

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Wednesday, Aug. 28

Senior Menu: Roast turkey, dressing with gravy, 7-layer salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Quesadillas, corn.

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

**Groton Daily Independent**  
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**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

## Wednesday Blessings

*Have a Wonderful Day*

Every day is  
a gift from  
God, so it's  
important  
not to waste  
a single  
precious  
moment.

Count your  
*Blessings*



## Thursday, Aug. 29

Senior Menu: Baked cod, parsley buttered potatoes, creamy coleslaw, tapioca pudding mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Taco burgers, tri taters.

Volleyball at Hamlin (C at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

## Friday, Aug. 30

Senior Menu: Ham salad on bun, cauliflower/pea/carrot salad, fresh fruit, cookie.

No School (Labor Day break)

Football hosts Mobridge-Pollock, 7 p.m.

Basketball Golf Tourney fundraiser at Olive Grove

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# 1440

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

## Eastern Equine Encephalitis

A New Hampshire resident has died after being infected with a rare but often deadly mosquito-borne virus—the first such death in the state in 10 years and the first in the US this year, officials confirmed yesterday.

The eastern equine encephalitis, or EEE, virus has put a handful of communities on alert. Massachusetts reported its first human case since 2020 last week, with at least 10 counties in the state at high or critical risk of EEE. Those communities have restricted outdoor activities and closed public parks from dusk to dawn. Three people have also been infected in Vermont, New Jersey, and Wisconsin.

The EEE virus is only passed onto humans through mosquitoes and isn't transmitted between people. Symptoms appear four to 10 days after a bite and include fever, body aches, vomiting, and fatigue. The virus can also cause neurological conditions. No vaccines or treatments for the root condition exist for humans. Roughly 30% of infected people die.

## Oasis Returns to Glory

British band Oasis is reuniting after a 15-year hiatus, with a major tour set to kick off in the Welsh capital of Cardiff in July, brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher announced yesterday. The UK and Irish tour will include performances at venues such as Wembley Stadium and multiple shows in their hometown of Manchester.

Formed in 1991, Oasis rose to fame during the "Britpop" era, releasing popular albums like "Definitely Maybe" and "(What's the Story) Morning Glory?" The band is known for hits including "Wonderwall," "Don't Look Back in Anger," and "Champagne Supernova." Despite selling over 75 million records worldwide, the band broke up in 2009 due to ongoing tensions between the brothers—the last song they played live together was a Beatles cover—and they went on to build successful solo careers.

Music industry reunions can boost ticket sales and revitalize interest in a band's catalog—Guns N' Roses' 2016 reunion tour grossed \$584.2M over three years. Industry experts estimate the Oasis reunion could generate \$528M.

## Paralympics in Paris

The 17th Summer Paralympics begins today with the opening ceremony from Paris at 8 pm local time (2 pm ET). The ceremony will take place in the French capital's iconic Place de la Concorde after a parade down the Champs-Élysées as 4,400 athletes from 184 delegations commence France's first Paralympics.

Over 11 days, Paralympians will compete in 22 sports across 20 venues, including canoe, taekwondo, wheelchair fencing, and more (see full list). Within each sport, athletes are classified and compete according to their permanent impairment, whether physical, visual, or intellectual (see list of eligible impairments). For example, badminton has six distinct events, some featuring those in wheelchairs and others pitting athletes of short stature against each other.

The Paralympics began as the Stoke Mandeville Games in England amid World War II, an event started by German-British neurologist Sir Ludwig Guttmann, who believed sports helped injured people rehabilitate their bodies and self-respect.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Travis and Jason Kelce sign three-year deal with Amazon's Wondery worth a reported \$100M for exclusive distribution rights to their "New Heights" podcast.

Leonard Riggio, who was chairman of Barnes & Noble bookstore for nearly 50 years, dies at age 83 of Alzheimer's disease.

NASCAR to host Cup Series race in Mexico City in 2025, its first-ever points-paying event outside the US.

NFL owners approve plan to allow up to 10% private equity ownership per franchise.

## Science & Technology

Security researchers say Chinese government-backed hackers targeted US internet service providers in recent months; analysts say goal was to use hack as an entry point to access corporate networks.

New AI-powered model predicts whether a person's brain is aging at a faster rate than their chronological age; platform analyzes how well different brain regions communicate with each other.

Event Horizon Telescope makes highest-ever resolution detection of black hole details made from Earth; advance offers a 50% increase in detail of the objects and their surrounding region.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.0%, Nasdaq +0.2%).

Nvidia earnings report today expected to show triple-digit revenue growth for fourth straight quarter amid AI boom.

Home prices reach record high in June, up 5.4% year-over-year per S&P Case-Shiller Index; New York, San Diego, and Las Vegas see highest jumps.

Lyft tests rider verification program in nine US cities after announcing pet-friendly rides earlier in the week, following similar Uber initiatives.

## Politics & World Affairs

Special counsel Jack Smith files revised indictment accusing former President Donald Trump of 2020 election subversion; indictment includes same four counts but limits scope of evidence per last month's Supreme Court decision.

Trump adds ex-Democrats Tulsi Gabbard and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to transition team.

Israel rescues 52-year-old hostage from Gaza's underground tunnel, the eighth hostage to be rescued in a military operation since the 11-month war began; Israel says 108 hostages remain in Gaza, with 40 dead.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg writes in letter to House Judiciary Committee the Biden administration pressured Meta to remove content related to COVID-19 in 2021; also said the company temporarily demoted content related to Hunter Biden's laptop in 2020 while fact-checkers investigated the story.

## Kosel/Moll united in marriage



Julianna Kosel and Isaac Moll were united in marriage on July 30, 2024, in the yard of his parents, Cameron and Suzanne Moll, Sarasota, Fla.

Parents of the couple are Paul and Tina Kosel, Groton, S.D., and Cameron and Suzanne Moll, Sarasota, Fla.

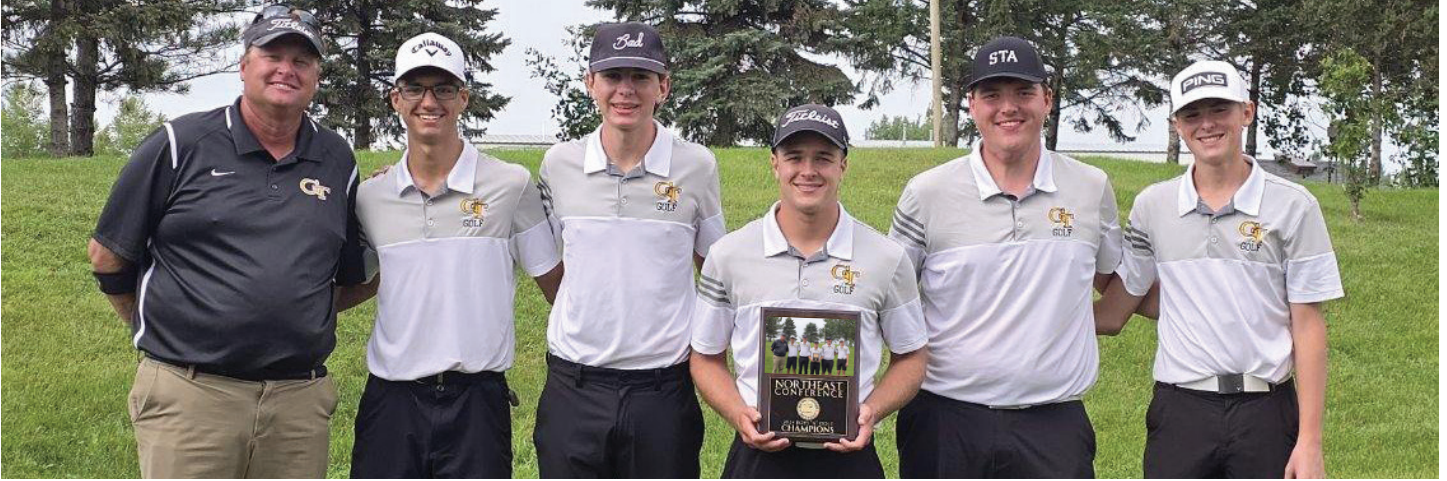
Bridesmaids were Suzanne Moll, mother of the groom; Olivia Moll, sister-in-law of the groom; and Jeslyn Kosel, sister of the bride. Groomsmen were Everest Moll, brother of the groom; Edison Moll, brother of the groom; and Zach Thompson, friend of the groom. Easton Moll, brother of the groom, did the rings and flowers.

Paul Kosel, father of the bride, performed the service. Madi Gibson, friend of the bride, did the hair for the ladies.

After the marriage, the couple went on a cruise to Bahamas, Costa Maya and Cozumel. They are living in Provo, Utah, where Julianna is working as a nanny and has her Utah cosmetology license and will be working in a salon soon. Isaac is pursuing a major in cyber security at Brigham Young University in Provo.

On August 24, 2024, the couple was sealed at the Bountiful Utah Temple, performed by brother Bennett.

A reception will be held at the Kosel home in Groton on Saturday, Nov. 30, 2024, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



**Pictured is the Groton golf team as the Northeast Conference champions: Coach Joel Guthmiller, Jayden Schwan, Carter Simon, Brevin Flihs, Logan Pearson and Jace Johnson.** (Courtesy Photo)

## **Groton boys golf team wins first ever NEC title**

The Groton Area boys golf team won their first ever Northeast Conference title Tuesday at Hankinson, N.D., with Tiospa Zina being the host team.

Groton beat Aberdeen Roncalli by three strokes, 327-330, to win the team title. Sisseton was third with 358, Milbank fourth with 368 and Redfield was fifth with 414.

Brevin Flihs took third with a 79, Carter Simon was fifth with an 82, Logan Pearson was sixth with an 82, Jace Johnson was eighth with an 84 and Jayden Schwan was 18th with a 99.

## Six new staff members at Groton Area

by Dorene Nelson

There are a few changes and six new instructors for the Groton Area School for 2024-2025. After six years of retirement, Mary Johnson is returning to teach middle school reading and social studies. Prior to her retirement, she taught sixth grade with Lance Hawkins. Alison Tvinnereim is going to be an RtI para as well as replace Tasha Dunker as the elementary school librarian. First grade teacher Caitlyn Fischbach will also be the volleyball assistant coach. In addition to those changing positions, there are six new teachers in the Groton Area Schools.



**Landon Brown**, the new vocal and show choir teacher, is a recent graduate from SDSU. "I'm from Milbank, SD, where I attended high school. While in high school, I participated in band, choir, oral interp, and theatre. I come from a musical family with a younger sister who is currently studying theatre."

"Following high school, I attended SDSU in Brookings, SD, where I majored in K-12 music education," Brown explained. "My responsibilities here in Groton include K-12 vocal and show choir."

"Teaching here in Groton is my very first job, and I'm really excited about being here," he admitted. "Rebuilding the vocal program here at Groton is my top priority. We should see some success with the help of the band teacher Desiree Yeigh and the musical accompaniment and experience supplied by Amy Warrington."

"I plan to get individual student lessons organized and set up later, after I'm more familiar with the school and the music students," Brown added.

"I teach about 250 students in junior kindergarten through the fifth grade," he listed. "The middle school choir has sixty-five students with thirty in the high school choir."

"I decided to accept this teaching job in Groton because it was the very first one I received," Brown admitted. "I also live in Aberdeen so its location is ideal."

"So far the elementary students are my favorite probably because of their friendliness and efforts at trying to please me," he smiled. "All of my students really want me to stay more than just one year, and that's what I'm hoping to do!"



**McKayla Hanson**, the new first grade teacher, is no stranger to the school system since she did her student teaching here too. "I was also in the Brandon, SD school district for twelve weeks student teaching there in special education," McKayla explained.

"I graduated from Northern State University with a double major in elementary education and special education," she said.

"I just got married last month, and my husband and I live in Aberdeen, making the Groton School the perfect place for me to teach and learn," Hanson stated.

"I have twenty-five students in the first grade with five sets of twins, an unusual number for a school the size of Groton," she smiled. "This is my first year of teaching."

"I decided to become an elementary teacher because the kids at this age are so much fun," Hanson admitted. "I am so excited to be a teacher and watch and help them grow."

"Part of helping the students learn more and grow is to figure out exactly what I can do to help them continue," she explained. "I am excited to start school, to meet the parents, and see so many new families and kids and explore their future."

"I had a really good time choosing the bulletin board material and other items for my first classroom," Hanson admitted. "It was especially satisfying that the parents and students noticed how nice the classroom looked!"

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**Lindsey Vander Wal** is the new ag teacher for Groton High School. "I'm from Bruce, SD, but attended high school in Sioux Valley," she added. "I was born and raised on a farm so becoming an ag teacher seemed very logical."

"I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from SDSU in Brookings," Vander Wal said. "Having been raised on a farm made this decision very easy!"

"Individuals who didn't attend an agricultural college like SDSU can become alternately certified," she said. "This is done through the Internet with most people coming from the ag industry and then deciding to teach."

"This is my first teaching job, and I'm pleased to have about 45 students enrolled in various levels of Agriculture and Horticulture," she listed. "This includes high school students, most of whom are boys."

"My farm background and my high school activities in Ag as well as having an excellent high school Ag teacher helped me to decide that that was what I wanted to do too," Vander Wal smiled.

"Growing up on a farm, I worked hard doing farm work just like my brother did," she admitted. "Our farm is a 5th generation farm that raises row crops and feeder cattle."

"The high school ag classes that I was part of helped to build a house, and studied multiple areas of agriculture," Vander Wal stated. "Part of my responsibility here in Groton is to care for and oversee greenhouse activities."

"I only have high school students in six different classes but one day hope to teach middle school classes as well," she explained. "I've done some organizing of the classroom to suit my preferences as well as tossing some items that I won't be needing."

"I'll be teaching Ag 1, 2, 3, and 4; greenhouse work, and horticulture," she said.

"I plan to have guest speakers on greenhouse maintenance, agronomist experts, a nutritionist, etc." Vander Wal stated. "I'm excited to be here and had a good first day in the classroom!"



**Carrie Cole** is excited to begin her first year as the new fifth grade teacher at Groton Area Elementary School. "I'm thrilled to be joining the Groton School District and starting this new chapter as a fifth grade teacher," Cole shared.

A proud Groton High School alumna, Cole initially pursued a degree in a journalism from South Dakota State University. She built a career in digital media, working as a digital media manager and interactive web publisher for regional newspapers including the American News and Farm Forum. However, her passion for education led her back to the classroom.

Cole's husband, Charles, works as a research agronomist for Wilbur-Ellis. The couple have three children, Libby, a ninth grader, Freddy, a third grader, and Ivy, a first grader.

Cole completed her student teaching last spring in the Doland School and is currently furthering her education in the Instructional Design in E-Learning Master's program at

Northern State University.

"I'm fortunate to be working alongside Janel Lone with whom I had the pleasure of learning from during two of my in-classroom educational teaching experiences. I'm confident we'll make a fantastic team," Cole said.

"I'm excited to get to know the fifth grade students and see their growth both academically and individually throughout the coming school year."

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**Jennifer Kunze** is the new OST coordinator and special ed para for the Groton Elementary School. She is originally from Buffalo, MN, where she attended all 12 years of her undergraduate education. Following high school, Jennifer attended and graduated from Rasmussen College, St. Cloud, MN, and has been teaching since 2010.

"In 2021 we moved to Groton, and my husband was able to get a transfer here by Dakota Supply Group. We have a seven-year-old son who is in the second grade," Kunze explained.

"Before we moved to Groton, I had been teaching in a childcare/school age center in Minnesota," she stated. "When we moved here, I started working at the Youth Development Center across the street from the YMCA in Aberdeen."

The Youth Development Center helps kids develop and learn how to maintain healthy lives. These programs are focused on three areas: cultivating the potential of kids, helping people live a healthier life, and strengthening our community.

"In addition to that job, I worked nights and weekends at Ken's Fairway Foods here in Groton and plan to continue working there after school starts," Kunze said. "I am very happy to be working in the same school that my son attends. Not only will I be able to see him occasionally, but I also won't have to be stopping at two different places every morning."

"Since I have lived in the Midwest all of my life, I found that the people and the weather here are very similar to what I was used to in Buffalo, MN," she stated.



**Megan Serr**, the new elementary special education teacher, is originally from Warner, SD. "I attended Northern State University to receive a double major in elementary education and special education," she listed.

"I chose special education based upon several past experiences," Serr explained. "As a child, we would 'play' school, and I was always the teacher. Even at that young age, I became aware that some children learn differently than others, and I just wanted to learn how I could best help them!"

"This knowledge was further evident when I was in high school and offered to help teachers or other students when needed," she said. "It became obvious to me that my purpose was to become an educator!"

"Before coming here to Groton, I was the special education teacher for two years in Selby, SD, at the Oahe Special Education Coop," Serr explained. "This is my first year here in Groton."

"I decided to apply here because I'm much closer to my family," she admitted. "I would like to be here for those special, big family moments that happen only once in a while! I have also heard incredible things about Groton and its community and knew that I wanted to be part of it."

"I work with the older elementary students in the fourth and fifth grades," Serr said. "The children at this age learn from each other as well as from the teachers. However, I think I learn the most from the students themselves."

"I have purchased a house and am planning to be here for quite a while," she smiled.



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## National Legion Convention



A group of South Dakota Legion National Convention attendees look on while the South Dakota Department Commander, Kevin Morello, is the first to sign the South Dakota delegation banner. (Courtesy Photo)



American Legion Post 39 Commander, Bruce Babcock, attended this week the National American Legion Convention held in New Orleans LA 26-29 August. Pictured L-R South Dakota Department Commander, Kevin Morello and Bruce Babcock. (Courtesy Photo)



6,500 Legion members from all 50 states and territories attended the 105th National American Legion Convention in New Orleans LA. (Courtesy Photo)

## Sunday Storm Destroys Conde City Shop Building

Photos by Jake Bawek



A large Cottonwood Tree next to the Conde City Shop was toppled during a severe storm that went through Conde on Sunday. Jake Bawek shared the photos of the damage done.



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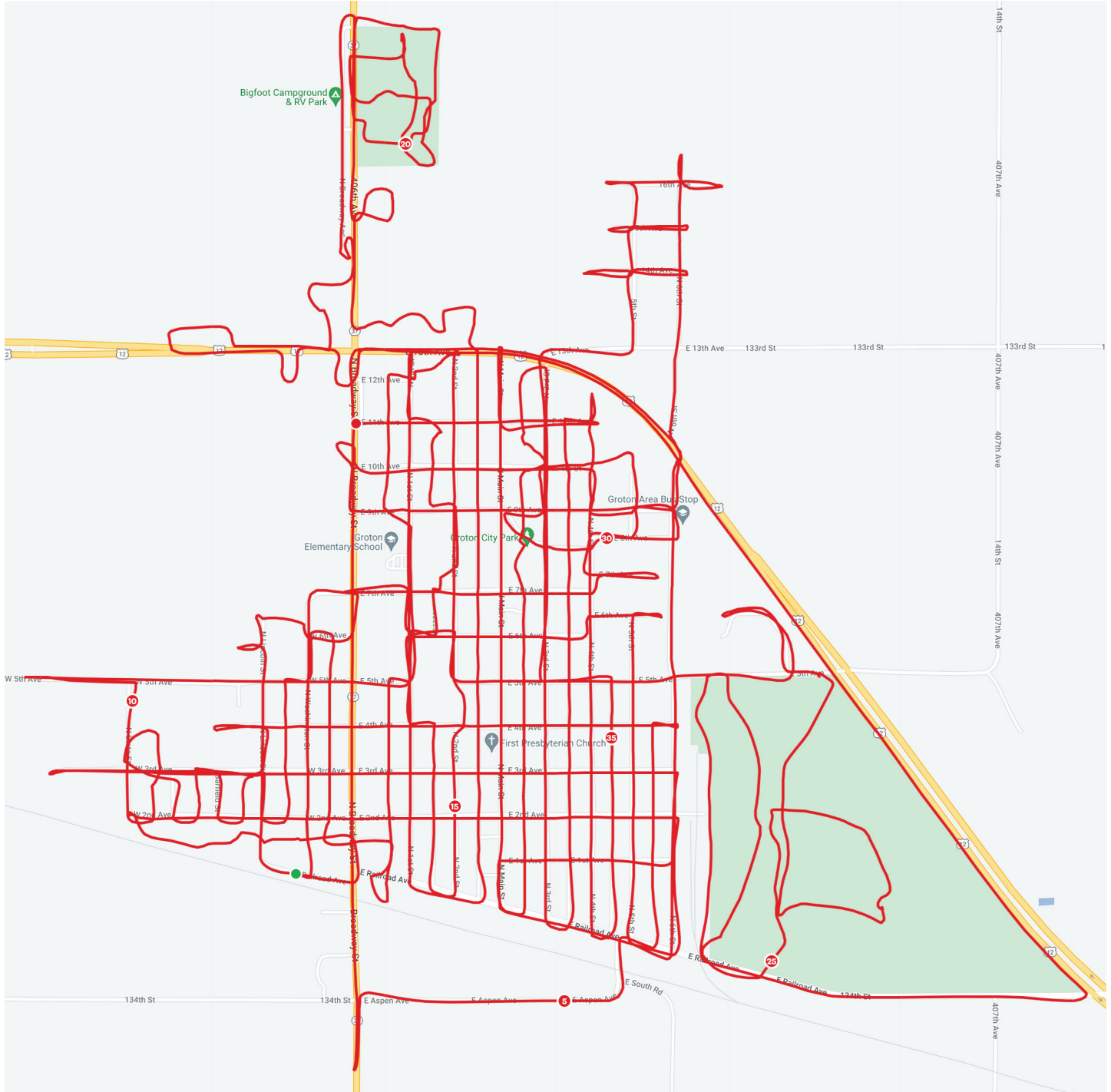
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## Adult Mosquito Control conducted Tuesday night



The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control Tuesday night. Temperature was in the 60s. Wind was N-NE at 5 p.m. 10.7 gallons of PermX UL 4x4 was used.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Noem commutes sentences for two convicted of murder**

**Governor also issues 45 more pardons since February**

**BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 27, 2024 3:34 PM**

Gov. Kristi Noem commuted the sentences of two people convicted of murder and issued 45 more pardons since February.

Since taking office in 2019, Noem has commuted the sentences of 27 people and pardoned 341.

Her first commutation of the summer was granted to 70-year-old John Proctor on July 24.

Proctor has served 51 years in prison for killing Meade County rancher Arlon Hamm. Proctor had been carrying on an affair with Hamm's stepmother, Billie Jean Hamm, with whom he'd plotted to kill Arlon Hamm. Billie Jean Hamm, now deceased, was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder.

The South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles recommended a commutation for Proctor last fall. The parole board had also recommended a commutation for Proctor in 2021.

Noem denied Proctor's 2021 clemency request in a letter dated March 15, 2022.

The recently approved commutation reduces Proctor's sentence from life in prison to 410 years. With credit for time served and good behavior, Proctor will be eligible for parole next July.

Noem's most recent commutation went to 45-year-old Renee Eckes on Aug. 21, less than two months after her appearance before the South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles. Her commutation was previously reported by The Dakota Scout.

Eckes had been serving a life sentence; her sentence was reduced to 45 years. She will be eligible for parole in September of 2027, the commutation says.

The board unanimously recommended that Noem issue a commutation for Eckes after its July meeting. The board reviews clemency applications, but Noem has the final say on the recommendations.

Noem has also issued commutations for people who didn't follow the formal process of applying to the board. Most recently, in December, Noem commuted the sentences of 12 women convicted of felony drug ingestion, a charge unique to South Dakota that can land a person in prison for having illicit substances in their system. None of the women made their case before the parole board.

Eckes was 19 years old when she and 17-year-old Jessi Owens killed David Bauman with a hammer during a burglary attempt. The pair entered Bauman's Watertown home in search of cash, but he came home and caught them in the act, setting up the physical altercation that ended his life. Owens grabbed a hammer and struck Bauman, after which Eckes picked it up and continued to strike him.

Owens' life sentence was reduced after a 2012 U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that life sentences for juveniles are unconstitutional. She was released in 2018.

On the pardons side, Noem issued 45 between July 2 and Aug. 21, signing them in batches on July 2, July 24, July 26 and Aug. 21.

Pardons permanently erase old charges from a person's criminal record. Because the state constitution grants sole authority for clemency to the governor, pardons represent the only pathway for South Dakotans to clear their record of old charges for which they were convicted or pleaded guilty. Pardons are sealed after five years.

The summer pardons cover a range of crimes, including DUIs, controlled substance possession and burglary, among others, as well as a 39-year-old aggravated assault conviction.

Prior to July, Noem's most recent batch of pardons were signed on Feb. 23.

On that same date, Noem signed four commutation denial letters, including one for Rex Gard, convicted of grand theft by embezzlement and sentenced to 65 years. Two members of the parole board, which

voted 8-1 to recommend a commutation, called the sentence "excessive" during his clemency hearing in the summer of 2023.

As of April, Noem had signed nine denial letters in total, according to records released at the request of South Dakota Searchlight.

Noem's office did not immediately respond to a request for any new denial letters issued since April. Spokesman Ian Fury also did not respond to questions on Noem's reversal in the Proctor situation or her swiftness in acting upon the Eckes commutation recommendation.

Here are the latest 45 pardons issued by Noem.

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

## Former state employee pleads not guilty in \$1.8 million theft case

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 27, 2024 11:42 AM**

An Iowa woman who formerly worked for the South Dakota Department of Social Services pleaded not guilty Tuesday to stealing an estimated \$1.8 million in state and federal funds from the department's Division of Child Protection Services over the course of 13 years.

Lonna Carroll, 68, of Algona, Iowa, is charged with two felony counts of aggravated grand theft.

She was arrested in July, after the South Dakota Attorney General's Office concluded an investigation that began in February. The investigation started "when the Department of Social Services Child Protection saw an irregularity" in some financial transactions Carroll controlled, Attorney General Marty Jackley told reporters in July.

Carroll's trial is scheduled to begin Dec. 4 in Pierre. Her bail is set at \$50,000 and she is being held in the Hughes County Jail.

The maximum, combined sentence for both counts of aggravated grand theft is 40 years in prison and \$80,000 in fines.

South Dakota state lawmakers on the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee plan to hold a hearing in October on the alleged theft and prevention strategies.

Earlier this month, Jackley confirmed another alleged crime involving a former state employee. The now-deceased woman, Sandra O'Day, used her position with the state Department of Revenue to create 13 fake vehicle titles used to secure \$400,000 in loans, Jackley said. Because the woman is deceased, no charges were filed.

*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.*

## Sturgis rally tax collections total \$1.4 million, which is down from last year

**BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - AUGUST 27, 2024 10:29 AM**

Tax collections attributed to the recently concluded 2024 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally were \$1.4 million, which was down 3% from last year, according to estimates released Tuesday by the state Department of Revenue.

State sales tax collections were \$790,805, state tourism tax collections were \$271,322, and city sales tax collections were \$337,374.

The collections came from 896 temporary vendors, which was 17 fewer than last year.

The department also tallies the numbers by region. The northern Black Hills, which includes Sturgis and all other communities in Meade and Lawrence counties, collected \$992,067 in taxes from 699 vendors, an 8% decrease compared to last year.

The southern Black Hills, which includes Rapid City, Custer, Hill City and Keystone, had 197 temporary vendors with \$407,434 in tax collected, increasing 12% from last year.



In other 2024 rally stats, at least 12 people died in motorcycle crashes in South Dakota during the rally or the days just before or after the official rally dates.

According to the Highway Patrol, there were also 155 arrests for driving under the influence in western South Dakota during the rally, 444 drug arrests, 54 non-injury traffic accidents and 35 injury accidents.

## U.S. Education Department outlines testing period for phased rollout of new FAFSA form

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - AUGUST 27, 2024 4:44 PM**

WASHINGTON — With the U.S. Department of Education using a staggered approach in opening up the 2025-26 application period for federal financial student aid, the agency said Tuesday it will partner with a small number of community-based organizations to participate in the first testing period beginning Oct. 1.

Earlier in August, the department said it would use a phased rollout to launch the Free Application for Federal Student Aid — more commonly known as FAFSA — in an attempt to address any issues before the form is available to everyone.

The form will be open to hundreds of students and contributors during the first beta testing period this fall, increasing to tens of thousands by the final testing stage and available to everyone by Dec. 1.

Community-based organizations interested in participating in the initial testing can fill out an interest form from Tuesday until Sept. 5.

The department said it will select two to six of those groups and notify them by Sept. 9.

"In our prep, just to give some confidence, we've hit every milestone so far on time," Jeremy Singer, FAFSA executive adviser, said on a call with reporters regarding the framework for the 2025-26 FAFSA testing period. "That bodes well for us being able to meet the beta testing period and a solid path to actually open it up to real users on October 1."

Singer, who leads FAFSA strategy within the department's Office of Federal Student Aid, said "each (community-based organization) will recruit students to participate in the beta, and then they'll host FAFSA night in very early October."

He said these organizations will also identify a partner college that will receive Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) and that the goal is to "test the system end-to-end."

Singer said that in later beta tests, the department will also partner with high schools and higher education institutions.

In March, the department said it received roughly 40% fewer FAFSA applications than the same time period in 2023, but as of Tuesday, the gap is now under 3%.

The 2024-25 FAFSA form witnessed its share of hiccups, both when the form soft launched last December and officially debuted this past January. The 2024-25 form got a makeover after the FAFSA Simplification Act passed in December 2020.

The department has worked to fix a series of glitches and errors, including concerns from advocates over the form's failure to adjust for inflation, its formula miscalculation and its tax data errors.

*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.*

## Otter Tail Power raising fee on electric customer bills to pay off projects

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 27, 2024 4:31 PM**

A monthly fee on electrical bills will increase by \$4.14 for the average Otter Tail Power residential customer starting next month.

Increases will vary for the rest of the company's customers. The company's website says it serves approximately 13,500 residential, commercial and industrial customers in northeastern South Dakota.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission's three elected commissioners unanimously approved the company's increase Tuesday. Otter Tail will generate up to \$3.2 million from the increase to help recoup costs from projects. Those include buying a natural gas plant in Deuel County, building a wind farm in North Dakota, and replacing and upgrading turbine blades and parts to increase the efficiency and lifespan

of multiple wind farms.

The additional fee will be reviewed by the PUC next year.

The increase is part of a rate adjustment mechanism that allows utilities to adjust customers' bills for specific projects. Company officials say the projects are essential for increasing reliability and generating cleaner energy.

*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.*

## **DOJ looks to revive classified documents case against Trump, argues judge's dismissal was 'flawed'**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - AUGUST 27, 2024 11:57 AM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Special Counsel Jack Smith has asked a federal appeals court to reverse the dismissal of a case alleging former President Donald Trump mishandled classified documents at his Florida home after he left the Oval Office.

The appeals process could take months, likely closing the door on any movement in the classified documents case against Trump, the 2024 Republican presidential nominee, before November's election.

Smith argued late Monday that U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon's decision to toss the case was based on a "flawed" argument that Smith was illegally appointed to the office of special counsel.

Over an 81-page brief filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, Smith cited statutes and a Watergate-era Supreme Court decision to argue the time-tested legality of U.S. attorneys general to appoint and fund independent, or special, counsels.

"In ruling otherwise, the district court deviated from binding Supreme Court precedent, misconstrued the statutes that authorized the Special Counsel's appointment, and took inadequate account of the long-standing history of Attorney General appointments of special counsels," Smith wrote.

Further, he warned, "[t]he district court's rationale could jeopardize the longstanding operation of the Justice Department and call into question hundreds of appointments throughout the Executive Branch."

Cannon, a federal judge for the Southern District of Florida, dismissed the classified documents case against Trump on July 15 — two days after Trump was injured in an attempted assassination in Pennsylvania and just as the Republican National Convention kicked off in Wisconsin.

Cannon is a Trump appointee who was nominated in 2020 and confirmed by the U.S. Senate later that year.

Trump had argued for the case's dismissal in February.

Days before he was set to officially accept the party's nomination for president, Trump hailed Cannon's dismissal as a way to unite the nation following the attempt on his life in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Cannon argued Smith's appointment violated two clauses of the U.S. Constitution that govern how presidential administrations and Congress appoint and approve "Officers of the United States," and how taxpayer money can be used to pay their salaries and other expenses.

Smith appealed her decision just days later.

### **Historic classified documents case**

Smith's historic case against Trump marked the first time a former U.S. president faced federal criminal charges.

A grand jury handed up a 37-count indictment in June 2023 charging the former president, along with his aide Walt Nauta, with felonies related to mishandling classified documents after Trump's term in office, including storing them at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate. A superseding indictment that added charges and another co-defendant was handed up a little over a month later.

The classified documents case is just one of several legal entanglements for Trump, who became a convicted felon in New York state court in May.

The former president also continues to face federal criminal charges for allegedly conspiring to overturn the 2020 presidential election results. That case has also been in a holding pattern for several months as Trump appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that the charges should be dropped based on presidential criminal immunity.

The Supreme Court ruled in early July that the former presidents enjoy immunity for official "core Constitutional" acts and returned the case to the federal trial court in Washington, D.C.

Smith has until the end of August to assess how the immunity decision affects the election subversion case against Trump. A pre-trial hearing is scheduled for Sept. 5.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## After lawsuit from SD and other states, judge pauses protections for undocumented spouses

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - AUGUST 27, 2024 9:36 AM

WASHINGTON — A Texas federal judge late Monday sided with 16-Republican led states, including South Dakota, to temporarily block a Biden administration program that grants deportation protections for undocumented spouses of U.S. citizens and a potential pathway to citizenship.

The ruling by Judge J. Campbell Barker of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, is an administrative stay, meaning no applications can be processed while the case is ongoing. The Department of Homeland Security began accepting applications last week.

"The claims are substantial and warrant closer consideration than the court has been able to afford to date," Barker, who former president Donald Trump appointed, wrote in his order.

A DHS spokesperson said the agency will defend the program, known as Keeping Families Together, in court.

"Keeping Families Together enables U.S. citizens and their family members to live without fear of separation, consistent with fundamental American values," a DHS spokesperson said. "The Department of Homeland Security will comply with the court's decision, including continuing to accept applications, while we defend Keeping Families Together in court."

DHS is still allowed to collect applications for the program, but not allowed to approve them, according to the order from Barker. Applications that have already been processed and a parole in place granted, are not impacted by the current stay.

The states, which filed the suit last week, are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming.

They are being represented by American First Legal, an organization established by former Trump adviser Stephen Miller — the architect of Trump's hard-line immigration policies.

Those states argue that the Biden administration overreached its authority in creating the program and they argue the program would financially harm them if that group of undocumented people — roughly 500,000 — are allowed to remain in the country.

In his order, Barker set a court timeline that could deliver a decision by mid-October, right before the presidential election. Both sides have until Oct. 10 to submit their briefs.

"The court does not, however, express any ultimate conclusions about the success or likely success of those claims," Barker wrote. "As with most administrative stays, the court has simply undertaken a screening, 'first-blush' review of the claims and what is at stake in the dispute."

President Joe Biden in June unveiled the program, which is a one-time action that applies to long-term undocumented people married to U.S. citizens for 10 years as of June 17 this year. It also applies to their children. It's expected to roughly include 50,000 children who are undocumented but have an immigrant

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parent married to a U.S. citizen.

The program allows for those undocumented spouses and their children to apply for a green card under certain requirements, which DHS will review on a case-by-case basis.

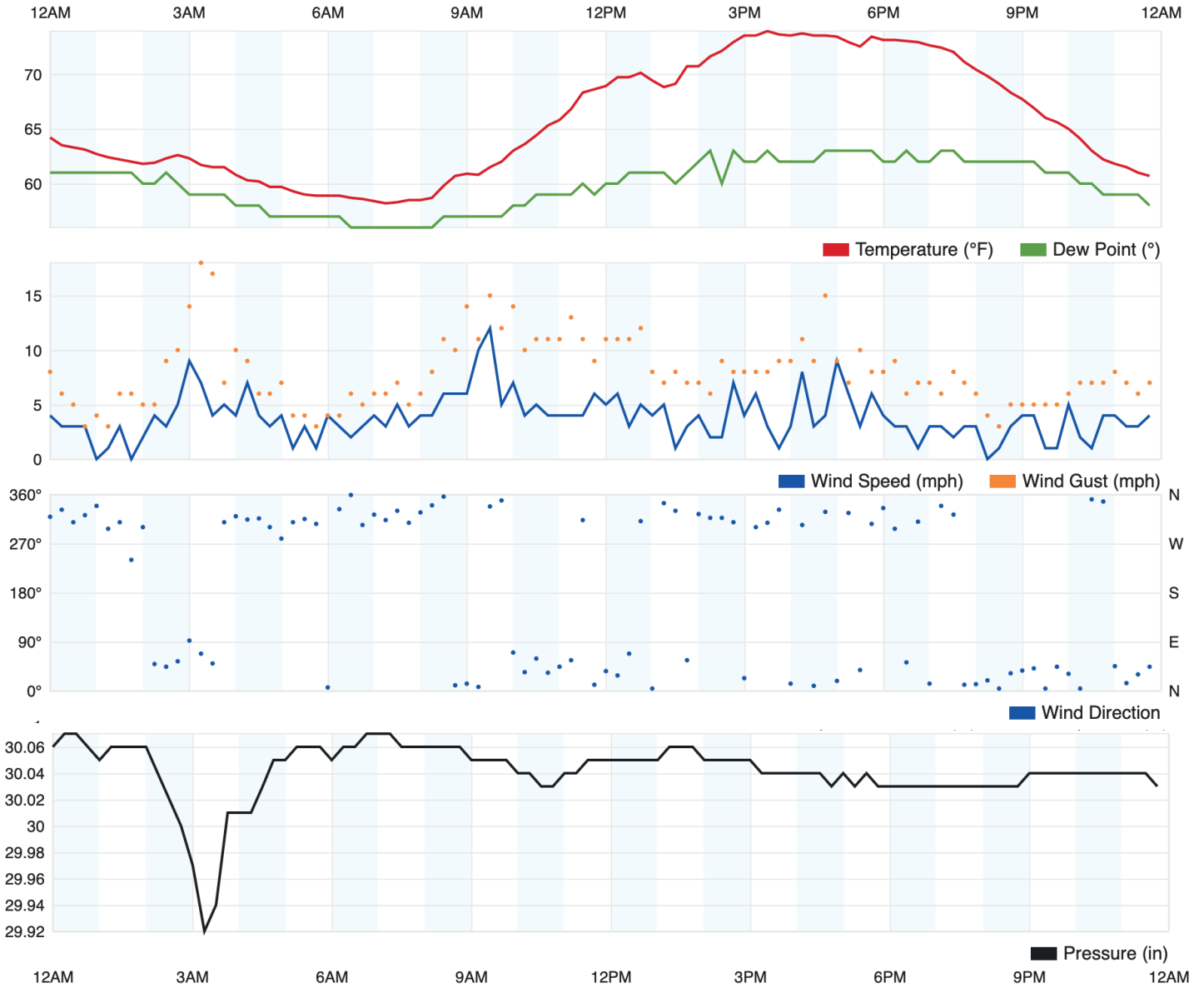
Under current U.S. immigration law, if a noncitizen enters the country without authorization, they are ineligible for permanent legal status and would need to leave the U.S. and then reenter through a green card application by their U.S. spouse. It's a lengthy process that can take years.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 85 °F

Patchy Fog then Sunny and Breezy

Tonight



Low: 65 °F

Chance T-storms and Breezy

Thursday



High: 78 °F

Chance T-storms then Slight Chance Showers

Thursday Night



Low: 54 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 79 °F

Sunny



## Severe Weather Threat

August 28, 2024  
4:21 AM

This evening through the overnight hours

### Timing/Location

Storms will develop over central SD around 6 PM CDT and move east through the evening and overnight hours.

### Primary Threats for the **YELLOW** areas

#### Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

#### Max Hail Size

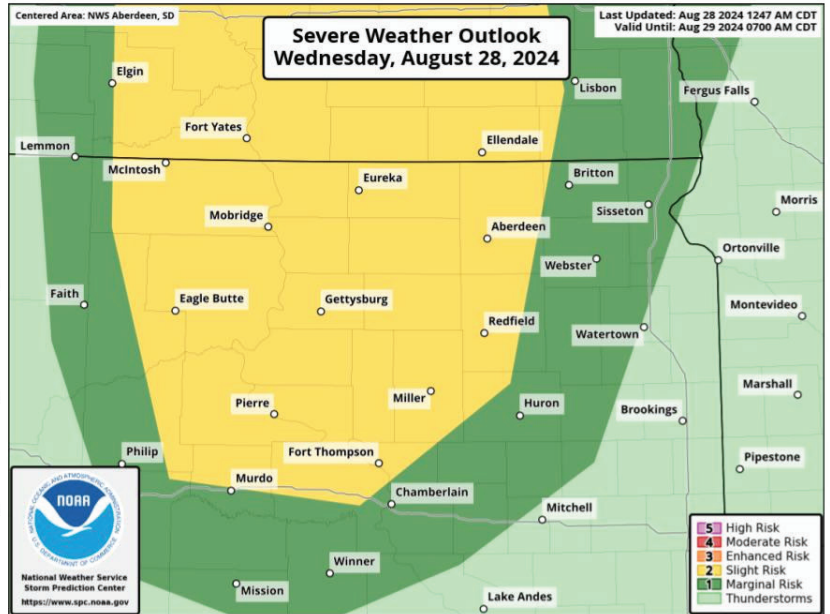
Dimes Quarters **Golfball** Baseball

#### 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 slight risk (2 out of 5) for severe thunderstorms primarily over central SD after about 6 PM CDT. The main threats will be hail 2" or more in diameter and wind gusts over 60 mph. A tornado or two will also be possible initially over central SD.

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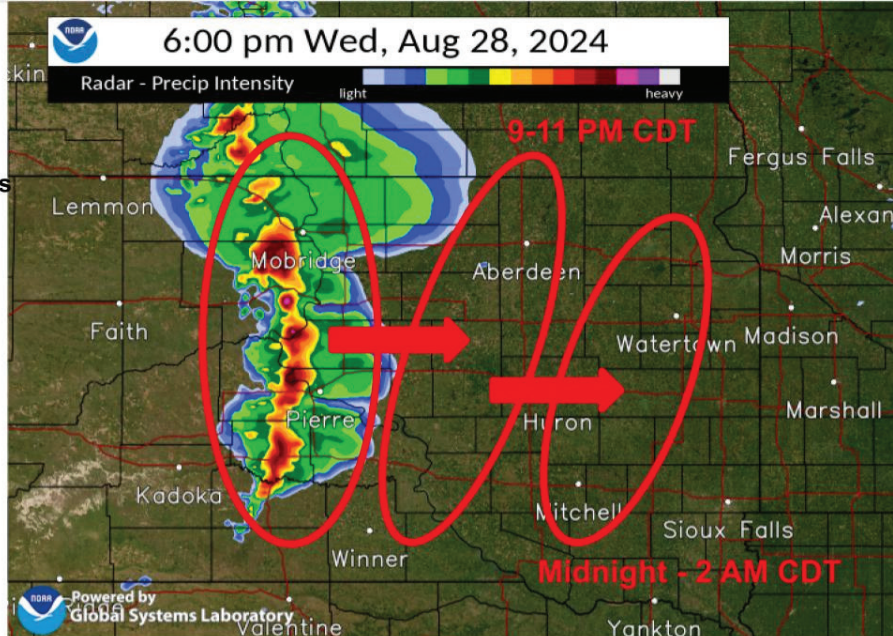


## Severe Weather Threat - Timing

August 28, 2024

4:29 AM

This evening through the overnight hours



\*\*\*This model shows a higher end/more storms scenario.

It is ONE possible outcome of MANY



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Storms are expected to develop over central SD around 6 PM CDT and move east across eastern SD through the evening and overnight hours. Note: This image depicts one model outcome. This is a higher end or more intense scenario. Actual storm placement and timing may be different.



## Severe Weather Threats - Hail

August 28, 2024

4:27 AM

This evening through the overnight hours

### Hail Threat Highlights:

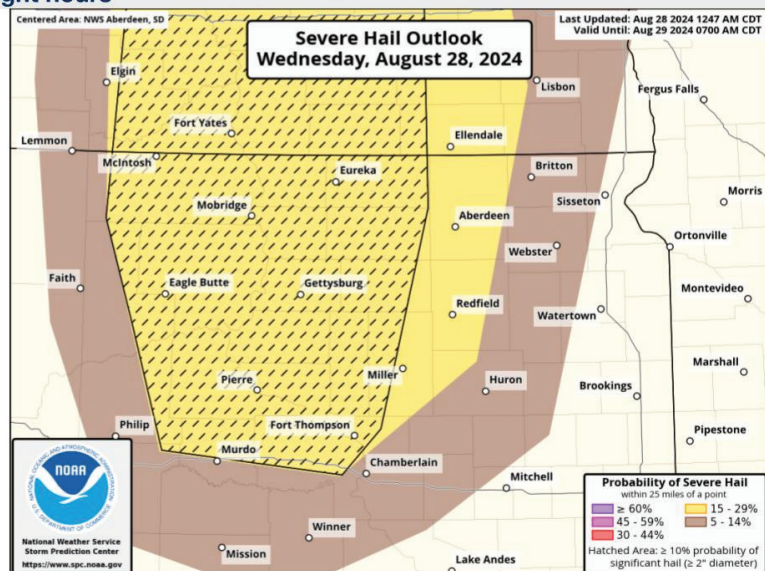
Any thunderstorms that develop today have the potential to produce 1" hail, but areas within the yellow are at highest risk. Additionally, storms in the yellow have the potential to develop significant hail greater than 2" in diameter.

### Cities At Greatest Risk of Significant Hail (2" or greater):

Eagle Butte, Eureka, Gettysburg, McIntosh, Mobridge, Pierre, Murdo, and Fort Thompson

### Other Cities At Greatest Risk of Severe Hail:

Aberdeen, Miller, Redfield



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

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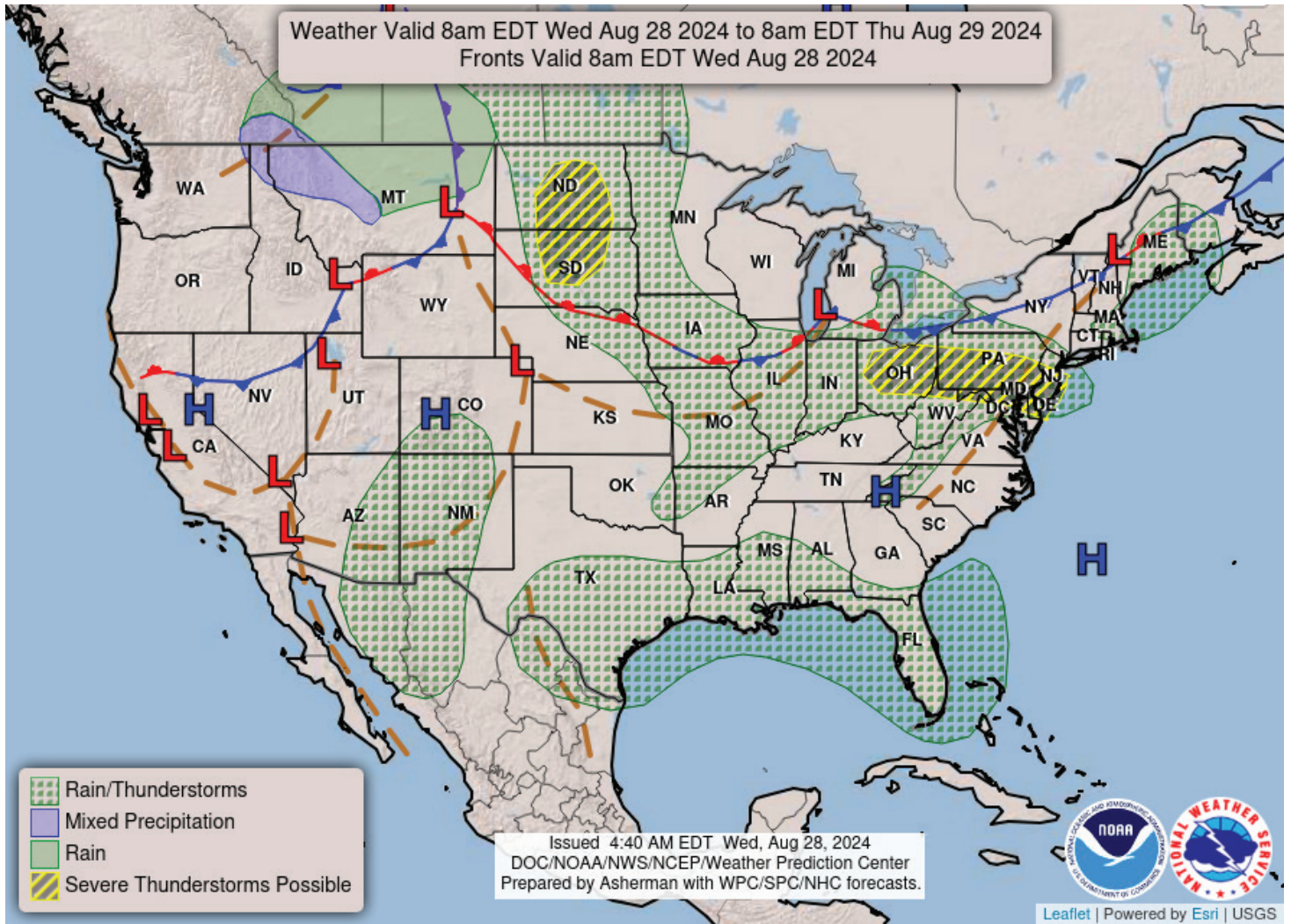
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 74 °F at 4:23 PM**  
**Low Temp: 58 °F at 7:09 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 3:14 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 29 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1937  
Record Low: 31 in 1893  
Average High: 81  
Average Low: 54  
Average Precip in Aug.: 2.03  
Precip to date in Aug.: 4.45  
Average Precip to date: 16.13  
Precip Year to Date: 19.34  
Sunset Tonight: 8:18:16 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:49:44 am





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## Today in Weather History

August 28, 2011: Several thunderstorms tracking southeast across the region brought large hail along with damaging winds to parts of the area. Golf ball hail broke some windows on several homes and the church in Herried in Campbell County. Colossal hail up to three inches in diameter caused some vehicle and siding damage in Tolstoy, in Potter County. In Redfield, seventy mph winds downed a tree along with many large tree branches. Also, the metal on a roof was peeled back.

1898 - Torrents of rain accompanied by a furious wind upset the rain gage at Fort Mohave AZ. However, water in a wash tub set out on the mesa, clear of everything, measured eight inches after the 45 minute storm. (The Weather Channel)

1911 - Saint George, GA, was deluged with 18.00 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1959 - Lieutenant Colonel William Rankin bailed out of his plane at a height of 46,000 feet into a violent thunderstorm, and lived to write about the 45 minute journey (which normally would have been a thirteen minute descent). He described it as one of the most bizarre and painful experiences imaginable. (The Weather Channel)

1971 - Heavy rains from Tropical Storm Doria caused devastating floods in central and northeast New Jersey resulting in 138 million dollars damage. In southeastern Pennsylvania, high winds downed trees and power lines, and in New York City, heavy rains flooded streets and subways. (David Ludlum)

1973 - An F4 tornado touched down near Canaan, New York, and moved to western Massachusetts. Three people were killed in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts when a truck stop was destroyed, and another person died in a ruined house nearby.

1986 - The temperature at Apalachicola, FL, dipped to 62 degrees to shatter their previous August record by four degrees, having tied their August record high of 99 degrees on the 2nd of the month. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms broke the heat in the southeastern U.S. and the Gulf Coast Region, but not before seven cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The severe thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 80 mph downing large trees around Horse Shoe NC, and pelted southeastern Meridian MS with hail two inches in diameter. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Tropical Storm Chris spawned a tornado near Manning, SC, which killed one person, and spawned three tornadoes in North Carolina. Chris produced one to two foot tides, and three to six inch rains, over coastal South Carolina. Severe thunderstorms in New York State and Vermont, developing ahead of a cold front, spawned a tornado which killed one person at Hector NY, produced tennis ball size hail at Brandon VT, and produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Lyndonville VT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms in Nebraska produced 4.50 inches of rain around McCook, and 4.65 inches near Auburn and Brownville. Showers in Montana pushed the rainfall total for the month at Havre past the previous August record of 3.90 inches. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Between 3:15 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. a devastating F5 tornado ripped a 16.4 mile-long path through portions of Kendall and Will counties in northern Illinois. A total of 29 people were killed, and 350 more were injured. An estimated \$160 million in damages occurred. The tornado's path width ranged from 200 yards to half a mile. A total of 470 homes were destroyed, and another 1000 homes were damaged. Sixty-five thousand customers lost power.

2005 - Hurricane Katrina attained Category 5 status on the morning of August 28 and reached its peak strength at 1800 UTC that day, with maximum sustained winds of 175 mph and a minimum central pressure of 902 mbars (26.6 inHg).



## WHERE AM I GOING?

A Bishop in the Church of England, known for his forgetfulness, boarded a train in London. Shortly after the train left the station, he began crawling around his seat and the other seats near him. Fearing for his safety the conductor approached him carefully, tapped him on the shoulder and asked what he was doing.

"I'm looking for my ticket," said the Bishop.

"Well, that's not a problem, Bishop. We'll take care of you. It's really quite all right," replied the conductor.

"No, it isn't," said the Bishop. "I forgot where I am going!" confessed the Bishop.

"Show me the path where I should walk, O Lord, point out the right road for me to follow," cried David. He knew that he needed guidance for life's journey so he went to the ultimate source: God!

What are God's methods for providing guidance to His children?

His primary guidance system is His Word. If we truly want Him to lead us, we need to go to the "source" of His information. By carefully reading and meditating on His Word, we will gain wisdom and insight on where we are to go.

Then we must spend time in prayer – waiting with a sincere willingness for Him to reveal His path for us.

Prayer: Lord, we know that You have the path for us to take in life's journey. As we read Your Word, open our eyes, speak to our hearts and show us the path we are to take. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Show me the right path, O LORD; point out the road for me to follow. Psalm 25:1-5

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.27.24

16 18 21 54 65 5

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$627,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 4  
DRAW: Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.26.24

23 38 42 43 44 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$7,790,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 19 Mins  
DRAW: 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.27.24

1 3 18 23 42 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 34 Mins  
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.24.24

8 9 22 24 31

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 34 Mins  
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.26.24

19 50 55 58 66 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 3 Mins  
DRAW: 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
08.26.24

2 4 23 68 69 15

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$54,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 3 Mins  
DRAW: 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

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## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Bridgewater-Emery def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-11, 25-14, 25-18

Britton-Hecla def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-18, 25-23, 25-21

Brookings def. Aberdeen Central High School, 23-25, 25-23, 19-25, 25-22, 15-10

Canistota def. Oldham-Ramona-Rutland, 25-21, 25-22, 24-26, 25-14

Canton def. Beresford, 25-11, 25-11, 25-18

Castlewood def. Clark-Willow Lake, 25-21, 25-16, 25-18

Centerville def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-27, 21-25, 25-22, 25-16, 15-10

Chester def. Flandreau, 25-4, 25-10, 25-6

Corsica/Stickney def. Irene-Wakonda, 13-25, 25-9, 21-25, 25-21, 15-11

DeSmet def. Howard, 25-16, 25-9, 25-10

Dell Rapids St Mary def. Estelline-Hendricks, 28-26, 25-22, 25-27, 25-16

Dell Rapids def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-17, 25-8, 25-15

Faulkton def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-17, 25-11, 25-16

Florence-Henry def. Redfield, 23-25, 25-19, 26-24, 21-25, 15-13

Garretson def. Tri-Valley, 25-18, 25-12, 25-22

Great Plains Lutheran def. Webster, 25-20, 25-14, 23-25, 25-21

Huron def. Tea, 25-18, 26-24, 25-14

Ipswich def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-17, 25-7, 23-25, 25-16

Iroquois-Lake Preston def. James Valley Christian, 25-10, 25-12, 25-16

Jones County def. Sully Buttes, 24-26, 25-18, 15-25, 25-23, 15-13

Langford def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-11, 25-11, 25-16

Menno def. Alcester-Hudson, 26-24, 25-16, 25-27, 27-25

Miller def. Kimball-White Lake, 25-14, 25-13, 25-9

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Parkston, 23-25, 25-23, 25-20, 25-15

Northwestern def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 21-25, 25-17, 25-21, 25-18

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 22-25, 25-16, 25-23, 25-21

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Yankton, 25-9, 25-16, 25-14

Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-27, 25-12, 18-25, 25-20, 15-6

Sioux Valley def. Deuel, 25-17, 25-11, 25-11

Sisseton def. Wilmot, 13-25, 26-24, 19-25, 25-19, 15-5

St Thomas More def. Douglas, 25-15, 25-23, 23-25, 25-19

Stanley County def. Chamberlain, 25-11, 25-14, 25-8

Sturgis Brown High School def. Belle Fourche, 21-25, 25-23, 25-17, 25-23

Tripp-Delmont-Armour def. Colome, 25-20, 25-8, 25-19

Watertown def. T F Riggs High School, 25-11, 25-14, 25-16

West Central def. Vermillion, 25-21, 25-23, 25-15

Winner def. Bon Homme, 25-13, 25-20, 25-17

Wolsey-Wessington def. Arlington, 25-17, 25-18, 25-18

Hanson Early Bird Tournament=

Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Sanborn Central-Woonsocket, 25-19, 25-23

Freeman Academy-Marion def. Freeman, 25-19, 25-18

Hanson def. Wessington Springs, 25-18, 20-25, 25-21

Platte-Geddes def. Avon, 18-25, 25-21, 29-27

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## Salmon will soon swim freely in the Klamath River for first time in a century once dams are removed

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

For the first time in more than a century, salmon will soon have free passage along the Klamath River and its tributaries — a major watershed near the California-Oregon border — as the largest dam removal project in U.S. history nears completion.

Crews will use excavators this week to breach rock dams that have been diverting water upstream of two dams that were already almost completely removed, Iron Gate and Copco No. 1. The work will allow the river to flow freely in its historic channel, giving salmon a passageway to key swaths of habitat just in time for the fall Chinook, or king salmon, spawning season.

"Seeing the river being restored to its original channel and that dam gone, it's a good omen for our future," said Leaf Hillman, ceremonial leader of the Karuk Tribe, which has spent at least 25 years fighting for the removal of the Klamath dams. Salmon are culturally and spiritually significant to the tribe, along with others in the region.

The demolition comes about a month before removal of four towering dams on the Klamath was set to be completed as part of a national movement to let rivers return to their natural flow and to restore ecosystems for fish and other wildlife.

As of February, more than 2,000 dams had been removed in the U.S., the majority in the last 25 years, according to the advocacy group American Rivers. Among them were dams on Washington state's Elwha River, which flows out of Olympic National Park into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Condit Dam on the White Salmon River, a tributary of the Columbia.

"Now the healing can really begin as far as the river restoring itself," said Joshua Chenoweth, senior riparian ecologist for the Yurok Tribe, which has spent decades fighting to remove the dams and restore the river. "Humans can do a lot to help that along, but what we've learned on Elwha and Condit and other dams is that really you just have to remove the dams, and then rivers are really good at kind of returning to a natural state."

The Klamath was once known as the third-largest salmon-producing river on the West Coast. But after power company PacifiCorp built the dams to generate electricity between 1918 and 1962, the structures halted the natural flow of the river and disrupted the lifecycle of the region's salmon, which spend most of their life in the Pacific Ocean but return up their natal rivers to spawn.

The fish population dwindled dramatically. In 2002, a bacterial outbreak caused by low water and warm temperatures killed more than 34,000 fish, mostly Chinook salmon. That jumpstarted decades of advocacy from tribes and environmental groups, culminating in 2022 when federal regulators approved a plan to remove the dams.

Since then, the smallest of the four dams, known as Copco No. 2, has been removed. Crews also drained the other three dams' reservoirs and started removing those structures in March.

Along the Klamath, the dam removals won't be a major hit to the power supply. At full capacity, they produced less than 2% of PacifiCorp's energy — enough to power about 70,000 homes. Hydroelectric power produced by dams is considered a clean, renewable source of energy, but many larger dams in the U.S. West have become a target for environmental groups and tribes because of the harm they cause to fish and river ecosystems.

The project was expected to cost about \$500 million — paid for by taxpayers and PacifiCorp's ratepayers.

But it's unclear how quickly salmon will return to their historical habitats and the river will heal. There have already been reports of salmon at the mouth of the river, starting their river journey. Michael Belchik, senior water policy analyst for the Yurok Tribe, said he is hopeful they'll get past the Iron Gate dam soon.

"I think we're going to have some early successes," he said. "I'm pretty confident we'll see some fish

going above the dam. If not this year, then for sure next year.”

There are two other Klamath dams farther upstream, but they are smaller and allow salmon to pass via fish ladders — a series of pools that fish can leap through to get past the dam.

Mark Bransom, chief executive of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation, the nonprofit entity created to oversee the project, noted that it took about a decade for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe to start fishing again after the removal of the Elwha dams.

“I don’t know if anybody knows with any certainty what it means for the return of fish,” he said. “It’ll take some time. You can’t undo 100 years’ worth of damage and impacts to a river system overnight.”

## **Israel launches a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank, killing 9 Palestinians**

By JULIA FRANKEL and NASSER NASSER Associated Press

AL-FARAA REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, where its forces killed at least nine Palestinians and sealed off the volatile city of Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel has carried out near-daily raids across the West Bank since Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the ongoing war there. Israel says it is rooting out militants to prevent attacks on its citizens, while Palestinians in the West Bank fear it intends to broaden the war and forcibly displace them.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said that “large forces” had entered the volatile city of Jenin, which has long been a militant stronghold, as well as Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camp dating back to the 1948 Mideast war, all in the northern West Bank.

He said the nine dead were all militants, including three killed in an airstrike in Tulkarem and another four in an airstrike in Al-Faraa. He said another five suspected militants were arrested, and that the raids were the first stage of an even larger operation aimed at preventing attacks on Israelis.

Palestinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with Israeli troops. The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said on Palestinian radio that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said Israeli forces had blocked the roads leading to a hospital with dirt barriers and surrounded other medical facilities in Jenin. Shoshani said the military was trying to prevent militants from taking shelter in hospitals.

An Associated Press reporter saw army vehicles blocking all the entrances to Al-Faraa camp. Military jeeps and bulldozers entered the camp and soldiers could be seen patrolling its alleyways by foot. Water leaked onto the damaged streets from houses where fighting had damaged tanks and pipes. Shots rang out every few minutes.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz drew comparisons with Gaza and called for similar measures in the West Bank.

“We must deal with the threat just as we deal with the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza, including the temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents and whatever steps might be required. This is a war in every respect, and we must win it,” he wrote on the platform X.

Shoshani said there was no plan to evacuate civilians.

Hamas called on Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, saying the raids are part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza and blaming the escalation on U.S. support for Israel. The militant group called on security forces loyal to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to “join the sacred battle of our people.”

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, condemned the raids as a “serious escalation” and called on the United States to intervene. Abbas later announced that he was cutting a visit to Saudi Arabia short and returning to the West Bank, where his government is headquartered.

At least 652 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since the war in Gaza began



over 10 months ago, according to the Palestinian ministry. Most have died during such raids, which often trigger gunbattles with militants.

Israel says the operations are required to dismantle Hamas and other militant groups and to prevent attacks on Israelis, which have also risen since the start of the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the bodies of seven people were brought to the hospital in Tubas, another West Bank city, and another two were brought to the hospital in Jenin. The ministry identified two killed in Jenin as Qassam Jabarin, 25, and Asem Balout, 39.

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, which 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 exercising limited control over population centers.

The war in Gaza erupted on Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and rampaged through army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. The militants are still holding some 110 hostages, around a third of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Around 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced, often multiple times, and Israeli bombardment and ground operations have caused vast destruction.

Israeli strikes in Gaza overnight and into Wednesday killed at least 16 people, including five women and three children. Most of the strikes were in or near the southern city of Khan Younis, which has come under heavy bombardment over the last two months. Associated Press reporters at two hospitals confirmed the toll.

The U.S., Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire that would see the remaining hostages released. But the talks have repeatedly bogged down as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas and the militant group has demanded a lasting cease-fire and a full withdrawal from the territory.

There was no sign of a breakthrough after days of talks in Egypt, and the negotiations move to Qatar this week.

## **A Russian missile strikes a Ukrainian city already in mourning for deaths in an earlier attack**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile slammed into Kryvyi Rih on Wednesday, local authorities said, just as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home city was observing an official day of mourning for an attack the previous day that killed four civilians at a hotel.

The latest attack on the city struck civilian infrastructure, wounding four people, local administration head Oleksandr Vilkul said on social media.

The previous attack on Tuesday, which also wounded five people in Kryvyi Rih in addition to the four dead, was part of a barrage of dozens of missiles and drones across Ukraine that Russia launched for a second consecutive day.

"When Kryvyi Rih is in mourning, the enemy attacks again. And it once again aims at civilians," regional head Serhii Lysak said Wednesday.

Russia stepped up its bombing of Ukraine on Monday, when it fired more than 100 missiles and a similar number of drones in its biggest onslaught in weeks.

The intensified bombing campaign coincided with what could prove to be a decisive period of the war, which Russia launched on Feb. 24, 2022.

Russian forces have been driving deeper into Ukraine's partly occupied eastern Donetsk region, whose total capture is one of the Kremlin's primary ambitions. Russia's army is closing in on Pokrovsk, a critical

logistics hub for the Ukrainian defense in the area.

At the same time, Ukraine has sent its forces into Russia's Kursk region in recent weeks in the largest incursion onto Russian soil since World War II. The move is in part an effort to force Russia to draw troops away from the Donetsk front.

At the hotel in Kryvyi Rih, rescuers on Wednesday found another body under the rubble. The rescue operation was subsequently ended.

Meanwhile, Ukraine claimed its anti-aircraft defenses destroyed a Russian Su-25 jet in the Donetsk region. Ukraine also kept up its long-range drone attacks on Russia's rear logistical areas, setting fire to a fuel depot.

## Paris to inaugurate Paralympic Games with 'never seen before' opening ceremony in city's heart

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Just weeks after hosting the Olympics, the summer of sports in Paris begins its final chapter Wednesday with the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games.

More than 4,000 athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments will compete in 22 sports over the next 11 days.

Organizers are promising a spectacular show to open the Games. Once again it's being held outside the confines of a stadium, but unlike the Olympic opening ceremony, which featured a boat parade on the Seine River, the Paralympic ceremony is happening exclusively on land, with athletes parading down the famous Champs-Élysées to the ceremony at the Place de la Concorde.

Artistic director Thomas Jolly, who also led the opening ceremony for the Olympics, said the event will "showcase the Paralympic athletes and the values that they embody", and promised "performances that have never been seen before."

Organizers say more than 2 million tickets have been sold for the Paris Paralympics. Competition begins Thursday with the first medals handed out in taekwondo, table tennis and track cycling. Athletes are grouped by impairment levels to ensure as level a playing field as possible. Only two sports on the program, goalball and boccia, don't have an Olympic equivalent.

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said that the big crowds expected in Paris will mean a lot to the athletes, many of whom competed in front of empty stands at the Tokyo Paralympics three years ago due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As our ambition is to be perceived and understood as the most transformational sport event on the planet, by having this atmosphere, it's important," he told The Associated Press on the eve of the opening ceremony.

## French prosecutors set to charge or release Telegram CEO Pavel Durov as his custody order expires

PARIS (AP) — French prosecutors are expected to charge or release the CEO of the popular messaging app Telegram, Pavel Durov, after his police custody order expires on Wednesday.

Durov was detained Saturday at Le Bourget airport outside Paris as part of a judicial inquiry opened last month involving 12 alleged criminal violations. They include allegations that his platform is being used for selling child sexual abuse material and drug trafficking, fraud, abetting organized crime transactions and Telegram's refusal to share information or documents with investigators when required by law.

Under French law, Durov can be held in custody for questioning for up to 96 hours after the arrest. Paris prosecutor's office said in a statement that Durov's police custody order was extended on Monday evening for up to 48 hours. After that, authorities must release or charge him, the prosecutor's office said in an earlier statement.

His arrest in France has caused outrage in Russia, with some government officials calling it politically

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motivated and proof of the West's double standard on freedom of speech. The outcry has raised eyebrows among Kremlin critics because in 2018, Russian authorities themselves tried to block Telegram but failed, withdrawing the ban in 2020.

In Iran, where Telegram is widely used despite being officially banned after years of protests challenging the country's Shiite theocracy, Durov's arrest in France prompted comments from the Islamic Republic's supreme leader. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei weighed in with veiled praise for France for being "strict" against those who "violate your governance" of the internet.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that Durov's arrest wasn't a political move but part of an independent investigation. Macron posted on X that his country "is deeply committed" to freedom of expression but "freedoms are upheld within a legal framework, both on social media and in real life, to protect citizens and respect their fundamental rights."

In a statement posted on its platform after Durov's arrest, Telegram said it abides by EU laws, and its moderation is "within industry standards and constantly improving."

"It is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that platform," Telegram's post said. "Almost a billion users globally use Telegram as means of communication and as a source of vital information. We're awaiting a prompt resolution of this situation. Telegram is with you all."

Durov is a citizen of Russia, France, the United Arab Emirates and the Caribbean island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

The UAE Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that it was "closely following the case" and had asked France to provide Durov "with all the necessary consular services in an urgent manner."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he hoped that Durov "has all the necessary opportunities for his legal defense" and added that Moscow stands "ready to provide all necessary assistance and support" to the Telegram CEO as a Russian citizen.

"But the situation is complicated by the fact that he is also a citizen of France," Peskov said.

Telegram, which says it has nearly a billion users worldwide, was founded by Durov and his brother after he himself faced pressure from Russian authorities.

In 2013, he sold his stake in VKontakte, a popular Russian social networking site which he launched in 2006.

The company came under pressure during the Russian government's crackdown following mass pro-democracy protests that rocked Moscow at the end of 2011 and 2012.

Durov had said authorities demanded that the site take down online communities of Russian opposition activists, and later that it hand over personal data of users who took part in the 2013-2014 popular uprising in Ukraine, which eventually ousted a pro-Kremlin president.

Durov said in a recent interview that he had turned down these demands and left the country.

The demonstrations prompted Russian authorities to clamp down on the digital space, and Telegram and its pro-privacy rhetoric offered a convenient way for Russians to communicate and share news.

Telegram also continues to be a popular source of news in Ukraine, where both media outlets and officials use it to share information on the war, and deliver missile and air raid alerts.

Western governments have often criticized Telegram for a lack of content moderation, which experts say opens up the messaging platform for potential use in money laundering, drug trafficking and the sharing of material linked to the sexual exploitation of minors.

In 2022, Germany issued fines of \$5 million against Telegram's operators for failing to establish a lawful way to reporting illegal content or to name an entity in Germany to receive official communication. Both are required under German laws that regulate large online platforms.

## Women in Chad defy discrimination and violence to assert their rights to own and control land

By ROBERT BOCIAGA Associated Press

BINMAR, Chad (AP) — When Milla Nemoudji, a 28-year-old from a village in southern Chad, divorced her husband following years of physical abuse, she found herself without means for survival. Though raised in a farming family, she struggled to get by in a community where access to land is customarily controlled by men.

With little support for women in her situation, divorce being relatively rare in Chad, she fought for economic independence. She sold fruits and other goods. During the rainy season, she plowed fields as a laborer. Last year, however, a women's collective arrived in her village and she decided to join, finally gaining access to land and a say over its use. She farmed cotton, peanuts and sesame, making enough money to cover basic needs.

The village, Binmar, is on the outskirts of Chad's second-largest city, Moundou, in the densely populated Logone Occidental region. Thatched-roof homes stand amid fields where women traditionally harvest the land but, like Nemoudji, have little or no say over it.

In Chad, land access is often controlled by village chiefs who require annual payments. Women are often excluded from land ownership and inheritance, leaving them dependent on male relatives and reinforcing their secondary status in society.

The struggle for land rights is compounded by the dual legal system in Chad where customary law often supersedes statutory law, especially in rural areas. While recent legal reforms mean laws recognize the right of any citizen to own land, application of those laws is inconsistent.

For women like Nemoudji who seek to assert their rights, the response can be hostile.

"There's no one to come to your aid, although everyone knows that you are suffering," Nemoudji told The Associated Press, criticizing the traditional system of land rights and urging local leaders to take domestic violence seriously. "If women weren't losing access to farmlands, they would dare to leave their husbands earlier."

Initiatives like N-Bio Solutions, the collective Nemoudji joined, are challenging those norms. Founded by Adèle Noudjilembaye in 2018, an agriculturist and activist from a neighboring village, the collective is a rare initiative in Chad negotiating on behalf of women with traditional chiefs, who then seek out residents with available land willing to lease it.

So far, Noudjilembaye runs five such collectives with an average 25 members. Although these initiatives are slowly gaining popularity, they are limited by financial resources and some women's hesitancy to risk the little they have.

Noudjilembaye told the AP that "despite the violence and neglect, many women stay (in that situation) because of financial dependency, fear of societal judgement or lack of support."

The efforts of such collectives have broader implications for both gender equality and sustainable agriculture in Chad. Women of Binmar have adopted sustainable farming practices including crop rotation, organic farming and the use of drought-resistant seeds, which help preserve the soil and increase productivity.

In general, women who gain access to land and resources are more likely to implement sustainable agricultural practices and improve local food systems, according to the United Nations.

But in Chad, life for women who attempt to assert their rights is especially challenging.

Chad is ranked 144th out of 146 countries, according to the 2024 Global Gender Gap Indicator Report compiled by World Economic Forum. The country's maternal mortality rate is high at 1,063 deaths per 100,000 births in 2020, over three times the global average, according to the U.N. Only 20% of young women are literate.

For Nemoudji, her family's response to her plight was mostly passive. They offered her a place to stay and provided emotional support but did little to confront her abuser or seek justice on her behalf.

"The system failed me when I sought help after my husband burned down my house," Nemoudji said. When she reported the incident to the village chief, "nothing was done to solve my dispute."

Village chief Marie Djetoyom, a woman in the hereditary role, told the AP that she was afraid to take action and risk being imprisoned in retaliation. She asserted that she must act within the customary land laws.

Despite the lack of support from traditional leaders and local authorities, women in the village of around 120 people have found strength in the collective.

"As cultural practices do not favor access to land for many women individually, the community alternative remains the best possibility to achieve the objective," said Innocent Bename, a researcher at CEREAD, a research center based in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad.

Marie Depaque, another village woman who struggled to get by after her second husband refused to financially support her children from her first marriage, added that "our fight for land rights is not just about economic survival but also about justice, equality and the hope for a better future."

Nemoudji dreams of better educational opportunities for the children in her community so they can break the cycle of poverty and violence. She advocates in the community for changes in the land ownership system.

"Knowing my rights means I can seek help from authorities and demand justice," she said.

## All eyes are on Nvidia as it prepares to report its earnings. Here's what to expect

By SARAH PARVINI AP Technology Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) —

Nvidia has led the artificial intelligence boom to become one of the stock market's biggest companies, as tech giants continue to spend heavily on the company's chips and data centers needed to train and operate their AI systems. The company is now worth over \$3 trillion, with its dominance as a chipmaker cementing Nvidia's place as the poster child of the AI industry ahead of the release of its latest financial results Wednesday.

Wall Street expects the company to report second-quarter adjusted earnings of 65 cents per share on revenue of \$28.74 billion, more than double what it earned in the comparable quarter one year ago, according to FactSet. In the past three quarters, revenue has more than tripled on an annual basis, with the vast majority of growth coming from the data center business.

Demand for generative AI products that can compose documents, make images and serve as personal assistants has fueled sales of Nvidia's specialized chips over the last year, but Wall Street is also looking for any indication that AI demand is waning.

The Santa Clara, California-based company carved out an early lead in AI applications race, in part because of founder and CEO Jensen Huang's successful bet on the chip technology used to fuel the industry. The company is no stranger to big bets. Nvidia's invention of the graphics processor unit, or GPU, in 1999 helped spark the growth of the PC gaming market and redefined computer graphics.

Nvidia will release its quarterly earnings after the market closes Wednesday.

## Ukraine first lady wants country's kids to see themselves as 'generation of winners' not war victims

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

UZHGOROD, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's first lady wants her country's children to view themselves not as a generation enduring a grinding war, but rather as "a generation of winners."

On the sidelines of a day spent at a rehabilitation camp for Ukrainian children in the relatively safe western city of Uzhhorod, Olena Zelenska said Tuesday that working with the next generation was both a moral obligation and a "strategic priority" for Ukraine's future.

Many of the children will return to front-line cities after spending a few weeks at the camp, barely enough time to overcome the trauma they face over and over.

"This issue needs to be addressed immediately, as soon as it arises, before it grows into something

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more," Zelenska told The Associated Press in a brief interview at the camp.

The foundation that bears her name, which is funded entirely by foreign donations, created the camp along with the Voices of the Children charity. A study by the Olena Zelenska Foundation and the Kyiv School of Economics this year found that 44% of Ukrainian children show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Dressed casually with white sneakers, black pants, a white T-shirt and pearls around her neck, Zelenska blended into the camp's activities with the children.

Since the start of the war, she has emerged as an unofficial ambassador for Ukraine globally. She was the first from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's family to leave the country after Russia invaded in February 2022 to promote Ukraine's cause. But she is equally active within Ukraine, and easily recognizable to the displaced families and wounded soldiers she visits.

At the camp, she joined an art therapy session midway, sitting beside a boy whose home was struck by an aerial bomb and who was later forced to evacuate from his hometown ahead of the Russian advance this summer.

Zelenska smiled and engaged with the children, examining each watercolor they presented. She even joined in, drawing a pink flower, a star and a heart. The conversation stayed away from the war.

"To ensure our children do not become a lost generation, we as adults must be not just active but also swift," Zelenska said. "It's difficult, but there is still the ongoing defense of the country. However, I am confident that political will combined with international cooperation can work wonders."

The first lady said she first heard about "war fatigue" in the summer 2022 but she refuses to believe in it.

"When your neighbor has a fire, it seems pointless to say: 'I'm tired of your fire. Stop it. Let's forget about it,'" she said. "We still need help, and we will continue to ask for it. Not because we are bold, but because it is vital for our survival."

During one of the activities, in which a mystery guest connected via an online call, eventually revealed to be Ukrainian boxer Oleksandr Usyk, one child in the crowd shouted, suggesting it might be the president.

The first lady quickly responded, "No, Zelenskyy is currently busy," prompting an eruption of laughter from dozens of children.

Zelenska studied architecture but wound up working as a comedy scriptwriter, including for Zelenskyy, who was a comedian with a popular television show before winning the presidency in 2019.

The couple periodically appears in public together, visiting schools or rehabilitation centers and making formal visits abroad. The scrutiny has taken something of a toll on Zelenska, who was not a public figure before her husband became president.

"I feel a responsibility because I understand that all eyes are on us," she said. "Even when you're not doing anything particularly special, people still assess how the president's family is functioning during the war — what they're doing, where they are, how they are behaving."

Zelenska noted that since the start of the invasion, Ukraine has been in a constant humanitarian crisis, with one of the biggest issues being internally displaced people and several million refugees abroad. Fighting prevents many children from attending school in person, while blackouts across the country force many schools in relatively safe regions to switch to online learning.

"We need the war to end, infrastructure for education to be in place, and for parents to feel secure," she said. "We would very much like these children to be able to physically go to school, see their teachers and peers, and interact. But for now, it's impossible."

Zelenska said that one of the topics she regularly draws attention to during her foreign visits is the forcible deportation of more than 19,500 Ukrainian children by Russia from the occupied territories. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's children's rights commissioner, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine.

Zelenska said holding Russia accountable must remain a key part of any end to the war.

"Only then will it be a victory," she said. "It may not be quick, but we need to constantly keep in mind this vision of how it should be, so that nothing is forgotten and no one is left out."

## As the far right rises in eastern Germany, companies struggle to attract skilled foreign workers

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

JENA, Germany (AP) — When electrical engineer Preetam Gaikwad first moved to Jena in 2013, she was smitten by what the eastern German city had to offer: a prestigious university, top research institutions, and cutting-edge technology companies, global leaders in their field.

Eleven years later, the Indian native takes a more sober view.

"I'm really worried about the development of the political situation here," Gaikwad, 43 said. Jena is in the eastern German state of Thuringia, which has elections on Sept. 1.

The far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, is currently leading the polls with about 30% support, far ahead of the center-right Christian Democrats (21%) and the center-left Social Democrats of Chancellor Olaf Scholz (7%).

The AfD's anti-foreigner stance is the cornerstone of its campaign, raising concern among businesses like Jenoptik, Gaikwad's employer. The company, which supplied lens assemblies for Perseverance, the NASA remote vehicle on Mars, employs 1,680 people in Jena and more than 4,600 globally.

Jenoptik, one of the few internationally successful businesses in Jena, depends on being able to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce, much of it from outside Germany. The rise of the AfD is making that more difficult, says Jenoptik CEO Stefan Traeger.

More and more prospective employees tell Traeger that while they would love to work for Jenoptik, they won't take a job there because they don't want to live in a state dominated by a hard-right party that ostracizes migrants or other minorities such as members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Traeger, a Jena native who studied in the U.S., told the AP he hopes that after the election "we will still be as open, free and democratic a country as we are now. That's what we need in order to move the company forward."

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This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series covering threats to democracy in Europe.

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Germany is already facing a massive skilled labor shortage with experts estimating that the country needs about 400,000 skilled immigrants each year as the workforce ages and shrinks. Long considered Europe's economic powerhouse, Germany was recently rated the world's worst-performing major developed economy by the International Monetary Fund.

Thuringia is one of the poorest states in Germany, a legacy of communist rule in what was East Germany from 1949 to 1990. Salaries are lower than average, and it has few major employers outside the public sector. Most young people, especially women, leave for opportunities elsewhere, a brain drain to the more affluent west that began in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, and has not stopped since.

The rise of the AfD has been catalyzed by high inflation and immigration. In 2023, Germany took in 1.9 million new inhabitants, while 1.2 million people left the country permanently, putting net migration at 663,000. While only a minority settle in Germany's poorer eastern states, anti-immigration sentiment runs high.

The AfD's Thuringia branch is particularly radical: its regional leader, Bjoern Hoecke, has described the Holocaust memorial in Berlin as a "monument of shame" and called for Germany to make a "180-degree turn" in the way it remembers its past, including the Nazis. In 2020, the branch was put under official surveillance by the German domestic intelligence service as a "proven right-wing extremist" group.

Thuringia's cities and villages are plastered with AfD election posters carrying the slogan "summer, sun, remigration," and the photo of a plane dubbed "deportation airline" that's meant to fly out all those people that the party and its voters don't want in Germany.

Nonetheless, the AfD in an interview with the AP sought to downplay the issue of what it prefers to call "remigration."

Remigration “refers to those who have no right to stay in this country and no prospect of staying because there is no reason for protective status, because there is no reason for their flight or for their migration in the sense of the applicable laws,” said Torben Braga, deputy speaker of the AfD Thuringia and member of the Thuringian state parliament)

Migrants with work permits would “of course not be affected,” he said.

The experience of Gaikwad, a legal migrant, is rather different. Some of the racism she’s experienced is subtle, some is outright discrimination, but it is always hurtful and humiliating.

Like the supermarket cashier who bags up the groceries for all the other customers and wishes them a nice day, only to slam Gaikwad’s bag down next to her shopping without a word.

Or the elderly neighbor she greets in German who stops her one day to say, “It makes me uncomfortable when I see so many people with strange skin and hair color here in Jena.”

More than anything, Gaikwad was shocked when she took her daughter, now 10, to the playground and overheard a little German boy telling her that he was making a body powder for her “so that you will become a normal person again.”

The AfD is especially popular in rural areas — and that’s 70% of the population in Thuringia — says Axel Salheiser, the director of research at the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society in Jena.

“Even when there are no majorities so far, there are considerable minorities who vote for the AfD, either to express their protest or to openly express anti-immigration and anti-liberal positions,” he told the AP.

When it comes to Thuringia as a place to do business, Salheiser said, that means not only work migrants will think twice about whether they will move there, but “potential investors will also ask themselves whether they want to locate their company or their branch of business here.”

“It’s a big problem for the region, if the impression arises that significant parts of the population not only tolerate anti-immigration and anti-diversity positions, but also support ... them,” he added.

A recent poll of more than 900 German companies by the Institute for the German Economy also showed that a majority sees the AfD as a risk, both for securing skilled workers and for investment in the region.

Last year, businesses and individuals set up Cosmopolitan Thuringia, a grassroots network to promote tolerance, diversity and “indivisible human rights,” which now has more than 7,940 members.

Among them is Jenoptik, which makes a point of promoting the diversity of its workforce, showcasing its foreign employees on posters at its Jena headquarters.

Gaikwad says Jenoptik’s open-mindedness, her great job and support from friends are what keep her in Jena, despite the racism she and her family have experienced.

“I have great faith in democracy, in the good in people,” she said.

Jenoptik’s CEO Traeger is grateful for Gaikwad and every other international employee he can retain in Jena.

“We need employees with creative potential. We Thuringians are a creative bunch, but we won’t be able to do it all by ourselves,” Traeger said. “We also need people who come from other parts of the world, who perhaps have different views, different beliefs, different skin colors or whatever.”

## **Two sworn enemies hold the key to ending the war in Gaza. Does either man want a deal?**

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

The latest flurry of Gaza cease-fire talks — the back-and-forth over now-familiar sticking points and appeals from around the world — obscures a grim truth about the monthslong efforts to end the Israel-Hamas war and free scores of hostages.

Any deal requires the signatures of two men: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.

They are sworn enemies, notoriously tough negotiators and know that the outcome of the talks will profoundly shape their legacies. In Sinwar’s case, it could mean life or death.



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Both have strong incentives to end the war. But they may also think they stand to gain by holding out a bit longer, and that war is preferable to a deal that falls short of their demands.

Here's a look at the two leaders and the constraints they face.

What does Netanyahu want?

Netanyahu has promised "total victory" over Hamas and the return of all the hostages held in Gaza — goals that many believe are incompatible.

He has come under tremendous pressure from the hostages' families and much of the Israeli public to make a deal to bring them home, even if it leaves a battered Hamas intact. The United States, which has provided key military aid and diplomatic support to Israel, is also pushing for such a deal.

But Netanyahu's governing coalition relies on far-right ministers who want to permanently reoccupy Gaza and have threatened to bring down the government if he concedes too much. That would force early elections that could drive him from power at a time when he is on trial for corruption.

It would also hasten a broader reckoning over the security failures surrounding the Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people in southern Israel, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250 others — on Netanyahu's watch. Netanyahu has rejected calls for a government investigation until the war is over.

The longer the war drags on, the more likely Israel is to achieve something that looks like victory — the killing of Sinwar, the rescue of more hostages — and the longer Netanyahu has to repair his political standing and reshape his legacy. But it also comes with risks as the number of soldiers killed in action rises nearly every day and Israel becomes increasingly isolated because of the suffering it has inflicted on Palestinians.

Netanyahu has clashed with his own defense minister over the endgame. Israeli media is filled with reports quoting unnamed senior security officials expressing frustration with Netanyahu, especially his demand for lasting control over two strategic corridors in Gaza. Some have gone so far as to accuse him of sabotaging the talks.

Both Israel and Hamas say they have accepted different versions of an evolving U.S.-backed cease-fire proposal in principle, while suggesting changes and accusing the other of making unacceptable demands.

Yohanan Plesner, head of the Israel Democracy Institute, a local think tank, acknowledged the anger directed at Netanyahu in the local press and among segments of Israeli society but said Sinwar bore most of the blame for the impasse because he had shown little interest in compromising.

"If we saw Sinwar was serious about getting a deal, that would force Israel and Netanyahu to expose their cards," Plesner said. The current situation is "almost like negotiating with oneself."

What does Sinwar want?

Sinwar wants to end the war — but only on his terms.

Israel's offensive has killed over 40,000 people, according to local health officials, displaced 90% of Gaza's population and destroyed its main cities. Hamas has lost thousands of fighters and much of its militant infrastructure.

Sinwar's only bargaining chips are the roughly 110 hostages still held in Gaza, around a third of whom are believed to be dead. And he needs much more than a temporary pause in the fighting if he hopes to salvage anything resembling victory from the Oct. 7 attack that he helped mastermind.

That begins with assurances that Israel won't resume the war once some or all of the hostages are freed. He also needs Israel to withdraw from all of Gaza to ensure that the lasting impact of the Oct. 7 attack is not a permanent reoccupation of the territory. The release of high-profile Palestinian prisoners as part of a deal is a sacred cause for Sinwar, who was himself a long-serving prisoner freed in an exchange. And he needs assurances that Palestinians will be able to return to their homes and rebuild them.

"Sinwar is very much concerned with bringing negotiations to a conclusion, whether with regard to a cease-fire or an exchange of prisoners, because in both cases, Sinwar will have come out as the winner," said Nabih Awada, a Lebanese political analyst and former militant who spent years in an Israeli prison with Sinwar.

There are risks for Sinwar in drawing the talks out: More hostages are likely to die or be rescued as the war grinds on. Death, destruction and hardship in Gaza will continue, and could stoke Palestinian discontent

with Hamas, with political implications down the line.

Sinwar himself, who sits atop Israel's most-wanted list, could be killed at any time. But given the centrality of martyrdom in Hamas' history and ideology, he may feel that outcome is inevitable — and preferable to a deal that looks like defeat.

Can any external pressure help?

Egypt and Qatar have served as key mediators with Hamas, but their influence is limited.

Any pressure exerted on Hamas' exiled leadership is unlikely to have much impact on Sinwar, who was appointed the overall head of Hamas after the killing of Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. Sinwar is believed to have spent most of the past 10 months living in tunnels under Gaza, and it is unclear how much contact he has with the outside world.

The United States has provided crucial military support for Israel throughout the conflict and has shielded it from international calls for a cease-fire. Earlier this year, President Joe Biden paused a shipment of hundreds of 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) bombs to pressure Israel not to invade the southern city of Rafah — which it did anyway.

U.S. election politics could also blunt American pressure. Biden has shown little inclination to pressure Netanyahu, and Vice President Kamala Harris has offered no concrete policy changes. Donald Trump has urged Israel to finish up its offensive but would likely be even more accommodating to Netanyahu, as he was during his presidency.

Any U.S. arms embargo is even less likely when Israel faces a potential retaliatory strike from Iran over the killing of Haniyeh. Instead, the United States has poured military assets into the region, taking some of the pressure off Israel.

Sinwar might have hoped that the targeted killings of Haniyeh and a top Hezbollah commander last month would widen the war. But that appears less likely, with both Israel and Hezbollah applying the brakes following a heavy exchange of fire over the weekend.

The cease-fire talks have continued through it all, punctuated by fleeting moments of optimism.

The mediators have spent recent weeks trying to hammer out a bridging proposal with Netanyahu, but it's still a work in progress. It has not yet been submitted to Sinwar.

## **Pope Francis is visiting East Timor after a clergy abuse scandal, but will he address it?**

By NINIEK KARMINI, DAVID RISING and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

DILI, East Timor (AP) — When the Vatican acknowledged in 2022 that the Nobel Peace Prize-winning, East Timorese independence hero Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo had sexually abused young boys, it appeared that the global clergy sexual abuse scandal that has compromised the Catholic Church's credibility around the world had finally arrived in Asia's newest country.

And yet, the church in East Timor today is stronger than ever, with most downplaying, doubting or dismissing the claims against Belo and those against a popular American missionary who confessed to molesting young girls. Many instead focus on their roles saving lives during the country's bloody struggle against Indonesia for independence.

Pope Francis will come face to face with the Timorese faithful on his first trip to the country, a former Portuguese colony that makes up half of the island of Timor off the northern coast of Australia. But so far, there is no word if he will meet with victims or even mention the sex abuse directly, as he has in other countries where the rank-and-file faithful have demanded an accounting from the hierarchy for how it failed to protect their children.

Even without pressure from within East Timor to address the scandals, it would be deeply meaningful to the victims if Francis did, said Tjiyske Lingsma, the Dutch journalist who helped bring both abuse cases to light.

"I think this is the time for the pope to say some words to the victims, to apologize," she said in an

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interview from Amsterdam.

The day after Lingsma detailed the Belo case in a September 2022 report in De Groene Amsterdammer magazine, the Vatican confirmed that Belo had been sanctioned secretly two years earlier.

In Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni's statement, he said the church had been aware of the case since 2019 and had imposed disciplinary measures in 2020, including restrictions on Belo's movements and a ban on voluntary contact with minors.

Despite the official acknowledgement, many in East Timor still don't believe it, like Dili university student Martinha Goveia, who is still expecting Belo will show up to be at Francis' side during his upcoming visit.

If he's not there, she said, "that is not good in my opinion," because it will confirm he is being sanctioned by the Vatican.

Vegetable trader Alfredo Ximenes said the allegations and the Vatican's acknowledged sanctions were merely rumors, and that he hoped Belo would come to welcome the pope and refute the claims in person.

"Our political leaders should immediately meet him to end the problem and persuade him to return, because after all he has contributed greatly to national independence," Ximenes said.

Timorese officials refused to answer questions about the Belo case, but there's been no attempt to avoid mentioning him, with a giant billboard in Dili welcoming Pope Francis, whose visit starts Sept. 9, placed right above a mural honoring Belo and three others as national heroes.

Only about 20% of East Timor's people were Catholic when Indonesia invaded in 1975, shortly after Portugal abandoned it as a colony.

Today, some 98% of East Timor's 1.3 million people are Catholic, making it the most Catholic country in the world outside the Vatican.

A law imposed by Indonesia requiring people to choose a religion, combined with the church's opposition to the military occupation and support for the resistance over years of bloody fighting that saw as many as 200,000 people killed, helped bring about that flood of new members.

Belo won the Nobel Peace Prize for his bravery in drawing international attention to Indonesian human rights abuses during the conflict, and American missionary Richard Daschbach was widely celebrated for his role in helping save lives in the struggle for independence.

Their heroic status, and societal factors in Asia, where the culture tends to confer much power on adults and authority figures, helps explain why the men are still revered while elsewhere in the world such cases are met with outrage, said Anne Barrett Doyle, of the online resource Bishop Accountability.

"Bishops are powerful, and in developing countries where the church is dominant, they are inordinately powerful," Barrett Doyle said.

"But no case we've studied exhibits as extreme a power differential as that which exists between Belo and his victims. When a child is raped in a country that is devoutly Catholic, and the sexual predator is not only a bishop but a legendary national hero, there is almost no hope that justice will be done."

In 2018, as rumors built against Daschbach, the priest confessed in a letter to church authorities to abusing young girls from at least 1991 to 2012.

"It is impossible for me to remember even the faces of many of them, let alone the names," he wrote.

The 87-year-old was defrocked by the Vatican and criminally charged in East Timor, where he was convicted in 2021 and is now serving 12 years in prison.

But despite his confession and court testimony from victims that detailed the abuse, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, an independence hero himself, has visited Daschbach in prison — hand-feeding him cake and serving him wine on his birthday — and has said winning the ex-priest's early release is a priority for him.

In Belo's case, six years after winning the Nobel Prize, which he shared with current East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta, he suddenly retired as the head of the church in East Timor in 2002, citing health reasons and stress.

Not long after his retirement, Belo, today 76, was sent by the Vatican and his Salesian missionary order to another former Portuguese colony, Mozambique, to work as a missionary priest.

There, he has said, he spent his time "teaching catechism to children, giving retreats to young people."

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Today he lives in Portugal.

Suspicion arose that Belo, like others before him, had been allowed to quietly retire rather than face any reckoning, given the reputational harm to the church that would have caused.

In a 2023 interview with The Associated Press, Pope Francis suggested that indeed was the case, reasoning that was how such matters were handled in the past.

"This is a very old thing where this awareness of today did not exist," Francis said. "And when it came out about the bishop of East Timor, I said, 'Yes, let it go in the open.' ... I'm not going to cover it up. But these were decisions made 25 years ago when there wasn't this awareness."

Lingsma said she first heard allegations against Belo in 2002, the same year East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste, won its formal independence after the Indonesian occupation ended in 1999. She said she wasn't able to investigate the case and build enough evidence to publish her story on him until two decades later.

Her story garnered international attention, as well as the Vatican's acknowledgement of the case, but in East Timor was primarily met with skepticism and negative reactions toward her reporting. Her 2019 story exposing the Daschbach case eventually prompted authorities to charge him, but also did not lead to the outpouring of anger that she had anticipated.

"The reaction was silence," she recalled.

During the fight for independence, priests, nuns and missionaries put themselves at great risk to help people, like "parents wanting to save their children," helping form today's deep connection between the church and people of East Timor, said Timorese historian Luciano Valentim da Conceicao.

The church's role is even enshrined in the preamble to the young country's constitution, which says that the Catholic Church "has always been able to take on the suffering of all the people with dignity, placing itself on their side in the defense of their most fundamental rights."

Because so many remember the church's significant role during those dark days, it has fostered an environment where it is difficult for victims of abuse to speak out for fear of being labeled anti-church, and where men like Belo and Daschbach continue to receive support from all walks of society.

"Pedophilia and sexual violence are common enemies in East Timor, and we should not mix them up with the struggle for independence," said Valentim da Costa Pinto, executive director of The Timor-Leste NGO Forum, an umbrella organization for some 270 NGOs.

The chancellor of the Dili Diocese today, Father Ludgerio Martins da Silva, said the cases of Belo and Daschbach were the Vatican's jurisdiction, and that most people consider the sex abuse scandals a thing of the past.

"We don't hear a lot of people ask about bishop Belo because he left the country... twenty years ago," da Silva said.

Still, Lingsma said she knew of ongoing allegations against "four or five" other priests, including two who were now dead, "and if I know them, I'm the last person to know."

"That also shows that this whole reporting system doesn't work at all," she said.

Da Conceicao, the historian, said he did not know enough about the cases against Daschbach or Belo to comment on them, but that he was well acquainted with their role in the independence struggle and called them "fearless freedom fighters and clergymen."

"Clergymen are not free from mistakes," da Conceicao conceded. "But we, the Timorese, have to look with a clear mind at the mistakes they made and the good they did for the country, for the freedom of a million people, and of course the value is not the same."

Because of that prevailing attitude, Barrett Doyle said "the victims of those two men have to be the most isolated and least supported clergy sex abuse victims in the world right now."

For that reason, Francis' visit to East Timor could be a landmark moment in his papacy, she said, if he were to denounce Daschbach and Belo by name and praise the courage of the victims, sending a message that would resonate globally.

"Given the exalted status of the Catholic Church in East Timor, just imagine the impact of papal fury directed at Belo, Daschbach and the yet unknown number of other predatory clergy in that country," she

said.

"Francis could even address the country's hidden victims, promising his support and urging them to contact him directly about their abuse — he literally could save lives."

## Having a family is expensive. Here's what Harris and Trump have said about easing costs

By MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The high cost of caring for children and the elderly has forced women out of the workforce, devastated family finances and left professional caretakers in low-wage jobs — all while slowing economic growth.

That families are suffering is not up for debate. As the economy emerges as a theme in this presidential election, the Democratic and Republican candidates have sketched out ideas for easing costs that reveal their divergent views about family.

On this topic, the two tickets have one main commonality: Both of the presidential candidates — and their running mates — have, at one point or another, backed an expanded child tax credit.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who accepted the Democratic Party's nomination last week, has signaled that she plans to build on the ambitions of outgoing President Joe Biden's administration, which sought to pour billions in taxpayer dollars into making child care and home care for elderly and disabled adults more affordable. She has not etched any of those plans into a formal policy platform. But in a speech earlier this month, she said her vision included raising the child tax credit.

Former President Donald Trump, the Republican, has declined to answer questions about how he would make child care more affordable, even though it was an issue he tackled during his own administration. His running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, has a long history of pushing policies that would encourage Americans to have families, floating ideas like giving parents votes for their children. Just this month, Vance said he wants to raise the child tax credit to \$5,000. But Vance has opposed government spending on child care, arguing that many children benefit from having one parent at home as caretaker.

The candidates' care agendas could figure prominently into their appeal to suburban women in swing states, a coveted demographic seen as key to victory in November. Women provide two-thirds of unpaid care work — valued at \$1 trillion annually — and are disproportionately impacted when families can't find affordable care for their children or aging parents. And the cost of care is an urgent problem: Child care prices are rising faster than inflation.

**Kamala Harris: Increase the child tax credit**

When Harris addressed the Democratic National Convention, she talked first about her own experience with child care. She was raised mostly by a single mother, Shyamala Gopalan, who worked long hours as a breast cancer researcher. Among the people who formed her family's support network was "Mrs. Shelton, who ran the day care below us and became a second mother."

As vice president, Harris worked behind the scenes in Congress on Biden's proposals to establish national paid family leave, make prekindergarten universal and invest billions in child care so families wouldn't pay more than 7% of their income. She announced, too, the administration's actions to lower copays for families using federal child care vouchers, and to raise wages for Medicaid-funded home health aides. Before that, her track record as a senator included pressing for greater labor rights for domestic workers, including nannies and home health aides who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

This month at a community college in North Carolina, Harris outlined her campaign's economic agenda, which includes raising the child tax credit to as much as \$3,600 and giving families of newborns even more — \$6,000 for the child's first year.

"That is a vital — vital year of critical development of a child, and the costs can really add up, especially for young parents who need to buy diapers and clothes and a car seat and so much else," she told the audience. Her running mate selection of Tim Walz, who established paid leave and a child tax credit as governor of Minnesota, has also buoyed optimism among supporters.

Donald Trump: Few specifics, but some past support

For voters grappling with the high cost of child care, Trump has offered little in the way of solutions. During the June presidential debate, CNN moderator Jake Tapper twice asked Trump what he would do to lower child care costs. Both times, he failed to answer, instead pivoting to other topics. His campaign platform is similarly silent. It does tackle the cost of long-term care for the elderly, writing that Republicans would "support unpaid Family Caregivers through Tax Credits and reduced red tape."

The silence marks a shift from his first campaign, when he pitched paid parental leave, though it was panned by critics because his proposal excluded fathers. When he reached the White House, the former president sought \$1 billion for child care, plus a parental leave policy at the urging of his daughter and policy adviser, Ivanka Trump. Congress rejected both proposals, but Trump succeeded in doubling the child tax credit and establishing paid leave for federal employees.

In his 2019 State of the Union address, Trump said he was "proud to be the first president to include in my budget a plan for nationwide paid family leave, so that every new parent has the chance to bond with their newborn child."

This year, there are signs that his administration might not pursue the same agenda, including his selection of Vance as a running mate. In 2021, before he joined the Senate, Vance co-authored an op-ed for The Wall Street Journal opposing a proposal to invest billions in child care to make it more affordable for families. He and his co-author said expanding child care subsidies would lead to "unhappier, unhealthier children" and that having fewer mothers contributing to the economy might be a worthwhile trade-off.

Vance has floated policies that would make it easier for a family to live off of a single income, making it possible for some parents to stay home while their partners work. Along with his embrace of policies he calls pro-family, he has tagged people who do not have or want children as "sociopaths." He once derided Harris and other rising Democratic stars as "childless cat ladies," even though Harris has two stepchildren — they call her "Momala" — and no cats.

Even without details about new care policies, Trump believes that families would ultimately get a better deal under his administration.

The Trump-Vance campaign has attacked Harris' record on the economy and said the Biden administration's policies have only made things tougher for families, pointing to recent inflation.

"Harris ... has proudly and repeatedly celebrated her role as Joe Biden's co-pilot on Bidenomics," said Karoline Leavitt, a campaign spokeswoman. "The basic necessities of food, gas and housing are less affordable, unemployment is rising, and Kamala doesn't seem to care."

## US Open: Naomi Osaka gets her first top-10 win in more than four years by defeating Ostapenko

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A year ago, still on maternity leave and still unsure when she would play elite tennis again, Naomi Osaka visited the U.S. Open to appear with Michael Phelps for a discussion about mental health. While at the site, she sat in the stands to watch one of Coco Gauff's matches.

Osaka also already was thinking about being back on a court at Flushing Meadows, so much so that she was pondering what she might want to wear to compete. And there she was Tuesday at Louis Armstrong Stadium, overpowering No. 10 seed Jelena Ostapenko 6-3, 6-2 while decked out, from her visor to her dress to the bows on her back and attached to her shoes, in lime green — the color of this "Brat" summer, as it happens (IYKYK) — and playing very much like a two-time champion at the place and a former No. 1-ranked star.

"I feel like being able to be a part of (designing) my tennis outfits gives me, I would say, a different strength, especially the U.S. Open outfits. I feel like they are a little bit more flamboyant. When I was putting on my outfit today, I was, like, 'Ah, I hope this isn't too much,'" Osaka said with a smile. "Because I had the tutu, and then I had the bow jacket and it was green. I feel like everyone was staring at me."

Another player asked for a photo, Osaka said, adding: "I hope it was a positive picture (and) it wasn't,

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like, 'Oh, my God, look at her.' For me, when I put on the outfit, it's almost like a super suit, so I try to channel that."

Did that well enough Tuesday to register her first victory against a top-10 opponent in more than four years.

Osaka claimed titles in New York in 2018 and 2020, along with a pair of trophies at the Australian Open in 2019 and 2021, and her matchup against 2017 French Open champion Ostapenko marked the first time two past major champs faced off in the opening round at the U.S. Open since Serena Williams defeated Maria Sharapova five years ago. Another such contest came Tuesday night, when 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin beat 2021 U.S. Open winner Emma Raducanu 6-1, 3-6, 6-4.

"Having two wins here means a lot, and I think for me, I've been struggling with confidence throughout the year," said Osaka, who returned to action at the Australian Open in January, her first Grand Slam appearance in nearly 1 1/2 years because of mental health breaks and time away to have a baby. "This time now forces me to look in the mirror and say, 'Hey, you've done really well here. There's no reason why you can't do well again.'"

How's this for doing well? Osaka did not make a single unforced error in the first set and finished with only five, 16 fewer than Ostapenko.

"I do remember thinking, 'I need to win this match so I can wear my other color.' That was very important to me," said Osaka, who is ranked 88th and received a wild-card invitation from the U.S. Tennis Association. "I guess you'll see my other color next time."

Next time will be Thursday against 2023 French Open runner-up Karolina Muchova, a 6-3, 7-5 winner against Katie Volynets of the U.S.

Other women moving into the second round included No. 1 Iga Swiatek, who got past Kamilla Rakhimova 6-4, 7-6 (6) by taking the last five points after needing to erase a trio of set points because she trailed 6-3 in the tiebreaker, and past major champions Elena Rybakina and Caroline Wozniacki. No. 5 Jasmine Paolini, a finalist at the French Open and Wimbledon this year, beat 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-4, while No. 11 Danielle Collins' Grand Slam singles career ended with a 1-6, 7-5, 6-4 loss to Caroline Dolehide in an all-American matchup. The 30-year-old Collins is retiring after this season.

Another American who recently announced her retirement, Shelby Rogers, lost the final match of her career by a 6-4, 6-3 score to No. 6 Jessica Pegula at night, after four-time major champion Carlos Alcaraz defeated qualifier Li Tu 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 in Arthur Ashe Stadium. Pegula meets Kenin next.

Earlier in Ashe, No. 1 Jannik Sinner played his first match since news came out that he was cleared in a doping case involving two failed tests in March, and while he got off to a slow start, the 23-year-old Italian quickly bounced back to eliminate Mackie McDonald 2-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2.

Other seeded men advancing included No. 5 Daniil Medvedev, No. 7 Hubert Hurkacz and No. 25 Jack Draper, but No. 11 Stefanos Tsitsipas and No. 19 Felix Auger-Aliassime both lost, as did No. 23 Karen Khachanov, who came out on the wrong end of the longest U.S. Open match, by time, since tiebreakers were instituted in 1970.

Dan Evans snuck past Khachanov 6-7 (6), 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4 across 5 hours, 35 minutes. The final set, in which Evans trailed 4-0, took 61 minutes itself — and was the shortest set they played.

"When you're a kid, you're just told to fight until the end. I mean, that's sort of Rule 1. I've done that pretty consistently for my career," Evans said. "It sort of paid off a bit today."

## **Kamala Harris' election would defy history. Just 1 sitting VP has been elected president since 1836**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As Vice President Kamala Harris begins her fall campaign for the White House, she can look to history and hope for better luck than others in her position who have tried the same.

Since 1836, only one sitting vice president, George H.W. Bush in 1988, has been elected to the White House. Among those who tried and failed were Richard Nixon in 1960, Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and Al

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Gore in 2000. All three lost in narrow elections shaped by issues ranging from war and scandal to crime and the subtleties of televised debates. But two other factors proved crucial for each vice president: whether the incumbent president was well-liked and whether the president and vice president enjoyed a productive relationship.

"You really do want those elements to come together," says Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University. "If the person the vice president is working for is popular, that means people like what he's doing and you can gain from that. And you need to have the two principals working together."

In 1988, Bush easily defeated Democrat Michael Dukakis, the Massachusetts governor whom Republicans labeled as ineffectual and out of touch. Bush was otherwise helped by a solid economy, the easing of Cold War tensions and some rare luck for a vice president. President Ronald Reagan's approval ratings rose through much of the year after falling sharply in the wake of the 1986-87 Iran-Contra scandal, and Reagan and Bush worked well together during the campaign. Reagan openly backed his vice president, who had run against him in the 1980 primaries. He praised Bush at the Republican convention as an engaged and invaluable partner, appeared with him at a California rally and spoke at gatherings in Michigan, New Jersey and Missouri.

"Reagan was not a man to hold grudges," said historian-journalist Jonathan Darman. "And Bush did a good job of navigating the complexity of their relationship while he was vice president."

Past vice presidents who ran

When Gore ran in 2000, his advantages were similar to those enjoyed by George H.W. Bush. The economy was strong, the country was at peace and the president, Bill Clinton, had high approval ratings despite his recent impeachment over his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Gore had worked closely with Clinton over the previous eight years, but the scandal led to enduring tensions between them. He minimized the president's presence during the campaign and pronounced himself "my own man" during his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. Commentators would cite his distance from Clinton as a setback in a historically close race, decided by a margin of fewer than 1,000 votes in Florida.

"Instead of finding a way to embrace the accomplishments of the Clinton administration, Gore ran away from Clinton as fast as his legs could carry him," Slate's Jacob Weisberg wrote soon after the election.

Like Gore, Nixon could not — or would not — capitalize on the incumbent Dwight Eisenhower's popularity. In 1960, Eisenhower was still so admired as he neared the end of his second term that Nixon's opponent, Democrat John F. Kennedy, feared the president's active support would prove critical. But Eisenhower and Nixon had a complicated relationship dating back to when Eisenhower ran eight years earlier. He had chosen Nixon as his running mate, but nearly dropped him because of the so-called Checkers scandal, in which Nixon was accused of misusing funds donated by political backers.

Nixon was more than 20 years younger than Eisenhower, the victorious World War II commander who often looked upon his vice president as a junior officer, according to Nixon biographer John A. Farrell. At the end of a summer press conference in 1960, Eisenhower was asked if he could cite Nixon's influence on any important decision. He answered, "If you give me a week, I might think of one." Meanwhile, Nixon was reluctant to have Eisenhower campaign, out of a desire to forge his own path, and, allegedly, out of concern for the 70-year-old president.

"Nixon very much wanted to be his own man," says Farrell, whose prize-winning "Richard Nixon" was published in 2017. "He always said he was worried about Eisenhower's health, but there are also anecdotes that Eisenhower was chafing at the bit. Both could be true."

Nixon's luck changed when he ran eight years later against Lyndon B. Johnson's vice president. No vice president was more entrapped by his predecessor than Hubert Humphrey, whose candidacy was only possible because Johnson decided not to seek reelection.

Humphrey faced challenges within the party from the anti-war candidates Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy (who was assassinated in June 1968 after winning the California primary) and was tied to Johnson's divisive, hawkish stance.



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Humphrey privately advocated a less hardline approach to the war, but Johnson intimidated him into silence and he trailed Nixon badly in many polls. Only in the fall did Humphrey diverge and call for a bombing halt with North Vietnam. The vice president rallied, but ended up losing the popular vote by less than a percentage point while falling short more decisively in the Electoral College.

"Johnson did catastrophic damage to Humphrey, in my opinion," says Boston Globe columnist Michael Cohen, author of a book on the 1968 election, "American Carnage."

How does Harris fare?

Like Johnson, President Joe Biden declared he wouldn't seek a new term less than a year before Election Day, though he waited much longer in the cycle than Johnson did. Unlike Humphrey, Harris quickly consolidated Democratic support and accepted her party's nomination at an uplifting convention that concluded without significant damage from protests, unlike the violence-marred 1968 event in the same city, Chicago.

In an AP-NORC survey conducted in July, after Biden dropped out of the race, about 4 in 10 Americans approved of his performance as president, roughly where his approval numbers have stood since the summer of 2021 and comparable to those of the Republican nominee, Donald Trump. Eisenhower, Reagan and Clinton frequently held higher approval ratings than Biden, although all served in less polarized eras.

Harris wants to succeed a president who himself served as vice president and ran for president, four years later. President Barack Obama discouraged Biden from seeking election in 2016 and waited to endorse Biden in 2020 until the crowded Democratic primary field was clear.

"Obama became an enthusiastic backer, which helped unify the party at a time when Biden's record on race in the 1990s, including his support for the crime bill, was fueling doubts among young progressive voters," Biden biographer Evan Osnos says. "Obama's endorsement of Biden was about more than his candidacy; it was about his character, and that proved to be important."

As president, Biden has worked to include Harris on his major policy calls and conversations with foreign leaders. He's pledged to be Harris' top campaign volunteer and to do whatever she asks of him for her election, though aides are still determining where the still-unpopular president would best be utilized. On Labor Day, Biden and Harris will appear together in Pittsburgh for a campaign event in a key swing state, Pennsylvania.

## Haiti's army wants recruits to fight gangs, and youths jump at the rare job offer

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — The announcement that Haiti's military wanted recruits crackled through a small radio perched on a street stall in downtown Port-au-Prince where Maurenceley Clerge repairs and sells smartphones.

It was early morning, and the 21-year-old paused, eager to hear the details. He envisioned earning enough to afford his own food and rent. Two weeks later, he completed the required paperwork and stood in line with hundreds of other Haitians under a brutal sun for the chance to join up.

"It's the moment I have been waiting for," said Clerge, who stays with a friend who also provides him with food. "I want to serve as a citizen of this country and also to move up and upgrade my life."

Thousands of young Haitians are jumping at the chance to become soldiers as widespread gang violence creates a rare job opportunity in a deeply impoverished country where work is scarce. Brushing aside the possibility they could be kidnapped, tortured or killed, Haiti's youngest generation is answering the call of a government seeking to rebuild a once-reviled military, reinstated just years ago with the aim to crush gangs.

"I thought about it a lot because I know that being a soldier requires a lot of sacrifice," said Samuel Delmas, who recently applied. "Everything that you're doing is risky."

The 20-year-old is taking computer repair courses but doesn't have a job. He heard about the recruit-

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ment via a Facebook group.

"I have always wanted to be useful to my country," he said.

Gangs forced Delmas and his family to flee their home two years ago, with only enough time to grab a handful of clothes amid a barrage of gunfire.

"I want to protect citizens who are on the run like me," he said.

'Most young kids are not working'

Haiti's government has not said how many soldiers it aims to hire nor how many have applied so far, but documents published online by the Defense Ministry show that at least 3,000 people were selected in mid-August and asked to submit documents as they await physical and mental tests.

If all were hired, that would more than double the force strength of 2,000 of early last year.

About 60% of Haiti's population of nearly 12 million people earn less than \$2 a day, with inflation soaring to double digits in recent years.

"Most young kids are not working," said Emerson Celadon, a 25-year-old mechanic who applied and was selected for the next round. "I was making some money, but ... that is still not enough for a family of four."

It's not clear how much soldiers earn, Defense Minister Jean-Marc Bernier Antoine did not return messages for comment. However, Celadon said friends in the army told him they make about \$300 a month.

On a recent afternoon, Celadon joined hundreds of mostly young men lined up outside a former U.N. base, a yellow envelope under his arm, waiting to take the first of several required tests to join the army.

A dark past

Haiti's armed forces were once widely feared and hated, with soldiers accused of horrific human rights abuses. The military organized several coups in the second half of the 20th century, even after so-called "dictator for life" François Duvalier diluted its strength.

After the last coup in 1991, to oust former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the government disbanded the armed forces in 1995. At the time, there were some 7,000 soldiers.

"The decision to demobilize the army ... proved to be one of the most catastrophic decisions in the country's history," said Michael Deibert, the author of two books about Haiti. He noted that, as a result, the first generation of politically-aligned gangs took root in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

"They stepped into a security void left by what would have been a security force, one whose role the Haitian police have never been fully able to assume," Deibert said.

After the army was disbanded, the government created the Haitian National Police and the Coast Guard, which were bolstered by the arrival of U.N. troops. Once the U.N. ended its peacekeeping operations, the army was reinstated in 2017 by President Jovenel Moïse, who was assassinated in July 2021.

Since then, the military has played a small role in fighting gangs and protecting top government officials. But as gang violence surged in the years following Moïse's killing, former Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced in March 2023 that he would mobilize all security forces. At the time, the armed forces had some 2,000 soldiers who were trained by experts in Mexico, Colombia and Argentina.

Despite the announcement, the military's role continued to take a back seat to police until recently.

A new army

Gen. Derby Guerrier was sworn in as the new armed forces chief on Aug. 20, just days after a massive recruitment for new soldiers ended. "Close ranks!" he ordered soldiers and officers during a brief but energetic speech as he demanded that they help Haiti restore peace.

More than 3,200 killings have been reported across Haiti from January to May, with gang violence leaving more than half a million people homeless in recent years, according to the U.N.

In coordinated attacks earlier this year, gangs seized control of more than two dozen police stations, closed down the main international airport for nearly three months and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing thousands of inmates.

Newly appointed Prime Minister Garry Conille has warned that the armed forces face "colossal challenges" while pledging to modernize the military and invest in communication and surveillance technologies. He also said he would improve military infrastructure, housing and health care for soldiers and their families.

"A soldier ... whose family is safe and well cared for is a soldier who is more determined and focused," Conille said.

The military is expected to work with Haiti's police and a U.N.-backed mission led by Kenya, which has sent some 400 police officers to Haiti so far to help quell gang violence. Police and soldiers from countries including Benin, Chad and Jamaica also are expected to arrive in upcoming months for a total of 2,500 foreign personnel.

Celadon, the mechanic, hopes he can work alongside them and help change Haiti.

"I would love to see the country like how I heard it was back in the day: a Haiti where everyone can move around freely, where there are no gangs, where everybody is able to work," he said.

## **Ukraine's Russia offensive is risky. To get a boost, it wants less US caution on weapons**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukraine's daring ground offensive has taken the fight to Russia, but not nearly as much as its leaders would like because, they say, the United States won't let them.

The U.S. restricts the use of long-range ballistic missiles it provides to Ukraine, which wants to aim them at military targets inside Russia. Ukraine's offensive, along with a barrage of drones and missiles that Moscow launched this week, has intensified pressure on the Biden administration to ease its cautious approach to the use of Western weapons in escalating Ukrainian attacks.

The Biden administration says its careful deliberations, including which advanced weapons it supplies to Ukraine and when, are necessary to avoid provoking retaliation from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some analysts agree Putin would take a Ukrainian strike by an American long-range ballistic missile within Russia as an attack by the U.S. itself.

But many other American and European supporters of Ukraine say the White House should see that Putin's threats of attacking the West, including with nuclear weapons, are bluster. Their fear is the U.S. support that has allowed Ukraine to withstand Russia's 2022 invasion comes with delays and caveats that could ultimately contribute to its defeat.

"This war is going to end exactly how Western policymakers decide it will end," said Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who led NATO in Europe from 2013 to 2016 and is among the retired U.S. military leaders and diplomats, Republican lawmakers, security analysts and others pushing for a loosening of restrictions on how Ukraine uses Western-provided weapons.

"If we keep doing what we're doing, Ukraine will eventually lose," Breedlove said. "Because right now ... we are purposely not giving Ukraine what they need to win."

Lifting such restrictions "would strengthen Ukrainian self-defense, save lives and reduce destruction in Ukraine," European Union foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell wrote Monday on the social platform X after Russia launched more than 200 missiles and drones at Ukraine. The next day, Russia launched 91 more.

The push and pull is playing out during Ukraine's surprise offensive into Russia's southern Kursk region, the first ground invasion of Russia since World War II.

Throughout the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has balanced copious thanks for U.S. support with frustrated appeals for more arms and ammunition. Upping the pressure this month, he again said Ukraine must fight the war as it sees fit with all the weapons at its disposal and appealed for the U.S. to drop a ban on using American long-range ATACMS missiles to strike deeper into Russia.

"A sick old man from the Red Square, who constantly threatens everyone with the red button, will not dictate any of his red lines to us," Zelenskyy said recently of Putin.

The Biden administration this year allowed Ukraine to fire shorter-range U.S.-provided munitions across the border in self-defense, but not ATACMS.

Security analysts say Ukraine is using U.S.-provided HIMARS rocket systems in its offensive. Ukraine also announced it has used a U.S.-supplied glide bomb against Russian forces and deployed its own prototype of a long-range drone-missile hybrid.

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Zelenskyy's military appeared to have launched the ground offensive on Aug. 6 without consulting American leaders.

As Ukraine has claimed nearly 500 square miles (1,300 square kilometers) of Russian territory, it has taken a message from another U.S. ally that receives military support, said Roman Kostenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker and military commander.

"Israel once stated that it is quite respectful of the advice of its partners, but as an independent state, it makes decisions independently," Kostenko told the Ukrainska Pravda news outlet. "I believe we can mirror this."

The U.S. has deliberated at length before eventually approving a succession of advanced weapons that Ukraine has pleaded for: modern tanks, precision medium-range rocket systems, Patriot missile batteries, ATACMS for use inside occupied Ukrainian territory and F-16 aircraft.

The Biden administration condemned Russia's attacks this week on Ukrainian energy infrastructure and is helping bolster its ally's air defenses, but has not changed its policy on long-range weapons, national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters this week.

A U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the government's internal discussions, said the Biden administration believes there's no strategic advantage to ATACMS strikes within Russia.

There are too few ATACMS overall to allow Ukraine to hit a significant number of targets within Russia, the official said, adding that Ukraine is using the long-range missiles it has to challenge Russia's hold on the strategically important Crimean Peninsula.

Russia also has moved many of its aircraft away from what the Institute for the Study of War research group says are 16 Russian airbases within potential range of the ATACMS. That includes aircraft launching the hard-to-intercept glide bombs that Russia is using in Ukraine, the official said.

Many outside the administration disagree. More than 200 other Russian military targets are within ATACMS range in what appear to be carelessly guarded areas along 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) of border, said George Barros, a security analyst focusing on Ukraine and Russia for the Institute for the Study of War, which provides some of the most closely watched battlefield analysis of the conflict.

Those targets include large military bases, communications stations, logistics centers, repair facilities, fuel depots, ammunition warehouses and permanent headquarters, Barros said.

While tech-savvy Ukraine is pioneering aggressive new ways of using armed drones and electronic warfare against Russia, hardened targets like bases need the bigger punch that ATACMS can provide, Barros said.

A few selective strikes against some Russian targets would force Putin to shift manpower and resources to protect those targets, he said.

"That is the kind of strain that drastically reduces an attacker's ability to successfully logistically support their front-line forces," Barros said.

Ukraine, fighting a far bigger military, needs the battlefield momentum that it hopes surprise offensives, demoralizing attacks within Russia and advanced weapons can provide. While it's pulled off a feat by deploying armed and uncrewed drone boats to bottle up Russia's navy in the Black Sea, its biggest battlefield successes were in the first dramatic months of the war.

A 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive ended without major gains, and then U.S. political deadlock stalled military support for months and allowed Russian forces to gain territory.

In grim conversations this summer, Ukrainians and Americans spoke of the risk of a cease-fire on Russia's terms. Without leverage from battlefield successes, Ukraine could be forced to cede large amounts of Ukrainian territory and face another invasion later.

Billions of dollars' worth of U.S. military support is flowing again. Zelenskyy has expanded military conscription. And American military leaders are back to talking of what had been allies' vision for the next phase of the war, said Bill Taylor, a veteran former diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine from 2006 to 2009.

That is, Ukraine spends the rest of the year rebuilding its ground forces and adding capacity to hit Russia hard enough that it seeks a cease-fire next year on terms Ukraine can accept, he said.

Long-range missile strikes on military targets anywhere inside Russia are part of that, Taylor said. "The Ukrainians should not have to give Russians a sanctuary."

## **Biden adviser meets with Qatari leaders to discuss Israel-Hamas negotiations**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's top Middle East adviser on Tuesday held talks in Doha with senior Qatari leaders on the efforts to complete a cease-fire and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas, as well as on the Qatari prime minister's meeting this week with Iran's president, according to a U.S. official.

White House senior adviser Brett McGurk's talks with Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani came after the prime minister's Monday visit to Tehran to meet with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The talks also come as cease-fire talks aimed at winning at least a pause in the war between Israel and Hamas are shifting to Doha this week after several days of intense negotiations in Cairo. A round of high-level talks ended Sunday without a final agreement. But talks continued at lower levels Monday in an effort to bridge remaining gaps.

Those working-group level talks are now expected to resume Wednesday in Doha. It was not clear why the location of the talks shifted from Cairo or whether this will have an impact on negotiations.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing sensitive cease-fire talks, confirmed an Israeli delegation will head to Doha on Wednesday.

The U.S. official, who was not authorized to discuss the sensitive talks publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that McGurk met with the Qatari officials and the focus of their conversation.

Tensions have been escalating between Israel and Iran, and with militant groups — Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis — that are backed by Tehran. Iran has vowed to retaliate against Israel for last month's assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh last month in Iran.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday expressed openness to renewing negotiations with the United States over his country's rapidly advancing nuclear program, telling its civilian government there was "no harm" in engaging with its "enemy." The timing of Khamenei's remarks came just one day after the Qatari prime minister's visit with the newly minted Iranian president. There have been indirect talks between Iran and the U.S. in recent years mediated by Oman and Qatar, two of the United States' Middle East interlocutors when it comes to Iran.

Biden earlier in his presidency had pressed Iran to return to compliance with the nuclear deal that was brokered by the Obama administration in 2015 but scrapped in 2018 by former President Donald Trump.

Since the deal's collapse, Iran has abandoned limits that the agreement put on its program, and is enriching uranium to up to 60% purity — near weapons-grade levels of 90%. After the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by the Iran-backed Hamas, the U.S. administration has put efforts to revive the nuclear agreement on the shelf.

Pezeshkian, 69, who ran as a reformist politician within Iran's Shiite theocracy, was elected last month to replace the late President Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line protégé of Khamenei, killed in a helicopter crash in May. The new president is closely aligned with former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who reached Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that saw sanctions lifted in exchange for the atomic program being drastically curtailed.

## **Harris will sit down with CNN for her first interview since launching presidential bid**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

Vice President Kamala Harris is sitting down with CNN this week for her first interview since President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid.

The Democratic presidential nominee will be joined by her running mate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz in an interview with CNN anchor Dana Bash in Savannah, Georgia. The interview will air Thursday at 9 p.m. Eastern time.

Harris' lack of access has become one of Republicans' key lines of attacks against her as she ascended to the top of the Democratic ticket after Biden's July 21 announcement. The CNN interview may be an opportunity for Harris to quell criticism that she is unprepared for uncontrolled environments, but it may also carry risks as her team tries to build on momentum from the ticket shakeup and Democratic National Convention.

During her three-plus years as vice president, she has done on-camera and print interviews with The Associated Press and many other outlets, often at a pace more frequent than Biden.

The Trump campaign has kept a tally of the days she has gone by as a candidate without giving an interview. On Tuesday, the campaign reacted to the news by noting the interview was joint, saying "she's not competent enough to do it on her own."

Earlier this month, Harris had told reporters that she wanted to do her first formal interview before the end of August.

Harris travels with members of the media on Air Force Two for all trips and nearly always comes to the back of the plane to speak to them for a few minutes before takeoff. Her office insists that those conversations are off the record, though, so what she says can't be used publicly.

She will rally voters in Savannah on Thursday as part of a bus tour that kicks off on Wednesday.

## Iran's supreme leader opens door to negotiations with US over Tehran's nuclear program

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's supreme leader opened the door Tuesday to renewed negotiations with the United States over his country's rapidly advancing nuclear program, telling its civilian government there was "no harm" in engaging with its "enemy."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks set clear red lines for any talks taking place under the government of reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian and renewed his warnings that Washington wasn't to be trusted.

But his comments mirror those around the time of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Tehran's nuclear program greatly curtailed in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Yet it remains unclear just how much room Pezeshkian will have to maneuver, particularly as tensions remain high in the wider Middle East over the Israel-Hamas war and as the U.S. prepares for a presidential election in November.

"This does not mean that we cannot interact with the same enemy in certain situations," Khamenei said, according to a transcript on his official website. "There is no harm in that, but do not place your hopes in them."

Khamenei, who has the final say on all state matters, also warned Pezeshkian's Cabinet, "Do not trust the enemy."

Khamenei, 85, has occasionally urged talks or dismissed them with Washington after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal in 2018.

There have been indirect talks between Iran and the U.S. in recent years mediated by Oman and Qatar, two of the United States' Middle East interlocutors when it comes to Iran. Khamenei's remarks came a day after Qatar's prime minister visited the country.

Asked for comment, the U.S. State Department told The Associated Press: "We will judge Iran's leadership by their actions, not their words."

"We have long said that we ultimately view diplomacy as the best way to achieve an effective, sustainable solution with regard to Iran's nuclear program," it said. "However, we are far away from anything like that right now given Iran's escalations across the board, including its nuclear escalations and its failure to cooperate" with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear watchdog.

"If Iran wants to demonstrate seriousness or a new approach, they should stop nuclear escalations and start meaningfully cooperating with the IAEA," it said.

Since the deal's collapse, Iran has abandoned all limits that the deal put on its program, and enriches

uranium to up to 60% purity — near weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Surveillance cameras installed by the IAEA have been disrupted, while Iran has barred some of the Vienna-based agency's most experienced inspectors. Iranian officials also have increasingly threatened that they could pursue atomic weapons.

Meanwhile, tensions between Iran and Israel have hit a new high during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. Tehran launched an unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel in April after years of a shadow war between the two countries reached a climax with Israel's apparent attack on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed two Iranian generals and others.

The assassination in Tehran of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh also prompted Iran to threaten to retaliate against Israel.

Pezeshkian, a former lawmaker who won the presidency after a May helicopter crash killed hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, campaigned in part on a promise to reengage the West with negotiations. Khomeini's remarks as Iran's paramount leader could provide him with the political cover to do so. Pezeshkian's new foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, was deeply involved in negotiations on the 2015 deal.

"After doing everything we can, a tactical retreat might sometimes be necessary, but we should not abandon our goals or opinions at the first sign of difficulty," Khomeini also said Tuesday, the second time in recent days he's referred to a "tactical retreat" amid the tensions.

However, it's not just Iran that's facing a new presidency. The U.S. will hold a presidential election on Nov. 5, with Vice President Kamala Harris and Trump as the leading candidates. Iran has been concerned about Trump's return to power.

While the U.S. engaged in indirect talks with Iran under President Joe Biden, it remains unclear how that would carry over to a possible Harris administration. Harris, in a speech to the Democratic National Convention last week, said: "I will never hesitate to take whatever action is necessary to defend our forces and our interests against Iran and Iran-backed terrorists."

The RANE Network, a risk-intelligence firm, said if Harris wins, "the likelihood of a deal will rise as the Israel-Hamas war winds down."

"Once negotiations begin, Iran will likely demand more protections regarding a potential U.S. withdrawal from a new deal after the United States walked away from the previous deal in 2018," RANE said in an analysis Tuesday.

"Because of concerns about the sustainability of any new deal, Iran is also less likely to offer as many nuclear concessions, like the dismantling of more advanced centrifuges, since Iran would want to be able to spin up its nuclear program as fast as possible in the event of another U.S. exit from the new deal."

Tuesday's meeting between Khomeini and Pezeshkian's Cabinet included an appearance by former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who helped Iran reach the 2015 deal. After the meeting, Zarif said in an online message that he would continue to serve as a vice president in Pezeshkian's administration after earlier publicly resigning over the makeup of the Cabinet.

## **Feds file new indictment in Trump Jan. 6 case, keeping charges intact but narrowing allegations**

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Special counsel Jack Smith filed a new indictment Tuesday against Donald Trump over his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election that keeps the same criminal charges but narrows the allegations against him following a Supreme Court opinion that conferred broad immunity on former presidents.

The new indictment removes a section of the indictment that had accused Trump of trying to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to overturn his election loss, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 opinion last month, said that Trump was absolutely immune from prosecution.

The stripped-down criminal case represents a first effort by prosecutors to comply with a Supreme Court opinion that made all but certain the Republican presidential nominee won't face trial before the November

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election in the case alleging he tried to thwart the peaceful transfer of power.

It comes days before prosecutors and defense lawyers are expected to tell the judge overseeing the case how they want to proceed in light of the Supreme Court's ruling, which said presidents are presumptively immune from prosecution for official White House acts. The high court sent the case back to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who now must analyze which allegations in the indictment were unofficial actions — or those taken in Trump's private capacity — that can proceed to trial.

Prosecutors and Trump's legal team will be back in court next week for the first hearing in front of Chutkan in months, given that the case had been effectively frozen since last December as Trump's immunity appeal worked its way through the justice system.

In a statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump called the new indictment "an act of desperation" and an "effort to resurrect a 'dead' Witch Hunt." He said the new case has "all the problems of the old Indictment, and should be dismissed IMMEDIATELY."

The special counsel's office said the updated indictment, filed in federal court in Washington, was issued by a grand jury that had not previously heard evidence in the case. It said in a statement that the indictment "reflects the Government's efforts to respect and implement the Supreme Court's holdings and remand instructions."

The new indictment does away with references to allegations that could be deemed as official acts for which Trump is entitled to immunity in light of the Supreme Court's ruling. That includes allegations that Trump tried to enlist the Justice Department in his failed effort to undo his election loss, including by conducting sham investigations and telling states — incorrectly — that significant fraud had been detected.

In its opinion, the Supreme Court held that a president's interactions with the Justice Department constitute official acts for which he is entitled to immunity.

The original indictment detailed how Jeffrey Clark, a top official in the Trump Justice Department, wanted to send a letter to elected officials in certain states falsely claiming that the department had "identified significant concerns that may have impacted the outcome of the election," but top department officials refused.

Clark's support for Trump's election fraud claims led Trump to openly contemplate naming him as acting attorney general in place of Jeffrey Rosen, who led the department in the final weeks of the Trump administration. Trump ultimately relented in that idea "when he was told it would result in mass resignations at the Justice Department," according to the original indictment. Rosen remained on as acting attorney general through the end of Trump's tenure.

The new case no longer references Clark as a co-conspirator. Trump's alleged co-conspirators were not named in either indictment, but the details make clear their identities. The new indictment stresses that none of the other co-conspirators "were government officials during the conspiracies and all of whom were acting in a private capacity."

The new indictment also removes references to Trump's communications with federal government officials — like senior White House attorneys — who told him there was no evidence of fraud that would change the outcome of the 2020 election. It also removes references to certain Trump statements, including a claim he made during a White House press conference two days after the election about a suspicious dump of votes in Detroit.

The new indictment still includes one of the more stunning allegations brought by Smith — that Trump participated in a scheme orchestrated by allies to enlist slates of fraudulent electors in battleground states won by Democrat Joe Biden who would falsely attest that Trump had won in those states.

It also retains allegations that Trump sought to pressure Vice President Mike Pence to reject legitimate electoral votes, and that Trump and his allies exploited the chaos at the Capitol on Jan. 6 in an attempt to further delay the certification of Biden's victory.

Chief Justice Roberts wrote in his majority opinion that the interactions between Trump and Pence amounted to official conduct for which "Trump is at least presumptively immune from prosecution."

The question, Roberts wrote, is whether the government can rebut "that presumption of immunity."



Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented from the ruling. In an excerpt from an interview with CBS News' "Sunday Morning" that aired Tuesday, she said: "I was concerned about a system that appeared to provide immunity for one individual under one set of circumstances. When we have a criminal justice system that had ordinarily treated everyone the same."

## From cold towels to early dismissal, people are finding ways to cope with a 2nd day of heat wave

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — As a second straight day of hot soupy temperatures approaching triple digits hung over much of the Midwest on Tuesday, residents looked for ways to stay cool and indoors.

Darrell Taylor, 61, has no air-conditioning in his apartment in Chicago, where it reached a record-breaking 98 degrees Fahrenheit. He described it as feeling like an oven. Running two fans did not improve things.

"I put a cold towel on my face. It's only working a little bit," he said before retreating to the home of a relative who has air conditioning.

The National Weather Service issued excessive heat warnings and advisories Tuesday in large swaths of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and into Mid-Atlantic states including Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The weather service warned of "dangerously hot conditions" and predicted heat index values — which take into account the temperature and relative humidity and indicate how hot it feels outdoors — of up to 110 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit in some locations, including Chicago. The city's high broke the record of 97 degrees set for this day in 1973, according to the weather service.

But relief was expected soon, with cooler temperatures expected starting Wednesday.

"The heat still persists across the middle part of the country but there is some much cooler air working in by the end of the month," Josh Weiss, a National Weather Service meteorologist said.

Many cities, including Chicago, opened cooling centers. Some schools planned early dismissal because of the heat. An Indiana zoo cut its hours while a Chicago zoo gave animals ice treats. And one Chicago church collected thousands bottles of water to give away.

Numerous schools in Ohio planned for early dismissals on Tuesday and Wednesday due to the expected heat, while some schools canceled classes due to power outages. Chicago schools started the academic year as planned this week, but school officials announced that outdoor athletics were canceled through Tuesday. Some suburban Chicago schools had early dismissal. Also, dozens of Philadelphia city schools without adequate air conditioning planned early dismissal Tuesday and Wednesday.

Members of St. Sabina Catholic Church on Chicago's South Side, collected over 4,000 bottles of water to give away as temperatures climbed. The National Weather Service said the temperature reached 98, which "We're blessing people with water because it is a very hot day," Meryle Davie-Hawthorne said as she passed out bottles kept cold from coolers full of ice. "We just want to help out."

In other places, residents were warned against using longtime methods to stay cool.

Officials in southwestern Michigan's Kalamazoo, where temperatures were expected to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit, asked residents to stop opening fire hydrants.

"There has been a large increase in the unauthorized private use of city of Kalamazoo fire hydrants," the city said on X, formerly Twitter. "Some private citizens are taking it upon themselves to open fire hydrants. Please note that opening and closing fire hydrants can cause serious injury."

Much of northern and eastern Missouri was under a heat advisory Tuesday. The high temperature in St. Louis was expected to approach 100 degrees, with a slight risk of storms. The region, accustomed to hot and sultry August weather, was largely taking the heat in stride, with few cancellations reported.

Meanwhile in Minnesota, a line of powerful thunderstorms packing high winds plowed across the state early Tuesday, causing widespread power outages and tree damage. The Minnesota State Fair in the St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights opened two hours late Tuesday morning so that fair officials could assess the damage and clean up the debris and rides on the Midway were temporarily halted.

Winds gusted as high as 64 mph in St. Paul, the National Weather Service said. Xcel Energy, the largest

electrical utility in Minnesota, said over 144,000 of its customers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area were still without power by 9 a.m. Tuesday.

At Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, staff made sure animals had access to shade and gave out ice treats to encourage hydration.

"People think animals are adapted to weather extremes like heat because they come from more tropical areas," said Dave Bernier, the zoo's general curator. "But they're really Chicagoans just like us and they experience the same weather we do."

In Indiana, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo said it would close at 3 p.m. Tuesday because of the excessive heat, according to its Facebook page.

The zoo also offered tips to stay cool from its resident expert, Penny the ostrich.

"Flap and fan your wings to keep yourself cool," the zoo said in a post featuring Penny pictures. "Use your long, flexible neck to better control your head temperature."

## Mexico puts relations with US and Canadian embassies 'on pause' for slamming judicial overhaul plan

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president told reporters Tuesday he has put relations with the United States and Canadian embassies "on pause" after the two countries voiced concerns over a proposed judicial overhaul that critics say could undermine the independence of the judiciary.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador didn't elaborate on what a pause would mean. It's not a term used in formal diplomatic codes, and Mexico's foreign ministry did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment about what it would entail.

The judicial overhaul proposal, suggested by the Mexican president during his final weeks in office, includes having judges elected to office, something analysts, judges and international observers fear would stack courts with politically biased judges with little experience. It has spurred major protests and strikes and wide criticism from investors and financial institutions.

Last week, American ambassador Ken Salazar called the proposal a "risk" to democracy that would endanger Mexico's commercial relationship with the United States. López Obrador lambasted the ambassador, saying he violated Mexican sovereignty. Salazar has since dialed back his tone, writing on X that he was open to a dialogue.

López Obrador said during his morning press briefing Tuesday he believed the sharp comments were not from Salazar, but rather from the U.S. State Department.

"We're not going to tell him (Salazar) to leave the country," he said, "I hope that they promise to be respectful of Mexico's independence, of our country's sovereignty. But until that happens, and they continue these policies, it's on pause."

He added cheekily, "we are going to take our time," garnering laughs from some reporters.

López Obrador also accused Canada of interfering with an internal matter for expressing apprehension about the proposal. The three countries share a crucial commercial relationship that reached an estimated \$1.8 trillion in trade in 2022. So far, the tensions show no clear signs of how they can affect the longstanding economic and diplomatic relationship between them.

Salazar has since dialed back his tone, writing on X that he was open to a dialogue and that he respected Mexican sovereignty. But as he did, members of the bipartisan Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including Republican Sen. Marco Rubio and Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine, issued a joint statement saying they were "deeply concerned" about the judicial overhaul and other proposed reforms to the constitution, which they say could "contradict commitments" made in their trade agreement.

The comments are likely to only further irritate the populist leader.

Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Relations Alicia Bárcena took to X to say she supports López Obrador in railing against what she called an "interventionist" policy by the U.S. and Canada. However, she added in the same post that the trilateral relationship was a "priority" and that ties continue on as "normal."

It's not the first time the Mexican state head has thrown around the phrase. In 2022, he announced a diplomatic pause with Spain over a dispute with energy companies. At the time, López Obrador said the pause "is not a break in relations" with Spain, but "nothing more than a respectful and fraternal protest against the abuses and grievances committed against the people of Mexico and our country."

However, the latest comments aimed at the U.S. ambassador come amid heightened tensions between the two governments in recent months, after the U.S. nailed Mexican drug lord Ismael 'El Mayo' Zambada in a peculiar set of events. As more information has been revealed about the case, López Obrador has taken on an increasingly belligerent tone, said Carlos Pérez Ricart, a political analyst at Mexico's Center for Economic Research and Teaching.

"In other circumstances, in another context, he might have just listened, not escalated the conflict," Pérez Ricart said. "In the past months, we've seen a lot more radical statements towards the United States."

López Obrador is set to pass the baton to his political ally and President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, who takes office Oct. 1. Pérez Ricart said while the recent tensions may burden Mexico's first woman president, it can also help her set herself apart as a more moderate head of state. \_\_\_\_

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## **Lowe's changes some DEI policies amid legal attacks on diversity programs and activist pressure**

By HALELUYA HADERO and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Home improvement chain Lowe's is scaling back its diversity, equity and inclusion policies, joining the ranks of several other companies that altered their programs since the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed affirmative action in college admissions or after facing a conservative backlash online.

In an internal memo shared by Lowe's with The Associated Press, its executive leadership said the retailer began "reviewing" its programs following the court's July 2023 ruling and the company recently decided to combine its resource groups, which were for "individual groups representing diverse sections of our associate population," into one umbrella organization.

The retailer also will no longer participate in an annual survey by the Human Rights Campaign that measures workplace inclusion for LGBTQ+ employees, and will also stop sponsoring and participating in events, such as festivals and parades, that are outside of its business areas.

The changes were made to ensure Lowe's policies are "lawful" and aligned with its commitment to "include everyone," the memo states.

"We may make additional changes over time," the company's leadership team said in the memo. "What will not change, though, is our commitment to our people."

Robby Starbuck, a conservative political commentator who has gone after companies like Tractor Supply and John Deere, took credit for the changes Monday in a post on X, saying he had approached a Lowe's executive online last week and detailed his plans to "expose" the company over its hiring policies and other topics, such as LGBTQ+ employee resource groups and funding for Pride events.

However, Lowe's spokesperson Steve Salazar pushed back on that claim in an email Tuesday, noting that Starbuck's outreach came after the company "already announced changes that had long been in process" internally. The company memo did not specify when exactly these changes were implemented but noted that they were discussed at an August 21 meeting.

Over the last week, Lowe's has knocked down a different claim spreading on social media, in which a digitally-altered image quoted Lowe's CEO Marvin Ellison as saying that conservatives who didn't like the company's values should instead shop at rival Home Depot.

"Lowe's CEO did not make this comment," the company wrote on X in response to several users who shared the image. "Everyone is welcome at Lowe's."

For his part, Ellison has diversified the company's ranks, adding more women and ethnically diverse leaders since taking the helm in 2018. Ellison, who is Black and grew up in segregated rural Tennessee, has also been outspoken about racism since the police killing of George Floyd, which sparked major protests

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for racial justice in 2020.

Criticism of such DEI policies has extended well beyond Lowe's to companies across all industries. They include boycott calls on social media as well as legal attacks following the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling, which many anti-DEI activists want to use to set a similar precedent in the working world.

Starbuck, who has a sizable following on X, has used the platform as a mega phone to target DEI policies at Tractor Supply, farm equipment maker John Deere, motorcycle manufacturer Harley-Davidson and whiskey maker Jack Daniels. During an interview with The AP last month, the 35-year-old Cuban American said he has a list of companies he is thinking of posting content about, but was starting with ones that have traditionally conservative customer bases.

Following an online pressure campaign earlier this summer, Tractor Supply and John Deere ended some diversity measures. Last week, Harley-Davidson backtracked on its DEI policies, though the company noted in its announcement that it has not "operated a DEI function since April 2024."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Jack Daniels' parent company Brown-Forman said last week that it had "adjusted" its diversity and inclusion strategy to "ensure it continues to drive our business results while appropriately recognizing the current environment in which we find ourselves." Starbuck suggested on X that the company had reacted preemptively after his team looked at employee profiles on LinkedIn.

Though the changes are welcomed by conservative activists, DEI advocates say that, by conceding to Starbuck and other right-wing figures, corporations are essentially giving in to hate.

"Racial justice and LGBTQ inclusion are being, for lack of a better word, sort of scapegoated by a small, organized effort that's really seeking to dictate how companies conduct their business," said Jen Stark, co-director of the Center for Business and Social Justice at BSR, a consulting network of more than 300 companies.

Stark said it's a challenging environment for companies today, but stressed that a majority are keeping diversity and inclusion programs in place because they make good business sense. However, following last year's Supreme Court decision, she noted that businesses need to ensure their DEI programs are "on firm ground" — and avoid overcorrection when and if backlash arrives, which she noted can cause more harm.

"This isn't just a step backward for workplaces," she said. "It's really a retreat from how we normalize practices that remove barriers and impediments for everyone."

On Tuesday, the Human Rights Campaign, which Lowe's is no longer partnering with under its new policy, blasted such retreats from DEI and pointed to potential impacts on companies' bottom line by turning off LGBTQ+ and other consumers.

Orlando Gonzales, HRC's senior vice president of programs, research and training, called the changes "shortsighted decisions contrary to safe and inclusive workplaces" that would create a "snowball effect of negative long-term consequences." Gonzales also took particular aim at Starbuck — arguing companies "should not cower to a random guy with zero business experience" and that the activist was removed from Tennessee Republican party because he is "so extreme."

Starbuck, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday, said last month that his list included companies perceived as mainstream or middle of the road politically, including Microsoft. For a company such as coffee chain Starbucks, on the other hand, it would be "hard to force boycott pressure on them," he said.

Stark noted the outcome of the U.S. election "will also turn the thermostat, up or down" on the DEI conversation. A second term for former President Donald Trump would likely increase pressure against DEI policies — with many of Trump's supporters already signaling ways they'd like to see such practices dismantled — whereas his challenger Kamala Harris could have the opposite effect.

Some companies are bracing for the prospects of potential changes in terms of their federal contracts, for example, which have historically been a powerful way to promote equity in workplaces. And others may be looking to change language or find new workarounds to existing programs.

"We could see potentially a resurgence of DEI related efforts or retrenchment," she said. "I think a through line will be that companies will continue again to do this work in practice or in name — (but) the degree to which they show up publicly will be dependent on the landscape."

## Utah mother and children's book author Kouri Richins to stand trial in husband's death, judge rules

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — A Utah mother of three who published a children's book about grief after her husband's death and was later accused of fatally poisoning him will stand trial, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Utah state Judge Richard Mrazik ruled on the second day of Kouri Richins' preliminary hearing that prosecutors had presented enough evidence against her to proceed with a jury trial.

She faces a slew of felony charges for allegedly killing her husband with a lethal dose of fentanyl in March 2022 at their home in a small mountain town near Park City. Prosecutors say Kouri Richins, 34, slipped five times the lethal dose of the synthetic opioid into a Moscow mule cocktail that Eric Richins, 39, drank.

Kouri Richins appeared stoic as the judge delivered the news that a jury would soon decide her fate. She has been adamant in maintaining she is innocent and entered pleas of "not guilty" to all 11 counts on Tuesday. Her trial is set to begin on April 28.

The second day of her preliminary hearing centered around an additional attempted murder charge filed earlier this year that accused her of slipping fentanyl into her husband's sandwich on Valentine's Day 2022, causing a severe but nonfatal reaction.

Summit County Prosecutor Brad Bloodworth defended the charge by describing how he thinks Kouri Richins learned lessons during the first unsuccessful attempt on her husband's life that helped her carry out the killing 17 days later.

One bite of his favorite sandwich — left with a note in the front seat of his truck on Valentine's Day — made Eric Richins break out in hives and black out, prosecutors allege. His wife had bought the sandwich from a local diner in the city of Kamas two days after she purchased fentanyl pills from the family's housekeeper, according to witness statements and deleted text messages that were recovered by police.

Text messages and location data indicate Kouri Richins may have brought the sandwich home, then left to spend Valentine's Day with another man with whom she was having an affair, Bloodworth said. A day after Valentine's Day, she texted her lover, "If he could just go away ... life would be so perfect."

In written testimony, two friends of Eric Richins recounted phone conversations from the day prosecutors say he was first poisoned by his wife of nine years. After injecting himself with his son's EpiPen and chugging a bottle of Benadryl, he awoke from a deep sleep and told a friend, "I think my wife tried to poison me," charging documents allege.

Housekeeper Carmen Lauber told police that Kouri Richins subsequently asked her to procure stronger fentanyl, Detective Jeff O'Driscoll said on the first day of the hearing Monday.

"She learned that putting it in a sandwich, where Eric Richins could take a bite, feel the effects, set the sandwich down, was not the proper way to administer a fatal dose of fentanyl," Bloodworth told the judge. "She learned that it takes a truckload to kill him."

Days later, Kouri Richins called 911 in the middle of the night to report that she had found her husband "cold to the touch" at the foot of their bed, according to a police report. He was pronounced dead, and a medical examiner later found five times the lethal dosage of fentanyl in his system.

Defense attorneys Kathy Nester and Wendy Lewis argued that because police never found fentanyl in the Richins home, detectives could not be certain that the drugs Kouri Richins bought from the housekeeper matched those found in Eric Richins' system.

"These are great trial arguments," Mrazik responded, but he wondered aloud whether any of their arguments were strong enough to make the case that there wasn't probable cause for the charges.

"We are aware that the preliminary hearing stage favors the prosecution to an extraordinary degree and respect the court's decision," Nester and Lewis said in a joint statement after the hearing. "We firmly believe the charges against Kouri do not withstand thorough scrutiny and are confident that a jury will find the same."

Mrazik recently appointed the pair of attorneys to represent Kouri Richins after he determined she was

unable to continue paying for private lawyers. Prosecutors say she mistakenly believed she would inherit her husband's estate under the terms of their prenuptial agreement and had taken out life insurance policies on him without his knowledge that totaled nearly \$2 million.

Court records indicate Eric Richins met with an attorney in October 2020 to discuss the possibility of filing for divorce, which he never did, and to quietly cut his wife out of his will.

In the months before her arrest in May 2023, the Utah mother self-published the children's book "Are You with Me?" about a father with angel wings watching over his young son after passing away. The book could eventually play a key role for prosecutors in framing Eric Richins' death as a calculated killing with an elaborate cover-up attempt.

The judge scheduled a pretrial conference on Sept. 23 for the prosecution and defense to discuss jury selection.

## **A 10-month-old Palestinian baby suddenly stopped crawling. Polio had struck Gaza**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Born into the devastating Israel-Hamas war, 10-month-old Abdel-Rahman Abu El-Jedian started crawling early. Then one day, he froze — his left leg appeared to be paralyzed.

The baby boy is the first confirmed case of polio inside Gaza in 25 years, according to the World Health Organization.

Abdel-Rahman was an energetic baby, said the child's mother, Nevine Abu El-Jedian, fighting back tears. "Suddenly, that was reversed. Suddenly, he stopped crawling, stopped moving, stopped standing up, and stopped sitting."

Health care workers in Gaza have been warning of the potential for a polio outbreak for months, as the humanitarian crisis unleashed by Israel's offensive on the strip only grows. Abdel-Rahman's diagnosis confirms health workers' worst fears.

Before the war, Gaza's children were largely vaccinated against polio, the WHO says.

But Abdel-Rahman was not vaccinated because he was born just before Oct. 7, when Hamas militants attacked Israel and Israel launched a retaliatory offensive on Gaza that forced his family into near-immediate flight. Hospitals came under attack, and regular vaccinations for newborns all but stopped.

The WHO says that for every case of paralysis due to polio, there are hundreds more who likely have been infected but aren't showing symptoms. Most people who contract the disease do not experience symptoms, and those who do usually recover in a week or so. But there is no cure, and when polio causes paralysis, it is usually permanent. If the paralysis affects breathing muscles, the disease can be fatal.

The Abu El-Jedian family, like many, now live in a crowded tent camp, near heaps of garbage and dirty wastewater flowing into the streets that aid workers describe as breeding grounds for diseases like polio, spread through fecal matter. The United Nations has unveiled plans to begin a vaccination campaign to stop the spread and protect other families from the ordeal the Abu El-Jedian family now faces.

The family of 10 left their home in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, moving from shelter to shelter until finally settling in a tent in the central city of Deir al-Balah.

"My son was not vaccinated because of the continued displacement," his mother said. "We are sheltering here in the tent in such health conditions where there is no medication, no capabilities, no supplements."

The mother of eight said she was "stunned" to find out that her boy had contracted polio.

The WHO says that there are at least two other children with paralysis reported in the strip, and samples of their stool have been sent to a lab in Jordan.

In order to vaccinate most of Gaza's children under the age of 10, UNICEF spokesperson Ammar Ammar said a cease-fire is necessary. The health agencies seek a pause in the fighting, which in recent days has sent thousands of Palestinian families fleeing under successive Israeli evacuation orders. Many children live in areas of Gaza that ongoing Israeli military operations make difficult to reach.

"Without the polio pause or cease-fire, it would be impossible," Ammar said. "This is due to the continued evacuation orders and continued displacement of the children and their families. In addition, it can be extremely dangerous for teams as well, to be able to reach the children."

The United Nations aims to vaccinate at least 95% of more than 640,000 children, beginning Saturday. Already 1.2 million doses of vaccine have arrived in Gaza, with 400,000 more doses set to arrive in the coming weeks, according to UNICEF. Israel's military body in charge of civilian affairs, COGAT, said it allowed U.N. trucks carrying over 25,000 vials of the vaccine through the Kerem Shalom crossing Sunday.

"If this is not implemented, it could have a disastrous effect, not only for the children in Gaza, but also neighboring countries and across the borders in the region," Ammar said.

Back in the family's tent in Deir Al-Balah, Nevine Abu El-Jedian gazed at her youngest boy, lying still in a plastic car seat-turned bassinet as her seven other children gathered around.

"I hope he returns to be like his siblings, sitting down and moving," she said.

## Immigrant families in limbo after judge puts U.S. program for spouses on hold

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — After President Joe Biden this summer announced a new U.S. citizenship pathway for immigrant spouses, Oscar Silva rushed to apply and was elated Monday when an email arrived confirming his appointment for a required biometric exam.

But hours later, Silva received a jolt: a federal judge in Texas was temporarily suspending the program that could benefit an estimated 500,000 immigrants in the U.S., freezing in place one of the biggest presidential actions to ease a path to citizenship in years.

"I don't know what is going to happen," Silva said Tuesday. The 23-year-old college student arrived in the U.S. as a baby and lives in Texas with his wife, Natalie, an American citizen who provides for their family as a high school teacher.

Although the Biden administration's "Keeping Families Together" program only began accepting applications last week, families and immigration attorneys say confusion, uncertainty and frustration is already mounting following the order by U.S. District Judge J. Campbell Barker. Couples who already applied say they are in limbo and those who haven't yet must weigh whether to wait for Republicans' court challenge over the program to play out.

Applicants must pay a \$580 processing fee. Following Barker's order, the Florida Immigrant Coalition said it was asking people "to weigh their options and to make the best decision for their families at this time."

The court order followed a challenge by 16 states, led by Republican attorneys general, who filed a federal lawsuit days after the program began taking applications on Aug. 19. Barker's order, known as an administrative stay, will be in place for 14 days but could be extended.

"That ruling is wrong. These families should not be needlessly separated," Biden said in a statement.

The states claimed the move would cause irreparable harm and accused the administration of bypassing Congress for "blatant political purposes."

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, whose office is helping lead the lawsuit, applauded the order. "This is just the first step. We are going to keep fighting for Texas, our country, and the rule of law," he said in a statement.

On Tuesday, the Department of Homeland Security said the government would continue to take applications and defend the program in court. Any applicants whose parole was granted prior to the order will be unaffected, according to the department.

DHS did not respond to questions about how many applications were received or approved or how long it takes to determine the outcome of a case under the program.

Fears of separation returned for Silva and his wife, Natalie. Under the traditional process to apply for a green card, spouses living in the U.S. illegally can be required to return to their home country — often for years — and they always face the risk they may not be allowed back in.

"We thought this was finally our opportunity to be able to go through this process together and not fear the possibility of spending ten years away from each other," Silva said. Now "I feel pretty heartbroken, very sad... because without it we face so much uncertainty."

Immigration attorney Laura Flores-Perilla said it was "really unclear" what will happen with Silva's appointment scheduled for September.

"I cannot underestimate the impact that this temporary pause is having," said Flores-Perilla, an attorney at the Action Justice Center.

Gregory Chen, the director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said he had heard from lawyers affiliated with the association of at least hundreds of people who had applied since the program was launched, including some who applied and were approved the next day.

Lawyers are rushing to understand what the order means for their clients, too. According to Chen, the organization's listserv for lawyers interested in the Keeping Families Together program "blew up" after the judge's decision late Monday with questions about what the decision means.

Advocates are concerned the changes, even temporary ones, created by such litigation "creates chaos and uncertainty" for those looking to apply. Chen said he's seen the effect litigation has had on other immigration-related programs.

His organization has held three webinars designed to educate lawyers about the program. One of those seminars had about 1,000 lawyers in attendance, an extremely high number for one of the group's educational offerings, Chen said.

Roberto García, 37, and his wife Maria in Los Angeles had just paid an attorney \$3,000 to help them fill out the lengthy application for the program but the application wasn't submitted yet because of Monday's order. Now, they're wondering if they should gamble their chances and pay the processing fee for a program on hold.

"I didn't think this was going to happen. It's very hard," said Roberto Garcia, referring to the order that halted the parole program. "We are not a priority. It is bad that they play with people's feelings."

Roberto is the sole provider for the family of five and earns a living through this construction business in California. He also sends money back home to family in Mexico.

If approved, applicants have three years to seek permanent residency. During that period, they can get a work authorization.

But Maria García said she is losing hope and considering moving to Mexico, where her husband has his parents and brothers.

"We will never be able to buy a house here," she said. "Here if you do things wrong, they reward you. If you do things right, they punish you."

## Negotiations so far more effective than rescues in bringing Israeli hostages home from Gaza

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military has rescued its eighth hostage from Gaza since the 10-month-old war began.

While the rescue Tuesday set off celebrations, it also renewed calls from the families of hostages who are still being held in Gaza for a deal that would bring home their loved ones before it's too late. They say an agreement, not military rescues, is the best hope.

International mediators have tried for months to broker a deal that would see scores of hostages still held by Hamas exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and a cease-fire. But Israel and Hamas cannot agree on key portions of the deal.

Of some 250 hostages taken by Hamas militants in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war, around 105 were released in a cease-fire last November. Israel says 108 remain in Gaza, at least 36 of whom are believed dead.



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"After 10 months, the IDF managed just to release a small number of hostages from Hamas and the rest of them must be released by negotiations and by ending this war," said Mazen Abu Siam, a close friend of Qaid Farhan Alkadi, the hostage who was freed Tuesday.

Here's where things stand, according to official Israeli figures:

Hostages freed through military rescues

The Israeli military has rescued eight hostages in Gaza, per an AP count.

It brought one home in the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack, a female soldier, Pvt. Ori Megidish, 19.

Two men, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Louis Har, 70, were rescued in February, when troops stormed a heavily guarded apartment in southern Gaza. Airstrikes carried out to provide cover during the raid killed more than 60 Palestinians, including women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The military rescued four hostages — Noa Argamani, 26, Almog Meir Jan, 22, Andrey Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 41 — in June, killing at least 210 Palestinians in the operation, according to a Gaza health official.

On Tuesday, the military said it had rescued Alkadi.

Hostages killed by the Israeli military

Israeli troops mistakenly killed three hostages — Yotam Haim, 28, Samer Al-Talalka 25, and Alon Shamriz, 26 — in December.

The army's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said it was believed that the three had escaped their captors or had been abandoned.

The soldiers mistakenly identified the three Israelis as a threat and opened fire on them, he said.

Hostages released in earlier deals

Israel's hostage crisis began when Hamas-backed militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and abducting about 250 more.

Of the hostages taken to Gaza, 105 were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November, in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners. The released hostages included 81 Israeli citizens and 24 foreign nationals, most of them Thai.

Four female hostages were released through earlier deals brokered by the U.S. and other mediators.

Hostages remaining in Gaza

Israel believes that 108 hostages, dead and alive, remain in Gaza, including four Israelis captured years earlier. Two of them, Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, were Israeli soldiers believed to have been killed in a 2014 war.

Hostages who died in Gaza

Israel says it has determined that at least 36 of those who were taken Oct. 7 are dead and that militants are holding their remains. Some may have been killed during that attack.

The cause of death for others is unknown, although Hamas has claimed some were killed in Israeli air-strikes. Israeli officials believe the number of dead hostages could be higher.

Hostages not declared dead in Gaza

There are about 70 hostages left in Gaza who Israel has not pronounced dead.

That includes about 15 women and two siblings under the age of 5 — Kfir and Ariel Bibas, whose mother, Shiri Bibas, is also still in captivity.

Also included is Hersh Polin-Goldberg, a 23-year-old American-Israeli who was taken hostage at a music festival where over 300 people were killed. Polin-Goldberg's parents have led a global campaign calling for their son's release and drawing attention to the plight of the hostages. Hamas released a video of Polin-Goldberg in April. Badly wounded in the Oct. 7 attack, his left hand was amputated. But the video was the first sign that he hadn't been killed.

Dead hostages returned to Israel

Israeli troops have recovered the bodies of at least 20 hostages from Gaza, according to Israeli government figures.

The bodies of two hostages, including female soldier Noa Marciano, were brought back from Gaza in November. So were the bodies of the three hostages killed by friendly fire in December.

The bodies of seven hostages, two women and five men, were recovered in Gaza in May. Last week, Israel recovered the bodies of six male hostages.

## Harris campaign releases new ad to highlight plans to build 3 million homes and reduce inflation

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris has a new advertising push to draw attention to her plan to build 3 million new homes over four years, a move designed to contain inflationary pressures that also draws a sharp contrast to Republican Donald Trump's approach.

Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, highlights her plan in a new minute-long ad released Tuesday that uses her personal experience, growing up in rental housing while her mother saved for a decade before she could buy a home. The ad targets voters in the swing states including Arizona and Nevada. Campaign surrogates are also holding 20 events this week focused on housing issues.

In addition to increasing home construction, Harris is proposing the government provide as much as \$25,000 in assistance to first-time buyers. That message could carry weight at this moment as housing costs have kept upward pressure on the consumer price index. Shelter costs are up 5.1% over the past 12 months, compared to overall inflation being 2.9%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Vice President Harris knows we need to do more to address our housing crisis and that's why she has a plan to end the housing shortage" and will crack down on "corporate landlords and Wall Street banks hiking up rents and housing costs," said Dan Kanninen, the campaign's battleground states director.

The Harris plan would create tax breaks for homebuilders focused on first-time buyers and expand existing incentives for companies that construct rental housing. Because local zoning often restricts the supply of homes, she would also double the available funding to \$40 billion to encourage local governments to remove the regulations that prevent additional construction.

Although Trump made his reputation as a real estate developer, data shows that there was a shortage of available housing during his presidency that has continued.

That shortage became more problematic when inflation jumped as the country recovered from the pandemic and faced higher food and energy costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The high inflation damaged the approval ratings of President Joe Biden, who Republicans and some economists blamed for sparking the price runups with his pandemic aid.

Mortgage rates climbed to levels that were prohibitively high for many would-be buyers. At the same time, many existing homeowners held off on listing their properties for sale in ways that compounded the inflation challenge.

Trump has floated an array of ideas for lowering housing costs — including his suggestion in a June speech in Wisconsin that stopping illegal immigration would reduce demand for housing and bring down prices.

"I will also stop inflation by stopping the invasion, rapidly reducing housing costs," Trump said.

There is also the possibility of opening up more federal land for home construction with the Trump campaign proposing a competition to charter as many as 10 new cities. Economists supportive of Trump's agenda have suggested — despite deficits climbing during his presidency — that Trump would get federal spending under control if he was president again, which would lower interest rates.

The Trump campaign has also opposed efforts by Democrats to encourage the construction of apartments and condominiums in suburbs and cities, which could alleviate the housing shortage. Trump has said in a video that such efforts are "Marxist" and would be a "war on the suburbs" that would destroy property values.

Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's national press secretary, in a statement said that "Kamalanomics" is to blame for home ownership becoming less attainable, an attempt to undermine Harris' message of being a change candidate who can open up opportunities for the middle class.

Trump's main play has been to claim that Harris can't pay for her housing agenda. That's even though he also attacks her for supporting tax increases and other revenue raisers proposed by Biden that could

in theory offset the costs.

"She has no clue how'd she paid for \$25,000 to every first-time homebuyer, including illegals," said Trump at an August 19 rally in York, Pennsylvania, claiming without clear evidence that her policy would support immigrants without legal status.

The Harris campaign plans to hold housing affordability events in the Pennsylvania cities of Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as the Arizona cities of Phoenix and Tucson. There will also be events in the Nevada cities of Las Vegas and Reno and the North Carolina cities of Asheville and Charlotte, in addition to Savannah, Georgia.

## **New Hampshire resident dies after testing positive for mosquito-borne encephalitis virus**

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

A New Hampshire resident infected with the mosquito-borne eastern equine encephalitis virus has died, state health authorities said.

The Hampstead resident's infection was the first in the state in a decade, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday. The resident, whom the department only identified as an adult, had been hospitalized due to severe central nervous system symptoms, the department said.

About a third of people who develop encephalitis from the virus die from the infection, and survivors can suffer lifelong mental and physical disabilities. There is no vaccine or antiviral treatment available for infections, which can cause flu-like symptoms and lead to severe neurological disease along with inflammation of the brain and membranes around the spinal cord.

"When it does cause an infection, it is very, very severe. Although it's a very rare infection, we have no treatment for it," said Dr. Richard Ellison, immunologist and infectious disease specialist at University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center. "Once someone gets it, it's just — all we can do is provide supportive care, and it can kill people."

Nationally, the burden of eastern equine encephalitis can vary from year to year. There are typically about 11 human cases in the U.S. per year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There were seven cases nationally last year, but more than 30 in 2019, which was a historically bad year in which at least a dozen patients died, according to federal data.

The 2019 outbreak included six deaths among 12 confirmed cases in Massachusetts, and the outbreak continued the following year with five more cases and another death. Two of the three people infected in New Hampshire in 2014 died.

This year, human infections have been confirmed in New Jersey, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Vermont as well as New Hampshire, according to the CDC.

The New Hampshire health department said the virus has also been detected in one horse and several mosquito batches in New Hampshire this summer. Mosquitoes that carry the virus can sometimes be found in developed areas that used to be swamp land where they can still find habitat, Ellison said.

Public health authorities in states where mosquito-borne infections happen encourage people to take precautions, preventing mosquito bites by using repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants and avoiding outdoor activity in the early morning and evening when mosquitoes are most active. Removing any standing water where mosquitoes breed also is important.

"We believe there is an elevated risk for EEEV infections this year in New England given the positive mosquito samples identified. The risk will continue into the fall until there is a hard frost that kills the mosquitos. Everybody should take steps to prevent mosquito bites when they are outdoors," said New Hampshire epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan.

In Massachusetts, several towns have urged people to avoid going outdoors at night this summer because of concerns over this virus, one of several diseases mosquitoes can spread to humans. Massachusetts authorities planned to begin spraying Tuesday in some communities to prevent the spread.

## Leonard Riggio, who forged a bookselling empire at Barnes & Noble, dead at 83

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Leonard Riggio, a brash, self-styled underdog who transformed the publishing industry by building Barnes & Noble into the country's most powerful bookseller before his company was overtaken by the rise of Amazon.com, has died at age 83.

Riggio died Tuesday "following a valiant battle with Alzheimer's disease," according to a statement issued by his family. He had stepped down as chairman in 2019 after Barnes & Noble was sold to the hedge fund Elliott Advisors.

"His leadership spanned decades, during which he not only grew the company but also nurtured a culture of innovation and a love for reading," reads a statement from Barnes & Noble.

Riggio's near-half century reign began in 1971 when he used a \$1.2 million loan to purchase Barnes & Noble's name and its flagship store on lower Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. He acquired hundreds of new stores over the next 20 years and, in the 1990s, launched what became a nationwide empire of "superstores" that combined a chain's discount prices and massive capacity with the cozy appeal of couches, reading chairs and cafes.

"Our bookstores were designed to be welcoming as opposed to intimidating," Riggio told The New York Times in 2016. "These weren't elitist places. You could go in, get a cup of coffee, sit down and read a book for as long as you like, use the restroom. These were innovations that we had that no one thought was possible."

By the end of the 1990s, an estimated one of every eight books sold in the U.S. were purchased through the chain, where front table displays were so valuable that publishers paid thousands of dollars to have their books included. Thousands of independent sellers went out of business even as Riggio insisted that he was expanding the market by opening up in neighborhoods without an existing store. Instead, independent owners spoke of being overwhelmed by competition from both Barnes & Noble and Borders Book Group, the rival chains sometimes setting up stores in close proximity to each other and to the locally owned business.

Barnes & Noble became so identified as an overdog that one of the 1990s' most popular romantic comedies, "You've Got Mail," starred Tom Hanks as an executive for the "Fox Books" chain and Meg Ryan as the owner of an endangered independent store in Manhattan.

"We are going to seduce them with our square footage, and our discounts, and our deep arm chairs, and our cappuccino," Hanks' character confidently declares. "They're going to hate us at the beginning, but we'll get 'em in the end."

The internet shifts bookselling

Riggio began the 2000s at the height of power, with more than 700 superstores and hundreds of others outlets. But internet commerce was growing quickly and Barnes & Noble, with its roots in physical retail, lacked the imagination and flexibility of the startup from Seattle that called itself "Earth's Biggest Bookstore," Amazon.com. The online giant launch in 1995 by Jeff Bezos gained business throughout the 2000s and by the early 2010s had displaced Barnes & Noble through such innovations as the Kindle e-book reader and the Amazon Prime subscription service.

Bezos would liken himself to David taking down Goliath, although the contrast between the leaders also had the feel of an Aesop's fable: The muscular, mustachioed Riggio, a boxer's son, upended by the quick and clever Bezos.

"We're great booksellers; we know how to do that," Riggio acknowledged to the Times in 2016. "We weren't constituted to be a technology company."

Leonard S. Riggio was the eldest son of a prize fighter (who twice defeated Rocky Graziano) turned cab driver and a dress maker. Even in childhood, he advanced quickly, skipping two grades and attending one of the city's top high schools, Brooklyn Tech. He studied metallurgical engineering at New York University's night school before focusing on commerce, and by day absorbed the bookselling world and the rising

cultural rebellion of the 1960s.

Riggio and the independent community may have seemed to hold opposing values, but they shared a love of reading and the arts and a liberal political outlook. He was a generous philanthropist and a prominent supporter of Democratic politicians. He was even friendly with the consumer activist and presidential candidate Ralph Nader, who featured Riggio, Ted Turner and Yoko Ono among others in his 2009 novel "Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us!", in which Nader imagines a progressive revolution from above.

"Ever since he was a boy from Brooklyn, he'd had a visceral reaction to the way workings stiff and the poor were treated on a day-to-day basis," Nader wrote of Riggio, who did at times stand apart from other his management peers. When some 200 business leaders were questioned by Fortune magazine in the 1990s about their political ideas, only Riggio supported the raising of worker pay.

"Money can become a burden, like something you carry on your shoulders," he told New York magazine in 1999. "My nature is to be a ball-buster, but my role is to help people."

## Ukraine says F-16s shot down some missiles in latest Russian barrage that killed 5

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired dozens of missiles and drones across Ukraine for a second day on Tuesday, including some that Ukraine's president said were shot down by Western-supplied F-16 fighter jets before they reached their targets.

The onslaught killed at least five people, destroying a hotel, homes and residential buildings as well as critical infrastructure in multiple Ukrainian regions. Kyiv and other cities had power outages in sweltering heat.

As it often does in statements after Russian bombing raids, Ukraine's military listed the Russian regions and occupied territories where the weapons were launched. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other top officials have called repeatedly for the U.S. to lift restrictions and let Ukraine strike deep inside Russia to hit military infrastructure responsible for the war.

"(The allies) try not to speak with me about it. But I keep raising this topic. Generally, that's it. The Olympics are over, but the ping-pong continues," Zelenskyy said.

In comments addressing the apparent first use by Ukraine of the F-16s to shoot down a missile, Zelenskyy thanked Ukraine's supporters for them but said there were too few, and too few pilots trained to fly them.

Among the Russian regions listed as a source of Tuesday's attack was Kursk, where the head of the Ukrainian army said his troops have gained control of nearly 1,300 square kilometers (500 square miles) since their surprise incursion three weeks ago. That's roughly the size of Los Angeles.

Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyy also said Ukraine has captured 594 Russian prisoners in the operation, which he said was intended to draw Russia's military away from the fighting in Ukraine. His claims could not be independently confirmed.

The Kursk operation, the largest incursion into Russia since World War II, has forced some 130,000 residents to evacuate their homes. Russia has sent reinforcements into the region, but it was not clear to what extent the movements might be weakening Russia's positions in Ukrainian territory.

Fighting in the region has raised concerns about dangers to the Kursk nuclear power plant, said International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi, who visited it Tuesday. He said in a post on X the situation was "serious" and called any attack on a nuclear plant unacceptable.

"There is now a danger of a nuclear incident here," Grossi said. "Today I was told about several cases of drone attacks on the territory, on the plant's facilities. At the plant I saw traces of these attacks."

But the plant now is operating "in a mode very close to normal," he said.

The Russian Defense Ministry asserted Tuesday that Ukraine has suffered heavy casualties in Kursk — some 6,600 troops killed or injured — and that more than 70 tanks have been destroyed along with scores of armored vehicles. Those figures could not be independently confirmed.

The head of the Ukrainian army's claim of territorial control came hours after the second consecutive

barrage of nighttime air and missile attacks from Russia.

Five people were reported killed and 16 injured in the attacks, which Zelenskyy said included 81 drones as well as cruise and ballistic missiles.

In the Kyiv region, which struggled with blackouts after Monday's onslaught that targeted energy facilities throughout the country, five air alerts were called during the night. The regional administration said air defenses destroyed all the drones and missiles but falling debris set off forest fires.

After Monday's barrage across Ukraine of more than 100 missiles and a similar number of drones, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said "the energy infrastructure has once again become the target of Russian terrorists" and urged Ukraine's allies to provide it with long-range weapons and permission to use them on targets inside Russia.

President Joe Biden called Monday's Russian attack on energy infrastructure "outrageous" and said he had "reprioritized U.S. air defense exports so they are sent to Ukraine first." He also said the U.S. was "surging energy equipment to Ukraine to repair its systems and strengthen the resilience of Ukraine's energy grid."

The Russian Defense Ministry said the attacks used "long-range precision air- and sea-based weapons and strike drones against critical energy infrastructure facilities that support the operation of Ukraine's military-industrial complex. All designated targets were hit."

Russian officials reported four Ukrainian missiles were shot down over the Kursk region.

## Does American tennis have a pickleball problem?

By JAMES MARTINEZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Does American tennis have a pickleball problem?

Even as the U.S. Open opened this week with more than a million fans expected for the sport's biggest showcase, the game's leaders are being forced to confront a devastating fact — the nation's fastest-growing racket sport (or sport of any kind) is not tennis but pickleball, which has seen participation boom 223% in the past three years.

"Quite frankly, it's obnoxious to hear that pickleball noise," U.S. Tennis Association President Dr. Brian Hainline grumbled at a recent state-of-the-game news conference, bemoaning the distinctive pock, pock, pock of pickleball points.

Pickleball, an easy-to-play mix of tennis and ping pong using paddles and a wiffleball, has quickly soared from nearly nothing to 13.6 million U.S. players in just a few years, leading tennis purists to fear a day when it could surpass tennis' 23.8 million players. And most troubling is that pickleball's rise has often come at the expense of thousands of tennis courts encroached upon or even replaced by smaller pickleball courts.

"When you see an explosion of a sport and it starts potentially eroding into your sport, then, yes, you're concerned," Hainline said in an interview with The Associated Press. "That erosion has come in our infrastructure. ... A lot of pickleball advocates just came in and said, 'We need these tennis courts.' It was a great, organic grassroots movement but it was a little anti-tennis."

Some tennis governing bodies in other countries have embraced pickleball and other racket sports under the more-the-merrier belief they could lead more players to the mothership of tennis. France's tennis federation even set up a few pickleball courts at this year's French Open to give top players and fans a chance to try it out.

But the USTA has taken a decidedly different approach. Nowhere at the U.S. Open's Billie Jean King National Tennis Center is there any such demonstration court, exhibition match or any other nod to pickleball or its possible crossover appeal.

In fact, the USTA is flipping the script on pickleball with an ambitious launch of more than 400 pilot programs across the country to broaden the reach of an easier-to-play, smaller-court version of tennis called "red ball tennis." Backers say it's the ideal way for people of all ages to get into tennis and the best place to try it is (wait for it) on pickleball courts.

"You can begin tennis at any age," USTA's Hainline said. "We believe that when you do begin this great sport of tennis, it's probably best to begin it on a shorter court with a larger, low-compression red ball. What's an ideal short court? A pickleball court."

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And instead of the plasticky plink of a pickleball against a flat paddle, Hainline said, striking a fuzzy red tennis ball with a stringed racket allows for a greater variety of strokes and “just a beautiful sound.” Players can either stick with red ball tennis or advance through a progression of bouncier balls to full-court tennis.

“Not to put it down,” Hainline said of pickleball, “but compared to tennis ... seriously?”

So what does the head of the nation’s pickleball governing body have to say about such comments and big tennis’ plans to plant the seeds of its growth, at least in part, on pickleball courts?

“I don’t like it but there is so much going on with pickleball, so many good things, I’m going to stick to what I can control, harnessing the growth and supporting this game,” said Pickleball USA CEO Mike Nealy.

Among the positive signs, Nealy said, is the continuing construction of new pickleball courts across the country, raising the total to more than 50,000. There’s also growing investment in the game at clubs built in former big-box retail stores, pro leagues with such backers as Tom Brady, LeBron James and Drake, and the emergence of “dink-and-drink” establishments that tap into the social aspect of the game by allowing friends to enjoy pickleball, beer, wine and food under the same roof.

“I don’t think it needs to be one or the other or a competition,” Nealy said of pickleball and tennis. “You’re certainly going to have the inherent frictions in communities when tennis people don’t feel that they’re getting what they want. ... They’re different games but I think they are complimentary. There’s plenty of room for both sports to be very successful.”

Top-ranked American tennis player Taylor Fritz agreed. “There are some people in the tennis world that are just absolute pickleball haters, and that’s fine. But for me, I don’t really have an issue with pickleball. I like playing sometimes. ... I don’t see any reason why both of them can’t exist.”

The relative health of tennis and pickleball is calculated by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, a marketing research group whose annual survey of 18,000 Americans on their preferences of physical activity has been widely cited for decades.

Though the group’s President and CEO Tom Cove refused to hazard a guess on if or when pickleball could overtake tennis, he said the American pickleball boom is unlike anything his organization has ever seen and several key stats suggest it could be poised to keep going.

For starters, though the initial growth of pickleball was fueled during the coronavirus pandemic by retirees looking for a socially distanced, low-impact way to get some exercise, the growth now is driven by those ages 18 to 34, with a million new players 17 and younger added last year. Also, of the current 13.6 million pickleball participants in SFIA’s survey, the core number, those who play eight or more times a year, is a robust 4.8 million.

But perhaps more important than any stat, Cove said, is that pickleball puts up almost no barriers to entry. Equipment is relatively cheap, the game can be played almost anywhere, even on a driveway, and it takes almost no time to start having meaningful games with players of all ages and skill levels. That’s unlike nearly every other sport, including tennis, which can often take months of practice to learn, be physically demanding and require finding players of similar skill level to play competitive matches.

“Pickleball has a unique quality to give enjoyment very early,” Cove said. “People figure it out and after one or two times. They say, ‘I like to play. It’s fun and I can do this. There’s enough competition, but not too much. There’s enough skill but not too much. There’s enough urgency but it doesn’t make me feel like I’m going to fall over. And I like the social part.’”

The USTA is seeking to capture some of that vibe as it charts tennis’ future. The game is coming off its own 10% growth over the past three years, according to SFIA’s survey, and the USTA has a goal to increase its ranks from 23.8 million to 35 million players — about 1 in 10 of all Americans — by 2035.

Building that base starts with outreach like a special “red ball” demonstration court set up next to stadium Court 17 at Flushing Meadows. A game that was once used almost exclusively to introduce children to tennis is now being promoted to adult U.S. Open fans — among the same people currently flocking to pickleball.

“I have to say, I kind of like it better than pickleball,” 27-year-old Angelique Santiago of Boston said after her first-ever session of red-ball. “The ball is softer compared to the hard pickleball. The tennis racket has a softer feel. It’s just easier to get into a rally. ... I’d definitely play it again.”

Such comments are music to the ears of the USTA's Hainline, who says comparing tennis to pickleball in terms of skill, nuance and athleticism is "like comparing apples to potatoes."

"We want to present another option," he said, "and let the people choose."

## Police officers are starting to use AI chatbots to write crime reports. Will they hold up in court?

By SEAN MURPHY and MATT O'BRIEN undefined

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A body camera captured every word and bark uttered as police Sgt. Matt Gilmore and his K-9 dog, Gunner, searched for a group of suspects for nearly an hour.

Normally, the Oklahoma City police sergeant would grab his laptop and spend another 30 to 45 minutes writing up a report about the search. But this time he had artificial intelligence write the first draft.

Pulling from all the sounds and radio chatter picked up by the microphone attached to Gilmore's body camera, the AI tool churned out a report in eight seconds.

"It was a better report than I could have ever written, and it was 100% accurate. It flowed better," Gilmore said. It even documented a fact he didn't remember hearing — another officer's mention of the color of the car the suspects ran from.

Oklahoma City's police department is one of a handful to experiment with AI chatbots to produce the first drafts of incident reports. Police officers who've tried it are enthused about the time-saving technology, while some prosecutors, police watchdogs and legal scholars have concerns about how it could alter a fundamental document in the criminal justice system that plays a role in who gets prosecuted or imprisoned.

Built with the same technology as ChatGPT and sold by Axon, best known for developing the Taser and as the dominant U.S. supplier of body cameras, it could become what Gilmore describes as another "game changer" for police work.

"They become police officers because they want to do police work, and spending half their day doing data entry is just a tedious part of the job that they hate," said Axon's founder and CEO Rick Smith, describing the new AI product — called Draft One — as having the "most positive reaction" of any product the company has introduced.

"Now, there's certainly concerns," Smith added. In particular, he said district attorneys prosecuting a criminal case want to be sure that police officers — not solely an AI chatbot — are responsible for authoring their reports because they may have to testify in court about what they witnessed.

"They never want to get an officer on the stand who says, well, 'The AI wrote that, I didn't,'" Smith said.

AI technology is not new to police agencies, which have adopted algorithmic tools to read license plates, recognize suspects' faces, detect gunshot sounds and predict where crimes might occur. Many of those applications have come with privacy and civil rights concerns and attempts by legislators to set safeguards. But the introduction of AI-generated police reports is so new that there are few, if any, guardrails guiding their use.

Concerns about society's racial biases and prejudices getting built into AI technology are just part of what Oklahoma City community activist aurelius francisco finds "deeply troubling" about the new tool, which he learned about from The Associated Press. francisco prefers to lowercase his name as a tactic to resist professionalism.

"The fact that the technology is being used by the same company that provides Tasers to the department is alarming enough," said francisco, a co-founder of the Foundation for Liberating Minds in Oklahoma City.

He said automating those reports will "ease the police's ability to harass, surveil and inflict violence on community members. While making the cop's job easier, it makes Black and brown people's lives harder."

Before trying out the tool in Oklahoma City, police officials showed it to local prosecutors who advised some caution before using it on high-stakes criminal cases. For now, it's only used for minor incident reports that don't lead to someone getting arrested.

"So no arrests, no felonies, no violent crimes," said Oklahoma City police Capt. Jason Bussert, who handles information technology for the 1,170-officer department.



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That's not the case in another city, Lafayette, Indiana, where Police Chief Scott Galloway told the AP that all of his officers can use Draft One on any kind of case and it's been "incredibly popular" since the pilot began earlier this year.

Or in Fort Collins, Colorado, where police Sgt. Robert Younger said officers are free to use it on any type of report, though they discovered it doesn't work well on patrols of the city's downtown bar district because of an "overwhelming amount of noise."

Along with using AI to analyze and summarize the audio recording, Axon experimented with computer vision to summarize what's "seen" in the video footage, before quickly realizing that the technology was not ready.

"Given all the sensitivities around policing, around race and other identities of people involved, that's an area where I think we're going to have to do some real work before we would introduce it," said Smith, the Axon CEO, describing some of the tested responses as not "overtly racist" but insensitive in other ways.

Those experiments led Axon to focus squarely on audio in the product unveiled in April during its annual company conference for police officials.

The technology relies on the same generative AI model that powers ChatGPT, made by San Francisco-based OpenAI. OpenAI is a close business partner with Microsoft, which is Axon's cloud computing provider.

"We use the same underlying technology as ChatGPT, but we have access to more knobs and dials than an actual ChatGPT user would have," said Noah Spitzer-Williams, who manages Axon's AI products. Turning down the "creativity dial" helps the model stick to facts so that it "doesn't embellish or hallucinate in the same ways that you would find if you were just using ChatGPT on its own," he said.

Axon won't say how many police departments are using the technology. It's not the only vendor, with startups like Policereports.ai and Truleo pitching similar products. But given Axon's deep relationship with police departments that buy its Tasers and body cameras, experts and police officials expect AI-generated reports to become more ubiquitous in the coming months and years.

Before that happens, legal scholar Andrew Ferguson would like to see more of a public discussion about the benefits and potential harms. For one thing, the large language models behind AI chatbots are prone to making up false information, a problem known as hallucination that could add convincing and hard-to-notice falsehoods into a police report.

"I am concerned that automation and the ease of the technology would cause police officers to be sort of less careful with their writing," said Ferguson, a law professor at American University working on what's expected to be the first law review article on the emerging technology.

Ferguson said a police report is important in determining whether an officer's suspicion "justifies someone's loss of liberty." It's sometimes the only testimony a judge sees, especially for misdemeanor crimes.

Human-generated police reports also have flaws, Ferguson said, but it's an open question as to which is more reliable.

For some officers who've tried it, it is already changing how they respond to a reported crime. They're narrating what's happening so the camera better captures what they'd want to put in writing.

As the technology catches on, Bussert expects officers will become "more and more verbal" in describing what's in front of them.

After Bussert loaded the video of a traffic stop into the system and pressed a button, the program produced a narrative-style report in conversational language that included dates and times, just like an officer would have typed from his notes, all based on audio from the body camera.

"It was literally seconds," Gilmore said, "and it was done to the point where I was like, 'I don't have anything to change.'"

At the end of the report, the officer must click a box that indicates it was generated with the use of AI.

## Presidential transition planning has begun in earnest, but Trump and Harris are already behind

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration offered federal resources to Donald Trump and Kamala Harris for presidential transition planning for the first time Tuesday, with experts suggesting both are behind in preparing for their potential administrations.

While transitions kick into high gear after Election Day, when a president-elect must begin selecting and vetting about 4,000 federal political appointees, success depends on the infrastructure built during the pre-election period, including identifying agency review teams and beginning the background check process for national security staff.

Both Vice President Harris and former President Trump started the process this month, months later than prior transitions. Harris was elevated to the top of the Democratic ticket just five weeks ago after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid, and she had to first redirect his political operation before laying the groundwork for the transition. It is not clear why Trump, who sewed up the nomination months ago, did not start sooner.

Max Stier, the president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service, said planning to take office in the modern era has tended to begin in the late spring.

"It is possible to try and catch up, but the reality is that both candidates have a lot to do," he said.

Tuesday is the congressionally mandated date for the General Services Administration to make space available for Trump and Harris, three business days after the second nominating convention. The office space is just blocks from the White House, with even more federal resources set to flow to the winner after Election Day. But nominees usually start the initial planning for their potential administrations soon after they lock up the nomination, even before they begin receiving federal support.

Harris, if she wins, may choose to keep some political appointees from the Biden administration — potentially helping her avoid messy confirmation fights if Republicans take control of the Senate. But significant change is inevitable, as she will want to put her own stamp on government. And many long-serving Biden administration officials are likely seeking to exit for other opportunities regardless of the outcome in November.

Trump, meanwhile, is likely to try to avoid mistakes of his 2016 transition, when he shelved months of planning by a group led by former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. That left Trump and his team, many of whom had never served in government, unprepared after Election Day.

Stier said Trump's 2016 effort set a low bar for transition efforts in the modern era, followed by George H.W. Bush's 1988 effort as the then-vice president prepared to take over from President Ronald Reagan. He said there can be a special challenge in negotiating a same-party handoff, including misplaced expectations about continuity between presidents and the risk of hubris in those who've served in government recently assuming more significant roles.

Trump formally stood up his transition team earlier this month to be led by former Small Business Administrator Linda McMahon and billionaire Howard Lutnick.

Harris has asked Yohannes Abraham, the ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the executive director of the Biden-Harris 2020 transition, to lead her planning for the White House.

Abraham is set to leave his position in the coming days to assume the role. Covington & Burling, LLP, which assisted Harris in vetting her vice presidential pick, will provide legal counsel to the transition organization.

According to a person familiar with the planning, Harris' transition team won't make any personnel decisions before the election, nor will it develop policy — functions that will remain with Harris' campaign and official office.

Trump's team, meanwhile, has not committed to accepting the federal support. Trump told the Daily Mail last week that he would decline access to traditional pre-Election Day intelligence briefings, saying he was worried about being accused of leaking classified information.

"We look forward to this notification and will reply when we have evaluated what is being offered, said

Brian Hughes, a senior adviser to the Trump campaign.

Trump has also brought former Democratic Rep. Tulsi Gabbard and independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. onto his transition team, Hughes confirmed Tuesday.

GSA is required by law to make available federal office space, IT support and other resources to transition teams starting Tuesday, but only once it has entered into memoranda of understanding with representatives for each nominee, which Congress requires the agency to do "to the maximum extent practicable," by Sept. 1. A GSA spokesperson confirmed that the agency had made its offer to the two candidates Tuesday.

"Both teams will really want to have the infrastructure set up behind the scenes that allows them to conduct meetings with federal agencies and manage a resume bank, and have an organized process for all of the personnel and policy planning confronting them should they win the election," said Valerie Smith Boyd, director of the Partnership for Public Service's Center for Presidential Transition.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has been making plans to support the transition for months in line with its obligation under the Presidential Transition Act.

A federal transition coordinating council, which includes representatives across the government and is chaired by Biden's chief of staff Jeff Zients, is holding regular meetings to prepare to hand off control on Jan. 20, 2025, and agencies are preparing detailed briefing memos on their activities to share with the eventual winner's team.

Teams of federal agents and government workers from the FBI and intelligence community — including some hired back from retirement — are at the ready to vet hundreds of potential transition staff and administration appointees.

Access to current executive branch employees, facilities, and documents require the transition teams to agree to an ethics plan, and transition teams must disclose donors and limit contributions to \$5,000 as a condition of receiving government funds.

## **Ex-jailer in Mississippi is charged in escape of inmate who had standoff with Chicago police**

HERNANDO, Miss. (AP) — A former employee of a Mississippi jail has been arrested and charged in the June escape of Joshua Zimmerman, an inmate who fled to Chicago and was captured there last week after a 15-hour standoff with police at a restaurant just blocks from the Democratic National Convention.

Ronnie Hunt was charged with conveying articles useful for the escape of a prisoner, Mississippi Department of Public Safety spokesperson Bailey Martin said Tuesday. Martin said "additional charges are probable." She did not respond to a question about whether Hunt is represented by an attorney.

The DeSoto County Sheriff's Department said Hunt, 32, has been fired from his job as a deputy jailer, WREG-TV reported. He was being held about an hour's drive away in the jail in Lafayette County, Mississippi.

The U.S. Marshals Service said Zimmerman escaped June 14 from the DeSoto County Courthouse in Hernando, Mississippi, where he was being held on attempted murder and armed robbery charges. He was also awaiting extradition to Houston, where he's charged with murder, the Marshals Service said.

Investigators said last week that they believe Zimmerman was working at the seafood restaurant where he was captured. The restaurant is about a half-mile from the United Center, where the political convention was being held. The Marshals Service said there was "no connection or threat to the event or those attending."

Zimmerman was wearing street clothes, not a jail jumpsuit, when he escaped in Mississippi. A screenshot from a courthouse security video showed him wearing khaki pants and a white shirt and no handcuffs.

According to court records in Harris County, Texas, Zimmerman is accused of fatally shooting a woman, Keyanna Mercer, at a Houston motel on Sept. 2, 2023. The two were asked to leave the motel after multiple complaints of fighting, and when staff members checked the room to see if they had left, they found Mercer's body with a gunshot wound to the head, police said.

Court records also show Zimmerman was arrested in Connecticut in 2022 on a felony sexual assault

charge. He pleaded not guilty and was freed on a \$200,000 bond, but a warrant was later issued for his re-arrest.

The DeSoto County sheriff, Thomas E. Tuggle II, told WREG-TV after Zimmerman's escape: "The notion that he had help, that's false. The notion that he had an extra set of clothes, that's false. This is a career criminal. He knew what he was doing."

## The Paralympic Games are starting. Here's what to expect as 4,400 athletes compete in Paris

By CIARÁN FAHEY and TOM NOUVIAN AP Sports Writers

PARIS (AP) — Let the games begin again.

The Paralympic Games are set to open Wednesday as some 4,400 athletes with disabilities, permanent injuries or impairments prepare to compete for 549 medals across 22 sports over 11 days in Paris.

The French capital, which just hosted the Olympics, again provides the backdrop for what promises to be another spectacle, with many of the same venues hosting Paralympic competitions.

Historic square Place de la Concorde, which hosted skateboarding, breaking and 3x3 basketball during the Olympics, will host the opening ceremony.

"We are at the heart of the city," International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "The symbolism behind this is like the city of Paris is giving our athletes a gigantic hug."

Equestrian returns to Château de Versailles, which will host para equestrian events. The Grand Palais transitions from fencing to wheelchair fencing. Archery venue Invalides will host para archery.

The venue beside the Eiffel Tower, which hosted beach volleyball during the Olympics, will host blind soccer, an adaption of the game for visually impaired players in teams of five with a ball containing rattles.

"We've got some monstrous iconic sites, and we're going to get an eyeful," France's para triathlon champion, Alexis Hanquiquant, said. "Paris is the most beautiful city in the world. I think we're going to have some pretty exceptional Paralympic Games."

Of the 22 Paralympic sports, only two do not have an Olympic equivalent — goalball and boccia. In goalball, teams of visually impaired or blind players take turns rolling a ball containing bells toward the opposing goal while the defending team's players act as goalkeepers. In boccia, players throw or roll leather balls as close as they can to a small ball called a jack.

Compared to the previous edition of the Paralympics in Tokyo, 10 medal events have been added to give female athletes and those with high-support needs more opportunities.

Parsons said around 2 million of 2.5 million tickets have been sold for the various events, which would be the second highest ever total number of spectators at a Paralympics, behind the London Paralympics in 2012.

The Paralympic flame was lit Saturday in Stoke Mandeville, a village northwest of London widely considered the birthplace of the Paralympic Games, and was to make its way via a torch relay under the English Channel to cities all over France before lighting the cauldron during the opening ceremony on Wednesday.

Anticipation has been building with Parisians returning from their summer vacations — the city almost felt empty at the beginning of the month with many away at the coast. For locals who missed the Olympic action, the Paralympics are a second chance to catch some of the excitement.

The athletes — Paralympians — will be the focus of attention starting Thursday in the first day of competition, when there will be medals to be won in para taekwondo, para table tennis, para swimming and para cycling on the track.

As was the case for the Olympics, there will medals up for grabs on each of the 11 days of competition.

Many of the competing athletes have titles to defend.

Para shooter Avani Lekhara, the first Indian woman to win a pair of medals at a single edition of the Paralympics, returns to defend her 10-meter air rifle gold in the SH1 category from Tokyo.

The SH1 category is for rifle shooters with lower limb impairments like amputations or paraplegia who can hold their gun without difficulty and shoot from a standing or sitting position.

American multi-sport specialist Oksana Masters won a hand-cycle road race and time trial at the Tokyo Paralympics, and she will be looking to add to her career total of seven gold and 17 medals overall in both summer and winter events.

Para powerlifter Sherif Osman of Egypt is going for his fourth gold medal, and Italian fencer Bebe Vio is vying for her third consecutive gold in wheelchair fencing. After contracting meningitis as a child, doctors amputated both her legs and her forearms to save her life.

Brazil is unbeaten in blind soccer going back to the first tournament in Athens in 2004, but France harbors hopes of an upset. The hosts kick off against China and Brazil plays Turkey on Sept. 1, a day before the teams meet for a potentially decisive match in Group A.

And there are other storylines.

Visually impaired Italian sprinter Valentina Petrillo will be the first transgender woman to compete at the Paralympics when she races in the heats for her classification in the women's 400 meters on Sept. 2.

American swimmer Ali Truwit is competing a year after losing her lower leg in a shark attack while snorkeling.

Teenage swimmer David Kratochvil is carrying Czech hopes of a medal after losing his sight because of a serious illness about 10 years ago. The 16-year-old Kratochvil used to play ice hockey but switched to the pool, where he set world records in the 50 and 200 meter backstroke last year.

Many more wait to be told over the next two weeks.

## **A Syrian journalist who reports for international agencies is arrested by Turkish-backed authorities**

By GHAITH ALSAYED Associated Press

IDLIB, Syria (AP) — A local journalist in rebel-held northwestern Syria who works with international news agencies was arrested by Turkish-backed authorities, his wife and rights groups said Tuesday.

Journalists and activists called Bakr Qassim's arrest part of an ongoing crackdown on them. Local authorities did not immediately comment.

Qassim, who has reported and taken photos for French news agency Agence France-Presse and Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency, was arrested Monday afternoon in al-Bab city in northern Aleppo province as he and his wife finished work.

Britain-based opposition monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said he was dragged and beaten while asking the reason for his arrest. It said he was presented with "a number of charges, including preparing press reports for several parties."

His wife, Nabiha Taha, and the opposition monitor said he was held by Turkish-backed authorities in Hawar Kilis village along the border with Turkey.

Local military police held Taha for two hours before she was released following protests from journalists and residents, she said in a video. Taha said Qassim was taken to another location and his current circumstances were unknown.

"We call on the local authorities in northern Syria to immediately release our correspondent Bakr Qassim and allow him to resume his work freely," AFP editor-in-chief Sophie Huet said in a statement.

Journalists and activists in northwestern Syria said they would stage a protest later Tuesday calling for the release of Qassim and other journalists and activists they say are arbitrarily detained. They also call for the release of activist Karam Kellieh, who was arrested two months ago and whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Northwestern Syria is the last rebel bastion in the war-torn country. Idlib province is under the formerly al-Qaida-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and northern Aleppo province is under Turkish-backed forces.

## Comic Relief US launches new Roblox game to help children build community virtually and in real life

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The notion that online gaming could help players develop charitable habits seemed bold when the anti-poverty nonprofit Comic Relief US tested its own multiverse on the popular world-building app Roblox last year.

As philanthropy wrestles with how to authentically engage new generations of digitally savvy donors, Comic Relief US CEO Alison Moore said it was “audacious” to design an experience that still maintained the “twinkle” of the organization that’s behind entertainment-driven fundraisers like Red Nose Day.

But the launch was successful enough that Comic Relief US is expanding the game this year. Kids Relief’s second annual “Game to Change the World” campaign features a magical new Roblox world, an exclusive virtual concert and a partner in children’s television pioneer Nickelodeon.

The goal is to instill empathy and raise money through a scavenger hunt across various realms, including SpongeBob SquarePants and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Users travel through portals to collect magical tools that will improve their surroundings. The net proceeds from in-game purchases will be donated.

The community-building inherent in collaborative gaming is intended to subtly encourage off-screen acts of kindness.

“It’s a little bit like me helping you, you helping me — all of us together. I love the idea of doing that in a game space,” Moore told The Associated Press. “It’s not meant to be a banner ad or a sign that says, ‘Do Good.’ It’s meant to be emblematic in the gameplay itself.”

Nickelodeon is also promoting an instructional guide for kids to start their own local projects in real life such as backpack drives.

Quests are delivered from wizards voiced by “Doctor Who” icon David Tennant, “Veep” star Tony Hale and “Never Have I Ever” actress Maitreyi Ramakrishnan. One wizard invites users to “embark on an enchanted journey to awaken the heart of your community.”

The campaign will culminate in a weekend music festival on Roblox beginning Sept. 13 that features rock band Imagine Dragons, whose lead singer Dan Reynolds has focused his philanthropy on LGBTQ+ causes. Virtual acts also include Conan Gray, Poppy, d4vd and Alexander Stewart — all musical artists who got their big breaks on YouTube.

Moore said she was “blown away” by last year’s numbers. The inaugural game has been played for over 32 billion minutes and one performance received the highest “concert thumbs up rating” ever on Roblox, according to Comic Relief US.

Charitable donations are increasingly being made through gaming, according to business strategist Marcus Howard.

The fit comes naturally, he said, considering that young people value experiences such as gaming over the material possessions that past generations might have bought at a charitable auction.

“It just makes sense,” Howard said.

But he finds that partners must overcome the negative stigma associated with online chat rooms. To its credit, Howard said, Roblox combines the creativity of popular competitor Fortnite with less “toxicity” because of its emphasis on cooperation over competition.

Comic Relief US kept in mind the need to build a game that appeals to both children and their parents, Moore said.

To navigate that tricky balance, the nonprofit has adopted a mindset that she credits Nickelodeon with originating: Include parents in the conversation but speak to their children.

“Good games are good games,” Moore said. “Good games that make me feel good are good things.”

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## Today in History: August 28 MLK delivers "I Have a Dream" speech

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 28, the 241st day of 2024. There are 125 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 28, 1963, during the March on Washington, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech before an estimated 250,000 people in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Also on this date:

In 1845, the first issue of "Scientific American" magazine was published; it remains the oldest continuously published magazine in the United States.

In 1862, the Second Battle of Bull Run began in Prince William County, Virginia, during the Civil War; the Union army retreated two days later after suffering 14,000 casualties.

In 1898, pharmacist Caleb Bradham of New Bern, North Carolina changed the name of the carbonated beverage he'd created five years earlier from "Brad's Drink" to "Pepsi-Cola."

In 1955, Emmett Till, a Black teenager from Chicago, was abducted from his uncle's home in Money, Mississippi, by two white men after he had allegedly whistled at a white woman four days prior; he was found brutally slain three days later.

In 1957, U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond (D-S.C.) began what remains the longest speaking filibuster in Senate history (24 hours and 18 minutes) in an effort to stall the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

In 1968, police and anti-war demonstrators clashed in the streets of Chicago as the Democratic National Convention nominated Hubert H. Humphrey for president.

In 1988, 70 people were killed when three Italian Air Force stunt planes collided during an air show at the U.S. Air Base in Ramstein (RAHM'-shtyn), West Germany.

In 2005, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin ordered a mandatory evacuation as Hurricane Katrina approached the city.

In 2013, a military jury sentenced Maj. Nidal Hasan to death for the 2009 shooting rampage at Fort Hood that claimed 13 lives and left 30 people injured.

In 2016, six scientists completed a yearlong Mars simulation on the big island of Hawaii, where they emerged after living in a dome in near isolation on Mauna Loa.

Today's Birthdays: Former Defense Secretary William S. Cohen is 84. Actor Ken Jenkins (TV: "Scrubs") is 84. Former MLB manager and player Lou Piniella (pih-NEHL'-uh) is 81. Former MLB pitcher Ron Guidry (GIH'-dree) is 74. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove is 72. Artist Ai Weiwei is 67. Actor Daniel Stern is 67. Olympic gold medal figure skater Scott Hamilton is 66. Actor Jennifer Coolidge is 63. Film director David Fincher is 62. Country singer Shania (shah-NY'-uh) Twain is 59. "Pokemon" creator Satoshi Tajiri is 59. Actor Billy Boyd is 56. Actor Jack Black is 55. Hockey Hall of Famer Pierre Turgeon is 55. Actor Jason Priestley is 55. Technology executive Sheryl Sandberg is 55. Olympic gold medal swimmer Janet Evans is 53. Actor Carly Pope is 43. Country singer Jake Owen is 43. Country singer LeAnn Rimes is 42. Rock singer Florence Welch (Florence and the Machine) is 38. Actor Quvenzhané (kwuh-VEHN'-zhah-nay) Wallis is 21.