

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 1 of 74

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Homecoming Parade Photos](#)
- [14- Obit: Ilse Cameron](#)
- [15- Prairie Doc: "Children's Dental Health: Key Points for Parents"](#)
- [16- Editorial: Revealing the "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing Bill of Sale"](#)
- [17- October Night Sky Guide](#)
- [18- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [19- EarthTalk - Pests attacking native trees](#)
- [20- SD SearchLight: Wind turbine technicians top SD's list of fastest growing jobs](#)
- [22- Weather Pages](#)
- [27- Daily Devotional](#)
- [28- Subscription Form](#)
- [29- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [30- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [31- News from the Associated Press](#)

Monday, Sept. 30

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

Tuesday, Oct. 1

- Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, pineapple/oranges, breadstick.
- School Breakfast: Scones.
- School Lunch: Chicken strips, tater tots
- Volleyball at Great Plains Lutheran (5 at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15 p.m., varsity to follow)
- Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



- Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center
- City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
- United Methodist Bible Study, 10 a.m.
- St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 2

- Senior Menu: Autumn soup, peas, chicken salad
- croissant, cinnamon apple sauce.
- School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
- School Lunch: Quesadillas, corn.
- Picture Day
- Groton Chamber meeting, noon, City Hall
- Community Coffee Hour at United Methodist Church, 9:30 a.m.
- Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.
- St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m. (elect officers), League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 2 of 74

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 Ravages Southeast

Hurricane Helene has left a trail of devastation since making landfall last week, killing over 100 people across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Dozens of people remain unaccounted for; more than 4 million people have experienced power outages.

A leading danger has come from floods and mudslides. In Tennessee, a bridge collapsed and a dam narrowly avoided failure. In North Carolina, entire towns and cities were cut off, with Asheville (population 94,000) largely isolated for days, requiring emergency supplies to be airlifted in. Atlanta witnessed the heaviest downfall of rain in a 48-hour period in its history. Dozens of people across multiple states have been rescued by helicopter.

Part of the impact can be explained by the storm's relatively large width. As Helene was downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone, the system continued to cause storm surges and historic floodwaters.

Hezbollah Leader Killed

An Israeli airstrike killed Hezbollah's longtime leader, Hassan Nasrallah, over the weekend. The strike involved 80 tons of bunker-buster bombs, killing Nasrallah at a meeting of senior leaders below residential buildings south of the Lebanese capital of Beirut.

The 64-year-old Nasrallah helmed the group, designated a terrorist organization by the US, for more than 30 years. During that time, he was seen as a spiritual leader for Hezbollah's supporters (up to roughly one-third of Lebanon's population) and a pivotal player in the Iranian proxy group's transformation into a regional power. The group led the 2006 war against Israel and has carried out ongoing strikes across the Lebanon-Israel border since Oct. 8—a show of support for Hamas following its Oct. 7 attacks and amid Israel's war in Gaza.

Israel has significantly expanded attacks across the region, killing other top Hezbollah commanders over the past week. It also struck Iran-backed Houthi rebels yesterday, its second such strike in Yemen.

'I Can Eat Sugar Now'

A stem cell treatment has reversed a 25-year-old woman's Type 1 diabetes, a study last week found. The case marks the first in which a patient with Type 1 was treated using cells from her own body.

Researchers at Beijing's Peking University extracted patient cells and reverted them to their pluripotent state. They then developed these cells into the insulin-producing islet cells responsible for turning glucose into energy—a process attacked by the body when a person has Type 1 diabetes. The team tested the cells in mice and primates for safety. Then, in June 2023, they reinjected 1.5 million cells into the patient's abdomen. Two and a half months later, the patient was producing enough insulin on her own to forgo other treatments.

Roughly half a billion people—including 38.4 million Americans—live with a form of diabetes, representing roughly 10% of the global adult population.

Editor's note: In Saturday's newsletter, we mistakenly referred to NYC Mayor Eric Adams (D) as a Republican. He is a Democrat. We apologize for the error and thank you to readers for pointing it out.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 3 of 74

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

MLB regular season wraps with postseason kicking off tomorrow; see playoff bracket.
Chicago White Sox set modern record for most losses in a season with 121.
YouTube blocks content by Adele, Green Day, Bob Dylan, and more amid legal dispute with a performing rights organization.
Kris Kristofferson, Grammy- and Golden Globe-winning country music legend and actor, dies at age 88.
Drake Hogestyn, longtime "Days of Our Lives" star, dies at age 70.
John Ashton, actor best known for "Beverly Hills Cop" franchise, dies at age 76.

Science & Technology

California passes law expanding its consumer privacy laws to give users of brain-computer interface devices ownership over their neurological data.
California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) vetoes AI safety bill, siding with tech execs.
Geologists discover new subduction zone—an area where one tectonic plate slides underneath another—in the Eastern Pacific.
SpaceX launches mission that will eventually return pair of astronauts stranded on the International Space Station following malfunction of their Boeing vehicle; return trip slated for February.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed Friday (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq -0.4%), with the Dow closing at a record high; key inflation data from August gives traders hope for additional interest cuts this year.
Government-facilitated talks between Boeing and union workers collapse, with no dates scheduled for further discussions; total US gross domestic product estimated to have dropped by \$1B since walkout of 33,000 production workers began this month.
WeightWatchers CEO Sima Sistani departs amid 90% drop in share value over the past year; Sistani had spearheaded \$106M acquisition of telehealth company prescribing weight-loss drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy.

Politics & World Affairs

Austria's nationalist-populist Freedom Party leads in yesterday's parliamentary elections with nearly 30% of the vote, the first win of its kind since WWII; remaining parties are in negotiations to form a coalition without it.
Nepal flooding and landslides leave at least 148 people dead, with capital of Kathmandu hardest hit.
The US says its airstrikes in Syria this month killed 37 al-Qaeda- and ISIS-affiliated militants, including two senior operatives.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 4 of 74

GHS Homecoming Parade Photos



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 5 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 6 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 7 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 8 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 9 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 10 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 11 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 12 of 74



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 13 of 74



The Life of Ilse Cameron



Ilse Dorteia Rosebrock Cameron passed away on September 26, 2024, at Bethesda Home in Aberdeen at the age of 94.

Ilse was born on December 5, 1929, to Fred and Thea (Müller) Rosebrock in Frederick, South Dakota. She attended Senn country school and Frederick High School. Ilse graduated from South Dakota State University in 1951 with a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics where she was a member of Phi Upsilon Omicron, Sigma Lambda Sigma and Pi Gamma Mu. She began teaching first in Gettysburg and then Webster, South Dakota.

Mom was introduced to Jerry Cameron on a blind date by their friends, Vi (Storley) and Richard Johnson. They were married on January 28, 1954, in Aberdeen and moved to the family farm east of Pierpont. Their union was blessed with four children, Steven, Margaret, Mary, and Paul. Mom was the consummate homemaker, keeping a beautiful home, growing a big garden, canning and making preserves, and sewing our clothes. Mom always seemed to have a homemade treat waiting for us when we got off the school bus.

Mom was active in community events, assisting with our 4-H clubs, judging at the Day County Fair, and serving many years as a band mother for all four children. She joined Eastern Star in 1958 and served in multiple offices including

Worthy Matron. Ilse was a member of Pierpont Community Church and later transferred to Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Ilse returned to teaching at Langford High School upon Jerry's death in 1975. She worked hard to support her four children and was our source of love and strength during a very challenging time. After teaching for several years, Ilse began working at Day County Bank in Pierpont retiring in 1994.

In 2000, Ilse moved off the family farm to Groton, SD. She joined Emmanuel Lutheran Church and remained active in Eastern Star. She was a volunteer for the pre-K program at Groton Elementary for several years. Ilse was a wonderful Grandmother, always willing to sew baby clothes, Halloween costumes, and doll clothes.

Ilse was preceded in death by her parents, Fred and Thea Rosebrock, her brother Fritz, an infant sister, her husband, Jerald Cameron, and her son-in-law, Patrick Collins. She is survived by her children, Steven (Cheryl), Margaret, Mary (Iver Finnesand), and Paul (Heidi). Six grandchildren, Cameron, Christopher, Sarah, Rachel, Ellie, and Emily; two great-grandchildren, Harrison and Hattie.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be her grandchildren.

Memorial services under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel will be held at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Groton on October 12, 2024, at 2:00pm. A private family burial will be held at Homer Cemetery in Pierpont.

Visitation will be held at the church for one hour prior to services.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be her grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to Homer Township Cemetery c/o CorTrust Bank, PO Box 231, Pierpont, SD 57468.

“Children’s Dental Health: Key Points for Parents”

Good dental health in children is crucial for overall well-being. Healthy teeth enable proper chewing, speech development, and contribute to self-esteem. Prioritizing dental health through education, preventive care, and regular check-ups lays the foundation for a lifetime of healthy smiles. The following topics are common discussion points of children’s dental health.

First Dental Visit

Children should visit the dentist by their first birthday or within six months after their first tooth erupts. Early visits help establish a dental home and allow the dental care team to monitor oral development and provide guidance on proper care. Regular dental visits every six months are essential for monitoring dental health and catching potential issues early.

Fluoride Treatments

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral that helps prevent tooth decay. Fluoride treatments can help strengthen tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acids produced by bacteria in the mouth. This in turn helps to significantly reduce the risk of cavities and promote stronger, healthier teeth. Dentists often recommend fluoride treatments for children and may also suggest fluoride toothpaste for at home use.

Dental Sealants

Dental sealants are thin coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of molars (back teeth) to protect them from cavities. Sealants act as a barrier against food particles and bacteria. They are typically recommended for children once their permanent molars emerge, usually around age six.

Visiting An Orthodontist

Children should have their first evaluation with an orthodontist by age seven. At this age, an orthodontist can identify potential issues with tooth alignment and bite. Early intervention may prevent more severe problems later and can help guide the growth of the jaw.

Thumb Sucking

Thumb sucking is common in infants and toddlers and usually doesn’t cause issues if stopped by age four. Prolonged thumb sucking can lead to dental problems, such as misalignment of teeth or changes in the roof of the mouth. If a child continues thumb sucking beyond this age, parents should consult a dentist for advice.

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Baby bottle tooth decay occurs when sugary liquids like milk or juice cling to a child’s teeth, leading to decay. To prevent this, avoid putting a baby to bed with a bottle and ensure regular cleaning of the child’s teeth and gums. Water can be used as a nighttime beverage.

Teeth Grinding (Bruxism)

Teeth grinding, or bruxism, is common in children, especially during sleep. It can be caused by stress, misaligned teeth, or other factors. If grinding is frequent, it can wear down teeth and lead to discomfort. Parents should discuss the issue with their child’s dentist, who may recommend monitoring, relaxation techniques, or in some cases, a custom mouth guard.

Dental Anxiety

Dental anxiety is a common issue among children, characterized by fear or apprehension about visiting the dentist. This anxiety can stem from various factors, including fear of pain, unfamiliar environments, or negative past experiences. Prepare children by discussing what to expect at their visit, using positive reinforcement, and visiting the office beforehand to familiarize them with the environment.

Regular dental checkups and good oral hygiene practices are vital for children’s dental health. Parents and caretakers should stay informed about common issues and consult their dentist for personalized advice to ensure the health of their child’s smile.

John Bisson, DDS is a dentist and owns Bisson Dental in Brookings, SD. Dr. Bisson is originally from Sturgis, SD but moved to Brookings in 2015 and opened Bisson Dental in 2018. For more information about Bisson Dental head here, <https://www.bisson-dental.com/>. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By John Bisson, DDS

Editorial

Revealing the “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing Bill of Sale”

South Dakota is not for sale. More than 38,000 people of South Dakota have signed the petition against Senate Bill 201 (SB 201) in just 90 days in a grassroots effort. South Dakota’s citizens have spoken and we want to keep our property rights local and out of the hands of big private corporations and state government. To continue these efforts please vote “No” on November 5th on Referred Law 21 (RL 21), the ballot version of SB 201.

RL 21, the “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing Bill of Sale”, is lengthy, confusing, and deceptive - offering no real protections for the landowners in the so called “Landowner Bill of Rights”. This bill could have a profound impact on our state’s and our neighboring states’ livelihoods, economy, environment, health, and safety in ways that would be irreparable. Learn more truths on Youtube video “Facts2024Ep8”.

This bill takes away the rights of every South Dakota citizen: it does not address eminent domain for potential economic development; there’s no protection of Constitutional rights; it restricts landowner’s ability to negotiate easements; it legislates private land negotiations; there’s no mandate of public release of safety data that includes pipeline rupture kill zones; and it does not protect landowners’ liability from pipeline ruptures.

This bill destroys local authority and control: it overrides local ordinances designed to protect communities; it upends 135 years of county zoning authority for a prospective project and future unknowns; it prohibits a county’s ability to tax or charge fees to offset costs and expenses; and it does not guarantee the \$1 per linear foot and only for up to 12 years.

August 21, 2024, the SD State Supreme Court ruled that CO2 is not a commodity, that the Summit pipeline is not a common carrier, and that Summit will not be allowed to use eminent domain to force landowners to sign easements for pipeline development or be able to access their land for surveys without consent. CO2 is necessary for plant growth so why take it out of the air?

This project is driven by Summit and their allies to acquire billions in tax credits (our taxpayer dollars), take control of our land, and use the sequestered CO2 for fracking oil, lining their pockets and those of foreign entities. We do not want these foreign entities taking control of our land. Let your voice be heard by voting “No” on RL 21. South Dakota is not for sale.

RJ and Lisa Wright
Brandon, SD



October 2024 Night Sky Guide

OCT
17

Full Hunter's Moon— Supermoon

Third Supermoon of four in a row!

OCT
**20-
21**

Moon Kisses Jupiter

Look E after 9:30 pm local time
(until sunrise).

OCT
**30-
31**

Trick or Treat Triple Threat

Gemini (Castor and Pollux)
and Mars form a straight line.

Look E just before midnight local time



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 18 of 74

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

Phew!

If you stopped watching when the Minnesota Vikings were up 28-0 against the Green Bay Packers, you missed a nail-biting finish. The Packers staged an insane comeback, outscoring the Vikings 29-3 and coming within an onside kick recovery from pulling off the improbable. Luckily for the Vikings, they were able to corral the onside kick and run out the clock to preserve their 31-29 win. The Vikings are now 4-0 this season but have plenty of questions heading into their week five matchup against Aaron Rodgers and the Jets.

The game started about as well as possible. The Vikings got the ball first and only needed six plays to drive 73 yards and reach the endzone on a 29-yard connection from Sam Darnold to Jordan Addison (who was finally back from an injury he suffered in week one against the Giants). The Packers had a decent drive going on the ensuing possession but missed a 37-yard field goal. The Vikings got the ball back and again drove 73 yards for a touchdown, this time on a two-yard pass to Josh Oliver, putting the good guys up 14-0. Three plays later, Kamu Grugier-Hill (who once again got the start with Ivan Pace Jr. out with an injury), intercepted Jordan Love for his second INT in consecutive weeks.

Entering the second quarter, the Vikings once again methodically moved the ball down the field and found the endzone, this time on a seven-yard end-around run. The Packers took their next possession down to the Vikings' 31-yard line, but again missed a field goal. After a Vikings' three-and-out, the Packers got the ball back but three plays later Love threw another interception, this time to Shaquill Griffin, who returned the ball to the four-yard line. After a holding penalty moved the Vikings back ten yards, Sam Darnold hit Justin Jefferson for a 14-yard touchdown. The Packers once again got into Vikings' territory, but not trusting their kicker, decided to go for it on fourth down but the pass from Love to Bo Melton was knocked away from Byron Murphy. Both teams exchanged three-and-outs, but on the Packers' punt, Jalen Nailor muffed the punt, setting the Packers up at the Vikings' three-yard line. Two plays later, the Packers finally found the endzone and the two teams went into halftime with the score 28-7.

The Packers got the ball to begin the second half and went three-and-out. The Vikings were driving on the next possession, but Darnold was intercepted by Xavier McKinney at the two-yard line. The Packers and Vikings proceeded to trade punts on the next two possessions, followed by the Packers turning the ball over on downs, followed by another Vikings punt. It was an ugly third quarter for both teams, and we entered the fourth quarter with a score of 28-7.

Unfortunately for the Vikings, everything that could go wrong did, while the Packers were seemingly unstoppable. The Packers had an 11-play, 89-yard touchdown, and then the Vikings fumbled the ball away on their next possession. The Packers found the endzone again two plays later, and after completing the two-point conversion, the score was suddenly 28-22. The Vikings managed to get a field goal on their next drive and followed that up with a third interception of Love, this time it was Byron Murphy snagging the INT. The Vikings went three-and-out but recovered a Packers' fumble on their next drive. The Vikings got the ball down to the Packers' four-yard line, but a horrible spot by the refs on fourth down gave the Packers the ball back, who went 96 yards in less than a minute and a half, bringing the score to 31-29. Luckily for the Vikings, they recovered the ensuing onside kick and escaped Green Bay with a 31-29 win.

Sam Darnold completed 20 of 28 passes for 275 yards, three touchdowns and one interception. Aaron Jones rushed the ball 22 times for 93 yards. Justin Jefferson caught six passes for 85 yards and a touchdown, while Jordan Addison added 72 yards on three catches for a touchdown to go along with his rushing TD.

After having at least five sacks in each of the first three games, the Vikings' defense only managed to bring Jordan Love down once. However, they were able to secure three interceptions to make up for it.

Looking ahead, the Vikings travel to London to take on Aaron Rodgers and the Jets this Sunday, October 6. It will be an early game, so make sure to set your alarm so you're up and ready for the 8:30 am start. The Jets are 2-2, and just lost an ugly game to the Denver Broncos. Rodgers was banged up in that game, and the Jets were sloppy in all three phases. The Vikings are clearly the better team, but as we know all too well, anything can happen in the NFL.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 19 of 74

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: I live in Massachusetts and often walk in the woods. It seems as if there are endless pests and diseases attacking our native trees. There are so many fallen or dead trees in the woods now. Is there hope for our forests?

— Molly Goodwin, via e-mail

In colonial days, wood was a hot commodity in New England. It was so widely used for agriculture and other industries that, between the 17th and 20th centuries, several New England states saw a 60 percent reduction in woodlands. Today, roughly 80 percent of New England is wooded again, but over 99 percent of the trees were planted within the last 100 years. These new-growth forests are remarkably homogenous, being evenly spaced, similar in height and size, and primarily of the same species.

Though trees have significantly rallied, financial support for New England land conservation has dropped by half since 2008. The annually conserved land area declined sixfold in just a decade, from 333,000 acres in the early 2000s to just 50,000 acres since 2010. A Harvard study showed that New England is losing 65 acres of woods daily to development, half which is related to increasing residential demands. Beyond development threats, the lack of biodiversity in these homogenous new-growth forests makes them particularly vulnerable to environmental changes, invasive species and infectious diseases.

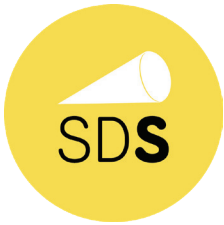
Rising temperatures put new-growth trees at risk of droughts, soil deterioration and extreme weather events. Invasive southern insects like the gypsy moth and Southern pine beetle are migrating northward as historically colder climates begin to warm. These bugs defoliate trees, bore bark to feed on tree sap, and cause needle loss. And invasive plants are now outcompeting native ones by releasing enzymes into the soil that limit the native plant growth and form dense thickets that shade out native species.

Citizens, scientists and ecologists must work together to prevent a 'bare New England.' State and local governments have the power to strengthen conservation efforts. For one, the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act permits towns to impose a surcharge of up to three percent on property taxes which is then diverted to preservation. Participation is voluntary, but 56 percent of towns have opted in.

Sustainable forestry is needed to prevent more tree loss. Selective cutting removes specific trees rather than clear-cutting. Building upwards instead of outwards reduces land clearance. Improving paper and wood recycling efforts reduces the demand for raw materials from forests. Removing invasive species would improve soil health and enhance ecosystem resilience. However, the process is labor-intensive and costly. Despite these challenges, finding the right balance between conservation, demand reduction, and invasive species removal may be the key to preserving the New England forests.



These days roughly 80 percent of New England is wooded, but over 99 percent of the trees were planted within the last 100 years. Credit: Roddy Scheer.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Wind turbine technicians top SD's list of fastest growing jobs

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - SEPTEMBER 29, 2024 2:08 PM

The fastest growing occupation through 2032 in South Dakota will be wind turbine service technicians, according to new projections from the state Department of Labor and Regulation.

The department recently released its occupational employment projections for the 2022-2032 decade.

Wind service turbine technicians also hold the top spot on the national list.

"It has been over 20 years since the first wind turbines began dotting the South Dakota horizon and 'wind techs,' as they are often called, not only install those big fans but also maintain and repair them as needed," said the department's report. "As this natural renewable energy source continues to grow in popularity, the need for these workers is also projected to continue at a whirlwind pace."

The department defines the fastest growing occupations as those that had employment of at least 100 workers in 2022 and have the highest percent change of employment during the 2022-2032 projections period.



Wind turbines stand in a cornfield in southern South Dakota on Aug. 14, 2024. (Makenzie Huber, South Dakota Searchlight)

Fastest growing occupations in SD

Among occupations with employment of at least 100 workers in 2022



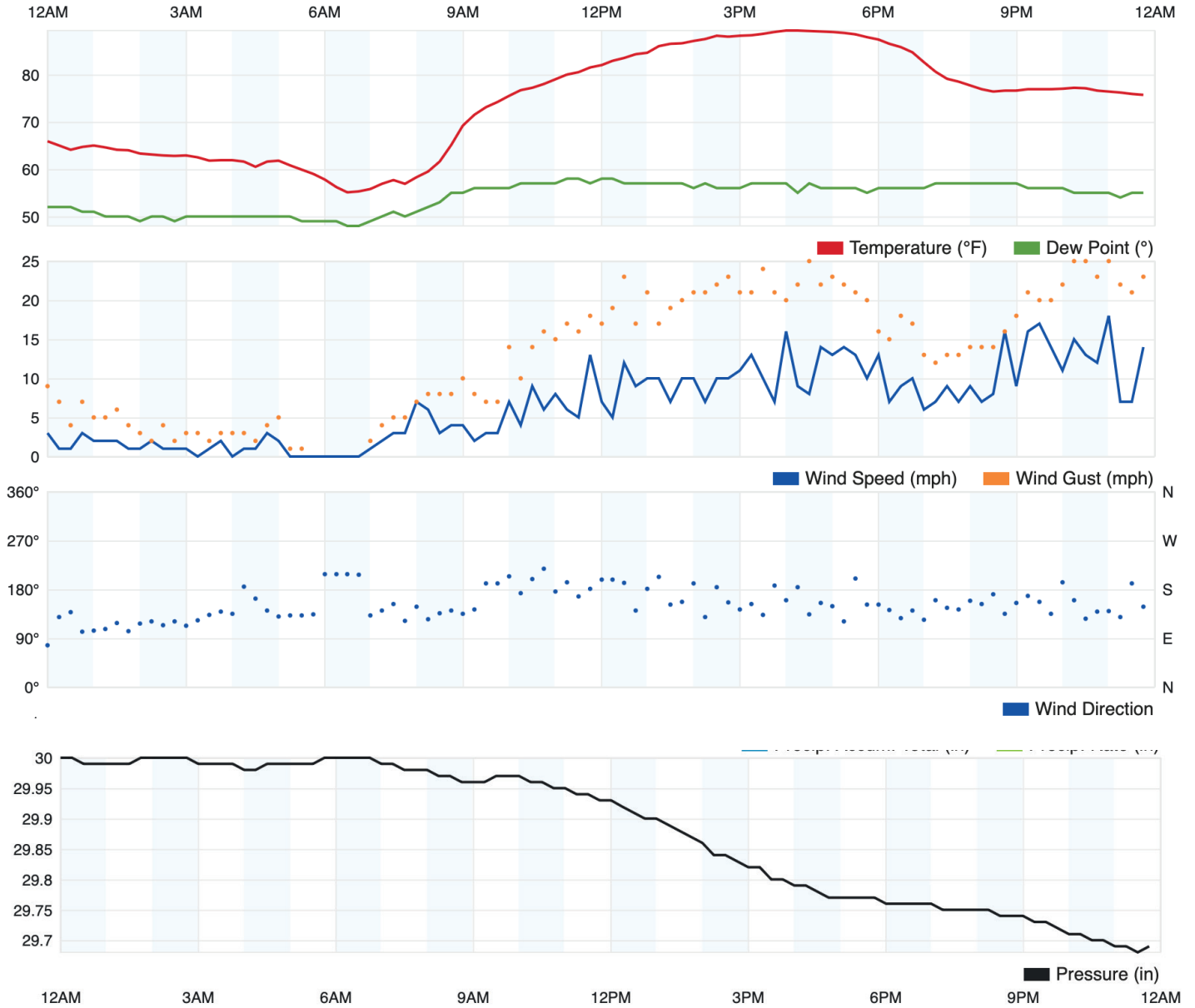
| Rank | Occupation | 2022 employment | 2032 projected employment | Numeric change | Percent change |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | Wind Turbine Service Technicians | 155 | 243 | 88 | 56.8% |
| 2 | Nurse Practitioners | 821 | 1,284 | 463 | 56.4% |
| 3 | Data Scientists | 116 | 163 | 47 | 40.5% |
| 4 | Information Security Analysts | 709 | 977 | 268 | 37.8% |
| 5 | Physician Assistants | 589 | 791 | 202 | 34.3% |
| 6 | Cooks, Restaurant | 1,585 | 2,085 | 500 | 31.6% |
| 7 | Physical Therapist Assistants | 344 | 447 | 103 | 29.9% |
| 8 | Medical and Health Services Managers | 1,004 | 1,278 | 274 | 27.3% |
| 9 | Nurse Anesthetists | 360 | 458 | 98 | 27.2% |
| 10 | Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 1,250 | 1,590 | 340 | 27.2% |

Source: [South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 22 of 74

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 23 of 74

Red Flag Warning

Today



High: 73 °F

Sunny and Breezy

Tonight



Low: 38 °F

Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear

Tuesday



High: 66 °F

Sunny

Tuesday Night



Low: 49 °F

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 79 °F

Sunny

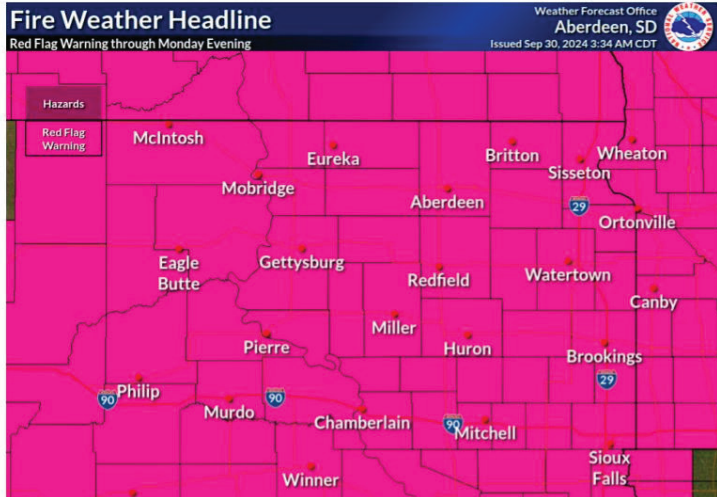


Fire Weather Concerns Through This Evening

September 30, 2024
3:43 AM

Key Messages

- Southwest winds switching to the northwest today.
- Sustained speeds 20-35 mph with gusts between 30-50 mph.
- Minimum RH values between 15-25 percent.



Minimum RH Forecast (%)

| | 9/30 Mon | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|----|
| | 3am | 4am | 5am | 6am | 7am | 8am | 9am | 10am | 11am | 12pm | 1pm | 2pm | 3pm | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm | 9pm | 10pm | |
| Aberdeen | 49 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 50 | 47 | 38 | 31 | 26 | 23 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 27 | 30 | 36 | 45 | 48 |
| Britton | 55 | 53 | 57 | 55 | 49 | 50 | 47 | 38 | 31 | 26 | 23 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 26 | 29 | 36 | 43 | 50 | 54 | |
| Brookings | 67 | 70 | 70 | 72 | 72 | 65 | 58 | 49 | 43 | 38 | 32 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 23 | 29 | 37 | 41 | |
| Chamberlain | 49 | 51 | 52 | 50 | 47 | 40 | 34 | 31 | 27 | 23 | 20 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 22 | 26 | 34 | 40 | |
| Clark | 55 | 57 | 59 | 57 | 54 | 53 | 52 | 42 | 36 | 29 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 26 | 31 | 37 | 43 | 48 | |
| Eagle Butte | 31 | 33 | 33 | 30 | 25 | 28 | 30 | 28 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 26 | 26 | 27 | 25 | 26 | 28 | 32 | 37 | 40 | |
| Ellendale | 49 | 53 | 51 | 50 | 50 | 49 | 40 | 33 | 27 | 23 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 26 | 28 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 48 | 50 | |
| Eureka | 51 | 51 | 52 | 46 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 32 | 29 | 25 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 28 | 31 | 33 | 40 | 48 | 50 | |
| Gettysburg | 39 | 41 | 42 | 39 | 34 | 32 | 33 | 31 | 25 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 43 | 46 | |
| Huron | 54 | 56 | 58 | 58 | 56 | 54 | 49 | 36 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 19 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 23 | 28 | 36 | 41 | |
| Kennebec | 39 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 37 | 35 | 28 | 26 | 23 | 19 | 18 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 21 | 24 | 28 | 35 | 41 | |
| McIntosh | 30 | 36 | 36 | 34 | 30 | 32 | 32 | 29 | 28 | 31 | 30 | 30 | 29 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 29 | 34 | 39 | 42 | |
| Milbank | 65 | 65 | 65 | 63 | 61 | 63 | 57 | 48 | 37 | 35 | 29 | 24 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 24 | 29 | 36 | 43 | 49 | |
| Miller | 49 | 47 | 47 | 47 | 44 | 44 | 35 | 28 | 26 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 29 | 36 | 41 | 44 | |
| Mobridge | 33 | 36 | 37 | 36 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 32 | 27 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 29 | 38 | 44 | |
| Murdo | 30 | 29 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 26 | 25 | 23 | 20 | 19 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 21 | 25 | 31 | 35 | |
| Pierre | 37 | 37 | 38 | 37 | 36 | 31 | 31 | 29 | 26 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 24 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 40 | |
| Redfield | 57 | 59 | 61 | 58 | 52 | 49 | 39 | 30 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 29 | 32 | 42 | 45 | |
| Sisseton | 60 | 63 | 63 | 59 | 54 | 54 | 51 | 41 | 35 | 29 | 24 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 23 | 26 | 31 | 37 | 45 | 48 | |
| Watertown | 70 | 67 | 67 | 65 | 61 | 61 | 54 | 49 | 38 | 34 | 28 | 24 | 21 | 20 | 22 | 25 | 31 | 35 | 43 | 48 | |
| Webster | 61 | 61 | 65 | 60 | 50 | 49 | 45 | 39 | 33 | 28 | 23 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 27 | 31 | 38 | 45 | 46 | |
| Wheaton | 54 | 54 | 58 | 59 | 59 | 60 | 54 | 46 | 40 | 32 | 26 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 25 | 31 | 35 | 40 | 45 | |

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The combination of gusty winds and a dry air will lead to very high fire danger today across South Dakota into western Minnesota. A cold front is forecast to move through today, and will usher in drier air and strong west to northwest winds. This will create critical fire weather conditions which could cause any fires that ignites to spread rapidly and be difficult to control. Burning should be avoided.

Broton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 24 of 74

WILDFIRE SAFETY

- Properly discard cigarettes.
- Keep vehicles off of dry grass.
- Avoid activities with open flames or sparks.
- Avoid power equipment that creates sparks.
- Obey burn bans.
- Evacuate if fire/smoke is heading your way.
- Evacuate if ordered to do so by local officials.

weather.gov/fire



With critical fire weather conditions, if fires start they will spread rapidly and be difficult to control. Activities that involve flames and sparks should be avoided.



Windy Conditions Continue Through This Evening

September 30, 2024
3:51 AM

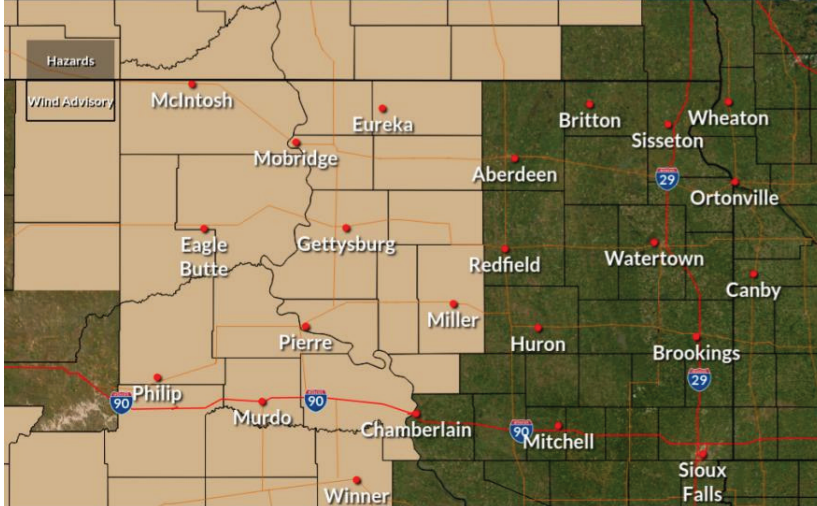
Southerly winds will turn northwesterly with the passing of a cold front

Wind Advisory Today

West River: 4AM CDT/3AM MDT to 4PM CDT/3PM MDT East River: 7AM CDT-4PM CDT

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Sep 30, 2024 3:41 AM CDT



Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

| | 9/30 Mon | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| | 3am | 4am | 5am | 6am | 7am | 8am | 9am | 10am | 11am | 12pm | 1pm | 2pm | 3pm | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm | 9pm | |
| Aberdeen | 33 | 33 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 33 | 36 | 38 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 31 | 29 | 26 |
| Britton | 32 | 33 | 33 | 36 | 40 | 38 | 36 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 33 | 32 | 30 | 28 | |
| Brookings | 25 | 26 | 28 | 29 | 32 | 33 | 30 | 30 | 29 | 26 | 32 | 32 | 31 | 31 | 32 | 31 | 29 | 28 | 24 | |
| Chamberlain | 31 | 32 | 30 | 28 | 30 | 35 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 28 | 23 | |
| Clark | 30 | 31 | 30 | 33 | 39 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 32 | 33 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 33 | 32 | 31 | 29 | 26 | |
| Eagle Butte | 22 | 22 | 26 | 36 | 47 | 47 | 47 | 47 | 47 | 47 | 46 | 45 | 44 | 41 | 38 | 35 | 31 | 28 | 26 | |
| Ellendale | 26 | 28 | 25 | 26 | 29 | 31 | 35 | 39 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 38 | 39 | 39 | 37 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 26 | |
| Eureka | 32 | 31 | 30 | 32 | 38 | 39 | 41 | 44 | 45 | 45 | 46 | 46 | 46 | 46 | 43 | 38 | 35 | 30 | 26 | |
| Gettysburg | 26 | 25 | 25 | 31 | 39 | 40 | 43 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 41 | 39 | 36 | 32 | 30 | 29 | |
| Huron | 31 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 32 | 32 | 31 | 37 | 39 | 36 | 37 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 28 | 28 | 25 | |
| Kennebec | 24 | 23 | 23 | 29 | 38 | 39 | 43 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 39 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 30 | 28 | |
| McIntosh | 25 | 28 | 31 | 37 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 46 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 47 | 46 | 44 | 40 | 37 | 33 | 30 | 26 | |
| Milbank | 16 | 17 | 20 | 24 | 30 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 29 | 28 | 26 | |
| Miller | 39 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 35 | 38 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 40 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 32 | 30 | 28 | 25 | |
| Mobridge | 36 | 32 | 35 | 38 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 39 | 36 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 25 | |
| Murdo | 30 | 28 | 29 | 36 | 46 | 47 | 46 | 45 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 30 | 28 | |
| Pierre | 18 | 17 | 20 | 26 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 43 | 41 | 40 | 39 | 39 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 30 | 28 | |
| Redfield | 25 | 25 | 24 | 26 | 30 | 31 | 33 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 33 | 31 | 29 | 26 | 26 | |
| Sisseton | 23 | 24 | 25 | 30 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 33 | 33 | 32 | 31 | 30 | 28 | |
| Watertown | 28 | 29 | 30 | 33 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 32 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 29 | |
| Webster | 30 | 30 | 30 | 33 | 40 | 38 | 36 | 35 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 37 | 38 | 38 | 37 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 30 | |
| Wheaton | 23 | 23 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 32 | 30 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 29 | 29 | 28 | 26 | |

Sustained winds between 20 to 35 mph and gusts of 45 mph



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A cold front will track from west to east through the area during the morning hours today. Winds will switch from a southwest to northwest direction and increase. Gusty conditions are expected for most areas with the windiest locations setting up west of the James Valley where gusts could range between 40-50 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 25 of 74

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90 °F at 3:55 PM

Low Temp: 55 °F at 6:33 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 11:20 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 46 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1989

Record Low: 15 in 1939

Average High: 69

Average Low: 41

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.99

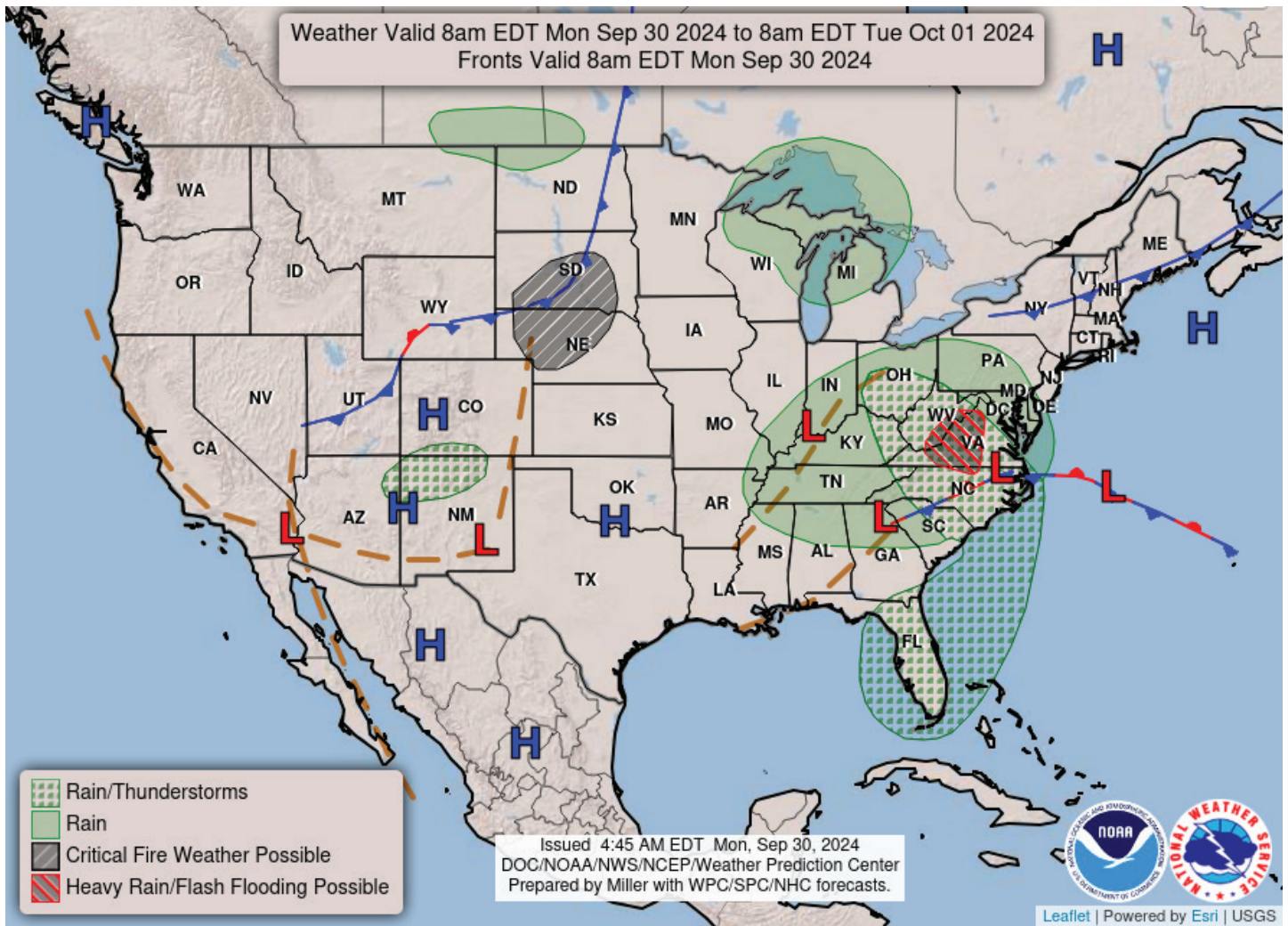
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.33

Average Precip to date: 18.33

Precip Year to Date: 19.75

Sunset Tonight: 7:15:20 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30:09 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 26 of 74

Today in Weather History

September 30, 2006: Severe to exceptional drought conditions improved dramatically by the end of the month across central and north central South Dakota as above normal rainfall was recorded for the month of September.

1896: A hurricane formed on September 22 and lasted until September 30. It formed directly over the Lesser Antilles and hit Cuba, Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. Its maximum sustained winds were at 130 mph. The heaviest rainfall deposited in association with the storm was 19.96 inches at Glennville, Georgia. This hurricane was responsible for an estimated 130 deaths and \$1.5 million in damage (1896 dollars).

1959 - Three tornadoes spawned by the remnants of Hurricane Gracie killed 12 persons at Ivy VA. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A nineteen month drought in southern California came to a climax. The drought, which made brush and buildings tinder dry, set up the worst fire conditions in California history as hot Santa Anna winds sent the temperature soaring to 105 degrees at Los Angeles, and to 97 degrees at San Diego. During that last week of September whole communities of interior San Diego County were consumed by fire. Half a million acres were burned, and the fires caused fifty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1977 - The temperature at Wichita Falls, TX, soared to 108 degrees to establish a record for September. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorms, which had inundated northern sections of Oklahoma with heavy rain, temporarily shifted southward producing 4 to 8 inches rains from Shawnee to Stilwell. Baseball size hail and 80 mph winds ripped through parts of southeast Oklahoma City, and thunderstorm winds caused more than half a million dollars damage at Shawnee. (Storm Data)

1987 - Afternoon thunderstorms in Michigan produced hail an inch in diameter at Pinckney, and wind gusts to 68 mph at Wyandotte. A thunderstorm in northern Indiana produced wet snow at South Bend. Seven cities in the northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including readings of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 101 degrees at downtown Sacramento CA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida, and in the western U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Fort Myers FL was their tenth record high for the month. Highs of 98 degrees at Medford OR and 99 degrees at Fresno CA were records for the date, and the temperature at Borrego Springs CA soared to 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, as readings soared into the upper 80s and 90s from the Northern and Central High Plains Region to Minnesota. Bismarck ND reported a record high of 95 degrees, and the temperature reached 97 degrees at Broadus MT. Afternoon thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced wind gusts to 60 mph at Wendover UT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: The past month was the coldest September ever recorded in interior Alaska. Fairbanks averaged a frigid 31.7° which was 13.2° below normal and the first below freezing September ever. Beginning on the 9th and on every day for the rest of the month, a new record low was set for either low minimums or low maximums, or both. On this date, the city plunged to 3° to set a new all-time record low for September. Snowfall for the month totaled 24.4 inches which was more than three times the previous record for September.



ANOTHER GREY HAIR

A father said to his son, "When you cause problems and are disobedient, you add another grey hair to my head."

"Wow," said the son in amazement, "you must have treated your dad horribly! Grandpa's hair is completely grey! What did you do to him?"

God's Word demands that children honor and obey their parents. But there is also a distinction between obeying and honoring parents.

Obeying means that children are to do what they are told to do as long as it is legal, proper, and ethical. Honoring, on the other hand, means giving respect, love and admiration.

Children cannot be expected to obey their parents if it means disobeying God. Neither are they to be submissive to parents who are controlling and demeaning when they are mature. As long as children accept the support of their parents, they must comply with the expectations made by their parents if the expectations of their parents are in keeping with God's Word.

But honoring and loving parents may sometimes be more difficult than obeying them. It is always important for parents and children to remember that respect, which leads to giving and receiving honor and love, flows in both directions. If there is thoughtfulness and kindness, patience and gentleness, goodness and happiness in the home, honor and love will be normal and natural.

Prayer: Father, family life is difficult. When You are the focus of a family, all can live in love, hope, and harmony. We pray that families will invite You in as a member. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise — "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Ephesians 6:2

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

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 28 of 74

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 29 of 74



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.27.24

29 46 53 69 70 23

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$93,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 50
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.24

12 13 47 48 51 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$10,120,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 5 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.29.24

7 15 27 31 38 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 20 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.24

5 12 15 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$46,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 20
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.24

6 7 17 20 57 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 49 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.28.24

3 11 13 24 39 22

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$258,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 49 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 30 of 74

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Hezbollah's deputy leader vows to fight on after Nasrallah's death

By ABBY SEWELL and NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hezbollah's deputy leader vowed to continue fighting Israel and said the militant group was prepared for a long war after much of its top command was wiped out, including its leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

In his first speech since Nasrallah was killed, Naim Kassem said in a televised statement Monday that if Israel decides to launch a ground offensive, Hezbollah fighters are ready to fight and defend Lebanon, where the group is based.

As deputy secretary-general, Naim Kassem now is the acting leader of Hezbollah until the group's leadership elects a replacement for Nasrallah.

Israeli strikes have killed Nasrallah and six of his top commanders in the last 10 days, and have hit what the military says are thousands of militant targets across large parts of Lebanon. Over 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon, nearly a quarter of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry, and the government says the fighting may have displaced up to a million people.

Hezbollah has significantly increased its rocket attacks in the past week to several hundred daily, but most have been intercepted or fallen in open areas. Several people have been wounded in Israel. There have been no fatalities since two soldiers were killed near the border on Sept. 19.

Kassem said that despite the killing of Hezbollah's top military commanders over the past months, Hezbollah now is relying on new commanders.

"Israel was not able to affect our (military) capabilities," Kassem said. "There are deputy commanders and there are replacements in case a commander is wounded in any post."

Before he spoke, an airstrike leveled an apartment building and killed three Palestinian militants in central Beirut early Monday, as Israel appeared to send a clear message that no part of Lebanon is out of bounds.

As recently as two weeks ago, such a strike, outside of the main areas where Hezbollah operates and next to a busy transportation hub, would have been seen as an escalation and likely followed by a long-range Hezbollah strike into Israel. But the unspoken rules of the long-running conflict, and Hezbollah's ability to respond, are no longer clear.

Israel has not claimed Monday's strike but is widely assumed to have carried it out.

It's possible that Hezbollah is holding back to avoid an even bigger escalation, including a threatened Israeli ground invasion. But the militant group might also be in disarray after Israeli intelligence apparently penetrated its highest levels.

The strike early Monday killed three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a small, leftist faction that has not been meaningfully involved in months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including the massive strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah — but had not hit locations closer to the city center.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, drones and missiles into northern Israel after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack from Gaza into Israel sparked the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies and both supported by Iran, and Hezbollah said it would continue the attacks in solidarity with the Palestinians until there was a cease-fire in Gaza.

Israel has responded to the rockets with airstrikes in Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based, and the fighting has steadily escalated over the past year, displacing tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until the attacks stop and its citizens can return to their homes.

The United States and its allies have called for a cease-fire, hoping to avoid further escalation that could draw in Iran and set off a wider war. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has shown little interest, as his country racks up military achievements against a longtime foe.

Some Israelis broke into spontaneous celebrations after Nasrallah's death was announced. Videos circulated of crowds at bars singing a song in Hebrew mocking him. A news anchor on a pro-Netanyahu station sang and danced as the studio audience joined in with him while a commentator on Israel's largest TV station offered co-panelists celebratory shots.

Hezbollah, which boasts tens of thousands of battle-hardened fighters and long-range missiles capable of hitting anywhere inside Israel, has long been seen as the most powerful militant group in the region and a key partner to Iran in both threatening and deterring Israel. Hezbollah fought Israel to a monthlong stalemate in their 2006 war,

But Hezbollah has never faced an onslaught quite like this one, which began with a sophisticated attack on its pagers and walkie-talkies in mid-September that killed dozens of people and wounded around 3,000 — including many fighters but also many civilians.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Israel's airstrikes in Lebanon had "wiped out" Hezbollah's command structure but warned that the group will work quickly to rebuild it.

"We're watching to see what they do to try to fill this leadership vacuum. It's going to be tough, he told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday.

Japan's likely next leader says he will call an election for Oct. 27 once he takes office

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Shigeru Ishiba, the head of Japan's governing party, plans to call a parliamentary election to be held on Oct. 27 after he is elected as prime minister on Tuesday.

Ishiba was chosen as the Liberal Democratic Party's leader on Friday and is assured to also succeed Fumio Kishida as prime minister because the party's coalition controls parliament.

Ishiba mentioned the election date as he announced his top party leadership lineup Monday ahead of forming his Cabinet. The plan is not official since he is not prime minister yet, but Ishiba said he mentioned the date early for the logistical convenience of those who have to prepare on relatively short notice.

"I believe it is important to have the new administration get the public's judgment as soon as possible," Ishiba said.

He appointed former Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, who came in third in the party leadership race, to head the party's election task force.

He is expected to name defense experts and his longtime confidantes Takeshi Iwaya as foreign minister and Gen Nakatani as defense chief once he takes office.

Ishiba has proposed an Asian version of the NATO military alliance and more discussion among regional partners about the use of the U.S. nuclear deterrence. He also suggested a more equal Japan-U.S. security alliance, including joint management of U.S. bases in Japan and having Japanese Self Defense Force bases in the United States.

The LDP has had a nearly unbroken tenure governing Japan since World War II. The party members may have seen Ishiba's more centrist views as crucial in pushing back challenges by the liberal-leaning opposition and winning voter support as the party reels from corruption scandals that drove down Kishida's popularity.

Ishiba on Friday stressed Japan needs to reinforce its security, noting recent violations of Japanese airspace by Russian and Chinese warplanes and repeated missile launches by North Korea.

He pledged to continue Kishida's economic policy aimed at pulling Japan out of deflation and achieving real salary increases, while tackling challenges such as Japan's declining birthrate and population and resilience to natural disasters.

Ishiba, first elected to parliament in 1986, has served as defense minister, agriculture minister and in other key Cabinet posts, and was LDP secretary general under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Britain's last coal-fired electricity plant is closing. It ends 142 years of coal power in the UK

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's last coal-fired power plant will close on Monday, ending 142 years of coal-generated electricity in the nation that sparked the Industrial Revolution.

The Ratcliffe-on-Soar station in central England is to finish its final shift at midnight, after more than half a century of turning coal into power. Owner Uniper says many of the 170 remaining employees will stay on during a two-year decommissioning process.

The U.K. government hailed the closure as a milestone in efforts to generate all of Britain's energy from renewable sources by 2030. The shutdown makes Britain the first country from the Group of Seven major economies to phase out coal — though some other European nations, including Sweden and Belgium, got there sooner.

Energy Minister Michael Shanks said the plant's closure "marks the end of an era and coal workers can be rightly proud of their work powering our country for over 140 years. We owe generations a debt of gratitude as a country."

"The era of coal might be ending, but a new age of good energy jobs for our country is just beginning," he said.

The world's first coal-fired electricity plant, Thomas Edison's Edison Electric Light Station, opened in London in 1882.

Ratcliffe-on-Soar, which opened in 1968, is a landmark whose eight concrete cooling towers and 199-meter (650-foot) chimney are seen by millions of people a year as they drive past on the M1 highway or speed by on trains.

In 1990 coal provided about 80% of Britain's electricity. By 2012 it had fallen to 39%, and by 2023 it stood at just 1%, according to figures from the National Grid. More than half of Britain's electricity now comes from renewable sources such as wind and solar power, and the rest from natural gas and nuclear energy.

"Ten years ago, coal was the leading source of this country's power — generating a third of our electricity," said Dhara Vyas, deputy chief executive of trade body Energy U.K.

"So, to get to this point just a decade later, with coal's contribution replaced by clean and low carbon sources, is an incredible achievement," Vyas said. "As we aim for further ambitious targets in the energy transition, it's worth remembering that few back then thought such a change at such a pace was possible."

Supplies rushed to communities isolated by Helene as death toll rises to nearly 100

By KATE PAYNE, JEFFREY COLLINS and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PERRY, Fla. (AP) — North Carolina officials pledged to get more water and other supplies to flood-stricken areas by Monday after Hurricane Helene left a trail of destruction across the U.S. Southeast and the death toll from the storm rose to nearly 100.

At least 91 people across several states were killed. A North Carolina county that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported 30 people killed.

Gov. Roy Cooper predicted the toll would rise as rescuers and other emergency workers reached areas isolated by collapsed roads, failing infrastructure and widespread flooding.

Supplies were being airlifted to the region around the isolated city of Asheville. Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder pledged that she would have food and water to the city by Monday.

"We hear you. We need food and we need water," Pinder said on a Sunday call with reporters. "My staff has been making every request possible to the state for support and we've been working with every single organization that has reached out. What I promise you is that we are very close."

Officials warned that rebuilding from the widespread loss of homes and property would be lengthy and difficult. The storm upended life throughout the Southeast. Deaths also were reported in Florida, Georgia,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 34 of 74

South Carolina and Virginia.

Cooper implored residents in western North Carolina to avoid travel, both for their own safety and to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles. More than 50 search teams spread throughout the region in search of stranded people.

One rescue effort involved saving 41 people north of Asheville. Another mission focused on saving a single infant. The teams found people through both 911 calls and social media messages, North Carolina National Guard Adjutant General Todd Hunt said.

President Joe Biden described the impact of the storm as "stunning" and said he would visit the area this week as long as it does not disrupt rescues or recovery work.

In a brief exchange with reporters, he described the impact of the storm as "stunning" and said that the administration is giving states "everything we have" to help with their response to the storm.

Hurricane Helene roared ashore late Thursday in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph (225 kph) winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded creeks and rivers and strained dams.

There have been hundreds of water rescues, including in rural Unicoi County in East Tennessee, where dozens of patients and staff were plucked by helicopter from a hospital rooftop Friday.

More than 2 million homeowners and other utility customers were still without power Sunday night. South Carolina had the most outages and Gov. Henry McMaster asked for patience as crews dealt with widespread snapped power poles.

"We want people to remain calm. Help is on the way, it is just going to take time," McMaster told reporters outside the airport in Aiken County.

Begging for help in North Carolina as that help is slow to arrive

The storm unleashed the worst flooding in a century in North Carolina. One community, Spruce Pine, was doused with over 2 feet (61 centimeters) of rain from Tuesday through Saturday.

Jessica Drye Turner in Texas had begged for someone to rescue her family members stranded on their rooftop in Asheville amid rising floodwaters. "They are watching 18-wheelers and cars floating by," Turner wrote in an urgent Facebook post on Friday.

But in a follow-up message Saturday, Turner said help had not arrived in time to save her parents, both in their 70s, and her 6-year-old nephew. The roof collapsed and the three drowned.

"I cannot convey in words the sorrow, heartbreak and devastation my sisters and I are going through," she wrote.

The state was sending water supplies and other items toward Buncombe County and Asheville, but mudslides blocking Interstate 40 and other highways prevented supplies from making it. The county's own water supplies were on the other side of the Swannanoa River, away from where most of the 270,000 people in Buncombe County live, officials said.

Law enforcement was making plans to send officers to places that still had water, food or gas because of reports of arguments and threats of violence, the county sheriff said.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell toured south Georgia on Sunday and planned to be in North Carolina Monday.

"It's still very much an active search and rescue mission" in western North Carolina, Criswell said. "And we know that there's many communities that are cut off just because of the geography" of the mountains, where damage to roads and bridges have cut off certain areas.

Biden on Saturday pledged federal government help for Helene's "overwhelming" devastation. He also approved a disaster declaration for North Carolina, making federal funding available for affected individuals.

Storm-battered Florida digs out, residents gather for church

In Florida's Big Bend, some lost nearly everything they own. With sanctuaries still darkened as of Sunday morning, some churches canceled regular services while others like Faith Baptist Church in Perry opted to worship outside.

Standing water and tree debris still covers the grounds of Faith Baptist Church. The church called on

parishioners to come “pray for our community” in a message posted to the congregation’s Facebook page. “We have power. We don’t have electricity,” Immaculate Conception Catholic Church parishioner Marie Ruttinger said. “Our God has power. That’s for sure.”

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Saturday that it looked “like a bomb went off” after viewing splintered homes and debris-covered highways from the air.

In eastern Georgia near the border with South Carolina, officials notified Augusta residents Sunday morning that water service would be shut off for 24 to 48 hours in the city and surrounding Richmond County.

A news release said trash and debris from the storm “blocked our ability to pump water.” Officials were distributing bottled water.

With at least 25 killed in South Carolina, Helene was the deadliest tropical cyclone for the state since Hurricane Hugo made landfall north of Charleston in 1989, killing 35 people.

Moody’s Analytics said it expects \$15 billion to \$26 billion in property damage.

Climate change has exacerbated conditions that allow such storms to thrive, rapidly intensifying in warming waters and turning into powerful cyclones sometimes within hours.

New tropical depression in Atlantic could become strong hurricane, forecasters say

A new tropical depression in the eastern Atlantic Ocean could become a “formidable hurricane” later this week, the National Hurricane Center said Sunday. The depression had sustained 35 mph (55kph) winds and was located about 630 miles (1,015 kilometers) west-southwest of the Cabo Verde Islands, the center said. It could become a hurricane by Wednesday.

An Israeli airstrike hits central Beirut for the first time in nearly a year of conflict

By MELANIE LIDMAN and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The first apparent Israeli airstrike on central Beirut in nearly a year of conflict leveled an apartment building early Monday. It came after Israel hit targets across Lebanon and killed dozens of people, as Hezbollah sustained heavy blows to its command structure, including the killing of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

The airstrike hit a multistory residential building, according to an Associated Press journalist at the scene. Videos showed ambulances and a crowd gathered near the building in a mainly Sunni district with a busy thoroughfare lined with shops.

A Palestinian leftist faction in Lebanon said three of its members were killed in the airstrike. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said in a statement early Monday that its military and security commanders in Lebanon, and a third member, were killed in the attack.

The group has not played a significant role in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

An official with Lebanon’s Civil Defense had earlier said that a member of the al-Jamaa al-Islamiya was killed in the strike and that 16 other people were wounded, but the Sunni militant group, which fights alongside Hezbollah, has not confirmed the death of any of its members.

Also early Monday, another strike killed a commander with the militant group Hamas, which has a presence in Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee camps. Hamas said Fatah Sharif and his family were killed in an airstrike on the Al-Buss refugee camp in the southern port city of Tyre.

In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut’s southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including a major strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah — but had not hit locations near the city center.

Israeli officials had no immediate comment.

Earlier, Hezbollah confirmed that Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of its Central Council, was killed Saturday, making him the seventh senior Hezbollah leader killed in Israeli strikes in a little over a week. They include the group’s founding members who had evaded death or detention for decades.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 36 of 74

Hezbollah also confirmed that Ali Karaki, another senior commander, died in the strike that killed Nasrallah. Israel says at least 20 other Hezbollah militants were killed, including one in charge of Nasrallah's security detail.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said at least 105 people were killed around the country in airstrikes Sunday. Two strikes near the southern city of Sidon, about 45 kilometers (28 miles) south of Beirut, killed at least 32 people, the ministry said. Separately, Israeli strikes in the northern province of Baalbek Hermel killed 21 people and wounded at least 47.

Lebanese media reported dozens of strikes in the central, eastern and western Bekaa and in the south, besides strikes on Beirut. Israel says it targets militants, but the strikes have hit buildings where civilians were living and the death toll was expected to rise.

In a video of a strike in Sidon, verified by the AP, a building swayed before collapsing as neighbors filmed. One TV station called on viewers to pray for a family caught under the rubble, posting their pictures, as rescuers failed to reach them. The Lebanese Health Ministry reported at least 14 medics were killed over two days in the south.

President Joe Biden said Sunday that he would speak soon with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and believes that an all-out war in the Middle East must be avoided. "It has to be," Biden told reporters at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware as he boarded Air Force One for Washington.

Meanwhile, wreckage from Friday's strike that killed Nasrallah was still smoldering. Smoke rose over the rubble as people flocked to the site, some to check on what was left of their homes and others to pay respects, pray or simply to see the destruction.

In response to the dramatic escalation in Israeli strikes on Lebanon, Hezbollah significantly increased its rocket attacks in the past week, from several dozen to several hundred daily, the Israeli military said. The attacks injured several people and caused damage, but most of the rockets and drones were intercepted by Israel's air defense systems or fell in open areas.

The army says its strikes have degraded Hezbollah's capabilities and the number of launches would be much higher if Hezbollah had not been hit.

Israel strikes Houthi targets in Yemen

Also on Sunday, the Israeli military said dozens of its aircraft struck Houthi targets in Yemen in response to a recent attack. The military said it targeted power plants and sea port facilities in the city of Hodeida.

The Houthis launched a ballistic missile attack toward Israel's Ben Gurion airport on Saturday when Netanyahu was arriving. The Houthi media office said the Israeli strikes hit the Hodeida and Rass Issa ports, along with two power plants in Hodeida city, a stronghold for the Iranian-backed rebels. The Houthi-run Health Ministry said the strikes killed four people and wounded 40 others.

The Houthis claimed they took precautionary measures ahead of the strikes, emptying oil stored in the ports, according to Nasruddin Ammer, deputy director of the Houthi media office. He said in a post on X that the strikes won't stop the rebels' attacks on shipping routes and on Israel.

U.S. warns Hezbollah will work quickly to rebuild

Meanwhile, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Israel's airstrikes in Lebanon had "wiped out" Hezbollah's command structure, but he warned the group will work quickly to rebuild it.

"I think people are safer without him walking around," Kirby said of Nasrallah. "But they will try to recover. We're watching to see what they do to try to fill this leadership vacuum. It's going to be tough. ... Much of their command structure has now been wiped out."

Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," Kirby sidestepped questions about whether the Biden administration agrees with how the Israelis are targeting Hezbollah leaders. The White House continues to call on Israel and Hezbollah to agree to a 21-day temporary cease-fire floated by the U.S., France and other countries during the U.N. General Assembly last week.

Airstrikes drive thousands from homes in Lebanon

A wave of Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon have killed more than 1,030 people — including 156 women and 87 children — in less than two weeks, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been driven from their homes. The government estimates around

250,000 are in shelters, with three to four times as many staying with friends or relatives, or camping out on the streets.

Hezbollah, a Lebanese militant group and political party backed by Iran, Israel's chief regional rival, rose to regional prominence after fighting a devastating monthlong war with Israel in 2006 that ended in a draw.

Kaouk was a veteran member of Hezbollah going back to the 1980s and served as Hezbollah's military commander in southern Lebanon during the 2006 war with Israel. The United States announced sanctions against him in 2020.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into northern Israel after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies that consider themselves part of an Iran-backed "Axis of Resistance" against Israel.

The conflict has steadily ratcheted up to the brink of all-out war, raising fears of a region-wide conflagration.

Israel says it is determined to return some 60,000 of its citizens to communities in the north that were evacuated nearly a year ago. Hezbollah has said it will only halt its rocket fire if there is a cease-fire in Gaza, which has proven elusive despite months of indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt.

As big supermarkets pursue profits, new research shows growing exploitation of shrimp farmers

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Indonesian shrimp farmer Yulius Cahyonugroho operated more than two dozen ponds only a few years ago, employing seven people and making more than enough to support his family.

Since then, the 39-year-old says the prices he gets from purchasers have fallen by half and he's had to scale back to four workers and about one-third the ponds, some months not even breaking even. His wife has had to take a job at a watermelon farm to help support their two children.

"It is more stable than the shrimp farms," said the farmer from Indonesia's Central Java province.

As big Western supermarkets make windfall profits, their aggressive pursuit of ever-lower wholesale prices is causing misery for people at the bottom end of the supply chain — people like Cahyonugroho who produce and process the seafood, according to an investigation by an alliance of NGOs focused on three of the world's largest producers of shrimp provided to The Associated Press ahead of its publication on Monday.

The analysis of the industry in Vietnam, Indonesia and India, which provide about half the shrimp in the world's top four markets, found a 20%-60% drop in earnings from pre-pandemic levels as producers struggle to meet pricing demands by cutting labor costs.

In many places this has meant unpaid and underpaid work through longer hours, wage insecurity as rates fluctuate, and many workers not even making low minimum wages. The report also found hazardous working conditions, particularly in India and parts of Indonesia, and even child labor in some places in India.

"The supermarket procurement practices changed, and the working conditions were affected — directly and rapidly," said Katrin Nakamura of Sustainability Incubator, who wrote the regional report and whose Hawaii-based nonprofit led the research on the industry in Vietnam. "Those two things go together because they're tied together through the pricing."

Tubagus Haeru Rahayu, the director general of aquaculture for Indonesia's Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry, said he was surprised by the report's findings and had already reached out to people in the industry to investigate the price pressures.

"If there is pressure like that, there will definitely be a reaction — not only in Indonesia but in Vietnam and India too," he told the AP in an interview at his Jakarta office.

Indian and Vietnamese officials refused to comment.

Supermarkets linked to facilities where exploited labor was reported by workers include Target, Walmart and Costco in the United States, Britain's Sainsbury's and Tesco, and Aldi and Co-op in Europe.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 38 of 74

Switzerland's Co-op said it had a "zero tolerance" policy for violations of labor law, and that its producers "receive fair and market-driven prices."

Germany's Aldi did not specifically address the issue of pricing, but said it uses independent certification schemes to ensure responsibly sourcing for farmed shrimp products, and would continue to monitor the allegations.

"We are committed to fulfilling our responsibility to respect human rights," Aldi said.

Sainsbury's referred to a comment from the British Retail Consortium industry group, which said its members were committed to sourcing products at a "fair, sustainable price" and that the welfare of people and communities in supply chains is fundamental to their purchasing practices.

None of the other retailers named in the report responded to multiple requests for comment on the report, titled "Human Rights for Dinner."

In Vietnam, researchers found that workers who peel, gut and devein shrimp typically work six or seven days a week, often in rooms kept extremely cold to keep the product fresh.

Some 80% of those involved in processing the shrimp are women who rise at 4 a.m. and return home at 6 p.m., with the exception of pregnant women and new mothers who can stop one hour earlier.

"The work day for peelers consists of standing in a refrigerated and disinfected room and working extremely rapidly with a knife while taking care not to make a mistake," researchers said.

Wages are generally not disclosed ahead of time and are based upon production. Sometimes workers make minimum wage, but frequently they do not.

The Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers issued a statement calling the allegations in the report "unfounded, misleading and detrimental to the reputation of Vietnam's shrimp exports."

It cited government labor policies in a four-page statement but did not specifically address the findings, and did not respond to queries.

After food supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission reported earlier this year that some grocers have used the situation "as an opportunity to further raise prices to increase their profits, which remain elevated today."

The demands for lower wholesale shrimp prices — combined with rising production costs and an over-supply — means farmers often must sell their products under cost just to keep operations going, the Sustainability Incubator analysis found.

Cahyonugroho said he's stuck selling his shrimp at the price offered by middlemen who then sell it to factories for processing. He can't scrape together the startup costs needed to sell directly to factories or markets to earn more.

"The opportunity is there," he said, "but you need a lot of capital if you want to jump into something like that."

The middlemen who buy the shrimp obfuscate the true sources of shrimp that appear in Western supermarkets, so many retailers may not be following ethical commitments they've made about procuring shrimp.

Only about 2,000 of the 2 million shrimp farms in the major producing countries of India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Ecuador, Thailand and Bangladesh are certified by either the Aquaculture Stewardship Council or the Best Aquaculture Practices ecolabel.

"With the yield from most certified shrimp farms being very small, it is mathematically impossible for certified farms to produce enough shrimp per month to supply all of the supermarkets that boast commitments to purchasing certified shrimp," the report said.

Ideally, supermarkets should pay higher wholesale prices and ensure that the extra money makes it all the way down the supply chain, Nakamura said.

U.S. policymakers could use antitrust and other laws already in place to establish oversight to ensure fair pricing from Western retailers, rather than adding punishing tariffs on suppliers for labor violations, she said.

Awareness about the trends hurting suppliers is growing.

In July, the European Union adopted a new directive requiring companies to "identify and address adverse human rights and environmental impacts of their actions inside and outside Europe."

Britain's Groceries Code Adjudicator office published a "deep dive" into views of suppliers about the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 39 of 74

conduct of supermarkets, saying they had chosen to conduct “warfare” with suppliers.

Higher wholesale prices don’t have to mean higher prices for consumers, Sustainability Incubator said. “Prices to farmers would be at least 200% higher than today if the shrimp sold in Global North supermarkets was made at minimum wage rates and in compliance with applicable domestic laws for labor, workplace health, and safety,” the report said. “This would not necessarily mean higher consumer prices, because supermarkets are already profiting at existing consumer prices.”

Researchers from the Corporate Accountability Lab found that Indian shrimp industry workers face “dangerous and abusive conditions” and that highly-salinated water from newly-dug hatcheries and ponds, tainted with chemicals and toxic algae, are contaminating surrounding water and soil.

Unpaid labor prevails, including salaries below minimum wage, unpaid overtime, wage deductions for costs of work and “significant” debt bondage, the report found.

Child labor was also identified, with girls aged 14 and 15 being recruited for peeling work.

In Indonesia, three non-profit research organizations found that shrimp workers’ wages have declined since the pandemic and now average \$160 per month, below Indonesia’s minimum wage in most of the biggest shrimp-producing provinces. Shrimp peelers were found to be routinely required to work at least 12 hours per day to meet minimum targets.

Still, given widespread poverty most workers said they’re happy to have their jobs, said lead researcher Kharisma Nugroho of the Migunani Research Institute.

“It’s exploitation of the vulnerability of the workers, because they have a lack of options,” he said.

“They’re paid the minimum wages but they have to work 150% of the normal,” he told the AP. “Can they live? Yes. Can they move? Yes. Do they make a complaint? No. They’re still there.”

The regional report compiled more than 500 interviews conducted in-person with workers in their native languages, in India, Indonesia and Vietnam, supplemented with secondary data and interviews from Thailand, Bangladesh and Ecuador.

After the Indonesia country report was issued recently, government officials asked to meet with the authors, and Nugroho said they showed a “genuine willingness to improve the situation.”

Vietnamese officials have also engaged with Sustainability Incubator to talk about the findings.

Government and industry intervention has already helped in Thailand, which has been criticized after the AP exposed serious labor abuses in the shrimp industry in the past. That, however, has led to higher prices for Thai shrimp, leading some buyers to shift sourcing to India and Ecuador.

Ecuador has an industrial approach to shrimp farming — unlike the smaller, often family-run operations in Southeast Asia — and is now the world’s largest exporter of shrimp. It has the lowest prices, followed by India; China, which wasn’t included in the report; then Vietnam and Indonesia.

But with the demand for lower wholesale prices, while Ecuador’s exports rose 12% in volume in 2023, they fell 5% in value. India’s exports rose 1% but dropped nearly 11% in value.

Meantime, with their relatively higher prices, Vietnam’s exports were down 25% in 2023 in volume Indonesia’s dropped 9.5%.

“Labor exploitation in shrimp aquaculture industries is not company, sector, or country-specific,” the report concluded. “Instead, it is the result of a hidden business model that exploits people for profit.”

Trump is pointing to new numbers on migrants with criminal pasts. Here’s what they show

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans are pointing to newly released immigration enforcement data to bolster their argument that the Biden administration is letting migrants who have committed serious crimes go free in the U.S. But the numbers have been misconstrued without key context.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement released data to Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales in response to a request he made for information about people under ICE supervision either convicted of crimes or facing

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 40 of 74

criminal charges. Gonzales' Texas district includes an 800-mile stretch bordering Mexico.

Gonzales posted the numbers online and they immediately became a flashpoint in the presidential campaign between former President Donald Trump, who has vowed to carry out mass deportations, and Vice President Kamala Harris. Immigration — and the Biden administration's record on border security — has become a key issue in the election.

Here's a look at the data and what it does or doesn't show:

What are the numbers?

As of July 21, ICE said 662,556 people under its supervision were either convicted of crimes or face criminal charges. Nearly 15,000 were in its custody, but the vast majority — 647,572 — were not.

Included in the figures of people not detained by ICE were people found guilty of very serious crimes: 13,099 for homicide, 15,811 for sexual assault, 13,423 for weapons offenses and 2,663 for stolen vehicles. The single biggest category was for traffic-related offenses at 77,074, followed by assault at 62,231 and dangerous drugs at 56,533.

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, later clarified that the numbers span decades and those not in its custody may be held by a state or local agency. For example, someone serving time in a state prison for murder could be counted as a criminal not in ICE's custody. They are not being held by federal immigration authorities but they are detained — a distinction ICE didn't make in its report to Gonzales.

Millions of people are on ICE's "non-detained docket," or people under the agency's supervision who aren't in its custody. Many are awaiting outcomes of their cases in immigration court, including some wearing monitoring devices. Others have been released after completing their prison sentences because their countries won't take them back.

What do both sides say about the numbers?

Republicans pointed to the data as proof that the Biden administration is letting immigrants with criminal records into the country and isn't doing enough to kick out those who commit crimes while they're here.

"The truth is clear — illegal immigrants with a criminal record are coming into our country. The data released by ICE is beyond disturbing, and it should be a wake-up call for the Biden-Harris administration and cities across the country that hide behind sanctuary policies," Gonzales said in a news release, referring to pledges by local officials to limit their cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

Trump, who has repeatedly portrayed immigrants as bringing lawlessness and crime to America, tweeted multiple screenshots of the data with the words: "13,000 CROSSED THE BORDER WITH MURDER CONVICTIONS."

He also asserted that the numbers correspond to Biden and Harris' time in office.

The data was being misinterpreted, Homeland Security said in a statement Sunday.

"The data goes back decades; it includes individuals who entered the country over the past 40 years or more, the vast majority of whose custody determination was made long before this Administration," the agency said. "It also includes many who are under the jurisdiction or currently incarcerated by federal, state or local law enforcement partners."

The department also stressed what it has done to deport those without the right to stay in America, saying it had removed or returned more than 700,000 people in the past year, which it said was the highest number since 2010. Homeland Security said it had removed 180,000 people with criminal convictions since President Joe Biden took office.

What's behind the figures?

The data isn't only listing people who entered the country during the Biden administration but includes people going back decades who came during previous administrations, said Doris Meissner, former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which was the predecessor to ICE.

They're accused or convicted of committing crimes in America as opposed to committing crimes in other countries and then entering the U.S., said Meissner, who is now director of the U.S. Immigration Policy Program at the Migration Policy Institute.

"This is not something that is a function of what the Biden administration did," she said. "Certainly, this

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 41 of 74

includes the Biden years, but this is an accumulation of many years, and certainly going back to at least 2010, 2011, 2012.”

A 2017 report by Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General says that as of August 2016, ICE had about 368,574 people on its non-detained docket who were convicted criminals. By June 2021, that number was up to 405,786.

Can’t ICE just deport criminals?

ICE has limited resources. The number of people it supervises has skyrocketed, while its staffing has not. As the agency noted in a 2023 end-of-year report, it often has to send staff to help at the border, taking them away from their normal duties.

The number of people ICE supervises but who aren’t in its custody has grown from 3.3 million a little before Biden took office to a little over 7 million last spring.

“The simple answer is that as a system, we haven’t devoted enough resources to the parts of the government that deal with monitoring and ultimately removing people who are deportable,” Meissner said.

ICE also has logistical and legal limits on who they can hold. Its budget allows the agency to hold 41,500 people at a time. John Sandweg, who was acting ICE director from 2013 to 2014 under then-President Barack Obama, said holding people accused or convicted of the most serious crimes is always the top priority.

But once someone has a final order of removal — meaning a court has found that they don’t have the right to stay in the country — they cannot be held in detention forever while ICE works out how to get them home. A 2001 Supreme Court ruling essentially prevented ICE from holding those people for more than six months if there is no reasonable chance to expect they can be sent back.

Not every country is willing to take back their citizens, Sandweg said.

He said he suspects that a large number of those convicted of homicide but not held by ICE are people who were ordered deported but the agency can’t remove them because their home country won’t take them back.

“It’s a very common scenario. Even amongst the countries that take people back, they can be very selective about who they take back,” he said.

The U.S. also could run into problems deporting people to countries with which it has tepid relations.

Homeland Security did not respond to questions about how many countries won’t take back their citizens. The 2017 watchdog report put the number at 23 countries, plus an additional 62 that were cooperative but where there were delays getting things like passports or travel documents.

Vance criticized an infrastructure law as a candidate then embraced it as a senator

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As he campaigned for the Senate two years ago, JD Vance harshly criticized a bipartisan 2021 law to invest more than \$1 trillion in America’s crumbling infrastructure, calling it a “huge mistake” shaped by Democrats who want to spend big taxpayer dollars on “really crazy stuff.”

That hasn’t stopped the first-term Ohio senator and Republican vice-presidential nominee from seeking more than \$200 million in federal money made available through the law for projects across his state, according to records reviewed by The Associated Press.

Vance is hardly alone among Republicans who have condemned spending enacted under Democratic President Joe Biden, only to later reap the benefit when government funds flow to popular projects back home. In this case, he also was criticizing the achievement of one of the bill’s authors — former Sen. Rob Portman, the Ohio Republican he succeeded.

“I believe you should campaign how you govern so that you are consistent in your message and voters know what they are going to get,” said Ohio state Sen. Matt Dolan, one of Vance’s 2022 Republican primary rivals, who was the only GOP candidate to support the bill.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 42 of 74

Parker Magid, a spokesperson for Vance said, "Senators are elected by their constituents to fight for them in Washington, regardless of the party in charge. The fact is that this bill was a wish list of destructive Biden-Harris policy proposals and over 1,000 pages long, but as his constituents expect of him, Senator Vance successfully advocated for full and fair consideration of legitimate expenditures on Ohio projects by the federal government."

To the man Vance defeated in the general election, former Democratic congressman Tim Ryan, Vance's pivot "fits the general pattern of him being two-faced on just about everything."

"Look at the Trump stuff," Ryan said. "He was 'America's Hitler'" in Vance's estimation, "then when it didn't benefit him anymore to have that view, he changed it."

Trump had vowed to pass an infrastructure bill when he was president, but did not offer a plan, and "Infrastructure Week" became something of a punch line.

That changed after Biden became president. A bipartisan group of senators including Portman and Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, then a Democrat, hashed out a roughly \$1 trillion package that passed with 19 Republicans joining Democrats.

Vance criticized the bill as a boondoggle tainted by Democrats' preoccupation with racial justice.

"I'm reading through this new infrastructure bill, and it includes all these ridiculous references to things called transportation equity, which is basically just importing critical race theory into our nation's infrastructure programs," Vance tweeted in August 2021. "It's totally ridiculous and it's obvious that Republicans have been had in supporting this bill."

During a September 2021 interview with CBS News, Vance said that the "mistake that Republicans have recently made on bipartisanship is that we gave Democrats a huge win."

"We do have infrastructure problems, but I don't think this bill actually spends the money on the things that we need," he said of the legislation, which Trump opposed.

Portman, who cited "partisan gridlock" as a reason he retired from the Senate, was unavailable for comment.

After taking office in January 2023, Vance appears to have warmed to the legislation his predecessor helped write — though not publicly.

In 10 letters addressed to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg that were sent between 2023 and 2024, Vance requested more than \$213 million made available through the law for Ohio projects, according to copies of his correspondence obtained by the AP. At least four of those projects were approved and are slated to get about \$130 million, federal records show.

Toledo received nearly \$20 million to revitalize a majority Black area that was isolated from the city's downtown when Interstate 75 was built in the 1960s. Toledo officials described the planning decision behind the location of the freeway as "discriminatory" in their federal application for the funding.

"These once-thriving communities now suffer from some of the city's highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and blight," the application states. "Historically, this majority-Black area has been disproportionately impacted by harmful transportation policy decisions." The application said those policies "caused displacement from which the area has never fully recovered."

Vance had previously mocked a journalist who asked Buttigieg about bias that went into decades-old planning decisions. "Nothing in our country works," he tweeted in November 2021. "And our reporters ask about the racism of our roads?"

As a senator he wrote that the project in Toledo had potentially "far-reaching" benefits, though he did include a disclaimer that he opposed "the Biden Administration's emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion over outcomes of meaningful infrastructure improvements."

In another instance, Vance sought \$29 million for low or no emissions buses. Vance has repeatedly railed against Democratic efforts to reduce emissions. In a recent opinion article in *The Wall Street Journal*, he singled out Vice President Kamala Harris and the Biden administration's support for zero-emission efforts, arguing that they were "stifling investment in the coal, natural gas, and nuclear plants that Americans rely on."

Dolan, Vance's 2022 primary rival, said he's glad the senator seems to have changed his mind about

the bill.

"The talking points during a campaign sometimes don't match the responsibility of governing," Dolan said. "I think the two should be indistinguishable. That's what it means to be a public servant."

He said if lawmakers were to "reject those dollars for political reasons, Ohio would suffer."

What to watch as JD Vance and Tim Walz meet for a vice presidential debate

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican JD Vance and Democrat Tim Walz will meet Tuesday in the lone vice presidential debate of the 2024 election, bringing together undercards who have spent two months going after each other and the opposing nominees who top the major-party tickets.

The matchup, hosted by CBS News in New York, might not carry the same stakes as the Sept. 10 debate between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. But it offers their top lieutenants a fresh opportunity to introduce themselves, vouch for their bosses and fulfill a time-honored role of a running mate: attack dog. It will involve the biggest television and online audience either No. 2 will see before Election Day.

Walz, the 60-year-old Minnesota governor, and Vance, a 40-year-old U.S. senator from Ohio, have previewed potential approaches for weeks. Walz, before Harris selected him, was the Democrat who coined "weird" as a go-to pejorative for the Republican ticket. Vance assails the governor's progressive record as proof Democrats are too far left for voters.

Vance has mocked his fellow veteran's military service record. Walz hammers Vance's opposition to abortion rights and his views on family life. Both men have played up their small-town, middle-America credentials — contrasts to Trump, the billionaire native New Yorker, and Harris, the California Bay Area native.

It sets up a potentially fierce night in Manhattan. Here are the dynamics to consider as the rivals meet face-to-face for the first time:

Is it more Walz vs. Vance or Harris vs. Trump?

Running mates have a balancing act. Their primary job is to make the case for their bosses. But a vice presidential nominee's credibility and connection with the audience are important factors in reaching that goal. If a voter doesn't like the messenger, they're less likely to buy the message.

Going into the debate, a new AP-NORC poll suggests Walz is better liked than Vance, giving the Republican perhaps a steeper challenge.

The poll found that only a quarter of registered voters have a somewhat or very favorable view of the Ohio senator, while about half have a somewhat or very unfavorable view. About a quarter don't know enough to say. Walz is viewed positively by about 4 in 10 voters and negatively by about 3 in 10; the rest don't know enough to say.

Still, Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat and the 2016 vice presidential nominee, warned participants against thinking too much about themselves.

"The only advice that matters is to protect the top of the ticket," Kaine insisted, recalling the 2000 matchup between Republican Dick Cheney and Democrat Joe Lieberman. "Cheney kept attacking (Al) Gore, and Lieberman, instead of defending Gore, tried to make himself likable. ... You can't leave attacks unanswered."

Abortion rights and views on family will feature prominently

Democrats believe abortion rights and reproductive health care will motivate their core voters and sway swing voters.

Walz has tried to capitalize already by mixing his story into the argument. The governor talks often about how he and his wife, Gwen, required fertility treatments to have their daughter. Democrats have excoriated Vance for his 2021 quip about "childless cat ladies" shaping American life. And Walz has been eager to echo Harris' emphasis on abortion rights as an anchor of her overall campaign theme: "Freedom."

Vance and Trump, on the other hand, have struggled for a consistent message on abortion rights — a

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 44 of 74

reflection of how politically fraught the issue is for Republicans since support for abortion access has increased since the 2022 Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and end a woman's constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy. Trump brags about appointing conservatives who helped strike down *Roe* and return abortion regulation to state governments. Many Republicans now want to go beyond state bans and place federal restrictions on the procedure, but Trump has indicated that overturning *Roe* is enough. He has also waffled on how he'll vote on a Florida referendum that would expand abortion rights.

Vance said in August that Trump would veto a national ban if it cleared Congress. A couple of weeks later, during Trump's debate with Harris, the former president demurred on an answer, saying, "I didn't discuss it with JD." The Harris campaign has amplified audio of Vance saying as a Senate candidate that he would like to see abortion outlawed nationwide.

Vance and Walz are competing for an advantage on the economy

Vance often offers clearer arguments than Trump about boosting American manufacturing, helping workers and punishing corporations. He regularly attacks the Biden-Harris administration over inflation. If there's a broad topic where Vance wants to put Walz on the defensive and tether the Democratic ticket to President Joe Biden, it's the economy.

For her part, Harris declares that "building the middle class will be a defining goal of my presidency." She acknowledges many consumers' struggles even as she generally defends Biden's overall record of economic growth, low unemployment and rising wages since inheriting a COVID-19 freefall.

Both campaigns have competing suites of economic proposals, including varying tax cuts and subsidies for certain sectors. Expect the running mates to spend considerable time trying to convince the dwindling slice of persuadable voters that their ticket is more in tune with most U.S. households' day-to-day economic concerns.

The two are expected to talk up their middle-America roots

As much as the debate is about Harris and Trump, the running mates got here in no small part because of their respective biographies.

Trump's choice was a play to further cement the GOP ticket as the choice for middle America. The author of the "Hillbilly Elegy" memoir who grew up in small-town Ohio, Vance has roots to match his economic populism in ways the billionaire Trump does not.

Walz and Harris both grew up middle class, but Walz remains firmly ensconced there, going from his boyhood on a Nebraska farm to the high school classrooms of Minnesota before he ran for office. It's both a juxtaposition with and reinforcement of Harris' story as the daughter of an Indian mother and Jamaican father.

Both men have made their families part of their political identities. Each have working spouses. Walz has two children — young adult and teenage. Vance has three young sons. The Walzes and Vances are more traditional political families than those of the presidential nominees: Harris has adult stepchildren from her decade-old marriage to Doug Emhoff; Trump has five children from three marriages.

Expect both running mates, even as they try to keep the spotlight on their bosses, to highlight their own stories.

The fact-checking onus will be on the candidates

CBS announced Friday that it will be up to the candidates to keep each other honest at Tuesday's debate — a sticking point from earlier debates this year.

In the June debate between Trump and Biden, CNN's Jake Tapper and Dana Bash limited follow-up questions and did not fact check either participant. In the September debate between Trump and Harris, ABC's David Muir and Linsey Davis interjected with matter-of-fact corrections to some of Trump's most glaring misstatements.

Who were the 7 high-ranking Hezbollah officials killed over the past week?

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — In just over a week, intensified Israeli strikes in Lebanon killed seven high-ranking commanders and officials from the powerful Hezbollah militant group, including the group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

The move left Lebanon and much of the Mideast in shock as Israeli officials celebrated major military and intelligence breakthroughs.

Hezbollah had opened a front to support its ally Hamas in the Gaza Strip a day after the Palestinian group's surprise attack into southern Israel.

The recent strikes in Lebanon and the assassination of Nasrallah are a significant escalation in the war in the Middle East, this time between Israel and Hezbollah.

Lebanon's most powerful military and political force now finds itself trying to recuperate from severe blows, having lost key members who have been part of Hezbollah since its establishment in the early 1980s.

Chief among them was Nasrallah, who was killed in a series of airstrikes that leveled several buildings in southern Beirut. Others were lesser-known in the outside world, but still key to Hezbollah's operations.

Hassan Nasrallah

Since 1992, Nasrallah had led the group through several wars with Israel, and oversaw the party's transformation into a powerful player in Lebanon. Hezbollah entered Lebanon's political arena while also taking part in regional conflicts that made it the most powerful paramilitary force. After Syria's uprising in 2011 spiraled into civil war, Hezbollah played a pivotal role in keeping Syrian President Bashar Assad in power. Under Nasrallah, Hezbollah also helped develop the capabilities of fellow Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq and Yemen.

Nasrallah is a divisive figure in Lebanon, with his supporters hailing him for ending Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000, and his opponents decrying him for the group's weapons stockpile and making unilateral decisions that they say serves an agenda for Tehran and allies.

Nabil Kaouk

Kaouk, who was killed in an airstrike Saturday, was the deputy head of Hezbollah's Central Council. He joined the militant group in its early days in the 1980s. Kaouk also served as Hezbollah's military commander in south Lebanon from 1995 until 2010. He made several media appearances and gave speeches to supporters, including in funerals for killed Hezbollah militants. He had been seen as a potential successor to Nasrallah.

Ibrahim Akil

Akil was a top commander and led Hezbollah's elite Radwan Forces, which Israel has been trying to push further away from its border with Lebanon. He was also a member of its highest military body, the Jihad Council, and for years had been on the United States' wanted list. The U.S. State Department says Akil was part of the group that carried out the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and orchestrated the taking of German and American hostages.

Ahmad Wehbe

Wehbe was a commander of the Radwan Forces and played a crucial role in developing the group since its formation almost two decades ago. He was killed alongside Akil in an airstrike in Beirut's southern suburbs that struck and leveled a building.

Ali Karaki

Karaki led Hezbollah's southern front, playing a key role in the ongoing conflict. The U.S. described him as a significant figure in the militant group's leadership. Little is known about Karaki, who was killed alongside Nasrallah.

Mohammad Surour

Surour was the head of Hezbollah's drone unit, which was used for the first time in this current conflict with Israel. Under his leadership, Hezbollah launched exploding and reconnaissance drones deep into

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 46 of 74

Israel, penetrating its defense systems which had mostly focused on the group's rockets and missiles.

Ibrahim Kobeissi

Kobeissi led Hezbollah's missile unit. The Israeli military says Kobeissi planned the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli soldiers at the northern border in 2000, whose bodies were returned in a prisoner swap with Hezbollah four years later.

Other senior commanders killed in action

Even in the months before the recent escalation of the war with Hezbollah, Israel's military had targeted top commanders, most notably Fuad Shukur in late July, hours before an explosion in Iran widely blamed on Israel killed the leader of the Palestinian Hamas militant group Ismail Haniyeh. The U.S. accuses Fuad Shukur of orchestrating the 1983 bombing in Beirut that killed 241 American servicemen.

Leaders of key units in the south, Jawad Tawil, Taleb Abdullah, and Mohammad Nasser, who over several decades became instrumental members of Hezbollah's military activity were all assassinated.

Who is left?

Nasrallah's second-in-command Naim Kassem is the most senior member of the organization. Kassem has been Hezbollah's deputy leader since 1991, and is among its founding members. On several occasions, local news networks were quick to assume that an Israeli strike in southern Beirut may have targeted Kassem.

Kassem is the only top official of the militant group who has conducted interviews with local and international media in the ongoing conflict.

The deputy leader appears to be involved in various aspects of the militant group, both in top political and security matters, but also in matters related to Hezbollah's theocratic and charity initiatives to the Shia Muslim community in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Hashim Safieddine who heads Hezbollah's central council, is tipped to be Nasrallah's successor. Safieddine is a cousin of the late Hezbollah leader, and his son is married to the daughter of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was slain in a U.S. drone strike in 2020. Like Nasrallah, Safieddine joined Hezbollah early on and similarly wears a black turban.

Talal Hamieh and Abu Ali Reda are the two remaining top commanders from Hezbollah who are alive and apparently on the Israeli military's crosshairs.

At least 148 are dead in floods and landslides in Nepal

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Rescuers in Nepal recovered dozens of bodies from buses and other vehicles that were buried in landslides near the capital Kathmandu, as the death toll from flooding rose to at least 148 with dozens missing, officials said Sunday.

The weather improved on Sunday following three days of monsoon rains, and rescue and clean-up efforts were underway. Kathmandu remained cut off Sunday as three highways out of the city were blocked by landslides.

Rescuers retrieved 14 bodies overnight from two buses that were headed to Kathmandu when a landslide buried them. Another 23 bodies were dug out from vehicles Sunday on the same spot, about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Kathmandu, and workers searched for others who may have been buried.

A statement by the Nepal police said another 101 people were injured in the flooding and landslides while 50 are missing. The death toll was expected to rise as reports come in from villages across the mountainous country.

Residents in the southern part of Kathmandu, which was inundated on Saturday, were cleaning up houses as water levels began to recede. At least 34 people were killed in Kathmandu, which was the hardest hit by flooding.

Police and soldiers were assisting with rescue efforts, while heavy equipment was used to clear the landslides from the roads. The government announced it was closing schools and colleges across Nepal for the next three days.

The monsoon season began in June and usually ends by mid-September.

Death toll rises from Helene while supplies are rushed to North Carolina and Florida digs out

By KATE PAYNE, JEFFREY COLLINS and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PERRY, Fla. (AP) — Authorities struggled to get water and other supplies to isolated, flood-stricken areas across the U.S. Southeast in the wake of Hurricane Helene as the death toll from the storm rose to nearly 100.

A North Carolina county that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported 30 people killed due to the storm, and several other fatalities reported in North Carolina Sunday pushed the overall death toll to at least 91 people across several states.

Supplies were being airlifted to the region around the isolated city. Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder pledged that she would have food and water into Asheville — which is known for its arts, culture and natural attractions — by Monday.

“We hear you. We need food and we need water,” Pinder said on a Sunday call with reporters. “My staff has been making every request possible to the state for support and we’ve been working with every single organization that has reached out. What I promise you is that we are very close.”

Officials warned that rebuilding from the widespread loss of homes and property would be lengthy and difficult. The storm upended life throughout the Southeast. Deaths also were reported in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia.

North Carolina governor predicts the death toll will rise as rescuers reach isolated areas

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper predicted the toll would rise as rescuers and other emergency workers reached areas isolated by collapsed roads, failing infrastructure and widespread flooding.

He implored residents in western North Carolina to avoid travel, both for their own safety and to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles. More than 50 search teams spread throughout the region in search of stranded people.

One rescue effort involved saving 41 people north of Asheville. Another mission focused on saving a single infant. The teams found people through both 911 calls and social media messages, North Carolina National Guard Adjutant General Todd Hunt said.

President Joe Biden described the impact of the storm as “stunning” and said he would visit the area this week as long as it does not disrupt rescues or recovery work.

Hurricane Helene roared ashore late Thursday in Florida’s Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph (225 kph) winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded creeks and rivers and strained dams.

There have been hundreds of water rescues, including in rural Unicoi County in East Tennessee, where dozens of patients and staff were plucked by helicopter from a hospital rooftop Friday.

More than 2 million homeowners and other utility customers were still without power Sunday night. South Carolina had the most outages and Gov. Henry McMaster asked for patience as crews dealt with widespread snapped power poles.

“We want people to remain calm. Help is on the way, it is just going to take time,” McMaster told reporters outside the airport in Aiken County.

Begging for help in North Carolina as that help is slow to arrive

The storm unleashed the worst flooding in a century in North Carolina. One community, Spruce Pine, was doused with over 2 feet (61 centimeters) of rain from Tuesday through Saturday.

Jessica Drye Turner in Texas had begged for someone to rescue her family members stranded on their rooftop in Asheville amid rising floodwaters. “They are watching 18-wheelers and cars floating by,” Turner wrote in an urgent Facebook post on Friday.

But in a follow-up message Saturday, Turner said help had not arrived in time to save her parents, both in their 70s, and her 6-year-old nephew. The roof collapsed and the three drowned.

“I cannot convey in words the sorrow, heartbreak and devastation my sisters and I are going through,”

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 48 of 74

she wrote.

The state was sending water supplies and other items toward Buncombe County and Asheville, but mudslides blocking Interstate 40 and other highways prevented supplies from making it. The county's own water supplies were on the other side of the Swannanoa River, away from where most of the 270,000 people in Buncombe County live, officials said.

Law enforcement was making plans to send officers to places that still had water, food or gas because of reports of arguments and threats of violence, the county sheriff said.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell toured south Georgia on Sunday and planned to be in North Carolina Monday.

"It's still very much an active search and rescue mission" in western North Carolina, Criswell said. "And we know that there's many communities that are cut off just because of the geography" of the mountains, where damage to roads and bridges have cut off certain areas.

Biden on Saturday pledged federal government help for Helene's "overwhelming" devastation. He also approved a disaster declaration for North Carolina, making federal funding available for affected individuals.

Storm-battered Florida digs out, residents gather for church

In Florida's Big Bend, some lost nearly everything they own. With sanctuaries still darkened as of Sunday morning, some churches canceled regular services while others like Faith Baptist Church in Perry opted to worship outside.

Standing water and tree debris still covers the grounds of Faith Baptist Church. The church called on parishioners to come "pray for our community" in a message posted to the congregation's Facebook page.

"We have power. We don't have electricity," Immaculate Conception Catholic Church parishioner Marie Ruttinger said. "Our God has power. That's for sure."

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Saturday that it looked "like a bomb went off" after viewing splintered homes and debris-covered highways from the air.

In eastern Georgia near the border with South Carolina, officials notified Augusta residents Sunday morning that water service would be shut off for 24 to 48 hours in the city and surrounding Richmond County.

A news release said trash and debris from the storm "blocked our ability to pump water." Officials were distributing bottled water.

With at least 25 killed in South Carolina, Helene was the deadliest tropical cyclone for the state since Hurricane Hugo made landfall north of Charleston in 1989, killing 35 people.

Moody's Analytics said it expects \$15 billion to \$26 billion in property damage.

Climate change has exacerbated conditions that allow such storms to thrive, rapidly intensifying in warming waters and turning into powerful cyclones sometimes within hours.

New tropical depression in Atlantic could become strong hurricane, forecasters say

A new tropical depression in the eastern Atlantic Ocean could become a "formidable hurricane" later this week, the National Hurricane Center said Sunday. The depression had sustained 35 mph (55kph) winds and was located about 585 miles (945 kilometers) west-southwest of the Cape Verde Islands, the center said. It could become a hurricane by Wednesday.

Austria's Freedom Party secures first far-right national election win since World War II

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — The Freedom Party secured the first far-right national parliamentary election victory in post-World War II Austria on Sunday, finishing ahead of the governing conservatives after tapping into anxieties about immigration, inflation, Ukraine and other issues. But its chances of governing were unclear.

Preliminary official results showed the Freedom Party finishing first with 29.2% of the vote and Chancellor Karl Nehammer's Austrian People's Party was second with 26.5%. The center-left Social Democrats were in third place with 21%. The outgoing government — a coalition of Nehammer's party and the environmentalist Greens — lost its majority in the lower house of parliament.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 49 of 74

Herbert Kickl, a former interior minister and longtime campaign strategist who has led the Freedom Party since 2021, wants to be chancellor.

But to become Austria's new leader, he would need a coalition partner to command a parliamentary majority. Rivals have said they won't work with Kickl in government.

The far right has benefited from frustration over high inflation, the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also built on worries about migration.

In its election program, titled "Fortress Austria," the Freedom Party calls for "remigration of uninvited foreigners," for achieving a more "homogeneous" nation by tightly controlling borders and suspending the right to asylum via an emergency law.

The Freedom Party also calls for an end to sanctions against Russia, is highly critical of Western military aid to Ukraine and wants to bow out of the European Sky Shield Initiative, a missile defense project launched by Germany. Kickl has criticized "elites" in Brussels and called for some powers to be brought back from the European Union to Austria.

"We don't need to change our position, because we have always said that we're ready to lead a government, we're ready to push forward this change in Austria side by side with the people," Kickl said in an appearance alongside other party leaders on ORF public television. "The other parties should ask themselves where they stand on democracy," he added, arguing that they should "sleep on the result."

Nehammer said it was "bitter" that his party missed out on first place, but noted he brought it back from lower poll ratings. He has often said he won't form a coalition with Kickl and said that "what I said before the election, I also say after the election."

More than 6.3 million people were eligible to vote for the new parliament in Austria, an EU member that has a policy of military neutrality.

Kickl has achieved a turnaround since Austria's last parliamentary election in 2019. In June, the Freedom Party narrowly won a nationwide vote for the first time in the European Parliament election, which also brought gains for other European far-right parties.

Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders, whose party dominates the Netherlands' new government, congratulated the Freedom Party on social network X Sunday. So did Alice Weidel, a co-leader of the Alternative for Germany party.

The Freedom Party is a long-established force but Sunday's result was its best yet in a national parliamentary election, beating the 26.9% it scored in 1999.

In 2019, its support slumped to 16.2% after a scandal brought down a government in which it was the junior partner. Then-vice chancellor and Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache resigned following the publication of a secretly recorded video in which he appeared to offer favors to a purported Russian investor.

The leader of the Social Democrats, a party that led many of Austria's post-World War II governments, positioned himself as the polar opposite to Kickl. Andreas Babler ruled out governing with the far right and labeled Kickl "a threat to democracy."

While the Freedom Party has recovered, the popularity of Nehammer's People's Party declined sharply compared with 2019. Support for the Greens, their coalition partner, also dropped to 8%.

During the election campaign, Nehammer portrayed his party, which has taken a tough line on immigration in recent years, as "the strong center" that would guarantee stability amid multiple crises.

But crises ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and resulting rising energy prices and inflation also cost it support. The government also angered many Austrians in 2022 with a short-lived coronavirus vaccine mandate, the first in Europe.

But the recent flooding caused by Storm Boris that hit Austria and other countries may have helped Nehammer slightly narrow the gap as a crisis manager.

The People's Party is the far right's only way into government, and now holds the key to forming any administration.

Nehammer repeatedly excluded joining a government led by Kickl, describing him as a "security risk" for the country, but didn't rule out a coalition with the Freedom Party itself — which would imply Kickl

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 50 of 74

renouncing a position in government. But that looks very unlikely with the Freedom Party in first place. The alternative would be an alliance between the People's Party and the Social Democrats — with or without the liberal Neos, who took 9% of the vote.

A final official result will be published later in the week after a small number of remaining postal ballots have been counted, but those won't change the outcome substantially.

About 300 protesters gathered outside the parliament building in Vienna Sunday evening, holding placards with slogans including "Kickl is a Nazi."

Kris Kristofferson, singer-songwriter and actor, dies at 88

By ANDREW DALTON and KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kris Kristofferson, a Rhodes scholar with a deft writing style and rough charisma who became a country music superstar and an A-list Hollywood actor, has died.

Kristofferson died at his home on Maui, Hawaii, on Saturday, family spokeswoman Ebie McFarland said in an email. He was 88.

McFarland said Kristofferson died peacefully, surrounded by his family. No cause was given.

Starting in the late 1960s, the Brownsville, Texas native wrote such country and rock 'n' roll standards as "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down," "Help Me Make it Through the Night," "For the Good Times" and "Me and Bobby McGee." Kristofferson was a singer himself, but many of his songs were best known as performed by others, whether Ray Price crooning "For the Good Times" or Janis Joplin belting out "Me and Bobby McGee."

He starred opposite Ellen Burstyn in director Martin Scorsese's 1974 film "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," starred opposite Barbra Streisand in the 1976 "A Star Is Born," and acted alongside Wesley Snipes in Marvel's "Blade" in 1998.

Kristofferson, who could recite William Blake from memory, wove intricate folk music lyrics about loneliness and tender romance into popular country music. With his long hair and bell-bottomed slacks and counterculture songs influenced by Bob Dylan, he represented a new breed of country songwriters along with such peers as Willie Nelson, John Prine and Tom T. Hall.

"There's no better songwriter alive than Kris Kristofferson," Nelson said at a 2009 BMI award ceremony for Kristofferson. "Everything he writes is a standard and we're all just going to have to live with that."

Kristofferson retired from performing and recording in 2021, making only occasional guest appearances on stage, including a performance with Cash's daughter Rosanne at Nelson's 90th birthday celebration at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles in 2023. The two sang "Loving Her Was Easier (Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again)," a song that was a hit for Kristofferson and a longtime live staple for Nelson, another great interpreter of his work.

Nelson and Kristofferson would join forces with Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings to create the country supergroup "The Highwaymen" starting in the mid-1980s.

Kristofferson was a Golden Gloves boxer, rugby star and football player in college; received a master's degree in English from Merton College at the University of Oxford in England; and flew helicopters as a captain in the U.S. Army but turned down an appointment to teach at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, to pursue songwriting in Nashville. Hoping to break into the industry, he worked as a part-time janitor at Columbia Records' Music Row studio in 1966 when Dylan recorded tracks for the seminal "Blonde on Blonde" double album.

At times, the legend of Kristofferson was larger than real life. Cash liked to tell a mostly exaggerated story of how Kristofferson landed a helicopter on Cash's lawn to give him a tape of "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down" with a beer in one hand. Over the years in interviews, Kristofferson said with all respect to Cash, while he did land a helicopter at Cash's house, the Man in Black wasn't even home at the time, the demo tape was a song that no one ever actually cut and he certainly couldn't fly a helicopter holding a beer.

In a 2006 interview with The Associated Press, he said he might not have had a career without Cash. "Shaking his hand when I was still in the Army backstage at the Grand Ole Opry was the moment I'd

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 51 of 74

decided I'd come back," Kristofferson said. "It was electric. He kind of took me under his wing before he cut any of my songs. He cut my first record that was record of the year. He put me on stage the first time."

One of his most recorded songs, "Me and Bobby McGee," was written based on a recommendation from Monument Records founder Fred Foster. Foster had a song title in his head called "Me and Bobby McKee," named after a female secretary in his building. Kristofferson said in an interview in the magazine, "Performing Songwriter," that he was inspired to write the lyrics about a man and woman on the road together after watching the Federico Fellini film, "La Strada."

Joplin, who had a close relationship with Kristofferson, changed the lyrics to make Bobby McGee a man and cut her version just days before she died in 1970 from a drug overdose. The recording became a posthumous No. 1 hit for Joplin.

Hits that Kristofferson recorded include "Watch Closely Now," "Desperados Waiting for a Train," "A Song I'd Like to Sing" and "Jesus Was a Capricorn."

In 1973, he married fellow songwriter Rita Coolidge and together they had a successful duet career that earned them two Grammy awards. They divorced in 1980.

The formation of the Highwaymen, with Nelson, Cash and Jennings, was another pivotal point in his career as a performer.

"I think I was different from the other guys in that I came in it as a fan of all of them," Kristofferson told the AP in 2005. "I had a respect for them when I was still in the Army. When I went to Nashville they were like major heroes of mine because they were people who took the music seriously. To be not only recorded by them but to be friends with them and to work side by side was just a little unreal. It was like seeing your face on Mount Rushmore."

The group put out just three albums between 1985 and 1995. Jennings died in 2002 and Cash died a year later. Kristofferson said in 2005 that there was some talk about reforming the group with other artists, such as George Jones or Hank Williams Jr., but Kristofferson said it wouldn't have been the same.

"When I look back now — I know I hear Willie say it was the best time of his life," Kristofferson said in 2005. "For me, I wish I was more aware how short of a time it would be. It was several years, but it was still like the blink of an eye. I wish I would have cherished each moment."

Among the four, only Nelson is now alive.

Kristofferson's sharp-tongued political lyrics sometimes hurt his popularity, especially in the late 1980s. His 1989 album, "Third World Warrior" was focused on Central America and what United States policy had wrought there, but critics and fans weren't excited about the overtly political songs.

He said during a 1995 interview with the AP he remembered a woman complaining about one of the songs that began with killing babies in the name of freedom.

"And I said, 'Well, what made you mad — the fact that I was saying it or the fact that we're doing it? To me, they were getting mad at me 'cause I was telling them what was going on.'"

As the son of an Air Force General, he enlisted in the Army in the 1960s because it was expected of him.

"I was in ROTC in college, and it was just taken for granted in my family that I'd do my service," he said in a 2006 AP interview. "From my background and the generation I came up in, honor and serving your country were just taken for granted. So, later, when you come to question some of the things being done in your name, it was particularly painful."

Hollywood may have saved his music career. He still got exposure through his film and television appearances even when he couldn't afford to tour with a full band.

Kristofferson's first role was in Dennis Hopper's "The Last Movie," in 1971.

He had a fondness for Westerns, and would use his gravelly voice to play attractive, stoic leading men. He was Burstyn's ruggedly handsome love interest in "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" and a tragic rock star in a rocky relationship with Streisand in "A Star Is Born," a role echoed by Bradley Cooper in the 2018 remake.

He was the young title outlaw in director Sam Peckinpah's 1973 "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid," a truck driver for the same director in 1978's "Convoy," and a corrupt sheriff in director John Sayles' 1996, "Lone

Star." He also starred in one of Hollywood's biggest financial flops, "Heaven's Gate," a 1980 Western that ran tens of millions of dollars over budget.

And in a rare appearance in a superhero movie, he played the mentor of Snipes' vampire hunter in "Blade." He described in a 2006 AP interview how he got his first acting gigs when he performed in Los Angeles. "It just happened that my first professional gig was at the Troubadour in L.A. opening for Linda Ronstadt," Kristofferson said. "Robert Hilburn (Los Angeles Times music critic) wrote a fantastic review and the concert was held over for a week," Kristofferson said. "There were a bunch of movie people coming in there, and I started getting film offers with no experience. Of course, I had no experience performing either."

Stuck NASA astronauts welcome SpaceX capsule that'll bring them home next year

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The two astronauts stuck at the International Space Station since June welcomed their new ride home with Sunday's arrival of a SpaceX capsule.

SpaceX launched the rescue mission on Saturday with a downsized crew of two astronauts and two empty seats reserved for Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who will return next year. The Dragon capsule docked in darkness as the two craft soared 265 miles (426 kilometers) above Botswana.

NASA switched Wilmore and Williams to SpaceX following concerns over the safety of their Boeing Starliner capsule. It was the first Starliner test flight with a crew, and NASA decided the thruster failures and helium leaks that cropped up after liftoff were too serious and poorly understood to risk the test pilots' return. So Starliner returned to Earth empty earlier this month.

The Dragon carrying NASA's Nick Hague and the Russian Space Agency's Alexander Gorbunov will remain at the space station until February, turning what should have been a weeklong trip for Wilmore and Williams into a mission lasting more than eight months.

Two NASA astronauts were pulled from the mission to make room for Wilmore and Williams on the return leg.

"I just want to say welcome to our new compadres," Williams, the space station commander, said once Hague and Gorbunov floated inside and were embraced by the nine astronauts awaiting them.

Hague said it was a smooth flight up. "Coming through the hatch and seeing all the smiles, and as much as I've laughed and cried in the last 10 minutes, I know it's going to be an amazing expedition," he said.

NASA likes to replace its station crews every six months or so. SpaceX has provided the taxi service since the company's first astronaut flight in 2020. NASA also hired Boeing for ferry flights after the space shuttles were retired, but flawed software and other Starliner issues led to years of delays and more than \$1 billion in repairs.

Starliner inspections are underway at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, with post-flight reviews of data set to begin this week.

"We're a long way from saying, 'Hey, we're writing off Boeing,'" NASA's associate administrator Jim Free said at a pre-launch briefing.

The arrival of two fresh astronauts means the four who have been up there since March can now return to Earth in their own SpaceX capsule in just over a week, bringing the station's crew size back down to the normal seven. Their stay was extended a month because of the Starliner turmoil.

Although Saturday's liftoff went well, SpaceX said the rocket's spent upper stage ended up outside its targeted impact zone in the Pacific because of a bad engine firing. The company has halted all Falcon launches until it figures out what went wrong. The stay was extended a month because of the Starliner turmoil.

California governor vetoes bill to create first-in-nation AI safety measures

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a landmark bill aimed at establishing first-in-the-nation safety measures for large artificial intelligence models Sunday.

The decision is a major blow to efforts attempting to rein in the homegrown industry that is rapidly evolving with little oversight. The bill would have established some of the first regulations on large-scale AI models in the nation and paved the way for AI safety regulations across the country, supporters said.

Earlier this month, the Democratic governor told an audience at Dreamforce, an annual conference hosted by software giant Salesforce, that California must lead in regulating AI in the face of federal inaction but that the proposal “can have a chilling effect on the industry.”

The proposal, which drew fierce opposition from startups, tech giants and several Democratic House members, could have hurt the homegrown industry by establishing rigid requirements, Newsom said.

“While well-intentioned, SB 1047 does not take into account whether an AI system is deployed in high-risk environments, involves critical decision-making or the use of sensitive data,” Newsom said in a statement. “Instead, the bill applies stringent standards to even the most basic functions — so long as a large system deploys it. I do not believe this is the best approach to protecting the public from real threats posed by the technology.”

Newsom on Sunday instead announced that the state will partner with several industry experts, including AI pioneer Fei-Fei Li, to develop guardrails around powerful AI models. Li opposed the AI safety proposal.

The measure, aimed at reducing potential risks created by AI, would have required companies to test their models and publicly disclose their safety protocols to prevent the models from being manipulated to, for example, wipe out the state’s electric grid or help build chemical weapons. Experts say those scenarios could be possible in the future as the industry continues to rapidly advance. It also would have provided whistleblower protections to workers.

The bill’s author, Democratic state Sen. Scott Weiner, called the veto “a setback for everyone who believes in oversight of massive corporations that are making critical decisions that affect the safety and the welfare of the public and the future of the planet.”

“The companies developing advanced AI systems acknowledge that the risks these models present to the public are real and rapidly increasing. While the large AI labs have made admirable commitments to monitor and mitigate these risks, the truth is that voluntary commitments from industry are not enforceable and rarely work out well for the public,” Wiener said in a statement Sunday afternoon.

Wiener said the debate around the bill has dramatically advanced the issue of AI safety, and that he would continue pressing that point.

The legislation is among a host of bills passed by the Legislature this year to regulate AI, fight deepfakes and protect workers. State lawmakers said California must take actions this year, citing hard lessons they learned from failing to rein in social media companies when they might have had a chance.

Proponents of the measure, including Elon Musk and Anthropic, said the proposal could have injected some levels of transparency and accountability around large-scale AI models, as developers and experts say they still don’t have a full understanding of how AI models behave and why.

The bill targeted systems that require a high level of computing power and more than \$100 million to build. No current AI models have hit that threshold, but some experts said that could change within the next year.

“This is because of the massive investment scale-up within the industry,” said Daniel Kokotajlo, a former OpenAI researcher who resigned in April over what he saw as the company’s disregard for AI risks. “This is a crazy amount of power to have any private company control unaccountably, and it’s also incredibly risky.”

The United States is already behind Europe in regulating AI to limit risks. The California proposal wasn’t as comprehensive as regulations in Europe, but it would have been a good first step to set guardrails around the rapidly growing technology that is raising concerns about job loss, misinformation, invasions

of privacy and automation bias, supporters said.

A number of leading AI companies last year voluntarily agreed to follow safeguards set by the White House, such as testing and sharing information about their models. The California bill would have mandated AI developers to follow requirements similar to those commitments, said the measure's supporters.

But critics, including former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, argued that the bill would "kill California tech" and stifle innovation. It would have discouraged AI developers from investing in large models or sharing open-source software, they said.

Newsom's decision to veto the bill marks another win in California for big tech companies and AI developers, many of whom spent the past year lobbying alongside the California Chamber of Commerce to sway the governor and lawmakers from advancing AI regulations.

Two other sweeping AI proposals, which also faced mounting opposition from the tech industry and others, died ahead of a legislative deadline last month. The bills would have required AI developers to label AI-generated content and ban discrimination from AI tools used to make employment decisions.

The governor said earlier this summer he wanted to protect California's status as a global leader in AI, noting that 32 of the world's top 50 AI companies are located in the state.

He has promoted California as an early adopter as the state could soon deploy generative AI tools to address highway congestion, provide tax guidance and streamline homelessness programs. The state also announced last month a voluntary partnership with AI giant Nvidia to help train students, college faculty, developers and data scientists. California is also considering new rules against AI discrimination in hiring practices.

Earlier this month, Newsom signed some of the toughest laws in the country to crack down on election deepfakes and measures to protect Hollywood workers from unauthorized AI use.

But even with Newsom's veto, the California safety proposal is inspiring lawmakers in other states to take up similar measures, said Tatiana Rice, deputy director of the Future of Privacy Forum, a nonprofit that works with lawmakers on technology and privacy proposals.

"They are going to potentially either copy it or do something similar next legislative session," Rice said. "So it's not going away."

Trump escalates attacks on Harris' mental fitness and suggests she should be prosecuted

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

ERIE, Pa. (AP) — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump escalated his personal attacks on his Democratic rival, Kamala Harris, on Sunday by repeating an insult that she was "mentally impaired" while also saying she should be "impeached and prosecuted."

Trump's rally in Erie, Pennsylvania, took on similar themes as an event one day earlier that he himself described as a "dark speech." He told a cheering crowd Sunday that Harris was responsible for an "invasion" at the U.S.-Mexico border and "she should be impeached and prosecuted for her actions."

"Crooked Joe Biden became mentally impaired," he added. "Sad. But lying Kamala Harris, honestly, I believe she was born that way. There's something wrong with Kamala. And I just don't know what it is, but there is definitely something missing. And you know what, everybody knows it."

With just over a month until the election, Trump is intensifying his use of personal and offensive attacks, even as some Republicans say he'd be better off sticking to the issues.

His suggestions that political enemies be prosecuted are particularly notable for their departure from norms in the U.S. in which the justice system is supposed to be protected from political influence. In recent weeks, Trump has threatened prosecutions of Google for allegedly giving priority to "good stories" about Harris and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

Trump has long threatened legal action against his rivals, including President Joe Biden and his 2016 rival, Hillary Clinton. This month he vowed to jail those "involved in unscrupulous behavior" this election, including election workers, lawyers, political operatives, donors, and voters, yet again attempting to sow

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 55 of 74

doubt about the integrity of the election.

But he also has many legal problems of his own. He was convicted in May of falsifying business records in a hush money case in New York, with a sentencing scheduled for Nov. 26. Two other cases are pending — a federal case for his alleged role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, and a state case in Georgia for his efforts to overturn his 2020 loss there to Biden. Prosecutors are appealing a federal judge's dismissal of a case involving his handling of classified documents.

Trump argues federal and state prosecutors are targeting him for political reasons, though there is no evidence to suggest that is true. If he wins the election, Trump could potentially pardon himself on the federal cases or order the Justice Department to shut down their investigations of him.

On Sunday, he acknowledged he might lose in November: "If she wins, it's not going to be so pleasant for me, but I don't care."

Trump has derided Harris, the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to lead a major party ticket, as "stupid," "weak," "dumb as a rock" and "lazy." His allies have pushed him publicly and privately to talk instead about the economy, immigration and other issues.

"I just think the better course to take is to prosecute the case that her policies are destroying the country," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on CNN's "State of the Union" Sunday when asked about Trump's comments. "They're crazy liberal."

When asked whether he approved of the personal attacks on Harris, Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., side-stepped during an interview on ABC's "This Week."

"I think Kamala Harris is the wrong choice for America," said Emmer, who is helping Trump's running mate JD Vance prepare for Tuesday's vice-presidential debate. "I think Kamala Harris is actually as bad or worse as the administration that we've witnessed for the last four years."

When pressed, Emmer said: "I think we should stick to the issues. The issues are, Donald Trump fixed it once. They broke it. He's going to fix it again. Those are the issues."

Former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, running for the Senate as a moderate Republican, brought up Trump's false claims that Harris, the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, had previously played down her Black heritage. Harris attended Howard University, a historically Black institution, and has identified as both Black and South Asian consistently throughout her political career.

"I've already called him out when he had the one interview where he was questioning her racial identity, and now he's questioning her mental competence," Hogan told CBS' "Face the Nation." "And I think that's insulting not only to the vice president but to people who actually do have mental disabilities."

Harris has not commented on Trump's recent attacks but has said when asked about other comments that it was the "same old show. The same tired playbook we've heard for years with no plan on how he would address the needs of the American people."

Ahead of the rally on Sunday, some of Trump's supporters said he often makes offensive remarks. Still, they support his proposals to restrict immigration and said he would have a better handle on the economy.

"He says what's on his mind, and again, sometimes how he says it isn't appropriate," said Jeffrey Balogh, 56, who attended the rally with two friends. "But he did the job. He did very well at it."

Tamara Molnar said she thinks Trump is very strong on immigration. As for his insults, Molnar said: "I think everybody has to have some decorum when speaking about other candidates, and I don't think either side is necessarily innocent on that. There's a lot of slinging both ways."

At the rally in Erie, Trump said the "invasion" would end and deportations would begin if he took office.

"Thousands of migrants from the most dangerous countries are destroying the character of small towns and leaving local communities in anguish and in despair," he said, talking about communities in the battleground states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Last month, the GOP leader said he was "entitled" to personal attacks against Harris.

"As far as the personal attacks, I'm very angry at her because of what she's done to the country," he told a news conference then. "I'm very angry at her that she would weaponize the justice system against me and other people, very angry at her. I think I'm entitled to personal attacks."

Behind the loudest issues, the UN is a world stage for disputes that are often out of the spotlight

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN UNITED NATIONS

The world's greatest stage is the sprawling Midtown Manhattan complex where leaders meet each year to discuss humanity's future.

The United Nations' most powerful body — the Security Council — is paralyzed by disputes, so this year's most varied speeches were delivered before the 193-member General Assembly.

Like the 15-nation Security Council with its five vetoes, the UNGA devoted much time to the Middle East, Russia, Ukraine and Sudan. But the more democratic institution also turned global attention to topics little-known outside individual countries and regions.

A look at some of the issues that countries brought to the world stage — or ignored — during their time on the global stage:

Guatemala-Belize

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo spoke Tuesday and asserted that his country is moving beyond its dark past of U.S.-backed dictatorship, civil war and human-rights violations, saying that "corruption drowns its roots in a past of authoritarianism, repression and political violence ... but we're freeing ourselves." He turned to Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, U.N. reform and migration before focusing on a definitively local issue, the longstanding border dispute between Guatemala and Belize.

Guatemala was a Spanish colony and Belize belonged to Great Britain until Guatemala won independence in 1821. Guatemala argues that it inherited Spain's claim to some 4,200 square miles (11,000 square kilometers) administered by Belize. Essentially the country's southern half, the area has nature reserves, farming villages, fishing towns and some Caribbean beaches. Belize rejects Guatemala's claim on the land. Diplomatic relations and even air travel have suffered and five Guatemalans have died in shootings blamed on Belize.

But before the General Assembly, Arévalo cited the relative lack of bloodshed as an example for the world. "We've shown that the way of peace and respect for multilateral institutions is the most effective way to resolve international disputes," he said.

North Macedonia

What's in a name? The archetypal local dispute. It centers on an ancient region divided by the modern national borders of Greece, Bulgaria and the country of North Macedonia.

That last name was adopted when the nation, population about 2.1 million, declared independence from the former Yugoslavia in 1991. Greece and what the U.N. cumbersomely used to call the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" went on to spar for nearly three decades. Greece said using "Macedonia" implied territorial claims on its own northern province of the same name and its ancient Greek heritage, not least as the birthplace of ancient warrior king Alexander the Great.

The name fight became "infamous as a difficult and irresolvable problem," in the words of Zoran Zaev, the former prime minister of North Macedonia. Repeated rounds of U.N.-mediated negotiations proved fruitless until June 2018, when the government agreed to change the country's name to North Macedonia. The switch took effect but the dispute slowed North Macedonia's integration into the EU.

Bulgaria now has the main objection, a more important stumbling block than the name disagreement. President Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova told the General Assembly Thursday that "in conditions of conflict on European soil, the stagnation of European integration not only demotivates Macedonian citizens and slows down reforms, but also destabilizes the region of Southeast Europe, leaving room for the penetration of malignant imperial and great power influences."

Cuba

For decades, one of Cuba's primary foreign-policy priorities has been ending the U.S. trade embargo on the island, and the country successfully dedicates much of its diplomacy to winning global critiques of the embargo.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 57 of 74

According to Cuba's U.N. mission, more than 25 countries addressed the embargo at this year's UNGA and at least 11 leaders critiqued the U.S. inclusion of Cuba on the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, another sanction limiting international trade. Many of the countries that spoke have benefitted from another of Cuba's trademark programs, sending its well-trained and highly educated doctors to developing countries across the world.

Right after mentioning Ukraine and Gaza, Prime Minister Allah Maye Halina of Chad told the world that "we can't ignore the embargo on Cuba, which hurts its people and hinders its development." Mexico, Russia and China joined the chorus Saturday, with the Chinese foreign minister saying that "we once again urge the United States to completely lift its blockade, sanctions and terrorism-related designation against Cuba."

Gambia

Some local issues are uncomfortable to discuss in front of the world, and nearly every leader addresses those issues delicately or ignores them.

Gambian President Adama Barrow was silent for months this year on a bill to repeal a ban on female genital cutting, the removal of external genitalia by traditional community practitioners or health workers. The practice, which still occurs in Gambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan and Somalia and other nations, can cause serious bleeding, death and childbirth complications.

Barrow said in June that he supported maintaining the ban — a declaration seen as key to Gambia's parliament keeping it. Barrow told the General Assembly this year that, "my government places great emphasis on women's rights, and we are dedicated to protecting and empowering women."

"As President, I will continue to ensure that women and girls are protected and given the necessary space to contribute meaningfully to our national development agenda," he said.

But the numbers tell a more difficult story for Gambian girls and women. The United Nations estimates that about 75% of women in Gambia have been subjected as young girls to cutting. In the past eight years some 30 million women globally have been cut, most of them in Africa but also in Asia and the Middle East, UNICEF said in March.

Libya

Some countries came to the UNGA against a backdrop of profound domestic disorder and focused some blame on external interference.

Libya plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. In the chaos that followed, the country split, with rival administrations in the east and west backed by rogue militias and foreign governments. Following years of strife, one of the country's dueling authorities unilaterally fired the country's powerful governor of the bank in August as militias mobilized in several key regions.

The presidential council in the capital of Tripoli, which is allied with the government of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah that controls western Libya, removed Gov. Sadiq al-Kabir, who had for years distributed the country's oil revenues between the opposing sides. The spat led to a closure of one of the country's main oil fields.

The political crisis stems from the failure to hold elections on Dec. 24, 2021, and the refusal of Dbeibah — who led a transitional government in the capital of Tripoli in the west — to step down. In response, Libya's east-based parliament appointed a rival prime minister who was replaced, while the powerful military commander Khalifa Hifter continues to hold sway in the east.

The top U.N. official in Libya, Stephanie Houry, said in August that the situation in Libya had deteriorated "quite rapidly." A series of U.N. envoys to the country have resigned after failing to make headway in moving closer to elections and unification. In April, the previous U.N. envoy for Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, resigned, blaming the country's feuding parties and their foreign backers for the conflict's continuation.

"Challenges are huge and complex before us," Younis Menfi, president of Libya's presidential council, told the General Assembly on Wednesday. "However, we're still trying to reach consensual solutions to unite our words and ranks and gather all parties around on table to find a national solution."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 58 of 74

AP Top 25: Alabama overtakes Texas for No. 1 and UNLV earns its 1st ranking in program history

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Alabama returned to No. 1 in The Associated Press college football poll for the first time in two years on Sunday following its dizzying victory over Georgia, making this 16 of 17 seasons the Crimson Tide has held the top spot at some point.

UNLV, unbeaten through four games for the first time in its Division I history, cracked the rankings for the first time ever just days after losing its starting quarterback over a NIL dispute. The Rebels are tied for No. 25 with Texas A&M.

Alabama received 40 of 63 first-place votes and leapfrogged three teams to take over No. 1 from Texas, which tussled with Mississippi State deep into the second half as a five-touchdown favorite and slipped to No. 2. The Longhorns got 19 first-place votes, well off last week's 44.

Ohio State remained No. 3 with four first-place votes. Tennessee, which had an open date, moved up a spot to fourth. Georgia, whose only three losses since 2021 have come to Alabama, dropped to No. 5.

Oregon, Penn State, Miami, Missouri and Michigan rounded out the top 10.

Mississippi and Utah took the biggest falls. The Rebels, upset by Kentucky at home, dropped from No. 6 to No. 12. The Utes, who lost to Arizona at home, went from No. 10 to No. 18.

Alabama, which is No. 1 for the first time under coach Kalen DeBoer, has posted back-to-back impressive wins with Heisman Trophy front-runner Jalen Milroe and freshman phenom receiver Ryan Williams leading the way.

The Tide won 42-10 on the road against Wisconsin two weeks ago and prevailed 41-34 against Georgia on Saturday night after squandering a 28-point first-half lead.

The Tide hadn't been No. 1 since Oct. 2, 2022. They memorably held the spot for just one week after needing a late goal-line stand to beat an unranked Texas A&M at home, with Milroe subbing for injured 2021 Heisman winner Bryce Young that night.

The Tide are No. 1 for the 141st time, most of any team since the AP rankings began in 1936, and for the 105th time since 2009 when Nick Saban won the first of his six national championships at 'Bama.

Poll points

The SEC holds four of the top five spots for the fourth straight week, an ongoing first in the AP poll. The only other time in the 88-year history of the poll that a conference had four of the top five teams was the SEC on Oct. 19, 2014 (No. 1 Mississippi State, No. 3 Mississippi, No. 4 Alabama and No. 5 Auburn). That lasted a week.

The SEC holds nine spots in the Top 25, one off its own record for number of ranked teams from one conference.

The Big Ten has four teams in the top 10 for the first time since October 2021 and seven in the Top 25.

In-and-out

UNLV was one of the feel-good stories of the season even before Matthew Sluka announced he would sit out the rest of the season, contending he was cheated out of a \$100,000 name, image and likeness payment.

The Rebels, with Hajj-Malik Williams starring as the new quarterback, beat Fresno State 59-14 on Saturday. Now the Rebels sit 4-0 for the first time since 1976, when they were Division II, and they will look to knock off a third power-conference opponent when they host Syracuse this week.

Also entering the rankings is Indiana at No. 23. The Hoosiers, who are 5-0 for the first time since 1967, hadn't been ranked since they were No. 17 in the 2021 preseason poll.

Oklahoma State dropped out. The Cowboys, who were No. 20, have lost two straight against ranked opponents, most recently getting blown out at Kansas State.

Conference call

SEC — 9 (Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 13, 19, T-25).

Big Ten — 7 (Nos. 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 23, 24).

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 59 of 74

Big 12 — 4 (Nos. 16, 17, 18, 20).

ACC — 3 (Nos. 8, 15, 22).

Mountain West — 2 (No. 21, T-25).

Independent — 1 (No. 14).

Ranked vs. Ranked

—No. 9 Missouri at No. 25 Texas A&M. The Tigers got a week off to recover from their double-overtime scare against Vanderbilt and will make their first visit to College Station since 2014. The teams have split four meetings since they joined the SEC in 2012.

As theaters struggle, many independent cinemas in Los Angeles are finding their audience

By KRYSTA FAURIA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — On a hot summer evening, Miles Villalon lined up outside the New Beverly Cinema, hours before showtime.

The 36-year-old already had tickets to the Watergate-themed double feature of 1976's "All the President's Men" and 1999's "Dick." But Villalon braved Los Angeles' infamous rush-hour traffic to snag front-row seats at Quentin Tarantino's historic theater.

This level of dedication is routine for the Starbucks barista and aspiring filmmaker, who typically sees up to six movies a week in theaters, and almost exclusively in independently owned theaters in and around Los Angeles.

"I always say it feels like church," he said. "When I go to AMC, I just sit there. And I can't really experience that communal thing that we have here, where we're all just worshipping at the altar of celluloid."

Streaming — and a pandemic — have radically transformed cinema consumption, but Villalon is part of a growing number of mostly younger people contributing to a renaissance of LA's independent theater scene. The city's enduring, if diminished, role as a mecca of the film industry still shapes its residents and their entertainment preferences, often with renewed appreciation after the pandemic.

A revival in the City of Angels

Part of what makes the city unique is its abundance of historic theaters, salvaged amid looming closures or resurrected in recent years by those with ties to the film industry. Experts see a pattern of success for a certain kind of theater experience in Los Angeles.

Kate Markham, the managing director at Art House Convergence, a coalition of independent cinema exhibitors, said a key factor is the people who run these theaters.

"They know their audiences or their potential audiences, and they are curating programs and an environment for them to have an exceptional experience," she wrote in an email.

Tarantino pioneered the trend when he purchased the New Beverly in 2007. After Netflix bought and restored the nearby Egyptian Theater, which first opened in 1922 as a silent movie house, the company reopened it to the public in November in partnership with the nonprofit American Cinematheque. It's now a bustling hub, regularly welcoming A-list celebrities premiering their projects as well as film buffs willing to stick around for hourslong marathons, like a recent screening of four Paul Thomas Anderson movies.

Further east is Vidiots. Previously existing as a Santa Monica video store before it closed in 2017, Vidiots reopened across town five years later with the addition of a 271-seat theater, bar and new crop of devotees.

"It's literally my favorite place to be outside of my own snuggly home," said filmmaker and actor Mark Duplass, a financial backer of Vidiots alongside dozens of other high-profile names, including Aubrey Plaza and Lily Collins.

What's bringing people in?

What draws people to independent theaters can vary, from older programming to elevated food-and-drink offerings to lower prices. But many agree, above all, there is a communal aspect chains can't match.

"The bigger places obviously have premium formats and stuff like that. But I think there's a lot less communal connection" said Dr. Michael Hook, who attended a matinee of "Seven Samurai" at Vidiots with

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 60 of 74

a Children's Hospital Los Angeles co-worker. "You're not just milling around with people who also have selected to go to a three-hour-long 1950s Japanese movie."

Although the pandemic was a blow from which the box office has yet to recover, it also served as a pruning that made the movie theater landscape more sustainable for the streaming era, according to Janice O'Bryan, Comscore's senior vice president.

"COVID weeded out some of the stuff that needed to close anyway," O'Bryan said of the more than 500 theaters that closed nationwide. "I think that it made everything healthier."

The theaters that survived have found niches, sometimes purposefully eschewing the chains' 4DX, reclining seats and dining services.

"For the types of films that we show, I definitely don't want waiters walking around, bringing stuff to people and hearing the scraping of cutlery on plates," laughed Greg Laemmle, who co-runs the Laemmle Theaters, a fixture of independent cinema in Los Angeles for nearly a century.

But Laemmle acknowledges the importance of giving audiences options beyond popcorn and soda, especially as an additional revenue source. Embracing food and drinks can sometimes turn the theater into a unique destination.

"When I normally go to a movie theater, I show up two minutes before the movie starts," Duplass said. "I go to Vidiots like 45 minutes before the movie starts so I can get my chilled Junior Mints, I can have a drink at the bar, see some people. I go and walk around the video store."

In February, more than 30 filmmakers — including Jason Reitman, Steven Spielberg, Denis Villeneuve and Christopher Nolan — acquired Westwood's Village Theater in an effort to preserve it. Also coming to the red-carpet premiere favorite? A restaurant, bar and gallery.

Not without challenges

Like the rest of the country, LA movie theaters have had their share of pandemic-inflicted challenges — some exacerbated by last summer's strikes — including fewer movies to show.

And not all theaters have found their Tarantino or Reitman. The iconic Cinerama Dome's closure was a blow to the city's cinephiles. Though owned and operated by the ArCLight Cinemas chain when it closed in April 2021, the Dome was a kind of singularity in Hollywood, a regular premiere spot memorialized in film and a symbol of the city's place in the industry.

Its fate remains in limbo, with reported delays to the targeting reopening date, despite parent company Decurion Corporation, who couldn't be reached for comment, being granted a liquor license for the multiplex in July 2022.

The venues that have been preserved often have done so through some form of benefaction or aid, like the \$16 billion federal Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program, which Laemmle used during the pandemic. He said the funds were a needed bandage in June 2021. But a full recovery has been slow.

"It provided some stability. How much remains to be seen," he said. "The waters are still muddy."

Only in Hollywood?

In some ways, thanks to the city's history, culture and surfeit of theaters, this renaissance is most apparent in Los Angeles, admits Bryan Braunlich, the executive director of the National Association of Theatre Owners Cinema Foundation.

Tarantino, who declined to be interviewed, is less likely to purchase a dying revival house in Peoria, Illinois. But, Braunlich argued, that doesn't mean this trend can't have an impact there.

"Hollywood and filmmakers are saying, 'Hey, movie theaters matter,'" he said. "There are amazing independent theater owners that are thriving across the country. And I think they get a boost of confidence of like, 'Yes, this is a great business to be in. This is a great business to invest in. And we're not alone as film nerds doing this.'"

As Duplass reflected on his own introduction to cinema growing up in the suburbs of New Orleans, he recalled a trip to Vidiots to see "Raising Arizona" with his parents.

"I realized that I was the same age now that they were then when we first saw it in the movie theater together. And I got to hold my dad's hand as we cried in that last scene," he said. "We shared that movie, but we shared the passing of time in our favorite church, which is the movie theater."

Awareness of 'Latinx' increases among US Latinos, and 'Latine' emerges as an alternative

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA Associated Press

"Latino" and "Hispanic" have long been the most prominent terms used to describe people in the U.S. with roots in Latin America and Spain. But over the last several years, "Latinx" has become a de-facto gender neutral alternative to Latino and Hispanic, according to a new study by race and ethnicity researchers.

Despite the increased awareness of the term among Latinos — 47% have heard of it — only 4% or 1.9 million people use "Latinx" to describe themselves, an increase of 1 percent since 2019, according to the study by the Pew Research Center.

"'Latinx' is more broadly known among U.S. Latinos today, but still few embrace it," said Mark Lopez, Pew's director of race and ethnicity research.

Of the Latinos who have heard the term, 36% view the usage of the term as a bad thing instead of a good thing, according to the study.

And with opinions mixed, about "Latinx," a new term has emerged: "Latine" (pronounce LA TEE NEH). That term has gained popularity among people from Latin American countries and Spanish speakers who have pushed for the term to be used instead of "Latinx," because in Spanish "e" can be used to better note gender neutrality, said Josh Guzmán, an associate professor of gender studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.

In the U.S., "Latinx" has more popularity than "Latine." Only 18% of Hispanics have heard of the latter, according to the Pew study. Yet 75% of U.S. Latinos surveyed think the terms should not be used to describe the population, and 81% largely prefer "Hispanic" and "Latino."

Guzmán said it is still important to respect those who do use either term.

"There is already so much difference within Latin communities that academics started debating whether there ever is going to be a term that will be adequate enough to cover all the different components to this identity," Guzmán said.

Jasmine Odalys, host of the podcast "Hella Latin@," said the term "Latinx" "feels either more corporate, more politically correct and very American."

"I think it came from a community that wanted to feel acknowledged and seen," Odalys said. "It turned, I think, into corporations maybe adopting it and making it so that it's like a blanket term for our community. I think we're almost like perpetuating the problem when we have one kind of quote-unquote inclusive term but then it's not inclusive of everyone's experiences."

"Hispanic" was coined by the federal government for people descended from Spanish-speaking cultures. But for some it has a connotation of political conservatism and emphasizes a connection to Spain and its colonial past. It sometimes gets mistakenly interchanged with "Latino" or "Latinx."

Latin Americans are not a monolith, and there are multiple identifiers that depend largely on personal preference. Mexican Americans who grew up during the 1960s Civil Rights era may identify as Chicano. Others may go by their family's nation of origin, such as Colombian American or Salvadoran American. For some, Latino reflects their ties to Latin America.

In the early 1990s, with the rise of the Internet, the usage of the @ character with "Latin" started to become popular among Chicana feminists, according to Guzmán. The word "Latinx" can also be traced to Latino youth and queer culture in the '90s, as a nod to people's Indigenous roots.

Then in the early 2000s, "Latinx" started to gain popularity when queer communities in Latin America started to use the 'x' in various words such as "bexos" instead of "besos," Spanish for "kisses," Guzmán said.

Eventually usage of the letter "x" circulated to the United States, and it stuck.

In 2017, Elisabeth Rosario founded the "Latinx Collective," a newsletter highlighting achievements within the community. Rosario said the choice of name was a conscious effort to be open and inclusive.

"Language is always going to evolve, and culture is always going to evolve, and the way that people think about their identity," Rosario said. "I think we just have to be really aware about what makes people

comfortable. And you are never going to make an entire group happy.”

Three years ago, Luis Torres founded the group “Queer Latinxs in Tech.” Torres said that in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he lives, there is strong emphasis on inclusivity, and he wanted to reflect that and respect people’s gender identity and pronouns.

Despite choosing “Latinxs” for the name of the group, Torres said he and his friends change which term they use if they are unsure of who is around and depending on what feels more comfortable. With friends he uses the “Latino” rather than “Latinx,” because that feels more natural to him.

“I think it is all about intention,” Torres said. “I think people who are trying to deliberately, with a good conscience, create a safe and inclusive environment, they use that word.”

How Helene became the near-perfect storm to bring widespread destruction across the South

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

Hurricane Helene killed and destroyed far and wide — from Tampa to Atlanta to Asheville, North Carolina, its high winds, heavy rains and sheer size created a perfect mix for devastation.

The storm made landfall late Thursday along a largely undeveloped expanse of pine trees and salt marshes on Florida’s Big Bend coast, but it immediately displayed its far-reaching power several hundred miles away. As of Sunday morning, at least 64 people were confirmed killed.

Tampa Bay was inundated with a massive storm surge that sent water up to people’s attics. Atlanta got more than 11 inches of rain, more than any 48-hour period in recorded history. So many trees were toppled in South Carolina that at one point more than 40 percent of the state lost electricity. In North Carolina, dams were in jeopardy of failing and entire communities are cut off by floods. Floodwaters submerged a hospital in Tennessee so quickly that more than 50 patients had to be rescued from the roof via helicopter.

How did a single storm unleash destruction so far away?

Dan Brown, a specialist at the National Hurricane Center near Miami, said Helene had all the attributes that make a storm widely destructive.

It was large, about 350 miles (560 kilometers) wide. It was strong, with winds reaching 140 mph (225 kph) when it made landfall late Thursday, creating widespread storm surge. It carried heavy rains. And it was fast, speeding north at up to 24 mph (39 kph) offshore and 30 mph (48 kph) inland.

He compared the geographic scale of Helene’s destruction to 1972’s Hurricane Agnes, 1989’s Hurricane Hugo and 2004’s Hurricane Ivan.

“Systems that get very powerful, large and fast moving unfortunately do bring the potential for impact and damage well inland,” Brown said Saturday.

Here is a look at the many deadly tentacles of Helene.

FLORIDA

Helene’s devastation began Thursday, hours before it made landfall, as it swept through the Gulf of Mexico. Its then-120-mph (193-kph) winds created storm surge that pushed 6-to-15-feet (2-to-4.5 meters) of water into island and coastal neighborhoods all along Florida’s west coast.

Nine people who drowned were residents who stayed behind after their Tampa Bay area neighborhoods were ordered evacuated.

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri expressed his frustration — issuing evacuation orders isn’t a decision that’s made lightly, he said. Many who ignored officials then called for help as some sought refuge in their attics from the rising waters. Deputies tried to help, using boats and high-profile vehicles, but they couldn’t reach many neighborhoods.

“We made our case, we told people what they needed to do and they chose otherwise,” Gualtieri said at a Friday press conference.

Late Thursday, Helene’s eye slammed into the northwest Florida coast in the Big Bend area, the spot where the Panhandle makes its westward jut from the peninsula — Hurricanes Idalia and Debby had pre-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 63 of 74

viously hit the area within the last 13 months.

Susan Sauls Hartway had evacuated her seaside home — it was gone and when she returned Friday. “I knew it would be bad, but I had no idea it was going to be this bad,” Hartway said. “This is unbelievable.”

GEORGIA

After making landfall, Helene sped into Georgia. Among more than 20 dead were a 27-year-old mother and her 1-month old twins died Friday when trees fell on their house in Thomson, just west of Augusta. An 89-year-old woman was killed when trees fell on her house nearby.

Rhonda Bell and her husband were spending a sleepless night in the downstairs bedroom of their century-old home just outside Valdosta, where Helene’s center passed shortly after midnight.

The winds broke off limbs, tore away neighbors’ roof shingles and knocked down fence panels in the neighborhood with train tracks along one edge. Then a towering oak tree crashed through the roof of an upstairs bedroom.

“I just felt the whole house shake,” Bell said. “Thank God we’re both alive to tell about it.”

Atlanta was hit with 11 inches (28 centimeters) of rain, the heaviest 48-hour downfall since the city began keeping records in 1878. Streets flooded, submerging cars. Firefighters rescued at least 20 people.

NORTH CAROLINA

Helene’s heavy rains in the state’s western mountains caused massive flooding and mudslides in the Asheville region, cutting off most communication and making the roads impassable.

Video posted online shows large portions of the city underwater.

More than 1,000 miles (1,610 kilometers) away in Texas, Jessica Drye Turner begged on Facebook on Friday for someone to rescue her family members stranded on their Asheville rooftop.

But in a follow-up message Saturday, Turner said the roof had collapsed before help arrived and her parents, both in their 70s, and her 6-year-old nephew had drowned.

“I cannot convey in words the sorrow, heartbreak and devastation my sisters and I are going through,” she wrote.

Jeff Muenstermann and his wife, Lisa, friends of Turner’s, told The Associated Press on Saturday they had spoken to Turner after she posted the initial plea for help. At her request, they messaged members of The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, where they all attend, to pray for the family’s safety back in North Carolina.

“I just thought they were going to be rescued,” Jeff Muenstermann said. “I asked everybody to pray and they did. And then a couple hours later, her husband called me, completely distraught and said ... we lost them. They all drowned.”

SOUTH CAROLINA

The storm was especially deadly in South Carolina. The biggest impact appears to be falling trees. The storm also produced tornadoes in the state.

In Saluda County, two firefighters were killed when a tree fell on their truck while they were answering a call. In Greenville County, four people were killed by falling trees. Four people were also killed in Aiken County by trees falling on homes, including a 78-year-old husband and his 74-year-old wife.

TENNESSEE

Helene’s heavy rains caused the state’s eastern rivers to overflow their banks and threatened to break dams, endangering those living nearby and forcing them to flee.

Patients and others at a hospital near the North Carolina border had to be evacuated to the roof Friday when torrents from the overflowing Nolichucky River rushed into the building.

Unicoi County Hospital tried to evacuate 11 patients and dozens of others, but the water was too treacherous for boats sent by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency to navigate.

Helicopters were flown in to help rescue them. Eventually, everyone was evacuated.

Profiles in clean energy: Former Shell VP helps create a new way of making clean electricity

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

When Cindy Taff was a vice president at the giant oil and gas company Shell in Houston, her middle schooler Brianna would sometimes look over her shoulder as she worked from home.

"Why are you still working in oil and gas?" her daughter asked more than once. "Is there a future in it? Why aren't you moving into something clean?"

The words weighed on Taff.

"As a parent you want to give direction, and was I giving her the right direction?" she recalled.

At Shell, Taff was in charge of drilling wells and bringing them into production. She worked on oil and natural gas that's called unconventional in the industry, because the oil or natural gas is difficult to get out of the ground — it doesn't naturally gush out like in movies. It's a term often used for oily shale rock. Taff was somewhat unconventional for the industry, too. Her coworkers used to tease her for driving an efficient hybrid.

"You're not helping oil and gas prices by driving a Prius," they'd say.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an occasional series of personal stories from the energy transition — the change away from a fossil-fuel based world that largely causes climate change.

Taff wanted Shell to pursue the energy that comes from the Earth's natural heat — geothermal. Her team looked into it, but Shell never greenlit any of those projects, saying it would take too much time to recoup the investment.

When Brianna went to college, she was passionate about energy too, but she wanted to work on renewables. After her sophomore year, in the summer of 2020, she got an internship at a geothermal company — one that in fact had just been launched by Taff's former colleagues at Shell — Sage Geosystems in Houston.

Now it was Taff looking over her daughter's shoulder and asking question as she worked from home during the pandemic.

And Sage executives were talking to Brianna, too. "We could use your mom here," they said. "Can you get her to come work for us?" Brianna recalled recently.

That's how Cindy Taff left her 36-year career at Shell to become chief operating officer at Sage.

"I didn't understand why Shell wasn't pursuing it," she said about applying the company's drilling expertise to heat energy. "Then I got this great opportunity to pivot from oil and gas and work with these guys that I have the utmost respect for. And also, I wanted to make my daughter proud, quite frankly."

Brianna Byrd, now 24, is the operations engineer and spokesperson at the company. She's glad her mother, now CEO, left oil and gas.

"Of course I'm biased, she's my mom, but I don't think Sage would be where it is without her," she said.

The United States is a world leader in electricity made from geothermal energy, but this kind of electricity still accounts for less than half a percent of the nation's total large-scale generation, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In 2023, most geothermal electricity came from California, Nevada, Utah, Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho and New Mexico, where there are reservoirs of steam, or very hot water, close to the surface.

The Energy Department estimates this next generation of geothermal projects, like what Sage is doing, could provide some 90 gigawatts by 2050 — enough to power 65 million homes or more. That hinges on private investment, and on companies like Sage introducing this form of energy to regions where, until now, it's been thought to be impossible.

How it works

Sage has two main technologies: The first makes electricity out of heat. The company drills wells and fractures hot, dry rock. Then electric pumps push water into those fractures, heating it up, and the hot

water gets jettisoned to the surface where it spins a turbine.

But a funny thing happened during testing in Starr County, Texas. In late 2021, the team realized much of their technology could also be used to store energy.

If that works, it could be a big deal. Currently, to store energy at large scale, the United States is adding batteries, mostly lithium-ion type, to solar and wind projects, so they can charge up and send electricity back to the electric grid when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing. These batteries typically supply four hours maximum power.

Sage envisions some of its technology placed at solar and wind farms, too. When electricity demand is low, they'll use extra energy from a solar or wind farm to run electric pumps, pumping water into the underground fractures, leaving it there until demand for electricity increases — storing the energy beneath the Earth's surface for hours, days or even weeks.

It's a novel way to use the technology, said Silviu Livescu, lead author on a report looking at the future of geothermal in Texas. Livescu knows Taff and has followed the company's progress.

"It's the right moment for companies like Sage with a purpose, with a mission and with the technology to show that geothermal indeed is the energy source we need to address climate change," said Livescu, who co-founded a different geothermal startup in Austin, Texas.

These days, Taff is often out in front, talking with politicians and policymakers about the potential of geothermal. She attended the United Nations COP28 climate talks last year to share her vision for this kind of energy.

Sage has raised \$30 million so far and is growing.

It's building a small (3-megawatt), geothermal energy storage system at San Miguel Electric Cooperative, Inc., south of San Antonio this year. It's working with U.S. military facilities in Texas that see geothermal as a way to power their bases securely. Sage recently announced partnerships for heating communities in Bucharest, Romania; clean electricity from geothermal for Meta's data centers, and energy storage and geothermal projects in California.

The company is final-testing a proprietary turbine to more efficiently convert heat to electricity.

Because of her oil and gas background, Taff said she knows geothermal will only be adopted widely if the cost comes down. The mantra at Sage is: It's going to be clean and it's going to be cheap. She's excited to be working in a field she feels is on the cusp of playing a big role in cleaning and stabilizing the electrical grid.

"I've never looked back," she said. "I love what I'm doing and I think it's going to be transformative."

Hospital clowns bring joy to young Ukrainian cancer patients who survived Russian missile attack

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and ANTON SHTUKA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Their costumes are put on with surgical precision: Floppy hats, foam noses, bright clothes, and a ukulele with multicolored nylon strings.

Moments later, in a beige hospital ward normally filled with the beeping sounds of medical machinery, there are bursts of giggles and silly singing.

As Ukraine's medical facilities come under pressure from intensifying attacks in the war against Russia's full-scale invasion, volunteer hospital clowns are duck-footing their way in to provide some badly needed moments of joy for hospitalized children.

The "Bureau of Smiles and Support" (BUP) is a hospital clowning initiative established in 2023 by Olha Bulkina, 35, and Maryna Berdar, 39, who already had more than five years of hospital clowning experience between them. "Our mission is to let childhood continue regardless of the circumstances," Bulkina, told The Associated Press.

BUP took on new significance following a Russian missile strike on Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv in July. The attack on Ukraine's largest pediatric facility forced the evacuation of dozens of young patients,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 66 of 74

including those with cancer, to other hospitals in the capital – and the clowns did not stand aside.

Together with first responders, Berdar and Bulkina helped with clearing the rubble after the attack and attended to the children who were relocated to other medical facilities. But even for them, the real heroes there were young patients.

“When the children were evacuated from Okhmatdyt after the missile attack, many of them were in extremely difficult medical conditions, but even in this situation they tried to support the adults,” said Berdar, recalling the events after the strike.

The hospital clowns, who use traditional clown noses and bright costumes, are now visiting multiple hospitals in the Ukrainian capital region, including the National Cancer Institute, where patient numbers have surged after the Okhmatdyt attack.

Tetiana Nosova, 22, and Vladyslava Kulinich, 22, are volunteer hospital clowns who go by Zhuzha and Lala and joined BUP more than a year ago. For them, hospital clowning is as challenging as it is rewarding.

“I volunteer so that children don’t think about their illness, even for a short moment, so that laughter replaces tears, and joy replaces fear, especially during medical procedures,” Kulinich said. In her practice, she stays together with children, sharing all their feelings, whether they are fear, pain, or joy.

For Nosova, the process itself is what made her start clowning. “I am motivated by joy. I simply enjoy it. All my life I studied to be an actress, all my life I enjoyed making people laugh. That’s enough motivation for me,” she said.

In a city grappling with nightly air raid alerts and power outages, overworked doctors say the presence of the volunteers brings a much-needed distraction, often helping children who had been undergoing painful medical treatment to feel happy again.

“Clowns play a very important role in the treatment of children. They help distract the children, they help them forget about the pain, they help them not pay attention to the nurses or doctors who come to treat them,” Valentyna Mariash, a senior nurse on the Okhmatdyt cancer ward, told AP.

The July attack complicated treatment plans for many families. Daria Vertetska, 34, was in Okhmatdyt with her 7-year-old daughter, Kira, when the missile exploded just outside their ward. Kira, who was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma of the nasopharynx, was asleep, medicated with morphine.

“It saved her that she was covered with a blanket during the strike, but still, her head, legs, and arms were cut with small glass shards,” said Vertetska. She and Kira returned to Okhmatdyt in less than a week after the attack.

Not all the children returned to the hospital. Some stayed in the medical facilities where they had been evacuated, while others were moved to apartments paid for by charity organizations and located in the hospital’s vicinity.

Despite hospital clown initiatives like BUP across Ukraine, the need for their work grows exponentially. “When I see how our work is needed in the large children’s hospitals located in Kyiv, I can only imagine what a great need there is in regional and district hospitals, where such (clown) activity, as for example in Okhmatdyt, to be honest, simply does not exist,” Berdar said.

The World Health Organization, earlier this month, warned that the country faces a deepening public health crisis, largely due to devastating missile and drone strikes on the country’s electricity system as well as hospital infrastructure.

Since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022, WHO has recorded nearly 2,000 attacks on Ukraine’s health care facilities and says they are having a severe impact.

Children are among the most vulnerable, but a mental health crisis affects the whole country. It means the clowns’ work has won broad support from medical professionals.

Parents are simply happy to see a smile return to their children’s faces.

“With clowns, children learn to joke, they play with soap bubbles, their mood lifts. Today, Kira saw clowns playing the ukulele, now she wants one, too,” said her mother, Daria.

Appeals stretch 4 decades for a prisoner convicted on little police evidence

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. (AP) — The four men who put Steve Szarewicz away for murder all changed their stories at one time or another, yet Szarewicz still sits behind bars. That's where he has been for almost 43 years.

A jury convicted him of killing Billy Merriwether, 25, who was shot twice in the back of the head and once in the chest, his body left facedown off a country road in western Pennsylvania on a rainy February morning in 1981.

There were no fingerprints, no eyewitness testimony and no DNA evidence linking Szarewicz to the scene. Investigators never found the murder weapons. Instead, the case rested on the words of four jailhouse informants who all testified that Szarewicz confessed to them.

Three of the four recanted: one in an interview with a famed newspaper reporter; one in a written statement to defense investigators; and another to Szarewicz's lawyer, who signed an affidavit recounting the exchange. Another inmate told the court the fourth witness against Szarewicz fabricated his story to settle a score.

Nevertheless, a Pittsburgh jury in 1983 found the informants' testimony believable enough to convict Szarewicz, despite qualms they voiced to the judge about the lack of physical evidence.

Today the conviction is still on appeal, with Szarewicz asking the state Superior Court to reduce his life sentence to 10 to 20 years, effectively setting him free.

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has taken a keen interest in the case, particularly because of how heavily prosecutors leaned on the jailhouse informants' testimony. A national database of more than 3,400 exonerations since 1989 includes more than 200 in which jailhouse informants played a role in the wrongful convictions.

'On the altar of a jury'

Prosecutors' use of informants has undergone "some sea changes in the last 40 years," driven by concerns about their reliability, said Marissa Boyers Bluestine with the Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice at the University of Pennsylvania's law school.

"If you have a strong enough case by the prosecutor, they don't want to use an informant, that's not their 'go-to' evidence," she said.

Complicating matters for Szarewicz, Pennsylvania has one of the nation's strictest frameworks for criminal appeals and post-conviction procedures, said Liz DeLosa, a lawyer with the Pennsylvania Innocence Project who has spent years investigating Szarewicz's case.

For instance, the state has no way to waive procedural issues, even in the face of "compelling evidence of actual innocence," she said. Her organization believes there are reasons to question the integrity of the conviction and is considering whether to formally represent Szarewicz.

When courts do reverse convictions based on informant testimony, it's usually because prosecutors made some agreement with the witness and didn't reveal it, said professor Bruce Antkowiak, a lawyer at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and a former defense attorney and prosecutor.

"Our court system places the issue of credibility on the altar of a jury," Antkowiak said. "And if a jury heard these witnesses and made the determination that they were truthful, appellate courts are loathe to make any change at all."

A dead man's final days: nervous and broke

Merriwether's troubles were piling up when he was killed. Unemployed and living on public assistance, he was known as someone who "would fight at the drop of a hat," an acquaintance told detectives at the time.

Three weeks before, a man who said Merriwether had bullied him stabbed Merriwether several times in a bar fight, landing him in the hospital. Merriwether himself was charged with beating a woman during a convenience store robbery. And there were reports that some guys in his New Kensington neighborhood with ties to organized crime were after him because they thought he had stolen from them. He was wor-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 68 of 74

ried enough to spend part of his last days at target practice with a handgun.

Merriwether had trouble in his romantic life, too. Both he and his girlfriend were married to other people. And his girlfriend's father — a now deceased local mobster named Mitch Roditis — was ticked off that Merriwether, who was Black, was dating his white daughter.

The day Merriwether was killed, a friend told police, he came to her house before dawn, nervous, broke and saying he needed \$1,500 by 9 a.m.

Around 7 that morning, a dog walker about 23 miles (37 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh reported hearing a single blast that sounded like a gunshot. Moments later, three more rang out. A nearby road crew saw a car speed by with two men in it. They pulled off, then drove away, leaving Merriwether's dead body behind.

A clean polygraph and a jury with questions

Prosecutors laid out a simple theory of the crime: it had been a \$5,000 murder-for-hire mob hit. They argued Roditis, who was never charged, got Szarewicz and two other men to kill Merriwether over him dating Roditis' daughter.

Szarewicz, who knew Merriwether from the neighborhood where they grew up, experienced a turbulent childhood after his father had died while he was in grade school. By the time he was accused of the killing at age 23, Szarewicz had an arrest record that included armed robbery, receiving stolen property, gun charges and drug offenses.

The murder case "was no prize," the prosecutor, former Allegheny County Assistant District Attorney Chris Conrad, recalled in an interview this spring. "It wasn't one where you walk in and you get confessions and fingerprints and just great physical evidence. There was no physical evidence. You had to fight to find a motive."

A polygraph examiner concluded Szarewicz told the truth when he said he wasn't involved in the murder, but polygraphs aren't admissible in court. Still, Szarewicz says he would take another one today.

In court, he testified that he was staying with one of his sisters and her boyfriend just outside Greensburg, Pennsylvania, some 30 miles (48 kilometers) away when Merriwether was killed. The couple backed him up.

But retired steelworker Vince Rattay, a former member of the jury who is now in his mid-90s, recalled that Szarewicz's attitude on the stand hurt his defense. "Maybe it would have been better if they didn't have him as a witness," Rattay said in a phone interview in May. "He was cocky."

And jurors had another qualm about the case: they asked the trial judge if they could convict someone without physical evidence. He said they would have to be more specific.

When the guilty verdict came down, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported, Szarewicz said: "God in heaven knows I am innocent."

A long trail of appeals going nowhere

Szarewicz has steadfastly maintained his innocence, launching one appeal after another, sometimes handled by lawyers but often representing himself. He has hit dead ends over and over, losing a string of lower court decisions and being turned away by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Much of Szarewicz's focus has been on the jailhouse informants, who detectives housed together for a time shortly before Szarewicz was charged. Three of those four witnesses were related to one another.

In September of 1982, witness Dave Cannon wrote a letter saying it wouldn't be right for Szarewicz to go to prison and that Cannon had been willing to testify only because he thought it could help him get out of jail. Three days later, Cannon met with a defense investigator and said Szarewicz never told him anything about being involved with Merriwether's murder.

At trial, Cannon changed his story again, testifying that he wrote the letter because he was afraid of Szarewicz. Contacted by The Associated Press by phone in March, Cannon stood by his statement that Szarewicz confessed to him inside the Allegheny County Jail.

"The bottom line is he did it," Cannon said. "He thought it made him look (like) a big wheel. I thought he was a punk."

And if he were asked to testify again? "I won't cooperate at all," Cannon said. "It's been too long. I now

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 69 of 74

have memory problems.”

Key witnesses recant their stories

Eight months after Szarewicz’s conviction, another one of the informants who testified against him, Ernie Bevilacqua, wrote in an affidavit: “I lied about everything I said about Steve and I would go to court to help him and to say what really happened.” He later reiterated the sentiment in an interview with investigative reporter Bill Moushey in the visiting room of Western State Penitentiary. Moushey’s notes say Bevilacqua told him “it was all a big set up from the start.”

Years later, when a court-appointed investigator asked Bevilacqua about the exchange, Bevilacqua changed his story again. Like Cannon, he said he recanted only because he was afraid of Szarewicz, his friends and fellow prisoners.

Approached by an AP reporter at his home in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in April, Bevilacqua said he also has memory problems and ordered the reporter away. He tore up a letter seeking comment and called police to complain.

The third informant who flip-flopped in Szarewicz’s case was Rick Bowen.

About six months after Szarewicz was convicted, Bowen approached defense attorney Pat Thomassey in the Westmoreland County courthouse. Thomassey later signed an affidavit saying Bowen “indicated to me that, in fact, he had lied in the case against Steven Szarewicz in order to make a deal for himself and to avoid being prosecuted for various crimes.” Bowen, who died in Missouri in 1997, later denied the exchange.

The fourth informant to testify against Szarewicz, Kenny Knight, did not respond to multiple messages left with family members or to a note left at his home in April. When police first interviewed him about Merriwether’s murder, he didn’t implicate Szarewicz, even when asked. He said later he feared Szarewicz and that he withheld information because he did not want to get involved.

At a post-trial hearing, Knight invoked his Fifth Amendment constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination and refused to testify.

Witness credibility was ‘low as a snake’s belly’

Thomas Fitzgerald, the lead detective in Merriwether’s murder, said in April he is convinced the informants told the truth when they implicated Szarewicz.

“It’s the jury’s decision,” Fitzgerald said. “Bring back the same jury and ask them again.”

But in a 1992 court proceeding — some nine years after Szarewicz’s conviction — a judge declared the witnesses’ credibility “about as low as a snake’s belly.” Prosecutor Maria Copetas did not defend them.

“There is an extraordinary amount of evidence on the record which indicates that in fact (they) have recanted at some point, and then recanted their recantations, and then refused to testify in court,” Copetas told the judge.

That was around the time, Szarewicz said, that his defense lawyer offered a guilty plea to third-degree murder, even though Szarewicz still maintained his innocence.

“At least I would have had a life,” he later wrote to the AP. But he says the district attorney declined.

Prosecutors and the courts stand firm

Allegheny County prosecutors have long fought to uphold Szarewicz’s conviction, and the courts have agreed.

In the most recent rulings, Allegheny County Judge Kevin Sasinoski said Szarewicz’s most recent claims weren’t sufficient to win a post-trial appeal. Szarewicz said he had discovered post-trial evidence that Bowen got a deal from prosecutors in exchange for his testimony and that Bevilacqua had changed his story to a court-appointed investigator.

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala’s office subsequently told an appeals court that “recantation evidence is ‘notoriously unreliable’, and if it involves an admission of perjury, ‘it is the least reliable source of proof.’”

Szarewicz also recently filed his first clemency petition, but even he acknowledges his claim of actual innocence may be a problem. The Pardons Board likes to see contrition.

The Innocence Project wrote Zappala a 14-page letter in September 2021 that outlined their concerns

and asked if prosecutors would review the case and open their files. The office's response was that the matter would be reviewed.

Zappala and his team declined multiple requests for comment from the AP.

Szarewicz's sister, Suzy Patton, says she would welcome him to live in her Pittsburgh area home if he ever gets released. She believes he is innocent and thinks he would not be in prison if the family had money.

These days Szarewicz spends time working on his own case and sometimes helping other inmates with theirs. He has a janitorial job that pays about \$75 a month, walks regularly and participates in Bible study.

And from his shared cell at the State Correctional Institution-Houtzdale, he hopes for a break.

"If I did not have my faith, I am sure I would most likely not be alive to fight another day," Szarewicz wrote a few years ago. "Is there anybody out there who is appalled by this clear abuse of the system? If so, help, please?"

What is ballot gathering? And what are the laws around this controversial practice?

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

Ballot gathering or ballot collecting is a practice in where a voter completes an absentee ballot, places it in a sealed, signed envelope and entrusts it to another person who then drops it off at a mail center or a designated ballot drop-off location. This practice is also sometimes known as "ballot harvesting," but experts say that is a loaded term and prefer "ballot gathering" or "ballot collecting" instead.

Is ballot gathering legal?

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, ballot gathering is legal in some form in 35 states where a person other than the voter is allowed to return a completed ballot on the voter's behalf. However, the laws relating to ballot gathering vary significantly from state to state. Most states that allow ballot gathering place limits who can do that to individuals such as a family member, household member or caregiver.

Seventeen states allow a voter to designate someone other than family members or caregivers while 11 states limit how many ballots such an authorized person can return. In Colorado, for example, a designee can return only up to 10 ballots. In states such as California, there is no limit on how many ballots an authorized person can return. California places a condition that a person collecting ballots cannot be compensated. Other states such as Rhode Island or Wyoming do not specify who may or may not return the ballot on a voter's behalf. These variations leave a lot of room for interpretation.

Alabama is the only state where only the voter is permitted to return the ballot unless there is an emergency situation. According to the Voting Rights Lab, which also tracks ballot gathering laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires all states to allow voters with disabilities who need assistance to receive it. They say that includes assistance applying for, completing, and returning absentee ballots.

Why is ballot gathering controversial?

Those who want to relax the rules on who may return absentee ballots argue that such restrictions don't prevent fraud, but end up disenfranchising certain groups of voters, particularly communities of color. Those who want such limitations argue that without them, there is opportunity for fraud. Some conservatives who pushed for these restrictions in previous election cycles have changed their stance, saying they need to gather ballots now because it is legal, and not doing so might put them at a disadvantage.

Is there a potential for fraud?

Experts say there is "very low risk" for fraud with ballot collecting by third parties. In a 2018 congressional election in North Carolina, a political operative for the Republican candidate faced allegations of running an illegal "ballot harvesting" operation in Bladen County, with the operative and his helpers illegally collecting absentee ballots before turning them in. The results of that election were thrown out and a new election was held. In 2020, then California Attorney General Hector Becerra ordered Republicans to remove unofficial ballot drop boxes from churches, gun shops and other locations, warning that those behind such "vote tampering" could face prosecution.

What is allowed and not allowed in ballot gathering efforts?

In California, those gathering ballots are allowed to collect them and either mail them or turn them in to the county registrar of voters office in person – within three days of receiving the ballots or before polls close on Election Day. Those authorized to collect ballots are not allowed to place ballot boxes in any location and they may not receive compensation based on the number of ballots returned. In all states, those collecting ballots are prohibited from tampering with ballots, electioneering or coercing someone to vote a certain way or change their vote.

Are churches allowed to gather ballots?

Churches in states like California can collect ballots, issue voter guides and even hold candidate debates, provided they don't endorse a particular candidate, post all candidates' positions and invite all candidates to the forum. A 1954 law called the Johnson Amendment, named for its principal sponsor, then Sen. Lyndon Johnson, states that tax-exempt nonprofit organizations including churches are "are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office." Doing so could jeopardize a church's tax exemption status. However, this law does not prevent nonpartisan voter-education activities, voter registration drives and publishing "issue guides" for voters or even arranging transportation for voters to get to polling places — activities that Black churches with members who tend to vote Democrat have engaged in for decades. Pastors are also free to preach on social and political issues that are issues of concerns from a faith perspective.

Conservative Christians were skeptical of mail-in ballots. Now they are gathering them in churches

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

MENIFEE, California (AP) — With Election Day just a few weeks away, longtime church members Lucky Hartunian and Janie Booth sat outside the Revival Christian Fellowship's sanctuary in Menifee, California, inviting congregants to register to vote.

The women urged those streaming into the evangelical church's Saturday morning civic engagement event to "make their voices heard as Christians." After mail-in ballots go out statewide, Booth and Hartunian will be among church volunteers collecting completed, sealed ballots and dropping them off at the county office the next day.

It's a practice known as ballot gathering - or ballot harvesting — that's been a source of national controversy over the years.

Booth said her task is a big responsibility, but she's not nervous.

"A lot of people don't trust the mail," she said. "So I feel honored and privileged to do this. I'm doing this for my kids and grandkids."

Dramatic Change of Course

Conservative voters who have been skeptical of mail voting and ballot gathering – a strategy often used by Democrats – are now warming up to it. Evangelical Christians, in particular, are embracing it this year.

Leading conservative figures Charlie Kirk and Republican National Committee co-chair Lara Trump have called on Christians and conservatives to collect ballots. Megachurches like Calvary Chapel Chino Hills in Southern California are leading the charge, urging – even training – congregations to collect ballots. They praise it as a valuable tool to raise voter turnout and elect candidates who align with their views on issues such as abortion, transgender rights and immigration.

Robert Tyler, a California-based attorney who represents conservative churches and pastors, said he still believes "ballot harvesting and universal vote by mail creates opportunities for fraud."

"But the rules of the game have changed," he said. "Until the law changes, we have to get out and gather ballots like they are doing."

To be clear, there has been no evidence of widespread fraud in any state related to mail voting. Some isolated cases of potential fraud involving ballot collections have been caught and prosecuted.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 72 of 74

Tyler's comments reflect a dramatic change of course for conservatives, some of whom amplified rumors about mail ballots to explain Donald Trump's 2020 loss. Republican leaders see it as necessary if they are to be competitive in an election this year that is likely to be decided by thin margins in a few swing states.

Trump has long criticized this voting method as rife with fraud — an unfounded assertion. Now he and other top GOP officials are encouraging voters to cast their ballots by mail. The party has launched an effort to "correct the narrative" on mail voting to coax those who were turned off to it by Trump to reconsider for this year's election.

The practice of ballot gathering — where individuals chosen by voters return mail-in ballots on their behalf — is legal in 35 states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Rules vary, but in California, where there is no limit on how many ballots a single person can collect, a collector cannot be compensated and must turn in the ballot in person or by mail within three days of receiving it, or before polls close on Election Day.

Training churches to gather ballots

Gina Gleason, executive director of California-based Real Impact, a ministry of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills, said she saw how Southern California Democrats used this strategy to get their congressional candidate elected by a narrow margin in 2018. In 2020, her church began collecting ballots every Sunday in the weeks before Election Day.

"Voters handed their signed and sealed ballots to us," she said. "We placed them in lock boxes and personally turned them over to the county offices where they needed to go."

The initiative was somewhat successful in 2020, when the church collected about 6,000 ballots. In 2022, that number rose to well over 13,000, Gleason said, adding that while most ballots were from church members and their families, some were from members of other churches who drove to Chino Hills to submit their ballots.

"This is the kind of impact we're looking for that can flip school boards and make a difference in our communities by changing laws we don't want to live under," she said, citing a law signed by Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom to prevent schools from outing transgender and gay students to their parents. "We don't want the government telling us what we can or cannot do when it comes to the health and safety of our children."

When she trains church volunteers, Gleason includes key instructions, like making sure the outside envelope is filled out correctly and ballots are returned to the appropriate registrar's office. Her church collects ballots from residents of Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties in Southern California.

"And of course, no one should be electioneering or telling people whom or what to vote for," she said.

Over the summer, Gleason trained more than 120 people from various churches who are now ready to collect ballots, including the one in Menifee. She and Pastor Jack Hibbs, who leads her church, have been traveling the state on their "Comeback California Tour" with the goal of "getting Christians energized and engaged."

Conservative groups hope these initiatives will proliferate in other states. Timothy Head, executive director of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, a conservative political advocacy nonprofit, said ballot gathering is gaining traction among once reluctant churches in competitive states such as Nevada and Virginia. He calls it the "crawl, walk, run effect."

"We expect it to significantly increase this time. ... Every vote counts and every effort to maximize votes counts."

Plus, churches are natural choices, he said.

"Congregations gather at least once or twice a week. As long as they are not explicitly partisan, it is a great place where voters can get civically engaged."

Hibbs spoke forcefully during the church event in Menifee, urging Christians to take a stand.

"That doesn't mean I want a Christian nation," he said. "I just want our country to be a place where a devout believer and an atheist have the same rights."

He ended his discourse by telling his audience that Trump may have gotten a "little wiggly and wobbly on abortion," and told them to "forget (Trump's) rhetoric and shenanigans, the crazy and off-color talk."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 73 of 74

"Fewer children will die under Donald Trump than under Kamala Harris," he said, referring to abortions. "So that's how I'll be voting."

The audience burst into applause. One man yelled out: "Yeah, Trump."

The issue of trust

Richard Hasen, who leads the Safeguarding Democracy Project at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law, said he is not aware of credible allegations of fraud involving ballot gathering. He would still prefer that states set limits on the number of ballots that can be collected.

"It's low-risk, but not no-risk, and the fact we haven't seen major problems is a good sign," he said. "Still, any time people get together to vote, you want to make sure they are making free and fair choices – whether that place is a church, nursing home or union hall."

Former Orange County Registrar Neal Kelley believes ballot gathering can help increase voting, but has not made a big dent on elections so far. He also is not too worried about ballot tampering, which is one concern critics have raised in the past regarding this practice.

"The general public doesn't understand all the ways we have to determine that ballots have been tampered with," he said. "We can tell when envelopes have been opened and resealed. If votes are being changed, we'll see a pattern."

Ada Briceno, chairperson of the Orange County Democratic Party, said ballot gathering allows more people to vote, especially in communities of color where people are working two or three jobs or may struggle with language issues.

"We want more people to have their voices heard, and this is just one more tool," she said. "Republicans were the ones who were all upset about turning in mail-in ballots. And now they're doing it. It's just hypocritical."

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference who has advised Trump, said he sees nothing wrong with churches gathering ballots.

"If other community groups are doing it, why not churches?" he said. "I have no doubt that churches will make sure everything is done legally and correctly because they have a higher level of accountability and that moral compass of integrity — more so than any community group."

Progressive groups have also trusted churches to get the vote out, said Juan Sepulveda, political science professor at Trinity University in San Antonio. Among the groups that pioneered such initiatives was the Industrial Areas Foundation, a national interfaith network established in 1940 by a community organizer, a Catholic bishop and the Chicago Sun-Times' founder.

"With the church, you have those natural bonds of trust," Sepulveda said. "You didn't have to create trust. It was already there."

Today in History: September 30, Berlin Airlift concludes

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Sept. 30, the 274th day of 2024. There are 92 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 30, 1949, the Berlin Airlift came to an end after delivering more than 2.3 million tons of cargo to blockaded residents of West Berlin over the prior 15 months.

Also on this date:

In 1777, the Continental Congress — forced to flee in the face of advancing British forces — moved to York, Pennsylvania.

In 1791, Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" premiered in Vienna, Austria.

In 1938, addressing the public after co-signing the Munich Agreement, which allowed Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain proclaimed, "I believe it is peace for our time."

In 1939, NBC broadcast the first televised football game, a college matchup between Fordham and Waynesburg; Fordham won 34-7.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Sept. 30, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 097 ~ 74 of 74

In 1947, the World Series was broadcast on television for the first time, as the New York Yankees defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers 5-3 in Game 1; the Yankees would go on to win the Series four games to three.

In 1954, the first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus, was commissioned by the U.S. Navy.

In 1955, actor James Dean was killed at age 24 in a two-car collision near Cholame, California.

In 1962, James Meredith, a Black student, was escorted by federal marshals to the campus of the University of Mississippi, where he enrolled for classes the next day; Meredith's presence sparked rioting that left two people dead.

In 1972, Pittsburgh Pirates star Roberto Clemente connected for his 3,000th and final hit, a double against Jon Matlack of the New York Mets at Three Rivers Stadium.

In 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed treaties to illegally annex more occupied Ukrainian territory in a sharp escalation of his seven-month invasion.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Angie Dickinson is 93. Singer Cissy Houston is 91. Singer Johnny Mathis is 89. Actor Len Cariou is 85. Singer Marilyn McCoo is 81. Actor Barry Williams is 70. Singer Patrice Rushen is 70. Actor Fran Drescher is 67. Country musician Marty Stuart is 66. Actor Crystal Bernard is 63. Actor Eric Stoltz is 63. Rapper-producer Marley Marl is 62. Country musician Eddie Montgomery (Montgomery Gentry) is 61. Rock singer Trey Anastasio (Phish) is 60. Actor Monica Bellucci is 60. Actor Tony Hale is 54. Actor Jenna Elfman is 53. Actor Marion Cotillard is 49. Author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates is 49. Tennis Hall of Famer Martina Hingis is 44. Olympic gold medal gymnast Dominique Moceanu is 43. Actor Lacey Chabert is 42. Actor Kieran Culkin is 42. Singer-rapper T-Pain is 40. Racing driver Max Verstappen is 27. Actor-dancer Maddie Ziegler is 22.