

Groton Daily Independent

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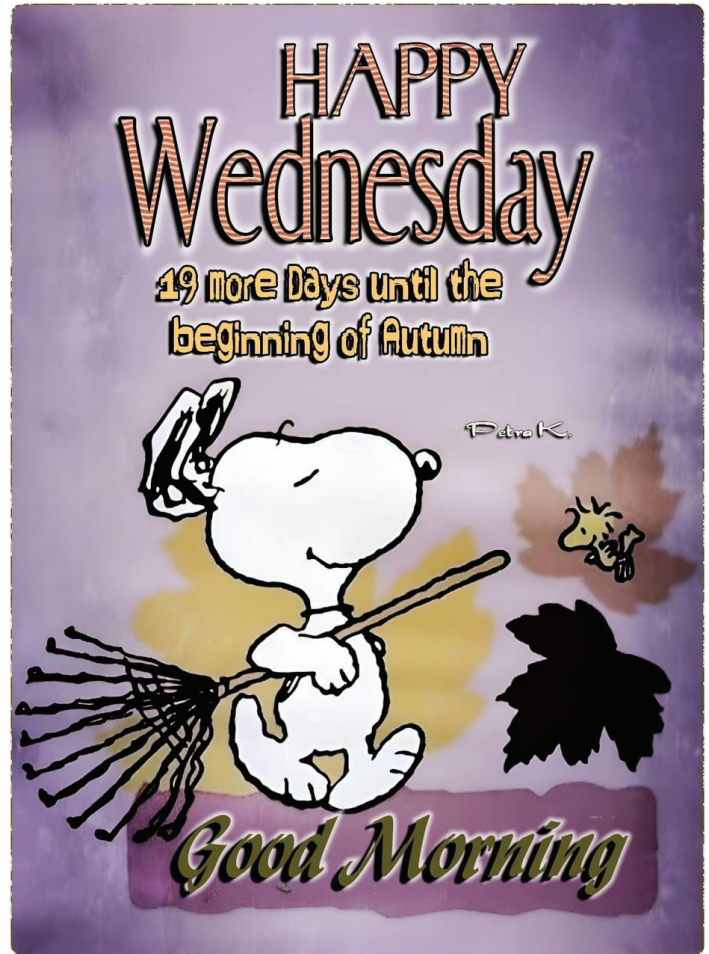
Wednesday, Sept. 4

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.

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.

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



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.

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 Jamboree

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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.

Deadly Blast in Ukraine

Russian airstrikes on a Ukrainian military institute and nearby hospital yesterday killed at least 50 people and wounded 270 others. The strike on the central Ukrainian city of Poltava is considered the war's deadliest single attack this year.

Meanwhile, five of Ukraine's ministers resigned as part of another government shake-up, leaving more than a third of the country's cabinet vacant after other resignations and dismissals earlier in the year. Fighting in the 2.5-year war has intensified since last month. Ukraine has continued its cross-border offensive into Russia, having seized at least 500 miles of territory, while Russia has advanced into eastern Ukraine.

Separately, Mongolia welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin for a state visit, ignoring an arrest warrant for Putin issued by the International Criminal Court last year. Mongolia is among 124 nations that are members of the court and is required by international law to comply with the warrant. Mongolia, which relies on Russia for fuel, could face consequences for failing to do so.

Congo Jailbreak Attempt

At least 129 people are dead and 59 others injured after an attempted escape from a prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital yesterday. Roughly two dozen people were shot by guards as they sought to break out, while the remainder of the dead were reportedly killed in a subsequent crowd surge and fire.

The Makala Central Prison in Kinshasa, Congo's capital on the Congo River in Central Africa, was built in 1957 when the country was still under Belgian rule. The capital's sole prison facility is designed to hold 1,500 prisoners but houses nearly 12,000 inmates—70% of whom haven't yet faced trial. Rights advocates have long condemned the facility as unsafe. Prisoners reportedly attempted to break out of their cells amid a power outage that had cut off fans and water access in 90 degree heat. Officials estimated roughly 500 inmates died last year from suffocation and disease in the facility.

The incident comes as the country of 100 million people also responds to an mpox outbreak and a resurgence in its three-decade civil conflict.

'Dieselgate' Trial Begins

Former Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn's criminal trial for his role in the so-called "dieselgate" scandal began yesterday, nine years after the German automotive giant was accused of rigging emissions tests. Winterkorn, 77, faces charges of fraud, market manipulation, and perjury. If found guilty, he could face up to 10 years in prison. He has denied all charges.

In September 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency accused Volkswagen of installing illegal software, dubbed "defeat devices," in diesel cars to manipulate emissions tests to pass environmental standards. The device could switch off a car's emissions control system while driving on the road and reactivate it during emissions testing on a dynamometer. When shut off, the defeat devices allowed nitrogen oxide emissions up to 40 times higher than the legal limit.

Roughly 11 million vehicles worldwide were equipped with the software and the scandal cost Volkswagen over \$38B in fines and compensation.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

UK government to investigate Ticketmaster over its "dynamic pricing" following soaring opening day prices for Oasis' reunion concert.

US judge puts temporary hold on former President Donald Trump's campaign from using popular Isaac Hayes song amid lawsuit by the late singer's estate.

James Darren, former teen idol known for starring roles in "Gidget" and "T.J. Hooker," dies at age 88.

Georgia leads first regular season AP college football Top 25 poll after Week 1 games; Ohio State and Texas round out the top three.

Science & Technology

Clearview AI fined \$34M by Dutch regulators for violating European privacy laws; officials say company collected biometric information via facial images without getting consent.

SpaceX Polaris Dawn mission officially cleared to launch, scheduled to blast off Friday; fully private flight will take humans roughly 870 miles away from the Earth's surface.

Scientists map genome of the Entomophthora muscae fungus, capable of turning flies into zombies; study is expected to shed light on how simple organisms ultimately control behavior in others.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -2.1%, Dow -1.5%, Nasdaq -3.3%), driven by economic reports indicating slowdown in manufacturing sector.

Rite Aid emerges from Chapter 11 bankruptcy as private company, names its chief financial officer as next CEO.

Costco membership price increase goes into effect for first time in seven years.

Hilton, Hyatt, and Marriott experience staffing shortages amid strike; around 10,000 hotel workers are striking in at least seven cities, seeking better pay.

Politics & World Affairs

Former aide to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) arrested, charged with acting as a Chinese spy; allegations include blocking Taiwanese officials from access to Hochul's office, revising statements to align with Chinese interests.

US Justice Department charges Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, five other senior militants with terrorism and other crimes in connection with Oct. 7 raid; Sinwar is believed to be hiding in Gaza's tunnels.

The UK suspends 30 of its 350 arms export licenses with Israel, impacting sales of fighter jets, drones, helicopters.

Migrant boat capsizes in English Channel, killing at least 12 people, most from the East African nation of Eritrea; more than 2,000 people have traveled to Britain on migrant boats in the past week, per UK government figures.

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We'll work around your schedule!
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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"

City Council meeting highlights infrastructure concerns

by Elizabeth Varin

Costly replacement of aging electric meters, plans to enhance the city's wastewater system and discussion of a new stop sign took up a majority of discussion at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

However, decisions on the critical updates to the city's infrastructure were tabled as the council waits for more information.

To spend \$54,000 or to spend \$343,000

A partial electric meter changeout led discussion Tuesday evening.

The city currently has a power-line based system, but issues are coming up that warrant a change in the meters, said Technology Specialist Paul Kosel. There is more interference on the line, which doesn't allow for remote reading of the meters. Instead, Kosel said, about 80 meters so far have to be manually checked each month in locations scattered around town.

Support for power line carriers is also going away next year, he added.

The city already has some of the equipment in place to transition over to new meters that have two-way communication between the city's system and individual household meters, he said. That would include putting an antenna up at City Hall and at the north substation. It would also mean purchasing or refurbishing the individual electrical meters.

"For minimal cost, we can do this in segments, in steps," he said. "So instead of doing the whole thing at one time, we can just say, 'Hey! Let's get these 80 meters taken care of right now. Get them so we can read them. We can deal with the rest of them at a later time when we have more money.'"

The cost to replace the 80 meters that can't be read remotely would total about \$54,000, he said. Much of that would be one-time set up costs that won't need to be paid when the later meters are replaced. If the city were to replace all 900 meters in town, it would cost about \$343,000.

Councilman Brian Bahr said it looks as if the city would be saving money per meter overall if it bought all the meters together.

Councilwoman Karyn Babcock agreed, asking if the city were to agree to purchase all 900 meters, would payments be able to be spread through a couple of years.

However, Councilman Kevin Nehls said he thinks it would be smarter to replace those that aren't working right now.

"If we do it all at once, we might run into the situation where they all start failing at the same time," he said. "At least this way, we're staging it in some way."

Bahr asked that the electric meter seller come to an upcoming meeting to get more specifics on pricing and such.

Price tag close to final for wastewater improvement options

Another decision that will come at an upcoming meter revolves around the city's wastewater system.

Ken Hier, senior civil designer at IMEG Corp., gave an update on the wastewater system study that has been ongoing this year.

Price points for two of the options were presented. The cost to replace the Aspen Lift Station and add an additional force main is likely to cost \$3.892 million. And adding a new wastewater cell and wetlands to deal with aeration issues would cost close to \$2.695 million.

"Our costs are getting pretty finalized here," Hier said.

He added that IMEG Corp. will be back at the city's September 17 meeting with some recommendations, and a decision is going to be needed soon if the city wants to get paperwork in to the Department of Natural Resources to secure possible grant or loan funding.

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Stop sign discussion tabled

The council discussed whether a stop sign should be added at North Third Street and East Fourth Avenue. There is an east-west facing pair of stop signs at that intersection, but a resident approached the city about possibly adding a north-south facing stop sign too.

That road going north and south is a "cut-through" road where people can potentially speed through without hitting traffic signs, said Councilwoman Karyn Babcock.

"I don't have a problem putting a stop sign there," she said. "It would get people to slow down. ...It won't hurt people to stop one more time."

Councilman Kevin Nehls asked if there have been any issues at that intersection, and the council received data from the state Department of Public Safety saying there has only been one crash report at that spot from 2013 to 2023.

However, that crash referenced did not actually occur at that intersection, but rather at East Fourth Avenue and Main Street, according to the document presented to the council.

Councilman Brian Bahr was quick to add, "I think we have enough stop signs in town," adding that intersection doesn't have any apparent issues as there is no obstructed view or anything like that.

Nehls asked that discussion be tabled in order to get Police Chief Stacy Mayou's opinion on the matter.

- The council looked at adding two swinging gates to the street next to the soccer fields on the west side of town. Those gates would be able to close the street during soccer games.
- An insurance adjuster is set to come to town to check on damage at the Community Center. The city is looking at giving the building some TLC, but the council asked that the insurance company be called first in case some of the roof damage is due to hail in the past year.

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Groton Area - Junior Varsity - Tigers Football Stats

September 3, 2024

Questions call Tom Woods – Groton Volunteer Stat Guy 605-397-7565

Location: Edgeley ND

	<u>Quarter Scores</u>			<u>Final</u>	
Groton Area	0	0	0	0	- 0
Ellendale / Edgeley Kulm	0	6	8	8	- 22

Groton Area Tigers

EEK Thunder

First Downs: 1

First Downs: 10

Rushing: Team Carries - 14
Team Yards - 21

Rushing: Team Carries - 29
Team Yards - 56

Individual Rushing Leaders

Individual Rushing Leaders

Player	Carries	Yards
Skyler Godel	6	- 11
Ryder Schelle	5	- 8
Lincoln Krause	1	- 2
Brady Small	2	- 0

Player	Carries	Yards
Tate Mathern	14	- 29
Jaeger Sand	11	- 25
Ethan Taszarek	1	- 2
Brady Hanson	3	- 0

Team Passing:

Completed 4 of 12 for 29 yards 0TD 1Int

Team Passing:

Completed 6 of 10 for 82 yards 1TD 0 Int

Individual:

Bradyn Small 3 of 11 for 29 yards 0 TD 1 Int
Alex Abeln 0 of 1

Individual:

Jaeger Sand – All

Receiving:

Ryder Schelle - 3 catches for 26 yds
Skyler Godel - 1 catch for 3 yds

Receiving:

Brady Hanson - 2 catches for 66 yards
Luke Nitschke - 1 catch for 7 yards
Ethan Taszarek - 1 catch for 5 yards
Ross Fredenburg - 1 catch for 4 yards
Tate Mathern - 1 catch for 0 yards

Fumbles: Had 1 Lost 1

Fumbles: Had 0 Lost 0

Penalties: 2 for 15 Yards Lost

Penalties: 1 for 5 Yards Lost

Defensive Leaders: (tackles, sacks, fumbles recovered, Int's)

Isaiah Scepaniak 9 tackles (1 sack)(3 for -7)
Ben Hoeft 7 tackles
Gunner Hardy 5 tackles (3 for -11)
Hunter Aden 5 tackles
Blake Lord 4 tackles (1 sack -5)
Skyler Godel 4 tackles (1 sack -4)
Ryder Schelle 3 tackles
Gavin Kroll 3 tackles
Lincoln Krause 3 tackles
Alex Abeln 2 tackles
Brysen Sadness 2 tackles
John Bisbee 1 tackle

Defensive Leaders: (tackles, sacks, fumbles recovered, Int's)

Tate Mathern 7 tackles
Ethan Taszarek 5 tackles
Ross Fredenburg 5 tackles
Brayan Vega 3 tackles
Ty Lloyd 2 tackles
Luke Nitschke 1 tackle
Drew Nitschke 1 tackle
Brysen Sandness 1 tackle

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Junior University
SCORING: Groton 0 vs Ellendale/
Edgeley/
Kilm 22 @ Edgeley

FIRST QUARTER

Date: 9-3-24

Time	Points	Play

SECOND QUARTER

Time	Points	Play
:31	6	EEK Jaeger Sand 3yd Run Tate Mathern Run Failed

THIRD QUARTER

Time	Points	Play
7:24	8	EEK Brady Hanson 23yd Pass Jaeger Sand Luke Nitschke 2pt Pass Jaeger Sand

FOURTH QUARTER

Time	Points	Play
5:55	8	EEK Tate Mathern 7yd Run Tate Mathern 2pt Run

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#	Name	Grade	Ellendale / Edgeley /Kulm – Thunder Football				
2	Tobias Duncan	12	Groton Area Tigers				
3	Joseph Kramlich	12					
4	Brogan Young	10					
5	Luke Nitschke	10					
6	Nash Nitschke	9					
7	Brayan Vega	9					
8	Jaeger Sand	9					
10	Ty Lloyd	9					
11	Micah Girard	9					
12	Drew Thorpe	10					
14	Walker Miller	10					
21	Max Tjernlund	12					
22	Damian Carlson	12					
24	Brady Hanson	10					
26	Ivan Carruth	11					
33	Tate Mathern	9					
34	Ethan Taszarek	9					
36	Benet Giesler	10					
40	Jano Wiehahn	9					
50	Porter Glynn	11					
51	Elijah Gonzalez	11					
55	Eli Klusmann	12					
56	Drew Nitschke	11					
57	Seth Irey	10					
58	Devin Olson	9					
60	Tucker Hahne	12					
61	Jaden Rascon	9					
64	Ross Fredenburg	10					
65	Drew Entzi	10					
70	Gregory Fuher	12					
71	Ludwig Willmers	10					
73	Anderson Rodriguez Campos	11					
80	Briggs Schlosser	9					
#	Name	Year	Position	Ht	Wt		
0	Keegen Tracy	JR	WR/DB	6'1"	175		
1	Kellen Antonsen	SR	WR/DB	5'9"	170		
2	Lincoln Krause	JR	WR/S	5'7"	140		
3	Conner Glines	JR	TE/LB	6'2"	180		
4	Ryder Johnson	JR	QB/S	6'4"	170		
5	Caden McInerney	SR	WR/LB	6'0"	185		
6	Ryder Schelle	FR	RB/LB	6'0"	170		
7	Taylor Diegel	SR	WR/DB	5'11"	165		
8	Brevin Fliehs	SR	RB/LB	5'9"	180		
9	Korbin Kucker	SR	RB/LB	5'11"	180		
10	Skyler Godel	SO	RB/DB	5'9"	155		
11	Joao Nunes	JR	K	5'6"	120		
12	Brady Small	JR	QB/DB	5'11"	140		
14	Alex Abeln	FR	QB/DB	5'7"	135		
16	Ale Jativa	SO	K	5'8"	150		
17	Shaydon Wood	FR	WR/DB	5'11"	150		
18	T.C. Schuster	FR	WR/DB	5'10"	130		
20	Gavin Kroll	SO	WR/LB	5'9"	165		
21	Brody Lord	SO	TE/DE	6'0"	155		
24	Christian Ehresmann	SR	RB/LB	5'11"	170		
25	Blake Lord	SO	TE/DE	6'0"	155		
26	Nick Morris	SR	RB/LB	5'10"	180		
28	John Bisbee	FR	WR/DB	5'10"	140		
32	Karsten Jeschke	SR	FB/LB	6'0"	175		
34	Caleb Mertz	SR	TE/LB	5'11"	185		
35	Noah Scepaniak	FR	WR/DB	5'5"	115		
42	Brysen Sandness	FR	OG/DT	5'6"	160		
44	Ben Hoeft	JR	TE/LB	6'0"	170		
48	Easten Ekern	SR	WR/LB	6'0"	180		
50	Ryder Smith	SR	OT/DT	6'3"	260		
51	Charlie Frost	JR	OT/DT	5'11"	220		
52	Tucker Hardy	JR	OG/DT	5'11"	235		
53	Logan Warrington	JR	OT/DE	6'2"	210		
54	Payton Mitchell	SR	C/LB	5'10"	180		
55	Gunner Hardy	FR	OG/DT	5'11"	205		
56	Gavin Englund	JR	OG/DT	6'0"	245		
57	Cason Okroi	SO	OT/DT	6'2"	210		
58	Jonas Friedman	SR	OT/DT	5'7"	220		
59	Layne Johnson	FR	C/DT	5'10"	180		
60	Isaiah Scepaniak	SO	OG/DT	5'11"	195		
62	Braeden Fliehs	FR	OG/LB	5'11"	180		
64	Drew Thurston	SR	OG/DT	5'8"	200		
65	Hunter Aden	FR	OT/DT	6'0"	255		
66	Karter Moody	JR	OT/DT	6'4"	285		
68	Jaeger Kampa	SR	OT/DE	6'3"	215		
72	Landon Smith	JR	OG/DT	6'0"	240		
98	Ashton Holmes	SO	OG/DT	5'10"	220		

Netters beat Ipswich in three sets

Groton Area's volleyball team posted a 3-0 win over Ipswich in action played in Groton.

Groton Area won the first set, 25-14, never trailing. Taryn Traphagen had four kills and a shared block with sister Faith Traphagen in the first set. Ipswich kept the second set close with the set being tied nine times and there were five lead changes. Groton Area scored the last four points to post the 25-22 win. Rylee Dunker had four kills and two blocks and Chesney Weber had five kills for Groton Area. After three ties and two lead changes, Groton Area took over the third set and went on to win, 25-19. Laila Roberts had three kills and a block and Chesney Weber had three kills and an ace serve in that set.

Weber led Groton Area with nine kills, two ace serves, eight sets and one block.

Dunker had five kills and three blocks. Taryn Traphagen had six kills and one block. Laila Roberts had five kills, 10 digs and one block. Faith Traphagen had three kills and two blocks. Jaedyn Penning had two ace serves and 10 digs. Elizabeth Flihs had 17 assists and two ace serves. Jerica Locke had 13 digs.

Ipswich was led by Marley Guthmiller with six kills, one block, 24 digs and one ace serve. Natalie Crissman had three blocks and two ace serves. Brianna Geditz had two ace serves and 28 digs.

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-12, 23-25 and 15-10. Groton Area made it a clean sweep, winning the C match, 25-17 and 25-19.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms, The Meathouse in Andover.



Chelsea Hansen and Jenna Strom were getting the court ready for the first volleyball team. They are putting the white tape down on the floor. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

The Life of Pauline Luce



Memorial services for Pauline Luce, 65, of Groton will be 2:00 p.m., Monday, September 9th at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Rev. Justin Brotzel will officiate. Inurnment will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton.

Pauline passed away Tuesday, September 3, 2024 at her home surrounded by family.

Pauline Jean Luce was born on April 10, 1959, in Aberdeen to Eugene and Ruby (Hofer) Luce. She grew up in a loving household with her parents and her two sisters, Vicki and Bonnie. Pauline was baptized and confirmed in the United Methodist Church in Groton. She attended and graduated from Groton High School in 1977. Throughout her life, she was employed at Data Control, Shedahl's, RBE Electronics, and she finished her career at Banner Engineering. Pauline retired in March of 2021, just in time for March Madness and cheering on her Michigan State Spartans, something she always enjoyed!

Pauline was known for her warm smile and kind heart. She touched the lives of many with her generosity and spirit, leaving a lasting impact on those who knew her. Family was the most important thing to Pauline. She always put others before herself and never missed an event or opportunity to support her nieces and nephews. Pauline greatly loved and cared for her parents, making their wellbeing a priority in her life. Her legacy of compassion and friendship will live on in the hearts of those she cherished.

Celebrating her life is her mother, Ruby Luce of Groton, her sisters, Vicki (Bill) Podoll of Aberdeen, Bonnie (Ron) Gemar of Moberge, her nephews and nieces, Christopher (Caitlin) Podoll, Jennifer (Brock) Pashen, Stephen Gemar and Stephanie Gemar, her great nieces and nephews, Sawyer Podoll, Hadlie and Beckett Pashen, and her only surviving aunt and uncle, Jerry and Sally Hofer (godmother) of Aberdeen. Pauline is also survived by many cousins.

Preceding her in death was her father, Gene, her maternal and paternal grandparents, several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be her nieces and nephews.



Pictured are Becker Bosma, Jace Johnson, Brevin Flihs, Logan Pearson, Carter Simon and Jayden Schwan. (Courtesy Photo)

Flihs medals at Hub City golf meet

Brevin Flihs placed 12th with a score of 78 at the Hub City Golf Meet held Tuesday. Carter Simon was 20th with an 81. Logan Pearson was 22nd with an 84. Jace Johnson was 25th with a score of 85. Becker Bosma was 36th with a 91. Jayden Schwan was 44th with a 96.

Watertown won the team title with 294 followed by Pierre with 298, Aberdeen Roncalli 323, Aberdeen Central 326, Groton Area 328, Brookings 350, Milbank 356, Sisseton 379 and Redfield 400.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Abortion ballot measure challenge on course for late September trial

Amendment supporters had hoped to see a judge dismiss case; issue will appear on ballots regardless of lawsuit's outcome

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 3:28 PM

SIOUX FALLS — A lawsuit against South Dakota's abortion-rights ballot question won't end before voting begins, according to rulings issued Tuesday.

A Minnehaha County judge declined to dismiss the litigation, with a trial set to begin Sept. 23, three days after early voting starts.

The abortion rights measure, Amendment G, will be on the Nov. 5 general election ballot regardless of the outcome. That's because the case wasn't decided by Aug. 13, the deadline to certify copies of all ballot questions to county auditors. By then, South Dakota Secretary of State Monae Johnson's office had reviewed petition signatures for Amendment G and certified it for inclusion on the ballot.

The seven-day trial in the lawsuit, which challenges the validity of those petition signatures, could affirm the measure's place on the ballot or invalidate it. An invalidation of the measure would negate the votes cast for and against it.

Life Defense Fund, an anti-abortion organization led by Leslee Unruh and Dell Rapids Republican Rep. Jon Hansen, sued the amendment's sponsor Dakotans for Health in June, saying the group ran afoul of several provisions of state law on petitions.

Dakotans for Health had hoped to see Judge John Pekas toss the case a second time after the South Dakota Supreme Court overturned his initial dismissal of the lawsuit.

Dakotans for Health: Lawsuit aims to interfere with rights of voters

Dakotans for Health lawyer James Leach, of Rapid City, argued Tuesday morning that a trial on a ballot measure this close to the election amounts to election interference and has the potential to damage voter confidence in an era when some citizens are already convinced that the system is corrupt.

Courts, he said, "should not contribute to that perception."

"They're asking for something I hope makes a little shudder run through you, which is to declare that the ballot measure is invalid, and that no one's vote should count," Leach said.

The trial is set to begin Sept. 23. That would not leave enough time for his side to appeal a loss to the state Supreme Court before ballots are cast, which he said would leave South Dakotans in the lurch as to whether their votes would count.

He also said there's no precedent for such a ruling so close to an election. No local court in the country has ever invalidated a ballot measure after ballots have been printed, he claimed.

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In court filings, Life Defense Fund cited several cases on ballot question challenges, including one in which the Hawaii Supreme Court upended a ballot question a few weeks before an election. But Leach said that situation is different, in that the supreme court in Hawaii made the final ruling.

Here, Leach said, there would be an opportunity to appeal to the South Dakota Supreme Court, but it's unrealistic to expect the high court would be able to offer a ruling by Nov. 5 that would give voters confidence in the validity of their vote on abortion.

Life Defense Fund: Challenge proper to protect integrity of ballot initiatives

Sarah Frankenstein, however, who represents Life Defense Fund, said there is plenty of precedent on ballot question challenges, including from the South Dakota Supreme Court. In 2021, after the 2020 election, the justices overturned a voter-backed constitutional amendment legalizing both recreational and medical marijuana because, they decided, it ran counter to a constitutional amendment restricting ballot measures to a single issue.

Medical marijuana is legal in South Dakota thanks to a separate ballot initiative that also passed in 2020.

In the pot case, Frankenstein argued, the Supreme Court noted that ballot question challenges could come either before or after an election, even as its ruling on the cannabis issue came after the election.

Frankenstein accused Dakotans for Health of engaging in "gamesmanship" by attempting to block the release of evidence and repeatedly arguing for dismissal.

"They want to run out the clock so they can say, 'Now it's too close to the election, we can't do anything,'" Frankenstein said.

With regard to election integrity and voter confidence, Frankenstein said Dakotans For Health is standing in the way by preventing Life Defense Fund from challenging the validity of signatures.

If laws are violated to get an amendment on the ballot, she argued, the courts have a responsibility to step in.

"The Supreme Court in our state and in other states have ruled that the courts can weigh in on elections," Frankenstein said.

Judge: Case can proceed

Pekas said he needed to focus on the motions at hand, in spite of the weighty rhetoric on democracy. Listening to Leach, he said, made him feel like Atlas with the world on his shoulders, "as though the election will go spinning into the ether" if he doesn't toss the case.

He denied the motion to dismiss, noting that the state Supreme Court had returned the case with the intention of creating a record after his earlier dismissal, which did not consider the merits of the arguments.

Pekas also ordered that some of the petitioners Life Defense Fund is deposing in the case produce emails from Dakotans for Health outlining their training. But he ruled in favor of Dakotans for Health on the issue of text messages. Life Defense Fund had requested all text communications between the petitioners and Dakotans For Health since Jan. 1, 2022.

Leach argued that the text records amount to a "classic fishing expedition" and said there would be First Amendment implications.

Pekas didn't rule on the First Amendment arguments, but did agree to block the text message request.

"I believe that would be overly burdensome," Pekas said.

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.

Wildfire burns west of Rapid City; residents urged to stay alert

BY: SETH TUPPER - SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 2:58 PM

RAPID CITY — Authorities are advising some residents on the western edge of Rapid City to be ready for a potential evacuation order as a wildfire burns nearby.

A pre-evacuation notice was in effect Tuesday morning.

"We're not evacuating anybody right now," said Lt. Jason Mitzel of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. "However, I would urge the public that lives in the vicinity to be prepared, and get documents, medications and animals ready to go, just in case the wind switches and the fire does expand."

Mitzel said some of the areas of concern include neighborhoods along Sheridan Lake Road from Norseman Lane to Victoria Lake Road, as well as the Red Rock, Dark Canyon, Falling Rock and Hisega residential areas. By Tuesday morning, authorities had closed Norseman Lane and Victoria Lake Road from Sheridan Lake Road to Taylor Ranch Road, and additional closures were under consideration.

Mitzel urged the public to stay out of the affected area to avoid endangering themselves and fire crews.

If evacuations are ordered, Mitzel said the information will be shared with local media and posted to social media accounts managed by the sheriff's office. He said authorities would also make efforts to go door-to-door in affected areas. The fairgrounds in Rapid City has been made available for livestock displaced by the blaze.

The wildfire, named the First Thunder Fire, was reported at 6:15 p.m. Mountain time on Monday. The cause is under investigation, and there are no damages to structures or injuries reported so far.

About 150 acres (roughly one-fourth of a square mile) had burned as of Tuesday morning. The location is several miles west of Rapid City in a forested, rocky area cut by deep canyons. Land in the area is a mixture of private ownership and the Black Hills National Forest.

To establish a containment perimeter, firefighters are digging earthen lines by hand and by bulldozer, utilizing logging roads and physical features that could help halt the fire's advance, and applying fire retardant chemicals. But authorities said containment Tuesday morning stood at 0%.

An estimated 75-100 people were involved in the response as of Tuesday morning, including firefighters from local, state and federal agencies. The response also included two helicopters, four air tanker planes and multiple fire trucks.

The temperature in Rapid City was expected to rise above 95 degrees Tuesday, and the forest at the city's edge is in a dry condition, said Brandon Sanchez, the incident commander for the U.S. Forest Service.

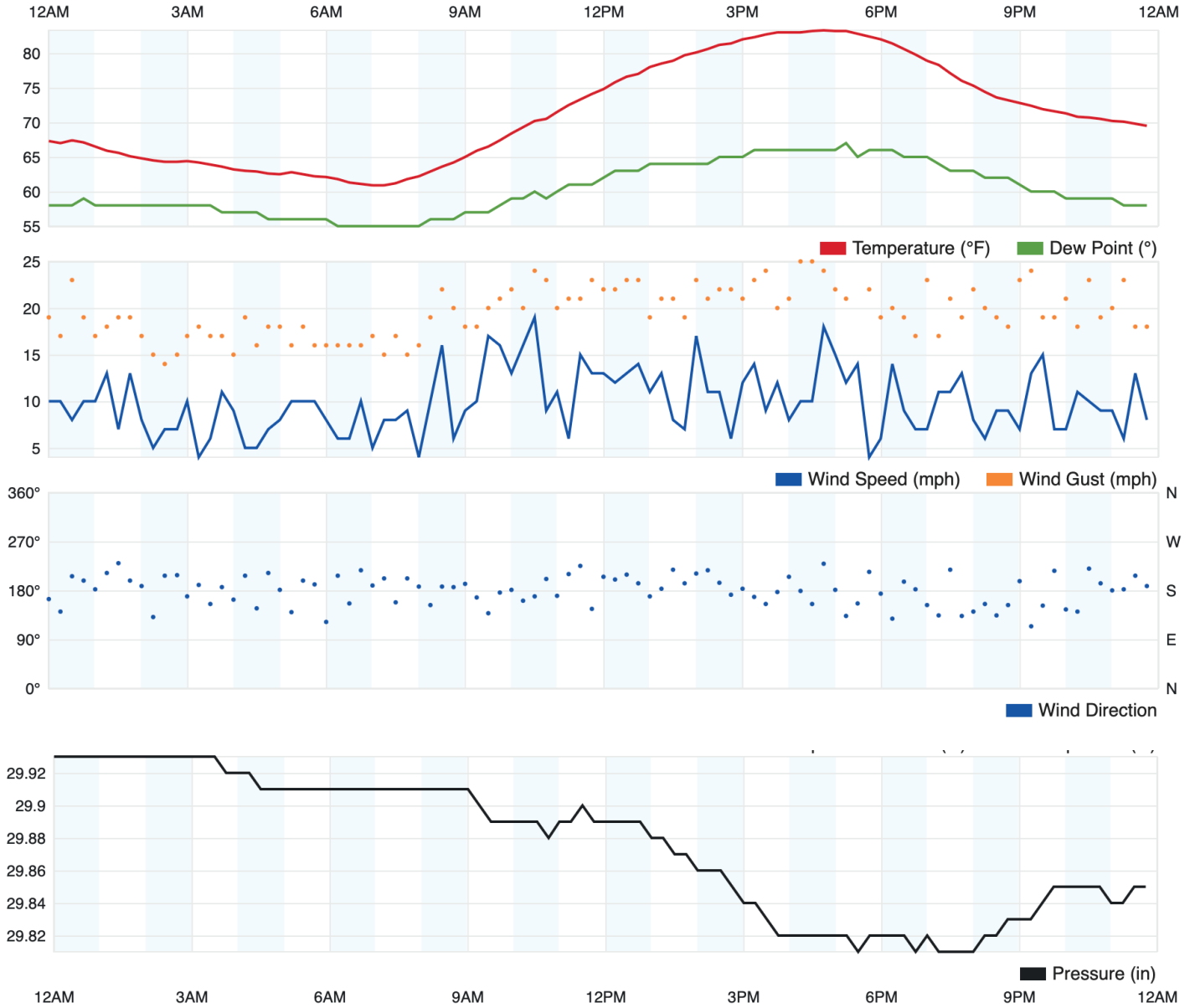
"The warm weather, for how late it is in the season, is really alarming for us as we try to get containment around the fire," Sanchez said. "Hopefully the weather does cool down and we get higher humidity at night."

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 85 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 58 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Mostly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 73 °F

Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 46 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 72 °F

Sunny



Severe Weather Threat Overview

September 4, 2024
4:30 AM

Today

Timing/Location

An isolated stronger storm or two is possible through the evening within the **Dark Green** area. Best chances will likely set up from the Coteau eastward late this afternoon into this evening.

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size

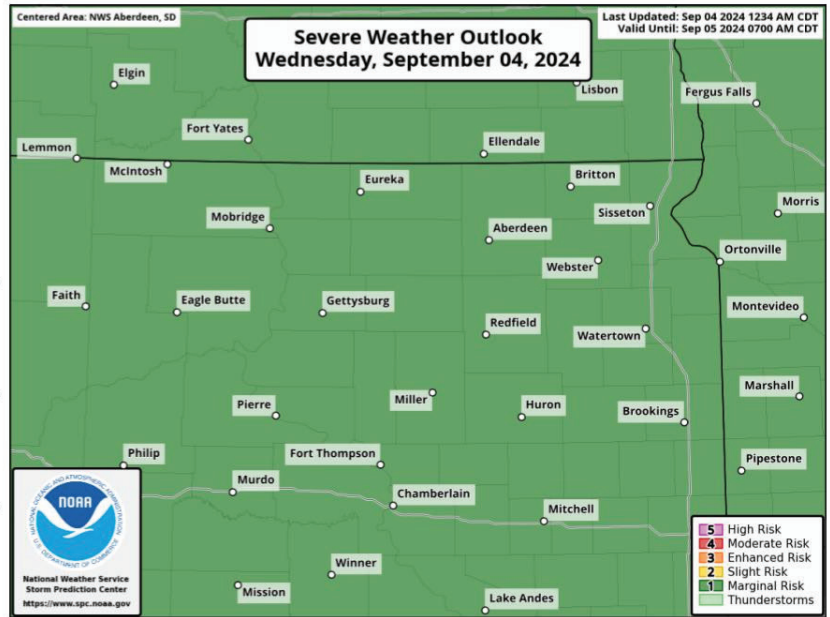
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

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

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Though the risk is low, there is the potential to see some strong to severe thunderstorms with a passing low and cold front today. Best chances will occur from the Coteau eastward late this afternoon into early evening.

Broton Daily Independent

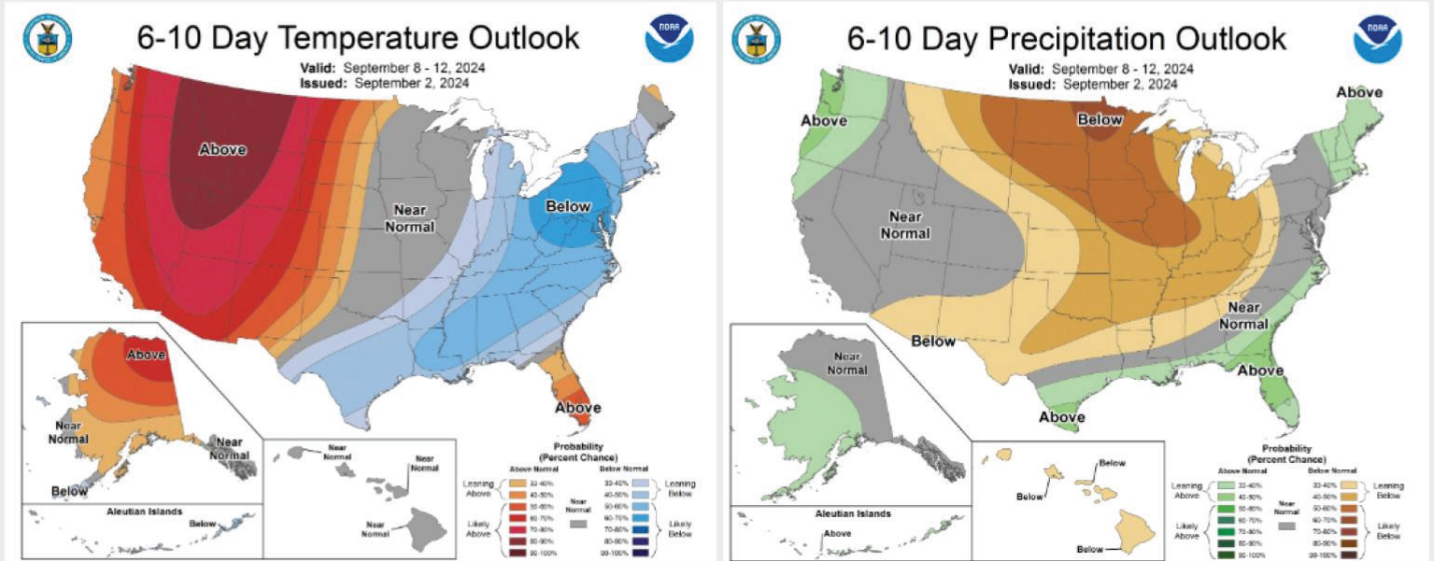
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September 8th - 12th Outlook

September 3, 2024
1:39 PM

The large-scale weather pattern will favor warmer temperatures and drier conditions than climatological normals through next week across c/ne SD and wc MN. **The maps below** show the probability (percent chance) for this. Normal highs during this time range between mid-70s to low-80s°.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Through next week, the large-scale pattern strongly favors drier than normal conditions across northern central and eastern SD as well as temperatures being warmer than normal.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 4:47 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 7:06 AM

Wind: 28 mph at 11:03 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 8 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1931

Record Low: 30 in 1961

Average High: 79

Average Low: 51

Average Precip in Sept.: 0.27

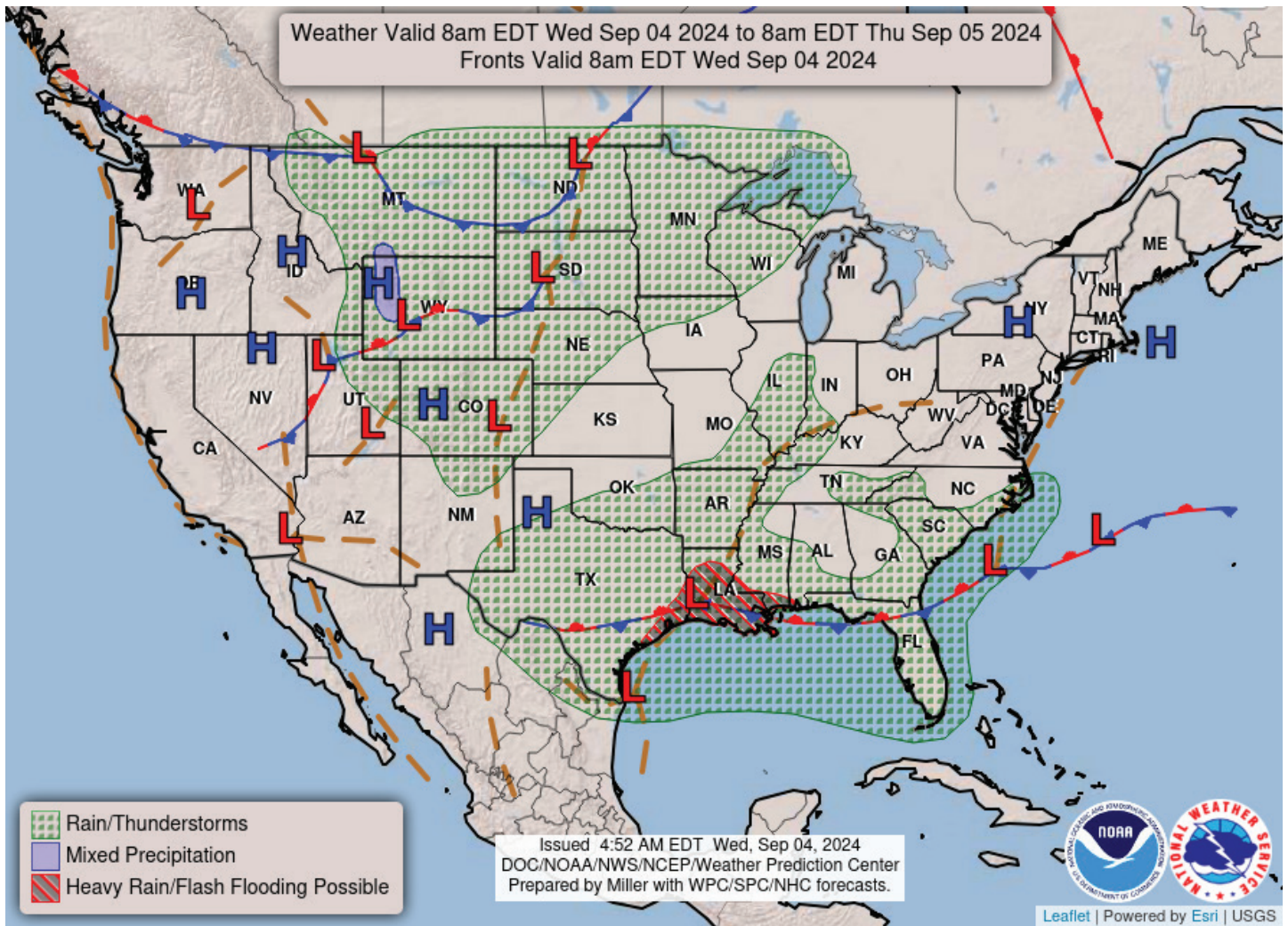
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 16.61

Precip Year to Date: 19.41

Sunset Tonight: 8:05:17 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:58:15 am



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Today in Weather History

September 4, 2001: Near record or record heat hit central and north-central South Dakota on this day in 2001. High temperatures during the afternoon were in the upper 90s to around 105 degrees. Pierre and Kennebec set record highs of 105 and 106, respectively. Mobridge rose to a high of 96, and Timber Lake topped out at 98 degrees on this day in 2001.

1766: A hurricane made landfall at modern-day Galveston, Texas. The following is from David Roth of the Weather Prediction Center. "A mission, named San Augustine de Ahumado was located in what is now-days known as Chambers County. This mission was destroyed and subsequently abandoned. A seven-foot storm surge put the area under water. A richly-laden treasure fleet of 5 galleons en route from Vera Cruz to Havana was driven ashore and had to wait many weeks for assistance to come. La Caraqueña wrecked on Galveston Island while El Nuevo de Constante sank along the western Louisiana coast. Fortunately, much of the treasure and people aboard were saved."

1939 - A thunderstorm deluged Washington D.C. with 4.4 inches of rain in two hours. September of that year was very dry across much of the nation, and Washington D.C. received more rain in that two hour period than most other places in the country that entire month. (David Ludlum)

1941: A violent tornado ripped through Northeast and North Minneapolis shortly afternoon on this day. The hardest-hit location was the Soo Line Railroad's Shoreham Yards where four people died, and at least 50 were injured. The death toll at Soo Line could have been higher, but the tornado struck five minutes after the lunch bell went off, meaning 100 men left the shops.

1970 - The greatest natural disaster of record for Arizona occurred. Unprecedented rains caused rivers in central Arizona to rise five to ten feet per hour, sweeping cars and buildings as far as 30 to 40 miles downstream. Flooding claimed the lives of 23 persons, mainly campers, and caused millions of dollars damage. Water crested 36 feet above normal near Sunflower AZ. Workman's Creek was deluged with 11.40 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. Moisture from Pacific Tropical Storm Norma led to the severe flooding. (4th-6th) (The Weather Channel)

1986 - An unusually strong dust devil moved across the Flagstaff Pulliam Airport. The dust devil blew open the doors of the National Weather Service office scattering papers and bringing down a ceiling-mounted light fixture. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced heavy rain across the Southern Atlantic Coast States. Up to eight inches was reported north of Charleston SC. Serious flooding was reported in Monks Corner SC. Seven cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Houlton ME dipped to 32 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2000: Houston and College Station, Texas recorded their hottest day on record when highs reached 109° and 112° respectively. Houston has tied their record on August 27th, 2011. Other daily record highs included: Wichita Falls, TX: 111°, Waco, TX: 111°, Dallas, (DFW), TX: 111°, Austin, (Bergstrom), TX: 110°, Austin (Camp Mabry), TX: 110°, Dallas, TX: 110°, Victoria, TX: 110°, San Antonio, TX: 109°, Shreveport, LA: 108°, Corpus Christi, TX: 107 °F.

2007: Hurricane Felix came ashore in the pre-dawn hours as a Category 5 storm on the northeastern coast of Nicaragua. At the time of its landfall, the maximum sustained surface winds were approximately 160 mph. Felix killed at least 130 people along the coast, with damage in Nicaragua totaling \$46.7 million.

2011: The center of Tropical Storm Lee moved ashore around sunrise. However, it would be a while before Lee would weaken to a depression as it remained nearly stationary while the southern half of the circulation was over water where it could continue to derive additional energy from the warm ocean. Lee brought torrential rains to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

2016: An EF1 tornado developed in the open country area north of Merna, Wyoming. The tornado caused tree damage along its 2.45-mile path. At its widest, the tornado produced sporadic tree damage approximately 300 yards across. The trees fell on some fence line but otherwise caused no property damage.

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ALL TOGETHER, NOW!

One morning on their way to school a group of young boys was walking past a home with a large iron gate. Michael thought he would provide a bit of humor for the group and decided to put his arms and head through the gate and said, "Look at me! My head and hands are on one side of the gate but my heart and body are on the other side."

Before he could get his head and hands out of the gate, one of his friends slammed the gate, and Michael Faraday was badly hurt. He overcame his injuries and became one of the most influential scientists in history for his contributions in the field of electromagnetism.

Later in life he said, "That experience taught me one thing: My heart, head and hands should always be on the same side."

This great scientist explained an important truth: there is a path that flows from the heart to the head and from the head to the hands. Simply stated, what begins in our heart usually grows, and in one way or another, spreads outward and ends up dominating the way we live and what we live for.

God's Word reminds us that we must "not let any part of our body become a tool of wickedness." So, when our eyes are enticed to look at objects that may lead to temptation and sin, we must immediately look to Him to "deliver us from evil."

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to realize that sin has a way of beginning with an innocent glance that can lead to everlasting destruction. May we keep our eyes on You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Romans 6:12-14

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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paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.03.24

12 41 43 52 55 9

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$740,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 46
DRAW: Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.24

3 6 7 27 39 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$8,330,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 1 Mins 12
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.03.24

25 36 38 39 48 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.31.24

5 9 12 18 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.24

4 12 13 16 67 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 45 Mins
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.02.24

8 42 46 48 53 22

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$93,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 45 Mins
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Alcester-Hudson def. Scotland, 25-19, 25-21, 25-19
Alliance, Neb. def. Rapid City Christian, 25-15, 25-11, 25-19
Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Bon Homme, 25-23, 25-22, 18-25, 23-25, 15-13
Baltic def. Beresford, 25-19, 25-11, 25-13
Bridgewater-Emery def. Howard, 25-16, 25-10, 25-10
Canton def. Madison, 25-13, 26-24, 25-15
Castlewood def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-21, 25-13, 9-25, 25-22
Centerville def. Flandreau Indian, 25-16, 25-1, 25-5
Chester def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-7, 25-6, 24-16
Colman-Egan def. Arlington
Corsica/Stickney def. Freeman Academy-Marion, 22-25, 25-16, 16-25, 25-15, 15-13
Crow Creek Tribal School def. Colome, 11-25, 25-19, 25-14, 25-18
Dakota Valley def. Tri-Valley, 25-8, 25-20, 25-12
Dell Rapids def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-21, 27-25, 25-19
Douglas def. Custer, 25-27, 25-14, 25-20, 24-26, 15-9
Dupree def. McLaughlin, 25-23, 24-26, 25-16, 22-25, 17-15
Ethan def. Kimball-White Lake, 25-20, 25-17, 23-25, 25-23
Faith def. Bison, 25-16, 25-15, 25-16
Flandreau def. Florence-Henry, 20-25, 28-26, 25-14, 25-15
Freeman def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-21, 25-20, 25-23
Gayville-Volin High School def. Canistota, 25-17, 25-14, 25-22
Groton def. Ipswich, 25-14, 25-22, 25-19
Hamlin def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-23, 24-26, 26-24, 25-14
Hanson def. Sanborn Central-Woonsocket, 25-18, 25-23, 20-25, 25-16
Harding County def. New England, N.D., 25-13, 25-16, 25-11
Highmore-Harrold def. James Valley Christian, 25-12, 25-10, 19-25, 25-11
Hill City def. Spearfish, 25-8, 25-21, 21-25, 25-18
Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-23, 25-19, 28-26
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Redfield, 25-23, 25-15, 25-16
Jones County def. Wall, 26-24, 18-25, 25-22, 25-16
Lemmon High School def. Hettinger-Scranton, N.D., 11-25, 25-23, 27-25, 25-19
Lennox def. Vermillion, 25-11, 25-11, 25-10
Lyman def. White River, 25-13, 21-25, 25-13, 26-24
Marshall, Minn. def. Watertown, 21-25, 25-16, 26-24, 18-25, 17-15
Menno def. Tripp-Delmont-Armour, 25-23, 20-25, 25-20, 25-12
Milbank def. Deuel, 25-19, 25-22, 25-6
Miller def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 18-25, 25-22, 25-23, 25-13
Mobridge-Pollock def. Herreid-Selby, 25-18, 26-24, 23-25, 20-25, 15-13
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Wagner, 25-18, 25-19, 25-20
Rapid City Stevens def. Rapid City Central, 25-15, 25-20, 13-25, 25-15
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-20, 13-25, 25-17, 25-21
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brandon Valley, 25-19, 25-23, 25-19
Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-19, 25-15, 25-22

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Sioux Valley def. Parker, 25-17, 25-22, 25-15
Sisseton def. Estelline-Hendricks
South Border, N.D. def. North Central, 25-22, 25-18, 25-21
St Thomas More def. Sturgis Brown High School, 25-23, 25-19, 25-19
Warner def. Webster, 25-7, 25-10, 25-21
Wessington Springs def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-19, 25-23, 25-19
West Central def. Tea, 23-25, 25-20, 25-23, 16-25, 15-9
Wilmot def. Waubay/Summit, 25-16, 25-19, 25-8
Winner def. Burke, 25-22, 25-22, 25-19
Wolsey-Wessington def. DeSmet, 25-21, 25-16, 22-25, 22-25, 15-11

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

Lady Gaga, Joaquin Phoenix bring 'Joker: Folie à Deux' to Venice Film Festival

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

VENICE, Italy (AP) — The Venice Film Festival is getting ready to welcome Lady Gaga and Joaquin Phoenix for the world premiere of "Joker: Folie à Deux" Wednesday evening.

Todd Phillips' film is one of the most highly anticipated of the festival, playing in the official competition five years after "Joker" won the Golden Lion. Warner Bros. is giving the dark comic book film the glitzy festival treatment before it's released in theaters in October.

"Joker: Folie à Deux" finds Phoenix's Arthur Fleck institutionalized at Arkham and awaiting trial for his crimes. There he meets Gaga's Harley Quinn.

"We knew we had to swing for the fences; we wanted to create something as crazy and fearless as Joker himself," Phillips wrote in his directors' statement. "So, Scott Silver and I wrote a script that delved further into the idea of identity. Who is Arthur Fleck? And where does the music inside him come from?"

The Joker sequel is competing for the festival's main prizes against the likes of Pedro Almodóvar's "The Room Next Door," Luca Guadagnino's "Queer," Pablo Larraín's "Maria" and Halina Reijn's "Babygirl." Awards will be presented on the final day of the festival, Sept. 7.

In a lineup full of major Hollywood stars, including the likes of Angelina Jolie, George Clooney and Brad Pitt, there is also quite a bit of excitement about what Gaga might wear.

Six years ago, for "A Star Is Born," she played the part of movie star perfectly, with grand looks and entrances that gave the festival some of its most iconic shots this century. Remember her perched on the side of the private water taxi in that black Jonathan Simkhai bustier dress, blowing kisses to fans and photographers? Later, for the red carpet, she wore a show-stopping pale pink feathered Valentino Couture gown that seemed to pop even more against the rainy backdrop.

In Asia, pope urges Indonesia to live up to promise of 'harmony in diversity,' fight extremism

By NICOLE WINFIELD and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Pope Francis urged Indonesia to live up to its promise of "harmony in diversity" and fight religious intolerance on Wednesday, as he set a rigorous pace for an 11-day, four-nation trip through tropical Southeast Asia and Oceania that will test his stamina and health.

Despite the grueling itinerary, an energetic Francis joked and laughed his way through a packed first full day in Indonesia, meeting with outgoing President Joko Widodo and other Indonesian officials at the presidential palace and then greeting Catholic priests, nuns and seminarians at Jakarta's main cathedral in the afternoon.

Cannons boomed as Francis joined Widodo on the veranda of the palace along with President-elect

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Prabowo Subianto. A marching band, stiff-legged troops and children in traditional Indonesian dress welcomed the first pope to visit in 35 years.

In his remarks to officials, Francis compared Indonesia's human diversity to the archipelago's 17,000 islands. He said each one contributes something specific to form "a magnificent mosaic, in which each tile is an irreplaceable element in creating a great original and precious work."

And yet, Francis warned that such diversity in a country with the world's largest Muslim population can also become a source of conflict — an apparent reference to episodes of intolerance that have flared in recent years in Indonesia as well as a broader concern about conflicts raging around the world.

"This wise and delicate balance, between the multiplicity of cultures and different ideological visions, and the ideals that cement unity, must be continuously defended against imbalances," Francis said. Political leaders, he said, had a particular role to play but he also assured Widodo of the Catholic Church's commitment to increasing interreligious dialogue.

"This is indispensable for meeting common challenges, including that of countering extremism and intolerance, which through the distortion of religion attempt to impose their views by using deception and violence," he said.

Regionally, the internal conflict in Myanmar has forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh, where thousands have fled overcrowded, violent camps to countries including Indonesia. Farther afield, Indonesia has regularly condemned Israel's war with the militant Hamas group in Gaza and Widodo thanked Francis for the Vatican's support for Palestinian civilians.

"War will not benefit anyone, war will only bring suffering and misery to the common people," Widodo said. "Therefore let us celebrate the differences that we have. Let us accept each other and strengthen tolerance to realize peace, to realize a better world for all humanity."

Francis arrived in Jakarta on Tuesday to kick off the longest, farthest and most difficult trip of his pontificate, given his myriad health problems. At 87, he uses a wheelchair, has regular bouts of bronchitis and has had multiple surgeries for intestinal problems.

By the trip's end on Sept. 13, Francis will have flown 32,814 kilometers (20,390 miles) and visited Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore — one of the longest papal trips ever in terms of days on the road and distances traveled.

Francis appeared in good form Wednesday, showing his trademark sense of humor even as he had to stand for long periods and had multiple transfers from his wheelchair to chairs and the car.

His dry wit never let up: To Widodo and Indonesian dignitaries, he praised Indonesia's relatively high birthrate while lamenting that in the West, "some prefer a cat or a little dog." To a private meeting with his fellow Jesuits he quipped at the end that "The police have come to take me away." To priests and nuns he warned against greed, saying "the devil enters through your pockets."

That said, Francis' prepared remarks were shorter than usual in a possible bid to spare him the strain of speaking for long periods.

In the afternoon, Francis met with Indonesian clergy and nuns in Jakarta's Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral for his traditional pep talk to the local church.

Catholics make up just 3% of Indonesia's population of 275 million, but the country is home to the world's largest Catholic seminary and has long been a top source of priests and nuns for the Catholic Church.

Addressing the priests, nuns and lay church leaders, Francis continued the theme of encouraging greater fraternity among people of different faiths and cultures.

"This is important, because proclaiming the Gospel does not mean imposing our faith or placing it in opposition to that of others, but giving and sharing the joy of encountering Christ always with great respect and fraternal affection for everyone," he said.

Sister Rina Rosalina was chosen to address the pope, and offered some constructive criticism of the inordinate amount of time it takes for the Vatican to approve Indonesian-language translations of his official texts.

"Holy Father, we are always trying to learn from you. Unfortunately, due to distance and language

barriers, sometimes we have difficulties studying the documents issued from Rome," she said, drawing knowing nods from the pope.

Outside the cathedral, several hundred well-wishers gathered to greet the pope, including at least one boy dressed as a tiny pope. They waved Indonesian and Holy See flags and children played traditional bamboo instruments.

The location of the cathedral is symbolically important for Indonesia's push for interfaith and intercultural harmony — it is located across from the country's main Istiqlal mosque and connected to it by an underground "Tunnel of Friendship," which Francis is to visit on Thursday with the mosque's grand imam.

While Francis wants to highlight Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance, the country's image as a moderate Muslim nation has been undermined by flare-ups of intolerance. In 2021, a militant Islamic couple blew themselves up outside a packed Catholic cathedral on Indonesia's Sulawesi island during a Palm Sunday Mass, injuring at least 20 people.

Amnesty International said it hoped Francis' visit would encourage an end to acts of intolerance and discrimination against minority groups and truly promote a respect for religious freedom that is enshrined in the country's constitution.

In a statement, Amnesty noted that from January 2021 to July 2024, there were at least 123 cases of intolerance, including rejection, closure or destruction of places of worship and physical attacks.

"The pope's visit has an important role to play in encouraging Indonesia to end intolerance and discrimination against all minority groups," said Usman Hamid, executive director of Amnesty International Indonesia.

Failures by UK government and industry made London high-rise a 'death trap' in Grenfell Tower fire

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A damning report on a deadly London high-rise fire said Wednesday that decades of failures by government, regulators and industry turned Grenfell Tower into a "death trap" where 72 people lost their lives.

The years-long public inquiry into the 2017 blaze concluded that there was no "single cause" of the tragedy, but said a combination of dishonest companies, weak or incompetent regulators and complacent government led the building to be covered in combustible cladding that turned a small apartment fire into the deadliest blaze on British soil since World War II.

The inquiry's head, retired judge Martin Moore-Bick, said the victims' deaths were all avoidable, and "those who lived in the tower were badly failed over a number of years" by multiple people and organizations.

"All contributed to it in one way or another, in most cases through incompetence but in some cases through dishonesty and greed," he said.

While the report may give survivors some of the answers they have long sought, they face a wait to see whether anyone responsible will be prosecuted. Police will examine the inquiry's conclusions before deciding on charges.

The fire broke out in the early hours of June 14, 2017, in a fourth-floor apartment and spread up the 25-story building like a lit fuse, fueled by flammable cladding panels on the tower's exterior walls.

The tragedy horrified the nation and raised questions about lax safety regulations and other failings by officials and businesses that contributed to so many deaths.

"How was it possible in 21st century London for a reinforced concrete building, itself structurally impervious to fire, to be turned into a death trap?" asked the report.

It concluded: "There is no simple answer to that question."

Grenfell Tower, built from concrete in the 1970s, had been covered during a refurbishment in the years before the fire with aluminum and polyethylene cladding — a layer of foam insulation topped by two sheets of aluminum sandwiched around a layer of polyethylene, a combustible plastic polymer that melts and drips on exposure to heat.

The report was highly critical of companies that made the building's cladding. It said they engaged in

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"systematic dishonesty," manipulating safety tests and misrepresenting the results to claim the material was safe.

It said insulation manufacturer Celotex was unscrupulous, and another insulation firm, Kingspan, "cynically exploited the industry's lack of detailed knowledge." It said cladding panel maker Arconic "concealed from the market the true extent of the danger."

The combustible cladding was used on the building because it was cheap and because of "incompetence of the organizations and individuals involved in the refurbishment" – including architects, engineers and contractors — all of whom thought safety was someone else's responsibility, the report said.

The inquiry concluded the failures multiplied because bodies in charge of enforcing Britain's building standards were weak, the local authority was uninterested and the "complacent" Conservative-led U.K. government ignored safety warnings because of a commitment to deregulation.

The inquiry has held more than 300 public hearings and examined around 1,600 witness statements. An initial report published in 2019, looking at what happened the night of the fire, criticized the fire department for telling residents to stay in their apartments and await rescue. The advice was changed almost two hours after the fire broke out, too late for many on the upper floors to escape.

London Fire Brigade came in for further criticism for a "chronic lack of effective management and leadership." The report said firefighters were not adequately trained to deal with a high-rise fire and were issued with old communications equipment that didn't work properly.

The Grenfell tragedy prompted soul-searching about inequality in Britain. Grenfell was a public housing building set in one of London's richest neighborhoods — a stones' throw from the pricey boutiques and elegant houses of Notting Hill — and many victims were working-class people with immigrant roots. The victims came from 23 countries and included taxi drivers and architects, a poet, an acclaimed young artist, retirees and 18 children.

The report said the inquiry had "seen no evidence that any of the decisions that resulted in the creation of a dangerous building or the calamitous spread of fire were affected by racial or social prejudice."

In the wake of the fire, the U.K. government banned metal composite cladding panels for all new buildings and ordered similar combustible cladding to be removed from hundreds of tower blocks across the country. But it's an expensive job and the work hasn't been carried out on some apartment buildings because of wrangling over who should pay.

The report made multiple recommendations, including tougher fire safety rules, a national fire and rescue college and a single independent regulator for the construction industry to replace the current mishmash of bodies.

The ruined tower, which stood for months after the fire like a black tombstone on the west London skyline, still stands, now covered in white sheeting. A green heart and the words "Grenfell forever in our hearts" are emblazoned at the top.

Police are investigating dozens of individuals and companies and are considering charges, including corporate and individual manslaughter. But they say any prosecutions are unlikely to come before late 2026.

"I can't pretend to imagine the impact of such a long police investigation on the bereaved and survivors, but we have one chance to get our investigation right," said Deputy Assistant Commissioner Stuart Cundy of the Metropolitan Police.

Sandra Ruiz, whose 12-year-old niece, Jessica Urbano Ramirez, died in the fire, said that "for me, there's no justice without people going behind bars."

"Our lives were shattered on that night. People need to be held accountable," she said. "People who have made decisions putting profit above people's safety need to be behind bars."

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kuleba resigns as Russian strikes kill 7 people in Lviv

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, one of Ukraine's most recognizable faces on the international stage, submitted his resignation Wednesday ahead of an expected major government reshuffle. Russian strikes, meanwhile, killed seven people in a western Ukraine city, a day after one of the deadliest missile attacks since the war began.

Kuleba, 43, didn't give a reason for stepping down. His resignation will be discussed by lawmakers at their next session, parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said on his Facebook page. Four other Cabinet ministers tendered their resignations late Tuesday, making the Cabinet reshuffle likely the biggest since Russia's February 2022 invasion.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy indicated last week that a reshuffle was imminent, with the war poised to enter a critical stage and as its 1,000-day mark looms in November.

Zelensky needs to keep up Ukraine's morale amid the grinding war of attrition with its bigger neighbor and steel the country's resolve for what will be another hard winter. Russia has been smashing Ukraine's power grid, knocking out some 70% of generation capacity and rupturing heat and water supplies. And Wednesday's deadly attack on Lviv — a city near the border with NATO member Poland and far from the front lines — underscored how all of Ukraine is at the mercy of Moscow's long-range capabilities.

The Ukrainian army's risky incursion almost a month ago into Russia's Kursk border region raised Ukrainian spirits and countered months of grim news from the front line in eastern Ukraine. The incursion's ultimate goals are unclear, though Zelenskyy says Ukraine wants to create a buffer zone there that would prevent cross-border Russian attacks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin remains bent on pushing his army deeper into eastern Ukraine, meanwhile. Russia's onslaught in Donetsk, where Ukraine is short of troops and air defenses, and long-range missile strikes that repeatedly hit civilian areas of Ukraine signal that Putin will remain uncompromising and unrelenting in his efforts to crush Ukrainian resistance.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said late Tuesday that Putin believes Russia "can slowly and indefinitely subsume Ukraine through grinding advances and that Russia can achieve its goals through a war of attrition against Ukrainian forces and by outlasting Western support" for Kyiv.

Zelensky is also keeping in mind the U.S. presidential election in November, which could bring a shift in key U.S. military support for his country.

During the war Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying Ukraine's message and needs to an international audience, whether through social media posts or meetings with foreign dignitaries. In July, Kuleba became the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to visit China since Russia's invasion. He has been foreign minister since March 2020.

Kuleba's successor is not yet known but is expected to be announced on Thursday. Several Ukrainian media outlets, citing unnamed sources, said Kuleba's deputy, Andrii Sybiha, would become the country's chief diplomat.

The new foreign minister will likely accompany Zelenskyy to the U.N. General Assembly in New York next week, which is an opportunity to lobby global leaders for their support.

More than half the current Cabinet will undergo changes, said Davyd Arakhamiia, a leader of Zelenskyy's party in the Ukrainian parliament. Ministers will be resigning on Wednesday and new appointments will be made Thursday, he said.

Zelenskyy's five-year mandate expired in May. He remains in power under the provisions of martial law.

Meantime, the nighttime strike on Lviv injured 52 people as well as killing seven, Ukraine's Rescue Service said. The strike was carried out with a Kinzhal missile and drones and targeted defense industry enterprises, Russian news agency Tass said, citing the Russian Defense Ministry.

Local officials disputed the targeting claim. Lviv Mayor Andrii Sadovyi and the Ukrainian Catholic University published a photo of a family whose mother and three daughters were killed in the attack that struck

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their home. The father survived but was in critical condition, Sadovyi said.

The eldest daughter, 21-year-old Yaryna, was a program manager at the European Youth Forum, a platform of the continent's youth organizations, her colleagues wrote on Facebook. "We will neither forget nor forgive" the attack, they said in the post.

Another Russian attack injured five people in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's hometown, regional head Serhii Lysak said.

Kuleba said the Lviv and Kryvyi Rih attacks showed Ukraine's need for more Western support. "To put an end to this terror, Ukraine's partners must promptly deliver the promised air defense systems and ammunition, as well as strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities and allow us to launch long-range strikes on all legitimate military targets in Russia," he wrote on X.

Zelenskyy reacted to the attacks by urging Ukraine's allies to give Kyiv "more range" to use Western weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory.

The attack happened a day after two ballistic missiles blasted a military academy and nearby hospital in Poltava in eastern-central Ukraine, killing 53 people and wounding almost 300 others, Ukrainian officials said.

The missiles tore into the heart of the Poltava Military Institute of Communication's main building, causing several stories to collapse.

Poltava is about 350 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Kyiv, on the main highway and rail route between Kyiv and Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, which is close to the Russian border.

Global stocks tumble after Wall Street drops on worries about the economy

By ZIMO ZHONG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — World stocks tumbled Wednesday after Wall Street had its worst day since early August, with heavyweight Nvidia falling 9.5%, leading to a global decline in chip-related stocks.

France's CAC 40 slipped 0.8% in early trading to 7,513.31, and Germany's DAX lost 0.8% to 18,607.62. Britain's FTSE 100 also dropped 0.8% to 8,230.49. The futures for the S&P 500 were down 0.4% and those for the Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 0.2%.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 4.2% and closed at 37,047.61, leading losses in Asia. Electronics and semiconductor company Tokyo Electron slumped 8.6% on Wednesday. South Korea's Kospi was down 3.2% to 2,580.80, with tech giant Samsung Electronics dropping 3.5%. Taiwan's Taiex lost 4.5%, dragged down by the heavyweight Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, which was 5.4% lower.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was down 1.9% and ended at 7,950.50 after Wednesday data showed the country's GDP grew by 1% compared to the second quarter of 2023, slightly above experts' forecast. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index declined 1.1% to 17,457.34 and the Shanghai Composite index shed 0.7% to 2,784.28.

Rising oil supply was driving down prices, as Libya moved closer to resolving a conflict over control of the country's oil revenue that meant its oil production may soon increase.

Benchmark U.S. crude fell 57 cents to \$69.77 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 75 cents to \$73.00 a barrel.

Growing worries about China's economy — the world's largest importer of crude oil — also amplified doubts about future oil demand, especially after the recent release of weak data, which was dragged down by a real estate slump and weak consumption.

The S&P 500's heaviest weight, Nvidia, fell 9.5% Tuesday. Its stock has been struggling even after the chip company topped high expectations for its latest profit report. The subdued performance could bolster criticism that Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks simply soared too high in Wall Street's frenzy around artificial intelligence technology.

The S&P 500 sank 2.1% to give back a chunk of the gains from a three-week winning streak that had carried it to the cusp of its all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 626 points, or 1.5%, from its own record set on Friday before Monday's Labor Day holiday. The Nasdaq composite fell 3.3% as Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks led the way lower.

Treasury yields also stumbled in the bond market after a report showed American manufacturing shrank again in August, sputtering under the weight of high interest rates. Manufacturing has been contracting for most of the past two years, and its performance for August was worse than economists expected.

"Demand remains subdued, as companies show an unwillingness to invest in capital and inventory due to current federal monetary policy and election uncertainty," said Timothy Fiore, chair of the Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing business survey committee.

Other reports due later in the week could show how much help the economy needs, including updates on the number of job openings U.S. employers were advertising at the end of July and how much United States services businesses grew in August. The week's highlight will likely arrive Friday, when a report will show how many jobs U.S. employers created during August.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 119.47 points to 5,528.93 on Tuesday. The Dow dropped 626.15 to 40,936.93, and the Nasdaq composite sank 577.33 to 17,136.30.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 3.84% from 3.91% late Friday. That's down from 4.70% in late April, a significant move for the bond market.

In currency dealing, the U.S. dollar was trading at 145.17 Japanese yen from 145.47 yen. The euro cost \$1.1052, up from \$1.1043.

Drought forces Kenya's Maasai and other cattle herders to consider fish and camels

By ZELIPHA KIROBI, DESMOND TIRO and EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

KAJIADO, Kenya (AP) — The blood, milk and meat of cattle have long been staple foods for Maasai pastoralists in Kenya, perhaps the country's most recognizable community. But climate change is forcing the Maasai to contemplate a very different dish: fish.

A recent yearslong drought in Kenya killed millions of livestock. While Maasai elders hope the troubles are temporary and they will be able to resume traditional lives as herders, some are adjusting to a kind of food they had never learned to enjoy.

Fish were long viewed as part of the snake family due to their shape, and thus inedible. Their smell had been unpleasant and odd to the Maasai, who call semi-arid areas home.

"We never used to live near lakes and oceans, so fish was very foreign for us," said Maasai Council of Elders chair Kelena ole Nchoi. "We grew up seeing our elders eat cows and goats."

Among the Maasai and other pastoralists in Kenya and wider East Africa — like the Samburu, Somali and Borana — cattle are also a status symbol, a source of wealth and part of key cultural events like marriages as part of dowries.

But the prolonged drought in much of East Africa left carcasses of emaciated cattle strewn across vast dry lands. In early 2023, the Kenya National Drought Management Authority said 2.6 million livestock had died, with an estimated value of 226 billion Kenya shillings (\$1.75 billion).

Meanwhile, increasing urbanization and a growing population have reduced available grazing land, forcing pastoralists to adopt new ways to survive.

In Kajiado county near Kenya's capital, Nairobi, the local government is supporting fish farming projects for pastoralists — and encouraging them to eat fish, too.

Like many other Maasai women, Charity Oltinki previously engaged in beadwork and her husband was in charge of the family's herd. But the drought killed almost 100 of their cows, and only 50 sheep of their 300-strong flock survived.

"The lands were left bare, with nothing for the cows to graze on," Oltinki said. "So I decided to set aside a piece of land to rear fish and monitor how they would perform."

The county government supplied her with pond liners, tilapia fish fingerlings and some feed. Using her savings from membership in a cooperative society, Oltinki secured a loan and had a well dug to ease the challenge of water scarcity.

After six months, the first batch of hundreds of fish was harvested, with the largest selling for up to 300

Kenyan shillings each (\$2.30).

Another member of the Maasai community in Kajiado, Philipa Leiyen, started farming fish in addition to keeping livestock.

"When the county government introduced us to this fish farming project, we gladly received it because we considered it as an alternative source of livelihood," Leiyen said.

The Kajiado government's initiative started in 2014 and currently works with 600 pastoralists to help diversify their incomes and provide a buffer against the effects of climate change. There was initial reluctance, but the number of participants has grown from about 250 before the drought began in 2022.

"The program has seen some importance," said Benson Siangot, director of fisheries in Kajiado county, adding that it also addresses issues of food insecurity and malnutrition.

The Maasai share their love for cattle with the Samburu, an ethnic group that lives in arid and semi-arid areas of northern Kenya and speaks a dialect of the Maa language that the Maasai speak.

The recent drought has forced the Samburu to look beyond cattle, too — to camels.

In Lekiji village, Abdulahi Mohamud now looks after 20 camels. The 65-year-old father of 15 lost his 30 cattle during the drought and decided to try an animal more suited to long dry spells.

"Camels are easier to rear as they primarily feed on shrubs and can survive in harsher conditions," he said. "When the pasture dries out, all the cattle die."

According to Mohamud, a small camel can be bought for 80,000 to 100,000 Kenyan shillings (\$600 to \$770) while the price of a cow ranges from 20,000 to 40,000 (\$154 to \$300).

He saw the camel's resilience as worth the investment.

In a vast grazing area near Mohamud, 26-year-old Musalia Piti looked after his father's 60 camels. The family lost 50 cattle during the drought and decided to invest in camels that they can sell whenever they need cattle for traditional ceremonies. Cows among the Samburu are used for dowries.

"You have to do whatever it takes to find cattle for wedding ceremonies, even though our herds may be smaller nowadays," said Lesian Ole Sempere, a 59-year-old Samburu elder. Offering a cow as a gift to a prospective bride's parents encourages them to declare their daughter as "your official wife," he said.

Iraqi women fear rise in child marriages as lawmakers consider giving conservative clerics more say

By STELLA MARTANY and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Shaimaa Saadoun is haunted by her memory of being forced into an abusive marriage to a 39-year-old man just after she turned 13.

Her impoverished family near the southern Iraqi city of Basra hoped that the dowry of gold and money would help improve their circumstances. Her husband presented a bloodstained piece of linen to prove her virginity after their wedding night.

"I was expected to be a wife and mother while I was still a child myself. No child or teenager should be forced to live what I have lived and experienced," said Saadoun, who divorced her husband when she was 30 and is now 44.

Saadoun's marriage was illegal, though a judge — who was related to the husband — signed off on it. Iraqi law sets 18 as the minimum age of marriage in most cases.

But such child marriages of girls might be state-sanctioned soon. Iraq's parliament is considering controversial legal changes that would give religious authorities more power over family law matters, a move that rights groups and opponents warn could open the door to the marriage of girls as young as 9.

Law would let clerics rule how young a girl can be married

The push for the changes comes mainly from powerful Shiite Muslim political factions backed by religious leaders that have increasingly campaigned against what they describe as the West imposing its cultural norms on Muslim-majority Iraq. In April, the parliament passed a harsh anti-LGBTQ+ law.

The proposed amendments would allow Iraqis to turn to religious courts on issues of family law, includ-

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ing marriage, which currently are the sole domain of civil courts.

That would let clerics rule according to their interpretation of Shariah, or Islamic law, as opposed to national laws. Some clerics interpret Shariah to allow marriage of girls in their early teens — or as young as 9 under the Jaafari school of Islamic law followed by many Shiite religious authorities in Iraq.

Many Iraqi women have reacted with horror, holding protests outside parliament and campaigning against the changes on social media.

“Legislating a law that brings back the country 1,500 years is a shameful matter ... and we will keep rejecting it until the last breath,” Heba al-Dabbouni, an activist among dozens at a protest in August, told The Associated Press. “The Iraqi parliament’s job is to pass laws that will raise the standards of society.”

Conservative legislators say the changes give people a choice whether to use civil or religious law, and argue they are defending families from secular, Western influences.

Human Rights Watch Iraq researcher Sarah Sanbar said the changes prioritize the husband’s preference. “So, yes it’s giving a choice, but it’s giving a choice to men first and foremost.”

Not all religious leaders are on board

The often furious debate has spilled into Iraqi media — even among clerics. On one recent news show, a Sunni cleric argued against a younger marriage age, calling it damaging to girls and saying there was no problem under Islam with the existing laws.

In a lecture posted on social media, Shiite cleric Rashid al-Husseini insisted Shariah allows marrying a 9-year-old girl. “But in practice, is this something that actually happens? ... It might be zero percent, or 1% of cases,” he said.

The proposed amendments are backed by most Shiite legislators in a bloc called the Coordination Framework that holds a parliament majority. But disputes continue over the draft. Parliament was meant to hold an initial vote on the law Tuesday but could not reach a quorum and had to postpone it.

Iraq’s personal status law passed in 1959 is broadly perceived as a strong foundation largely protecting women and children’s rights. It set the legal marriage age at 18, though it allows girls as young as 15 to marry with parental consent and medical proof that the girl has hit puberty and is menstruating.

Marriages outside state courts were forbidden. Still, enforcement is lax. Individual judges sometimes approve younger marriages, whether because of corruption or because the marriage has already taken place informally.

Parliamentarian Raed al-Maliki, who presented the proposed amendments, said the state would still provide protections and that discussions were still taking place about a minimum marriage age.

The age will be “very close to the current law,” al-Maliki told the AP, without elaborating.

Iraqi women are leading the fight against the changes

Al-Maliki and other proponents depict the changes as a defense against Western secularism.

He said the original law was influenced by “communists and Baathists,” the latter in reference to the secular pan-Arab nationalist party that ruled the country with an iron fist from 1968 until its rule under Saddam Hussein was toppled in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

“In the West they take children away from their parents for the simplest reasons and accuse them of violence, then they change their culture and create homosexuals out of them,” al-Maliki said, referring to Iraq’s law passed in April that criminalized same-sex relations and the promotion of LGBTQ+ rights. “We cannot imitate that or consider it as development.”

Criticism of Western culture has gained new strength since the latest Israel-Hamas war broke out, with most Iraqis sympathizing with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Many see statements about human rights by the United States and others as hypocritical because of their support of Israel’s campaign in Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians.

But the most vocal opponents of the changes are Iraqi women, said Sanbar of Human Rights Watch.

“It speaks volumes to the fact that this is what Iraqi women want, not foreign organizations dictating what Iraq needs to do,” she said.

This wasn’t the first such set of amendments to be proposed over the past decade. But now, Shiite parties are more unified behind them.

Harith Hasan, a non-resident fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center, says Shiite parties previously had different priorities, focused on the many conflicts rocking the country the past two decades.

"Now there is sort of a consensus" among them on cultural issues, he said, adding that the new amendments would create "institutionalized sectarianism" in Iraq and could weaken civil courts.

"When they say it is the right of religious officials to handle marriage, inheritance, divorce, and the court cannot challenge this, you create two parallel authorities," Hasan said. "This will create confusion in the country."

Saadoun, who now lives in Irbil, in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, said she fears for women and girls in Iraq.

"The new amendments in the personal status law will destroy the future of many little girls and many generations," she said.

Timeline of events surrounding the 2017 fire at Grenfell Tower in West London that killed 72

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's worst residential fire since World War II led to deaths of 72 people in a high-rise apartment building in west London more than seven years ago.

An inquiry, whose final report is being released Wednesday, began soon after the fire at Grenfell Tower, which broke out in the early morning hours of June 14, 2017, and quickly engulfed the 25-story public housing building.

Here is a summary of how the disaster evolved and what happened after the flames were extinguished:

June 14, 2017

At 12:54 a.m., a call is made to the London Fire Brigade reporting that a fire has broken out in a fourth-floor apartment at Grenfell Tower. Barely half an hour later, flames have swirled to the roof of the building.

The fire's rapid spread is quickly blamed on flammable cladding made of aluminum composite material (ACM), which had recently been installed as part of a building refurbishment. Survivors also question why people were told to remain in their apartments as fire engulfed the building.

June 15, 2017

Prime Minister Theresa May announces a public inquiry into the fire. Martin Moore-Bick, a retired court of appeal judge, is appointed to lead the inquiry two weeks later.

July 28, 2017

Judith Hackitt, a chemical engineer and former chair of Britain's national workplace safety regulatory, is appointed to conduct review of building regulations.

Sept. 19, 2017

London's Metropolitan Police widens its criminal investigation into the fire, with detectives considering individual as well as corporate manslaughter charges.

Nov. 30, 2017

A petition, backed by singer Adele, urges then-Prime Minister May to expand the Grenfell inquiry panel because of concerns that Moore-Bick lacked first-hand experience of life as a social tenant in a multicultural neighborhood.

Jan. 29, 2018

Maria del Pilar Burton, a 74-year-old survivor, dies in palliative care. She is considered the 72nd victim of the fire.

May 17, 2018

Hackitt recommends "fundamental reform" of fire safety rules in a report that describes a "race to the bottom" on building safety as building owners put the drive to save money ahead of safety.

May 21, 2018

The inquiry begins with seven days of hearings commemorating the dead, starting with a tribute to the

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fire's youngest victim, stillborn Logan Gomes.

June 14, 2018

A year after the fire, survivors and bereaved relatives gather to lay white roses at the foot of Grenfell Tower. They are joined by rapper Stormzy, a London native who supported the residents' drive for better representation at the inquiry. Across the country, people observe 72 seconds of silence in memory of the victims.

June 21, 2018

Firefighters begin giving evidence to the inquiry. London Fire Brigade Commissioner Dany Cotton tells the inquiry she would change nothing about her team's response on the night of the fire. Survivors react with anger.

Sept. 30, 2018

The British government bans combustible cladding on all residential buildings above 18 meters (59 feet), as well as schools, care homes, student accommodation and hospitals.

June 18, 2019

Survivors and bereaved families project a message on to the Houses of Parliament reading: "Two years after Grenfell, this building still hasn't kept its promises #DemandChange."

Oct. 30, 2019

The inquiry releases its report on the first phase of its investigation. It attributes the rapid spread of flames to ACM panels with polyethylene cores, "which acted as a source of fuel."

It also criticized the London Fire Brigade for allowing a "stay in place" order to remain in effect even after it became clear safety systems were failing, leading to an increased loss of life.

The report's recommendations include calls for legislation to require evacuation plans for all high-rise residential buildings, more frequent inspections of elevators and fire doors, better training for firefighters and improved communication among emergency responders.

Nov. 6, 2019

Jacob Rees-Mogg, then the leader of the House of Commons, apologizes for suggesting Grenfell victims should have used "common sense" and ignored fire service guidance not to leave their apartments.

Feb. 24, 2020

Campaigners urge the government to create a multibillion-pound fund to replace dangerous cladding after research suggests that more than half a million people could be living in unsafe homes. The Association of Residential Managing Agents said that while Grenfell highlighted the dangers of ACM cladding, it also revealed a much wider building safety crisis.

March 11, 2020

Rishi Sunak, then Britain's Treasury chief, creates a 1 billion pound fund to remove unsafe cladding from high-rise residential buildings.

Jan. 19, 2021

The government promises to create a new regulator to improve the safety of building materials after the Grenfell inquiry had "shone a light" on dishonest practices by some manufacturers, including "deliberate attempts to game the system and rig the results of safety tests."

Feb. 10, 2021

Robert Jenrick, then housing secretary, announces a new 3.5 billion pound package to pay for the removal of unsafe cladding from medium- and high-rise buildings. Critics say the program doesn't do enough to address the problems of people who bought apartments in unsafe buildings and are now unable to sell because of delays in addressing fire safety issues.

June 14, 2022

Prince William and British politicians join in memorial services to mark five years since the fire. Some say Grenfell families feel "abandoned" after half a decade of "betrayal" by the housing department and slow progress on safety improvements.

May 2024

London's Metropolitan Police Service confirms that bereaved families and survivors may have to wait

until the end of 2026 for a decision on potential criminal charges. The Met says police won't complete their investigation until the end of 2025, and prosecutors are likely to need another year to determine whether any charges will be brought.

July 2024

Government figures show the slow pace of removing dangerous cladding from buildings in England. While authorities have identified 4,630 residential buildings of 11 meters (36 feet) or more that have unsafe cladding, only around half (2,299) have either started or completed remediation works. Less than a third (1,350) have completed the work.

Aug. 26, 2024

A huge fire at an apartment building in east London reminds people of the dangers of combustible cladding. While no one died in the fire, more than 80 residents were evacuated from the six-story building where contractors were removing "non-compliant" cladding.

Sept. 4, 2024

Final report of the Grenfell Inquiry is published.

US Open: Navarro's first Grand Slam semifinal will be against Sabalenka. Fritz and Tiafoe win, too

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Emma Navarro's first Grand Slam semifinal will come at the U.S. Open against Aryna Sabalenka, someone trying to win her second major trophy of the year and third overall.

Navarro, an American who is seeded 13th, used a stunning turnaround to grab the last six games of her quarterfinal against Paula Badosa for a 6-2, 7-5 victory at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday, following up her upset of defending champion Coco Gauff.

"Sometimes you're out in the court, and you can kind of picture yourself playing a third set. When I was out there, I didn't picture myself playing a third set," despite being down 5-1 in the second, Navarro said. "I felt like ... I could come back and do it in two."

Sure did.

There was no such drama in No. 2 Sabalenka's 6-1, 6-2 win against No. 7 Zheng Qinwen, the gold medalist at the Paris Olympics last month, in a rematch of Sabalenka's victory in the Australian Open final.

With Roger Federer in the stands, attending the U.S. Open for the first time since his retirement, Sabalenka displayed a typically powerful performance to get into the semifinals in New York for the fourth year in a row. In 2023, she was the runner-up to Gauff.

Sabalenka said she saw Federer in the crowd and figured he was there to watch Frances Tiafoe and Grigor Dimitrov in the match that followed hers.

"But still, I was like, OK, I have to play my best tennis so he enjoys it. I have to show my skills, you know, slice skills, come to the net and all that stuff," Sabalenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus who's known more for her power, said with a laugh.

She is trying to become the first woman since Angelique Kerber in 2016 to win the hard-court major titles at the Australian Open and U.S. Open. Sabalenka defeated Zheng in January for a second consecutive title at Melbourne Park.

"I just think the next time I play against her maybe I should hold a rally better and play a little bit more relaxed," Zheng said. "Because today obviously I entered into the match with a lot of nerves."

The opponents in the other women's semifinal will be decided on Wednesday, when No. 1 Iga Swiatek plays No. 6 Jessica Pegula, and No. 22 Beatriz Haddad Maia takes on unseeded Karolina Muchova.

In the men's quarterfinals Tuesday, No. 12 Taylor Fritz of the U.S. earned his first berth in the final four of a major, beating 2020 U.S. Open runner-up Alexander Zverev 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3).

Fritz had been 0-4 in Grand Slam quarterfinals but finally broke through against Zverev, the No. 4 seed he also defeated in the fourth round at Wimbledon.

"I've had a lot of looks at quarterfinals over the last couple of years and today just felt different," Fritz said. "I really felt like it was my time to take it a step further."

Tiafoe gave the Americans a third semifinalist when Grigor Dimitrov stopped playing because of an injury in the fourth set. Tiafoe was leading 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3, 4-1 and will play the 12th-seeded Fritz in Friday's semis, guaranteeing the U.S. a men's finalist in its Grand Slam tournament for the first time since 2006.

Navarro was three points from having to go to a third set against Badosa but won the next four points to stay alive, starting a stretch in which she captured 24 of the match's last 28 points.

"Things weren't looking great there in the second set, but just tried to be really tough, stick in there, make her hit one more ball," Navarro said. "I felt like if I could scrap out a few longer points, maybe put some pressure on her, I felt like I could come back and maybe close it out in two sets. Happy with how I was able to do that."

Navarro had never even won a match in the main draw of her home major before this year.

Badosa described herself as a "disaster" while dealing with the pressure of trying to reach her first Grand Slam semifinal.

"I never had the momentum in this match. I played four or five games OK. It was 5-1, but I never felt myself on the court," Badosa said. "I lost, I don't know, 20 points almost in a row. It's very weird for me because I'm quite a consistent player, so I wasn't expecting that either."

Navarro also beat Gauff in the fourth round at Wimbledon before losing to eventual runner-up Jasmine Paolini in the next round, a 6-2, 6-1 rout in less than an hour.

But the 2021 NCAA singles champion for Virginia was ready for this matchup between New York natives, jumping on Badosa to win the first three games, then seizing the opening Badosa gave her late.

Navarro became the sixth player in the last 40 years to reach the U.S. Open semis without a previous main-draw victory in the tournament, a list that includes recent champions Bianca Andreescu in 2019 and Emma Raducanu in 2021.

Human rights group implicates Venezuelan security forces in killings during post-election protests

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A global human rights watchdog on Wednesday implicated Venezuelan security forces and pro-government armed groups in killings that occurred during the protests that followed the country's disputed July presidential election.

Human Rights Watch, in a report detailing repressive measures the government unleashed after the vote, asserted that credible evidence gathered and analyzed by researchers, forensic pathologists and arms experts ties Venezuela's national guard and national police to some of the 24 killings that took place as people protested the outcome of the election. The organization also concluded that violent gangs aligned with the ruling party also "appear to be responsible" in some of the deaths.

Twenty-three of those killed were protesters or bystanders and one was a member of the Bolivarian National Guard.

"The repression we are seeing in Venezuela is shockingly brutal," Juanita Goebertus, the organization's director for the Americas, said in a statement. "Concerned governments need to take urgent steps to ensure that people are able to peacefully protest and that their vote is respected."

The organization said it reached its conclusions regarding the killings based on interviews with witnesses, journalists and other sources; reviews of death certificates, videos, photographs; and analyses by forensic pathologists and arms experts.

Thousands of people, including minors, took to the streets across Venezuela hours after ruling party-loyal electoral authorities declared President Nicolás Maduro the winner of the election. The protests were largely peaceful, but demonstrators also toppled statues of Maduro's predecessor, the late fiery leader Hugo Chávez, threw rocks at law enforcement officers and buildings, and burned police motorcycles and

government propaganda.

Maduro and his ruling party allies, who controlled all aspects of government in the South American government, responded to the demonstrations with full force, carrying out arbitrary detentions, prosecutions as well as a campaign that encourages people to report relatives, neighbors and other acquaintances who participated in the protests or cast doubt on the results.

Among the killings detailed in the Human Rights Watch report is that of civil engineer and food truck worker Rancés Daniel Yzarra Bolívar. The organization said Yzarra Bolívar, 30, participated in the July 29 protests in the northern Venezuela city of Maracay.

A journalist told researchers the demonstration was initially peaceful, and a different witness reported protesters called for soldiers at a military compound to join them. A soldier instructed them to leave, and some did.

Researchers verified videos showing peaceful protesters as well as riot gear-clad National Guard officers arriving at the demonstration. Another video, which researchers geolocated to about 150 meters (490 feet) from the military facility, shows smoke near the compound and a person is heard saying it was 5:37 p.m. and officers were throwing tear gas to disperse demonstrators.

"At approximately 6 p.m., a bullet hit Yzarra Bolívar on the left side of his chest, a person close to him said," according to the report. "Human Rights Watch analyzed and geolocated four videos showing Yzarra Bolívar injured and unconscious. In one verified video, taken by a journalist at 5:50 p.m. and posted 20 minutes later, two protesters are seen carrying Yzarra Bolívar to a location approximately 150 meters from the military compound. Other protesters are heard shouting 'they killed him.'"

In the days after the election, Venezuelan security forces rounded up more than 2,000 people, including dozens of children, journalists, political leaders, campaign staffers and an attorney defending protesters. One local activist livestreamed her arrest by military intelligence officers as they broke into her home with a crowbar.

"Maduro and Attorney General Tarek Saab have said publicly that those arrested were responsible for violent events, terrorism, and other crimes," Human Rights Watch said in the report. "However, Human Rights Watch repeatedly found cases of people arrested for just criticizing the government or participating in peaceful protests."

The group said those arrested often have been kept incommunicado for weeks and most have been denied the right to hire a lawyer.

Unlike in previous presidential elections, the National Electoral Council did not release vote tallies backing Maduro's claim to victory. But the main opposition coalition obtained vote tallies from more than 80% of the electronic voting machines used in the election and said its candidate, González, defeated Maduro by a 2-to-1 margin.

The lack of transparency over the results, coupled with widespread arrests that followed the anti-government protests, has drawn global condemnation against Maduro and his allies. The criticism grew Monday after a judge approved a prosecutor's request for an arrest warrant for González.

Harris is visiting New Hampshire, away from bigger swing states, to tout her small business tax plan

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris is using a New Hampshire campaign stop on Wednesday to propose an expansion of tax incentives for small businesses — presenting a pro-entrepreneur plan that may soften her previous calls for wealthy Americans and large corporations to pay higher taxes.

She wants to expand from \$5,000 to \$50,000 tax incentives for small business startup expenses, with the goal of eventually spurring 25 million new small business applications over four years. Harris is making the announcement while visiting the Portsmouth area, across the Piscataqua River from Maine.

New Hampshire has been reliably blue in recent presidential elections, but the trip could also have some benefit across state lines since Maine splits its electoral votes, allowing candidates to win some without

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carrying the full state. Still, it marks a rare deviation from Harris spending most of her time visiting a tight group of Midwest and Sun Belt battlegrounds likely to decide November's election.

Since President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid and endorsed Harris, the vice president has focused on the "blue wall" states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that have been the centerpiece of successful Democratic campaigns.

She's also frequently visited Arizona, Nevada and Georgia, all of which Biden narrowly won in 2020, and North Carolina, which she's still hoping to flip from Republican former President Donald Trump.

Wednesday's stop comes after Harris marked Labor Day with Monday rallies in Detroit and Pittsburgh and before she heads back to Pittsburgh on Friday — marking her 10th visit to Pennsylvania in 2024. By contrast, Wednesday is her first visit to New Hampshire in years.

Trump has called for lowering the corporate tax rate to 15% — a break with Biden who in his budget proposal in March suggested setting the corporate tax rate at 28%. Harris has released relatively few major policy proposals in the roughly six weeks since taking over the top of the Democratic ticket, but has not suggested she's planning to deviate greatly from his administration on tax policy.

The small business plan Harris is presenting Wednesday has lots of facets that many in the business community would like. But that contrasts another proposal Harris unveiled last month, where she promised to help fight inflation by working to combat "price gouging" from food producers that she suggests have driven grocery store prices up unnecessarily.

Harris has built her campaign around calls to grow and strengthen the nation's middle class — and suggested that rich Americans and large corporations should "pay their fair share" in higher taxes.

Biden, who similarly built his campaign around promoting the middle class, won New Hampshire by 7 percentage points in 2020, but Trump came much closer to winning it against Hillary Clinton in 2016. Still, the Harris campaign notes that it has 17 field offices operating in coordination with the state Democratic party across New Hampshire, compared to one for Trump's campaign.

Some of the state's Democrats were angry that Biden directed the Democratic National Committee to make South Carolina the first state to vote in the party's presidential primary this year — displacing Iowa's caucus and a first-in-the-nation primary New Hampshire held for more than a century.

Despite that, New Hampshire pressed ahead with an unsanctioned primary. Though Biden didn't campaign in it, or appear on the ballot, he still easily won via a write-in drive.

Trump is nonetheless hoping to use what happened to his advantage, posting on his social media account that Harris "sees there are problems for her campaign in New Hampshire because of the fact that they disrespected it in their primary and never showed up."

"Additionally, the cost of living in New Hampshire is through the roof, their energy bills are some of the highest in the country, and their housing market is the most unaffordable in history," the former president wrote. "I protected New Hampshire's First-In-The-Nation Primary and ALWAYS will."

Raise taxes on the rich or cut them? Harris, Trump differ on how to boost the US economy

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump is betting that Americans crave trillions of dollars in tax cuts — and that growth will be so fantastic that it's not worth worrying about budget deficits.

In short, he's hoping that most economic analyses of his ideas are dead wrong.

Vice President Kamala Harris believes that big corporations and the ultra-wealthy should pay more in taxes — and wants to use those revenues to help spur the construction of 3 million homes and offer tax breaks for parents.

She's hoping to deliver on the types of policies that President Joe Biden has been unable to secure in a lasting way.

The two presidential nominees are using the week before their debate to sharpen their economic messages about who could do more for the middle class. Harris will discuss her policy plans Wednesday in

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Portsmouth, New Hampshire, while Trump will address the Economic Club of New York on Thursday.

The economy has historically been a dominant issue in presidential elections. In an August survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs, Trump did narrowly better on the economy with 45% saying he would handle it better and 38% saying Harris would.

There are high stakes in this showdown because the winner of November's election could rewrite much of the federal tax code next year, when parts of Trump's 2017 tax cuts are set to expire.

A look at the candidates' proposals:

DIFFERENT PITCHES TO THE MIDDLE-CLASS

Trump and Harris have different ways of trying to help the middle class.

The former Republican president sees tax cuts for businesses and the wealthy as essential for promoting more investment, with those who've previously advised him saying average growth would top 3%. Mind you, overall economic growth never hit 3% a year when Trump was president. But between 2018 and 2019, the median household income jumped by \$5,220 to an inflation-adjusted \$78,250, according to the Census Bureau.

"What I tell people all the time: The Trump policies were designed to lift middle-class wages, re-onshore and re-industrialize," said Joseph LaVorgna, an economist who worked in the Trump White House. "The intention is to get wages higher."

By contrast, Harris wants to upgrade the middle-class promise of home ownership and ease the high costs of parenthood. She also wants tax breaks for entrepreneurs. It's a message meant to show that Harris can address the problem of prices as people are still recovering from inflation spiking to a four-decade high in 2022.

First-time homebuyers could get \$25,000 in down payment assistance that would be coupled with broader policies to encourage the construction of 3 million additional homes in four years. New parents could get a \$6,000 tax credit and an expanded child tax credit.

"When working- and middle-class Americans have the opportunity to earn more, to build a business, to buy a home, to climb the economic ladder, it strengthens our economy and helps us grow," said Brian Nelson, a Harris adviser.

NO TAXES ON TIPS, SOCIAL SECURITY

Trump has proposed no taxes on tips paid to workers or Social Security income. Harris has embraced the idea of not taxing workers' tips.

As Ernie Tedeschi at the Yale Budget Lab noted, excluding tips from taxes is unlikely to provide much of an economic boost even if some individuals feel better off. He noted that just 2.5% of workers receive tips and that many don't earn enough money to owe income taxes to the federal government.

Trump would also exclude Social Security payments from taxation, which could cost \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. The risk is those taxes help fund Social Security. Without those revenues, the program would be unable to pay full benefits starting in 2033, or two years earlier than currently forecast, according to an analysis by Brendan Duke, senior director of economic policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank.

TARIFFS

As much as Trump talks about tax cuts, he would also want to engage in a massive tax hike by charging higher tariffs on imports in order to grow jobs.

How much would the tariff be? No one really knows. Trump has proposed a broad tariff of 10%, but at an August event in North Carolina suggested it could be as high as 20%. Against Chinese products, he would like a tax of somewhere between 60% to 100%.

The Republican insists his tariffs wouldn't jack up inflation, but the whole goal of the tax is to make imports more expensive so that more manufacturing occurs domestically. The Harris campaign says the middle class would face a higher tax burden, with the 20% tariff applied broadly costing a typical household \$4,000 annually.

The Trump campaign did not answer questions about how the tariffs would work. If the goal is to bring

jobs back from overseas, the tariffs would presumably be phased in over time so that manufacturing jobs could return to the U.S. But if the goal is to raise revenues, then they would be implemented immediately.

TRUMP'S NOT AFRAID OF DEBT

It's not clear that Trump could pay for his ambitious tax cuts.

He wants to extend the expiring provisions of his 2017 tax overhaul. He's floated the idea of chopping the 21% corporate tax rate to 15%, in addition to no taxes on tips and Social Security income. The estimated price is close to \$6 trillion, but it could be higher. And the Congressional Budget Office already estimates \$22 trillion in deficits over the next decade without the tax overhaul being extended.

Growth would not appear to cover the price tag. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget surveyed economic analyses and found that Trump extending his tax cuts would have roughly no impact on overall growth over 10 years because of the additional debt.

"The overall agenda doesn't seem to be all that pro-growth," said Marc Goldwein, senior vice president and senior policy director for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

HARRIS IS MORE CAUTIOUS WITH DEFICITS

According to the Harris campaign, all her spending plans would be funded. Officials with her campaign have suggested that her sources of revenue would largely mirror Biden's 2025 budget proposal.

Still, the Penn Wharton Budget Model estimates that her policies would add \$2.3 trillion in spending. It forecasts that her plan to increase the corporate tax rate to 28% would produce \$1.1 trillion in tax revenues. But the group did not include other proposals such as taxing the unrealized income gains of people worth \$100 million or more, as there are not enough details to produce an accurate number. Nor did it include other revenue increases.

The Penn Wharton Budget Model suggests that the Harris plans would hurt growth more than Trump's would through 2034, though it excluded his proposed tariffs from the analysis.

The real difference of the plan is how tax burdens would change starting in 2026.

Under Trump's plans, someone in the top 0.1% of earners would after taxes get on average \$376,910 more in income. The poorest 20% would get just \$320 more.

Harris' policies would reduce the average incomes of the top 0.1% by \$167,225. But the bottom 20% get \$2,355 more in income and benefits.

"Bigger picture: both Harris and Trump are causing the debt path to rise even faster than the fast pace under current law," said Kent Smetters, the faculty director of the Penn Wharton Budget Model.

Federal judge rejects Donald Trump's request to intervene in wake of hush money conviction

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday swiftly rejected Donald Trump's request to intervene in his New York hush money criminal case, spurning the former president's attempt at an end-run around the state court where he was convicted and is set to be sentenced in two weeks.

U.S. District Judge Alvin Hellerstein's ruling — just hours after Trump's lawyers asked him to weigh the move — upends the Republican presidential nominee's plan to move the case to federal court so that he could seek to have his conviction overturned in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's presidential immunity ruling.

Trump's lawyers challenged the decision, filing a notice of appeal late Tuesday in the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Trump and his lawyers "will continue to fight to move this Hoax into federal court where it should be put out of its misery once and for all," his campaign spokesperson, Steven Cheung, said in a statement.

Hellerstein, echoing his denial of Trump's pretrial bid to move the case, said the defense failed to meet the high burden of proof for changing jurisdiction and that Trump's conviction for falsifying business records involved his personal life, not official actions that the Supreme Court ruled are immune from prosecution.

In a four-page ruling, Hellerstein wrote that nothing about the high court's July 1 ruling affected his

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previous conclusion that hush money payments at issue in Trump's case "were private, unofficial acts, outside the bounds of executive authority."

Hellerstein sidestepped a defense complaint that Trump's state court trial had been plagued by "bias, conflicts of interest, and appearances of impropriety," writing that he "does not have jurisdiction to hear Mr. Trump's arguments concerning the propriety of the New York trial."

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which prosecuted Trump's case, declined comment. Earlier Tuesday, the office sent a letter to the trial judge, Juan M. Merchan, objecting to Trump's effort to delay post-trial decisions in the case while he was seeking to have the U.S. District Court in Manhattan step in.

Merchan is expected to rule soon on two key defense requests: Trump's call for the judge to delay his Sept. 18 sentencing until after the November election, and his request that the judge overturn his conviction and dismiss the case in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling.

Merchan has said he will rule Sept. 16 on Trump's motion to overturn the verdict. His decision on delaying sentencing has been expected in the coming days.

Trump was convicted in May of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to conceal a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels, whose affair allegations threatened to disrupt his 2016 presidential run. Trump has denied her claim and said he did nothing wrong. His lawyers contend the case was tainted by violations of Trump's constitutional rights and that the verdict is vitiated by the Supreme Court's immunity ruling.

Falsifying business records is punishable by up to four years behind bars. Other potential sentences include probation or a fine.

Trump's lawyers contend that sentencing Trump as scheduled, just two days after Merchan's expected immunity decision, wouldn't give him enough time to weigh next steps, including a possible appeal, if the judge rules to uphold the verdict.

They also argued a Sept. 18 sentencing, about seven weeks before Election Day, would be election interference. In a court filing last week, they raised the specter that Trump could be sent to jail just as early voting is getting underway.

Prosecutors have not staked a position on whether to delay sentencing, deferring to Merchan on an "appropriate post-trial schedule." In their letter Tuesday, they said they were open to a schedule that allows "adequate time" to adjudicate Trump's motion to overturn the verdict while also sentencing him "without unreasonable delay."

Trump's lawyers first asked the federal court to intervene last week, but their paperwork was kicked back because they hadn't gotten the required clearance from Hellerstein to file it. Hours after they submitted papers Tuesday requesting Hellerstein's permission to proceed, he issued his ruling denying it.

Before dissecting Trump's immunity claims, Hellerstein dispatched quickly of the defense's oft-repeated claims that Merchan had treated Trump unfairly — subjecting him to a gag order and refusing to delay the trial until after the Supreme Court ruled — because Merchan's daughter is a Democratic political consultant.

Merchan last month rejected Trump's latest request that he step aside from the case, saying Trump's demand was a rehash "rife with inaccuracies and unsubstantiated claims" about his ability to remain impartial. A state appeals court recently upheld the gag order.

"It would be highly improper for this Court to evaluate the issues of bias, unfairness or error in the state trial," Hellerstein wrote. "Those are issues for the state appellate courts."

Instead, he noted, Trump can pursue a state appeal or seek review from the U.S. Supreme Court, whose immunity ruling reins in prosecutions of ex-presidents for official acts and restricts prosecutors in pointing to official acts as evidence that a president's unofficial actions were illegal.

Trump's lawyers have argued that prosecutors rushed to trial instead of waiting for the Supreme Court's presidential immunity decision, and that prosecutors erred by showing jurors evidence that should not have been allowed under the ruling, such as former White House staffers describing how Trump reacted to news coverage of the hush money deal and tweets he sent while president in 2018.

Former aide to 2 New York governors is charged with being an agent of the Chinese government

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

A former aide to two New York governors was charged Tuesday with acting as an illegal agent of the Chinese government who used her state positions to subtly advance Beijing's agenda in exchange for financial benefits worth millions of dollars.

Linda Sun, who held numerous posts in New York state government, including deputy chief of staff for Gov. Kathy Hochul and deputy diversity officer for former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, was arrested Tuesday morning along with her husband, Chris Hu, at their \$4 million home on Long Island.

Federal prosecutors said Sun, at the request of Chinese officials, blocked representatives of the Taiwanese government from having access to the governor's office and shaped New York governmental messaging to align with the priorities of the Chinese government, among other things.

In return, her husband got help for his business activities in China — a financial boost that prosecutors said allowed the couple to buy their multimillion-dollar property in Manhasset, New York, a condominium in Hawaii for \$1.9 million, and luxury cars including a 2024 Ferrari, the indictment said.

Sun also received smaller gifts, the indictment said, including tickets to performances by a visiting Chinese orchestra and ballet groups and "Nanjing-style salted ducks" that were prepared by the personal chef of a Chinese government official and delivered to Sun's parents' home in New York.

If true, the allegations show that Chinese authorities were able to gain influence at the highest levels of state government in New York for nearly a decade.

"As alleged, while appearing to serve the people of New York as Deputy Chief of Staff within the New York State Executive Chamber, the defendant and her husband actually worked to further the interests of the Chinese government and the CCP," United States Attorney Breon Peace said, using the acronym for the Chinese Communist Party. "The illicit scheme enriched the defendant's family to the tune of millions of dollars."

Sun and Hu pleaded not guilty during an initial court appearance on Tuesday afternoon in Brooklyn and will be released on bond. Sun has been barred from having any contact with the People's Republic of China's consulate and mission.

Her defense lawyer, Jarrod Schaeffer, said, "We're looking forward to addressing these charges in court. Our client is understandably upset that these charges have been brought."

The case is part of a broader Justice Department effort to root out secret agents for the Chinese government operating in the U.S. In recent years, federal authorities have charged Chinese nationals not only with covertly advancing Beijing's interests but also with harassing and intimidating dissidents on the government's behalf.

Last year, the Justice Department charged a pair of men with establishing a secret police station in New York City while acting under the direction and control of the Chinese government.

Sun, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in China, worked in state government for about 15 years, holding jobs in Cuomo's administration and eventually becoming Hochul's deputy chief of staff, according to her LinkedIn profile. In November 2022, Sun took a job at the New York Department of Labor, as deputy commissioner for strategic business development, but she left that job months later in March 2023, the profile said.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Hochul's office said the administration fired Sun after "discovering evidence of misconduct."

"This individual was hired by the Executive Chamber more than a decade ago. We terminated her employment in March 2023 after discovering evidence of misconduct, immediately reported her actions to law enforcement and have assisted law enforcement throughout this process," the statement reads.

The indictment said that, among other things, Sun worked to ensure that representatives of Taiwan's government couldn't get meetings with high-ranking New York state officials. The Chinese government considers Taiwan to be part of China.

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It also outlined a series of exchanges Sun had with officials in the Chinese Consulate in New York in January 2021, when Cuomo was still governor and Hochul was lieutenant governor. Neither leader is named in the document but are instead referred to as "Politician-1" and "Politician-2."

After Chinese officials requested a Lunar New Year video from the governor, Sun said Hochul could probably do it and asked for "talking points of things you want her to mention."

"Mostly holiday wishes and hope for friendship and cooperation / Nothing too political," an official told her, according to the indictment.

Sun later told a different official that she had argued with Hochul's speechwriter over the draft, because the speechwriter insisted on mentioning the "Uyghur situation" in China. She promised that she wouldn't let that happen, and the final speech did not mention the Muslim ethnic minority, according to the indictment.

Sun's alleged activities in New York paved the way for lucrative business deals for Hu in China, prosecutors said, including discussions about a venture to export frozen seafood to China. Hu then attempted to conceal the earnings through various methods in the U.S., according to the indictment.

At the arraignment, Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander Solomon said there were a "multitude of shell and business entities" used in the crimes, adding, "This is no ordinary financial fraud."

The FBI searched the couple's multimillion home in Manhasset in late July but declined to release details at the time.

Sun is charged with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act, money laundering and helping people commit visa fraud and enter the U.S. illegally. Hu is charged with money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and misuse of means of identification. Neither has been charged with espionage.

Cuomo spokesperson Rich Azzopardi downplayed Sun's reach in the former governor's administration, saying she "worked in a handful of agencies and was one of many community liaisons who had little to no interaction with the governor."

Sun and Hu live in a gated community on Long Island called Stone Hill. The couple purchased the house in 2021 but placed it in a trust earlier this year, records show.

This fall, Hollywood tries to balance box office with the ballot box

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Three weeks after the U.S. presidential election in November, Ridley Scott will present his latest big-screen opus. "Gladiator II" returns the prodigious filmmaker to ancient Rome for a story about a power, the survival of Rome and the fate of democracy.

"Hopefully," Scott says, "it will be a good omen."

This fall, Hollywood will be trying — with everything from swaggering historical epics like "Gladiator II" to the high-seas adventure of "Moana 2" — to capture the nation's attention at a time when much of it will be directed at the polls.

Already, Hollywood has played a co-starring role in the election. The Democratic Convention in August was packed with stars like Oprah Winfrey. Republican vice-presidential candidate, JD Vance, was first introduced to many by the 2020 big-screen adaptation of his "Hillbilly Elegy." And it was George Clooney, who this month stars in the Apple Studios film "Wolfs" alongside Brad Pitt, who was one of the most prominent voices to urge President Joe Biden to step down from the race.

Hollywood, famously progressive, has always had to strike a balance between the liberal leanings of the majority of its creatives with the big-tent demands of pop culture. In recent years, that's grown increasingly tricky.

At the same time, the movie industry, after several years hobbled by pandemic and strikes, is striving to recapture its all-audiences populism — and all the billions that can come with it. Disney chief Robert A. Iger last year signaled the need "to entertain first," adding "it's not about messages."

This past summer, Disney led Hollywood out of a box-office slump with a pair of billion-earners in "Inside Out 2" and "Deadpool vs. Wolverine." Ticket sales for the summer rose to \$3.7 billion, according to Comscore — less than the traditional \$4 billion benchmark but significantly better than initially feared after

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a painfully slow start.

One of the fall's likeliest candidates to continue the trend is "Moana 2." Dwayne Johnson, who returns as the voice of Maui, earlier this year said he wouldn't endorse a candidate in the election out of concern for the division it would cause.

Like many of the films opening this fall, "Moana 2" (opening Nov. 27), as a story about a strong female protagonist and a celebration of Pacific Islander culture, could resonate very differently, depending on the outcome of the election.

"If it resonates for people in a different way, I can't control that," says Dana Ledoux Miller, who directed "Moana 2" with David Derrick Jr. and Jason Hand. "I'm so excited about what this story is and what it means to be a person in a community who wants something more for the world they live in and for the future. We'll see what happens, but the movie is what it is."

Movies this year have largely only approached political themes from a distance. "Civil War," by Alex Garland, imagined the U.S. in all-out warfare. "War Game," directed by Tony Gerber and Jesse Moss, gathered real political figures for an insurrection simulation.

But "The Apprentice" will offer the movie version of an October surprise. The film, the release of which was announced just last week, stars Sebastian Stan as a young Donald Trump under the tutelage of Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong). The Trump campaign has called it "election interference by Hollywood elites." Its director, Ali Abbasi, argues filmmakers have a responsibility to face current politics head-on.

"I've been hearing a lot: Let's make a movie about the Second World War or the Civil War — just go back in time," says Abbasi. "They say a Civil War movie is a good metaphor for the way our society is now. I'm like: Our society is extremely exciting, complex, complicated, has huge problems and opportunities. Why not address them? We have a (expletive) responsibility."

As usual this fall, studios will trot out a new wave of awards contenders. Unlike last year, when Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" came into the season the clear favorite, no such frontrunner has yet emerged. At the Venice, Telluride, Toronto and New York film festivals, notable premieres include Todd Phillips' anticipated sequel "Joker: Folie à Deux," Edward Berger's "Conclave," Marielle Heller's "Nightbitch," Malcolm Washington's "The Piano Lesson," Steve McQueen's "Blitz" and LaMell Ross's "Nickel Boys."

Standouts from earlier festivals will also mix in, like Sean Baker's Palme d'Or-winning "Anora" and Jacques Audiard's "Emilia Pérez." But, at least for now, the Oscar race appears wide open.

"Emilia Pérez," about a Mexican drug lord who transitions into a woman, is just one of the many musicals landing in theaters. Some studios have recently run from the label of "musical"; last December's "Wonka" wasn't advertised as such. But this fall, no matter what's happening on the news, it won't be hard to find song and dance on the big screen.

That includes "Joker: Folie à Deux," "Moana 2" and the two-part adaptation of the Broadway show "Wicked!" — not to mention biopics on Robbie Williams ("Better Man") and Bob Dylan ("A Complete Unknown," with Timothée Chalamet).

"Wicked" director Jon M. Chu and producer Marc Platt were confident enough in their film, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, that they opted to split it into two. (Part two will release in November 2025.) "Wicked," opening Nov. 22, will open against "Gladiator II" in the fall's most "Barbeheimer" -like weekend matchup.

"I love at this time, at this moment, we can root for all movies, all the time," says Chu. "It's getting to tell people: Come to the movies. Everyone come."

In "Wicked," which imagines the story behind the opposing witches of "The Wizard of Oz," Platt sees a story with plenty of relevance to the current political climate.

"It's a significant election for both of us," says Platt. "But our story aspires to be about the distance people travel to connect with each other, about seeing the other as not the other, about living in a world where sometimes the truth is not real."

Some films are taking some novel approaches to storytelling. Morgan Neville's "Piece by Piece" tells Pharrell Williams' story with Lego bricks. Robert Zemeckis' "Here," starring Tom Hanks, has the appear-

ance of a film shot in one take. In "Better Man," Williams is portrayed by computer-generated monkey.

In festival screenings of Francis Ford Coppola's "Megalopolis," midway through the movie a man has walked on stage and addressed a question to the screen. Coppola, who financed the film himself, spent years steadily building "Megalopolis," a future-set epic about a visionary (Adam Driver). In cynical times, it's brashly optimistic, even utopian.

"You never turn on CNN or open the newspaper to: 'Human Being Is an Unbelievable Genius.' But it's true. How can you deny it?" Coppola said after the film's premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. "Think of what we can do. A hundred years ago they said man will never fly. Now we're zooming around. So I ask myself: Why is it that no one dare say how great we are? There's no problem that we're facing that we're not ingenious enough to solve."

While Coppola was making his conception of a modern-day Roman epic, Scott was a making the genuine article. During the making of "Gladiator II," Scott — a self-professed news junkie — continually felt that his film was far from ancient history. Russia's war in Ukraine unspooled during the film's making, the director noted.

"You are living during what I call democracy against tyrants, tyranny," says Scott. "We're looking in this film as about tyrannical leadership against people who try to rectify that. When is history not about that?"

US charges Hamas leader, other militants in connection with Oct. 7 massacre in Israel

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department announced criminal charges Tuesday against Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and other senior militants in connection with the Oct. 7, 2023, rampage in Israel, marking the first effort by American law enforcement to formally call out the masterminds of the attack.

The seven-count criminal complaint filed in federal court in New York City includes charges such as conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization resulting in death, conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals and conspiracy to finance terrorism. It also accuses Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah of providing financial support, weapons, including rockets, and military supplies to Hamas for use in attacks.

The impact of the case may be mostly symbolic given that Sinwar is believed to be hiding in tunnels in Gaza and the Justice Department says three of the six defendants are believed now to be dead. But officials say additional actions are expected as part of a broader effort to target a militant group that the U.S. designated as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997 and that over the decades has been linked to a series of deadly attacks on Israel, including suicide bombings.

The complaint was originally filed under seal in February to give the U.S. time to try to take into custody then-Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and other defendants, but it was unsealed Tuesday after Haniyeh's death in July and other developments in the region lessened the need for secrecy, the Justice Department said.

"The charges unsealed today are just one part of our effort to target every aspect of Hamas' operations," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a video statement. "These actions will not be our last."

The charges come as the White House says it is developing a new cease-fire and hostage deal proposal with its Egyptian and Qatari counterparts to try to bring about an agreement between Israel and Hamas to end the nearly 11-month war in Gaza.

A U.S. official, who was not authorized to talk publicly about the case and spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press there was no reason to believe the charges would affect the ongoing negotiations.

National security spokesman John Kirby said the recent "executions" of six hostages, including one American, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, by Hamas underscore "the sense of urgency" in the talks.

"We are investigating Hersh's murder, and each and every one of the brutal murders of Americans, as acts of terrorism," Garland said in the statement. "We will continue to support the whole of government effort to bring the Americans still being held hostage home."

Sinwar was appointed the overall head of Hamas after the killing of Haniyeh in Iran and sits atop Israel's

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most-wanted list. He is believed to have spent most of the past 10 months living in tunnels under Gaza, and it is unclear how much contact he has with the outside world. He was a long-serving Palestinian prisoner freed in an exchange of the type that would be part of a cease-fire and hostage release deal.

Haniyeh was also charged.

Other Hamas leaders facing charges include Marwan Issa, deputy leader of Hamas' armed wing in Gaza, who helped plan last year's attack and who Israel says was killed when its fighter jets struck an underground compound in central Gaza in March; Khaled Mashaal, another Haniyeh deputy and a former leader of the group thought to be based in Qatar; Mohammed Deif, Hamas' longtime shadowy military leader who was thought to be killed in an Israeli airstrike in southern Gaza in July; and Lebanon-based Ali Baraka, Hamas' head of external relations.

The charges are "yet another tool" for the U.S. to respond to the threat Hamas poses to the U.S. and its ally Israel, said Merissa Khurma, Middle East program director at the Wilson Center think tank in Washington.

"If Sinwar is found and brought to justice for planning the October 7 attacks, it would be a significant win for the U.S. and for all those who lost loved ones," she said by email.

However, with Sinwar in hiding, Khurma doesn't see the charges adding more pressure on Hamas. She noted that the chief prosecutor of the world's top war crimes court sought arrest warrants for Hamas leaders like Sinwar and it didn't change their behavior or weaken them in the cease-fire negotiations.

She said the case was still important for the U.S. because many of those killed or kidnapped were Americans and because the country doesn't recognize the International Criminal Court.

During the Oct. 7 attacks, militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 people hostage. Roughly 100 hostages remain, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

The criminal complaint describes the massacre as the "most violent, large-scale terrorist attack" in Hamas' history. It details how Hamas operatives who arrived in southern Israel with "trucks, motorcycles, bulldozers, speedboats, and paragliders" engaged in a brutal campaign of violence that included rape, genital mutilation and machine-gun shootings at close range.

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

Hamas has accused Israel of dragging out months of negotiations by issuing new demands, including for lasting Israeli control over the Philadelphi corridor along the border of Egypt and a second corridor running across Gaza.

Hamas has offered to release all hostages in return for an end to the war, the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants — broadly the terms called for under an outline for a deal put forward by President Joe Biden in July.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged "total victory" over Hamas and blames it for the failure of the negotiations.

Florida State drops out of AP Top 25 after 0-2 start. Texas up to No. 3 behind Georgia, Ohio State

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Florida State fell out of The Associated Press college football poll on Tuesday after starting the season 0-2, becoming just the third team to go from preseason top 10 to unranked in the first regular-season poll since the rankings expanded to 25 in 1989.

Georgia remained No. 1, receiving 57 first-place votes after starting the season with a blowout of then-No. 14 Clemson. The Tigers hung on at No. 25, but it was the second straight year they dropped at least 10 spots after losing their season opener.

Ohio State was No. 2 with five first-place votes. No. 3 Texas and No. 4 Alabama each moved up a spot, putting three Southeastern Conference teams in the top four along with Georgia. The last time the SEC

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did that in a non-pandemic season was Sept. 22, 2019.

No. 5 Notre Dame jumped two spots after opening the season with a victory at then-No. 20 Texas A&M, which fell out of the rankings.

Florida State has been the early season's major disappointment. The defending Atlantic Coast Conference champion lost in Dublin, Ireland, to ACC rival Georgia Tech and then dropped another league game Monday night at home to Boston College.

No other preseason Top 25 team this year lost to an unranked opponent to open the season. Florida State did it twice as a double-digit favorite and did not receive a single vote from the AP poll panel.

The other preseason top-10 teams to fall all the way out of the Top 25 after Week 1 in the past 35 years were Michigan in 2007 after famously losing to Appalachian State as No. 5 and Clemson in 2008. The Tigers were No. 9 but opened with a blowout loss to Alabama and tumbled out of the rankings.

Mississippi remained at No. 6. Oregon slipped four spots to No. 7 after winning a close game with Idaho. Penn State stayed at No. 8. Missouri moved up two spots to No. 9 to give the SEC five teams in the top 10. Michigan dropped one spot to No. 10.

Georgia Tech's 2-0 start has the No. 23 Yellow Jackets ranked for the first time since 2015.

Poll points

Because Florida State started its season a week before most of the country, it moves into an exclusive club of teams that began their seasons 0-2 with each loss coming while ranked in the top 10.

Notre Dame was the last to do it in 2022, when the Fighting Irish began the season No. 5, lost at No. 2 Ohio State in their opener, and then were beaten at home the next week by Marshall while ranked eighth. The Irish went to on finish 9-4.

Ohio State opened the 1986 season ranked ninth and lost back-to-back games to ranked opponents, No. 5 Alabama and No. 17 Washington. The Buckeyes were No. 10 when they played the Huskies. Ohio State finished 10-3.

The 1967 Texas team and TCU from 1952 also started 0-2 while ranked in the top 10 in both games.

Florida State is only the second ranked team to lose twice before the first regular-season poll was released, joining Kentucky in 1951. The Wildcats went from No. 6 to No. 17 while going 1-2 to start the season, losing at No. 11 Texas and at Mississippi.

Florida State gets a weekend off before resuming its schedule with home games against Memphis and new ACC member California before a trip to SMU followed by a home game against Clemson.

"You've got a football team that nobody envisioned ever being where we are and having disappointment, having failure, but I do believe in what this team can do," coach Mike Norvell said after the BC loss. "I believe in what this team can accomplish."

Moving up

The big movers upward in the Top 25 were Miami and Southern California.

The Hurricanes jumped seven spots to No. 12 after routing Florida at The Swamp and have their best ranking since cracking the top 10 late in the 2020 season.

No. 13 USC moved up 10 places after beating LSU with a late touchdown Sunday night in Las Vegas. LSU dropped to No. 18.

The Trojans started last season at No. 6, but ended up unranked after a disappointing 8-5 season with 2022 Heisman Trophy winner Caleb Williams.

In and out

The only other team to move into the rankings this week, along with Georgia Tech, was fellow ACC school Louisville. The Cardinals were among the top unranked voter-getters in the preseason and now sit at No. 22.

Conference call

Despite Florida State and Clemson starting the season 0-3, the ACC has one more team in this week's rankings than it did last time:

SEC — 8 (Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 16, 18).

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Big Ten — 6 (Nos. 2, 7, 8, 10, 13, 21).

ACC — 5 (Nos. 12, 22, 23, 24, 25).

Big 12 — 5 (Nos. 11, 16, 17, 19, 20).

Independent — 1 (No. 5).

Ranked vs. ranked

No. 3 Texas at No. 10 Michigan. The first regular-season meeting ever is a top-10 matchup at the Big House.

No. 14 Tennessee vs. No. 24 N.C. State in Charlotte, North Carolina. Interesting SEC-ACC ranked matchup.

As Columbia resumes classes, student activists vow to carry on with protests against Israel

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Columbia University resumed classes Tuesday with students sunbathing and eating ice cream on the lawn that was home to a pro-Palestinian encampment last spring. But there were also fresh demonstrations just off campus, and students and faculty say they're planning for more as the new school year unfolds.

In recent weeks, the university's new leadership has embarked on listening sessions aimed at cooling tensions, released a report on campus antisemitism and circulated new protest guidelines meant to limit disruption. But student organizers are undeterred, promising to ramp up their actions — including possible encampments — until the university agrees to cut ties with companies linked to Israel.

Someone splattered red paint Tuesday on a statue in front of the Low Memorial Library. Outside the gates of the university, a small group of protesters marched on a picket line and urged arriving students and faculty to join them rather than go to class.

"As long as Columbia continues to invest and to benefit from Israeli apartheid, the students will continue to resist," Mahmoud Khalil, a graduate student who represented campus protesters in negotiations with the university, told The Associated Press last week ahead of the start of classes. "Not only protests and encampments, the limit is the sky."

The new year begins less than a month after the resignation of Columbia's president, Minouche Shafik, whose decision to bring police on campus to clear a protest encampment in April set off a wave of college demonstrations nationwide. After a second encampment was erected and a group of students occupied a university building, hundreds of police officers surged onto campus, making arrests and plunging the university into lockdown.

Since Shafik's resignation, the interim president, Katrina Armstrong, has met with students on both sides of the issue, promising to balance students' rights to free expression and a safe learning environment. While the message has inspired cautious optimism among some faculty, others see the prospect of major disruptions as all but inevitable.

"We are hoping for the best, but we are all wagering how long before we go into total lockdown again," said Rebecca Korbin, a history professor who served on Columbia's antisemitism task force. "There haven't been any monumental changes, so I don't know why the experience in the fall would look much different than what it did in the spring."

In a report released Friday, the task force of Columbia faculty accused the university of allowing "pervasive" antisemitism to fester on campus following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack. The report recommended that the university revamp its disciplinary process and require additional sensitivity training for students and staff.

Demonstrations against the war have already started bubbling up on college campuses this semester, including one at the University of Michigan that resulted in multiple arrests.

The University of Maryland announced that it will not allow student organizations to hold any on-campus demonstrations on Oct. 7, the anniversary of the Hamas attacks in Israel. It took the action after at least one group reserved a location for a vigil commemorating Palestinians killed in Gaza.

"Numerous calls have been made to cancel and restrict the events that take place that day, and I fully

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understand that this day opens emotional wounds and evokes deeply rooted pain," University of Maryland President Darryll Pines wrote in a letter Sunday. "The language has been charged and the rhetoric intense."

Columbia's steps to limit protests this semester have included restricting access to campus.

The university's tall iron gates, long open to the public, are now guarded, requiring students to present identification to enter campus. Inside, private security guards stand on the edge of the grassy lawns that students had seized for their encampment. A new plaque on a nearby fence notes that "camping" is prohibited.

On Tuesday morning, dozens of pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated outside one entrance to the university, some beating drums, while a long line of students and staff made their way through the checkpoint. At another entrance, protesters used a megaphone to implore those in line to instead join their picket line.

Later, two protesters outside the gates of Barnard College, the university's nearby sister school, were taken into custody by police. The New York Police Department did not immediately have any details on the arrests.

Speaking to the AP ahead of the start of classes, Layla Hussein, a junior at Columbia who helped to lead orientation programming, described the added security measures as an unwelcome and hostile distraction.

"We're trying to cultivate a welcoming environment. It doesn't help when you look outside and it's a bunch of security guards and barricades," Hussein said.

Others have accused the university of treating student protesters too leniently, arguing that a lack of clear guidelines would result in further turmoil. Though some of those disciplinary cases remain ongoing, prosecutors have dropped charges against many of the students arrested last semester, and the university has allowed them to return to campus.

"They violated every rule in the book, and they openly state they'll continue to do so," said Elisha Baker, a junior at Columbia who leads an Israeli engagement group, adding: "We need to have a serious reckoning with the disciplinary process to make sure students have a safe learning environment."

After Jewish students sued Columbia, accusing them of creating a dangerous environment on campus, the university agreed in June provide a "safe passage liaison" to those concerned with protest activity.

In July, Columbia removed three administrators who exchanged private text messages disparaging certain speakers during a discussion about Jewish life in a manner Shafik said touched on "ancient antisemitic tropes." One of the administrators had suggested in a text that a campus rabbi was going to turn concerns about antisemitism into a fundraising opportunity.

A spokesperson for Columbia said the university had since bolstered its guidelines around protests and developed new training for incoming students on antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The revised protest guidelines require organizers to inform the university of any scheduled protests, barring any demonstrations that pose "a genuine threat of harassment" or "substantially inhibit the primary purposes" of university space.

Like many universities, Columbia is also in the midst of a contentious debate about the definition of antisemitism, and whether anti-Zionist speech — common at the student protests — should be seen as a form of discrimination.

At New York University, which also saw large-scale protests and an encampment last spring, an updated code of conduct now warns students that speech critical of Zionism could run afoul of its anti-discrimination policy. The move has drawn praise from major Jewish groups, as well as backlash from student groups and some faculty.

The Columbia task force report defines antisemitism as "prejudice, discrimination, hate, or violence directed at Jews, including Jewish Israelis," "double standards applied to Israel" and exclusion or discrimination based on "real or perceived ties to Israel."

Eduardo Vergara, a graduate student at Columbia who teaches literature in the Spanish department, said many instructors were going into the semester uncertain about what they could and couldn't say in the classroom. He said he fully expected to spend much of the semester discussing the war in Gaza and the reaction on campus.

"It feels like everything is calm now," he added. "I don't think that's going to last long."

Condoms can't be trusted and boys don't cry in Catholic Paraguay's first sex ed program

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (AP) — Ahead of her 15th birthday, Diana Zalazar's body had gotten so big she could no longer squeeze into the dress she bought for her quinceañera to celebrate her passage into womanhood in Paraguay.

Her mother sought help from a doctor, who suspected that growing inside of the 14-year-old Catholic choir girl could be a giant tumor. Next thing Zalazar knew, a gynecologist was wiping down the probe she'd applied to her belly and informing her that she was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

It made no sense to Zalazar, who had recently had sex for the first time without realizing it could make her pregnant.

In Catholic Paraguay, which has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in South America, many young mothers explained their teen pregnancies to The Associated Press as the result of growing up in a country where parents avoid the birds and the bees talk at all costs and national sex education is indistinguishable from a hygiene lesson.

"I didn't decide to become a mother," Zalazar said. "I didn't have a chance to choose because I didn't have the knowledge."

Over the years that Zalazar, now 39, has gone from sexual ignorance and shame to raising her 23-year-old son and advocating for children's rights, Paraguay's lack of sex education has remained unchanged — until now. For the first time, the Ministry of Education has endorsed a national sex ed curriculum. But in a surprising twist, it's the sexual health educators and feminists who are panicked. Conservative lobbyists are thrilled.

The curriculum, a copy of which was obtained by the AP, promotes abstinence, explains sex as "God's invention for married people," warns about the inefficacy of condoms and says nothing of sexual orientation or identity.

"We have a very strong Judeo-Christian culture that still prevails, and there's fierce resistance to anything that goes against our principles," said Miguel Ortigoza, a key proponent of the curriculum and evangelical pastor from Capitol Ministries, a Washington-based nonprofit that ran Bible study for former President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

As a new generation of activists campaigning for legal abortion and gay rights scores victories across Latin America, a conservative backlash has gathered in Paraguay. The country already has among the world's strictest abortion laws — punishable by prison time even in cases of incest or rape, though not when the mother's life is in danger.

"Laws everywhere now allow girls to kill their babies, but Paraguay is among the remaining few saying no for Jesus' sake," said Oscar Avila, manager of an anti-abortion shelter for young mothers in Paraguay's capital. At a recent morning Mass, girls no older than 15 filled the pews, some heavily pregnant, others with infants on their hips.

Critics explain the outsized power of Paraguay's right-wing pressure groups as the consequence of a peculiar history. The conservative Colorado party has ruled the country for 76 of the past 80 years — including during a dictatorship openly sympathetic to Adolf Hitler.

"Growing up under the dictatorship, I was told homosexuality is a deviation," said Simón Casal, founder of Paraguayan LGBTQ+ rights group SomosGay. "The dictatorship legally ended, but the same political clans kept running the show."

More recently, the rise of the far right in Latin America has given the governing party's platform of religion, family and "patria," or fatherland, newer resonance — emboldening conservative culture warriors with evangelical ties to take their battles to classrooms.

In 2017, Paraguay became the first country to ban school discussions about gender identity, an unwitting trailblazer for European populists and Republican governors. Now its sex ed curriculum has become a national flashpoint.

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"The text is very dangerous, it's an affront to science," leftist Sen. Esperanza Martínez told a government committee recently convened to debate the curriculum.

Education Minister Luis Fernando Ramirez downplayed the controversy, stressing there was still time to improve the curriculum before enforcing it. "There's no expenditure of state funds," he told lawmakers. "Let's not pass judgement until we do deeper work."

Authorities assembled teams to revise the curriculum, called "12 Sciences of Sexuality and Affectivity Education," which it plans to pilot in September across five eastern regions before taking it nationwide. Parents' rights groups praise the 12 books, one for each grade, as a way of teaching morals and protecting young people.

"It's a real battle for life, family, the true rights of children and the freedom of parents," said curriculum author Maria Judith Turriaga. "It's the reason parents fought for it to be included in public schools."

The curriculum instructs children to treat others with respect and cultivate healthy relationships.

But in discouraging contraception and enforcing traditional gender norms, it has become a lightning rod for social tensions. Critics say it perpetuates sexist stereotypes: "Men conquer, not seduce," "girls have smaller and lighter brains," "boys don't cry easily," "girls don't like taking risks."

Masturbation, it says, causes "frustration and isolation." Marital love lasts forever. Girls should beware of "how their way of dressing makes men behave." Female puberty is "the body preparing to become a wife and mother."

The books are filled with unexpected claims, too — "Boys do not clearly perceive high-pitched voices," it says.

Any talk of sex is about the heterosexual variety.

"Without a truly inclusive education that allows you to understand your reality, it's scary," said Yren Rotela, a trans activist whose identity as female at 13 pushed her into indentured servitude and sex work in a country where transgender identity is not legally recognized, there's no legislation recognizing hate crimes and discrimination is widespread.

At a workshop in August, participants voiced alarm over parts of the curriculum emphasizing the duty of obedience to parents and authorities and urging pregnant teens to confide in their families — even as sexual assault is typically perpetrated in the home.

"I never got help from my family, they were threatening me not to tell anyone," said Liliana, who was raped by her stepfather and became pregnant at 13, speaking on condition that only her first name be used because her case is under investigation.

The focus on unquestioned deference carries a political charge in Paraguay, where experts say Latin America's longest-ruling dictatorship instilled an enduring autocratic tradition.

"It's easy in this country to create authoritarian projects that play on people's fears," said Adriana Closs, president of Feipar, a Paraguayan group promoting comprehensive education. "Political factions are taking advantage of this because of the favorable global context."

As the politics of social conservatism surge from Brazil to Hungary, Paraguayan lawmakers have found immense promise in agitating against what they hold is a Western conspiracy to feminize boys and make girls gay.

Panic over foreign influence taps into collective trauma from the War of the Triple Alliance, which pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, and decimated more than half of its population. Paraguayans still have a habit of invoking the 1865-1870 conflict as if it happened last week.

"Paraguay is the perfect breeding ground for globalist conspiracies," said Esteban Caballero, adviser for the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, a regional research group. "It's not a fringe group of fanatics promoting this narrative, it's a conservative society terrified by nonbinary identities. That means votes."

Before 2023's parliamentary elections, an annual transfer of European Union funds to Paraguay's Education Ministry plunged politicians into a galvanizing battle.

Electoral debate pivoted from Paraguay's rampant corruption and neglected schools to accusations that the EU indoctrinates children about "gender ideology" through its financing agreement, "Transforming

Education.”

The Senate narrowly rejected a bill that swept through the lower house ordering authorities to repeal EU funds, which in reality support anti-hunger initiatives.

As controversy swirled, European diplomats held a ceremony to change the agreement’s name to “Strengthening Education” for fear the word “transforming” caused offense. President Santiago Peña appeared at Paraguay’s biggest evangelical church, promising religious leaders increased influence over the national educational agenda.

“We see stronger support than in previous times,” Pastor Ortigoza said. “There’s greater sensitivity to our causes.”

A boat with dozens of migrants rips apart in the English Channel off France, killing 12

By JOHN LEICESTER and MARK CARLSON Associated Press

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, France (AP) — A boat carrying migrants ripped apart in the English Channel as they attempted to reach Britain from northern France on Tuesday, plunging dozens into the treacherous waterway and leaving 12 dead, authorities said.

Most of the victims were believed to be women, some under 18, and many of the passengers didn’t have life preservers, officials said, with one calling it the deadliest migrant accident in the channel this year.

“Unfortunately, the bottom of the boat ripped open,” said Olivier Barbarin, mayor of Le Portel near Boulogne-sur-Mer, where a first aid post was set up to treat victims. “If people don’t know how to swim in the agitated waters ... it can go very quickly.”

Europe’s increasingly strict asylum rules, growing xenophobia and hostile treatment of migrants have been pushing them north. Before Tuesday’s accident, at least 30 migrants had died or gone missing while trying to cross to the U.K. this year, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Rescuers pulled a total of 65 people from the English Channel on Tuesday in a search that lasted more than four hours, according to Lt. Etienne Baggio, a spokesman for the French agency that oversees the stretch of sea where the boat ripped apart. Doctors confirmed 12 died, he said.

Another 12 people were hospitalized, and two were in very serious conditions, authorities said.

Adam Beernaert, director of the Civil Protection authority, whose personnel looks after rescued migrants once they reach land, said the people his team attended Tuesday were traumatized. “What needs to be said is that they shouldn’t cross,” Beernaert told the AP. “The sea is not easy. Weather conditions change all the time.”

Baggio called it the deadliest migrant boat tragedy in the English Channel this year. In July, four migrants died while attempting the crossing on an inflatable boat that capsized and punctured. Five others, including a child, died in another attempt in April. And five dead were recovered from the seas or found washed up along a beach after a migrant boat ran into difficulties in the dark and winter cold of January.

Many of those aboard the vessel that broke up in the English Channel on Tuesday didn’t have life vests, Baggio said. He said the boat was an inflatable. Three helicopters, a plane, two fishing boats and more than six other vessels were involved in the rescue operation.

In another sea tragedy Tuesday involving migrants seeking a better life in Europe, a boat carrying migrants capsized in the Mediterranean off the Libyan coast, leaving one person dead and 22 missing, Libyan authorities said.

The agency overseeing the rescue operation in the English Channel said the boat got into difficulty off Gris-Nez point between Boulogne-sur-Mer and the port of Calais further north. Sea temperatures off northern France were around 20 degrees C, or about 68 F.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin went to Boulogne-sur-Mer to meet those involved in handling what he described as the “terrible shipwreck.” He said the boat was frail and small — less than 7 meters (23 feet) long — and that smugglers are packing more and more people aboard such vessels. Most of the people on the boat were believed to be from Eritrea, and most of the victims were women, he said.

Last week, the leaders of France and the U.K. agreed to deepen cooperation on illegal migration in the channel.

"We absolutely must — and this is a very important point — re-establish special relations with our British friends," Darmanin said on Tuesday. He later told the AP that to successfully tackle smuggling networks, immigration legislation between the U.K. and France should be harmonized.

"It has now been 30 years that these problems remain, and it is absolutely necessary that we find solutions," said Barbarin, the mayor of Le Portel.

U.K. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper called it "a horrifying and deeply tragic incident" and paid tribute to French rescuers "who undoubtedly saved many lives, but sadly could not save everyone."

"The gangs behind this appalling and callous trade in human lives have been cramming more and more people onto increasingly unseaworthy dinghies, and sending them out into the Channel even in very poor weather," she said.

"They do not care about anything but the profits they make, and that is why — as well as mourning the awful loss of life — the work to dismantle these dangerous and criminal smuggler gangs and to strengthen border security is so vital and must proceed apace."

At least 2,109 migrants have tried to cross the English Channel on small boats in the past seven days, according to U.K. Home Office data updated Tuesday. The data includes people found in the channel or on arrival.

Harris to propose tenfold startup tax incentive increase she says will spur small business creation

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris plans to propose on Wednesday a tenfold increase in federal tax incentives for small business startup expenses, from \$5,000 to \$50,000, hoping to help spur a record 25 million new small business applications over her four-year term should she win the presidency in November.

She's set to unveil the plan during a campaign stop in the Portsmouth area of New Hampshire — marking a rare deviation from the Midwestern and Sunbelt battlegrounds the Democrat has focused on in her race against former Republican President Donald Trump.

A Harris campaign official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a policy plan that hadn't been released publicly, said Tuesday the change would cover the \$40,000 it costs on average to start a business. The proposal would let new businesses wait to claim that deduction until they first turn a profit, to better maximize its impact lowering their taxes.

Such changes would likely require congressional approval. But a series of tax cuts approved during the Trump administration are set to expire at the end of next year, setting up a scenario where lawmakers may be ready to consider new tax policies. The proposal can help Harris show her support for entrepreneurs even as she's called for higher corporate tax rates.

Since President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid and endorsed Harris in July, the vice president has focused on campaigning in the "blue wall" states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that have been the centerpiece of Democratic campaigns that have won the White House in recent decades.

She's also frequently visited Arizona, Nevada and Georgia, all of which Biden narrowly won in 2020, and North Carolina, which last voted Democratic in a presidential race in 2008 but which she's still hoping to flip from Trump. Biden won New Hampshire by 7 percentage points in 2020, though Trump came far closer to winning it against Hillary Clinton in 2016.

"The cost of living in New Hampshire is through the roof, their energy bills are some of highest in the country, and their housing market is the most unaffordable in history," Trump posted last week on his social media platform.

Harris' team says securing 25 million new business applications in four years if she wins the White House would exceed the roughly 19 million such applications filed since Biden took office. And those were mil-

lions more than the previous four years under Trump. The vice president's goal would be a record for new small business applications — but records only go back about 20 years.

Applications to start a business don't always translate to small businesses actually being formed. Still, Harris' plan could keep new small businesses that do come to fruition from otherwise incurring more debt which, at a time of high interest rates, might help them better succeed.

In the weeks since Harris took over the top of the Democratic ticket, she has offered relatively few major policy proposals — attempting to strike a political balance between injecting new energy into the race and continuing to support many of the Biden administration proposals she helped champion as vice president.

Harris' small business plan follows her announcing last month proposed steps to fight inflation by working to lower grocery prices, and to use tax cuts and other incentives to encourage homeownership. The vice president has also proposed ending federal taxes on tips to service industry workers, an idea Trump proposed first.

The plan she's introducing Wednesday further calls for developing a standard deduction for small businesses meant to save their owners time when doing their taxes, and making it easier to get occupational licenses — letting people work across state lines and businesses expand into new states. Harris also wants to offer federal incentives so state and local government will ease their regulations.

In an effort to spur business investment outside urban and suburban hubs, Harris is pledging to launch a small business expansion fund to enable community banks and federal entities to cover interest costs while small businesses are expanding or otherwise creating jobs. Her team says those efforts will focus especially on areas that traditionally receive less investment.

Stock market today: Wall Street tumbles on worries about the economy, and Dow drops more than 600

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks tumbled Tuesday to their worst day since an early August sell-off, as a week full of updates on the economy got off to a discouragingly weak start.

The S&P 500 sank 2.1% to give back a chunk of the gains from a three-week winning streak that had carried it to the cusp of its all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 626 points, or 1.5%, from its own record set on Friday before Monday's Labor Day holiday. The Nasdaq composite fell 3.3% as Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks led the way lower.

Treasury yields also stumbled in the bond market after a report showed U.S. manufacturing shrank again in August, sputtering under the weight of high interest rates. Manufacturing has been contracting for most of the past two years, and its performance for August was worse than economists expected.

"Demand remains subdued, as companies show an unwillingness to invest in capital and inventory due to current federal monetary policy and election uncertainty," said Timothy Fiore, chair of the Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing business survey committee.

Stocks of oil and gas companies were some of the market's biggest losers after the price of crude oil fell roughly 4% on concerns about how much fuel a fragile global economy will burn. A barrel of benchmark U.S. oil is almost back to \$70 and down for the year after climbing above \$85 in April.

Exxon Mobil lost 2.1%, and ConocoPhillips dropped 3.5%.

Similar worries about a slowing U.S. economy and a possible recession had helped send stocks on a scary summertime swoon in early August. It briefly knocked the S&P 500 nearly 10% below its record set in July, but financial markets quickly rebounded on hopes that the Federal Reserve could pull off a perfect landing for the economy.

The Fed appears set to lower interest rates later this month in hopes of easing conditions for the economy and avoiding a recession after earlier jacking its main interest rate to a two-decade high to beat high inflation.

Other reports due later this week could show how much help the economy needs, including updates

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on the number of job openings U.S. employers were advertising at the end of July and how strong U.S. services businesses grew last month. The week's highlight will likely arrive on Friday, when a report will show how many jobs U.S. employers created during August.

The jobs report has once again become the main event for the stock market each month, taking over from updates on inflation, according to analysts at Bank of America. Many traders are anticipating the Fed will deliver a full percentage point of cuts to interest rates this year, which is a "recession-sized" amount, Gonzalo Asis and other economists and strategists wrote in a BofA Global Research report.

The strength of this jobs report, or lack thereof, will likely determine the size of the Fed's upcoming cut, according to Goldman Sachs economist David Mericle. If Friday's data shows an improvement in hiring over July's disappointing report, it could keep the Fed on course for a traditional-sized move of a quarter of a percentage point.

But if Friday's report is weaker, it could drive the Fed to deliver an outsized cut of half a percentage point from the federal funds rate's current range of 5.25% to 5.50%, Mericle said.

While cuts to rates are generally boons to investment prices, a recession could more than wipe out that benefit by dragging down corporate profits.

On Wall Street, U.S. Steel fell 6.1% in its first trading after Vice President Kamala Harris said Monday that she opposed the company's planned sale to Japan's Nippon Steel. The Democratic presidential nominee's comments, which echo President Joe Biden's position, came after Nippon Steel Corp. said last week it would spend an additional \$1.3 billion to upgrade facilities in Pennsylvania and Indiana, on top of a previous \$1.4 billion commitment.

Nippon Steel also reiterated that it expects the transaction to close by the end of this year, despite ongoing political and labor opposition.

Nvidia was the heaviest weight by far on the S&P 500 after falling 9.5%. Its stock has been struggling even after the chip company topped high expectations for its latest profit report. The subdued performance could bolster criticism that Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks simply soared too high in Wall Street's frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology.

All of the stocks that have come to be known as the "Magnificent Seven," which accounted for the vast majority of the S&P 500's return last year and early this year, fell at least 1.3%.

Still, it wasn't a complete washout on Wall Street. Nearly 30% of the stocks within the S&P 500 climbed, led by those that tend to benefit the most from lower interest rates. That includes dividend-paying stocks, as well as companies whose profits are less closely tied to the ebbs and flows of the economy, such as real-estate stocks and makers of everyday staples for consumers.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 119.47 points to 5,528.93. The Dow dropped 626.15 to 40,936.93, and the Nasdaq composite sank 577.33 to 17,136.30.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 3.84% from 3.91% late Friday. That's down from 4.70% in late April, a significant move for the bond market.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were lower across much of Europe and Asia.

Worries were also growing about the resilience of China's economy, as recently disclosed data showed a mixed picture. Weak earnings reports from Chinese companies, including property developer and investor New World Development Co., added to the pessimism.

Russian missiles blast Ukrainian military academy and hospital, killing more than 50, officials say

By LORI HINNANT and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

POLTAVA, Ukraine (AP) — Two ballistic missiles blasted a military academy and nearby hospital Tuesday in Ukraine, killing more than 50 people and wounding more than 200 others, Ukrainian officials said, in one of the deadliest Russian strikes since the war began.

The missiles tore into the heart of the Poltava Military Institute of Communication's main building, caus-

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ing several stories to collapse. It didn't take long for the smell of smoke and word of the deadly strike to spread through the central-eastern town.

"People found themselves under the rubble. Many were saved," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video posted on his Telegram channel. He ordered an investigation.

Shattered bricks were visible inside the closed gates of the institution, which was off-limits to the media, and small pools of blood could be seen just outside hours later. Field communications trucks were parked along the perimeter. Roads were covered in glass from shattered apartment windows.

"I heard explosions ... I was at home at that time. When I left the house, I realized that it was something evil and something bad," said Yevheniy Zemskyy, who arrived to volunteer his help. "I was worried about the children, the residents of Poltava. That's why we are here today to help our city in any way we can."

By Tuesday evening, the death toll stood at 51, according to the general prosecutor's office.

Filip Pronin, governor of the region that bears Poltava's name, announced on Telegram that 219 people were wounded. Up to 18 people may be buried under the rubble, he said.

Ten apartment buildings were damaged, and more than 150 people donated blood, Pronin said.

He called it "a great tragedy" for the region and all of Ukraine, and announced three days of mourning starting Wednesday.

The academy trains officers in communications and electronics, as well as drone operators, honing some of the most valued skills in a war where both sides are fighting for control of the electronic battlefield.

"The enemy certainly must answer for all (its) crimes against humanity," Pronin wrote on Telegram.

The Kremlin offered no immediate comment on the strike. It was not clear whether the dead and wounded were limited to Ukrainian military personnel, such as signal corps cadets, or if they included civilians.

Since it embarked on its full-scale invasion in early 2022, the Russian military has repeatedly used missiles to smash civilian targets, sometimes killing scores of people in a single attack.

Some of the deadliest such assaults included a 2022 airstrike on a theater in Mariupol that killed hundreds of civilians sheltering in the basement and a strike that same year on the train station in Kramatorsk that killed 61. Apartment buildings, markets and shopping centers have also been targeted.

Poltava is about 350 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of Kyiv, on the main highway and rail route between Kyiv and Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, which is close to the Russian border.

The attack happened as Ukrainian forces sought to carve out their holdings in Russia's Kursk border region after a surprise incursion that began Aug. 6 and as the Russian army hacks its way deeper into eastern Ukraine.

The missiles hit shortly after an air-raid alert sounded, when many people were on their way to a bomb shelter, Ukraine's Defense Ministry said, describing the strike as "barbaric."

Rescue crews and medics saved 25 people, including 11 who were dug out of the rubble, a Defense Ministry statement said.

The strike came on the day that Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Mongolia. There was no indication that his hosts would heed demands to arrest him on an international warrant for alleged war crimes.

Zelenskyy repeated his appeal for Ukraine's Western partners to ensure swift delivery of military aid. He has previously chided the U.S. and European countries for being slow to make good on their pledges of help.

He also wants them to ease restrictions on what Ukraine can target on Russian soil with the weapons they provide. Some countries fear that hitting Russia could escalate the war.

"Ukraine needs air defense systems and missiles now, not sitting in storage," Zelenskyy wrote in English on Telegram.

"Long-range strikes that can protect us from Russian terror are needed now, not later. Every day of delay, unfortunately, means more lost lives," he said.

Trial expected to focus on shooter's competency in 2021 Colorado supermarket massacre

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A man sitting in his van after fixing a coffee machine inside a supermarket in the college town of Boulder was the first person killed. In just over a minute, nine more people died in a barrage of gunfire inside and outside the store in 2021 as the shooter targeted and pursued people who were moving.

Survivors fled out of the back of the store to escape the bullets. For more than an hour, others hid in shelves, checkout stands and offices.

Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, then 21, surrendered after being shot in the leg by a police officer in the store, emerging wearing only his underwear and repeatedly asking officers to call his mother. His attorneys don't dispute he was the shooter.

But why he carried out the mass shooting remains unknown as his trial is set to begin this week. Public questioning of potential jurors began Tuesday with opening statements expected before the end of the week. Alissa is charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder, 15 counts of attempted murder and other offenses, including having six high-capacity ammunition magazine devices banned in Colorado after previous mass shootings.

The closest thing to a possible motive revealed so far was when a mental health evaluator testified during a competency hearing last year that Alissa said he bought firearms to carry out a mass shooting and suggested that he wanted police to kill him.

Robert Olds, whose 25-year-old niece Rikki Olds was the manager Alissa fatally shot at close range near the entrance, plans to sit in his usual spot in the front row throughout the trial. He has sometimes wished Alissa had just died in the attack. But he has held out hope that he would one day learn why his niece, known for her sense of humor and outgoing personality, and the others were killed. He has become less hopeful of that but is certain Alissa knew what he was doing.

"I hope he goes to prison for the rest of his life, and then he'll serve the real penalty when he has to meet God and answer for killing 10 people," he said.

The trial is expected to focus largely on Alissa's mental state at the time of the shooting. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. His lawyers argue he should be acquitted because his mental illness prevented him from being able to tell right from wrong.

The defense argued in a court filing that his relatives said he irrationally believed that the FBI was following him and that he would talk to himself as if he were talking to someone who was not there. However, prosecutors point out Alissa was never previously treated for mental illness and was able to work up to 60 hours a week leading up to the shooting, something they say would not have been possible for someone severely mentally ill.

Alissa's trial has been delayed because experts repeatedly found he was not able to understand legal proceedings and help his defense. But after Alissa improved after being forcibly medicated, Judge Ingrid Bakke ruled in October that he was mentally competent, allowing proceedings to resume.

Prosecutors will have the burden of proving he was sane, attempting to show Alissa that knew what he was doing and intended to kill people in the store.

Authorities have not explained why Alissa bypassed a King Soopers near his home in the Denver suburb of Arvada and drove about 15 miles (24 kilometers) to the chain's store in Boulder, a city he had never visited before the shooting, according to the defense.

Prosecutors have presented evidence that, in the months before the shooting, Alissa had researched things like how to move and shoot with an assault rifle and what kinds of bullets are the most deadly. One court document noted without elaboration that he searched for information about the "Christ Church attacks," an apparent reference to the livestreamed shooting attacks by a white nationalist on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, that killed 51 people in 2019.

Alissa immigrated from Syria with his family as a toddler. He lived with his family in Arvada, where they owned a restaurant.

The only known problem Alissa had before the shooting was an incident in high school in 2018 when he was convicted of assaulting a fellow student, according to police documents. A former classmate also told The Associated Press that Alissa was kicked off the wrestling team after yelling he would kill everyone following a loss in a practice match.

A sister-in-law who lived in Alissa's home told police that he had been playing with what she thought was a "machine gun" two days before the shooting before two relatives took it away, according to court documents.

Several of Alissa's relatives are listed as potential witnesses for the defense during the trial.

Both sides will rely on experts to testify about his sanity, possibly including videos of their interviews with Alissa, said defense lawyer Karen Steinhauer, a former prosecutor and University of Denver law professor.

If jurors don't believe Alissa was legally insane, they could also consider whether his mental illness prevented him from being able to act with deliberation and intent and find him guilty of second-degree murder instead, she said.

A sanity evaluation done by experts at the state mental hospital found Alissa was legally sane at the time of the attack, according to details provided by the defense in a court hearing this spring. According to the defense, the evaluators found the attack would not have happened but for Alissa's untreated mental illness, which attorney Sam Dunn said was schizophrenia that included "auditory hallucinations."

Olds said he is bracing himself to learn more horrific details about the shooting, including surveillance video not previously shown in public.

But he said having the trial behind him will help him and many of the families finally grieve what they've lost, he said.

"There's no such thing as moving on. It's finding other ways to live without your loved one," he said.

What to know about delta-8 and other common vape shop drugs

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

They're sold in gas stations, vape shops, online and in other stores around the country in seemingly countless enticing forms: gummies, chocolate bars, chips. Their packaging lists things like delta-8 THC, micro- and macrodoses of "psychedelics" and "nootropics."

These substances are often sold through legal loopholes, despite concerns about potential health risks and a lack of oversight of how they're produced. And in the absence of federal rules, many states have banned or have tried to ban delta-8 THC.

Legal but under-regulated drugs are easy to come by, but experts say there are still a lot of uncertainties. Here's what to know.

How are these substances legal?

Drug laws are often specific to the substance, so federal and state regulators are left chasing the newest chemical concoction.

Delta-8 THC exploded in popularity under the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, more commonly known as the Farm Bill. Under that law, hemp products and the cannabinoids that could be made from them were classified as distinct from marijuana.

Delta-8 has just a slight chemical tweak from the psychoactive delta-9 compound found in marijuana, but it can still get you high.

It remains in a legally ambiguous area with restrictions that vary state by state, said Robert Mikos, a marijuana policy and law expert at Vanderbilt University. Substances like cannabinoids are also easy to change into new but similar versions of drugs that may come under scrutiny.

"There's been all sorts of things that (have) cycled through popularity over time," he said. "And government enforcement is always one step behind what the chemists can come up with."

If it's on a store shelf though, it's safe, right?

Not necessarily.

Because of a lack of oversight into manufacturing processes and a lack of uniform labeling requirements,

it's hard to know what exactly is in a particular product.

For example, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration began investigating illnesses earlier this year caused by recalled Diamond Shrooms products, which in addition to containing muscimol, a legal psychoactive compound from the Amanita muscaria mushroom, were found to contain other unlisted ingredients, including psilocin, a controlled substance.

It's hard to even know basic information about what the potency of the drug in many of these products is, said Dr. Ginger Nicol, who leads the psychedelics research program at Washington University in St. Louis.

And the concern isn't just limited to the drugs themselves: It extends to other things that could be introduced in the manufacturing process, said Dr. Igor Grant, director of the University of California, San Diego's Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research.

He pointed to how delta-8 is made from CBD.

The chemical process to make delta-8 uses strong acids and more, Grant said, and if some of those other trace chemicals are left behind, they can pose added health risks to those already posed by delta-8 itself.

"If this was done by the Food and Drug Administration's standards where they have strong regulations about purity and all that, it'd probably be fine," he said. "But that's not how it's made."

What should you do?

Nicol suggested that people to talk to their doctor before taking anything, especially if it's an unregulated drug.

That's in part because of the lack of rigorous research that could better understand the drugs' effects, side effects and safety — and in part because there is so little oversight.

"You can get a bad batch," she said. "Nobody is necessarily testing it for purity or contamination."

China-linked 'Spamouflage' network mimics Americans online to sway US political debate

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When he first emerged on social media, the user known as Harlan claimed to be a New Yorker and an Army veteran who supported Donald Trump for president. Harlan said he was 29, and his profile picture showed a smiling, handsome young man.

A few months later, Harlan underwent a transformation. Now, he claimed to be 31 and from Florida.

New research into Chinese disinformation networks targeting American voters shows Harlan's claims were as fictitious as his profile picture, which analysts think was created using artificial intelligence.

As voters prepare to cast their ballots this fall, China has been making its own plans, cultivating networks of fake social media users designed to mimic Americans. Whoever or wherever he really is, Harlan is a small part of a larger effort by U.S. adversaries to use social media to influence and upend America's political debate.

The account was traced back to Spamouflage, a Chinese disinformation group, by analysts at Graphika, a New York-based firm that tracks online networks. Known to online researchers for several years, Spamouflage earned its moniker through its habit of spreading large amounts of seemingly unrelated content alongside disinformation.

"One of the world's largest covert online influence operations — an operation run by Chinese state actors — has become more aggressive in its efforts to infiltrate and to sway U.S. political conversations ahead of the election," Jack Stubbs, Graphika's chief intelligence officer, told The Associated Press.

Intelligence and national security officials have said that Russia, China and Iran have all mounted online influence operations targeting U.S. voters ahead of the November election. Russia remains the top threat, intelligence officials say, even as Iran has become more aggressive in recent months, covertly supporting U.S. protests against the war in Gaza and attempting to hack into the email systems of the two presidential candidates.

China, however, has taken a more cautious, nuanced approach. Beijing sees little advantage in supporting one presidential candidate over the other, intelligence analysts say. Instead, China's disinformation efforts

focus on campaign issues particularly important to Beijing — such as American policy toward Taiwan — while seeking to undermine confidence in elections, voting and the U.S. in general.

Officials have said it's a longer-term effort that will continue well past Election Day as China and other authoritarian nations try to use the internet to erode support for democracy.

Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu rejected Graphika's findings as full of "prejudice and malicious speculation" and said that "China has no intention and will not interfere" in the election.

X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, suspended several of the accounts linked to the Spamouflage network after questions were raised about their authenticity. The company did not respond to questions about the reasons for the suspensions, or whether they were connected to Graphika's report.

TikTok also removed accounts linked to Spamouflage, including Harlan's.

"We will continue to remove deceptive accounts and harmful misinformation as we protect the integrity of our platform during the US elections," a TikTok spokesperson wrote in a statement emailed on Tuesday.

Compared with armed conflict or economic sanctions, online influence operations can be a low-cost, low-risk means of flexing geopolitical power. Given the increasing reliance on digital communications, the use of online disinformation and fake information networks is only likely to increase, said Max Lesser, senior analyst for emerging threats at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a national security think tank in Washington.

"We're going to see a widening of the playing field when it comes to influence operations, where it's not just Russia, China and Iran but you also see smaller actors getting involved," Lesser said.

That list could include not only nations but also criminal organizations, domestic extremist groups and terrorist organizations, Lesser said.

When analysts first noticed Spamouflage five years ago, the network tended to post generically pro-China, anti-American content. In recent years, the tone sharpened as Spamouflage expanded and began focusing on divisive political topics like gun control, crime, race relations and support for Israel during its war in Gaza. The network also began creating large numbers of fake accounts designed to mimic American users.

Spamouflage accounts don't post much original content, instead using platforms like X or TikTok to recycle and repost content from far-right and far-left users. Some of the accounts seemed designed to appeal to Republicans, while others cater to Democrats.

While Harlan's accounts succeeded in getting traction — one video mocking President Joe Biden was seen 1.5 million times — many of the accounts created by the Spamouflage campaign did not. It's a reminder that online influence operations are often a numbers game: the more accounts, the more content, the better the chance that one specific post goes viral.

Many of the accounts newly linked to Spamouflage took pains to pose as Americans, sometimes in obvious ways. "I am an American," one of the accounts proclaimed. Some of the accounts gave themselves away by using stilted English or strange word choices. Some were clumsier than others: "Broken English, brilliant brain, I love Trump," read the biographical section of one account.

Harlan's profile picture, which Graphika researchers believe was created using AI, was identical to one used in an earlier account linked to Spamouflage. Messages sent to the person operating Harlan's accounts were not returned.

The presidential campaigns brace for an intense sprint to Election Day

By STEVE PEOPLES, THOMAS BEAUMONT and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press
LA CROSSE, Wis. (AP) — After a summer of historic tumult, the path to the presidency for both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump this fall is becoming much clearer.

The Democratic vice president and the Republican former president will devote almost all of their remaining time and resources to just seven states. They will spend hundreds of millions of dollars targeting voters who, in many cases, have just begun to pay attention to the election. And their campaigns will try to focus their messages on three familiar issues — the economy, immigration and abortion — even in the

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midst of heated debates over character, culture and democracy.

The candidates will debate in one week in what will be their first meeting ever. The nation's premier swing state, Pennsylvania, begins in-person absentee voting the week after. By the end of the month, early voting will be underway in at least four states with a dozen more to follow by mid-October.

In just 63 days, the final votes will be cast to decide which one of them will lead the world's most powerful nation.

Privately, at least, both camps acknowledge that victory is no sure thing as they begin the nine-week sprint to Election Day. Harris and Trump are neck-and-neck in most national polls conducted since President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign.

The Harris campaign still put out a memo over the weekend casting itself as "the clear underdogs" in the contest.

"There's not a scenario here that's easy," Harris senior adviser David Plouffe said in an interview. "The pathway to beating Donald Trump, the pathway to 270 electoral votes for Kamala Harris, is exceedingly hard, but doable. And that's just a reality."

Trump, meanwhile, rejects any indicators that suggest Harris is ahead even as he lashes out at her in deeply personal and sometimes apocalyptic terms, declaring that "our country is finished" if she wins.

"As we move past Labor Day, we will really get into the time where voters start to harden their opinions," said James Blair, the Trump campaign's political director. "We feel pretty good about things. We feel energized. Our people are energized. But there's certainly plenty of work to be done."

The electoral map settles on seven states

Just over a month ago, Trump allies suggested Democratic-leaning states like Minnesota, Virginia or even New Jersey might be in play. Neither side believes that is still the case on Labor Day weekend.

In replacing Biden as the party's nominee, Harris breathed new life into the Democrats' political prospects, especially across the Sun Belt states of Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina. All four states have significant numbers of African Americans and Latinos, traditionally Democratic constituencies who were down nationally on Biden but appear to have come home to rally behind Harris.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham was among the senior GOP officials who brokered a peace between Trump and Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, whose feud threatened to undermine the Republican effort in the state. Graham told The Associated Press he was worried about Georgia's shift leftward.

"Trump was up 5 or 6 points, and all over the course of a month it's become much more competitive," he said.

Republican pollster Paul Shumaker, an adviser to North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis, said even a slight uptick in the Black vote has the potential to give Harris the edge in North Carolina, pointing to Mecklenburg County, the home of the Charlotte metro area, but also fast-growing counties such as Durham and Wake.

"If Kamala Harris could get them to turn out at the rate of Republicans in rural North Carolina, game over for Republicans," Shumaker said of Black voters.

At the same time, Trump remains decidedly on offense in the Midwestern battlegrounds of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, which form the so-called Democratic "blue wall" that he narrowly carried in 2016 and barely lost in 2020.

Those seven states — in addition to swing districts in Nebraska and Maine that each award single Electoral College votes — will draw virtually all of the candidates' attention and resources over the next nine weeks.

Trump is investing more advertising dollars in Pennsylvania than any other state through Election Day.

A Trump victory in Pennsylvania alone would make it much more difficult for Harris to earn the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency. Harris' team insists she has multiple pathways to victory.

The Democrats' organizing advantage

In the fight to frame the election on the air and reach voters in person, Democrats currently have a decided advantage.

Harris' team is on pace to outspend Trump's camp 2-to-1 in television advertising over the next two months. And even before Biden made way for Harris, the Democrats wielded superior campaign infrastructure in the states that matter most.

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Harris' team, which includes her campaign and an allied super PAC, have more than \$280 million in television and radio reservations for the period between Tuesday and Election Day, according to the media tracking firm AdImpact. Trump's team, by contrast, has \$133 million reserved for the final stretch, although that number is expected to grow.

Trump's side is actually narrowly outspending Harris' on the airwaves in Pennsylvania, where both sides will spend more than \$146 million between Tuesday and Election Day, according to AdImpact, a figure that dwarfs that of any other state. Georgia is drawing nearly \$80 million in ad spending over the campaign's final nine weeks.

But in the other five battleground states, Harris largely has the airwaves largely to herself — at least for now.

Trump and his allied super PACs have made only marginal ad reservations in Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Nevada to date. Harris' team, by comparison, is investing no less than \$21 million in each of the five states, according to an AdImpact analysis.

Harris' team also boasts more than 300 coordinated offices and 2,000 staff on the ground in swing states, according to her campaign's weekend memo.

Blair, the Trump campaign's political director, disputes that Democrats have as big an organizing advantage as those numbers make it seem. He pointed to outside allies that will organize for Trump are well-funded, including a new effort backed by billionaire Elon Musk.

Trump's campaign on Tuesday said it also has more than 100 dedicated campaign offices in key states, which are backed by another 200 existing GOP offices dedicated to Republican victories this fall.

Here's what the polls say

Both candidates are locked in close races across the seven top swing states. Democratic pollster John Anzalone said Harris "put the Democrats back in the game to where it's kind of a toss-up."

But now comes the hard part, Anzalone said.

"Post Labor Day, when the bell rings, there is a battle for a slim universe of — you can call them anything you want: persuasion voters, swing voters, independent voters — and it's pretty small, and that's where each side gets a billion dollars," Anzalone said.

Many independents appear to find both candidates unsatisfying, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in August.

For now, Harris also has a slight advantage on some key traits among independents, while she and Trump are about even on others.

For example, about 3 in 10 independents say that "honest" describes Harris better, while about 2 in 10 say it describes Trump better. About 3 in 10 also say that "committed to democracy" describes Harris better, while less than 2 in 10 say it describes Trump better.

The candidates were about equally likely to be perceived by independents as capable of winning the election, capable of handling a crisis, and "caring about people like you."

Who is the 'change candidate'?

The race may ultimately be decided by whichever candidate can most successfully be cast as the "change candidate" given that about 7 in 10 voters say the country is heading in the wrong direction, based on an AP-NORC poll conducted in late July after Biden withdrew from the race.

Trump was the face of change when he won the 2016 election. And even after serving in the White House for four years, he continues to energize millions of frustrated voters who embrace his brash leadership style and unwillingness to follow the traditional rules of politics.

Harris has been Biden's vice president for nearly four years, yet the historic nature of her candidacy — she would be the first woman president — allows her to make a convincing case that she represents a new direction for the country, said veteran Democratic strategist James Carville.

Still, he's worried about his party's "severe underperformance" in the so-called "blue wall" states in recent elections.

"I'll feel good after the election," Carville said. "Let's get the hay in the barn. There's still a lot of hay out there in the field."

The Fed welcomes a 'soft landing' even if many Americans don't feel like cheering

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Jerome Powell delivered a high-profile speech last month, the Federal Reserve chair came the closest he ever had to declaring that the inflation surge that gripped the nation for three painful years was now essentially defeated.

And not only that. The Fed's high interest rates, Powell said, had managed to achieve that goal without causing a widely predicted recession and high unemployment.

Yet most Americans are not in the same celebratory mood about the plummeting of inflation in the face of the high borrowing rates the Fed engineered. Though consumer sentiment is slowly rising, a majority of Americans in some surveys still complain about elevated prices, given that the costs of such necessities as food, gas and housing remain far above where they were before the pandemic erupted in 2020.

The relatively sour mood of the public is creating challenges for Vice President Kamala Harris as she seeks to succeed President Joe Biden. Despite the fall of inflation and strong job growth, many voters say they're dissatisfied with the Biden-Harris administration's economic record — and especially frustrated by high prices.

That disparity points to a striking gap between how economists and policymakers assess the past several years of the economy and how many ordinary Americans do.

In his remarks last month, given at an annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Powell underscored how the Fed's sharp rate hikes succeeded much more than most economists had predicted in taming inflation without hammering the economy — a notoriously difficult feat known as a "soft landing."

"The 4-1/2 percentage point decline in inflation from its peak two years ago," he noted, "has occurred in a context of low unemployment — a welcome and historically unusual result."

With high inflation now essentially conquered, Powell and other central bank officials are preparing to cut their key interest rate in mid-September for the first time in more than four years. The Fed is becoming more focused on sustaining the job market with the help of lower interest rates than on continuing to fight inflation.

Many consumers, by contrast, are still preoccupied most by today's price levels.

"It really has been a remarkable success, how inflation went up, has come back, and is around the target," said Kristin Forbes, an economist at MIT and a former official at the United Kingdom's central bank, the Bank of England.

"But from the viewpoint of households, it has not been so successful," she added. "Many have taken a big hit to their wages. Many of them feel like the basket of goods they buy is now much more expensive."

Two years ago, economists feared that the Fed's ongoing rate hikes — it ultimately raised its benchmark rate more than 5 percentage points to a 23-year high in the fastest pace in four decades — would hammer the economy and cause millions of job losses. After all, that's what happened when the Fed under Chair Paul Volcker sent its benchmark rate to nearly 20% in the early 1980s, ultimately throttling a brutal inflationary spell.

In fact, at Jackson Hole two years ago, Powell himself warned that using high interest rates to defeat the inflation spike "would bring some pain."

Yet now, according to the Fed's preferred measure, inflation is 2.5%, not far above its 2% target. And while a weaker pace of hiring has caused some concerns, the unemployment rate is at a still-low 4.3%, and the economy expanded at a solid 3% annual rate last quarter.

While no Fed official will outright declare victory, some take satisfaction in defying the predictions of doom and gloom.

"2023 was a historic year for inflation falling," said Austan Goolsbee, president of the Chicago Fed. "And there wasn't a recession, and that's unprecedented. And so we will be studying the mechanics of how that happened for a long time."

Measures of consumer sentiment, though, indicate that three years of hurtful inflation have dimmed many Americans' outlook. In addition, high loan rates, along with elevated housing prices, have led many

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young workers to fear that homeownership is increasingly out of reach.

Last month, the consulting firm McKinsey said that 53% of consumers in its most recent survey "still say that rising prices and inflation are among their concerns." McKinsey's analysts attributed the escalated figure to "an 'inflation overhang' — the belief that it can take months, if not years, for consumers to adjust emotionally to a much higher level of prices even if their pay is keeping pace.

Economists point to several reasons for the wide gap in perceptions between economists and policymakers on the one hand and everyday consumers and workers on the other.

The first is that the Fed tailors its interest rate policies to manage inflation — the rate of price changes — rather than price levels themselves. So when inflation spikes, the central bank's goal is to return it to a sustainable level rather than to reverse the price increases. The Fed's policymakers expect average wages to catch up and eventually to allow consumers to afford the higher prices.

"Central bankers think even if inflation gets away from 2% for a period, as long as it comes back, that's fine," Forbes said. "But the amount of time inflation is away from 2% can have a major cost."

Research by Stefanie Stantcheva, a Harvard economist, and two colleagues found that most people's views of inflation are very different from those of economists. Economists tend to regard inflation as a consequence of strong growth. They often describe inflation as a result of an "overheating" economy: Low unemployment, strong job growth and rising wages lead businesses to sharply increase prices without necessarily losing sales.

By contrast, a survey by Stantcheva found, ordinary Americans "view inflation as an unambiguously bad thing and very rarely as a sign of a good economy or as a byproduct of positive developments."

Her survey respondents also said they believed that inflation stems from excessive government spending or greedy businesses. They "do not believe that (central bank) policymakers face trade-offs, such as having to reduce economic activity or increase unemployment to control inflation."

At the Jackson Hole conference, Andrew Bailey, governor of the Bank of England, argued that central banks cannot guarantee that high inflation will never appear — only that they will try to drive it back down when it does.

The test of a central bank, Bailey said, "is not that we will never have inflation. The test of the regime is how well, once you get hit by these shocks, you bring it back to target."

Still, Forbes suggested that there are lessons to be learned from the inflation spike, including whether inflation was allowed to stay too high for too long. The Fed has long been criticized for having taken too long to start raising its benchmark rate. Inflation first spiked in the spring of 2021. Yet the Fed, under the mistaken impression that high inflation would prove "transitory," didn't begin raising rates until nearly a year later.

"Maybe should we rethink ... where we seem to be now: 'As long as it comes back four to five years later, that's fine,'" she said. "Maybe four to five years is too long."

"How much unemployment or slowdown in growth should we be willing to accept to shorten the length of time that inflation is too high?"

James Darren, 'Gidget' teen idol, singer and director, dies at 88

By BOB THOMAS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — James Darren, a teen idol who helped ignite the 1960s surfing craze as a charismatic beach boy paired off with Sandra Dee in the hit film "Gidget," died Monday at 88.

Darren died in his sleep at a Los Angeles hospital, his son Jim Moret told news outlets.

Moret told The Hollywood Reporter that Darren was supposed have had an aortic valve replacement but was too weak for the surgery. "I always thought he would pull through," his son told the entertainment trade, "because he was so cool. He was always cool."

In his long career, Darren acted, sang and built up a successful behind-the-scenes career as a television director, helming episodes of such well-known series as "Beverly Hills 90210" and "Melrose Place." In the 1980s, he was Officer Jim Corrigan on the television cop show "T.J. Hooker."

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But to young movie fans of the late 1950s, he would be remembered best as Moondoggie, the dark-haired surfer boy in the smash 1959 release "Gidget." Dee starred as the title character, a spunky Southern Californian who hits the beach and eventually falls in love with Moondoggie.

"I was in love with Sandra," Darren later recalled. "I thought that she was absolutely perfect as Gidget. She had tremendous charm."

The film was based on a novel that a California man, Frederick Kohner, had written about his own teenage daughter and helped spur interest in surfing — one that influenced pop music, slang and even fashion.

For Darren, his success with teen fans led to a recording contract, as it did with many young actors at the time, among them Tab Hunter and Annette Funicello. Two of Darren's singles, "Goodbye Cruel World" and "Her Royal Majesty," reached the Top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 chart. ("Goodbye Cruel World" also appeared in Steven Spielberg's 2022 semi-autobiographical film, "The Fabelmans.") Other singles included "Gidget" and "Angel Face."

Darren was the only "Gidget" cast member who appeared in both its sequels, 1961's "Gidget Goes Hawaiian" and 1963's "Gidget Goes to Rome." Dee was replaced by Deborah Walley in the second film and Cindy Carol in the third. ("Gidget" later became a television show, launching the career of Sally Field.)

"They had me under contract; I was a prisoner," Darren told Entertainment Weekly in 2004. "But with those lovely young ladies, it was the best prison I think I'll ever be in."

As a contract player at Columbia Studios, Darren appeared in grown-up films, too, including "The Brothers Rico," "Operation Meatball" and "The Guns of Navarone."

By the mid-'60s, when Darren appeared in "For Those Who Think Young" and "The Lively Set," his big-screen acting career was almost over. He appeared in just a handful of movies after the 1960s ended, last appearing in 2017's "Lucky," directed by John Carroll Lynch.

But he remained active on television, appearing as a lead on the sci-fi show "The Time Tunnel" in the late 1960s, and doing guest spots and small recurring roles in TV shows such as "The Love Boat," "Hawaii Five-O" and "Fantasy Island."

Darren was a series regular for four seasons of the William Shatner-starrer "T.J. Hooker" in the 1980s. While appearing on the show, he noticed that no director was listed for an upcoming sequence and asked if he could try out for it.

"When it was shown, I got several offers to direct," he told the New York Daily News. "Soon I was getting so many offers to direct, I kind of gave up acting and singing."

For almost two years, Darren directed episodes of "Walker, Texas Ranger," "Hunter," "Melrose Place," "Beverly Hills 90210" and other series. He returned to acting in the 1990s with small roles in "Melrose Place" and "Star Trek, Deep Space Nine."

Darren was born James Ercolani in 1936 and grew up in South Philadelphia, not far from such fellow teen idols of the 1950s and '60s as Fabian and Frankie Avalon. Singing came easy to him, and at 14 he was appearing in local nightclubs.

"From the age of 5 or 6 I knew I wanted to be an entertainer, or famous maybe," he said in a 2003 interview with the News-Press of Fort Myers, Florida. He noted that such luminaries as Eddie Fisher and Al Martino had lived in the same area as he did, "a real neighborhood. It made you feel you could be successful, too."

According to a 1958 Los Angeles Times profile, he got a break when he went to New York to get some pictures taken and the photographer's office put him in touch with a talent scout.

He was soon signed by Columbia Pictures, and the newspaper said that after a few appearances, his fan mail at the studio was running "second only to Kim Novak's. ... The studio now feels that the young man is ready to hit the jackpot."

Darren married his first wife, Gloria, in 1955 and together had Moret, an "Inside Edition" correspondent and former CNN anchorman. After a divorce he married Evy Norlund, who came to the U.S. as the Danish entry in the Miss Universe contest. They had two sons, Christian and Anthony.

He was also the godfather of Nancy Sinatra's daughter A.J. Lambert. Sinatra, his "For Those Who Think Young" co-star, posted The Hollywood Reporter obituary on her X page, with a broken heart emoji.

How a narrow strip of scrubland has become an obstacle to a cease-fire in Gaza

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

A narrow strip of scrubland and sand dunes on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt has emerged as a major obstacle in talks aimed at halting the Israel-Hamas war and freeing scores of hostages.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel must maintain control over the so-called Philadelphi corridor to prevent Hamas from replenishing its arsenal through a network of smuggling tunnels in the area. He says that's necessary to ensure the group can never again launch an attack into Israel like the one on Oct. 7 that ignited the war.

But many Israelis, including the defense minister, say Israel should relinquish the corridor, at least for a short period of time, in order to secure an agreement to bring back around 100 hostages still held in Gaza, about a third of whom are believed to be dead.

The debate reached a fever pitch this weekend after Israel recovered the bodies of six hostages that the military says Hamas killed as troops closed in. Critics say they could have been returned alive in a cease-fire deal and accuse Netanyahu of sabotaging the talks for his own political interests.

Hamas has demanded a full withdrawal from Gaza and says Netanyahu only raised the demand for the Philadelphi corridor in recent weeks to derail the talks.

Netanyahu blames Hamas for the lack of a deal and says the demand is not new.

Egypt, which has served as a key mediator, is also opposed to any Israeli presence along the Gaza side of its border and says it would threaten the decades-old peace treaty between the two countries, a cornerstone of regional stability.

What is the Philadelphi corridor and why does Israel want it?

The Philadelphi corridor is a strip — only 100 meters (yards) wide in some places— that runs the 14-kilometer (8.6-mile) length of the Gaza side of the border with Egypt. It includes the Rafah crossing, which was Gaza's only outlet to the outside world not controlled by Israel until the army captured the entire corridor in May.

Israel says Hamas used a vast network of tunnels beneath the border to import arms, allowing it to build up the military machine it deployed on Oct. 7. The military says it has found and destroyed dozens of tunnels since seizing the corridor.

At a news conference on Monday, Netanyahu pointed to a map of the region depicting weapons flowing into Gaza from across the border, saying the corridor provided "oxygen" for Hamas.

Egypt released a statement Tuesday rejecting Netanyahu's allegations, saying they misled the Israeli public and obstructed cease-fire efforts. Egypt says it destroyed hundreds of tunnels on its side of the border years ago and set up a military buffer zone of its own that prevents smuggling.

What do Netanyahu's critics say about the corridor?

For weeks, Israeli media have quoted unnamed security officials lambasting Netanyahu, saying the corridor is not essential to Israel's security and should not hold up a deal to return hostages. Some have suggested an international force could patrol the border, perhaps with remote Israeli sensors.

The dispute sparked a shouting match at a security Cabinet meeting last week, in which Defense Minister Yoav Gallant accused Netanyahu of favoring border arrangements over the lives of the hostages, according to an Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door meeting. Gallant was the lone dissenting voice in a subsequent vote in favor of maintaining control over the Philadelphi corridor and has since called on the government to reverse it.

Families of hostages have led months of mass protests calling on Netanyahu to make a deal with Hamas to return their loved ones. The biggest demonstrations yet erupted over the weekend after the killing of the six hostages, including Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin, one of the best-known captives.

Netanyahu's supporters say that conceding the Philadelphi corridor now would reward Hamas for killing the captives. They maintain that only relentless military pressure can defeat Hamas, return the hostages and bring about a deal that ensures Israel's long-term security.

What do Palestinians say about the corridor?

Any Israeli presence inside Gaza would be widely seen as a military occupation, likely prolonging the conflict.

It could also extend, perhaps indefinitely, the closure of the Rafah crossing, which has been a lifeline for Gaza since Egypt and Israel began imposing various degrees of a blockade on the territory after Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007.

For 16 years, it was the only way for most Palestinians to exit or enter Gaza. During the first seven months of the war, it was also the only route available for medical evacuations and the main entry point for desperately needed humanitarian aid.

Israel captured Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, territories the Palestinians want for their own state. It withdrew soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005 but continued to control the territory's airspace, coastline, and all of its border crossings except Rafah.

Hamas has adamantly rejected any Israeli presence in Gaza, including in the Philadelphi corridor and the Netzarim corridor, a buffer zone carved out by Israel separating northern from southern Gaza. Israel says it needs that corridor to search Palestinians returning to their homes in the north to keep militants from slipping in.

Israel denies its demands regarding the two corridors are new, referring to them as "clarifications" of an earlier proposal endorsed by President Joe Biden in a May 31 speech and by the U.N. Security Council.

Israel also accuses Hamas of making unacceptable demands since then, and says the militant group is hindering a deal, including by killing hostages who would be part of it.

What is the position of the mediators?

Biden's speech and the Security Council resolution referred to a complete Israeli withdrawal. Egyptian officials and Hamas say the demands regarding the corridors were not included in subsequent versions of the U.S.-backed proposal, including one that Hamas said it accepted in early July.

Egypt is deeply opposed to any Israeli military presence along the Gaza border and has refused to reopen its side of the Rafah crossing unless the Gaza side is returned to Palestinian control.

It has accused Israel of violating annexes to the landmark 1979 peace treaty pertaining to Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza that regulate the deployment of forces along the border. Israeli officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The United States, which is providing crucial military support to Israel while also serving as a mediator, has not taken a position on the corridors, at least publicly, while Hamas has accused it of trying to impose Israel's demands on the militant group.

Biden said Monday that Netanyahu was not doing enough to bring about a cease-fire, without elaborating.

Lightning damages Rome's ancient Constantine Arch during a violent thunderstorm

ROME (AP) — Lightning struck Rome's Constantine Arch near the Colosseum during a violent thunderstorm, loosening fragments from the ancient structure.

The fragments from Tuesday's lightning strike were immediately gathered and secured by workers at the Colosseum Archeological Park, officials said. The extent of the damage was being evaluated.

"The recovery work by technicians was timely. Our workers arrived immediately after the lightning strike. All of the fragments were recovered and secured," the park said in a statement.

The lightning occurred during a storm that felled trees and flooded streets in the Italian capital.

The honorary arch, more than 20 meters (nearly 70 feet) in height, was erected in 315 A.D. to celebrate the victory of Emperor Constantine over Maxentius following the battle at Milvian Bridge.

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Today in History: September 4, the 1949 Peekskill Riots

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 4, the 248th day of 2024. There are 118 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 4, 1949, more than 140 people were injured following a performance by singer Paul Robeson in Peekskill, N.Y. as an anti-Communist mob attacked departing concertgoers.

Also on this date:

In 1781, Los Angeles was founded by Spanish settlers under the leadership of Governor Felipe de Neve.

In 1944, during World War II, British troops liberated Antwerp, Belgium.

In 1957, Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus ordered Arkansas National Guardsmen to prevent nine Black students from entering all-white Central High School in Little Rock.

In 1972, U.S. swimmer Mark Spitz became the first to win seven medals at a single Olympic Games, winning a seventh gold at the Munich Olympics in the 400-meter medley relay.

In 1972, the longest-running game show in U.S. history, "The Price is Right," debuted on CBS.

In 1974, the United States established diplomatic relations with East Germany.

In 1998, Google was founded by Stanford University Ph.D. students Sergey Brin and Larry Page.

In 2016, elevating the "saint of the gutters" to one of the Catholic Church's highest honors, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa, praising her radical dedication to society's outcasts and her courage in shaming world leaders for the "crimes of poverty they themselves created."

In 2018, the Senate Judiciary Committee began confirmation hearings for future Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh on a day that saw rancorous exchanges between Democrats and Republicans.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Mitzi Gaynor is 93. Golf Hall of Famer Raymond Floyd is 82. Golf Hall of Famer Tom Watson is 75. Actor Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs is 71. Actor Khandi Alexander is 67. Actor-comedian Damon Wayans Sr. is 64. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Piazza is 56. DJ-musician-producer Mark Ronson is 49. Actor Wes Bentley is 46. Actor Max Greenfield is 45. Singer-actor Beyoncé is 43. Actor-comedian Whitney Cummings is 42. Actor-comedian Kyle Mooney (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 40.