

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

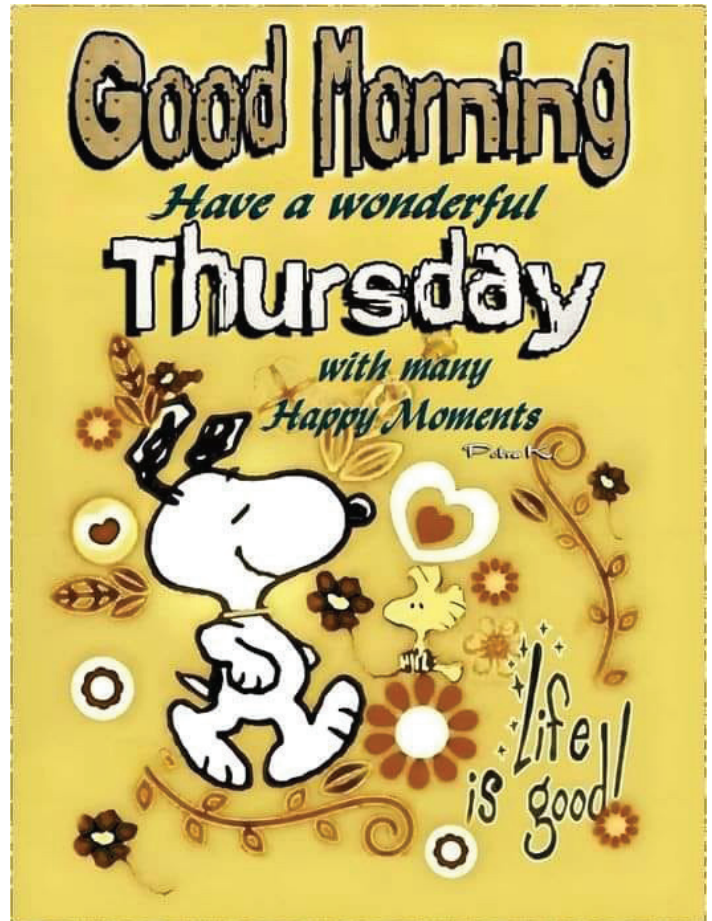
Basketball Golf Tourney fundraiser at Olive Grove

Saturday, Aug. 31

Volleyball C Team tournament at Matchbox Club in Aberdeen

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

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



Sunday, Sept. 1

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

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

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

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

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1440

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

Media Murder

A jury found former Nevada county official Robert Telles guilty yesterday of the 2022 murder of journalist Jeff German. The case garnered attention as the only known US journalist among almost 70 killed worldwide that year and raised concerns of press freedom.

German, a journalist for the Las Vegas Review-Journal, had reported on allegations of inappropriate work behavior in Telles' office, including bullying and favoritism as well as a romantic affair between Telles and an employee. In September 2022, he was found stabbed to death outside his home. Local police and German's colleagues zeroed in on Telles—who had lost his reelection bid following German's exposé—as the prime suspect. Physical evidence, photos, surveillance video, and DNA confirmed Telles was behind the murder.

Telles was first elected Clark County public administrator in 2018, in charge of overseeing unclaimed estates in the Las Vegas area. He was found guilty of first-degree murder and faces up to life in prison.

West Bank Raids

Israel launched airstrikes and raids in multiple cities in the West Bank yesterday, killing at least 10 Hamas militants, per Hamas and Israeli figures, and arresting other suspects. The operation was believed to be the country's largest there in 20 years.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, Israel has conducted near-daily raids in the West Bank. Israel says it seeks to counter a rise in militant activity there; at least 19 Israelis have been killed in recent months, per Israeli figures. Israeli settlements there have meanwhile expanded, and Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians have been on the rise. Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed at least 652 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the war, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Addressing Israeli settler violence, the Biden administration yesterday imposed sanctions on an Israeli security official and security company operating in the West Bank.

Berkshire Joins Trillion Dollar Club

Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate reached \$1T in market capitalization yesterday. The firm joins just six other US companies currently valued at 13 figures: Apple, Microsoft, Nvidia, Alphabet, Meta, and Amazon.

The conglomerate and its longtime CEO—known among investors as the "Oracle of Omaha"—have averaged 20% annual returns since the native Nebraskan bought Berkshire Hathaway, then a struggling textile manufacturer, in 1965. The firm has since grown to have controlling shares in roughly 70 companies, with a cash pile of close to \$280B (including \$234B in US T-bills, making it the Treasury's largest lender). Its success comes as the conglomerate approach—whereby a parent company owns majority stakes in many diverse companies—has declined in recent decades.

Buffett's approach involves long-term investments in undervalued companies, with an emphasis on high-quality managers in sound businesses.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2024 PGA Tour Championship begins today from East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta for the FedEx Cup title and \$25M winner's bonus.

Disney India and Mumbai-based conglomerate Reliance's \$8.5B merger to go forward after India's antitrust commission approves deal.

"Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" kicks off the 81st Venice Film Festival; see full list of the competition's films.

Comedian Nikki Glaser tapped to host 2025 Golden Globe Awards.

Science & Technology

Google to allow some users of its Gemini AI platform to resume generating images of people; move comes six months after the feature was pulled due to ahistorical and racially inaccurate depictions.

Molecular mechanism behind multiple sclerosis and other autoimmune diseases discovered; study identifies a specific protein that triggers regulatory T cells, which dampen the immune system.

Male fruit flies become oblivious to threats during attempts to mate, new study suggests; research finds the chemical dopamine plays a key role in silencing risk-reward signals.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.6%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -1.1%).

Nvidia beats Wall Street estimates, reports 122% year-over-year Q2 revenue growth.

OpenAI reportedly in talks to raise funding, potentially valuing it at over \$100B.

Telegram founder Pavel Durov charged with crimes in France over illegal activity on app.

Two Sigma cofounders to step down as co-CEOs from the \$60B hedge fund in bid to resolve long-running feud.

Super Micro Computer shares close down 19% after company delays annual report filing; comes a day after short-seller Hindenburg Research accuses Super Micro of accounting manipulation.

Politics & World Affairs

FBI report finds shooter at Trump rally had researched campaign schedules of both former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, saw Pennsylvania rally as target of opportunity.

Supreme Court maintains temporary injunction on President Biden's \$400B student loan forgiveness plan; 8 million people currently enrolled in the plan, known as SAVE, announced last fall.

Houthis agree to allow tugboats to reach Greek oil tanker carrying 1 million barrels of crude oil ablaze in the Red Sea; US Defense Department says the tanker—attacked by Houthi rebels over the weekend—is likely leaking oil.

NOW HIRING

Blizzard® Wizzards & Smile Makers

Join our team,
apply inside.



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We're hiring! Age 16 and older.
Looking for reliable, energetic people with smiling faces who love people and Free Food! This is a great job for anyone - high school and college students, adults, moms whose kids are going back to school.
We'll work around your schedule!
Stop in for an application.

Informational Meeting

Never in 135 years of statehood has a law jeopardized people's Property Rights & Local Control like RL 21

Open Forum

Mon. Sept 9, 2024

6:30 pm Meeting

Ramkota

1400 8TH Ave NW Aberdeen, SD

Speakers:

Curtis Jundt - 40 yr pipeline engineer

Rep Julie Auch: District 18 Rep Jim Eschenbaum: Chair of RL 21

Former Speaker Spencer Gosch District 23

Sen Elect Mark Lapka District 23

Ed Fischbach - Spink County Farmer

Contact for more info:

Jodi Waltman: 605-216-8171

"Pie Auction Fundraiser"

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70th Anniversary
Nancy and Charles Boynton 70th
Wedding Anniversary Celebration
will be held at the
Aberdeen Senior Center on
September 7th from 2- 4!

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers
GT

Thursday, Aug. 29th
Volleyball at
Hamlin

Varsity game should start
around 7 p.m.



\$5 ticket or
GDI Subscription
required to watch the games.

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GROTON
VET CLINIC



1503 N Broadway, Groton, 605/397-8145

September 2024 Community Calendar

Sunday, Sept. 1

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

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

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

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 4

School Breakfast: Cereal

School Lunch: Chicken leg, mashed potatoes.

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, pineapple/strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.

Groton Chamber meeting, noon, City Hall

Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.

United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 2

NO SCHOOL - Labor Day

Soccer with Mitchell in Groton: Boys at 1 p.m., Girls at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 3

School Breakfast; Egg omelet.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.

Senior Menu: Baked pork chops, au gratin potatoes, vegetable capri blend, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

Boys Golf at Lee Park, Aberdeen, 10 a.m.

JH Football vs. Ellendale/Edgeley-Kulm, 5 p.m., one game in Edgeley.

JV Football vs. Ellendale/Edgeley-Kulm, 6:30 p.m., in Edgeley.

Volleyball: Ipswich in Groton: 7th/C at 5 p.m.; 8th/JV at 6 p.m.; varsity to follow

Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 209 N Main, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Pantry open, Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 5

School Breakfast: Breakfast sandwich.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, fries.

Senior Menu... Oven fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, haavard beets, pineapple tidbits, dinner roll.

Cross Country at Redfield, 10 a.m.

Volleyball at Sisseton: 7th at 4 p.m., 8th/C at 5 p.m.; JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 6

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.

School Lunch: Pizza, green beans.

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

Football at Webster Area, 7 p.m.

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Aberdeen

225-6772

1-800-843-1865



Redfield

1-800-247-4650



Webster

1-800-658-2252

JOHN DEERE

Saturday, Sept. 7

C Volleyball at Matchbox Club, Aberdeen.
Soccer at West Central: Girls at noon, boys at 1:30 p.m.
Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, municipal airport, all day.
Citywide rummage sale, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Common Centers Community Thrift Store open, 209 N Main, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football @ Mobridge Jam-boree

Sunday, Sept. 8

Emmanuel Lutheran: Rally Sunday: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, municipal airport, all day.
Couples Sunflower Golf Tourney, 10 a.m.
Doggie Day at the pool, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Carnival of Silver Skates registration, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Skating House
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 9

School Breakfast: French toast.
School Lunch: Meatball, mashed potatoes.
Senior Menu: Baked fish, oven roasted potatoes, pea and cheese salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.
JH/JV Football at Langford Area vs. Webster Area. JH at 4 p.m., JV at 5 p.m.
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Pantry Open, community center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the community center, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Carnival of Silver Skates registration, after school to 6 p.m., Skating House
United Methodist: PEOPLE Meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 10


School Breakfast: Scones.
School Lunch: Taco, refried beans.
Senior Menu: Tator tot hot dish, carrots, peaches, whole wheat bread.
Cross Country at Britton-Hecla, 4 p.m.
Boys Soccer hosts James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.
Volleyball hosts Webster Area: 7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Church council, 6 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 209 N Main, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Pantry open, Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.; Caring Team Meeting, 1 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 11

PATRIOT DAY
School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
School Lunch: General's TSO Chicken, rice.
Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, creamed cabbage, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, TBD; League, 6:30 p.m.
Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football hosts Sisseton - 6PM

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|  <p>New Construction Remodeling Hoop Barns Shops</p> <p>Perry Blocker</p> | <p>13379 Sperry Ln, Bath 605/216-2677 prblocker@hotmail.com</p> |
|--|---|

Thursday, Sept. 12

School Breakfast: Biscuits.
School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.
Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazine, green beans, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.
Boys Golf hosts Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.
Volleyball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli: 7th/C at 5 p.m.; 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow.
Groton Lions Club Meeting, 104 N Main, 6 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 13

School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.
School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, peas.
Senior Menu: Taco salad, mexican rice with beans, breadstick, cherry fluff.
Football at Milbank, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 14

7th/8th at Matchbox Tournament, Aberdeen
Soccer hosts Vermillion: Girls at 1 p.m., Boys at 2:30 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

Sunday, Sept. 15

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.;

Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School Kick-off event, 9 a.m.; Third Graders receive Bibles, 10:3 a.m.; Picnic potluck, 11:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 16

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagel.
School Lunch: French bread pizza, cooked carrots.
Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, scalloped potatoes, oriental blend vegetables, frosted brownie, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Homecoming Coronation
Cross Country at Webster Area, 2 p.m.
JV Football hosts Milbank, 4 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Pantry Open, community center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizen meet at the community center, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football hosts Warner - 6PM

Tuesday, Sept. 17

School Breakfast: Waffles.
School Lunch: Sloppy joes, tri-taters.
Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.
Boys Golf at Redfield, 10 a.m.
JH Football hosts Milbank: 7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.
Soccer hosts Dakota Valley: Girls at 4 p.m., boys at 5:30 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 209 N Main, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Pantry open, Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
City Council meeting, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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DID YOU KNOW . . .

You can use the GDI Fitness Center by paying by the month and you can cancel any time without penalty.

Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 for details!

Wednesday, Sept. 18

School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Baked potato with toppings.
Senior Menu: Turkey sub sandwich, lettuce and tomato, macaroni salad with peas, broccoli, tropical fruit.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Pastor at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.; Confirmation, time to be determined.
Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football at Hitchcock - 6:30PM

Thursday, Sept. 19

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Lasagna bake, garlic toast.
Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, melon, cookie, garlic bread.
Boys Golf at Hankinson, N.D., 10 a.m.
Cross Country at Lee Park, Aberdeen, 4 p.m.
JH Football at Britton-Hecla, 4:30 p.m.
Volleyball hosts Clark/Willow Lake: 7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow

Friday, Sept. 20

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.
Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, peas and carrots, grape juice, cake with strawberries, dinner roll.
Homecoming Parade
Boys Soccer hosts Custer, 4 p.m.
Football hosts Deuel, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 21

Volleyball at Hamlin Tournament, 9 a.m.
JH FB Jamboree at Webster, 10 a.m.
Boys Soccer hosts Hot Springs, 11 a.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football hosts Jamboree

Sunday, Sept. 22

FIRST DAY OF AUTUMN
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 23

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.
School Lunch: Turkey gravy, mashed potatoes.
Senior Menu: Hot pork sandwich, cucumber salad, baked beans, sherbert, fruit.
Cross Country at Clear Lake, 4 p.m.
JH Football hosts Oakes, 4:30 p.m., one game
JV Football hosts Oakes, 5:30 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Pantry open, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., community center.
Senior Citizens meet at the community center, potluck, noon to 3 p.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football hosts Redfield - 6PM

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Tuesday, Sept. 24

School Breakfast: egg omelets.
School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, bread stick.
Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hotdish, Cauliflower and broccoli, pears, whole wheat bread.
Volleyball hosts Warner: 7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 209 N Main, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Pantry open, Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 25

School Breakfast: Cereal.
School Lunch: Cheese stuffed breadsticks, marina sauce.
Senior Menu: Beef stew, buttermilk biscuit, waldorf salad, cookie.
Confirmation, 6:30 p.m.
Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Sept. 26

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick.
School Lunch: Ranch parmesan chicken bake, peas.
Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.
Boys golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.
Boys Soccer at James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.
Volleyball hosts Tiospa Zina: 7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow

Friday, Sept. 27

School Breakfast: Egg bake.
School Lunch: Tomato soup, grilled cheese.
Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Football vs. Clark/Willow Lake at Clark, 7 p.m.
3rd/4th and 5th/6th Football at Clark - 5PM

Saturday, Sept. 28

Volleyball at Miller Tournament.(CSD Conference)
Boys soccer at Freeman Academy, noon
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

Sunday, Sept. 29

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 30

School Breakfast: French toast.
School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.
Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, green beans, vanilla pudding, Mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.
Region 1A Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.
Cross Country at Olive Grove Golf Course, Groton, 4 p.m.
JH FB hosts Clark/Willow Lake, 7th grade only, 4 p.m.
JV Football hosts Clark/Willow Lake, 5 p.m.
Volleyball hosts Florence/Henry: 7th/C at 5 p.m. | 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Pantry open, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., community center



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Fast-track law enforcement training status returned to Western Dakota Tech

School hires new program director, addresses problems documented by law enforcement commission

BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 28, 2024 1:57 PM

A new program director from North Carolina and a series of protocol changes have put Western Dakota Technical College back in the good graces of the state's Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission.

Commissioners unanimously voted to reinstate the Rapid City school's articulation agreement during a virtual meeting Wednesday after hearing from that new program director, Jonni Joyce, and from the school's president, Ann Bolman.

The articulation agreement represents a fast track to a South Dakota law enforcement career for students in the school's two-year criminal justice program. Students can take reciprocity tests and get certified to work a policing job in South Dakota through the program, which allows them to skip the 13-week basic law enforcement academy course in Pierre.

Western Dakota Tech rejoins Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls and Lake Area Technical College in Watertown as one of three schools in the state with fast-track articulation agreements.

"We need Western Dakota and we appreciate the steps that they've taken," said Attorney General Marty Jackley, who is a member of the commission. "They've taken this very seriously, and I think these improvements are going to help the officers in the future."

Commissioners voted to revoke the school's articulation agreement in January after two years of back-and-forth between the program's administrators and law enforcement training officials.

There were four problems behind the vote:

Inaccurate or false reports sent to the state by program administrators.

Students taking the law enforcement certification test before their final semester.

Failure to report required student retention information.

Failure to produce instructor credential records.

Bolman told commissioners on Wednesday that communication was the primary deficiency. The qualifications for adjunct instructors weren't maintained by the school's human resources department, for example.

That's no longer true, she said. The program's student retention reports will be shared with the program director and the school's vice president now, Bolman said, and student grades must be logged for the program director within 48 hours of a test or assignment.

"Our communication process was lacking, and I feel like it has been significantly improved," Bolman said.

Joyce came to Western Dakota Tech this year after teaching law enforcement at two schools in North Carolina. She told commissioners her focus will be on accountability, using the state's basic law enforcement certification curriculum as a guide and increasing the amount of time students spend with "high-liability training areas" like emergency vehicle operations and firearms.

"That is going to improve our student success, and that will result in an increase in our pass rates in the reciprocity exam, and also put qualified people out into the workforce as professional law enforcement officers," Joyce said.

After Wednesday's meeting, Rapid City-based commission member Steve Allender told South Dakota Searchlight he was pleasantly surprised by the school's aggressive action to address concerns. The school

began to work with him and officials in Pierre quickly after January's revocation, even including Allender, a former Rapid City mayor and police chief, in its interview for Joyce.

"I was a little cynical about the whole thing," Allender said. "I thought the program had gone downhill and that it would be a long recovery, but this new director has really taken this bull by the horns."

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

COMMENTARY

America's decade-long experience with marijuana legalization shows it to be a success

by **PAUL ARMENTANO**

Contributor Tom Dean urges "we go slow" and put the brakes on efforts to legalize and regulate marijuana use ("More research needed on health effects of recreational marijuana," Aug. 23). For those of us who have spent decades working to end over a century of marijuana prohibition and stigmatization, these changes cannot come soon enough.

The initial push for cannabis criminalization, which began in earnest in the early 1900s, had little to do with any legitimate concerns about public health or safety. Rather, the move to ban marijuana and to criminally prosecute those who consume it was based primarily upon myths and xenophobia. In many cases, these myths have persisted through modern day – resulting in the arrest of an estimated 30 million Americans for marijuana-related violations.

By 2012, however, the public had heard and seen enough. That's when voters in Colorado and Washington decided in favor of citizen-initiated ballot measures legalizing and regulating the adult use, possession, production and sale of cannabis.

Contrary to opponents' claims, legalizing marijuana did not increase crime. States that have legalized cannabis see improvements in their overall crime clearance rates, including improvements in law enforcement's ability to close cases involving violent crimes.

Legalization is also associated with declines in teens' marijuana use. According to data recently provided by the government's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the percentage of those ages 12 to 17 who reported having ever tried marijuana fell 18% from 2014 to 2023. Those reporting having consumed cannabis during the past year fell 15%. The percentage of teens reporting current marijuana use fell by 19%.

Compliance check data from California, Colorado, Nevada and other legal marijuana states show that licensed marijuana retailers do not sell products to underage patrons.

Let's be clear. Legalization doesn't create or normalize the marijuana market. The market is already here. But under a policy of prohibition, this market flourishes underground — and those involved in it are largely unaccountable. They don't pay taxes, they don't check IDs and they don't test the purity of their products.

By contrast, under regulation, cannabis products are available from licensed manufacturers at retail stores. Cannabis is cultivated, and products are manufactured, in accordance with good manufacturing practices. Products are lab-tested and labeled accordingly. And sales are taxed, with revenues being re-invested in the community. Since 2014, retail sales of adult-use cannabis products have generated more than \$15 billion in tax revenue.

Legalization also disrupts the unregulated cannabis market. According to 2023 survey data, most consumers residing in legal states say that they obtain their cannabis products from licensed establishments. By contrast, only 6% of respondents say that they primarily purchased cannabis from a "dealer." In Canada, where marijuana sales have been regulated since 2018, nearly 70% of consumers say that they purchase cannabis from the legal market.

Today, 24 states and the District of Columbia have adopted policies regulating adults' use of cannabis.

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No legislature has ever repealed their laws. Nationwide, public support for legalization has never been higher. This is evidence that these policies are working largely as voters and politicians intended and that they are preferable to cannabis criminalization.

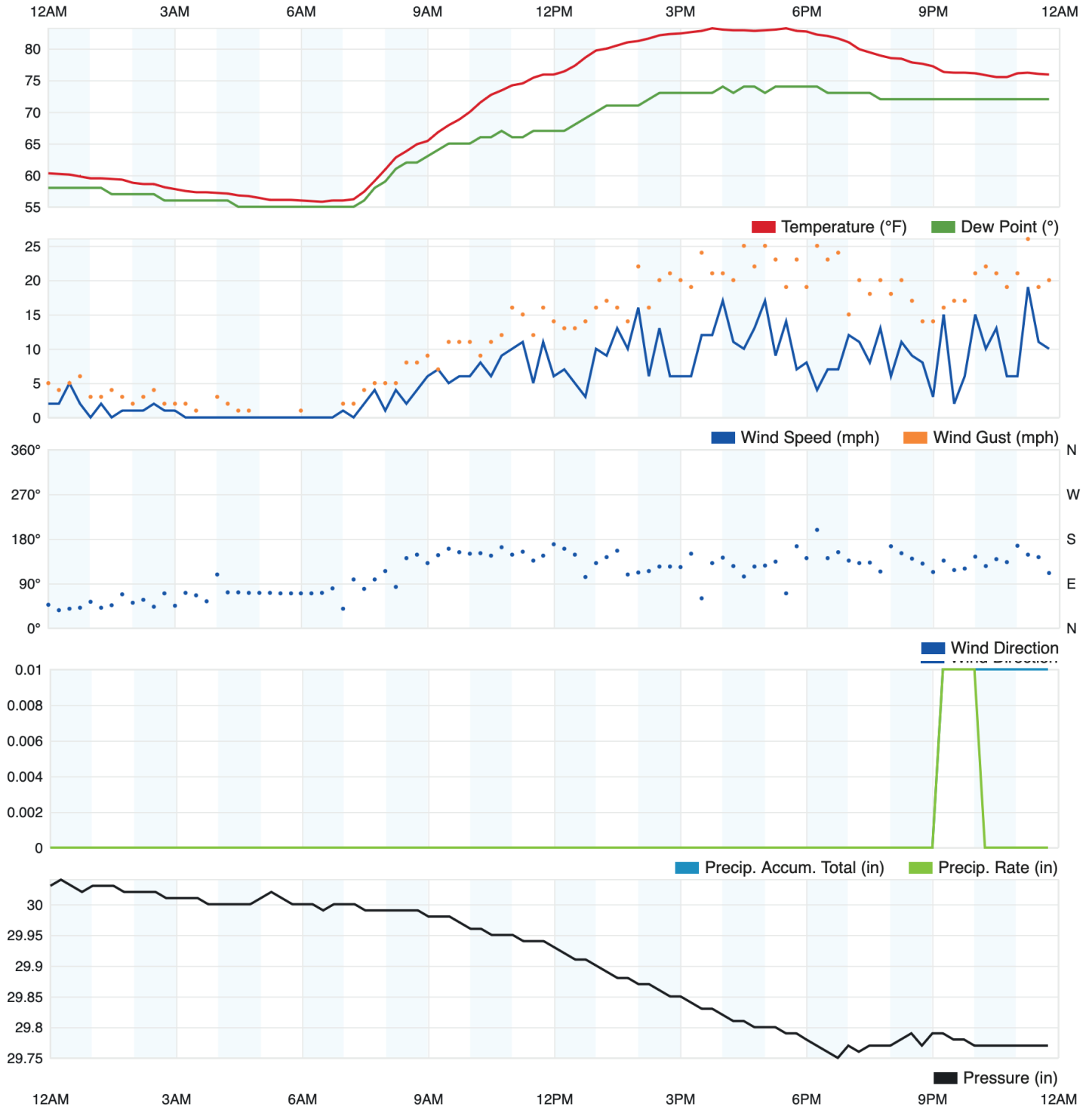
After a century of failed policies and canna-bigotry, most Americans are ready to move in a different direction – one that legalizes, regulates and educates.

Paul Armentano is the deputy director of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, in Washington, D.C.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 78 °F

Chance
T-storms then
Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 52 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 81 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 55 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 85 °F

Sunny



~ Through the Weekend ~

Today



Highs: 77-81°F
Lows: 52-55°F

Some
showers/t-storms
across eastern SD
and west central
MN

Friday



Highs: 76-84°F
Lows: 56-58°F

Saturday



Highs: 82-91°F
Lows: 51-55°F

Sunday



Highs: 70-80°F
Lows: 50-57°F

Monday



Highs: 74-88°F
Lows: 58-65°F

Gusty winds
possible during the
afternoon

Showers and non-severe storms are possible across eastern SD today, then dry conditions are expected through the holiday weekend. Saturday will be the warmest with highs in the 80s to around 90.

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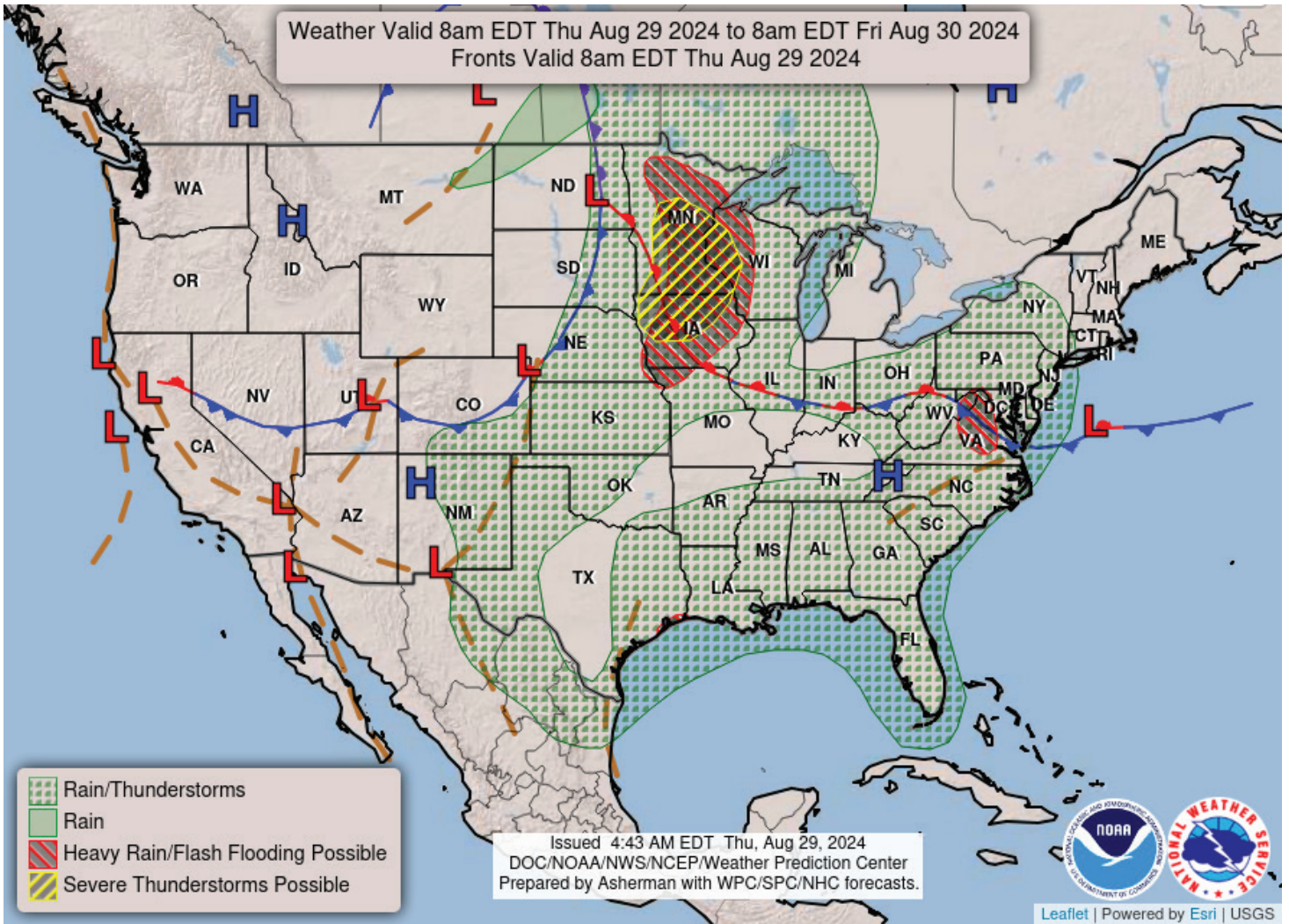
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 3:39 PM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 6:25 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 5:20 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 26 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1961
Record Low: 30 in 1893
Average High: 81
Average Low: 53
Average Precip in Aug.: 2.10
Precip to date in Aug.: 4.45
Average Precip to date: 16.20
Precip Year to Date: 19.34
Sunset Tonight: 8:16:27 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:50:57 am



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Today in Weather History

August 29, 1983: A devastating hail storm struck portions of central South Dakota. In a small part of Faulk County, hail pounded the area for two straight hours. At times, the hail was the size of baseballs. Of course, this incredible hailstorm devastated crops in the area and took out windows in area buildings. In one home, the windows were shattered, the curtains shredded, and glass shards and water ruined much of the upper floor. On some houses, the paint was peeled off by the continual pounding of the hail. Also, funnel clouds were reported just east of Lake City, and near Langford and Veblen in Marshall County. In Veblen, a pole barn was blown over, and shingles were torn off.

August 29, 1993: A severe thunderstorm hit Groton with hail, damaging lightning, and 3.43 inches of rain which flooded some basements. At the high school, lightning spits a 30-foot chimney which fell through a large skylight and sections of the roof.

1960: The storm that would become Hurricane Donna forms near Cape Verde off the African coast. It would go on to cause 150 deaths from Puerto Rico to New England over the next two weeks.

1962 - Hackberry, LA, was deluged with twenty-two inches of rain in 24 hours, establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - A national record for the month of August was established when 2.5 inches of snow fell atop Mount Washington NH. Temperatures in New England dipped to 39 degrees at Nantucket MA, and to 25 degrees in Vermont. For many location it was the earliest freeze of record. (David Ludlum)

1983 - A devastating hail storm struck portions of central South Dakota. In a small part of Faulk County, hail pounded the area for two straight hours. At times, the hail was the size of baseballs. Of course, this incredible hailstorm devastated crops in the area and took out windows in area buildings. In one home, the windows were shattered, the curtains shredded, and glass shards and water ruined much of the upper floor. On some houses, the paint was peeled off by the continual pounding of the hail. Also, funnel clouds were reported just east of Lake City, and near Langford and Veblen in Marshall County. In Veblen, a pole barn was blown over, and shingles were torn off.

1987 - Some of the most powerful thunderstorms in several years developed over the piedmont of North Carolina, and marched across central sections of the state during the late afternoon and evening hours. Baseball size hail was reported around Albemarle, while thunderstorm winds downed giant trees around High Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Cool air invaded the north central U.S. Ten cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Bismarck ND with a reading of 33 degrees. Deerfield, a small town in the Black Hills of South Dakota, reported a low of 23 degrees. The remnants of Tropical Storm Chris drenched eastern Pennsylvania with up to five and a half inches of rain, and produced high winds which gusted to 90 mph, severely damaging a hundred boats in Anne Arundel County MD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms produced destructive lightning in West Virginia. The lightning caused widespread damage, particularly in Doddridge County. Numerous trees were downed closing many roads. Fire companies had a difficult time tending to the many homes and trailers on fire. Anchorage AK reported a record 9.60 inches of rain for the month of August. The average annual precipitation for Anchorage is just slightly more than fifteen inches. Three day rainfall totals in northwest Missouri ranged up to 8.20 inches at Maryville. (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Plaquemines Parish in southeastern Louisiana early on the 29th with maximum sustained winds near 125 mph, a strong category-three, and the third most-intense landfalling hurricane in U.S. history. The center of the hurricane passed just east of New Orleans, where winds gusted over 100 mph. Widespread devastation and unprecedented flooding occurred, submerging at least 80 percent of the city as levees failed. Farther east, powerful winds and a devastating storm surge of 20-30 feet raked the Mississippi coastline, including Gulfport and Biloxi, where Gulf of Mexico floodwaters spread several miles inland. Rainfall amounts of 8-10 inches were common along and to the east of the storm's path. Katrina weakened to a tropical storm as it tracked northward through Mississippi and gradually lost its identity as it moved into the Tennessee Valley on the 30th.



WHERE'S THE HAPPINESS?

An unhappy skeptic said to Benjamin Franklin, "The Constitution is a mockery! Where's the happiness that it guarantees?"

"My friend," said Franklin, "it only guarantees the pursuit of happiness."

Our word for happiness can be misleading. The "root" hap means chance. Human happiness is something that is dependent on the chances and the changes of life, the "things" that daily events or circumstances may give and or take away.

On the other hand, consider the beatitudes. They are not about some hope for a future, blissful state in heaven. They are for the now which belongs to the Christian in the present life. The way the beatitudes are written assures the Christian of the presence of God, the joyous thrill of His presence and the hope of the Christian life.

The word blessed that is used in each of the beatitudes is a very special word. It describes a joy that has its secret within itself – a joy that is peaceful and untouchable and self-contained. It is a joy that is above and beyond and independent of all the circumstances of life. It is a joy that comes from God Himself. "No one," said Jesus, "will take your joy from you!" The world cannot take away the joy that comes from Jesus. Walking daily with Him assures us of a joy no one or nothing can disturb.

Prayer: Give us, our Heavenly Father, a peace that passes this world's understanding, a joy that comes from Your presence and a hope that assures us of our home with You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. Matthew 5:1-12

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 1 Days 17 Hrs 22
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

7 28 41 46 52 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$7,990,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

4 7 8 17 34 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 52 Mins
DRAW: 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

2 16 21 23 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 52
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

9 11 31 52 54 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

5 33 47 50 64 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Errant ostrich brings traffic to a halt in South Dakota after escaping from a trailer

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An ostrich brought traffic to a halt in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on Tuesday as motorists tried to lure and nudge the towering bird off a multilane thoroughfare.

Drivers called Sioux Falls police just before noon to report the roughly 7-foot-tall bird in the middle of a busy four-lane road.

As police and animal officials responded, motorists hopped out of their cars and managed to carefully corral the flightless bird. Video shot by bystanders showed people coaxing the bird off the road by offering up food in a plastic container and a few gentle nudges.

A police spokesman said the bird was among several ostriches being hauled in a trailer owned by an out-of-state traveler before it escaped. The owner helped capture the bird and managed to get it back into the trailer.

"The ostrich suffered no injuries, appeared just fine by us and was back with its owner before we had to take over," Thomas Rhoades, a Sioux Falls Animal Control officer, told the Argus Leader newspaper.

A Hong Kong court convicts 2 journalists in a landmark sedition case

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A Hong Kong court convicted two former editors of a shuttered news outlet on Thursday, in a sedition case that is widely seen as a barometer for the future of media freedom in the city once hailed as a bastion of free press in Asia.

Stand News former editor-in-chief Chung Pui-kuen and former acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam were arrested in December 2021. They pleaded not guilty to the charge of conspiracy to publish and reproduce seditious publications. Their sedition trial was Hong Kong's first involving media since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Stand News was one of the city's last media outlets that openly criticized the government amid a crack-down on dissent that followed massive pro-democracy protests in 2019.

It was shut down just months after the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper, whose jailed founder Jimmy Lai is fighting collusion charges under a sweeping national security law enacted in 2020.

Chung and Lam were charged under a colonial-era sedition law that has been used increasingly to crush dissidents. They face up to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (about \$640) for a first offense.

Best Pencil (Hong Kong) Ltd., the outlet's holding company, was convicted on the same charge. It had no representatives during the trial, which began in October 2022.

Chung appeared calm after the verdict was handed down, while Lam did not appear in court.

Defense lawyer Audrey Eu read out a mitigation statement from Lam, who said Stand News reporters sought to run a news outlet with fully independent editorial standards. "The only way for journalists to defend press freedom is reporting," Eu quoted Lam saying.

Dozens of residents and reporters lined up to secure a seat for the hearing, which began an hour late.

The delivery of the verdict was delayed several times for reasons including awaiting the appeal outcome of another landmark sedition case.

Resident Kevin Ng, who was among the first in the line, said he used to be a reader of Stand News and has been following the trial. Ng, 28, said he read less news after its shutdown, feeling the city has lost some critical voices. He said if the editors were found guilty, he would have "complex feelings."

"They reported the truth, they defended press freedom," said Ng, who works in risk management industry.

Judge Kwok Wai-kin found that 11 of the 17 articles in question carried seditious intent, according to

a press summary. He noted the intense political atmosphere at the time of their publication, when many residents were dissatisfied with or opposed to the governments of Hong Kong and China.

The articles included stories featuring pro-democracy ex-lawmakers Nathan Law and Ted Hui, who are among a group of overseas-based activists targeted by Hong Kong police bounties. Other articles included interviews with three participants in a primary election organized by the pro-democracy camp in 2020, and commentaries by Law and veteran journalists Allan Au and Chan Pui-man. Chan is also Chung's wife.

The court ruled that interviews with Law and Hui did not carry seditious intention because they only touched on the political views and the status of the interviewees, the summary said. Two of the interviews with the primary participants were also not seditious due to similar reasons, but the judge deemed a third one had the intent of inciting hatred against the authorities.

The commentaries were also said to be seditious because they smeared the national security law, the city's crime ordinance, as well as law enforcement and prosecution procedures without objective basis, it said.

Prosecutors accused some of the articles of helping promote "illegal ideologies," as well as smearing the security law and law enforcement officers.

Prosecutors said Stand News was a political platform as well as an online news outlet.

Chung previously denied that Stand News was a political platform, and emphasized the importance of freedom of speech during the trial.

"Freedom of speech should not be restricted on the grounds of eradicating dangerous ideas, but rather it should be used to eradicate dangerous ideas," he said.

Stand News shut down in December 2021, following a high-profile police raid at its office and the arrests. Armed with a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials, more than 200 officers participated in the operation.

Days after Stand News shut down, independent news outlet Citizen News also announced it would cease operations, citing the deteriorating media environment and the potential risks to its staff.

Hong Kong was ranked 135 out of 180 territories in Reporters Without Borders' latest World Press Freedom Index, down from 80 in 2021. Self-censorship has also become more prominent during the political crackdown on dissent. In March, the city government enacted another new security law that many journalists worried it could further curtail press freedom.

The Hong Kong government insists the city still enjoys press freedom, as guaranteed by its mini-constitution.

Russia launches a heavy missile and drone bombardment of Ukraine for the third time in 4 days

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia conducted a heavy aerial attack on Ukraine for the third time in four days Thursday, again launching missiles and scores of drones that mostly were intercepted, Ukraine's air force said.

Russian forces fired five missiles and 74 Shahed drones at Ukrainian targets, an air force statement said. Air defenses stopped two missiles and 60 drones, and 14 other drones presumably fell before reaching their target, it said.

Authorities in the capital, Kyiv, said debris of destroyed drones fell in three districts of the city, causing minor damage to civilian infrastructure but no injuries.

Russia's relentless and unnerving long-range strikes on civilian areas have been a feature of the war since it invaded its neighbor in February 2022.

Ukrainian officials have recently become more vocal in their long-standing insistence that Western countries supporting their war effort should scrap restrictions on what Ukraine is allowed to target inside Russia with long-range weapons they have provided.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed his pleas for Western allies to untie his hands in deciding what to strike on Russian soil.

"All our partners should be more active — much more active — in countering Russian terror," Zelenskyy said late Wednesday. "We continue to insist that their determination now — lifting the restrictions on long-range strikes for Ukraine now — will help us to end the war as soon as possible in a fair way for Ukraine and the world as a whole."

The European Union's top diplomat on Thursday backed Zelenskyy's push for international backers to end their limits.

Ukraine has deployed domestically produced drones to strike Russia.

The Russian military said Thursday it had thwarted an overnight attack on Crimea. The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces destroyed three Ukrainian sea drones aimed at the Black Sea peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The Russia-installed governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhayev added that four Ukrainian aerial drones and three sea drones were destroyed "at a significant distance" from the peninsula's shore.

In the meantime, Ukraine's Army General Staff acknowledged Thursday Ukraine's involvement in strikes this week on oil depots deep inside Russia, where blazes broke out.

The attacks in the Rostov and Kirov regions were part of Ukraine's effort to disrupt logistical infrastructure supporting Russia's war machine.

CIA official: Suspects in foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift shows aimed to kill 'tens of thousands'

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The suspects in the foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna earlier this month sought to kill "tens of thousands" of fans before the CIA discovered intelligence that disrupted the planning and led to arrests, the agency's deputy director said.

The CIA notified Austrian authorities of the scheme, which allegedly included links to the Islamic State group. The intelligence and subsequent arrests ultimately led to the cancellation of three sold-out Eras Tour shows, devastating fans who had traveled across the globe to see Swift in concert.

CIA Deputy Director David Cohen addressed the failed plot during the annual Intelligence and National Security Summit, held this week in Maryland.

"They were plotting to kill a huge number — tens of thousands of people at this concert, including I am sure many Americans — and were quite advanced in this," Cohen said Wednesday. "The Austrians were able to make those arrests because the agency and our partners in the intelligence community provided them information about what this ISIS-connected group was planning to do."

Austrian officials said the main suspect, a 19-year-old Austrian man, was inspired by the Islamic State group. He allegedly planned to attack outside the stadium, where upwards of 30,000 fans were expected to gather, with knives or homemade explosives. Another 65,000 fans were likely to be inside the venue. Investigators discovered chemical substances and technical devices during a raid of the suspect's home.

Austria's interior minister, Gerhard Karner, previously said help from other intelligence agencies was needed because Austrian investigators, unlike some foreign services, can't legally monitor text messages.

The 19-year-old's lawyer has said the allegations were "overacting at its best," and contended Austrian authorities were "presenting this exaggeratedly" in order to get new surveillance powers.

Swift broke her silence about the cancellations last week after her London shows had concluded.

"Having our Vienna shows cancelled was devastating," she wrote in a statement posted to Instagram. "The reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many people had planned on coming to those shows."

She thanked authorities — "thanks to them, we were grieving concerts and not lives," she wrote — and said she waited to speak until the European leg of her Eras Tour concluded to prioritize safety.

"Let me be very clear: I am not going to speak about something publicly if I think doing so might provoke those who would want to harm the fans who come to my shows," she wrote.

Concert organizer Barracuda Music said it canceled the three-night Vienna run that would have begun

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Aug. 8 because the arrests made in connection to the conspiracy were too close to showtime.

The main suspect and a 17-year-old were taken into custody on Aug. 6, the day before the cancellations were announced. A third suspect, 18, was arrested Aug. 8. Their names have not been released in line with Austrian privacy rules.

The shows in London, the next stop after Vienna, came on the heels of a stabbing at a Swift-themed dance class that left three little girls dead in the U.K. In a statement issued after the Southport attack, Swift said she was "just completely in shock" and "at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families." News outlets reported that Swift met with some of the survivors backstage in London.

The Vienna plot also drew comparisons to a 2017 attack by a suicide bomber at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, that killed 22 people. The bomb detonated at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving, becoming the deadliest extremist attack in the United Kingdom in recent years.

Cohen on Wednesday praised the CIA's work in preventing the planned violence, saying that other counterterrorism "successes" in foiling plots typically go unheralded.

"I can tell you within my agency, and I'm sure in others, there were people who thought that was a really good day for Langley," he said, referring to the CIA headquarters. "And not just the Swifties in my workforce."

The record-smashing tour is on hiatus until the fall.

Why Russia has struggled to halt Ukraine's incursion in the Kursk region

By The Associated Press undefined

After three weeks of fighting, Russia is still struggling to dislodge Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region, a surprisingly slow and low-key response to the first occupation of its territory since World War II.

It all comes down to Russian manpower and Russian priorities.

With the bulk of its military pressing offensives inside Ukraine, the Kremlin appears to lack enough reserves for now to drive out Kyiv's forces.

President Vladimir Putin doesn't seem to view the attack — or at least, give the impression that he views it — as a grave enough threat to warrant pulling troops from eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, his priority target.

"Putin's focus is on the collapse of the Ukrainian state, which he believes will automatically render any territorial control irrelevant," wrote Tatiana Stanovaya, senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Putin's priorities

Months after launching the full-scale invasion in 2022, Putin illegally annexed the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as part of Russian territory, and their full capture has been a top priority. He declared in June that Kyiv must withdraw its forces from parts of those regions it controls as a condition for peace talks, a demand that Ukraine rejects.

"In marshaling forces to meet Ukraine's incursion, Russia is doing all it can to avoid drawing units from its own offensive in the Donbas," said Nigel Gould-Davies of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Russia currently judges that it can contain the threat on its own soil without compromising its most important goal in Ukraine."

Even as Ukrainian forces pushed into Kursk on Aug. 6, Russian troops continued their slow advance around the strategic city of Pokrovsk and other parts of the Donetsk area.

"Russia is very keen on continuing the attacks toward Pokrovsk and not taking resources away from Pokrovsk to Kursk," said Nico Lange, senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for European Policy Analysis.

Unlike Pokrovsk, where Ukrainian forces have built extensive fortifications, other parts of Donetsk still under Ukrainian control are less protected and could be significantly more vulnerable to the Russian onslaught if Pokrovsk falls.

Speaking about Kursk in televised meetings with officials, Putin described the incursion as an attempt

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by Kyiv to slow the Russian campaign in Donetsk. He said the Russian advance there only has accelerated despite events in Kursk.

In pressuring Ukraine to meet his demands, Russia also has launched a steady barrage of long-range strikes on the power grid. An attack Monday on energy facilities was one of the largest and most devastating of the war, involving over 200 missiles and drones and causing widespread blackouts. It highlighted loopholes in Ukraine's air defenses that are stretched between protecting front-line troops as well as infrastructure.

Playing down the incursion

Focused on capturing Ukraine's four regions, Putin has sought to attach little importance to Kyiv's foray into Kursk.

"Rather than rallying the population against a threat to the motherland, the Kremlin is anxious to downplay the incursion," said Gould-Davies of the London-based IISS.

Faced with the reality of the occupation of Russia's territory, the state propaganda machine has sought to distract attention from the obvious military failure by focusing on government efforts to help over 130,000 residents displaced from their homes.

State-controlled media cast the attack on Kursk as evidence of Kyiv's aggressive intentions and more proof that Russia was justified in invading Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Stanovaya noted that while many Kursk residents could be angry at the Kremlin, the overall nationwide sentiment could actually favor the authorities.

"While it's certainly a blow to the Kremlin's reputation, it is unlikely to spark a significant rise in social or political discontent among the population," she said. "The Ukrainian attack might actually lead to a rallying around the flag and a rise in anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western sentiments."

A limited Kremlin response

Ukraine's chief military officer, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, said his forces control nearly 1,300 square kilometers (about 500 square miles) and about 100 settlements in the Kursk region, a claim that couldn't be independently verified.

With the combat situation in Kursk in flux, unlike the static front lines in Donetsk, Ukrainian units could roam the region without establishing a lasting presence in many of the settlements they claim.

Observers say Russia does not have enough well-coordinated resources to chase the Ukrainian forces in Kursk.

"Moscow's efforts to counter the new Ukrainian offensive appear limited to sending units from all over Russia, including a proportion of militia and irregular forces," said Ben Barry, senior fellow for land warfare at the IISS, in a commentary.

Until the Kursk incursion, Putin has refrained from using conscripts in the war to avoid a public backlash. Young conscripts drafted for a compulsory one-year tour of duty have served away from the front, and those deployed to protect the border in the Kursk region became easy prey for Ukraine's battle-hardened mechanized infantry units. Hundreds were captured, and 115 were exchanged for Ukrainian troops over the weekend.

Commentators observed that Putin also is reluctant to call up more reservists, fearing domestic destabilization like what happened when he ordered a highly unpopular mobilization of 300,000 in response to a Ukrainian counteroffensive in 2022. Hundreds of thousands fled Russia to avoid being sent to combat.

Since then, the Kremlin has bolstered its forces in Ukraine with volunteers attracted by relatively high wages, but that flow has ebbed in recent months.

It would take tens of thousands of troops to fully dislodge the Ukrainian force, estimated at 10,000, that used the region's dense forests as cover.

Clearly lacking resources for such a massive operation, Russia for now has focused on stemming deeper Ukrainian advances by sealing roads and targeting Kyiv's reserves — tactics that have been partially successful.

Ukraine, meanwhile, has confounded the Russian military by destroying bridges across the Seym River,

disrupting logistics for some Russian units in the region and creating conditions for establishing a pocket of control.

Lange predicted Ukrainian troops could use the river to carve out a buffer zone.

"I would expect the Ukrainians to find some few more choke points for Russian logistics and infrastructure, not necessarily only bridges, and take them under control," he said.

The risks for Ukraine

By capturing a chunk of Russian territory, Ukraine has embarrassed the Kremlin and reshaped the battlefield. But diverting some of the country's most capable forces from the east is a gamble for Kyiv.

"This all carries considerable risk, particularly if an effort to over-stretch Russian forces results in over-stretching the smaller Ukrainian forces," according to Barry of the IISS.

An attempt to create a foothold in Kursk would further extend the more than 1,000-kilometer (over 600-mile) front line, adding to the challenges faced by the undermanned and outgunned Ukrainian forces. Defending positions inside Russia would raise serious logistical problems, with the extended supply lines becoming easy targets.

"The Russian system is very hierarchical and stiff, so it always takes them a significant amount of time to adapt to a new situation," Lange said, "but we will have to see how Ukraine can sustain there, once Russia has adapted and comes with full force."

Strong storm lashes Japan with torrential rains and strong winds on its slow crawl north

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A strong storm lashed southern Japan with torrential rain and strong winds Thursday, causing at least three deaths as it started a crawl up the length of the archipelago and raised concerns of flooding, landslides and extensive damage.

Tropical storm Shanshan made landfall Thursday morning as a powerful typhoon on the southern island of Kyushu and then gradually lost strength, though it was still forecast to bring strong winds, high waves and significant rainfall to most of the country, particularly on Kyushu.

About 60 centimeters (nearly 2 feet) of rain fell in parts of Miyazaki prefecture on Kyushu, swelling rivers and threatening floods, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. That 24-hour total was more than the average rainfall for all of August, it said.

By late afternoon Thursday, the storm was moving north at 15 kph (9 mph) and its winds had weakened to 108 kph (67 mph). It is "no longer a powerful typhoon," the agency said.

Shanshan ripped through downtown Miyazaki city, knocking down trees, throwing cars to the side in parking lots and shattering windows of some buildings. The prefectural disaster management task force said 40 buildings were damaged.

NHK public television showed a swollen river in the popular hot spring town of Yufu in Oita prefecture, just north of Miyazaki, with muddy water splashing against a bridge.

At least 50 people were injured across Kyushu, about half of them in Miyazaki. Some were injured by being thrown to the ground by the storm on their way to shelters, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said.

Nearly a quarter of a million households were without power across Kyushu, most of them in Kagoshima prefecture, Kyushu Electric Power Co. said.

About 20,000 people took shelter at municipal community centers, school gymnasiums and other facilities across Kyushu, according to prefectural reports.

Ahead of the storm's arrival, heavy rain triggered a landslide that buried a house in the central city of Gamagori, killing three residents and injuring two others, the city's disaster management department said. On the southern island of Amami, which Shanshan passed, one person was injured by being knocked down by a wind gust while riding a motorcycle, the fire agency said.

Weather and government officials are concerned about extensive damage as the storm slowly sweeps up

the Japanese archipelago to the northeast over the next few days, threatening more floods and landslides. The storm's impact was yet to be felt in the Tokyo region, where business continued as usual and heavy rain was predicted later this week.

Disaster Management Minister Yoshifumi Matsumura said Shanshan could cause "unprecedented" levels of violent winds, high waves, storm surges and heavy rain. At a task force meeting on Wednesday, he urged people, especially older adults, not to hesitate and take shelter whenever there is any safety concern.

Hundreds of domestic flights connecting southwestern cities and islands were canceled Thursday, and bullet trains and some local train services were suspended. Similar steps were taken in parts of the main island of Honshu that were experiencing heavy rain. Postal and delivery services were suspended in the Kyushu region, and supermarkets and other stores planned to close.

Israeli army says it has killed 5 more West Bank militants, including a well-known local commander

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military said it has killed five more militants in a large-scale operation in the occupied West Bank early Thursday, including a well-known local commander.

There was no immediate Palestinian confirmation of the death of Mohammed Jaber, known as Abu Shujaa, a commander in the Islamic Jihad militant group in the Nur Shams refugee camp on the outskirts of the city of Tulkarem.

He became a hero for many Palestinians earlier this year when he was reported killed in an Israeli operation, only to make a surprise appearance at the funeral of other militants, where he was hoisted onto the shoulders of a cheering crowd.

The military said he was killed along with four other militants in a shootout with Israeli forces early Thursday after the five had hidden inside a mosque. It said Abu Shujaa was linked to numerous attacks on Israelis, including a deadly shooting in June, and was planning more.

The military said another militant was arrested in the operation in Tulkarem, and that a member of Israel's paramilitary Border Police was lightly wounded.

Israel launched a large-scale operation in the West Bank overnight into Wednesday. Hamas said 10 of its fighters were killed in different locations, and the Palestinian Health Ministry reported an 11th casualty, without saying whether he was a fighter or a civilian.

Violence has surged in the West Bank since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza ignited the war there.

Nur Shams is among several built-up refugee camps across the Middle East that date back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, in which around 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven out of what is now Israel. Many of the camps are militant strongholds.

Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule, with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority administering towns and cities. Over 500,000 Jewish settlers, who have Israeli citizenship, live in well over 100 settlements across the territory that most of the international community considers illegal.

Telegram CEO Durov faces preliminary charges in France of allowing crime on messaging app

By BARBARA SURK and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French authorities handed preliminary charges to Telegram CEO Pavel Durov on Wednesday for allowing alleged criminal activity on his messaging app and barred him from leaving France pending further investigation.

Both free-speech advocates and authoritarian governments have spoken in Durov's defense since his weekend arrest. The case has also called attention to the challenges of policing illegal activity online, and

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to the Russia-born Durov's own unusual biography and multiple passports.

Durov was detained Saturday at Le Bourget airport outside Paris as part of a sweeping investigation opened earlier this year, and released earlier Wednesday after four days of questioning. Investigative judges filed preliminary charges Wednesday night and ordered him to pay 5 million euros bail and to report to a police station twice a week, according to a statement from the Paris prosecutor's office.

Allegations against Durov, who is also a French citizen, include that his platform is being used for child sexual abuse material and drug trafficking, and that Telegram refused to share information or documents with investigators when required by law.

The first preliminary charge against him was for "complicity in managing an online platform to allow illicit transactions by an organized group," a crime that can lead to sentences of up to 10 years in prison and 500,000 euro fine, the prosecutor's office said.

Preliminary charges under French law mean magistrates have strong reason to believe a crime was committed but allow more time for further investigation.

David-Olivier Kaminski, a lawyer for Durov, was quoted by French media as saying "it's totally absurd to think that the person in charge of a social network could be implicated in criminal acts that don't concern him, directly or indirectly."

Prosecutors said Durov is, "at this stage, the only person implicated in this case." They did not exclude the possibility that other people are being investigated, but declined to comment on other possible arrest warrants. Any other arrest warrant would be revealed only if the target of such a warrant is detained and informed of their rights, prosecutors said in a statement to the AP.

French authorities opened a preliminary investigation in February in response to "the near total absence of a response by Telegram to judicial requests" for data for pursuing suspects, notably those accused of crimes against children, the prosecutor's office said.

Durov's arrest in France has caused outrage in Russia, with some government officials calling it politically 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 the Telegram app 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."

"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," it said.

In addition to Russia and France, Durov is also a citizen of 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 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 stance 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.

Harris, Walz will sit down for first major television interview of their presidential campaign

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, will sit down Thursday for their first major television interview of their presidential campaign as the duo travels in southeast Georgia on a bus tour.

The interview with CNN's Dana Bash will give Harris a chance to quell criticism that she has eschewed uncontrolled environments, while also giving her a fresh platform to define her campaign and test her political mettle ahead of an upcoming debate with former President Donald Trump set for Sept. 10. But it also carries risk as her team tries to build on momentum from the ticket shakeup following Joe Biden's exit and last week's Democratic National Convention.

Joint interviews during an election year are a fixture in politics; Biden and Harris, Trump and Mike Pence, Barack Obama and Biden — all did them at a similar point in the race. The difference is those other candidates had all done solo interviews, too. Harris hasn't yet done an in-depth interview since she became her party's standard bearer five weeks ago, though she did sit for several while she was still Biden's running mate.

Harris and Walz remain somewhat unknown to voters, unlike Trump and Biden of whom voters had near-universal awareness and opinion.

The CNN interview, airing at 9 p.m. EDT Thursday, takes place during her two-day bus tour through southeast Georgia campaigning for the critical battleground state, a trip that culminates Thursday with a rally in Savannah. Harris campaign officials believe that in order to win the state over Trump in November, they must make inroads in GOP strongholds across the state.

Harris, during her time as vice president, has done on-camera and print interviews with The Associated Press and many other outlets, a much more frequent pace than the president — except for Biden's late-stage media blitz following his disastrous debate performance that touched off the end of his campaign.

Harris' lack of media access over the past month has become one of Republicans' key attack lines. The Trump campaign has kept a tally of the days she has gone by as a candidate without giving an interview. On Wednesday, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump's former press secretary, suggested Harris needed a "babysitter" and that's why Walz would be there.

"They know Kamala Harris can't get through an interview all by herself. There is not a lot of confidence in somebody to become the leader of the free world and ask people to make her president of the United States when she can't even sit down (for) an interview," she said on "Fox & Friends."

Trump, meanwhile, has largely steered toward conservative media outlets when granting interviews, though he has held more open press conferences in recent weeks as he sought to reclaim the spotlight that Harris' elevation had claimed.

After the CNN interview, Walz will peel off and Harris will continue the bus tour alone, heading to a rally

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before going back to Washington. On Wednesday, the duo visited a high school marching band to the delight of students, and stopped by a Savannah barbecue restaurant.

Harris campaign communications director Michael Tyler said bus tours offer an “opportunity to get to places we don’t usually go (and) make sure we’re competing in all communities.”

The campaign wants the events to motivate voters in GOP-leaning areas who don’t traditionally see the candidates, and hopes that the engagements drive viral moments that cut through crowded media coverage to reach voters across the country.

The stops are meant as moments where voters can learn “not just what they stand for, but who they are as people,” Tyler said.

Harris has another campaign blitz on Labor Day with Biden in Detroit and Pittsburgh with the election just over 70 days away. The first mail ballots get sent to voters in just two weeks.

Surf before you worship at this church in Portugal. Their motto: “We love waves, we love Jesus.”

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

PORTO, Portugal (AP) — Porto takes pride in its beaches, old churches covered in blue-and-white tiles and its famous port wine named after the city in northern Portugal.

It’s also home to a different kind of church — located on its beachfront suburbs along the Atlantic coast near a fishing town known for some of the world’s largest waves. Parishioners attend in boardshorts, T-shirts, flip flops — even barefoot.

They surf before they worship.

Surf Church was established by a Brazilian-born Portuguese surfer and ordained Baptist pastor to spread the Gospel in a once-devoutly Catholic country — and top surfing destination — where about half of young people today say they have no religion.

In less than a decade, it has grown from a few families to dozens of parishioners representing more than a dozen nationalities from across the world. Their motto: “We love waves. We love Jesus.”

“When you’re waiting for the right wave it’s the calm before the swell, and that’s a peaceful moment that sometimes is seconds, sometimes minutes,” said the Rev. Samuel Cianelli, Surf Church’s pastor. “This peaceful moment is, for me, my deepest connection with God.”

On a recent Sunday, he wore a bright orange wetsuit — instead of traditional priestly vestments — and lay belly down on a surfboard on the powdery sand of Matosinhos beach to show young parishioners huddled around him how to paddle, “pop up” and catch a wave.

“I always loved waves, and when I see people learning how to surf, it makes my heart so happy,” said Uliana Yarova, 17, after she walked out of the same waters where — a week later — Cianelli baptized her and her brother in a joyous ceremony. They wore matching white T-shirts that read: “I chose Jesus.”

The Ukrainian teenager fled her war-torn country with her family after Russia’s invasion and found refuge in Porto and the Surf Church.

“When you’re paddling on the surfboard waiting for the wave, and you stand, you might start to doubt and feel like you’ll fall,” she said. “And then, when it goes right, you feel confidence and peace — you feel nature and how God is holding you on that wave.”

The church members — mostly Generation Z and millennials — walked in and out of the waters smiling, carrying red and turquoise surfboards branded with Surf Church stickers. Some sported tattoos of the cross — the only other visible sign that set them apart from other surfers who shared the waves.

In preparation for worship, they rinsed the surfboards and carried them to a white van that a few missionaries in bathing suits drove to nearby Surf Church.

Churches in Porto, Portugal’s second-largest city, include the majestic cathedral with its silver altar, the so-called “Chapel of the Souls” with its façade of thousands of illustrated white and blue tiles, and São Francisco, with its intricate wood carvings covered in gold dust.

Surf Church’s garage is instead painted with a mural of a gold-colored Volkswagen camper van with a

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blue surfboard strapped to its roof.

After surfing, sandal-wearing members of the church hung wetsuits next to a rack lined with boards. Some rinsed their feet with a garden hose or took a quick shower before they gathered to pray and sing in a cozy living room decorated with roof-hanging surfboards and a mural of surfers riding waves.

Church member Hannah Kruckels said she never felt as welcome attending a much larger traditional church in her native Switzerland. That changed when she arrived as an intern in 2020 to Surf Church, where she feels at home and where she learned how to surf.

"It's an important part of spirituality to be connected to something bigger. In this case for us, it's God, but it can be the ocean, too," she said after a Sunday service that she attended with her Portuguese boyfriend, who is also a surfer. "That's what makes surfing a spiritual experience."

Surfing had religious significance in Hawaii, where it was born long before the arrival of Europeans.

"After prayers and offerings, master craftsmen made boards from sacred koa or wililili trees, and some had heiaus (temples) on the beach where devotees could pray for waves," William Finnegan writes in "Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life."

Men and women of all ages and from all social levels — from royalty to commoners — surfed. But when 19th century Calvinist missionaries arrived in the islands, they were appalled by what they believed was a barbaric spectacle and banned surfing.

It only reemerged decades later thanks to Hawaiians like Duke Kahanamoku, the Olympic gold medal swimmer who is regarded as the father of modern surfing.

Surfers were still "typecast as truants and vandals," Finnegan wrote. Even in modern era, some beach towns banned surfing.

For long, surfing continued to be frowned upon as a counterculture movement or a mere pastime — and for decades it remained little-known outside California and Hawaii.

But the tides have changed. Surfing has spread across the globe as a professional and most recently an Olympic sport, as well a multibillion-dollar industry.

Portugal has emerged as one of the world's top surfing destinations — home to some of the biggest waves for pros in the fishing hamlet of Nazaré and for uncrowded waves for beginners along the beaches near Porto.

"People from all over come to Portugal because they want to experience what the beaches of Portugal have to offer," said Cianelli, wearing a loose shirt covered with designs of palm trees. "We found in this a good strategy to start a church that combines Jesus and surf."

He grew up swimming competitively in the Brazilian port city of Santos, where soccer legend Pele played most of his career. After an injury kept Cianelli from competing at the age of 15, he took up surfing.

At the same time, he grew closer to his Christian faith. He attended seminary, was ordained and served as a youth pastor.

During a conference a 2013 in Brazil, he met Troy Pitney, an American missionary and surfer. They began to dream about planting churches in Portugal.

They wanted to use Portugal's growing surf culture to attract members in the once fiercely Catholic country where religious practice is falling, especially among the young, while a rising wave of migrants from Brazil and other South American countries continues to plant evangelical churches.

After moving with their families to Porto, they launched Surf Church in April 2015. Their strategy was simple: catch waves and invite other surfers and beach lovers to read the Bible, sing and pray.

"We didn't know what we were doing," Cianelli said. "We just had a love for Jesus. We were all surfers."

They began to meet in an apartment, and from 2016-2020 they worshipped at a gym near the beach, "just to break the concept of what church means," Cianelli said.

"The building is about the people. You could be in the ocean, you could be at the beach, you could be inside of a gym or someone's living room. Or now, where we are in the space that belongs to us. It doesn't matter the place, what is important is the people — this is the real meaning of church."

They were also intentional in their words: They still don't use the word "igreja" — Portuguese for church

— to avoid connotations of the cavernous spaces with emptying wooden church pews.

There's plenty of "gorgeous, historical" church buildings in Porto, Cianelli said. He respects their historical role, but says that what his congregation seeks is a modern-day "living church made by people."

The pillars of his church remain the same: surfing, community and the Bible. It took them nine years to go over the New Testament, word-by-word, and they've recently started with the Old Testament.

Their dream, he said, is to plant surf churches — or churches linked to mountain biking, soccer or any passion that brings people together in sport and prayer — across the world.

"We're not just surfers anymore," he said.

Trump to visit swing districts in Michigan and Wisconsin as battleground campaigning increases

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Donald Trump is scheduled to campaign Thursday in Michigan and Wisconsin as the former president ramps up battleground state travel heading into the traditional Labor Day turn toward the fall election.

Trump's intense focus on recapturing states he won in 2016 but lost narrowly in 2020 continues with stops in the middle of Michigan and western Wisconsin.

Trump's day starts with an afternoon rally in Pottersville, Michigan, near the state capital of Lansing. Trump won Eaton County, where part of Lansing is located, in both 2016 and 2020, but by a smaller margin the second time. It will be his third visit to the state in the past nine days and second this week after a speech to the National Guard Association in Detroit on Monday.

Later, he will visit La Crosse, Wisconsin, for a town hall moderated by former Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who endorsed him in Detroit. It will be Trump's first visit to Wisconsin since the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, which ended three days before President Joe Biden dropped out of the race and made way for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Along with Pennsylvania, which Trump will visit on Friday, these three Midwestern states make up a northern industrial bloc Democrats carried for two decades before Trump won them in 2016. Biden recaptured them on his way to the White House in 2020.

Trump and his vice-presidential pick, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, have blitzed the battleground states in recent weeks, with Vance in both states this week as well.

The battleground offensive comes as a reinvigorated Democratic Party rallies around Harris and her new running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

Harris and Walz are aiming to leverage the surge in enthusiasm among the party's base since her campaign launch just over a month ago. They hope this excitement — which was on full display at last week's convention in Chicago — will extend to more moderate areas as they embark on a two-day bus tour in Georgia, including events in the state's rural southern regions.

Trump's events in Michigan and Wisconsin are both in swing congressional districts.

Pottersville is in Michigan's 7th District, which features a mix of Republican-dominated counties like Clinton and Shiawassee, and Democratic strongholds such as Ingham, home to the state Capitol and Michigan State University. This district is expected to be one of the nation's most competitive this fall following incumbent Democratic Rep. Elissa Slotkin's decision to run for the state's open U.S. Senate seat.

La Crosse, meanwhile, is a hub within Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, where Republican Derrick Van Orden won narrowly in 2022. Democrat Rebecca Cooke won the Aug. 13 primary to face him in November.

Botched college financial aid form snarls enrollment plans for students

By ANNIE MA AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a long summer of technical glitches, most of America's prospective college students finally applied for federal financial aid — an annual process upended by a redesign-gone-bad.

The number of high school seniors who have completed their Free Application for Federal Student Aid is down 9% compared with this time last year, according to the National College Attainment Network. That number was as high as 40% in the spring, when students usually must submit their forms to give schools enough time to assemble an aid package.

How much the FAFSA problems will impact the number of students attending college remains to be seen, counselors and advisers say. But the delays certainly have changed where students enrolled, with many students forced to pick a college with limited information about their financial picture.

As one of the few Black girls at her suburban Chicago high school, Adjovi Golo looked forward to college as a time when it would not be so hard to be seen and heard. She was hoping to attend Spelman College, a historically Black women's college in Atlanta.

The federal financial aid calculators told her she would likely be eligible for \$15,000 in loans, grants and work-study, but her FAFSA had not been processed before a May 1 deadline to commit to a college. She called the FAFSA hotline 11 times to resolve a glitch, getting a different suggestion each time.

DePaul University in Chicago, meantime, offered her the most in merit scholarships. Without a complete financial aid package from either school as her FAFSA remained in limbo, she chose to enroll at DePaul, rather than risk taking on more debt.

In August, Golo moved into DePaul's dorms. She loves her roommate, the campus and her professors.

But she wonders what might have been different.

"I felt like I was just backed into a corner," she said. "A part of me, like 75% of me, doesn't regret it. I love it here. But another part of me wishes I waited."

The plunge in FAFSA completion rates was especially sharp for students who already face hurdles to enrolling in postsecondary education, including low-income students and students of color. Advocates worry the delays — on top of a Supreme Court ruling that struck down affirmative action in higher education — will affect where and whether many go to college.

Theoretically, said Katharine Meyer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, "We're going to see a less racially diverse college enrollment cohort, a less socioeconomically diverse college enrollment cohort."

Areas with a high percentage of people living in poverty and places with a larger share of Black and Latino residents saw a 20% larger decline in FAFSA completions compared with higher-income areas, according to the Century Foundation, a progressive think tank. Its analysis also found students in those areas were twice as likely to have submitted an incomplete FAFSA.

"It's too soon to know how bad college enrollment declines will be, but it's not too early to recognize the risks," said Peter Granville, a fellow at the Century Foundation.

For students who cannot pay for their entire tuition and fees out of pocket, nearly all forms of financial support — institutional, state and federal, including eligibility for federal loans — require completion of the FAFSA.

A 2020 law directed the Education Department to simplify the FAFSA form, which had been criticized for being tedious and difficult, especially for families without college experience. But the launch of the simplified form in 2023 ran into error upon error — it launched months overdue in December, and students encountered glitches and hours-long waits for helpline assistance.

Emmily Almaraz, a junior at Texas Christian University, said she breezed through the form in under 20 minutes this year. But the students she helped as an intern with a college access organization did not all have the same luck.

Despite spending hours on the phone, one student could not get past the verification process for parents who lack a Social Security number, which is the case for some immigrants. Ultimately, the student decided to delay enrolling until the spring, Almaraz said.

"It's just really discouraging for certain kids that end up finding out that just because they're missing one piece of information, it may delay them," Almaraz said. "It may cause them to pay for an education that they can't fully pay for."

College housing became an additional hurdle for students whose families were unwilling to put down deposits without knowing more about financial aid, said Jesse Hendrix, executive director of College Possible Texas. Many were stuck with expensive, off-campus options or could not secure housing at all.

Some students admitted to four-year colleges are choosing more affordable two-year colleges closer to home, counselors say. Chandra Scott, executive director of the nonprofit Alabama Possible, said she reached out to the state's community colleges urging them to prepare for a last-minute influx of students.

"They're going to hold out as long as they can, because they may really want to go to that four-year institution," Scott said. "But if they don't have the financial aid resources that they need to go in a timely manner, they're going to have to begin to make hard decisions on whether to sit out a year, which we hope they don't do."

Students who don't continue directly on to college from high school tend to face more barriers to pursuing higher education, counselors and advocates said. While some states have programs to help students return to school, only four in 10 students who do not immediately begin college after high school do so in the next decade, Granville said.

"After you decide to wait a year, that becomes more of a lonely journey," he said. "That can hinder someone's likelihood of ultimately completing a degree."

Some students are still working through FAFSA issues even after enrolling. In Chicago, Golo filed a paper FAFSA in June to try to get a finalized aid package from DePaul, but was told that the agency had a backlog of paper filings. Golo said the school has not required her to start paying until the paperwork is processed.

"I'm kind of just scared to take out money, knowing that I might be able to lower that in a few weeks or so, because I don't know when it's going to come," Golo said of her financial aid package. "It can come tomorrow. It can come in a few weeks. It may not come for a few more months. But my future right now is just very unknown."

Ballot measures in 41 states give voters a say on abortion and other tough questions

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Life, death, crime and taxes will be on ballots for voters to decide this fall.

More than 140 measures are going before voters in 41 states during the general election alongside choices for president and other top offices. The ballot questions will give voters a chance to directly decide some consequential issues, instead of deferring to their elected representatives.

Arizona, Colorado and California have the greatest number of ballot measures. More could still get placed on ballots in some states. And some measures could get bumped from ballots if pending lawsuits are successful.

Here's a look at some of this year's top ballot issues.

Abortion

Initiatives dealing with pregnancy have surged in response to the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that ended a nationwide right to abortion and shifted the issue to states.

At least nine states will consider constitutional amendments enshrining abortion rights — Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada and South Dakota. Most would guarantee a right to abortion until fetal viability and allow it later for the health of the pregnant woman.

Nebraska is the only state with a competing measure. It would place into the constitution the state's current 12-week abortion ban with exceptions for rape, incest and to save the life of the pregnant woman. If both pass, the one with the most votes will take effect.

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A proposed amendment in New York doesn't specifically mention abortion but would prohibit discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes" and "reproductive healthcare and autonomy."

Assisted suicide

A proposed West Virginia amendment to prohibit medically assisted suicide is the only such measure this year. Physician-assisted suicides are allowed in 10 states and Washington, D.C.

Citizen voting

Republican-led legislatures in eight states proposed amendments declaring that only citizens can vote.

A 1996 U.S. law prohibits noncitizens from voting in federal elections, and many states already have similar laws. Yet specific constitutional bans are being proposed in Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Wisconsin. The measures are part of a Republican emphasis on immigration and election integrity.

Though there is no indication of widespread voting by noncitizens, some municipalities in California, Maryland, Vermont and Washington, D.C. do allow it for certain local elections.

Crime

A California proposal would toughen punishments for repeat shoplifters and fentanyl dealers and create a new drug court treatment program for people with multiple drug possession convictions. The measure would reverse portions of a 2014 initiative that reduced penalties for nonviolent drug and property crimes to address prison overcrowding. The latest measure comes after a surge of groups committing smash-and-grab thefts at stores.

An Arizona measure would require life imprisonment for certain child sex trafficking convictions. Two Colorado proposals would deny bail in first-degree murder cases and lengthen mandatory prison terms before parole eligibility for people convicted of certain violent crimes.

Elections

Measures in Idaho, Montana, Nevada and South Dakota would create open primary elections, in which candidates from all parties appear on the same ballot and a certain number advance to the general election. Arizona voters will decide between competing proposals that would require either open primaries or the state's current method of partisan primaries. If both pass, the one with the most votes will take effect.

A Florida measure would expand partisan elections to school boards, reversing a 1998 amendment that made them officially nonpartisan, removing party labels from ballots.

Measures in Idaho, Nevada and Oregon propose ranked choice voting, in which voters rank their preferences for candidates, with votes cast for the lowest-finishing candidates getting reallocated until one person obtains a majority.

Ranked choice voting currently is used in Alaska and Maine. But Alaska voters will consider whether to repeal provisions of a 2020 initiative that instituted open primaries and ranked choice general elections. Missouri's citizens-voting measure also would ban ranked choice voting.

A Connecticut amendment would authorize no-excuse absentee voting. A Nevada proposal would require photo identification to vote in-person or the last four-digits of a driver's license or Social Security number to vote by mail. If approved, the Nevada measure would require a second affirmative vote in 2026 to take effect.

Taxing weapons

A Colorado proposal would make it the second state after California to impose a sales tax on firearms and ammunition. Revenue would go primarily to crime victims' services. The federal government already taxes sales of guns and ammunition.

Immigration

An Arizona measure would make it a state crime to enter from a foreign country except through official ports of entry, and for someone already in the U.S. illegally to apply for public benefits using false documents. The border crossing measure is similar to a challenged Texas law that the Justice Department says violates federal authority and would create chaos at the border.

Arizona's measure also would make it a felony to sell fentanyl that causes a person's death.

Marijuana

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Voters in Florida, North Dakota and South Dakota will decide whether to legalize recreational marijuana for adults. It will be the third vote on the issue in both North Dakota and South Dakota. About half the states currently allow recreational marijuana and about a dozen more allow medical marijuana.

In Massachusetts, an initiative would legalize the possession and supervised use of natural psychedelics, including psilocybin mushrooms.

Marriage

Though the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015, some states still have unenforceable provisions against it. Measures in California, Colorado and Hawaii would repeal those provisions. The California measure would go further, declaring: "The right to marry is a fundamental right."

Pay and benefits

A California measure would gradually raise the state's minimum wage for all employers to \$18 an hour. Measures in Alaska and Missouri would gradually raise minimum wages to \$15 an hour while also requiring paid sick leave. A Nebraska measure would provide paid sick leave but not change wages.

A Massachusetts measure would gradually raise the minimum wage for tipped employees until it matches the rate for other employees. By contrast, an Arizona measure would let tipped workers be paid 25% less than the minimum wage, so long as tips push their total pay beyond the minimum wage threshold.

Prison labor

Proposals in California and Nevada would repeal constitutional provisions that allow "involuntary servitude" as punishment for crime. Some supporters are seeking to curtail forced prison labor.

Colorado began the trend by revising its constitution in 2018 to ban slavery and involuntary servitude. Utah and Nebraska followed in 2020 and Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee and Vermont in 2022.

Property taxes

North Dakota voters will consider a first-of-its-kind move to eliminate property taxes. If approved, local governments could need more than \$3 billion biennially in replacement revenue from the state, which collects billions in taxes from the fossil fuel industry.

Rising property values also have spurred measures to cap or cut assessed property values or taxes in Colorado, Florida, Georgia and New Mexico.

Arizona has a unique proposal linking property taxes and responses to homelessness. It would let property owners seek property tax refunds if they incur expenses because a local government declined to enforce ordinances against illegal camping, loitering, panhandling, the obstruction of public thoroughfares, public urination or defecation, or the public consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Redistricting

An Ohio initiative would create a citizens commission to handle redistricting for U.S. House and state legislative seats, taking the task away from elected officials. A proposed amendment in Utah would let lawmakers repeal or revise voter-approved initiatives — a response to a state Supreme Court ruling that lawmakers had exceeded their authority by revising a voter-approved redistricting initiative.

Sports betting

Missouri voters will decide whether to legalize sports betting via a measure backed by its professional sports teams. A total of 38 states and Washington, D.C., already allow sports betting, which has expanded rapidly since the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for it in 2018.

Israel launches a big military operation in the West Bank and kills at least 10 Hamas militants

By JULIA FRANKEL and NASSER NASSER Associated Press

AL-FARAA REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces launched a large operation in the occupied West Bank overnight and into Wednesday, killing at least 10 Hamas militants, carrying out arrests and sealing off the volatile city of Jenin.

The ongoing operation was among the largest in the West Bank in months, and a reminder that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict extends far beyond the war in Gaza that began with Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. Israel

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says it is rooting out West Bank militants to prevent attacks, while Palestinians fear it intends to broaden the war and expel them from territories they want for a future state.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said "large forces" had entered Jenin, long a militant stronghold, as well as Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camp dating to the 1948 Mideast war, all in the northern West Bank.

He said Israeli forces killed three militants in an airstrike in Tulkarem and 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. Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Hamas announced that 10 of its fighters had been killed in the West Bank on Wednesday, including three of the four men killed in Jenin. It was not immediately clear if the fourth was also a fighter. The Israeli military said all of the dead were militants.

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 were seen patrolling its alleyways by foot. Water leaked onto the damaged streets from houses where fighting had ruptured 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, calling the raids 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 U.S. to intervene. Abbas announced he was cutting short a visit to Saudi Arabia and returning to the West Bank, where his government is based.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for Israel to immediately halt its operation in the West Bank, according to U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric. Guterres also called on Israel to protect civilians and urged its forces "to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable to protect life," Dujarric said.

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 raids, which often trigger gunbattles with militants.

Israel says the operations are required to dismantle Hamas and other militant groups. Attacks on Israelis have risen since the start of the war.

The Israeli operation comes as Hamas is using the West Bank as a base for organizing more attacks, using weapons smuggled from Iran and taking advantage of the weakness of the Palestinian Authority, according to Michael Milshtein, an expert on Palestinian issues at Tel Aviv University.

He predicted similar operations in the future because Israeli authorities don't seem to have a strategy for defeating Hamas in either Gaza or the West Bank.

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. Hamas claimed Jabarin as a fighter and said another two fighters, Mohammed Abu Zumeiro and Ahmed al-Sous, were killed in Jenin.

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 is home to over 500,000 Jewish settlers. The settlers 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 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 108 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 24 people, including five women and five children, according to Palestinian health officials. AP reporters at two hospitals confirmed the toll.

One strike hit tents housing displaced people near the central town of Deir al-Balah, killing eight including two brothers, 6 and 17 years old.

"He's alive!" their mother shouted as the teenager's body was carried to the morgue. She later sobbed and cradled both of them.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense residential areas. The military rarely comments on individual strikes in Gaza, which often kill women and children.

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.

One of the hostages was released Tuesday after Israeli forces found him in a tunnel. After a short stay in a hospital he returned Wednesday to his Bedouin village where he got a hero's welcome.

Ex-politician convicted in 2022 killing of Vegas reporter, jury sets sentence at 20 years to life

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A Democratic former politician was found guilty of murder on Wednesday by a Nevada jury that decided he'll serve 20 years to life in prison for killing an investigative journalist who wrote articles critical of his conduct in office two years ago.

Robert Telles hung his head, shaking it slightly from side to side, as his verdict was read in Clark County District Court. Jurors deliberated for nearly 12 hours over three days before their unanimous vote that he ambushed and attacked Las Vegas Review-Journal reporter Jeff German in a side yard of German's home.

Telles didn't speak then or when he learned his sentence but appeared near tears during character witness testimony by his wife, mother and ex-wife. His defense attorney, Robert Draskovich, told reporters outside court that his client plans to appeal.

Telles, 47, was returned in custody to jail, where he has been held without bail since his arrest several days after German's body was found during Labor Day weekend 2022. His sentencing was scheduled for Oct. 16.

Jessica Coleman, a county employee, was among several co-workers who urged German in 2022 to investigate Telles' conduct heading the office of unclaimed estate and probate property cases. She sobbed

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after the verdict was read.

"Finally. Finally," Coleman said after sitting with other co-workers through trial, which started Aug. 12. "Finally the system is working."

Clark County District Court Judge Michelle Leavitt can invoke sentencing enhancements because the killing was found to be with use of a deadly weapon, willful, deliberate, premeditated, by a person who lay in wait and on a victim 60 years or older. That could raise Telles' time in prison to a minimum of 21 years and a maximum of 28 years.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson said outside the courtroom that he was surprised how long the 12 jurors deliberated before their guilty verdict. He said he believed they carefully considered evidence.

"The jury ... hit a home run by getting the right verdict," he said.

Jurors declined through a court official to speak later with the media. They could have set Telles' sentence at life without parole.

Wolfson derided as "ludicrous" Telles' claims that a broad conspiracy of people — including Wolfson — framed him for German's killing in retaliation for Telles' effort to root out corruption he saw in his office.

"I am not the kind of person who would stab someone. I didn't kill Mr. German," Telles told the jury last week as he ended his rambling narrative from the witness stand. "And that's my testimony."

Wolfson, an elected Democrat, said German "had a stellar reputation in this community" and called it "a crying shame, literally and figuratively that he's no longer with us."

German, 69, spent 44 years covering crime, courts and corruption in Las Vegas.

In their first public comments since his death, German's brother, Jay German, and two sisters, Jill Zwerg and Julie Smith, described him as a loving brother and uncle to their children.

"He was the older brother that we all leaned on," Jay German said. He called the murder "devastating."

Zwerg said her oldest brother — a dedicated reporter and author who moved to Las Vegas from Milwaukee in 1978 — used to tell her why he rejected offers by other newspapers to move to other cities.

"This is Las Vegas, Sin City," she said he told her. "This is where I need to be."

Tears welled in Telles' eyes as his wife, Mary Ann "Mae" Ismael, took the witness stand and described him as a "great" provider during their 14 years of marriage for their "blended" family of her son, his daughter and their daughter.

"I would love to have the chance for the kids to have their father back" after prison, Ismael said.

Telles' ex-wife, Tonia Burton, noted the oldest child, a daughter she and Telles have together, is now 16.

His mother, Rosalinda Anaya, said she accepted the verdict but told the jury, "I ask if you could please give my son a chance at parole."

Telles, an attorney, practiced civil law before he was elected in 2018. He lost his primary for a second elected term after German's stories appeared in the Las Vegas Review-Journal in May and June 2022.

Prosecutor Christopher Hamner told jurors during closing arguments Monday that Telles blamed German for destroying his career, ruining his reputation and threatening his marriage. He said German fought to the death with his attacker and reminded them that DNA that matched Telles was found beneath German's fingernails.

Prosecutor Pamela Weckerly presented a timeline and videos showing Telles' maroon SUV leaving the neighborhood near his home and driving on streets near German's home about the time German was killed.

The SUV driver was seen wearing a bright orange outfit similar to one worn by a person captured on camera walking to German's home and slipping into a side yard where German was attacked just after 11:15 a.m.

A little more than two minutes later, the figure in orange wearing a broad straw hat emerged and walked down a sidewalk. German did not reappear.

Evidence showed Ismael sent a text message to her husband about 10:30 a.m. asking, "Where are you?" Prosecutors said Telles left his cellphone at home so he couldn't be tracked. Telles told the jury he took a walk and then went to a gym in the afternoon.

The jury learned that police found cut-up pieces of a straw hat and athletic shoe at Telles' house that looked like ones worn by the person wearing the orange shirt. Neither the shirt nor a murder weapon

were ever found.

Katherine Jacobsen, U.S., Canada, and Caribbean program coordinator at the Committee to Protect Journalists, issued a statement Wednesday saying the verdict "sends an important message that the killing of journalists will not be tolerated."

"It is vital that the murder of journalists should be taken seriously and perpetrators held accountable," Jacobsen said.

German was the only journalist killed in the U.S. in 2022, according to the New York-based committee. The nonprofit has records of 17 media workers killed in the U.S. since 1992.

Brazil top court threatens to suspend X operations in latest twist of ongoing feud

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A Brazilian Supreme Court justice on Wednesday threatened to shut down the local operations of X, formerly Twitter, unless its billionaire owner Elon Musk names a legal representative in Brazil within 24 hours.

The order from Justice Alexandre de Moraes is the latest development in an ongoing feud with Musk's platform. The company clashed with de Moraes earlier this year over free speech, accounts associated with the far-right and misinformation on the platform, and it claims to be a victim of censorship.

Earlier this month, X said it was removing all remaining Brazil staff in the country "effective immediately," saying de Moraes had threatened its legal representative in the country with arrest.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday notified X of de Moraes' order in a reply to a post from the company's global government affairs account on the social platform.

"In case of non-compliance with the determination, the decision could bring about suspension of the social media network's activities in Brazil," the court said in a statement.

In the United States, free speech is a constitutional right that's much more permissive than in many countries, including Brazil, where de Moraes in April ordered an investigation into Musk over the dissemination of defamatory fake news and another probe over possible obstruction, incitement and criminal organization.

Brazil's political right has long characterized de Moraes as overstepping his bounds to clamp down on free speech and engage in political persecution. His defenders have said his actions are lawful, supported by at least the majority of the court's bench, and have served to protect democracy at a time in which it is imperiled.

Harris and Walz reach out to voters in GOP strongholds in southeast Georgia bus tour

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

HINESVILLE, Ga. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, dropped in on a high school band practice Wednesday as part of a two-day bus tour through southeast Georgia, a critical battleground state that Democrats just narrowly won four years ago.

Harris and Walz paid a visit to Liberty County High School in Hinesville, listening to the marching band perform its school fight song and delivering brief remarks to students and faculty on the first day of their Georgia swing, which will culminate in a rally in Savannah on Thursday night.

"We're so proud of you and we're counting on you," Harris told the students, some shrieking with excitement at the sight of the vice president. "Your generation ... is what is going to propel our country into the next era of what we can do and what we can be."

Harris told the students that she, too, played in the band — an aide said the vice president had played the French horn, xylophone and kettle drums.

The visit is part of a two-pronged strategy by the Harris-Walz campaign to make inroads in GOP strong-

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holds and to use smaller, more intimate settings to showcase a softer side of the ticket — which is still relatively unknown by the electorate. Campaign officials believe that in order to beat Republican Donald Trump in the state, they will need more than Atlanta and the suburbs that delivered for Joe Biden in 2020.

Harris campaign communications director Michael Tyler said bus tours offer an “opportunity to get to places we don’t usually go (and) make sure we’re competing in all communities.”

The campaign wants the events to motivate voters in GOP-leaning areas who don’t traditionally see the candidates, and hopes that the engagements drive viral moments that cut through crowded media coverage to reach voters across the country.

Harris and Walz also stopped at Sandfly, a barbecue restaurant outside Savannah, where some of the patrons were teachers. One thanked Walz, a former high school teacher himself.

Tyler said the campaign’s strategy of using informal engagements to reach voters has been consistent from when President Biden was on the ticket, but the nature of the events has shifted along with the candidates. During a bus tour in western Pennsylvania, for example, they stopped at a football practice — Walz is a former assistant high school football coach.

Walz met Harris on the tarmac in Savannah, and the two greeted students from Savannah State University before setting off in their bright blue bus with “Harris Walz” emblazoned in big letters on the side, along with the phrase “A New Way Forward.”

It looks like a regular campaign bus, but this one is an armored U.S. Secret Service vehicle driven by agents that comes with lights and sirens and secure communications. After the first stop, Harris shifted back to her traditional SUV, the bus relegated to the back of the motorcade.

Harris and Walz are also sitting down with CNN anchor Dana Bash for their first joint interview. The interview will air Thursday night.

The Democratic strategy to peel off votes in Republican parts of the state has had some success before. Raphael Warnock, Georgia’s first Black senator, won reelection in 2022 by nearly 3 percentage points — while Biden carried Georgia by only a quarter percentage point about two years earlier — in part by venturing into the deepest red areas. The operatives involved in Warnock’s win are now on Harris’ campaign team.

The Georgia trip is a makeup visit from earlier in the month, when the duo was set to embark on a seven-state swing tour introducing the new Democratic ticket. The North Carolina and Georgia legs of the trip got scrapped as Tropical Storm Debby battered the region.

The easygoing stops were a contrast to a bakery visit last week by Trump’s running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance in Valdosta, Georgia, where he struggled to banter with employees while buying doughnuts and one worker asked to be kept off camera.

During an NBC interview Tuesday, Vance said that he felt terrible for the worker.

“We walked in, and there’s 20 Secret Service agents, and there’s 15 cameras, and she clearly had not been properly warned, and she was terrified, right? I just felt awful for her.”

Vance also said Wednesday that he was among those who spoke with Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp after Trump’s blistering attacks against him at a rally in the state just a few weeks ago. Trump blamed the governor for his narrow 2020 loss in the state, railed against Kemp for not giving in to his false theories of election fraud and attributed his legal problems in the state to Kemp’s not stepping in to stop a local district attorney from prosecuting him.

“I encouraged him to support the president, and he didn’t take much persuasion. He wanted to support the president because he thinks Kamala Harris is going to be a disaster,” Vance said.

Trump changed his tune last week, thanking the governor in a social media post for all his “help and support in Georgia, where a win is so important to the success of our Party and, most importantly, our Country.”

On the eve of Harris’ visit, Kemp told Fox News that Republicans “need to be telling people why they should vote for us, what we’re going to do to make things better than they are right now. And there’s a host of issues that I think you could contrast Kamala Harris and her record.”

“To me, that’s what we need to stay focused on, not some dustup from two or three weeks ago,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Harris campaign launched a new ad across the battleground states, seeking to tie Trump to the conservative "Project 2025."

The first ad asserts that Trump is "out for control" over voters, juxtaposing Trump quotes with ominous screenshots of the plan. It's part of Harris' \$370 million in digital and television ad reservations between Labor Day and Election Day.

Led by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, Project 2025 is a detailed 920-page handbook for governing under the next Republican administration, including ousting thousands of civil servants and replacing them with Trump loyalists and reversing the Food and Drug Administration's approval of medications used in abortions.

Trump has tried to distance himself from Project 2025, though it was drafted by longtime allies and former officials of the Trump administration. Last month, he posted on social media that he had not seen the plan, had "no idea who is in charge of it, and, unlike our very well received Republican Platform, had nothing to do with it."

Trump campaign was warned not to take photos at Arlington before altercation, defense official says

By TARA COPP, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's campaign was warned about not taking photographs before an altercation at Arlington National Cemetery during a wreath-laying ceremony earlier this week to honor service members killed in the Afghanistan War withdrawal, a defense official told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter concerning Monday's events. It came a day after NPR reported, citing a source with knowledge of the incident, that two Trump campaign staff members "verbally abused and pushed" aside a cemetery official who tried to stop them from filming and photographing in Section 60, the burial site for military personnel killed while fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The defense official told the AP that the Trump campaign was warned about not taking photographs in Section 60 before their arrival and the altercation. Trump was at Arlington on Monday at the invitation of some of the families of the 13 service members who were killed in the Kabul airport bombing exactly three years prior.

Arlington National Cemetery is the resting place for more than 400,000 service members, veterans and their families. Cemetery officials said in a statement that "an incident" had occurred and a report had been filed, but it did not address details of what had happened. They declined to share the report.

"Federal law prohibits political campaign or election-related activities within Army National Military Cemeteries, to include photographers, content creators or any other persons attending for purposes, or in direct support of a partisan political candidate's campaign," the cemetery officials' statement said. "Arlington National Cemetery reinforced and widely shared this law and its prohibitions with all participants. We can confirm there was an incident, and a report was filed."

Trump's spokesperson Steven Cheung said the Republican presidential candidate's team was granted access to have a photographer. He contested the allegation that a campaign staffer pushed a cemetery official.

"The fact is that a private photographer was permitted on the premises and for whatever reason, an unnamed individual, clearly suffering from a mental health episode, decided to physically block members of President Trump's team during a very solemn ceremony," he said.

Chris LaCivita, a top Trump campaign adviser, noted that Trump was there at the invitation of the families of the service members who were killed in the airport bombing. The Trump campaign posted a message signed by relatives of two of the service members killed in the bombing that said "the president and his team conducted themselves with nothing but the utmost respect and dignity for all of our service members, especially our beloved children."

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"For a despicable individual to physically prevent President Trump's team from accompanying him to this solemn event is a disgrace and does not deserve to represent the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery," he said in a written statement, misspelling the word hallowed. "Whoever this individual is, spreading these lies are dishonoring the men and women of our armed forces."

Michael Tyler, a spokesperson for Trump's Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, called the reports "pretty sad when it's all said and done."

"This is what we've come to expect from Donald Trump and his team," Tyler said on CNN. "Donald Trump is a person who wants to make everything all about Donald Trump. He's also somebody who has a history of demeaning and degrading military service members, those who have given the ultimate sacrifice."

Democratic U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly of Virginia has called on cemetery officials to release more information about what happened Monday.

"It's sad but all too expected that Donald Trump would desecrate this hallowed ground and put campaign politics ahead of honoring our heroes," he said. "His behavior and that of his campaign is abhorrent and shameful."

Trump's running mate JD Vance was asked about the incident Wednesday at a campaign event in Erie, Pennsylvania, and said that "apparently somebody at Arlington Cemetery, some staff member, had a little disagreement with somebody" and "the media has turned this into a national news story."

He instead tried to focus on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, calling Harris "disgraceful" for not firing anyone for the deaths of service members in the terror attack. "She can go to hell," Vance said.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack.

A Pentagon investigation into the deadly attack concluded that the suicide bomber acted alone and that the deaths of more than 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members were not preventable. But critics have slammed the Biden administration for the catastrophic evacuation, saying it should have started earlier than it did.

Utah Republican Gov. Spencer Cox faced criticism Wednesday for including a photo of him and Trump at the Arlington ceremony in a campaign email soliciting donations for his reelection bid. One of the victims in the suicide bombing was Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover, a Utah resident.

Cox's campaign has apologized for using the photo and politicizing the graveside ceremony.

"This was not a campaign event and was never intended to be used by the campaign," the governor wrote in a post on X. "It did not go through the proper channels and should not have been sent."

Backpage.com founder Michael Lacey sentenced to 5 years in prison, fined \$3M for money laundering

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Michael Lacey, a founder of the lucrative classified site Backpage.com, was sentenced Wednesday to five years in prison and fined \$3 million for a single money laundering count in a sprawling case involving allegations of a yearslong scheme to promote and profit from prostitution through classified ads.

A jury convicted Lacey, 76, of a single count of international concealment money laundering last year, but deadlocked on 84 other prostitution facilitation and money laundering charges. U.S. District Judge Diane Humetewa later acquitted Lacey of dozens of charges for insufficient evidence, but he still faces about 30 prostitution facilitation and money laundering charges.

Authorities say the site generated \$500 million in prostitution-related revenue from its inception in 2004 until it was shut down by the government in 2018.

Lacey's lawyers say their client was focused on running an alternative newspaper chain and wasn't involved in day-to-day operations of Backpage.

But Humetewa told Lacey during Wednesday's sentencing he was aware of the allegations against Backpage and did nothing.

"In the face of all this, you held fast," Humetewa said. "You didn't do a thing."

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Two other Backpage executives, Chief Financial Officer John Brunst and Executive Vice President Scott Spear, also were convicted last year and were each sentenced on Wednesday to 10 years in prison.

The judge ordered Lacey and the two executives to report to the U.S. Marshals Service in two weeks to start serving their sentences.

Prosecutors said the three defendants were motivated by greed, promoted prostitution while masquerading as a legitimate classified business and misled anti-trafficking organizations and law enforcement officials about the true nature of Backpage's business model.

Yvonne Ambrose, whose 16-year-old daughter Desiree Robinson was trafficked in Chicago on Backpage and killed in 2016 by a man who answered an online sex ad, told the judge on Tuesday about the pain she feels from her daughter's death.

"I suffer every day from the loss of my baby," Ambrose said.

Prosecutors said Lacey used cryptocurrency and wired money to foreign bank accounts to launder revenues earned from the site's ad sales after banks raised concerns that they were being used for illegal purposes.

Authorities say Backpage employees would identify prostitutes through Google searches, then call and offer them a free ad. The site also is accused of having a business arrangement in which it would place ads on another site that lets customers post reviews of their experiences with prostitutes.

The site's marketing director has already pleaded guilty to conspiring to facilitate prostitution and acknowledged that he participated in a scheme to give free ads to prostitutes to win over their business. Additionally, the CEO of the company when the government shut the site down, Carl Ferrer, pleaded guilty to a separate federal conspiracy case in Arizona and to state money laundering charges in California.

Two other Backpage employees were acquitted of charges by a jury at the same 2023 trial where Lacey, Brunst and Spear were convicted of some counts.

At trial, the Backpage defendants were barred from bringing up a 2013 memo by federal prosecutors who examined the site and said at the time that they hadn't uncovered evidence of a pattern of recklessness toward minors or admissions from key participants that the site was being used for prostitution.

In the memo, prosecutors said witnesses testified that Backpage made substantial efforts to prevent criminal conduct on its site and coordinated such efforts with law enforcement agencies. The document was written five years before Lacey, Larkin and the other former Backpage operators were charged in the Arizona case.

A Government Accountability Office report released in June noted that the FBI's ability to identify victims and sex traffickers had decreased significantly after Backpage was seized by the government because law enforcement was familiar with the site and Backpage was generally responsive to requests for information.

Prosecutors said the moderation efforts by the site were aimed at concealing the true nature of the ads. Though Lacey and Larkin sold their interest in Backpage in 2015, prosecutors said the two founders retained control over the site.

Paralympic Games opening ceremony starts the final chapter on a long summer of sport in Paris

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Just weeks after hosting the Olympics, Paris inaugurated the 2024 Paralympics on Wednesday with a nearly four-hour-long opening ceremony in the heart of the city.

Against the backdrop of a setting sun, thousands of athletes paraded down the famed Champs-Élysées avenue to Place de la Concorde in central Paris where French President Emmanuel Macron officially declared the Paralympic Games open.

About 50,000 people watched the ceremony in stands built around the iconic square, which is the biggest in Paris and is visible from afar because of its ancient Egyptian Obelisk. Accessibility for athletes in wheelchairs was facilitated with strips of asphalt laid along the avenue and placed over the square.

More than 4,000 athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments will compete in 22 sports

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from Thursday until Sept. 8. Organizers say more than 2 million of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold for the various Paralympic events.

The opening ceremony was held outside the confines of a stadium, just like when the Olympics opened in the city on July 26. Fighter planes flew overhead, leaving red-white-and blue vapors in the colors of the French national flag, before the delegations entered the square in alphabetical order.

Some delegations were huge — more than 250 athletes from Brazil — and some were tiny — less than a handful from Barbados and just three from Myanmar.

Ukraine's delegation got a loud cheer and some of the crowd stood to applaud them.

Flag bearers Steve Serio and Nicky Nieves led the U.S. team's delegation. The French arrived last and to roars from the crowd, which then sang along to popular French songs, including "Que Je T'aime" by late rocker Johnny Hallyday.

Throughout the show, directed by Thomas Jolly who also led the Olympic opening ceremony, singers, dancers and musicians with and without disabilities performed on stage together seamlessly, projecting a theme of inclusion and overcoming physical differences. Lucky Love, a French singer who lost his left arm at birth, was joined by performers in wheelchairs. Other acts featured dancers with crutches.

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said he hoped the Paris Paralympics would start an "inclusion revolution" beyond the field of sport.

"The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games will show what persons with disabilities can achieve at the highest level when the barriers to succeed are removed," he said in a speech. "The fact these opportunities largely exist only in sport in the year 2024 is shocking. It is proof we can and must do more to advance disability inclusion — whether on the field of play, in the classroom, concert hall or in the boardroom."

As the ceremony concluded, the Paralympic torch was carried into the area by former Olympic wheelchair tennis gold medalist Michaël Jérémy, who was surrounded on stage by dozens of torchbearers. Five French Paralympians lit the Olympic cauldron, which is designed to look like a hot air balloon and glowed gold-like in the night.

The Paralympic flag was raised high into the night sky and its emblem adorned the top of the Arc de Triomphe about 3 kilometers (2 miles) away.

Although Wednesday night's show started at 8 p.m. local time, fans had gathered hours earlier under a scorching sun to get top spots along the way. As performers entertained the crowd on stage, volunteers danced alongside Paralympians as they waved their national flags and the sky gave off a postcard-perfect orange glow.

Tony Estanguet, the president of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, called Paralympians "immense champions who we have the honor of being with tonight."

The first medals handed out on Thursday will be in taekwondo, table tennis, swimming and track cycling. Athletes are grouped by impairment levels to ensure as level a playing field as possible.

The closing ceremony will be held at Stade de France, the national stadium.

FAA grounds SpaceX after rocket falls over in flames at landing

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

SpaceX launches are on hold after a booster rocket toppled over in flames while landing Wednesday.

The Federal Aviation Administration grounded the company's Falcon 9 rockets and ordered an investigation following the predawn accident off the Florida coast. No injuries or public damage were reported.

It's too early to know how much impact this will have on SpaceX's upcoming crew flights, one private and the other for NASA. A billionaire's chartered flight was delayed just a few hours earlier because of a poor weather forecast.

The rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station and got all 21 Starlink internet satellites to orbit. But the first-stage booster fell over in a fireball moments after landing on an ocean platform, the first such accident in years. It was the 23rd time this particular booster had launched, a recycling record for SpaceX.

The FAA said it must approve SpaceX's accident findings and corrective action before the company can resume Falcon 9 launches. A launch from California with more Starlinks was immediately called off following the accident.

SpaceX's Jon Edwards, a vice president, said the company is working "ASAP" to understand what went wrong.

"Losing a booster is always sad. Each one of them has a unique history and character. Thankfully this doesn't happen often," Edwards posted on X.

Besides the private spaceflight awaiting liftoff from Florida's Kennedy Space Center, SpaceX is due to launch a pair of astronauts for NASA late next month. Two seats will be set aside for the two astronauts who launched in June aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule, deemed unsafe by NASA for their return.

Supreme Court rebuffs Biden administration plea to restore multibillion-dollar student debt plan

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday kept on hold the latest multibillion-dollar plan from the Biden administration that would have lowered payments for millions of borrowers, while lawsuits make their way through lower courts.

The justices rejected an administration request to put most of it back into effect. It was blocked by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In an unsigned order, the court said it expects the appeals court to issue a fuller decision on the plan "with appropriate dispatch."

The Education Department is seeking to provide a faster path to loan cancellation, and reduce monthly income-based repayments from 10% to 5% of a borrower's discretionary income. The plan also wouldn't require borrowers to make payments if they earn less than 225% of the federal poverty line — \$32,800 a year for a single person.

Last year, the Supreme Court's conservative majority rejected an earlier plan that would have wiped away more than \$400 billion in student loan debt.

Cost estimates of the new SAVE plan vary. The Republican-led states challenging the plan peg the cost at \$475 billion over 10 years. The administration cites a Congressional Budget Office estimate of \$276 billion.

Two separate legal challenges to the SAVE plan have been making their way through federal courts. In June, judges in Kansas and Missouri issued separate rulings that blocked much of the administration's plan. Debt that already had been forgiven under the plan was unaffected.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals issued a ruling that allowed the department to proceed with a provision allowing for lower monthly payments. Republican-led states had asked the high court to undo that ruling.

But after the 8th Circuit blocked the entire plan, the states had no need for the Supreme Court to intervene, the justices noted in a separate order issued Wednesday.

The Justice Department had suggested the Supreme Court could take up the legal fight over the new plan now, as it did with the earlier debt forgiveness plan. But the justices declined to do so.

"This is a recipe for chaos across the student loan system," said Mike Pierce, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center, an advocacy group.

"No court has decided on the merits here, but despite all of that borrowers are left in this limbo state where their rights don't exist for them," Pierce said.

Eight million people were already enrolled in the SAVE program when it was paused by the lower court, and more than 10 million more people are looking for ways to afford monthly payments, he said.

Sheng Li, litigation counsel with the New Civil Liberties Alliance, a legal group funded by conservative donors, applauded the order. "There was no basis to lift the injunction because the Department of Education's newest loan-cancellation program is just as unlawful as the one the Court struck down a year ago," he said in a statement.

Gunman in Trump assassination attempt saw rally as 'target of opportunity,' FBI official says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The gunman in the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump searched online for events of both Trump and President Joe Biden, looked up information about explosives over the last five years and eyed the Pennsylvania campaign rally where he opened fire last month as a "target of opportunity," a senior FBI official said Wednesday.

Investigators who have conducted nearly 1,000 interviews do not yet have a motive for why 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks shot at Trump during a July campaign rally but they believe that he conducted "extensive attack planning," including looking up campaign events involving both the current president and former president, particularly in western Pennsylvania.

The FBI analysis of his online search history reveals a "sustained, detailed effort to plan an attack on some event, meaning he looked at any number of events or targets," Kevin Rojek, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Pittsburgh field office, told reporters Wednesday in the latest in a series of briefings on the investigation.

Once a Trump rally was announced for July 13 in Butler, Pennsylvania, "He became hyper-focused on that specific event and looked at it as a target of opportunity," Rojek said. Crooks' internet searches in the days leading up to the rally included queries about the grounds where the rally was held, "Where will Trump speak from at Butler Farm Show?" "Butler Farm Show podium" and "Butler Farm Show photos."

In the 30 days before the attack, the FBI says, Crooks did more than 60 internet searches related to Biden and Trump, including seeking the dates of both the Democratic and Republican national conventions. FBI Director Christopher Wray has previously revealed that one week before the shooting, Crooks did a Google search for "How far away was Oswald from Kennedy?"

That's an apparent reference to Lee Harvey Oswald, the shooter who killed President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

The new details add to an emerging portrait of Crooks as a highly intelligent and reclusive man who investigators say in the years before the shooting had taken an eerie interest in explosives, violence and prominent public figures but whose internet searches of Democrats and Republicans alike have frustrated efforts to assign a simple political motive or to establish why Trump himself would have been targeted.

"We have a clear idea of mindset, but we are not ready to make any conclusive statements regarding motive at this time," Rojek said. The FBI has also not found that anyone else had advance knowledge of the shooting or that Crooks had conspired with anyone else.

The FBI found explosive devices in his car and home, and investigators say his internet searches revealed that since at least 2019 he had looked up information about bomb-making materials, including about how remote detonators work.

The FBI has said that Trump, the 2024 Republican presidential nominee, was struck in the ear by a bullet or a bullet fragment in the assassination attempt. Crooks fired eight shots from an AR-style rifle. One rallygoer was killed and two others were injured before the gunman, who was positioned on the roof of a building less than 150 yards away, was killed by a Secret Service counter-sniper.

Also Wednesday, the FBI released images of the rifle Crooks used, his backpack and improvised explosive devices found in his car.

Probe is closed into owners of Pulse nightclub, where 49 died in mass shooting

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The Orlando Police Department has closed its investigation into the former owners of the Pulse nightclub without filing any charges. Victims' families and survivors of the killing of 49 patrons at the LGBTQ-friendly club had asked law enforcement to investigate them for possible criminal culpability.

No charges will be filed against former owners Barbara and Rosario Poma because probable cause didn't exist for involuntary manslaughter by culpable negligence, the Orlando police said this week in an emailed statement.

About two dozen people, mostly survivors and family members of those who died in the 2016 shooting, gave statements to investigators. They said that building plans weren't available to first responders during the three hours hostages were held in the club and that unpermitted renovations and building modifications had occurred. They also maintained that the club was likely above capacity, that it had operated for years in violation of its conditional use permit, and that there were security and risk-management failures.

Despite efforts to reach the the Pomas, investigators weren't able to interview them. Sara Brady, a spokesperson for the Pomas, said Wednesday that they aren't issuing a statement.

Investigators concluded that the lack of building plans didn't hamper rescuers, that it was impossible to identify how many people were in the club that night, that the city of Orlando never took any action against Pulse when the nightclub changed its interior, and that there were too many unknowns about how gunman Omar Mateen entered.

None of the Pomas' actions were done "with a reckless disregard for human life," and "they could not have reasonably foreseen or anticipated a terrorist incident taking place at Pulse," investigators wrote in a report.

On its Facebook page, the group Pulse Families and Survivors for Justice called the investigation a "sham" in a post.

"It's really very simple. There should be some accountability and a legitimate investigation. Not this joke report," the post said.

Mateen opened fire during a Latin night celebration on June 12, 2016, leaving 49 dead and 53 wounded. At the time, it was the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Mateen, who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, was killed after a three-hour standoff with police.

The Pulse shooting's death toll was surpassed the following year when 58 people were killed and more than 850 injured among a crowd of 22,000 at a country music festival in Las Vegas.

The city of Orlando purchased the Pulse property last year for \$2 million.

Before the Pomas and another businessperson sold the property, Barbara Poma was the executive director of the onePulse Foundation, the nonprofit that had been leading efforts to build a memorial and museum. The original project, unveiled in 2019 by the onePulse Foundation, called for a museum and permanent memorial costing \$45 million. That estimate eventually soared to \$100 million.

Barbara Poma stepped down as executive director in 2022 and left the organization entirely last year amid conflict-of-interest criticism over her stated desire to sell the Pulse property instead of donating it.

The city has since outlined more modest plans for a memorial. The original idea for a museum has been scrapped, and city leaders formed an advisory board to help determine what the memorial will look like.

What a new indictment means for Donald Trump's federal 2020 election interference case

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Special counsel Jack Smith is pressing forward with his 2020 election interference case against Donald Trump, with a new indictment that aims to salvage the prosecution after the Supreme Court slammed the door on the possibility of a trial before the November election.

The new indictment, filed Tuesday in Washington, includes the same criminal charges, but narrows the allegations in an attempt to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling that former presidents have broad immunity from prosecution.

Here's what to know about the case and what happens next:

Why file a new indictment?

In its ruling last month, the Supreme Court's conservative majority said former presidents are absolutely

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immune from prosecution for official acts that fall within their "exclusive sphere of constitutional authority."

Furthermore, former presidents are at least presumptively immune for other official actions, the Supreme Court said, but prosecutors can try to make the case that those allegations remain part of the indictment. But former presidents do not enjoy immunity for unofficial, or private, actions, the justices said.

As a result, the Supreme Court said Trump is immune from prosecution for conduct involving his interactions with the Justice Department, effectively stripping those allegations from the indictment. The justices sent the case back to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to analyze what other allegations could potentially proceed to trial.

In rewriting the indictment now, Smith's team aims to make that job easier for Chutkan by removing references to allegations it believes could be considered official acts for which Trump could be entitled to immunity.

What's different?

The new indictment does away with any reference to Trump's interactions with Justice Department officials, whom prosecutors alleged he tried to enlist in his failed effort to undo his election loss. Prosecutors alleged Trump tried to use the Justice Department to conduct sham election fraud investigations and send a letter to states falsely claiming that significant fraud had been detected.

The new indictment also deletes details about Trump's communications with certain other federal government officials, like the Director of National Intelligence and senior White House attorneys, who prosecutors say told Trump that his election fraud claims were false.

It also adds language designed to back up prosecutors' contentions that the actions that form the basis of his case were taken by Trump in his personal capacity as a candidate rather than his professional capacity as president.

For example, the new indictment says Trump "had no official responsibilities" related to Congress' certification of the 2020 election, "but he did have a personal interest as a candidate in being named the winner of the election."

The first page of the old indictment refers to Trump as the 45th U.S. president. The new indictment says only that Trump "was a candidate for President of the United States in 2020."

It also deletes references to certain Trump statements made from the White House, like the video Twitter message he had taped from the Rose Garden in which he asked his supporters at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, to go home but reassured them, "We love you, you're very special." But comments Trump made during his speech near the White House before the riot remain in the indictment. That was a "campaign speech at a privately-funded, privately organized political rally," the indictment says.

Smith's team noted that a new grand jury that had not previously heard evidence in the case brought the indictment. That move was likely designed to prevent Trump's lawyers from arguing that the entire case was tainted because the grand jury that brought the original indictment heard evidence the Supreme Court now says must stay out.

What stayed the same?

Trump remains charged with four counts: obstruction of an official proceeding, conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, conspiracy to defraud the U.S. and conspiracy against the right to vote. While the Supreme Court ruled in a different case in June that the Justice Department applied the obstruction charge too broadly against Trump supporters who stormed the Capitol, prosecutors kept that charge against Trump, suggesting they believe it will survive review in his case.

The indictment maintains a slew of allegations against Trump, including that he pressured state officials to subvert the results of the election and participated in a scheme orchestrated by allies to enlist slates of fraudulent electors in battleground states who would falsely attest that Trump had won in those states. Trump "had no official responsibilities related to the convening of legitimate electors or their signing and mailing of their certificates of vote," the new indictment says.

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 President Joe Biden's victory.

What's Trump saying?

Trump acted with predictable fury, railing against the new indictment on his Truth Social platform as an act of "desperation" that has "all the problems of the old Indictment and should be dismissed IMMEDIATELY!"

He also asserted that Smith had revised the original indictment to "circumvent" the Supreme Court ruling, but the exact opposite is true: in paring down the case and the allegations, the special counsel's office was clearly trying to comply with, rather than get around, the spirit of the opinion.

Trump also claimed that by bringing the new indictment, the Justice Department violated an internal "policy" against any investigative action that could affect a campaign within 60 days of an election.

But the reality is more complicated, and the policy he cited about the indictment is actually more an informal and unwritten practice than a hard-and-fast rule.

It is true that longstanding Justice Department guidance cautions against taking overt investigative action in the run-up to an election. Memos from attorneys general issued over the years say prosecutors should never pursue criminal charges or visible steps — such as executing a search warrant — for the purpose of affecting an election.

The goal is to avoid raising fresh allegations against a candidate that the candidate might not have sufficient time to respond to, or that voters might not have enough time to absorb before casting ballots. But that guidance wouldn't seem to be relevant here, in part because the revised indictment doesn't include any new claims against Trump for voters to consider — to the contrary, it actually subtracts allegations against him.

What about the trial and what's next?

The case is now back in Judge Chutkan's hands, but it doesn't mean a trial is going to happen anytime soon. There will likely be months of legal wrangling over which allegations involve official conduct that should be struck from the indictment.

On Friday, Smith's team and Trump's lawyers are due to propose a schedule for future proceedings in light of the Supreme Court's ruling. And the two sides are scheduled to be back in Chutkan's courtroom next week for the first time in months to discuss the path forward.

Trump's lawyers could mount new efforts to dismiss the case. His legal team has sought at every turn to delay the criminal cases against him and may ask for more time to determine the impact of the Supreme Court's ruling.

An Israeli freed from Gaza returns to a Bedouin village targeted for demolition

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

KHIRBET KARKUR, Israel (AP) — An Israeli hostage rescued from Gaza returned to a hero's welcome tinged with a bitter reality: Much of the small village he calls home — Khirbet Karkur — is targeted for demolition.

Qaid Farhad Alkadi, 52, is one of Israel's roughly 300,000 Bedouin Arabs, a poor and traditionally nomadic minority that has a complicated relationship with the government and often faces discrimination. While they are Israeli citizens and some serve in the army, about a third of Bedouins, including Alkadi, live in villages the government considers illegal and wants to tear down.

Since November, about 70% of Khirbet Karkur residents have been told the government plans to raze their homes because they were built without permits in a "protected forest" not zoned for housing, according to a lawyer representing them. Alkadi's family hasn't received a notice, but the looming mass displacement of this close-knit community has cast a pall on what has otherwise been a joyous 24 hours.

"It's so exciting, we didn't know if he'll come back alive or not," said Muhammad Abu Tailakh, the head of Khirbet Karkur's local council and a public health lecturer at Ben Gurion University in nearby Beersheba. "But the good news is also a bit complicated, because of everything that's going on."

Alkadi was greeted by dozens of well-wishers Wednesday — and a crush of media. He was released from

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the hospital and returned home a day after his dramatic rescue, which he recounted in appreciative phone calls with Israel's prime minister and president.

Neighbors and family erected a huge tent in his honor, and served tea and coffee from the early morning as they eagerly awaited his arrival. When the clean-shaven but gaunt Alkadi arrived – seemingly overwhelmed by the attention after 326 days in captivity, some of it an underground tunnel – he spoke with reporters and pleaded with Israeli leaders to free all the hostages.

"It does not matter if they are Arab or Jewish, all have a family waiting for them," said Alkadi, a father of 11 who was kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7 while working as a security guard at a packing plant near the Gaza border.

"They also want to feel the joy," he said. "I hope, I pray an end to this."

Alkadi was one of eight Bedouins abducted on Oct. 7, and three are believed to still be alive in captivity; two teenagers were released, one was accidentally killed by the Israeli army, and one declared dead is still in Gaza.

On Oct. 7, many Bedouins rushed to help attendees of an Israeli music festival, saving hundreds of lives at a time when the army and police were in disarray.

A spokesperson for the Israel Land Authority said that "in light of the situation" it would not serve a demolition notice to the Alkadi family. But it would not comment on the plight of his neighbors or their lawyers' efforts to save their homes.

On Wednesday, most family members and neighbors tried to focus on the good news, rather than legal fights that could drag on for years.

"We need that this problem be resolved so that people here ... receive an appropriate solution that fits the needs of the Bedouins," said Nasser Amran, 59, a friend of Alkadi. "There is no electricity. For water, they bring a pipe from some community, and it arrives here, but it is still difficult to live in a village without water and electricity the way it should be."

Unrecognized villages are not connected to state water, sewage, or electricity infrastructure, and the roads to many, including Khirbet Karkur, are dusty and potholed. Khirbet Karkur is nestled in the shadow of a large dump, and the smell of rotting garbage drifts over the short, squat corrugated metal homes. Piles of construction debris and trash ring the small cluster of dwellings.

Israel's Supreme Court has previously deemed many of the unrecognized Bedouin villages illegal, and the government has said they are trying to bring order to a lawless area and give a better quality of life to the impoverished minority.

For decades, Israel has been trying to convince scattered, off-the-grid Bedouin villagers that it is in their interest to move into government-designated Bedouin townships, where the government can provide them with water, electricity and schools. Bedouin leaders have rejected many proposals, saying they would destroy their lifestyle or send them to less desirable areas.

There have been 1,325 Bedouin homes demolished in the first six months of 2024, a 51% increase over the same period in 2022, according to the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, which tracks demolitions in the Bedouin community.

The increase in demolitions has coincided with the ascendance of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and other members of his party have consistently championed the demolition of illegal Bedouin construction in the Negev desert and Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Ben-Gvir last year traveled to witness a demolition himself, expressing "kudos" and calling the destruction "sacred work."

Abu Tailkha says he and his neighbors want to maintain their rural lifestyle, and the government should officially recognize their villages. He said residents of Khirbet Karkur, who were placed there in the 1950s by the government, would be open to moving to another rural area, but not a city.

The government wants to move them north to Rahat, an urban Bedouin settlement of about 70,000, according to Netta Amar Shiff, a lawyer representing families who received demolition notices. She called it "disgusting cynicism" for the government to say it will not serve Alkadi's family with lawsuits.

"If there's a good reason for one person not to get the notice, there's a good reason for everyone," she said.

Regavim, a right-wing group that studies land issues in Israel and supports the government's relocation plan for Bedouins, said the Bedouin are being offered an excellent deal with free land, and it is in their interest to move in order to receive services that every Israeli citizen is entitled to receive.

"Israel can't provide services to people who just build wherever they want," said Naomi Kahn, the head of Regavim's international division.

The unrecognized villages do not have adequate bomb shelters or a warning system in the case of incoming rockets, and at least 11 Bedouin have been killed by rockets fired into Israel since the war began.

"The entire country is in a war, and I also have to fight this demolition order," said Abu Tailkha, the head of Khirbet Karkur's local council. "

Abu Tailkha said that while the country and its leaders were embracing Alkadi's return, he isn't optimistic real change will occur in their village.

"I think in a bit they will forget about Farhan, and they will send another round of demolition orders," he said.

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

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also been outspoken about racism since the police killing of George Floyd, which sparked major protests 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.”

Donating a kidney is even safer now than long thought, US study shows

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — People who volunteer to donate a kidney face an even lower risk of death from the operation than doctors have long thought, researchers reported Wednesday.

The study tracked 30 years of living kidney donation and found that by 2022, fewer than 1 of every 10,000 donors died within three months of the surgery. Transplant centers have been using older data — citing a risk of 3 deaths per 10,000 living donors — in counseling donors about potentially deadly surgical complications.

“The last decade has become a lot more safe in the operating room for living donors,” said Dr. Dorry Segev, a transplant surgeon at NYU Langone Health. He co-authored the study published in the journal JAMA.

Newer surgical techniques are the key reason, said Segev, calling for guideline updates to reflect those safety improvements — and maybe increase interest in living donation.

He often finds transplant recipients more worried about potential risks to their donors than the would-be donors themselves.

“For them, this is even more reassuring to allow their friends or family to donate on their behalf,” Segev said.

Thousands of people die each year waiting for an organ transplant. It’s possible for living donors to give a one of their two kidneys or part of a liver, the only organ that regenerates.

With nearly 90,000 people on the U.S. list for a kidney transplant, finding a living donor not only shortens the yearslong wait -- those organs also tend to survive longer than ones from deceased donors.

Yet last year, just 6,290 of the nation’s more than 27,000 kidney transplants came from living donors, the most since before the pandemic. Safety isn’t the only barrier to living donation. So is awareness, as many patients are reluctant to ask. And while the recipient’s insurance covers medical bills, some donors face expenses such as travel or lost wages as they recover.

The NYU team analyzed U.S. records of more than 164,000 living kidney donations from 1993 through 2022 and found 36 post-surgical deaths. Most at risk were male donors and those with a history of high blood pressure.

Only five of those deaths occurred since 2013. That period coincided with U.S. transplant centers switching to minimally invasive kidney removal as well as adopting a better way to stop renal artery bleeding, Segev said.

“Over time, it’s a safe operation that’s become even safer,” important for would-be donors to know, said Dr. Amit Tevar of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, who wasn’t involved in the study.

But there are long-term risks to consider, too, he stressed -- including whether a donor’s remaining kidney is expected to last the rest of their life.

The risk of a donor later experiencing kidney failure also is small and depends on such factors as obesity, high blood pressure, smoking and family history of kidney disease. Risk calculators help doctors determine a potential donor’s likelihood of later-in-life trouble, and transplant centers may have slightly different eligibility criteria.

“There’s no such thing as a moderate- or high-risk donor — either you’re perfect or you’re not,” is how Tevar puts the decision to accept or turn away a potential donor.

Doctors once thought young adults were the ideal living donor. But Segev said there’s a shift toward more older living donors because it’s easier to correctly predict that they won’t outlive their remaining kidney.

If a living donor later experiences kidney failure, they get priority for a transplant, he noted.

Congresswomen press FDA on why a proposal to ban hair-straightening chemicals is delayed

By KENYA HUNTER AP Health Writer

Two U.S. House members who first pushed the Food and Drug Administration in 2023 to investigate the health risks of hair straighteners used primarily by Black women are now asking the agency why it has twice delayed its target date to propose a ban on products containing formaldehyde, which studies link to increased rates of cancer.

Democratic Reps. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Shontel Brown of Ohio pressed the FDA in a letter to finalize the proposed rule for banning certain salon-grade and at-home hair straighteners. Rep. Nydia Velazquez of New York joined Pressley and Brown in spearheading the letter, which was dated Tuesday.

The FDA gave notice of a possible rule in 2023 with an initial target date to release the proposal in April. That was then moved to July before jumping to September.

The letter from Pressley, Brown and Velazquez — all of whom are up for re-election this year — asks FDA Commissioner Robert Califf to provide specific reasons for the delay.

Pressley told The Associated Press that Black women look to straightening treatments in part because of hair discrimination.

"If you do a Google search right now of unprofessional work hairstyles, you'll be besieged by images of Black women," said Pressley, who also believes another delay could cause more health issues for communities of color. "Everything from protective styles, Senegalese twists or braids like I wore for many years, or afros or locs ... I just want everyone to be able to show up fully, authentically and unapologetically, without fear and without discrimination."

It isn't uncommon for the FDA to have items on the regulatory agenda for years. For example, the draft of a proposed ban on menthol cigarettes came out in 2022, but the target date on finalizing the rule was pushed back twice before it was indefinitely delayed in April.

When asked about the letter, an FDA spokesperson told the AP that agency officials would respond directly to lawmakers. Last month, the agency said the proposed ban was still among its top priorities and in the rulemaking process, but couldn't comment to the AP on the timing or content of the proposal.

Black women and women of other ethnicities have used chemical hair-straightening treatments for decades, and many of the relaxers, creams and keratin treatments contain formaldehyde — a chemical used in pesticides and to preserve dead bodies.

A 2022 study from the National Institutes of Health found people who used hair straighteners had an increased risk of developing uterine cancer. A 2023 study from Boston University found that postmenopausal women who used relaxers most often had a greater than 50% increased risk of uterine cancer compared to those who seldom used them.

Thousands of lawsuits allege that beauty companies that make some of the hair straighteners misrepresented "health impacts" of the products, and exposed plaintiffs to chemicals that increased the risk of uterine and ovarian cancers. Some also claim they experienced infertility after using the products.

In a social media video from October, the FDA reminded people that no ban was in place yet, and that the agency planned to work with and encourage the cosmetics industry to develop alternative straightening products.

Questions about the safety of Tesla's 'Full Self-Driving' system are growing

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Three times in the past four months, William Stein, a technology analyst at Truist Securities, has taken Elon Musk up on his invitation to try the latest versions of Tesla's vaunted "Full Self-Driving" system.

A Tesla equipped with the technology, the company says, can travel from point to point with little human

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intervention. Yet each time Stein drove one of the cars, he said, the vehicle made unsafe or illegal maneuvers. His most recent test-drive earlier this month, Stein said, left his 16-year-old son, who accompanied him, "terrified."

Stein's experiences, along with a Seattle-area Tesla crash involving Full Self-Driving that killed a motorcyclist in April, have drawn the attention of federal regulators. They have already been investigating Tesla's automated driving systems for more than two years because of dozens of crashes that raised safety concerns.

The problems have led people who monitor autonomous vehicles to become more skeptical that Tesla's automated system will ever be able to operate safely on a widespread scale. Stein says he doubts Tesla is even close to deploying a fleet of autonomous robotaxis by next year as Musk has predicted it will.

The latest incidents come at a pivotal time for Tesla. Musk has told investors it's possible that Full Self-Driving will be able to operate more safely than human drivers by the end of this year, if not next year.

And in less than two months, the company is scheduled to unveil a vehicle built expressly to be a robotaxi. For Tesla to put robotaxis on the road, Musk has said the company will show regulators that the system can drive more safely than humans. Under federal rules, the Teslas would have to meet national standards for vehicle safety.

Musk has released data showing miles driven per crash, but only for Tesla's less-sophisticated Autopilot system. Safety experts say the data is invalid because it counts only serious crashes with air bag deployment and doesn't show how often human drivers had to take over to avoid a collision.

Full Self-Driving is being used on public roads by roughly 500,000 Tesla owners — slightly more than one in five Teslas in use today. Most of them paid \$8,000 or more for the optional system.

The company has cautioned that cars equipped with the system cannot actually drive themselves and that motorists must be ready at all times to intervene if necessary. Tesla also says it tracks each driver's behavior and will suspend their ability to use Full Self-Driving if they don't properly monitor the system. Recently, the company began calling the system "Full Self-Driving" (Supervised).

Musk, who has acknowledged that his past predictions for the use of autonomous driving proved too optimistic, in 2019 promised a fleet of autonomous vehicles by the end of 2020. Five years later, many who follow the technology say they doubt it can work across the U.S. as promised.

"It's not even close, and it's not going to be next year," said Michael Brooks, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety.

The car that Stein drove was a Tesla Model 3, which he picked up at a Tesla showroom in Westchester County, north of New York City. The car, Tesla's lowest-price vehicle, was equipped with the latest Full Self-Driving software. Musk says the software now uses artificial intelligence to help control steering and pedals.

During his ride, Stein said, the Tesla felt smooth and more human-like than past versions did. But in a trip of less than 10 miles, he said the car made a left turn from a through lane while running a red light.

"That was stunning," Stein said.

He said he didn't take control of the car because there was little traffic and, at the time, the maneuver didn't seem dangerous. Later, though, the car drove down the middle of a parkway, straddling two lanes that carry traffic in the same direction. This time, Stein said, he intervened.

The latest version of Full Self-Driving, Stein wrote to investors, does not "solve autonomy" as Musk has predicted. Nor does it "appear to approach robotaxi capabilities." During two earlier test drives he took, in April and July, Stein said Tesla vehicles also surprised him with unsafe moves.

Tesla has not responded to messages seeking a comment.

Stein said that while he thinks Tesla will eventually make money off its driving technology, he doesn't foresee a robotaxi with no driver and a passenger in the back seat in the near future. He predicted it will be significantly delayed or limited in where it can travel.

There's often a significant gap, Stein pointed out, between what Musk says and what is likely to happen.

To be sure, many Tesla fans have posted videos on social media showing their cars driving themselves without humans taking control. Videos, of course, don't show how the system performs over time. Others have posted videos showing dangerous behavior.

Alain Kornhauser, who heads autonomous vehicle studies at Princeton University, said he drove a Tesla

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borrowed from a friend for two weeks and found that it consistently spotted pedestrians and detected other drivers.

Yet while it performs well most of the time, Kornhauser said he had to take control when the Tesla has made moves that scared him. He warns that Full Self-Driving isn't ready to be left without human supervision in all locations.

"This thing," he said, "is not at a point where it can go anywhere."

Kornhauser said he does think the system could work autonomously in smaller areas of a city where detailed maps help guide the vehicles. He wonders why Musk doesn't start by offering rides on a smaller scale.

"People could really use the mobility that this could provide," he said.

For years, experts have warned that Tesla's system of cameras and computers isn't always able to spot objects and determine what they are. Cameras can't always see in bad weather and darkness. Most other autonomous robotaxi companies, such as Alphabet Inc.'s Waymo and General Motors' Cruise, combine cameras with radar and laser sensors.

"If you can't see the world correctly, you can't plan and move and actuate to the world correctly," said Missy Cummings, a professor of engineering and computing at George Mason University. "Cars can't do it with vision only," she said.

Even those with laser and radar, Cummings said, can't always drive reliably yet, raising safety questions about Waymo and Cruise. (Representatives for Waymo and Cruise declined to comment.)

Phil Koopman, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University who studies autonomous vehicle safety, said it will be many years before autonomous vehicles that operate solely on artificial intelligence will be able to handle all real-world situations.

"Machine learning has no common sense and learns narrowly from a huge number of examples," Koopman said. "If the computer driver gets into a situation it has not been taught about, it is prone to crashing."

Last April in Snohomish County, Washington, near Seattle, a Tesla using Full Self-Driving hit and killed a motorcyclist, authorities said. The Tesla driver, who has not yet been charged, told authorities that he was using Full Self-Driving while looking at his phone when the car rear-ended the motorcyclist. The motorcyclist was pronounced dead at the scene, authorities reported.

The agency said it's evaluating information on the fatal crash from Tesla and law enforcement officials. It also says it's aware of Stein's experience with Full Self-Driving.

NHTSA also noted that it's investigating whether a Tesla recall earlier this year, which was intended to bolster its automated vehicle driver monitoring system, actually succeeded. It also pushed Tesla to recall Full Self-Driving in 2023 because, in "certain rare circumstances," the agency said, it can disobey some traffic laws, raising the risk of a crash. (The agency declined to say if it has finished evaluating whether the recall accomplished its mission.)

As Tesla electric vehicle sales have faltered for the past several months despite price cuts, Musk has told investors that they should view the company more as a robotics and artificial intelligence business than a car company. Yet Tesla has been working on Full Self-Driving since at least 2015.

"I recommend anyone who doesn't believe that Tesla will solve vehicle autonomy should not hold Tesla stock," he said during an earnings conference call last month.

Stein told investors, though, they should determine for themselves whether Full Self-Driving, Tesla's artificial intelligence project "with the most history, that's generating current revenue, and is being used in the real world already, actually works."

Sweaty corn is making it even more humid

By MELINA WALLING Associated Press

Barb Boustead remembers learning about corn sweat when she moved to Nebraska about 20 years ago to work for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and found herself plunked down in an ocean of corn. The term for the late-summer spike in humidity from corn plants cooling themselves was

"something that locals very much know about," Boustead, a meteorologist and climatologist, recalled.

But this hallmark of Midwestern summer might be growing stickier thanks to climate change and the steady march of industrial agriculture. Climate change is driving warmer temperatures and warmer nights and allowing the atmosphere to hold more moisture. It's also changed growing conditions, allowing farmers to plant corn further north and increasing the total amount of corn in the United States.

Farmers are also planting more acres of corn, in part to meet demand for ethanol, according to the USDA's Economic Research Service. It all means more plants working harder to stay cool — pumping out humidity that adds to steamy misery like that blanketing much of the U.S. this week.

It's especially noticeable in the Midwest because so much corn is grown there and it all reaches the stage of evapotranspiration at around the same time, so "you get that real surge there that's noticeable," Boustead said.

Dennis Todey directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Midwest Climate Hub, which works to help producers adapt to climate change. He said corn does most of its evapotranspiration — the process of drawing water up from the soil, using it for its needs and then releasing it into the air in the form of vapor — in July, rather than August.

He said soybeans tend to produce more vapor than corn in August.

Todey said more study is necessary to understand how climate change will shape corn sweat, saying rainfall, crop variety and growing methods can all play a part.

But for Lew Ziska, an associate professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University who has studied the effects of climate change on crops, warmer conditions mean more transpiration. Asked whether more corn sweat is an effect of climate change, he said simply, "Yes."

He also noted increasing demand for corn to go into ethanol. Over 40% of corn grown in the U.S. is turned into biofuels that are eventually guzzled by cars and sometimes even planes. The global production of ethanol has been steadily increasing with the exception of a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data from the Renewable Fuels Association.

The consumption of ethanol also contributes to planet-warming emissions.

"It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that it's been getting hotter. And as a result of it getting hotter, plants are losing more water," Ziska said.

A Russian missile hits the Ukrainian president's home city as it mourns deaths in an earlier attack

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile slammed into Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home city on Wednesday, local authorities said, just as Kryvyi Rih 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 eight people, local administration head Oleksandr Vilkul said on social media.

Tuesday's attack, which also wounded five people, 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 aerial attacks on Ukraine on Monday, firing more than 100 missiles and a similar number of drones in its biggest onslaught in weeks.

The intensified 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 a final body under the rubble. The rescue operation then 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.

A Ukrainian security official told The Associated Press that an operation by the country's military intelligence agency, known by its acronym GUR, struck oil depots in Russia's Rostov and Kirov regions Wednesday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly about the strikes, did not provide further details. It would be the first known Ukrainian attack on the Kirov region, which is about 950 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of the Ukrainian border.

The governor of Kirov, Alexander Sokolov, said three Ukrainian drones fell near an oil depot in the region but didn't damage it.

Church sex abuse scandals in East Timor met by silence, but Pope Francis' visit brings new attention

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 Tjyske 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 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

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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." 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.

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"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 Conceixao.

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 Conceixao, 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 Conceixao 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."

Today in History: August 29, Hurricane Katrina strikes Louisiana

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 29, the 242nd day of 2024. There are 124 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S. Gulf Coast near Buras-Triumph, Louisiana, breaching levees and spurring floods that devastated New Orleans. The costliest storm in U.S. history, Katrina caused nearly 1,400 deaths and an estimated \$200 billion in damage.

Also on this date:

In 1814, during the War of 1812, Alexandria, Virginia, formally surrendered to British military forces, which occupied the city until September 3.

In 1825, the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro was signed by Portugal and Brazil, officially ending the Brazilian War of Independence.