that efforts to highlight her past statements and the positions she took in previous races will turn off swing voters after her honeymoon period ends.

He repeatedly referenced the Biden administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan, and said that, if he wins, he will ask for the resignation of every senior military official who was involved.

He pledged to get "critical race theory and transgender insanity the hell out of our U.S. armed forces." During his administration, he instituted a Pentagon policy that largely barred transgender individuals from serving in the military, which Biden reversed.

"Our warriors should be focused on defeating America's enemies, not figuring out their genders," he said. "If you want to have a sex change or a social justice seminar, then you can do it somewhere else, but you're not going to do it in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force or the United States Marines."

He also pledged major investments in the armed forces and said he would launch the largest peace-time recruitment drive in the nation's history.

"We're going to make it so hot that I'm going to want to resign and join the military," said Trump, who received a series of deferments, including one attained with a physician's letter stating that he suffered from bone spurs in his feet.

Trump was joined Wednesday by his running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, who cast Harris as a candidate selected by power brokers instead of voters and lambasted her vice presidential pick, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, before Trump took the stage.

That included continuing to accuse Walz of mischaracterizing his service record as an Army National Guard member, as well as criticizing him for retiring from service before his unit's deployment to Iraq.

"What won't Stolen Valor Tim Walz lie about?" Vance, who served four years as a Marine, asked the crowd.

Trump has spent the week visiting political battleground states in his busiest week of campaigning since the Republican primaries.

Reflecting the importance of North Carolina in this year's election, the trip was Trump's second to the state in just the past week. Last Wednesday, he appeared in Asheville, North Carolina, for a speech on the economy.

Trump won North Carolina by a comfortable margin in 2016. The state delivered the former president his closest statewide margin of victory four years ago and is once again considered a key battleground in 2024.

Before Trump landed in Asheboro, his plane did a flyover of the rally site. The crowd erupted into cheers.

Edna Ryan, a 68-year-old retired flight attendant and private pilot, said she was bullish on the Republican's

chances, but said: "We need to be strong because otherwise we're going to be very sorry."

Lisa Watts, a retired business owner from Hickory, North Carolina, who was attending her fifth Trump rally, said she's feeling "very positive" about the race against Harris.

"I don't think that her record proves that she is ready to run this country," Watts said.

Watts said she doesn't think Trump's chances of winning are much different now from when Biden was the Democratic nominee.

"I think the Democrats are going to try to do everything they can to keep her up on that pedestal," she said, predicting the hype around Harris will fade.

## **Guatemalan police arrest 7 accused of trafficking the 53 migrants who asphyxiated in Texas in 2022**

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Guatemalan police on Wednesday arrested seven Guatemalans accused of having smuggled 53 migrants from Mexico and Central America who died of asphyxiation in 2022 in Texas after being abandoned in a tractor trailer in the scorching summer heat.

They were the latest arrests after years of investigation into the deadliest tragedy of migrants smuggled across the border from Mexico. The dead included eight children.

Interior Minister Francisco Jiménez told The Associated Press the arrests were made possible after 13 raids in three of the country's departments. They included Rigoberto Román Miranda Orozco, the alleged ringleader of the smuggling gang whose extradition has been requested by the United States.

Police also seized vehicles and cash and rescued other migrants during the operations, they said in a statement.

"This is a collaborative effort between the Guatemalan police and Homeland Security, in addition to other national agencies, to dismantle the structures of human trafficking, one of the strategic objectives of the government President Bernardo Arévalo in order to take on the phenomenon of irregular migration," Jiménez said.

Six people were charged previously.

Homero Zamorano Jr., who authorities say drove the truck, and Christian Martinez were arrested shortly after the migrants were found. Both are from Texas. Martinez later pleaded guilty to smuggling-related charges. Zamorano pleaded not guilty to smuggling-related charges and is awaiting trial. Four Mexican nationals were also arrested in 2023.

Authorities have said the men were aware that the trailer's air-conditioning unit was malfunctioning and would not blow cool air to the migrants trapped inside during the sweltering, three-hour ride from the border city of Laredo to San Antonio.

When the trailer was opened in San Antonio, 48 migrants were already dead. Another 16 were taken to hospitals, where five more died. The dead included 27 people from Mexico, 14 from Honduras, seven from Guatemala and two from El Salvador.

Authorities have alleged that the men worked with human smuggling operations in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, and shared routes, guides, stash houses, trucks and trailers, some of which were stored at a private parking lot in San Antonio.

Migrants paid the organization up to \$15,000 each to be taken across the U.S. border. The fee would cover up to three attempts to get into the country.

Orozco, the alleged ringleader, was arrested in the Guatemalan department of San Marcos, on the border with Mexico. The other arrests occurred in the departments of Huehuetenango and Jalapa. The police identified the gang as "Los Orozcos" because several of those arrested are family members and carry that surname.

"Said organization illegally housed and transferred hundreds of migrants of different nationalities to the United States, collecting millions of quetzales (the national currency) through several years of operation," said the Guatemalan government.

## Kennedy campaign's future in question as Trump allies lobby for endorsement

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Close allies to Donald Trump are quietly urging independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to endorse the Republican nominee if he withdraws from the campaign for the White House as soon as this week.

Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., along with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson and GOP donor Omeed Malik are among those who have been working behind the scenes to lobby Kennedy to drop out of the race and back Trump, according to a person familiar with the efforts. The person requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Kennedy will speak Friday "about the present historical moment and his path forward," his campaign announced Wednesday, fueling growing speculation that he could drop out and support Trump. Kennedy's running mate openly discussed the possibility on a podcast this week, saying the campaign was considering a move to "join forces" with Trump to limit the election chance of Kamala Harris, whose Democratic convention winds up Thursday night in Chicago.

The move would have once seemed unthinkable for Kennedy, a Democrat for most of his life and — as the nephew of President John F. Kennedy and the son of Robert F. Kennedy — a member of a beloved Democratic dynasty.

Last month, during the Republican National Convention, Kennedy's son posted and then quickly deleted a video showing a phone call between Kennedy and Trump, in which the former president appeared to try to talk Kennedy into siding with him.

Kennedy will give a speech in Phoenix, hours before Trump is scheduled to hold a rally in neighboring Glendale. A spokesperson for Kennedy, Stefanie Spear, declined to say whether he planned to drop out or why he chose Arizona for his speech.

Trump and Kennedy have been in regular contact in recent weeks, including a meeting in Milwaukee as Republicans gathered for their national convention last month.

He told CNN Tuesday that he would "love" an endorsement from the independent candidate, whom he called a "brilliant guy."

He also said he would "certainly" be open to Kennedy playing a role in his administration if Kennedy drops out and endorses him instead.

"He's a very smart guy. I've known him for a very long time," Trump told the network. "I didn't know he was thinking about getting out, but if he is thinking about getting out, certainly I'd be open to it."

Trump, who had previously railed against Kennedy as "the most radical left candidate in the race," was also asked by CNN if he would consider appointing Kennedy to a role in his administration if he wins in November.

"I like him a lot. I respect him a lot," Trump said. "I probably would, if something like that would happen. He's a very different kind of a guy — a very smart guy. And, yeah, I would be honored by that endorsement, certainly."

After leaving the Democratic primary to run as an independent, Kennedy built an unusually strong base of support for someone running without the backing of a major party. It was unclear exactly where his support was coming from, which worried Republicans and Democrats alike.

But since President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign and Democrats coalesced around Vice President Harris as their nominee, Kennedy's rise has been stunted. It looks increasingly unlikely that he will be able to make the debate stage when Trump and Harris face off next month, a moment Kennedy counted on for momentum and legitimacy. His campaign finances have also been strained.

The news comes a little over a week since a New York judge ruled that Kennedy should not appear on the ballot in the state because he listed a "sham" address on nominating petitions. Kennedy has appealed, but has faced several similar challenges around the country.

On Wednesday, he was in a courtroom in a suburb of New York City, testifying in a trial for another ballot



lawsuit in the state, this one backed by the Democratic National Committee, that challenges the signatures collected by his campaign.

During a break in the court proceedings, Kennedy declined to answer questions from reporters about whether he was dropping out.

He's also facing a likely legal challenge in Arizona, where last week he submitted signatures that may have been collected by a super PAC that supports him, which Kennedy's critics say is illegal coordination between a candidate and an independent political group.

## **Judge blocks Arizona lithium drilling that tribe says is threat to sacred lands**

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

A federal judge has temporarily blocked exploratory drilling for a lithium project in Arizona that tribal leaders say will harm land they have used for religious and cultural ceremonies for centuries.

Lawyers for the national environmental group Earthjustice and Colorado-based Western Mining Action Project are suing federal land managers on behalf of the Hualapai Tribe. They accuse the U.S. Bureau of Land Management of illegally approving drilling planned by an Australian mining company in the Big Sandy River Basin in northwestern Arizona, about halfway between Phoenix and Las Vegas.

The case is among the latest legal fights to pit Native American tribes and environmentalists against President Joe Biden's administration as green energy projects encroach on lands that are culturally significant.

U.S. District Judge Diane Humetewa granted a temporary restraining order late Monday, according to court documents. Humetewa is suspending the operation until she can hear initial arguments from the tribe, Arizona Lithium Ltd. and the bureau at a hearing in Phoenix on Sept. 17.

The tribe wants the judge to issue a preliminary injunction extending the prohibition on activity at the site pending trial on allegations that federal approval of the exploratory drilling violated the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act.

"Like other tribal nations who for centuries have stewarded the lands across this country, the Hualapai people are under siege by mining interests trying to make a buck off destroying their cultural heritage," Earthjustice lawyer Laura Berglan said in a statement Wednesday.

The tribe says in court documents that the bureau failed to adequately analyze potential impacts to sacred springs the Hualapai people call Ha'Kamwe, which means warm spring. The springs have served as a place "for healing and prayer" for generations.

The tribe and environmental groups also argue that a 2002 environmental review by the bureau and the U.S. Energy Department determined that the land was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property.

Arizona Lithium plans a total of 131 drilling sites across nearly a square mile (2.6 square kilometers) to obtain samples to help determine if there's enough lithium to construct a mine and extract the critical mineral needed to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles, among other things.

Justice Department lawyers representing the bureau said in court filings this week that any potential impacts of an actual mine would be determined by a more extensive environmental review. They said the tribe is exaggerating potential harm that could come solely from exploratory drilling.

"Given the speculative nature of Hualapai's alleged harm and the benefits of better defining the lithium deposits in this area, the equities favor denying" the tribe's bid for additional delay, the government lawyers wrote.

"Further, an injunction would not be in the public interest because the project is an important part of the United States' green energy transition," they said.

The bureau completed a formal environmental assessment of the project and issued a finding of "no significant impact" in June. On July 9, the bureau issued a final decision approving the drilling.

In court documents, Arizona Lithium referenced the "prodigious amount of resources" expended over three years to get federal authorization for the project, saying it worked with land managers to develop a

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 57 of 72

plan that complied with federal regulations and considered the interests of the Hualapai Tribe, the environment and local residents.

The tribe says its homeland stretches from the Grand Canyon south and east toward mountain ranges near Flagstaff, Arizona.

The Ha'Kamwe' springs are on land known as Cholla Canyon, which is held in trust for the tribe. According to the lawsuit, there is archaeological evidence of the tribe's presence there dating to 600 A.D.

"Today our people celebrate the granting of the temporary restraining order, but understand our fight is not over," Hualapai Tribe Chairman Duane Clarke said in a statement Wednesday. "We will continue to bring awareness to the protection of our water."

## **Crowds of pro-Palestinian protesters rally and march outside Democratic convention's 3rd night**

By SOPHIA TAREEN, JAKE OFFENHARTZ, JOEY CAPPELLETTI and LEA SKENE Associated Press  
CHICAGO (AP) — More than 2,000 pro-Palestinian protesters marched Wednesday past a park where pro-Israel demonstrators had gathered earlier and toward the arena hosting the third night of the Democratic National Convention.

The demonstration, which stayed largely peaceful, came a day after violent clashes between police and protesters led to 56 arrests at a much smaller unsanctioned protest outside the Israeli Consulate.

Organizers of Wednesday's demonstration drew on the Chicago area's Palestinian community, one of the largest in the country, by bringing buses from suburban mosques.

Raed Shuk, 48, came with his children from the suburbs, including his 2-year-old son, who sat on Shuk's shoulders ahead of the march. Shuk, whose parents are Palestinian, said they have come to so many rallies that his son knows the chants by heart.

"Everybody's humanity needs to be equally addressed here and there," he said of Gaza. "I want to help my children learn from this experience that you always like to stand up for your rights and always peacefully protest."

The march, one of the largest anticipated demonstrations of the week, took on a festive tone at times as a drum line led marchers and a sea of Palestinian flags waved above the crowds. Some kids ate popsicles as they walked, and others were pushed in strollers or rode in wagons.

The crowd stopped outside a park that is roughly a block from the United Center and used megaphones and air horns to call out elected leaders, including Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, for being "complicit" in the war in Gaza. The two-term Democrat, who was under consideration as Vice President Kamala Harris' running mate, criticized a ceasefire resolution Chicago approved in January.

As marchers passed under a new elevated train station near the United Center that was completed just before the DNC, officers were seen bringing a person to the ground on the platform above. In response, hundreds of protesters pushed against the edge of the station, banging on the glass with their hands and flag poles as they called on police to free the person. The person left through the station's emergency exit moments later, accompanied by officers but not in handcuffs, prompting cheers from the crowd.

The crowds of pro-Palestinian protesters included many families and people of different faiths. Small groups of Muslims gathered in prayer at a park just ahead of the march's kickoff, using keffiyeh as prayer rugs. Rabbis were among the leaders of the march, and a small group marched through in the crowd holding a sign that said "Christians for Ceasefire."

Rabbi Brant Rosen, a founder of the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council, condemned Democrats for not speaking out about the war in Gaza at the convention

"The word Palestine is not allowed inside the Democratic National Convention. The word ceasefire has barely been uttered," he said. "This is a Hollywood-style coronation of a candidate. They assume they are entitled to our votes, but they are not entitled to our votes."

Earlier in the day, police escorted pro-Israel demonstrators out of a park near the United Center as the area was blocked off ahead of the march of activists heading there.

The rally near the United Center was organized by the U.S. Palestinian Community Network, a Palestinian and Arab community-based organization. It was in stark contrast to the protest Tuesday night outside the Israeli Consulate, where protesters not affiliated with a coalition of more than 200 groups that has the city's permission for demonstrations ended up in an intense standoff with Chicago police.

Chicago Police Superintendent Larry Snelling said those arrested Tuesday night outside the Israeli Consulate, about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from the United Center, "showed up with the intention of committing acts of violence, vandalism." Snelling called police response "proportionate."

Thirty of the people detained by police were issued citations for disorderly conduct, according to Chicago police. One person was arrested on a felony charge of resisting police, while nine were charged with misdemeanors including disorderly conduct, resisting officers, battery, assault and criminal damage to property, police said.

Snelling said that two people were taken to the hospital with minor injuries, one for knee pain and one with a finger injury. Two officers were injured but they refused medical attention because they did not want to leave fellow officers, Snelling said. He said three journalists were among those arrested, but he did not have details on charges.

Hatem Abudayyeh, co-founder of the U.S. Palestinian Community Network, put the onus on police to keep the peace when asked about the clashes between pro-Palestinian protesters and police. The police "only have one responsibility here," he said. "They have the responsibility of not infringing on our First Amendment rights."

The Israeli Consulate has been the site of numerous demonstrations since the war in Gaza began in October, and protests during the DNC have largely focused on opposing the Israel-Hamas war..

The largest protest so far, which attracted about 3,500 people on Monday, was largely peaceful and resulted in 13 arrests, most related to a breach of security fencing. Two were arrested Sunday night during another mostly peaceful march.

Also on Wednesday, a man who escaped from a Mississippi courthouse and is wanted on murder and armed robbery charges was taken into custody following a standoff with police at a restaurant about half a mile from the United Center. There was no indication that he had any connection to the convention.

## California announces new deal with tech to fund journalism, AI research

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California will be the first U.S. state to direct millions of dollars from taxpayer money and tech companies to help pay for journalism and AI research under a new deal announced Wednesday.

Under the first-in-the-nation agreement, the state and tech companies would collectively pay roughly \$250 million over five years to support California-based news organization and create an AI research program. The initiatives are set to kick in in 2025 with \$100 million the first year, and the majority of the money would go to news organizations, said Democratic Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, who brokered the deal.

"This agreement represents a major breakthrough in ensuring the survival of newsrooms and bolstering local journalism across California — leveraging substantial tech industry resources without imposing new taxes on Californians," Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement. "The deal not only provides funding to support hundreds of new journalists but helps rebuild a robust and dynamic California press corps for years to come, reinforcing the vital role of journalism in our democracy."

Wicks' office didn't immediately answer questions about specifics on how much funding would come from the state, which news organizations would be eligible and how much money would go to the AI research program.

The deal effectively marks the end of a yearlong fight between tech giants and lawmakers over Wicks' proposal to require companies like Google, Facebook and Microsoft to pay a certain percentage of advertising revenue to media companies for linking to their content.

The bill, modelled after a legislation in Canada aiming at providing financial help to local news organizations, faced intense backlash from the tech industry, which launched ads over the summer to attack the bill. Google also tried to pressure lawmakers to drop the bill by temporarily removing news websites from some people's search results in April.

"This partnership represents a cross-sector commitment to supporting a free and vibrant press, empowering local news outlets up and down the state to continue in their essential work," Wicks said in a statement. "This is just the beginning."

California has tried different ways to stop the loss of journalism jobs, which have been disappearing rapidly as legacy media companies have struggled to profit in the digital age. More than 2,500 newspapers have closed in the U.S. since 2005, according to Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. California has lost more than 100 news organizations in the past decade, according to Wicks' office.

The Wednesday agreement is supported by California News Publishers Association, which represents more than 700 news organizations, Google's corporate parent Alphabet and OpenAI. But journalists, including those in Media Guild of the West, slammed the deal and said it would hurt California news organizations.

State Sen. Steve Glazer, who authored a bill to provide news organizations a tax credit for hiring full-time journalists, said the agreement "seriously undercuts our work toward a long term solution to rescue independent journalism."

State Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire also said the deal doesn't go far enough to address the dire situation in California.

"Newsrooms have been hollowed out across this state while tech platforms have seen multi-billion dollar profits," he said in a statement. "We have concerns that this proposal lacks sufficient funding for newspapers and local media, and doesn't fully address the inequities facing the industry."

## **Babysitter pleads guilty to manslaughter for death of man she injured when he was a baby in 1984**

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — A former babysitter pleaded guilty to manslaughter Wednesday for the 2019 death of a man she was accused of disabling as an infant 40 years ago and was sentenced to three years in prison, finally admitting that she hit him numerous times.

Terry McKirchy, 62, accepted a plea deal for the death of Benjamin Dowling, who died at 35 after a life of severe disabilities caused by a brain hemorrhage he suffered in 1984 when he was 5 months old while at McKirchy's suburban Fort Lauderdale home.

Investigators have long believed she caused the injury by shaking him, but she had always denied hurting him even after pleading guilty in 1985 to injuring him.

Rae and Joe Dowling said after the hearing that they are glad McKirchy admitted to hurting their son, but nothing will bring him back or get him the life he would have had if she hadn't. He never walked, talked or ate on his own and spent his life in a wheelchair.

"She will have to live with this," Rae Dowling said.

"We just have to be strong and move forward," Joe Dowling said.

In a letter of apology read to Dowling's parents by her attorney, assistant public defender David Fry, McKirchy said she was feeling overwhelmed and exhausted by taking care of numerous children and struck him, causing his injuries. But she provided no details.

Before the plea deal, she had been charged with first-degree murder and faced a possible life sentence.

"It was in a state of impulse and anger that I struck Benjamin while he and other children were crying," she wrote. "Your life and Benjamin's life were truly harmed by me and I am truly sorry."

Shackled and dressed in an orange jail jumpsuit, McKirchy never showed any emotion during the 90-minute hearing while her letter was read, as Dowling's mother and sister talked about his life or during a photo montage showing him through the years with his family.

"Benjamin taught us all many valuable lessons, and everyone who knew Benjamin was better because



they did know him," Rae Dowling told Circuit Judge George Odom Jr. during the hearing.

Pam Chestnutt, her former best friend and Benjamin's cousin, told the court she knew McKirchy had a bad temper but would not have believed her capable of hurting an infant like that, though eventually came to the realization she could. She said what especially hurt is that in the days after Benjamin was injured, McKirchy repeatedly told her she had not hurt him.

"You sat with me face to face and you denied doing anything to that baby. You told me Benjamin fell off the couch," she told McKirchy. "You lied straight to my face."

A Broward County grand jury indicted McKirchy, who now lives in Sugar Land, Texas, with first-degree murder in 2021 after an autopsy concluded Dowling died from his decades-old injuries. She had voluntarily entered the Broward County Jail in May to begin her sentence after the deal was close to being finalized. Prosecutor Pascale Achille said the case took three years because McKirchy's attorneys had to do their own investigation and then a plea had to be negotiated.

This isn't the first time McKirchy has taken a deal in connection with Dowling's injuries, receiving an exceptionally light sentence after pleading no contest to attempted murder in 1985. Then six months pregnant with her third child and facing 12 to 17 years in prison, she was sentenced to weekends in jail until giving birth. She was then freed and put on probation for three years.

At the time, she insisted she was innocent, telling reporters that her "conscience is clear." She said then that she took the deal because wanted to put the case behind her and be with her children.

Prosecutors called the sentence "therapeutic" but didn't explain at the time. Ryal Gaudiosi, then McKirchy's public defender, said the sentence was "fair under the circumstances." He died in 2009.

Achille said she can't explain why McKirchy was given such a light sentence 40 years ago except to say "it was a different time."

Rae and Joe Dowling had been married four years when Benjamin was born Jan. 13, 1984. Both Dowlings worked, so they hired McKirchy, then 22, to babysit him at her home.

Rae Dowling told investigators that when she picked up Benjamin from McKirchy on July 3, 1984, his body was limp and his fists were clenched. She rushed him to the hospital, where doctors concluded he had suffered a brain hemorrhage from severe shaking. McKirchy was arrested within days.

The Dowlings told reporters in 1985 they were stunned when prosecutors told them minutes before a court hearing of the plea deal McKirchy would receive. They said Wednesday that they are still stunned by that sentence.

The Dowlings had two more children and would take Benjamin to their games and performances as they grew up. The photo montage during the hearing showed his family worked hard to make him part of school and family outings, weddings, vacations and other milestones.

"Growing up, Benjamin taught me and countless others invaluable lessons about compassion, empathy, patience and understanding," said his younger sister, Melissa Dowling. "Benjamin's presence was a constant source of inspiration. He never walked or talked or got the chance to say, 'I love you.'"

The family moved to Florida's Gulf Coast in the late 1990s. Benjamin died at their home on Sept. 16, 2019. "He was so strong. We thought he would live forever," his mother said.

## Triple-digit temperatures scorch Texas as millions across Southwest under excessive heat warnings

By KEN MILLER and NADIA LATHAN Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Summer heat scorched Texas and the Southwest on Wednesday, pushing Phoenix to nearly 90 consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures and putting millions of people under excessive heat warnings.

Meanwhile, energy demand in Texas hit an unofficial all-time high Tuesday, according to data from the state's grid operator.

A major heat alert is in place for Texas, reflecting what the weather service called "rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief." An extreme heat alert was issued for eastern

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 61 of 72

New Mexico.

This area of high pressure, sometimes referred to as a heat dome, is a slow moving, upper-level high pressure system of stable air and a deep layer of high temperatures, meteorologist Bryan Jackson said.

"It is usually sunny, the sun is beating down, it is hot and the air is contained there," Jackson said. "There are dozen or so sites that are setting daily records ... mostly over Texas."

Record high temperatures were expected in cities such as Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Amarillo. In Phoenix, monsoon rains have provided brief respites since Sunday, although daytime highs continue to top 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius).

The dome was expected to move into western Oklahoma and eastern New Mexico beginning Saturday, then into the mid-Mississippi Valley, where it was forecast to weaken slightly, Jackson said.

About 14.7 million people are under an excessive heat warning, with heat indexes expected at 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) and above. Another 10 million people were under a heat advisory.

In Fort Worth, Texas, hundreds in August have sought emergency care due to the heat, according to MedStar ambulance. The service responded to 286 heat-related calls during the first 20 days of August, about 14 per day, compared to about 11 per day in August 2023, according to public information officer Desiree Partain.

Austin-Travis County EMS Capt. Christa Stedman said calls about heat-related illness in the area around the Texas state Capitol since April 1 are up by about one per day compared with a year ago, though July was somewhat milder this year.

"The vast majority of what we see is heat exhaustion, which is good because we catch it before it's heat stroke, but it's bad because people are not listening to the red flags," such as heat cramps in the arms, legs or stomach warning that the body is becoming too hot, Stedman said.

Despite the record heat in Texas, residents haven't been asked to cut back on their energy use like in years prior. This contrasts with the 11 conservation notices issued last year. One reason is that the agency, which manages Texas' independent energy grid and deregulated providers, has improved the grid's capabilities to better control supply and demand, Doug Lewin, an energy consultant and president of Stoic Energy said.

However, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas' criteria for when to notify residents to conserve energy has also changed, Lewin said, because they're ineffective and unpopular.

"I don't think they're seeing all that much reduction when they give notices," Lewin said of ERCOT. In fact public uproar against the conservation warnings has led to the agency sending fewer of them, he continued.

"There are many factors that ERCOT operations take into consideration when determining the need to issue conservation, case by case depending on conditions at the time," communications manager Trudi Webster said on the matter.

"It's been a hot summer, but this one does stand out in terms of extremes," said Jackson, the meteorologist.

Earlier this month, about 100 people were sickened and 10 were hospitalized due to extreme heat at a Colorado air show and at least two people have died due to the heat in California's Death Valley National Park.

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

## **Taylor Swift calls cancellation of Vienna shows 'devastating' and explains her silence**

LONDON (AP) — Two weeks after organizers scrubbed Taylor Swift's concerts in Vienna amid a foiled terror plot, the singer issued her first statement on the cancellations.

"Having our Vienna shows cancelled was devastating," she wrote in a statement posted to Instagram

on Wednesday. "The reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many people had planned on coming to those shows."

She thanked authorities — "thanks to them, we were grieving concerts and not lives," she wrote — and said she waited to speak until the European leg of her Eras Tour concluded to prioritize safety.

"Let me be very clear: I am not going to speak about something publicly if I think doing so might provoke those who would want to harm the fans who come to my shows," she wrote.

In the wake of the cancellations, Swift's representatives did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press and other news organizations and her social media pages had gone dormant.

"In cases like this one, 'silence' is actually showing restraint, and waiting to express yourself at a time when it's right to. My priority was finishing our European tour safely, and it's with great relief that I can say we did that," she added.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music had said it canceled the three-night Vienna run that would have begun Aug. 8 because the arrests made in connection to the conspiracy were too close to showtime. Authorities said a 19-year-old suspect had planned to target spectators outside the Ernst Happel Stadium with knives or homemade explosives, hoping to "kill as many people as possible." Austrian officials said they appeared to have been inspired by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

That suspect and another 17-year-old were taken into custody on Aug. 6, the day before the shows were announced as canceled. A third suspect, 18, was arrested Aug. 8. The 19-year-old's lawyer has said the allegations were "overacting at its best," and contended Austrian authorities were "presenting this exaggeratedly" in order to get new surveillance powers.

Tens of thousands of Swifties from around the world had traveled to Vienna for the shows.

Swift's Instagram post also commemorated the end of the European leg with a tribute to her five nights at London's Wembley Stadium, which she said factored into her decision to wait to speak out and ultimately "felt like a beautiful dream sequence."

"I decided that all of my energy had to go toward helping to protect the nearly half a million people I had coming to see the shows in London," she wrote the day after her last Wembley concert. "My team and I worked hand in hand with stadium staff and British authorities every day in pursuit of that goal."

The shows in London, the next stop scheduled after Vienna, also came on the heels of a stabbing at a Swift-themed dance class that left three little girls dead in the U.K. In a statement issued after the Southport attack, Swift said she was "just completely in shock" and "at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families." News outlets reported that Swift met with some of the survivors backstage in London.

The record-smashing tour is on hiatus until October, when it resumes in Miami.

## **Hunter Biden's lawyer accuses prosecutors of trying to smear him with salacious details at tax trial**

By AMY TAXIN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An attorney for Hunter Biden accused prosecutors Wednesday of wanting to introduce salacious details about partying and spending by President Joe Biden's son to smear his character in front of jurors at his upcoming trial on federal tax charges.

During a lengthy hearing in Los Angeles federal court, Hunter Biden's lawyer said special counsel David Weiss' team was intent on "character assassination" by seeking to bring in evidence of spending on things like strippers in the case alleging a scheme to avoid paying at least \$1.4 million in taxes.

"They want to slime him because that is the whole purpose," attorney Mark Geragos told U.S. District Judge Mark Scarsi.

Geragos' comments came as the defense and prosecution sparred for hours over what evidence and testimony jurors should be allowed to hear when the trial begins early next month. It's the second criminal trial in just months for the president's son, who was convicted in June of three felony charges in a

separate federal case over the purchase of a gun in 2018.

Potential jurors are expected to be brought to the court for questioning on Sept. 5, with opening statements in the trial expected on Sept. 9.

Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty, and his lawyers have indicated they will argue he didn't act "willfully," or with the intention to break the law. Pointing to Hunter Biden's well-documented addiction struggles during those years, they've argued his drug and alcohol abuse impacted "his decision-making and judgment, such that Mr. Biden was unable to form the requisite intent to commit the crimes he has been charged with."

Prosecutor Leo Wise said evidence of things like Hunter Biden's payments to a pornographic website would help jurors evaluate whether he accidentally or intentionally listed those items as business expenses when they clearly were not. Wise noted that Hunter included descriptions of wild partying in California in his own memoir.

"He describes partying in hotels with a cast of strippers," Wise said. "He chose to pay them, which is fine — it's America, you can do that. But then he chose to take it as a business deduction."

The judge did not rule on whether prosecutors will be able to introduce such evidence, and the two sides said they would work on reaching an agreement on that issue before trial.

In a blow to the defense, the judge said Hunter Biden's lawyers won't be able to call as a witness an expert whom it had wanted to testify about addiction issues. The judge also ruled out testimony about the car accident that killed Hunter Biden's mother and sister when he was a toddler, and any testimony attributing the cause of his substance abuse struggles to the death of his brother Beau from brain cancer in 2015.

Hunter Biden's lawyers had argued it was important to delve into those issues to provide context about his drug use during the years he was accused of failing to pay his taxes.

Prosecutors have also pushed to be able to introduce evidence related to Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings, which have been at the center of Republican investigations into the Democratic president's family.

The special counsel's team has said it wants to tell jurors about his work for a Romanian businessman, who they say sought to "influence U.S. government policy" while Joe Biden was vice president. Wise told the judge that evidence about Hunter Biden's business dealings reflects his decision-making ability in the years he is accused of evading his taxes.

The defense accused prosecutors of releasing details about Hunter Biden's work for the Romanian businessman in court papers to drum up media coverage and taint a jury pool before the trial even starts.

"I believe it was designed specifically to inflame or ignite press coverage," Geragos said.

Hunter Biden was supposed to plead guilty last year to misdemeanor tax offenses in a deal with prosecutors that would have allowed him to avoid prosecution in the gun case if he stayed out of trouble. However, the plea deal fell apart after a federal judge in Delaware raised concerns about it, and he was subsequently indicted in the two cases.

In the gun case that ended in June in Delaware, jurors found Hunter Biden guilty of lying about his drug use in 2018 on a federal form to buy a firearm that he had for about 11 days. He could face up to 25 years in prison at sentencing set for Nov. 13, but as a first-time offender, he is likely to get far less time or avoid prison entirely.

## Key mediator Egypt expresses skepticism about the Gaza cease-fire proposal as more details emerge

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Key mediator Egypt expressed skepticism Wednesday about the proposal meant to bridge gaps in cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas as more details emerged a day before negotiations were expected to resume in Cairo.

The challenges around the so-called bridging proposal appeared to undermine the optimism for an imminent agreement that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken carried into his latest Mideast visit this week.

Diplomatic efforts have redoubled as fears grow of a wider regional war after the recent targeted killings



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 64 of 72

of leaders of the militant Hamas and Hezbollah groups, both blamed on Israel, and threats of retaliation. President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday, and stressed the urgency of reaching a cease-fire and hostage release deal, the White House said.

Officials in Egypt, in its unique role as both a mediator and affected party since it borders Gaza, told The Associated Press that Hamas won't agree to the bridging proposal for a number of reasons — ones in addition to the long-held wariness over whether a deal would truly remove Israeli forces from Gaza and end the war.

One Egyptian official with direct knowledge of the negotiations said the bridging proposal requires the implementation of the deal's first phase, which has Hamas releasing the most vulnerable civilian hostages captured in its Oct. 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war. Parties during the first phase would negotiate the second and third phases with no "guarantees" to Hamas from Israel or mediators.

"The Americans are offering promises, not guarantees," the official said. "Hamas won't accept this, because it virtually means Hamas will release the civilian hostages in return for a six-week pause of fighting with no guarantees for a negotiated permanent cease-fire."

He also said the proposal doesn't clearly say Israel will withdraw its forces from two strategic corridors in Gaza, the Philadelphi corridor alongside Gaza's border with Egypt and the Netzarim east-west corridor across the territory. Israel offers to downsize its forces in the Philadelphi corridor, with "promises" to withdraw from the area, he said.

"This is not acceptable for us and of course for Hamas," the Egyptian official said.

A second Egyptian official, briefed on the latest developments in negotiations, said there were few chances for a breakthrough since Israel refuses to commit to a complete withdrawal from Gaza in the deal's second phase. The official said Israel also insists on keeping its forces in the Philadelphi corridor and having full control of the Netzarim corridor.

He also said Egypt told the United States and Israel that it won't reopen the Rafah crossing into Gaza, a crucial entry point for humanitarian aid, without the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian side and from the Philadelphi corridor — where Israel wants to prevent Hamas from replenishing its arsenal through smuggling tunnels. Israel's defense minister says over 150 such tunnels have been destroyed.

Both Egyptian officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations. Mediators are scheduled to meet on Thursday and Friday in Cairo for more talks on the proposal before submitting it officially to Hamas.

Hamas political official Bassem Naim said Tuesday that the bridging proposal adopted several new demands from Netanyahu, including that Israeli forces remain in Rafah, Philadelphi and Netzarim and search displaced Palestinians returning to northern Gaza. Israel has said the searches are necessary to find militants.

Naim said the proposal also includes unspecified changes to the exchange of hostages held in Gaza for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel and doesn't guarantee that a cease-fire would remain in place during negotiations on the transition from the deal's first phase to the second.

In previous versions of the cease-fire plan, the second phase would entail a permanent cease-fire, full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the release of remaining male hostages, both civilians and soldiers.

Blinken after his visit to Egypt and fellow mediator Qatar said the bridging proposal is "very clear on the schedule and the locations of (Israeli military) withdrawals from Gaza," but no details on either have emerged.

Blinken added that because Israel accepted the proposal, the focus turns to doing everything possible to "get Hamas on board." Egypt's state-run Al-Ahram daily reported that Blinken received a "clear Egyptian demand for the U.S. to work towards a well-framed deal with clear deadlines and clear objectives to encourage Hamas to sign."

But there is skepticism, along with fatigue, among many in Israel about Netanyahu's commitment to securing an agreement.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 65 of 72

"As long as the entire group of professional negotiators believes that Netanyahu is scuttling a deal, there won't be any confidence," commentator Nadav Eyal wrote in daily newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth.

The war in Gaza, now in its 10th month, has caused widespread destruction and forced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents to flee their homes. Aid groups fear the outbreak of polio and other diseases.

The Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians. Over 100 hostages were released during last year's cease-fire. Hamas is still believed to be holding around 110 hostages. Israeli authorities estimate around a third are dead. Six bodies of hostages were recovered this week in Gaza.

"In what world do families have to beg and cry for the return of their family members alive and murdered?" Esther Buchshtab, the mother of one, 35-year-old Yagev Buchshtab, asked at his funeral Wednesday.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count. On Wednesday, Israeli tank and drone strikes in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah killed at least 17 people, according to hospital staff and AP journalists who counted the bodies.

Also on Wednesday, Netanyahu made his first visit to northern Israel since Israel's killing of a top Hezbollah commander last month in Beirut, as focus returns to the increasing crossfire along Israel's border with Lebanon.

"We are ready for every scenario, both defensive and offensive," he said while meeting troops.

## Divers recover 5 bodies from wrecked superyacht off Sicily; 1 still missing

By NICOLE WINFIELD, DANICA KIRKA and SILVIA STELLACCI Associated Press

PORTICELLO, Sicily (AP) — Divers searching the wreck of a superyacht that sank off Sicily found the bodies of five passengers Wednesday, leaving one still missing as questions intensified about why the vessel sank so quickly when a nearby sailboat remained largely unscathed.

Rescue crews brought four body bags ashore at Porticello. Salvatore Cocina, head of the Sicily civil protection agency, said a fifth body had been located. Divers on-scene said they would try to recover it on Thursday while continuing the search for the sixth.

The discovery made clear the operation to search the hull on the seabed 50 meters (164 feet) underwater had quickly turned into a recovery one, not a rescue, given the amount of time that had passed and with no signs of life over three days of searching.

The Bayesian, a 56-meter (184-foot) British-flagged yacht, went down in a storm early Monday as it was moored about a kilometer (a half-mile) offshore. Civil protection officials said they believed the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout.

Fifteen people escaped in a lifeboat and were rescued by a nearby sailboat. The body of the ship's chef, Recaldo Thomas of Antigua, was recovered Monday.

Thomas was born in Canada, according to his cousin David Isaac, but visited his parents' homeland of Antigua as a child, and moved permanently to the tiny eastern Caribbean island in his early 20s. Italian officials previously listed Antigua and Canada as the nationality of people on board.

The fate of six missing passengers had driven the search effort, including British tech magnate Mike Lynch, his 18-year-old daughter and associates who had successfully defended him in a recent U.S. federal fraud trial.

Lynch's spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Termini Imerese Public Prosecutor's Office investigators were acquiring evidence for their criminal investigation, which they opened immediately after the tragedy despite no formal suspects having been publicly identified.

Questions have abounded about what caused the superyacht, built in 2008 by Italian shipyard Perini Navi, to rapidly sink, when the nearby Sir Robert Baden Powell sailboat was largely spared and managed to rescue the survivors.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 66 of 72

Giovanni Costantino, head of The Italian Sea Group, which owns the ship maker, blamed human error for the disaster, which he said took 16 minutes. "The ship sank because it took on water. From where, the investigators will say," he told RAI state television after he met with prosecutors.

Costantino cited AIS ship tracking data which he said showed the Bayesian had taken on water for four minutes when a sudden gust of wind flipped it and it continued taking on water. The ship straightened up slightly and then went down, he said.

But was it merely the case of a freak waterspout that knocked the ship to its side and allowed water to pour in through open hatches? What was the position of the keel, which on a large sailboat like the Bayesian might have been retractable to allow it to enter shallower ports?

"There's a lot of uncertainty as to whether it had a lifting keel and whether it might have been up," said Jean-Baptiste Soupeze, a fellow of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects and the editor of the Journal of Sailing Technology. "But if it had, then that would reduce the amount of stability that the vessel had, and therefore made it easier for it to roll over on its side," he said in an interview.

The captain of the sailboat that rescued survivors said his craft sustained minimal damage — the frame of a sun awning broke — even with winds that he estimated reached 12 on the Beaufort wind scale, which is the highest hurricane-strength force on the scale.

He said he had remained anchored with his engines running to try to maintain the ship's position as the forecast storm rolled in.

"Another possibility is to heave anchor before the storm and to run downwind at open sea," Karsten Borner said in a text message. But he said that might not have been possible for the Bayesian, given its trademark 75-meter (246-foot) tall mast.

"If there was a stability problem, caused by the extremely tall mast, it would not have been better at open sea," he said.

Yachts like the Bayesian are required to have watertight, sub-compartments that are specifically designed to prevent a rapid, catastrophic sinking even when some parts fill with water.

The underwater search continued in dangerous and time-consuming conditions. Because of the wreck's depth, which requires special precautions, divers working in pairs could only spend about 12 minutes at a time searching, though reinforcements outfitted with special equipment to enable longer dives were on the wreck Wednesday.

In all, some 27 divers took rotations, including four who helped with recovery after the 2012 Costa Concordia disaster off Tuscany. They called the Porticello wreck a "little Concordia," fire crews said in a statement.

The limited dive time was aimed in part at avoiding decompression sickness, also known as the "bends," which can occur when divers stay underwater for long periods and ascend too quickly, allowing nitrogen gas dissolved in the blood to form bubbles.

"The longer you stay, the slower your ascent has to be," said Simon Rogerson, the editor of SCUBA magazine. He said the tight turnaround time suggested the operation's managers were trying to limit the risks and recovery time after each dive.

"It sounds like they're operating essentially on no decompression or very tight decompression, or they're being extremely conservative," he said.

Divers were also working with debris floating around them, limited visibility and air tanks on their backs.

"We are trying to advance in tight spaces, but any single thing slows us down," said Luca Cari, spokesman for the fire rescue service. "An electric panel could set us back for five hours. These aren't normal conditions. We're at the limit of possibility."

## Vance and Walz are still relatively unknown, but the governor is better liked, an AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tim Walz and JD Vance have vaulted themselves out of national obscurity as they hustle to introduce themselves to the country, but the senator from Ohio has had a rockier start than the Minnesota governor.

A poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that Walz had a smoother launch as a running mate to Vice President Kamala Harris than Vance did for former President Donald Trump. About one-third of U.S. adults (36%) have a favorable view of Walz, who will introduce himself to his party when he speaks at the Democratic National Convention on Wednesday. About one-quarter (27%) have a positive opinion of Vance. Significantly more adults also have an unfavorable view of Vance than Walz, 44% to 25%.

Both are well-liked so far within their own parties, while independents are slightly more likely to have a positive view of Walz than Vance, but most don't know enough about either one yet.

Both VP candidates still need to work to become better known — about 4 in 10 Americans don't know enough about Walz to have an opinion about him, and roughly 3 in 10 don't know enough about Vance. Still, both are much better known than they were before they were selected as vice presidential nominees.

Democrats like Walz, but many key groups don't know enough

As Walz prepares to speak at the convention, about 6 in 10 Democrats said they have a favorable opinion of him, including about 4 in 10 whose opinions are "very favorable." Roughly 3 in 10 don't know him well enough to have an opinion. This is the first measure of Walz's favorability in an AP-NORC poll, but other polls showed he was virtually unknown nationally before he was chosen.

Many key Democratic coalitions still don't know much about Walz. About 4 in 10 women don't know enough to have an opinion of him, and about 4 in 10 young adults under age 45 say the same. About half of Black adults and roughly 4 in 10 Hispanic adults don't know enough to say whether they like him, either. Many lower-income adults and those without college degrees also don't have a view of Walz.

Data from AP VoteCast shows that when he ran for governor in 2022, Walz won with the support of women, young voters, union households, those living in the suburbs, and people in urban areas. He split the support of white voters and men — two groups where the Harris-Walz team will try to undercut Trump's advantage. He lost rural voters in the state, as well as households with military veterans.

Samantha Phillis, a 33-year-old home care nurse and mother of four from Mankato, Minnesota, has known Walz for years. She attended Mankato West High School when Walz was a teacher there, and she was in the Gay-Straight Alliance when he was the faculty adviser. Since he became governor, she said, his policies have been "tremendous" for three of her children with disabilities. As a parent, she appreciated his program to provide free school meals for children.

"He was a great asset to Mankato West, and we are huge fans of him. As far as Minnesota goes, he's done great things for my family," Phillis said. "I'm really encouraged to see what he could help Kamala Harris do as her vice president."

Phillis said she was always planning to vote for the Democratic candidate but has been thrilled by the energy and momentum Walz added to the campaign.

"Now that Gov. Walz is on the ticket, I'm all in."

Vance's favorability has risen among Republicans

The new AP-NORC polling shows that in the weeks since Vance was selected as Trump's running mate, Republicans have gotten to know him better and have developed a generally positive view. About 6 in 10 Republicans now have a very or somewhat favorable opinion of Vance, a sharp rise since a mid-July poll conducted before the Ohio senator was announced as Trump's running mate. In that poll, only about 3 in 10 had a favorable view of him, and about 6 in 10 Republicans said they didn't know enough about Vance to have an opinion.

In the most recent poll, about 2 in 10 Republicans have an unfavorable view of Vance, and about one-



quarter say they don't know enough about him to have an opinion.

Adults older than 45 are somewhat more likely than younger ones to have a positive opinion of Vance, 32% to 22%.

Data from AP VoteCast shows that when Vance ran for Senate in Ohio in 2022, he earned the support of many groups that have become the bedrock of Trump's political base. About 6 in 10 male voters in the state supported Vance, as well as voters age 45 and over. He also outperformed with young men compared to Republicans nationally. About 6 in 10 male voters under 30 voted for Vance in Ohio, compared to about half for Republican candidates nationwide.

Mary Lynch, a 62-year-old Republican from Marquette, Michigan, said she's followed Vance through TV interviews since before he ran for Senate. She said her positive view of him has only grown the more she learns about him. She appreciates his support for family-related policies, like anti-abortion measures and school choice.

Lynch supported Republican Nikki Haley during the GOP primaries, but she plans to vote for Trump in November. She likes Trump's policies, but she struggles with his personality. She sees Vance as a strong future leader for the Republican Party.

"I like (Vance's) personality a lot. He says things nicer. He doesn't use hyperbole," Lynch said. "If Trump wins with JD Vance, I look forward to having JD Vance run for president next."

## **Attorney for far-right Oath Keepers extremist group pleads guilty to Capitol riot charges**

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An attorney who represented the far-right Oath Keepers pleaded guilty on Wednesday to charges stemming from a mob's Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, including members of the extremist group.

Kellye SoRelle, who was general counsel for the antigovernment group and a close associate of its founder, is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 17 by U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta in Washington, D.C.

SoRelle, 45, of Granbury, Texas, answered routine questions by the judge as she pleaded guilty to two charges: a felony count of obstructing justice and a misdemeanor count of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds. The felony carries a maximum prison sentence of 20 years, but her estimated sentencing guidelines recommend a maximum of 16 months behind bars.

SoRelle was arrested in Junction, Texas, in September 2022. Her case remained suspended for months amid questions about her mental health.

More than a year ago, medical experts concluded that SoRelle was mentally incompetent to stand trial. In November 2023, she reported to a federal Bureau of Prisons facility for treatment. Last month, Mehta ruled that SoRelle had recovered to an extent that she could understand the nature of her charges and could assist in her defense.

Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes is serving a 18-year prison sentence for orchestrating a plot to keep Donald Trump in the White House after the 2020 presidential election. After Rhodes' arrest, SoRelle told media outlets she was acting as the president of the Oath Keepers in his absence.

SoRelle, a former Texas prosecutor, was photographed with Rhodes outside the Capitol on Jan. 6. As the riot erupted, she posted a chat message for other Oath Keepers that said, "We are acting like the founding fathers — can't stand down. Per Stewart, and I concur."

"Although SoRelle did not personally enter the Capitol Building on January 6, she understood the role those inside and outside the building, like herself, played in delaying the certification proceeding that had been taking place inside the Capitol," said a court filing accompanying her guilty plea.

The night before the riot, she joined Rhodes in meeting with other extremist group members in an underground garage in Washington, D.C. The meeting also included former Proud Boys national leader Enrique Tarrio, who is serving a 22-year prison sentence for his role in a separate plot to stop the peaceful transfer of power from Trump to Joe Biden after the election.

Rhodes, a former U.S. Army paratrooper, founded the Oath Keepers in 2009. The group recruits current and former military, police and first responders and pledges to “fulfill the oath all military and police take to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

During the trial for Rhodes and other Oath Keepers charged with seditious conspiracy, jurors heard testimony that SoRelle had a romantic relationship with Rhodes.

SoRelle pleaded guilty to obstructing justice for encouraging others to destroy electronic evidence of their participation in the plot. Two days after the riot, Rhodes and SoRelle both sent messages from her cellphone encouraging Oath Keepers to delete any incriminating evidence.

She was indicted on other charges, including conspiring with Rhodes and other Oath Keepers to obstruct Congress from certifying the Electoral College vote. But she did not plead guilty to the conspiracy charge.

Also on Wednesday, a judge set a Feb. 3 trial date for an Illinois man charged with firing a gun during the riot. John Banuelos climbed scaffolding outside the Capitol, took out his revolver and fired two shots into the air, according to prosecutors.

Banuelos, of Summit, Illinois, was arrested in March. U.S. District Judge Judge Tanya Chutkan refused on Wednesday to free Banuelos from pretrial custody. She ruled that he poses a flight risk and a danger to the public.

“It could have been much more tragic,” the judge said of the gunshots.

## **It’s not just IUDs. Gynecologists and patients are focused on making procedures less painful**

By DEVI SHASTRI, DEVNA BOSE and KENYA HUNTER AP Health Writers

Federal officials affirmed this month that the pain people might feel when getting an IUD can be more than doctors’ promises of “just a pinch.”

The local anesthetic lidocaine “might be useful for reducing patient pain” when inserting intrauterine devices, according to new guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which also encourages doctors to have a conversation with patients about pain management.

Women have used social media to advocate for more pain-management options, even recording and posting videos to document their grimaces, screams and tears as IUDs are put in. But complaints of pain are not limited to the small, long-lasting birth control device.

Many relatively quick outpatient procedures can cause pain, including biopsies and examinations of the uterus and cervix. Gynecologists and patients say there need to be more conversations about options for local anesthetics — as well as other pain-relief options for these procedures.

### **Pain relief options**

Lidocaine spray or gel used as a local anesthetic and other pain treatments — think ibuprofen or an injection of an anesthetic — are safe for most patients and can be effective, gynecologists say.

The CDC’s new guidance is just that — not a hard rule. And the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists spokesperson Rachel Kingery said in an emailed statement that there’s no timeline for the group to provide clearer guidance on pain management for in-office procedures.

All of Dr. Cheruba Prabakar’s patients who get an IUD also get a local anesthetic spray at minimum. The owner of Lamorinda Gynecology and Surgery in Lafayette, California, near Oakland, also books patients for 45-minute appointments in which she can thoroughly answer their questions and talk through concerns.

Some practices offer even stronger choices. After requests from their patients, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts added in March sedation options for IUD insertions and certain procedures in which doctors cut out possible cancers. Patients are not fully asleep, but drowsy.

Dr. Luu Ireland, an OB-GYN at Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and UMass Memorial Hospital, said there are lighter pain-management offerings, including anxiety pills and local anesthetic.

“I can’t tell you how many patients I’ve seen choose less effective methods of birth control or forgo birth control (entirely) because they’re afraid to undergo the procedure,” she said of IUDs.

Prabakar believes that the biggest barrier to more patients having their pain taken seriously isn’t cost

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 70 of 72

or equipment. It's time and trust.

"There are a lot of patients with a history of trauma, history of shame," said Prabakar, who serves as an advisor to the Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention. "They barely can tolerate a speculum, let alone some of these other procedures."

Gynecology students should be taught on "Day One" about how trauma affects patients, said Dr. Deborah Bartz, an OB-GYN at Brigham and Women's Hospital who also teaches at Harvard Medical School.

That can include how anxiety levels and trauma can affect the level of pain a patient feels at the gynecologist, and how people who have never given birth may be at higher risk for pain during these sorts of visits, she said.

Research shows providers regularly underestimate the pain of IUD insertions. Women of color are less likely to have their pain taken seriously by providers; ample research shows Black people are undertreated for pain relative to white patients.

"If women have had their pain dismissed forever, since they were little kids having their periods, they're probably going to be more primed to experience trauma in the health care system," said Kate Nicholson, executive director of the National Pain Advocacy Center, a nonprofit focused on policy changes.

Advocating for medication

When the guidelines — or gynecologists — fall short, the onus may fall on the patient to speak up.

"(In obstetrics and gynecology,) there is that culture of: 'Women are strong. We can do this without pain medicine.' But why? Why is that?" said Sarah Friedberg, a Massachusetts mother of three who first experienced pain at the gynecologist since she got an IUD insertion 20 years ago — despite taking an over-the-counter pain reliever.

Friedberg's periods had always been exceptionally heavy, and after having three children, her doctors recommended removing her uterus. In August 2022, she went in to have blood drawn and other tests run in preparation for a hysterectomy. A doctor said they'd need to take some tissue samples from inside her uterus.

This was the first she'd heard of needing a biopsy, and she hadn't taken anything for pain ahead of time. Friedberg said no, and that she needed to reschedule the appointment.

"I'm a person who, if I don't like the nail polish they're putting on, I would never say, 'let's not do that,' or 'this is wrong,' or 'I want something different,'" Friedberg said. "I like not to make a splash in general."

She read up on what the biopsy would generally entail. The internet told her she had an option — lidocaine spray — and she asked her doctor for it. It took a search, but her doctor found some.

Her advocacy paid off. She didn't have extreme pain.

Friedberg hopes the updated CDC guidelines means women—including her daughter, when it's time — will have a different experience at the gynecologist.

"But it's very, very late," she said. "It's 2024. Come on, guys."

What questions should I ask at the gynecologist?

— What are my options for pain management? They're likely to tell you one of three levels: oral (ibuprofen), local anesthetic (lidocaine spray or gel) and injection (paracervical blocker). Sedation may be an option, but you'll likely need to book that ahead of time and line up a ride home.

— How will I know how much pain I might feel? Every person's pain threshold is different, and your levels of anxiety and stress can play a role, too. Talk to your doctor about your past experiences and concerns, even if you're just nervous.

— What if my doctor doesn't listen to me or provide the medication I request? Continue to advocate for yourself and come armed with knowledge. Experts agree that patients often don't know their options, and the new CDC guidance encourages gynecologists to talk with patients first. You can always seek a second opinion if needed and if time allows.

It's not "rocket science," said Cheryl Hamlin, an OB-GYN in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the reproductive care lead for the American Medical Women's Association. Doctors just need to tell patients their options, answer their questions and let them decide.

## How to avoid the worst of jet lag and maximize your travel time

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — It's the bane of many travelers: jet lag. Nobody wants to lose out because they're too tired to enjoy the delights of their vacation spot.

Here are some tips on how to handle jet lag, wherever you might end up.

What is jet lag?

Scientists define jet lag as the effect on the human body of traveling across different time zones. Our bodies have biological clocks programmed into almost every cell in the body, according to Sofia Axelrod, who studies circadian rhythms at Rockefeller University in New York.

"The clock is set by the 24-hour light and dark pattern," Axelrod said. "Every morning when we wake up, specialized (light) receptor cells in our retina receive a daylight signal, which is transmitted to the brain and from there, the whole body."

When we travel to another time zone, our eyes receive the daylight signal at a different time than usual, causing our internal clocks to reset. But that process can take awhile — and it's during that adjustment period that we feel the effects of jet lag.

Is jet lag preventable?

Yes, but that can come at a cost. Malcolm von Schantz, a professor who specializes in circadian rhythms at Northumbria University in Newcastle, said that flying in premium cabins where travelers can stretch out and properly rest, can ward off sleep deprivation, but he acknowledges that isn't an option for most people. Still, he said that timing your flights can help. For example, he suggests flying from Europe to North America during the day, so that it's evening when passengers land and they can get a proper night's sleep.

"If you take the evening flight instead, you'll be woken up at midnight to be served breakfast and land an hour or two later, when both jet lag and sleep deprivation will hit you hard and simultaneously," he said.

Von Schantz also said flying in newer models with a lighter frame, like the Airbus A350 or Boeing 787 Dreamliner, would help. That's because those planes can maintain a more comfortable cabin atmosphere, which should help travelers feel less worn out by the end of their flights.

What should you do when you arrive?

Experts say getting exposure to sunlight is critical to resetting your internal body clock. That can mean either avoiding morning sun or deliberately seeking it out, depending on where you've travelled from. Getting light in the morning will advance your body clock, while light exposure in the early evening will delay it. Naps are OK, but scientists warn against taking long siestas later in the day, as that might compromise your ability to sleep through the night.

Are there supplements or medicines that might help?

Melatonin, a hormone that the brain naturally produces when the body thinks it's night, can be helpful. But it's not available everywhere and in some countries like the U.K. and France, a prescription is required. Von Schantz of Northumbria University said that one of the advantages of melatonin is that you can start taking it before your journey, to reset your internal clock quicker.

"If you're in a part of the world where melatonin is available over the counter, you can combine the effects of light and melatonin to achieve the advance or delay (in your body clock) that you need," he said.

What can you do to deal with the effects of jet lag?

Business travelers might want to consider arriving a day or two ahead of any important meetings or events, said Russell Foster of Oxford University, who has authored a book on circadian rhythms.

"You should just be aware that if you're jet-lagged, you're more likely to make unwise decisions, be less empathetic and unable to multitask," he said.

Tourists might not need to be as alert as business travelers, but they should still be careful, he said. He advises tourists to get caught up on their sleep before doing anything potentially risky or that requires concentration, like driving.

Foster said he tries to maximize his light exposure when he arrives at a new destination to offset jet lag. But he also has a fallback strategy: coffee.

"I'm not suggesting it's an ideal thing to do, but caffeine will help override the sleepiness and cognitive impairment you might be feeling as a result of jet lag," he said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, August 22, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 058 ~ 72 of 72

## Today in History: August 22, first America's Cup trophy

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 22, the 235th day of 2024. There are 131 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 22, 1851, the schooner America outraced more than a dozen British vessels off the English coast to win a trophy that came to be known as the America's Cup.

Also on this date:

In 1791, the Haitian Revolution began as enslaved people of Saint-Domingue rose up against French colonizers.

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea, which remained under Japanese control until the end of World War II.

In 1922, Irish revolutionary Michael Collins was shot to death, apparently by Irish Republican Army members opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that Collins had co-signed.

In 1965, a fourteen-minute brawl ensued between the San Francisco Giants and the Los Angeles Dodgers after Giants pitcher Juan Marichal stuck Dodgers catcher John Roseboro in the head with a baseball bat. (Marichal and Roseboro would later reconcile and become lifelong friends.)

In 1968, Pope Paul VI arrived in Bogota, Colombia, for the start of the first papal visit to South America.

In 1972, John Wojtowicz (WAHT'-uh-witz) and Salvatore Naturile took seven employees hostage at a Chase Manhattan Bank branch in Brooklyn, New York, during a botched robbery; the siege, which ended with Wojtowicz's arrest and Naturile's killing by the FBI, inspired the 1975 movie "Dog Day Afternoon."

In 1989, Black Panthers co-founder Huey P. Newton was shot to death in Oakland, California.

In 1992, on the second day of the Ruby Ridge siege in Idaho, an FBI sharpshooter killed Vicki Weaver, the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed welfare legislation that ended guaranteed cash payments to the poor and demanded work from recipients.

In 2003, Alabama's chief justice, Roy Moore, was suspended for his refusal to obey a federal court order to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of his courthouse.

In 2007, A Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Iraq, killing all 14 U.S. soldiers aboard.

Today's Birthdays: Author Annie Proulx (proo) is 89. Baseball Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski is 85. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells is 83. Writer-producer David Chase is 79. CBS newsman Steve Kroft is 79. International Swimming Hall of Famer Diana Nyad is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Paul Molitor is 68. Rock guitarist Vernon Reid is 66. Country singer Collin Raye is 64. Rock singer Roland Orzabal (Tears For Fears) is 63. Singer Tori Amos is 61. International Tennis Hall of Famer Mats Wilander (VEE'-luhn-dur) is 60. Rapper GZA (JIHZ'-ah)/The Genius is 58. Actor Ty Burrell is 57. Celebrity chef Giada De Laurentiis is 54. Actor Rick Yune is 53. Singer Howie Dorough (Backstreet Boys) is 51. Comedian-actor Kristen Wiig is 51. Talk show host James Corden is 46. Pop singer Dua Lipa is 29.