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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.

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



Saturday, Sept. 7

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

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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.

Hunter Biden Plea

Hunter Biden pleaded guilty yesterday to tax fraud charges, switching his plea as jury selection in California was due to begin. Biden now faces up to 17 years in prison and fines of up to \$1.3M. Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 16.

Biden was charged last year on nine counts related to tax evasion, with prosecutors alleging over \$1M in owed federal taxes. Prosecutors say he counted strip club visits, rent, and children's tuition as business expenses, among other items. This case is separate from Biden's conviction on gun-related felony charges, for which sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 13.

Separately, former President Donald Trump pleaded not guilty through his lawyer to renewed charges of 2020 election interference yesterday. The indictment was revised to focus on actions he took as a private citizen following the Supreme Court decision finding US presidents have some immunity over criminal charges.

Vacant Starliner to Return

Boeing's faulty Starliner vehicle is scheduled to depart from the International Space Station this evening and return to Earth without its two-person crew, 73 days later than intended. Weather permitting, the small bus-sized module will parachute six hours later in New Mexico to the White Sands Space Harbor.

The vehicle's inaugural crewed mission launched June 5 with astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore in tow for a planned eight-day trip to the ISS. Shortly before docking, five of the service module's 28 thrusters misfired. On-Earth tests point to a possible overheated, swollen Teflon seal blocking the flow of propellant. Later analysis revealed a separate helium leak in the propulsion system.

The issues have forced engineers to delay the astronauts' homecoming out of caution. After over two months of deliberation, officials opted to return a crewless Starliner to Earth and transport the two astronauts in February aboard SpaceX's regularly scheduled Crew Dragon spacecraft.

NFL Kicks Off

The 2024-25 NFL season got underway last night with the defending champion Kansas City Chiefs hosting the Baltimore Ravens in a rematch of last season's AFC championship. Star Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes threw for 291 yards and one touchdown en route to a 27-20 victory.

The Green Bay Packers and Philadelphia Eagles face off tonight (8:15 pm ET, Peacock) in Brazil, one of five international games this season. The rest of the league gets underway beginning Sunday, with the return of veteran QB Aaron Rodgers with the New York Jets after a season-ending injury last year against the San Francisco 49ers (Monday, 8:20 pm ET, ESPN) leading the list of notable games.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

2024 Paris Paralympics wrap up this weekend with closing ceremony Sunday (2:30 pm ET, CNBC); see latest medal count.

American soccer great Alex Morgan announces retirement.

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UK court drops charges of indecent assault against Harvey Weinstein related to alleged incidents from the mid-1990s.

Rebecca Cheptegei, Ugandan Olympic marathoner, dies at 33 after arson attack by her ex-boyfriend.

Rich Homie Quan, rapper best known for "Type of Way," dies at 34.

Science & Technology

Scientists develop method to temporarily turn mouse tissue transparent, allowing researchers to study organs and how they function under various conditions in live animals.

China's Chang'e 5 lunar mission finds evidence of active volcanism on the moon as recently as 125 million years ago; previous theories held volcanic activity ended on the moon at least 1 billion years ago.

Serotonin—a brain chemical involved in mood regulation, maintaining the body's internal clock, and much more—found to play a key role in emotional resilience during traumatic events.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq +0.3%) ahead of latest monthly jobs report data to be released today.

Hiring for private US companies falls in August to lowest level since January 2021, per ADP report.

Verizon Communications agrees to acquire Frontier Communications in all-cash deal worth \$20B, including debt; acquisition allows Verizon to recapture some fiber optic lines it sold to Frontier nearly a decade ago.

Department of Transportation launches probe into whether rewards programs offered by Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, United Airlines, and Southwest Airlines are unfair to customers.

Politics & World Affairs

Police arrest father of 14-year-old shooter who killed four people at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia; father faces charges including involuntary manslaughter for allegedly allowing his son to possess a weapon.

North Carolina to begin sending out mail-in ballots today, first state to do so for Nov. 5 elections.

Former President Donald Trump unveils proposals if reelected, including creating a sovereign wealth fund and tapping Elon Musk to head new commission auditing economic efficiency of US agencies.

French President Emmanuel Macron appoints Michel Barnier—European Union's former Brexit negotiator and part of France's conservative Les Républicains party—as new prime minister, tasked with forming a government.

NOW HIRING

Blizzard® Wizzards & Smile Makers

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

Informational Meeting

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

Open Forum

Mon. Sept 9, 2024

6:30 pm Meeting

Ramkota

1400 8TH Ave NW Aberdeen, SD

Speakers:

Curtis Jundt - 40 yr pipeline engineer

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

Former Speaker Spencer Gosch District 23

Sen Elect Mark Lapka District 23

Ed Fischbach - Spink County Farmer

Contact for more info:

Jodi Waltman: 605-216-8171

"Pie Auction Fundraiser"

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GT



Tiger Football

on GDILIVE.COM

Friday, Sept. 6,
7 p.m.
at Webster

Groton Area vs. Webster Area

GDILIVE.COM

GT

Groton Area
Tigers

**Text Paul at
605-397-7460**

Any interest in any of
these basketball games on
GDILIVE.COM?
They are \$25 each.

Sisseton Volleyball C
Webster Area Volleyball C
Webster Area Volleyball JV
Aberdeen Roncalli Volleyball C
~~Aberdeen Roncalli Volleyball JV~~
Clark/Willow Lake Volleyball C
Clark/Willow Lake Volleyball JV
Warner Volleyball C
~~Warner Volleyball JV~~
Tiospa Zina Volleyball C
Tiospa Zina Volleyball JV
Florence/Henry Volleyball C
Florence/Henry Volleyball JV

Groton Area netters sweep Sisseton

Groton Area's volleyball teams swept all three matches in minimum sets in action played Thursday in Sisseton.

Groton Area won the C match, 2-0, won the junior varsity match, 25-15 and 25-12, and won the varsity match 25-9, 25-20 and 25-18.

Sisseton gave Groton Area a little trouble in the second set as it was tied eight times and there were five lead changes. Sisseton had a 17-16 lead before Groton Area scored seven straight points to go on for the win. The Tigers had a 10-point run in the first set.

Rylie Dunker was 18 of 22 in attacks with nine kills. Chesney Weber was 13 of 15 in attacks with eight kills, was 12 of 13 in serves with four ace serves, had 16 assists and seven digs. Taryn Traphagen had seven kills. Faith Trapahgen was 12 of 15 in attacks with seven kills. Jaedyn Penning was 15 of 16 in serving with five ace serves, had five kills and 15 digs. Jerica Locke was nine of 11 in serves with three ace serves and had 13 digs. Elizabeth Flihs had 16 assists and one ace serve. Laila Roberts had two kills and an ace serve and Sydney Locke had two ace serves.

Sisseton was led by Krista Langager with seven kills and one ace serve followed by Kennedy Hanson with three kills and two ace serves, Alexia Quinn had two kills, Tara Nelson and Elliot Hortness each had one kill and one ace serve and Valerie Myrum and Saylor Langager each had one kill.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by 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.

The junior varsity match was also broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright. McKenna Tietz and Liby Althoff each had seven kills and two ace serves, Makenna Krause had six kills, Tali Wright had two kills, one block and one ace serve, Kella Tracy had two kills and Emerlee Jones had three kills and one block.

Saylor Langager had three kills for Sisseton while Gabby Hanson had one.



Laila Roberts

(Photo courtesy Samantha Weber)

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Jaedyn Penning
(Photo courtesy Samantha Weber)



Chesney Weber
(Photo courtesy Samantha Weber)



Taryn Traphagen
(Photo courtesy Samantha Weber)

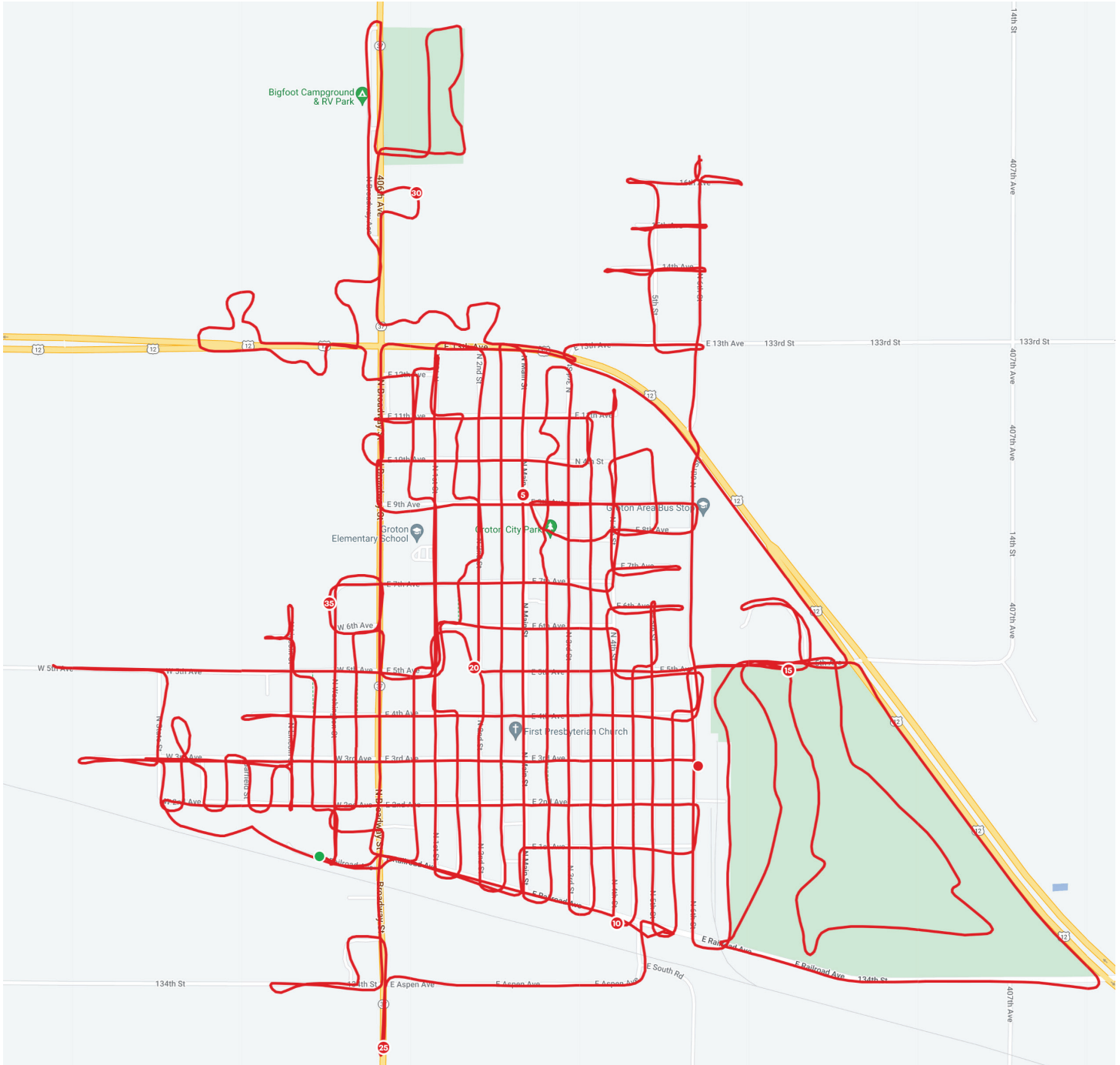


Sydney Locke and Rylee Dunker
(Photo courtesy Samantha Weber)

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Groton City conducts adult mosquito control Thursday night



The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control Thursday night. The wind was light out of the NNW. Temperature was in the low to mid 50s. 11.4 gallons of Perm-X 4x4UL in the 35 miles that were driven.

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Northern Volleyball Opens 2024 in the Win Column

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The Northern State University volleyball team opened their 2024 campaign today in a sweep. The Wolves took down (RV) Northwest Missouri State with set scores of 25-23, 25-23, and 25-20.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, NWMSU 0

Records: NSU 1-0, NWMSU 0-1

Attendance: N/A

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern took control of the match early with 16 kills in the opening set and only improved from there; they hit .268 in the first, .283 in the second, and .371 in the third

The Wolves recorded a match leading 58 points, seven aces, and seven blocks, while adding 44 kills, 43 assists, and 54 digs

In total NSU hit .303 in the win and held NWMSU to a .260 attack percentage, including a match low .184 in the opening set

Two Wolves tallied double figure kills and another two added double digit digs

Natalia Szybinska led the attack with 12 kills and three blocks in the win, followed by Abby Brooks with 11 kills, three blocks, and a team leading .409 attack percentage

Keri Walker dished out 41 total assists, averaging 13.67 per set and led the team with four aces

Abby Meister didn't miss a bet from the fall of 2023, leading the defense with 18 digs, averaging 6.0 per set

Morissen Samuels and Hanna Thompson added offensive sparks with eight and seven kills respectively

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Keri Walker: 41 assists, 12 digs, 4 aces, 1 kill

Natalia Szybinska: 12 kills, .290 attack%, 3 blocks

Abby Brooks: 11 kills, .409 attack%, 3 blocks

Abby Meister: 18 digs

UP NEXT

Northern returns to the Sanford Pentagon tomorrow for a pair of matches against South Dakota Mines and host Augustana. Start times are set for 9 a.m. against the Hardrockers and 1:30 p.m. versus the Vikings.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting September 9, 2024 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of August 12, 2024 school board meetings as drafted.
2. Approval of August 2024 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of August 2024 District bills for payment.
4. Approval of August 2024 School Transportation Report.
5. Approval of August 2024 School Lunch Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentations
 - a. Food Service...B. Clocksene
 - b. Maintenance Service/Transportation Service...R. Scepaniak, D. Bahr
 - c. Wellness & Health Service...B. Gustafson
3. Second reading and adoption of coaching handbook amendments.
4. Second reading and adoption of Federal Grants Manual.
5. Second reading and adoption of recommended policy changes: BDDC Agenda Preparation and Dissemination (Amendment), BDDC-E(2) Introduction to Public Forum (New), KLB Public Complaints About the Curriculum or Instructional Materials (Amendment), KLB-E(1) Request for Consideration of Instructional Materials (Amendment), KLB-E(2) Library Materials Opt-Out Form (New), IIAC Library Materials Selection and Adoption (Amendment), JFC Student Conduct (Amendment), JEC School Admissions (Amendment), JOA Student Directory Information (Amendment), DLC Expense Reimbursement (Amendment), DLC-R Expense Reimbursements (Delete), DLB Salary Deductions (Amendment)
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Groton Football Field Discussion [Mr. Tom Woods]
2. Adopt Supplemental Budget #25-02 (Title I 1003 Grant Funds).
3. First reading of recommended policy change: DJB Petty Cash Accounts (Amendment).
4. Approve academic lane change for Lindsey DeHoet from MS+15 to MS+30.
5. Approve hiring Maggie Cleveland, part-time student OST worker.

ADJOURN



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Calls for transparency and accountability permeate prison commission meeting

Some lawmakers signal support for expanding oversight role of Corrections Commission

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 5:20 PM

The first meeting of the South Dakota Corrections Commission in nearly a year drew calls for transparency and accountability from commissioners, lawmakers and members of the public.

Under state law, the commission is meant to advise the Department of Corrections (DOC) on matters of justice and public safety. The DOC also needs commission approval to spend any money to adjust the operations of prison industries like the state's license plate or sign-making shops.

There was much to discuss on Thursday.

Since the commission's last meeting in October of 2023, the Department of Corrections has faced a series of controversies, among them a lawsuit in Lincoln County over its proposed site for a new men's prison, two bouts of unrest at two separate prisons that injured inmates and staff, a suspension of tablet-based communications that contributed to one of those bouts of violence, and concerns from inmates and family members over the price of goods made available through the state's new commissary vendor.

Questions have also emerged about the commission's role in light of testimony from DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko to lawmakers on the state's Government Operations and Audit Committee in July, as well as comments from some commission members suggesting that the group has ceased to serve its intended purpose.

As many as 33 people at a time logged in for the virtual meeting, a figure that includes Department of Corrections staff members and commissioners.

Most who spoke expressed concerns over the host of issues facing the prison system.

"I've heard nothing but more chaos in the past six months," said Sen. Shawn Bordeaux, D-Mission, who was elected to serve as the commission's chair on Thursday. "I'm really struggling with what we can do."

Role of commission debated

Wasko began the meeting by addressing what she called "perceived interpretations" of the laws defining the commission's role.

On July 31, Wasko told the state's audit committee that she answers to it, not the commission. Prior to that meeting, DOC officials had asserted in public statements that the commission's only role was to oversee Pheasantland Industries, the umbrella term for the industrial shops inside DOC facilities.

Those assertions came despite language in state law that defines the commission's role more broadly. In the past, its members toured prisons, asked questions about justice reform efforts and security measures, and weighed in on new prison construction options.

Particularly with security incidents, Wasko said July 31, she doesn't feel that she should discuss the details with the commission's citizen members in the group's open public meetings. She also suggested that lawmakers reassess the commission's role.

On Thursday, she read the law that created the commission, noting that the statute refers to it as an advisory body, not an oversight one. She said she'd "done some homework" by reviewing notes from 10 years of commission meetings and learned that the commission's focus narrowed to prison industries sometime around 2018.

The commission's members were given paper copies of the DOC's annual statistical report in January. If commissioners want to weigh in and advise the DOC based on those figures, Wasko said, they are wel-

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come to do so.

She receives and responds to calls from lawmakers on a weekly basis, she said. But aside from Judge Christina Klinger and newly appointed member Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, "I've never received a single email, text or call from another member of this commission asking for an opportunity to discuss a concern," Wasko said.

Commission members David McGirr and Mark Anderson have bemoaned the body's narrowed focus. On Thursday, McGirr said previous iterations of the commission had a more useful role.

Without discussions on broader justice issues, he said, there's little incentive for the unpaid commissioners to show up at all.

"It really feels like we don't need to be meeting several times a year to discuss prison industries and financials," he said.

Previous commissions spent time talking about diversion programs and ways to reduce the prison population, Anderson said. Yet the commission has never discussed the state's current plans for new prisons over the two years those plans have taken shape.

"My biggest concern is that we're looking at building a prison when the people before you, their intention was to reduce the number of inmates so we didn't have to build a new prison," Anderson said.

Rep. Kevin Jensen, R-Canton, a former commission member, joined Thursday's meeting to say he intends to bring legislation to strengthen the commission's role. The group learned a lot from tours, Jensen said, and its members discussed justice issues and potential legislative fixes on an ongoing basis. The law that created the commission says the group should engage in a "continuing study" of criminal justice issues, Jensen said.

"I don't see any continuing study," he said. "It seems like it's just meeting to meeting."

Jensen wrote an op-ed for The Dakota Scout newspaper, published Thursday morning, that outlined his concerns in more detail.

Wasko told commissioners she'd be happy to offer more information or to set up tours of prison facilities. As for justice reform efforts, Wasko said none of them moved the needle on the state's prison population in the years before her arrival from Colorado in 2022. She's worked since then to address the issues that were front and center, such as overcrowding and staffing.

"I came into this state looking at an agenda, and I followed what that agenda was," Wasko said.

As for calls to adjust the authority or scope of the commission's work, Wasko said she would prefer that it "remain in the advisory capacity, as state statute recommends."

Calls for transparency

The meeting's regular agenda included a discussion of changes to prison commissary operations. The DOC switched its vendor for the prison store starting this month. As part of the contract with Union Supply, inmates work to manage inventory on site at the prison in Sioux Falls.

DOC Finance Director Brittni Skipper said one of the goals of the switch was to offer inventory skills training in areas like forklift operations.

"They get the skills that are needed in a high-demand industry in e-commerce," Skipper said.

Some inmates and family members have complained of higher prices, however. McGirr said he's seen media reports on the prices, and said he'd voted to approve the changes last October with the understanding that prices would drop.

"The idea was that we would see a lowering in cost to the prisoners as well as some profit-making to help run the prisons," McGirr said.

Skipper said the new commissary catalog includes 142 new items. Of the items listed in both the old and new catalogs, she said, more than half cost less or are within 10 cents of their prior price.

"One of the biggest items for commissary are ramen noodles," Skipper said. "The difference is one cent."

McGirr wondered why there wouldn't be more savings, given that inmates earn a dollar an hour to manage the system.

"I had hoped we would live up to our expectations," he said.

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Wasko said there are good reasons for some of the price increases. Televisions cost more now, she said, but the new televisions are "prison grade," more durable and with clear outer casings for security.

Beth Warden, a reporter with Dakota News Now, referenced that point in her own public comments. Warden decried what she described as a lack of transparency and argued that the DOC's reticence to answer basic questions on security incidents or issues like price increases does damage to the agency's credibility.

Wasko's explanation on the price of televisions, Warden said, could've been shared with the reporters covering the inmates' price concerns.

"Why are we having to fight to get answers that would lower the tension?" Warden said.

Lynette Johnson, the widow of slain correctional officer Ron "R.J." Johnson, also called on Wasko to adjust her approach. Johnson's husband was murdered by two inmates in 2011, both of whom have since been put to death.

"If you follow the agenda of the past, there was no transparency," Johnson said.

Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, put the blame for a lack of openness on Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's office. The lawmaker said the state needs more information on corrections, because "it belongs to all of us."

"For six years, I have seen the shutting down of transparency in this state," Duba said. "I agree with the press in their frustration."

Nieema Thasing, an advocate for inmates who lives in Sioux Falls, thanked Wasko for opening up the discussion and addressing several of the issues that have arisen this year, calling the discussion "forward-looking."

Thasing then suggested that the state create a citizen commission to address the concerns of inmates, family members and members of the communities to which most incarcerated individuals return after serving their sentences.

"I would volunteer myself, and I know there would be other people who would serve on a citizen commission," Thasing said.

After the meeting, newly elected commission chairman Bordeaux said he supports the idea of a citizen commission, and that he would be happy to work with Rep. Jensen on bills to strengthen the corrections commission's role. He also said he plans to bring a bill to add two more lawmakers to the commission to act as liaisons for the rest of the Legislature.

The next Corrections Commission meeting is set for Nov. 19.

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.

Legislators plan to examine alleged state employee crimes in upcoming meetings

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 2:56 PM

The legislative Government Operations and Audit Committee plans to analyze and question state agencies about alleged crimes within their departments that have come to light this summer.

A former state Department of Social Services worker pleaded not guilty last month to stealing an estimated \$1.8 million from the department's Division of Child Protection Services over the course of 13 years. The trial is scheduled to begin on Dec. 4.

Further revelations emerged this summer about the state Department of Revenue, where two former employees have been accused of falsifying documents. One of the employees used her position within the department to create 13 fake vehicle titles used to secure \$400,000 in loans, according to the Attorney General's Office, which is reportedly investigating similar allegations in the second case.

The committee will discuss the Department of Revenue situation at its Oct. 21 meeting, and will consider whether an outside organization is needed to conduct deeper financial audits in state government. The

committee will discuss the Department of Social Services matter on Dec. 11 and 12.

On Tuesday during a meeting in Pierre, lawmakers on the committee pressed Bureau of Finance and Management Commissioner Jim Terwilliger for information about the State Board of Internal Control, which is tasked with implementing a system among state agencies to detect and prevent financial fraud.

The board adopted a plan in 2019 to create a statewide internal control framework. The board has worked through 19 agencies since then and has 10 more to go. Terwilliger said the board implemented internal controls within four state agencies in fiscal year 2024.

Terwilliger said the state is "much better off" than it was before the framework, but there is more work to do in light of the recent investigations.

"When things like this happen, it's frustrating because it shouldn't happen and you put people in places of trust," Terwilliger said.

Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, said she'd like to see the Bureau of Finance and Management reevaluate how it tracks its success with internal controls, since it only tracks how many state agencies implement internal controls throughout the fiscal year.

"I do believe, based on the history of what's happened this summer, we need to have some kind of metric there other than saying 'I'm going to all agencies,'" Hunhoff said.

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

Divide remains on clarity of abortion exception after state releases video

Lawmakers and Gov. Noem approved a bill requiring the video's production

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 2:39 PM

A new state government video intended to clarify South Dakota's only abortion exception has not settled disputes over whether the exception's legal language is clear enough.

Nancy Turbak Berry chairs the Freedom Amendment Coalition. The group supports Amendment G, a question on the Nov. 5 general election ballot that would legalize abortion in the state. She said the new video is not enough to help physicians, because the video is "ambiguous" and includes disclaimers that the information presented is "not legal advice" and "not legally binding."

"It doesn't solve anything," Turbak Berry said. "The whole problem that prompted this is legal, not medical. Doctors didn't need a video to tell them medically what the standards would be — they've known for decades. They needed legal guidance."

The South Dakota Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem passed a bill during the 2024 legislative session requiring the state Department of Health to create a video that clarifies the state's abortion exception and how it should be applied. The department published the video this week.

South Dakota state law bans abortions except when "necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant female." Violators of the law can be charged with a felony.

Since the abortion ban was triggered after the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision in 2022, some physicians across the state have said the law is not clear enough, and that it could be interpreted as only allowing an abortion when a patient's life is actively in danger, like when a patient is bleeding out in the emergency room.

Department of Health Secretary Melissa Magstadt said in the video that abortions are illegal when "the sole intent is to end the life of the unborn child." A patient does not need to be "critically ill or actively dying" to terminate a pregnancy, she said.

A patient might need to terminate a pregnancy for a variety of health complications, though Magstadt said in the video that such instances are "very rare." The video lists several examples when a physician can intervene to terminate a pregnancy, including severe preeclampsia, infection, kidney disease and other life-threatening conditions.

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The video was made in consultation with medical and legal experts, including practicing OB-GYNs and the Attorney General's Office, the department told South Dakota Searchlight.

Video lays out medical advice

If a life-threatening complication occurs beyond the point of "fetal viability," which is around 23 to 24 weeks, there is "no question as to management," Magstadt said in the video, adding that the baby should be delivered and should be given appropriate care along with the mother.

A "maternal-fetal separation" before the point of viability due to a life-threatening complication is legal, Magstadt said in the video, "when the foreseen but unintended consequence is neonatal death."

"The key for a physician to ensure they are practicing within the bounds of the law is to document their decision-making process and how that led to their recommended course of treatment," Magstadt said in the video.

Retired Chamberlain OB-GYN Patti Giebink has been outspoken since the Dobbs decision about her opinion that providers are able to adequately care for their patients within the current exception. She said if a physician treats a patient for a life-threatening illness — like cancer or infection or miscarriage — the death of the fetus would be a secondary effect of treatment and wouldn't be intentional.

"If you don't take care of the patient, it's malpractice," Giebink said.

Giebink spoke in support of the informational video during the legislative session, and she told South Dakota Searchlight the video "exceeded" her expectations.

"It should put to rest a lot of the questions in many doctor's minds about practicing obstetrics," she said.

'Line is still fuzzy,' doctor says

While Magstadt said the conditions listed in the video are "very rare," Sioux Falls-based OB-GYN Amy Kelley sees such conditions frequently, she said, since complex and high-risk pregnancies are often sent to providers in the state's largest city.

The video does not address Kelley's primary concern: whether physicians can refer patients to out-of-state abortion resources if the patient wants such resources. Under state law, it is illegal to "procure" an abortion for someone.

The video also doesn't touch on life-threatening mental health conditions or fatal fetal anomalies.

"I don't know if I can refer people. The line is still fuzzy with certain conditions," Kelley said. "It leaves a lot of people out in the cold, like people with fatal fetal anomalies. I don't think it changed much of anything."

The video did not alleviate concerns about legality, Kelley said, especially when a patient's medical condition would be considered life-threatening enough for intervention.

"It's just going to take one prosecutor, one county state's attorney to think 'I don't think that person waited long enough' or to think it wasn't really life threatening," Kelley said. "When you're talking about a career-ending felony, you can understand why physicians are scared."

Kelley co-chairs a group of doctors supporting Amendment G.

Giebink said she didn't hear any conditions listed in the video for which a patient would have to leave South Dakota to "be taken care of."

How the video impacts the upcoming election

The video leaves doctors "in the same position they were before," Turbak Berry said.

"It's clearly just a press relations piece promoted and, for the most part, facilitated by and serving Right to Life people to try and give them cover leading up to the election," Turbak Berry said.

Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt introduced the bill requiring the video last legislative session, after failed efforts to expand the exception to include the health of the mother. She told South Dakota Searchlight in a written statement that the video provides "clear and concise guidance" to physicians.

"As we approach the November election, I believe it's important to highlight that the ballot measure to legalize abortion is too extreme," Rehfeldt said. "The video helps clarify how we can protect women with-

out resorting to extreme measures, while also ensuring that healthcare remains safe and compassionate for both moms and babies.”

A lawsuit attempting to invalidate the ballot measure is currently in court, but the case is not likely to be decided by the time early voting begins on Sept. 20. South Dakota is one of 10 states with abortion questions on ballots in the general election.

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

Tribe gets nearly \$8 million from federal program that state shunned

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 6:47 PM

A Native American tribe in South Dakota will receive a nearly \$8 million grant from a federal program that state government declined to apply for.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday that the Rosebud Sioux Tribe has been selected to receive a \$7.88 million Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The tribe will use the money to install electric-vehicle charging stations, purchase electric buses for transit routes and purchase and operate a heavy-duty EV garbage truck.

“This is a great opportunity for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe,” said Ivan Crow Eagle, the tribe’s environmental director, in a news release from the EPA.

States and major cities were also eligible for grants. South Dakota and Sioux Falls chose not to apply. A Sioux Falls official said at the time that the grants “have numerous requirements that would ultimately take away the focus from the city’s current and planned sustainability efforts.” A spokesman for Gov. Kristi Noem’s administration said more federal spending would make inflation worse and said the federal dollars would come with “strings attached.”

Rapid City obtained a \$1 million planning grant but was not awarded an implementation grant.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe’s grant is from the latest phase of nearly \$5 billion in total awards by the program. The grants are funded by the Inflation Reduction Act that Congress passed and President Joe Biden signed in 2022.

Grants for tribes and territories were awarded following a review of 110 applications that requested a total of more than \$1.3 billion.

Wildfire near Rapid City is 77% contained

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 5:54 PM

A wildfire burning just west of Rapid City in the Black Hills is 77% contained, firefighters reported Thursday afternoon.

“Cooler temperatures and scattered rain showers yesterday provided much needed moisture and was helpful to the firefighters to reinforce the fire line during operations,” said a news release from the U.S. Forest Service.

The First Thunder Fire started Monday evening. Its cause remains under investigation.

The fire’s size was relatively unchanged Thursday afternoon at 157 acres, in an area where privately owned land is intermixed with the Black Hills National Forest. No injuries or damages to structures have been reported. About 100 personnel remained on scene Thursday with bulldozers and fire engines.

Pre-evacuation warnings for people residing near the fire have been lifted. Roads including Taylor Ranch, Norseman, Victoria Lake, Buzzard’s Roost Trailhead and Falling Rock are now open. Firefighters still advise the public to avoid the area.

Cooperative serving South Dakota receives share of \$7.3 billion for rural clean energy projects

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 12:39 PM

A rural electric cooperative serving South Dakotans is among 16 co-ops sharing in \$7.3 billion from the federal government for clean energy projects that President Joe Biden announced Thursday in Wisconsin.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative will apply its funding toward 1,400 megawatts' worth of renewable energy infrastructure in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Estimated long-term member savings are over \$400 million. Plus, the project would reduce greenhouse gasses — equivalent to removing 522,000 gasoline-powered cars annually from the road.

"Renewable generation is a key portion of our balanced approach to resource development," said Basin Electric Power Cooperative CEO and General Manager Todd Brickhouse.

His comments were included in a news release from the federal government, which did not specify the amount of funding awarded to Basin. The cooperative did not immediately respond to a message from South Dakota Searchlight.

The funds come from the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which included \$13 billion in rural electrification programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

That represents "the largest investment in rural electrification since 1936 and the New Deal," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told reporters in a briefing Wednesday ahead of the announcement.

The funds announced Thursday are under the USDA's Empowering Rural America program, dubbed New ERA. Federal grants and loans are projected to seed another \$29 billion in private investment to produce more than 10 gigawatts of clean energy for rural communities — enough to power about 4 million homes according to one federal estimate.

The 16 power co-ops taking part serve residents in 23 states. The initiative will "bring the promise of clean energy and lower costs to about 5 million rural households, representing 20% of the nation's entire rural households, as well as farms and businesses that are located in those 23 states," Vilsack said.

Collectively, the co-ops are projected to add 4,500 jobs on top of 16,000 construction jobs, according to the USDA. The projects include 3,700 megawatts of wind power, 4,700 MW of solar power, 800 MW of nuclear power and 357 MW of hydropower.

"All of this is designed not only to provide more reliant electricity for those rural communities, but will also result in a 43.7-million-ton annual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions," Vilsack said.

All projects funded through the Inflation Reduction Act must be fully completed by Sept. 30, 2031, according to administration officials.

The New ERA program is limited to rural electric cooperatives. Another USDA program, PACE (Powering Affordable Clean Energy), also funded through the Inflation Reduction Act, provides low-interest loans to rural energy providers for clean energy and energy storage projects. Vilsack said the USDA has made 19 awards nationally under that program, totaling \$665 million.

The Inflation Reduction Act also expanded the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which provides grants and loans to farmers and rural small businesses installing renewable energy systems or undertaking energy-efficiency projects. The Biden administration has so far put \$2.2 billion into that program, covering 7,600 projects.

In announcing the New ERA program and projects in Wisconsin, Biden took something of a victory lap.

His Wisconsin visit as well as a stop in Michigan are "part of a broader effort that we've launched to hear directly from different communities across the country who are benefiting from the president's investing in America agenda, and as a result, have peace of mind and more hope for the future," White House Deputy Chief of Staff Natalie Quillian told reporters in Wednesday's briefing.

When Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris took office in 2021, they "rejected conventional wisdom that trickle-down economics was the best path for America," Quillian said. "Instead, President Biden built the economy from the middle out and the bottom up and made sure that instead of providing tax breaks

for companies that ship jobs overseas, he invested here in America and in Americans.”

Thursday’s announcement, she said, joined other administration initiatives toward that end, including 350 road, bridge and other infrastructure repair projects in Wisconsin; \$200 million set aside towards removing lead pipes in the state; and the first-ever enactment of a national standard for PFAS chemicals by the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2021, Biden visited La Crosse, Wisconsin, and “laid out his plans for a better future,” Quillian said. “And when he returns (Thursday), he will have delivered on so many of those promises.”

Trump’s Jan. 6 case to extend beyond Election Day under timeline laid out by judge

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 12:47 PM

WASHINGTON — Exactly two months out from the presidential election, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan plans to move ahead with the case accusing former President Donald Trump of subverting the 2020 presidential election results, telling Trump’s attorneys that she is “not concerned with the electoral schedule.”

Chutkan released a timeline for the case late Thursday afternoon setting several deadlines for evidence, briefs and replies for the weeks prior to November’s election, and ultimately stretching beyond Election Day.

While it had been evident for some time that the Republican presidential nominee likely would not face a trial before Nov. 5 on election interference charges, Chutkan’s calendar made it certain.

Trump did not appear in federal court for Thursday morning’s hearing in Washington, D.C., but his lawyers pleaded not guilty on his behalf to the four charges that remained unchanged in U.S. special counsel Jack Smith’s new indictment, filed last week.

The case had been in a holding pattern for eight months as Trump appealed his claim of presidential immunity all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

U.S. prosecutors say they are ready to restart the case in the coming weeks, while Trump’s team has argued for more time to review evidence and dismiss the superseding indictment.

The Supreme Court returned Trump’s case to the trial court after ruling that former presidents are immune from criminal charges for official “core constitutional” acts while in office and hold at least presumptive immunity for “outer perimeter” activities, but not for personal actions.

This gave Chutkan, an Obama administration appointee, the major task of parsing Smith’s indictment, deciding which allegations against Trump fall under the umbrella of official acts and which relate to actions taken in a personal capacity.

Chutkan set the following deadlines on the pre-trial calendar:

The government must complete all mandatory evidentiary disclosures by Sept. 10, with other disclosures ongoing afterward.

Trump’s reply briefs to certain evidence matters are due Sept. 19.

The government’s opening brief on presidential immunity is due Sept. 26, and the Trump legal team’s reply is due on Oct. 17. The government’s opposition is thereafter due on Oct. 29.

Trump is also scheduled to provide a supplement to his original motion to dismiss based on statutory grounds by Oct. 3, and the government must reply by Oct. 17.

Trump’s request to file a motion based on his argument that Smith was illegally appointed to his special prosecutor position is due on Oct. 24, with the government’s reply due on Oct. 31. The due date for Trump’s opposition to the government’s reply is Nov. 7, stretching the pre-trial calendar beyond the presidential election.

Chutkan skeptical

Chutkan did not issue any decisions on immunity at the Thursday hearing but rather spent significant time grilling Trump’s attorney John Lauro on why he believes it is “unseemly” for Smith’s office to lay out its case this month in an opening brief. Thomas Windom, a federal prosecutor in Smith’s office, said the government would be ready to file the brief by the end of September.

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Lauro argued that Smith wanting to file “at breakneck speed” is “incredibly unfair that they are able to put in the public record (evidence) at this sensitive time in our nation’s history.”

“I understand there’s an election impending,” Chutkan snapped back, reminding him that it “is not relevant here.”

“Three weeks is not exactly breakneck speed,” Chutkan added.

Lauro argues that Chutkan should examine parts of the indictment that accuse Trump of pressuring then-Vice President Mike Pence to accept false slates of electors leading up to Pence’s ceremonial role in certifying the election results on Jan. 6, 2021.

“The problem with that issue is if in fact the communications are immune, then the entire indictment fails,” Lauro argued.

“I’m not sure that’s my reading of the case,” Chutkan replied.

The government maintains that all actions and communications by Trump described in the new indictment were “private in nature,” Windom argued.

Chutkan also spent time during the roughly 75-minute hearing questioning Lauro on the Trump legal team’s numerous plans to request the case’s dismissal. One anticipated plan is to try its successful play in Florida, where a Trump-appointed federal judge tossed his classified documents case after Trump argued Smith was illegally appointed as special counsel.

Chutkan said she will allow the defense to file that motion but warned that attorneys must provide convincing arguments on why “binding precedent doesn’t hold” for the time-tested position of special prosecutor.

New indictment, same charges

Trump is charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States; conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding; obstruction of, and attempt to obstruct, an official proceeding; and conspiracy against rights for his alleged role in conspiring to create false electors from seven states and spreading knowingly false information that whipped his supporters into a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

A federal grand jury handed up a revised indictment Aug. 27 in an effort to tailor the charges to the Supreme Court’s July 1 immunity ruling. The fresh indictment omitted any references to Trump’s alleged pressure campaign on Justice Department officials to meddle in state election results.

But the document added emphasis on Trump’s personal use of social media outside of his actions as president, and said he and several co-conspirators schemed outside of his official duties. The new indictment also stressed Trump’s pressure on Pence to accept the fake electors in his role outside of the executive branch as president of the Senate.

If Trump wins the Oval Office in November, he would have the power to hinder or altogether shut down the Department of Justice’s election interference case against him.

If he loses to Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris, the case is sure to be set back by further delays, as the Trump team plans numerous challenges and will almost certainly appeal — likely to the Supreme Court again — Chutkan’s decisions on which allegations against Trump are or are not subject to immunity.

According to Friday’s joint filing in which each side laid out plans for the case going forward, Trump’s team also warned they will challenge that Trump’s tweets and communication about the 2020 presidential results should be considered all official acts.

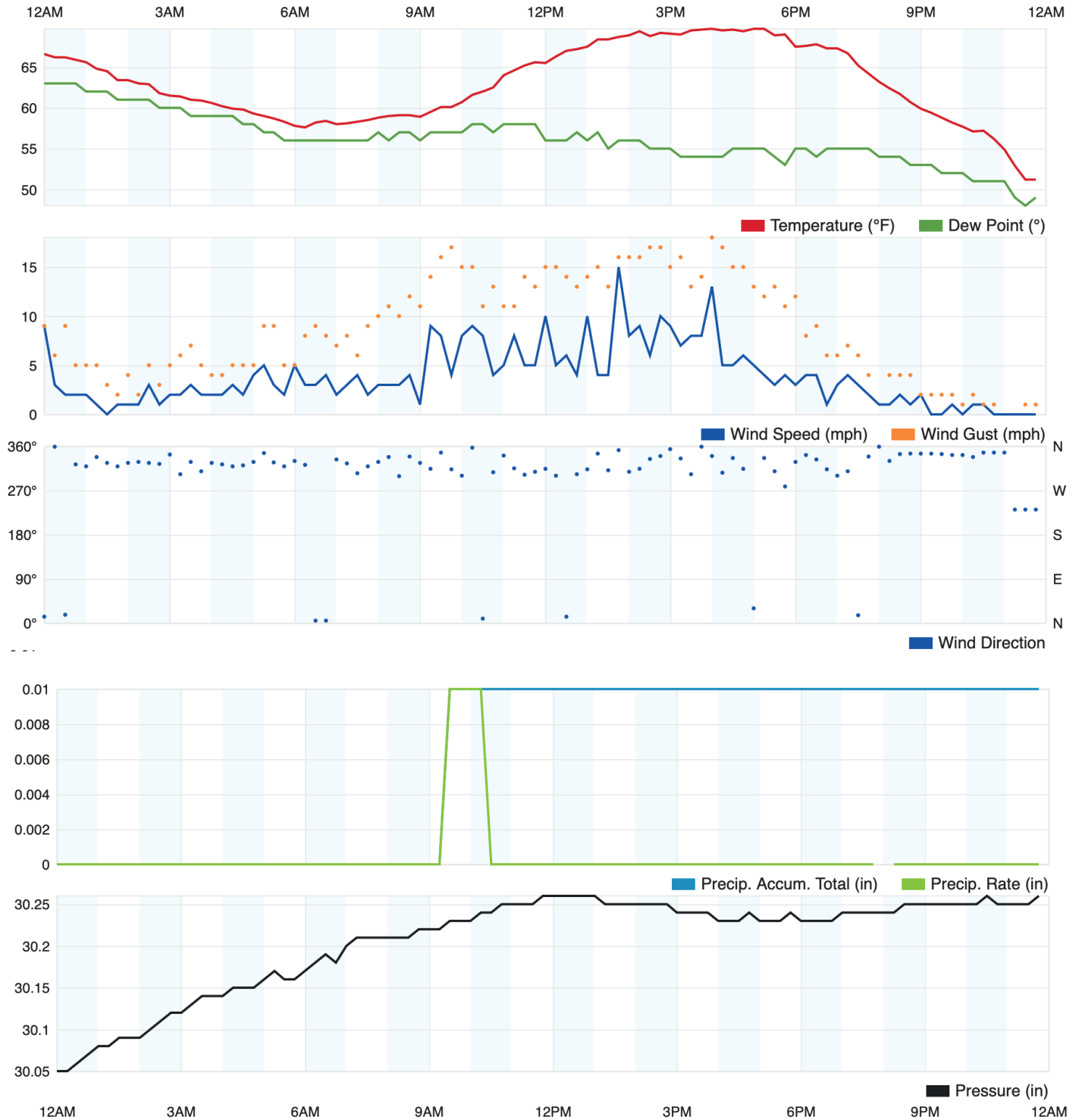
Additionally, Trump plans to file a motion to dismiss the case based on the Supreme Court’s June ruling that a Jan. 6 rioter could not be charged with obstructing an official proceeding — a charge that Trump also faces.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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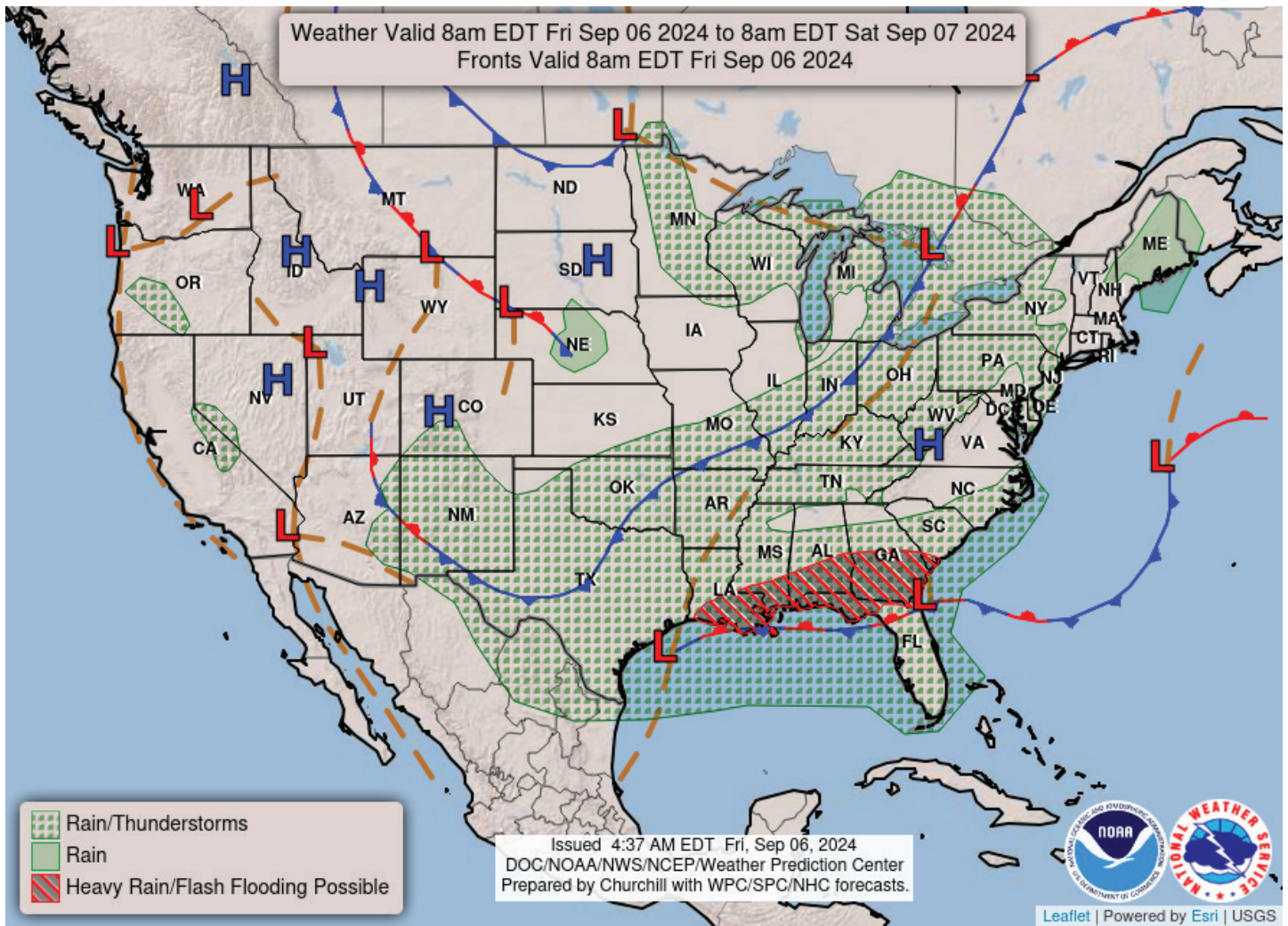
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 70 °F at 3:51 PM
Low Temp: 51 °F at 11:29 PM
Wind: 18 mph at 12:22 PM
Precip: : 0.01

Day length: 13 hours, 2 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1970
Record Low: 32 in 1956
Average High: 79
Average Low: 51
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.41
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.01
Average Precip to date: 16.75
Precip Year to Date: 19.42
Sunset Tonight: 8:01:31 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:59:36 pm



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Today in Weather History

September 6, 2000: Eight miles southwest of Miller, ninety mph winds destroyed three barns and a small garage along with severely damaging a creeper feeder and an enclosed trailer. Another building was moved from its foundation and damaged. An empty school bus was rolled several times before it came to rest atop a fence. Also, a window was broken out of the house.

1667: The "dreadful hurricane of 1667" is considered one of the most severe hurricanes ever to strike Virginia. On the first, this same storm was reported in the Lesser Antilles. The hurricane devastated St. Christopher as no other storm had done before. The "great storm" went on to strike the northern Outer Banks of North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. Area crops (including corn and tobacco) were beaten into the ground. 1776: Called the Pointe-à-Pitre hurricane, this storm is one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes on record. While the intensity and complete track are unknown, this storm struck Guadeloupe on this day, killing 6,000.

1881: Forest fires in "The Thumb" of Michigan and Ontario resulted in "Yellow Day" over the New England states. Twenty villages and over a million acres burned in Michigan. The smoke from these fires caused the sky to appear yellow over several New England cities. Twilight appeared at noon on this day.

1929 - Iowa's earliest snow of record occurred as a few flakes were noted at 9 AM at Alton. (The Weather Channel)

1933: The remnant low of the Treasure Coast Hurricane dumped 10.33" of rain in Charleston, which is the second-highest 24-hour rainfall total on record for the downtown station. The storm produced wind gusts of 51 mph and also spawned a tornado near the city.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced more than seven inches of rain in Georgia. Four persons drowned, and two others suffered injury, as three couples attempted to cross Mills Stone Creek at Echols Mill in their automobile. Smoke from forest fires in California and Oregon spread across Utah into western Colorado. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably cool weather prevailed across the north central and northeastern U.S. Thirty cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Joseph MO with a reading of 38 degrees. A low of 44 degrees at Indianapolis IN was their coolest reading of record for so early in the season. The mercury dipped to 31 degrees at Hibbing MN and Philips WI. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - An early afternoon thunderstorm produced wind gusts to 104 mph at Winterhaven, FL, flipping over four airplanes, and damaging five others. The high winds also damaged a hangar and three other buildings. A cold front produced strong winds and blowing dust in the Northern High Plains, with gusts to 54 mph reported at Buffalo SD. Powerful Hurricane Gabrielle and strong easterly winds combined to create waves up to ten feet high along the southern half of the Atlantic coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003: Hurricane Isabel was first named on September 6th, 2003. It would reach Category 5 status and eventually make landfall in North Carolina as a Category 2.

2017: Category 5 Hurricane Irma affected the US Virgin Island and Puerto Rico. Maximum sustained winds were at 180 mph when the storm hit St. Thomas & St. John. Catastrophic damage was reported over the US Virgin Island & significant damage over Puerto Rico, especially over Culebra.



GIVE UP OR GO ON?

Little Margie was having a difficult time learning to skate. It seemed as though the skates her father gave her far exceeded the strength and coordination of her legs and muscles. A neighbor watching her fall down and get up was amazed at her tenacity and determination. Finally he said to her, "Why don't you give up?"

"Because," she said with tears in her eyes, "my father didn't give me these skates to give up with but to go on with."

How like our Heavenly Father. He does not "give" things to us to cause us to fall down, but to help us "go" with Him and grow into the likeness of His Son, our Savior.

We speak often about Paul's "affliction" – not ever knowing what it was or the problems it may have caused him personally. But we do know that he said, "So I am glad to boast about my weaknesses...for when I am weak, then I am strong."

The great lesson for us to learn from Paul is that if and when we are willing to admit our weakness, God will fill us with His power and strength. There is always the temptation for us to try to "do it on our own." It is the natural thing to do. But that is not how God created us. God wants us to depend on Him for everything.

Prayer: Father, give us a willingness to recognize that in You, with You and through You, we can overcome any weakness that may defeat us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.03.24

12 41 43 52 55 9

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$740,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 1 Mins 56
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.04.24

7 9 28 30 31 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$8,540,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 16
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.05.24

2 3 18 23 25 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 31 Mins
DRAW: 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.04.24

9 21 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$23,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 31
DRAW: Mins 56 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.04.24

4 21 34 35 41 9

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 56
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.04.24

7 10 21 33 59 20

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$112,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 56
DRAW: 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

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

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Arlington def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-17, 25-12, 25-3
Baltic def. Garretson, 25-14, 25-14, 25-23
Bennett County def. Jones County, 15-25, 25-17, 22-25, 25-16, 18-16
Britton-Hecla def. Webster, 26-24, 25-16, 25-19
Castlewood def. Deubrook, 25-23, 25-19, 24-26, 25-22
Clark-Willow Lake def. Milbank, 23-25, 25-15, 25-19, 25-23
Colman-Egan def. DeSmet, 14-25, 29-27, 25-14, 25-20
Dakota Valley def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-16, 25-21, 25-23
Dell Rapids def. Sioux Falls Christian
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Oldham-Ramona-Rutland, 25-13, 25-17, 25-16
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Hitchcock-Tulare def. James Valley Christian, 25-6, 25-6, 25-3
Howard def. Freeman, 25-17, 21-25, 29-27, 25-18
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Kadoka def. Philip, 25-20, 25-15, 25-18
Lennox def. Tri-Valley, 25-16, 25-12, 25-22
Menno def. Freeman Academy-Marion, 25-20, 21-25, 25-19, 25-21
Miller def. Sully Buttes, 25-14, 25-11, 25-10
Mobridge-Pollock def. Potter County, 25-14, 25-23, 25-13
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Bon Homme, 25-21, 25-17, 25-12
New Underwood def. White River, 27-25, 10-25, 11-25, 25-23, 15-11
Northwestern def. Langford, 25-5, 25-11, 25-3
Parker def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-13, 23-25, 26-24, 25-19
Platte-Geddes def. Colome, 25-13, 25-15, 25-21
Redfield def. Deuel, 25-12, 25-12, 25-22
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket def. Ethan
Sioux Falls Washington def. Mitchell, 25-18, 25-15, 25-12
South Sioux City, Neb. def. Vermillion, 22-25, 25-13, 25-12, 25-21
T F Riggs High School def. Douglas, 21-25, 25-21, 27-25, 25-21
Wagner def. Chamberlain, 25-5, 25-12, 25-6
Wall def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-16, 25-16, 25-22
Warner def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-9, 25-8, 25-13
Watertown def. Brookings, 25-10, 25-15, 25-15
West Central def. Madison, 26-24, 19-25, 16-25, 28-17, 15-12

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

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 44, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 28

Todd County 54, McLaughlin 0

White River 28, Tiospa Zina 0

Winnebago, Neb. 40, Pine Ridge 34

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

Israeli forces appear to withdraw from Jenin — but the operation may not be over

By JALAL BWAITEL and DAVID RISING Associated Press

JENIN REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — Israeli forces appeared to have withdrawn from three refugee camps in the occupied West Bank by Friday morning, after a more than weeklong military operation that left dozens dead and a trail of destruction.

Overnight, Israeli armored personnel carriers were seen leaving the Jenin refugee camp from a checkpoint set up on one of the main roads, and an Associated Press reporter inside the camp saw no evidence of any remaining troops inside as dawn broke early Friday morning.

During the operation, Israeli military officials said they were targeting militants in Jenin, Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camps in an attempt to curb recent attacks against Israeli civilians they say have become more sophisticated and deadly.

Troops were pulled out of the Tulkarem camp by Friday morning and had left Al-Faraa earlier, but in a statement the Israeli military suggested the operation was not yet over.

"Israeli security forces are continuing to act in order to achieve the objectives of the counterterrorism operation," the military said in a statement.

Hundreds of Israeli troops have been involved for more than a week in what has been their deadliest operation in the occupied West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war began, employing what the United Nations called "lethal war-like tactics."

The main focus has been the Jenin refugee camp, a stronghold of Palestinian militancy that has grown since the Hamas attack on Israel that started the war in Gaza nearly 11 months ago.

Fighting in Jenin accounts for 21 of 39 Palestinians who local health officials say have been killed during the Israeli push in the West Bank — most of whom, the military says, have been militants.

The fighting has had a devastating effect on Palestinian civilians living in Jenin.

Water and electric services have been cut, families have been confined to their homes and ambulances evacuating the wounded have been slowed on their way to nearby hospitals, as Israeli soldiers search for militants.

During the operation, Israeli forces sent military bulldozers into the camp, ripping up roads in search of buried explosives.

When asked by an AP reporter about the infrastructure damage caused to the Jenin camp, an Israeli military official acknowledged the destruction but said it was a result of a militant strategy planting explosives in civilian areas. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations.

In the quiet morning Friday, Jenin residents took advantage of the lull to rummage through the rubble of destroyed buildings and take stock of the damage.

Twisted rebar protruded from the concrete of collapsed buildings, and walls still standing were pock-

marked by bullets and shrapnel.

In the Tulkarem camp, resident Ziad Abu Tahoun looked with dismay at the torn up streets and crumbled buildings all around him.

"Look at the condition of the camp, the camp is in a deplorable state," he said. "They've set us back 60 years."

In southern Gaza, health workers resumed vaccinating children against polio, continuing the second phase of a large-scale immunization campaign.

Children lined up early in the morning outside a United Nations health center in Khan Younis to receive the vaccine, which was being administered by local health care crews in coordination with UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

The first phase started Sunday in hospitals and medical locations in the central Gaza Strip. The final phase was to focus on the north, finishing Sept. 9.

The operation was undertaken as an urgent measure to prevent a large-scale polio outbreak after health officials confirmed the first reported polio case in 25 years, in a 10-month-old boy who is now paralyzed in the leg.

The WHO reached an agreement with Israel for limited pauses in the fighting to allow for the vaccination campaign to take place. In all, the WHO hopes to be able to vaccinate 640,000 Palestinian children in Gaza against polio.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas and other militants staged a surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people, primarily civilians. Hamas is believed to still be holding more than 100 hostages. Israeli authorities estimate about a third are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count. The ministry reports that more than 94,000 more have been wounded since the start of the war.

Israel has been under increasing pressure from the United States and other allies to reach a cease-fire deal in Gaza, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists on a demand that has emerged as a major sticking point in talks — continued Israeli control of the Philadelphi corridor, a narrow band along Gaza's border with Egypt where Israel contends Hamas smuggles weapons into Gaza. Egypt and Hamas deny it.

Hamas has accused Israel of dragging out months of negotiations by issuing new demands, including for lasting Israeli control over both Philadelphi corridor 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 U.S. President Joe Biden in July.

A million people flee their homes as Typhoon Yagi makes landfall in China

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A powerful typhoon made landfall on the Chinese tropical vacation island of Hainan Friday after it swept south of Hong Kong, bringing many aspects of life in the region to a halt and forcing about a million people in the country's south to leave their homes.

The Hainan province's meteorological service said Yagi — earlier packing winds of up to about 245 kph (152 mph) near its center — made landfall in the province's Wenchang city at around 4:20 p.m. It is expected to sweep toward other parts of the island before moving to the Beibu Gulf, it said.

China's national meteorological authorities said Yagi was the strongest autumn typhoon to have landed in China. They predicted it would make a second landfall in Xuwen County in neighboring Guangdong province on Friday night.

Ahead of the afternoon landfall, nearly 420,000 residents were relocated in Hainan, and so were more than half a million people in Guangdong, state media said.

The storm brought heavy rain across most of Hainan and some areas faced power outages. Strong winds

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buffeted the province's iconic coconut trees. People built sandbag barriers outside buildings to guard against possible floods and reinforced their windows with tape, China's official Xinhua news agency reported.

State media said classes, work, transportation and businesses had been suspended in parts of the province as early as Wednesday evening. Some tourist attractions were closed and all flights at three airports on the island were expected to be grounded on Friday.

State broadcaster CCTV said Qinzhou city in Guangxi region also issued a top emergency response alert to guard against the typhoon. It said Yagi is expected to make another landfall somewhere between the region's Fangchenggang city and the coastal area of northern Vietnam on Saturday afternoon. Beihai city suspended work, classes, businesses and transportation on Friday, local media said.

Earlier, trading on the stock market, bank services and schools were halted in Hong Kong on Friday after the city's weather authority raised a No. 8 typhoon signal for Yagi, the third-highest warning under the city's weather system.

Yagi forced more than 270 people to seek refuge at temporary government shelters and led to cancellations of more than 100 flights in the city. Nine people were injured and treated at hospitals. Heavy rain and strong winds felled dozens of trees.

Yagi was a tropical storm when it blew out of the northwestern Philippines into the South China Sea on Wednesday, leaving at least 16 people dead and 17 others missing, mostly in landslides and widespread flooding, and affecting more than 2 million people in northern and central provinces.

More than 47,600 people were displaced from their homes in Philippine provinces, and classes, work, inter-island ferry services and domestic flights were disrupted for days, including in the densely populated capital region, metropolitan Manila.

Inside the Georgia high school where a sleepy morning was pierced by gunfire

BY JEFF AMY Associated Press

WINDER, Ga. (AP) — It was the middle of second period at Apalachee High School, and the boy who few knew slipped out of his algebra class in J Hall again. That didn't strike his fellow students as unusual.

"He got up sometime in the morning, and class continued as normal," Lyela Sayarath said. "He was probably just skipping."

Many teenagers weren't quite awake on Wednesday morning at the high school near Winder, in rapidly suburbanizing Barrow County. Junior Julie Sandoval was dozing in her physics class as other students caught up on work. Sophomore Jacob King also dozed off, in world history, after a morning football practice.

But soon, terror and panic erupted as authorities say Colt Gray, the 14-year-old student who left class, returned to the hallway with a semiautomatic assault-style rifle and opened fire. Four people were killed and nine more hurt, seven of them shot, in the latest school shooting to shock the nation.

Gray is charged with four counts of murder. Authorities haven't said yet where he got the weapon, how he brought it to campus or what he did with it in the two hours between school starting at 8:15 a.m. and when shots first rang out around 10:20 a.m.

Law enforcement hasn't said whether Gray was being sought before the shooting. "We're still trying to clarify a lot of the timeline," Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Hosey said Wednesday.

On Thursday, officials also arrested his father, Colin Gray, and charged him with involuntary manslaughter, second-degree murder and cruelty to children, saying he knowingly allowed his son to possess a gun.

At first, students thought it was a drill

At the school on Wednesday morning, the alert was sounded when several teachers set off their wearable panic buttons, which Sheriff Jud Smith said were distributed to staff only days earlier. That sparked a lockdown, and immediately a warning flashed on classroom smartboards across the sprawling school.

"The screen ... said 'hard lockdown' in big red words, and the top light started flashing," said Layla Ferrell, a junior who was in a food and nutrition class in another hall.

Many thought it was a drill. Georgia schools are required to complete at least one active shooter drill by

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Oct. 1 each year.

"I thought it was fake until my friend told me it wasn't fake," King said. He added, "They weren't really acting like it was real."

Some heard what sounded like a loud, metallic crash.

"It sounded more like punching a locker at first," Ferrell said.

But those in J Hall had no doubt.

Students fled or hid under desks

Sayarath said that when the suspect tried to return to class, a student saw what warrants describe as "black semi-automatic AR-15 style rifle" and refused to let him in. Classroom doors at the school lock automatically and must be opened from inside, a "hardening" precaution in America's era of school shootings.

Kaylee Abner, a sophomore, said a student who left her geometry class to take a test elsewhere came racing back.

"She ran back inside, shuts the door and then we hear three gunshots," Abner said.

Junior Landon Culver got a glimpse of the shooter after leaving algebra II.

"I was walking out to get water and I heard gunshots and I heard bullets going like by my head," Culver said. "It looked like he was wearing a black hoodie and he had a AR and, I just, I didn't really stick around too long to look."

Marques Coleman Jr. told The Washington Post that the shooter leaned inside an open door of his algebra classroom and sprayed it with gunfire, hitting people including Christian Angulo, who died. Others were shot in the hall.

Senior Cassidy Reed was retaking a test in a hallway when she heard shots from around the corner. A teacher told everyone to flee.

"He got us up and told us to run because our classroom door was shut and it was locked, so we couldn't get in there," Reed said.

A teacher across the hall opened the door to her chemistry classroom, and the students ran inside. "I hid under a lab table," Reed said.

Teachers turned out lights and herded students into corners or behind desks. Classroom furniture became makeshift barricades.

"We put desks and chairs against our door and built it up so that nobody could get in, and then we were all just quiet, waiting," Ferrell said.

They sent chilling messages to family members

Authorities say the suspect fatally shot students Angulo and Mason Schermerhorn, both 14, and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53. The nine who were hurt — eight students and a teacher — are expected to recover.

One of the three school resource officers on campus quickly tracked down the shooter, who gave up and was taken into custody, the sheriff said.

Some students said they heard shouts from an officer ordering the shooter to halt and put his gun down.

"I heard the 'Get down! Get down! Don't move!' Reed said. Then, the sound of a "scuffle" as the suspect was handcuffed.

But the terror wasn't over.

Students said some students and teachers took off their clothes to try to stanch bleeding from gunshot wounds.

Deputies with guns drawn searched classroom by classroom for any more wounded, as well as any other possible shooters.

As students huddled, they called and texted each other and their parents. More than a few sent what they feared would be farewells.

"I love you. I love you so much. Ma I love you," a crying Sandoval texted. "I'm sorry I'm not the best daughter. I love you."

Sandoval's mother wrote back in Spanish to say everything would be all right and she should trust in God.

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"We started praying, because we didn't know whether we would come out alive or not," said Michelle Moncada, a freshman who was in art class.

Nearby, Sandoval said, another student was on the phone with their mother: "They're shooting up the school! They're shooting up the school!"

Abner held the hand of a boy who was praying.

"I was just trying to think happy thoughts, trying not to think anything negative," she said.

Parents abandoned cars and ran to the school

The hundreds of panicked parents who raced to the school created a traffic jam along the two-lane roads near Apalachee High. Many abandoned their cars and ran toward campus.

Shannon Callahan, Ferrell's mother, said her daughter texted a photo of her barricaded under a table. "Once the texts stopped, I was 100% completely worried."

During the evacuation, King saw the body of what appeared to a student on the floor. "They were blocking the body," King said.

Abner also saw what appeared to be female student who had been shot, in the shoulder. She was leaning against a wall as emergency personnel attended to her.

Another female student was lying on the floor and covering her eyes, Abner said: "I don't know if she was dead or shot or something, or just processing."

Reed saw a gun on the floor, and blood.

As they fled, students abandoned bookbags, phones, even shoes. Ferrell lost her rainbow Crocs and later made the long walk to her mother's car in her socks.

Gathered inside the football stadium, students wept and milled around.

"Everyone is crying, everyone is walking around," Moncada said. "They're all running around trying to see who's OK and who's not."

By early afternoon, students began to be released to parents to go home.

But Culver and others said the sound of gunfire will stick with them forever.

"You could hear gunshots, like just ringing out through the school," Culver said. "And you're just wondering, which one of those is going to be somebody that you're best friends with or somebody that you love?"

Pope arrives in Papua New Guinea for the second leg of his Southeast Asia and Oceania trip

By NICOLE WINFIELD and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (AP) — Pope Francis arrived in Papua New Guinea on Friday for the second leg of his four-nation trip through Southeast Asia and Oceania, becoming the second pope to visit the poor, strategically important South Pacific nation.

A cannon salute and marching band greeted the 87-year-old pope on the tarmac of the Port Moresby airport as he arrived after a six-hour flight from Jakarta, Indonesia. During the brief welcome ceremony the pope momentarily lost his balance while maneuvering from his wheelchair to a chair, but his security guards steadied him.

The packed three-day Indonesia visit culminated with a jubilant Mass on Thursday afternoon before a crowd that filled two sports stadiums and overflowed into a parking lot.

"Don't tire of dreaming and of building a civilization of peace," Francis urged them in an ad-libbed homily. "Be builders of hope. Be builders of peace."

The Vatican had originally expected the Mass would draw some 60,000 people, and Indonesian authorities had predicted 80,000. But the Vatican spokesman quoted local organizers as saying more than 100,000 attended.

"I feel very lucky compared to other people who can't come here or even had the intention to come here," said Vienna Frances Florensus Basol, who came with her husband and a group of 40 people from Sabah, Malaysia, but couldn't get into the stadium.

"Even though we are outside with other Indonesians, seeing the screen, I think I am lucky enough,"

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she said from a parking lot where a giant TV screen was erected for anyone who didn't have tickets for the service.

While in Indonesia, Francis sought to encourage the country's 8.9 million Catholics, who make up just 3% of the population of 275 million, while also seeking to boost interfaith ties with the country boasting the world's largest Muslim population.

In the highlight of the visit, Francis and the grand imam of Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque, Southeast Asia's largest, signed a joint declaration pledging to work to end religiously inspired violence and protect the environment.

In Papua New Guinea, Francis' agenda is aligned with more of his social justice priorities. The poor, strategically important South Pacific nation is home to more than 10 million people, most of whom are subsistence farmers.

John Lavu, the choir conductor at St. Charles Luwanga parish in the capital, Port Moresby, said the visit would help him grow stronger in his Catholic faith.

"I have lived this faith all my life, but the coming of the Holy Father, the head of the church, to Papua New Guinea and to be a witness of his coming to us is going to be very important for me in my life as a Catholic," he said on the eve of Francis' arrival.

Francis will be traveling to remote Vanimo to check in on some Catholic missionaries from his native Argentina who are trying to spread the Catholic faith to a largely tribal people who also practice pagan and Indigenous traditions.

The country, the South Pacific's most populous after Australia, has more than 800 Indigenous languages and has been riven by tribal conflicts over land for centuries, with conflicts becoming more and more lethal in recent decades.

History's first Latin American pope will likely refer to the need to find harmony among tribal groups while visiting, the Vatican said. Another possible theme is the country's fragile ecosystem, its rich natural resources at risk of exploitation and the threat posed by climate change.

The Papua New Guinean government has blamed extraordinary rainfall for a massive landslide in May that buried a village in Enga province. The government said more than 2,000 people were killed, while the United Nations estimated the death toll at 670.

Francis becomes only the second pope to visit Papua New Guinea, after St. John Paul II touched down in 1984 during one of his lengthy, globetrotting voyages. Then, John Paul paid tribute to the Catholic missionaries who had already been trying for a century to bring the faith to the country.

Papua New Guinea, a Commonwealth nation that was a colony of nearby Australia until independence in 1975, is the second leg of Francis' four-nation trip. In the longest and farthest voyage of his papacy, Francis will also visit East Timor and Singapore before returning to the Vatican on Sept. 13.

Teen accused of killing 4 at Apalachee High is set to appear in court. His father was also arrested

By JEFF AMY and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

WINDER, Ga. (AP) — The 14-year-old accused of fatally shooting four people at his high school in Georgia was expected to make his first court appearance Friday, a day after his father was also arrested for allowing his son to have a weapon.

According to arrest warrants obtained by The Associated Press, Colt Gray is accused of using a semiautomatic assault-style rifle to kill two students and two teachers at Apalachee High School in Winder, outside Atlanta. Nine people were also hurt in Wednesday's attack. Authorities have not offered any motive or explained how Gray obtained the gun or got it into the school.

The teen's father, Colin Gray, 54, was charged Thursday in connection with the shooting, including with counts of involuntary manslaughter and second-degree murder, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Hosey.

"His charges are directly connected with the actions of his son and allowing him to possess a weapon,"

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Hosey said. Colin Gray's first court appearance has not been set.

It's the latest example of prosecutors holding parents responsible for their children's actions in school shootings. In April, Michigan parents Jennifer and James Crumbley were the first convicted in a U.S. mass school shooting. They were sentenced to at least 10 years in prison for not securing a firearm at home and acting indifferently to signs of their son's deteriorating mental health before he killed four students in 2021.

Colt Gray was charged as an adult with four counts of murder in the deaths of Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53.

A neighbor remembered Schermerhorn as inquisitive when he was a little boy. Aspinwall and Irimie were both math teachers, and Aspinwall also helped coach the school's football team. Irimie, who immigrated from Romania, volunteered at a local church, where she taught dance.

Gray will appear by video from a youth detention facility for the proceedings at the Barrow County courthouse.

The teen denied threatening to carry out a school shooting when authorities interviewed him last year about a menacing post on social media, according to a sheriff's report obtained Thursday.

Conflicting evidence on the post's origin left investigators unable to arrest anyone, the report said. Jackson County Sheriff Janis Mangum said she reviewed the report from May 2023 and found nothing that would have justified bringing charges at the time.

The attack was the latest among dozens of school shootings across the U.S. in recent years, including especially deadly ones in Newtown, Connecticut; Parkland, Florida; and Uvalde, Texas. The classroom killings have set off fervent debates about gun control but there has been little change to national gun laws.

It was the 30th mass killing in the U.S. so far this year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University. At least 127 people have died in those killings, which are defined as events in which four or more people die within a 24-hour period, not including the killer — the same definition used by the FBI.

Jobs report will help Federal Reserve decide how much to cut interest rates

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Friday's monthly jobs report will likely mark a pivotal moment for the economy and the Federal Reserve.

If it shows that hiring was weak in August and that the unemployment rate rose — similar to the unexpectedly soft figures for July — it would heighten worries that the job market is stumbling. The Fed might then seek to deliver a stimulus with a larger-than-usual interest rate cut of a half-percentage point when it meets later this month.

If, on the other hand, hiring picked up from July's gain of just 114,000 or if the unemployment rate fell from 4.3% — the highest level in three years, though still low by historical standards — it would suggest that the labor market remains stable, though slowing. The Fed would probably cut its key rate from its 23-year high by a more modest quarter-point, with further rate cuts to follow in the coming months.

Either outcome could also help shape the remaining two months of the presidential race. Another sluggish hiring report would fuel former President Donald Trump's claims that the Biden-Harris administration has overseen a worsening economy.

A healthier report, though, would arm Vice President Kamala Harris with evidence that the job market is still motoring ahead even while inflation has tumbled from a four-decade peak to near the Fed's 2% target, opening the door to rate cuts. Reductions in the Fed's benchmark rate will eventually lead to lower borrowing costs for a range of consumer and business loans, including mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

The two presidential nominees outlined dueling economic plans in speeches this week, with Trump promising to cut corporate taxes to 15% and eliminate taxes on tips and Social Security income. Harris has vowed to expand tax deductions for start-up companies while raising the corporate tax rate to 28%.

Economists have estimated that the government will report Friday that employers added 160,000 jobs

in August and that the unemployment rate slipped back to 4.2%. Since hitting a half-century low of 3.4% in April of last year, the jobless rate has risen nearly a full percentage point.

Most of the rise in the jobless rate, though, reflects an influx of people into the labor force — notably, recent immigrants as well as new college graduates — who didn't find work right away and so were counted as unemployed. This makes the increase in unemployment less of a concern than if it were caused by waves of job cuts. The pace of layoffs, in fact, is barely above where it was before the pandemic.

Still, a slower pace of hiring is often a precursor to layoffs — one reason why the Fed's policymakers are now more focused on sustaining the health of the job market than on continuing to fight inflation.

Recent economic data has been mixed, elevating the importance of the jobs report, which is among the more comprehensive economic snapshots the government issues. The Labor Department surveys roughly 119,000 businesses and government agencies and 60,000 households each month to compile the employment data.

On the weaker side, companies are advertising fewer job openings, and fewer workers are quitting for new opportunities. In a healthy job market, workers are more likely to quit, usually for new, higher-paying opportunities. With quits declining, that means fewer jobs are opening up for people out of work.

"New grads and returning workers are having an exceptionally hard time breaking in," said Daniel Zhao, lead economist at the career website Glassdoor. "And so for those folks, it certainly feels even worse because they can't get their foot in the door."

The Fed's Beige Book, a collection of anecdotes from the 12 regional Fed banks, reported that many employers appeared to have become pickier about whom they hired in July and August. And a survey by the Conference Board in August found that the proportion of Americans who think jobs are hard to find has been rising, a trend that has often correlated with a higher unemployment rate.

At the same time, consumer spending, the principal driver of economic growth in the United States, rose at a healthy pace in July. And the economy grew at a solid 3% annual pace in the April-June quarter.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has made clear that he doesn't want to see the job market weaken further, which is why a particularly poor jobs report might lead the Fed to announce a deep rate cut this month.

Later Friday, Christopher Waller, a member of the Fed's Board of Governors, is scheduled to discuss the economic outlook in a speech at the University of Notre Dame. Waller, an influential member of the governing board, may provide insights into the Fed's next moves.

Substantial rate cuts by the Fed could spur some companies to start hiring more quickly, some labor market experts say.

"Everyone's in a bit of a holding pattern," said Becky Frankiewicz, president of North America at staffing giant Manpower. "Everyone's watching that mid-September meeting, to free up and start spending."

Nearly 2,000 drug plants are overdue for FDA checks after COVID delays, AP finds

By MATTHEW PERRONE and NICKY FORSTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal regulators responsible for the safety of the U.S. drug supply are still struggling to get back to where they were in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic upended factory inspections in the U.S. and across the world, The Associated Press has found.

An AP analysis of Food and Drug Administration data shows that agency staffers have not returned to roughly 2,000 pharmaceutical manufacturing firms to conduct surveillance inspections since before the pandemic, raising the risks of contamination and other issues in drugs used by millions of Americans.

The firms that are overdue for safety and quality inspections represent about 42% of the 4,700 plants that are currently registered to produce drugs for the U.S. and previously underwent FDA review before May 2019, the AP found. The plants make hundreds of critical medicines, including antibiotics, blood thinners and cancer therapies.

Under FDA's own guidelines, factories that haven't been inspected in five or more years are considered a

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significant risk and are supposed to be prioritized for "mandatory" inspections. Most of the overdue plants are in the U.S., but more than 340 are in India and China, countries that together make up the largest source of drug ingredients used in low-cost U.S. prescriptions.

"Generic drugmakers are under intense pressure to cut their costs and some will do that by cutting quality," said David Ridley of Duke University, who studies the pharmaceutical industry. "If they're not inspected, then we won't know about it until — in a few tragic cases — it's too late."

Last year, tainted eyedrops from an Indian factory led to an outbreak of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that sickened more than 80 Americans, killing four of them and blinding more than a dozen others. The plant never registered with the FDA.

Prior to COVID-19, dozens of common medications made at FDA-regulated plants were recalled due to traces of cancer-causing contaminants. The FDA didn't open its first overseas outposts until 2008, after dozens of U.S. deaths were linked to a contaminated blood thinner imported from a Chinese plant that hadn't been inspected.

"The U.S. drug supply is the safest on the planet and no other regulator conducts more inspections than the FDA," said FDA Associate Commissioner Michael Rogers, noting that the agency has increased drug inspections each year since 2021 while prioritizing foreign factories.

But last year's inspection numbers were still down almost 40% from the pre-pandemic period, when the FDA averaged around 4,300 annual inspections. Rogers offered no date for when the backlog of un-inspected plants might be cleared.

The agency's work has been hampered by a wave of staff departures, he said, including longtime inspectors who have found new jobs that often allow them to work from home.

"There's a significant cost to the agency associated with the loss through attrition of an experienced investigator," Rogers said. "We need to retain these people, and we are."

The FDA halted all but the most "mission critical" inspections in March 2020. It gradually restarted prioritized inspections later that year, but regular international visits did not resume until 2022.

In a statement, the FDA said that it receives inspection details from international partners, including European regulators, which help the agency decide whether a visit is necessary. The agency also began using video and other online tools to evaluate plants remotely during COVID-19, although those aren't equivalent to physical inspections.

The FDA's struggles overseeing the global pharmaceutical supply have been documented by the Government Accountability Office, which has flagged the area as a "high risk" issue every year since 2009.

Beginning in the 1990s, drugmakers began shifting manufacturing overseas, first to Puerto Rico, and then to Asia in search of cheaper labor and materials. The FDA has largely been playing catch-up ever since.

"We have to recognize that this is the world we live in and we have to adapt to it," said Dr. Stephen Ostroff, FDA's former chief scientist. "That has to include being able to get into these facilities and take a look at what they're doing, particularly in India and China."

"Cascade of failure"

The FDA keeps a confidential list of drug facilities to inspect, prioritizing them based on potential risks.

The AP created its own list by compiling public records of FDA inspections from before COVID-19 and tracking which firms haven't received a follow-up within five years. The data accounts for the vast majority of inspections, but has some omissions, including visits required for new drug approvals and those that are part of ongoing government investigations.

The AP's tally of overdue plants also doesn't include any of the new facilities that have registered with the agency since COVID-19 but haven't yet had an initial inspection. FDA's internal list of sites for inspection has increased 14% over the past five years, the agency noted last year.

The FDA said in a statement that it "must be judicious and apply a risk-based approach," due to the "enormity" of its workload and limited budget.

"We prioritize the inspections that pose the greatest risk to public health," the agency said.

On a global basis, FDA says only 6% of sites inspected last year had serious problems. But rates are higher in India, where 11% of plants were cited for violations, the most of any country.

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Nearly 90% of FDA's foreign inspections in fiscal 2023 were announced in advance, according to FDA correspondence with Congress obtained via public records requests. The GAO and other government watchdogs have long raised concerns about the practice, which typically gives companies up to 12 weeks to correct or conceal potential problems.

Even with the advanced warnings, the FDA has found egregious violations in overseas factories.

When agency staffers visited Intas Pharmaceuticals' plant in northwest India for the first time in nearly three years they found what they called a "cascade of failure." Among the violations, inspectors saw an employee "pouring acetic acid in a trash bin" to destroy company documents used for drug testing. Elsewhere inspectors found "plastic bags filled with torn and discarded" documents relating to quality control measures.

"This kind of behavior has been pointed out to the FDA time and time again by people like me for the last 10 years," said Dinesh Thakur, a former pharmaceutical industry executive who became a whistleblower for the U.S. government. In 2013, his work led to a \$500 million settlement with Indian drugmaker Ranbaxy for falsifying generic drug data.

"If you do not prosecute people who do this kind of wrongdoing, it gives the implicit signal that the FDA will give companies a pass," Thakur said.

In the case of Intas, FDA issued a warning letter — which has no legal repercussions — and blocked some of the company's exports to the U.S., while attempting to maintain shipments of the critical chemotherapy drug cisplatin. That strategy backfired in June 2023 when Intas abruptly shuttered the plant, triggering a nationwide shortage of cisplatin, which is used in more than a half-dozen cancers.

FDA inspections in India have been accelerating, but 160 plants are overdue, including some which haven't been inspected since 2015 yet continue shipping pain pills, antibiotics and other medications to the U.S., according to AP's analysis.

Mexico, France and Spain also have over 100 overdue firms between them.

In China, political tensions have made inspections even more challenging. Just two fulltime FDA inspectors are based in the country, where about 185 factories are overdue. Former FDA officials say the Chinese government has withheld visas from inspectors unless the U.S. reciprocates for Chinese nationals seeking to enter the U.S.

FDA Commissioner Robert Califf has acknowledged his discomfort with the current situation.

"Even if we do periodic inspections, it's not the same as a society where you have more freedom of information," Califf told lawmakers at a hearing last year. "I am very concerned about it."

Help wanted

The FDA could seemingly address its inspection backlog by hiring more investigators or assigning extra work to current staffers. But the agency is struggling to hold onto inspectors who can often earn far more working for the companies they now regulate.

On a call with FDA stakeholders in May, Rogers warned that "our attrition rates and our inability to retain our staff" would soon impact the agency's ability to oversee drugs and other medical supplies.

The FDA currently has 225 vacancies on its inspection workforce, nearly four times as many as before COVID-19, according to agency records.

New inspectors generally start at an annual salary of about \$40,000 and can eventually rise to over \$100,000. Job postings alert applicants they may have to travel "up to 50% of the time."

In 30 years as an FDA inspector, Jose Hernandez experienced firsthand the grueling pace and pressures of the job.

When he began doing international inspections in the mid-1990s, it was on a volunteer basis and employees spent no more than six weeks per year outside the U.S. By the end of his government career, Hernandez was traveling overseas more than four months per year, making multiple trips to Asia.

For each one-week inspection, he said he might need another week or more to write up his report, particularly if he found serious violations. Hernandez says that extra time and attention to detail wasn't always appreciated by his managers.

"They just wanted people who are like bean counters: walk in, walk out and find nothing so that they can get this report through the system and make their numbers," he said.

Hernandez retired from the FDA in 2014, earning just over \$100,000 in his final year. Today he is a private consultant and says former FDA inspectors can easily earn more than \$250,000 working for industry.

"Now I fly business class, I stay in nice hotels, I rest when I get there and nobody tells me what to do," Hernandez said. "I made the right decision."

FDA says it's exploring ways to make the jobs more attractive, including extra pay for experienced staffers and offering more flexible, comfortable travel arrangements.

Testing for quality

The slowdown in inspections has attracted scrutiny from lawmakers and raised new questions about whether FDA's decades-old approach is working.

House Republicans have peppered the agency with dozens of inquiries about the program since 2023. In their most recent letter, members of the Energy and Commerce Committee ask regulators to explain why FDA staffers making high-priority inspections in Asia are reporting less than half as many violations today compared with pre-COVID-19.

"The committee is concerned that FDA's fear of triggering additional drug shortages is driving the decreased rate that FDA issues warning letters," states the June letter.

FDA's Rogers rejected the argument, saying inspectors follow strict guidelines when conducting inspections and that decisions about managing drug shortages are handled separately by other parts of the agency.

A pilot program requested by the U.S. Defense Department takes an alternative approach to monitoring the drug supply. The Pentagon is collaborating with a private laboratory, Valisure, to evaluate 40 prescription drugs critical to military personnel, testing them for contaminants, dosing and other issues. Initial findings from the two-year program found serious flaws in about 10% of a subset of drugs tested, according to results shared with the AP.

Laboratory testing of imported drugs has long been standard practice in Europe, where more than 70 private labs operate alongside government regulators.

The testing approach has attracted interest from experts concerned that FDA's method — rooted in physical inspections and reviewing paperwork — may not be up to the task of uncovering manufacturing problems on the other side of the world.

Stanford University's Dr. Kevin Schulman says one solution would be to incentivize U.S. pharmacy chains and drug distributors to only purchase drugs from high-quality manufacturers.

Currently, U.S. companies decide which generic drugs to buy based on whichever company has the lowest price, Schulman said. "Purchasers say, 'Well, it's the FDA's job to worry about quality, not ours,'" he said.

Even as the FDA struggles to recover from COVID-19 and reinspect plants worldwide, Schulman sees a potential upside.

"Maybe this is the straw that breaks the camel's back," he said. "That, in fact, we should just admit that one U.S. agency can't regulate the entire global manufacturing for this critically important market."

Zelenskyy meets top military leaders in Germany as the US announces additional aid for Ukraine

By TARA COPP Associated Press

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pressed for more weapons support during a meeting Friday with top United States military leaders and more than 50 partner nations in Germany, as Washington announced it would provide another \$250 million in security assistance to Kyiv.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the meeting of the leaders was taking place during a dynamic moment in Ukraine's fight against Russia, as it conducts its first offensive operations of the war while facing a significant threat from Russian forces near a key hub in the Donbas.

It was Zelenskyy's first time to come to Ramstein to address the group, and he used the public appear-

ance to stress that, in his view, what's needed most now is for the U.S. and the West to allow him to use the weapons they provided to strike deeper inside Russia — something the U.S. has not supported out of concern it would further escalate the war.

"We need to have this long-range capability, not only on the divided territory of Ukraine, but also on the Russian territory, so that Russia is motivated to seek peace," Zelenskyy told the members. "We need to make Russian cities and even Russian soldiers think about what they need: peace or Putin."

So far, the surprise assault inside Russia's Kursk territory — in which Zelenskyy said Ukraine's army has been able to capture about 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) of Russian territory and kill or injure about 6,000 Russian soldiers — has not drawn away President Vladimir Putin's focus from taking the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, which provides critical rail and supply links for the Ukrainian army. Losing Pokrovsk could put additional Ukrainian cities at risk.

While Kursk has put Russia on the defensive, "we know Putin's malice runs deep," Austin cautioned in prepared remarks to the media before the Ukraine Defense Contact Group met. Moscow is pressing on, especially around Pokrovsk, Austin said.

Recent deadly airstrikes by Russia have renewed Zelenskyy's calls for the U.S. to further loosen restrictions and obtain even greater Western capabilities to strike deeper inside Russia. Zelenskyy also said systems that were promised already have been too slow to arrive.

"The number of air defense systems that have not yet been delivered is significant," Zelenskyy said.

The meeting Friday was expected to focus on resourcing more air defense and artillery supplies and shoring up gains on expanding Ukraine's own defense industrial base, to put it on more solid footing as the final days of Joe Biden's U.S. presidency wind down.

Western partner nations were working with Ukraine to source a substitute missile for its Soviet-era S-300 air defense systems, Austin said.

The U.S. is also focused on resourcing a variety of air-to-ground missiles that the newly delivered F-16 fighter jets can carry, including the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, which could give Ukraine a longer-range cruise missile option, said Bill LaPlante, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, who spoke to reporters traveling with Austin.

No decisions on the munition have been made, LaPlante said, noting that policymakers would still have to decide whether to give Ukraine the longer-range capability.

"I would just put JASSM in that category, it's something that is always being looked at," LaPlante said. "Anything that's an air-to-ground weapon is always being looked at."

For the past two years, members of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group have met to resource Ukraine's mammoth artillery and air defense needs, ranging from hundreds of millions of rounds of small arms ammunition to some of the West's most sophisticated air defense systems, and now fighter jets. The ask this month was more of the same — but different in that it was in person, and followed a similar in-person visit Thursday in Kyiv by Biden's Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer as Zelenskyy shores up U.S. support before the administration changes.

Since 2022, the member nations together have provided about \$106 billion in security assistance to Ukraine. The U.S. has provided more than \$56 billion of that total.

The German government said Chancellor Olaf Scholz plans to meet Zelenskyy in Frankfurt on Friday afternoon.

A fire in a school in Kenya kills 17 students and seriously burns 13 others

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A fire in a school dormitory in Kenya killed 17 students and seriously burned 13 others, police said Friday.

There are fears that the death toll may rise, police said.

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The cause of the fire Thursday night at Hillside Endarasha Primary in Nyeri county was being investigated, police spokesperson Resila Onyango said. The school caters to children up to the age of 14.

Nyeri County Commissioner Pius Murugu and the education ministry reported that the dormitory that caught fire housed more than 150 boys aged between 10 and 14. Since most of the buildings are built with wooden planks, the fire spread very fast.

The school, which has 824 students, is located in the country's central highlands, 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of the capital, Nairobi, where wooden structures are common.

The Nyeri County governor, Mutahi Kahiga, told journalists that rescue efforts were hampered by the muddy roads caused by ongoing rains in the area.

Anxious parents who had been unable to trace their children among survivors waited at the school, engulfed with grief.

President William Ruto called the news "devastating."

"I instruct relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate this horrific incident. Those responsible will be held to account," he wrote on the social media platform X.

His deputy, Rigathi Gachagua, urged school administrators to ensure that safety guidelines recommended by the education ministry for boarding schools are being followed.

School fires are common in Kenyan boarding schools, often due to arson fueled by drug abuse and overcrowding, according to a recent education ministry report. Many students stay at school because parents believe it gives them more time to study without long commutes.

Some fires have been started by students during protests over the workload or living conditions. In 2017, 10 high school students died in a school fire started by a student in Nairobi.

The deadliest school fire was in 2001 when 67 students died in a dormitory fire in Machakos county.

The education ministry's guidelines recommend that dormitories should be spacious enough and have two doors on each end, an emergency door in the middle and that windows are not fitted with grills to allow for escape in case of fire. Fully serviced fire extinguishers and fire alarms are required at easily accessible spots.

Harris raised \$361 million in August from nearly 3 million donors, campaign says

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris raised well more than double what former President Donald Trump took in from donors in August, her campaign announced Friday, saying it raised \$361 million from nearly 3 million donors in her first full month as a candidate.

Trump's team had announced Wednesday he brought in \$130 million over the same period. Harris' team says it ended the month with \$404 million on hand for the final sprint to Election Day, \$109 million more than Trump's campaign says it had at the end of August.

The massive Harris war chest is being used to fund a \$370 million paid media effort for the final two months of the campaign, and to pay for its more than 2,000 field staff spread through more than 310 offices in battleground states.

Harris' fundraising builds on the \$310 million she raised in July, the overwhelming majority of which came in after she took over President Joe Biden's campaign after he dropped out that month. The ticket swap has helped the Democratic party reverse the fundraising edge Trump had developed in the prior months, when voter doubts about Biden's fitness for another term dampened donor — and voter — enthusiasm.

"In just a short time, Vice President Harris' candidacy has galvanized a history-making, broad and diverse coalition — with the type of enthusiasm, energy and grit that wins close elections," Harris campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez said in a statement. "As we enter the final stretch of this election, we're making sure every hard-earned dollar goes to winning over the voters who will decide this election."

The figures released by both campaigns do not include full Federal Elections Commission filings, which

will come later this month. Both campaign totals include fundraising by their respective national parties and associated committees.

A Capitol rioter hawked Jan. 6 merchandise from jail. The judge who sentenced him was disturbed

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From jail, Shane Jenkins helped sell T-shirts, tote bags and other merchandise promoting the notion that he and other rioters who attacked the U.S. Capitol are political prisoners unjustly held in pretrial detention.

That disturbed the judge who sentenced the Texas man to seven years in prison for storming the Capitol, trying to smash a widow with a metal tomahawk and hurling makeshift weapons at police officers guarding the building on Jan. 6, 2021. U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta assured Jenkins that he wasn't getting punished for his political beliefs.

"And what bothers me about this notion of being (a) political prisoner is it continues to fuel the lie that somehow an election was stolen, that somehow people who are being charged because of their actions and not their beliefs are the victims. That is false," the judge told Jenkins.

Mehta is among several judges presiding over the nearly 1,500 riot cases in Washington who have pushed back on false narratives being spread about the Jan. 6 attack and the idea that the rioters are being treated unfairly by the criminal justice system.

"Twelve people looked at the same evidence that people who are here today just saw," Mehta told Jenkins at his sentencing. "And it's hard for me to believe anybody could come to any other conclusion. It's all on video."

A jury convicted Jenkins last year of charges including obstructing an official proceeding, the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress called to certify President Joe Biden's 2020 electoral victory over Trump.

Prosecutors argued that Jenkins played a pivotal role in the attack. He struck a windowpane six times with the spike end of the tomahawk before another rioter stepped in to break the window.

"Are we going in or not?" he shouted at the crowd.

Destroying the window allowed rioters to enter a conference room, where they made improvised weapons from the broken parts of wooden furniture. Mob members used the furniture pieces to attack police officers guarding an entrance in a tunnel on the Capitol's Lower West Terrace.

Jenkins told the judge he never would have been at the Capitol if he "had any inkling things were going to go the way they did" and regrets not doing more to "de-escalate the situation."

"Things definitely got out of hand," Jenkins said before the judge handed down his sentence. "I did get caught up in the heat of the moment, but I never had a malicious plan or intent. There was never any premeditated anything to January 6th for me."

A website promotes Jenkins as the founder of a group that seeks to "shed light on the January 6th defendants and the treatment they have faced from the government." The website hawked apparel with Jan. 6-themed slogans, including "Free the J6 political prisoners" and "Want my vote? Help the J6ers."

Defense attorney Kyle Singhal told The Associated Press that he believes that Jenkins' views on Jan. 6 have evolved, and his client wouldn't consider himself a political prisoner or a hostage today.

Juries aren't swayed by defenses in Capitol riot trials

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A retired New York police officer told a jury that he was acting in self-defense when he tackled a police officer and grabbed his gas mask during the Jan. 6 riot.

Jurors deliberated for less than three hours before convicting the 20-year NYPD veteran, Thomas Webster, of all six counts in his indictment.

Webster was the first Jan. 6 defendant to be tried on an assault charge and the first to present a jury

with a self-defense argument. His conviction proved to be a bellwether for the dozens of trials that followed. Finding a viable trial defense hasn't been easy for rioters who stormed the Capitol. Of the nearly 100 riot defendants who have elected to a trial by jury, none has been fully acquitted.

Many have said they were swept up in the moment. Some have tried to shift the blame for their actions to former President Donald Trump and his lies about a stolen election. Others have claimed they were trying to protect themselves from overzealous police officers.

In Webster's case, prosecutors repeatedly showed frame-by-frame footage of him assaulting a Metropolitan Police Department officer with a metal flagpole, tackling him to the ground and trying to rip off his gas mask.

Webster testified he was trying to protect himself from a "rogue cop" who punched him in the face. A juror who spoke to reporters after the May 2022 verdict said the videos refuted Webster's self-defense claims.

"I guess we were all surprised that he would even make that defense argument," the juror said. "There was no dissension among us at all. We unanimously agreed that there was no self-defense argument here at all."

Before U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sentenced him to 10 years in prison, Webster apologized to the officer. He said he wished he had never come to Washington, where he says he "became swept up in politics and former President Trump's rhetoric."

"I wish the events of that horrible day had never happened. People would still be alive, people would not have gotten hurt, and families would not have been thrown apart. Perhaps our country would not be as divided as it is today," Webster said.

11 strikes in 16 seconds: One Capitol rioter's violent attack on police with a hockey stick

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan said she hasn't grown numb to the violent scenes of Jan. 6 that are routinely shown in her courtroom.

"I'm horrified every single time," she said before sentencing a U.S. Marine Corps veteran in February to more than three years in prison.

That man, Michael Foy, traveled to Washington alone from his Michigan home on the morning of Jan. 6. He posed for a photo in front of the Washington monument with an American flag wrapped around his shoulders and a "TRUMP 2020" flag attached to a hockey stick in his hand.

He would later use that hockey stick to attack officers in one of the most violent scenes captured on camera as the mob battled for hours with police for control of a Capitol entrance.

He wildly swung the stick at officers at least 11 times in 16 seconds, while other rioters attacked police with a crutch, flagpoles, and other makeshift weapons during an explosion of violence at mouth of the Lower West Terrace Tunnel. Earlier, he picked up a sharpened metal pole and hurled it like a spear at police.

Foy served in the Marine Corps from 2015 until June 2020, working as a heavy equipment mechanic and attaining the rank of corporal before he was honorably discharged.

At his sentencing hearing, his lawyer called her client's conduct "a complete aberration," and cited mental health struggles such as post-traumatic stress disorder she said made him particularly susceptible to aggressive behavior at the Capitol.

After leaving the Marines, he hit "rock bottom," and meanwhile "around him, all he heard was about how America was dying and only Trump could save America; everything was going to hell," his lawyer said.

Before the judge handed down his sentence, Foy apologized to the officers he attacked and "to my country."

"After three years of reflection, I only want to make this right," he told the judge.

Chutkan ultimately handed down a punishment far lighter than the eight years prosecutors were seeking — which she called "unreasonable." She applauded the progress Foy had made since his release

from jail, telling him he seemed already on the "path to rehabilitation." But, she said there needed to be consequences — not because of his political beliefs but because of his actions.

"I do not care who you believe should have won the presidency," said Chutkan, who's also overseeing the 2020 election interference case against former President Donald Trump in Washington.

"I don't care whether you believe the election was stolen or not. What I care about is what you did, because a whole lot of people, millions and millions of people, felt the same way you did, and they didn't come to the Capitol and storm the Capitol, and they didn't assault law enforcement officers."

January 6 crimes did happen. Court cases, video and thousands of pages of evidence prove it

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and CAL WOODWARD undefined
WASHINGTON (AP) —

Inside Washington's federal courthouse, there's no denying the reality of Jan. 6, 2021. Day after day, judges and jurors silently absorb the chilling sights and sounds from television screens of rioters beating police, shattering windows and hunting for lawmakers as democracy lay under siege.

But as he seeks to reclaim the White House, Donald Trump continues to portray the defendants as patriots worthy of admiration, an assertion that has been undercut by the adjudicated truth in hundreds of criminal cases where judges and juries have reached the opposite conclusion about what history will remember as one of America's darkest days.

The cases have systematically put on record — through testimony, documents and video — the crimes committed, weapons wielded, and lives altered by physical and emotional damage. Trump is espousing a starkly different story, portraying the rioters as hostages and political prisoners whom he says he might pardon if he wins in November.

"This is not normal," U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth, who was nominated to the federal bench in Washington by Republican President Ronald Reagan, wrote in court papers. "This cannot become normal. We as a community, we as a society, we as a country cannot condone the normalization of the January 6 Capitol riot."

There are no broadcast television cameras inside the E. Barrett Prettyman federal courthouse on Constitution Avenue. But the real story of Jan. 6 is found in the reams of evidence and testimony judges and juries have seen and heard behind the doors of the courthouse where hundreds of Trump's supporters have been convicted in the attack.

The Associated Press has spent more than three years tracking the nearly 1,500 Capitol riot cases brought by the Justice Department. AP reporters have reviewed hours of video footage and thousands of pages of court documents. They have witnessed dozens of court hearings and trials for the rioters who descended on the Capitol and temporarily halted the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. These videos are a fractional representation of the evidence that prosecutors have presented to juries and judges deciding these cases.

It's unclear whether Trump will ever stand trial at the same courthouse in the federal case alleging he illegally schemed to overturn his 2020 election loss in the run-up to the violence. The Supreme Court's ruling that former presidents have broad immunity from prosecution means a trial won't happen before the election. If he wins, he could appoint an attorney general who could seek dismissal of the case, or potentially order a pardon for himself.

In Trump's telling, the mob on Jan. 6 assembled peacefully to preserve democracy, not upend it, and the rioters were agitated but not armed. They were not insurrectionists but rather 1776-style "patriots." And now they are being persecuted by the Justice Department, juries and judges for their political beliefs.

His relentless attempts to rewrite history have become foundational to the Republican's bid for another term, with campaign rallies honoring the rioters as heroes while an anthem plays in their name.

He was an invited guest for a "J6 Awards Gala" fundraiser at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, for those charged with crimes connected to the riot. His campaign later said he wouldn't attend the fundraiser,

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which was then postponed. Organizers did not respond to requests for comment.

When pressed during a recent event, Trump said he “absolutely” would pardon rioters who assaulted police — if they were “innocent.” When the interviewer noted she were talking about convicted rioters, Trump replied that they were convicted “by a very tough system.”

It’s part of an effort to undermine faith in the nation’s justice system that has escalated since Trump’s conviction on 34 felony charges in his New York hush money trial. Even more than that, it’s fuel for a campaign of vengeance Trump says will come if he wins.

“Those J6 warriors, they were warriors, but they were really more than anything else — they’re victims of what happened,” Trump said in a rally after conviction. Falsely claiming the rioters were “set up” by police, he appeared to threaten revenge: “That blows two ways, that blows two ways, believe me.”

In response to several questions from the AP about Trump’s support of the Jan. 6 defendants and pledge to pardon the rioters, Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said in an email: “Kamala Harris and Joe Biden’s Department of Justice has spent more time prosecuting President Trump and targeting Americans for peacefully protesting on January 6th than criminals, illegal immigrants, and terrorists who are committing violent crimes in Democrat-run cities every day.”

Many Republicans have lined up behind Trump to minimize the violence and push these lies: Police welcomed the mob into the building. Undercover FBI operatives and left-wing antifa activists instigated the attack. His running mate, JD Vance, has echoed Trump’s claims that Jan. 6 defendants are being treated unfairly, referring to them in a 2022 social media post as “political prisoners,” and describing their “captivity” as “an assault on democracy.”

The disinformation campaign has taken root in a vast swath of the country. About a year after the attack, only about 4 in 10 Republicans recalled it as very violent or extremely violent, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll. Three years after the riot, a Washington Post-University of Maryland poll found about 7 in 10 Republicans said too much is being made of it.

And now some of the same lawmakers who blamed Trump for the riot are supporting his bid to return to the White House. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell endorsed Trump’s campaign this year after condemning the former president as “morally responsible” for what McConnell called a “failed insurrection.”

Over 900 people have pleaded guilty to crimes, and approximately 200 others have been convicted at trial. More than 950 people have been sentenced, with roughly two-thirds getting time behind bars — terms ranging from a few days to 22 years.

To be sure, not all members of the mob engaged in violence. Hundreds of people who went into the Capitol but did not attack police or damage the building were charged only with misdemeanors. And the Justice Department has dropped a felony obstruction charge in some cases after the Supreme Court ruled in June that prosecutors applied it too broadly.

Investigators have documented a number of firearms in the crowd, along with knives, a pitchfork, a tomahawk axe, brass knuckle gloves and other weapons. One rioter was captured on camera firing a gun into the air outside the Capitol. Others used makeshift weapons to attack police, including flagpoles, a crutch and a hockey stick.

Judges and juries have heard police officers describe being savagely attacked while defending the building. All told, about 140 officers were injured that day, making it “likely the largest single day mass assault of law enforcement” in American history, Matthew Graves, the U.S. Attorney for D.C., has said.

Trump has said no one was killed on Jan. 6. In fact, a Trump supporter, Ashli Babbitt, was fatally shot by police while trying to climb through the broken window of a barricaded Capitol doorway. Authorities cleared the officer of any wrongdoing after an investigation. Three other people in the crowd died of medical emergencies. At least four officers who were at the Capitol later died by suicide. And Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick collapsed and died after engaging with the protesters. A medical examiner later determined he died of natural causes.

Juries have watched videos of rioters calling for violence against then-Vice President Mike Pence and select lawmakers. They’ve seen far-right extremists in the run-up to the riot talk of civil war and revolution. They’ve heard congressional aides recount running to safety as the mob roamed the halls in search

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of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others.

And judges have watched hundreds of rioters admit to breaking the law, many expressing remorse for falling for Trump's stolen election lies — falsehoods he continues to spread. Some rioters have defiantly parroted Trump's rhetoric in court, with at least two defendants shouting "Trump won!" after learning their sentences.

Lamberth said in his nearly four decades on the bench, he "cannot recall a time when such meritless justifications of criminal activity have gone mainstream."

"I have been shocked to watch some public figures try to rewrite history, claiming rioters behaved 'in an orderly fashion' like ordinary tourists, or martyrizing convicted January 6 defendants as 'political prisoners' or even, incredibly, 'hostages,'" the judge wrote in court papers.

"That is all preposterous. But the Court fears that such destructive, misguided rhetoric could presage further danger to our country."

Chiefs hold off Ravens 27-20 when review overturns TD on final play of NFL's season opener

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Patrick Mahomes thought for a moment that the Chiefs were headed to overtime. So did Ravens counterpart Lamar Jackson, who had found Isaiah Likely in the back of the end zone with no time left for a touchdown that appeared to tie the game.

In the end, the NFL's season opener Thursday night was decided by referee Shawn Hochuli undertaking a video review.

With a capacity crowd that included pop superstar Taylor Swift waiting in anticipation, Hochuli needed just seconds looking at that final play before making his announcement: Likely landed with his toe on the endline, putting the Baltimore tight end out of bounds, and giving the Chiefs a 27-20 victory as they began pursuit of a record third consecutive Super Bowl title.

"Definitely nerve-wracking because it looked good from my angle on the sideline," Mahomes said, "but then the first view you could see his cleat. ... You have to wear white cleats next time. That's my advice for him."

Mahomes threw for 291 yards and with a touchdown pass to Xavier Worthy, who also scored a rushing TD in his NFL debut, as the Chiefs not only won the rematch of last season's AFC title game but beat the Ravens for the fifth time in six meetings.

That lopsided ledger has been especially frustrating for Jackson, who has called Kansas City the Ravens' "kryptonite." He was sublime Thursday night, throwing for 273 yards and a touchdown and adding 122 yards on the ground, but that review of the final play left him to rue another missed opportunity to finally upstage Mahomes and Co.

"I thought it was a touchdown," Jackson said. "Still think it was a touchdown."

The Ravens were trailing 27-17 in the fourth quarter before kicking a field goal, then got the ball back at their own 13 with 1:50 left and no timeouts. Jackson completed a couple of throws to Likely, who had 111 yards receiving and a score, and scrambled for a crucial first down. Two plays later, Jackson found Rashod Bateman down the sideline for 38 yards to move the Ravens to the Kansas City 10 with 19 seconds remaining.

Jackson's first pass was a throwaway, but his second missed wide-open Zay Flowers in the back of the end zone. Then came the final throw, after Jackson had scrambled for what seemed like an eternity, and Likely looked like he had forced overtime.

Ravens coach John Harbaugh even signaled for his team to try a winning 2-point conversion, though it never got the chance.

"I thought our guys (overcame) setbacks at times, and fought like crazy to overcome. It looked like we had an opportunity there to tie the game up and try to win," Harbaugh said. "Didn't happen at the end, but our guys fought."

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The wild ending came after the start was delayed about 20 minutes by a storm that brought heavy rain and lightning.

The Ravens proceeded to open with an 11-play, 70-yard drive that ended with Derrick Henry, who had tormented the Chiefs in six previous meetings while he was with Tennessee, plunging into the end zone from 5 yards out for the early lead.

But the high-octane Chiefs, trying to avoid back-to-back season-opening losses, needed just two minutes to answer. Mahomes twice connected with Rashee Rice, who has so far avoided any NFL punishment for his role in an alleged street-racing crash in Dallas, before Worthy showed why the Chiefs made him their first-round pick with his 21-yard touchdown run.

After those two drives, though, the first half was mostly marked by Week 1 blunders.

Jackson was strip-sacked by Chris Jones deep in his own territory, leading to a Kansas City field goal. Flowers was stopped short of the first-down marker on fourth-and-3 near midfield on the Ravens' next series, leading to another field goal. And even Justin Tucker, one of the league's most accurate kickers, pulled a 53-yard field-goal attempt wide left.

The Chiefs were not immune to mistakes. Mahomes' pass was picked off by Roquan Smith on a poor throw late in the first half, leading to a chip-shot field goal that got Baltimore — which trailed twice at halftime all of last season — to 13-10 at the break.

Yet the Ravens' inability to get into the end zone, and swing the momentum their way, ultimately proved costly.

The Chiefs opened the second half with an 81-yard touchdown march to extend their lead. Then, after Jackson had connected with Likely on a broken play for a 49-yard touchdown throw, Mahomes drove them 70 yards against the No. 1 scoring defense in the NFL last season for a touchdown that made it 27-17 with 10 minutes to go.

Tucker made it a one-score game with his field goal with 4:54 to go, and Baltimore quickly forced a punt. But despite Jackson's impassioned play, he was left to trudge off the field after another disappointing loss to the Chiefs.

"It was a fight down to the end," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "When they say it's a game of inches, might be shorter than that."

Star-studded crowd

Swift, the girlfriend of Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, wasn't the only star attending the NFL's opening night. Quincy Hall, the Olympic 400-meter champion, was in the crowd along with AC Milan midfielder Christian Pulisic, who will join his U.S. teammates Saturday night for an exhibition against Canada at nearby Children's Mercy Park.

Injuries

Baltimore: LB Kyle Van Noy left six plays into the second half because of an eye injury and did not return.

Up next

Ravens: Host Las Vegas on Sunday, Sept. 15.

Chiefs: Host Cincinnati on Sunday, Sept. 15.

A look at the winding legal saga of Hunter Biden that ended in an unexpected guilty plea

By CLAUDIA LAUER, AMY TAXIN, ALEX VEIGA and DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The legal saga surrounding Hunter Biden took an unexpected turn when he pleaded guilty to nine federal tax counts after prosecutors refused to budge in their opposition to a special plea that would have allowed him to maintain his innocence.

The twist that played out as jury selection was scheduled to start in the tax trial Thursday almost brings to a close a yearslong investigation of President Joe Biden's son. The case has been punctuated by Republicans' allegations of preferential treatment and accusations by his defense attorneys that prosecutors

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overcorrected and bowed to political pressure when two indictments were issued as a previous plea deal fell apart.

Hunter Biden will now await sentencing in both his June jury conviction on charges that he lied about his drug use on a federal form to purchase a gun, which he possessed for 11 days, and the tax case he pleaded guilty to Thursday.

Here's a look at the winding legal road that led to the surprise plea.

The plea deal that collapsed

Hunter Biden had initially agreed to plead guilty to a negotiated misdemeanor tax charge as part of a deal with the Justice Department. That deal would have seen the gun charges dismissed in a diversion agreement as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years and likely would have come with a recommendation for no prison time.

The agreement collapsed last year after a federal judge in Delaware questioned several unusual aspects, including how it was packaged.

Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed Delaware U.S. Attorney David Weiss as special counsel a month later, in August 2023, giving the prosecutor broad authority to investigate and report out his findings. Hunter Biden was subsequently indicted in two separate cases: the gun charges in Delaware and the tax charges in California.

Conviction on gun charges

Hunter Biden's attorneys made several failed motions asking for the gun charges to be dropped — ranging from questioning their constitutionality to challenging the appointment of the special counsel — over the months between the indictment and trial in early June.

After not even six full days of testimony in June, a Delaware jury took less than three hours to convict Hunter Biden on the gun charges.

Prosecutors presented sometimes relentless personal details about his drug use, purchases and relationships — showing photos and texts from his ex-girlfriends and pressing his oldest daughter about her ability to tell if he was sober — all while family members including first lady Jill Biden watched from the gallery, some of them choking back tears.

After the conviction, prosecutors turned their focus to the California tax charges alleging that Hunter Biden had engaged in a four-year scheme to avoid paying more than \$1.4 million in taxes for the years 2016 through 2019 while living a lavish lifestyle of top-tier hotels, payments to escorts and purchasing exotic cars.

Although the political stakes of the second trial largely evaporated when President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid in July, weeks of arguments between prosecutors and defense attorneys over what evidence could be presented to jurors indicated California could be a repeat of the painful airing of personal details. It was unclear if Hunter Biden's daughters would have been called as witnesses in the case, but both were listed in a glossary provided to court staff by prosecutors.

The latest plea

About a half-hour before the questioning of potential jurors was set to begin Thursday, Hunter Biden's attorneys announced to a judge that they would like to enter into what's known as an Alford plea. The maneuver, named after a U.S. Supreme Court case, allows a defendant to acknowledge that prosecutors have enough evidence to convince a jury of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt but also allows them to maintain their claim of innocence.

Prosecutors immediately balked at the idea. Lead prosecutor Leo Wise told U.S. District Judge Mark Scarsi that the government opposed an Alford plea saying, "Hunter Biden is not innocent. Hunter Biden is guilty."

Prosecutors do not have to agree to an Alford plea, but Scarsi was prepared to give the government until the end of the day to file its objections before ruling on whether he would accept the plea, likely after reconvening Friday.

Instead, Hunter Biden changed his plea to guilty on all nine of the tax charges. There was no offer on the table from prosecutors to reduce those charges or to recommend a lesser sentence, and prosecutors

read the charging documents aloud for more than an hour before he was asked to enter the plea.

Hunter Biden issued a written statement about his decision to plead guilty, saying: "I will not subject my family to more pain, more invasions of privacy and needless embarrassment. For all I have put them through over the years, I can spare them this."

Hunter Biden will now face sentencing in both cases. He faces up to 25 years at his Nov. 13 sentencing hearing in Delaware, though as a first-time offender he would likely receive a lesser sentence. He faces up to 17 years and a fine of up to \$1.3 million on the tax charges at a scheduled Dec. 16 sentencing.

A spokesperson for Joe Biden reiterated when asked Thursday that the president had no plans to pardon his son or commute his eventual sentence. ____

Lauer reported from Philadelphia.

How to talk with kids about school shootings and other traumatic events

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

The U.S. is dealing with another school shooting: Two students and two teachers were killed Wednesday at a school in Georgia. At least nine other people — eight students and one teacher — were taken to hospitals with injuries.

The effects of a shooting on a community are felt long after the day's tragedy. But a shooting like the most recent one in Winder, Georgia, can have physical, emotional and behavioral effects on all kids.

Many health experts, including psychologists and grief counselors, are reminding people there are resources to support students' mental and emotional health as they grieve and process.

Here's how they say families should address traumatic experiences with their kids.

Don't avoid talking about school shootings

It takes time to process emotions, regardless of age, so adults should start by taking care of themselves. That said, experts encourage parents to have conversations with their children and not avoid the topic, if kids indicate a willingness to talk about it.

"If they are not hearing about it from you as their parent, they will hear about it from their friends at school," says Emilie Ney, director of professional development at the National Association of School Psychologists.

It's OK for caregivers to say they don't have all the answers and not force the conversation, according to guidance from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Being available and patient is key.

This isn't just a job for parents and guardians. All adults should remember to be available for the kids in their life. After all, not all children have trusted adults they can speak with, said Crystal Garrant, chief program officer at Sandy Hook Promise, a nonprofit group that works to prevent suicides and mass shootings.

For instance, she said, adults who work in before-school or after-school programs should ask the kids in their care open-ended questions, do community-building activities or provide kids with other opportunities to share openly. They may not have the opportunity to do so otherwise.

How young is too young to discuss shootings?

It depends on the child, but development levels will vary in the way children are able to understand a situation, Ney said.

"There is no specific age target for these conversations," said Garrant, who has a 9-year-old daughter. "But make sure that younger children understand the word that you're using. When we say safety, what does it mean to feel safe? How does it feel in your body? What does it sound like when you're not safe?"

Some children may have emotional and behavioral responses to traumatic events, such as anxiety, nightmares or difficulty concentrating.

Younger children need simple information and reassurances their schools and homes are safe, guidance from the National Association of School Psychologists notes. Older children have a deeper capacity for understanding and could benefit from hearing about what agency they might have to keep themselves safe.

Validate big feelings about school shootings

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Recognizing, acknowledging and validating children's emotions are key, said Beverly Warnock, executive director of the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children based in Cincinnati.

"You need to get those feelings out and be honest," she said. "Don't try to squash the feelings or not talk about it. It's something that will be with you for the rest of your life."

The process of navigating emotions after a shooting can be confusing and frustrating for people, Ney said. "The stages of grief are not necessarily sequential. People may go in and out of the various different phases, and it may be that it doesn't really hit someone until a week later," Ney said.

Psychologists hope to reassure people their feelings are normal and they don't have to pretend they are unaffected.

"Even if you didn't know anyone involved, even if they were very far away from you, it is okay to grieve," Ney said. "It shows that you care about others."

After acknowledging the emotional response, Warnock said, there is comfort in knowing life goes on.

"You will find a coping skill, and you will be able to enjoy life again," she said. "You may not feel that way now, but it does happen. It's just going to take some time."

If you need more help

If you or someone you know are experiencing distress because of a mass shooting, you can call the 24/7 National Disaster Distress Helpline. The number is 1-800-985-5990, and Spanish speakers can press "2" for bilingual support. To connect directly to a crisis counselor in American Sign Language, call 1-800-985-5990 from your videophone.

US Open: Jessica Pegula reaches her first Grand Slam final at age 30 and will play Aryna Sabalenka

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jessica Pegula could do no right at the outset of her first Grand Slam semifinal. Her opponent at the U.S. Open on Thursday night, Karolina Muchova, could do no wrong.

"I came out flat, but she was playing unbelievable. She made me look like a beginner," Pegula said. "I was about to burst into tears, because it was embarrassing. She was destroying me."

Pegula managed to shrug off that sluggish start and come back from a set and a break down to defeat Muchova 1-6, 6-4, 6-2 for a berth in the final at Flushing Meadows. The No. 6-seeded Pegula, a 30-year-old from New York, has won 15 of her past 16 matches and will meet No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka for the title on Saturday.

Sabalenka, last year's runner-up to Coco Gauff at the U.S. Open, returned to the championship match by holding off No. 13 Emma Navarro of the United States 6-3, 7-6 (2).

This final will be a rematch of the one last month at the hard-court Cincinnati Open, which Sabalenka won — the only blemish on Pegula's post-Olympics record.

"Hopefully," Pegula said, "I can get some revenge out here."

Pegula's parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and NHL's Buffalo Sabres; her father was in the Arthur Ashe Stadium stands Thursday, as were her sister, brother and husband.

Things did not look promising for Pegula early on the cool evening. Not at all.

Muchova, the 2023 French Open runner-up but unseeded after missing about 10 months because of wrist surgery, employed every ounce of her versatility and creativity, the traits that make her so hard to deal with on any surface. The slices. The touch at the net. The serve-and-volleying. Ten of the match's first 12 winners came off her racket. The first set lasted 28 minutes, and Muchova won 30 of its 44 points.

After grabbing eight of the first nine games, Muchova was a single point from leading 3-0 in the second set. But she couldn't convert a break chance there, flubbing a forehand volley off a slice from Pegula, and everything changed.

Quickly, the 52nd-ranked Muchova went from not being able to miss a shot to not being able to make one. And Pegula turned it on, heeding her two coaches' advice to mix up her serves and her spins and to go after Muchova's backhand.

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"She was everywhere," Muchova said. "She started to play way better."

Most of all, Pegula demonstrated the confident brand of tennis she used to eliminate No. 1 Iga Swiatek, a five-time major champion, in straight sets on Wednesday. Pegula had been 0-6 in major quarterfinals before that breakthrough.

Took Pegula a while to play that well Thursday, but once she got going, whoa, did she ever. All told, she collected nine of 11 games, a span that allowed her to not merely flip the second set but race to a 3-0 edge in the third.

"I was able to find a way, find some adrenaline, find my legs. And then at the end of the second set, into the third set, I started to play like how I wanted to play. It took a while," Pegula said. "I don't know how I turned that around."

Muchova, a 28-year-old from the Czech Republic, hadn't ceded a set in the tournament until then. But she began to fade. After going 7 for 7 on points at the net in the first set, she went 15 for 29 the rest of the way. After only seven unforced errors in the first set, she had 33 across the second and third.

And all the while, a crowd that was flat at the beginning — save for the occasional cry of "Come on, Jess!" — was roaring.

When things suddenly got quite tight in the second set of the first semifinal, and spectators suddenly got quite loud while pulling for Navarro, Sabalenka found herself flashing back to 2023, when it felt like everyone was backing Gauff.

"Last year, it was a very tough experience. Very tough lesson. Today in the match, I was, like, 'No, no, no, Aryna. It's not going to happen again. You have to control your emotions. You have to focus on yourself,'" said Sabalenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus who was the champion at the last two Australian Opens.

Using her usual brand of high-risk, high-reward tennis, Sabalenka produced 34 winners and 34 unforced errors — punctuating most of her groundstrokes with a yell — and, in a fitting bit of symmetry, Navarro had 13 winners and 13 unforced errors.

Navarro did not fold in the second set, despite trailing for much of it, and she broke when Sabalenka attempted to serve out the victory at 5-4.

"I wasn't ready for the match to be over," Navarro said.

But in the tiebreaker that followed, Sabalenka took over after Navarro led 2-0, grabbing every point that remained.

"I kind of got my teeth into it there at the end of the second set," said Navarro, who got past Gauff in the fourth round, "and I felt I could definitely push it to a third. Wasn't able to do so."

When it ended, thousands of ticket-holders saluted Sabalenka for her latest show of mastery on a hard court; she's now into her fourth straight final at a major held on that surface.

"Well, guys, now you are cheering for me," Sabalenka with a laugh. "Well, it's a bit too late."

Abortion rights questions are on ballots in 9 states. Will they tilt elections?

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Ballot measures on abortion access could attract voters to polls in November who otherwise might sit out the election — and even a small number of additional voters could make a difference in close races for offices from the state legislature to president.

Scholars and ballot measure experts are divided on the impact ballot measures have previously had on candidate elections. But in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling, which ended the nationwide right to abortion, these measures are seen as ones that could sway results if any can.

"2024 is a test in this post-Dobbs world of how this issue being on the ballot will impact candidates," said Chris Melody Fields Figueredo, executive director of The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, which helps progressive groups with the details of pursuing and campaigning for ballot measures. "It is really dependent on whether candidates are willing to run on those issues."

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Voters in nine states are considering measures to add the right to abortion to their state constitutions in the highest profile of many ballot measures.

One, Nebraska, also has a competing measure that would enshrine the current law, which outlaws most abortions after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Additionally, New York has an equal rights measure that would bar discrimination based on pregnancy outcomes, though it doesn't mention abortion by name.

If any ballot measures have major effects on candidate elections, it's expected to be those regarding abortion. But they're not alone on the ballot. There are more than 140 questions being posed in 41 states, including about marijuana legalization, immigration, election procedures, sports betting and minimum wage.

Since 2022, the position pushed by abortion rights advocates has prevailed in all seven statewide abortion-related ballot measures, including in conservative Kansas and Kentucky.

Dave Campbell, a political science professor at Notre Dame, said there could be some parallels this year to the 2004 election. That November, 11 states adopted bans on same-sex marriage and President George W. Bush, who opposed same-sex marriage, was reelected in a tight race. Republicans gained seats in both houses of Congress.

Scholars differ over whether the ballot measures — later supplanted by a Supreme Court decision to allow same-sex unions nationwide — were a major factor for Bush.

Studies found that overall voter turnout didn't seem to get a bigger boost in states where the measures were on the ballot. But Campbell and a co-author found that more white protestant evangelicals did vote in those states and that those additional voters heavily favored Bush — including in Ohio, where his narrow win was key to retaining his office.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who last week launched a nationwide bus tour to promote reproductive freedom, could get a similar boost in her run against former President Donald Trump, Campbell said.

Trump nominated the Supreme Court members who were crucial to overturning Roe and called it "a beautiful thing to watch" as states set their own restrictions. He also has said he would not support a national ban. His running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, said Trump would veto such legislation if it landed on his desk.

Last week, Trump repeated that the Florida law banning abortion after the first six weeks of pregnancy is too restrictive, but said he would vote against a ballot measure that would make abortion legal until fetal viability.

Significant numbers of Republican voters have supported abortion rights, but most of the party's candidates are now abortion opponents.

"It's pretty hard to cast a ballot in favor of an abortion rights initiative and turn around and vote for a Republican candidate," Campbell said.

Kelly Hall, executive director of The Fairness Project, a nonpartisan group that supports progressive ballot measures, said ballot measures often get more votes than any candidates for office.

But she said there wasn't much evidence until the abortion measures over the last two years that ballot questions would attract large numbers of voters who would otherwise not vote at all.

"For those candidates who hope that the election is more about abortion than other issues, sharing a ballot with one of these reproductive rights measures is a huge benefit," she said.

If ballot measures drive voter enthusiasm and alter outcomes of candidate races, it's most likely to happen in races that are tight anyway.

In a Montana race that could be crucial to determining whether Democrats keep control of the U.S. Senate, incumbent Jon Tester, a Democrat who supports abortion rights, is in a tight race against Republican Tim Sheehy, who has criticized the ballot measure.

Tester's campaign recently has released three new ads promoting abortion rights.

In New York, a judge last month declined to require the word "abortion" to appear in the ballot measure. Democrats were pushing for it to be included in a state where congressional races could be close.

There are also measures on the ballot in Nevada and Arizona, presidential battleground states where control of the state government is split between the parties.

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Arizona State Sen. Eva Burch, a Democrat from Mesa, said abortion was a key to her victory in the competitive district two years ago and could be again this year.

Burch announced in a legislative floor speech earlier this year that she was getting an abortion because her pregnancy was no longer viable. Her speech came just before the Arizona Supreme Court ruled that a Civil War-era abortion ban could apply. The Legislature repealed the law before enforcement could begin.

"One of the reasons that it continues to be an important part of the conversation is because there's so much ambiguity around abortion care in Arizona right now and people just aren't really sure where we stand," Burch said.

The campaign of her Republican opponent, Robert Scantlebury, declined to speak to The Associated Press about the ballot measure.

Arizona is also home to one the most competitive congressional districts in the nation, an area along the U.S-Mexico border where first-term Republican Rep. Juan Ciscomani faces a rematch with Democrat Kirsten Engel.

In a debate last week, Ciscomani, who immigrated from Mexico as a child, said immigration is the top issue. It too is the subject of a statewide ballot initiative.

He didn't respond to the AP's request for an interview.

Engel helped gather signatures to get the abortion question on the ballot. "So many voters practically grabbed those clipboards out of our hands to sign the initiative," she said.

While polling shows support for legal abortion access, the issue is also mobilizing some anti-abortion voters.

Danise Rees, a 23-year-old senior at Arizona State University and vice president of the school's chapter of Students of Life, said she switched from Republican to independent after the Dobbs ruling because she was upset that some Republicans have moderated their stances. Still, she said she intends to vote for Trump this fall because he is more sympathetic to the anti-abortion movement.

"If the Democrats tomorrow decided that they were going to be pro-life completely and more so than the Republican candidates," she said, "then I would vote Democrat."

American company, Russian propaganda: New Kremlin tactic reveals escalating effort to sway US vote

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia has long sought to inject disinformation into U.S. political discourse. Now, it's got a new angle: paying Americans to do the work.

This week's indictment of two Russian state media employees on charges that they paid a Tennessee company to create pro-Russian content has renewed concerns about foreign meddling in the November election while revealing the Kremlin's latest tactic in a growing information war.

If the allegations prove correct, they represent a significant escalation, analysts say, and likely capture only a small piece of a larger Russian effort to sway the election.

"We have seen the smoke for years. Now, here's the fire," said Jim Ludes, a former national defense analyst who now leads the Pell Center for International Relations at Salve Regina University. "I don't wonder if they're doing more of this. I have no doubt."

According to prosecutors, the two employees of RT, a Russian outlet formerly known as Russia Today, funneled \$10 million to the U.S. media company, which then paid several popular right-wing influencers for their content — in one case \$400,000 a month. Two of those influencers said they had no idea their work was being supported by Russia.

Intelligence officials and private analysts say Russia's disinformation campaigns are designed to cut off American assistance to Ukraine, clearing the way for a rapid Russian victory after more than two years of bitter conflict.

In the presidential race, Russia supports Donald Trump as the candidate perceived as the least supportive of Ukraine, intelligence officials say. Trump has openly praised Russian President Vladimir Putin, suggested

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cutting funds to Ukraine and repeatedly criticized the NATO military alliance. On Thursday, Putin wryly claimed he was pulling for Vice President Kamala Harris to win.

A secondary goal of Russian disinformation, officials have said, is to increase political polarization and distrust as a way of eroding American confidence in democracy.

This summer, intelligence officials warned that Russia was using unwitting Americans to spread its propaganda by adapting it to fit existing social debates within the U.S. Instead of creating new conflicts, Russia has found success by identifying and exaggerating existing divides, tailoring disinformation accordingly. When successful, Russia can get Americans to spread its talking points for free, without them even knowing their source.

When an Ohio train derailment caused massive environmental damage last year, Russian voices tried to steer the debate with anti-government posts that were quickly reposted by American users. Some U.S. websites picked up the Russian propaganda and reposted it without attribution.

Earlier this year, Russian state media and networks of fake accounts began to amplify claims about immigration on platforms used by Americans.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Russian state media claimed without evidence that the virus was the product of U.S. bioweapons experiments and that the U.S. maintained biological laboratories in Ukraine. English-language posts soon started showing up on American social media sites.

Four years later, the conspiracy theory still reverberates on far-right message boards.

"What if Covid was created in a Ukraine biolab, and the War has been to keep that a secret?" a poster wrote last week on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The company hired by RT was identified as Tenet Media by two of the right-wing content creators it paid — Tim Pool and Benny Johnson. Both men said on social media Wednesday that they had no knowledge of Tenet's relationship with RT and that if the allegations are true, they are victims.

Pool posted that no one told him what to say in his podcast and condemned Russia: "Putin is a scumbag."

Pool has a long history, however, of espousing pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian views as well as conspiracy theories about Democrats and American democracy.

On one podcast, he said "criminal elements" within the U.S. government were directing the war against Russia and said Ukraine was the real enemy.

"Ukraine is our enemy, being funded by the Democrats," Pool said. "Ukraine is the greatest threat to this nation and to the world. We should rescind all funding and financing, pull out all military support, and we should apologize to Russia."

Trump said on Truth Social that the case amounted to "election interference" by federal prosecutors, who he said were "resurrecting the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, and trying to say that Russia is trying to help me, which is absolutely false," with the last word in capital letters.

Trump's comments referred to concerns about Russian meddling in the 2016 election, when groups linked to the Kremlin used social media networks and paid ads on Facebook and other platforms to support Trump. Russia also sought to help Trump in the 2020 election.

China and Iran have mounted their own campaigns to use social media to shape American views. Iran covertly supported protests over the war in Gaza and was recently accused of trying to hack into the campaign systems of Trump and Harris, his Democratic opponent.

Russia, however, remains the chief threat, intelligence officials maintain.

During a briefing last month with reporters, an official with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence said Russia was increasingly trying to cover its tracks by "outsourcing its efforts to commercial firms to hide its hand, and laundering narratives through influential U.S. voices." The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Russian officials have repeatedly bragged about their abilities to shape American views despite U.S. government efforts. RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan, who has been sanctioned over her ties to the Russian government, detailed how Moscow tries to hide its fingerprints from American intelligence.

"We create many sources of information that are not tied to us," Simonyan said recently on a Russian

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talk show. "While the CIA tries to figure out that they're tied to us, they already have an enormous audience. This is how we chase each other. It's actually fun."

From stirring to cringey: Memorable moments from past presidential debates

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It could be a well-rehearsed zinger, a too-loud sigh — or a full performance befuddled enough to shockingly end a sitting president's reelection bid.

Notable moments from past presidential debates demonstrate how the candidates' words and body language can make them look especially relatable or hopelessly out-of-touch — showcasing if a candidate is at the top of their policy game or out to sea. Will past be prologue when Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump debate in Philadelphia on Tuesday?

"Being live television events, without a script, without any way of knowing how they are going to evolve — anything can happen," said Alan Schroeder, author of "Presidential Debates: 50 years of High-Risk TV." Here's a look at some highs, lows and curveballs from presidential debates past.

Biden blows it

Though it's still fresh in the nation's mind, the June debate in Atlanta pitting President Joe Biden against Trump may go down as the most impactful political faceoff in history.

Biden, 81, shuffled onto the stage, frequently cleared his throat, said \$15 when he meant that his administration helped cut the price of insulin to \$35 per month on his first answer and inexplicably gave Trump an early chance to pounce on the chaotic 2021 withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. It got even worse for the president 12 minutes in, when Biden appeared lose his train of thought entirely.

"The, uh — excuse me, with the COVID, um, dealing with, everything we had to do with, uh ... if ... Look ..." Biden stammered before concluding "we finally beat Medicare." He meant that his administration had successfully taken on "big pharma," some of the nation's top prescription drug companies.

Biden at first blamed having a cold, then suggested he'd overprepared. Later, he pointed to jetlag after pre-debate travel overseas.

In the frantic hours immediately after the debate, a Biden campaign spokesperson said, "Of course, he's not dropping out." That was correct until 28 days later, when the president did just that, bowing out and endorsing Harris on July 21.

The age question

Biden was asked in Atlanta about his age and got into an argument with Trump over golf. It was the opposite of knowing a sensitive question was coming and still making the answer sound spontaneous — a feat President Ronald Reagan pulled off while landing a line for the ages during 1984's second presidential debate.

Reagan was 73 and facing 56-year-old Democratic challenger Walter Mondale. In the first debate, Reagan struggled to remember facts and occasionally looked confused. An adviser suggested afterward that aides "filled his head with so many facts and figures that he lost his spontaneity."

So Reagan's team took a more hands-off approach toward the second debate. When Reagan got a question about his mental and physical stamina that he had to know was coming, he was ready enough to make the response feel unplanned.

Asked whether his age might hinder his handling of major challenges, Reagan responded, "Not at all," before smoothly continuing: "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." The audience, and even Mondale, cracked up.

Then, capitalizing on years of Hollywood-honed comedic training, the president took a sip of water, giving the crowd more time to laugh. Finally, he grinned and left little doubt that he'd rehearsed, adding, "It was Seneca, or it was Cicero, I don't know which, that said, 'If it was not for the elders correcting the mistakes of the young, there would be no state.'"

Years later, Mondale conceded, "That was really the end of my campaign that night."

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Reagan is further remembered for using a light touch to neutralize criticisms from Democratic President Jimmy Carter in a 1980 debate. When Carter accused him of wanting to cut Medicare, Reagan scolded, "There you go again."

The line worked so well that he turned it into something of a trademark rejoinder going forward.

Gaffes galore

In 1976, Republican President Gerald Ford had a notable moment in a debate against Carter — and not in a good way. The president declared that there is "no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and there never will be under a Ford administration."

With Moscow controlling much of that part of the world, the surprised moderator asked if he'd understood correctly. Ford stood by his answer, then spent days on the campaign trail trying to explain it away. He lost that November.

Another awkward moment came in 2012, when Republican nominee Mitt Romney got a debate question about gender pay equality and recalled soliciting women's groups' help to find qualified female applicants for state posts: "They brought us whole binders full of women."

Aaron Kall, director of the University of Michigan's debate program, said key lines affect not just who a debate's perceived winner is but also fundraising and media coverage for days, or even weeks, afterward. "The closer the election, the more zingers and important debate lines can matter," Kall said.

Not all slips have a devastating impact, though.

Then-Sen. Barack Obama, in a 2008 Democratic presidential primary debate, dismissively told Hillary Clinton, "You're likable enough, Hillary." That drew backlash, but Obama recovered.

The same couldn't be said for the short-lived 2012 Republican primary White House bid of then-Texas Gov. Rick Perry. Despite repeated attempts and excruciatingly long pauses, Perry could not remember the third of the three federal agencies he'd promised to shutter if elected.

Finally, he sheepishly muttered, "Oops."

The Energy Department, which he later ran during the Trump administration, is what slipped his mind.

Getting personal

Another damaging moment opened a 1988 presidential debate, when Democrat Michael Dukakis was pressed about his opposition to capital punishment in a question that evoked his wife.

"If Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?" CNN anchor Bernard Shaw asked. Dukakis showed little emotion, responding, "I don't see any evidence that it's a deterrent."

Dukakis later said he wished he'd said that his wife "is the most precious thing, she and my family, that I have in this world."

That year's vice presidential debate featured one of the best-remembered, pre-planned one-liners.

When Republican Dan Quayle compared himself to John F. Kennedy while debating Lloyd Bentsen, the Democrat was ready. He'd studied Quayle's campaigning and seen him invoke Kennedy in the past.

"Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy," Bentsen began slowly and deliberately, drawing out the moment. "Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."

The audience erupted in applause and laughter. Quayle was left to stare straight ahead.

Wordless blunders

Quayle and George H.W. Bush still easily won the 1988 election. But they lost in 1992 after then-President Bush was caught on camera looking at his watch while Democrat Bill Clinton talked to an audience member during a town hall debate. Some thought it made Bush look bored and aloof.

In another instance of a nonverbal debate miscue, then-Democratic Vice President Al Gore was criticized for a subpar opening 2000 debate performance with Republican George W. Bush in which he repeatedly and very audibly sighed.

During their second, town hall-style debate, Gore moved so close to Bush while the Republican answered one question that Bush finally looked over and offered a confident nod, drawing laughter from the audience.

A similar moment occurred in 2016, as Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton faced the audience to answer

questions during a debate with Trump. Trump moved in close behind her, narrowed his eyes and glowered. Clinton later wrote of the incident: "He was literally breathing down my neck. My skin crawled." That didn't stop Trump from claiming the presidency a few weeks later.

Father of Georgia school shooting suspect arrested on charges including second-degree murder

By JEFF AMY and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

WINDER, Ga. (AP) — The father of a 14-year-old boy accused of fatally shooting four people at a Georgia high school was arrested Thursday and faces charges including second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter for letting his son possess a weapon, authorities said.

It's the latest example of prosecutors holding parents responsible for their children's actions in school shootings. In April, Michigan parents Jennifer and James Crumbley were the first convicted in a U.S. mass school shooting. They were sentenced to at least 10 years in prison for not securing a firearm at home and acting indifferently to signs of their son's deteriorating mental health before he killed four students in 2021.

Colin Gray, 54, the father of Colt Gray, was charged with four counts of involuntary manslaughter, two counts of second-degree murder and eight counts of cruelty to children, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Hosey said at a news conference.

"His charges are directly connected with the actions of his son and allowing him to possess a weapon," Hosey said.

In Georgia, second-degree murder means that a person has caused the death of another person while committing second-degree cruelty to children, regardless of intent. It is punishable by 10 to 30 years in prison, while malice murder and felony murder carry a minimum sentence of life. Involuntary manslaughter means that someone unintentionally caused the death of another person.

Father and son have been charged in the deaths of students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53, according to Hosey. Colt Gray has a first court appearance scheduled Friday, but no proceedings were yet scheduled for his father. Neither Gray appeared in online court records for Barrow County.

Authorities have charged 14-year-old Colt Gray as an adult with four counts of murder in the shootings Wednesday at Apalachee High School outside Atlanta, Hosey said. Arrest warrants obtained by the AP accuse him of using a semiautomatic assault-style rifle in the attack, which killed two students and two teachers. Nine other people were hurt, seven of them shot.

The teen denied threatening to carry out a school shooting when authorities interviewed him last year about a menacing post on social media, according to a sheriff's report obtained Thursday.

Conflicting evidence on the post's origin left investigators unable to arrest anyone, the report said. Jackson County Sheriff Janis Mangum said she reviewed the report from May 2023 and found nothing that would have justified bringing charges at the time.

"We did not drop the ball at all on this," Mangum told The Associated Press in an interview. "We did all we could do with what we had at the time."

When a sheriff's investigator from neighboring Jackson County interviewed Gray last year, his father said the boy had struggled with his parents' separation and often got picked on at school. The teen frequently fired guns and hunted with his father, who photographed him with a deer's blood on his cheeks.

"He knows the seriousness of weapons and what they can do, and how to use them and not use them," Colin Gray said, according to a transcript obtained from the sheriff's office.

The teen was interviewed after the sheriff received a tip from the FBI that Colt Gray, then 13, "had possibly threatened to shoot up a middle school tomorrow." The threat was made on Discord, a social media platform popular with video gamers, according to the sheriff's office incident report.

The FBI's tip pointed to a Discord account associated with an email address linked to Colt Gray, the report said. But the boy said "he would never say such a thing, even in a joking manner," according to the investigator's report.

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The investigator wrote that no arrests were made because of "inconsistent information" on the Discord account, which had profile information in Russian and a digital evidence trail indicating it had been accessed in different Georgia cities as well as Buffalo, New York. The teen said he stopped using the account a few months earlier after it was hacked.

The attack was the latest among dozens of school shootings across the U.S. in recent years, including especially deadly ones in Newtown, Connecticut; Parkland, Florida; and Uvalde, Texas. The classroom killings have set off fervent debates about gun control and frayed the nerves of parents whose children are growing up accustomed to active-shooter drills. But there has been little change to national gun laws.

Classes were canceled Thursday at the Georgia high school, though some people came to leave flowers around the flagpole and kneel in the grass with heads bowed.

The nine people — eight students and one teacher — who were taken to the hospital after the shooting were all expected to survive, Barrow County Sheriff Jud Smith said.

Isaiah Hooks, an Apalachee High School football player, said he was in a nearby classroom when the shooting started.

"It was rough, just hearing my peers and hearing the sounds, just knowing that people ended up getting hurt," he said.

He recalled Aspinwall, who was his coach on the team, as a tremendous motivator.

"It was really hard to lose someone that pushed himself to really, like, make us better and make sure that we're better at what we do," Hooks said. "He pushed us to be great at what we did."

Authorities have not offered any motive or explained how the suspect obtained the gun and got it into the school of roughly 1,900 students in a rapidly developing area on the edge of metro Atlanta's ever-expanding sprawl.

It was the 30th mass killing in the U.S. so far this year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University. At least 127 people have died in those killings, which are defined as events in which four or more people die within a 24-hour period, not including the killer — the same definition used by the FBI.

Prior cases have emerged in which someone who was once on the FBI's radar but was not arrested went on to commit violence.

A month before Nikolas Cruz killed 17 people at the Parkland, Florida, high school in 2018, the bureau received a warning that he had been talking about committing a mass shooting. The FBI also investigated a tip about the person later convicted in a deadly 2022 shooting at a gay nightclub in Colorado.

The pattern underscores the challenges law enforcement faces in trying to determine when concerning behavior crosses into a crime. Investigators sift through tens of thousands of tips every year to try to determine which could yield a viable threat. Cases such as the Georgia school shooting prompt fresh questions about whether more intensive investigative work might have averted the violence.

The sheriff's report says investigator Daniel Miller spoke to the boy and his father May 21, 2023. The father said his son had access to guns in the house.

"I mean they aren't loaded, but they are down," Gray's father said, according to the interview transcript.

He described a photo on his cellphone from a recent hunting trip with his son: "You see him with blood on his cheeks from shooting his first deer." Gray's father called it "the greatest day ever."

Feeling the heat as Earth breaks yet another record for hottest summer

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Summer 2024 sweltered to Earth's hottest on record, making it even more likely that this year will end up as the warmest humanity has measured, European climate service Copernicus reported Friday.

And if this sounds familiar, that's because the records the globe shattered were set just last year as human-caused climate change, with a temporary boost from an El Nino, keeps dialing up temperatures and extreme weather, scientists said.

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The northern meteorological summer — June, July and August — averaged 16.8 degrees Celsius (62.24 degrees Fahrenheit), according to Copernicus. That's 0.03 degrees Celsius (0.05 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the old record in 2023. Copernicus records go back to 1940, but American, British and Japanese records, which start in the mid-19th century, show the last decade has been the hottest since regular measurements were taken and likely in about 120,000 years, according to some scientists.

The Augusts of both 2024 and 2023 tied for the hottest Augusts globally at 16.82 degrees Celsius (62.27 degrees Fahrenheit). July was the first time in more than a year that the world did not set a record, a tad behind 2023, but because June 2024 was so much hotter than June 2023, this summer as a whole was the hottest, Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said.

"What those sober numbers indicate is how the climate crisis is tightening its grip on us," said Stefan Rahmstorf, a climate scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research, who wasn't part of the research.

It's a sweaty grip because with the high temperatures, the dew point — one of several ways to measure the air's humidity — probably was at or near record high this summer for much of the world, Buontempo said.

Until last month Buontempo, like some other climate scientists, was on the fence over whether 2024 would smash the hottest year record set last year, mostly because August 2023 was so enormously hotter than average. But then this August 2024 matched 2023, making Buontempo "pretty certain" that this year will end up hottest on record.

"In order for 2024 not to become the warmest on record, we need to see very significant landscape cooling for the remaining few months, which doesn't look likely at this stage," Buontempo said.

With a forecasted La Nina — a temporary natural cooling of parts of the central Pacific — the last four months of the year may no longer be record-setters like most of the past year and a half. But it's not likely cool enough to keep 2024 from breaking the annual record, Buontempo said.

These aren't just numbers in a record book, but weather that hurts people, climate scientists said.

"This all translates to more misery around the world as places like Phoenix start to feel like a barbecue locked on high for longer and longer stretches of the year," said University of Michigan environment dean and climate scientist Jonathan Overpeck. The Arizona city has had more than 100 days of 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) weather this year. "With longer and more severe heat waves come more severe droughts in some places, and more intense rains and flooding in others. Climate change is becoming too obvious, and too costly, to ignore."

Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Cape Cod, said there's been a deluge of extreme weather of heat, floods, wildfires and high winds that are violent and dangerous.

"Like people living in a war zone with the constant thumping of bombs and clatter of guns, we are becoming deaf to what should be alarm bells and air-raid sirens," Francis said in an email.

While a portion of last year's record heat was driven by an El Nino — a temporary natural warming of parts of the central Pacific that alters weather worldwide — that effect is gone, and it shows the main driver is long-term human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, Buontempo said.

"It's really not surprising that we see this, this heat wave, that we see these temperature extremes," Buontempo said. "We are bound to see more."

Hunter Biden enters surprise guilty plea to avoid tax trial months after his gun conviction

By AMY TAXIN, DEEPA BHARATH, ALEX VEIGA, CLAUDIA LAUER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, pleaded guilty Thursday to federal tax charges, a surprise move meant to spare his family another painful and embarrassing criminal trial after his gun case conviction just months ago.

Hunter Biden's decision to plead guilty to misdemeanor and felony charges without the benefits of a deal

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with prosecutors caps a long-running saga over his legal woes that have cast a shadow over his father's political career. It came hours after jury selection was supposed to begin in the case accusing him of failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes.

The president's son was already facing potential prison time after his June conviction on felony gun charges in a trial that aired unflattering and salacious details about his struggles with a crack cocaine addiction. The tax trial was expected to showcase more potentially lurid evidence as well as details about Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings, which Republicans have seized on to try to paint the Biden family as corrupt.

"I will not subject my family to more pain, more invasions of privacy and needless embarrassment," Hunter Biden said in an emailed statement after he entered his plea. "For all I have put them through over the years, I can spare them this, and so I have decided to plead guilty."

Although President Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the 2024 presidential election muted the potential political implications of the tax case, the trial was expected to carry a heavy emotional toll for the president in the final months of his five-decade political career.

"Hunter put his family first today, and it was a brave and loving thing for him to do," defense attorney Abbe Lowell told reporters outside the federal courthouse in Los Angeles.

Hunter Biden, 54, quickly responded "guilty" as the judge read out each of the nine counts. He showed no emotion as he walked out the courthouse holding his wife's hand. He ignored questions shouted at him by reporters before climbing into an SUV and driving off.

The charges carry up to 17 years behind bars, but federal sentencing guidelines are likely to call for a much shorter sentence. He faces up to \$1.35 million in fines. Sentencing is set for Dec. 16 in front of U.S. District Judge Mark Scarsi, who was nominated to the bench by former President Donald Trump.

He faces sentencing in the Delaware case on Nov. 13 — the week after the general election. Those charges are punishable by up to 25 years in prison, though he is likely to get far less time or avoid prison entirely.

More than 100 potential jurors had been brought to the courthouse Thursday to begin the process of picking the panel to hear the case alleging a four-year scheme to avoid paying taxes while spending wildly on things like strippers, luxury hotels and exotic cars.

Prosecutors were caught off guard when Hunter Biden's lawyer told the judge Thursday morning that Hunter wanted to enter what's known as an Alford plea, under which a defendant maintains their innocence but acknowledges prosecutors have enough evidence to secure a conviction.

Special counsel David Weiss' team objected to such a plea, telling the judge that Hunter Biden "is not entitled to plead guilty on special terms that apply only to him."

"Hunter Biden is not innocent. Hunter Biden is guilty," prosecutor Leo Wise said.

After a break in the hearing, Hunter Biden's lawyers said he had decided to plead guilty to all nine charges.

Last year, it had looked like he was going to be spared prison time under a deal with prosecutors that would have allowed him to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses. Prosecutors would have recommended two years of probation and he would have escaped prosecution on a felony gun charge as long he stayed out of trouble for two years.

But the agreement imploded after a judge questioned unusual aspects of it, and Hunter Biden was subsequently indicted in the two cases. The defense has accused special counsel Weiss of caving to political pressure to indict the president's son after Trump and other Republicans blasted what they described as a "sweetheart deal."

The indictment brought last year grew out of an investigation into Hunter Biden's taxes that began in 2018 under the Trump administration. Hunter Biden confirmed the existence of the investigation in December 2020 — the month after his father won the election — saying he learned about it for the first time the previous day.

Prosecutors alleged that Hunter Biden lived lavishly while flouting the tax law, spending his cash on things like strippers and luxury hotels — "in short, everything but his taxes."

The charges in both the gun and tax cases stemmed from a period in Hunter Biden's life in which he

struggled with drug and alcohol abuse before becoming sober in 2019. His lawyers had been expected to argue that his substance abuse struggles affected his decision-making and judgment, so he could not have acted "willfully," or with intention to break the tax law.

"As I have stated, addiction is not an excuse, but it is an explanation for some of my failures at issue in this case," Hunter Biden said in a statement. "When I was addicted, I wasn't thinking about my taxes, I was thinking about surviving. But the jury would never have heard that or know that I had paid every penny of my back taxes including penalties."

His decision to plead guilty came after the judge issued some unfavorable pre-trial rulings for the defense, including rejecting a proposed defense expert lined up to testify about addiction. Scarsi had also placed some restrictions on what jurors would be allowed to hear about the traumatic events that Hunter Biden's family, friends and attorneys say led to his drug addiction.

Hunter Biden's attorneys had asked Scarsi to also limit prosecutors from highlighting details of his expenses that they say amount to a "character assassination," including payments made to strippers or pornographic websites.

Prosecutors had also planned to introduce evidence about Hunter Biden's overseas business dealings, including his work for a Romanian businessman who prosecutors said in court papers sought to "influence U.S. government policy" while Joe Biden was vice president.

Former 2016 Trump campaign adviser is charged over his work for sanctioned Russian TV

By ERIC TUCKER and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has charged a Russian-born U.S. citizen and former adviser to Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign with working for a sanctioned Russian state television network and laundering the proceeds.

Indictments announced Thursday allege that Dimitri Simes and his wife received over \$1 million dollars and a personal car and driver in exchange for work they did for Russia's Channel One since June 2022. The network was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2022 over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Simes, 76, and his wife, Anastasia Simes, have a home in Huntly, Virginia, and are believed to be in Russia. "These defendants allegedly violated sanctions that were put in place in response to Russia's illegal aggression in Ukraine," U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves said in a statement announcing the charges. "Such violations harm our national security interests — a fact that Dimitri Simes, with the deep experience he gained in national affairs after fleeing the Soviet Union and becoming a U.S. citizen, should have uniquely appreciated."

The indictments come at a time of renewed concern about Russian efforts to meddle with the upcoming U.S. election using online disinformation and propaganda. On Wednesday federal authorities announced charges against two employees of the Russian media organization RT accused of covertly funding a Tennessee company that produced pro-Russian content.

Simes and the Washington think tank he led, the Center for the National Interest, figured prominently in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and potential ties to the Trump campaign.

The report chronicles interactions that the Soviet-born Simes, who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1970s, had with assorted figures in Trump's orbit, including Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Before one such meeting, according to the Mueller report, Simes sent Kushner a letter detailing potential talking points for Trump about Russia and also passed along derogatory information about Bill Clinton that was then forwarded to other representatives of the campaign.

Simes's think tank, which was founded by former President Richard Nixon, helped arrange a foreign policy speech at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington at which Simes introduced Trump, according to the report. Among those present was Sergei Kislyak, then the Russian ambassador to the U.S.

Simes was never charged with any crime in relation to the investigation.

After the report was released, Simes defended himself in an interview in The Washington Post: "I did not see anything in the Mueller report that in any way that would indicate any questionable activity on my part or on the center's part."

A second indictment alleges that Anastasia Simes, 55, received funds from sanctioned Russian businessman Alexander Udodov. Udodov was sanctioned last year for his support for the Russian government. He is the former brother-in-law of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and has been linked to business dealings with both of them. Udodov also has been investigated for money laundering.

It was not immediately clear if either defendant had a lawyer who could speak on their behalf. An attorney who previously represented Simes said he was no longer representing him. The Trump campaign did not immediately return a message seeking comment Thursday.

In an interview with The New York Times before the charges were announced, Simes, who appears regularly on Channel One, defended the work he was doing.

"I assumed that what I was saying on Russian TV would not be to the liking of the Biden administration, but I also assumed that as long as it was just my opinion and was presented as such, it was not something for which I could be prosecuted," he told the newspaper.

Pope heads to Papua New Guinea after final Mass in Indonesia before an overflow crowd of 100,000

By NICOLE WINFIELD and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Pope Francis wrapped up his visit to Indonesia on Friday after celebrating Mass before an overflow crowd of 100,000, a final celebration before heading to Papua New Guinea for the second leg of his 11-day journey through Southeast Asia and Oceania.

The 87-year-old pope had no official events Friday beyond a farewell ceremony and the six-hour flight to Port Moresby, giving him something of a break after a packed three-day program in Jakarta.

The visit culminated with a jubilant Mass on Thursday afternoon before a crowd that filled two sports stadiums and an overflowed into a parking lot.

"Don't tire of dreaming and of building a civilization of peace," Francis urged them in an ad-libbed homily. "Be builders of hope. Be builders of peace."

The Vatican had originally expected the Mass would draw some 60,000 people, and organizers predicted 80,000. But the Vatican spokesman quoted local organizers as saying more than 100,000 had attended.

"I feel very lucky compared to other people who can't come here or even had the intention to come here," said Vienna Frances Florensus Basol, who came with her husband and a group of 40 people from Sabah, Malaysia but couldn't get into the stadium.

"Even though we are outside with other Indonesians, seeing the screen, I think I am lucky enough," she said from a parking lot, where a giant TV screen was erected for anyone who didn't have tickets for the service.

While in Indonesia, Francis sought to encourage the country's 8.9 million Catholics, who make up just 3% of the population of 275 million, while also seeking to boost interfaith ties with the country boasting the world's largest Muslim population.

In the highlight of the visit, Francis and the grand imam of Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque, Southeast Asia's largest, signed a joint declaration pledging to work to end religiously inspired violence and protect the environment.

In Papua New Guinea, Francis' agenda is aligned with more of his social justice priorities. The poor, strategically important South Pacific nation is home to more than 10 million people, most of whom are subsistence farmers.

Francis will be travelling to remote Vanimo to check in on some Catholic missionaries from his native Argentina who are trying to spread the Catholic faith to a largely tribal people who also practice pagan and Indigenous traditions.

The country, the South Pacific's most populous after Australia, has more than 800 Indigenous languages and has been riven by tribal conflicts over land for centuries, with conflicts becoming more and more lethal in recent decades.

History's first Latin American pope will likely refer to the need to find harmony among tribal groups while visiting, the Vatican said. Another possible theme is the country's fragile ecosystem, its rich natural resources at risk of exploitation and the threat posed by climate change.

The Papua New Guinean government has blamed extraordinary rainfall for a massive landslide in May that buried a village in Enga province. The government said more than 2,000 people were killed, while the United Nations estimated the death toll at 670.

Francis becomes only the second pope to visit Papua New Guinea, after St. John Paul II touched down in 1984 during one of his lengthy, globetrotting voyages. Then, John Paul paid tribute to the Catholic missionaries who had already been trying for a century to bring the faith to the country.

Papua New Guinea, a Commonwealth nation that was a colony of nearby Australia until independence in 1975, is the second leg of Francis' four-nation trip. In the longest and farthest voyage of his papacy, Francis will also visit East Timor and Singapore before returning to the Vatican on Sept. 13.

Trump suggests tariffs can help solve rising child care costs in a major economic speech

By JILL COLVIN, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump suggested to business leaders Thursday that his plans to increase tariffs on foreign imports would solve seemingly unrelated challenges such as the rising cost of child care in the U.S.

The GOP presidential nominee promised to lead what he called a "national economic renaissance" by increasing tariffs, slashing regulations to boost energy production and drastically cutting government spending as well as corporate taxes for companies that produce in the U.S.

Trump was asked at his appearance before the Economic Club of New York about his plans to drive down child care costs to help more women join the workforce.

"Child care is child care, it's something you have to have in this country. You have to have it," he said. Then, he said his plans to tax imports from foreign nations at higher levels would "take care" of such problems.

"We're going to be taking in trillions of dollars, and as much as child care is talked about as being expensive, it's — relatively speaking — not very expensive, compared to the kind of numbers we'll be taking in," he said.

Trump has embraced tariffs as he appeals to working-class voters who oppose free-trade deals and the outsourcing of factories and jobs. But in his speech Thursday and his economic plans as a whole, Trump has made a broader — to some, implausible — promise on tariffs: that they can raise trillions of dollars to fund his agenda without those costs being passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices.

His campaign attacks Democratic nominee Kamala Harris' proposals to increase corporate tax rates by saying they would ultimately be borne by workers in the form of fewer jobs and lower incomes. Yet taxes on foreign imports would have a similar effect with businesses and consumers having to absorb those costs in the form of higher prices.

The United States had \$3.8 trillion worth of imports last year, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Trump in the past has talked about universal tariffs of at least 10%, if not higher, though he has not spelled out details about how these taxes would be implemented.

Kimberly Clausing, an economist at the University of California, Los Angeles, has repeatedly warned in economic analyses about the likely damage to people's finances from Trump's tariffs. She noted that Trump wants tariffs to pay for everything, even though they can't.

"I believe Trump has already spent this revenue, to pay for his tax cuts (which it doesn't), or to perhaps end the income tax (which it cannot)," she said in an email. "It is unclear how there would be any revenues left over to fund child care."

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Trump was asked to talk about child care

Child care is unaffordable for many Americans and financially precarious for many day care operators and their employees. Democrats in Congress have long argued the child care industry is in crisis and requires a drastic increase in federal aid — and some Republicans have joined them. Trump pointed to his tariff ideas as well as efforts he announced to reduce what he described as “waste and fraud.”

“I want to stay with child care, but those numbers are small relative to the kind of economic numbers that I’m talking about, including growth, but growth also headed up by what the plan is that I just told you about,” he said.

Trump’s running mate JD Vance was also asked about proposals to lower day care costs earlier this week, and he suggested making it easier for families to keep the kids at home with a grandparent or another relative.

“Make it so that, maybe like grandma or grandpa wants to help out a little bit more,” he said. “If that happens, you relieve some of the pressure on all the resources that we are spending on day care.”

Vance also suggested training more people to work in day cares, and said some states required what he called “ridiculous certification that has nothing to do with taking care of kids.”

Trump laid out a series of economic proposals

In his speech, Trump said he would immediately issue “a national emergency declaration” to achieve a massive increase in the domestic energy supply and eliminate 10 current regulations for every new regulation the government adopts. He said Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk has agreed to head a commission to perform a financial audit of the federal government that would save trillions of dollars.

“My plan will rapidly defeat inflation, quickly bring down prices and reignite explosive economic growth,” Trump claimed.

Trump has previously floated the idea of chopping the corporate tax rate to 15%, but on Thursday clarified that would be solely for companies that produce in the U.S. The corporate rate had been 35% when he became president in 2017, and he later signed a bill lowering it.

Harris calls for raising the corporate tax rate to 28% from 21%. Her policy proposals this week have been geared toward promoting more entrepreneurship, a bet that making it easier to start new companies will increase middle-class prosperity.

On Thursday, Trump attacked Harris’ proposals on banning price gouging and accused her of embracing Marxism and communism.

“She wants four more years to enforce the radical left agenda that poses a fundamental threat to the prosperity of every American family and America itself,” he said.

He also vowed to end what he called Harris’ “anti-energy crusade,” promising that energy prices would be cut in half, although energy prices are often driven by international fluctuations. He said an emergency declaration would help with rapid approvals for new drilling projects, pipelines, refineries, power plants and reactors, where local opposition is generally fierce.

And he also said he would ask Congress to pass legislation to ban the spending of taxpayer money on people who have entered the country illegally. He specifically said he would bar them from obtaining mortgages in California, targeting a bill passed in that state last week. Throughout his campaign, Trump has railed against the economic impact of the influx of migrants that have entered the country in recent years and their strain on some government services.

The Harris campaign issued a memo accusing Trump of wanting to hurt the middle class, arguing his ideas would expand the national debt and shrink economic growth and job creation.

“He wants our economy to serve billionaires and big corporations,” the campaign said in a statement.

Their dueling economic proposals are likely to be central to the upcoming presidential debate on Tuesday. Harris arrived Thursday in downtown Pittsburgh to devote the next several days to preparing for the debate. She intentionally picked a key part of the battleground state of Pennsylvania to hone her ideas ahead of their showdown.

Trump plans to rely heavily on tariffs

In June, the right-leaning Tax Foundation estimated that Trump’s proposed tariffs would amount to a

\$524 billion yearly tax hike that would shrink the economy and cost the equivalent of 684,000 jobs. After Trump floated tariffs as high as 20% in August, the Harris campaign seized on an analysis suggesting that figure would raise a typical family's expenses by almost \$4,000 annually.

The money raised by tariffs would not be enough to offset the cost of his various income tax cuts, including a plan to whittle the corporate rate to 15% from 21%. The Penn Wharton Budget Model put the price tag on that at \$5.8 trillion over 10 years.

Economists have warned about Trump's plans to impose tariffs that he says would return manufacturing jobs to the U.S. Some have said such taxes on imports could worsen inflation, though he is vowing to cut down costs. Inflation peaked in 2022 at 9.1% but has since eased to 2.9% as of last month.

"Some might say it's economic nationalism. I call it common sense. I call it America First," he said on Thursday.

Rich Homie Quan, the Atlanta rapper known for trap jams like 'Type of Way,' dies at 33

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. and ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Rich Homie Quan, the Atlanta rapper who gained mainstream fame through the trap singles "Type of Way" and "Flex (Ooh, Ooh, Ooh)," has died. He was 33.

Quan, whose legal name is Dequantess Devontay Lamar, died at an Atlanta hospital, the Fulton County Medical Examiner confirmed to The Associated Press. The medical examiner was informed of his death Thursday, said Jimmy Sadler, senior medical examiner investigator. The cause of death was not immediately available, with an autopsy scheduled for Friday.

Quan was one of the biggest names in hip-hop in the mid-2010s. He released a slew of mixtapes before he broke through in 2013 with the infectious "Type of Way." The song became such a success that several other rappers jumped on the remix, including Jeezy and Meek Mill. He maintained his momentum, appearing on a YG track with Jeezy and releasing the London on da Track-produced song "Lifestyle" through his Rich Gang rap collective that included Young Thug and Birdman.

Quan followed up with "Flex (Ooh, Ooh, Ooh)," a song produced by DJ Spinz and Nitti Beatz. It became his highest charting solo single at No. 26 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. He also featured on Lil Dicky's viral "\$ave Dat Money."

In 2018, Quan debuted his first and only studio album "Rich as in Spirit," which mostly went without any features — except for "Think About It," a single with Rick Ross.

Quavo, Lil Boosie and Playboi Carti are some of the music artists who paid tribute to Quan on social media. "Rest in Peace my brother Rich Homie Quan," said singer Jacquees, who also called him a "legend" on X. "I love you for Life."

Quan spoke with The Associated Press in 2022 about returning to music after an abrupt hiatus. At the time, the rapper said he was going through litigation with independent label T.I.G. (Think It's a Game Record), but was prepared to make a comeback.

During that time, Quan ended up in a feud with his old collaborator Young Thug — who along with rapper Gunna — were among a group indicted on charges of conspiracy to violate Georgia's RICO Act and also accused of participation in a criminal street gang.

Quan said there was no beef between him Young Thug and was open to having a conversation with him if the opportunity presented itself. He said he hated to see Young Thug locked up, adding that rappers were being targeted by law enforcement.

"I wouldn't say unfairly targeted because at the same time, some of these rappers are putting guns in videos and, you know, it's like social media — it goes back to the social media thing," he said.

"I think we showing too much, I think they're showing too much, you know what I mean. Like that's the difference in my music, I'ma tell a story but I ain't going to tell you how I did it," he added. "It's still Black art, but we're definitely being targeted. So that's why I'm mindful of what I say in my music."

Prosecutors in Trump election case get judge's OK to lay out fresh evidence in court filing

By ERIC TUCKER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal election interference case against Donald Trump inched forward Thursday, with a judge permitting prosecutors to file court documents later this month that could detail unflattering allegations about the former president as the Republican nominee enters the final weeks of his White House run.

The order came hours after a court hearing, the first in the case in nearly a year, in which U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan sparred with a Trump lawyer who accused the government of trying to rush ahead with an "illegitimate" indictment in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election. Chutkan made clear she would not let the upcoming election affect how she proceeds, turning aside defense efforts to delay the process while also acknowledging that the case is nowhere close to a trial date.

"There's no rush to judgment here," Chutkan said.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers are at odds over the next steps in the case after the Supreme Court narrowed the scope of the prosecution by ruling that former presidents are entitled to broad immunity from criminal charges. The dueling proposals and testy courtroom exchanges Thursday reflected the extent to which the justices' July opinion had upended the path of the case that charges Trump with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 election before the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021.

By day's end, she permitted prosecutors to file by Sept. 26 a legal brief that could include fresh details about Trump's failed efforts to cling to power four years ago. The brief is meant to defend a revised, and stripped-down, Trump indictment that special counsel Jack Smith's team filed last week to comply with the Supreme Court's immunity opinion. The filing is expected to include detailed allegations from the investigation, said Thomas Windom, a member of Smith's team.

Trump lawyer John Lauro objected to the filing of the brief before the defense team has had a chance to seek the indictment's dismissal — and during the "sensitive time" before the election.

"This process is inherently unfair, particularly during this sensitive time that we're in," Lauro said.

That comment drew a rebuke from Chutkan, who said that the timing of the election was "not relevant" to how the case should proceed.

"This court is not concerned with the electoral schedule," the judge said. At another point, she suggested that the defense was trying to delay the case because of the forthcoming election, cautioning, "That's not going to be a factor I consider at all."

Another tense encounter occurred when Lauro told Chutkan that the case concerned momentous issues. "We are talking about the presidency of the United States," he said. Chutkan shot back: "I'm not talking about the presidency of the United States. I'm talking about a four-count indictment."

The new indictment filed by Smith's team last week removed allegations related to Trump's attempts to use the Justice Department's law enforcement powers to undo the election results, conduct for which the Supreme Court said he enjoyed immunity. But the Trump team believes the new indictment did not go far enough to comply with the 6-3 ruling, in part because it left intact allegations that Trump badgered his vice president, Mike Pence, to refuse to certify the counting of the electoral votes, Lauro said.

"We may be dealing with an illegitimate indictment from the get-go," Lauro said.

He told Chutkan that the Supreme Court's opinion required the outright dismissal of the case, a position the judge made clear she did not accept. She bristled again when he suggested that prosecutors were guilty of a "rush to judgment."

"This case has been pending for over a year," Chutkan said, referencing the fact that the matter has been frozen since last December while Trump pursued his immunity appeal. "We're hardly sprinting to the finish here."

She added: "We all know — we all know — that whatever my ruling on immunity is, it's going to be appealed. And the taking of that appeal will again stay this case. So, no one here is under any illusion that we're sprinting towards any particular trial date."

The Supreme Court held that former presidents are immune from prosecution for the exercise of their core constitutional functions and are presumptively immune for all other official duties. It now falls to Chutkan to determine which of the acts in the four-count indictment are official or not and which can remain part of the case in light of the opinion.

Neither side envisions a trial happening before Election Day, especially given the amount of work ahead. Pushing back on the defense's claims that the special counsel wants to move too quickly, Windom noted that Trump's lawyers filed a lengthy brief seeking to overturn his New York hush money conviction and dismiss the case less than two weeks after the Supreme Court's ruling in July.

"The defense can move comprehensively, quickly and well. So can we," Thomas Windom said.

The hearing ended without the judge issuing an order about future dates in the case.

Trump was not in the courtroom and gave an economic speech in New York, though a not guilty plea was entered on his behalf for the revised indictment. Smith attended the hearing.

Defense lawyers said they intend to file multiple motions to dismiss the case, including one that piggybacks off a Florida judge's ruling that said Smith's appointment was unconstitutional.

The case is one of two federal prosecutions against Trump. The other, charging him with illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, was dismissed in July by U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, who said Smith's appointment as special counsel was unlawful.

Smith's team has appealed that ruling. Trump's lawyers say they intend to ask Chutkan to dismiss the election case on the same grounds, though Chutkan noted in court Thursday that she did not find Cannon's opinion "particularly persuasive."

Shooter's sanity at issue as trial begins in Colorado supermarket mass killing

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — A man who gunned down 10 people in a supermarket mass shooting was not insane when he unleashed terror in a Colorado college town but a calculated killer who knew what he did was wrong, a prosecutor told jurors Thursday in an opening statement swiftly disputed by the defense attorney.

Years of legal wrangling over the mental state of Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa during the March 2021 shooting will likely continue through his three-week trial.

Alissa's attorney argued that his client, who has been diagnosed with treatment-resistant schizophrenia, suffered from hallucinations — hearing screaming voices, seeing people who weren't there and believing he was being followed — in the runup to the shooting at the King Soopers grocery store in Boulder.

Alissa has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. No one, including Alissa's lawyers, disputes he was the shooter.

"We're not running from that. But if you're going to point the finger at this guy, you deserve to hear the truth about him. This man, Ahmad Alissa, is an ill individual," said his attorney, Samuel Dunn, in his opening statement.

A prosecutor argued Alissa was able to determine right from wrong and therefore sane.

"The victims were random, but the murders were absolutely deliberate and intentional," Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty told jurors.

Dressed in a striped white dress shirt, Alissa sat beside his attorneys in court, sometimes swiveling in his chair and turning to look up at a video screen where lawyers presented evidence and bullet points of their arguments.

Relatives of the victims filled rows on the opposite side of court, dabbing their eyes at times and comforting one another.

Alissa is charged with 10 counts of murder, 15 counts of attempted murder and other offenses for the shooting in Boulder, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) northwest of Denver.

Alissa's motive, if he had one, has remained unclear and Dougherty did not posit one. He argued Alissa

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acted with intent and full knowledge of his wrongdoing.

Most of those shot inside and outside the store were killed in just over a minute. Alissa targeted people trying to flee and made a special effort to finish off those he wounded with additional shots, Dougherty pointed out.

"The shooter prepared to kill them, planned to kill them, and went and executed 10 people at King Soopers. That's why you're here," Dougherty told the jury after showing photos of each victim and describing why each was at the store that day.

No one who was shot survived. After shooting eight people, Alissa prowled the store — which had fallen quiet except for background music still playing over the store speakers — then spotted and killed Suzanne Fountain, 59, as she left a hiding spot in another aisle.

His final victim was Boulder Police officer Eric Talley, a father of seven and one of the first three officers who entered the store.

Alissa surrendered to other police who arrived, voluntarily stripping down to his underwear and complying with their instructions as they approached and handcuffed him.

"There's no hallucinating, there's no delusion, there's no confusion," Dougherty said of Alissa's behavior.

Alissa's attorney described a range of hallucinations, delusions and social withdrawal that relatives said Alissa experienced before the shooting and that psychiatrists later verified.

The schizophrenia was so severe it took years for him to engage with therapists and only after he was given a drug, clozapine, which Dunn pointed out is used only when other treatments don't work.

Before the shooting, Alissa had gone without treatment as a member of a Syrian immigrant family whose father believed possession by an evil spirit, or djinn, was to blame, Dunn said.

"I want you to imagine that between your ears, where you have no shelter or reprieve, you can't identify the source of it: You just hear yelling and screaming," Dunn said. "That's what was being broadcast in Ahmad Alissa's mind."

Once, Alissa's father awoke at 3 a.m. and his son, who was also awake, asked if he had seen a man in the bathroom. The father looked and nobody was there, Dunn said.

"The law says you can have intent and be insane. But what the law doesn't allow is you to ignore plain, clear evidence someone's mental illness that is severe and chronic and say that person is sane, that person is capable of telling right from wrong," Dunn said.

He told jurors to use "common sense, apply the law," and find Alissa insane.

If successful, Alissa's plea of not guilty by reason of insanity could enable him to avoid prison and instead be committed indefinitely to the state mental hospital.

Prosecution witnesses who testified Thursday included Alison Sheets, an emergency room doctor who heard the gunfire while shopping and hid sideways on a shelf of potato chips. There, she heard more shots and somebody in the next aisle taking their last breath — a sound she recognized from work.

"It was a sigh, almost," she said. Prosecutors said it was Fountain's dying breath.

A mental health evaluator testified during a competency hearing in 2022 that Alissa said he bought firearms to carry out a mass shooting and suggested he wanted police to kill him.

Relatives have 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, according to court documents.

Netanyahu gives a starkly different take on Biden administration's hopes for a Gaza deal

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were sharply at odds Thursday over prospects of reaching a deal for a Gaza cease-fire and hostage release, with Netanyahu saying it was "exactly inaccurate" that a breakthrough was close.

"There's not a deal in the making," Netanyahu said in an interview with "Fox and Friends." His public skepticism comes as U.S. officials said they were working on a revised proposal to address remaining

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disputes between Israeli and Hamas leaders after the weekend discovery of six dead hostages added urgency to the talks.

National security spokesman John Kirby reiterated Thursday that only disagreements on “implementing details” of a cease-fire proposal need to be hammered out.

“I’ve heard what the prime minister said. I’m not going to get into a back and forth with him in a public setting,” Kirby told reporters. “We still believe, though this is incredibly difficult ... if there’s compromise, if there’s leadership, we can still get there.”

President Joe Biden’s team, a lame-duck administration two months before the election, has projected optimism this summer as it works with fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar to try to get Israel and Hamas to agree to a truce in the 11-month war in Gaza. The deal would release more of the hostages taken by Hamas during its Oct. 7 attack on Israel, including Americans, in exchange for Palestinian prisoners — one of the big sticking points.

U.S. officials said in the days before Israeli forces recovered the bodies of six recently slain hostages, including Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin, that Israeli and Hamas leaders could sign off on a deal as soon as the end of this week.

“I’m optimistic. It’s far from over. Just a couple more issues. I think we’ve got a shot,” Biden told reporters last Friday.

Even before that, Netanyahu was digging in his heels, adding conditions that make sealing any agreement before the U.S. elections difficult. His far-right government publicly prioritized for the first time in July — months into the talks — a demand for Israeli forces to keep their presence in a buffer zone along Gaza’s border with Egypt. Netanyahu says it’s needed to prevent Hamas from smuggling arms into the Palestinian territory.

“To ask Israel to make concessions after this murder is to send a message to Hamas: Murder more hostages, you’ll get more concessions,” Netanyahu said Thursday. “That’s the wrong thing to do, and I think the Israel public overwhelming is united against that.”

Hostage families have accused Netanyahu of blocking a deal and potentially sacrificing their loved ones to hold the border strip, called the Philadelphi corridor. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets, calling for a deal and saying time is running out to bring home the hostages alive.

Netanyahu has brushed off criticism that his management of the war and cease-fire negotiations has been politically motivated and said he believes only heavy pressure on Hamas will force it into concessions.

The Biden administration has stressed that its ally Israel has supported the negotiations and Hamas has been blocking a deal. This week, however, Biden said “no” when asked if Netanyahu was doing enough in the talks.

“We see time and again that Israel agrees to certain terms,” said Shira Efron, a policy adviser at the U.S.-based Israel Policy Forum, which analyzes Israeli-Palestinian relations. “It doesn’t say no, it agrees to certain terms — but then says, ‘Yes, but under those conditions.’”

“These public statements that come out after what seems to be an agreement ... basically derail the agreement,” Efron said.

Randa Slim, a senior fellow at the U.S.-based Middle East Institute research center, said she saw the talks as being between the U.S. and Netanyahu, and “in this bilateral negotiation, I see Netanyahu having the upper hand.”

The U.S., Egypt and other Arab nations have raised objections to a lasting Israeli presence in the Philadelphi corridor. Hamas says the Israeli position is in breach of the bridging proposal’s call for Israel to leave densely populated areas of Gaza.

U.S. officials say Israeli officials, including Netanyahu, have been more agreeable to negotiations in private discussions than in their public statements.

A senior U.S. administration official told reporters Wednesday that Israel and Hamas have agreed on 14 of the 18 paragraphs in the bridging proposal, have technical differences about one paragraph and deeper differences about three paragraphs. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

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Those three paragraphs in question focus on the exchange of hostages captured by Hamas and the number of Palestinian prisoners who would be released during what is supposed to be at least a six-week cease-fire.

The list of Palestinian prisoners to be released in the initial phase of the deal includes some who are serving life sentences in Israeli prisons. The official said the dispute about the ratio of prisoners to hostages to be swapped has been further complicated by the recent deaths of the six hostages.

For each hostage, there's a certain number of Palestinian prisoners that were to be released. Now, "you just have fewer hostages as part of the deal in phase one," the official said.

Netanyahu said they are still discussing the number of prisoners to be released for each hostage, the list of prisoners to be freed and whether they will be allowed to return home or have to leave.

The U.S. and others hope a cease-fire would calm tensions that threaten a wider regional conflict, including fighting between Israel and Hezbollah militants in neighboring Lebanon.

Attacks by Hezbollah and other Iran-backed groups have increased since the Oct. 7 attack, in which some 1,200 people were killed. Militants also took about 250 people hostage, with roughly 100 remaining in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in response has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

When it comes to a deal, "we're being pragmatic about it, and we do believe that we have made an immense amount of progress in the last few months in terms of getting the structure of the deal in place," Kirby said.

Police deny Venezuela gang has taken over rundown apartment complex in Denver suburb

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — Police in the Denver suburb of Aurora say a Venezuela street gang with a small presence in the city has not taken over a rundown apartment complex — yet the allegation continues to gain steam among conservatives and was amplified by former President Donald Trump in a Wednesday Fox News town hall where he said Venezuelans were "taking over the whole town."

The unsubstantiated allegation gained momentum following last month's dissemination of video from a resident in the complex that showed armed men knocking on an apartment door, intensifying fears the Tren de Aragua gang was in control of the six-building complex.

However, city officials indicate the buildings, along with two other apartment complexes, were run down because of neglect by the property manager, CBZ Management.

Aurora is a diverse city that has long grappled with crime and gangs, and police said they have so far linked 10 people to Tren de Aragua and arrested six of them, including the suspects in a July attempted homicide.

But in a visit to the apartments where the armed men were filmed, interim Aurora police chief Heather Morris said gang members had not taken over and weren't collecting rent. The remarks came after Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman said that "criminal elements" had taken over some unspecified buildings and were extorting residents.

Aurora Police agent Matthew Longshore reiterated Thursday in an email to The Associated Press that the agency has confirmed residents are not paying rent to gang members, but they found apartment managers are no longer sending representatives to the complex.

The City of Aurora is already taking legal action against Zev Baumgarten with CBZ for "years of neglecting properties and numerous code violations" after another building he managed in Aurora was shut down as uninhabitable. Its residents were evicted in mid-August. Trials for Baumgarten that had been scheduled for August and September have been delayed for at least six months.

CBZ didn't immediately return a telephone call seeking comment, and phone numbers listed for the two open apartment buildings managed by CBZ in Aurora were disconnected.

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After residents held a news conference to speak out against the gang claims, Coffman, a Republican and former congressman, conceded he was "not sure where the truth is in all of this." In an interview this week with Denver7 TV station, Coffman said the narrative that all of Aurora was unsafe was not true and harmful to the economic health of the rapidly growing city of more than 400,000 people.

Coffman wasn't immediately available Thursday to speak about the situation.

Trump has sought to capitalize on concerns over immigration as he seeks a second term in November. At Wednesday night's town hall, he repeated his call for mass deportations after overstating the gang situation in Aurora.

"Take a look at Aurora in Colorado, where Venezuelans are taking over the whole town, they're taking over buildings, the whole town," Trump said. "You saw it the other day they're knocking down doors and occupying apartments of people."

Among the nearly 1 million Venezuelan migrants who entered the U.S. in recent years were suspected gang members tied to police shootings, human trafficking and other crimes — yet there's no evidence that the gang has set up an organizational structure in the U.S., Jeremy McDermott, the Colombia-based co-director of InSight Crime, told the AP this summer. He published a recent report on Tren de Aragua's expansion.

Social media posts about a video purporting to show migrants taking over a school bus in San Diego and a 911 call reporting Venezuelan migrants taking over an apartment building in Chicago have also gotten attention lately. Both were unsubstantiated.

Many of the immigrants from Venezuela and other Latin American countries who live in the Aurora complex say there are no gangs there, and they are being unfairly painted as criminals.

They pinned blame on New York-based CBZ Management for refusing to take care of bedbugs, rodents and constant water leaks despite monthly rent costing \$1,200 or more. Residents fear they could be evicted, but the city said Wednesday there were no immediate plans to pursue that option.

"The only criminal here is the owner of the building," Moises Didenot, who is from Venezuela, said Tuesday through a translator at a news conference in a dusty courtyard at the complex.

He showed reporters some mice he recently caught on sticky traps in the basement apartment he shares with his wife and 11-year-old daughter. Only two of the burners on their stove work, their ceiling fan is missing a blade and as soon as they clean their bathtub, mold quickly creeps back, he said.

Aurora officials said in an Aug. 30 social media post that they were taking the Venezuela gang's presence seriously and indicated more arrests were expected. They also said they would "continue to address the problems that the absentee, out-of-state owners of these properties have allowed to fester unchecked."

The video helping fuel the unsubstantiated allegation showed armed men, including one holding a long gun, climbing up the stairs and knocking on an apartment door. The former residents who filmed it told KDVR-TV it was taken before a shooting at the complex on Aug. 18 in which a 25-year-old man later died.

An Aurora Police Department spokesperson, Sydney Edwards, said that police have been in possession of the video and seized evidence seen in it. She said she could not comment further about an ongoing investigation.

Aurora police have also announced a task force with local, state and federal enforcement agencies to specifically address concerns about Tren de Aragua and other criminal activity affecting migrant communities.

"We will continue to investigate, pursue and arrest those who commit crimes, and we will maintain a robust presence at these properties," the city said in a statement Thursday.

US secures the release of 135 Nicaraguan political prisoners

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — The U.S. government announced Thursday that it secured the release of 135 Nicaraguan political prisoners, who have arrived in Guatemala where they will apply for entry to the United States or other countries.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement that they were released on humanitarian

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grounds.

"No one should be put in jail for peacefully exercising their fundamental rights of free expression, association, and practicing their religion," Sullivan said.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Eric Jacobstein, speaking with reporters, said that the Nicaraguan government received nothing in exchange for the prisoners' release and the negotiation signaled no change in U.S. policy toward the government of President Daniel Ortega.

"Though the pressure itself has been consistent, the planning and execution of this release was rapid, and we've worked quickly to facilitate the travel of these individuals and really ensure their safety at every step of the journey," Jacobstein said, adding that Nicaragua continues to "unjustly" detain people.

Asked if there were some prisoners Nicaragua was willing to release, but who refused to leave, he declined to comment.

Jacobstein, who greeted the Nicaraguans in Guatemala, said "these are individuals, some of whom have been victims of torture ... who've had an extremely difficult time, we did find them generally in very good health and spirits."

One thing that struck the U.S. diplomat about some of his conversations with the prisoners was the "true pettiness and cruelty" of Ortega's government for imprisoning people for no justifiable reason.

Francisco Arteaga, a released prisoner who spoke from the window of the yellow bus carrying him and others from the air field, was asked why he had been arrested. "For spreading on social media the government's actions against the Catholic church," he said.

Among the Nicaraguans released were 13 members of a Texas-based religious charity, Catholic laypeople, students and others.

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo agreed to host the Nicaraguans while they apply for entry to the U.S.

The Nicaraguans rolled out of a Guatemalan air base in the capital on buses Thursday morning, with some waving from the windows.

Nicaragua's government did not immediately confirm the announcement on the prisoners' release.

Nicaraguan human rights advocate Haydeé Castillo said the release of the prisoners was a "triumph for the Nicaraguan people's resistance." She noted that the prisoners weren't really freed because their release comes with forced displacement from their country.

"Nobody should be held prisoner for thinking differently," Castillo said.

She said advocates were reviewing lists to see how many such prisoners remain in custody.

Ivannia Alvarez, an exiled Nicaraguan and member of the Recognition Mechanism for Political Prisoners, said that her most recent count had been 151 jailed, suggesting that some of them are still detained.

The Texas-based religious organization Mountain Gateway confirmed the release of 13 of its people after nine months in jail.

"This is the day we have prayed for," pastor Jon Britton Hancock, Mountain Gateway's founder, said in a statement.

Environmentalist Amaru Ruiz said on social platforms that among those released were eight Indigenous forest rangers.

"The United States again calls on the government of Nicaragua to immediately cease the arbitrary arrest and detention of its citizens for merely exercising their fundamental freedoms," Sullivan said.

The U.S. government referred to them as political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

The announcement came just two days after Nicaragua's National Assembly approved changes to the criminal code allowing the government to try Nicaraguans and foreigners in absentia.

Opponents and organizations that have fled or been forced into exile in President Ortega's yearslong campaign to silence critical voices could be fined, sentenced to lengthy prison terms and see their property seized by the government under the approved changes.

Last year, the government exiled more than 300 opposition figures, stripping them of their nationality. Far more Nicaraguans have fled into exile themselves to escape the repression that followed massive 2018

protests that Ortega dubbed a failed coup with international backing.

"These individuals safely and voluntarily arrived in Guatemala," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. "We thank President Bernardo Arévalo and his administration for their efforts and support in welcoming them."

"Nicaraguan authorities unjustly detained these individuals for exercising their fundamental freedoms of expression, of association and peaceful assembly, and of religion or belief," Blinken said.

The government has shuttered more than 5,000 organizations since 2018, many of them religious in nature.

With Musk's X banned in Brazil, its users carve out new digital homes

By DAVID BILLER and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — As billionaire Elon Musk's clash with a Brazilian Supreme Court justice came to a head last week, there were legal twists, insults, ultimatums, defiance and then, finally, capitulation. When the digital dust settled, X had become an ex.

Musk's social media platform was banned nationwide and Justice Alexandre de Moraes set a whopping \$9,000 daily fine for anyone using a virtual private network (VPN) to skirt the suspension. Brazil's X users, left casting about for a new platform, mostly started washing up on Threads and Bluesky.

"Hello literally everyone in Brazil," Shauna Wright posted on Threads the day de Moraes ordered X's suspension.

Everyone hadn't been on X; Brazil's social masses are primarily on TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. But X had outsize influence in terms of newsmakers, agenda setting and thought leaders. It was the local battleground of the global culture war and the peanut gallery for soccer games and reality shows, especially Big Brother. So as X went dark in this highly online country of 213 million, its users started migrating.

Wright's post was an in-joke for fellow former employees of the company then known as Twitter, and an homage to its award-winning post when Meta's Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp all went down in 2021, sending users flocking to Twitter for info. But Wright also intended her throwback as a genuine greeting to all the friendly Brazilians.

"It took off even among those who didn't get the reference, but they didn't have to!" Wright, a content designer who posts as "goldengateblond", told the Associated Press from San Francisco. "I was glad it made people feel welcome."

Meta launched Threads last year amid widespread backlash to Musk's 2022 purchase of Twitter and his upending many of its policies and features — from content moderation to its user verification system.

Opening a Threads account was seamless for Instagram users, so it scaled rapidly; it had 175 million monthly users globally as of July, Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced. Meta declined to provide specifics on Brazilian users.

More Brazilians went to Bluesky, a lesser-known platform that not only looks and feels very much like the former Twitter, but also grew out of it. The pet project of former CEO Jack Dorsey was supposed to replace it eventually. Whether it can remains to be seen, but Brazilians have started doing their part. Bluesky gained 2.6 million users since last week, 85% from Brazil, the company said Wednesday, boosting its total to over 8 million.

"Good morning everyone," Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva posted Sunday on Bluesky and Threads. "What do you think of it here?"

"Our mental health is already showing signs of improvement," Tatiane Queiroz, 43, replied on Bluesky, where she describes herself as a "Twitter refugee in Mato Grosso," a state in Brazilian farm country.

Bluesky has been posting in Portuguese to get Brazilians situated and find those with whom they previously shared connections. They celebrated Wednesday as TV network Globo's evening news program, which gets over 20 million viewers, presented its new Bluesky account on air. Pioneers with prior footholds

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are giving tips and sharing so-called “starter packs” of accounts to follow.

Jefferson Nascimento, a human rights lawyer in Sao Paulo, has created 10 starter packs to help newbies navigate.

“In some way, to strengthen the environment, make the environment more favorable for other people to go there, so that when Twitter (X) comes back — if it does come back at some point — there isn’t a mass stampede again,” said Nascimento, 42, whose follower count on X was 135,000, more than triple his Bluesky amount.

Some compared Bluesky to the halcyon days of early-2010s Twitter. Egerton Neto, 30, opened his Bluesky account on the day of X’s shutdown. He has just 8 followers — far below his 252 on X — but appreciates Bluesky’s more peaceful discourse and less intentional addictiveness. He said by phone from Recife that he also likes seeing its developers interact with the community as they build the platform.

Starting over from scratch online is a bit of déjà vu for Brazilians — at least millennials. They were early adopters of Google’s former social network Orkut and dominated the platform before its 2014 shutdown. They migrated en masse to Facebook.

Bluesky’s CEO Jay Graber told the AP on Monday that this wave of Brazilians underscores one of its missions: allowing users to move platforms and keep connections, similar to switching cell phone carriers without losing your number or contacts.

On established social networks like TikTok or Facebook, users can only interact with people on the same platform. There’s no interoperability. Big Tech companies have largely built moats around their online properties, which helps serve their advertising-focused business models. Bluesky is building the technical foundation — what it calls “a protocol for public conversation” — that could make networks work more like email, blogs or phone numbers.

“The situation users are in today is a bit of a trap because users are locked in and developers are locked out of these social platforms. And then that means that you’re essentially stuck in a place where it should be offering you a service, but now it’s owning your entire social life,” Graber said. “One of the fundamental things we believe is that a user’s social relationships, like their social graph, their connections to their friends, should be something that they own.”

X had 22 million users in Brazil, according to estimates in the Digital 2024: Brazil report, just one-sixth the number on Instagram, and about one-fifth of Facebook or TikTok. But skimpy figures bely its importance as a gathering place for journalists, politicians, academics and celebrities whose interactions resounded far beyond, according to David Nemer, who specializes in the anthropology of technology at the University of Virginia.

“Even though Twitter may not have this direct impact on the everyday, common Brazilians, it would impact the press, which eventually would impact indirectly common Brazilians,” said Nemer, who is Brazilian. “That’s the sort of impact that Twitter has — or used to have — in Brazil.”

According to data from research firm Similarweb, X was Brazil’s fourth-most downloaded social media app from the Google Play store the day before its suspension; Bluesky has since surpassed it. On Apple’s app store, Bluesky became the top downloaded app of any type, social media or otherwise. Bluesky saw daily active Brazilian users reach 3.4 million on Aug. 30, the day de Moraes ordered the shutdown, versus X’s 6.1 million that day.

Similarweb data also showed many Brazilians using VPNs to stay on X. Nemer said that from his home in Charlottesville he has seen some far-right politicians brazenly posting and defying Brazil’s Supreme Court to levy its exorbitant fine.

But most Brazilians have gone, and there were those on X lamenting their departure.

“Losing Brazil is like ‘Sex and the City’ losing Samantha. You’re losing all the best one-liners and the sexual energy that makes the platform/show tick,” posted Sam Stryker, who until 2022 oversaw Twitter’s global branded entertainment channels — even operating Twitter’s Twitter account.

And Brazilian X users who emigrated were settling into their new digital abodes, like columnist and internet personality Chico Barney.

"Bluesky as a post-Twitter refuge proving once and for all that it doesn't matter the place, but the people," he wrote Wednesday.

Tiny glass beads suggest the moon had active volcanoes when dinosaurs roamed Earth

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Volcanoes were still erupting on the moon when dinosaurs roamed Earth, new research suggests.

The evidence: three tiny glass beads plucked from the surface of the moon and brought to Earth in 2020 by a Chinese spacecraft. Their chemical makeup indicates that there were active lunar volcanoes until about 120 million years ago, much more recent than scientists thought.

An earlier analysis of the rock samples from the Chang'e 5 mission had suggested volcanoes petered out 2 billion years ago. Previous estimates stretched back to 4 billion years ago.

The research was published Thursday in the journal *Science*.

"It was a little bit unexpected," said Julie Stopar, a senior staff scientist with the Lunar and Planetary Institute who was not involved with the research.

Images from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in 2014 had also suggested more recent volcanic activity. The glass beads are the first physical evidence, Stopar said, although more research is needed to confirm their origin.

The Chang'e 5 samples were the first moon rocks brought to Earth since those collected by NASA's Apollo astronauts and by Soviet Union spacecraft in the 1970s. In June, China returned samples from the far side of the moon.

The research may help us understand how long small planets and moons — including our own — can stay volcanically active, study co-author He Yuyang from the Chinese Academy of Sciences said in an email.

Researchers studied around 3,000 lunar glass beads smaller than a pinhead and found three with signs they came from a volcano. Glass beads can form on the moon when molten droplets cool after a volcanic eruption or meteorite impact.

Existing time lines suggest the moon had already cooled off past the point of volcanic activity by the time frame suggested by the new research, Stopar noted.

"It should inspire lots of other studies to try to understand how this could happen," she said.

GOP lawsuits set the stage for state challenges if Trump loses the election

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Before voters even begin casting ballots, Democrats and Republicans are engaged in a sprawling legal fight over the 2024 election through a series of court disputes that could even run past Nov. 5 if results are close.

Republicans filed more than 100 lawsuits challenging various aspects of vote-casting after being chastised repeatedly by judges in 2020 for bringing complaints about how the election was run only after votes were tallied.

After Donald Trump made "election integrity" a key part of his party's platform following his false claims of widespread voter fraud in 2020, the Republican National Committee says it has more than 165,000 volunteers ready to watch the polls.

Democrats are countering with what they are calling "voter protection," rushing to court to fight back against the GOP cases and building their own team with over 100 staffers, several hundred lawyers and what they say are thousands of volunteers.

Despite the flurry of litigation, the cases have tended to be fairly small-bore, with few likely impacts for most voters.

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"When you have all this money to spend on litigation, you end up litigating less and less important stuff," said Derek Muller, a law professor at Notre Dame University.

The stakes would increase dramatically should Trump lose and try to overturn the results. That's what he attempted in 2020, but the court system rejected him across the board. Trump and his allies lost more than 60 lawsuits trying to reverse President Joe Biden's win.

Whether they could be successful this year depends on the results, experts said. A gap of about 10,000 votes — roughly the number that separated Biden and Trump in Arizona and Georgia in 2020 — is almost impossible to reverse through litigation. A closer one of a few hundred votes, like the 547-vote margin that separated George W. Bush and Al Gore in Florida in 2000, is much more likely to hinge on court rulings about which ballots are legitimate.

"If he loses, he's going to claim that he won. That goes without saying," Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said of Trump. "If it looks like what we had last time ... I expect we'll see the same kind of thing."

Trump has done nothing to discourage that expectation, saying he would accept the results of the election only if it's "free and fair," raising the possibility it would not be, something he continues to falsely contend was the case in 2020. He also continues to insist that he could only lose due to fraud.

"The only way they can beat us is to cheat," Trump said at a Las Vegas rally in June.

To be clear, there was no widespread fraud in 2020 or any election since then. Reviews, recounts and audits in the battleground states where Trump disputed his loss reaffirmed that Biden won. And Trump's attorney general said there was no evidence that fraud tipped the election.

Trump installed his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, as co-chair of the Republican National Committee, which then named attorney Christina Bobb as the head of its election integrity division. Bobb is a former reporter for the conservative One America News Network who has been indicted by Arizona's attorney general for being part of an effort to promote a slate of Trump electors in the state, even though Biden won it.

Echoing Trump, the RNC said it's trying to counter Democratic mischief.

"President Trump's election integrity effort is dedicated to protecting every legal vote, mitigating threats to the voting process and securing the election," RNC spokeswoman Claire Zunk said in a statement. "While Democrats continue their election interference against President Trump and the American people, our operation is confronting their schemes and preparing for November."

This time around, Democrats say they're prepared for whatever Republicans might do.

"For four years, Donald Trump and his MAGA allies have been scheming to sow distrust in our elections and undermine our democracy so they can cry foul when they lose," Jen O'Malley Dillon, Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign manager, said in a statement. "But also for four years, Democrats have been preparing for this moment, and we are ready for anything."

The highest-profile litigation so far has been in Georgia, over new rules from a Republican-appointed majority on the State Board of Elections, which has echoed Trump's conspiracy theories. The rules could allow members of local election boards to try to refuse to certify results, a gambit Trump supporters have tried, unsuccessfully, to reverse losses in 2020 and 2022.

A Trump-aligned group sued to have courts declare that election board members have that power while Democrats sued to overturn the new rules. GOP Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger has questioned the wisdom of the board changing procedures so close to the election. Legal experts say the state board's rules conflict with longstanding state law that certification is not optional.

Whether local boards delay or refuse to certify the results from the upcoming election has been a growing concern, especially after a handful of local officials took that step during this year's primaries. But experts say the fears of a certification crisis are overblown, in large part because most state laws are clear that state or local boards must certify the official results brought to them by election offices. The courtroom remains the most important venue for candidates who want to challenge results.

"Trying to deny certification is a really poorly thought out theory," Ben Ginsberg, a Republican election lawyer, said on a Thursday call with reporters. "It has never worked."

The litigation to date has often been about relatively esoteric matters, but some cases could have implications after November if Trump loses. The RNC has filed lawsuits in Michigan, Nevada and North Carolina alleging the states need to remove inactive or ineligible voters from their rolls. Late last month, Republicans sued North Carolina over a favorite issue — the risk of noncitizens voting, which is rare. They contend the state wasn't doing enough to safeguard against it.

So far none of the claims have succeeded. But if Trump loses in those states by a narrow margin, that sort of pre-election litigation could pave the way for him to claim in court that the vote was invalid.

The other area that could have ramifications in November and beyond is whether mail ballots arriving after Election Day can be counted. Nineteen states allow that as long as the ballots are sent before polls close. The RNC sued to overturn this provision in Nevada and Mississippi, but both cases were dismissed by judges.

The RNC appealed those cases, and the first is scheduled to be heard by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later this month. It's the sort of issue that could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court. Some Trump allies in 2020 hoped the court would declare him the winner, but the late-arriving mail ballot litigation at the time showed the limits of that tactic.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the state had to count mail ballots that arrived up to four days after Election Day. Republicans then appealed that ruling to the nation's highest court, and late-arriving mail was counted separately in November 2020 while everyone waited for the Supreme Court to weigh in.

In the end, the Supreme Court didn't take up the case. Trump lost Pennsylvania by more than 80,000 votes, so the 10,000 late-arriving mail ballots wouldn't have even made a difference.

Persistent power outages in Puerto Rico spark outrage as officials demand answers

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — A growing number of Puerto Rican government officials on Thursday demanded answers from two private electric companies as the U.S. territory struggles with persistent power outages.

Tens of thousands of customers including schools, homes and businesses were left without electricity this week amid selective power cuts stemming from a deficit in generation, with several units out of service for maintenance.

On Thursday, lawmakers demanded that the presidents of Luma Energy, which oversees transmission and distribution of power, and Genera PR, which operates generation, appear the following day to answer questions about the ongoing outages that each company blames on the other.

"No more excuses, we don't want any more explanations," said Carlos Méndez, a member of the island's House of Representatives. "The people deserve a clear and precise answer."

On Wednesday, Luma issued a statement blaming the outages on a lack of electricity generation and crumbling infrastructure that Genera PR operates, saying "it should accept its responsibility."

Meanwhile, Genera PR has claimed that Luma Energy requested that it reduce generation, which damaged the units currently being repaired.

Both companies were contracted after Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority privatized operations as it struggles to restructure a more than \$9 billion debt load and tries to modernize aging infrastructure dating from the mid-20th century whose maintenance was long neglected.

The U.S. territory's ombudsman, Edwin García Feliciano, called on the governor to meet with energy officials to pursue concrete action. In a statement Wednesday, García accused both companies of keeping Puerto Ricans "hostage."

"They do not feel the urgency or rush to solve the problem," he said.

The outages come just weeks after Tropical Storm Ernesto swiped past the island and left more than 730,000 clients without power. Crews are still making permanent repairs to the island's electric grid after Hurricane Maria razed it in September 2017 as a powerful Category 4 storm.

Teen vaping hits 10-year low in the US

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fewer adolescents are vaping this year than at any point in the last decade, government officials reported Thursday, pointing to a shrinking number of high school students who are using Elf Bar and other fruity, unauthorized e-cigarettes.

The latest survey numbers show the teen vaping rate fell to under 6% this year, down from 7.7% in 2023. More than 1.6 million students reported vaping in the previous month — about one-third the number in 2019, when underage vaping peaked with the use of discrete, high-nicotine e-cigarettes like Juul.

This year's decline was mainly driven by a half-million fewer high school students who reported using e-cigarettes in the past month, officials said. Vaping was unchanged among middle schoolers, but remains less common in that group, at 3.5% of students.

"This is a monumental public health win," FDA's tobacco director Brian King told reporters. "But we can't rest on our laurels. There's clearly more work to do to further reduce youth use."

King and other officials noted that the drop in vaping didn't coincide with a rise in other tobacco industry products, such as nicotine pouches.

Sales of small, flavored pouches like Zyn have surged among adults. The subject of viral videos on social media platforms, the pouches come in flavors like mint and cinnamon and slowly release nicotine when placed along the gumline. This year's U.S. survey shows 1.8% of teens are using them, largely unchanged from last year.

"Our guard is up," King said. "We're aware of the reported growing sales trends and we're closely monitoring the evolving tobacco product landscape."

The federal survey involved more than 29,000 students in grades 6 through 12 who filled out an online questionnaire in the spring. Health officials consider the survey to be their best measure of youth tobacco and nicotine trends. Thursday's update focused on vaping products and nicotine pouches, but the full publication will eventually include rates of cigarette and cigar smoking, which have also hit historic lows in recent years.

Officials from the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attributed the big drop in vaping to recent age restrictions and more aggressive enforcement against retailers and manufacturers, including Chinese vaping companies who have sold their e-cigarettes illegally in the U.S. for years.

Use of the most popular e-cigarette among teens, Elf Bar, fell 36% in the wake of FDA warning letters to stores and distributors selling the brightly colored vapes, which come in flavors like watermelon ice and peach mango. The brand is part of a wave of cheap, disposable e-cigarettes from China that have taken over a large portion of the U.S. vaping market. The FDA has tried to block such imports, although Elf Bar and other brands have tried to find workarounds by changing their names, addresses and logos.

Teen use of major American e-cigarettes like Vuse and Juul remained significant, with about 12% of teens who vape reporting use of those brands.

In 2020, FDA regulators banned fruit and candy flavors from reusable e-cigarettes like Juul, which are now only sold in menthol and tobacco. But the flavor restriction didn't apply to disposable products, and companies like Elf Bar stepped in to fill the gap.

Other key findings in the report:

- Among students who current use e-cigarettes, about 26% said they vape daily.
- Nearly 90% of the students who vape used flavored products, with fruit flavors as the overwhelming favorite.
- Zyn is the most common nicotine pouch among teens who use the products.

Munich police fatally shoot a man they believe was planning to attack the Israeli Consulate

By MATTHIAS SCHRADER and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

MUNICH (AP) — Police in Munich exchanged fire with a gunman near the Israeli Consulate in Munich on Thursday, fatally wounding him. Authorities said they believe he was planning to attack the consulate on the anniversary of the attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics.

No one else was hurt in the shootout shortly after 9 a.m. in an area near the consulate and a museum on the city's Nazi-era history. Officers had been alerted to a person carrying a gun in the Karolinenplatz area, near downtown Munich, and returned fire when he shot at them. The suspect, who was carrying an old long gun with a bayonet attached to it, died at the scene.

Five officers were at the scene at the time the gunfire erupted. Police quickly deployed about 500 officers to the area.

Police said the gunman was an 18-year-old from Austria, but investigators were still looking into his motive. They didn't give further details on the suspect, who left a car near the scene, except to say that he lived in Austria.

"We have to assume that an attack on the Israeli Consulate possibly was planned early today," Bavaria's top security official, state Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann, told reporters at the scene. "It's obvious that, if someone parks here within sight of the Israeli Consulate ... then starts shooting, it most probably isn't a coincidence."

Prosecutors and police said in a statement later Thursday they currently believe the plan was for "a terrorist attack, also with respect to the consulate of the state of Israel," and that they are still investigating the man's motive.

Thursday was the 52nd anniversary of the attack by Palestinian militants on the Israeli delegation at the 1972 Munich Olympics, which ended with the death of 11 Israeli team members, a West German police officer and five of the assailants.

"There may be a connection — that must be cleared up," Bavarian governor Markus Söder said.

Munich police said there was no evidence of any more suspects connected to the shooting.

In neighboring Austria's Salzburg province, police said the suspected assailant, an Austrian with Bosnian roots, had come to authorities' attention in February 2023. They said that, following a "dangerous threat" against fellow students coupled with bodily harm, he had also been accused of involvement in a terror organization.

There was a suspicion that he had become religiously radicalized, was active online in that context and was interested in explosives and weapons, a police statement said, but prosecutors closed an investigation in April 2023.

However, authorities did issue a ban on him owning weapons until at least the beginning of 2028. Police said he had not come to their attention since.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said the consulate was closed Thursday due to a memorial ceremony for the 1972 attack and none of its staff was hurt. The nearby Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism, which opened in 2015 and explores the city's past as the birthplace of the Nazi movement, also said all of its employees were unharmed.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said he spoke with German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier. He wrote on the social media platform X that "together we expressed our shared condemnation and horror" at the shooting.

The head of Germany's main Jewish organization, Josef Schuster, said "there could have been a catastrophe in Munich today" and thanked police for intervening quickly.

Söder and German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser reiterated their strong commitment to protecting Jewish and Israeli facilities.

Can Harris prosecute the political case against Trump? Key questions ahead of their debate

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump and Kamala Harris will debate for the first — and perhaps, last — time on Tuesday night as the presidential candidates fight to sway voters on the biggest stage in U.S. politics.

The meeting comes just 75 days after President Joe Biden's disastrous debate performance triggered a political earthquake that ultimately forced him from the race. Few expect such a transformative result this time, but Trump is on a mission to end Harris' "honeymoon."

Harris, a former courtroom prosecutor, will enter the night with relatively high expectations against a Republican opponent with 34 felony convictions and a penchant for false statements. The question is whether Harris, who did not particularly stand out during primary debates in her 2020 presidential campaign, can prosecute Trump's glaring liabilities in a face-to-face meeting on live television with the world watching.

The 90-minute meeting begins at 9 p.m. ET Tuesday inside Philadelphia's National Constitutional Center. It will be moderated by ABC News anchors David Muir and Linsey Davis. In accordance with rules negotiated by both campaigns, there will be no live audience.

Here's what we're watching for on a historic night:

Can Harris do what Biden could not?

Biden set an incredibly low bar for Harris in the June 27 debate. The president struggled to offer coherent arguments or even finish his sentences. But the anti-Trump coalition was most disappointed that he failed to take advantage of Trump's obvious political liabilities — whether on abortion, the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, character issues or his legal trouble.

Harris is expected to do much better. Polls suggest the Democratic vice president is now even with the Republican former president in some swing states.

But even with such fertile terrain, scoring points against Trump on the debate stage is easier said than done. Trump may be the most experienced debater in modern presidential history. As a former reality television star, he knows how to dominate television coverage. And he clearly likes to fight.

Harris recently suggested that she may be looking forward to a political brawl. "Donald," she told a cheering audience last month in Atlanta, "if you've got something to say, say it to my face."

Can she back up the tough talk? The world is about to find out.

Can Trump focus?

Trump is not known for his discipline or preparation. His debate performances, like his governing style, are typically fueled much more by instinct than thoughtful analysis.

Therefore, few expect Trump to offer a clear and concise line of attack against Harris on Tuesday night. Still, he needs to do better than the kitchen-sink approach he's been testing on the campaign trail for much of the last month.

Trump has questioned Harris' racial identity. He's falsely called her a communist. He's questioned her strength. He's jabbed her as a San Francisco liberal. And he's reminded voters that she has served in the Biden White House for nearly four years and would presumably continue the president's policies for another four years if she wins.

It is the Biden connection that many Republicans, inside and outside of Trump's campaign, believe is most effective. They want him to evoke Ronald Reagan's 1980 debate-stage jab — "Are you better off?" — early and often.

The question is whether Trump can deliver that message in a way that isn't immediately overshadowed by a much more controversial statement. Recent history offers reasons to be skeptical.

Body language matters

There will, of course, be an obvious gender dynamic on stage Tuesday night.

Fair or not, body language and tone are viewed differently in a debate between a man and a woman. Just ask Hillary Clinton. She said Trump made her "skin crawl" when he stood behind her as she was speaking during a town hall-style debate in 2016.

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The candidates — who have never met in person before — will be expected to stay behind their podiums on Tuesday night. But Republicans are hopeful that Trump will avoid any other provocations like pointing, yelling or otherwise approaching Harris in a way that might be off-putting to suburban women or other swing voters.

Harris, too, will face unique challenges related to her race and gender as voters consider whether to make her the nation's first female president. Some voters still say they're not comfortable with the idea. If she comes across as angry, she risks playing into racist tropes about Black women.

While the gender dynamic looms, do not underestimate the significance of their age difference, either.

Harris is almost two decades younger than the 78-year-old Trump. Age was viewed as a political advantage for Trump when he was facing the 81-year-old Biden, but the situation is now reversed against the 59-year-old Harris. If he wins, Trump would be the oldest U.S. president ever elected.

The format will be somewhat different as well, in accordance with a set of rules the candidates agreed upon this week.

There will be no live audience, no opening statements and no props allowed. Candidates' microphones will be muted when their opponent is on the clock, a stipulation that created some controversy in recent days.

Trump reluctantly agreed to the mute function when he faced Biden in June, but after that debate, his team determined it was a net positive if voters did not hear from the Republican former president while his opponent was speaking. Harris' team was pushing to return to a normal format without mute buttons.

Abortion vs Immigration

Policy sometimes plays second to personality in presidential debates, but there are dramatic differences between the candidates on key issues that are on the minds of millions of voters.

Republicans hope Trump makes immigration a defining issue of the debate.

The GOP has effectively condemned the Biden administration's handling of illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border for much of the last four years. Once an issue that appealed mostly to the Republican base, illegal immigration — and related concerns about drugs, crime and national security — is now a top issue for voters across the political spectrum.

Harris will be eager to remind voters that Trump helped kill a bipartisan immigration bill that would have done much to fix the problem. But overall, Harris is likely to be on the defensive when the issue comes up.

Democrats, meanwhile, want to focus on abortion.

Trump, of course, appointed three Supreme Court justices who later overturned the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision that protected a woman's right to choose abortion. Trump has repeatedly said he was proud that *Roe* was defeated. But aware that such a view isn't popular among many women, he has tried to moderate his stance on the divisive issue.

Harris won't make that easy. Stating the obvious, as a woman, she is positioned to be a much more effective messenger on the issue than Biden was. And Trump can't afford to lose many more female voters.

Look out for wild card Trump

If you ask Trump's previous debate opponents what they're watching for on Tuesday night — and we did — many say the same thing: Look out for the thing he says or does that Harris can't possibly prepare for.

Trump is the ultimate wild card who has found tremendous political success by ignoring the traditional rules of politics. He will say or do whatever he thinks is best in the moment. And Harris, who has dedicated several days to debate prep, can't make a plan for everything.

At this point, it's hard to imagine Trump surprising anyone with new material. He has praised dictators, talked about genitalia size, suggested suspending the U.S. Constitution and said that Harris only recently "turned Black."

Trump's own team doesn't know what he'll do or say on any given day. That's incredibly risky for Trump. But it also puts enormous pressure on Harris.

Why is Beijing interested in a mid-level government aide in New York State?

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The decision by New York prosecutors to charge a former aide to the New York governor this week with acting as an illegal agent for the Chinese government has raised concerns about China's efforts to influence U.S. politics.

Linda Sun held numerous roles in New York state government, including deputy chief of staff for Gov. Kathy Hochul. She is accused of pushing Chinese interests at state functions, including allegedly blocking representatives from Taiwan from meeting the governor, in exchange for financial benefits worth millions of dollars.

Sun's arrest on Tuesday is the latest, and perhaps most high profile, in a series of cases the U.S. Department of Justice has prosecuted in recent years to root out Beijing's agents on U.S. soil.

While previous cases involved charges against suspected Chinese spies for reporting on and surveilling dissidents critical of the Communist Party, Tuesday's case appeared to show how China is trying to directly influence U.S. politics in line with its interests, even at the local level.

WHY STATE LEVEL?

China sees it as important to cultivate state-level relationships with U.S. officials, and has always done so.

Although the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and China has become increasingly tense, the two countries had cultivated extensive regional-level ties in the 2010s, with U.S. governors frequently visiting China to boost trade and cultural ties.

That's taken a sharp 180-degree turn in recent years, as the U.S. government's relationship with China grows more confrontational and being tough on China has become a bipartisan point of consensus. The White House and Congress are leveling high tariffs on Chinese products and limiting export of high-tech products to China.

Some states are even passing bills to actively ban China's presence. Georgia, Florida, and Alabama are just some of the states that banned Chinese "agents" from buying real estate.

Seeking influence on the state level has "increased in importance as relations at the federal level have soured," said Mareike Ohlberg, senior fellow in the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, who studies China. "Something is better than nothing."

HOW DOES BEIJING CULTIVATE INFLUENCE ABROAD?

China's Communist Party has a branch specifically tasked with overseas work, called the United Front. Under the United Front's control are a multitude of groups which serve to engage overseas Chinese under the guise of social or industry groups. Well-known among these groups is the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, which itself oversees a number of smaller groups.

The groups seek to build membership overseas and engage with the Chinese diaspora, and has branches all over the world, from Africa to Southeast Asia to North America.

Willy Lam, a senior fellow at The Jamestown Foundation, said the Chinese government has a long history of targeting major U.S. cities and states with large Chinese populations such as New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles and San Francisco, where Beijing's operatives have been working with established, "well-built" associations and trade groups for overseas Chinese.

It pays for those local groups for work with Beijing, while the setup spares Beijing a lot of legwork on the ground, Lam said.

Sun was linked with Shi Qianping, who has described himself as a standing committee member of the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, according to Chinese state media. Shi also held the role of the head of the U.S. Federation of Chinese-American Entrepreneurs, according to Xinhua.

Sun also engaged with regional-level branches of the Returned Overseas Chinese group, like in Jiangsu province, where Sun was born, according to the group.

Aside from these groups, there are also growing worries about overseas Chinese police stations, set up without the knowledge of the countries they operate in. Last year, New York police arrested two men for

allegedly setting up a secret police station for a Chinese provincial police agency.

WHAT DOES BEIJING WANT?

Sun's case, which at first glance may seem the stuff of spy films, showed that China was interested in cultivating influence on a subtle level — for example by promoting messages in line with Beijing's views.

Prosecutors said Sun solicited talking points from a Chinese official for a video Hochul recorded when she was lieutenant governor to wish people a happy Lunar New Year. She specifically kept Hochul from mentioning Chinese human rights issues in that video, prosecutors say. Sun also allegedly blocked representatives of Taiwan's government from meeting with top New York state officials. China claims Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, as part of its own territory and views any interaction between Taiwanese government representatives and other governments as an infringement of its sovereignty claim.

Speeches by Chinese President Xi Jinping and party documents have made it clear that one directive for the party's overseas work is to rally overseas Chinese around the party's goals, including urging them to "actively participate in and support" the causes of modernization and peaceful unification for their motherland.

The Chinese government also has been willing to exploit domestic U.S. issues, such as violence against Asian-Americans, to boost its messaging. Sun had claimed to be a representative for the Asian-American community.

"The Chinese government likes to claim to speak for all ethnic Chinese abroad," said Audrye Wong, a Jeane Kirkpatrick Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. She said the Chinese government sometimes blurs the lines between legitimate cultural and community groups and influence operations.

SHOULD STATES CUT OFF ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINESE PROVINCES?

China is often able to set the agenda when it comes to engagement at the local level. "There's been quite a mismatch in terms of resources on the PRC side vs US side," Ohlberg said. For example, the city of Shanghai has hundreds of staffers dedicated to international engagement, while U.S. states may only have a handful.

"There needs to be more strategic thinking going into this, more resources and knowledge, and then once you have that, you can decide," she said.

Wong added that local governments should reach out to communities of Asian descent instead of relying on one person as a community liaison, as what seemed to have happened in Sun's case, and "really build infrastructure at the local community level working with legitimate Asian American organizations."

Uganda Olympic runner's horrific death is the latest in violence against female athletes in Kenya

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

Olympic runner Rebecca Cheptegei's horrific death after being doused with petrol and set on fire by her boyfriend has again brought to the fore Kenya's harrowing history of domestic violence against female athletes.

Her killing follows the deaths of at least two other high-profile female runners in cases of domestic violence in the last three years in a region that has produced dozens of Olympic and world champions.

What happened to Cheptegei?

Cheptegei, who was from Uganda, died on Thursday at age 33. Police say Cheptegei's boyfriend poured a can of petrol over her and set her on fire during a dispute on Sunday. She suffered 80% burns on her body and died in a hospital in the town of Eldoret four days later.

The boyfriend was also burned in the attack and is being treated at the same hospital. No criminal charges have yet been announced against him.

Cheptegei competed in the women's marathon at the Paris Olympics less than a month ago, finishing in 44th place. She lived in western Kenya's famous high-altitude training region that draws the best distance runners from across the world and had recently built a house there to be close to the training centers.

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Agnes Tirop

The brutal slaying of Kenyan star runner Tirop in the same region in 2021 led to an outpouring of anger from fellow athletes and prompted the East African country's athletics authorities to acknowledge the scourge of domestic abuse as a major problem.

Tirop was one of Kenya's brightest talents when she was stabbed to death at her home in Iten, the other world-renowned distance-running training town in Kenya, alongside Eldoret. Her husband, who was on the run, was arrested days after the killing and has been charged with murder. His court case is still underway.

Like Cheptegei, the 25-year-old Tirop had just competed at an Olympics — the 2021 Tokyo Games — and had set a new world record in the 10-kilometer road race in another competition a month before she was killed. Her body was found with stab wounds to the stomach and neck, as well as blunt trauma injury to her head.

In the weeks after Tirop's death, current and former male and female athletes, spoke out over what they said was a long-running problem of domestic abuse against female athletes in the region. Some marched through the streets of Iten to demand better protection for female athletes and stricter laws against abusers.

Other Kenyan athletes like Ruth Bosibori, a former African champion in the steeplechase, and Joan Chelimo, a marathon runner, said Tirop's killing had emboldened them to talk about their own abusive relationships.

Both said they had escaped violent partners that made them fear for their lives.

Damaris Muthee

Just six months after Tirop, another runner was killed. Kenyan-born Muthee, who competed for Bahrain, was found dead in a house in Iten after being strangled. Her decomposing body had been there for days before it was found, authorities said at the time.

A male Ethiopian runner with whom she was in a relationship was charged with murder. Muthee, who was 28, had a young child from another relationship.

The cases of domestic abuse in Kenya's running community are set against the country's overriding high rates of violence against women, which has prompted marches by ordinary citizens in towns and cities this year.

Activists say successful female athletes may be especially vulnerable in instances when their partners want to control their money and assets in an impoverished region and the women refuse and push back.

Police said Cheptegei was killed in a dispute with her boyfriend over the land she had just built a house on.

Samuel Wanjiru

One of Kenya's best male athletes also died in what authorities said was a domestic dispute in 2011. Wanjiru was 24 and at the time the reigning Olympic marathon champion. He fell to his death from a balcony at his home during an argument with his wife.

He had been arrested a year earlier and questioned by police for allegedly threatening to kill his wife with an assault rifle. He denied the allegations.

Although Kenyan authorities ruled Wanjiru died after falling or jumping from the balcony, his family claimed that he was killed.

The first 100,000 doses of mpox vaccine reach Congo. But it's a fraction of what is needed

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — The first batch of mpox vaccine arrived in Congo's capital on Thursday, the country's authorities said, three weeks after the World Health Organization declared mpox outbreaks in 12 African countries a global emergency.

The 100,000 doses of the MVA-BN vaccine, manufactured by the Danish company Bavarian Nordic, have been donated by the European Union through HERA, the bloc's agency for health emergencies. Another 100,000 are expected to be delivered on Saturday, the Congolese authorities said.

UNICEF is going to be in charge of the vaccination campaign in the most impacted provinces, Congo's Health Minister Roger Kamba told reporters after the delivery of the vaccine. But it remained unclear when

the vaccination drive would begin.

About 380,000 doses of mpox vaccines have been promised by Western partners such as the European Union and the United States, Dr. Jean Kaseya, head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters last week. That is less than 15% of the 3 million doses authorities have said are needed to end the mpox outbreaks in Congo, the epicenter of the global health emergency.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, had been spreading mostly undetected for years in Africa before the disease prompted the 2022 outbreak in more than 70 countries, Dr. Dimie Ogoina, the chair of WHO's mpox emergency committee told reporters last month.

5 takeaways from AP's report on the big backlog of uninspected drug factories

By MATTHEW PERRONE and NICKY FORSTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As COVID-19 swept across the globe in early 2020, the Food and Drug Administration pulled most of its safety inspectors from the field, creating a massive backlog of uninspected pharmaceutical plants in the U.S. and overseas.

Nearly five years later, The Associated Press wanted to assess the FDA's performance in catching up on inspections of factories that produce drugs used by millions of Americans.

The FDA keeps a list of drug facilities to inspect annually, prioritizing them based on their potential risks. But the list is confidential, so the AP created its own list by compiling public records of FDA inspections before COVID-19 and tracking which firms haven't received a follow-up.

Here are five takeaways from the AP's exclusive story:

The FDA hasn't returned to roughly 2,000 drug manufacturing plants since before the pandemic

The overdue drug plants identified by the AP represent about 42% of the firms that are currently registered to produce drugs for the U.S. and previously underwent FDA surveillance inspections before May 2019. The plants make hundreds of critical medicines, including antibiotics, blood thinners and cancer therapies.

Under FDA's own guidelines, factories that haven't been inspected in five or more years are considered a significant risk and are supposed to be prioritized for inspection.

While most of the overdue plants are in the U.S., more than 340 are in India and China, the main producers of generic drug ingredients for U.S. prescriptions.

FDA officials say the U.S. drug supply is "the safest on the planet." Because of its enormous inspection workload, the agency says it prioritizes facilities that pose the greatest risk to the public. The FDA has been using online tools and information from European regulators to supplement its efforts.

Drug inspections still haven't recovered from pandemic disruptions

The FDA has been ramping up inspections since 2021, concentrating on overseas plants. But the agency still isn't inspecting at the level it was before COVID-19. Last year's inspection numbers were down 40% from the pre-pandemic period, according to AP's analysis.

FDA staffers keep leaving the agency, hampering inspection efforts

The agency's work has been slowed by attrition, according to one senior official. A wave of departures before and after the pandemic has left the agency with a less experienced workforce.

"We aren't able to keep up with the pace of attrition and we have a number of investigators who are not as fully trained as their predecessors," said FDA Associate Commissioner Michael Rogers. "We continue to increase their experience and training to get this group of investigators up to the same level we were able to utilize pre-pandemic."

Vacancies persist among FDA's workforce

Despite years of recruitment efforts, the FDA still has more than 220 vacancies among its inspection workforce, according to agency records obtained by the AP. Today, the FDA's inspection team is 85% staffed, compared with more than 95% staffed in fiscal 2019.

FDA staffers are uncovering serious problems as they return to overseas plants

When FDA inspectors do visit factories in India and other countries, they sometimes find egregious

violations.

An FDA inspector visiting Intas Pharmaceuticals in India, for example, witnessed a company employee "pouring acetic acid in a trash bin" to destroy company documents related to drug testing. The FDA issued a warning letter last year documenting a number of violations at the plant, including inadequate recordkeeping and manufacturing practices.

You aren't likely to lose a job in the US but may find it harder to land one

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Laid off by the music streaming service Spotify last year, Joovay Arias figured he'd land another job as a software engineer fairly soon. His previous job search, in 2019, had been a breeze. "Back then," he said, "I had tons of recruiters reaching out to me — to the point where I had to turn them down."

Arias did find another job recently, but only after an unexpected ordeal.

"I thought it was going to be something like three months," said Arias, 39. "It turned into a year and three months."

As Arias and other jobseekers can attest, the American labor market, red-hot for the past few years, has cooled. The job market is now in an unusual place: Jobholders are mostly secure, with layoffs low, historically speaking. Yet the pace of hiring has slowed, and landing a job has become harder. On Friday, the government will report on whether hiring slowed sharply again in August after a much-weaker-than-expected July job gain.

"If you have a job and you're happy with that job and you want to hold onto that job, things are pretty good right now," said Nick Bunker, economic research director for North America at the Indeed Hiring Lab. "But if you're out of work or you have a job and you want to switch to a new one, things aren't as rosy as they were a couple of years ago."

Since peaking in March 2022 as the economy accelerated out of the pandemic recession, the number of listed job openings has dropped by more than a third, according to the government's latest monthly report on openings and hiring.

Temporary-help firms have reduced jobs for 26 of the past 28 months. That's a telling sign: Economists generally regard temp jobs as a harbinger for where the job market is headed because many employers hire temps before committing to full-time hires.

In a roundup this week of local economic conditions, the Federal Reserve's regional banks reported signs of a decelerating job market. Staffing agencies have said that job gains have slowed "as firms are approaching hiring decisions with greater hesitancy," the New York Fed found. "Job candidates are lingering on the market longer."

The Minneapolis Fed said that a staffing agency reported that "businesses are getting a lot more picky" about whom they hire. And the Atlanta Fed found that "only a few" companies planned to step up hiring.

Job-hopping, so rampant two years ago, has slowed as workers have gradually lost confidence in their ability to find better pay or working conditions somewhere else. Just 3.3 million Americans quit their jobs in July, compared with a peak of 4.5 million in April 2022.

"People are staying put because they're afraid they won't find new jobs," said Aaron Terrazas, chief economist at the employment website Glassdoor.

And the Labor Department has reported, in its annual revised estimates of employment growth, that the economy added 818,000 fewer jobs in the 12 months that ended in March than it had previously estimated.

In one respect, it's not at all surprising that the pace of hiring is now moderating. Job growth in 2021 and 2022, as the economy roared back from the COVID-19 recession, was the most explosive on record. Workers gained leverage they hadn't enjoyed in decades. Companies scrambled to hire fast enough to keep up with surging sales. Many employers had to jack up pay and offer bonuses to keep employees.

It was inevitable — and even healthy, economists say, in the long run — for hiring to slow, thereby eas-

ing pressure on wage growth and inflation pressures. Otherwise, the economy could have overheated and forced the Fed to tighten credit so aggressively as to cause a recession.

The post-pandemic jobs boom was a marked contrast to the sluggish recovery from the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Back then, it took more than six years for the economy to recover the jobs that had been lost. By contrast, the breathtaking pandemic job losses of 2020 — 22 million — were reversed in less than 2 1/2 years.

Still, the surging economy ignited inflation, leading the Fed to raise interest rates 11 times in 2022 and 2023 to try to cool the job market and slow inflation. And for a while, the economy and the job market appeared immune from higher borrowing costs. Consumers kept spending, businesses kept expanding and the economy kept growing.

But eventually the continued high rates began leaving their mark. Several high-profile companies, including tech giants like Spotify, announced layoffs last year in the face high interest rates. Outside of the economy's technology sector, though, and, to a lesser extent, finance, most American companies haven't cut jobs. The number of people filing first-time applications for unemployment benefits is barely above where it was before the pandemic struck.

Yet the same companies that are keeping workers aren't necessarily adding more.

"Compared to a year or two ago, it's a lot more difficult, particularly for entry-level folks," Glassdoor's Terrazas said. "Because of the gradual drip of layoffs in tech and finance, in professional services over the past year and a half, there have been a lot of high-skilled, experienced folks on the job market.

"By all evidence, they are finding jobs. But they are also pushing more entry-level folks further and further down the queue... Recent grads, folks without a lot of on-the-job experience are feeling the effects of suddenly competing with people who have two, five, 10 years' experience in the jobs market. When those big fish are in the market, the little fish naturally get squeezed out."

You aren't likely to lose a job in the US but may find it harder to land one

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Despite the pressure of the highest interest rates in decades, the economy remains in solid shape, having grown at a healthy 3% annual pace from April through June. Most Americans are enjoying solid job security.

Still, given the growing difficulty of changing jobs, even some of those job holders are feeling the chill.

"The reality is a lot of people, even when they have jobs, are feeling a lot of angst about the economy," Terrazas said. "People are feeling a little bit job insecurity, a lot more pressure in the workplace than they have in a while."

In an August survey, the New York Fed found that Americans as a whole are more worried about losing

their jobs now than at any time since 2014, when people were just beginning to feel the full effects of the recovery from the Great Recession of 2008-2009.

Adding to the anxiety is that memories of the recent job boom are still fresh.

"The reference point for most people is still 2021, 2022, when the job market was very strong, and what looks like for us economists as a normalization (of the job market from unsustainable levels), I think for a lot of people feels like a loss of status," Terrazas said.

Consider Abby Neff, who, since graduating from Ohio University in May 2023, has struggled to find the "old-fashioned writing job" that she hoped to land in journalism

"It's been pretty tough," she said, "to find a permanent journalism job."

In the meantime, Neff, 23, has joined the government's AmeriCorps agency, which mobilizes Americans to perform community service, in southeastern Ohio. The job doesn't pay much. But it has given her the opportunity to write and to learn about everything from forestry to sustainable agriculture to watershed management.

She hadn't expected to encounter such difficulty in finding a job in her field.

"I feel like I did all the 'right things' in college," Neff said ruefully.

She edited a campus magazine and made contacts in the business. She has landed some interviews, only to learn later that the job was filled without her having heard from the employer.

"I will get 'ghosted,'" she said. "I almost feel like I have to hunt employers down to even get a response to an application or submission."

Arias, the software engineer, started looking for a job "the minute I got laid off" in June 2023. At first, he was casual about it. He took time off to care for his newborn daughter and drew money out of his severance package from Spotify. But when the job hunt proved difficult, he "decided to really ramp it up" early this year.

Arias started driving for a ride-sharing service and getting job leads from passengers. He reached out to a company through which he had taken part in a computer coding bootcamp, seeking contacts. Eventually, the networking paid off with a new job.

Yet the process proved much more frustrating than he had envisioned. Employers he had communicated with would vanish without explanation.

"That's the worst part about the experience," Arias said. "You get that introductory message. Then you send your resume. And then that's it. Communication would end there. Or you'd get an automated response. So you don't know what happened, what you did wrong ... It just feels really demoralizing, really stressful, because you don't know what happened."

Pope and imam of Southeast Asia's largest mosque make joint call to fight violence, protect planet

By NICOLE WINFIELD and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Pope Francis and the grand imam of Southeast Asia's largest mosque vowed Thursday to fight religiously inspired violence and protect the environment, issuing a joint call for interfaith friendship and common cause at the heart of Francis' visit to Indonesia.

A second highlight of the trip came later in the day when Francis celebrated a jubilant afternoon Mass in Jakarta's steamy stadium before an estimated 100,000 people who cheered wildly as he looped the track in his open-topped popemobile.

In the morning event at Jakarta's iconic Istiqlal Mosque, Francis presided over an interreligious gathering rich with symbolic meaning and personal touches. Present were representatives of the six religions that are officially recognized in Indonesia: Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Catholicism and Protestantism.

Francis and the grand imam, Nasaruddin Umar, stood at the ground-level entrance to the "Tunnel of Friendship," an underpass which connects the mosque compound with the neighboring Catholic cathedral, Our Lady of the Assumption.

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Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, has held out the tunnel as a tangible sign of its commitment to religious freedom, which is enshrined in the constitution but has been challenged by repeated instances of discrimination and violence against religious minorities.

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, Amnesty International noted on the eve of Francis' visit.

Approaching the elevator to the tunnel, Francis said it was a potent sign of how different religious traditions "have a role to play in helping everyone pass through the tunnels of life with our eyes turned towards the light."

He encouraged Indonesians of every religious tradition to "walk in search of God and contribute to building open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable."

Francis traveled to Indonesia, the first leg on an 11-day, four nation journey through Southeast Asia and Oceania, to encourage it to combat religiously inspired violence and pledge the Catholic Church's commitment to greater initiatives of fraternity.

The meeting at the mosque showed the personal side of the policy, with Francis and Umar — the 87-year-old pope and the 65-year-old imam — showing a clear affinity for one another. As Francis was leaving in his wheelchair, Umar bent down and kissed Francis on the head. Francis then grasped Umar's hand, kissed it and held it to his cheek.

Francis has made improving Catholic-Muslim ties a hallmark of his papacy and prioritizes travel to majority Muslim nations to further the agenda.

During a 2019 visit to the Gulf, Francis and the imam of Al-Azhar, the 1,000-year-old seat of Sunni learning, launched a "Human Fraternity" movement calling for greater Christian-Muslim efforts to promote peace around the world. More recently, Francis traveled to Najaf, Iraq, in 2021 to visit the top Shiite cleric, who delivered a message of peaceful coexistence.

The new initiative launched Thursday, called The Istiqlal Declaration, now becomes another pillar of Francis' interfaith push. It was signed by Francis and Umar at a formal ceremony in the tent on the Istiqlal Mosque compound. The other religious representatives at the encounter didn't co-sign it but were listed by organizers as having "accompanied" it.

The document said religion should never be abused to justify violence, but should instead be used to resolve conflicts and protect and promote human dignity. It also called for "decisive action" to protect the environment and its resources, blaming human-made actions for the current climate crisis.

"The human exploitation of creation, our common home, has contributed to climate change, leading to various destructive consequences such as natural disasters, global warming and unpredictable weather patterns," it read. "This ongoing environmental crisis has become an obstacle to the harmonious coexistence of peoples."

Fighting climate change has been an important priority for the Argentine Jesuit pope, who has issued encyclicals insisting on the moral case for caring for God's creation. The climate issue is of existential importance to Indonesia, a tropical archipelago stretching across the equator and home to the world's third-largest rainforest and a variety of endangered wildlife and plants.

Umar, the grand imam, recalled in his remarks to the gathering that Istiqlal Mosque was designed by a Christian architect and is used for a variety of social and educational programs that benefit everyone, not just Muslims.

Calling the mosque "a big house for humanity," he said the tunnel was a melting pot for people of different faiths. "We hope and have the principle that humanity is one, so anyone can enter and benefit," he said.

Khanit Sannano, the secretary general of Indonesia's Council of Buddhist Communities, recognized the value of showing Indonesia's unity to the leader of the world's Catholics.

"That's why on this day we come to support and pay respect to him," he said on the sidelines of the meeting.

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The interfaith gathering was a centerpiece of Francis' Indonesia visit, which concluded with Mass in Jakarta's main stadium. There were so many people that Indonesian authorities put the overflow into another nearby stadium to watch the Mass on TV screens, which were also erected outside the grounds in a huge parking lot so passers-by could also follow the service.

The Vatican had originally expected it would draw some 60,000 people but the spokesman quoted local organizers as saying more than 100,000 had attended.

"Don't tire of dreaming and of building a civilization of peace," Francis said in an ad-libbed homily. "Be builders of hope. Be builders of peace."

Catholics represent about 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.

"Viva Papa Francesco," the crowd chanted as Francis arrived for the service, held under a very humid 33 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). The faithful, many decked out in matching T-shirts or caps, furiously waved fans to cool themselves.

On Friday, Francis heads to Papua New Guinea for the second leg of his trip, one of the longest and farthest in papal history, which will also take him to East Timor and Singapore before it ends Sept. 13.

Today in History: September 6, President McKinley fatally shot

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 6, the 250th day of 2024. There are 116 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 6, 1901, President William McKinley was shot and mortally wounded by anarchist Leon Czolgosz (CHAWL'-gawsh) at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. (McKinley died eight days later and was succeeded by his vice president, Theodore Roosevelt.)

Also on this date:

In 1949, Howard Unruh, a resident of Camden, New Jersey, shot and killed 13 of his neighbors. (Unruh, who was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, was incarcerated for 60 years until his death in 2009.)

In 1972, the Summer Olympics resumed in Munich, West Germany, a day after the deadly hostage crisis that left eleven Israelis, five Arab abductors and a West German police officer dead.

In 1975, 18-year-old tennis star Martina Navratilova of Czechoslovakia, in New York for the U.S. Open, requested political asylum in the United States.

In 1995, Baltimore Oriole Cal Ripken Jr. played in his 2,131st consecutive game, breaking Lou Gehrig's 56 year-old MLB record; Ripken's streak would ultimately reach a still-record 2,632 games.

In 1997, a public funeral was held for Princess Diana at Westminster Abbey in London, six days after her death in a car crash in Paris.

In 2006, President George W. Bush acknowledged for the first time that the CIA was running secret prisons overseas and said "tough" interrogation techniques had forced terrorist leaders to reveal plots to attack the United States and its allies.

In 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized consensual sex between adults, legalizing homosexuality in the country.

In 2022, Liz Truss began her tenure as U.K. prime minister; she would resign just 49 days later.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian JoAnne Worley is 87. Cartoonist Sergio Aragonés is 87. Country singer-songwriter David Allan Coe is 85. Rock singer-musician Roger Waters (Pink Floyd) is 81. Comedian-actor Jane Curtin is 77. Actor-comedian Jeff Foxworthy is 66. Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is 62. Television journalist Elizabeth Vargas is 62. Country singer-songwriter Mark Chesnutt is 61. Actor Rosie Perez is 60. R&B singer Macy Gray is 57. Actor Idris Elba is 52. Actor Justina Machado is 52. Actor Anika Noni Rose is 52. Actor Naomi Harris is 48. Rapper Foxy Brown is 46. Actor/singer Deborah Joy Winans is 41. Actor-comedian Lauren Lapkus is 39. Actor Asher Angel is 22.