

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Friday, Sept. 20

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

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

## Friday Blessings



May God go  
before you  
this weekend  
and make the  
rough roads  
smooth. May  
His Joy be  
your  
strength, and  
His Presence  
fill your  
heart.

Good Morning



## Saturday, Sept. 21

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

## Sunday, Sept. 22

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

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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.**

## Lasker Awards Announced

Recipients of the US medical Lasker Awards were announced yesterday, recognizing scientists for their work in immunology, GLP-1 hormone therapy, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Often described as "America's Nobel," the awards frequently predict winners of the Nobel Prizes announced in October, with 95 Lasker laureates having won a Nobel.

A trio of researchers, including pioneering endocrinologist Svetlana Mojsov, was recognized for the discovery of the GLP-1 hormone's efficacy in treating obesity and diabetes, the basis of highly popular weight-loss drugs like Ozempic. For decades of HIV/AIDS research, including involvement in testing a promising twice-yearly antiviral drug injection, Quarraisha and Salim Abdool Karim were recognized with the public service award. University of Texas' Zhijian "James" Chen was recognized for identifying how the immune system detects foreign DNA in viruses.

Established in 1945 by philanthropists Mary and Albert Lasker, the awards seek to accelerate funding for medical research. Recipients receive a \$250K financial award.

## Mohamed Al-Fayed Allegations

The late billionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed has been accused of sexual assault by more than 20 female former employees of Harrods, five of whom accuse him of rape. Al-Fayed, who died last year at age 94, owned the British luxury department store from 1985 to 2010. A BBC documentary released yesterday alleges Harrods failed to intervene and helped cover up abuse claims.

The incidents reportedly occurred at various locations in London, Paris, St. Tropez, and Abu Dhabi, including Harrods' offices, Al-Fayed's London apartment, and properties he owned abroad. Some women allege they underwent medical examinations, including sexual health tests, when starting work for Al-Fayed.

The Egyptian-born businessman, whose son Dodi's relationship with Princess Diana was portrayed in "The Crown," faced additional sexual assault claims in 1997, 2008, and 2017 but was never formally prosecuted or convicted. Harrods' current owners have expressed shock and apologized to the victims.

## Freddie Owens Execution

Freddie Owens is set to be executed by lethal injection today at 6 pm ET. The execution will mark South Carolina's first in 13 years. It comes after Owens' codefendant recently retracted allegations against him.

In 1999, Owens was convicted of killing 41-year-old convenience store worker Irene Graves during a robbery two years earlier. Surveillance footage shows a man named Stephen Andra Golden and Owens conducting the robbery; it is not clear who fired the lethal shot. This week, however, Golden retracted his allegation that Owens was present with him, instead saying a third, unnamed person is culpable.

Following his sentencing, Owens was charged with killing cellmate Christopher B. Lee. Owens says he did so in anger after what he maintains is a false conviction in the Graves case.

Today's execution will mark the US' 14th execution this year.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani becomes first MLB player in history to hit 50 home runs and steal 50 bases.

2024 WNBA regular season wraps with the playoffs set to begin Sunday.

"Saturday Night Live" announces lineup of hosts and musical guests for the show's 50th season set to begin Sept. 28.

Judge dismisses lawsuit against New York Knicks and Madison Square Garden chairman James Dolan alleging sex trafficking and assault alongside Harvey Weinstein.

## Science & Technology

EU regulators give Apple six months to comply with interoperability requirements under the recently passed Digital Markets Act; rule would enable non-Apple devices to easily interact with iPhones and Apple Watches.

Pocket-sized nuclear battery up to 8,000 times more efficient than existing comparable technologies demonstrated by researchers.

Engineers develop "ventilator-on-a-chip" that allows real-time study of ventilator-caused lung injuries at the cellular level.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.7%, Dow +1.3%, Nasdaq +2.5%); S&P 500 and Dow rise to fresh records following the Federal Reserve's larger-than-expected rate cut a day before.

Nike CEO John Donahoe to step down Oct. 13, will be replaced by longtime Nike veteran Elliott Hill, who retired from the brand in 2020.

The Walt Disney Co. to stop using Salesforce-owned Slack after hack exposed company data.

US existing home sales drop 2.5% month-over-month in August, the slowest pace since October 2023; median home price of \$416,700 is up 3.1% from a year ago and is highest median price for any August since records going back to 1999.

## Politics & World Affairs

Hezbollah and Israel exchange strikes following pager, walkie-talkie explosions that killed at least 37 people; Hezbollah rockets kill two Israelis while Israel says it destroyed dozens of rocket launchers.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) takes unconventional step to advance stopgap government funding bill in the Senate following defeat in the House.

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson (R) denies CNN report claiming he posted numerous controversial and sexually explicit messages on adult sites, including calling himself a "Black Nazi"; Robinson says he will stay in the race.



Press

## CARDIOVASCULAR

### Mayo Clinic Minute: Boost your health and productivity with 'activity snacks'

DeeDee Stiepan

Active workstations incorporating a walking pad, bike, stepper and/or standing desk are successful strategies for reducing sedentary time and improving mental cognition at work without reducing job performance, according to a Mayo Clinic study. But you don't need to spend money on new office equipment to achieve the benefits of an active workstation.

Sitting at a desk for hours at a time may make some feel exhausted and unmotivated. If that's ever happened to you, it may be time for a snack ... an activity snack.

The concept is simple, after sitting for an hour, take two to three minutes to get up and move your body.

"You break this sedentary status of your body by going to take the stairs for two or three flights, or just do some push-ups or do something that is meaningful in terms of activity for just a few minutes, and then come back and continue your work," says Dr. Lopez-Jimenez.

In a way, Dr. Lopez-Jimenez says those two to three minutes reset your metabolic clock.

"It has been impressive, the biological changes those activity snacks can induce in your cells, in the metabolism of the sugar, in the metabolism of the cholesterol, just by having those little episodes of activity, even though you might be sitting down for the next 45 minutes," he says.

It's a small change that can make a big impact on your physical and mental health.

"You will see how that little thing will even sharpen your mind for the next half an hour, 45 minutes, absolutely," says Dr. Lopez-Jimenez.

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**Groton Area Superintendent Joe Schwan was busy after the volleyball match painting the GT on the football field for the homecoming game.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## **GHS 50th Class Reunion**

**The GHS Class of 1974 will be celebrating 50 years on Friday, September 20, 2024 at the Groton Legion. The evening is open to anyone who would like to come and visit members of the class.**

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## SD West Nile Virus (as of September 18):

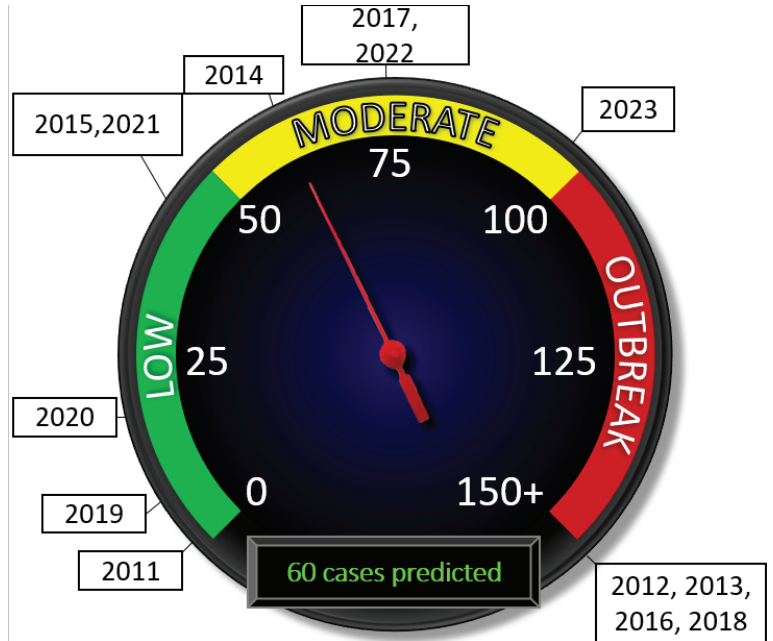
15 human cases (Beadle, Codington, Davison, Gregory, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lawrence, Pennington, Potter, Roberts, Walworth, Ziebach)

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

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

US WNV (as of September 17): 659 cases (AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WV)

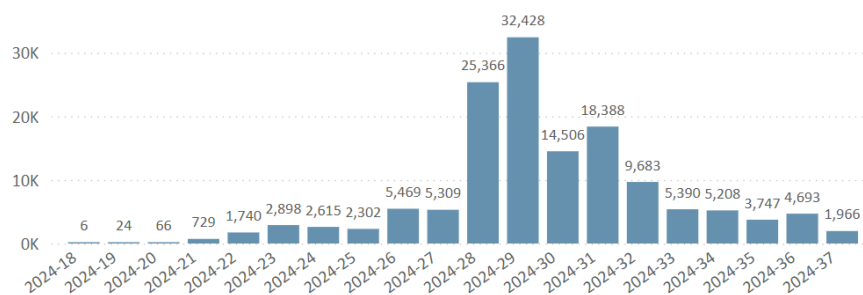
WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of September 19)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending September 14, 2024 (MMWR Week 37)

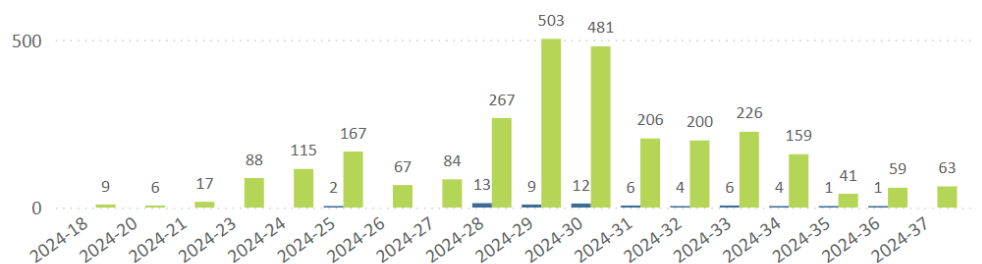
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 77  
 Total mosquito pools tested: 2,857  
 % positivity: 2.07%

Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

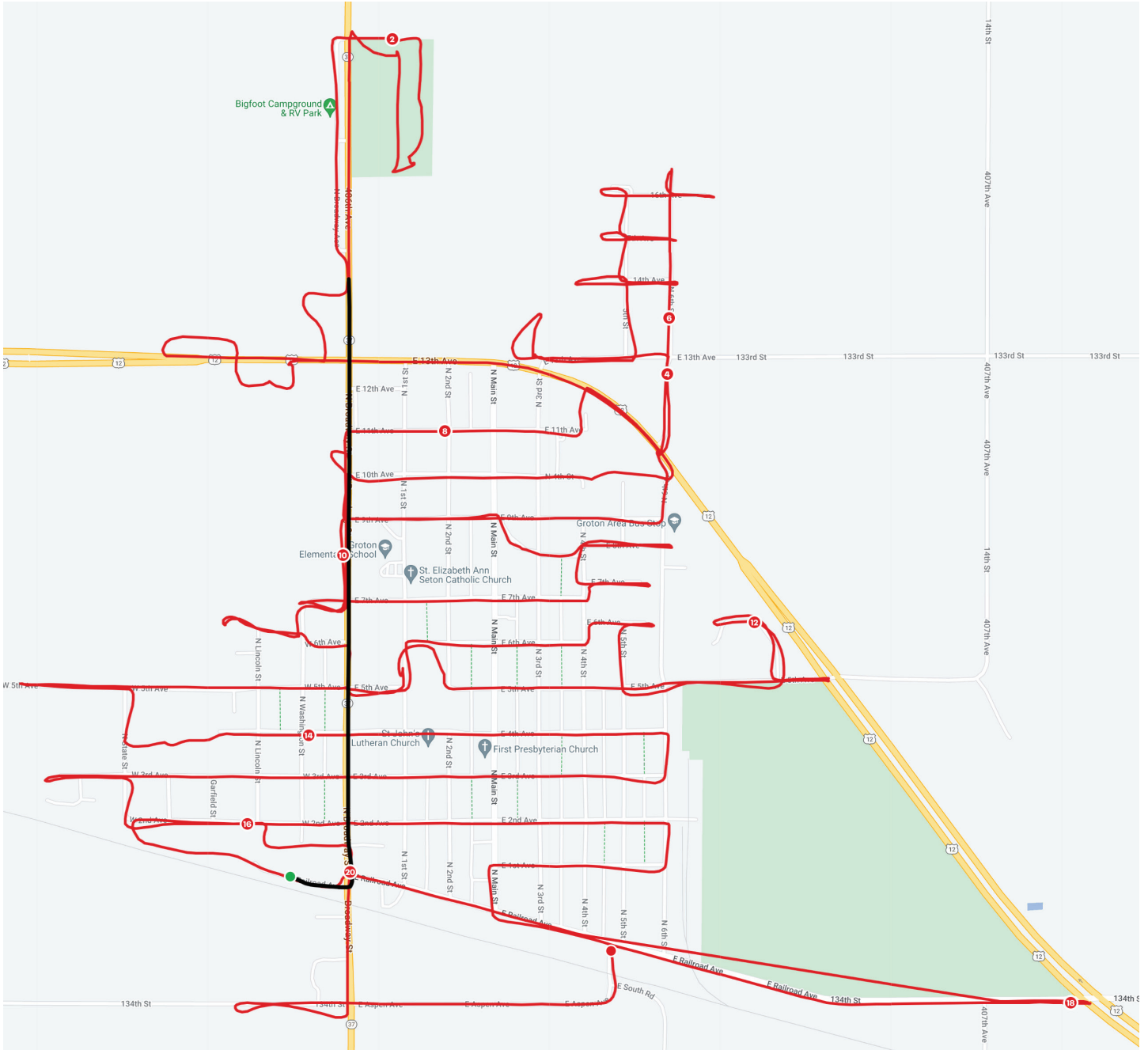
Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



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## Adult Mosquito Control



Adult mosquito control was conducted Thursday evening. The wind was south at 5 mph and temperature was in the upper 60s and low 70s. 5.2 gallons of Perm-X 4x4UL was used.

## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### Origins of Electoral College: Compromise for Electing the President

With less than 50 days remaining in the 2024 presidential election, citizens are turning their attention to the "Electoral College Map," fully aware that the next president will be the candidate who captures 270 electoral votes, rather than the winner of the popular vote, although most Americans continue to prefer a direct, nationwide election, one they view as more consistent with democratic principles, and wonder why the Framers of the Constitution chose such a peculiar method for electing the nation's highest official.

What concerns and circumstances drove the Framers to invent the Electoral College? The delegates' creation of a unique and cumbersome method of selecting the president, one not used to elect any other governmental official, was born of complex considerations. James Wilson, second in importance to James Madison as the chief architect of the Constitution, and a future Supreme Court Justice, noted the challenging, winding road that the Framers traveled in creating the Electoral College. On September 4, just two weeks before the Convention adjourned, Wilson observed: "This subject . . . is in truth the most difficult of all on which we have had to decide." Indeed, delegates voted on the subject some 30 times, over the course of 22 days.

The complexity surrounding the Framers' decision to create the Electoral College stemmed from their commitment to implementing the doctrine of separation of powers, which precluded election of the president by the national legislature, a primary feature of the parliamentary scheme practiced in England and one with which they were intimately familiar. The English Prime Minister, chosen by the House of Commons and subjected to removal by that body with a "no confidence" vote, left the nation's chief executive with little formal independence. The Framers, by contrast, prized executive independence from the legislature, consistent with the separation of powers, and recognized the incompatibility of the two systems, which necessitated a search for another method of selecting the president. Delegates focused, immediately, on the direct election of the president by American voters.

On July 17, Gouverneur Morris, whose elegant penmanship led his colleagues to task him with writing the final, and official, draft of the Constitution, proposed that the president should be elected by voters, noting that this direct method—selection by a nationwide electorate-- would avoid the "intrigue and cabal" of "designing men" who could manipulate Congress. As it turned out, Morris spoke for several heavyweights in the Convention, including James Madison. Rufus King, Benjamin Franklin and John Dickinson. Madison embraced the essentially democratic character of this plan, as he told colleagues in the Virginia ratifying convention, because the president should be "the choice of the people at large."

While numerous delegates supported a direct popular vote, others, also sympathetic to it, nonetheless pointed out what became the clear, and most important objection to such a plan. Roger Sherman of Connecticut, author of the Connecticut Compromise that bridged crucial differences among delegates, objected on grounds that the voters would not be well enough informed about the leading candidates to make a wise choice and that they would generally vote for someone from their own state. Wilson coun-



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tered with the argument that voter parochialism would still “restrain the choice to a good nomination.” Others observed that voters would know the leading candidates well enough and that the people would not be easily misled by a few men in a large country.

The Framers did not reject popular election of the president out of fear of a democratic mob. Anti-majoritarianism was not a motivating factor. Only a very few--George Mason, Elbridge Gerry and Pierce Butler--objected in principle to direct election of the executive. Rather, the lack of communication, transportation and the size of the country represented factors that undermined, at least in 1787, the concept of popular selection of the president. As scholars have demonstrated, the collection of statements from framers who explained and defended the Constitution after the Convention adjourned reflect a desire for the election of the president to be grounded on the wishes of voters. As Madison said in Virginia, it was only because of the difficulties surrounding a direct popular vote posed by a nation as large as America, that the Electoral College was proposed, but the people would elect the electors.

We turn next week to the framers’ deliberations that led to that plan.

*David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.*

**Groton Area**

# GT TIGERS

## GDILIVE.COM

**10th Anniversary of GDILIVE.COM!**

**Friday, Sept. 20**

 <p><b>Homecoming Parade 1 p.m.</b></p>	 <p><b>Boys Soccer hosts Custer, 4 p.m.</b></p>	 <p><b>Football hosts Deuel, 7 p.m.</b></p>
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**COMMON CENTS**  
**Community Thrift Store**

**75% OFF THE  
ENTIRE STORE**

**209 N MAIN ST**

**SEPTEMBER 21ST  
9AM-2PM**

**\*some exclusions apply**

## **GFP Fisheries Staff Collecting Lake Survey Information**

Pierre, S.D.-As the weather cools off and South Dakotan's thoughts turn to hunting, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) wildlife staff are actively taking account of habitat, wildlife, and fish.

While fall is a busy time in the fields with conservation officers, making connections with hunters, anglers, and landowners statewide, GFP field staff and biologists are also hard at work conducting lake surveys across the state.

Whether working on the mammoth Lake Oahe, doing surveys on game fish and prey fish like smelt and lake herring, or working on smaller water bodies, fall survey work is imperative to ensuring lakes are properly stocked come spring.

"We really have a lot of work to do in the fall," said GFP fisheries section chief, John Lott. "Lake surveys set the population bar on specific lakes. We need to know the type, size, and number of fish in these lakes to set our stocking schedule for next year. There is a lot of water out there, and we try to survey as much as possible every year."

"We essentially do double duty when out surveying lakes," Lott said. "We also have employees looking for zebra mussels or other aquatic invasive species (AIS) that may be present. While out surveying lakes in northeastern South Dakota, fisheries staff recently discovered the presence of zebra mussels on several rocks in Bullhead Lake in Marshall County."

Going forward, GFP will consider Bullhead Lake to be positive for zebra mussels.

The information gathered from these surveys is a critical aspect of fisheries management and completed reports for each fishery can be found in the Fish Surveys, Reports, and Maps database.

"This database provides significant information to individuals interested in fisheries management," concluded Lott. "Whether looking at their favorite waterbody or for a new hot spot, anglers can find lake survey, creel survey, and stocking reports in this database."

## Netters beat Clark/Willow Lake

It was a slow start for the Tigers, but after pulling off a first set extra points win, Groton Area went on to beat the Cyclones in three sets.

The first set had eight lead changes and was tied 14 times before the Tigers pulled out the 27-25 win. Groton Area never trailed in the second set, winning 25-15. Groton Area led for most of the third set, but the Cyclones did make a late threat. Clark/Willow Lake tied the set at 17 and then took a 22-19 lead. Groton Area called time-out and from there, scored the final six points for the 25-22 win.

Rylee Dunker led Groton Area with 11 kills and three blocks. Chesney Weber had 10 kills and two ace serves. Jaedyn Penning had eight kills and three ace serves. Faith Traphagen had seven kills. Taryn Traphagen had three kills, Kella Tracy had two kills, Laila Roberts had one kill and Elizabeth Fliehs and Jerica Locke each had one ace serve.

Shay Michalski had nine kills and one ace serve for the Cyclones while Hannah Heiman had nine kills and three ace serves, Shelby Begeman had eight kills and two block, Tehya Vig had four kills, Zoe Nichols had two kills and Kate Larson and Avery Lee each had an ace.

Clark/Willow Lake won the junior varsity match, 25-21 and 25-17. McKenna Tietz had six kills, Liby Althoff and Makenna Krause each had three kills, Kella Tracy and Emerlee Jones each had two kills, Talli Wright had a kill and an ace serve and Sydney Locke had an ace serve.

Ella Sass led Clark/Willow Lake with six kills. Then five players scored five points with Kelsey Hofer having four kills and one ace serve, Johanna Vandersnick had three kills and two ace serves, Maddie Brenden had two kills and three ace serves, Eliza Larson had four kills, Calla Larson had three kills and Kadee Frankfurth and Peyton Lee each had an ace serve.

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

- Paul Kosel



**Jaedyn Penning**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Rylee Dunker**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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**Elizabeth Flihs**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Jaedyn Penning**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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**Laila Roberts**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Chesney Weber**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Court explains abortion ballot measure trial mix-up but doesn't schedule new date

**Hearing on motion filed by anti-abortion group is scheduled for after election**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 5:49 PM**

More information emerged Thursday about the confusion that wrecked plans for a trial next week on South Dakota's abortion-rights ballot measure, but no new trial date has been scheduled, while a motions hearing has been scheduled for nearly a month after the election.

A judge signed an order last month saying the trial would take place the week of Sept. 23 in Sioux Falls. On Tuesday of this week, the judge emailed the parties saying the matter still needed to be added to the court calendar. The email surprised lawyers on both sides who had been planning for the Sept. 23 trial.

Karl Thoennes, court administrator for the Second Judicial Circuit, said Thursday that the confusion stemmed from a series of judge re-assignments following the scheduling order that was issued on Aug. 9.

The case was originally assigned to Judge John Pekas. After the scheduling order, he became aware of a surgery his wife needed, and he determined he would not be available the week of Sept. 23. Presiding Judge Robin Houwman reassigned the case to Judge Douglas Hoffman, but the plaintiff, Life Defense Fund, exercised its right to request a different judge. The matter was then reassigned back to Pekas.

Thoennes said court staff contacted the parties at that point and advised them that further proceedings should be scheduled on Pekas' calendar. But the attorneys proceeded with the assumption that the trial was still scheduled for Sept. 23, while court staff proceeded with an opposite assumption.

Meanwhile, Life Defense Fund filed a motion asking the judge to decide the case in its favor without a trial. A hearing on that motion has now been scheduled for Dec. 2, after the Nov. 5 general election.

The lawsuit from Life Defense Fund challenges the legality of petitions circulated by Dakotans for Health to place the abortion-rights measure on the ballot. The measure is on the ballot no matter what happens in the lawsuit, because the deadline to remove the measure has passed. Life Defense Fund still hopes for a decision invalidating the measure.

Current South Dakota law bans abortions except when necessary to "preserve the life of the pregnant



**An equal justice statue sits outside the doors of the Minnehaha County Courthouse in Sioux Falls.** (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

female.”

The ballot measure, Amendment G, would prohibit regulation of abortion during the first trimester. In the second trimester, regulations would be allowed if they are reasonably related to the pregnant woman’s physical health. During the third trimester, abortion could be regulated or prohibited, except when necessary to preserve the life or health of the woman, as determined by her physician’s medical judgment.

*Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.*

## ‘Dangerous and illicit’ contraband found during penitentiary lockdown, prison officials say

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 5:08 PM

South Dakota Department of Corrections officials say correctional officers confiscated numerous items of contraband since locking down the state penitentiary and maximum security Jameson Annex on Sunday.

When the DOC announced the lockdown of its Sioux Falls prisons late Sunday night, the agency said it would not answer questions on why the lockdown began or how long it might last.

Searches since then turned up “handmade weapons, other items that can be fashioned into or used as weapons, and unauthorized electronics equipment,” according to a news release issued Thursday.

The lockdown was not prompted by an assault or fight, DOC stated, but was implemented as a “proactive security measure.”

The lockdown remains in place. The most recent count of inmates listed on the DOC website put the population of those two prisons at around 1,300.

Phone calls are being “managed” with service sometimes disrupted, according to prison officials. Inmates are getting food and medication in their cells, and have access to medical and mental health appointments or commissary.

“The safety of our staff is the number one priority,” Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko said. “The lockdown will continue until the search of the entire complex is complete.”

Any suspected criminal activity uncovered during the lockdown will be referred to the state Division of Criminal Investigation, according to the DOC.

There were lockdowns earlier this year after two bouts of unrest in March. The incidents had inmates trying to destroy gates and other DOC property, as well as lighting fires in their cells, according to court



**The South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, as seen on Jan. 9, 2023.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



documents. Shouts of “we want phones” could be heard from outside the penitentiary’s east hall. The incidents resulted in indictments for several inmates and two people outside prison facilities who are accused of collaborating with inmates on illegal activity.

The March incidents followed a decision by the DOC to temporarily shut down tablet-based communications for an “ongoing investigation.” No charges have been filed, and no explanation has been offered.

Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield also saw unrest in July, with inmates injured in two separate flare-ups of inmate-on-inmate violence the department said injured six people.

*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.*

## State Supreme Court suspends law license of former attorney general for six months

**Jason Ravensborg was impeached, convicted for 2020 collision that killed Joe Boever**

**BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 12:40 PM**



**Jason Ravensborg, former attorney general of South Dakota, speaks during a hearing about the future of his law license on Feb. 14, 2024, at the Capitol in Pierre while his legal team looks on.** (David Bordewyk/SD NewsMedia Association)

Republican, was elected in 2018.

Ravnsborg will be required to reimburse the court and the State Bar of South Dakota for the costs of the proceedings prior to the return of his license. The opinion does not specify an amount.

### False statements during investigation

The Thursday ruling on his suspension criticized his decision to stay on as attorney general as the criminal case against him proceeded.

He pleaded no contest in 2021 to two misdemeanor charges, not admitting or denying his mobile phone use while driving and his illegal lane changes. He also settled a civil case brought by Boever’s family.

The former South Dakota attorney general who accidentally killed a man with his vehicle in 2020 will lose his license to practice law in South Dakota for six months under the terms of a ruling released Thursday by the state Supreme Court.

The suspension is effective immediately.

Jason Ravensborg was impeached, convicted and removed from office in 2022 by the South Dakota Legislature for his actions after the collision just outside of Highmore, which killed pedestrian Joe Boever on Sept. 12, 2020.

The state Supreme Court ruled that Ravensborg’s conduct after the crash and during the investigation was unbecoming of an attorney, particularly one who’d been serving in a position of trust as South Dakota’s top law enforcement official. Ravensborg, a

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"It is evident, even as of the time of oral argument to this Court, that Ravensborg failed to consider how his actions following the accident and the subsequent investigation, would impact his office's ability to fulfill its duties in such a way that maintained the public's confidence," the state Supreme Court's opinion says.

The ruling also calls out Ravensborg for lying to investigators about whether he'd used his cell phone during the Sept. 12 trip. An accident reconstruction showed that he wasn't looking at his phone at the time of the crash, but a forensic investigation of the device found that he'd spent much of the trip using it. Ravensborg initially denied using his phone at all.

"His evolving explanation regarding the extent of his cell phone use while driving involved actual dishonesty and misrepresentations," the ruling said. "He only reluctantly admitted that he 'looked at stuff' on his phone after he was confronted with specific information found on his phone."

The state's high court also called out Ravensborg for noting his position as attorney general when he reported the crash, as well as in previous traffic stops, as inappropriate.

## Shorter suspension than first recommended

The Disciplinary Board of the State Bar of South Dakota recommended a 26-month law license suspension. Ravensborg contested the board's recommendation, though he'd voluntarily ceased to practice law. A referee, retired circuit court judge Bradley Zell, ruled that the board had overstepped in some of its conclusions. Ravensborg had still behaved in a manner worthy of censure, Zell decided, but not suspension.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the case in February.

Chief Justice Steven Jensen, writing for the court, disagreed with the referee and wrote that Ravensborg had been dishonest and acted in a manner unbecoming of an attorney.

The opinion did not uphold the 26-month suspension, however. Jensen pointed to the case of the late former Governor and Congressman Bill Janklow, who ran a stop sign and killed a motorcyclist in 2003.

Janklow's law license was suspended for 26 months, but Jensen wrote that the Janklow case involved a felony reckless manslaughter conviction. Ravensborg's case involved two low-level misdemeanors – crimes that, unlike Janklow's, would not result in an automatic suspension of his law license.

The opinion also says that Ravensborg was "a well-respected public servant for most of his career," having served in the military prior to joining state government, marking another reason a six-month suspension is more reasonable.

Ravnsborg told the court in February that "he does not plan to practice law in South Dakota after these proceedings are concluded."

Even so, the opinion says, the suspension should signal that his behavior was a breach of his ethical responsibilities as an attorney and are worthy of sanction.

"While Ravensborg is unlikely to continue practicing law in South Dakota, we conclude suspension is necessary to preserve the integrity of the profession and deter like conduct by other attorneys."

Ravnsborg is currently registered as the chair and treasurer of a statewide political action committee named \$99 for Freedom, according to campaign finance documents on file with the secretary of state.

The committee had about \$28,000 cash on hand as of its most recent campaign finance disclosure, which was money transferred from Ravensborg's prior candidate committee, Jason for South Dakota, in 2023. The PAC had not contributed to any campaigns or spent any money beyond office supplies and bank fees as of May 20, the date of the organization's last public filing.

Calls to the phone number listed on the campaign finance reports were answered with an automated message saying the line had been disconnected, or that the number had been changed.

An email sent to the committee's listed email address was not immediately returned.

*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.*

## Johnson votes yes as 'anti-woke' bill targeting higher ed passes U.S. House

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 8:40 PM

WASHINGTON — A GOP measure barring accrediting organizations from requiring colleges and universities to adopt diversity, equity and inclusion policies as a condition of accreditation passed the U.S. House Thursday, though its fate appears dim.

The End Woke Higher Education Act — which succeeded 213-201 — marks one of several so-called anti-woke initiatives and messaging bills from Republican lawmakers to hit the House floor this week.

South Dakota GOP Rep. Dusty Johnson voted for the bill.

The higher education measure, which drew fierce opposition from the Biden administration and major associations of colleges and universities, came amid a looming government shutdown deadline and in the heat of the 2024 campaign.

Four House Democrats voted in favor of the GOP measure, including Reps. Don Davis of North Carolina, Jared Golden of Maine, Mary Peltola of Alaska and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington.

Baked into the legislation are two bills introduced by Republican members of the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce — the Accreditation for College Excellence Act and the Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act.

Utah Rep. Burgess Owens, chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, introduced the Accreditation for College Excellence Act in May 2023, while New York Rep. Brandon Williams brought forth the Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act in March.

In a statement to States Newsroom, Owens said "House Republicans passed the End Woke Higher Education Act to stand up for academic freedom, defend students' constitutional rights, and ensure that colleges and universities aren't forced to bend the knee to activist accreditors pushing political agendas as a condition for federal funding."

The Utah Republican said the "Biden-Harris administration has injected its far-left ideology — Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Critical Race Theory — into every part of American life, including our higher education system."

Owens' bill says accreditation standards must not require, encourage or coerce institutions to support or oppose "a specific partisan, political, or ideological viewpoint or belief" or "set of viewpoints or beliefs on social, cultural, or political issues" or support "the disparate treatment of any individual or group of



**Rice-Eccles Stadium on the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City is pictured on Monday, Jan. 15, 2024.** (Photo by Spenser Heaps for Utah News

Dispatch)

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individuals.”

Meanwhile, Williams’ Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act forces schools to disclose policies regarding free speech to students and faculty as a condition of receiving any Title IV funds.

Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 includes federal student financial aid programs.

## Strong opposition

But the legislation is highly unlikely to be passed in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

The Biden administration also strongly opposed the measure, saying in a statement this week that the legislation would “micromanage both public and private institutions, undermining their ability to recognize and promote diversity.”

The legislation “would go beyond Congress’s traditional role in higher education with a wide range of confusing and unprecedented new mandates,” the administration added.

Rep. Bobby Scott — ranking member of the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce — called the measure a “baseless attempt to inject culture wars into an ever-important accreditation process” during the floor debate Thursday.

The Virginia Democrat said the legislation “attempts to circumvent the First Amendment to establish a whole new scheme to regulate speech and association rights on campus outside of established precedents and practices.”

The GOP measure also drew the ire of leading associations of colleges and universities, who opposed the legislation both individually and collectively.

In a joint letter this week to House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, six major associations led by the American Council on Education took aim at Williams’ portion of the legislation, saying it “would undermine efforts to protect free speech on campus and provide safe learning environments free from discrimination.”

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

## The Fed says its long-awaited rate cut is apolitical, even close to the presidential election

**BY: CASEY QUINLAN - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 8:29 PM**

The Federal Reserve’s first key interest rate cut in four years coincides with another major four-year event: the homestretch of the presidential election.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell downplayed the central bank’s role in the race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump in announcing the half-percentage point cut in its benchmark rate on Wednesday. But that didn’t stop the candidates’ campaigns from weighing in, and it could prove a key factor for voters.

“This is my fourth presidential election at the Fed, and it’s always the same. We’re always going to this meeting in particular and asking what’s the right thing to do for the people we serve,” Powell said. “Nothing else is ever discussed.”

The decision to cut for the first time during the Biden Administration indicates the Federal Reserve’s Board of Governors believe the economy has beaten the COVID-19 pandemic-induced wave of inflation that has plagued it since mid-2021. The Fed hiked its key rate 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023.

Inflation peaked at 9.1% in June 2022. The Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation, rose 2.5% over the past year, according to the latest release from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in August. The unemployment rate was 4.2% in August, down from 4.3% in July, but still much higher than 3.5% in July 2023 when the Fed made its last rate hike.

“We now see the risks to achieving our employment and inflation goals as roughly in balance, and we

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are attentive to the risks of both sides of our dual mandate," Powell said.

Wednesday's was the first in what is expected to be a series of key rate cuts. For now, that benchmark rate is 4.75 to 5%

One member of the Fed's governing board, Michelle Bowman, dissented with the rest of the group, marking the first time a governor has done so since 2005. Bowman preferred a 25 basis point – or quarter percentage point – cut.

## Timing of the rate cut

Both campaigns quickly reacted to the news from the Fed.

Trump, speaking at a crypto-themed bar in New York, said the cut should have been smaller.

"I guess it shows the economy is very bad to cut it by that much, assuming they're not just playing politics," the Republican nominee said. "The economy would be very bad or they're playing politics, one or the other. But it was a big cut."

Harris, in a prepared statement, was forward-looking.

"While this announcement is welcome news for Americans who have borne the brunt of high prices, my focus is on the work ahead to keep bringing prices down," the Democratic nominee said. "I know prices are still too high for many middle class and working families."

Sarah Binder, a senior fellow in governance studies at the nonpartisan Brookings Institution and author of, "The Myth of Independence: How Congress Governs the Federal Reserve," said there is a long history of presidents pressuring the Fed, from John F. Kennedy to Richard Nixon and Trump, as a president and now as a presidential candidate.

In order to be effective in its role in keeping the economy moving, Binder said, the Fed needs to be trusted as legitimate, and its political support is contingent on doing a good job.

"The Fed doesn't have the liberty of sitting it out or not doing enough, which can also bring the Fed into politicians' crosshairs where they really, really don't want to be," she said.

Skanda Amarnath, executive director of Employ America, a research group that advocates for full employment, said the Fed should be examining the economic data.

"That's what they should look at, not where they are in the electoral seasonal cycle," she said. "I think that's the case, by and large. I don't see anything that's just a real politicization here."

## What a Fed rate cut means for the economy

Many economists and economic advisers have argued for the Fed to cut rates for months to avoid significant damage to the labor market and in the worst case, a recession.

Now, consumers should begin to see lower costs for borrowing money to buy houses, cars and other necessities.

Kitty Richards, senior strategic adviser at Groundwork Collaborative, a progressive think tank based in



**Home mortgage rates are posted outside a real estate office in Los Angeles after the Federal Reserve interest rates announcement on Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2024. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell announced a half-point cut to its benchmark interest rate in the first rate cut since the early days of the COVID pandemic.**

(Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

Washington, D.C., said the Fed should not hold back on cutting rates now that inflation is slowing.

"The Fed pursued four back-to-back 70 basis-point rate hikes when inflation was heating up. There's no reason they should allow inertia to hold them back from normalizing rates now that inflation is under control," she said.

Because shelter makes up so much of inflation, Richards has expressed concern that by keeping rates where they are, mortgage rates have been pushed so high that the housing market is unaffordable for many Americans. This, in turn, affects inflation, she said, creating a vicious cycle.

Dean Baker, senior economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a progressive economic policy think tank, said the Fed decision is a good sign for the housing market.

"It is good that the Fed has now recognized the weakening of the labor market and responded with an aggressive cut. Given there is almost no risk of rekindling inflation, the greater boost to the labor market is largely costless," Baker said in a statement. "Also, it will help to spur the housing market where millions of people have put off selling homes because of high mortgage rates."

Casey Quinlan is an economy reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. For the past decade, they have reported on national politics and state politics, LGBTQ rights, abortion access, labor issues, education, Supreme Court news and more for publications including The American Independent, ThinkProgress, New Republic, Rewire News, SCOTUSblog, In These Times and Vox.

## Health lab director says 'very unusual' Sturgis rally overdose reports remain a mystery

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 11:04 AM

State health officials are unable to pinpoint the cause of an unusual string of suspected overdose cases — including two deaths — associated with the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

At least 12 cases with similarly mysterious symptoms were reported to the state, with six of the patients requiring intubation.

State Public Health Laboratory Director Tim Southern told the Opioid Abuse Advisory Committee at its August meeting that although the state lab performed comprehensive tests on blood from two patients, including one who died, the lab didn't find a substance connecting the cases.



**Motorcycle enthusiasts attend the 81st annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally on Aug. 8, 2021, in Sturgis.** (Scott Olson/Getty Images)

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"Unfortunately we weren't able to discover the culprit behind these very unusual clinical cases and overdoses," Southern said. "Fortunately, these strange occurrences did end when the rally ended."

The lab can identify six main classes of drugs through blood toxicology tests:

THC, which is found in cannabis.

Amine, or amphetamine, a stimulant found in meth.

Benzo, or benzodiazepines, a depressant found in Valium or Xanax.

Opioid, a depressant found in fentanyl, heroin or prescription opioids, such as morphine or hydrocodone.

Barb, or barbiturates, which are depressants.

Cocaine, which is a stimulant.

The lab can also identify some other drugs through blood toxicology, such as xylazine, which was confirmed in South Dakota last year.

The first reported case of mysterious, overdose-like symptoms at the Sturgis rally happened around July 28, Southern said, and the last one was Aug. 7. The state received reports of patients with shallow breathing, seizures, hallucinations and some cardiac arrests.

Southern said some patients required multiple doses of sedatives, because it was "very, very difficult" to control the patients while they were transported to an emergency room.

The Health Department did not disclose identifying information about the two people who died. Because state officials found no single, linked cause for the medical events experienced by the two patients, the state could not corroborate that the cases were caused by overdoses.

South Dakota Department of Health Secretary Melissa Magstadt said the episode serves as a warning ahead of next year's rally to prepare for and report cases. She said her department wasn't advised of cases as they were happening, only after it was "too late."

The two deaths linked to the overdose-like symptoms came in addition to at least 12 people who died in motorcycle crashes in South Dakota during the rally or in the days just before or after the official rally dates, according to information from the Highway Patrol. The state Department of Health does not track deaths specific to the rally.

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

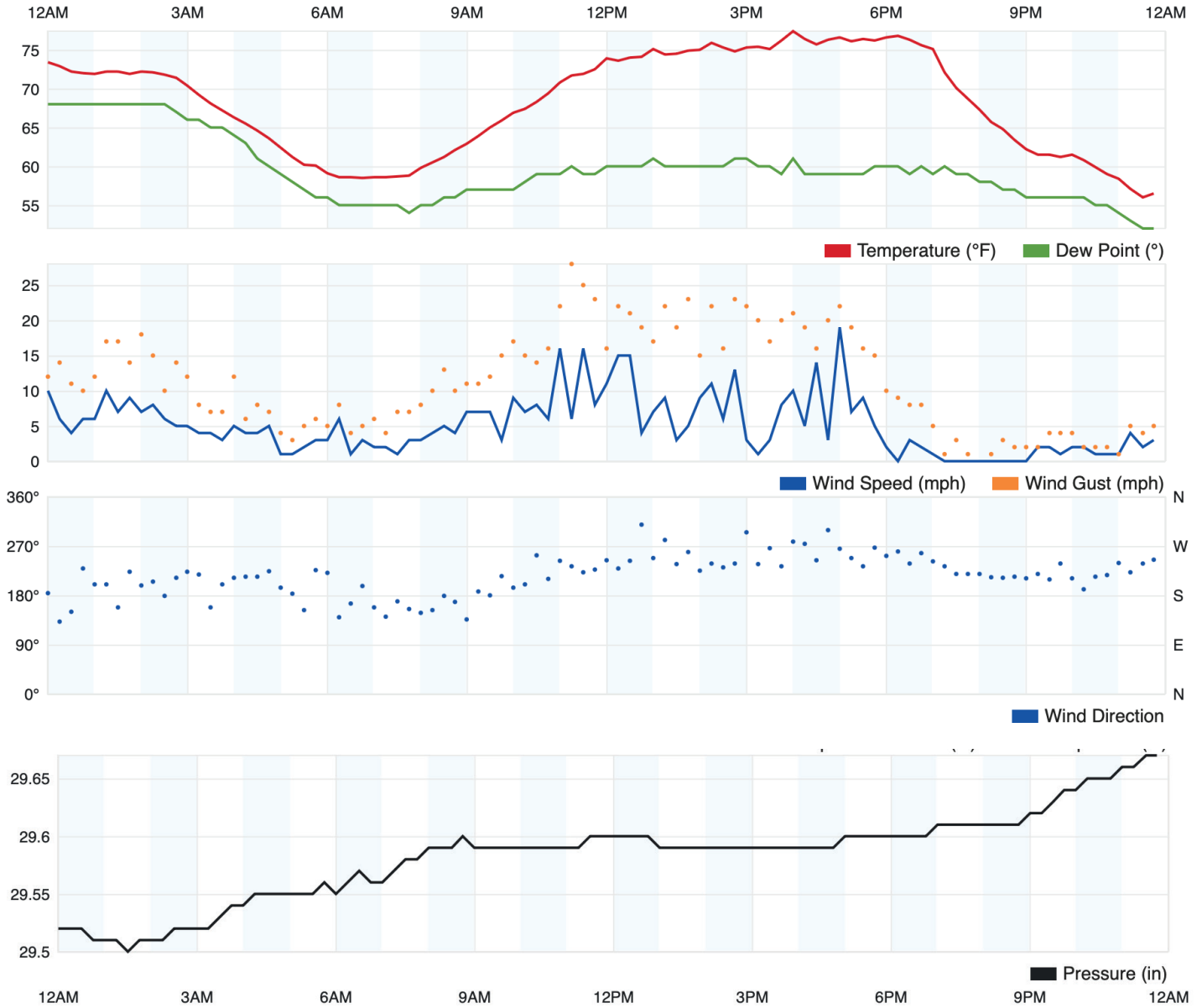
Tax collections attributed to the rally were \$1.4 million, which was down 3% from last year, according to estimates by the state Department of Revenue.

*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.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 80 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 53 °F

Clear

Saturday



High: 68 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 41 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 67 °F

Mostly Sunny

## WEEKEND FORECAST

TODAY



HIGHS: 78-89°F

LOWS: 50-59°F

SATURDAY



HIGHS: 67-71°F

LOWS: 39-45°F

SUNDAY



HIGHS: 67-71°F

LOWS: 40-45°F



After today, temperatures will be around to slightly below average for several days. Expect dry conditions. Some wind gusts of 35+ mph are possible on Saturday west of the James River.

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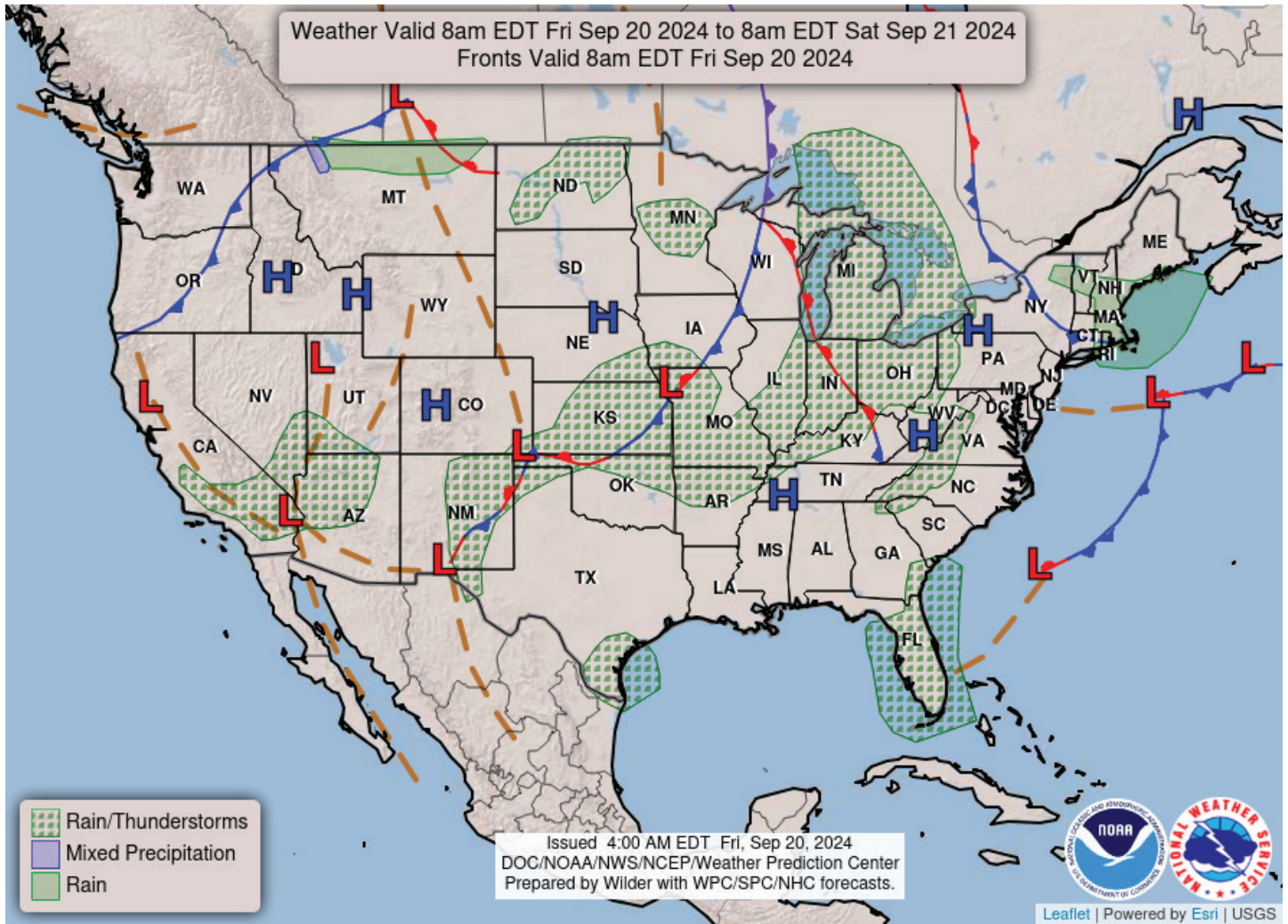
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 78 °F at 4:02 PM**  
**Low Temp: 56 °F at 11:28 PM**  
**Wind: 28 mph at 11:13 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 18 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1937  
Record Low: 20 in 1901  
Average High: 73  
Average Low: 45  
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.33  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.24  
Average Precip to date: 17.67  
Precip Year to Date: 19.66  
Sunset Tonight: 7:34:34 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:17:44 am



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## Today in Weather History

September 20, 1970: During the late afternoon, golfball hail fell in and around Redfield with a tornado reported just north of Doland. No damage was reported with the hail or the tornado.

September 20, 1972: About 430 pm, in southeast South Dakota, a tornado caused an estimated \$95,000 damage to property and 50,000 damage to crops in Utica and nearby rural areas. Buildings were damaged; trees and power lines were downed.

1845 - A tornado traveled 275 miles across Lake Ontario, New York and Lake Champlain. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1909: A large and deadly Category 3 hurricane made landfall near Grand Isle, Louisiana during the late evening hours. The states of Louisiana and Mississippi showed catastrophic damage resulting in 371 deaths and \$265 million in damage (2010 USD).

1926 - A hurricane which hit Miami, FL, on the 18th, pounded Pensacola with wind gusts to 152 mph. Winds raged in excess of 100 mph for four hours, and above 75 mph for 20 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1961: On September 10th, the Television Infrared Observation Satellite observed an area of thunderstorms west-southwest of the Cape Verde Islands, suggesting a possible tropical cyclone. This storm is the first large tropical cyclone to be discovered on satellite imagery and would eventually become Hurricane Esther. On September 20th, Hurricane Esther, a Category 4 storm off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina began to slow down as it moved north-northeast well off the Jersey shore. The storm continued to weaken as it made a five-day loop south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, then moved to Cape Cod and into Maine on the 26th.

1967 - Hurricane Beulah moved into South Texas, and torrential rains from the hurricane turned the rich agricultural areas of South Texas into a large lake. Hurricane Beulah also spawned a record 115 tornadoes. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The temperature at West Yellowstone MT plunged to six degrees below zero, while the temperature at San Francisco CA soared to 94 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and west Texas. In Oklahoma, a thunderstorm at Seiling produced three inches of rain in one hour, golf ball size hail, and wind gusts to 60 mph which collapsed a tent at the state fair injuring nine persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in central Wyoming, and snow in some of the higher elevations. Casper WY reported 1.75 inches of rain in 24 hours, and a thunderstorm north of the Wild Horse Reservoir produced 1.90 inches of rain in just forty minutes.

1989 - Hugo jilted Iris. Hurricane Hugo churned toward the South Atlantic Coast, gradually regaining strength along the way. Tropical Storm Iris got too close to Hugo, and began to weaken. A cold front brought strong and gusty winds to the Great Basin and the Southern Plateau Region, with wind gusts to 44 mph reported at Kingman AZ. (The National Weather Summary)

2002: A glacial avalanche buries the village of Karmadon in Russia, killing more than 100 people.

2005 - Hurricane Rita tracked through the Florida Straits and just south of the Florida Keys. Winds were sustained at tropical storm force at Key West, where peak winds gusted to 76 mph.



## THE GREATEST OF THESE

Abraham Lincoln was known for his kindness to everyone. He was often criticized by his associates for being so gracious.

On one occasion one of them said, "With all of the power you have, why don't you destroy your enemies?"

"Am I not destroying my enemies," he asked, "when I make them my friends?"

Perhaps there is no more misunderstood or misused word in our world today than the word "love." Nearly everyone has their own personal meaning for it. For some it has a "sexual" meaning. For others it has an "I like to be with you" meaning. And there are those who see love as demonstrating an unselfish concern for others – helping them when they are unable to help themselves or even provide for themselves.

Paul speaks of a love that is supremely concerned with the best interests and welfare of others. It is a love that makes the needs and concerns of others my very own. It is as though I am saying, "I don't walk away from the needs of others, I take them with me. If they have a need, it is my need. If they hurt, I hurt. If they are in pain, it is my pain as well. If they have no food, I will share my food with them."

As Christians we must move beyond the feeling, sentimental and emotional types of love to a love that forces us to do what Jesus would have us to do for others.

Prayer: Lord, we see in Your life and death the real meaning of love. Strengthen us to live as you lived and to love as You loved so others will see You in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 1 Corinthians 13

*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:  
09.17.24

14 31 48 57 64 9

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$47,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 11 Mins  
DRAW: 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.24

7 17 29 42 45 5

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$9,310,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 26  
DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.19.24

11 20 28 35 43 13

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 41 Mins  
DRAW: 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.24

3 15 23 25 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$35,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 41  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.24

16 23 50 53 66 14

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

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 10  
DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
09.18.24

1 11 22 47 68 7

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$195,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 10  
DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## Upcoming Groton Events

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

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

### **In-person voting for the US presidential contest is about to start as Election Day closes in**

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Democratic and Republican national conventions are just a memory, the first and perhaps only debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump is in the bag, and election offices are beginning to send out absentee ballots.

Now come the voters.

Friday is the start of early in-person voting for the 2024 U.S. presidential election, kicking off in Virginia, South Dakota and Minnesota, the home state of Harris' running mate, Gov. Tim Walz.

The first ballots being cast in person come with just over six weeks left before Election Day on Nov. 5. About a dozen more states will follow with early in-person voting by mid-October.

"If I could wave a magic wand in this room right now, I would wish for two things: Between now and November 5th, I want to see high turnout and low drama," Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon said during a news conference Thursday that previewed his state's efforts around the election season. Simon also serves as president of the National Association of Secretaries of State.

Across the country, local election directors are beefing up their security to keep their workers and polling places safe while also ensuring that ballots and voting procedures won't be tampered with. Officials and ordinary poll workers have been targets of harassment and even death threats since the 2020 presidential election.

Federal authorities are investigating the origin of suspicious packages that have been sent to or received by elections officials in more than 15 states in recent days, including Virginia.

As the start of early voting approached, Trump's rhetoric turned more ominous with a pledge to prosecute anyone who "cheats" in the election in the same way he falsely claimed they did in 2020, when he lied about widespread fraud and attacked officials who stood by their accurate vote tallies.

Trump has previously sought to sow doubts about mail voting and encouraged voters to cast ballots in person on Election Day. But this year, Trump and the Republican National Committee, which he now controls, have begun to embrace early and mail voting as a way to lock in GOP votes before Election Day, just as Democrats have done for years.

In Virginia, early in-person voting has long been popular in the city of Chesapeake, especially during presidential elections, said its elections director, Mary Lynn Pinkerman.

She expects early voting to help ease the crowds on Nov. 5, but also cautioned that Election Day voting "is certainly not a thing of the past" and that "voters could still encounter wait times."

Fairfax County Elections Director Eric Spicer said roughly a third of local voters came to the polls on Election Day during the 2020 presidential election, while the rest voted by mail or early and in-person.

"We call them our cicada voters who come out every four years," he said, adding that he expects this year's presidential race to drive heavy turnout in his northern Virginia county.

In South Dakota, the top election official in Minnehaha County, the state's most populous, is planning for an 80% overall turnout. Extra seasonal workers began Monday, and an early voting area was set up in the county administration building in Sioux Falls.

County Auditor Leah Anderson said the presidential race and several statewide ballot measures — including one that would enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution and another to legalize recreational marijuana — will attract voters.

"There's a lot on our ballot," Anderson said.

Many early voters might opt for early in-person balloting instead of mail-in absentee ballots to ensure their votes get counted, given the ongoing struggles of the U.S. Postal Service.

State and local election officials from across the country last week warned that problems with mail deliv-



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eries threaten to disenfranchise voters, and they told the head of the system that it hasn't fixed persistent deficiencies despite their repeated attempts at outreach.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy responded in a letter released Monday that he'll work with state election officials to address their concerns, but reiterated that the Postal Service will be ready.

Simon urged voters to make their voting plans now. Mail delays vary across the country, he said, so voters should request mail-in absentee ballots early if they plan to vote from home, and return them early. Some states count ballots as long as they're postmarked by Election Day, while Minnesota and other states count only the ballots that arrive by the time polls close.

"My hope and expectation is that the USPS will do the things that we have recommended, and do them quickly over the next 47 days because the stakes really are high for individual voters," Simon said.

## Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Little Wound 50, McLaughlin 0

Lower Brule 68, Marty 0

Pine Ridge 50, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 14

Tiospa Zina 54, Crow Creek Tribal School 0

Todd County 62, St. Francis Indian 30

White River 60, Flandreau Indian 6

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

## A lawsuit challenging a South Dakota abortion rights measure will play out after the election

By JACK DURA Associated Press

An anti-abortion group's lawsuit to invalidate an abortion rights measure appearing on South Dakota's statewide ballot won't be resolved until after the November election.

Media reports of an apparent disconnect between attorneys and the Second Judicial Circuit over scheduling of the trial — initially set for Sept. 23-27 — led the court to issue an advisory with a timeline of judge assignments in the case. A hearing on the Life Defense Fund's motion for summary judgment is now set for Dec. 2, weeks after the Nov. 5 election.

The release describes how, over about two weeks, the case was reassigned from Judge John Pekas after he learned of his wife's need for surgery. However, the case then was assigned back to him after another judge was removed from the case.

In a statement, Life Defense Fund spokesperson Caroline Woods said both parties were surprised the trial was not going to happen next week.

"After an immense amount of preparation, Life Defense Fund is deeply disappointed that we are not allowed to provide our evidence to the court," she said.

Dakotans for Health co-founder Rick Weiland said, "I think for us the bottom line is that through this whole process and just trying to stop the voters of South Dakota from weighing in, and they've been unsuccessful every step of the way, and now their hope was to have a trial during the height of the election, and that's not going to happen. ... We're going to have a vote, not a trial."

Life Defense Fund alleged a mix of wrongdoing by petition circulators in its effort to kill the measure, which would place abortion rights in the state constitution.

South Dakota outlaws abortion as a felony crime, with the only exception to save the life of the mother, under a trigger ban that took effect in 2022 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

South Dakota is one of nine states where voters will decide ballot measures enshrining abortion rights

this fall. In all seven states where the issue has previously been on the ballot, voters have sided with abortion rights.

## **South Dakota court suspends law license of former attorney general after fatal accident**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has ordered a six-month suspension of former state Attorney General Jason Ravensborg's law license, citing actions he took after a deadly accident with a pedestrian that precipitated his political downfall.

Ravnsborg violated "Rules of Professional Conduct," the Supreme Court ruling issued Wednesday states. "Ravnsborg's patent dishonesty concerning the use of his phone, as well as the developed forensic evidence, raise genuine questions about the integrity of his statements regarding the night of the accident," the ruling states. "This conduct, particularly considering Ravensborg's prominent position as attorney general, reflected adversely on the legal profession as a whole and impeded the administration of justice."

It's unclear if Ravensborg will appeal. A call to a phone number listed for Ravensborg on Thursday went unanswered. Messages were left with Ravensborg's attorney, Michael Butler.

Ravnsborg, a Republican, was elected in 2018. He was impeached and removed from office less than two years after the 2020 accident that killed 55-year-old Joe Boever, who was walking along a rural stretch of highway when he was struck.

A disciplinary board of the South Dakota State Bar sought a 26-month suspension of Ravensborg's law license, though it would have been retroactive to June 2022, when he left office.

At a hearing before the South Dakota Supreme Court in February, Ravensborg spoke on his own behalf, telling justices that contrary to the disciplinary board's allegations, he was remorseful.

"I'm sorry, again, to the Boever family that this has occurred," Ravensborg told the court. "It's been 1,051 days, and I count them every day on my calendar, and I say a prayer every day for him and myself and all the members of the family and all the people that it's affected. And I'm very sorry for that."

Thomas Frieberg, an attorney for the disciplinary board, said at the February hearing that members focused on Ravensborg's actions after the accident.

"The board felt very strongly that he was, again, less than forthright. That he was evasive," Frieberg said.

Ravnsborg was driving home from a political fundraiser the night of Sept. 12, 2020, when his car struck "something," according to a transcript of his 911 call. He told the dispatcher it might have been a deer or other animal.

Relatives later said Boever had crashed his truck and was walking toward it, near the road, when he was hit.

Ravnsborg resolved the criminal case in 2021 by pleading no contest to a pair of traffic misdemeanors, including making an illegal lane change and using a phone while driving, and was fined by a judge. Also in 2021, Ravensborg agreed to an undisclosed settlement with Boever's widow.

At the 2022 impeachment hearing, prosecutors told senators that Ravensborg made sure that officers knew he was attorney general, saying he used his title "to set the tone and gain influence" in the aftermath of the crash. Butler, at the February hearing, said Ravensborg was only responding when an officer asked if he was attorney general.

## **Thousands of exploding devices in Lebanon trigger a nation that has been on edge for years**

By ZEINA KARAM and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Chris Knayzeh was in a town overlooking Lebanon's capital when he heard the rumbling aftershock of the 2020 Beirut port blast. Hundreds of tons of haphazardly stored ammonium nitrates had exploded, killing more than 200 people and injuring thousands.

Already struggling with the country's economic collapse, the sight of the gigantic mushroom cloud un-

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leashed by the blast was the last straw. Like many other Lebanese, he quit his job and booked a one-way ticket out of Lebanon.

Knayzeh, now a lecturer at a university in France, was visiting Lebanon when news broke Tuesday of a deadly attack in which thousands of handheld pagers were blowing up in homes, shops, markets and streets across the country. Israel, local news reports said, was targeting the devices of the militant Hezbollah group. Stuck in Beirut traffic, Knayzeh started panicking that drivers around him could potentially be carrying devices that would explode.

Within minutes, hospitals were flooded with bloodied patients, bringing back painful reminders of the port blast four years ago that left enduring mental and psychological scars for those who lived through it.

A day later, a similar attack struck walkie-talkies. In total, the explosions killed at least 37 people and injured more than 3,000, many of them civilians. Israel is widely believed to be behind the blasts, although it has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility.

"The country's state is unreal," Knayzeh told The Associated Press.

The port blast was one of the biggest nonnuclear explosions ever recorded, and it came on top of a historic economic meltdown, financial collapse and a feeling of helplessness after nationwide protests against corruption that failed to achieve their goals. It compounded years of crises that have upended the lives of people in this small country.

Four years after the port catastrophe, an investigation has run aground. The ravaged Mediterranean port remains untouched, its towering silos standing broken and shredded as a symbol of a country in ruins. Political divisions and paralysis have left the country without a president or functioning government for more than two years. Poverty is on the rise.

On top of that and in parallel with the war in Gaza, Lebanon has been on the brink of all-out war with Israel for the past year, with Israel and Hezbollah trading fire across the border and Israeli warplanes breaking the sound barrier over Beirut almost daily, terrifying people in their homes and offices.

"I can't believe this is happening again. How many more disasters can we endure?" asked Jocelyn Hallak, a mother of three, two of whom now work abroad and the third headed out after graduation next year. "All this pain, when will it end?"

A full-blown war with Israel could be devastating for Lebanon. The country's crisis-battered health care system had been preparing for the possibility of conflict with Israel even before hospitals became inundated with the wounded from the latest explosions. Most of the injuries received were in the face, eyes and limbs — many of them in critical condition and requiring extended hospital stays.

Still, Knayzeh, 27, can't stay away. He returns regularly to see his girlfriend and family. He flinches whenever he hears construction work and other sudden loud sounds. When in France, surrounded by normalcy, he agonizes over family at home while following the ongoing clashes from afar.

"It's the attachment to our country I guess, or at the very least attachment to our loved ones who couldn't leave with us," he said.

This summer, tens of thousands of Lebanese expatriates came to visit family and friends despite the tensions. Their remittances and money they spend while there help keep the country afloat and in some cases are the main source of income for families. Many, however, cut their vacations short in chaotic airport scenes, fearing major escalation after the assassinations of Hezbollah and Hamas commanders in Beirut and Tehran last month, blamed on Israel.

Even in a country that has vaulted from one crisis to another for decades, the level of confusion, insecurity and anger is reaching new heights. Many thought the port blast was the most surreal and frightening thing they would ever experience — until thousands of pagers exploded in people's hands and pockets across the country this week.

"I saw horrific things that day," said Mohammad al-Mousawi, who was running an errand in Beirut's southern suburb, where Hezbollah has a strong presence, when the pagers began blowing up.

"Suddenly, we started seeing scooters whizzing by carrying defaced men, some without fingers, some with their guts spilling out. Then the ambulances started coming."

It reminded him of the 2020 port blast, he said. "The number of injuries and ambulances was unbelievable."

"One more horror shaping our collective existence," wrote Maha Yahya, the Beirut-based director of the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center.

"The shock, the disarray, the trauma is reminiscent of Beirut after the port explosion. Only this time it was not limited to a city but spread across the country," she said in a social media post.

In the aftermath of the exploding pagers, fear and paranoia has taken hold. Parents kept their children away from schools and universities, fearing more exploding devices. Organizations including the Lebanese civil defense advised personnel to switch off their devices and remove all batteries until further notice. One woman said she disconnected her baby monitor and other household appliances.

Lebanon's civil aviation authorities have banned the transporting of pagers and walkie-talkies on all airplanes departing from Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport "until further notice." Some residents were sleeping with their phones in another room.

In the southern city of Tyre, ahead of a speech by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, city resident Hassan Hajo acknowledged feeling "a bit depressed" after the pager blasts, a major security breach for a secretive organization like Hezbollah. He was hoping to get a boost from Nasrallah's speech. "We have been through worse before and we got through it," he said.

In his speech, Nasrallah vowed to retaliate against Israel for the attacks on devices, while Israel and Hezbollah traded heavy fire across the border. Israel stepped up warnings of a potential larger military operation targeting the group.

Another resident, Marwan Mahfouz, said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been threatening Lebanon with war for the past year and he should just do it.

"If we are going to die, we'll die. We are already dying. We are already dead," he said.

## Kentucky sheriff charged in killing of judge at courthouse

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — A judge in a rural Kentucky county was shot and killed in his courthouse chambers Thursday, and the local sheriff was charged with murder in the slaying, police said.

The preliminary investigation indicates Letcher County Sheriff Shawn M. Stines shot District Judge Kevin Mullins multiple times following an argument inside the courthouse, according to Kentucky State Police. Mullins, who held the judgeship for 15 years, died at the scene, and Stines surrendered without incident.

The fatal shooting in Whitesburg sent shock waves through a tight-knit Appalachian town and county seat of government with about 1,700 residents located about 145 miles (235 kilometers) southeast of Lexington.

Lead county prosecutor Matt Butler described an outpouring of sympathy as he recused himself and his office from investigations in the shooting, citing social and family ties to Mullins.

"We all know each other here. ... Anyone from Letcher County would tell you that Judge Mullins and I married sisters and that we have children who are first cousins but act like siblings," Butler said in statement from his office. "For that reason, among others, I have already taken steps to recuse myself and my entire office."

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman said his office will collaborate with a commonwealth's attorney in the region as special prosecutors in the criminal case.

"We will fully investigate and pursue justice," Coleman said on social media.

Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice Larence B. VanMeter said he was "shocked by this act of violence" and that the court system was "shaken by this news."

Letcher County's judge-executive signed an order closing on Friday the county courthouse where the shooting took place.

Mullins, 54, was hit multiple times in the shooting, Kentucky State Police said. Stines, 43, was charged with one count of first-degree murder. The investigation is continuing, police said.

It was unclear whether Stines had an attorney. Kentucky State Police referred inquires about Stines' legal

representation Thursday to a spokesperson who did not immediately respond by email.

Responding to the shooting, Gov. Andy Beshear said in a social media post: "There is far too much violence in this world, and I pray there is a path to a better tomorrow."

Mullins served as a district judge in Letcher County since he was appointed by former Gov. Steve Beshear in 2009 and elected the following year.

Mullins was known for promoting substance abuse treatment for people involved in the justice system and helped hundreds of residents enter inpatient residential treatment, according to a program for a drug summit he spoke at in 2022. He also helped develop a program called Addiction Recovery Care to offer peer support services in the courthouse. The program was adopted in at least 50 counties in Kentucky.

Mullins also served as a founding member of the Responsive Effort to Support Treatment in Opioid Recovery Efforts Leadership Team.

After the shooting, several area schools were briefly placed on lockdown.

## **The EU's chief is trying to help Ukraine prepare for winter. Half its energy network is destroyed.**

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen arrived in Ukraine on Friday focused on helping the country to repair and reconnect its war-damaged electricity grid and boost its heating capacity as winter approaches.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during its war with Russia, and rolling electricity blackouts leave parts of the east in darkness for four hours at a time. Von der Leyden said it was as though all of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had lost electricity.

Meanwhile, winter is approaching.

"Heating season starts in two weeks and Russia's relentless attacks on Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure aims to inflict maximum damage," von der Leyen said as she arrived in Kyiv for talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "We will help Ukraine in its brave efforts to overcome this."

The main aim is to help Ukraine decentralize its power grid, and to become less reliant on the big power stations that make easier targets for Russian forces. Around 260 missiles rained down in a major attack on energy infrastructure late last month.

The Europeans have already sent more 10,000 generators and transformers, and they're supplying small and more mobile gas turbines too. These types of electricity-providing equipment is harder to hit and easier to repair.

Ukraine's winter runs from late October through March, with January and February the toughest months. The Europeans hope to help supply around 25% of the 17 gigawatts of power that the country is likely to need this winter.

One aim of the EU assistance is to provide an incentive for people to stay in Ukraine. Some 4 million people have fled since the war began in February 2022, often to Poland and other neighboring countries.

The EU is providing assistance, such as short-term help to find a place to stay, jobs or education. But recently the number of people leaving has climbed. The commission, the EU's powerful executive branch, estimates that 10,000 more people are applying for help each week.

On Thursday, the commission announced that it would provide an extra 160 million euros (\$180 million) to help fortify Ukraine's energy network. Of that, 100 million euros (\$112 million) come from the windfall profits the EU has earned from interest on frozen Russian assets.

Von der Leyen said the plan is to make "Russia pay for it through the revenue generated by their frozen assets." Denmark is also leading the charge on using the money to place orders for weapons and military equipment directly with Ukraine's defense industry.

She and Zelenskyy will also discuss the use of loans organized by the Group of Seven major industrial powers to help bolster Ukraine's conflict-ravaged economy, and weigh progress in Kyiv's efforts to join the EU.

## Protests ousted Sri Lanka's last president. Ahead of new election, many are still waiting for change

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Two years ago, tens of thousands of Sri Lankans rose up against their president and forced him to flee the country. As the country prepares for its first election since then, many say they're still waiting for change.

As Sri Lanka sank into economic collapse in 2022, people from various walks of life rallied to change a long-entrenched government they saw as responsible. The unprecedented island-wide public uprising they led was a moment of hope for the country long been fatigued by war and economic instability.

Days ahead of Saturday's presidential election, many still complain of corrupt leaders, economic mismanagement, and the entrenched power of the political old guard, but former protesters are having a hard time coming together behind a candidate.

They agree on one thing: Sri Lanka needs a new political system that can take it out of economic and political turbulence.

Days after Rajapaksa fled the country, Sri Lanka's parliament replaced him with then-prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in a vote that many protesters saw as a victory for the status quo.

Many Sri Lankans say the current government is largely made up of the same politicians who have ruled the island nation for decades through a devastating civil war that ended in 2009 to the economic crisis that began during the coronavirus pandemic.

Even though he was later jailed for seven days on charges of violence that saw Sri Lankan dissidents ransacking the presidential palace, 42-year-old physician Pathum Kerner said the protests achieved one goal: bringing in a new leader who could address the country's economic woes.

The worst of the economic crisis is over, he says, but there's still a long road ahead. "We wanted to create a new party, a new political culture, and emerging leaders, but we could not do that," said Kerner, who joined the protests in their first days and helped to start the "Go Home, Gota" slogan that became a rallying cry for Rajapaksa's foes.

Wickremesinghe has made progress steadying Sri Lanka's economy, but discontent remains strong as he's introduced economic policies that have raised the cost of living, like tax cuts and a debt restructuring program.

Meanwhile, many of the protest movement's political demands remain unmet, from accountability from his predecessors for the economic crisis, to curtailment of president's powers and a democratic replacement.

Ajantha Perera, an academic and scientist who was part of the protests, said she hoped at first that Wickremesinghe would work with the protesters to find solutions to the crisis.

Instead, she said, the new president went after civil society leaders who were instrumental in the citizens' movement, delayed local elections citing lack of funds, and protected the powerful Rajapaksa clan that had ruled Sri Lanka for more than 12 years.

"All of a sudden he turned into something totally different. He was trying to please the Rajapaksas who left," Perera said.

Like many former protesters, she wants Sri Lanka to strip its presidency of most of its powers, moving them to a more powerful parliament and prime minister.

"Executive presidency is a white elephant for Sri Lanka," she said, saying that any new president could use it to tighten their grip over the country. "We can't afford it. We don't need it."

The former protesters are finding that they don't always agree the course their country should take, spurring divisions between one-time allies.

Wickremesinghe's main challengers — opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and parliamentarian Anura Dissanayake, a surprise top contender who heads a new leftist coalition — have promised major political changes, including renegotiating a deal with the International Monetary Fund to win more favorable terms.

Dissanayake has even promised to nationalize the country's resources to spur growth.

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Those promises worry Kerner, who says he's eager to hold the government to its promises but doesn't trust leftists with the economy.

"Bringing in a leftist to this crisis," Kerner said, "is like leaving laxatives to a patient who's dying from dehydration."

Human rights lawyer Swasthika Arulingam says that the emerging political splits among former protesters are a sign of healthier democracy.

Arulingam, who offered legal aid to protesters during the uprising, says Sri Lankans have become "politically conscious" after decades of voting on ethnic lines.

"This was the moment when the political status quo broke and people came out to the streets and demanded for systemic change. So definitely there's a shift in politics in terms of the younger generation," Arulingam said. "Political parties and candidates can no longer come and say whatever they want. People are asking questions now."

The 37-year-old, a member of the minority Tamil community that bore the brunt of the civil war — is helping run a campaign for a candidate from the newly minted People's Struggle Alliance. It's another leftist political movement that is vying for a place in Sri Lanka's political landscape.

On a recent afternoon in Homagama, a town which is about 24 kilometers (15 miles) south-east of Colombo, Arulingam spoke in front a small crowd of supporters and urged them to vote for change.

Arulingam admits her party won't win this election, but she says it won't hesitate to hit the streets again if the country's politicians don't meet demands for change.

"We are gearing up for a political fight, and we are preparing the ground," she said.

## Shohei Ohtani surpasses 50-50 milestone in spectacular fashion with a 3-homer, 2-steal game

By ALANIS THAMES AP Sports Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Shohei Ohtani looked up at a visiting crowd that turned out to cheer him and the Los Angeles Dodgers — and ended up getting to witness one of the greatest individual performances, and seasons, in major league history.

Fans lifted their phones to capture the moment and chanted "M-V-P!" as Ohtani rounded the bases after he cleared the fence for the 50th time, becoming the first major league player with at least 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases in a season.

The most amazing thing about it? Ohtani's day wasn't even finished.

Ohtani raced past the 50-50 milestone in the most spectacular game of his history-making career, becoming the first big league player to hit three homers and steal two bases in a game during a 20-4 rout of the Miami Marlins on Thursday that also secured a playoff spot for the Dodgers.

"I almost cried, to be honest," Dodgers shortstop Miguel Rojas said. "It was a lot of emotions because of everything that happens behind the scenes that we got to witness every single day."

Los Angeles' \$700 million Japanese superstar hit his 49th homer in the sixth inning, his 50th in the seventh and his 51st in the ninth. He finished 6 for 6 with 10 RBIs while becoming the first big league player to hit three homers and steal two bases in a game.

"It was something I wanted to get over as quickly as possible. And, you know, it's something that I'm going to cherish for a very long time," Ohtani said through an interpreter in a televised interview.

Ohtani reached the second deck in right-center on two of his three homers at LoanDepot Park. In the sixth inning, he launched a 1-1 slider from George Soriano 438 feet for his 49th.

Ohtani hit his 50th homer in the seventh, an opposite-field, two-run shot to left against Marlins reliever Mike Baumann. Then, in the ninth, his 51st traveled 440 feet to right-center, a three-run shot against Marlins second baseman Vidal Brujan, who came in to pitch with the game out of hand.

"To be honest, I'm the one probably most surprised," Ohtani said. "I have no idea where this came from, but I'm glad that it was going well today."

Ohtani came into the game with 48 homers and 49 steals. He took care of the stolen bases early, swiping

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his 50th in the first and his 51st in the second. He has been successful on his last 28 stolen base attempts.

He broke the Dodgers' franchise record of 49 homers set by Shawn Green in 2001. And he became the third player in major league history with at least six hits, three homers and 10 RBIs in a game, joining Cincinnati's Walker Cooper in 1949 and Washington's Anthony Rendon in 2017.

"THIS GUY IS UNREAL!!!" LeBron James posted on X.

Ohtani has 120 RBIs, trailing only Aaron Judge of the New York Yankees (53 homers, 136 RBIs) in both categories.

Ohtani reached the 50-50 milestone in his 150th game. He was already the sixth player in major league history and the fastest ever to reach 40 home runs and 40 stolen bases in a season, needing just 126 games.

His previous career high in homers was 46 for the Los Angeles Angels in 2021, when he also made 23 starts on the mound and won his first of two American League MVP awards.

It was another memorable night for Ohtani at LoanDepot Park, where he struck out then-Angels teammate Mike Trout of the United States for the final out of the 2023 World Baseball Classic championship while playing for Japan.

"I've had perhaps the most memorable moments here in my career," Ohtani said, "and this stadium has become one of my favorite stadiums."

Already the consensus best player in baseball whose accomplishments as a pitcher and batter outpaced even Babe Ruth, Ohtani reached new heights as an offensive player while taking the year off from pitching.

Ohtani signed his \$700 million, 10-year deal with the Dodgers last December. The two-way star, who previously spent six years with the Los Angeles Angels, has played exclusively at designated hitter this season as he rehabilitates after surgery a year ago for an injured elbow ligament.

He finished a triple shy of the cycle on Thursday, adding a run-scoring single and two doubles. He was thrown out at third base while trying to stretch his second double into a triple.

"There's nothing you really can say because there's nothing anybody can do about it," teammate and former MVP Mookie Betts said. "He's just too good."

First base was open when Ohtani came up to bat in the seventh, but Marlins manager Skip Schumaker decided against intentionally walking him with the Marlins trailing 11-3.

"If it was a tight game, one-run lead or we're down one, I probably put him on," Schumaker said. "Down that many runs, that's a bad move baseball-wise, karma-wise, baseball god-wise. ... I think out of respect for the game, we were going to go after him. He hit the home run. That's just part of the deal. He's hit (51) of them. He's the most talented player I've ever seen."

Preparation was a key to Ohtani becoming the first member of the 50-50 club. He regularly huddled with the team's hitting coaches and studied video of opposing pitchers to understand their tendencies with hitters and baserunners.

"I see all the work he puts in," catcher Will Smith said recently. "It's not like he goes out there and it's too easy for him. He works harder than anybody. He scouts really hard. He's playing a different game so it's fun to see."

Ohtani appeared to make the 50-50 mark his mission. He increased the frequency of his base-stealing attempts, and in turn his success rate went up.

But that may not be the case next year when he returns to the mound.

"He's not pitching this year so I think he is emptying the tank offensively," manager Dave Roberts said. "I do think the power, the on-base (percentage), the average, I think he can do that as a pitcher. He's done something pretty similar like that with his OPS. But as far as the stolen bases go, I'm not sure about that."

Ohtani's teammates have enjoyed watching him crush home runs and scamper around the bases.

"I'm honestly kind of trying to learn from him just seeing the way he goes about his day-to-day business. He's very consistent, the same demeanor throughout," outfielder Tommy Edman said recently. "I think that's why he's such a good player."

Third baseman Max Muncy added, "Every night I feel like he does something that we haven't seen."



What's next for Ohtani?

The Dodgers are headed to the postseason in October, which will be another first for Ohtani. He never made it there with the Angels, who never had a winning record during his tenure in Anaheim.

Another potential first could be earning National League MVP honors as a designated hitter. No player who got most of his playing time as a DH — without pitching — has ever won MVP, although Don Baylor, Edgar Martinez and David Ortiz placed high in the vote.

It would be Ohtani's third career MVP award.

## **It's been a decade since 43 students disappeared in Mexico. Their parents still fight for answers**

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

TIXTLA, México (AP) — Clemente Rodríguez has been documenting the long search for his missing son with tattoos.

First, it was an ink drawing of a turtle — a symbol of 19-year-old Christian Rodríguez's school — with a smaller turtle on its shell. Then, an image of Mexico's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe, accompanied by the number 43. Later, a tiger for strength and a dove for hope.

"How else is my son going to know that I have been looking for him?" asked Rodríguez. To the heart-broken father, the body art is evidence that he never stopped searching — proof he could perhaps one day show to his boy.

On Sept. 26, 2014, Christian Rodríguez, a tall boy who loved to folk dance and had just enrolled in a teachers college in the southern state of Guerrero, disappeared along with 42 classmates. Every year since, on the 26th of each month, Clemente Rodríguez, his wife, Luz María Telumbre, and other families meet at the Rural Normal School at Ayotzinapa and take a long bus ride to the capital, Mexico City, to demand answers.

They will do so again next week, on the 10th anniversary of their sons' disappearance.

"It is hard, very hard," Clemente Rodríguez said.

There are many questions and few answers

Rodríguez and the other parents are not alone. The 43 students are among more than 115,000 people still reported as missing in Mexico, a reflection of numerous unresolved crimes in a country where human rights activists say violence, corruption and impunity have long been the norm.

Over the years, authorities have offered different explanations. The previous administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto said that the students were attacked by security forces linked to a local drug cartel, and that the bodies were then turned over to organized crime figures, who burned their bodies in a dump and threw their ashes in a river. A bone fragment of one of the students was later found in the river.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's administration confirmed the source of the attack. But the current justice department — along with the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights and a Truth Commission formed specifically to investigate the students' disappearance — refuted the story about the incineration of the bodies in a dump. They accused top former officials of planting the bone fragment in the river to suit their narrative. They also unearthed clues in a different location, including bone fragments from one of Christian's feet.

But the families still don't have any solid answers about what happened to the students. For his part, Clemente Rodríguez is far from convinced that his son is dead.

Parents launch a desperate search for their children

Not long after the students disappeared, parents took matters into their own hands, charging into remote, often gang-controlled mountain towns to search for their children. They encountered others who had been displaced by violence. Fear was everywhere.

"When I left the house, I never knew if I would come back alive," Rodríguez said.

During the search, Christina Bautista, the 49-year-old mother of missing student Benjamin Ascencio, says strangers told her they'd been searching for a son for three years or a daughter for five. She had thought

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it would be a matter of weeks.

"I couldn't take it, I took off running," she said. "How could there be so many disappeared?"

Dozens of bodies were found, but not those of their children.

A decade of fighting has upended lives

A decade of fighting to keep the case alive has turned the parents' lives inside out. Before his son's disappearance, Rodríguez sold jugs of water from the back of his pickup and tended a small menagerie of animals in the town of Tixtla, not far from the school. Telumbre sold handmade tortillas cooked over a wood fire.

When the students vanished, however, they dropped everything. Parents sold or abandoned their animals, left fields untended and entrusted grandparents with the care of other children.

Rodríguez, 56, has since managed to partially reassemble his clutch of livestock and has planted some corn on the family's plot of land. The family's main income, however, comes from homemade crafts sold on trips to Mexico City: mats woven from reeds; bottles of an uncle's locally brewed mezcal decorated with twine and colorful tiger faces; and cloth napkins embroidered by Telumbre.

Sometimes the stocky, soft-spoken Rodríguez visits his land to think or to release his anger and sadness. "I start to cry, let it all go," he said.

Parents find support and respect at Ayotzinapa

Parents also find solace at the Rural Normal School at Ayotzinapa.

The school, which trains students to teach in poor remote villages, is part of a network of rural educational facilities with a long history of radical activism. School walls painted with slogans demanding justice for the missing students also display murals honoring Che Guevara and Karl Marx.

For the poorest families, Ayotzinapa offers a way out: Students receive free room, board and an education. In exchange, they work.

The atmosphere has militaristic undertones: New students' heads are shaved and the first year is about discipline and survival. They are tasked with tending cattle, planting fields and commandeering buses to drive to protests in the capital. The students who disappeared in 2014 were abducted from five buses they had taken over in the city of Iguala, 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the school.

Parents arrived at Ayotzinapa little by little from villages deep in the mountains. They gathered on the school's basketball court, a concrete pad under a pavilion where 43 chairs still hold photos of each of the missing students.

In the years since, a certain codependency has developed. The school's fight for justice is fueled by the parents' grief and anger. The school's students, meanwhile, "are our strong arm," Bautista says. "Here is where the movement started."

Students treat the parents respectfully and affectionately, greeting them as "aunt" or "uncle" as they pass through the guarded gates.

Another meeting ends in disappointment and anger

In late August, Rodríguez and other parents met for the last time with López Obrador, who leaves office at the end of this month.

The exchange was a grave disappointment.

"Right now, this administration is just like that of Enrique Peña Nieto," Rodríguez said. "He's tried to mock us" by hiding information, protecting the Army and insulting the families' lawyers, he said.

López Obrador continues to insist that his government has done its best to find answers. He cites dozens of arrests, including that of a former attorney general charged with obstructing justice. He has downplayed the role of the military, however. Years ago, López Obrador declared the students' abduction a "state crime," pointing to the involvement of local, state and federal authorities, including the Army.

The families met in July with López Obrador's successor, Claudia Sheinbaum, who will take office Oct. 1, but she made no promises or commitments.

After the August meeting, Rodríguez posed for a portrait in the National Palace, his gaze firm and his fist raised.

Like other parents, he vows to keep fighting.  
"During these 10 years, we have learned a lot about obfuscation ... lies," Rodríguez said. Top military and government authorities "have the answers," he added.  
"They can reveal them."

## **Western nations were desperate for Korean babies. Now many adoptees believe they were stolen**

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and CLAIRE GALOFARO Associated Press

Yooree Kim marched into a police station in Paris and told an officer she wanted to report a crime. Forty years ago, she said, she was kidnapped from the other side of the world, and the French government endorsed it.

She wept as she described years spent piecing it together, stymied at every turn to get an answer to a simple question: How was she, a bright, diligent schoolgirl, with known parents whom she loved, documented as an abandoned orphan in South Korea in 1984 and sent to strangers in France? She believes the government of France — along with many Western nations — allowed families to "mail order children" through international adoption, and did nothing to protect them.

"They were reckless," she said. "They never questioned anything. They never checked where I was from. They never checked whether my parents existed or not."

Kim was caught in an adoption machine that sent hundreds of thousands of Korean children to families in the United States, Europe and Australia. Now adults, many have since discovered that their adoption paperwork was untrue, and their quest for accountability now has spread far beyond South Korea's borders to the Western countries that claimed them.

Those governments turned a blind eye to rampant fraud and sometimes pressured the South Korean government to keep the kids coming, an investigation led by The Associated Press has found. Documents show that at the peak of adoptions from South Korea, Western diplomats processed papers like an assembly line, despite evidence that adoption agencies were aggressively competing for babies to send abroad, pressuring mothers and paying hospitals. Governments focused on satisfying intense demand from Western families desperate for children.

The AP, in collaboration with Frontline (PBS), spoke with more than 80 adoptees in the U.S., Australia and Europe and examined thousands of pages of documents to reveal evidence of kidnapped or missing children ending up abroad, fabricated names, babies switched with one another and parents told their newborns were gravely sick or dead, only to discover decades later they'd been sent to new parents overseas.

The seismic consequences are ricocheting around the world and challenging the entire international adoption industry, which was built on the model created in South Korea.

The Netherlands in May announced it would no longer allow its citizens to adopt from abroad. Denmark's only international adoption agency said it was shutting down, Sweden stopped adoptions from South Korea, and Norway is investigating. Switzerland apologized for failing to prevent illegal adoptions. France in March released a scathing assessment of its own culpability.

The U.S., the pioneer of this system and long the country to adopt the most foreign orphans, has not analyzed its own accountability, and some have questioned why. The State Department said questions from AP over several months have prompted it to begin trying to piece together its history from archives. An early review found that widespread practices in South Korea at the time "may have resulted in adoptions based on falsified documentation" but no indication yet that U.S. officials were aware of it.

Kim believes Western governments clung to the narrative that they were saving needy children and ignored evidence that suggested otherwise. Foreign diplomats in the country surely would have noticed that Seoul's streets weren't packed with abandoned babies and street children, she said.

"We were commodified like a good to be sold," she said. "They made fake orphans and fed the market."

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This story is the second in an ongoing investigation led by The Associated Press in collaboration with

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FRONTLINE (PBS). The first story is here. The investigation includes an interactive and the upcoming documentary South Korea's Adoption Reckoning, premiering Sept. 20 on PBS and online.

'Illicit practices of a systemic nature'

The Korean adoptee diaspora of around 200,000 children is thought to be the largest in the world. At the peak in the 1970s and '80s, South Korea was sending out babies by the hundreds per month.

It's impossible to tell how many adoptions involved fraud, and advocates argue most went well. But France, the country that took in Yooree Kim, acknowledged in March that its own government had long known of "the existence of illicit practices of a systemic nature."

"The public authorities were alerted early and were late in taking action," the report said. "In France, diplomatic archives and the archives of associations effectively showed these practices existed in countries over long periods of time and they were alerted at times at the highest levels, often in isolation, without any political reaction to put an end to them."

Access to birth control and abortion in the Western world had caused the number of domestically adoptable babies to plummet, and families clamored for children. The system was designed for the convenience of consumers, and most adoptive parents didn't even have to visit South Korea.

"To put it simply, there was supply because there was demand," said Park Geon-Tae, who leads a team with South Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission now investigating its adoption practices. "Were there so many abandoned children in South Korea? We have yet to see this."

In 1974, South Korea tried to stop adoptions to Scandinavia, after its political rival, North Korea, charged that children were "being sold like animals in the foreign land." South Korean government records from the time show that diplomats from Sweden, Denmark and Norway began begging for babies.

"The adoption of Korean orphans by Swedish parents is not because Korea is neglecting its orphans, but because Swedish couples without children are desiring to adopt them, so it would be good to continue the transfers of orphans," the Swedish ambassador said in a meeting with South Korea's deputy foreign minister in January 1975.

South Korean Health Minister Ko Jae-pil wrote in a report that the countries sent nine pleas for adoptions to continue, citing at least 1,455 requests for Korean children. Ambassadors visited Korean officials multiple times and "have kept badgering by sending diplomatic documents" that practically threatened halted adoptions would damage relations, the report says. One wrote that he was "concerned that the public opinion against South Korea would worsen" if they halted adoptions to Scandinavia. A Danish citizen wrote to the South Korean president directly to plead for him to expedite the adoptions of two Korean boys.

Under pressure, South Korea reversed course.

"Accepting the strong requests by related nations to resume adoptions is considered to promote international friendships," Ko wrote in 1975.

In July of that year, Choi Young-ja's toddler ran out of the house to chase a cloud of insecticide sprayed by a fumigation truck with friends and never returned.

She and her husband reported him missing and created posters with his photo and name, Paik Sang-yeol. They carried the posters into the country's largest adoption agency, Holt Children's Services, every month for years. Each time, they were told there was no information.

Nearly 50 years later, after exhausting all other options, she submitted her DNA to a police unit that helps Korean adoptees find their families. Choi has been fighting stomach cancer. As she was rolled into the operating room, all she thought was that she could not die without seeing her son.

When she learned last year that they had found him, she fell to the ground and wept.

He'd been adopted to Norway in December 1975, five months after he went missing. The documents that went with him made up a new name, and included a photo — black-and-white, his lips pursed tight, his hands curled inward. His adoption case number, K-8818, was taped to his chest.

The adoption agency that sent him away was Holt, the same agency she had visited so many times. She stormed into Holt's offices in Seoul, demanding her son's full adoption files, she said. When a worker

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refused without her son's signoff, Choi snapped: She flipped a chair, hurled a trash bin, and swung a roll of paper.

"Did you get me to sign off when you sold away my 4-year-old?!" Choi recalled shouting. Holt did not respond to a request to verify Choi's account of the meeting.

She's working with lawyers to file a lawsuit against the South Korean government and Holt for sending her son to Norway.

Norwegian authorities "are aware of serious findings that have come to light" about adoptions, said Ingeborg Gloppen Johnsen, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The country launched an investigation last year to uncover whether illegal or unethical practices happened, and if Norwegian officials failed to control them.

In late October, Choi nervously paced her narrow living quarters, double-checked flight arrival times and dug through an album of fading photographs. She hadn't slept for days.

Her boy — now a graying 52-year-old fashion designer — was coming to visit.

Choi quietly stood at the Incheon International Airport, sporting freshly styled hair and a vibrant pink cardigan she handpicked for the reunion. She'd been rehearsing what to say, and practiced "I'm sorry" in English.

Then he emerged from the crowd. She knew him immediately — the familiar round cheeks, the prominent ears, the wide, grinning eyes.

She buried her face into his chest and wailed, managing to choke out the words:

"I'm sorry."

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'We constantly dropped the ball'

Americans pioneered the modern adoption system and brought home far more South Korean children than any other nation.

In the 1950s, Harry and Bertha Holt, evangelical Christians from Oregon, said they'd received a calling from God to save Korean War orphans. Until then, international adoptions were not common. But after the war, biracial babies born to Korean women and American soldiers were shunned by a society that valued racial purity and saw them as a painful reminder of U.S. imperialism.

Harry Holt, a farmer and timberman, flew to Korea and rounded up a dozen orphans — eight for himself and four for friends. The Holts were "deluged" with letters from others who wanted orphans of their own, Bertha Holt wrote in a memoir.

Harry Holt began flying planeloads of babies to the U.S. The only qualification for adoptive families was that they were born-again Christians.

The government knew its citizens were desperate for children: Aching letters had been pouring into U.S. government offices from hopeful parents, begging for help finding someone to adopt, according to archives. A woman wrote she felt she was "cheating" her husband out of a family. Another said they wanted a child born to parents suitably intelligent. Yet another asked for a baby "or one as young as I can get it."

U.S. officials wanted to process the adoptions as quickly as possible to avoid bad publicity, according to internal government memos at the National Archives. A social worker wrote that an immigration official told her his boss "wants no reports to reach Washington of dissatisfied customers due to delays in processing."

The mothers of biracial children didn't always want to give them up, records show. In a letter to his wife in 1956, Harry Holt wrote: "One poor girl almost had hysterics in the office. She thought she could keep track of her baby after he had gone to America. I had to tell her it was a clean break and forever. Poor girl, her baby wasn't weaned yet and she cried and cried."

The adoption business boomed and attracted competitors, including Eastern Social Welfare Society, Korea Welfare Services and Korea Social Service. Holt remained the largest, sending about half of Korean adoptees abroad. Holt split in 1977, forming a separate Oregon-based agency, Holt International, that often partnered with its Korean sister. By then, South Korea was climbing out of post-war poverty, yet the numbers of adoptions kept skyrocketing.

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An International Social Service social worker who visited the U.S. Embassy in Seoul around that time found what she saw "distasteful," according to documents at the agency's archives at the University of Minnesota Libraries.

"It showed the callous way in which children going to the US. were processed, to me, it was a real assembly line type method," Patricia Nye, the east Asia director for ISS, wrote. "Only documents are seen, children are never seen by the visa officers."

American officials seemed to defer entirely to the agencies, she wrote: "I was told that it is the US embassy's feelings that each agency should be left to their own cognizance." Nye has since died.

At a hearing in 1977, a U.S. Congressman asked why so many children were still coming from South Korea. Immigration officials acknowledged it was because of "the active cooperation of the Korean government" and "very active adoption agencies."

An official testified that an officer in Tokyo would fly to Seoul for one week a month to make sure the children were adoptable orphans. But with hundreds of stories to verify in a single week, only a tiny fraction of adoptions were denied.

"We didn't pay attention when we should have been in the beginning. Somebody should have said, what is going on? How is that possible?" said Susan Jacobs, a retired State Department official who has worked on adoption reform efforts. "We were wrong, we were totally wrong, we constantly dropped the ball."

Laws tended to favor the desires of adoptive parents, she said, and there were few safeguards built into the system. International adoptions were shoehorned into a process built for domestic adoptions. After the federal government issued the initial visas, adoptions were finalized through thousands of local courthouses with different judges, laws and standards.

In 1985, Judge Homer Stark in Gwinnett County, Georgia, noticed the adoption file before him for twin Korean boys included no acknowledgement of the birth parents or proof that they consented. The only paperwork submitted was a statement signed by a guardian, and it was unclear how the person came into possession of the children.

"That opens a lot of holes for illegal things," Stark remembers thinking, in a recent conversation with AP. "I don't know where this child came from, he might have been picked up off the street."

Stark asked the attorney general for an opinion. Assistant Attorney General David Will wrote that granting adoptions without documentation of the birth parents' consent "would condone the practice of the sale of kidnapping of foreign children for ultimate adoption in this state."

Will soon got a call from his boss to look in their office lobby, he told AP. Mothers had pushed their adopted children in strollers into the attorney general's office for a sit-in, claiming he was trying to shut down adoption.

He says he tried to tell them: "We just want adoptions to be done right, to respect the rights of the parents and make sure that no one is stealing a child or buying a child."

When Stark rejected the petition, it was granted by a judge in another Georgia county where the U.S. adoption agency was based. The adoptive father, who asked to not be named, still treasures the photo from that day — him and his wife, the judge and their twin sons, all smiling.

The year after his boys arrived, the adoption industry took its case to the legislature. Georgia's governor signed a bill into law in April 1986 that exempted the requirement to prove that birth parents gave their consent for foreign adoptions. It fell to federal officials to determine whether a child was truly an adoptable orphan.

"For us, it seemed like we were sending children to a better situation — whether that's true or not, I can't tell you, but that's what it seemed like," said Donald Wells, who was chief of the State Department's immigrant visa unit in Seoul from 1980 to 1984. "I've always considered that we were doing a good thing."

He estimates they processed more than 12,000 visas, and immigration officers checked if the child met the definition of an eligible orphan. If the paperwork then looked right to the State Department, they accepted it.

"We saw paperwork, we did not see children," he said, "and we did not have the resources to go out and investigate the background and find out where this child came from."

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The immigration officer he worked with there did question where all the kids were coming from. Robert Ackerman, immigration attache at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, told reporters in 1988 that he had heard allegations of birth mothers being bribed. But he said he saw "no evidence of fraud or profiteering" in his five years at the embassy, despite complaints that he was too tough with adoption applications. Ackerman, who has died, said then that he was "bothered" by the business.

"When I see 500 kids going out of the country a month, I have to ask, 'Do we have a humanitarian effort or just a baby pipeline?'" Ackerman told United Press International. "Where does humanitarianism end and business begin?"

'That day has come'

Today, the United States is in the middle of an emotional debate about how best to move forward with adoptions built on a model some call deeply flawed.

Maureen Flatley, a consultant who's helped write reforms of the international adoption system, believes it can only do so after looking at its past. She recalled telling a lobbyist fighting against safeguards in the 1990s that one day, adoptees would grow up and tell their own stories, and that would force a reckoning.

"I think that day has come and I'm glad it's here," she said. "I think it's long past time for the U.S. government to conduct a deep and thorough and searching investigation into what these practices have been. There's a reason the old saying is 'Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.'"

Michelle Bernier-Toth, the State Department's special adviser for children's issues, said the agency is tracking developments in Europe, and has been in contact with South Korea's truth-finding commission on adoptions. They are sympathetic to adoptees who believe their lives were shaped by fraud and deceit. The State Department just started working with an archivist to understand its own history, she said, but records are sparse and difficult to find.

The department emphasized that adoption now is very different. The United States in 2008 ratified the Hague Adoption Convention, an international treaty meant to safeguard intercountry adoptions. Agencies must now be accredited, there are far more regulations and a more stringent process for evaluating orphans. Most children now are older or have special needs, and the number of intercountry adoptions to the U.S. has plummeted from 20,000 in 2004 to less than 2,000, with just 47 from Korea last year.

That has caused some to warn of the danger of stringent regulations making it too hard to save children from dire conditions abroad.

"Of course, I, like all adoption advocates, would prefer that we have even better systems... to make sure that there are as few as possible illegal adoptions that happen," said Elizabeth Bartholet, a Harvard law professor and adoptive parent. "But if you set the standard to be 'we want zero,' you are going to deny millions of kids homes. And that's enormously destructive."

The lobby of Holt International, on a leafy street in Eugene, Oregon, is a museum to its origin story and Christian mission: to find families for the world's neediest children. It is a well-respected agency that works all over the world, and has called for stricter safeguards in the industry.

Holt asked Susan Soonkeum Cox, who retired last year after working for 40 years at the adoption agency, to speak to AP and Frontline. Holt brought Cox from Korea to the U.S. at around 4 years old in 1956.

Cox rejects the allegations that agencies foraged for babies to send abroad.

"What I'm aware of is the franticness of so many children being brought to orphanages," she said. "It would be wonderful if every child born in Korea and every other country could stay with their biological family and live a happy, fulfilling life. But that's not the reality."

Holt's South Korea operation, a separate company from the U.S. Holt International, declined to comment on specific allegations, as did the three other Korean adoption agencies. Holt Korea in recent years has denied wrongdoing, attributing adoptees' complaints to misunderstandings and the country's problems with social welfare. Kim Jin Sook, president of Eastern, said the agency was just carrying out government policies to find Western homes for "discarded children."

Cox said that as a representative of Holt, she's often at an "uncomfortable juxtaposition" where some fellow adoptees blame her. But she believes the majority are happily living their lives.

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Cox still refers to Bertha Holt as "grandma," and remembers finding a snapshot of a little girl staring off into the distance in a giant scrapbook when she first began working for Holt.

"Oh my God, that's me," she gasped at the time. "Any kind of hint or a clue is so precious."

She later learned that her father was a Western soldier, and her mother, now dead, gave her the name Soonkeum — "pure gold" in Korean.

On her 40th birthday, she reclaimed that name as part of her own.

'Answer me!'

Most adoptees were babies and have no memories of their own. But Yooree Kim remembers.

She was 11 when she and her younger brother were sent by the Korean agency Holt to a couple in France who'd requested siblings around their ages. After a divorce, her impoverished single mother had put them in an orphanage so at least they could eat, a common practice then in Korea. Two days before Christmas in 1983, an orphanage worker pulled her aside to say they would be sent away.

She was terrified. She claimed she was abused at her new home, which her adoptive parents deny. Her brother also denies it, she said, but he did not respond to AP requests for comment. A judge dismissed a complaint she filed against her adoptive father for insufficient evidence.

Ten years after her traumatic move to France, she remembered her Korean family's names, their addresses. So she found them.

"Why did you abandon me?" she asked her mother.

Her mother said she never did. When she returned to the orphanage, Angel's Home in Seoul, she learned her daughter was already gone.

Angel's Home has since closed. From 1973 to 1990, at least 390 children from there were sent to foreign adopters, including 217 to the U.S. and 127 to France, according to information AP obtained through a records request. All but seven were handled through Holt.

Kim's paperwork contains three conflicting stories of how she and her brother were turned into orphans.

One said they were relinquished by their paternal grand-aunt, whom Kim never recalls meeting. Korean law made clear that consent for adoption can only come from parents, direct-line grandparents or legal guardians. Another document says Kim's mother agreed to the adoption. A third says the siblings were found "roaming" the streets and were "emotionally hardened" by the experience. She wondered: How did no one in this system, from South Korea to France, catch such discrepancies?

She called the former president of Holt in Korea, who signed her paperwork.

"How can you say you knew nothing when you were the president?" she asked on the call, which she recorded and provided to AP. He scolded her.

"You are now 50, you should know better," he said to Kim. "This was something that happened 40 years ago."

Then he hung up.

When reached by AP, the president, Kim Han-Kyu, refused to comment on individual cases.

"What would I know? The president stamps the paperwork as the guardian and the nuts and bolts are handled by working-level employees," he said.

He added that he didn't know where Holt got its children, but insisted it "didn't do bad things" and agencies didn't compete for children.

"No, no, no, the children were sent abroad as a government policy," he said. "Holt and other social welfare organizations had the role of transport stations. You sent them because the government approved it, otherwise you couldn't."

Kim's French agency, Les Amis des Enfants du Monde, didn't respond to requests for comment.

Kim wants the world to know what happened to her and to so many others. She stormed up to the home of a French adoption agency leader with a Korean film crew, pressed the buzzer and held it down for a full minute.

"Why did you steal me from my Korean parents?...They never abandoned me," she screamed, unsure if



anyone was listening.  
"Answer me!"

## Brazil drought punishes coffee farms and threatens to push prices even higher

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA and DEE-ANN DURBIN Associated Press

CACONDE, Brazil (AP) — Silvio Almeida's coffee plantation sits at an ideal altitude on a Brazilian hillside, whose clay-rich soil does well at retaining moisture from rainfall and a nearby reservoir.

Lately, though, water is scarce on Almeida's modest farm in Caconde, a town in one of Sao Paulo state's key growing regions. He can't get his coffee to grow the way it should.

In Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, Almeida and other farmers have started grappling with the nation's worst drought in more than seven decades and above-average temperatures. Almeida expected to harvest 120 sacks of coffee beans this harvest season, but instead managed just 100.

"Given the conditions here, the 2025 crop is already affected," he told The Associated Press, pointing to a part of his plantation where flower buds died before blooming. "I won't say it's doomed, because with God anything is possible. But based on the situation, it's already compromised."

Brazil's harvest season that ends this month was virtually flat from last year, and exports surged, but the ongoing drought is already complicating the start of the 2025/2026 season, according to a report Monday by the Center for Advanced Studies on Applied Economics at the University of Sao Paulo's agribusiness school.

At the same time, Vietnam, the world's second-biggest coffee producer, is experiencing heat and drought, affecting its crops. Potential supply shortages in both countries have started driving up global coffee prices, according to the report.

The market is closely monitoring how Brazilian coffee plants endure these adverse climate conditions, which can cause flowers to stop blooming, fail to turn into cherries or produce lower-quality beans, said Felipe Serigati, who coordinates the master's program in agribusiness at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university in Sao Paulo.

"It could result in a smaller coffee harvest," Serigati said. "Since the market tends to anticipate these movements, we've already seen the price of arabica coffee in New York and robusta (coffee) in Europe trading at higher levels."

Coffee prices haven't reached the record highs the world saw in the late 1970s, after a severe frost wiped out 70% of Brazil's coffee plants. But they have been soaring in recent years.

In August, the International Coffee Organization's Composite Indicator Price — which combines the price of several types of green coffee beans — averaged \$2.38 per pound, up nearly 55% from the same month a year ago.

In part, prices are rising because of higher demand, particularly in Asia. But weather is also driving increases. Drought, frost and fire have damaged as much as one-fifth of arabica coffee producers' growing areas in Brazil, said Billy Roberts, a senior economist for food and beverage at Colorado-based CoBank.

"It's not looking like it will get that much better in the near term. They will need consistent rainfall to recover," he said.

Uncontrolled, manmade wildfires across Brazil have lately been ravaging protected areas and farms. One of them ripped through Caconde last week.

Almeida, who is also a math teacher at a local public school, helped calculate the damage for a regional association. So far, he estimates the blazes affected 519 hectares (1,282 acres). Half was native Atlantic Forest, 30% pasture and 15% coffee plantations.

On Almeida's own land, 2,000 of his 15,000 plants were torched. His neighbor, João Rodrigues Martins, lost everything.

Martins, 71, had 2,500 coffee plants on a small plot, now completely blackened by soot. The coffee he sells to a local cooperative is his livelihood and also pays for his son's medical treatment.

For smallholders, seeing years of cultivation reduced to ash is tough to reckon with. Last week, Martins ran through fire to save his bee boxes. Today, he is finding the strength to continue forward. "Faith is a boat that helps us navigate life," he said.

## Voters split on whether Harris or Trump would do a better job on the economy: AP-NORC poll

By JOSH BOAK and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Going into November's election, neither Kamala Harris nor Donald Trump has a decisive edge with the public on the economy, turning an issue that was once a clear strength for Trump into the equivalent of a political jump ball.

About 4 in 10 registered voters say Republican Trump would do a better job handling the economy, while a similar number say that about the Democratic vice president, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About 1 in 10 voters don't trust either candidate, and a similar share has equal faith in them.

The finding is a warning sign for Trump, who has tried to link Harris to President Joe Biden's economic track record. The new poll suggests that Harris may be escaping some of the president's baggage on the issue, undercutting what was previously one of Trump's major advantages.

The economy has long been a weak issue for Biden: A separate AP-NORC poll conducted in late June, before Biden's disastrous debate with Trump, found that about 6 in 10 Americans disapproved of his handling of the economy. Earlier this year, Americans were much more likely to say that Trump's presidency helped the country on cost of living and job creation, compared to Biden's.

The new poll found that the economy is one of the most important issues for about 8 in 10 voters as they consider which candidate to support, dwarfing other top issues like health care and crime.

The aftermath of inflation's spike in 2022 to a four-decade high has pervaded this year's presidential contest. Shoppers are upset over their grocery bills. Higher interest rates are financially squeezing the buyers of homes and motor vehicles. All that has appeared to matter more to the public than the low 4.2% unemployment rate and stock market gains.

According to the AP-NORC poll, only about one-third of voters say the state of the national economy is somewhat or very good, although they're more optimistic about their own situation, with about 6 in 10 voters saying their household's finances are somewhat or very good. Both of those numbers have remained steady over the course of the year, despite falling inflation.

The candidates have clashing ideas about how best to straighten out the economy, giving voters a stark choice that might hint at how partisan identity increasingly informs views of the economy and policy. But neither campaign has fully explained how its plans would be implemented. Harris insists her plans would be fully funded and not add to the deficit, while Trump's team assumes — in defiance of most economic models — that growth will be high enough to offset the cost.

Mark Carlough, 33, who works on medical records in Philadelphia, plans to vote for Harris and says he believes that the taxes on imports proposed by Trump would hurt most consumers.

"The tariffs would be horrible for the economy," he said.

Richard Tunnell, 32, of Huntsville, Texas, plans to vote for Trump, just as he did in 2020. He's not sure if the Republican has an advantage over Harris on the economy, but he noted that Trump has been a great businessman who remains one of the "richest men on the planet" even after filing for bankruptcy multiple times.

"I believe this country needs someone to reach their hand in it and work it like a game of Monopoly and that person is Donald Trump," said Tunnell, a military veteran on disability.

Chantelle Breaux, 38, a stay-at-home parent from Lafayette, Louisiana, feels neither candidate has much to offer on the economy. She doesn't plan to vote — unless a candidate more to her liking enters the race.

"Kamala wants to put a Band-Aid where major surgery needs to be done on this economy," said Breaux. "Trump wants to run the country as if it's a business, but it isn't a business that is going to support all of

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the people.”

Former President Trump suggests growth would come from tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy leading to more investment, while a universal tariff of as much as 20% would direct that investment to building U.S. factories.

Harris has campaigned on more benefits for the middle class to be funded by higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, saying that would help to contain costs and deliver growth. Her team has warned that Trump’s tariffs would lead to higher prices and worsen underlying inflation challenges.

The economy is one of many issues shaping public sentiment as the campaigns seek to turn out their voters. More than half of voters said health care was a top concern, while roughly half said that about crime, immigration, abortion policy and gun policy. Only about one-third called climate change one of the most important issues for their vote, and about one-quarter said that about the war between Israel and Hamas.

Trump and Harris are evenly matched in the poll on who would better handle crime and the war in Gaza. But the issues soon splinter in ways that reflect the distinct priorities of Republicans and Democrats.

Trump has an advantage over Harris on whom voters trust to better handle immigration. This issue was a problem for Biden, as well: Illegal immigration and crossings at the U.S. border with Mexico have been a challenge during much of his administration. Republicans are more likely to care about immigration, the issue where Trump has a clear upper hand.

Harris fares better than Trump when it comes to issues that Democrats care more about, including gun policy, health care, abortion policy and climate change.

Rosamaria Nunez, a 68-year-old retiree in San Antonio, Texas, identified gun violence as the most important issue facing the country, saying it became personal when her grandson called her last year to be picked up because of a school lockdown.

Nunez said she plans to vote for Harris, saying: “First of all, she’s a gun owner, so she can relate to the safety issue. She seems like she’s more in tune with a real person than Trump is.”

Overall, voters see high stakes for the presidential election’s impact on the country’s future, the economy, and the future of democracy in the U.S., but they’re less likely to think the election will have an impact on them personally. About 8 in 10 voters say the election will have “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of impact on the country’s future. About three-quarters say the election will have a similar impact on the nation’s economy and the future of democracy in the U.S.

By contrast, half of voters say the election will have at least “quite a bit” of impact on them personally.

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The poll of 1,771 registered voters was conducted September 12-16, 2024, using a sample drawn from NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for registered voters is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

## Flood-hit regions in Central Europe will get billions in EU aid

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday pledged billions of euros in aid for Central European countries that suffered enormous damage to infrastructure and housing during the massive flooding that has so far claimed 24 lives in the region.

Von der Leyen paid a quick visit to a flood-damaged area in southeastern Poland and met with heads of the governments of the affected countries — Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

She said funds will be made available quickly for infrastructure repair from the EU’s solidarity fund, as well as 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) from what is called the cohesion fund — for the most urgent repairs. In a special approach, no co-financing will be required from these countries for the money to be released.

“Here we say it’s 100% European money, no co-financing,” von der Leyen told a news briefing. “These are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times need extraordinary measures.”

Meanwhile, a massive flood wave threatened new areas and heavy rains also caused flooding and evacua-

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tion of some 1,000 people in the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. In Central Europe, the receding waters revealed the scale of the destruction caused by exceptionally heavy rains that began a week ago.

Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakušan said one more person was reported killed on Thursday in the country's hard-hit northeast, bringing the death toll there to five. There were also seven deaths each in Poland and Romania, and five in Austria — with the overall death toll now at 24.

Authorities deployed troops to help. In the northeastern Czech Republic, soldiers joined firefighters and other emergency crews to help with the recovery efforts. Army helicopters distributed humanitarian aid while soldiers were building temporary bridges in place of those that were swept away.

Some 400 people remained evacuated from the homes in the regional capital of Ostrava. In the southwest, the level of the Luznice River reached an extreme high but the evacuation of 1,000 people in the town of Veseli nad Luznici was not necessary for the moment, officials said.

Cleanup efforts were underway in Austria, where flooding washed away roads and led to landslides and bridge damage. Firefighters and soldiers pumped water and mud out of houses and disposed of damaged furniture, broadcaster ORF quoted fire department spokesperson Klaus Stebal as saying.

The governor of Lower Austria province, Johanna Mikl-Leitner, said reconstruction was expected to take years, according to the Austria Press Agency.

The Vienna public transport company has had to pump almost 1 million liters (260,000 gallons) of water since last weekend. Ten towns and areas were still inaccessible on Thursday, APA reported.

In Hungary, flood waters continued to rise as authorities closed roads and rail stations. Ferries along the Danube River halted. In the capital, Budapest, water spilled over the city's lower quays and threatened to reach tram and metro lines. Some transport services were suspended.

Further upriver, in a region known as the Danube Bend, homes and restaurants near the riverbanks were inundated.

Nearly 6,000 professionals, including members of Hungary's water authority and military, were mobilized, and prison inmates were involved in filling sandbags, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said at a news conference Thursday.

The Danube stood at over 771 centimeters (25 feet), approaching the 891-centimeter (29.2 feet) record set during major flooding in 2013.

In southwestern Poland, the high waters reached the city of Wroclaw and an extended wave was expected to take many hours, even days to pass, exerting pressure on the embankments.

The water level on the Oder River just before Wroclaw was 6.4 meters (21 feet), some 2 meters (6.5 feet) above alarm levels but still lower compared to the disastrous flooding in 1997.

In the two most-affected towns, Stronie Slaskie and Ladek-Zdroj, tap water and power were restored, said Gen. Michal Kamieniecki, who was put in charge of the recovery operations there after an emotional appeal to Prime Minister Donald Tusk for help the day before by a young woman identified only as Katarzyna.

As concerns mounted, Tusk invited von der Leyen to Wroclaw to see the situation first hand. Government leaders from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria were also there.

In Italy, rivers flooded in the provinces of Ravenna, Bologna and Forlì-Cesena, as local mayors asked people to stay on the upper floors or leave their houses. Those areas were hit by devastating floods in 2023, when more than 20 rivers overflowed, killing 17 people.

Italy's vice minister for transport and infrastructure, Galeazzo Bignami, said Thursday that two people were reported missing in Bagnocavallo, in Ravenna province.

At least 800 residents in Ravenna and almost 200 in Bologna province spent the night in shelters, schools and sports centers. Trains were suspended and schools closed while residents were advised to avoid travel.

## Trump vows to be 'best friend' to Jewish Americans, as allegations of ally's antisemitism surface

By WILL WEISSERT, BRIAN SLODYSKO and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Thursday decried antisemitism hours after an

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explosive CNN report detailed how one of his allies running for North Carolina governor made a series of racial and sexual comments on a website where he also referred to himself as a "black NAZI."

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson vowed to remain in the race despite the report, and the Trump campaign appeared to be distancing itself from the candidate while still calling the battleground state a vital part to winning back the White House. Trump has frequently voiced his support for Robinson, who has been considered a rising star in his party despite a history of inflammatory remarks about race and abortion.

Trump did not comment on the allegations during his Thursday addresses to a group of Jewish donors and to the Israeli-American Council in Washington. His campaign issued a statement about the CNN story that did not mention Robinson, saying instead that Trump "is focused on winning the White House and saving this country" and that North Carolina was a "vital part of that plan."

Robinson's reported remarks — including a 2012 comment in which he said he preferred Adolf Hitler to the leadership in Washington — clashed with Trump's denunciations of antisemitism in Washington and his claim that Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, sympathized with enemies of Israel. The story also could threaten Trump's chances of winning North Carolina, a key battleground state, with Robinson already running well behind his Democratic opponent in public polls.

"This story is not about the governor's race in North Carolina. It's about the presidential race," said Paul Shumaker, a Republican pollster who's worked for Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., and warned that Trump could risk losing a state he won in 2016 and 2020.

"The question is going to be, does Mark Robinson cost Donald Trump the White House?" Shumaker added.

After allegations against Robinson became public, a spokesman for Harris' campaign, Ammar Moussa, reposted on social media a photo of Trump and the embattled candidate. "Donald Trump has a Mark Robinson problem," he wrote.

The North Carolina Republican Party issued a statement standing by Robinson, noting he "categorically denied the allegations made by CNN but that won't stop the Left from trying to demonize him via personal attacks."

Trump has angled to make inroads among Black voters and frequently aligned himself with Robinson along the campaign trail, which has more and more frequently taken him to North Carolina. At a rally in Greensboro, he called Robinson "Martin Luther King on steroids" in reference to the civil rights leader, for his speaking ability.

Robinson has been on the trail with Trump as recently as last month, when he appeared with the GOP nominee at an event in Asheboro, North Carolina.

Recent polls of North Carolina voters show Trump and Harris locked in a close race. The same polls show Democrat Josh Stein with a roughly 10-point lead over Robinson.

Trump recounts his White House record to Jewish supporters

Both Trump and Harris, the Democratic nominee, were making appearances meant to fire up their core supporters, with Harris participating in a livestream with Oprah Winfrey.

Trump appeared Thursday with Miriam Adelson, a co-owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks and widow of billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson.

"My promise to Jewish Americans is this: With your vote, I will be your defender, your protector, and I will be the best friend Jewish Americans have ever had in the White House," Trump said during the donor event in Washington, titled "Fighting Anti-Semitism in America."

"But in all fairness, I already am," Trump added.

Trump also has been criticized for his association with extremists who spew antisemitic rhetoric such as far-right activist Nick Fuentes and rapper Ye, formerly known as Kanye West. And when former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke endorsed Trump in 2016, Trump responded in a CNN interview that he knew "nothing about David Duke, I know nothing about white supremacists."

But during his four years in office Trump approved a series of policy changes long sought by many advocates of Israel, such as moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognizing Israel's

annexation of the Golan Heights.

In his remarks, Trump criticized Harris over the Biden administration's handling of the Israel-Hamas war and for what he called antisemitic protests on college campuses and elsewhere.

"Kamala Harris has done absolutely nothing. She has not lifted a single finger to protect you or to protect your children," Trump said. He also repeated a talking point that Jewish voters who vote for Democrats "should have their head examined."

Multiple attendees at the event said they weren't familiar with the story about Robinson or declined to discuss it. Rep. Virginia Foxx, a conservative North Carolina Republican who was asked about the CNN report beforehand, told reporters she wasn't taking questions.

Later Thursday, Trump spoke at the Israeli-American Council National Summit to honor the victims of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and painted a dire future for the nation if Harris were to be elected.

"Israel will not exist within two years if she becomes president," he told the crowd, also adding that if he loses the presidential election to her on Nov. 5 "the Jewish people would really have a lot to do with that."

Harris is denied an endorsement by liberals who want a ceasefire

Harris on Thursday faced pressure from parts of her liberal base over the war. Leaders of the Democratic protest vote movement "Uncommitted" said the group would not endorse Harris for president, but also urged supporters to vote against Trump. The group, which opposes the Biden administration's handling of the Israel-Hamas war, has called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to U.S. weapons transfers to Israel.

"Uncommitted" drew hundreds of thousands of votes in this year's Democratic primaries, surfacing a rift within the party. The group has warned that some Democratic voters may stay home in November, particularly in places like Michigan.

Harris' campaign did not directly address the group's announcement, but said in a statement that she will "continue working to bring the war in Gaza to an end in a way where Israel is secure, the hostages are released, the suffering in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can realize their right to dignity, security, freedom and self-determination."

## Hezbollah leader vows retaliation against Israel for attacks on devices as both sides trade strikes

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of Hezbollah vowed Thursday to keep up daily strikes on Israel despite this week's deadly sabotage of its members' communication devices, and said Israelis displaced from homes near the Lebanon border because of the fighting would not be able to return until the war in Gaza ends.

Hezbollah and Israel launched fresh attacks across the border as Hassan Nasrallah spoke for the first time since the mass bombing of devices in Lebanon and Syria that he described as a "severe blow" — and for which he promised to retaliate.

The two days of attacks targeting thousands of Hezbollah pagers and walkie-talkies have been widely blamed on Israel, heightening fears that 11 months of near-daily exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and Israel will escalate into all-out war. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement in the attacks.

During Nasrallah's speech, Hezbollah struck at least four times in northern Israel, and two Israeli soldiers were killed in a strike earlier in the day. Israeli warplanes flew low over Beirut while Nasrallah spoke and broke the sound barrier, scattering birds and prompting people in houses and offices to quickly open windows to prevent them from shattering.

Israel also launched attacks in southern Lebanon on Thursday, saying it struck hundreds of rocket launchers and other Hezbollah infrastructure, though it was not immediately clear if there were any casualties. The army claimed the launchers were about to be used "in the immediate future."

At the same time, the army ordered residents in parts of the Golan Heights and northern Israel to avoid public gatherings, minimize movements and stay close to shelters in anticipation of possible rocket fire.

In recent weeks, Israeli leaders have stepped-up warnings of a potential larger military operation against

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Hezbollah, saying they are determined to stop the group's fire to allow tens of thousands of Israelis to return to homes near the border.

In a Thursday briefing, the Israeli defense minister said Hezbollah would "pay an increasing price" as Israel seeks to make conditions near its border with Lebanon safe enough for residents to return.

"The sequence of our military actions will continue," he said.

The attack on electronic devices appeared to be the culmination of a monthslong operation by Israel to target as many Hezbollah members as possible all at once — but civilians were also hit. At least 37 people were killed, including two children, and some 3,000 wounded in the explosions Tuesday and Wednesday.

Nasrallah said the group is investigating how the bombings were carried out.

"Yes, we were subjected to a huge and severe blow," he said. "The enemy crossed all boundaries and red lines," he said. Pointing to the number of pagers and walkie-talkies, he accused Israel of intending to kill thousands of people at one time. "The enemy will face a severe and fair punishment from where they expect and don't expect."

He said Hezbollah will continue its barrages into northern Israel as long as the war in Gaza continues, vowing that Israel will not be able to bring its people back to the border region. "The only way is stop the aggression on the people of Gaza and the West Bank," he said. "Neither strikes, nor assassinations nor an all-out war will achieve that."

Earlier Thursday, Hezbollah said it had targeted three Israeli military positions near the border, two of them with drones. Israeli hospitals reported eight people lightly or moderately injured.

Hezbollah says its near daily fire is a show of support for Hamas. Israel's 11-month-old war with Hamas in Gaza began after its militants led the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Israel has responded to Hezbollah's attacks with strikes in southern Lebanon, and has struck senior figures from the group in the capital Beirut. The exchanges have killed hundreds in Lebanon and dozens in Israel and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of residents on each side of the border.

Israel and Hezbollah have repeatedly pulled back from an all-out war under heavy pressure from the United States, France and other countries.

But in their recent warnings, Israeli leaders have said they are determined to change the status quo dramatically.

Speaking to Israeli troops on Wednesday, Gallant said, "We are at the start of a new phase in the war — it requires courage, determination and perseverance." He made no mention of the exploding devices but praised the work of Israel's army and security agencies, saying "the results are very impressive."

He said that after months of fighting Hamas in Gaza, "the center of gravity is shifting to the north by diverting resources and forces."

Israel began moving more troops to its border with Lebanon on Wednesday as a precautionary measure, Israeli officials said. Israel's army chief, Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, said plans have been drawn up for additional action against Hezbollah, though media reported the government has not yet decided whether to launch a major offensive in Lebanon.

Lebanon is still reeling from the deadly device attacks of Tuesday and Wednesday.

The explosions have rattled anxious Lebanese fearing a full-scale war. The Lebanese Army said it has been locating and detonating suspicious pagers and communication devices, while the country's civil aviation authorities banned pagers and walkie-talkies on all airplanes departing from Beirut's international airport until further notice.

The attack was likely to severely disrupt Hezbollah's internal communication as it scrambles to determine safe means to talk to each other. Hezbollah announced the death of five combatants Thursday, but didn't specify if they were killed in the explosions or on the front lines.

The blasts went off wherever the holders of the pagers or walkie-talkies happened to be in multiple parts of Beirut and eastern and southern Lebanon — in homes and cars, grocery stores and cafes and on the street, even at a funeral for some killed in the bombings, often with family and other bystanders nearby.

Many suffered gaping wounds on their legs, abdomens and faces or were maimed in the hand. Tuesday's

pager blasts killed 12 people, including two children, and wounded some 2,300 others. The following day's explosion killed 25 and wounded more than 600, Health Minister Firas Abiad said, giving updated figures.

Abiad told reporters that Wednesday's injuries were more severe than the previous day as walkie-talkies that exploded were bigger than the pagers. He praised Lebanon's hospitals, saying they had managed to deal with the flood of wounded within hours. "It was an indiscriminate attack. It was a war crime," he said.

## Harris looks for boost from Oprah as part of digital-first media strategy

By JOSH BOAK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris looked for a boost with persuadable and less-motivated voters as she participated in a livestream Thursday evening with former talk show host Oprah Winfrey to focus on her plans to cut costs for the middle class, restore a national right to abortion and address gun violence.

The event, billed as "Unite for America," and hosted by Winfrey from suburban Michigan, one of this election's key battlegrounds, sought to tap into the same energy as long-running Winfrey's talk show, which drove bestseller lists and allowed celebrities to share their softer side and everyday people to share stories of struggle and inspiration.

It leaned on celebrities like Bryan Cranston, Jennifer Lopez and Meryl Streep, but also the stories of ordinary voters to promote Harris' message over the course of 90 minutes and to draw a contrast with former President Donald Trump, the GOP nominee. More than 300,000 people were watching the Harris campaign livestream on YouTube alone and the event was also being streamed on other major social media platforms.

"We each have those moments in our lives when it's time to step up," Harris said when Winfrey asked about her overnight transformation as she went from President Joe Biden's running mate to being the Democratic nominee in her own right after he suddenly dropped out in July. "I felt a sense of responsibility, to be honest with you, and with that comes a sense of purpose."

Winfrey told Harris it looked as if a "veil dropped" and she "stepped into your power."

At one point Harris reminded viewers that she owns a gun — which surprised Winfrey — saying, "If somebody's breaking into my house they're gettin' shot." She added, "I probably shouldn't have said that."

Harris was given the chance to talk about her plans to reduce the cost of housing and lower taxes for the middle class, as she took questions from voters in Michigan and Virginia.

Oprah recognized Hadley Duvall in the audience, a 22-year-old woman who became an abortion rights advocate after she was raped by her stepfather as a child.

"You can't wait until it's too late to care about reproductive healthcare, because then it's too late," said Duvall, who is featured in a new Harris campaign ad. "Thank you for hearing us and seeing us when the Supreme Court won't," Duvall added in praise of Harris.

Harris and Winfrey also welcomed the mother and sister of a young Georgia mother who died after waiting 20 hours for a hospital to treat her complications from an abortion pill. Amber Thurman's death, first reported Monday by ProPublica, occurred just two weeks after Georgia's strict abortion ban was enacted in 2022 following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn nationwide abortion rights. Harris has blamed her death on Trump.

"Amber was not a statistic, she was loved by a family, a strong family and we would have done whatever to get my baby, our baby, the help that she needed," said Thurman's mother, Shanette Williams.

Harris praised their courage in speaking out and called out a "healthcare crisis" caused by the overturning of Roe v. Wade. "They have no right to be in your womb," added Winfrey.

Natalie Griffith, a student who was shot twice last month at Apalachee High School in Georgia, joined with her parents. Her mother described the fear she felt after learning about the gunfire at her child's school.

"No parent should go through this," Marilda Griffith said through tears, describing rushing out of work, then running to the school to learn if her daughter was OK. She appealed for federal action to curb gun



violence.

Harris, after pointing out that she herself owns a gun, said assault-style rifles were designed to kill as many people as possible on a battlefield, and “don’t belong on the streets of a civil society.”

The event comes as Harris is working to continue to share her biography and governing philosophy with voters during her abbreviated presidential campaign, with early voting already underway in some states.

Harris has limited her interactions with the traditional media, instead prioritizing digital engagement and casual — and often more controlled — moments that her campaign hopes will reach voters who increasingly get their news from digital sources.

“I want to bring my daughters to the White House to meet this Black woman president,” comedian Chris Rock said.

The in-the-round stage has the appearance of a college campus, with faux brick pillars and a background of trees and green turf under the chairs of the several hundred guests in the audience. Dozens more supporters were featured on video screens in the hall.

“I look around at these screens, Oprah, and I look at who’s in the room, and this is America,” Harris said.

The event is meant as a unifying event of Harris supporter groups that spun off organically after a “Black Women for Harris” call drew tens of thousands of viewers — and raised \$1.5 million — in the hours after Harris took over for Biden after he ended his campaign. They included “White Dudes for Harris,” “Comedians for Harris” and “Swifties for Harris.”

The event included a direct call to action to viewers to volunteer for Harris’ campaign and to make calls and knock on doors for the Democrat.

Winfrey ended with a call “for all decent people, for all caring people” to back Harris, saying of Trump, “We’re better than this.”

## **A new genetic analysis of animals in the Wuhan market in 2019 may help find COVID-19’s origin**

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Scientists searching for the origins of COVID-19 have zeroed in on a short list of animals that possibly helped spread it to people, an effort they hope could allow them to trace the outbreak back to its source.

Researchers analyzed genetic material gathered from the Chinese market where the first outbreak was detected and found that the most likely animals were racoon dogs, civet cats and bamboo rats. The scientists suspect infected animals were first brought to the Wuhan market in late November 2019, which then triggered the pandemic.

Michael Worobey, one of the new study’s authors, said they found which sub-populations of animals might have transmitted the coronavirus to humans. That may help researchers pinpoint where the virus commonly circulates in animals, known as its natural reservoir.

“For example, with the racoon dogs, we can show that the racoon dogs that were (at the market) ... were from a sub-species that circulates more in southern parts of China,” said Worobey, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Arizona. Knowing that might help researchers understand where those animals came from and where they were sold. Scientists might then start sampling bats in the area, which are known to be the natural reservoirs of related coronaviruses like SARS.

While the research bolsters the case that COVID-19 emerged from animals, it does not resolve the polarized and political debate over whether the virus instead emerged from a research lab in China.

Mark Woolhouse, a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Edinburgh, said the new genetic analysis suggested that the pandemic “had its evolutionary roots in the market” and that it was very unlikely COVID-19 was infecting people before it was identified at the Huanan market.

“It’s a significant finding and this does shift the dial more in favor of an animal origin,” Woolhouse, who was not connected to the research, said. “But it is not conclusive.”

An expert group led by the World Health Organization concluded in 2021 that the virus probably spread

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to humans from animals and that a lab leak was “extremely unlikely.” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus later said it was “premature” to rule out a lab leak.

An AP investigation in April found the search for the COVID origins in China has gone dark after political infighting and missed opportunities by local and global health officials to narrow the possibilities.

Scientists say they may never know for sure where exactly the virus came from.

In the new study, published Thursday in the journal *Cell*, scientists from Europe, the U.S. and Australia analyzed data previously released by experts at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. It included 800 samples of genetic material Chinese workers collected on Jan. 1, 2020 from the Huanan seafood market, the day after Wuhan municipal authorities first raised the alarm about an unknown respiratory virus.

Chinese scientists published the genetic sequences they found last year, but did not identify any of the animals possibly infected with the coronavirus. In the new analysis, researchers used a technique that can identify specific organisms from any mixture of genetic material collected in the environment.

Worobey said the information provides “a snapshot of what was (at the market) before the pandemic began” and that genetic analyses like theirs “helps to fill in the blanks of how the virus might have first started spreading.”

Woolhouse said the new study, while significant, left some critical issues unanswered.

“There is no question COVID was circulating at that market, which was full of animals,” he said. “The question that still remains is how it got there in the first place.”

## **Israeli soldiers pushed three apparently lifeless bodies from roofs during a West Bank raid**

By JULIA FRANKEL and MAJDI MOHAMMED Associated Press

QABATIYA, West Bank (AP) — Israeli soldiers pushed three apparently lifeless bodies from rooftops during a raid in the northern part of the occupied West Bank on Thursday, according to an Associated Press journalist at the scene and video obtained by AP.

An AP journalist in the town of Qabatiya witnessed three soldiers push the bodies off the roofs of adjacent multi-story buildings, sending them falling out of view. It was the latest in a series of suspected violations by Israeli forces since the start of the Israel-Hamas war that rights groups say show a pattern of excessive force toward Palestinians.

“This is a serious incident that does not coincide with IDF values and the expectations from IDF soldiers,” the military said in a statement, using the acronym it goes by. “The incident is under review.”

Israel said its troops had killed four militants during operations in Qabatiya on Thursday.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah did not immediately confirm multiple deaths, but said one person had been killed in the town and that Israeli gunfire sent 10 Palestinians to the hospital.

In the video obtained by AP, three soldiers can be seen picking up what appears to be a stiff body and then dragging it toward the edge of a roof as troops stand on the ground below. The soldiers on the roof peer over the edge before heaving the body off.

On an adjacent rooftop, the soldiers hold another apparently lifeless body by its limbs and swing it over the edge. In a third instance, a soldier kicks a body toward the edge before it falls from view. Photos captured by AP during Thursday’s raid show an Israeli army bulldozer moving near the buildings where the bodies were dropped.

Other journalists at the scene also witnessed the bodies being pushed off the roofs.

The identities of the dead and the cause of their deaths were not immediately known.

When withdrawing from raids, the army usually leaves behind any Palestinians killed by Israeli gunfire. Occasionally the army brings dead bodies into Israel.

Under international law, soldiers are supposed to ensure dead bodies, including those of enemy combatants, are treated decently.

“There is no military need to do this. It’s just a savage way of treating Palestinian bodies,” said Shawan

Jabarin, the director of Palestinian rights group Al-Haq, after watching the footage.

Jabarin said the video was shocking but not surprising, and he was doubtful Israel would properly investigate the incident. The Israeli military rarely prosecutes soldiers in cases of reported harm to Palestinians, rights groups say.

"The most that will happen is that soldiers will be disciplined, but there will be no real investigation and no real prosecution," said Jabarin.

The AP reporter who witnessed the raid saw a blindfolded and shirtless Palestinian man kneeling before an Israeli army jeep and armed soldiers. Smoke billowed from several buildings that appeared damaged.

As the world's attention focuses on the far more deadly war in Gaza less than 80 miles away, scores of Palestinians have been killed, shot and arrested in the West Bank, where the Israeli military has waged a monthslong crackdown.

Over 700 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since the war erupted on Oct. 7, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The northern West Bank has seen some of the worst violence since the war's outbreak.

Israel says the raids are necessary to stamp out militancy, which has flared since Oct. 7. In that time, Palestinian gunmen have attacked Israelis at checkpoints and staged several attacks within Israel.

Earlier this month, Israel staged its deadliest raid into the northern West Bank since the war began, killing at least 33 people.

## **Justice Department opens civil rights probe of sheriff's office after torture of 2 Black men**

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The Justice Department has opened a civil rights investigation into a Mississippi sheriff's department whose officers tortured two Black men in a racist attack that included beatings, repeated use of stun guns and assaults with a sex toy before one of the victims was shot in the mouth, officials said Thursday.

The Justice Department will investigate whether the Rankin County Sheriff's Department has engaged in a pattern or practice of excessive force and unlawful stops, searches and arrests, and whether it has used racially discriminatory policing practices, according to Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke.

Five Rankin sheriff's deputies pleaded guilty in 2023 to breaking into a home without a warrant and engaging in an hourslong attack on Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker. A sixth officer, from the Richland Police Department, was also convicted in the attack.

Some of the officers were part of a group so willing to use excessive force they called themselves the Goon Squad. All six were sentenced in March, receiving terms of 10 to 40 years.

The charges followed an Associated Press investigation in March 2023 that linked some of the officers to at least four violent encounters since 2019 that left two Black men dead.

"The concerns about the Rankin County Sheriff's Department did not end with the demise of the Goon Squad," Clarke said Thursday.

The Justice Department has received information about other troubling incidents, including deputies overusing stun guns, entering homes unlawfully, using "shocking racial slurs" and employing "dangerous, cruel tactics to assault people in their custody," Clarke said.

The attacks on Jenkins and Parker began on Jan. 24, 2023, with a racist call for extrajudicial violence, according to federal prosecutors. A white person phoned Deputy Brett McAlpin and complained that two Black men were staying with a white woman at a house in Braxton.

Once inside the home, the officers handcuffed Jenkins and Parker and poured milk, alcohol and chocolate syrup over their faces while mocking them with racial slurs. They forced them to strip naked and shower together to conceal the mess. They mocked the victims with racial slurs and assaulted them with sex objects.

Locals saw in the grisly details of the case echoes of Mississippi's history of racist atrocities by people

in authority. The difference this time is that those who abused their power paid a steep price for their crimes, attorneys for the victims have said.

In addition to McAlpin, the others convicted were former deputies Christian Dedmon, Hunter Elward, Jeffrey Middleton and Daniel Opdyke and former Richland police officer Joshua Hartfield.

U.S. District Judge Tom Lee called the former officers' actions "egregious and despicable" and imposed sentences near the top of federal guidelines for five of the six.

"The depravity of the crimes committed by these defendants cannot be overstated," Attorney General Merrick Garland said after the sentencing.

Malik Shabazz and Trent Walker, the attorneys for Jenkins and Parker, said in a statement Thursday that Rankin County has a "long and extremely violent legacy of departmental abuse under Sheriff Bryan Bailey" and that they applaud the Justice Department for opening the civil rights investigation

"This is a first, critical step in cleaning up the Sheriff's Department and holding Rankin County legally accountable for the years of constitutional violations against its citizenry," Shabazz and Walker said. "All of this took place because, despite innumerable warnings, Rankin County and Sheriff Bailey belligerently refused to properly monitor and supervise this rogue department."

The Rankin County Sheriff's Department is the 11th law enforcement agency in the U.S. to come under a Justice Department investigation since 2021, Clarke said.

The U.S. attorney for the southern district of Mississippi, Todd Gee, said text messages between Goon Squad members, including officers who were not present during the January 2023 assault, showed that deputies "routinely discussed extreme, unnecessary uses of force and other ways to dehumanize residents of Rankin County." He said deputies shared a video of an officer defecating in the home of one resident.

"In Mississippi and throughout the nation, we have learned over and over that real change in civil rights sometimes requires us to dig up the past, tell painful facts and offer new ways of doing things," Gee said. "We intend for this investigation to do that same work in Rankin County."

## **The FBI says Iran tried to send hacked files to Democrats. It's another sign of foreign meddling**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the FBI said this week that Iran had tried to provide Democrats with material stolen from Donald Trump's campaign, it was only the latest allegation of foreign interference with the U.S. election.

The 2024 presidential campaign is encountering a spate of efforts by adversaries to weaken faith in the outcome and potentially alter the results. While much of the attention has been focused on Iran, Russia is still seen as the biggest threat.

The Biden administration has moved aggressively in recent weeks to call out the operations in hopes of alerting Americans so they remain vigilant to wide-ranging, often hidden, foreign efforts to influence their views on hot-button social issues as well as the candidates.

A look at the latest development and broader concerns about foreign election meddling:

What Iran is alleged to have done

Iranian operatives stand accused of hacking the Trump campaign and attempting to spread internal communications they pilfered. They also sought access to the Democratic presidential campaign, but there's no indication those efforts were successful.

Several media organizations said last month they received apparently stolen information but declined to publish it. Politico, for instance, reported that it began receiving emails in July from an anonymous AOL account identified only as "Robert" that passed along what appeared to be a research dossier the campaign had apparently done on the Republican vice presidential nominee, Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

The latest revelation came Wednesday when intelligence officials disclosed that Iranian operatives had offered people associated with the Biden campaign information stolen from the Trump side.

The FBI said a few people connected to Biden's reelection effort received unsolicited emails in late June

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and early July, before he dropped out of the race, that contained an excerpt "taken from stolen, non-public material" from the Trump campaign.

The outreach to both the media and to Biden campaign associates suggests Iran was trying to pull off a hack-and-leak operation reminiscent of the Russian election interference that was meant to benefit Trump during his 2016 race against Democrat Hillary Clinton.

No signs Democrats accessed the stolen material

The effort fell flat: There's no evidence anyone ever even responded to the emails.

Morgan Finkelstein, a spokeswoman for Democrat Kamala Harris' campaign, said in a statement that the material was not sent directly to the campaign but rather to just a few people associated with the campaign and that the emails looked like a phishing attempt or spam.

She said the campaign has cooperated with law enforcement ever since being made aware that Biden associates were "among the intended victims of this foreign influence operation."

"We condemn in the strongest terms any effort by foreign actors to interfere in U.S. elections including this unwelcome and unacceptable malicious activity," she said.

Trump's unsupported claims

Despite the lack of evidence that anyone connected to the Biden or Harris campaigns tried to take advantage of the stolen material, Trump has seized on the FBI announcement. He falsely claimed on his Truth Social platform that the Harris campaign had been caught "illegally spying on me."

"This is real election interference, not the phony crap they've been trying to pin on me with Russia, Russia, Russia for years," Trump said in a Wednesday night campaign appearance.

That's a reference to an FBI investigation into whether the Trump campaign had coordinated with Russian operatives to tip the outcome of the 2016 election.

Though the investigation did not establish a criminal conspiracy, officials did determine that Trump associates actively welcomed the Russian assistance and hoped to exploit the help for political gain. That includes Trump, who on July 27, 2016, memorably said: "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press,"

That was a reference to the 30,000 emails reportedly stored on the private email server that Clinton, his opponent, used as secretary of state. Within hours of his statement, Russian hackers for the first time targeted Clinton's personal office.

Why might Iran be doing this?

One goal, according to U.S. intelligence officials, is to stoke discord in the United States and to undermine public confidence in the integrity of an election that Tehran sees as consequential for its own security interests.

It's also not the first time, either. In the 2020 election, American officials linked Iran to "a multi-pronged covert influence campaign intended to undercut former President Trump's reelection prospects" that was likely authorized by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and implemented by Iran's military and intelligence services.

Intelligence officials have said Iran opposes Trump's reelection, seeing him as more likely to increase tension between Washington and Tehran.

Trump's administration ended a nuclear deal with Iran, reimposed sanctions and ordered the killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, an act that prompted Iran's leaders to vow revenge. A Pakistani man who spent time in Iran was recently charged in a plot to carry out political assassinations on U.S. soil, including potentially of Trump.

What other acts of interference have been detected?

Despite all the news around Iran, the U.S. government still regards Russia as the primary threat to the integrity of the election.

The Justice Department announced a pair of criminal cases this month that officials say exposes the lengths that Russia is prepared to go to influence the election.

One case charged two employees of RT, a Russian state media company, with funneling millions of dollars through shell companies to a Tennessee-based content creation firm to churn out English-language,

pro-Russia videos, which have generated millions of views. Right-wing influencers linked to the Tennessee firm, Tenet Media, were kept in the dark about the Russian funding and worked unknowingly for a company that was a front for a Russian influence operation.

Another case involved a Russian government scheme to produce AI-generated content on bogus news websites that masqueraded as legitimate outlets.

Speaking Wednesday at a cybersecurity event, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said a "more diverse set of actors" than before was threatening elections.

"They are acting more aggressively," Monaco said. "They are doing so in a much more polarized environment than we've ever seen before. And they're utilizing more and more disruptive technology."

## Republicans are trying a new approach to abortion in the race for Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the most contested races for control of the U.S. House, many Republican candidates are speaking up about women's rights to abortion access and reproductive care in new and surprising ways, a deliberate shift for a GOP blindsided by some political ramifications of the post-Roe v. Wade era.

Looking directly into the camera for ads, or penning personal op-eds in local newspapers, the Republicans are trying to distance themselves from some of the more aggressive anti-abortion ideas coming from their party and its allies. Instead the Republican candidates are working quickly to spell out their own views separate from a GOP that for decades has worked to put restrictions on reproductive care.

In New York, endangered GOP Rep. Mike Lawler, sitting at a kitchen table with his wife in one ad said, "There can be no place for extremism in women's health care."

In California, GOP Rep. Michelle Steel explains her own journey to parenthood with in vitro fertilization and vows, "I have always supported women's access to IVF, and will fight to defend it."

And in Arizona, GOP Rep. Juan Ciscomani faces the camera and says, "I want you to hear directly from me: I trust women. I cherish new life. And I reject the extremes on abortion."

It's a remarkable new approach as the Republican Party works to prevent losses this November that could wipe out its majority control of the House. It comes in a fast-moving election season with high-profile and gripping stories of women's lives being upended and endangered by abortion restrictions.

The new strategy is both sanctioned and promoted by the House Republicans' campaign arm, an acknowledgement of the GOP's failure to grasp the political power of women's reproductive care as an issue that would mobilize voters.

"The Republicans have always known they're actually on the wrong side of this issue," said Ilyse Hogue, former president of the group previously known as NARAL Pro-Choice America, who is now a senior fellow at New America, a think tank in Washington. She said the party's shift "wouldn't surprise me."

With the election fewer than 50 days away, the House Republican candidates are real-time road-testing how to talk about women's access to reproductive care at a time when young women are more liberal than in decades.

On the national level, Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president, has both celebrated the Supreme Court decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case overruling Roe v. Wade yet insisted it's best left to the states to decide whether to allow abortions. He's also distanced himself from the far right's longtime goal of a national abortion ban.

With Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris having replaced President Joe Biden at the top of the party's ticket, Democrats are capitalizing on the vice president's ability to mobilize women, and others, and vow to reinstate reproductive care in a campaign whose rally-goers cheer: "We are not going back."

The campaigns for control of the U.S. House are as tight as ever, with a few seats expected to determine which party holds the majority in the chamber, and whether Congress will become aligned with the White House or a potential opposition check on a new administration.

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Republicans admit they did not expect abortion access to become such a determinative issue when the Supreme Court, in 2022, decided the Dobbs case that struck down Roe v. Wade, ending the right to abortion that had been the law of the land for nearly 50 years.

Voters didn't always mention abortion access as a top concern in the 2022 election, Republicans said, but it became disqualifying for candidates who were portrayed as too extreme. The anti-abortion movement's push for a national abortion ban and proposed rollbacks of fertility treatments sparked a new focus. That November's promised "red wave" of Republican election victories never materialized and the party barely won a House majority.

By summer 2024, polling by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed a solid majority of Americans oppose a federal abortion ban and a rising number support access to abortions for any reason. That's an increase from 2021, a year before the Supreme Court decision.

In one contested San Diego-area House race, the Republican challenger Matt Gunderson speaks directly to the camera and declares: "I'm pro-choice."

Jack Pandol, the communications director of the National Republican Congressional Committee, said that in 2022, Democrats spent hundreds of millions of dollars "lying about Republican candidates' positions on this sensitive and nuanced issue."

"Republicans can't let Democrats lie any longer — they should be clear, direct, and forcefully push back against these false attacks."

Still, House Democrats are redoubling efforts to gain control of the chamber by focusing on House Republican candidates and their abortion views — past and present.

"Republicans are trying to gaslight voters," said CJ Warnke, communications director of the House Majority PAC, which is the outside group supporting House Democrats.

House Majority PAC is pummeling Republicans with millions of dollars' worth of campaign ads warning against extreme GOP views on abortion and reproductive care. It has pulled up the voting records, bill sponsorships and past commentary from both incumbents and newcomers and is promising to spend at least \$100 million this election cycle on the issue in House races.

Democrats, too, have shifted to speaking more openly and forcefully in favor of reproductive care, led in many ways by Harris' example.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, the chairwoman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, vowed, "We'll make sure the American people will know exactly how the Republicans have voted to restrict reproductive rights."

Congress has served as a key battleground in efforts to advance the anti-abortion agenda for decades, as Republicans have repeatedly proposed legislation to limit different types of abortion services, including late-term abortions.

Trump, along with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, orchestrated the confirmation of three justices to the nine-member Supreme Court — a historic accomplishment — during the former president's term in office, fulfilling a longtime party goal of shifting the court to a conservative majority.

First celebrated as a conservative victory when the court overruled Roe v. Wade, the aftermath of the Dobbs decision soon became a political liability for Republicans as states began instituting abortion bans.

One of the nation's leading anti-abortion advocacy groups, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, is encouraging candidates in a strategy memo to recommit to ending abortion and portraying the Democrats as extreme in seeking to make abortion access available nationwide.

But GOP Rep. Lawler said it was important he address the issue head on because Democrats are attacking him as extreme on the issue. "Voters have a right to know where I stand," Lawler said.

## Happy 50th 'SNL!' Here's a look back at the show's very first cast

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Live from New York! It's 50 seasons later for "SNL."

The landmark NBC sketch comedy show "Saturday Night Live" premiered Oct. 11, 1975, with drop-dead

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dark humor and pratfalls, George Carlin as host and not one but two musical guests: Billy Preston and Janis Ian.

On Saturday nights, in those early years, young people gathered around TVs to watch the Lorne Michaels production that served up counterculture to the mass market via the Not Ready for Prime Time Players.

"What is attractive and unusual about the program is that it is an attempt, finally, to provide entertainment on television in a recognizable human, non-celebrity voice, and in a voice, too, that tries to deal with the morass of media-induced show business culture that increasingly pervades American life," The New Yorker's Michael J. Arlen wrote in a 1975 review.

Fast forward to this year, Sept. 28, when the first episode of "SNL's" half-century season is set to air in a lead-up to a three-hour live primetime special Feb. 16 on, gasp, a Sunday. Jean Smart will host to open the season, with Jelly Roll as musical guest.

Over the decades, some seasons were better than others, with breakout stars like Eddie Murphy, Adam Sandler, Tina Fey, Will Ferrell, Mike Myers and more following the original seven. So what became of the very first cast, the freshman class, post-"SNL?" Here's a catchup.

John Belushi

"National Lampoon's Animal House," "Continental Divide," "Neighbors" and all things The Blues Brothers. Belushi left "SNL" in 1979 to pursue music and film projects. That he did, to bad reviews and good.

Following years of drug use, he died March 5, 1982, at 33 after overdosing at the Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles. Belushi's death stunned and saddened his friends and fans and symbolized the end of the hard-living '70s.

In addition to his mischievous, often frenzied performances on "SNL," Belushi appeared in other films as well, including the drama "Old Boyfriends" and the poorly-reviewed Steven Spielberg-directed historical comedy "1941."

Before that, Belushi birthed his "Joliet" Jake Blues, joining fellow "SNL" cast member Dan Aykroyd as brother Elwood. Their TV debut as the brothers blue came on "SNL" in 1978.

The sunglass-wearing, dark-suited Blues Brothers took on a fame of their own with the self-titled 1980 movie, directed by John Landis. After Belushi's death, "Blues Brothers 2000" was released in 1998 in tribute with most of the first film's original cast.

After Belushi's death, many of his loved ones, including his widow Judith Belushi Pisano, were angered by the negative narrative tone of "Wired," the Bob Woodward book about the comic genius. Belushi Pisano and Tanner Colby responded with a book of their own, "Belushi: A Biography."

Belushi Pisano, his high school sweetheart, died in July from cancer. John Belushi shared a writing Emmy with fellow "SNL" cast members and writers in 1977.

Gilda Radner

Nasally Roseanne Roseannadanna. Weird teen Lisa Loopner. Weekend Update's "never mind" complainer Emily Litella. Radner contributed an endearing sweetness to the inaugural season of "SNL." She stayed for five years.

In 1979, the Emmy and Grammy winner took to Broadway to perform a one-woman show, "Gilda Live." Included were some of her most beloved "SNL" characters, including Baba Wawa, a spoof of Barbara Walters. The show was filmed and released as a movie.

Radner appeared in several other films, including "First Family" and "The Woman in Red," the latter a 1984 hit written and directed by her co-star and future husband, Gene Wilder. Among other projects: She starred in the 1980 Broadway drama "Lunch Hour."

Radner died May 20, 1989, at age 42 after a long battle with ovarian cancer. Her book detailing her cancer fight was released earlier that year. A documentary about her life, "Love Gilda," was released in 2018.

Chevy Chase

Chase was the first to utter the words: "Live from New York, it's Saturday night!" And he has a long list of post-"SNL" credits, including many commercial successes and his share of flops. He was also the first cast member to leave the show.



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Initially hired as a writer, he was known on "SNL" for "Weekend Update," his bumbling President Gerald Ford, his pratfalls in general and his feuds with cast members. Chase was replaced in the middle of the second season by Bill Murray.

Years later (2013), Chase exited TV's "Community" during the fourth season amid complaints about racial slurs directed at fellow cast member Donald Glover.

In between "SNL" and that moment, Chase worked a lot, at least for a time.

There were two "Fletch" movies. There was "Caddyshack" and a poorly-received sequel. There was "The Three Amigos!" There were five "Vacation" movies, though his appearance in the last one (in 2015) was a cameo.

Chase's first hit was "Foul Play" with Goldie Hawn in 1978. He tried his hand at a late-night talk show, "The Chevy Chase Show," on Fox in 1993. It was canceled after six weeks.

Among his awards: A writing Emmy for "SNL" in 1976, a performance Emmy on the show the same year and a shared writing Emmy for "The Paul Simon Special" in 1977.

Chase put out a biography in 2007, "I'm Chevy Chase ... and You're Not," named for his famous catchphrase as anchor of "Weekend Update." In his book, he detailed childhood physical abuse at the hands of his mother and stepfather, John Cederquist — both of whom are dead.

Now 80, Chase has taken in recent years to hosting screenings with audience Q&As for "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," the most enduring movie in that franchise.

He also makes chicken sounds and posts fan meetups and family gatherings on TikTok, where he has 1.2 million followers.

Laraine Newman

She left "SNL" in 1980 after portraying Connie Conehead, Valley Girl stewardess Sherry and ditz public access TV co-host Christie Christina. She was also a recurring reporter on "Weekend Update."

Newman has spoken openly about her struggles with depression and drug addiction during that time. She got sober in 1987.

Before leaving "SNL," Newman appeared in the 1978 film "American Hot Wax." Steady film, TV and voice work followed through the 1980s into the 2000s. She was the antagonist in the 1991 comedy "Problem Child 2" and appeared in 1993's "Coneheads" as Connie's Aunt Laarta.

Newman, 72, appeared in episodes of "Friends," "3rd Rock from the Sun," "7th Heaven," "Laverne & Shirley" and "St. Elsewhere," and in the 1994 live action "Flintstones" film.

She lent her voice to several animated hit films, including "Wall-E," "Up," "Toy Story 3" and "Tangled." And she has worked as a magazine writer and editor. In 2021, she put out "May You Live in Interesting Times," an audio memoir.

Fun fact: After high school graduation, Newman studied mime in Paris with Marcel Marceau.

In 2017, with the rest of "SNL's" original cast, she was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame.

Dan Aykroyd

When he wasn't bleeding out as Julia Child or declaring, "Jane, you ignorant slut!" on "Weekend Update," Aykroyd swagged with Steve Martin as one of two wild and crazy guys, and led the Conehead family as patriarch Beldar.

And he lent so much more to "SNL" before leaving in 1979, including as half of The Blues Brothers and impersonations of talk show host Tom Snyder, Rod Serling and two presidents: Nixon and Carter.

With Belushi, his close friend, and backed by legit players, the bluesy and soulful brothers caught on as a band. They played gigs and released a multimillion-selling album, "Briefcase Full of Blues."

His post-"SNL" work has taken him even higher. He and Belushi had a smash with "The Blues Brothers" film. Hit after hit followed: "Neighbors" in 1981, "Trading Places" in 1983 and the 1984 "Ghostbusters" that launched a franchise (Aykroyd and Harold Ramis wrote the first two). He also appeared in "1941."

Aykroyd, 72, wrote and narrated a recent audio documentary, "Blues Brothers: The Arc of Gratitude."

In 1985, Aykroyd co-wrote and starred with Chase in "Spies Like Us," directed by Landis. Aykroyd earned a supporting actor Oscar nomination for 1989's "Driving Miss Daisy."

The '90s weren't so kind. There were many flops, including his directorial debut in 1991, "Nothing but

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Trouble" starring Demi Moore, Chase, John Candy and Aykroyd with a grisly prosthetic face. A bright spot was the acclaimed "Grosse Pointe Blank," in which he played a rival hitman to star John Cusack.

With Hard Rock Cafe co-founder Isaac Tigrett, Aykroyd co-founded House of Blues, a chain of live music halls and restaurants that became a division of Live Nation in 2006.

Jane Curtin

Curtin left "SNL," in 1980, after five seasons. She was a master of deadpan, often playing the straight woman off such outsized performers as Belushi and Radner. A regular on "Weekend Update," she was also known for the Coneheads sketches as matriarch Prymaat and as Enid Loopner with fellow nerds Radner and Murray.

Curtin, 76, has spoken about being bothered by the drug-fueled lifestyles of some of her castmates. She won two Emmys for her 1980s sitcom "Kate & Allie." She later starred as Dr. Mary Albright in the hit series "3rd Rock from the Sun" (1996-2001).

Her post-"SNL" work stayed mainly on television, including some busts like the 1990 sitcom "Working it Out." It was canceled after 13 episodes. With Fred Savage, she appeared in the sitcom "Crumbs" in 2006. It was canceled four months later.

There was some Broadway work: Miss Proserpine Garnett in "Candida," "Love Letters" and the 2002 revival of "Our Town" that marked Paul Newman's return to Broadway after 38 years.

Garrett Morris

Initially hired as a writer, he was the oldest on "SNL's" first cast at 37. He came to the show after 17 years as a singer and arranger with Harry Belafonte, as an actor in plays and musicals, as a playwright and as a civil rights activist who helped desegregate Actor's Equity.

Morris was raised in New Orleans by his grandmother and Baptist minister grandfather, spending his childhood singing in the church choir. He later became a Buddhist after moving to New York, where he was homeless for a time well before "SNL."

Morris, 87, trained at The Juilliard School. Belafonte gave him his first professional break. Morris performed with the Harry Belafonte Singers for 10 years, starting when he was just 22.

He remained on "SNL" until 1980. He was known for his character Chico Escuela, the Dominican baseball player whose catchphrase, "Baseball has been berry berry good to me," caught on in pop culture. He also performed as the shouting interpreter in the "News for the Hard of Hearing" segments and did impersonations of Idi Amin, James Brown, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bob Marley and Muhammad Ali.

Morris once sang a Mozart aria on "SNL" as the musical guest. He also sang a Schubert composition on the show.

In 1994, Morris was shot and seriously wounded in an attempted holdup in Los Angeles.

In the '80s, Morris appeared in a string of horror films. Later, he was a regular on the series "2 Broke Girls" and performed on TV comedies "Martin," "The Jamie Foxx Show" and "The Wayans Brothers." He also appeared on "Married with Children," "Family Guy" and "The Jeffersons."

He competed with his family on "Celebrity Family Feud" in 2016, appeared on "This is Us" in 2018 and on a "Black Lady Sketch Show" in 2019.

Morris also has a long list of film credits: Sidney Lumet's "The Anderson Tapes," the classic "Cooley High," "The Longshots," "Pawn Shop" and Marvel's "Ant-Man" included.

## Sean 'Diddy' Combs joins list of Hollywood stars charged with sex crimes

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

Since the #MeToo movement took off, a multitude of male celebrities have been accused of sexual misconduct, but only a handful of those in the music and film industries who have actually faced criminal charges.

Sean "Diddy" Combs has now joined that short list of prosecuted stars.

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Here is a list of some of the most prominent men to face criminal charges in recent years and the outcome of those cases:

Harvey Weinstein

The ex-movie mogul was prosecuted in both New York and California after dozens of women came forward to publicly accuse him of sexual assault.

In the Los Angeles case, a jury convicted Weinstein in 2022 of raping and sexually assaulting one of four women he was charged with abusing. The three guilty counts involved an Italian actor and model who said Weinstein appeared at her hotel room, uninvited, during a Los Angeles film festival in 2013.

Weinstein, 72, was later acquitted of a sexual battery allegation made by a massage therapist who treated him at a hotel in 2010. The jury was unable to reach a decision on counts involving two other accusers. A mistrial was declared on those counts.

In the New York case, Weinstein was initially convicted in 2020 of raping one woman and sexually assaulting another, followed weeks of harrowing and graphic testimony from a string of accusers. But his 23-year prison sentence and conviction was overturned earlier this year, with New York's highest court saying the trial judge unfairly allowed testimony based on allegations that were not part of the case.

A retrial has been scheduled and Manhattan prosecutors this week brought a new indictment with additional allegations from another woman. The trial had been scheduled to start in November but is now unlikely to begin until 2025.

Weinstein, who also faces several civil lawsuits brought by women accusing him of sexual misconduct, denies sexually assaulting anyone and is appealing his California conviction.

Bill Cosby

The former "Cosby Show" star was the first celebrity to go on trial in the #MeToo era.

He was arrested in 2015 when a district attorney armed with newly unsealed evidence — Cosby's damaging deposition in a lawsuit brought by Temple University sports administrator Andrea Constand — filed charges against him just days before the 12-year statute of limitations was about to run out. Constand accused Cosby of drugging and sexually assaulting her.

The AP does not typically identify sexual assault victims without their permission, which Constand has granted.

Jurors couldn't reach a unanimous verdict when Cosby was put on trial in 2017. At a second trial in 2018, he was convicted and sentenced to up to a decade in prison. But the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2021 said the district attorney who made the decision to arrest Cosby was obligated to stand by a predecessor's promise not to charge Cosby, though there was no evidence that agreement was ever put in writing.

Cosby, now 87, has been accused of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment by more than 60 women. He has denied all allegations involving sex crimes.

R. Kelly

Federal juries in Chicago and New York convicted Kelly, now 56, of crimes that include producing child sexual abuse materials and federal sex trafficking charges.

Born Robert Sylvester Kelly, he was sentenced to 30 years in the New York case last year and a mostly concurrent 20-year sentence in February in the Chicago case.

The 57-year-old was accused of using his fame to sexually abuse young fans, including some who were just children, in a systematic scheme that went on for decades.

The Grammy-winning, multiplatinum-selling songwriter also was accused of using his entourage of managers and aides to meet girls and keep them from speaking out, an operation that prosecutors said amounted to a criminal enterprise.

Attorneys for R. Kelly are appealing his convictions.

Sean "Diddy" Combs

The hip-hop mogul was arrested in New York on Sept. 16 and was accused in an indictment of using his "power and prestige" to induce female victims and male sex workers into drug-fueled sexual performances dubbed "Freak Offs."

Prosecutors said he used violence and threats of blackmail to keep people from speaking out. Combs,

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54, faces federal racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking charges that could put him in prison for at least 15 years if he is convicted on all counts.

A judge Wednesday rejected the hip-hop mogul's proposal that he await his sex trafficking trial in the luxury of his Florida mansion instead of a federal jail in Brooklyn.

Kevin Spacey

Last year, a London jury acquitted the Oscar-winning actor of sexual assault charges stemming from allegations by four men dating back 20 years.

Three men accused Spacey of aggressively grabbing their crotches, describing him as "vile" and a "slippery, snaky" predator. Spacey said he was a "big flirt" who had consensual flings with men and whose only misstep was touching a man's groin while making a "clumsy pass."

The court victory in England came after Spacey also successfully defended himself against a civil lawsuit in New York in 2022 brought by "Star Trek: Discovery" actor Anthony Rapp.

Cuba Gooding Jr.

The Oscar-winning "Jerry Maguire" star pleaded guilty in 2022 to forcibly kissing a worker at a New York nightclub in 2018 — and in return prosecutors dropped charges involving two other women that could have led to a possible jail term if the case had gone to trial and resulted in a conviction.

Gooding also publicly apologized for the first time to two other women who accused him of similar behavior in separate encounters, calling himself a "celebrity figure" who meant no harm. His admissions were part of a plea deal that came nearly three years after Gooding was arrested.

Gooding told the judge he "kissed the waitress on her lips" without consent.

Danny Masterson

"That '70s Show" star is serving a sentence of 30 years to life in prison for raping two women.

After an initial jury failed to reach verdicts on three counts of rape in December 2022 and a mistrial was declared, prosecutors retried Masterson on all three counts.

At his second trial, a jury found Masterson guilty of two of three rape counts on May 31. Both attacks took place in Masterson's Hollywood-area home in 2003, when he was at the height of his fame.

They could not reach a verdict on the third count, an allegation that Masterson also raped a longtime girlfriend.

Prosecutors alleged that Masterson used his prominence in the Church of Scientology — where all three women were also members at the time — to avoid consequences for decades after the attacks, and the women blamed the church for their hesitancy in going to police about Masterson.

## Happy 50th 'SNL!' Here's a look back at the show's very first cast

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Live from New York! It's 50 seasons later for "SNL."

The landmark NBC sketch comedy show "Saturday Night Live" premiered Oct. 11, 1975, with drop-dead dark humor and pratfalls, George Carlin as host and not one but two musical guests: Billy Preston and Janis Ian.

On Saturday nights, in those early years, young people gathered around TVs to watch the Lorne Michaels production that served up counterculture to the mass market via the Not Ready for Prime Time Players.

Fast forward to this year, Sept. 28, when the first episode of "SNL's" half-century season is set to air in a lead-up to a three-hour live primetime special Feb. 16 on, gasp, a Sunday. Jean Smart will host to open the season.

Over the decades, some seasons were better than others, with breakout stars like Eddie Murphy, Adam Sandler, Tina Fey, Will Ferrell and more. So what became of the freshman "SNL" class?

John Belushi

"National Lampoon's Animal House," "Continental Divide," "Neighbors" and all things The Blues Brothers. Belushi left "SNL" in 1979 to pursue music and film projects.

Following years of drug use, he died March 5, 1982, at 33 after overdosing at the Chateau Marmont

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in Los Angeles. Belushi's death stunned friends and fans and symbolized the end of the hard-living '70s. Belushi birthed his "Joliet" Jake Blues, joining fellow "SNL" cast member Dan Aykroyd as brother Elwood. Their TV debut as the brothers blue came on "SNL" in 1978.

The sunglass-wearing, dark-suited Blues Brothers took on a fame of their own with the self-titled 1980 movie. After Belushi's death, "Blues Brothers 2000" was released in 1998 in tribute with most of the first film's original cast.

Gilda Radner

Nasally Roseanne Roseannadanna. Weird teen Lisa Loopner. Weekend Update's "never mind" complainer Emily Litella. Radner contributed an endearing sweetness to the inaugural season of "SNL." She stayed for five years.

In 1979, the Emmy and Grammy winner took to Broadway to perform a one-woman show, "Gilda Live." Included were some of her most beloved "SNL" characters, including Baba Wawa, a spoof of Barbara Walters. The show was filmed and released as a movie.

Radner died in 1989 at 42 after a long battle with ovarian cancer. A documentary about her, "Love Gilda," was released in 2018.

Chevy Chase

Chase was the first to utter the words: "Live from New York, it's Saturday night!" The first cast member to leave the show, he has a long list of post-"SNL" credits.

Initially hired as a writer, he was known on "SNL" for "Weekend Update," his bumbling President Gerald Ford and his feuds with cast members. Bill Murray replaced Chase in the middle of season two.

In his post-"SNL" years, there were two "Fletch" movies. There was "Caddyshack," "The Three Amigos!" and five "Vacation" movies, though his appearance in the 2015 one was a cameo.

Now 80, Chase has taken in recent years to hosting screenings with audience Q&As for the enduring "Christmas Vacation."

Laraine Newman

She left "SNL" in 1980 after portraying Connie Conehead, Valley Girl stewardess Sherry and ditzy public access TV co-host Christie Christina.

Newman, 72, has spoken openly about her struggles with depression and drug addiction during that time. She got sober in 1987.

Steady film, TV and voice work followed. She was the antagonist in the 1991 comedy "Problem Child 2," appeared in 1993's "Coneheads" as Connie's Aunt Laarta and performed in episodes of "Friends" and "3rd Rock from the Sun." She lent her voice to several animated hit films, including "Wall-E," "Up," "Toy Story 3" and "Tangled."

In 2017, with the rest of "SNL's" original cast, she was inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame.

Dan Aykroyd

When he wasn't bleeding out as Julia Child or declaring, "Jane, you ignorant slut!" on "Weekend Update," Aykroyd swaggered with Steve Martin as one of two wild and crazy guys, and led the Conehead family as patriarch Beldar.

He lent so much more to "SNL" before leaving in 1979, including his half of The Blues Brothers and impersonations of talk show host Tom Snyder, Rod Serling and two presidents: Nixon and Carter.

With Belushi, his close friend, and backed by legit players, the bluesy and soulful brothers caught on as a band. They played gigs and released a multimillion-selling album, "Briefcase Full of Blues."

His post-"SNL" work took him even higher. Hit after hit followed "The Blues Brothers": "Neighbors" in 1981, "Trading Places" in 1983 and 1984's "Ghostbusters." Aykroyd earned a supporting actor Oscar nomination for 1989's "Driving Miss Daisy."

With Hard Rock Cafe co-founder Isaac Tigrett, Aykroyd co-founded House of Blues, a chain of live music halls and restaurants.

Jane Curtin

Curtin left "SNL," in 1980, after five seasons. She was a master of deadpan, often playing the straight woman off such outsized performers as Belushi and Radner. A regular on "Weekend Update," she was

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also known for the Coneheads sketches as matriarch Prymaat and as Enid Loopner with fellow nerds Radner and Murray.

Curtin, 76, has spoken about being bothered by the drug-fueled lifestyles of some of her castmates. She won two Emmys for her 1980s sitcom "Kate & Allie." She later starred as Dr. Mary Albright in the hit series "3rd Rock from the Sun."

Garrett Morris

Initially hired as a writer, he was the oldest on "SNL's" first cast at 37. He came to the show after 17 years as a singer and arranger with Harry Belafonte, as a stage actor, as a playwright and as a civil rights activist who helped desegregate Actor's Equity.

He remained on "SNL" until 1980. He was known for his character Chico Escuela, the Dominican baseball player whose catchphrase, "Baseball has been berry, berry good to me," caught on in pop culture. He also performed as the shouting interpreter in the "News for the Hard of Hearing" segments and did impersonations of James Brown, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bob Marley and Muhammad Ali.

In 1994, Morris was shot and seriously wounded in an attempted holdup in Los Angeles.

In the '80s, Morris appeared in a string of horror films. Later, he was a regular on the series "2 Broke Girls" and performed on TV comedies "Martin," "The Jamie Foxx Show" and "The Wayans Brothers."

## Widespread adoption fraud separated generations of Korean children from their families, AP finds

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and CLAIRE GALOFARO Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — As the plane descended into Seoul, Robert Calabretta swaddled himself in a blanket, his knees tucked into his chest like a baby in the womb. A single tear ran down his cheek.

The 34-year-old felt like a newborn — he was about to meet his parents for the first time since he was 3 days old.

Most of his life, he thought they'd abandoned him for adoption to the United States. When he finally found them, he learned the truth: The origin story on his adoption paperwork was a lie. Instead, he said, his parents were told in 1986 that their infant was very sick and they thought he had died.

"I am so sorry," his birth father had written when they found each other, his words interrupted by fits of weeping. "I miss you. How did you endure this cruel world?"

Calabretta is among a growing and vocal community of victims of an adoption system they accuse of searching out children for would-be parents, rather than finding parents for vulnerable children — sometimes with devastating consequences only surfacing today.

South Korea's government, Western countries and adoption agencies worked in tandem to supply some 200,000 Korean children to parents overseas, despite years of evidence they were being procured through questionable or downright unscrupulous means, an investigation led by The Associated Press found. Those children grew up and searched for their roots — and some realized they are not who they were told.

Their stories have sparked a reckoning that is rocking the international adoption industry, which was built in South Korea and spread around the world. European countries have launched investigations and halted international adoption. The South Korean government has accepted a fact-finding commission under pressure from adoptees, and hundreds have submitted their cases for review.

The AP investigation, done in collaboration with Frontline (PBS), was based on interviews with more than 80 adoptees in the U.S., Australia and six European countries, along with parents, agency employees, humanitarian workers and government officials. It also drew on more than 100 information requests and thousands of pages of documents — including many never publicly seen before and some the AP got declassified — from courts, archives, government files and adoption papers.

In dozens of cases AP examined with Frontline, it found: Children were kidnapped off the streets and sent abroad. Parents claim they were told their newborns were dead or too sick to survive, only to have them shipped away. Documents were fabricated to give children identities that belonged to somebody else, leading adoptees to anguished reunions with supposed parents — to later discover they were not

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related at all.

The agencies and governments each played a part in keeping the baby pipeline pumping. Adoption agencies created a competitive market for children and paid hospitals to supply them, documents show. The South Korean government not only knew of fraudulent practices but designed laws to speed up the exportation of children it deemed undesirable. Western governments turned a blind eye, sometimes even pressuring South Korea for children, while promoting the narrative that they were saving orphans with no other options.

Calabretta doesn't believe he was saved; he believes he was stolen. And many in his network of adult adoptees believe they were, too.

Advocates say the vast majority of adoptions are honest and end well. But it is impossible to know how many adoptions are fraudulent because unreliable documents prevent adoptees from finding their birth families and learning the truth. Government data obtained by AP shows less than a fifth of 15,000 adoptees like Calabretta, who have asked South Korea for help with family searches since 2012, have managed to reunite with relatives.

In 2019, a Korean government agency told Calabretta they had found his father. He pictured himself as a rock on a beach, with two waves crashing over it. The first was joy — he had been loved. The other was fury that something profound had been taken from him.

"You're constantly in flux between two worlds," he said, "the one you could have and should have been in, and the one where you are."

"A baby factory"

Adoptions from South Korea peaked in the 1980s, fueled by the government, just as Calabretta's parents arrived at the hospital with a blanket in which to carry their firstborn son home.

The adoption industry had grown out of the wreckage of the Korean War in the 1950s, when Americans took in the unwanted biracial children born of Korean women and Western soldiers. As it clawed its way out of post-war poverty, South Korea continued to rely on private adoption agencies as its social safety net, bringing millions of dollars into the economy and saving even more by never building its own child welfare program.

Meanwhile, in the West, the number of adoptable babies plummeted because of access to birth control and abortion. The desires of two cultures collided: couples in wealthy nations desperately wanted babies, and South Korea desperately wanted to rid itself of mouths to feed.

As the supply of biracial babies dwindled, South Korea turned to those it saw as unwelcome citizens: fully-Korean children of poor families and unwed mothers.

Korean officials fit their laws to match American ones to make children adoptable for what some deride as "baby diplomacy" to satisfy Western demand. The government endorsed "proxy adoptions," for families to adopt children quickly without ever visiting Korea, meeting them by the planeloads at American airports.

In an internal memo from 1966 obtained by AP, International Social Service, a Geneva-based organization, wrote that it suspected the Korean government assessed agencies not by child welfare standards, but by the money they brought in.

"There is quite a bit of rivalry and competition among the different agencies, and it is not beyond agencies to bribe or pressure mothers for the release of these children, and not beyond agencies to try to compete with each other for the same child," officials noted in the document, now at the agency's archives at the University of Minnesota Libraries.

In 1976, Patricia Nye, east Asia director for ISS, concluded in a memo that the South Korean government was "entirely irresponsible." What was happening, she wrote, was "close to being scandalous, the mass exportation of children, Korea has been called a baby factory."

Nye, who has died, said publicly on a BBC program called "A Traffic in Babies," that Korean adoptions had "gone out of control."

"We are not talking about little pets or pieces of wood," Nye said into the camera. "It's almost like a trade in children ... Asian children flowing from Asia to Europe and North America."

The Korean government tried to downplay the concerns. Documents reveal an official insisted the show

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— which described the country's adoption program as "baby wholesaling" — actually depicted it as "organized and well-managed."

In December 1976, the government facilitated a new law that widened the legal definition of adoptable children, removed judicial oversight and granted vast powers to the heads of private agencies.

The government empowered four agencies to handle most adoptions: Holt Children's Services, which had pioneered sending Korean children to the U.S., and three others, Eastern Social Welfare Society, Korea Welfare Services and Korea Social Service. A 1983 Health Ministry audit cited all four agencies and accused Holt of providing larger-than-allowed payments to impoverished birth mothers. The ministry's response was to issue a "warning."

Records show that officials were aware of a laundry list of dubious practices in the industry: lost children were documented as abandoned; the origins of alleged orphans weren't verified; some were "disguised" by agencies as being born from unwed mothers to make them adoptable, according to Health Ministry records seen by AP. In the early 1980s, the government itself likened the agencies' child-hunting practices to "trafficking." At a meeting in 1982, documents show, the ministry admitted to child "intake" problems and cautioned agencies to improve their practices to avoid the appearance of "trafficking, profiteering." Yet the government still called for "as many adoptions as possible."

Calabretta was taken from the Red Cross Hospital in Daegu in 1986. His father, Lee Sung-soo, said an administrator told him his son had serious lung and heart problems. The family didn't have a lot of money. The only option, the administrator said, was a high-risk and very expensive surgery that could leave the baby dead or severely disabled.

She advised Lee to relinquish his son to Holt, which would pay for the surgery and find a home for a disabled child if he survived.

Lee said he signed the paper, believing it was the only way to save his son, and wept. The AP could not verify Lee's account — the hospital closed and its records were destroyed. Information obtained through a records request show that 470 children born in that hospital were adopted during the 80s and 90s.

"It felt like the sky was falling," Lee said. "I felt like my heart was being ripped apart."

By then, agencies were procuring most of their children directly from hospitals and maternity homes, which often received illegal payments for babies, records show. Though the stated intention of adoption was to spare children from orphanages, they gathered more than 4,600 children from hospitals in 1988, 60% of their supply.

"In paying rewards for childbirth delivery costs to hospitals, maternity homes, local administrative offices and others when acquiring children for adoption," the Health Ministry wrote in 1988, "the social welfare institutions (agencies) have lost their morality and have descended to become trafficking institutions."

A government audit the following year shows that Holt made nearly 100 illegal payments to hospitals during six months in 1988, worth about \$16,000 now. Eastern Social Welfare Society gave even more, now worth about \$64,000, to hospitals over that period.

The South Korean government declined to answer questions about its responsibility for the past, saying it will let the fact-finding commission finish its work. In a statement, the Health Ministry acknowledged that skyrocketing adoptions in the 1970s-80s were possibly driven by an intent to reduce welfare spending to balance cuts in foreign aid.

Lee Moo-ja, a retired local official in Boryeong city, recalled a sense of helplessness during the 1980s. Abandoned children were supposed to be reported to city officials, who would assign them to an orphanage, she said. But instead, agencies were directly scooping them up, and the pleading letters she sent to hospitals went nowhere.

The national government wasn't interested in enforcement, she said, leaving local officials like her powerless to stop it.

Calabretta's parents felt powerless too; they got onto an elevator with other couples holding their newborn children. All they had was the empty blanket.

"Is this really all for children?"



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With the government on their side, agencies raced against time for children.

Employees were told to process them as quickly as they could, said two former adoption workers who spoke anonymously because Korean law forbids them from publicizing confidential information.

"All I heard was work faster, faster," said one, employed at an agency from 1979 to 1984. "Do it faster and faster."

Even now, the woman clenches her hands and clutches a pillow as she said she convinced herself they were saving orphans. She couldn't help but quietly wonder: "Is this really all for children?"

Agencies had intake workers scour every region of the country for children, she said. They invested "zero effort" in confirming a child was truly orphaned.

She questioned whether dubious practices were baked into the system, from beginning to end. A colleague once brought in a girl allegedly abandoned in Daegu, about 145 miles away from Seoul. She refused to process the girl for adoption because she thought it was too soon to conclude she was abandoned. Not long after, the Daegu worker sent the same girl again, with the same photo — but a new name and background story that claimed she'd been abandoned earlier.

The former worker said she never learned whether the girl was adopted.

Some lost children ended up overseas.

Laurie Bender was approached by a strange woman while playing in the front yard in South Korea in 1975. She remembers the woman saying that Bender's family didn't want her anymore because her mother had another baby. She went with the woman, and felt so sad she thought she might die.

Bender says she was 4, but Korea calculates birthdays differently and her records say she was 6.

Every day, her mother, Han Tae-soon, went to police stations, government offices, adoption agencies. Every night, she slept with a picture of her missing daughter.

That picture was displayed everywhere — in subway stations, on lamp posts, on bags of snacks that advertised missing children, the Korean version of American milk cartons. But Bender was on the other side of the globe — sent by Holt to an American family who believed she was an orphan.

The U.S. took in the highest number of orphans by far, and to be eligible for a visa, they had to have lost one or both parents to death, disappearance or abandonment. The agencies seized on the word abandonment, applying it to most of the children they acquired.

Records from 1980 to 1987 show that more than 90% of the Korean children sent to the West almost certainly had known relatives, said Philsik Shin, a scholar at Korea's Anyang University. The number of children sent for adoption was often more than 10 times higher than the police count for abandoned children, he found — close to 9,000 in 1985.

Listing children as abandoned made adoptions easier because agencies didn't have to verify child origins or obtain parental relinquishment. It was "almost customary" to document children as abandoned, said Helen Noh, who matched hundreds of children with U.S. parents at Holt Children's Services from 1981 to 1982.

Now a scholar at Seoul's Soongsil University, Noh said Holt workers understood the agency was charging adopters about \$3,000 per child.

"My salary was 240,000 won, which is like less than \$200 a month," Noh said. "If you send one child ... that amount could pay at least one worker for the whole year."

Documents obtained by AP show that agencies were likely charging even more, around \$4,000 to \$6,000. But they pocketed some of that money through improper means, such as charging for travel expenses for adoption workers but arranging for commercial passengers to carry babies instead.

Workers tried to meet specific requests from adoptive families. Some asked for siblings, Noh said, so she and her colleagues would compete over the small number of twins in their networks.

Another former worker, employed at two agencies from the 1970s to early 1990s, said anybody facing challenges in raising their children would be strongly encouraged to give them away.

"Many of the children we gathered would have stayed with their biological parents with a little help," the former worker said. "But what we heard (from management) was always the same — if we don't take that child, another adoption agency will."

Private counseling records in a 1988 Holt document obtained by AP show that some parents who re-

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linquished their children soon pleaded for them back. The agency's workers told them that their children would thrive under good Western parents and may return home someday rich or "with Ph.Ds."

In one case, a mother returned and asked to see her son. The boy was still in Seoul, but a Holt worker told the mother he'd been flown to the U.S.

"After being told the lie," the worker wrote, "the birth mother began to regain her peace of mind as expected."

Susan Soonkeum Cox, who long worked for Holt International, the Oregon-based U.S. arm of the Holt adoption network, denied widespread problems. She said the goal was always to find good homes for children who would have otherwise grown up in orphanages.

"Has there been some activity that shouldn't have happened? Probably. We're human and everybody is different. There's good social workers, there's bad social workers, there's good employees, bad employees," she said. "But...the accusation of systemic, deliberate wrongdoing, that I reject."

The Seoul-based Holt Children's Services, which split from the American agency in the 1970s, and the three other Korean agencies declined to comment on specific cases.

Holt Korea has in recent years denied accusations of wrongdoing and attributed adoptee complaints to misunderstandings and Korea's social welfare issues. Kim Jin Sook, president of Eastern, has said the agency carried out government policies to find homes for "discarded children."

But some other agencies on the ground started closing their programs because of ethical concerns.

In the 1970s, Francis Carlin ran South Korea's Catholic Relief Services, which facilitated about 30 adoptions a month, compared to hundreds by the larger agencies. The demand from the West was intense, and there weren't enough legitimate orphans to feed it, he said, leading to "a lot of the compromises, a lot of the hanky panky."

The larger agencies toured orphanages, grabbing up healthy babies and leaving older and disabled children, he said.

"These, I would call them brokers, were going out and trying to get more and more children," Carlin said when reached by AP. "They would put the legitimate parent on a guilt trip and say, what are you doing? You can't afford to take care of this child.... Why don't you just step back and let them have a better life? You're so selfish."

One Korean social worker expressed disgust in words so crushing they stuck with Carlin all these years: "It's sickening, just sickening."

Catholic Relief Services ceased its adoption program in 1974. Carlin remembers standing up at a meeting of humanitarian organizations: "We are beginning to slide into the abyss," he said.

Four decades later, Laurie Bender took a DNA test because her own daughter was curious about their heritage. In 2019, she got a call: "Your mother has been looking for you."

Bender dropped the phone.

"It's like a hole in your heart has been healed, you finally feel like a complete person," Bender said. "It's like you've been living a fake life and everything you know is not true."

Bender and her daughter flew to South Korea just weeks later. Her mother, Han Tae-soon, wore her best outfit and lipstick for the first time in a long time. She recognized her daughter immediately in the airport and ran to her, screaming, moaning, running her fingers through her hair.

Han, who is in her 70s, has notebooks feverishly annotated with English translations, written during countless hours trying to learn her daughter's language. Amid the photos of her children on her living room wall is a black-and-white one of Bender as a little girl, stuck in time.

Han plans to sue the South Korean government and Holt for robbing them of ever having a real relationship.

"I feel like I am dying. I really am dying," she said. "There's so little time for me."

She jabbed her finger at paperwork that sent her daughter away.

"Isn't this a government seal?" she demanded. "Why did you make this up and sell away other people's children?"

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This story is part of an ongoing investigation led by The Associated Press in collaboration with FRONTLINE (PBS). The investigation includes an interactive and the upcoming documentary South Korea's Adoption Reckoning, premiering Sept. 20 on PBS & online.

## Switched identities

This system turned children into people with no history, no parents, no ties.

Many adoptees will never know the basic facts of their lives — their birthdays, their birth parents, if they were wanted or truly abandoned — because their documents are false.

Robyn Joy Park, adopted to the United States, cherished her documents so much that she tattooed her adoption number — 82C-1320 — on her back. It was her only tether to her motherland.

Those documents said she was a girl named Park Joo Young, born in Busan in August 1982, and her unmarried mother couldn't afford to keep her. In 2007, Park traveled to Korea to meet the woman that her adoption agency, Eastern, listed as her mother.

Their bond deepened slowly over years. They visited relatives, held hands, shared hotel rooms — the mother spoonfed her rice. The woman's son changed his name to Park Joon Young, to share the "Young" syllable in line with Korean naming traditions for siblings.

Five years passed. Park asked the woman to take a DNA test in the hope of finding her father.

They were not related. She was not Park Joo Young — she was another, unknown, girl.

"I really was so hurt and stunned and devastated and incredibly angry," Park said. "I could only imagine what it was like for her."

She lost touch with the woman, although she remains in contact with the man she considered her brother. Her agency offered her nothing but an apology, and declined to comment when reached by AP.

Her story is not uncommon. When children processed for adoption died, became too sick to travel or were found by their biological families, agencies often replaced them with other children instead of redoing the process from scratch, according to former adoption workers. At a meeting with an adoptee in 2021 where AP was present, a longtime worker said Western partner agencies were willing to take "any child of the same sex and similar age, because it would take too much time to start over again."

The AP has spoken to 10 others who found that their identity was switched with someone else.

One of them, Mia Sang Jørnø, raised in Denmark, developed a close relationship with the family of the man listed as her father by her agency, Korea Social Service. She attended his funeral in 2000, even joining relatives as they received guests through the traditional three-day mourning procession.

He had given her the name of her mother, and she worked up the courage to contact her. They took a DNA test.

They weren't related.

The agency told her that her paperwork was mistaken, and she wasn't even the girl named on her documents, Park Sang Ok. She was Kim Eun-hye. She had mourned a father who wasn't hers.

"I always have this kind of restlessness," she said, "of just not knowing that part of me, my identity."

KSS did not respond to questions. In letters seen by AP and Frontline, the agency has admitted to adoptees that the stories on their paperwork were invented to get the adoptions through.

"I would like to apologize for the wrong information in your adoption paper," a KSS worker wrote to a Danish adoptee in 2016. "It was made up just for adoption procedure." The worker could not be reached by AP.

In 2022, the agency emailed another adoptee that their "real background is different" than listed, apologizing that the discrepancy might "confuse" them.

Neither Park nor Jørnø ever found their real parents. They both think often of the girls whose identities they were given, and wonder: What happened to her?

"We were supposed to be a happy family"

The Korean government cracked down on the adoption industry when the 1988 Olympics brought attention to the baby trade as a national shame.

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The Health Ministry instructed agencies to “improve” their practices and stop “touring” hospitals and orphanages to gather children, according to a document obtained by AP. They were told they could be punished if they continued to “competitively engage in unlawful practices.”

Adoptions plummeted, from around 8,000 a year in the mid-1980s to around 2,000 a year in the 1990s. But tens of thousands of children were already overseas, including Calabretta.

Hospital officials told Calabretta’s mother to assume he had died. She went to a temple three times to offer a Buddhist ceremony to bless the soul of the dead.

The documents that went with him to the U.S. in 1986 described him as a “normal healthy baby, adoptable,” born to an unwed mother, and made no mention of a surgery.

Calabretta returned to South Korea in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. His father, Lee Sung-soo, could not wait out the two-week quarantine and showed up outside the apartment the next day.

Calabretta threw open the window. “Dad!” he shouted.

“My son!” Lee shouted back.

“We were supposed to be a happy family, not separated. He was my precious firstborn son,” Lee said. “For over 30 years, he lived in a foreign land against his will. That makes my heart break.”

Calabretta visits South Korea often, and they talk on the phone every few days. He has the same odd divot in his ear as his mother, the same laugh as his father, the same taste in shoes and jackets and music, the same allergies.

All those years, Calabretta’s mother kept the blanket she’d carried empty out of the hospital, a symbol of the absence where her son should be.

He asked her to rename him, to reclaim him, as her son and a son of Korea. In Korea, there is a sentiment that something isn’t truly yours until you name it, and once you do, you must take care of it.

So he prefers his new name now: Hanil Lee.

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AP reporter Lori Hinnant and researcher Rhonda Shafner and Frontline’s Lora Mofteh and Emily Sternlicht contributed to this report.

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COMING TOMORROW: The role of the West

Robert Calabretta blames not just South Korea but also the United States for taking him away from his parents and adopting him out to an American family.

“What higher trophy is it of domination than taking one’s children and carting them off?” he asked. “The audacity of that. And it’s all tied in a bow of, ‘you must feel so lucky that you’re adopted.’”

Western governments turned a blind eye to rampant fraud and pressured the South Korean government to keep the kids coming, an Associated Press investigation has found.

## **Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese change the WNBA’s landscape, and its future**

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Year 1 of the Clark & Reese Show has been unlike anything the WNBA has ever seen.

Sure, this season’s final chapter is still unscripted with the playoffs set to start Sunday. But the rookie seasons and attention Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese have had makes the league’s outlook extremely bright beyond this postseason.

Sold out arenas became the norm. Soaring television ratings helped expand the fan base. Clark, Reese, the presumptive league MVP A’ja Wilson and others continually chased record-breaking statistics. And routine conversations and social media posts spurred sometimes heated debates about everything from basketball to culture.

“Watching the basketball that’s been played this season and the talent that’s been on the floor across

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the league, it's been phenomenal," Chicago Sky veteran Lindsay Allen said. "The two rookies, Caitlin and Angel — Angel has been huge for us and has been setting records. The basketball has been at a very, very high level and the interest has been, too."

It's impossible to ignore how much the sport has evolved since Clark, Reese and arguably the best rookie class in league history arrived in April. The timing for the league was perfect, too.

Clark and Reese brought the swagger, confidence and passion they exuded in a rivalry that captivated college basketball fans. That momentum continued into the pros and has elevated the profile of everyone around the league.

And as much as everyone attempted to manage the lofty expectations, Clark and Reese, in particular, exceeded them.

The Indiana Fever guard's resume includes rookie records for scoring (761), 3-pointers (120) and All-Star Game assists (10). She broke the league's single-game (19) and single-season records for assists (329) while becoming the first rookie to ever post a triple-double. Now, she believes a title run is possible in the playoffs.

"Once we get there, I think it'll feel a little more real and, obviously, we're not just happy to be there," said Clark, who helped Indiana end the second-longest playoff drought in league history at seven years. "We really believe we can compete with every single team that's going to be in the playoffs. Obviously, the only team we didn't beat this year was the (Las Vegas) Aces and the only way we would see them, I think, would be in the Finals."

Reese was equally efficient, perhaps more proficient, in her impressive season.

The Chicago rookie forward established new league marks for single-season rebounds (446), offensive rebounds (172) and overall rebounding average (13.1). Though Reese didn't hold the single-season rebound record long because Wilson broke it while Reese was sidelined with a season-ending injury.

Reese did become the first rookie with an All-Star Game double-double, and she became the first WNBA player to record back-to-back games of 20 or more rebounds while her 24 double-doubles broke the league's rookie record.

The only real disappointment has been the wrist injury that ended Reese's season after 34 games, an absence that could keep the Sky out of the playoffs and possibly throw a wrench into Reese's Rookie of the Year hopes.

The Clark-Reese dynamic continues to fuel debates among fans — similar to the barbershop discussions about Larry Bird-Magic Johnson in 1980 when they each played leading roles as rookies.

Their polarizing personas put Clark & Reese squarely in the middle of discussions about everything from hard fouls to technical fouls, even cultural issues — including sexuality and race.

But there's no doubt that their presence — and their rivalry — opened the door to more endorsements and more fan engagement, including children who increasingly showed up in the players' jerseys long before tip-off.

From the corn maze featuring Clark in northwestern Indiana to Reese's presence on a large electronic billboard in Chicago to promote blue jeans or the tears of joy streaming down the cheeks of Wilson and her teammates when she broke the league's single-season scoring record at Indiana, everyone seems to have a favorite moment.

"I've been in this league long enough to play alongside some amazing players, Hall of Fame players and this one is no different," Aces forward Alysha Clark said, wiping her eyes while sitting next to Wilson. "When you have players of this caliber playing now, appreciate that because one day she's not going to be here. She's going to retire and go on to live her life and people are going to marvel at what she's done and I'm like, 'Marvel at it now.'"

Fans of Clark and Reese share similar sentiments about the two 22-year-olds who seem destined to be the face of the league for years to come and cornerstone pieces on the 2028 U.S. Olympic Team.

But it's not just a bright future for the rookies, it's also a bright future in a league that has seen ticket demand and visibility soar while playing in front of packed arenas.

"We've seen just a huge amount of people talking about the WNBA, talking about the Fever," said Indiana guard Lexie Hull. "I think a lot of that comes from people being invested in the college game and then coming over, following the players they like, following the 'W' and it's pretty incredible."

## These evangelicals are voting their values — by backing Kamala Harris

By CURTIS YEE and TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the Rev. Lee Scott publicly endorsed Kamala Harris for president during the Evangelicals for Harris Zoom call on Aug. 14, the Presbyterian pastor and farmer said he was taking a risk.

"The easy thing for us to do this year would be to keep our heads down, go to the ballot box, keep our vote secret and go about our business," Scott told the group, which garnered roughly 3,200 viewers according to organizers. "But at this time, I just can't do that."

Scott lives in Butler, Pennsylvania, the same town where a would-be assassin shot former President Donald Trump in July. Scott told The Associated Press that the attack and its impact on his community pushed him to speak out against Trump and the "vitriol" and "acceptable violence" he normalized in politics.

Trump has maintained strong support among white evangelical voters. According to AP VoteCast, a sweeping survey of the electorate, about 8 in 10 white evangelical voters cast a ballot for him in 2020. But a small and diverse coalition of evangelicals is looking to pull their fellow believers away from the former president's fold, offering not only an alternate candidate to support but an alternate vision for their faith altogether.

"I am tired of watching meanness, bigotry and recreational cruelty be the worldly witness of our faith," Scott said on the call. "I want transformation, and transformation is risky business."

Exploiting cracks in Trump's evangelical base

Trump has heavily courted white conservative evangelicals since his arrival on the political scene almost a decade ago. Now he is selling Trump-themed Bibles, touting the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and imploring Christians to get out the vote for him.

But some evangelicals have used perceived cracks in his political fidelity to further distance themselves from the former president, especially as Trump and his surrogates have waffled over whether he would sign a federal abortion ban should he become president.

The Rev. Dwight McKissic, a Baptist pastor from Texas who spoke on the Evangelicals for Harris call, said he saw no "moral superiority of one party over the other," citing the GOP's decision to "abandon a commitment to ban abortion with a constitutional amendment" and to soften its stance against same-sex marriage in its party platform.

Though he has historically voted Republican, McKissic said he would vote for Harris, whom he said has stronger character and qualifications.

"I certainly don't agree with her on all matters of policy," said Scott, who identifies as evangelical and is ordained in the mainline Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "I am pro-life. I am against abortion. But at the same time, she has a pro-family platform," citing Harris' education policies and promise to expand the child tax credit.

Grassroots groups like Evangelicals for Harris are hoping they can convince evangelicals who feel similarly to support Harris instead of voting for Trump or sitting out the election altogether.

With modest funding in 2020, the group, formerly known as Evangelicals for Biden, targeted evangelical voters in swing states. This election, the Rev. Jim Ball, the organization's president, said they're expanding the operation and looking to spend a million dollars on targeted advertisements.

While white evangelicals vote strongly Republican, not all evangelicals are a lock for the GOP, and in a tight race, every vote counts.

In 2020, Biden won about 2 in 10 white evangelical voters, but performed better with evangelicals overall, according to AP VoteCast, winning about one-third of this group. A September AP-NORC poll found

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that around 6 in 10 Americans who identify as “born-again” or “evangelical” have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of Harris, but around one-third have a favorable opinion of her. The majority — around 8 in 10 — of white evangelicals have a negative view of Harris.

Vote Common Good, a similar group run by progressive evangelical pastor Doug Pagitt, has a simple message: Political identity and religious identity are not a package deal.

“There’s a whole group who have become very uncomfortable voting for Trump,” Pagitt said. “We’re not trying to get them to change their mind. We’re trying to work with them once their minds have changed to act on that change.”

Working with the campaign

In August, Harris’ campaign hired the Rev. Jen Butler, a Presbyterian (U.S.A.) minister and experienced faith-based organizer, to lead its religious outreach.

Butler told the AP she has been in touch with Evangelicals for Harris. With less than two months until Election Day, she wants to harness the power of grassroots groups to quickly engage even more faith voters.

“We want to turn out our base, and we think we have some real potential here to reach folks who have voted Republican in the past,” Butler said.

They are focusing on Black Protestants and Latino evangelicals, especially in key swing states. They are reaching out to Catholics and mainline Protestants across the Rust Belt and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Arizona and Nevada. Butler’s colleagues are working with Jewish and Muslim constituencies.

Catholics for Harris and Interfaith for Harris groups are launching. Mainline Protestant groups like Black Church PAC and Christians for Kamala are also campaigning on behalf of the vice president.

Butler, who grew up evangelical in Georgia, said the Harris campaign can find common ground with evangelicals, particularly suburban evangelical women.

“There’s a whole range of issues that they care about,” she said, citing compassionate approaches to immigration and abortion. “They know that the way to address any pro-life concerns is really to support women.”

A tough sell

Even for evangelicals who dislike Trump, it can be difficult to support a Democrat.

Russell Jeung, a co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate and speaker on the Evangelicals for Harris call, told AP that the group doesn’t “agree with everything that Harris stands for” and that evangelicals can “hold the party accountable by being involved.”

Others on the call noted they would use their vote to pressure Harris on issues where they disagreed, with Latina evangelical activist Sandra Maria Van Opstal saying she’d push the potential Harris administration “to do better on Palestine-Israel and do better on immigration.”

Soong-Chan Rah, a professor of evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, describes himself as a nonpartisan progressive evangelical and a “prophet speaking to broken systems.” Though he’s never endorsed a candidate before, he said the stakes of this election are so high that he wanted to throw his public support behind Harris.

“Not only do I find this candidate, Trump, repugnant and repulsive,” Rah said, “it is to such an extreme that I want to endorse his opposition.”

But the chorus of evangelicals who find voting for a Democrat unconscionable remains loud.

Trump-supporting evangelical worship leader Sean Feucht ridiculed the existence of Evangelicals for Harris on X: “HERETICS FOR HARRIS rings so much truer!”

The Rev. Franklin Graham, a longtime Trump supporter, took issue with one of the group’s ads and its use of footage of his late father, the Rev. Billy Graham. “The liberals are using anything and everything they can to promote candidate Harris,” he wrote on his public Facebook page, which has 10 million followers.

Imagining a new evangelical identity

But the project of shoring up Democratic evangelical voters goes beyond partisan politics. It gets at the core of what evangelicalism means.

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The term evangelical itself is fraught and has become synonymous with the Republican Party, argues Ryan Burge, a political science professor at Eastern Illinois University.

"More people are probably evangelical theologically," said Burge, "but they're not going to grab that word because they don't vote for Trump or they're moderate or liberal."

Evangelicalism has historically referenced Christians who hold conservative theological beliefs regarding issues like the importance of the Bible and being born again. But that's changed as the term has grown more connected with Republican voters.

For many, evangelicalism has largely been defined along racial and socio-political lines and in endorsing Harris, Rah hopes to "show that there are other voices in the church aside from the religious right and Trump evangelicals."

Latasha Morrison, a speaker on the Evangelicals for Harris Zoom, told the AP that as a Black woman, "I never associated myself with the word 'evangelical' until I started attending predominantly white churches."

For years her anti-abortion views led her to vote Republican, but now the Christian author and diversity trainer says, "I feel like women and children have a better opportunity under the Harris administration than the Trump administration."

For Ball, the Evangelicals for Harris organizer, he's not looking to "tell people if they are an evangelical" or not.

"Diversity is a strength for us. We're not we're not looking for total unanimity. We're looking for unity," Ball said. "We can be united while we still have differences."

## Residents of Springfield, Ohio, hunker down and pray for a political firestorm to blow over

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ohio (AP) — In the quiet corners of Springfield, Ohio — out of sight of the drumbeat of politicians and journalists, troopers and newly installed security cameras — the people who live here are taking a breath, praying and attempting to carry on.

Between the morning bomb sweeps of Springfield's schools and the near daily afternoon media briefings, a hush comes over the city of 58,000 that residents say is uncanny, haunting even. It's fear. It's confusion — dismay at being transformed overnight into a target for the nation's vitriol.

Pastor Andy Mobley, who runs the Family Needs Inc. food pantry on the city's south side, said people are hunkered down out of the public eye. He said they're hoping the attention sparked by former President Donald Trump spreading unsubstantiated rumors about the city's legal Haitian immigrants eating house pets during last week's presidential debate will blow over.

Trump and his vice presidential running mate, Ohio's junior Sen. JD Vance, have used the cat-eating rumors to draw attention to the city's 15,000 Haitian immigrants, whose arrival to fill manufacturing, distribution and warehouse jobs has put a severe strain on local resources.

Since the Republican candidates' initial comments, more than two dozen bomb threats — mostly from foreign actors seeking to sow discord — have prompted the state to send in additional state troopers and install surveillance cameras around the city in order to reopen schools and government buildings.

"We've got good people here. Republican, Democrat. They're good people," Mobley said Tuesday, as the pantry tended to a steady stream of clients seeking clothing and food.

Resident Josh Valle said the situation is unsettling.

"We definitely need answers," said the 35-year-old tool and die repairman, who has lived in Springfield for decades. "It's affecting my kids and my community and my neighbors. With the bomb threats and the influx, it's something new every day. And this used to be a really chill town, you know, it used to be just a small town Ohio."

The area around Springfield City Hall, where Valle spoke, sat largely silent Tuesday afternoon, until a news conference with state and local officials prompted a brief swarm of activity. Local families are avoid-



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ing schools in the wake of earlier bomb threats, even though dozens of troopers have fanned out across the Springfield City School District to stand guard. Some 200 of 500 students were absent Tuesday from a single elementary school, officials said.

Still, there are signs of hope.

"Home Sweet Springfield" tea towels adorn the window of Champion City Guide & Supply on a downtown block that bustles with activity over the lunch hour. One line of mugs and clothing items reads: "Speak a Good Word for Springfield — or say nothing."

Across town, a small group of kids whose parents kept them home on Tuesday horsed around together at a makeshift lemonade stand they set up to make a few bucks. They delighted in the revving motor of a passing muscle car and, when sales were slow, swigged back the merchandise.

David Graham, who visits communities in crisis as The Praying Cowboy, positioned himself in Springfield this week to show support. "Agenda: Pray, worship, witness, smile, honor, esteem," he wrote in a Facebook post from the city, accompanied by his hands holding an open Bible with a newly installed surveillance platform in the background. He added lines with black electrical tape to a small heart placard he posted nearby, to represent Springfield hearts being broken.

He wasn't the only one trying to help. A bipartisan group of area mayors met with Springfield Mayor Rob Rue on Monday to figure out how they can help — including with resources to address the traffic, health care, social services and housing needs prompted by the increase in the Haitian population and their language barrier.

Andrew Ginther, the Democratic mayor of Ohio's capital, Columbus, and president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, said in a statement: "Mayors across America will continue to stand by Springfield and all cities working to responsibly address an increased number of migrants, which we can do without losing sight of our shared humanity."

Years ago, Family Needs Inc. was designated one of President George H.W. Bush's "thousand points of light," honoring its dedication to volunteerism. The organization has helped Haitians arriving in Springfield for years now, Mobley said — providing them translation services and co-signing their rental agreements.

He recalled working with Haitian immigrants as far back as 2016, the year Trump was elected — though census figures show the population remained at only about 400 until a few years ago.

"In 2016, we started signing contracts. Through the pandemic, we were doing things for the Haitian community," he said. "Has that all been forgotten? They have been here, and we've been dealing with this, and we've been asking for help through two different administrations. And no administration has helped us, until now this thing has become public."

As she walked downtown, one resident who declined to give her name said she's not letting the situation get her down.

"It's childish. It's stupid. It took one stupid person to get on a debate and ruin the reputation of a community. I think you know exactly who I'm talking about," she said.

"He should never have said that. There's no truth to those allegations whatsoever. I was born and raised in this town, I'm staying here, and I have no problem with nobody."

## **A gold mining town in Congo has become an mpox hot spot as a new strain spreads**

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KAMITUGA, Congo (AP) — Slumped on the ground over a mound of dirt, Divine Wisoba pulled weeds from her daughter's grave. The 1-month-old died from mpox in eastern Congo in August, but Wisoba, 21, was too traumatized to attend the funeral.

In her first visit to the cemetery, she wept into her shirt for the child she lost and worried about the rest of her family. "When she was born, it was as if God had answered our prayers — we wanted a girl," Wisoba said of little Maombi Katengey. "But our biggest joy was transformed into devastation."

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Her daughter is one of more than 6,000 people officials suspect have contracted the disease in South Kivu province, the epicenter of the world's latest mpox outbreak, in what the World Health Organization has labeled a global health emergency. A new strain of the virus is spreading, largely through skin-to-skin contact, including but not limited to sex. A lack of funds, vaccines and information is making it difficult to stem the spread, according to alarmed disease experts.

Mpox — which causes mostly mild symptoms like fever and body aches, but can trigger serious cases with prominent blisters on the face, hands, chest and genitals — had been spreading mostly undetected for years in Africa, until a 2022 outbreak reached more than 70 countries. Globally, gay and bisexual men made up the vast majority of cases in that outbreak. But officials note mpox has long disproportionately affected children in Africa, and they say cases are now rising sharply among kids, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups, with many types of close contact responsible for the spread.

Health officials have zeroed in on Kamituga, a remote yet bustling gold mining town of some 300,000 people that attracts miners, sex workers and traders who are constantly on the move. Cases from other parts of eastern Congo can be traced back here, officials say, with the first originating in the nightclub scene.

Since this outbreak began, one year ago, nearly 1,000 people in Kamituga have been infected. Eight have died, half of them children.

Challenges on the ground

Last month, the World Health Organization said mpox outbreaks might be stopped in the next six months, with governments' leadership and cooperation.

But in Kamituga, people say they face a starkly different reality.

There's a daily average of five new cases at the general hospital, which is regularly near capacity. Overall in South Kivu, weekly new suspected cases have skyrocketed from about 12 in January to 600 in August, according to province health officials.

Even that's likely an underestimate, they say, because of a lack of access to rural areas, the inability of many residents to seek care, and Kamituga's transient nature.

Locals say they simply don't have enough information about mpox.

Before her daughter got sick, Wisoba said, she was infected herself but didn't know it.

Painful lesions emerged around her genitals, making walking difficult. She thought she had a common sexually transmitted infection and sought medicine at a pharmacy. Days later, she went to the hospital with her newborn and was diagnosed with mpox. She recovered, but her daughter developed lesions on her foot.

Nearly a week later, Maombi died at the same hospital that treated her mother.

Wisoba said she didn't know about mpox until she got it. She wants the government to invest more in teaching people protective measures.

Local officials can't reach areas more than a few miles outside Kamituga to track suspected cases or inform residents. They broadcast radio messages but say that doesn't reach far enough.

Kasindi Mwenyelwata goes door to door describing how to detect mpox — looking for fevers, aches or lesions. But the 42-year-old community leader said a lack of money means he doesn't have the right materials, such as posters showing images of patients, which he finds more powerful than words.

ALIMA, one of the few aid groups working on mpox in Kamituga, lacks funds to set up programs or clinics that would reach some 150,000 people, with its budget set to run out at year's end, according to program coordinator Dr. Dally Muamba.

If support keeps waning and mpox spreads, he said, "there will be an impact on the economy, people will stop coming to the area as the epidemic takes its toll. ... And as the disease grows, will resources follow?"

The vaccine vacuum

Health experts agree: What's needed most are vaccines — even if they go only to adults, under emergency approval in Congo.

None has arrived in Kamituga, though it's a priority city in South Kivu, officials said. It's unclear when or how they will. The main road into town is unpaved — barely passable by car during the ongoing rainy

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season.

Once they make it here, it's unclear whether supply will meet demand for those who are at greatest risk and first in line: health staff, sex workers, miners and motorcycle taxi drivers.

Congo's government has budgeted more than \$190 million for its initial mpox response, which includes the purchase of 3 million vaccine doses, according to a draft national mpox plan, widely circulating among health experts and aid groups this month and seen by The Associated Press. But so far, just 250,000 doses have arrived in Congo and the government's given only \$10 million, according to the finance ministry.

Most people with mild cases recover in less than two weeks. But lesions can get infected, and children or immunocompromised people are more prone to severe cases.

Doctors can ensure lesions are clean and give pain medication or antibiotics for secondary infections such as sepsis.

But those who recover can get the virus again.

A new variant, a lack of understanding

Experts say a lack of resources and knowledge about the new strain makes it difficult to advise people on protecting themselves. An internal report circulated among aid groups and agencies and seen by AP labeled confidence in the available information about mpox in eastern Congo and neighboring countries low.

While the variant is known to be more easily transmissible through sex, it's unclear how long the virus remains in the system. Doctors tell recovered patients to abstain from sex for three months, but acknowledge the number is largely arbitrary.

"Studies haven't clarified if you're still contagious or not ... if you can or can't have sex with your wife," said Dr. Steven Bilembo, of Kamituga's general hospital.

Doctors say they're seeing cases they simply don't understand, such as pregnant women losing babies. Of 32 pregnant women infected since January, nearly half lost the baby through miscarriage or stillbirth, hospital statistics show.

Alice Neema was among them. From the hospital's isolation ward, she told AP she'd noticed lesions around her genitals and a fever — but didn't have enough money to travel the 30 miles (50 kilometers) on motorbike for help in time. She miscarried after her diagnosis.

As information trickles in, locals say fear spreads alongside the new strain.

Diego Nyago said he'd brought his 2-year-old son, Emile, in for circumcision when he developed a fever and lesions.

It was mpox — and today, Nyago is grateful health care workers noticed his symptoms.

"I didn't believe that children could catch this disease," he said as doctors gently poured water over the boy to bring his temperature down. "Some children die quickly, because their families aren't informed.

"Those who die are the ones who stay at home."

## Takeaways from AP's report on the evangelicals backing Kamala Harris

By CURTIS YEE and TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump has heavily courted conservative evangelicals since his arrival on the political scene almost a decade ago. Now he is selling Trump-themed Bibles, touting the overturning of Roe v. Wade and imploring Christians to get out the vote for him.

But a small and diverse coalition of evangelicals is looking to pull their fellow believers away Trump's fold, offering not only an alternate candidate to support but an alternate vision for their faith altogether.

Grassroots groups like Evangelicals for Harris have run advertisements and a Zoom call. Despite some policy differences with the vice president, they argue she is the better choice this election.

Here are takeaways from AP's report on the evangelicals supporting Vice President Kamala Harris.

Exploiting cracks in Trump's evangelical base

Trump has historically maintained strong support among evangelical voters. According to AP VoteCast, a sweeping survey of the electorate, about 8 in 10 evangelical voters cast a ballot for him in 2020.

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But some evangelicals have used perceived cracks in his political fidelity to further distance themselves from the former president, especially as Trump and his surrogates have waffled over whether he would sign a federal abortion ban should he become president.

The Rev. Dwight McKissic, a Baptist pastor from Texas who spoke on the Evangelicals for Harris call, said he saw no "moral superiority of one party over the other," citing the GOP's recent party platform that lacked a national abortion ban and softened its stance against same-sex marriage.

Though he has historically voted Republican, McKissic said he would vote for Harris, whom he said has stronger character and qualifications.

Presbyterian pastor Lee Scott, who is part of Evangelicals for Harris, said he is anti-abortion and doesn't agree with Harris on all policies. "But at the same time, she has a pro-family platform," he said, citing her education policies and promise to expand the child tax credit.

With modest funding in 2020, the group, formerly known as Evangelicals for Biden, targeted evangelical voters in swing states. This election, the Rev. Jim Ball, the organization's president, said they're expanding the operation and looking to spend a million dollars on targeted advertisements.

While white evangelicals vote strongly Republican, not all evangelicals are a lock for the GOP, and in a tight race, every vote counts.

In 2020, Biden won about 2 in 10 white evangelicals, but performed better with evangelical voters overall, according to AP VoteCast, winning about one-third of this group. A September AP-NORC poll found that around 6 in 10 Americans who identify as "born-again" or "evangelical" have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of Harris, but that unfavorability increases to 8 in 10 for white evangelicals.

#### Working with the campaign

In August, Harris' campaign hired the Rev. Jen Butler, a Presbyterian (U.S.A.) minister and experienced faith-based organizer, to lead its religious outreach.

Butler told the AP she has been in touch with Evangelicals for Harris, and she wants to harness the power of grassroots groups to engage religious voters.

The campaign is focusing on Black Protestants and Latino evangelicals, especially in key swing states. They are reaching out to Catholics and mainline Protestants across the Rust Belt and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Arizona and Nevada. Butler's colleagues are working with Jewish and Muslim constituencies.

Catholics for Harris and Interfaith for Harris groups are launching. Mainline Protestant groups like Black Church PAC and Christians for Kamala are also campaigning on behalf of the vice president.

Butler said the Harris campaign can find common ground with evangelicals, particularly suburban evangelical women who want compassionate approaches to issues like immigration and abortion.

#### Imagining a new evangelical identity

The chorus of evangelicals who find voting for a Democrat unconscionable remains loud.

The term evangelical itself is fraught and has become synonymous with the Republican Party, argues Ryan Burge, a political science professor at Eastern Illinois University.

Evangelicalism has historically referenced Christians who hold conservative theological beliefs regarding issues like the importance of the Bible and being born again. But that's changed as the term has grown more connected with Republican voters.

Latasha Morrison told the AP that as a Black woman, she didn't identify as evangelical until she started attending predominantly white churches. For years her anti-abortion views led her to vote Republican, but this election, she thinks women and children will be better off under a Harris administration.

Soong-Chan Rah, a professor of evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, said that by endorsing Harris, he hopes to "show that there are other voices in the church aside from the religious right and Trump evangelicals."

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## Today in History: September 20

### Billie Jean King wins "Battle of the Sexes"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 20, the 264th day of 2024. There are 102 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 20, 1973, in their so-called "Battle of the Sexes," tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, in the Houston Astrodome.

Also on this date:

In 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew set out from Spain on five ships to find a western passage to the Spice Islands. (Magellan was killed en route, but one of his ships completed the first circumnavigation of the globe three years later.)

In 1946, the first Cannes Film Festival, lasting 16 days, opened in France.

In 1962, James Meredith, a Black student, was blocked from enrolling at the University of Mississippi by Democratic Gov. Ross R. Barnett.

In 1964, The Beatles concluded their first full-fledged U.S. tour by performing in a charity concert at the Paramount Theater in New York.

In 1967, the Cunard liner Queen Elizabeth 2 was christened by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in Clydebank, Scotland.

In 2011, the repeal of the U.S. military's 18-year-old "don't ask, don't tell" compromise took effect, allowing gay and lesbian service members to serve openly.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria, the strongest storm to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years, struck the island, wiping out as much as 75 percent of power distribution lines and causing an island-wide blackout.

In 2019, Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the 1979 site of the nation's worst commercial nuclear power accident, was shut down by its owner after producing electricity for 45 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Sophia Loren is 90. Author George R. R. Martin is 76. Actor Gary Cole is 68. TV news correspondent Deborah Roberts is 64. Actor Maggie Cheung is 60. Actor Kristen Johnston is 57. Rock singers Gunnar and Matthew Nelson are 57. Race car driver Juan Pablo Montoya is 49. Actor Jon Bernthal is 48. Actor Aldis Hodge is 38. Mixed martial artist Khabib Nurmagomedov is 36. Singer-songwriter Phillip Phillips is 34.