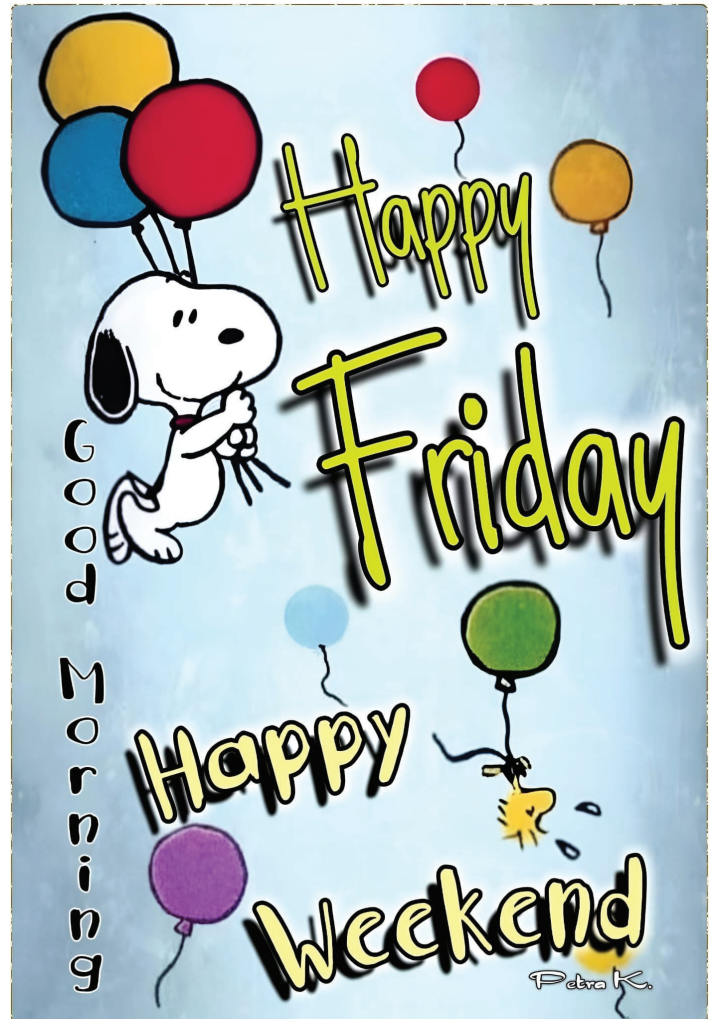


Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 1 of 87

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Sample Ballot](#)
- [7- Netters beat Tiospa Zian](#)
- [11- All six gofers medal at Sisseton](#)
- [12- DANR Announces Over \\$24 Million for State-wide Environmental Projects](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: South Dakotans in Congress request study of Missouri River pipeline to western part of state](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Rosebud Tribe gets \\$12 million from Interior Department to electrify and upgrade homes](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: South Dakota Lottery revenue projected to fall by \\$4.7 million, report says](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: U.S. House panel on Trump assassination attempt points to multiple failures by Secret Service](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Will abortion swing the first post-Roe presidential election?](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: Taxes: Where do Trump and Harris stand?](#)
- [27- Weather Pages](#)
- [32- Daily Devotional](#)
- [33- Subscription Form](#)
- [34- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [35- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [36- News from the Associated Press](#)



Friday, Sept. 27

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

Saturday, Sept. 28

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

Sunday, Sept. 29

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 2 of 87

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.

Helene Hits Florida

Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida last night as a Category 4 storm, bringing 140 mph winds to the state's northwest coast. Over 600,000 homes and businesses have already lost power.

One of the biggest concerns for Hurricane Helene is storm surge, which analysts say could reach as high as 15 to 20 feet. Another is the storm's size; at 420 miles wide, it is among the largest storms to hit the US in recent years. As of this writing, 61 of Florida's 67 counties are under a state of emergency, with hurricane and flash flood warnings extending to parts of Georgia and North Carolina.

The last time the US was hit with a Category 4 storm was Hurricane Ian in 2022, which killed 150 people when it made landfall on a similar trajectory a few hundred miles south in Fort Myers. Almost 2,500 people were rescued by emergency crews.

NYC Mayor Charged

New York City Mayor Eric Adams (D) has been charged with five federal counts of bribery, fraud, and illegal campaign donations. The unsealed indictment comes after a three-year investigation by Manhattan's US attorney's office culminating in a predawn raid on the mayoral residence at Gracie Mansion.

Adams stands accused of soliciting bribes, yielding over \$100K in free travel accommodations and gifts from foreign nationals, including a Turkish government official. In exchange, then-mayoral candidate Adams allegedly pressured the city's fire department to overlook safety code violations for a Turkish consulate building. Prosecutors also accuse Adams of defrauding the city of \$10M in public funds, faking qualification for a campaign donation matching program. Adams maintains he is innocent and has resisted calls to resign.

The investigation is one of at least four encircling the Adams administration, with three associates resigning in recent weeks amid police raids and subpoenas.

Sudan Launches Offensive

Sudan's army launched airstrikes and drone strikes in the country's capital of Khartoum yesterday, its first offensive there against the Rapid Support Forces militia in months. The RSF has held most of the capital since April 2023, when the conflict began.

The clash between forces of two formerly allied generals—army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo—has killed over 16,000 people and displaced an estimated 10 million others, about one-fifth of the country's population. The RSF militia is currently backed by the United Arab Emirates, where Dagalo—enriched from Sudanese gold mines—stashes militia finances. Both sides are accused of committing atrocities, including mass killings and sexual violence.

After three decades under Omar al-Bashir's strongman leadership, the two generals united in 2019 to oust the longtime leader and transition to a democracy, a process marred by disputes and culminating in the current clash.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 3 of 87

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

2024 MLB regular season wraps this Sunday; see latest playoff picture.

Oakland Athletics plays final game in Oakland; A's will play in Sacramento through 2027 ahead of permanent move to Las Vegas in 2028.

Ultimate Fighting Championship agrees to settle class-action lawsuit for \$375M over alleged antitrust practices within the mixed martial arts industry.

Hoda Kotb to depart NBC's "Today" show next year for new role at NBC News.

English rock band The Cure releases first new song in 16 years, announces upcoming album release.

Science & Technology

OpenAI to restructure into a for-profit company, give CEO Sam Altman equity for the first time; decision comes as key executives depart, including CTO Mira Murati.

New study pinpoints cellular mechanism in killifish allowing the animal to regrow its tail after injuries; discovery sheds light on how some species are able to regenerate lost limbs.

Scientists discover carbon bond using only one of its six electrons to connect atoms; results improve understanding of common carbon-based materials ranging from charcoal to diamond.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.4%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +0.6%), with S&P 500 closing at new record after weekly jobless claims fell more than expected and final government data showed the US grew at 3% annualized rate in Q2.

Super Micro Computer shares close down 12% after US Justice Department reportedly opens probe into the company; comes after short-seller Hindenburg Research accused Super Micro of accounting manipulation.

Alphabet to invest \$3.3B to build two data centers in South Carolina.

> Southwest Airlines shares close up 5% after airline unveils revamp plan and \$2.5B stock buyback; changes include introducing assigned seating in first half of 2026 and offering red-eye flights.

Politics & World Affairs

Cable news channel Newsmax settles with voting machine company Smartmatic over 2020 election claims.

Rudy Giuliani (R), former New York mayor and ex-attorney for Trump, disbarred in Washington, DC, over 2020 election statements.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visits the White House to bolster US support for Ukraine's defenses in its war with Russia; the US announces roughly \$8B in military aid.

World's longest-serving death row inmate—an 88-year-old former boxer in Japan—acquitted in 1966 murders after evidence found to have been fabricated.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 4 of 87

SAMPLE GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

A November 5, 2024	B Brown County	C SOUTH DAKOTA
		District 01
<p>Instructions to the Voter: To vote for a person FILL IN the oval next to the name. To vote on a ballot question FILL IN the oval next to "yes" or "no". Use only a pencil or pen. If you make a mistake, give the ballot back and get a new one. DO NOT cast more votes than are allowed in each race.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For Presidential Electors you may vote for <u>one</u> slate or leave it blank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Harris & Walz Electors Democratic Party Mary Susanne Larson Donn Larson Larry Olsen</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Oliver & ter Maat Electors Libertarian Party Randy "Uriah" Luallin Gregory Baldwin Brian DeYoung</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Trump & Vance Electors Republican Party Marty Jackley Kristi Noem Larry Rhoden</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Kennedy, Jr. & Shanahan Electors Independent Jordan Thomas Jared Degraaf Edward Dykstra</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For United States Representative you may vote for <u>one</u> or leave it blank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Sheryl Johnson Democratic Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Dusty Johnson Republican Party</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For Public Utilities Commissioner you may vote for <u>one</u> or leave it blank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Forrest Wilson Democratic Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A. Gideon Oakes Libertarian Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Kristie Fiegen Republican Party</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">For State Senator District 01 you may vote for <u>one</u> or leave it blank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Michael H. Rohl Republican Party</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">For State Representative District 01 you may vote for up to <u>two</u> or leave it blank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Steven D. McCleerey Democratic Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Mark Sumption Democratic Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Josh Dennert Libertarian Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Tamara Lesnar Libertarian Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Logan Manhart Republican Party</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Christopher Reder Republican Party</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;">NONPOLITICAL BALLOT</div> <p style="text-align: center;">Supreme Court Justice Retention Vote on each justice. Shall the justice of the Supreme Court named on this ballot, whose term expires January 1, 2025, be retained in office?</p> <p>Justice Scott P. Myren, representing the Fifth Supreme Court District</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Constitutional Amendment E</p> <p>Title: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution Updating Gender References for Certain Officeholders and Persons.</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: The South Dakota Constitution became effective upon the State joining the United States in 1889. The generic male pronouns he, his, and him are used in the text of the State Constitution to reference certain officeholders or individuals.</p> <p>This amendment changes the text of the State Constitution to remove the use of generic male pronouns when referencing certain officeholders or individuals. For example, when referencing the Governor, instead of saying "he shall be commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the state," the text will be changed to read "the Governor shall be commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the state." The amendment makes similar changes to other references to the Governor, as well as to references to other officeholders including Lieutenant Governor, Supreme Court Justices, and Circuit Court Judges. The amendment also makes similar changes to references in the Constitution to general classes of people such as persons, electors, and public officers.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the amendment.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave the Constitution as it is.</p>
A <i>This is a sample ballot.</i>	B <i>Your official ballot may look different.</i>	C Page 1 of 3

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 5 of 87

SAMPLE GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

A November 5, 2024	B Brown County	C SOUTH DAKOTA
District 01		
<p style="text-align: center;">Constitutional Amendment F</p> <p>Title: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution Authorizing the State to Impose a Work Requirement on Individuals Eligible for Expanded Medicaid Benefits</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: The Medicaid program is funded by the State and the federal government to provide medical coverage for certain low-income people who qualify for the program. In 2022, the voters approved a Constitutional provision that expanded Medicaid eligibility for any person over age 18 and under 65 whose income is at or below 133% of the federal poverty level, plus 5% of the federal poverty level for the applicable family size.</p> <p>This constitutional amendment authorizes the State to impose work requirements on any person eligible to receive benefits under the expanded Medicaid program, except for those persons who are physically or mentally disabled. The amendment does not identify any specific work requirement that may be imposed on those receiving expanded Medicaid benefits. Any work requirement proposed by the State must be approved by the federal government prior to implementation.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the amendment.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave the Constitution as it is.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Constitutional Amendment G</p> <p>Title: An Initiated Amendment Establishing a Right to Abortion in the State Constitution.</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: This initiated amendment establishes a constitutional right to an abortion and provides a legal framework for the regulation of abortion. This framework would override existing laws and regulations concerning abortion.</p> <p>The amendment establishes that during the first trimester a pregnant woman's decision to obtain an abortion may not be regulated nor may regulations be imposed on the carrying out of an abortion.</p> <p>In the second trimester, the amendment allows the regulation of a pregnant woman's abortion decision, and the regulation of carrying out an abortion. Any regulation of a pregnant woman's abortion decision, or of an abortion, during the second trimester must be reasonably related to the physical health of the pregnant woman.</p> <p>In the third trimester, the amendment allows the regulation or prohibition of abortion except in those cases where the abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the pregnant woman. Whether an abortion is necessary during the third trimester must be determined by the pregnant woman's physician according to the physician's medical judgment.</p> <p>Judicial clarification of the amendment may be necessary. The Legislature cannot alter the provisions of a constitutional amendment.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the amendment.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave the Constitution as it is.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Constitutional Amendment H</p> <p>Title: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution Establishing Top-Two Primary Elections</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: Currently, to appear on the general election ballot, major party candidates for the following offices must participate in a partisan primary election: Governor, State Legislature, U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and elected county offices. Only members of the candidate's party may vote for that candidate unless that party has opened the primary to voters not affiliated with the party. Minor party candidates may be chosen by primary or party convention.</p> <p>Unaffiliated candidates (independents) are only required to file nominating petitions to appear on the general election ballot.</p> <p>For the listed offices, this amendment requires one primary election wherein all candidates run against each other in their respective races, including major and minor party and unaffiliated candidates. A candidate may list any party next to their name on the ballot regardless of party affiliation or registration. All voters may vote for any candidate. The two candidates receiving the most votes advance to the general election. If there is more than one candidate to be elected to an office, the number of candidates advancing to the general election is twice the number to be elected.</p> <p>Primary elections may be held for other offices.</p> <p>The amendment may be challenged on constitutional grounds.</p> <p>Fiscal Note: Open primaries would require printing additional ballots at a cost of \$0.47 per ballot. The additional cost statewide to counties would currently be approximately \$23,667 for each primary election. The share of the total cost for each county will vary. There is no expected cost to state government.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the amendment.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave the Constitution as it is.</p>
A <i>This is a sample ballot.</i>	B <i>Your official ballot may look different.</i>	C <i>Page 2 of 3</i>

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 6 of 87

SAMPLE GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

A November 5, 2024	B Brown County	C SOUTH DAKOTA
Initiated Measure 28	Initiated Measure 29	District 01
<p>Title: An Initiated Measure Prohibiting Taxes on Anything Sold for Human Consumption.</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: Currently, the State collects tax on the sale or use of certain goods, including foods and drinks. Many municipalities also collect these taxes.</p> <p>This initiated measure prohibits the State from collecting sales or use tax on anything sold for human consumption. The measure eliminates these sources of revenue for the State.</p> <p>Human consumption is not defined by state law. However, its common definition includes more than foods and drinks.</p> <p>The measure does not prohibit the collection of sales or use tax on alcoholic beverages or prepared food. Prepared food is defined by law to include food that is sold heated or with utensils.</p> <p>The measure may affect the State's obligations under the tobacco master settlement agreement and the streamlined sales tax agreement. The master settlement agreement resulted from multi-state lawsuits against cigarette manufacturers for the public health effects of smoking. South Dakota's annual share of the master settlement agreement is approximately \$20 million. The streamlined sales tax agreement is a multistate program designed to simplify the collection of sales and use tax for companies selling in multiple jurisdictions.</p> <p>Judicial or legislative clarification of the measure will be necessary.</p> <p>Fiscal Note: Beginning July 1, 2025, the State could see a reduction in sales tax revenues of \$123.9 million annually from no longer taxing the sale of anything sold for human consumption, except alcoholic beverages and prepared food. Municipalities could continue to tax anything sold for human consumption.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the initiated measure.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave South Dakota law as it is.</p>	<p>Title: An Initiated Measure Legalizing the Recreational Use, Possession, and Distribution of Marijuana.</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: This initiated measure allows individuals 21 years of age or older to possess, grow, ingest, and distribute marijuana or marijuana paraphernalia. Individuals may possess up to two ounces of marijuana in a form other than marijuana concentrate or other marijuana products. Individuals may possess up to six marijuana plants with no more than twelve plants per household. The measure also places limits on the possession of other forms of marijuana and marijuana products. Under the measure, the possession, ingestion, and distribution of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia remains illegal for individuals under the age of 21. Driving under the influence of marijuana remains illegal. The measure restricts where individuals may possess or consume marijuana, such as schools or where tobacco is prohibited. The measure allows employers to restrict an employee's use of marijuana. Property owners may also regulate the use of marijuana on their property. The measure does not affect State laws dealing with hemp. It also does not change laws concerning the State's medical marijuana program. The measure legalizes marijuana-derived substances considered felony controlled substances under State law. Marijuana remains illegal under federal law. Judicial or legislative clarification of this measure may be necessary.</p> <p>Fiscal Note: The state and municipalities would collect minimal additional sales tax revenue, as the measure would not decriminalize the sale of cannabis but would decriminalize the sale of cannabis accessories. Counties could see incarceration expenses reduced by \$581,556 every year.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to adopt the initiated measure.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to leave South Dakota law as it is.</p>	<p>Title: A Referred Act to Provide New Statutory Requirements for Regulating Linear Transmission Facilities, to Allow Counties to Impose a Surcharge on Certain Pipeline Companies, and to Establish a Landowner Bill of Rights.</p> <p>Attorney General Explanation: The Act authorizes counties to impose, for any tax year in which the pipeline operator receives a tax credit, a \$1.00 per foot surcharge on carbon dioxide pipelines. Revenue from the surcharge must be distributed as tax relief to each property owner in the county where the pipeline is installed. Any remaining revenue can be allocated at each county's discretion. No other fee may be imposed except property taxes, or fees associated with road agreements.</p> <p>The Act also imposes certain requirements on carbon dioxide pipelines: pipelines must be installed to a minimum depth; each pipeline operator is responsible for damages to drain tile, and to the surface owner, caused by the pipeline; each operator is also responsible for leaks or failures of the pipeline; and any land agent acting on behalf of the pipeline must be a pipeline employee, State resident, or State licensed real estate agent. The Act also includes requirements that carbon pipeline easements be in writing, and only enforceable for a specified period of time; pipeline operators must initiate business operations within five years of the easement; and each easement is void after five years of nonuse.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes Vote "Yes" to allow the Act of the Legislature to become law.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No Vote "No" to reject the Act of the Legislature.</p>
A <i>This is a sample ballot.</i>	B <i>Your official ballot may look different.</i>	C <i>Page 3 of 3</i>

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 7 of 87

Netters beat Tiospa Zian

Groton Area's volleyball team defeated Tiospa Zina in action played Thursday in Groton, 3-0. Game scores were 25-11, 25-11 and 25-13.

Chesney Weber was 14 of 16 in attacks with eight kills and three ace serves, Faith Traphagen was 16 of 21 in attacks with seven kills, Taryn Traphagen was 14 of 16 in attacks with six kills and one block, Rylee Dunker had six kills and two blocks, Jaedyn Penning had five ace serves, two kills and 12 digs, Talli Wright had four ace serves and 13 assists, McKenna Tietz had three ace serves and one kill, Kella Tracy had three kills, Jerica Locke. Had three ace serves and 14 digs, Emma Kutter had two kills, Laila Roberts had two ace serves, Sydney Locke had one kill and one ace serve and Elizabeth Flihs had one ace serves, 14 assists and six digs.

There was no junior varsity or C match.

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

- Paul Kosel



Chesney Weber
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



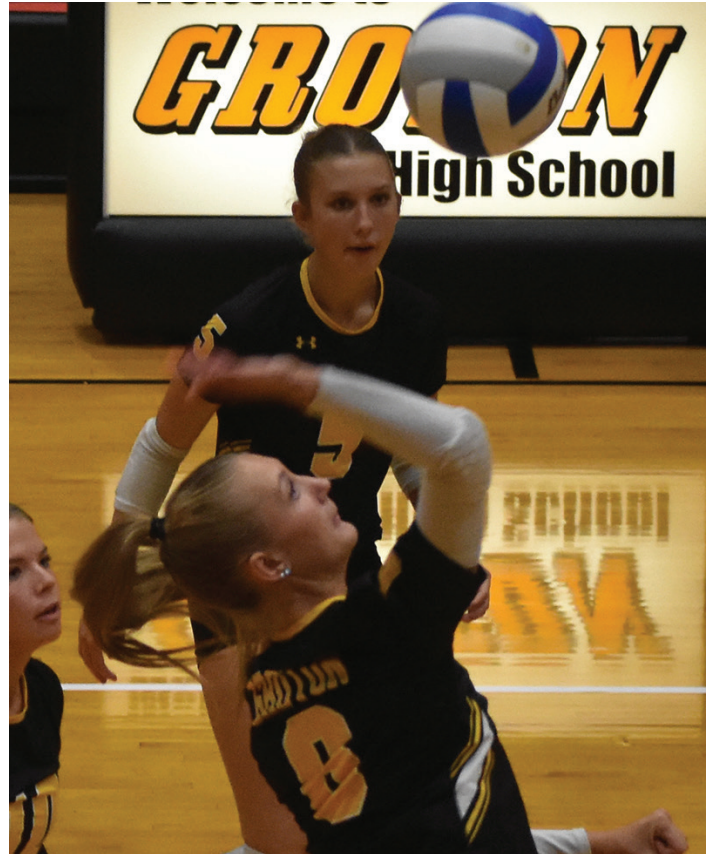
Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 8 of 87



Emma Kutter's first point
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Faith Traphagen
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Jaedyn Penning
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 9 of 87



Jerrica Locke
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Laila Roberts
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Kella Tracy
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



McKenna Tietz
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 10 of 87



Rylee Dunker
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



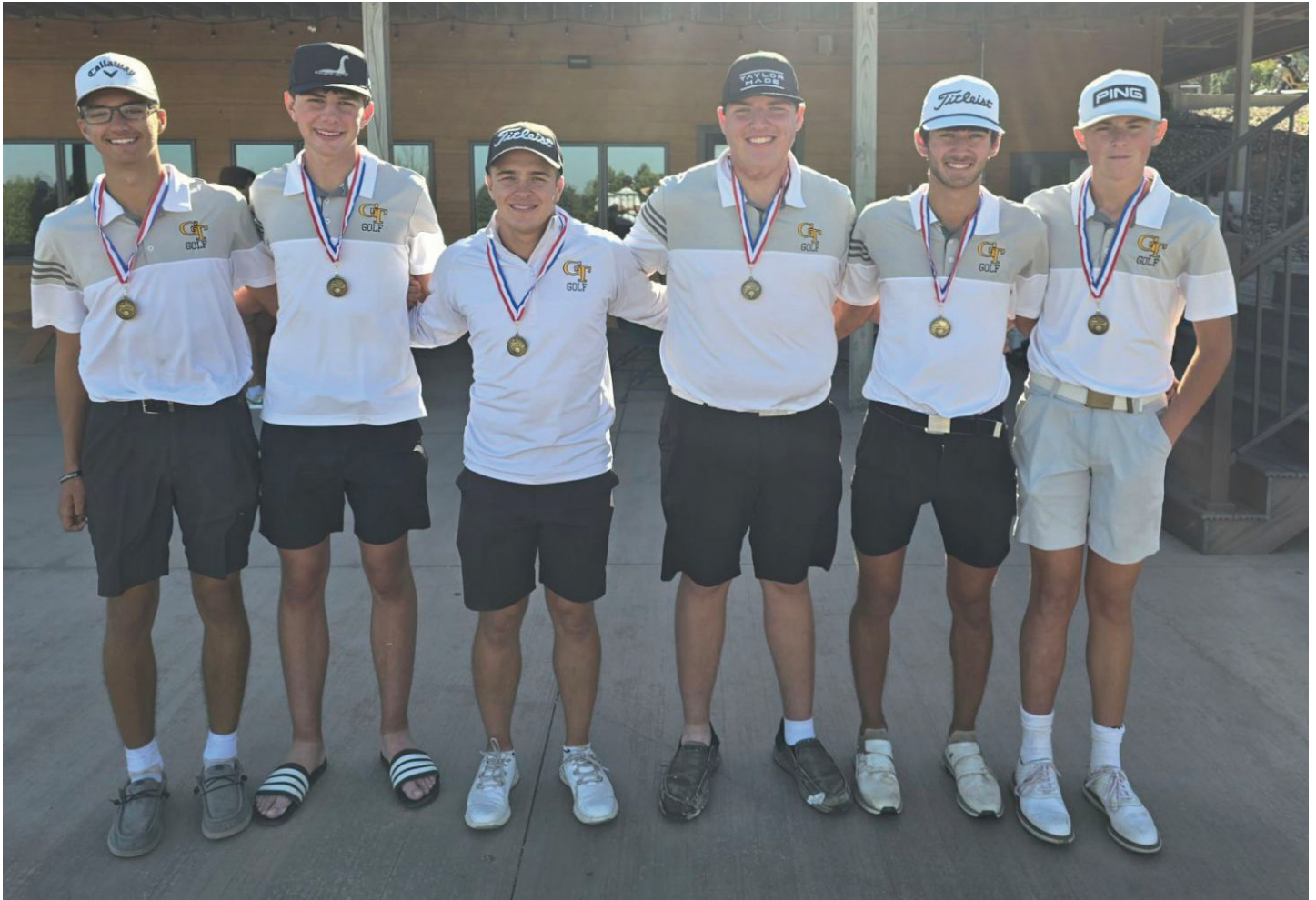
Sydney Locke
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Talli Wright
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Taryn Traphagen
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



All six gofers medal at Sisseton

Groton boy's golf team all received a medal, placing in the top 15, at the Sisseton Invitational Golf Meet held Thursday. Jayden Schwan placed 13th with a 94, Carter Simon placed sixth with an 88, Brevin Flihs placed fourth with an 85, Logan Pearson placed fifth with an 86, Jarrett Erdmann placed 11th with a 90 and Jace Johnson placed 12th with a 91. The team placed second just one stroke behind the winner. (Courtesy photo)

DANR Announces Over \$24 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$24,416,257 in loans and grants for drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste projects in South Dakota.

The \$24,416,257 total consists of \$24,286,257 in low-interest loans and \$130,000 in grants to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"I am pleased to announce this financial assistance is available," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "Safe and reliable water, wastewater, and solid waste infrastructure help protect our environment and strengthen communities for our kids and grandkids."

Funds were awarded from DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, and Solid Waste Management Program to the following:

Box Elder received a \$2,000,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace sewer mains within the Highway 14/16 corridor and add additional water lines to accommodate recent growth. The project also includes upsizing lines on the west side of town for areas of new development. The terms of the loan are 3.75 percent for 30 years. Previous funding for this project was awarded in May 2022.

Fort Pierre received a \$2,470,434 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan for drinking water system improvements including construction of a water storage tank, water mains booster station, and other necessary appurtenances. The terms of the loan are 3.75 percent for 30 years. Previous funding for this project was awarded in September 2022.

Lincoln County Rural Water System received a \$1,740,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to relocate its existing water main to accommodate a connection from Highway 11 to Interstate 29. The improvements are necessary due to the growth of Sioux Falls, Harrisburg, and Tea. The terms of the loan are 4.75 percent for 30 years.

Mitchell received a \$13,000,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for improvements at its wastewater treatment facility. Improvements at the south plant include equalization installation of a new generator and extension of the sewer force main. Improvements at the north plant include the construction of an additional equalization basin. Previous funding was awarded in April 2022. The terms of the loan are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

Pierre received a \$5,075,823 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace the existing force main under Euclid Avenue due to the existing infrastructure's age and condition. The terms of the loan are 3.75 percent for 30 years.

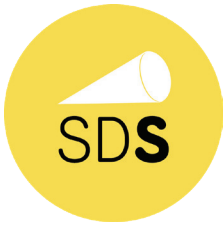
South Eastern Council of Governments received a \$100,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant to recapitalize its Economic Revolving Loan Fund to originate loans for eligible purchases. This funding allows the Council to provide low-interest loans for solid waste management and recycling projects in the region.

Walworth County received a \$30,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant to construct a cold storage facility at the landfill to store and perform maintenance on landfill equipment.

The Solid Waste Management Program provides loans and grants for solid waste disposal, recycling, and waste tire projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated funding for the Solid Waste Management Program through the Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs, which provide low-interest loans for wastewater, stormwater, water conservation, nonpoint source projects, and public drinking water system projects. The programs are funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at yesterday's meeting in Pierre.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakotans in Congress request study of Missouri River pipeline to western part of state

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 4:05 PM

The three members of Congress representing South Dakota introduced House and Senate bills Wednesday to require a federal feasibility study for a potential water pipeline from the Missouri River to the Black Hills.

The legislation would authorize \$10 million in federal funding to cover up to 50% of the study's cost. The nonprofit organization leading the pipeline effort aims to cover the rest of the cost with federal and state funding it's already received, plus locally raised funds.

Senator John Thune introduced the Senate bill, with Sen. Mike Rounds as a co-sponsor. Representative Dusty Johnson introduced the House version. All three are Republicans.

"The Western Dakota Regional Water System is a promising proposal to address the rapidly

growing water needs of the Black Hills region," said Thune in a joint news release. "This legislation would advance the project by authorizing a Bureau of Reclamation study in order to determine the feasibility of the project, and I'm proud to join Rep. Johnson and Sen. Rounds in this critical effort."

Cheryl Chapman is the executive director of the Western Dakota Regional Water System, a Rapid City-based nonprofit organized to advance the pipeline proposal. The nonprofit was founded after a 2019 study by researchers at South Dakota Mines showed the Rapid City area could run short of water during an extended drought.

"The idea is to bring an additional source of water to our area," Chapman said.

The pipeline could bring water to Rapid City and the Black Hills and also to other places in western South Dakota. The nonprofit has a geographically diverse roster of members ranging from the city of Fort Pierre to the city of Newell.

Existing Missouri River pipelines, including the Mni Wiconi and Lewis and Clark projects, already bring water to some other parts of the state. Dams on the river control large reservoirs in multiple states, including South Dakota's Lake Oahe, the nation's fourth-largest reservoir.



A view of the Missouri River from the bluffs above Chamberlain looking toward Oacoma on Sept. 20, 2024. (Seth Tupper/

South Dakota Searchlight)

The South Dakota Mines report estimated in 2019 that a western South Dakota pipeline would cost \$2 billion. Chapman said federal funding is vital.

She said the federal feasibility study would assess the project's viability, including its economic and environmental impacts, and is expected to guide future legislative and funding decisions.

"The feasibility study is kind of the first step of a two-step process to get congressional approval for a project like this, which in turn then puts us in line for federal funding," she said.

If the House or Senate bill passes, the Bureau of Reclamation, an agency within the Department of the Interior, will conduct the feasibility study.

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.

Rosebud Tribe gets \$12 million from Interior Department to electrify and upgrade homes

BY: JOHN HULT - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 4:52 PM

Less than a month after an \$8 million federal award for electric transportation, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe has been awarded nearly \$12 million to electrify homes across the reservation.

The \$11.8 million award for Rosebud is the largest in the second round of funding from the Interior Department through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tribal Electrification Program. Rosebud was awarded \$1 million through the program in March.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota was also awarded \$2 million in round-two funding, according to a news release from Interior. The money is meant to hook up electricity for homes that don't have it, transition current homes to "zero-emissions" energy and pay for repairs and retrofits to support zero-emission hookups.

The Department of Energy's Office of Indian Energy reported that 16,805 tribal homes across the U.S. lacked electricity as of 2022, leaving 54,209 people without it.

The electrification program "continues to provide tribes with the assistance they need to ensure their communities have safe, reliable electricity, which is essential to daily living," Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland said in the news release.



A sample of the homes being built at Keya Wakpala Woicageyapi on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. The project aims to construct hundreds of affordable, energy-efficient houses. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 15 of 87

The awards announced Thursday for 13 tribal communities add up to \$71 million, as did the awards announced in March. The money comes from the Inflation Reduction Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden in 2022. Twenty-one tribes and tribal organizations in total were awarded funds.

That law also funded the \$7.88 million grant for electric vehicles awarded to Rosebud earlier this month. That money flowed through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency program called the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, and is meant to cover the cost of electric buses, electric vehicle charging stations and a heavy duty electric garbage truck.

The state of South Dakota declined to apply for funding through that program, with Gov. Kristi Noem's office saying there were too many "strings attached" to the money. The city of Sioux Falls offered a similar explanation for its decision not to pursue the funds.

Rapid City applied for and received a \$1 million planning grant through the program.

Calls to the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's president and vice president were not immediately returned on Thursday.

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.

South Dakota Lottery revenue projected to fall by \$4.7 million, report says

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 2:58 PM

South Dakota Lottery revenue is expected to drop by \$4.7 million this fiscal year, largely due to falling sales of number-picking lotto games.

Lottery sales are typically the state government's third largest source of revenue for its general fund.

The state collected an estimated \$184.1 million in lottery revenue during fiscal year 2024, after collecting \$176.5 million in fiscal year 2023. The state expects to collect \$179.39 million in fiscal year 2025. The state's fiscal years begin on July 1 and run through June 30.

Lotto game sales were down 57.31% during the first two months of this fiscal year, compared to the same time last year.

Sales Director David Dahl told South Dakota Lottery commissioners Thursday during a meeting in Pierre that the drop in sales is a nationwide trend, adding that with "the economy the way that it is," people have less disposable income.

At this time last year, "\$5 billion jackpots" for lotto games drove up sales in South Dakota, Dahl added. "We need that Powerball run," Chairman Jason Ahrendt said after the presentation.

South Dakota Lottery expects video lottery revenue to increase by about \$800,000 this fiscal year. Sales of instant games — scratch tickets — are expected to decrease by \$660,000, though Dahl said instant sales generally perform better in the winter.

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.



(Flavio Coelho/Getty Images)

U.S. House panel on Trump assassination attempt points to multiple failures by Secret Service

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 4:33 PM

Members of the U.S. House task force investigating the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump on Thursday blamed the U.S. Secret Service for poor planning and breakdowns in communication and coordination with local law enforcement.

Republicans and Democrats on the House Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump at their first public hearing praised the work of local law enforcement agencies, representatives of which testified at the hearing.

Lawmakers said initial investigations showed it was the Secret Service who was responsible for a lack of planning, information-sharing and decision-making.

Thomas Matthew Crooks, the attempted assassin, at a July 13 rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, scouted the site in the days ahead of Trump's rally and found security vulnerabilities, task force Chair Mike Kelly, a Pennsylvania Republican, said.

If those weaknesses were not apparent to the 20-year-old gunman, the entire incident may have been avoided, Kelly added.

But the shooting that injured Trump's ear and killed one rallygoer was caused by more than one breakdown, he said.

"It was not a single mistake that allowed Crooks to outmaneuver one of our country's most elite" security agencies, Kelly said. "There were security failures on multiple fronts."

The Secret Service, which is the lead agency during any event in which a person under the agency's protection is present, did not create a sufficient plan and was not decisive on key questions, Kelly said. The agency did not manage access to sites adjacent to the rally and did not effectively communicate with state and local partners, he added.



From left, Sgt. Edward Lenz, Adams Township Police Department, Commander, Butler County Emergency Services Unit; Patrolman Drew Blasko, Butler Township Police Department; Lt. John Herold, Pennsylvania State Police; and Patrick Sullivan, former United States Secret Service agent, are sworn in during the first hearing of the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald Trump in the Longworth House Office Building on Sept. 26, 2024 in Washington, D.C. (Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 17 of 87

Testimony from local agencies

Local officials told the panel they felt prepared in their assignment of assisting the Secret Service protection.

Commander Edward Lenz of the Butler County Emergency Services Unit said the Secret Service had requested help from counter-assault teams, sniper teams and a quick reaction force and that the local agency felt prepared for those missions.

"There were additional things, obviously, that probably needed (to be) covered," he said. "But they never asked us to do that, they never tasked us with that. So given what they specifically asked us to do, we were certainly prepared."

He added that sniper teams had not been given specific instructions for their mission.

Patrolman Drew Blasko of the Butler Township Police Department said local police executed what had been asked of them.

"With the information that we had, I believe that we did the very best that we could," Blasko said.

No unified command

The task force's ranking Democrat, Colorado's Jason Crow, who is an Army veteran, highlighted a failure to communicate.

"Clear lines of communication are crucial," he said during an opening statement. "The Secret Service must do better."

Later, while questioning witnesses, Crow said he was surprised to learn the Secret Service did not establish a unified command center for the Butler rally.

Patrick Sullivan, a former Secret Service agent who testified in his personal capacity, said that was atypical for a Secret Service operation.

Usually, a central command post is established for the Secret Service, state and local agencies and any other assisting law enforcement, Sullivan said.

"This is very unusual, the way it turned out here in this site," he said.

A unified command center can help relay information from disparate teams, including warning the agents closest to the president or presidential candidate of a suspicious person.

Pennsylvania Democrat Chrissy Houlihan noted that the communications breakdown between Secret Service and local authorities happened because they were not on the same radio frequencies.

"So here we were with three minutes and every second counting, and the Secret Service and the state police weren't able to directly hear what local law enforcement actually saw, because they didn't have that interoperability with local law enforcement frequencies and didn't have possession of those radios," she said.

She called for reforms to require different agencies are able to communicate with each other.

Slipped through cracks

Crooks was spotted multiple times throughout the day and identified by local police as suspicious, Kelly said.

Crooks was operating in an unsecured area "where information about him was both delayed and limited," Kelly said.

Sullivan told Ohio Republican David Joyce that authorities could have used several methods to secure adjacent sites, suggesting the most effective way could have been to station officers there.

Local police spotted Crooks, identified him as suspicious and passed information on to the Pennsylvania State Police and the Secret Service, Lenz said.

But that information did not reach the Secret Service in time to remove Trump from the stage before the shooting began, Kelly said.

"The Secret Service could not process the information fast enough to pull the former president from

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 18 of 87

the stage," Kelly added.

The chairman wondered why Trump was allowed to go on stage after Crooks had been flagged several times.

"I'm constantly going to be wondering, at what point did somebody say, 'We're not sure the area is secure and safe,'" Kelly said.

First hearing

After two months of investigation, the Thursday meeting marked the first public hearing for the task force, which the House voted unanimously to form in the aftermath of the Butler shooting.

The Secret Service has borne the brunt of the blame for the shooting.

Then-Director Kimberly Cheatle resigned under pressure in the days following the attempted assassination.

Acting Director Ronald Rowe said last week the incident was "a failure of the United States Secret Service" and pledged it would spark a "paradigm shift" in how the agency operates.

The importance of Secret Service protection and the task force's mission was highlighted again this month when a man who'd been hiding in the bushes of Trump's Florida golf club was arrested and charged with another attempted assassination.

Members of both parties on the panel condemned targeting political candidates Thursday.

"Political violence has no place in our democracy, period," Crow said.

Trump said this week he will return to Butler on Oct. 5 to "finish our speech."

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Will abortion swing the first post-Roe presidential election?

The Dobbs backlash could send an abortion provider to Congress

BY: SOFIA RESNICK - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 9:53 AM

Dr. Kristin Lyerly's placenta detached from her uterus when she was 17 weeks pregnant with her fourth son in 2007. Her doctor in Madison, Wisconsin, gave the devastated recent medical school graduate one option: to deliver and bury her dead child. But she requested a dilation and evacuation abortion procedure, knowing it would be less invasive and risky than being induced. And she couldn't fathom the agony of holding her tiny dead baby.

But Lyerly's doctor declined, giving her a direct window into the many ways Americans lack real choice when it comes to their reproductive health decisions. At the time of this miscarriage, Lyerly was getting a master's degree in public health before beginning her residency. She was able to get a D&E at the same hospital by a different doctor. As an OB-GYN, she soon would learn how much abortion is stigmatized and limited throughout the country, but also regularly sought after and sometimes medically necessary, including among her many conservative Catholic patients in northeastern Wisconsin.

And then, on June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ended federal abortion rights, prompting states such as Wisconsin to resurrect dormant abortion bans from the 19th and 20th centuries. Lyerly's job changed overnight. She stopped working as an OB-GYN in Sheboygan and moved her practice to Minnesota. She became a plaintiff in a lawsuit over an 1849 Wisconsin feticide law being interpreted as an abortion ban, which has since been blocked.

When a congressional seat opened up in a competitive Wisconsin district this year, the 54-year-old mother of four joined the post-Dobbs wave of women running for office to restore reproductive rights, which this election cycle includes another OB-GYN and a patient denied abortion care. Lyerly's decision to run is emblematic of the nationwide backlash against the Dobbs decision, which altered the reproductive health care landscape, with providers, patients and advocates turning to the ballot box to change the laws to restore and broaden access.

Wisconsin is among seven swing states expected to determine the country's next president and fed-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 19 of 87

eral leaders. And in many ways they're being viewed as referendums on how much the right to have an abortion can move the needle in a tight presidential election.

"What we've seen in every election since the Dobbs decision is that abortion is at top of mind for voters — and it's not just helping voters decide who or what to vote for. It's actually a turnout driver," said Ryan Stitzlein, vice president of political and government relations at national lobbying group Reproductive Freedom for All. The group is investing in down-ballot races



The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization in June 2022 ended federal abortion rights. (Sofia Resnick/States Newsroom)

in conservative districts such as Lyerly's, buoyed by cash and momentum from Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' reproductive-rights-focused campaign.

Anti-abortion money is also flowing through the swing states, led by lobbying groups Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America and Women Speak Out PAC. Some of their messaging, adopted by Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and many GOP candidates, often paints Democrats as champions of infanticide, focusing on the rarest and most controversial type of abortions, those performed in the third trimester.

But aside from that rhetoric, many Republican candidates have been quiet on an issue that for years motivated their staunchest supporters.

SBA Pro-Life America declined an interview for this story but shared a press release outlining the organization's strategy trying to reach 10 million voters in Montana, Ohio and all of the battleground states except for Nevada. The group endorsed 28 House candidates total this cycle, and a fifth of them are in North Carolina. One of North Carolina's endorsed candidates in a toss-up race is Republican GOP challenger Laurie Buckhout, who does not mention her abortion stance on her campaign website, and did not return a request for comment.

"Our field team is talking to persuadable and low propensity pro-life voters to urge them to cast their votes against the party that endorses abortion in the seventh, eighth and ninth months," said SBA's national field team director Patricia Miles in the press statement.

But throughout this election cycle, polls in the swing states have shown bipartisan support for abortion rights, especially when voters are educated about what abortion bans do. Voters in more than half of the states expected to determine the presidential winner have, to varying degrees, lost access to abortion. And abortion-rights activists across these states told States Newsroom they are determined to protect that access, or to get it back.

Arizona sees backlash after GOP upholds Civil War-era abortion ban

In Arizona, the Dobbs decision resurrected a Civil War-era ban that allowed abortions only to save a pregnant patient's life.

Legislators repealed the law, but abortion-rights supporters fought for more certainty. This fall, Arizonans

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 20 of 87

will vote on a proposed ballot measure that would protect access until fetal viability, around 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Now, two of the judges who upheld the abortion ban — Justices Clint Bolick and Kathryn King — are up for reelection, in races infused with national cash by groups such as RFA and Planned Parenthood. Also on the ballot is Proposition 137, which would give lifetime appointments to state judges. The Republican-initiated measure has garnered controversy in part because it is retroactive to this year's election, so if approved, any retention bids would be nullified even if the majority votes to unseat the judge.

Ballot organizers turned in more than 800,000 signatures, double the required number, and overcame opponents' legal challenges to qualify the abortion-rights ballot measure, Proposition 139. Abortion is legal up to 15 weeks of pregnancy, but there are many state restrictions that the Arizona Abortion Access Act would eliminate, such as a ban on any abortions sought for fetal genetic abnormalities and a blocked law from 2021 granting personhood status to fertilized eggs.

Recent deaths reignite controversy over Georgia's abortion ban

This month, ProPublica reported on the deaths in 2022 of two Georgia women who suffered rare complications after they obtained mifepristone and misoprostol for early-term medication abortions. Both were trying to navigate a new state law that banned abortions at about six weeks of pregnancy and threatened medical providers with up to a decade in prison.

In one case, doctors at an Atlanta-area hospital refused for 20 hours to perform a routine dilation and curettage, a D&C, to clear the patient's uterus when her body hadn't expelled all the fetal tissue. In the other, a woman who had ordered the pills online suffered days of pain at home, fearful of seeking medical care. Both women left children behind.

Georgia's law permits abortion if the patient's life is at risk, but medical providers have said the law's language is unclear, tying their hands and threatening the health of patients who have high-risk pregnancies.

Their cases, which a state medical review committee found to be "preventable," have galvanized activists in the state.

Harris spoke at length about the women, Amber Nicole Thurman and Candi Miller, at a recent campaign event in Atlanta. She blamed their deaths on Georgia's law, calling it "the Trump abortion ban," because the former president appointed three justices he'd promised would overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

"This is a health care crisis, and Donald Trump is the architect of this crisis," Harris said. "Understand what a law like this means: Doctors have to wait until the patient is at death's door before they take action. ... You're saying that good policy, logical policy, moral policy, humane policy is about saying that a health care provider will only start providing that care when you're about to die?"

Trump has not commented on the deaths. He has repeatedly said this year that abortion access should be left to the states. He has dismissed the idea of a federal abortion ban, but during the presidential debate, he refused to say whether he would veto such legislation.

At a recent rally in North Carolina, Trump addressed "our great women" (a demographic he's trailing among), saying, "you will no longer be thinking about abortion, because it is now where it always had to be, with the states, and with the vote of the people."

Abortion was a driving concern in this spring's qualifying process for Georgia's 2024 legislative elections — the first opportunity for aspiring state lawmakers to jump on the ballot in response to their state's severe abortion restrictions.

Melita Easters, the executive director and founding chair of Georgia WIN List, which endorses Democratic women who support abortion rights, was already calling this year's general election "Roevermonth" back when President Joe Biden was still the party's nominee.

But Easters told States Newsroom that having Harris on the ticket instead has elevated the issue of reproductive freedom even more and "has breathed new life into down-ballot campaigns." Easters said she is especially encouraged after a Democratic state House candidate in Alabama who ran on abortion rights flipped a Huntsville seat during a special election in March.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 21 of 87

Michigan Democrats continue betting on abortion after 2022 successes

Michigan was one of the earliest states post-Dobbs to show that abortion rights could be a strong election-winning issue.

Months after the Supreme Court's ruling, Michiganders overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure to protect abortion rights in the state constitution; reelected Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who vowed to prioritize reproductive freedom; and voted for Democratic majorities in both chambers, giving the party a legislative trifecta for the first time in 40 years. In 2023, the legislature repealed a 1931 abortion ban that was still on the books and passed the Reproductive Health Act, expanding abortion access in the state.

This year, state and national abortion-rights groups have campaigned in toss-up congressional district-sacross Michigan, warning that a federal ban would supersede the state's protections.

State judicial races, meanwhile, have attracted millions of dollars, as they could determine partisan control of the Michigan Supreme Court. Democrats secured a slim 4-3 majority on the state Supreme Court in 2020 after Republican-nominated justices controlled the court for most of the last few decades.

Nevada reproductive rights activists hope ballot initiative improves turnout

In Nevada, abortion remains legal through 24 weeks and beyond for specific health reasons. In 2023, the state's Democratic-led legislature passed a law shielding patients and providers from out-of-state investigations related to abortion care; it was signed by Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo.

Seeking to cement these rights in the state constitution, reproductive health advocates mobilized a ballot initiative campaign, which they hope will drive voter turnout that would affect the presidential and down-ballot races. Constitutional amendments proposed through an initiative petition must be passed by voters twice, so if voters approve Question 6 in November, they will have to approve it again in 2026.

In the state's closely watched U.S. Senate race, Democratic Sen. Jacky Rosen currently edges Republican Sam Brown, who has had inconsistent positions on abortion and reproductive rights but opposes the abortion-rights measure.

National anti-abortion groups Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America and Students for Life of America have notably not focused on Nevada in their campaign strategies.

Growing Latinx voting bloc in North Carolina

In North Carolina many Democrats are campaigning in opposition to a 12-week abortion ban that the Republican-majority legislature passed last year after overriding Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto.

In a high-profile race for governor, Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein faces Republican opponent Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who has previously said he believes "there is no compromise on abortion," according to NC Newsline. The lieutenant governor is now facing calls to withdraw from the race over comments made on a pornography website years ago, and Stein has started racking up endorsements from prominent state Republicans.

Iliana Santillan, a political organizer who supports abortion rights, has focused on mobilizing Latinos, a growing voting bloc in the state. The executive director of progressive nonprofit El Pueblo and its political sister group La Fuerza NC told States Newsroom she's talked to many young women motivated to secure their own reproductive rights, including her college-age daughter. She said the Latinx community faces additional reproductive care barriers such as language and transportation, with undocumented immigrants scared to cross state lines without a driver's license.

Santillan also said there's a misconception that all Latinos are against abortion because they're Catholic, when in reality opposition to abortion skews among older voters.

"With older folks, the messaging that we've tested that has worked is: 'We don't want politicians to have a say in what we do with our bodies,'" Santillan said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 22 of 87

Motivated voters in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania, with its 19 electoral votes, is the largest swing state and considered essential to win the White House.

In a poll conducted this month by Spotlight PA and MassINC Polling Group, abortion ranked as the fifth most-important concern in the presidential race for likely voters, with 49% naming it as among their top issues.

The issue is far more important to Democrats, however, with 85% calling it a top issue compared with 17% of Republicans. Among those who aren't registered with either major party, 49% called it a top issue.

In 2022, voters surprised pundits by sending enough Democrats to the state House to flip it blue. Voters were responding to the Dobbs decision, Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro told Pennsylvania Capital-Star at a recent Harris campaign event.

Shapiro also won in 2022, and so far his administration has supported over-the-counter birth control pills and ended the state's contract with a network of anti-abortion counseling centers. He said his administration would not defend a current state law that prohibits state Medicaid funding from being used for abortions.

Abortion isn't protected under Pennsylvania's state constitution, but it remains legal up to 24 weeks' gestation, and clinics there have seen an influx of out-of-state patients.

Wisconsin abortion services resume

After more than a year without abortion access, reproductive health clinics in Wisconsin resumed abortion services in September 2023, shortly after a judge ruled that the 1849 state law that had widely been interpreted as an abortion ban, applied to feticide and not abortion. A state Supreme Court race a few months earlier saw Justice Janet Protasiewicz win in a landslide after campaigning on reproductive freedom.

Seven months later when Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher announced his resignation, Lyerly threw her hat in the ring, running as the only Democrat in the 8th District. She now faces businessman Tony Wied. Although in the past it was considered a swing district, it has leaned conservative in recent election cycles. With the redrawn maps and national support, Lyerly said it's a competitive race.

"We have the potential to really fix, not just reproductive health care, but health care," Lyerly told States Newsroom. "Bring the stories of our patients forward and help our colleagues understand, build those coalitions and help to gain consensus that's going to drive forward health care reform in this country."

Wied's campaign website does not mention abortion or his policy proposals related to health care, though the words "Trump-endorsed" appear prominently and abundantly throughout the site. Wied hasn't said much about the issue beyond it should be a state issue, but the two are scheduled to debate this Friday night. His campaign declined an interview.

Currently the only OB-GYNs who serve in Congress oppose abortion. If Lyerly wins in November, she would not only change that (potentially alongside Minnesota Sen. Kelly Morrison) but also could help flip party control in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Most Wisconsin voters oppose criminalizing abortion before fetal viability, according to a poll this year by the University of Maryland's Program for Public Consultation.

Patricia McFarland, 76, knows what it's like to live without abortion access. For more than 50 years, the retired college teacher kept her pre-Roe abortion a secret, having grown up in a conservative Irish Catholic family like many of her suburban Milwaukee neighbors.

McFarland told States Newsroom she has been politically active most of her life, but the Dobbs ruling dredged up the physical and emotional trauma from the illegal procedure she had alone in Mexico City. Now, McFarland rarely leaves home without her "Roe Roe Roe Your Vote" button, engaging anyone who will talk to her about the dangers of criminalizing pregnancy.

The mother and grandmother said she's been canvassing and doing informational sessions with her activist group the PERSISTers, as well as the League of Women Voters. As she has warned fellow Wisconsinites about the federal power over their reproductive freedom, she said the enthusiasm for abortion rights in her state is palpable.

"For women my age," McFarland said, "we don't want our grandchildren to lose their ability to decide when to become a mother."

Georgia Recorder's Jill Nolin contributed to this report.

Sofia Resnick is a national reproductive rights reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. She has reported on reproductive-health politics and justice issues for more than a decade.

Taxes: Where do Trump and Harris stand?

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 9:12 AM

WASHINGTON — With the clock ticking on former President Donald Trump's signature 2017 tax law, and high housing, food and child care costs darkening Americans' mood, tax cuts have become the star of the 2024 presidential contest between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Trump wants to overall extend his tax provisions beyond the 2025 expiration date and then some, promising to lower the corporate tax rate even further and lift the cap on the state and local taxes deduction.

He argues the loss in federal revenue will be made up by imposing steep tariffs on imported goods.

Tariff is a "beautiful word," he told a crowd in Savannah, Georgia, Tuesday night, "one of the most beautiful words I've ever heard."

"We will take in hundreds of billions of dollars into our treasury and use that money to benefit the American citizens," he said.

Harris is running on an "opportunity economy" platform that keeps the Biden administration's promises to not raise taxes on those making less than \$400,000 and enact a "billionaire" tax.

The vice president has also vowed to give tax deductions and credits to budding entrepreneurs and first-time homebuyers, and permanently expand the Child Tax Credit.

"Under my plan, more than 100 million Americans will get a middle-class tax break that includes \$6,000 for new parents during the first year of their child's life," Harris said Wednesday at a campaign speech in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Whoever wins the Oval Office will need a cooperative Congress to enact these policies — with the exception of tariffs, over which the president enjoys wide latitude.



Former President Donald Trump, at left, the Republican presidential nominee, and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, debate for the first time during the presidential election campaign at The National Constitution Center on Sept. 10, 2024, in Philadelphia. (Win McNamee/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 24 of 87

What would it cost?

The barrage of proposals has kept economists busy with near-constant and evolving analyses of how much the tax cut promises would add to the nation's ballooning federal deficit and change the economy.

Both candidates' plans come with a price tag in the trillions of dollars, though Trump's is the more expensive of the two.

Models released in late August by the Penn Wharton Budget Model project Trump's plan would add up to \$5.8 trillion to the deficit over 10 years, while Harris' plan would increase the deficit by up to \$2 trillion over the same time period.

"I think that both candidates are missing the mark when it comes to fiscal responsibility and economic responsibility," the Tax Foundation's Erica York told States Newsroom in an interview Monday.

"Neither of them have really outlined a plan that would get us on a sustainable path in terms of debt and deficits, nor that would boost growth and opportunity in the economy. Both are likely to have a negative impact on the economy," said York, senior economist and research director for the foundation, which generally favors lower taxes.

Promise: No taxes on tips, overtime

Trump, followed by Harris, has proposed to nix taxes on tipped workers — though Harris has suggested limiting the benefit to workers in the service and hospitality industries who earn less than \$75,000.

She has also said the tax break would not apply to payroll taxes, meaning the contribution workers pay toward Social Security and Medicare. Trump has not detailed any limits on his proposal for tipped workers.

Economists across the board warn Trump's plan could incentivize more tipped work. They also question whether Trump and Harris' proposals would actually benefit low-income workers.

After all, tax benefits for lower income workers who have children phase in as the person earns income. Reporting less income means those taxpayers could ultimately see less help from the Child Tax Credit or the Earned Income Tax Credit.

"If you work and you report income, you get these provisions. But if you don't, you don't get these provisions. Well, you add exemptions into the tax code that reduces the amount of earned income that you report to the IRS, you could potentially reduce the value of these credits for very low-income households," Kyle Pomerleau, senior fellow at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute, told States Newsroom in an interview Monday.

For instance, a tipped worker who has one child and earns \$24,000 annually, half of which comes from tips, could see a \$300 decrease in refundable tax credits under this policy, Pomerleau and senior AEI fellows Alex Brill and Stan Veuger wrote in August.

The same principle for lower income taxpayers applies to Trump's recent promise to eliminate taxes on overtime.

"There could be a negative effect there, depending on how this is structured," Pomerleau said Monday.

The nonpartisan watchdog Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates an elimination of taxes on all overtime would cost the country \$1.7 trillion in lost revenue over 10 years. With no guardrails preventing workers switching from salaried to hourly, the price tag could reach up to \$6 trillion in the most extreme case, CRFB estimates.

Promise: No taxes on Social Security

Economists monitoring the nation's Social Security coffers continue to sound alarm bells on the program's solvency — with little reaction on the campaign trail.

The fund that provides money to senior citizens and people with disabilities is on track to be depleted by 2035, and recipients would face an immediate 17% cut in benefits, as the Tax Foundation's Alex Durante wrote Tuesday.

Trump has mentioned Social Security during campaign rallies and on his social media platform, but in the context of eliminating taxes on the benefit payments.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 25 of 87

While low-income recipients do not pay taxes on their benefits, others do and are projected to contribute \$94 billion this year back into the fund.

Nixing those taxes could speed up Social Security's insolvency by one year, according to an analysis by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Promise: New corporate tax rates and tariffs

Trump's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which cleared Congress strictly along party lines, permanently lowered the top corporate tax rate to 21% from 35%.

Harris has vowed, if elected, she will bump the rate up to 28%. Analyses from the CFRB, the Tax Foundation, Penn Wharton and the Yale Budget Lab estimate the increase would raise roughly \$1 trillion to \$1.2 trillion in federal revenue over the next decade.

The former president wants to cut the rate even further to 15%, a level not seen in the U.S. since the 1930s. Economists estimate the cut would reduce revenue anywhere from \$460 billion to \$673 billion over 10 years.

"Here is the deal that I will be offering to every major company and manufacturer on Earth: I will give you the lowest taxes, the lowest energy costs, the lowest regulatory burden and free access to the best and biggest market on the planet, but only if you make your product here in America," Trump said in Georgia Tuesday.

Trump has big plans for products imported into the U.S. He's planning to impose up to 20% tariffs on most imports, reaching as high as 60% on Chinese goods and 100% on countries that turn away from the U.S. dollar.

That could cost the typical American household about \$2,600 a year as costs on consumer goods would shift to the customer, particularly affecting those with lower incomes, according to economists Kimberly Clausing and Mary Lovely at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Speaking at a farming roundtable in Pennsylvania Monday, Trump publicly warned John Deere that if the company moves manufacturing to Mexico, he'll impose a 200% tariff on tractors coming back over the border.

Experts warn another downside is that the policy invites foreign retaliation.

"So if we are, say, exporting Kentucky bourbon to China, China may say, well, to retaliate for the 60% tax on imports, we're going to place taxes on this export, and that's going to have a direct impact on the incomes of Americans and make us poorer," Pomerleau said.

Promise: A billionaire tax

A familiar refrain from Harris and the Biden administration is that billionaires and wealthy corporations should pay their "fair share."

The U.S. individual tax rate already progresses with an earner's income, meaning that the higher your income, the higher your tax rate.

Both Harris and Trump want to keep individual tax rates that were lowered across the board in the 2017 law, but Harris is seeking to increase taxes on long-term capital gains, and levy a minimum tax on unrealized capital gains for very high earners.

For those earning upwards of \$1 million a year, Harris proposed raising taxes to 28%, up from 20%, on profits made from the sale of an asset, like stocks, bonds, or real estate, that have been held by the owner for more than a year.

The vice president also proposes quadrupling the stock buyback tax to 4%, up from 1%.

For ultra-wealthy households that have more than \$100 million in assets, Harris follows Biden in proposing a 25% tax rate — sometimes referred to as the "billionaire tax."

Those high-wealth individuals would need to calculate their regular income tax liability and compare it to their total net worth, meaning income plus unrealized capital gains, multiplied by 25%.

"Whichever is greater you pay," Pomerleau explains. "So if you are in a situation where you have a low

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 26 of 87

effective tax rate relative to this broader definition of income, the minimum tax will kick in and you'll start paying increments."

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates the plan could raise \$750 billion in revenue over ten years.

Promise: No SALT cap

Ahead of a mid-September campaign rally on Long Island, New York, Trump pledged to abandon the cap in his 2017 law on the state and local tax deduction — simply known in tax parlance as SALT.

As the law stands now, taxpayers can only deduct up to \$10,000 of their state and local tax bill from their federal tax liability.

A full SALT deduction is more valuable for higher income taxpayers, and prior to the 2017 cap, 91% of taxpayers who claimed it lived in California, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas and Pennsylvania, according to an analysis by the Tax Foundation.

Eliminating the cap would cut taxes by an average of more than \$140,000 for the highest earning 0.1% of households, according to modeling by the Tax Policy Center, a collaboration between the left-leaning Urban Institute and Brookings Institution.

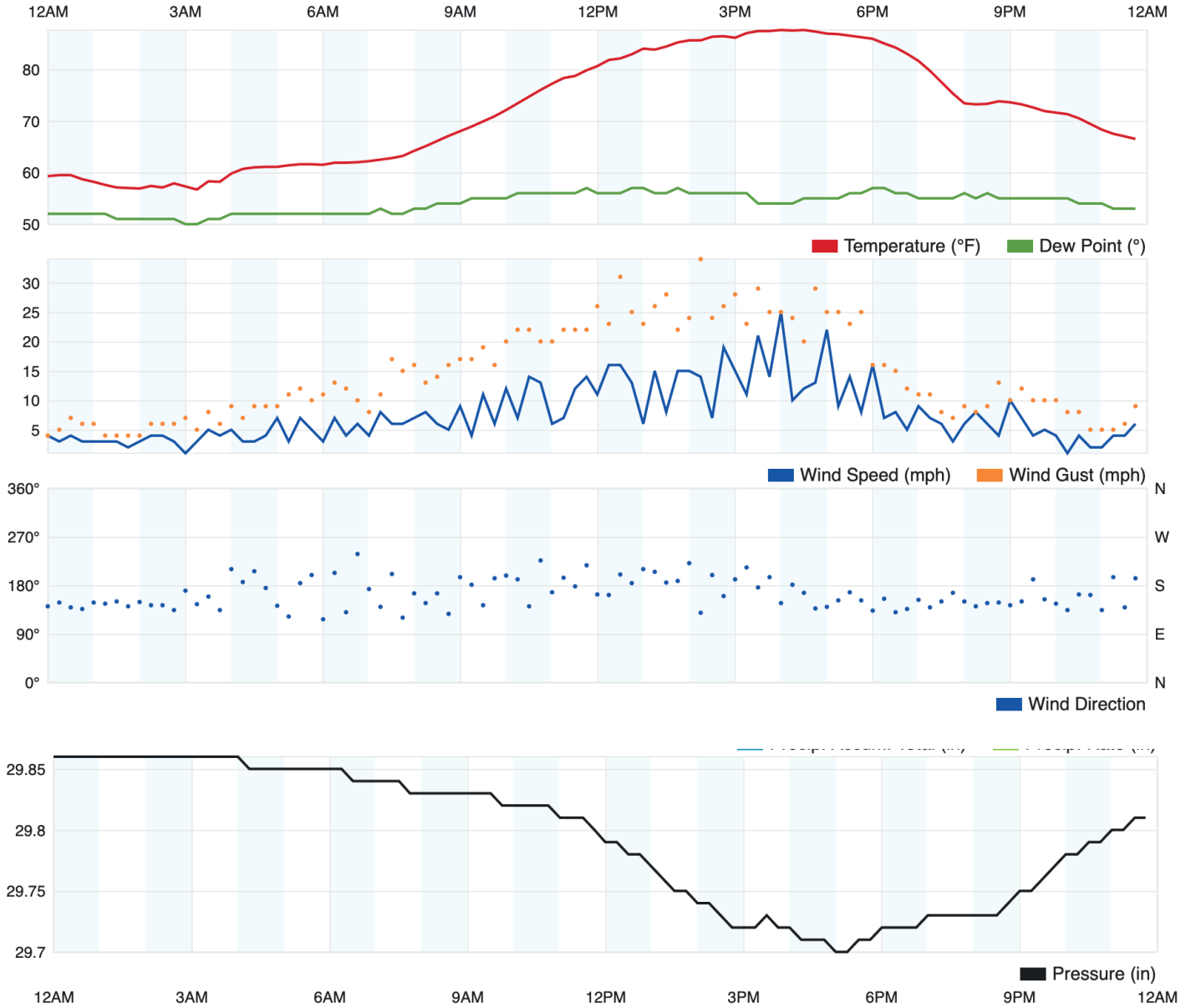
The Committee for a Responsible Budget estimates the move could cost \$1.2 trillion over a ten-year budget window.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 27 of 87

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 28 of 87

Today



High: 82 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 47 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 86 °F

Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 52 °F

Clear

Sunday



High: 86 °F

Sunny



Weekend Forecast

NWS Aberdeen, SD
Sept. 27th, 2024, 3:45 AM

Friday



Highs: 81-85°F
Lows: 47-54°F

Saturday



Highs: 83-93°F
Lows: 52-60°F

Sunday



Highs: 82-93°F
Lows: 58-63°F

This weekend will be a good time to enjoy the warmer weather before the cooler fall temperatures come back, as it will be warmer than normal with clear, sunny skies.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 29 of 87



Warm September Continues & Records to Watch

NWS Aberdeen, SD
Sept. 26th, 2024, 1:10 PM

Friday, Sept. 27

78-84°

Winds NE 5-10
mph

Record Highs in
Danger:

None

Saturday, Sept. 28

82-91°

Winds SE 15-20
mph

Record Highs in
Danger:

Mobridge: 92 (2021)

Sunday, Sept. 29

82-94°

Winds S 20-25
mph
Gusts to 35
mph

Record Highs in
Danger:

Mobridge: 91 (1931)
Pierre: 92 (2007)

Monday, Sept. 30

68-76°

Winds NW
25-30 mph
Gusts to 40
mph

Record Highs in
Danger:

None

Number of days in September above 80 degrees*

Aberdeen: 18
Record: 21 (1908)

Sisseton: 16
Record: 18 (1998)

Mobridge: 20
Record: 21 (1939)

Pierre: 21
Record: 23 (1998)

*through 9/25

September temperatures have consistently been above average, and that trend will continue as we close out the month. There is record high potential this weekend for the Missouri River area and west, along with windy conditions Sunday and Monday. There have also been nearly a record number of days above 80 degrees across South Dakota this September! A cool down is coming Monday, and October temperatures will start closer to normal.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 30 of 87

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 88 °F at 3:51 PM

Low Temp: 56 °F at 3:07 AM

Wind: 34 mph at 2:09 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 55 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1952

Record Low: 22 in 1900

Average High: 70

Average Low: 42

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.79

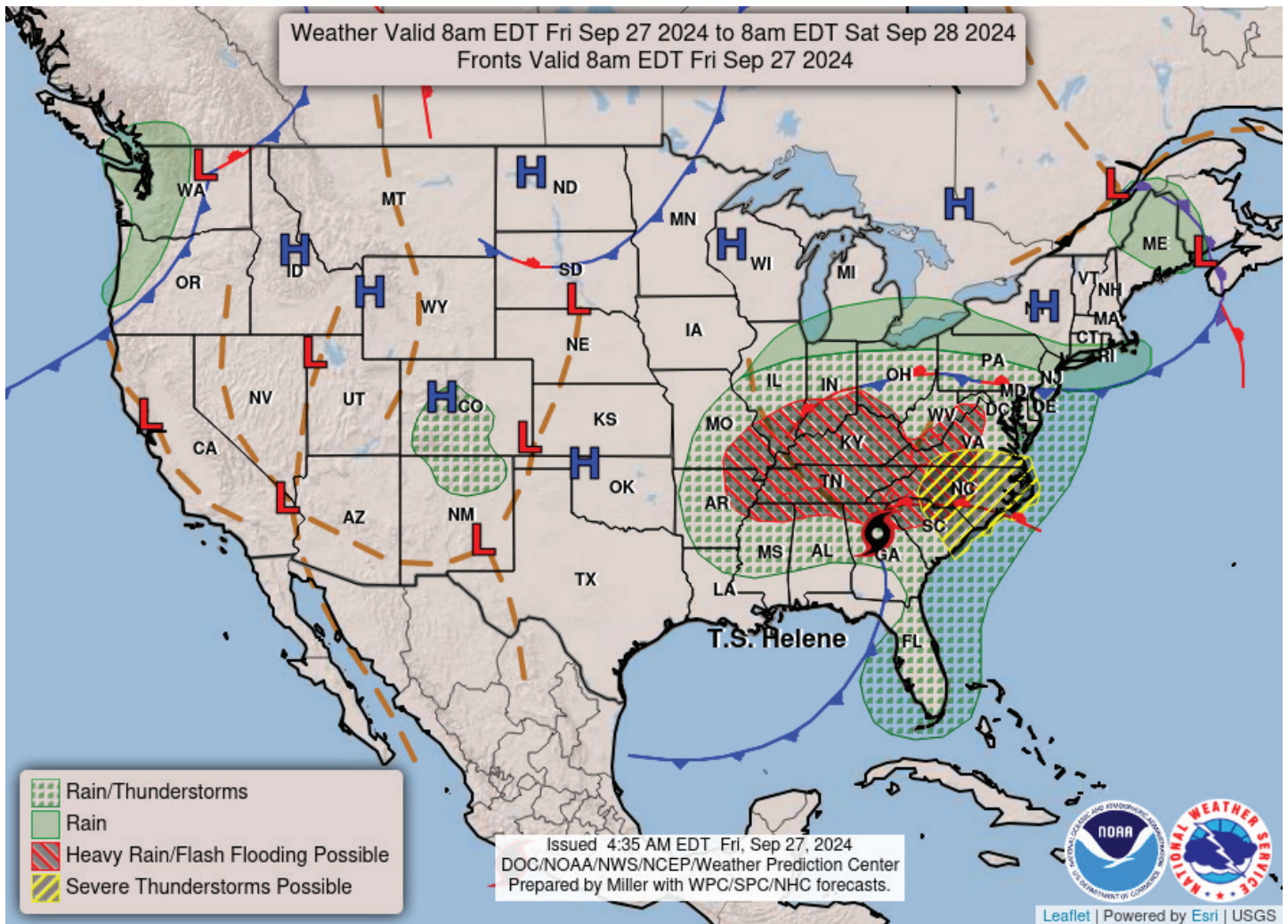
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.33

Average Precip to date: 18.13

Precip Year to Date: 19.75

Sunset Tonight: 7:26:24 am

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26:24 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 31 of 87

Today in Weather History

September 27, 1983: Lightning caused a grass fire which burned 25,000 acres northwest of Reliance during the evening hours. At its peak, the fire was four miles wide by ten miles long.

September 27, 1985: Snow fell across south-central South Dakota from the evening of the 27th until the early afternoon of the 28th. Three to five inches of snow occurred with up to 18 inches reported around Winner. Eight to 12 inches fell around Gregory and Burke.

1816 - A black frost over most of New England kills unripened corn in the north resulting in a year of famine. (David Ludlum)

1822: Using various documents and meteorological observations determined a hurricane moved ashore on this day in South Carolina. One account from Bull Island, South Carolina records the eye passing directly over that location.

1906: The second September storm of 1906 was one of great violence. On the 27th the hurricane reached the central Gulf Coast with destructive winds and unprecedented tides. At Pensacola, FL, the tide was 10 feet above normal. At Mobile, AL property damage was severe. An estimated 134 lives were lost from Pensacola, FL to Mississippi from this storm.

1911: The earliest photograph of a tornado in Australia occurred on this day. The estimated F3 tornado tore through Marong, Victoria, or about 150 km from Melbourne.

1959 - A tornado 440 yards in width traveled twenty miles from near Hollow, OK, to western Cherokee County KS. Although a strong tornado, it was very slow moving, and gave a tremendous warning roar, and as a result no one was killed. (The Weather Channel)

1959: Typhoon Vera was the strongest and deadliest typhoon on record to make landfall on the islands of Japan. Damage totals from this typhoon are estimated at \$4.85 billion (USD 2015). An estimated 4,000 deaths occurred from Typhoon Vera. This Category 5 Typhoon first made landfall on September 26 near Shionomisaki on Honshu. Vera transitioned to an extratropical cyclone on September 27, which continued to affect the island for an additional two days.

1970 - Afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Long Beach, CA, and 105 degrees at the Los Angeles Civic Center were the hottest since September records were established in 1963. Fierce Santa Ana winds accompanying the extreme heat resulted in destructive fires. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - A record early season snowstorm struck the Central High Plains Region. The storm left up to nineteen inches of snow along the Colorado Front Range, and as much as a foot of snow in the High Plains Region. (Storm Data)

1985 - Hurricane Gloria swept over the Outer Banks then rushed across Long Island, New England, and Canada. It was the first significant hurricane to hit New England in twenty-five years and brought heavy rains and high winds to the Mid-Atlantic states as well.

1987 - While those at the base of Mount Washington, NH, enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, the top of the mountain was blanketed with 4.7 inches of snow, along with wind gusts to 99 mph, and a temperature of 13 degrees. Severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front in the south central U.S. A thunderstorm west of Noodle TX produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in southeastern Wyoming during the afternoon, with tennis ball size hail reported at Cheyenne. Strong winds ushering the cold air into the north central U.S. gusted to 59 mph at Lander WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley. Houghton Lake MI reported a record low of 21 degrees. Thunderstorms in the western U.S. produced wind gusts to 50 mph at Salt Lake City UT, and gusts to 58 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2014: A squall line impacted central Arizona, including the Phoenix Metro area.



AN INSIDE JOB

"Why is it," the little girl asked the botanist, "that when I open a marigold it dies, but when God opens it, it's beautiful?"

"Because," came the answer, "God works from the inside out, while you work from the outside in."

What a beautiful description of the new birth. It's not something that happens on the outside, but something God does on the inside that will eventually be seen on the outside.

A Christian becomes a completely new person. Although we cannot see the change on the inside, we know that there is a change when others see it on the outside – the new behaviors that come with the new birth. When Christ fills our heart on the inside, others will see it on the outside: we will no longer be the same and therefore do the same as we did in the past.

People often speak of "being rehabilitated." This means that one has been restored to good health, a useful life, one's former condition. But, that is not true of those of us who have been born again. We have, in and through Christ, been "recreated" – we become completely "new beings" or actually "new people!" "The old life is gone. A new life has begun," said Paul.

When we are converted to faith in Christ, we do not turn over a new leaf. We begin living a new life under a new Leader that results in a new way of living. Now we begin living a new life by a new set of standards – God's standards. We must now ask, "Do others see Jesus in me?"

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to examine our lives carefully and completely to be sure we are living this "new life." May we allow Your Holy Spirit to work within us to change us, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:11-19

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 33 of 87

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 34 of 87



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.24.24

1 6 10 23 27 18

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$77,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 26 Mins
DRAW: 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.25.24

5 10 13 31 52 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$9,930,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 41
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.26.24

4 8 27 37 40 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 56 Mins
DRAW: 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.25.24

15 20 24 25 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$42,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 56
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.25.24

6 32 51 62 69 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 25
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.25.24

2 26 45 46 52 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$243,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 25
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 35 of 87

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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 36 of 87

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Sisseton, 25-23, 25-14, 25-17

Avon def. Colome, 25-8, 25-9, 25-23

Baltic def. Parker, 25-11, 25-15, 25-13

Bon Homme def. Chamberlain, 25-14, 24-26, 25-17, 25-18

Bridgewater-Emery def. Canistota, 25-18, 25-19, 25-19

Britton-Hecla def. Florence-Henry, 25-20, 25-19, 23-25, 25-18

Brookings def. Huron, 11-25, 25-19, 23-25, 25-14, 15-13

Burke def. Bon Homme, 25-10, 25-8, 25-9

Burke def. Chamberlain, 25-4, 25-9, 25-10

Canton def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 25-17, 25-14, 25-21

Chester def. Garretson, 25-14, 25-14, 25-17

Clark-Willow Lake def. Deuel, 25-6, 25-8, 25-16

Colman-Egan def. Gayville-Volin High School, 23-25, 26-24, 27-25, 18-25, 16-14

Corsica/Stickney def. Gregory, 20-25, 30-28, 26-24, 23-25, 15-10

Dakota Valley def. Sioux Falls Christian, 25-21, 25-23, 19-25, 23-25, 15-7

Dell Rapids St Mary def. Arlington, 11-25, 23-25, 25-17, 25-15, 16-14

Dell Rapids def. Flandreau, 25-8, 25-21, 25-8

Deubrook def. Estelline-Hendricks, 25-18, 25-10, 22-25, 25-17

Edgemont def. Cody-Kilgore, Neb., 25-13, 25-14, 25-10

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Beresford, 25-18, 25-12, 25-11

Great Plains Lutheran def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-11, 25-17, 25-7

Groton def. Tiospa Zina, 25-11, 25-11, 25-13

Hamlin def. Webster, 18-25, 25-18, 25-17, 25-13

Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-13, 25-13, 25-18

Hill City def. Newell, 25-15, 25-10, 25-7

Hot Springs def. Lakota Tech, 25-12, 25-22, 25-19

Ipswich def. Langford, 25-15, 25-14, 23-25

Iroquois-Lake Preston def. Highmore-Harrold, 24-26, 25-21, 27-25, 25-16

Jones County def. Todd County, 25-22, 25-27, 25-20, 25-14

Kimball-White Lake def. Wagner, 17-25, 25-20, 25-22, 25-22

Lennox def. West Central, 24-26, 25-22, 25-20, 25-23

Linton, N.D. def. Herreid-Selby, 25-19, 27-25, 25-13

Madison def. Tri-Valley, 25-21, 27-25, 25-23

McIntosh High School def. Dupree, 14-25, 25-20, 22-25, 25-22, 15-13

Milbank def. Redfield, 25-18, 25-20, 14-25, 25-17

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-19, 25-21, 25-15

North Central def. Strasburg, N.D., 25-7, 25-10, 25-10

Northwestern def. Waubay/Summit, 25-10, 25-9, 25-8

Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. Flandreau Indian, 25-13, 25-5, 25-6

Philip def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-19, 25-18, 25-21

Pine Ridge def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-9, 25-11, 25-27, 25-13

Potter County def. Stanley County, 25-14, 25-14, 25-23

Rapid City Stevens def. Rapid City Central

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 37 of 87

Scotland def. Marty, 25-14, 25-5, 25-7
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Brandon Valley, 25-14, 25-20, 24-26, 25-22
Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-21, 22-25, 25-18, 22-25, 15-12
Spearfish def. Custer, 25-13, 25-16, 25-16
Sully Buttes def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-20, 25-17, 25-9
Viborg-Hurley def. Howard, 25-19, 25-18, 18-25, 26-24
Watertown def. Mitchell, 25-12, 25-13, 25-17
Wessington Springs def. Lower Brule, 25-7, 25-10, 25-16
Wilmot def. Tri-State, N.D., 25-17, 25-11, 25-11
Wolsey-Wessington def. James Valley Christian, 25-14, 25-7, 25-10

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

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 50, McLaughlin 12

Crazy Horse 60, Flandreau Indian 6

Little Wound 20, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 14

Pine Ridge 70, St. Francis Indian 18

Tiospa Zina 36, Marty 6

White River 66, Crow Creek Tribal School 0

Winnebago, Neb. 36, Todd County 20

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

Nevada high court orders dismissal of Chasing Horse sex abuse case but says charges can be refiled

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Nevada Supreme Court has ordered the dismissal of a sprawling sex abuse indictment against Nathan Chasing Horse, while leaving open the possibility of charges being refiled in a case that sent shockwaves throughout Indian Country and led to more criminal charges in the U.S. and Canada.

Proceedings in the 18-count criminal case have been at a standstill for more than a year while the former "Dances with Wolves" actor challenged it. The full seven-member court's decision, issued Thursday, reverses earlier rulings upholding the charges by a three-member panel of the high court and a state judge.

Kristy Holston, the chief deputy public defender representing Chasing Horse, had argued that a definition of grooming presented to the grand jury without expert testimony tainted the state's case. Holston said prosecutors also failed to provide the grand jury with evidence that could have cast a doubt on the allegations against Chasing Horse, including what she described as inconsistent statements made by one of the victims.

The high court agreed.

"The combination of these two clear errors undermines our confidence in the grand jury proceedings and created intolerable damage to the independent function of the grand jury process," the court said in its scathing order.

The ruling directs the judge overseeing the case in Clark County District Court to dismiss the indictment without prejudice, meaning charges against Chasing Horse can be refiled. But the order for dismissal won't take effect immediately, as prosecutors also have the option to ask the high court to reconsider within 25 days.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 38 of 87

"The allegations against Chasing Horse are indisputably serious, and we express no opinion about Chasing Horse's guilt or innocence," the order says.

Holston declined to comment. District Attorney Steve Wolfson, in a statement Thursday, described the court's decision as "only a minor setback."

"My office is committed to resurrecting the charges in this case," Wolfson said, "and we will not rest until we obtain justice on behalf of the victims in this matter."

Chasing Horse is charged with sexual assault of a minor, kidnapping and child abuse. He has pleaded not guilty.

The 48-year-old has been in custody since his arrest last January near the North Las Vegas home he is said to have shared with five wives. He is unlikely to be released from custody, even after the high court's decision, because he faces charges in at least four other jurisdictions, including U.S. District Court in Nevada and on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana.

Chasing Horse is best known for portraying Smiles A Lot in the 1990 film "Dances with Wolves." But in the decades since starring in the Oscar-winning movie, authorities said, he built a reputation as a self-proclaimed medicine man among tribes and traveled around North America to perform healing ceremonies.

He is accused of using that position to gain access to vulnerable girls and women starting in the early 2000s, leading a cult and taking underage wives. Authorities have said one of the wives was offered to Chasing Horse as a "gift" when she was 15, while another "became a wife" after turning 16.

Chasing Horse also is accused of recording sexual assaults and arranging sex with the victims for other men who allegedly paid him.

His legal issues have been unfolding at the same time lawmakers and prosecutors around the U.S. are funneling more resources into cases involving Native women, including human trafficking and murders. Chasing Horse was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, which is home to the Sicangu Sioux, one of the seven tribes of the Lakota nation.

Belgian PM and king blast Pope Francis for church's sex abuse cover-up legacy in blistering welcome

By NICOLE WINFIELD and RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgium's prime minister blasted Pope Francis for the Catholic Church's horrific legacy of clerical sex abuse and cover-ups here, demanding "concrete steps" to come clean with the past and put victims' interests ahead those of the institution in a blistering welcome at the start of Francis' visit on Friday.

The speech by Prime Minister Alexander De Croo was one of the most pointed ever directed at the pope during a foreign trip, where the genteel dictates of diplomatic protocol usually keeps outrage out of the public remarks. But even King Philippe had strong words for Francis, demanding the church work "incessantly" to atone for the crimes and help victims heal.

Their tone underscored just how raw the abuse scandal still is in Belgium, where two decades of revelations of abuse and systematic cover-ups have devastated the hierarchy's credibility and contributed to an overall decline in Catholicism and the influence of the once-powerful Catholic Church.

Francis applauded at the end of De Croo's speech and was expected to meet with victims in private later Friday. "This is our shame and humiliation," he said in an improvised response.

"Today, words alone do not suffice. We also need concrete steps," De Croo told Francis and an audience of royals, church officials, diplomats and politicians at Laeken Castle, the residence of Belgium's royal family.

"Victims need to be heard. They need to be at the center. They have a right to truth. Misdeeds need to be recognized," he said. "When something goes wrong we cannot accept cover-ups," he said. "To be able to look into the future, the church needs to come clean on its past."

Revelations of Belgium's horrific abuse scandal have dribbled out in bits over a quarter century, punctuated by a bombshell in 2010, when the country's longest-serving bishop, Bruges Bishop Roger Vangheluwe, was allowed to resign without punishment after admitting he had sexually abused his nephew for 13 years.

Francis only defrocked Vangheluwe earlier this year, in a move clearly designed to remove a lingering

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 39 of 87

source of outrage among Belgians before his visit.

Two months after Vangheluwe resigned, Belgian police staged what were then unprecedented raids on Belgian church offices, the home of recently retired Archbishop Godfried Danneels, and even the crypt of a prelate — a violation the Vatican decried as “deplorable.”

Danneels was then caught on tape trying to persuade Vangheluwe’s nephew to keep quiet until the bishop retired. Finally, in September 2010 the church released a 200-page report that said 507 people had come forward with stories of being molested by priests, including when they were as young as 2. It identified at least 13 suicides by victims and attempts by six more.

Victims and advocates say those findings were just the tip of the iceberg and that the true scope of the scandal is far greater. Police eventually returned the documentation that was seized in the 2010 raids to the church, scuttling hopes for criminal investigations.

Despite everything that was known and already in the public domain, the scandal reared its head in a shocking new way last year, when a four-episode Flemish documentary, “Godvergeten” (Godforsaken) aired on public broadcaster VRT.

For the first time, Belgian victims told their stories on camera one after another, showing Flemish viewers the scope of the scandal in their community, the depravity of the crimes and their systematic cover-up by the Catholic hierarchy.

Amid the public outrage that ensued, both a Flanders parliamentary committee and Belgium’s federal parliament opened official inquests last year. A follow-on investigation announced this week will look into whether any external pressures led to the collapse of the criminal investigation.

Significantly, both King Philippe and De Croo made their toughest remarks about abuse in Dutch — the language spoken in the once-staunchly Catholic Flanders where the abuse cases have gained the most notoriety — while the more neutral parts of their speeches were delivered in French and German.

De Croo’s speech was outside typical Vatican protocol, which normally would have seen only the king address the pope. As occurred in Canada, when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the pope alongside the country’s governor-general, De Croo’s office requested that he be able to speak, officials said.

The pope also referred to abuse in his remarks, insisting that the church was “addressing firmly and decisively” the problem by implementing prevention programs, listening to victims and accompanying them to heal.

But after the astonishing dressing down by the prime minister and king, Francis went off-script to express the shame of the church for the scandal and voice his commitment to ending it.

“The church must be ashamed and ask for forgiveness and try to resolve this situation with Christian humility and put all the possibilities in places so that this doesn’t happen again,” Francis said. “But even if it were only one (victim), it is enough to be ashamed.”

Victims, however, have demanded the church do far more, including implementing robust reparations programs to compensate them for their trauma and pay for the lifelong therapy many need. Some penned a letter demanding such a reparations program, which they planned to deliver to Francis in their private meeting.

The prime minister, king and pope also referred to a new church-related scandal rocking Belgium, over so-called “forced adoptions,” which echoed earlier revelations about Ireland’s so-called mother and baby homes.

After World War II and through the 1980s, many single mothers were forced by the Belgian church into offering their newborns up for adoption. Often they barely saw their babies before nuns took them away, and the babies were then placed for adoption, with money changing hands.

For those adopted, it is close to impossible now to find out who their birth mothers were, since the records have long ago disappeared.

Francis said he was “saddened” to learn of these practices, but said such criminality was “mixed in with what was unfortunately the prevailing view in all parts of society at this time.”

“Many believed in conscience that they were doing something good for both the child and the mother,”

he said, referring to the social stigma of an unwed mother in a Catholic country. He said he prayed that the church would "bring clarity" to the problem and not manipulate the Gospel to "draw inauthentic conclusions that cause suffering and exclusion."

Belgium's caretaker Justice Minister Paul Van Tigchelt has called the forced adoptions "horror practices by the church." No formal figures are available, but the HLN media group that brought the issue to the fore again last year estimated it affected up to 30,000 babies over the period.

Helene weakens to a tropical storm with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph over Georgia

By KATE PAYNE and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

CRAWFORDVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Hurricane Helene weakened to a tropical storm over Georgia with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph) early Friday, the National Hurricane Center said.

Helene continues to weaken while moving farther inland over Georgia. The storm was about 40 miles (65 kilometers) east of Macon and about 100 miles (165 kilometers) southeast of Atlanta, moving north at 30 mph (48 kph) at 5 a.m., the center in Miami reported.

The storm made landfall in northwestern Florida as a Category 4 storm as forecasters warned the enormous system could create a "nightmare" storm surge and bring dangerous winds and rain across much of the southeastern U.S. There were at least three storm-related deaths.

The hurricane center said Helene roared ashore around 11:10 p.m. Thursday near the mouth of the Aucilla River in the Big Bend area of Florida's Gulf Coast. It had maximum sustained winds estimated at 140 mph (225 kph). That location was only about 20 miles (32 kilometers) northwest of where Hurricane Idalia came ashore last year at nearly the same ferocity and caused widespread damage.

The hurricane's eye passed near Valdosta, Georgia, as the storm churned rapidly north into Georgia Thursday night. The National Hurricane Center issued an extreme wind warning for the area, meaning possible hurricane-force winds exceeding 115 mph (185 kph).

At a hotel in the city of 55,000 near the Florida line, dozens of people huddled in the darkened lobby after midnight Friday as winds whistled and howled outside. Electricity was out, with hall emergency lights, flashlights and cellphones providing the only illumination. Water dripped from light fixtures in the lobby dining area and roof debris fell to the ground outside.

Fermin Herrera, 20, his wife and their 2-month-old daughter left their room on the top floor of the hotel, where they took shelter because they were concerned about trees falling on their Valdosta home.

"We heard some rumbling," said Herrera, cradling the sleeping baby in a downstairs hallway. "We didn't see anything at first. After a while the intensity picked up. It looked like a gutter that was banging against our window. So we made a decision to leave."

Helene is the third storm to strike the city in just over a year. Tropical Storm Debby blacked out power to thousands in August, while Hurricane Idalia damaged an estimated 1,000 homes in Valdosta and surrounding Lowndes County a year ago.

"I feel like a lot of us know what to do now," Herrera said. "We've seen some storms and grown some thicker skins."

Helene prompted hurricane and flash flood warnings extending far beyond the coast up into northern Georgia and western North Carolina. More than 1.2 million homes and businesses were without power in Florida, more than 190,000 in Georgia and more than 30,000 in the Carolinas, according to the tracking site poweroutage.us. The governors of those states and Alabama and Virginia all declared emergencies.

One person was killed in Florida when a sign fell on their car and two people were reported killed in a possible tornado in south Georgia as the storm approached.

"When Floridians wake up tomorrow morning, we're going to be waking up to a state where very likely there's been additional loss of life and certainly there's going to be loss of property," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference Thursday night.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 41 of 87

Helene was moving rapidly inland after making landfall, with the center of the storm set to race from southern to northern Georgia through early Friday morning. The risk of tornadoes also would continue overnight and into the morning across north and central Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and southern North Carolina, forecasters said. Later Friday, there would be the risk of tornadoes in Virginia.

"Helene continues to produce catastrophic winds that are now pushing into southern Georgia," the hurricane center said in an update at 1 a.m. Friday. "Persons should not leave their shelters and remain in place through the passage of these life-threatening conditions."

Even before landfall, the storm's wrath was felt widely, with sustained tropical storm-force winds and hurricane-force gusts along Florida's west coast. Water lapped over a road in Siesta Key near Sarasota and covered some intersections in St. Pete Beach. Lumber and other debris from a fire in Cedar Key a week ago crashed ashore in the rising water.

Beyond Florida, up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain had fallen in the North Carolina mountains, with up to 14 inches (36 centimeters) more possible before the deluge ends, setting the stage for flooding that forecasters warned could be worse than anything seen in the past century.

Heavy rains began falling and winds were picking up earlier Thursday in Valdosta, Georgia, near the Florida state line. The weather service said more than a dozen Georgia counties could see hurricane-force winds exceeding 110 mph (177 kph).

In south Georgia, two people were killed when a possible tornado struck a mobile home on Thursday night, Wheeler County Sheriff Randy Rigdon told WMAZ-TV. Wheeler County is about 70 miles (113 kilometers) southeast of Macon.

The storm made landfall in the sparsely-populated Big Bend area, home to fishing villages and vacation hideaways where Florida's Panhandle and peninsula meet.

"Please write your name, birthday, and important information on your arm or leg in a PERMANENT MARKER so that you can be identified and family notified," the sheriff's office in mostly rural Taylor County warned those who chose not to evacuate in a Facebook post, the dire advice similar to what other officials have dolled out during past hurricanes.

Still, Philip Tooke, a commercial fisherman who took over the business his father founded near the region's Apalachee Bay, planned to ride out this storm like he did during Hurricane Michael and the others: on his boat. "If I lose that, I don't have anything," Tooke said.

Michael, a Category 5 storm, all but destroyed one town, fractured thousands of homes and businesses and caused some \$25 billion in damage when it struck the Florida Panhandle in 2018.

Many, though, were heeding the mandatory evacuation orders that stretched from the Panhandle south along the Gulf Coast in low-lying areas around Tallahassee, Gainesville, Cedar Key, Lake City, Tampa and Sarasota.

Among them were Cindy Waymon and her husband, who went to a shelter in Tallahassee after securing their home and packing medications, snacks and drinks. They wanted to stay safe given the magnitude of the storm, she said.

"This is the first time we've actually come to a shelter, because of the complexities of the storm and the uncertainties," she said.

Federal authorities staged search-and-rescue teams as the weather service forecast storm surges of up to 20 feet (6 meters) and warned they could be particularly "catastrophic and unsurvivable" in Apalachee Bay.

"Please, please, please take any evacuation orders seriously!" the office said, describing the surge scenario as "a nightmare."

This stretch of Florida known as the Forgotten Coast has been largely spared by the widespread condo development and commercialization that dominates so many of Florida's beach communities. The region is loved for its natural wonders including the vast stretches of salt marshes, tidal pools and barrier islands.

"You live down here, you run the risk of losing everything to a bad storm," said Anthony Godwin, who lives about a half-mile (800 meters) from the water in the coastal town of Panacea, as he stopped for gas before heading west toward his sister's house in Pensacola.

School districts and multiple universities canceled classes. Airports in Tampa, Tallahassee and Clearwater

were closed Thursday, while cancellations were widespread elsewhere in Florida and beyond.

While Helene will likely weaken as it moves inland, damaging winds and heavy rain were expected to extend to the southern Appalachian Mountains, where landslides were possible, forecasters said. Tennessee was among the states expected to get drenched.

Helene had swamped parts of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Wednesday, flooding streets and toppling trees as it passed offshore and brushed the resort city of Cancun. In western Cuba, Helene knocked out power to more than 200,000 homes and businesses as it brushed past the island.

Areas 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of the Georgia-Florida line expected hurricane conditions. The state opened its parks to evacuees and their pets, including horses. Overnight curfews were imposed in many cities and counties in south Georgia.

"This is one of the biggest storms we've ever had," Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said.

For Atlanta, Helene could be the worst strike on a major Southern inland city in 35 years, said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd.

Helene is the eighth named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year because of record-warm ocean temperatures.

Families of 43 missing students in Mexico are still demanding justice 10 years later

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Families of the 43 students from a rural teacher's college abducted 10 years ago in southern Mexico marked the painful anniversary Thursday, disillusioned after what they say was a decade of unfulfilled government promises.

Thousands marched with the families in the rain through Mexico's capital, demanding the truth about what happened and justice for the missing.

"The first time we came through here, who could have imagined that all of this time would pass and (we're) here again without answers," said Margarito Guerrero, the father of missing student Jhosivani Guerrero de la Cruz.

Guerrero appreciated those who accompanied them, like Lourdes Silva, a homemaker, participating in her first march with her daughter, a student who has been following the families' movement for a decade.

"We need to keep pressuring," Silva said. "We want this agony to end for the parents."

The anniversary falls just four days before the departure of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, whose election in 2018 generated hope among the families.

His administration made some early advances, established a Truth Commission and declared the disappearances a "state crime." But when the investigation stalled without the cooperation of the military, the president closed ranks with the generals.

"He gave us a lot of hope," said Joaquina García, mother of missing student Martín Getsemany Sánchez. "But it looks like he really protects the military and that's not fair."

On Sept. 26, 2014, students from the Rural Normal School at Ayotzinapa went to Iguala to steal buses — a common way they obtained transportation. They were attacked by a local drug gang in cahoots with local, state and federal authorities.

Two administrations later, many details of what happened to the students and most importantly where they are remain unknown. They are among the more than 115,000 recorded missing in Mexico.

"Ten years of suffering, 10 years of pain, of not having your son isn't easy," García said at an event Thursday at Mexico's National Autonomous University. "Here we're shouting to see if the people who took our children will find it in their heart."

Some 120 people are in custody. Mexico's former attorney general has been charged in inventing a false narrative about what happened.

López Obrador had promised to solve the mystery. But on Wednesday, he downplayed, minimized and

even pushed back against the findings of his own administration, asserting that those trying to link the military are driven by "political interests."

The United Nations Human Rights Office lamented in a statement Thursday the "unsatisfactory results" of authorities. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which sent experts to Mexico to aid in the investigation for eight years said in a statement it was worried the investigation had stalled and denounced a "pact of silence that has impeded the identification of the perpetrators and those who cover for them."

The families are prepared to pressure incoming President Claudia Sheinbaum as well.

"We're going to press her if she doesn't respond," Guerrero said.

García agreed. "This fight is not over."

New British leader vows his nation will reengage on global leadership

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — New British Prime Minister Keir Starmer took the international stage at the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday for the first time with a message: His nation is returning to "responsible global leadership."

The Labour Party leader, who won a landslide election victory in July, told the annual gathering of world leaders that with him as prime minister, "the U.K. will lead again tackling climate change at home and internationally, and restoring our commitment to international development."

Working with other nations, Starmer said, Britain will also tackle conflicts from Gaza and the West Bank to Ukraine and Sudan where immediate cease-fires are urgently needed.

He said nations must also work together "to make the world less dangerous."

"We have to face some hard truths," the prime minister said. "The institutions of peace are struggling, underfunded, under pressure and outpoliticized."

He said the entire global system of arms control and combating the proliferation of weapons which has been constructed over decades "has begun to fall away" and needs global action.

"We will also change how the U.K. does things," Starmer said. "Moving from the paternalism of the past towards partnership for the future — listening a lot more, speaking a lot less."

He said the U.K. will also be offering other countries "game-changing British expertise," and will work together with nations "in a spirit of equal respect."

Starmer told assembled ministers and diplomats that "a sense of fatalism has taken hold" in an age people describe as polarized and full of impunity and instability.

"Well, our task is to say: No. We won't accept this slide into greater and greater conflict, instability and injustice," he said. "Instead, we will do all we can to change it."

Harris heads to the US-Mexico border to face down criticism of her record

By WILL WEISSERT and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday will make her first visit to the U.S.-Mexico border since becoming the Democratic presidential nominee to confront head-on one of her biggest vulnerabilities ahead of the November election.

She is scheduled to appear in Douglas, Arizona, as former President Donald Trump and his fellow Republicans pound Harris relentlessly over the Biden administration's record on migration and fault the vice president for spending little time visiting the border during her time in the White House.

Immigration and border security are top issues in Arizona, the only battleground state that borders Mexico and one that contended with a record influx of asylum seekers last year. Trump has an edge with voters on migration, and Harris has gone on offense to improve her standing on the issue and defuse a key line of political attack for Trump.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 44 of 87

In nearly every campaign speech she gives, Harris recounts how a sweeping bipartisan package aiming to overhaul the federal immigration system collapsed in Congress earlier this year after Trump urged top Republicans to oppose it.

"The American people deserve a president who cares more about border security than playing political games," Harris plans to say, according to an excerpt of her remarks previewed by her campaign.

After the immigration legislation stalled, the Biden administration announced rules that bar migrants from being granted asylum when U.S. officials deem that the southern border is overwhelmed. Since then, arrests for illegal border crossings have fallen.

Harris will also use her trip to remind voters about her work as attorney general of California in confronting crime along the border. During an August rally in Glendale, outside Phoenix, she talked about helping to prosecute drug- and people-smuggling gangs that operated transnationally and at the border.

"I prosecuted them in case after case, and I won," Harris said then.

Florida Democratic Rep. Maxwell Frost, at 27 the youngest member of Congress and a leading advocate for Harris with young and Hispanic voters, said that in backing stricter enforcement, Harris is trying to "strike a chord" and "she understands that, right now, there is a crisis at the border. It's a humanitarian crisis."

"That's why she's pushing for more resources at the border so that we have an orderly process, which is really important," Frost said. "But, the thing is, that's where Donald Trump stops, is just at enforcement."

The vice president's trip to Douglas thrusts the issue of immigration into the brightest spotlight yet less than six weeks before Election Day.

Trump didn't wait for her to arrive there before pushing back.

On Thursday, he delivered a lengthy diatribe from New York, declaring that "anything she says tomorrow, you know is a fraud because she was the worst in history at protecting our country. So she'll try and make herself look a little bit better. But it's not possible."

A day earlier, at a rally in North Carolina, Trump told voters that "when Kamala speaks about the border, her credibility is less than zero."

The Trump campaign has also countered with its own TV ads deriding the vice president as a failed "border czar."

"Under Harris, over 10 million illegally here," said one spot. However, estimates on how many people have entered the country illegally since the start of the Biden administration in 2021 vary widely.

Harris also never held the position of border czar. Instead, her assignment was to tackle the "root causes" of migration from three Central American nations — El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — that were responsible for a significant share of border crossers.

The vice president took a long-term approach to an immediate problem, helping persuade multinational corporations and Latin American businesses to invest in the region. That, she argued, would create jobs and give locals more reasons to stay home rather than take the arduous trek north.

Still, Trump has continued to decry an "invasion" of border crossers.

Polls show that most American trust him to handle immigration more than they do Harris.

Douglas, where Harris will appear, is an overwhelmingly Democratic border town in GOP-dominated Co-chise County, where the Republicans on the board of supervisors are facing criminal charges for refusing to certify the 2022 election results. Trump was in the area last month, using a remote stretch of border wall and a pile of steel beams to draw a contrast between himself and Harris on border security.

The town of 16,000 people has strong ties to its much larger neighbor, Agua Prieta, Mexico, and a busy port of entry that's slated for a long-sought upgrade. Many locals are as concerned with making legal border crossings more efficient as they are with combatting illegal ones.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 45 of 87

As the Ukraine war enters a critical period, the EU moves ahead without the US

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — As the war in Ukraine enters a critical period, the European Union has decided that it must take responsibility for what it sees as an existential threat to security in its own neighborhood and is preparing to tackle some of the financial burden, perhaps even without the United States.

EU envoys have been working in Brussels this week on a proposal to provide Ukraine with a hefty loan package worth up to 35 billion euros (\$39 billion). It was announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a trip to Kyiv last Friday.

“Crucially, this loan will flow straight into your national budget,” she told President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. “It will provide you with significant and much-needed fiscal space. You will decide how best to use the funds, giving you maximum flexibility to meet your needs.”

Zelenskyy wants to buy weapons and bomb shelters and rebuild Ukraine’s shattered energy network as winter draws near.

In international matters, particularly involving major conflicts, the EU rarely moves ahead without the U.S., but it hopes this decision will encourage others to come forward.

Russian troops and an election close in

Almost 1,000 days since their full-scale invasion, Russian forces are making advances in the east. Ukraine’s army has a shaky hold on part of the Kursk region in Russia, which has provided a temporary morale boost, but as casualties mount it remains outmanned and outgunned.

On the political front, Zelenskyy hopes to secure support for a “victory plan” that might force Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table. He’s trying to persuade U.S. President Joe Biden and other allies to help strengthen Ukraine’s hand in any future talks.

But a U.S. election looms, and polls suggest that Donald Trump might return to the White House in January. Trump has been critical of U.S. aid to Ukraine. On Wednesday, he said Zelenskyy should have made concessions to Putin before the invasion began in February 2022.

Most of the 27-nation EU fears that a Putin victory would lead to deep uncertainty. Russia’s armed forces are depleted and currently incapable of another war, but the prospect of a future land grab in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania or Poland remains.

Reworking a G7 loan plan

The EU loans are part of a plan by the Group of Seven major industrialized nations to take advantage of interest earned on about \$250 billion worth of frozen Russian assets, most of them held in Europe. These windfall profits are estimated at around 4.5 billion to 5.5 billion euros (\$5 billion to \$6 billion) a year.

The profits underpin the G7 plan. The EU would stump up \$20 billion, the U.S. \$20 billion, and Canada, Japan and the U.K. \$10 billion together, for a combined total of \$50 billion. The scheme expires at the end of the year, before the next U.S. president takes office.

Now, amid differences over how long the Russian asset freeze should be guaranteed, the EU has decided to go it alone. Its offer of up to \$39 billion in loans accounts for almost the entirety of the U.S. share as well.

The U.S. wants to ensure that the assets are locked away for at least three years to guarantee the income. But EU member Hungary insists this should only happen in 6-month increments. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán styles himself as a peacemaker and is too close to Putin for many of his partners’ comfort.

The other 26 EU countries feel they must move now because time is running out.

An evolving alliance with the United States

The U.S. election is just weeks away. The Europeans are wary of Trump’s unpredictability and are testing scenarios to help protect themselves from the kind of battering, like tariff hikes, their economies received during his past presidency. But they also see the Democrats as more inward looking these days.

Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act left European leaders fuming over rules that favored American products. China and war in the Middle East are the foreign policy priorities of Democrat or Republican candidates alike, and for now the U.S. is in the grip of election campaign fever.

The EU hopes that Vice President Kamala Harris, if she is elected president, would enter the loan program as previously planned and reduce the EU's financial burden. But that remains an open question for now, and EU members say Ukraine's position is too precarious to hesitate.

Political delays in the U.S. Congress last year over a \$60 billion support package starved Ukrainian troops of weapons and ammunition for months, resulting in "real consequences on the battlefield," in the words of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Pressing ahead on pressing needs

Helping Ukraine in military terms is a challenge for the Europeans. They could not do it alone, and cannot match the U.S. transport, logistics and equipment superiority, despite progress in ramping up their defense industries to supply arms and ammunition.

But the world's biggest trading bloc does wield economic might. It has already given Ukraine about \$132 billion since the full-scale invasion started. Within weeks it appears ready to provide tens of billions more, even though going it alone is not in the EU's DNA.

"I do not know what the Americans, the United States with the new presidency, will do or not," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Tuesday. But, he said, "as long as the Ukrainians want to resist, we have to support them. Otherwise, we will make a historical mistake."

The Biden administration did announce Wednesday that the U.S. will send Ukraine a major military aid package, including cluster bombs and an array of rockets, artillery and armored vehicles. A U.S. official also said billions of dollars more in assistance would arrive over the coming months.

Meanwhile, deliberations on the EU's share of the G7 loan package will be high on the agenda of a summit of the bloc's leaders in Brussels on Oct. 17-18.

Lebanon fears Gaza-like carnage as Israel ramps up airstrikes across the country

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

When she first heard about the evacuation warnings Israel was sending to residents of Lebanon, Aline Naser's thoughts immediately turned to Gaza.

For the past year, the 26-year-old Beirut resident has been following with horror the reports about besieged Palestinians in the Gaza Strip ordered to move from one place to the other, fleeing to "humanitarian zones" only to be bombed and ordered to leave again.

The Israeli calls for Lebanese citizens to evacuate ahead of a widening air campaign, delivered via mobile phone alerts, calls and leaflets this week, seemed chillingly familiar.

"It's definitely something on the back of my mind, and we don't really know where exactly is safe," she said.

Almost a year after the start of its war in Gaza, Israel has turned its focus on Lebanon, significantly ratcheting up its campaign against its archenemy Hezbollah. Among many in Lebanon, there is fear that Israel's military operations in Lebanon would follow the same Gaza playbook: Evacuation orders, mass displacement and overwhelming airstrikes. Israel says its strikes target Hezbollah weapons sites and militants.

There are key differences between Gaza and Lebanon and how Israel has so far conducted its operations, which it says aim to push back Hezbollah from the border so that tens of thousands of Israelis displaced by Hezbollah's rocket attacks can return to their homes. Although it has said it is preparing for a possible ground operation, Israel has so far not sent troops into Lebanon.

Still, there are fears that Israel's actions in Gaza, including the use of overwhelming and what rights groups and the United Nations have described as disproportionate force, would be repeated in Lebanon. Top Israeli officials have threatened to repeat the destruction of Gaza in Lebanon if the Hezbollah fire continues.

On Monday, Israel struck 1,600 targets across Lebanon, killing 492 people and wounding 1,645, and causing a massive wave of displacement as thousands fled from south Lebanon north. It was a staggering

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 47 of 87

one-day toll that shocked a nation used to war. It was by far the deadliest barrage since the monthlong 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, when an estimated 1,000 people in Lebanon were killed.

Throughout the day, the Israeli military sent warnings to residents to immediately evacuate in anticipation of the strikes and to stay away from places where Hezbollah stores weapons — something most would have no way of knowing.

"Please get out of harm's way now," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a recorded message. "Once our operation is finished, you can come back safely to your homes."

Israel's evacuation orders have been a central part of its military campaign in Gaza for the past year. In the first week after launching war, Israel ordered 1.1 million civilians in the Gaza Strip to relocate from the north to the south, sowing confusion and fear in the overcrowded enclave.

Since then, the Israeli military has issued dozens of evacuation orders calling on Palestinians to evacuate to Israeli-designated "humanitarian zones." Israeli officials say they are targeting Hamas militants who have embedded themselves among the population. Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in Gaza. The Health Ministry, part of the territory's Hamas government, does not differentiate between civilians and combatants, but says that just over half the dead have been women and children."

With Gaza's borders sealed, residents of the cramped territory are trapped with nowhere to go, whereas in Lebanon, those fleeing Israeli strikes have been able to move to safer areas. Thousands have fled to neighboring Syria, while others have left through the country's airport.

A second front for Israel

Hezbollah started firing rockets on Israel in support of Gaza on Oct. 8, a day after Hamas militants launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing some 1,200 people and abducting another 250. Since then, the two sides have been engaged in cross border strikes that have gradually escalated and displaced tens of thousands of civilians on both sides of the border.

Many Lebanese have been following the growing hostilities with a mixture of nonchalance and dread, hoping they would remain contained. Lebanon has been in the throes of an economic meltdown since 2019 and can ill afford another devastating war with Israel.

Hostilities escalated dramatically last week when thousands of explosives hidden in pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah detonated, killing dozens of people and leaving thousands, including many civilians, with severe injuries to the eyes, face and limbs. Israel is widely believed to be behind the attack. Israel has also killed several top Hezbollah commanders in Beirut.

Meanwhile, intensifying Hezbollah barrages have wounded several people in Israel.

As the region appeared to be teetering toward another all-out war, Jana Bsat, 25, who works for a media analysis company in Beirut, said she now has a bag packed, ready for immediate evacuation. She feels it's only a matter of time.

"It feels surreal, to be honest. We heard about what was happening in Gaza and now we're experiencing it for ourselves," she said.

"I am in disgust of all this fear-mongering and psychological torture," she said, adding: "But then you remember, it's all part of a warfare strategy and it's not going to stop anytime soon."

Lebanon is not Gaza

While Israel's actions in Lebanon may have echoes of Gaza, the conflicts are different. In Gaza, Israel's goal is the complete destruction of Hamas, whereas Israel's stated goal in Lebanon is to push Hezbollah away from its border. Whereas Hamas rules Gaza, Hezbollah is a powerful militia with enormous influence inside Lebanon, and has representatives in the country's parliament and government.

In 2006, Israel flattened entire Beirut neighborhoods and bombed Lebanon's only international airport as well as key infrastructure, including bridges and power stations. By contrast, its current campaign seems to be, for the large part, targeting Hezbollah, although many civilians have also been killed.

Unlike Gaza, Lebanon is also a mixed tapestry of political and religious groups, including Christian and Sunni-majority areas where there is significant opposition to the Iran-backed Shiite Hezbollah.

Ali Safa, a 30-year-old interior designer who fled to Beirut from south Lebanon with his family this week,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 48 of 87

said he isn't worried about the Gaza scenario being repeated in Lebanon.

"Gaza is an open prison, it is besieged. Lebanon is much larger, it is not encircled. And it has Hezbollah, which is a much bigger force, much better-equipped than Hamas," he said.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, speaking at the United Nations Wednesday, said the world "cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza."

Frayed nerves

Whether the current hostilities will expand into an all-out war or whether Israel will launch a ground invasion remains to be seen. Israel's army chief said Wednesday that preparations were underway for a possible ground operation.

Many in Lebanon say they are haunted by the nonstop churn of horrifying images from Gaza over the past year, fearing the same scenario in Lebanon.

For several months, low-flying Israeli fighter jets have launched sonic booms over Lebanon, rattling windows and terrifying residents. More recently, the buzzing sound of Israeli military drones in Lebanese skies have added to the anxiety.

Some have gotten used to it. At a funeral for a Hezbollah commander recently where a few hundred people gathered, hardly anyone flinched when low-flying Israeli planes caused a thundering boom that shook the ground.

Bsat said at some point she, too, got used to hearing sonic booms that made the windows in her house shake.

"The drones I also got used to and now, unfortunately, the bombing," she said via Whatsapp.

"I've come to terms with reality, but my hands still can't stop shaking as I'm writing this," she said.

"I'm still dreading what is going to happen here."

Mexico's populist president held court each morning for 6 years. Now he's retiring from public life

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Every day at 7 a.m., President Andrés Manuel López Obrador strolls onto a stage in Mexico's National Palace, clad in a smart suit and tie, and peers out at a room of bleary-eyed reporters and social media personalities. "Buenos días, look alive!" the 70-year-old leader calls out in a gravelly voice.

And the show begins.

Throughout his nearly six-year term in office, López Obrador's morning media briefings, known as "las mañaneras," have provided him with a powerful tool: a direct line to his political base, broadcast live on government and local news channels, and streaming online. Without pausing to take bathroom breaks or even a sip of water, the president stands at the podium talking for sometimes more than three hours, often in long, roundabout musings or rambling diatribes, all in simple language that anyone tuning in can understand.

Before he leaves office Monday, the daily briefings, beloved by many supporters and criticized by opponents as full of falsehoods and personal attacks, are emblematic of the particular brand of folksy populism that López Obrador wielded to become one of the most powerful political forces Mexico has seen in decades. It's a model that his successor and protege, President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, will be hard-pressed to emulate.

"The national conversation revolves around him," said Daniela Lemus, a National Autonomous University of Mexico professor who researches political communication and has written about the briefings. "He is the protagonist of the mañaneras ... and what he says becomes the main topic of conversation by the media, day and night."

When López Obrador won the presidency in a landslide in 2018, he pitched himself as a fighter for poor, working-class and rural Mexicans long neglected by the political elite. He started holding the briefings right after taking office that December, and has continued to do so every workday almost without fail for

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 49 of 87

the duration of his time in office.

They're popular with his base: One older adult couple in Mexico City, for example, tune in religiously on a small TV wedged between bags of seeds and nuts at their stall in a food market. Elsewhere, a magazine vendor records the broadcast to watch at night after work. Still another fan of AMLO, as the president is popularly known, streams it on social media while he looks for work.

"The mañaneras have opened our eyes. They show us all what Mr. López Obrador has achieved," said Jesús Hernández Alarcón, a 79-year-old roasted corn vendor. "We have understood a lot because the media is full of lies, many have tricked us. Now that we have the mañaneras, everything has changed for me."

López Obrador often uses the space to provide updates on key projects and take questions from a cluster of journalists and government-friendly social media influencers, some of whom have gained a platform from their participation in the briefings — such as Carlos Pozos Soto, an eccentric, bow-tied, effusively pro-AMLO figure better known as Lord Molecule.

As time has gone on, the briefings have morphed into something resembling a morning show, with López Obrador inviting mariachi bands to serenade viewers on Mother's Day, lecturing at length on Mexican history and hosting recurring segments such as "Who's who in the lies of the week," in which government officials attack critical media.

"This is a way to educate, to raise awareness so that (traditional news organizations) cannot manipulate" information, López Obrador said one morning in August. "People are more informed, and that comes with a lot of advantages. ... There is no topic that is off limits, there is no censorship."

López Obrador's willingness to publicly joust with journalists has had all the more impact because his predecessor, Enrique Peña Nieto, almost never took a question during his own six-year term.

But while the president calls the briefings a bastion of transparency in a nation long plagued by corruption, critics say he has used them to badmouth opponents and journalists, spread false information and firmly control the political narrative.

Often, rather than answering a question directly, he instead uses it as a launching pad to talk about one of his preferred topics. He consistently sidesteps questions about Mexico's continuing cartel-fueled violence, for example, or pivots to rail against his predecessors for starting the drug war.

López Obrador has attacked judges, criticized opponents during election campaigns and regularly targeted both domestic and foreign journalists.

In February, after a New York Times reporter sought comment for an article investigating ties between his administration and drug cartels, the president disclosed her cellphone number during a morning briefing.

And last month, when an independent Mexican journalist said she had been harassed by a mob of his supporters and forced to flee an event she was covering, López Obrador responded with a mix of scorn and disinterest.

"I am at risk because of this, now anyone can attack me in the street," Reyna Ramírez told the president. "You have polarized society. Don't you have anything to say about that?"

"Have you gone on long enough?" the president said.

Advocates for press freedom have expressed concern over his hostility toward critical media in a place that is more dangerous for journalists than any other country not currently at war. At least 138 journalists have been killed in Mexico in the past 20 years, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, and many more have gone missing or been threatened, attacked, tortured or forced to flee their homes.

The president's discourse created "a narrative of us versus them, of journalists being the enemies of this political project, the opponents of the people ... diminishing the urgency of protecting press freedom," said Jan-Albert Hootsen, the CPJ's Mexico representative.

Meanwhile a 2021 report by the political consulting agency SPIN found that López Obrador made more than 56,000 false or misleading statements in his mañaneras in a period covering 2 1/2 years. Among them is his assertion that cartels "respect citizens" and only fight among themselves.

"Just because the president is walking up to a stage and is talking about something, doesn't mean he's being open," Hootsen said. "If he's lying all the time, and there are no consequences, then we're not

talking about transparency.”

In the age of social media, videos and soundbites from the *mañaneras* often go viral online, further boosting the president’s audience.

“It’s not what happens in the morning press conference itself, but what happens after,” said Kevin Zapata, a social and public policy professor at the University of Nottingham who has studied the briefings. “A 30-second clip can be more powerful than the two hours on the TV.”

For people who may not have much time to investigate López Obrador’s claims and deeply distrust Mexican media, it’s often the government’s narrative that ends up dominating.

When asked about false information and attacks on journalists, his supporters often repeat the president’s lines of attack, for example saying such criticism comes from a corrupt opposition and the president is defending Mexican sovereignty.

López Obrador’s popularity spurred his Morena party to major electoral gains in the June elections. Morena will have an even greater majority in Congress as Sheinbaum takes up the presidency, and lawmakers recently passed a constitutional amendment that observers and critics say is likely to result in courts being stacked with judges friendly to the party.

Sheinbaum has said she will continue the morning broadcasts. But most Mexicans agree that she lacks the natural charisma that has allowed López Obrador to wield the *mañaneras* so effectively.

“It’s something that worked for AMLO because he’s a very unique figure and very charismatic. ... But now democracy is becoming a popularity show in Mexico,” Zapata said. “Many people will try to emulate it, that’s for sure. But not everyone will be able to.”

Trump and Zelenskyy will meet as tensions rise over US backing for Ukraine

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump is set to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as public tensions have been rising between the two over Ukraine’s defense against Russia’s invasion.

Trump said Zelenskyy asked for the meeting. The visit is set for about 9:45 a.m. Eastern Time at Trump Tower in New York, less than a day after Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump’s Democratic opponent, met with the Ukrainian leader and expressed unwavering support.

“I look forward to seeing him tomorrow,” Trump said in a press conference Thursday. “I believe I will be able to make a deal between President (Vladimir) Putin and President Zelenskyy, quite quickly.”

The meeting is highly anticipated and comes as Election Day nears, with Trump and Harris taking sharply different positions on backing Ukraine in the third year of its war with Russia.

Trump argues Putin would never have invaded had he been president while derisively calling Zelenskyy a “salesman” for getting U.S. assistance for Ukraine. Trump has in recent days praised Russia’s historic military victories and insisted the U.S. needs “to get out” and end its involvement with Ukraine.

Friday’s meeting almost wasn’t scheduled despite Zelenskyy’s office saying something had been planned during the Ukrainian leader’s visit to the U.N. General Assembly, during which he is making his endgame pitch to allies.

In an interview with *The New Yorker* that was published earlier this week, Zelenskyy implied Trump does not understand and oversimplifies the conflict. The Ukrainian leader said Trump’s running mate JD Vance was “too radical” and had essentially advocated for Ukraine to “make a sacrifice” by “giving up its territories.”

Trump ripped Zelenskyy and Ukraine on two separate occasions this week. Speaking Wednesday in North Carolina, Trump referred to Ukraine as “demolished” and its people as “dead.”

“Any deal — the worst deal — would’ve been better than what we have now,” Trump said. “If they made a bad deal it would’ve been much better. They would’ve given up a little bit and everybody would be living and every building would be built and every tower would be aging for another 2,000 years.”

Meanwhile, Harris on Thursday stood alongside Zelenskyy and said Trump’s push for Ukraine to quickly

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 51 of 87

cut a deal to end the war were “not proposals for peace,” but “proposals for surrender.” Trump on Thursday said he was not advocating for a surrender.

While Trump and Vance have long been skeptics of U.S. backing for Ukraine, other Republican allies of the former president have backed Kyiv’s defense against Moscow’s invasion and argue supporting Ukraine is in America’s interest.

One ally of both Ukraine and Trump is Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. At a closed-door meeting Zelenskyy had with senators on Capitol Hill, also on Thursday, Graham stood up and said he had been talking to Trump about the Ukrainian president, according to a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

Graham told those in the room he would talk to Zelenskyy privately about his conversations with Trump, the person said. As the meeting came to a close, Graham pulled Zelenskyy aside and the two had a private conversation.

Graham is close to the former president, despite an on-again-off-again relationship, and has often played a role as an intermediary on various subjects. He did not respond to a message seeking comment Thursday.

Indicted New York City mayor could appear before a judge Friday

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City’s embattled and indicted mayor, Eric Adams, could make his initial court appearance Friday on charges that he accepted illegal campaign contributions and free overseas trips from people looking to buy his influence in city government.

An indictment unsealed Thursday accused the Democrat of taking a variety of improper gifts from Turkish officials and businesspeople, including free hotel stays and deeply discounted airline tickets to destinations including France, China, Sri Lanka, India, Hungary, Ghana and Turkey.

In return, prosecutors said, Adams did favors for his patrons. That included helping Turkey get fire department approvals to open a new diplomatic tower in Manhattan, despite concerns about its fire safety system, prosecutors said.

Adams says he is innocent. His lawyer has said it was neither unusual nor improper for a government official to accept some travel perks. The mayor has denied ever knowingly accepting an illegal campaign contribution and said any help he gave people navigating city bureaucracy was just part of doing his job.

Adams was scheduled to appear at noon before Magistrate Judge Katharine Parker.

Adams’ lawyer, Alex Spiro, asked the court to delay the arraignment until at least Monday, mainly for the purpose of reducing the number of times the mayor would have to come to court. A judge did not immediately respond to that request.

It was unclear late Thursday how the mechanics of Adams’ trip to court might unfold. Many people charged with federal crimes are arrested, booked, then brought before a judge after spending some amount of time in detention. But that isn’t always the case.

When former U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, of New Jersey, was arraigned on corruption charges in the same courthouse exactly one year ago Friday, he arrived as a free person in the morning, had a short appearance before a judge and walked out after around 4 1/2 hours in the building. He was never seen in handcuffs.

Adams, a Democrat, faces conspiracy, wire fraud and bribery charges in a five-count indictment.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams on Thursday said that several businesspeople and a Turkish diplomat had engaged in “a multiyear scheme to buy favor” from Adams.

In public remarks Thursday, Adams asked New Yorkers to avoid making any judgments until they heard his defense.

His lawyer, Spiro, told reporters the travel perks and seat upgrades Adams accepted were commonly offered to VIPs and members of Congress.

“That’s what airlines do,” he said, noting that many of the charges relate to trips Adams took years ago when he was Brooklyn Borough President.

It was unclear whether this week’s indictment was the last word on federal investigations involving the

administration.

Federal prosecutors are believed to be leading multiple, separate inquiries involving Adams and his senior aides and relatives of those aides. In early September, federal investigators seized devices from the police commissioner, schools chancellor, two deputy mayors and other trusted Adams confidants.

In the last two weeks alone, the police commissioner resigned and the schools chancellor announced he would retire. Neither has been charged with a crime or been publicly accused of wrongdoing.

Jews and Catholics warn against Trump's latest loyalty test for religious voters

By DAVID CRARY and HOLLY MEYER Associated Press

Former President Donald Trump recently reissued his loyalty test to religious Americans, declaring that he can best protect their freedoms while preemptively blaming members of certain faiths should he lose the presidential election in November.

Jews and Catholics can vote for him and ace the test, but those who don't, he says, "need their head examined." If he loses, Trump added, "Jewish people would have a lot to do with the loss."

Among the Jewish leaders appalled at Trump's remarks was Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism — an umbrella group for more than 800 Reform synagogues in North America.

"Your words preemptively blaming Jews for your potential election loss is of a piece with millennia of antisemitic lies about Jewish power," Jacobs said in a social media post. "It puts a target on American Jews. And it makes you an ally not to our vulnerable community but to those who wish us harm. Stop."

Trump's speeches for years have hewed to divisive "us" versus "them" messaging, but tying those themes to specific religious Americans who oppose him is out of line and even dangerous, according to rhetoric experts, religious leaders and academics.

"Non-Jews shouldn't express public opinions about what is or isn't good Judaism and non-Catholics shouldn't express public opinions about what is or isn't good Catholicism," said Steven Millies, a public theology professor at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

"Not only is it bad form, but it's also an ignorant waste of oxygen."

Asked to respond to criticism from Jewish leaders, Trump campaign press secretary Karoline Leavitt sent statements from herself and several of Trump's Jewish supporters. The statements didn't directly address the potential blaming of Jews for a Trump defeat; rather, they depicted Trump as a stronger supporter of Israel than President Joe Biden and Trump's Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris.

"Jewish Americans and Jewish leaders around the world recognize that President Trump did more for them and the State of Israel than any President in history," Leavitt said via email. "The bottom line is that Kamala Harris and Joe Biden cave to Far-Left extremists and terrorists while President Trump will protect Jewish Americans and put American citizens first."

Trump's latest provocative comments came in a span of four days. His warnings about Jewish voters were in Sept. 19 speeches to Jewish donors and the Israeli-American Council in Washington. His remarks about Catholics came on Sept. 22 in a post on Truth Social.

Matthew Boedy, who studies religious rhetoric as a professor at the University of North Georgia, said Trump has adopted spiritual warfare rhetoric, which is commonplace in certain Christian circles.

"Those who gave him that rhetoric saw Satan or evil as the enemy. Now that enemy is anyone — Jew, Christian, Muslim — who stands in his way," Boedy said via email, calling it dangerous to democracy and religion.

"Trump always makes his religious followers — especially Christians — choose. They have to choose him over pluralism, over morality, over evangelism," said Boedy, a Protestant.

"If God is already on your side theologically, it's not a far leap to say he should be on your side politically. That isn't new to American politics," Boedy said. "Trump is only making that divide advantageous to him. He's furthering that which was there, but he is also adding his own weight to it. Making it worse."

David Gibson, director of the Center on Religion and Culture at Jesuit-run Fordham University, said that

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 53 of 87

in past elections, "for a non-Catholic like Trump to be setting himself up as the savior of Catholics, or Jews for that matter, would have been political insanity."

"But it's Trump, and conservatives who would attack a Democrat for such language are cheering for the Republican nominee," Gibson added in an email. "There are many reasons, the most obvious is that they like Trump more than they heed their own church."

Gibson also suggested that Trump's tough stance on immigration, which includes calls for mass deportations, is at odds with Catholic teaching.

"Catholics listening to the increasingly Nativist rhetoric on immigration from Trump and even his running mate, JD Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, ought to have their hearts examined if they support that," Gibson said.

Professor Jennifer Mercieca, a historian of American political rhetoric at Texas A&M University, said typical politicians seek to connect to voters based on shared policy beliefs, not by demanding religious loyalty.

"But Trump isn't a typical politician, and he's very concerned about loyalty," she said. "He divides the world up into 'us' versus 'them' and tries to use those divisions to gain power."

"It's especially dangerous to attempt to divide people based upon religious identity," said Mercieca, author of "Demagogue for President: The Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump." "The kind of language Trump is using here is more like that used by an authoritarian personality cult leader."

Trump's recent comment about blaming Jews if he loses came at an event that also featured Jewish megadonor Mariam Adelson, widow of the late casino magnate Sheldon Adelson. She introduced Trump as "a true friend of the Jewish people."

Among the pro-Trump statements provided to The Associated Press by Leavitt was one from Ellie Cohan, who served during the Trump administration as deputy special envoy for combating antisemitism.

Trump "is absolutely correct in challenging our assumptions about voting on auto-pilot and failing to comprehend that the Democrat Party, which has been hijacked by its far-left base, is no longer a home for the Jewish people," Cohan's statement said.

Adelson and Cohan represent the portion of U.S. Jews that strongly supports Trump. In 2020, he received about 30% of Jewish Americans' votes compared to 70% for Biden, according to AP VoteCast.

The criticism of Trump's recent remarks came from the center as well as the left of the national Jewish community.

The American Jewish Committee — a prominent advocacy group that strives to broadly represent Jews in the U.S. and abroad — issued a sharply critical statement. It took issue with Trump's suggestion that if 40% of the U.S. Jewish electorate voted for him, "That means 60% are voting for the enemy."

"Setting up anyone to say 'we lost because of the Jews' is outrageous and dangerous," the AJC said. "Thousands of years of history have shown that scapegoating Jews can lead to antisemitic hate and violence."

"Some Jews will vote for President Trump and some will vote for Vice President Harris," the AJC added. "None of us, by supporting the candidate we choose, is voting for the enemy."

To the left of center, a harsh denunciation of Trump came from Lauren Maunus, political director of IfNotNow — an organization of U.S. Jews that has accused the Israeli government of oppressive policies toward Palestinians and protested Israel's military offensive in Gaza.

"Trump doubled down on his longstanding pattern of scapegoating Jews," Maunus said. "Make no mistake: This is a clear and flagrant instruction to his fanatical base of extremists to target Jews with retributive violence if he should lose."

Some Jews found a positive twist to Trump's remarks, as Betsy Frank of Mattituck, New York, conveyed in a letter published Sept. 23 in The New York Times.

"As a proud Jewish woman who believes in Israel's right to defend itself but supports the United States and everything it stands for even more, I would not vote for Donald Trump for any office," she wrote. "If he loses the election, I will gladly take the blame."

Helene makes landfall in northwestern Florida as a Category 4 hurricane

By KATE PAYNE and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

CRAWFORDVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Hurricane Helene made landfall Thursday night in northwestern Florida as a Category 4 storm as forecasters warned that the enormous system could create a “nightmare” storm surge and bring dangerous winds and rain across much of the southeastern U.S.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami said Helene roared ashore around 11:10 p.m. EDT near the mouth of the Aucilla River in the Big Bend area of Florida’s Gulf Coast. It had maximum sustained winds estimated at 140 mph (225 kph). That location was only about 20 miles northwest of where Hurricane Idalia came ashore last year at nearly the same ferocity and caused widespread damage.

Helene prompted hurricane and flash flood warnings extending far beyond the coast up into northern Georgia and western North Carolina. More than a million homes and businesses were without power in Florida and more than 50,000 in Georgia, according to the tracking site poweroutage.us. The governors of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas and Virginia all declared emergencies in their states.

One person was killed in Florida when a sign fell on their car and two people were reported killed in a possible tornado in south Georgia as the storm approached.

“When Floridians wake up tomorrow morning, we’re going to be waking up to a state where very likely there’s been additional loss of life and certainly there’s going to be loss of property,” Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference Thursday night.

The National Weather Service in Tallahassee had issued an “extreme wind warning” for the Big Bend as the eyewall approached: “Treat this warning like a tornado warning,” it said in a post on X. “Take shelter in the most interior room and hunker down!”

Even before landfall the storm’s wrath was felt widely, with sustained tropical storm-force winds and hurricane-force gusts along Florida’s west coast. Water lapped over a road in Siesta Key near Sarasota and covered some intersections in St. Pete Beach. Lumber and other debris from a fire in Cedar Key a week ago crashed ashore in the rising water.

Beyond Florida, up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain had fallen in the North Carolina mountains, with up to 14 inches (36 centimeters) more possible before the deluge ends, setting the stage for flooding that forecasters warned could be worse than anything seen in the past century.

Heavy rains began falling and winds were picking up earlier Thursday in Valdosta, Georgia, near the Florida state line. The weather service said more than a dozen Georgia counties could see hurricane-force winds exceeding 110 mph (177 kph).

In south Georgia, two people were killed when a possible tornado struck a mobile home on Thursday night, Wheeler County Sheriff Randy Rigdon told WMAZ-TV. The damage was reported as heavy thunderstorms raked much of the state. Wheeler County is about 70 miles (113 kilometers) southeast of Macon.

Forecaster Dylan Lusk said the National Weather Service issued a tornado warning for Wheeler County at 8:47 p.m. on Thursday. He said it’s one of 12 tornado warnings the office near Atlanta issued for parts of Georgia between 1 p.m. and 11 p.m.

The storm made landfall in the sparsely-populated Big Bend area, home to fishing villages and vacation hideaways where Florida’s Panhandle and peninsula meet.

“Please write your name, birthday, and important information on your arm or leg in a PERMANENT MARKER so that you can be identified and family notified,” the sheriff’s office in mostly rural Taylor County warned those who chose not to evacuate in a Facebook post, the dire advice similar to what other officials have dolled out during past hurricanes.

Still, Philip Tooke, a commercial fisherman who took over the business his father founded near the region’s Apalachee Bay, planned to ride out this storm like he did during Hurricane Michael and the others – on his boat. “If I lose that, I don’t have anything,” Tooke said. Michael, a Category 5 storm, all but destroyed one town, fractured thousands of homes and businesses and caused some \$25 billion in damage when it struck the Florida Panhandle in 2018.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 55 of 87

Many, though, were heeding the mandatory evacuation orders that stretched from the Panhandle south along the Gulf Coast in low-lying areas around Tallahassee, Gainesville, Cedar Key, Lake City, Tampa and Sarasota.

Among them was Sharonda Davis, one of several gathered at a Tallahassee shelter worried their mobile homes wouldn't withstand the winds. She said the hurricane's size is "scarier than anything because it's the aftermath that we're going to have to face."

Federal authorities were staging search-and-rescue teams as the weather service forecast storm surges of up to 20 feet (6 meters) and warned they could be particularly "catastrophic and unsurvivable" in Apalachee Bay.

"Please, please, please take any evacuation orders seriously!" the office said, describing the surge scenario as "a nightmare."

This stretch of Florida known as the Forgotten Coast has been largely spared by the widespread condo development and commercialization that dominates so many of Florida's beach communities. The region is loved for its natural wonders — the vast stretches of salt marshes, tidal pools and barrier islands.

"You live down here, you run the risk of losing everything to a bad storm," said Anthony Godwin, 20, who lives about a half-mile (800 meters) from the water in the coastal town of Panacea, as he stopped for gas before heading west toward his sister's house in Pensacola.

School districts and multiple universities canceled classes. Airports in Tampa, Tallahassee and Clearwater were closed Thursday, while cancellations were widespread elsewhere in Florida and beyond.

While Helene will likely weaken as it moves inland, damaging winds and heavy rain were expected to extend to the southern Appalachian Mountains, where landslides were possible, forecasters said. The hurricane center warned that much of the region could experience prolonged power outages and flooding. Tennessee was among the states expected to get drenched.

Helene had swamped parts of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Wednesday, flooding streets and toppling trees as it passed offshore and brushed the resort city of Cancun. In western Cuba, Helene knocked out power to more than 200,000 homes and businesses as it brushed past the island.

Areas 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of the Georgia-Florida line expected hurricane conditions. The state opened its parks to evacuees and their pets, including horses. Overnight curfews were imposed in many cities and counties in south Georgia.

"This is one of the biggest storms we've ever had," said Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp.

For Atlanta, Helene could be the worst strike on a major Southern inland city in 35 years, said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd.

Helene is the eighth named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year because of record-warm ocean temperatures.

In storm activity in the Pacific, former Hurricane John reformed Wednesday as a tropical storm and strengthened Thursday back into a hurricane as it threatened areas of Mexico's western coast with flash flooding and mudslides. Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador raised John's death toll to five as communities along the country's Pacific coast prepared for the storm to make a second landfall.

Alabama puts man convicted of killing 3 to death in the country's second nitrogen gas execution

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — Alabama used nitrogen gas Thursday to execute a man convicted of killing three people in back-to-back workplace shootings, the second time the method that has generated debate about its humaneness has been used in the country

Alan Eugene Miller, 59, was pronounced dead at 6:38 p.m. local time at a south Alabama prison. He shook and trembled on the gurney for about two minutes with his body at times pulling against the restraints.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 56 of 87

That was followed by about six minutes of periodic gulping breaths before he became still.

Miller was convicted of killing three men — Lee Holdbrooks, Christopher Scott Yancy and Terry Jarvis — in 1999 and the state had previously attempted to execute him by lethal injection in 2022.

"I didn't do anything to be in here," Miller said in his final words that were at times muffled by the blue-rimmed gas mask that covered his face from forehead to chin. However, witnesses at the trial had expressed no doubt about his guilt, describing Miller shooting the three men.

At the execution, Miller also asked his family and friends to "take care" of someone but it was not clear whose name he said.

Miller was one of five inmates put to death in the span of one week, an unusually high number that defies a yearslong trend of decline in the use of the death penalty in the U.S.

"Tonight, justice was finally served for these three victims through the execution method elected by the inmate," Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement. "His acts were not that of insanity, but pure evil. Three families were forever changed by his heinous crimes, and I pray that they can find comfort all these years later."

Family members of the three victims did not witness the execution and did not issue a statement to be read to reporters, state officials said.

The execution was the second to use the new method Alabama first employed in January, when Kenneth Smith was put to death. The method involves placing a respirator gas mask over the inmate's face to replace breathable air with pure nitrogen gas, causing death by lack of oxygen.

Alabama officials and advocates have argued over whether Smith suffered an unconstitutional level of pain during his execution after he shook in seizure-like spasms for several minutes, at times rocking the gurney. Smith then gasped for breath for several minutes. The shaking exhibited by Miller was similar to what was seen at the first nitrogen gas execution but did not seem as long or as violent.

Alabama Corrections Commissioner John Q. Hamm said the shaking movements were anticipated.

"Just like in Smith we talked about there is going to be involuntarily body movements as the body is depleted of oxygen. So that was nothing we did not expect," Hamm said, explaining the nitrogen gas flowed for 15 minutes. "Everything went according to plan and according to our protocol."

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said the execution "went as expected and without incident."

"Tonight, despite misinformation campaigns by political activists, out-of-state lawyers, and biased media, the State proved once again that nitrogen hypoxia is both humane and effective," Marshall said in a statement.

Marshall did not personally witness the execution but a representative from his office did, prison officials said.

A delivery truck driver, Miller was convicted of capital murder for the Aug. 5, 1999, shootings that claimed three lives and shocked the city of Pelham, a suburban city just south of Birmingham.

Police say that early that morning, Miller entered Ferguson Enterprises and fatally shot two co-workers: Holdbrooks, 32, and Yancy, 28. He then drove 5 miles (8 kilometers) away to Post Airgas, where he had previously worked, and shot Jarvis, 39. Trial testimony indicated that Miller was paranoid and believed his co-workers had been gossiping about him.

"You've been spreading rumors about me," a witness described Miller as saying before he opened fire. All three men were shot multiple times.

Miller had initially pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity but later withdrew the plea. A psychiatrist hired by the defense said that Miller was mentally ill but his condition wasn't severe enough to use as a basis for an insanity defense, according to court documents. Jurors convicted Miller after 20 minutes of deliberation and recommended by a vote of 10-2 that he receive the death penalty.

In 2022, the state called off the previous attempt to execute Miller after being unable to connect an IV line to the 351-pound (159-kilogram) inmate. Miller had initially challenged the nitrogen gas protocol but dropped his lawsuit after reaching an undisclosed settlement with the state.

Hamm said the state did not change the protocol. Miller, among other things, had requested to be given

a sedative. Hamm declined to say if Miller was given a sedative and referred questions about the settlement to Miller's attorneys.

At least 11 killed in Israeli strike that hit a school in northern Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli airstrike hit a school sheltering thousands of displaced Palestinians in northern Gaza on Thursday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 22, including women and children, the territory's Health Ministry said.

The Israeli military confirmed it struck the school in the Jabalia refugee camp, saying it was targeting Hamas militants inside who were planning attacks on Israeli troops. The claim couldn't be independently confirmed.

Footage from the al-Falouja School showed rescue workers rushing casualties out of the school compound amid widespread debris and crowds of people. One video showed men wrapping a mangled, severed torso in a plastic sheet and putting body parts into a cooler.

Gaza's Health Ministry didn't immediately say how many of the casualties were women and children.

Israeli forces have repeatedly struck schools, saying Hamas fighters use them as "command centers" to plan attacks. The military says it uses precision weapons to avoid civilian casualties.

The strikes have brought heavy death tolls. Tens of thousands of Palestinians are living packed in schools across Gaza after fleeing their homes in the face of Israeli bombardment and offensives. More than 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced in the nearly yearlong conflict, according to the United Nations.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, authorities buried in a mass grave the bodies of 88 Palestinians that Israel returned to the Gaza Strip a day earlier. A bulldozer dug a trench in one of the city cemeteries, and the bodies were laid inside in blue plastic bags before the bulldozer covered them over with dirt.

Gaza's Health Ministry denounced what it called the "inhumane and immoral" way Israel had treated the bodies, saying they were sent back piled in a truck with no information to identify them.

Throughout Israel's offensives in Gaza, troops have dug up multiple graveyards as well as impromptu mass graves created at hospitals holding the bodies of Palestinians killed during raids on the facilities. The military has taken an unknown number of bodies into Israel, saying it is searching for potential bodies of Israeli hostages or militants.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 41,500 Palestinians and wounded more than 96,000 others, according to the latest figures released Thursday by the Health Ministry. The ministry's count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but more than half the dead have been women and children, including about 1,300 children under the age of 2.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza, vowing to destroy Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack, during which militants killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 others hostage. It blames civilian deaths in Gaza on Hamas, because the group's fighters operate in residential areas and use civilian infrastructure.

Voting technology firm, conservative outlet reach settlement in 2020 election defamation case

By RANDALL CHASE Associated Press

DOVER, Del. (AP) — A settlement was reached Thursday in a defamation lawsuit brought by electronic voting machine manufacturer Smartmatic against conservative news outlet Newsmax for airing accusations about vote manipulation in the 2020 election made by allies of former President Donald Trump.

The settlement was announced just a few hours after jury selection began in the lawsuit filed by Florida-based Smartmatic against Newsmax.

Smartmatic claimed that Newsmax program hosts and guests made false and defamatory statements in November and December 2020 implying that Smartmatic participated in rigging the results and that its

software was used to switch votes.

Newsmax argued that it was simply reporting on newsworthy allegations being made by Trump and his supporters, including former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and conservative attorney Sidney Powell. Newsmax has said the lawsuit represented a threat to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

"Newsmax is pleased to announce it has resolved the litigation brought by Smartmatic through a confidential settlement," Newsmax said in a prepared statement.

Smartmatic said in a prepared statement that it was pleased the case against Newsmax had been completed.

The terms of the settlement were not disclosed, but Newsmax has said Smartmatic recently dropped its damages claims by more than \$1 billion.

Howard Cooper, an attorney for Newsmax, told Judge Eric Davis at a pretrial hearing last week that Newsmax planned to question Smartmatic witnesses about why the company had previously sought damages of \$1.7 billion, but was now claiming only \$400 million.

J. Erik Connolly, an attorney for Smartmatic, told the judge that the company was asserting lost revenue opportunities valued at \$369.8 million, based on the purported damage to its reputation from the Newsmax reports.

Connolly also told the judge that Smartmatic would be seeking lost revenue damages only for the period from late 2020 to August of this year, when three current and former Smartmatic executives were indicted on criminal charges in Florida. The indictments involve an alleged scheme to pay more than \$1 million in bribes to put Smartmatic voting machines in the Philippines.

Newsmax argued that the investigation and indictment should be presented to jurors as alternative reasons for any purported reputational harm or economic loss that Smartmatic blamed on Newsmax.

The Delaware lawsuit, which centered on Newsmax reports over a five-week period in late 2020, is one of several stemming from reports by conservative news outlets following the election.

Smartmatic also is suing Fox News for defamation in New York. The company recently settled a lawsuit in the District of Columbia against the One America News Network, another conservative outlet.

"We are now looking forward to our day in court against Fox Corp and Fox News for their disinformation campaign," Smartmatic said in Thursday's statement. "Lying to the American people has consequences. Smartmatic will not stop until the perpetrators are held accountable."

In response to Smartmatic's statement, Fox said Smartmatic chose to settle with Newsmax because of a series of pretrial setbacks, including the Florida indictments and the subsequent reduction in Smartmatic's damage claims. Fox also noted Davis ruled that Smartmatic would not be allowed to seek punitive damages.

"Smartmatic's claims against Fox are similarly impaired, unsupported by the facts and intended to chill First Amendment freedoms," Fox said in a statement. "We look forward to defending this case when it goes to trial."

Dominion Voting Systems similarly filed several defamation lawsuits against those who spread conspiracy theories blaming its election equipment for Trump's loss. Last year, in a case presided over by Davis, Fox News settled with Dominion for \$787 million.

Venezuelans crossing the Darien Gap say they lost hope after July's election

By JUAN ZAMORANO Associated Press

LAJAS BLANCAS, Panama (AP) — Venezuelans trekking across the Darien Gap — a rugged jungle passage between Colombia and Panama — say they're making the perilous journey because they lost hope for change after a contentious presidential election handed victory to President Nicolás Maduro despite vote tallies released by the opposition showing that his competitor won by a landslide.

"We stayed waiting for the election (results) because if Maduro left (power) then we would stay. But nothing happened," said Enrique Dordis, 46, a former cab driver from the central state of Carabobo, who left Venezuela last week with his wife, an 8-year-old son, Emanuel, and four other family members.

Tucked in a tent in the Lajas Blancas camp, he reflected Thursday on the raging rivers and heavy downpours the family had to face in their four-day trek across the dense jungle, once believed to be nearly impossible to cross. "Money is not enough. You get desperate and you have to look for a better future for your children," he said.

Last year, more than half a million migrants – a record number – crossed through the Darien on their way to the United States. More than 60% of them were Venezuelans fleeing economic and political turmoil by the millions. Those who didn't migrate held onto hope that their country, once one of Latin America's wealthiest, would someday bounce back.

While migration from Venezuela has since slowed along the border from record levels, the disputed results of the July election and the state repression that followed was the final straw, and many fear it could potentially trigger a new wave of migration.

"We feel very disappointed after the election, which was a total fraud," said Rosimar Angulo, a Venezuelan staying with other migrants in a small Red Cross reception center on Thursday morning at the mouth of the jungle passage.

Angulo arrived in the camp after traveling by boat from Bajo Chiquito, where migrants make their first registration with Panamanian authorities, after trudging days through the jungle on foot.

"It's getting harder and harder, our relatives are getting sick," Angulo said, as a fellow traveler was carried on a stretcher by members of the Red Cross.

Like Angulo, many of the Venezuelans arriving to Lajas Blancas said that they made the decision to leave shortly after Venezuela's electoral authority handed victory to Maduro, despite vote tallies released by the opposition showing that his competitor won by a landslide.

More than half a dozen Venezuelan migrants interviewed said they held out until several weeks after the election, hoping for a favorable outcome for opposition candidate Edmundo González — who has since left the country — and encouraged by street demonstrations led by leader María Corina Machado.

"For us, the same government winning again means there will be no improvement in the country," said Laura Naveda, a migrant traveling with 13 family members, including several children.

Top climate negotiators urge tougher targets, but outsiders say they aren't cutting back themselves

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A trio of leaders of international climate negotiations on Thursday urged colleagues to step up efforts to fight global warming, but outside groups and endangered nations told those leaders to look in the mirror, take their own advice — and stop pumping out fossil fuels.

At the United Nations, the troika of the current and next two presidents of U.N. climate conferences told other leaders to make their required climate-fighting targets — due next February — much more ambitious. New national plans should be aligned with the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, cover their entire economies and include all heat-trapping gases, urged the trio of leaders from the United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan and Brazil.

"The world is not on track to meet the goals of the Paris agreement," said Mukhtar Babayev, who takes over as head of international negotiations in November when Azerbaijan hosts the U.N. climate conference. "We face an urgent need to deliver deep, rapid and sustained emissions reduction, including by transitioning away from fossil fuels."

In a two-hour session, Babayev and his UAE and Brazilian counterparts pushed their "Roadmap to Mission 1.5." The nations of the world have a deadline five months away to create new national targets for carbon pollution cuts. The world's current targets are pointing to 2.7 degrees Celsius (4.9 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since the mid-1800s, but the three nations want new national plans more aligned with 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Representing small island nations, Samoa Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa said she appreciates

the push and pointed out that countries like hers didn't cause the climate problem, yet are cutting their emissions of heat-trapping gases. Then, during the session, she tweaked richer nations.

"Sadly, we do not see the same level of ambition from countries that bear the most responsibility for this current crisis," she said. Her organization of 44 small island nations said it was "not overly optimistic that this will significantly move the dial forward."

Longtime climate negotiation analysts Alden Meyer of the think tank E3G and Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics, which tracks emissions pledges, said the negotiation chiefs from the UAE, Azerbaijan and Brazil were big on soaring rhetoric, but their own nations' actions fell far short.

The UAE, Azerbaijan and Brazilian officials didn't detail how their countries would transition away from fossil fuels, Meyer said, "rather, all three of them are pushing ahead with massive new investments in oil and gas production, making the effort to keep 1.5C alive even more difficult. This is not what real leadership looks like."

In its last update, Azerbaijan "actually weakened" its target, Hare asserted.

"The troika, all ranking in the top largest oil and gas producing countries in the world, are also on track to collectively increase their oil and gas production by one third by 2035," said Oil Change International Policy Manager Romain Ioualalen.

National climate leaders responded to the trio's pleas by saying they must limit warming to only a few more tenths of a degree and that it was an urgent problem, but on Thursday offered few details on how they would do it.

United Nations climate secretary Simon Stiell said, "We will need to go from a world that knows 1.5 must be achieved to a world that knows how 1.5 will be achieved."

A look inside the indictment accusing New York City's mayor of taking bribes

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Mayor Eric Adams has never been shy about his globetrotting ways. But he's not always said how he bankrolled years' worth of overseas adventures.

Federal prosecutors unsealed an indictment Thursday saying the Democrat took trips to France, China, Sri Lanka, India, Hungary, Ghana and Turkey that were partly or fully paid for by people looking to buy his influence in city government.

The gifts, prosecutors said, included free hotel rooms, seat upgrades worth thousands of dollars, expensive meals, entertainment — even a trip to a Turkish bath. All told, the perks were worth more than \$100,000, prosecutors said.

The indictment also accuses Adams of conspiring to collect illegal donations to his campaigns, partly by funneling them through straw donors who hadn't actually contributed the money.

Adams says he didn't do anything wrong and has no plans to resign. His lawyer, Alex Spiro, criticized the charges as a jumble of innuendo meant to mislead the public and tarnish the mayor.

Here are highlights from the 57-page indictment:

Key allegations against Adams

Adams is accused of exploiting a yearslong relationship with people tied to Turkey, who funded his travel and fueled his run for mayor with donations that helped him qualify for more than \$10 million in public campaign funds. People who are not U.S. citizens are banned by law from donating to U.S. political candidates.

Prosecutors say Adams returned the favor in September 2021 by ensuring that Turkey's newly built diplomatic tower in Manhattan wouldn't be subject to a fire inspection, which it was certain to fail.

At one point, a Turkish official praised Adams as a "true friend of Turkey," according to the indictment. Adams allegedly responded: "Yes even more a true friend of yours. You are my brother. I am hear (sic) to help."

The indictment said Adams also agreed not to release a statement on Armenian Genocide Remembrance

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 61 of 87

Day that would reflect poorly on Turkey.

Adams is charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, bribery and receiving campaign contributions from a foreign national.

Who is named in the indictment?

Adams is the only person charged and the only person identified by name — but there are lots of other characters who factor prominently in the indictment.

There's the "Turkish Official," a senior official in the Turkish diplomatic establishment said to have arranged Adams' travel perks and facilitated straw donations to his campaign; "The Promoter," a Turkish entrepreneur who prosecutors say organized events to introduce Adams to Turkish businesspeople; and the "Airline Manager," a New York City-based general manager for Turkish Airlines who booked Adams' free and heavily discounted flights and business class upgrades.

There were also "Businessman-1," the owner of a Turkish University who prosecutors say was considering a business venture in Brooklyn; the "Businesswoman," who gave Adams free or steeply discounted stays in opulent suites at the St. Regis Istanbul, a luxury hotel she owned; plus "Businessman-2," "Businessman-3," "Businessman-4," and "Businessman-5," all of whom were accused of being involved in straw donations.

'The Promoter'

Prosecutors said the person they identified as "The Promoter" concocted a plan — personally approved by Adams — to funnel up to \$100,000 in banned campaign contributions to him through U.S. employees of a Turkish university, the indictment alleges.

At one point, an Adams staffer tried to discourage the idea, saying Adams likely wouldn't be interested in "such games" because it "might cause a big stink later on," according to the indictment. But prosecutors said Adams liked the idea and directed his staffer to pursue it.

"The Promoter" purportedly told associates that Adams was worth supporting because he could become president someday.

'This is how things work in this country'

At one point, the indictment says, a construction company owner tried to recruit others in industry and the Turkish community to back Adams with campaign contributions and gifts, writing, in part, this "may feel like swimming against the current but unfortunately this is how things work in this country."

What does Adams' lawyer say?

Spiro told reports the conduct described in the indictment wasn't illegal or didn't involve the mayor.

The Turkish consulate was asking for "a courtesy," not payback, when it wanted Adams' help in skipping a fire inspection, Spiro said, adding: "New Yorkers do this all the time." Adams said he'd see what he could do and, a few days later, ignored a follow up phone call from the consulate, Spiro asserted.

"There is no corruption. This is not a real case," Spiro said.

Spiro said Adams sent emails telling his staff never to accept foreign donations.

As for the free flights and upgrades, Spiro said there's nothing illegal or unusual about that.

"When you actually look at this -- if you just take a second to step back and look at this -- look at the flights they talk about, the travel, the expenses," Spiro said. "The flight they talk about, that free flight was in 2017 -- seven years ago, five years before he's the mayor. There's nothing illegal or improper about that."

Adams' flight upgrades put him in otherwise open seats, the defense attorney said, contending that such arrangements are a common practice in the airline industry.

"That's what airlines do," Spiro said. "They do it every day. They do it for VIPs. They do it for congress-people. They're empty seats that cost the airlines nothing."

Alleged cover up

The indictment claims that Adams and co-conspirators took steps to cover their tracks, including making a false paper trail to make it appear as if he had fully paid for flights that were free or deeply discounted.

The indictment also accused the mayor and others of making it difficult for investigators.

FBI agents seized electronic devices from Adams last November as he left an event. According to the indictment, the mayor produced two phones but not the personal phone. Adams later turned over that phone in response to a subpoena, but it was locked and required a password.

Adams claimed to have forgotten it, the indictment said.

According to the indictment, an Adams staffer who met with FBI agents excused herself at one point, went to a bathroom and deleted the encrypted messaging app she had used to communicate with the mayor, the Turkish official, the Turkish airline contact and others.

Netanyahu vows to use 'full force' against Hezbollah and dims hopes for a cease-fire

By TIA GOLDENBERG, BASSEM MROUE and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday vowed to carry out "full force" strikes against Hezbollah until it ceases firing rockets across the border, dimming hopes for a cease-fire proposal put forth by U.S. and European officials.

Israel carried out a new strike in the Lebanese capital, which killed a senior Hezbollah commander, and the militant group launched dozens of rockets into Israel. Tens of thousands of Israeli and Lebanese people living near their countries' border have been displaced by the fighting.

Netanyahu spoke as he arrived in New York to attend the annual gathering of world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly, where U.S. and European officials were putting heavy pressure on both sides of the conflict to accept a proposed 21-day halt in the fighting to give time for diplomacy and avert all-out war.

Nearly 700 people have been killed in Lebanon this week as Israel dramatically escalated strikes, saying it is targeting the military capacity of Hezbollah — the Iranian-backed Shiite group that is the strongest armed force in Lebanon. Israeli leaders say they are determined to stop the group's cross-border attacks, which began after the Hamas militant group's Oct. 7 attack that ignited the war in Gaza.

Israel's "policy is clear," Netanyahu said. "We are continuing to strike Hezbollah with full force. And we will not stop until we reach all our goals, chief among them the return of the residents of the north securely to their homes."

Later, the prime minister's office said in a statement that Israel and U.S. officials met Thursday to discuss the cease-fire proposal and would continue talks in coming days.

One of Israel's latest airstrikes killed a Hezbollah drone commander, Mohammed Hussein Surour, in the suburbs of Beirut. Israel's military announced the death, which Hezbollah later confirmed.

The Health Ministry said two people were killed and 15 wounded in the strike. Associated Press photos of the scene showed a gutted apartment in a residential building in Dahiyeh, the mainly Shiite suburb where Hezbollah has a strong presence.

Until recently, Israel had rarely targeted sites in Beirut during the low-level conflict with Hezbollah that began in October. But it has struck Beirut's southern suburbs several times this week. Several strikes in Beirut targeted senior Hezbollah commanders. One strike in eastern Lebanon on Thursday killed 20 people, most of them Syrian migrants, according to Lebanese health officials.

Israel hit 75 sites early Thursday across southern and eastern Lebanon and launched a new wave of strikes in the evening, the military said. Throughout the day, Hezbollah fired some 175 projectiles into Israel, the Israeli military said. Most were intercepted or fell in open areas, sparking some wildfires, though one rocket hit a street in a town near the northern city of Safed.

Israel has talked of a possible ground invasion into Lebanon to drive Hezbollah away from the border. It has moved thousands of troops to the north in preparation. Some 100,000 Lebanese have fled their homes in the past week, streaming into Beirut and points further north.

Israeli military vehicles transported tanks and armored vehicles toward the country's northern border with Lebanon a day after commanders issued a call-up of reservists. Several tanks arrived in Kiryat Shmona, a hard-hit town just several miles from the border.

Lebanon's foreign minister called for an immediate cease-fire "on all fronts," warning that continued violence at his nation's border will "transform into a black hole that will engulf international and regional peace and security."

Abdallah Bouhabib, speaking before the U.N. General Assembly, decried Israel's "systematic destruction

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 63 of 87

of Lebanese border villages.”

“The crisis in Lebanon threatens the entire Middle East,” Bouhabib said. “We wish today to reiterate our call for a cease-fire on all fronts.”

He said Lebanon welcomes efforts by the United States and France to move urgently toward a cease-fire before things spin out of control.

Hezbollah has not yet responded to the proposal.

Israel’s military on Friday also said it intercepted a missile fired from Yemen that set off air raid sirens across the country’s center. Sirens rang out across Israel’s populous central area, including the seaside metropolis of Tel Aviv. Another missile from Yemen landed in central Israel about two weeks ago.

The escalation has raised fears of a repeat – or worse – of the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah that wreaked destruction across southern Lebanon and other parts of the country and saw heavy Hezbollah rocket fire on Israeli cities.

“Another full-scale war could be devastating for both Israel and Lebanon,” U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said after talks with his British and Australian counterparts in London.

One of Netanyahu’s far-right governing partners threatened to suspend cooperation with his government if it signs onto a temporary cease-fire with Hezbollah – and to quit completely if a permanent deal is reached. It was the latest sign of displeasure from Netanyahu’s allies toward international cease-fire efforts.

“If a temporary cease-fire becomes permanent, we will resign from the government,” said National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of the Jewish Power party.

If Ben-Gvir leaves the coalition, Netanyahu would lose his parliamentary majority. That could topple his government, though opposition leaders have said they would offer support for a cease-fire deal.

Hezbollah has insisted it would halt its strikes only if there is a cease-fire in Gaza, where Israel has battled Hamas for nearly a year. That appears out of reach.

One day after Hamas’ Oct 7 attack, Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel, bringing Israeli counterfire and a cycle of reprisals since. Hezbollah says its barrages are a show of support for Palestinians and that it is targeting Israeli military facilities, though rockets have also hit civilian areas.

Before this week, the cross-border exchanges had killed about 600 people in Lebanon, mostly militants but including more than 100 civilians, and about four dozen people in Israel, roughly half of them soldiers and the rest civilians. The fighting also forced tens of thousands to flee homes on both sides of the border.

Israel says its escalated strikes across Lebanon the past week are targeting Hezbollah rocket launchers and other military infrastructure. Since Monday, strikes have killed more than 690 people in Lebanon, around a quarter of them women and children, according to local health authorities.

The campaign opened with what is widely believed to be an Israeli attack on Sept. 18 and 19 detonating thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah, killing at least 39 people and maiming thousands more, including civilians.

Hezbollah in turn has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. Several people in Israel have been wounded. On Wednesday, the group fired on Tel Aviv for the first time with a longer-range missile that was intercepted.

Early Thursday, an Israeli airstrike hit a building housing Syrian workers and their families near the ancient city of Baalbek in Lebanon’s eastern Bekaa Valley. The Lebanese Health Ministry said 19 Syrians and a Lebanese were killed, one of the deadliest single strikes in Israel’s intensified air campaign.

Hussein Salloum, a local official in Younine, said most of the dead were women and children. The state news agency had initially reported that 23 people were dead.

Lebanon, with a population of around 6 million, hosts nearly 780,000 registered Syrian refugees and hundreds of thousands who are unregistered — the world’s highest refugee population per capita.

Feds charge NYC mayor with selling his influence to foreign nationals. He says he won't resign

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Mayor Eric Adams vowed to stay in office Thursday after federal prosecutors unsealed an indictment accusing him of letting Turkish officials and businesspeople buy his influence with illegal campaign contributions and lavish overseas trips.

Adams, a Democrat, faces conspiracy, wire fraud and bribery charges in a five-count indictment outlining a decade-long trail of corruption that began when he served as an elected official in Brooklyn and continued through his mayoral administration.

Among other things, prosecutors say Adams received free and steeply discounted flight upgrades valued at more than \$100,000, free stays in opulent hotel suites and expensive meals, as well as campaign contributions from straw donors, some of which helped him qualify for more than \$10 million in matching public campaign funds.

"I want to be clear, these upgrades and freebies were not part of some frequent flyer or benefits program available to the general public," U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said at a news conference. "This was a multiyear scheme to buy favor from a single New York City official on the rise."

In exchange for the bribes, Adams took actions that appeared to benefit Turkey's leaders, including expediting the fire safety inspection at a consulate building and not releasing a statement on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, according to the indictment.

Adams had a duty to disclose gifts he received, but year after year "kept the public in the dark," the U.S. attorney said.

Speaking outside Gracie Mansion, Adams denied wrongdoing and said he doesn't plan to resign. Flanked by prominent Black clergy members, Adams, who is the city's second Black mayor, lashed out at federal prosecutors and suggested he had been unfairly targeted.

"I ask New Yorkers to wait to hear our defense before making any judgments," he said. "From here, my attorneys will take care of the case so I can take care of the city."

Adams' arraignment was scheduled for noon on Friday before Magistrate Judge Katharine Parker.

The indictment brought a stunning crescendo to the drumbeat of federal investigations that has engulfed the mayor and his top aides in recent weeks, prompting resignations from his police commissioner, schools chancellor and top legal adviser.

While Adams faced calls to resign from Republicans and several of his likely opponents in next June's mayoral primary, top Democrats such as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries stopped short of asking him to step down and instead said the legal process should play out.

Gov. Kathy Hochul has the power to remove Adams from office. In a statement Thursday, she said she's considering the options. "I expect the Mayor to take the next few days to review the situation and find an appropriate path forward to ensure the people of New York City are being well-served by their leaders."

If Adams were to resign, he would be immediately replaced by Jumaane Williams, a progressive Democrat who serves as the city's public advocate. Williams would then schedule a special election. In a statement Thursday, Williams said Adams' time to show he can effectively govern and regain the city's trust "is rapidly running out."

Adams spent 22 years in New York City's police department before going into politics, first as a state senator and then as Brooklyn borough president, a largely ceremonial position but one that gave him a springboard to run for mayor in 2021.

FBI agents initially seized Adams' electronic devices nearly a year ago as part of an investigation focused on campaign contributions during his mayoral run as well as Adams' interactions with the Turkish government and the Turkish American business community. Since then, he has been asked repeatedly at news conferences about his frequent global trips over the years and who paid for them.

Adams said there was nothing nefarious about his trips and that he never did anything improper in ex-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 65 of 87

change for campaign money.

But prosecutors allege that Adams sought and accepted illegal contributions funneled to his campaign through an unnamed official in the Turkish diplomatic establishment. The official arranged for Adams and his companions to receive free or discounted travel on Turkey's national airline to destinations including France, China, Sri Lanka, India, Hungary, and Turkey, the indictment contends.

Additionally, Adams sought contributions from foreign officials — who are banned by law from donating to U.S. political candidates — then “compounded his gains” by gaming the city's matching funds program, which provides a generous match for small-dollar donations, prosecutors allege. In total, his campaign received more than \$10 million in matching public funds, which are only supposed to be available to candidates who play by the rules, according to the indictment.

In September 2021, a Turkish official told Adams it was time to repay him for the contributions and benefits by pressuring the fire department to facilitate the opening of the consulate without a fire inspection, in time for a visit by Turkey's president, according to prosecutors. That request would have been a few months before Adams took office, but after it was clear he would become mayor.

Even after a fire department official warned that major defects at the consulate building had left it “unsafe to occupy,” Adams pushed safety officials to allow it to open. Days later, Adams relayed news of the approval to the Turkish official, who called Adams a “true friend of Turkey,” the indictment states. Adams responded: “You are my brother. I am hear (sic) to help,” according to the indictment.

Several months later, the Turkish official messaged an Adams staffer with another request: that the mayor “not make any statement about the Armenian Genocide” ahead of an April remembrance day, according to the indictment. The staffer confirmed that Adams wouldn't mention it, which he didn't. The Turkish government denies that the 1915 killing of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians qualifies as a genocide.

At times, Adams created and instructed others to create fake paper trails in order to falsely suggest he had paid for travel benefits that were actually free, prosecutors allege. He also deleted messages with others involved in his misconduct, at one point assuring a co-conspirator that he “always” deleted her text messages, according to the indictment.

His lawyer, Alex Spiro, argued that the conduct described in the charges either didn't involve the mayor or wasn't illegal, noting that free flights are commonly afforded to politicians. He said Adams had responded to a “courtesy” request from a Turkish official seeking to expedite a fire inspection at a new consulate. “New Yorkers do this all the time,” Spiro added.

The charges were made public hours after FBI agents entered the mayor's official residence, Gracie Mansion, and seized his phone early Thursday.

The U.S. attorney, Williams, said the corruption investigation would continue.

Federal prosecutors are believed to be leading multiple, separate inquiries involving Adams and his senior aides, relatives of those aides, campaign fundraising and possible influence peddling of the police and fire departments.

In the last two weeks alone, the police commissioner and schools chancellor have resigned. Neither has been charged with a crime or publicly accused of wrongdoing. In early September, federal investigators seized devices from the police commissioner, schools chancellor, two deputy mayors and other trusted Adams confidants.

Florida man's lawsuit temporarily stops Ohtani's 50th HR ball from being sold

MIAMI (AP) — A Florida man's lawsuit has temporarily stopped Shohei Ohtani's 50th home run ball from being sold at auction after saying it was stolen from him moments after he secured it.

Max Matus' representatives say their client gained possession of the Los Angeles Dodgers star's historic ball on Sept. 19 — the man's 18th birthday — before Chris Belanski took it away. The ball has since been turned over to Goldin Auctions, a New Jersey-based auction house specializing in trading cards, collectibles and memorabilia.

The Miami-Dade County judge said in an emergency hearing on Thursday that the motion for a temporary injunction was deferred, and an evidentiary hearing will be held Oct. 10. The order says the auction can start, but the house "will not sell, conceal or transfer" the ball pending the court's ruling.

Matus' initial filing requested a court order declaring that he is entitled to the ball and requests a jury trial on his claims. It also alleged unlawful battery against Belanski.

Kelvin Ramirez also is named in the lawsuit after claiming ownership of the ball. Ramirez attended the game with Belanski. Goldin Auctions, Belanski and Ramirez are named in the lawsuit filed by John Uustal, the attorney representing Matus.

Ohtani's home run against the Miami Marlins gave him 50 homers and 50 stolen bases in the same season, making him the first member of the 50-50 club.

The opening bid for the ball is \$500,000. There is black scuffing and abrasions on the white leather ball, which was authenticated by Major League Baseball.

"Ohtani is truly one-of-a-kind, and the 50-50 record may be his crowning achievement," said Ken Goldin, founder and CEO of the auction house. "This is a piece of baseball history that fans and historians around the world will remember for decades to come."

Melania Trump calls her husband's survival of assassination attempts 'miracles'

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

In her first interview in more than two years, former First Lady Melania Trump said she saw her husband's survival in two attempts on his life as "miracles" and offered new details about the former president, including his desire to have more children.

The Slovenian-born former fashion model has remained somewhat of an enigma in the 2024 election cycle, staying largely absent from the campaign trail, breaking norms in not speaking at the Republican National Convention and skipping key moments for her husband, Donald Trump, including his primary-night victory parties and court appearances in New York and Florida.

In a pre-taped interview aired on Fox News Thursday morning, Melania Trump called for Democrats and members of the media to stop branding her husband as a threat to democracy. She blamed the media for "fueling a toxic atmosphere" and empowering those who "want to do harm to him." Democrats previously blamed Trump for violent rhetoric, including helping to incite an attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"This is not normal," she told Ainsley Earhardt, a "Fox & Friends" co-host.

Melania Trump added: "Is it really shocking that all this egregious violence goes against my husband? Especially that we hear the leaders from the opposition party and mainstream media branding him as a threat to democracy, calling him vile names?"

The former first lady added: "This needs to stop."

Melania Trump said that a staffer alerted her to the shooting at a July rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Earlier this month, Melania said she was in New York when she saw television reports of the second assassination attempt at his golf course in Florida.

"I think something was watching over him," she said of her husband surviving both assassination attempts. "It's almost like" the "country really needs him."

Melania Trump is promoting her new memoir, which is set to release on Oct. 8.

When asked if she and her husband ever discussed growing their family, she revealed that the Republican presidential nominee tried to persuade her to have more children. "I was always perfectly fine with one," she said. "And Donald was encouraging to have more. And I said like I'm completely fine with one because it's" a "very busy life, and I know how busy he is. And I am in charge of everything. So that's why it's just perfect."

The Slovenia native said the fashion industry gave her the "thick skin" required to withstand attacks as the wife of a president, who is one of the most polarizing political figures in recent memory.

"The fashion industry, it's glamorous, but it's, at the same time, very tough," she said. "Everybody judges

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 67 of 87

you, look at you" a "certain way, so it can be a mean world as well. So nothing prepared me more for this world than fashion. It gives you a thick skin." Melania also revealed that her son, Barron Trump, decided to continue living in their New York residence while attending New York University.

"I could not say I'm an empty nester. I don't feel that way," she said. "It was his decision to come here, that he wants to be in New York and study in New York and live in his home. And I respect that."

Athletics bid emotional farewell to Oakland Coliseum that they called home since 1968

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Baseball Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Mark Kotsay treated this moment, this daunting day, like the World Series he has never had as a player or manager.

Kotsay fought tears, just like so many others Thursday, as the Oakland Athletics bid an emotional farewell to their beloved Coliseum they've called home since 1968, complete with all its quirks like plumbing problems and rally possums — and those stray cats who helped inspire Hall of Famer Tony La Russa's former Animal Rescue Foundation.

The A's beat the Texas Rangers 3-2 and Kotsay took the microphone afterward for a heartfelt thank you to a sellout crowd of 46,889 before leading one last chant of "Let's go Oakland!" Third baseman Max Schuemann grabbed a huge A's flag and ran it around the field, stopping to wave it in front of different sections.

"I've never been to a World Series before," Kotsay said. "But I feel like today is one of those days that you can kind of experience the emotion of that, the magnitude of it. Driving in the gates today and seeing the fullness of a parking lot, feeling the energy and the emotion is something I'll treasure for the rest of my life."

Longtime supporters and kids alike stole away from work or school to be here for the matinee finale under a cloudless September blue sky. Oakland's last team standing, the A's follow the NFL Raiders and Golden State Warriors basketball team out of town.

Spontaneously, Schuemann grabbed the flag held by mascot Stomper moments earlier, and took off running.

"I wanted to enjoy it with them, for sure," he said of the fans.

Quickly, home plate was dug up and the mound rubber removed. Head groundskeeper Clay Wood's sweet dog Reba made one final run through the outfield to her master's office beyond the fence.

Kotsay made one request for a memento: He's taking home three bases, which were changed out every inning so 27 were available as keepsakes — with longtime, outgoing groundskeeper Clay Wood gifted the first-inning bags.

From Kotsay's days of playing outfield and way back to the 1989 earthquake-interrupted World Series when the A's swept the Giants, to Bash Brothers Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire and that special 20-game winning streak of 2002 and the Big Three of Tim Hudson, Mark Mulder and Barry Zito before "I Believe in Stephen Vogt" later became a battle cry, this building has been home to so many glory moments transcending eras and spanning stars of different generations.

Zito sang the national anthem to huge applause, while Rickey Henderson and Dave Stewart tossed out ceremonial first pitches.

Not far from the A's dugout, Kelly Mattson of the grounds crew let fans scoop dirt right out of his shovel.

Hours before first pitch, A's bullpen catcher Dustin Hughes and his Oakland scout father John played catch in left field before hiking up to Mount Davis and then exploring the inside of the scoreboard and other hidden spots below the center-field stands.

Hundreds of fans spent recent days walking through the concourse snapping photos or taking videos of all the pictures and memories spanning the decades. The parking lots were filled before breakfast with tailgaters taking it all in just once more.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 68 of 87

Former A's fan favorite and current Rangers second baseman Marcus Semien expected 10 to 15 family and friends — including his parents and grandparents — in the stands for the special occasion.

"Thank you to all the security guards, concession workers everyone who made this place a major league stadium," Semien said on the field. "I really appreciate you welcoming me as an East Bay kid to your place of work. I feel very sorry for anybody who can't continue on with Oakland but keep on grinding like you always have been."

Longtime manager and former catcher Bruce Bochy became emotional in the visiting dugout. The Coliseum matters so much to him, too.

The A's plan to play the next three years in Sacramento with hopes of opening a new ballpark in Las Vegas ahead of the 2028 season.

"Big day," said Bochy, a former catcher who guided the San Francisco Giants to World Series titles in 2010, '12 and '14. "Memorable day for I think so many people but for me, it's starting to hit me now that baseball's done here. It's kind of sad. Because I love this place, love the field and everything."

He added of his team: "I think they're really appreciating what this place is."

Kotsay planned to soak in everything.

"It's a day that will come and go pretty quickly," he said, "and you just don't want to miss any opportunity to express your gratitude toward the fans, toward the people that mean everything, the workers in the stadium. Sharing moments with them today was tough. There's a lot of people here that have invested their lives and their souls into this organization and into this stadium and into the game of baseball. The love for the game of baseball but more for the love for the people and the relationships that have been built over 57 years in this stadium."

Even his players understood the magnitude of saying goodbye.

"It's unique in that there's no frills. A lot of stadiums have, whether it's good or bad, kind of become less about the actual baseball game and more just about an entertainment product," slugger Brent Rooker said. "What the Coliseum offers is, 'Here's just a bunch of seats, and here's a field and there's going to be a baseball game happening.' And that's really cool."

Harris blasts proposals for Ukraine to cede territory to Russia during Zelenskyy meeting

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With American support for Ukraine at a partisan crossroads, Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday slammed suggestions that Kyiv should cede territory for the sake of peace with Moscow as "dangerous and unacceptable."

The Democratic presidential nominee spoke alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as she unleashed the veiled criticism of Republican candidate Donald Trump's push for Ukraine to quickly cut a deal to end the war.

"They are not proposals for peace," Harris said. "Instead they are proposals for surrender."

Her comments were a reminder of the high stakes for the war effort in this year's election. Trump, for his part, has criticized U.S. assistance for Ukraine, praised Russian President Vladimir Putin and faulted Zelenskyy for the ongoing bloodshed.

Trump said he will meet with Zelenskyy in New York on Friday after days of questions over whether the two leaders will sit down together. He rejected Harris' criticisms and insisted that he only wants to stop the "horror show that's gone on."

Asked if Ukraine should give up territory, Trump said "we'll see what happens" and "we need peace."

Before announcing the meeting with Zelenskyy, Trump posted on social media a purported message from the Ukrainian leader asking to see him. The message, which was not confirmed by Ukrainian officials, said "we have to strive to understand each other."

The decision to publicly disclose what appeared to be private communications, however benign their

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 69 of 87

contents, was a reminder of the tension that's been brewing between Trump and Zelenskyy.

It was a far different impression than Harris delivered Thursday as she embraced Ukraine's defense and outlined a broader foreign policy vision rooted in "international order, rules and norms." Harris rejected calls for the U.S. to walk away from its global role and warned that potential aggressors could be emboldened if Putin emerges victorious.

"The United States supports Ukraine not out of charity, but because it's in our strategic interest," Harris said.

Zelenskyy was in Washington to present the White House and Congress with his plans for reaching an endgame in the war by improving Ukraine's chances on the battlefield and its eventual leverage at the negotiating table. He's pushing to lift restrictions on using long-range Western weapons to strike targets deeper in Russian territory.

No movement on this issue was evident during Zelenskyy's visit. However, President Joe Biden announced billions of dollars more in missiles, drones, ammunition and other supplies. The weapons include an additional Patriot missile defense battery and a new shipment of glide bombs that can be deployed from Western fighter jets, increasing their strike range.

Biden pledged to ensure that all approved funding is disbursed before he leaves office, and said he plans to convene a meeting with other world leaders focused on Ukraine's defense during a visit to Germany next month.

"We stand with Ukraine, now and in the future," Biden said alongside Zelenskyy in the Oval Office. "Russia will not prevail. Ukraine will prevail."

Ukrainian officials are anxious to maintain good relations with whomever becomes the next president of the United States, which is its biggest and most important provider of arms, money and other support. But the effort risks slipping into the political blender of the presidential campaign, polarizing the discussion around a war that used to be a bipartisan cause célèbre in Washington.

About two thirds of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents said the U.S. has a responsibility to help Ukraine, compared with one third of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, according to a Pew Research Center poll conducted in July.

Americans are also split on which presidential candidate would do a better job handling the war. An AP-NORC poll from August found that about one-third of Americans said they trusted Harris more, while a similar share said the same about Trump.

On Thursday, Zelenskyy found some bipartisan support as he visited Capitol Hill, where he was greeted by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Sen. Lindsay Graham, a South Carolina Republican, said Zelenskyy asked to use long-range weapons, such as British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles or U.S.-made ATACMS, for "maximum benefit to bring Putin to the table" and increase Ukraine's negotiating position.

"If we don't make that fundamental choice this week, I think the outcome for Ukraine is dire," Graham said.

Administration officials have been skeptical of Zelenskyy's request, believing the weapons could have limited benefits but increase the risk of escalating the conflict. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, said senators gave Zelenskyy advice on how to persuade Biden to loosen restrictions.

Rep. Jim Himes, another Connecticut Democrat and the ranking member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said Zelenskyy wanted "more, faster."

"He was politely frustrated," Himes said, and specifically requested more Patriot missile defenses as Russia escalates strikes on Ukraine's cities and energy grid before the winter.

Zelenskyy faces a much more tense situation with Trump. The latest round of sniping started on Sunday, when The New Yorker published an interview with Zelenskyy in which he criticized JD Vance, Trump's running mate, as "too radical" for suggesting that Ukraine needs to give up some territory to end the war. Zelenskyy also dismissed Trump's boasts that he could quickly negotiate a solution, saying "my feeling is that Trump doesn't really know how to stop the war even if he might think he knows how."

On the same day, Zelenskyy toured a Pennsylvania factory producing munitions for the war. He was

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 70 of 87

joined by Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro, a top surrogate for Harris, and Republicans criticized the visit as a political stunt in a political battleground state.

House Speaker Mike Johnson demanded that Zelenskyy fire the Ukrainian ambassador to the U.S., alleging that the tour was "designed to help Democrats and is clearly election interference." The Louisiana Republican didn't attend any of lawmakers' meetings with Zelenskyy on Thursday.

Trump complained this week that Zelenskyy is "making little nasty aspersions toward your favorite president, me." He also described the Ukrainian leader as "the greatest salesman on Earth" for securing U.S. support, and he complained that "we continue to give billions of dollars to a man who refuses to make a deal" to end the war. Trump's message dovetails with Russian propaganda that claims intransigence by Kyiv — not aggression from Moscow — has prolonged the bloodshed.

Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Zelenskyy is in a "no-win situation" where he "can't even visit a U.S. weapons manufacturer to say thank you without being attacked."

Trump was impeached during his first term over asking Zelenskyy for help investigating Biden, then a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, at a time when the Ukrainian leader was seeking support from Washington. Now there are fears that Trump would cut off or add strings to U.S. military assistance if he returned to the White House.

Charles Kupchan, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Trump is not wrong to want a negotiated end to the war. However, he said, Trump risks undermining Ukraine by enabling Putin to make more gains on the battlefield.

"Neither Ukraine nor Russia is going to win this war, and the sooner that the parties try to end this, the better," Kupchan said. "Where Trump goes off course, and where Biden and Harris have a much stronger argument, is that we get to that point not by throwing Ukraine under the bus but by giving them sufficient support so they can block further Russian aggression."

Memphis man gets life sentence for killing rapper Young Dolph

By TRAVIS LOLLER and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Justin Johnson was found guilty of murder in the death of rapper Young Dolph on Thursday after the jury heard testimony from a co-defendant that the killing was part of a feud between rival record labels.

Jurors deliberated for just under four hours before finding Johnson guilty of murder, conspiracy to commit murder and being a felon in possession of a gun. Shelby County Criminal Court Judge Jennifer Mitchell sentenced Johnson to life in prison.

Cornelius Smith testified that rapper Yo Gotti's brother, Anthony "Big Jook" Mims, had put out a \$100,000 hit on Young Dolph and had also put bounties on all the artists at Young Dolph's record label, Paper Route Empire. Smith said he and co-defendant Johnson set out on the morning of Nov. 17, 2021, "looking for somebody" and "didn't know who we were going to catch."

They knew that Young Dolph and some of his artists were participating in a Thanksgiving turkey giveaway, so they were heading in that direction when they saw Young Dolph's car. They followed him to a Memphis cookie shop and opened fire in broad daylight, Smith said. Young Dolph was hit 22 times and died at the scene.

Deputy District Attorney Paul Hagerman, in opening statements, told jurors that Young Dolph, whose real name was Adolph Thornton Jr., was determined to make it on his own as an artist, and also with his own label.

"Trying to make it on your own can create enemies," Hagerman said.

He noted that Cocaine Muzik Group (now known as Collective Music Group), a rival record label founded by Yo Gotti, wanted Young Dolph to work for them, but he turned them down. Young Dolph later wrote diss tracks directed at the label, its artists, and its "number two person," Big Jook. Big Jook was shot and killed outside a restaurant earlier this year.

In addition to Smith's testimony, prosecutors presented a mountain of circumstantial evidence, including from surveillance cameras and Johnson's own cell phone.

Johnson had pleaded not guilty, and defense attorney Luke Evans said in closing arguments that the videos only prove that someone wearing similar clothing to Johnson shot Young Dolph. Evans told the jury Smith would say anything to try to save himself.

"Cornelius Smith is lying from start to finish," Evans said.

Smith is also charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder and has pleaded not guilty.

Evans also noted that Smith's fingerprints were found in the getaway car but Johnson's were not. And he said there was "no proof that Justin Johnson got a penny," while Smith testified he received \$800 before he was arrested and his defense attorney later received another \$50,000.

Hagerman countered that the video and cell phone evidence corroborated Smith's story. They included calls between Smith and Johnson shortly before the killing and a call between Johnson and Big Jook immediately after.

Also testifying was Jermarcus Johnson, who pleaded guilty in June 2023 to three counts of serving as an accessory after the killing by helping Smith and Justin Johnson, his half-brother. Jermarcus Johnson has acknowledged helping the two communicate by cellphone while they were on the run from authorities. He has not been sentenced.

Hernandez Govan, whom Smith identified as a go-between with Big Jook, has pleaded not guilty to organizing the killing.

Young Dolph began his career by releasing numerous mixtapes, starting with 2008's "Paper Route Campaign." His multiple studio albums include his 2016 debut "King of Memphis." He also collaborated on other mixtapes and albums with fellow rappers Key Glock, Megan Thee Stallion, T.I., Gucci Mane, 2 Chainz and others.

Young Dolph had three albums reach the top 10 on the Billboard 200, with 2020's "Rich Slave" peaking at No. 4.

Hearing on Trump assassination attempts says Pennsylvania failure was by Secret Service

By FARNOUSH AMIRI, REBECCA SANTANA and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of a bipartisan House task force investigating the Trump assassination attempts emphasized during their first hearing Thursday that the Secret Service, not local authorities, was responsible for the failures in planning and communications that led to a gunman being able to open fire on former President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania.

Lawmakers repeatedly questioned why the agency tasked with protecting the country's top leaders didn't do a better job communicating with local authorities during the July 13 rally, particularly when it came to securing the building that was widely agreed to be a security threat but that ultimately was left so unprotected that gunman Thomas Michael Crooks was able to climb up and open fire on Trump.

"In the days leading up to the rally, it was not a single mistake that allowed Crooks to outmaneuver one of our country's most elite group of security professionals. There were security failures on multiple fronts," said the Republican co-chair of the committee, Rep. Mike Kelly from Pennsylvania.

"The communication between the Secret Service and local and state partners was disjointed and unclear," said Rep. Jason Crow, the ranking Democrat on the panel, who also praised the local law enforcement.

Trump was wounded and a man attending the rally with his family was killed.

The panel — comprised of seven Republicans and six Democrats — has spent the last two months analyzing the security failures at the rally, conducting nearly two dozen interviews with law enforcement and receiving more than 2,800 pages of documents from the Secret Service.

The lawmakers are also investigating a second assassination attempt on Trump that happened earlier this month where a man with a rifle sought to assassinate the GOP presidential nominee while he was golfing at one of his courses in southern Florida.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 72 of 87

But the hearing Thursday focused on the rally shooting with testimony from Pennsylvania and Butler County police officials.

The Secret Service often relies on local authorities to secure bigger events where protectees like Trump appear around the country. But after the Butler rally, the agency was heavily criticized for failing to clearly communicate what it needed from those local agencies that day.

One key question has been why there were no law enforcement personnel on top of the AGR building where Crooks eventually climbed up and took his shots, considering that it was so close to the rally stage and afforded a clear line of sight to Trump.

"A 10-year old looking at that satellite image could have seen that the greatest threat posed to the president that day" was the building near the stage, said Rep. Pat Fallon, R-Texas.

Edward Lenz, commander for the Butler County Emergency Services Unit who was in charge of the local tactical units operating at the Butler rally, said his agency was never asked to put a sniper team on top of the roof and never said that they would. Lenz said the Secret Service knew their shooters were inside the AGR Building — a position designed to allow them to look for threats inside the rally crowd as opposed to threats to the president from outside — and there was no "feedback or guidance" from the Secret Service that they wanted the team anywhere else.

"They knew where we would be," Lenz said. "They knew what our plan was."

Lenz also testified that Secret Service officials did not check with him or his team to make sure they were in place before Trump went on stage and that the emergency communication for July 13 had not been worked out in advance.

Drew Blasko, an assistant team leader of the sniper unit within the Butler Township Emergency Services Unit, testified that he shared his concerns about the building with the Secret Service ahead of the rally and said his team didn't have the manpower to post anyone there. He said he asked the Secret Service that additional people be posted there and was told "that they would take care of it."

Some of the witnesses also said that there had been discussions ahead of time about using opaque screens or large farm equipment to block the line of sight to the stage, but it's not clear what happened to those suggestions.

Another issue that lawmakers emphasized was the difficulty of the various agencies to talk to each other on radios or cellphones. And they questioned why there were two command posts as opposed to one unified post where the Secret Service could have directly communicated with all the state and local authorities.

Patrick Sullivan, a retired Secret Service agent who was not involved in the Butler rally but attended the hearing as an expert on the agency's practices and procedures, said it was not a typical setup. "There should be just one overall command post," he said.

Lawmakers struggled in their questioning Thursday to get witnesses to zero in on a single individual or moment that led to the assassination attempt. Local police officials and a retired Secret Service agent also testifying instead pointed to a series of incidents and mistakes that ultimately allowed Crooks to remain undeterred for a prolonged period of time and eventually take his shot at the former president.

"Communication was totally lacking here," said Rep. Correa, a Democrat from California. "What went wrong? Who's in charge?"

Thursday's session was the fourth congressional hearing about the Butler shooting since July. Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle resigned one day after she appeared before a congressional hearing where she was berated for hours by both Democrats and Republicans for the agency's security failures.

Cheatle called the Pennsylvania attempt on Trump's life the Secret Service's "most significant operational failure" in decades, but she angered lawmakers by failing to answer specific questions about the investigation.

An interim report Wednesday from the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which is also conducting an investigation, said the Secret Service failed to give clear instructions on how state and local officials should cover the building where the gunman eventually took up position. The report also said the agency didn't make sure it could share information with local partners in real-time.

The Secret Service has also released a five-page document summarizing the key conclusions of a yet-to-

be-finalized agency report on what went wrong in Butler. Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe has said that the agency is ultimately responsible for what happened. He's cited complacency by the agency's staff and said they needed to do a better job communicating with local and state officials.

The House panel is expected to propose a series of legislative reforms and issue a final report before Dec. 13.

While the oversight investigations have been bipartisan, Democrats and Republicans have disagreed on whether to give the Secret Service more money in the wake of its failures. A government funding bill that passed Wednesday includes an additional \$231 million for the agency, even though many Republicans were skeptical and said an internal overhaul of the Secret Service is needed.

OpenAI looks to shift away from nonprofit roots and convert itself to for-profit company

By MATT O'BRIEN, KELVIN CHAN and THALIA BEATY AP Business Writers

OpenAI's history as a nonprofit research institute that also sells commercial products like ChatGPT may be coming to an end as the San Francisco company looks to more fully convert itself into a for-profit corporation accountable to shareholders.

The artificial intelligence company's board is considering a decision that would change OpenAI into a public benefit corporation, according to a source familiar with the discussions who wasn't authorized to speak publicly about them.

While OpenAI already has a for-profit division, where most of its staff works, it is controlled by a nonprofit board of directors whose mission is to help humanity. That would change if the company converts the core of its structure to a public benefit corporation, which is a type of corporate entity that is supposed to help society as well as turn a profit.

No final decision has been made by the board and the timing of the shift hasn't been determined, the source said.

OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman acknowledged in public remarks Thursday that the company is thinking about restructuring but said the departures of key executives the day before weren't related.

Speaking at a tech conference in Italy, Altman mentioned that OpenAI has been considering an overhaul to get to the "next stage." But he said it was not connected to the Wednesday resignations of Chief Technology Officer Mira Murati and two other top leaders.

"OpenAI will be stronger for it as we are for all of our transitions," Altman told the Italian Tech Week event in Turin. "I saw some stuff that this was, like, related to a restructure. That's totally not true. Most of the stuff I saw was also just totally wrong," he said without any more specificity.

"But we have been thinking about (a restructuring)," he added.

OpenAI said Thursday that it will still retain a nonprofit arm.

"We remain focused on building AI that benefits everyone and as we've previously shared we're working with our board to ensure that we're best positioned to succeed in our mission," it said in a written statement. "The nonprofit is core to our mission and will continue to exist."

OpenAI is not the first technology company to try to balance commercial and humanitarian objectives but its maneuvers drew a rebuke Thursday from Mozilla, which blends a nonprofit foundation and research hub with a company known for making the Firefox web browser.

"The principled staff exodus at OpenAI is another example of their true long-term goal: profit," said Mozilla president Mark Surman in an emailed statement. "As far as we can tell, OpenAI no longer exists as a public interest organization."

Altman asserted Thursday that the resignations of Murati, Chief Research Officer Bob McGrew and another research leader, Barret Zoph, were "just about people being ready for new chapters of their lives and a new generation of leadership."

But the exits were the latest in a string of recent high-profile departures that also include the resignations of OpenAI co-founder Ilya Sutskever and safety team leader Jan Leike in May. In a statement, Leike

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 74 of 87

had leveled criticism at OpenAI for letting safety “take a backseat to shiny products.”

Much of the conflict at OpenAI has been rooted in its unusual governance structure. Founded in 2015 as a nonprofit with a mission to safely build futuristic AI to help humanity, it is now a fast-growing big business still controlled by a nonprofit board bound to its original mission.

This unique structure made it possible for four OpenAI board members — Sutskever, two outside tech entrepreneurs and an academic — to briefly oust Altman last November in what was later described as a dispute over a “significant breakdown in trust” between the board and top executives. But with help from a powerful backer, Microsoft, Altman was brought back to the CEO role days later and a new board replaced the old one. OpenAI also put Altman back on the board of directors in March.

It may not be easy to change OpenAI’s corporate structure, even if it’s designed to make investors and employees happy.

Tax experts have said that OpenAI’s corporate structure appeared to be set up to give the tax-exempt nonprofit entity full control of the for profit entities that the organization created as its growth started to take off.

In 2016, the goal of OpenAI’s founders — a group that included Altman and Tesla CEO Elon Musk — was to “advance digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole, unconstrained by a need to generate financial return.”

A few years later, the organization realized it needed billions of dollars to finance the computing power required to develop AI technologies. “We want to increase our ability to raise capital while still serving our mission, and no pre-existing legal structure we know of strikes the right balance,” wrote co-founders Sutskever and Greg Brockman in 2019.

So they set up a new for-profit corporation with a “cap” on the amount of profits that investors or employees could reap and put the nonprofit and its board in charge of the new entity.

Any “excess” profit would go back to the nonprofit, Brockman and Sutskever explained, though in practice little money has gone back to the nonprofit in recent years. Brockman has been on leave since August, leaving Altman one of the few early leaders still at the helm.

In research published in February, Ellen P. Aprill, professor emerita of tax law at Loyola Marymount University, noted that OpenAI’s structure appeared to be “painstakingly” designed to protect its nonprofit status.

All of its subsidiary corporations are governed or managed by the nonprofit and its board, and OpenAI says it warns investors that they may never receive a return.

However, Aprill and her colleagues pointed to Altman’s ouster and reinstatement as evidence that the nonprofit’s board may not be meaningfully in charge. “Unless the members of the board fulfill their fiduciary duties... even the most carefully thought-out structures are for naught,” Aprill and her co-authors wrote.

What obstacles stand in the way of an Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

Israel and Hezbollah each have strong incentives to heed international calls for a cease-fire that could avert all-out war — but that doesn’t mean they will.

Hezbollah is reeling after a sophisticated attack on personal devices killed and wounded hundreds of its members. Israeli airstrikes have killed two top commanders in Beirut in less than a week, and warplanes have pounded what Israel says are Hezbollah sites across large parts of Lebanon, killing over 600 people.

So far, Israel clearly has the upper hand militarily, which could make it less willing to compromise. But it’s unlikely to achieve its goal of halting Hezbollah rocket fire with air power alone, and a threatened ground invasion of Lebanon poses major risks.

After nearly a year of war, Israeli troops are still fighting Hamas in Gaza. And Hezbollah is a much more formidable force.

“Hezbollah has yet to employ 10% of its capabilities,” military affairs correspondent Yossi Yehoshua wrote in Yediot Ahronot, Israel’s largest daily newspaper. “The euphoria that is evident among the decision-makers and some of the public should be placed back in the attic: the situation is still complex and flammable.”

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 75 of 87

The United States and its allies, including Gulf Arab countries, have tried to offer a way out, proposing an immediate 21-day cease-fire to "provide space for diplomacy."

But any deal would require both sides to back away from their core demands, and they may decide the price is too high.

Hezbollah wants a truce in Gaza, too

Hezbollah began launching rockets, drones and missiles into northern Israel after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in the south triggered the war in Gaza. Hezbollah and Hamas are both allies of Iran, and the Lebanese militant group says it is acting in solidarity with Palestinians.

Israel has responded with waves of airstrikes. Overall, the fighting has killed dozens of people in Israel, more than 1,500 in Lebanon and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from communities on both sides of the border.

Hezbollah has said it will halt the attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza. But months of negotiations over Gaza led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt have repeatedly stalled, and Hamas might be less motivated to reach a deal if it thinks Hezbollah and Iran will join a wider war against Israel.

For Hezbollah, halting its rocket fire without securing any tangible gains for the Palestinians would be seen as a capitulation to Israeli pressure, with all of its recent casualties suffered in vain.

Any deal involving a cease-fire in Gaza would be a hard sell for Israel, which would view it as a reward for Hezbollah rocket attacks that have displaced tens of thousands of its citizens for nearly a year.

For Israel, a cease-fire might not be enough

Israel's goals in Lebanon are far narrower than in Gaza, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas and the return of scores of hostages.

Israel wants the tens of thousands of people who were evacuated from northern communities nearly a year ago to return safely to their homes. And it wants to ensure that Hezbollah never carries out an Oct. 7-style attack.

A weekslong cease-fire — which would give Hezbollah a chance to reset after major attacks on its chain of command and communications — might not be enough.

Few Israelis are likely to return if they know it's only temporary, and even an agreement for a lasting cease-fire would face skepticism.

The U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah called for the militants to withdraw north of the Litani River, some 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the border, and for the area between to be patrolled by Lebanese forces and U.N. peacekeepers.

Israel says that provision was never implemented and is likely to demand additional guarantees in any new cease-fire. But Hezbollah is far stronger than Lebanon's regular armed forces and the U.N. detachment, neither of which would be able to impose any agreement by force.

Netanyahu's partners want him to fight on

Netanyahu leads the most religious and nationalist government in Israel's history. His far-right coalition partners have threatened to bring down his government if he makes too many concessions to Hamas, and they are also likely to oppose any deal with Hezbollah.

Bezalel Smotrich, Netanyahu's hardline finance minister, said Thursday that Israel's campaign in the north "should only end in one scenario — crushing Hezbollah and denying its ability to harm residents of the north."

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the far-right National Security Minister, said he would not support a temporary cease-fire and would leave the government if it becomes permanent.

Although opposition parties would likely support the cease-fire, the defection of his partners would eventually bring down Netanyahu's government and force early elections, potentially leaving him even more exposed to investigations into the security failures of Oct. 7 and corruption charges that predate the war. It could even mean the end of his long political career.

Iran has sent mixed signals

In Lebanon, Prime Minister Najib Mikati has welcomed the cease-fire proposal, but he has little power to impose an agreement on Hezbollah.

Iran, which helped establish Hezbollah in the 1980s and is the source of its advanced weapons, has more sway over the group, but it has yet to express a position on any cease-fire. It likely fears a wider war that could bring it into direct conflict with the United States, but can't stand by indefinitely while its most powerful proxy force is dismantled.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, a relative moderate elected over the summer, struck a more conciliatory tone toward the West than his predecessors when he addressed the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday.

But he had sharp words for Israel and said its heavy bombardment of Lebanon in recent days "cannot go unanswered."

Oklahoma executes a man for a 1992 killing despite board recommending his life be spared

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma executed a man Thursday for his role in the 1992 fatal shooting of a convenience store owner after the governor again rejected a recommendation from the state's parole board to spare a death row inmate's life.

Emmanuel Littlejohn, 52, received a lethal injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary and was declared dead at 10:17 a.m.

"A jury found him guilty and sentenced him to death," Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt said in a statement explaining why he declined to commute Littlejohn's sentence to life in prison without parole. "As a law and order governor, I have a hard time unilaterally overturning that decision."

Stitt has granted clemency only once out of the five times that the parole board has recommended it during Stitt's nearly six years in office. Oklahoma has carried out 14 executions under Stitt, having resumed them in 2021 after a more than six-year hiatus.

In voting 3-2 last month to recommend clemency, the board appeared to be moved by questions Littlejohn's lawyers raised about whether he or a co-defendant fired the shot that killed Kenneth Meers. Littlejohn's attorneys also suggested the jury was unclear about whether a sentence of life without parole would guarantee someone would never be released.

His lethal injection came just two days after the execution of Marcellus Williams in Missouri, where advocates insisted Williams was innocent.

Strapped to a gurney and with an IV line in his right arm, Littlejohn looked toward his mother and daughter, who witnessed the execution.

"Mom, you OK?" Littlejohn asked.

"I'm OK," his mother, Ceily Mason, responded.

"Everything is going to be OK. I love you," he said.

Mason sobbed quietly and clutched a cross necklace during the lethal injection, which began shortly after 10 a.m. Littlejohn's breathing became labored before a doctor declared him unconscious at 10:07 a.m. He was pronounced dead 10 minutes later.

Littlejohn's spiritual advisor, the Rev. Jeff Hood, was inside the death chamber and prayed over him.

Steven Harpe, the director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, said the lethal injection went without any problems.

If an execution set for Thursday evening in Alabama is carried out, it would mark the first time in decades that five death row inmates were put to death in the U.S. within one week. The five executions would also mark another grim milestone — 1,600 executions since the death penalty was reinstated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1976, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Littlejohn was 20 when prosecutors say he and co-defendant Glenn Bethany robbed the Root-N-Scout convenience store in south Oklahoma City in June 1992.

During video testimony to the Pardon and Parole Board in early August, Littlejohn apologized to Meers' family but denied firing the fatal shot. Littlejohn's attorneys pointed out that the same prosecutor tried

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 77 of 87

Bethany and Littlejohn in separate trials using a nearly identical theory, even though there was only one shooter and one bullet that killed Meers, 31.

But prosecutors told the board that two teenage store employees who witnessed the robbery both said Littlejohn, not Bethany, fired the fatal shot. Bethany was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Littlejohn's attorneys also argued that killings resulting from a robbery are rarely considered death penalty cases and that prosecutors today would not have pursued the ultimate punishment.

"It is evident that Emmanuel would not have been sentenced to death if he'd been tried in 2024 or even 2004," attorney Caitlin Hoerberlein told the board.

Littlejohn was prosecuted by former Oklahoma County District Attorney Bob Macy, who was known for his zealous pursuit of the death penalty and secured 54 death sentences during more than 20 years in office.

Stitt previously asked one of his appointees to the parole board, Adam Luck, to step down after Luck voted several times to recommend clemency.

The only time Stitt has granted clemency was in 2021, when he commuted Julius Jones' death sentence to life without parole just hours before Jones was scheduled to receive a lethal injection. Stitt has denied clemency recommendations from the board in three other cases: Bigler Stouffer, James Coddington and Phillip Hancock, all of whom were executed.

A state appellate court on Wednesday denied a last-minute legal challenge from Littlejohn's attorneys to the constitutionality of the state's lethal injection method of execution. A similar appeal filed in federal court also was rejected Thursday.

Diners are skipping restaurants and making more meals at home as inflation trend inverts

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Eating in is in and eating out is out.

That's the message that inflation-squeezed consumers have been sending to fast-food companies and other restaurants. Meanwhile food producers are benefitting from more palatable prices in grocery store aisles.

Inflation has been easing broadly for more than a year now, and it's been cooling faster for grocery items since the middle of the year. The current trend marks a reversal from previous years when grocery inflation outpaced restaurants as food producers raised prices, often fattening their profit margins.

The shift has been weighing on McDonald's, Olive Garden owner Darden Restaurants, and similar chains.

Orlando-based Darden reported a 1.1% sales drop at restaurants open for at least a year. The decline was a more severe 2.9% at the Olive Garden chain. July was especially weak.

McDonald's reported a 1.1% drop for that same sales measure during its second quarter, compared with an 11.7% jump a year prior.

"You are seeing consumers being much more discretionary as they treat restaurants," said McDonald's CEO Christopher J. Kempczinski, in a call with analysts following the earnings report. "You're seeing that the consumer is eating at home more often. You're seeing more deal seeking from the consumer."

Both Darden and McDonald's are offering more bargains to entice cautious consumers. Olive Garden has brought back its "never ending pasta bowl," while McDonald's introduced its \$5 value meal deal.

Consumers have been focusing more on groceries and eating at home, and that's driving sales volumes for companies like General Mills, which makes Cheerios cereal, Progresso soups and Haagen-Dazs ice cream.

"We did anticipate that might be the case as we see consumers taking value," said General Mills CEO Jeffrey L. Harmening in a call with analysts. "Consumers are still economically stressed, so that played out the way we thought."

General Mills and other food producers had raised prices to offset rising inflation, resulting in profit margin boosts for many of them. Now they are among food producers trimming some prices to ease the squeeze on consumers.

Grocery stores have also reaped more of the benefits from consumers dining at home. Kroger reported

a 1.2% rise in sales at stores open at least a year during its most recent quarter. Wall Street expects that measure to rise 1.8% during Kroger's current quarter and 2.1% during the final quarter of its fiscal year.

"We are cautiously optimistic about our sales outlook for the second half of the year and expect customers to continue prioritizing food and essentials," said Kroger CEO Rodney McMullen.

US health authorities need to play a larger role in cannabis policy, a new report says

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

With more Americans using ever-stronger marijuana, a federal advisory panel is calling for a public health approach that's a big departure from "Just Say No."

Thursday's report proposes a health-focused strategy with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention taking a larger role in cannabis policy than ever before.

"We'd like the federal government to step up to provide some leadership in this area," said Dr. Steven Teutsch of the University of Southern California, who chaired the committee behind the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report. The CDC and the National Institutes of Health sponsored the report. A CDC spokesperson said Thursday that the agency would study the recommendations and that more money would be needed to implement them.

An estimated 18 million Americans report using marijuana daily or near-daily, more than the number who drink alcohol that often.

Today, 38 states and the District of Columbia allow the medical use of marijuana and many of those states also allow adult recreational use, with taxes and regulation of sales similar to alcohol. Florida voters will decide on recreational use in November.

Marijuana remains illegal under federal law, although the government is taking steps to reclassify cannabis as a less dangerous drug while still illegal.

Cannabis is getting stronger, with levels of the intoxicating compound THC rising. Twenty-five years ago, cannabis flower contained about 5% THC.

"Now you go into the stores, it's hard to find products that are less than 20% THC," said Beau Kilmer, co-director of the RAND Drug Policy Research Center and a report committee member.

Cannabis can ease chronic pain, but evidence on other health benefits has been limited by lack of research. The risks for heavy users include car accidents and repeated bouts of vomiting that can send people to the emergency room.

For teens, cannabis can get in the way of learning and increase the risk of mood and anxiety disorders. Regular use during pregnancy can raise risks for the baby.

Public health "took a back seat" as states passed cannabis laws, Teutsch said. "Financial interests played a substantial role in influencing those policies."

According to the report, industry lobbying has prevented attempts in Washington state to limit THC concentration and attempts in Colorado to restrict pesticides in cannabis cultivation.

Aaron Smith of the National Cannabis Industry Association said states have protected public health by replacing criminal markets with regulated businesses "that are required to test products for contaminants, practice truth in labeling, and most importantly, keep cannabis products out of the hands of minors." Making cannabis legal nationally would improve public health through federal regulation, Smith said.

Among the report's recommendations for the CDC:

- Develop and evaluate health campaigns about cannabis, specifically for parents, young people, pregnant women and people 65 and older.

- Monitor cannabis cultivation, sales, use and health impacts.

- Create best practices for state regulation, including ways to limit youth access.

For Congress:

- Close a loophole that allows intoxicating products derived from hemp to be widely sold, even in states where other cannabis products are illegal.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 79 of 87

— Remove restrictions on the Office of National Drug Control Policy that prevent it from studying the effects of cannabis legalization.

For states:

- Require training and certification for cannabis retail staff.
- Automatically expunge or seal records for low-level cannabis-related offenses in states that have decriminalized cannabis.
- Adopt and enforce quality standards set by the U.S. Pharmacopeia, an independent group that sets standards in medicines and dietary supplements.

Japanese court acquits the longest-serving death row inmate of a 1966 quadruple murder

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A Japanese court found an 88-year-old former boxer not guilty on Thursday after a retrial for a 1966 quadruple murder, reversing a decision that made him the world's longest-serving death row inmate.

Iwao Hakamada's acquittal by the Shizuoka District Court makes him the fifth death row inmate to be found not guilty in a retrial in postwar Japan, where prosecutors have a more than 99% conviction rate. The case could rekindle a debate around abolishing the death penalty in Japan.

The court found that evidence was fabricated and planted by investigators and that Hakamada was not the culprit, his lawyer Hideyo Ogawa said.

After the ruling and an explanation were read out, his 91-year-old sister Hideko Hakamada walked out of the courthouse with a big smile, welcomed by cheers and two big bouquets of flowers to celebrate the acquittal of her brother after the 58-year legal battle.

"Thank you, everyone, we won an acquittal," she told a televised news conference. "When I heard the main sentence, it sounded almost divine. I was so touched and could not stop crying with joy."

Hakamada was convicted of murder in the 1966 killing of an executive and three of his family members, and setting fire to their home in central Japan. He was sentenced to death in 1968, but was not executed due to the lengthy appeal and retrial process in Japan's notoriously slow-paced criminal justice system.

He spent 48 years behind bars — more than 45 of them on death row — making him the world's longest-serving death row inmate, according to Amnesty International.

Ogawa said he asked the prosecutors not to appeal the case, as is possible, but was told they have not yet decided what to do.

The lawyer also said the defense team is considering filing a lawsuit against the government, in part to learn more about the troubled investigation. If prosecutors do not appeal and his acquittal is finalized, Hakamada would be entitled to seek compensation.

It took 27 years for the top court to deny his first appeal for retrial. His second appeal for a retrial was filed in 2008 by his sister.

That request was granted in 2014, when a court ruled there was evidence suggesting he was wrongly accused. He was not cleared of the conviction, but he was released from prison and allowed to await retrial at home because his poor health and age made him a low risk for escape.

But the case continued to bounce among several courts, until one finally ruled in his favor in 2023, paving the way for the latest retrial that began in October.

Following his arrest, Hakamada initially denied the accusations, but then confessed. He later said his confession was forced during a violent interrogation by police.

"I have nothing to do with the case ... I am innocent," he wrote in his letter to his mother while on trial in 1967.

On Thursday, the court concluded that five pieces of bloodstained clothing that investigators claimed to have found hidden in a tank of fermented soybean paste, or miso, a year after Hakamada's arrest must have been put there long after the arrest.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 80 of 87

The court cited scientific experiments that showed the bloodstains should not have been visible on clothing soaked in miso for a year. The ruling concluded that investigators, who had said Hakamada wore the clothes during the crime, had applied the bloodstains themselves and planted the clothing.

According to defense lawyers and earlier court rulings, the blood samples did not match Hakamada's DNA, and trousers that prosecutors submitted as evidence were too small for him.

Thursday's ruling also blamed the prosecutors for forcing Hakamada into a false confession because of an "inhumane" interrogation.

Ogawa, Hakamada's lawyer, praised the ruling as "groundbreaking" for clearly stating that the prosecution fabricated key evidence at the beginning. "I believe this ruling puts an end to the case. ... Now we must prevent prosecutors from appealing no matter what."

After Hakamada was sentenced to death, he expressed fear and anger at being falsely accused.

"When I go to sleep in a soundless solitary cell every night, I sometimes cannot help cursing God. I have not done anything wrong," he wrote to his family. "What a cold-blooded act to inflict such cruelty on me."

Hakamada, whose Christian name is Paulo, was invited to a Mass in Tokyo during Pope Francis' visit in 2019, five years after his release.

Supporters say Hakamada's nearly half-century detention took a toll on his mental health. Most of his 48 years behind bars was spent in solitary confinement. The first two months after Hakamada's release, he kept pacing inside the apartment, without even trying to go outside, his sister said.

One day, she asked him to help her with groceries to get him to agree to leave the house. Going out for a walk then became his daily routine, though today he is less able and he goes out by car, assisted by his supporters.

The case has drawn attention to and criticism of Japan's legal system. Japan Bar Association Chairperson Reiko Fuchigami urged the government and parliament on Thursday to promptly take steps to abolish the death penalty and lower hurdles for retrials.

"The Hakamada case clearly shows the cruelty of the wrongful death penalty, and the tragedy should never be repeated," she said, expressing hope that Hakamada truly regains his freedom and lives in serenity as a citizen.

At a final hearing at the Shizuoka court in May before Thursday's decision, prosecutors again demanded the death penalty, triggering criticism from rights groups that prosecutors were trying to prolong the trial.

Japan and the United States are the only two countries in the Group of Seven advanced nations that retain capital punishment. A survey by the Japanese government showed an overwhelming majority of the public supports executions.

Executions are carried out in secrecy in Japan and prisoners are not informed of their fate until the morning they are hanged. In 2007, Japan began disclosing the names of those executed and some details of their crimes, but disclosures are still limited.

Hideko Hakamada has devoted around half of her life to her brother's case. Before Thursday's ruling, she said she was in a never-ending battle.

"It is so difficult to get a retrial started," She told reporters in Tokyo. "I'm sure there are other people who have been wrongly accused and crying. ... I want the criminal law revised so that retrials are more easily available."

Military recruiting rebounds after several tough years, but challenges remain

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

FORT JACKSON, South Carolina (AP) — After several very difficult years and a swath of new programs and enticements, the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Space Force will all meet their recruiting goals by the end of this month and the Navy will come very close, the military services say.

The results represent a slight uptick in young people joining the military, reversing a dismal trend as the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 81 of 87

services struggled to overcome severe restrictions on in-person recruiting mandated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the low unemployment rate and stiff competition from private companies able to pay more and provide similar or better benefits.

But Army leaders looking to the future worry that an expected drop in the youth population may signal more difficult times ahead. And other military officials say that while they are seeing improvements, they will still face tough challenges and must keep transforming their recruiting going forward.

Military leaders note that only about 23% of young adults are physically, mentally and morally qualified to serve without receiving some type of waiver. Moral behavior issues include drug use, gang ties or a criminal record. And of those qualified to serve, many are wary of taking on a job that puts their life or health at risk.

The Army has made the biggest comeback, after falling far short of recruiting goals for the past two years. Two years ago, the Army brought in 45,000 recruits, far less than the 60,000 it needed, and last year it again fell 15,000 short of what leaders publicly set as a "stretch goal" of 65,000 recruits.

This year, with a lower goal of 55,000, the service will meet its target, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said Wednesday, and she plans to now set a higher goal for 2025.

"We not only met our goal, we exceeded it," she said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Our goal was 55,000 new contracts and 5,000 young people in our delayed entry program. We exceeded that goal of 55,000 by a few hundred, and we put 11,000 young people into the delayed entry program, which is going to give our recruiters a really strong jumping-off point to start towards our recruiting target for next year."

Still, she noted, "the headwinds that we've been facing are not going to stop blowing." Wormuth said that an expected drop of about 10% in the number of college-age young people in 2026 is a significant concern. The dip comes 18 years after the financial recession in 2008, which triggered a decrease in the number of children born.

It's a big issue, she said, because the Army and the other services recruit from that population. And other challenges will also continue.

"I think we're going to probably continue to see pretty low unemployment. We're still going to see 60% go to college. It's a more competitive labor market," Wormuth said. "So we're going to have to kind of keep fighting hard for our new recruits."

A key to the recruiting success, she said, has been the Army's future soldier prep course that gives lower-performing recruits up to 90 days of academic or fitness instruction to help them meet military standards. This year more than 13,000 recruits — or 24% of the 55,000 — came in through the program, which was started as a test two years ago.

The Navy is the only service that won't hit its goal this year. While the service was able to sign up 40,600 recruits as hoped, the crush of last-minute enlistments means it won't be able to get them all through boot camp by next month. As a result, the Navy will fall about 5,000 short of its target to get all of the recruits into the 10-week training course at Great Lakes, Illinois, by the end of the fiscal year.

"I'm excited that even though we can't get everybody that we've signed up right now through boot camp by the end of this month, we now have a delayed entry pool for the beginning of next year, which will really prime the pump," said Navy Adm. Lisa Franchetti, in an interview with The Associated Press.

The Navy fell short of its recruiting goal by about 7,000 last year, prompting leaders to take more dramatic steps than the other services. It has worked to greatly expand its pool of applicants by bringing in recruits who don't have high school diplomas or a GED and by taking young adults who score very low on the armed services test. Both are rare steps that the other services greatly limit or avoid.

Navy leaders also followed the Army and created a future sailor prep course that gives underperforming recruits academic or physical fitness training to help them qualify for enlistment. That course, said Franchetti, "is having really good results for our teammates that want to be in the Navy."

The Air Force, which fell short of its recruiting target last year by about 10%, will hit its goal to recruit at least 27,100 this year while also managing to bolster its pool of delayed entry applicants and will start

the next fiscal year with more than 13,000.

All of the services try to have a pool of applicants ready to go when they start the year, but they all had to dip heavily into that bank of recruits to make their numbers in recent years.

Brig. Gen. Christopher Amrhein, who heads Air Force recruiting, told the AP that there wasn't one "silver bullet" change and the service was able to make some adjustments "without actually changing the quality of the members that are coming in."

The service expanded its ability to bring in legal permanent residents, beefed up its social media presence and has looked for improved partnerships with sports events, including NASCAR.

"It was several initiatives, thoughts, discipline training, all working in harmony, plus some really hard work by our recruiters to have a very strong year," he said, but added, "We've got to keep our foot on the gas on this. We're not out of the woods."

The Marine Corps and the tiny Space Force — the two smallest services — have consistently met their goals. The Space Force brought in 716 recruits — a bit more than its goal of 659.

And the Marine Corps hit its target of roughly 28,000 recruits, and for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic will go into the next year with a larger delayed-entry pool than the previous year.

"Our recruiters, who are assigned to every ZIP code across the nation, knew this year would be challenging, but they never stopped fighting to accomplish the mission," said Maj. Gen. William Bowers, head of Marine Corps Recruiting Command, adding that they "are going into the next fiscal year more confident, focused and determined to meet or exceed the 2025 mission."

US and allies call for an immediate 21-day cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah

By AAMER MADHANI, MATTHEW LEE and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S., France and other allies jointly called Wednesday for an immediate 21-day cease-fire to allow for negotiations in the escalating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah that has killed more than 600 people in Lebanon in recent days.

The joint statement, negotiated on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, says the recent fighting is "intolerable and presents an unacceptable risk of a broader regional escalation."

"We call for an immediate 21-day cease-fire across the Lebanon-Israel border to provide space for diplomacy," the statement said. "We call on all parties, including the governments of Israel and Lebanon, to endorse the temporary cease-fire immediately."

The U.S. hopes the new deal could lead to longer-term stability along the border between Israel and Lebanon. Months of Israeli and Hezbollah exchanges of fire have driven tens of thousands of people from their homes, and escalated attacks over the past week have rekindled fears of a broader war in the Middle East.

While the deal applies only to the Israel-Lebanon border, the U.S. officials said they were looking to use a three-week pause in fighting to restart stalled negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas, another Iranian-backed militant group, after nearly a year of war in Gaza.

The U.S. officials said Hezbollah would not be a signatory to the new cease-fire proposal but believed the Lebanese government would coordinate its acceptance with the group. They said they expected Israel to "welcome" the proposal and perhaps formally accept it when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks at the General Assembly on Friday.

Netanyahu's office said the cease-fire plan put forward from the United States and France was only a proposal and that the prime minister, who was flying to the United States, has not responded to it.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who is the acting prime minister during Netanyahu's trip abroad, said there will be no cease-fire in the north, vowing to continue the fighting there "with full force until victory" and returning the tens of thousands of Israeli citizens evacuated from their homes in the north.

The prime minister's office added that the Israeli military was continuing to strike Hezbollah targets in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 83 of 87

Lebanon and Gaza.

The allies calling for a halt to the Israel-Hezbollah conflict are the United States, Australia, Canada, the European Union, France, the U.K., Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Work on the proposal came together quickly this week with President Joe Biden's national security team, led by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan, meeting with world leaders in New York and lobbying other countries to support the plan, according to U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic conversations.

Blinken first raised the proposal with the French foreign minister Monday and then broadened his outreach that evening at a dinner with the foreign ministers of all the Group of Seven industrialized democracies.

During a meeting Wednesday morning with Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers, Blinken approached Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan to ask their approval and got it. Blinken and senior White House adviser Amos Hochstein then met with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and won his approval.

Sullivan, Hochstein and senior adviser Brett McGurk were also in touch with Israeli officials about the proposal, one of the U.S. officials said. McGurk and Hochstein have been the White House's chief interlocutors with Israel and Lebanon since the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas launched the war in Gaza.

The officials said the deal crystallized by late Wednesday afternoon during a conversation on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly between Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Blinken expects to meet Netanyahu's top strategic adviser in New York on Thursday ahead of the prime minister's arrival.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot told the U.N. Security Council during a special meeting that "we are counting on both parties to accept it without delay" and added that "war is not unavoidable."

At the meeting, Mikati, the Lebanese prime minister, publicly threw his support behind the French-U.S. plan that "enjoys international support and which would put an end to this dirty war."

He called on the Security Council "to guarantee the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Lebanese territories and the violations that are repeated on a daily basis."

Israel's U.N. Ambassador, Danny Danon, told journalists that Israel would like to see a cease-fire and the return of people to their homes near the border: "It will happen, either after a war or before a war. We hope it will be before."

Addressing the Security Council later, he made no mention of a temporary cease-fire but said Israel "does not seek a full-scale war."

Both Danon and Mikati reaffirmed their governments' commitment to a Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war. Never fully implemented, it called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon to be replaced by Lebanese forces and U.N. peacekeepers, and the disarmament of all armed groups including Hezbollah.

Earlier Wednesday, Biden warned in an appearance on ABC's "The View" that "an all-out war is possible" but said he thinks the opportunity also exists "to have a settlement that can fundamentally change the whole region."

Biden suggested that getting Israel and Hezbollah to agree to a cease-fire could help achieve a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

That war is approaching the one-year mark after Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking hostages. Israel responded with an offensive that has since killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, who do not provide a breakdown of civilians and fighters in their count.

"It's possible and I'm using every bit of energy I have with my team ... to get this done," Biden said. "There's a desire to see change in the region."

The U.S. government also raised the pressure with additional sanctions targeting more than a dozen ships and other entities it says were involved in illicit shipments of Iranian petroleum for the financial benefit of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah.

Russian missiles and drones target Kyiv for 5 hours and hit Ukraine's power grid

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's air defenses battled an overnight Russian aerial attack on the capital Kyiv for five hours, officials said Thursday, as missiles and drones again hammered the Ukrainian power grid.

The Kyiv attack injured at least two people, Ukraine's Emergency Service said. A kindergarten, a gas pipe and around 20 cars were damaged in the city, said the Kyiv Military Administration.

In western Ukraine, the air force said, Russia fired three Kinzhal hypersonic ballistic missiles — one of Russia's most advanced weapons — "in the direction of" Starokostiantyniv, a city in the Khmelnytskyi region, on Thursday morning. The air force said it could not make further information public, suggesting the missiles were aimed at a sensitive site.

Long-range strikes have been a hallmark of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, now deep in its third year, often hitting civilian areas. Attacks on the electricity network have knocked out around 70% of Ukraine's energy generation capacity, according to the United Nations, bringing blackouts as winter approaches.

Air defense systems are a critical need for Ukraine, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was due to meet President Joe Biden in Washington on Thursday in an effort to ensure continuing U.S. military support for his country.

Energy infrastructure was hit in Ukraine's western Ivano-Frankivsk region, causing a blackout in parts of the regional capital of the same name, regional Gov. Svitlana Onyshchuk said.

The power grid was also targeted in the southern Mykolaiv region, local authorities said without immediately providing further details.

Russia launched six missiles and 78 Shahed drones at Ukraine overnight from Wednesday to Thursday, Ukraine's air force said. Defenses destroyed four of the missiles and 66 drones in the air, it said.

In the south, a missile killed a 62-year-old woman in the Odesa region, where homes and cars were damaged, regional Gov. Oleh Kiper said.

In the city of Zaporizhzhia, at least 10 people were injured in the overnight attack, including a 14-year-old, said regional governor Ivan Fedorov. He published photographs of houses with their windows blown out and walls riddled with shrapnel. The Emergency Service said 12 residential buildings were damaged in the city and 18 people were evacuated.

Meanwhile, in the northeastern Sumy region ordnance experts defused a 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) glide bomb that landed without exploding next to a bridge over the River Psel.

Shorter games, more running, more action. Two years in, MLB's rule changes have provided a jolt

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Two years ago, it looked as if Major League Baseball was having an existential crisis. To many inside the game, it certainly felt like one as a sport built on its timelessness careened toward a future hellbent on speeding things up.

Pitch clocks. Defensive shift bans. Bigger bases. Fewer throwovers. Ghost runners. Expanded playoffs designed to keep more teams in contention. All with the expressed purpose of getting the fans in the stands to put down their phones and the ones sitting at home from flipping to a channel where something — anything really — was actually happening.

Though the changes were working, there was trepidation. And with good reason.

Los Angeles Dodgers manager Dave Roberts could feel baseball retreating into the mainstream background, and the metrics — from attendance to TV ratings on down — backed it up.

"I think that in the last 10 or 20 years, you know, football and basketball have taken market share," he said.

The issue wasn't the players, who are throwing it harder, hitting the ball farther and running faster than

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 85 of 87

any previous generation. It was the game itself.

Texas Rangers manager Bruce Bochy was in the midst of a three-year sabbatical in the early 2020s and would often find himself engaged in the same conversation over and over.

"Man, your game slowed down," Bochy would be told before adding that he agreed with the assessment "because I was watching them, too."

Baseball rule changes having tangible impact

Nearly two seasons into MLB's great experiment, the tide has turned.

The average game time has dropped to 2 hours, 36 minutes, the lowest since 1984. Attendance is up 11% since 2022. Viewership — particularly among fans 18-34 — has risen 10.5% since the changes were adopted. Youth participation is spiking. Baseball's social media ecosystem is thriving.

The angst that accompanied MLB's modernization has been replaced with something far different as the 2024 playoffs loom: legit buzz.

The best player on Roberts' team, Shohei Ohtani — who also happens to be the best hitter on the planet — offered proof in Miami last week.

Six swings. Three home runs. Two stolen bases. A club-record 10 RBIs. The inaugural member of the 50/50 club. One iconic performance by Ohtani that broke barriers and social media along with it.

Yet maybe the most impressive number on the most remarkable night of Ohtani's career — so far anyway — was Time of Game: 3 hours, 6 minutes. During that span the Dodgers and the Marlins managed to combine for 24 runs, 25 hits and 54 outs and sparked countless "did you see what Shohei did?" conversations.

"I don't love all the rule changes, but they seem to be making the game more exciting for fans, which is why we play — for our fans," Cleveland Guardians manager Stephen Vogt said.

Fans enjoying watching more action, rising baseball stars

A fanbase that is growing younger seemingly in lockstep with the game's bid to get faster.

According to MLB, the median age of ticket buyers has dropped five years (from 51 to 46) since 2019. The number of tickets sold to fans ages 18-34 has jumped 8.5% over that span. It helps that the games are getting shorter. Attendance at weeknight games is up 12% over 2022 per MLB, in part because fans aren't as concerned they're going to be out all night.

"To sit down and watch a game used to be just too much of a time commitment, right?" said Tate Conrad of Des Moines, Iowa, while taking in a game at between the Chicago Cubs and New York Yankees in early September.

Now, not so much. And it's not just that the games are shorter. There's more happening, most notably on the base paths.

The decision to limit pickoffs has allowed base runners to go wild. There have been nearly 1,000 more stolen bases in 2024 than there were in 2022 heading into the final days of the regular season. Check your phone for a second and that runner on first might be standing on third by the time you look up.

"I just feel like the attention span of people is getting shorter and shorter," Arizona Diamondbacks outfielder Jake McCarthy said. "So I just think when you turn on a baseball game, the odds of a play like that happening — (the changes have) increased the chances of it."

Hardly the picture of a sport that Pittsburgh Pirates rookie ace Paul Skenes allows only tongue-somewhat-in-cheek could seem monotonous to those on the outside looking in.

"You know, especially nights like tonight," the 22-year-old said after limiting Miami to one run in six innings while racking up nine strikeouts in a 3-2 victory on Sept. 9. "Not very many runs scored, that kind of thing. It is a boring sport in some ways."

Not when Skenes is on the hill. The former No. 1 overall pick turned All-Star starter has been a sensation in his first year with the Pirates. His starts are simply known as "Skenes Day" in Pittsburgh and fans will show up to PNC Park wearing faux Skenes-inspired mustaches to go with their No. 30 jerseys.

The flame-throwing right-hander is among a wave of young stars, including San Diego Padres outfielder Jackson Merrill, Kansas City shortstop Bobby Witt Jr. and Cincinnati shortstop Elly De La Cruz.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 86 of 87

The rising stars could eventually be where Ohtani and teammate Mookie Betts, New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge, and Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Bryce Harper are now: the faces of the game.

Nontraditional outlets bringing more eyeballs to baseball

Yet there's more at play here. It's not just baseball that's changing, but the way the game is being consumed. It's not just that more fans are watching games on their phones than ever — MLB.TV's 28 highest-rated telecasts have all come over the course of the last two seasons — but that they're looking toward nontraditional outlets for analysis, perspective and more than a few laughs.

Outlets like Jomboy Media. Co-founded seven years ago by Jimmy O'Brien when he was in his late 20s along with Jake Storiato, Jomboy Media offers sports-related content across various platforms, including a YouTube channel that has nearly 2 million subscribers.

The Jomboy offerings run the gamut, from comically tinged breakdowns to in-depth analysis to trivia contests among the company's on-air talent, most of whom are in their 20s.

"My brother is 10 years younger than I am, and baseball abandoned him," O'Brien said. "They didn't put highlights where people could find them."

It's not just young males getting involved either.

Skenes' girlfriend is LSU gymnast/influencer Livvy Dunne, who has spent a chunk of her summer exposing her 5.3 million Instagram followers to Skenes' rapid rise from college star to rookie MLB phenom.

While Skenes himself generally shies away from social media, he also gave a tutorial on his "splinker" grip on the "Pitching Ninja" YouTube channel. Those kinds of appearances can create a connection that was simply unavailable a generation ago. Skenes sees the increasingly symbiotic relationship between players and content creators as a driver of interest in the game.

"They are growing the game and I think that's a byproduct of what we're doing on the field," he said.

Loosening swag restrictions in baseball widens the game's appeal

The aim isn't just to create fans, but players. There's evidence that it's working.

Over 16 million children participated casually in baseball in 2023, according to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, more than double what it was in 2014, the last year before MLB launched its "Play Ball" Initiative. Little League International counts more than 2 million kids playing youth baseball or softball under its umbrella across the world, a slight increase over 2019.

The hope is the changes create a trickle-down effect. Make the games move along faster to appeal to a wider audience. Maybe kids watching — on their TVs, their tablets, their phones or in the stands — will find baseball a more appealing alternative to other sports or video games.

It helps MLB has loosened up its staid rules on uniforms and celebrations, allowing players to express themselves in ways that used to be forbidden. Bat-flips, hand-gestures and highly specific home run celebrations are now an accepted part of the game, along with more freedom for players to use whatever colors they prefer on their cleats or their gloves.

Swag is important. Pirates manager Derek Shelton points to New York Mets shortstop Francisco Lindor as proof.

"I think it's been a very concerted effort by Major League Baseball to try to make it a little bit more, I don't know if 'cooler' is the right word but appealing to younger kids because that's what they gravitate towards," Shelton said.

Ten years ago, Andrew McCutchen was a perennial MVP candidate who had swag to spare, from his dreadlocks (long since shorn) to the way he'd drop his bat after a walk.

When the Pittsburgh Pirates designated hitter looks out across the MLB landscape, he sees players his 6-year-old son Steel might one day emulate. Players from Atlanta outfielder Ronald Acuna Jr. to San Diego Padres star Fernando Tatis, all unafraid to draw attention to themselves or their sport.

"People are showing their personalities a little more, especially at a very young age that they are in their careers and that's good," McCutchen said. "That's good for the game."

The numbers across the board offer proof. The skepticism that greeted the rule changes and all that came with it has morphed into something bordering on optimism.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 094 ~ 87 of 87

While things are hardly perfect — not in a season that will end with the historically bad Chicago White Sox crossing the 120-loss barrier, the Athletics bailing on Oakland and a rash of elbow injuries to high-profile pitchers that have left some wondering if the clock is to blame — there is an energy about the game that it lacked in recent years. Yes, it took seismic changes to get here. Yet all sides seem to have bought in as a potentially electric October looms.

Roberts sees it on the field, in the stands, and in the culture.

"The talent's never been higher," the Dodgers manager said. "More eyeballs (are on the game). And I think attendance is speaking volumes to that. I think the parity in the game speaks to that. So we're in a good spot."

Today in History: September 27, Taliban take power in Afghanistan

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Sept. 27, the 271st day of 2024. There are 95 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 27, 1996, in Afghanistan, the Taliban, a band of former seminary students, drove the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani out of Kabul, captured the capital and executed former leader Najibullah.

Also on this date:

In 1779, John Adams was named by Congress to negotiate the Revolutionary War's peace terms with Britain.

In 1903, a Southern Railway mail train derailed near Danville, Virginia, killing 11; the accident inspired the famous ballad, "Wreck of the Old 97."

In 1939, Warsaw, Poland, surrendered after weeks of resistance to invading forces from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II.

In 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, formally allying the World War II Axis powers.

In 1964, the government publicly released the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, Congress gave its final approval to forming the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced in a nationally broadcast address that he was eliminating all U.S. battlefield nuclear weapons and called on the Soviet Union to match the gesture.

In 1994, more than 350 Republican congressional candidates gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol to sign the "Contract with America," a 10-point platform they pledged to enact if voters sent a GOP majority to the House.

In 2013, President Barack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke by telephone, the first conversation between American and Iranian leaders in more than 30 years.

In 2018, during a day-long hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee, Christine Blasey Ford said she was "100 percent" certain that she was sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when they were teenagers, and Kavanaugh then told senators that he was "100 percent certain" he had done no such thing.

In 2021, R&B singer R. Kelly was convicted in a sex trafficking trial in New York, after decades of avoiding criminal responsibility for numerous allegations of misconduct with young women and children.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Randy Bachman (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 81. Actor Liz Torres is 77. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt is 75. Singer and actor Shaun Cassidy is 66. Comedian Marc Maron is 61. Actor Gwyneth Paltrow is 52. Actor Indira Varma is 51. Musician-actor Carrie Brownstein is 50. Actor Anna Camp is 42. Rapper Lil Wayne is 42. Musician Avril Lavigne (AV'-rihl la-VEEN') is 40. Tennis player Simona Halep is 33. Actor Jenna Ortega is 22.