

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Oct. 5

Boys Soccer at Dakota Valley.
Girls Soccer at Garrison, 11 a.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main
Pumpkin Fest, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Gypsy Day Parade in Aberdeen (Refer to the Sept. 26th edition of the Groton Daily Independent for the lineup and information)

Sunday, Oct. 6

United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

**COMMON CENTS IS
MOVING TO THE GROTON
COMMUNITY CENTER
(109 N 3RD STREET) FOR A
3-DAY \$10 BAG SALE!!**

SHOP

**THURS, OCT. 10TH 2-7PM
FRI, OCT. 11TH 9AM-3PM
SAT, OCT. 12TH 9AM-3PM**



St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m., No Sunday School.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Pastor at Bethesda, 2 p.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 7

Senior Menu: Spanish rice, green beans, vanilla pudding with oranges, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.
School Lunch: Beef sticks, mashed potatoes.
JH/JV Football at Aberdeen Roncalli (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m.)
State Boys Golf at Central Valley Golf Course, Hartford, 10 a.m.
Volleyball at Mobridge: 7/C at 4 p.m., 8th/JV at 5 p.m., Varsity to follow
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

US Hiring Jumps

US employers added 254,000 nonfarm jobs in September—the highest jobs growth in six months. The figure is up from the upwardly revised 159,000 jobs in August and better than the 150,000 jobs economists had expected, according to government data released yesterday.

The unemployment rate in September ticked down to 4.1% from 4.2% in the previous month. Most of the jobs were added in food services and drink establishments (69,000), healthcare (45,000), government (31,000), and social assistance (27,000). Average hourly earnings in September rose 0.4% month-over-month and 4% year-over-year, both higher than economist estimates of 0.3% and 3.8%, respectively.

Analysts suggest the data likely rule out another half-percentage-point interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve at its upcoming November meeting. However, a quarter-percentage drop is still expected, at least twice, before the end of this year. Last month, the Fed reduced its benchmark federal funds rate to a range of 4.75% to 5%, marking its first rate cut since March 2020.

US launches airstrikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The US military conducted airstrikes on at least a dozen Iran-backed Houthi targets in Yemen Friday, homing in on weapons systems, bases, and other equipment. The strikes hit Houthi strongholds in roughly five locations, including the airport in Hodeida. The US airstrike came in response to recent Houthi threats and attacks on US and other commercial vessels in the region, as well as the group's claim of shooting down a US military drone over Yemeni airspace.

Death toll from Hurricane Helene rises to at least 223 people.

New Jersey's search-and-rescue teams are now helping with efforts in North Carolina to find survivors. Hundreds of people remain missing. Roughly 740,000 people in the Southeast US are still without power, as of this writing.

Spirit Airlines shares fall to record low amid possible bankruptcy filing.

Spirit shares closed down nearly 25% Friday, a day after reports said the budget airline was considering filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The news came following Spirit's failed \$3.8B bid to merge with rival JetBlue Airways. In August, Spirit reported a \$193M loss for the second quarter of this year, up from a \$2.3M loss in the same period in 2023. Spirit reportedly has about \$3.3B in debt.

Breakthrough donor cell therapy remits autoimmune diseases.

Researchers in China successfully treated three individuals with severe autoimmune conditions using bioengineered and CRISPR-modified immune cells from a healthy donor. The treatment marks the first use of donor-derived CAR T-cell therapy for autoimmune disorders. It improved symptoms and led to remission for all three patients. The breakthrough could lead to more accessible and cost-effective treatments for autoimmune diseases.

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Largest solar flare since 2017 spotted erupting from sun's surface.

Solar flares are bursts of radiation coming from sunspots and can potentially disrupt some telecommunications systems and power grids. They are often accompanied by coronal mass ejections—bursts of plasma and magnetic field lines coming from the sun's corona—that erupt from an active sunspot.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Cindi S. in McCormick, South Carolina.

"Being caught in the direct path of Hurricane Helene, experiencing damage from tropical force winds and extended power outages, my household gathered what food we could salvage, loaded the car and headed north. Unaware of broad reaching storm damage, we were unable to find refuge or gas to continue our search. Stranded in Gaffney, SC, three separate good Samaritans rescued us by contributing gas cans, funnels, and gas to get us on our way! None of them would take money for their efforts. Thank you to these nameless angels for restoring my faith that good people still exist."

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Groton Hosts the Annual Lake Region Marching Band Festival

On Friday, October 11th the Groton Area High School Band, the Groton Middle School Band, and 16 school bands will converge in Groton for the Lake Region Marching Band Festival. The parade of bands will travel from south to north on Groton's Main Street from Railroad Avenue to 9th Avenue, beginning at 10 a.m.

This festival originated in Milbank then moved to Waubay for 11 years. Since 2013 Groton has hosted the festival and it plans to remain there for the foreseeable future. Bands will be evaluated on their performance by a panel of three judges. The bands will be judged by: Mr. John Patzlaff, Mr. Al Stewart, and Mr. Mike Likness. Awards will be given to the top two bands in the high school and middle school band division, and the top three bands in the combined division. Other awards include Best Color Guard, Best Winds, Best Drum Major, and Best Percussion. A Grand Champion Award will also be awarded to the band with the highest score overall.

The festival has become a premier marching event in Northeast South Dakota, attracting bands and spectators from towns across the region. The public is invited to watch the parade of bands on Main Street as well as awards at the GHS Arena Gym. Students from the MS/HS Drumline will perform before the awards ceremony.

Attending the festival are bands from Aberdeen Roncalli, Redfield, Langford Area, Leola, Ipswich, Frederick Area, Great Plains Lutheran, Northwestern, Pierre, Sully Buttes, Hoven, Lake Preston, Warner, Britton-Hecla, Milbank Middle School, and Aberdeen Simmons and Holgate Middle School.

The event will be livestreamed, free of charge, at GDILIVE.COM. Anyone at the event can also listen to the announcer at 89.3 FM.

Primary sponsors of the festival are the Groton Dairy Queen, The Groton Daily Independent, Professional Management Services of Groton, Groton HS PAC, and the City of Groton.

Lake Region Marching Festival

Friday October 11th

10:00 am

Groton, SD

10:00 Groton High School- Exhibition

Combined

10:06- Sully Buttes

10:12- Frederick Area

10:18- Hoven

10:24- Aberdeen Roncalli

10:30- Ipswich

10:36- Lake Preston

10:42- Leola

10:48- Langford Area

High School

10:54- Britton

11:00- Redfield

11:06- Great Plains Lutheran

11:12- Warner

11:18- Emerald Regiment (T.F. Riggs)

11:24- Northwestern

Middle School

11:30- Holgate/Simmons

11:36- Milbank

11:42 Groton Middle School- Exhibition

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No. 22 Wolves Netters Roll Past Mavericks in NSIC Face-off

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 22 Northern State University volleyball team swept (RV) Minnesota State Friday evening from Wachs Arena. The Wolves hit .226 and held the Mavericks to a .081 attack percentage.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, MSU 0

Records: NSU 11-2 (3-2 NSIC), MSU 10-2 (2-2 NSIC)

Attendance: 1421

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern took the match with set scores of 25-22, 25-16, and 25-16

The Wolves recorded a match leading 40 kills, 39 assists, 78 digs, seven blocks, and four aces

NSU hit a match-high .349 in the second, notching 17 kills and just two hitting errors

Three Wolves notched double figure digs led by Abby Meister with 24, while Victoria Persha added a team best ten kills

Persha hit .500 with juts one attack error and recorded a team best five blocks

Abby Brooks and Morissen Samuels followed with nine kills apiece, hitting .444 and .320

Keri Walker and Reese Johnson tallied 14 and ten digs respectively, while Walker led the team with 34 assists and two aces

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Victoria Persha: 10 kills, .500 attack%, 5 blocks, 4 digs

Keri Walker: 34 assists, 14 digs, 2 aces

Abby Meister: 24 digs, 1 assist

UP NEXT

Northern State hits the road next Friday and Saturday, traveling to Concordia-St. Paul and Winona State. Start times are set for 6 p.m. on Friday against the Golden Bears and 5 p.m. on Saturday versus the Warriors.

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GFP Commission Holds October Meeting

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Park (GFP) Commission held their monthly meeting on October 3-4 at the Huron Events Center in Huron.

Wildlife and Parks Finalization Fee Adjustment

The Commission finalized adjustments to fees within the both the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Division of Wildlife.

Some of the adjustments include:

Establish nonresident Park Entrance licenses and set fee at \$60 single and \$90 double;

Increase resident Park Entrance licenses to \$40 single and \$60 double;

Create a rule for the department to sell habitat conservation plate emblems at \$50 per vehicle set and \$30 per motorcycle;

Increase resident boat license fees by \$5 for under 19 ft motorized, \$10 19ft and over motorized, and \$3 for non-motorized;

Increase nonresident fishing licenses by \$13;

Increase resident fishing licenses by \$3;

Increase nonresident small game licenses by \$21; and,

Increase resident combination licenses by \$5.

For a complete breakdown of the fee package, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

Public Comment Opportunity and Upcoming Meeting

To hear the discussion on any of the topics on the agenda, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these documents in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, public comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT, November 3

The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held November 7-8 at the State Capitol in Pierre.

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

October 8, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Residents of Eisenhower Circle regarding Odor from Beef Plant
5. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. Discuss approach culverts west of Mansfield
 - b. Surplus Equipment
6. Judy Dosch, Building Superintendent & Randy Zens, Asst. Building
 - a. Quote for Air Compressor with a Dryer - Courthouse Complex
 - b. Discuss Tuckpointing Project
7. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Fair Recap Update
8. Second Reading & Possible Adoption of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #276 – Rezone
 - b. Ord. #277 – Rezone
 - c. Ord. #278 - Rezone
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2024
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Set Hearing Date for Package (Off-Sale) Liquor License & Authorize Advertising
 - e. Set Hearing Date for Retail (On-Sale) Liquor License Transfers & Authorize Advertising
 - f. Travel Request
 - g. Landfill Tonnage Report for September
 - h. Abatements/Refunds
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at

<https://www.brown.sd.us/departments/commission>

The Life of Joyce Sanderson



Mass of Christian Burial for Joyce Sanderson, 86, of Conde will be 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, October 8th at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Turton. Father Gregory Tschakert will officiate. Burial will follow in St. John's Catholic Cemetery, Conde under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel.

Visitation will be held on Monday from 5-7 p.m. at the funeral chapel with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Joyce passed away Monday, September 30, 2024 at her home.

Joyce was born on July 23, 1938, in Conde to Lyman and Dorothy (Ragels) Wettstein. After graduating from Conde High School, she married Ronald A. (Jim) Sanderson on September 24, 1956, at St. John's Catholic Church in Conde. Together they raised three children: Patty (Mark) Grossman, Don Sanderson, and Brian (Tina) Sanderson. Joyce and Jim farmed in the Garden City area for many years before settling back on the home farm in 1972.

Grateful for sharing in her life are her children, and her grandchildren: Kristin (Evan) Mikulsky, Tony (Abbey) Grossman, Samantha (David) Hinckley, Travis (Mikayla Hood) Sanderson, Branden Kroll, Amber (Luke) Steiner, James (Stevie Ray Ann Wunder) Sanderson, and Autumn (Tyler) Neigel. The prides of Joyce's life were her great-grandchildren: Sullivan Mikulsky; Jillian Grossman; Mason Sanderson; Jackson, Ian, and Amelia Steiner; and Destry, Miakoda, and Laiken Neigel. She is further survived by many nieces and nephews, and sisters-in-law Judy Zeck and Dorothy Sanderson.

In addition to her parents and her husband, Joyce is preceded in death by her brothers, Robert and Darrell "DZ" Zeck; her sister, Donna Boss; her grandson, David Kroll; and her brothers- and sisters-in-law, Jean and Ed Tribble, Richard Sanderson, Hazel and Don Reeve, and Ron Boss.

Joyce loved being part of her community, surrounding herself with people, and spending time with her friends. She was active in the Conde Legion Auxiliary and St. John's Catholic Church and Altar Society. She also enjoyed cooking, bowling, gardening, and taking care of her yard. Her pride and joy was their farm with its stunning views of the hills and sunsets. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Extreme Fire Danger in the Black Hills

Custer, SD, October 4, 2024 — Black Hills National Forest officials are asking for the public's help when visiting the Forest, to prevent unwanted wildfires during this period of extreme fire danger across the Black Hills National Forest.

Jason Virtue, Fire Management Staff Officer, Black Hills National Forest said, "A small spark from activities like mowing the lawn, recreational shooting, chains dragging on the road while pulling trailers, and operating a motorized vehicle in tall grass can start a fire. Be sure mechanical equipment is equipped with a working spark arrestor," Virtue said, "and take care that hot mufflers on vehicles do not come into contact with dry grass or other combustible materials." While dispersed camping is allowed, campfires are not allowed in dispersed camp sites.

When fire danger level is extreme, fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious. Development into high intensity burning will usually be faster and occur from smaller fires than in the very high fire danger classification. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition. Under these conditions, the only effective and safe control action is on the flanks until the weather changes, or the fuel supply lessens.

"One Less Spark is a campaign that provides helpful information about how people can prevent one less wildfire," said Scott Jacobson, Public Affairs Officer for the Black Hills National Forest. "When working or recreating out in the woods, under the current fire danger conditions, it is important to have water and a fire extinguisher on hand in the event an accidental fire starts."

Since January 2024, Great Plains Dispatch Center is reporting 92 wildfire starts on the Black Hills National Forest, with nearly 400 acres burned. The majority of these fires have been less than an acre. However, as dry conditions persist, fire activity and potential for bad outcomes increase. Recent fires such as the First Thunder fire and the Silver Mountain fire have produced extreme fire behavior, but firefighters were able to manage those fires without loss of homes or life.

When determining fire danger levels officials use several factors including: the moisture content of grasses, shrubs, and trees; the projected weather conditions (temperatures and wind). Fire managers also take into consideration the intensity of fire spread after ignition and the availability of firefighting resources.

For more information on the Black Hills National Forest, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills>.

Groton Area beats Roncalli in a double overtime thriller

A goal line stand in the second overtime gave the Groton Area Tigers a 29-23 thrilling win over Aberdeen Roncalli in action played Friday in Groton.

"We work on situations like that," said Coach Shaun Wanner. "We fill every gap and our linebackers were going to hit hard. We knew where the ball was going. Backous is a senior and a four year starter and one of the best players around. Roncalli wasn't going to go for any trick plays. They were going to him. That was a great stop."

The Tigers scored first in the game on a 58 yard pass play from Korbin Kucker to Keegen Tracy. Joao Nunes kicked the PAT. That drive took just six plays with two first downs going 70 yards in three minutes. "When we scored first," Wanner said, "I



Brevin Flihs tackles Zane Backous for a sack.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Christian Ehresmann tried to gain some yards, but a Roncalli player would grab a hold of a leg and wouldn't let go. (Photo by

Paul Kosel)

knew this was going to be a good game."

Roncalli would then score on the next possession that was helped by a big pass play taking the Cavaliers down to the Tiger seven yard line. Roncalli would score on a seven yard run by Zane Backous and Aiden Fisher kicked the PAT. That drive went 69 yards in four plays with two first downs in just over a minute.

The first quarter ended tied at seven.

Roncalli would score first in the second quarter in a drive that went 77 yards in 10 plays with six first downs in four minutes. Brody Weinmeister would score on a one-yard run with Fisher kicking the PAT.

Groton Area would answer on a 64 yard drive with three first downs in nine plays spanning five minutes. Tracy would make the touchdown catch on an eight yard pass from Korbin Rucker. Joao Nunes would kick the PAT and the game was tied at 14, which was the halftime score.

Groton Area had the ball twice and Roncalli once in the third quarter, but the score remained tied at 14 going into the fourth quarter.

Ryder Johnson would punt the ball and it would land right at the one yard line where Roncalli had to start. The Cavaliers got one first down, but ended up punting on fourth and nine.

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The Tigers would start at the Roncalli 43 yard line and after two first downs, Groton Area was fourth and one at the Roncalli one yard line. "Our exchange student from Langford is a good kicker," Wanner said. "He hasn't missed many extra points - only when there is a bad snap or bad hold. I asked the team if they wanted to go for the run or the kick and they agreed to go for the field goal. I wanted points and I knew he was going to make it. That would put pressure on Roncalli."

Joao Nunes would kick a 20 yard field goal and the Tigers would take a 17-14 lead with 3:17 left in the game.

The Cavaliers would try to get a first down on fourth and 10 with 1:41 left in the game; however, the pass was incomplete and Groton Area would take over on downs. The Tigers had the ball at the Roncalli 48, but were held to fourth and third. Now Roncalli had the ball back with 1:12 left in the game.

The Cavaliers got a first down at the Tiger 19 yard line with 50 seconds left. They got another first down and were down to the Groton Area four yard line with 27 seconds left. The Tiger defense kept the Cavaliers out of the end zone. On fourth and 10 at the Groton Area 10 yard line, a field goals attempt by Roncalli was blocked; but a roughing the kicker penalty would give Roncalli another chance. This time, Aiden Fisher would kick a 22 yard field goal with one second left on the clock and the game was tied at 17.

Both teams would have four chances to score from the 10 yard line. Groton Area would have the first opportunity in the first overtime. On the first play, Christian Ehresmann would score on a 10 yard pass from Korbin Kucker. The Tigers were going to kick the PAT, but picked up the ball and attempted a run that was stopped.

Roncalli would score on a third and three with a three yard run by Zane Backous. The PAT kick was blocked by Ryder Johnson and the score remained tied, now at 23. "We came up with some big plays and that was one of them," Wanner said. "If they would have made the kick, they would have won the game."

Groton Area would score on the first play in the second overtime on a pass play from Korbin Kucker to Keegen Tracy. Once again, the Tigers were going to kick the PAT but elected for the run that was stopped.

Aberdeen Roncalli would now have four chances. The Cavaliers had the ball at the one yard line for the final play of the game and the Tiger defense prevented the score and would win the game, 29-23.

"I was proud of our kids," Wanner said. "After last week, I didn't know how we were going to respond. But by midweek, I knew they were ready to go. We had a good practice on Wednesday and everyone was there at that the 6 a.m. Thursday practice. I could tell we were ready to play."

Groton Area had 13 first downs, carried the ball 28 times for 59 yards (Korbin Kucker 15-15, Brevin Flihs 5-19, Christian Ehresmann 8-25); and Korbin Kucker completed 15 of 19 passes for 166 yards with four touchdowns (Receivers: Christian Ehresmann 7-47, 1 TD; Keegen Tracy 3-68, 3 TD; Brevin Flihs 2-14| Ryder Johnson 2-17; Teylor Diegel 1-15). Defensive leaders were Christian Ehresmann with 14 tackles followed by Brevin Flihs with nine, Tucker Hardy seven, Korbin Kucker five and Caleb Mertz with four.

Aberdeen Roncalli had 15 first downs, carried the ball 37 times for 146 yards with three touchdowns (Zane Backus 17-82, 2 TD; Aiden Fisher 10-24; Brady Weinmeister 10-40, 1 TD); and Aiden Fisher completed seven of 20 passes for 140 yards (Receiver: James Behan 3-114, Brody Weinmeister 1-9, Jett Johnson 1-5,



Keegen Tracy would catch the ball on the his play. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Luke Kaiser 1-7, Zane Backous 1-5) Defensive leaders were Brody Weinmeister with 12 tackles followed by Carter Samson with 11 and Zane Backous and Noah Kramer each had eight.

There were no fumbles or interceptions in the game.

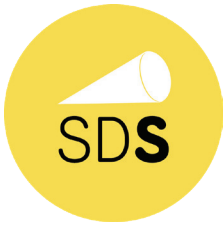
Groton Area, now 4-2, will travel to Sisseton on Friday. Aberdeen Roncalli is also 4-2.

"We can't have a letdown in the next two weeks. If we win those games, we could be hosting the first round of the playoffs."

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra

Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt from Groton Ford, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover. Justin Olson provided the play-by-play, Jeslyn Kosel operated the camera and Paul Kosel the technical assistance.

- Paul Kosel



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Experts applaud SD lawmakers and urge further efforts to protect children online

Hundreds attend Community Response to Child Abuse Conference

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 4, 2024 5:09 PM

SIoux FALLS — A day after a group of South Dakota lawmakers met for the third time to discuss digital safety for children and regulations surrounding online spaces and tools, hundreds of professionals focused on child abuse prevention gathered Thursday in Sioux Falls to focus on the issue themselves.

Professionals highlighted concerns similar to those heard by lawmakers on the summer study committee. The committee is drafting bills to require age verification by app stores and makers of mobile phones and tablets, and to define artificial intelligence.

South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen told conference attendees in his opening remarks that the new and “complex landscape of child abuse” due to technology and social media allows predators a new “ability to invade lives and homes.”

The annual Community Response to Child Abuse Conference brings together social workers, medical professionals, teachers and school officials, law enforcement, mental health providers, child advocates and members of the legal community to continue education surrounding child abuse and strengthen response efforts.

This year’s focus is digital safety, said Chrissie Young, director of the Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment at the University of South Dakota.

The focus comes from an “explosion” of online child harm in the last five years, increasing at an “alarming rate” after the COVID pandemic, she said. During the pandemic, many children were given unsupervised access to the internet.

That not only means more risk to children regarding bullying, cyberstalking and sextortion, but an increase in cases of children putting self-generated, sexually explicit imagery online. Young added that increased access and use has led to higher rates of depression and anxiety among children.

Social media use can create an “addictive response” in children, similar to nicotine, alcohol and cocaine,



Warren Binford, an international children’s rights scholar and advocate at the University of Colorado, speaks on Oct. 3, 2024, during the Community Response to Child Abuse Conference in Sioux Falls. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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studies show. Excessive social media use is anything over two hours a day, according to some experts, with many adolescents spending up to four hours a day on social media and their phones.

Expert evaluates SD efforts

Warren Binford, the keynote speaker for the conference and an international children's rights scholar and advocate at the University of Colorado, said she was encouraged to learn of South Dakota lawmakers' planned legislation.

Requiring age verification could encourage platforms to "bring a fence around children" in digital spaces and protect them from online predators, Binford said. That includes restricting engagement with other online users who aren't their age or close relatives, and restricting children from creating shadow accounts unbeknownst to parents.

Binford was frustrated by the decision not to recommend legislation that would have required website-based age verification to access adult content.

A bill with that aim failed last winter in the state Senate after passing in the House, primarily due to concerns about legal battles surrounding similar legislation in other states. Binford said the "wait and see" approach isn't helpful to children who are experiencing difficulties now. She added that websites manage age verification requirements for gambling and alcohol, and that the same can be done for pornography.

Online pornography sites are "not the 'Playboys' of their dads' and grandpas' days," Binford said. The sites are a voluminous source of pornography that can sometimes be humiliating or violent. If children are exposed to that, it can compromise their understanding of human sexuality, leading them to become dependent on the explicit content and prone to hurtful sexual relationships with other people.

"I think it's important for every state to pass this legislation regardless of what's going on in the court system," Binford told South Dakota Searchlight.

Legislative action anticipated

Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt expects the age verification pornography bill to be re-introduced even if it isn't recommended by the summer study committee. Rehfeldt, who attended the child abuse conference, plans to support the bill again.

Young, of the Center for Prevention of Child Maltreatment, said age verification for adult content sites is "critical" for South Dakota children. While the Legislature is taking a positive step in recommending age verification for app stores and device makers, it's important that information is communicated to web browsers, she said. And children can still access obscene or adult content from non-mobile devices, which isn't addressed in the summer study's requested drafts.

"I think they're taking the right approach. It's one piece of the puzzle," Young said, adding that she'd like to see the Legislature take a larger role in consumer protection laws for children, such as requiring social media platforms to implement guardrails for children on the platforms. Guardrails might include notification restrictions, eliminating auto-play for children's accounts, or interrupting social media "infinite scrolling."

Binford applauded efforts by some school districts in South Dakota to remove cell phones from classrooms. The summer study committee does not plan to pursue a statewide policy for cell phone use in schools.

Binford added that she believes schools should require universal online safety education — especially for middle and high school students and their parents — so they can understand the risks they face and how to protect themselves. That could be a statewide requirement with implementation control at the local level, she said.

She also recommends more funding for frontline workers, such as social workers and law enforcement personnel, to train in digital safety and technology facilitated harm.

Rehfeldt said she doesn't see a likelihood of increased funding from the Legislature to meet those training needs. But she did say the conference confirmed for her that lawmakers will have to play a role in protecting children in digital spaces, especially since Binford and others at the conference presented evidence that exposure to technology and social media is negatively impacting South Dakota children.

"If we don't start doing something to move in the right direction, it'll get worse," Rehfeldt said.

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

Thune, Cornyn or Scott: Leadership is next big question for U.S. Senate GOP

South Dakota senator in race for top spot with colleagues from Texas, Florida

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans shortly after Election Day will face a major decision for their chamber as well as the national party when they pick a new leader.

Once the dust from the election clears and the balance of power in the Senate is decided, senators will gather behind closed doors to choose who will lead their conference. Come January, that person will step into one of the more important and influential roles in the U.S. government, as well as becoming a prominent figure for messaging and fundraising for the GOP.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn, Florida Sen. Rick Scott and South Dakota Sen. John Thune have all publicly announced they're seeking the post. Thune is currently the minority whip, the No. 2 leader in the Senate GOP, and Cornyn held the whip job before him.



Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, joined by Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, speaks at the Capitol on Sept. 29, 2021, in Washington, D.C. (Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images)

The lawmaker who secures the support of his colleagues will replace Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who since 2007 has led his party through three presidencies, numerous votes on natural disaster aid packages, the COVID-19 pandemic, two impeachments and the Jan. 6 insurrection.

McConnell, who served as majority leader when Republicans controlled the Senate, has been at the center of dozens of pivotal negotiations and ensured his position was a boon for his home state of Kentucky.

The Republican who takes his place will have to navigate choppy political seas in the years ahead as the GOP continues to hold onto the Reagan-era policies many still value, while adjusting to the brand of conservatism that Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump champions.

States Newsroom interviewed Republican senators to find out what characteristics they believe the next GOP leader needs to have to earn their vote, and about the challenges that person will face in the years ahead.

While only one senator would volunteer an opinion on a favorite candidate, many said they are interested in a leader who will emphasize moving legislation through the chamber, listen closely to members and forge strong ties with what they hope is a Trump administration.

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In search of a workhorse

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley said he's looking for a "competent" Republican leader who will listen to members and work behind the scenes.

"I don't want to see leaders on television commercials, I don't want to see them featured in Senate races, I don't want them as the deciding factor days before an election," Hawley said. "I want somebody who is going to be a workhorse and who's going to work with members to achieve our priorities and then get stuff accomplished."

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said the next GOP leader should hold the line on conservative priorities while also being able to negotiate bipartisan deals during what is expected to be a divided government. Democrats narrowly control the Senate, but Republicans are projected to possibly take the majority in the election.

"I would like somebody who can be strong in the face of opposition, present a strong argument, not afraid to take it to the other side when needed, but then also somebody that could get in the room and negotiate right when it gets tough," she said.

Capito acknowledged the outcome of the presidential election could have an impact on who becomes the next Republican leader.

"(It) just depends on who wins," she said.

Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall said his choice will "be the most important vote that I take."

"You vote for the president, that's important, but mine is one vote out of 150 million votes, or whatever it is. But this vote will be one out of, hopefully 53, so I think it has a lot of weight," Marshall said. "And I think it's really important that we elect a majority leader that shares the same priorities as, hopefully, President Trump."

Tennessee Sen. Bill Hagerty said the overarching criteria for the next GOP leader is their "ability to get along well with President Trump and the incoming administration."

"The first 100 days are going to count, and we need to have very close alignment to make certain we're successful," Hagerty said.

There is no guarantee that voters will elect Trump as the next president during this year's presidential election. The next Senate GOP leader could end up working with an administration led by the Democratic nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris.

That would require whomever Republican senators elect to walk a tightrope on Cabinet secretary confirmation votes, judicial nominees, must-pass legislation and potentially a Supreme Court nominee.

Louisiana Sen. John Kennedy said he's vetting the candidates based on which one would be the most savvy, strategic, patient and inclusive.

That person, Kennedy said, must also be "willing to test his assumptions against the arguments of his critics and willing to ask God for money if necessary." McConnell has been known as a prodigious fundraiser for Republicans.

Chairmanship clout

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, ranking member on the Appropriations Committee, said she'll vote for the candidate willing to devote significantly more floor time to debating and voting on bipartisan legislation.

"I think that's a real problem," Collins said. "I'd like us to go back to the days where power was vested in the committee chairs. And if they and their ranking members are able to produce a bill, that it gets scheduled for floor consideration."

Collins, a moderate in a Senate conference packed with more conservative members, said she wants the next Senate Republican leader to recognize "that we're a big tent party and that we need to be inclusive in our approach."

North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven, the top Republican on the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, said he wants a GOP leader to follow "regular order on appropriations."

"We get them through committee with bipartisan votes, but they're not getting to the floor," Hoeven said of the dozen annual government funding bills. "We need to get them to the floor, there needs to be

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an amendment process, and we need to act on the bills and get back to voting on bills and that's called regular order. And I think that's the biggest key for our next leader is to be able to do that."

Alabama Sen. Katie Britt has begun talking with the candidates and is evaluating their plans for the Senate floor schedule, especially for bringing the annual government funding bills up for debate and amendment.

"I want to know how we're going to get the appropriations process back working; like, how we're actually going to move the ball down the field on that," Britt said. "I want to know how we're going to actually embolden the committees and the committee process."

Britt, ranking member on the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, expressed frustration with how much floor time goes toward confirming judicial nominees, something that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, and McConnell have both championed.

Senate floor procedures are much more time-consuming than the rules that govern debate in the House. Legislation can take weeks to move through the filibuster process, which requires 60 votes for bills to advance, and for leaders to negotiate which amendments will receive floor votes.

The Senate, unlike the House, is also responsible for vetting and confirming executive branch nominees, like Cabinet secretaries, as well as judicial nominees. With a new president in place, 2025 will mean many confirmation votes.

"When we have a leader that really knows how to lead, they'll put appropriations bills on the floor, they'll figure out how to embolden members," Britt said, adding that "a weak leader consolidates all the power, and that's, unfortunately, what I think we have right now when it comes to Chuck Schumer."

'Getting stuff done'

Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford said whomever he votes for needs to "be successful at getting stuff done, finished, completed."

"We have to be able to get our committees working and get legislation up, negotiated and moved," Lankford said.

Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst said whoever takes over as the next GOP leader must be able to communicate well with senators.

That person "needs to be someone that has strategy, and knows how to work the floor, certainly. And then, also fundraising is a portion of that, too."

Arkansas Sen. John Boozman said his vote will go to the person he believes can best build consensus and listen to members, though he hasn't yet decided which of the three contenders he'll support.

"I'm a true undecided," Boozman said. "I think the reality is most members just want to get the election over. They don't want to deal with this until then."

Boozman said the results of the battle for control of the Senate in the November elections could influence which candidate he and his colleagues pick to lead them during the next Congress.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said that the next GOP leader should be in tune with Republican voters and the issues important to them.

"It's someone who I think has an affinity and is in touch with where our voters are," Rubio said.

Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley declined to list off any characteristics he believes the next leader needs, saying he doesn't want any of the three to figure out his choice.

"I wouldn't want to tell you that, because this is what I told all three people that came to my office — I said, 'I'm not going to tell either one of you. You're all friends of mine. You ain't going to know who I vote for,'" Grassley said. "And if I answered your question, they're going to start figuring out who I'm going to vote for."

Grassley said the next leader's first major challenge will be negotiating a tax bill during 2025 that addresses expiring elements from the 2017 Republican tax law.

Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran said character matters in determining who he'll vote for, but said he hadn't created a score sheet just yet.

"I'll have an idea of who I'm voting for before the November election," Moran said. "Those characteristics

that I think are important would be important regardless of what the makeup of the House, Senate and the White House is.”

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson threw his support behind Scott for GOP leader, saying he prefers someone who previously served as a governor and worked in the private sector. He was the only senator interviewed by States Newsroom to reveal his vote, which will be conducted via secret ballot.

He said that Scott “is willing to tackle tough issues.”

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said that Republicans have “a lot of good choices” among the three men and that he wants someone who can carry the GOP message.

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Ariana covers the nation’s capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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

Biden’s student loan relief plan suffers another setback in Missouri ruling

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - OCTOBER 4, 2024 12:39 PM

The Biden administration was hit with the latest blow to its student debt relief efforts on Thursday after a federal judge in Missouri temporarily blocked the administration from putting in place a plan that would provide student debt relief to millions of borrowers.

The ruling further hinders the administration’s efforts to promote its work on student loans ahead of the November election and comes amid persistent Republican challenges to Biden’s student debt relief initiatives.

The administration, which unveiled the plans in April, said these efforts would provide student debt relief to more than 30 million borrowers. The proposals were never finalized.

In a September lawsuit, Missouri led Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Dakota and Ohio in challenging the administration over the plan.

Their suit, filed in a Georgia federal court, came just days after a separate student debt relief effort — the Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE, plan — continued to be put on pause after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to lift a block on the plan in late August.

Following the September filing of the suit, U.S. District Judge J. Randal Hall of Georgia paused the plan through a temporary restraining order on Sept. 5 and extended that order on Sept. 19 while the case



A Thursday ruling in federal court in Missouri further hinders the administration’s efforts to promote its work on student loans ahead of the November election. (Photo by Getty Images)

could be reviewed.

But on Wednesday, Hall let that order expire, dismissed Georgia from the suit and moved the case to a Missouri federal court.

Once the suit moved to Missouri and the restraining order was not extended, the remaining six states in the case quickly sought a preliminary injunction.

U.S. District Judge Matthew T. Schelp granted the states' request on Thursday, writing that the administration is barred from "mass canceling student loans, forgiving any principal or interest, not charging borrowers accrued interest, or further implementing any other actions under the (debt relief plans) or instructing federal contractors to take such actions."

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey praised Schelp's decision, saying in a Thursday post on X that it's a "huge win for transparency, the rule of law, and for every American who won't have to foot the bill for someone else's Ivy League debt."

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Department of Education said the agency is "extremely disappointed by this ruling on our proposed debt relief rules, which have not yet even been finalized," per a statement.

"This lawsuit was brought by Republican elected officials who made clear they will stop at nothing to prevent millions of their own constituents from getting breathing room on their student loans," the spokesperson said.

The department will "continue to vigorously defend these proposals in court" and "will not stop fighting to fix the broken student loan system and provide support and relief to borrowers across the country," they added.

The Student Borrower Protection Center, an advocacy group, also lambasted the Missouri decision.

"With this case, the Missouri Attorney General continues to put naked political interest and corporate greed ahead of student loan borrowers in Missouri and across the country," Persis Yu, deputy executive director and managing counsel for the advocacy group, said in a Thursday statement.

"This is a shameful attack on tens of millions of student loan borrowers and our judicial system as a whole," Yu said. "We will not stop fighting to expose these abuses and ensure borrowers get the relief they deserve."

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

Unemployment ticks down, labor market remains strong, latest numbers show

BY: CASEY QUINLAN - OCTOBER 4, 2024 4:49 PM

A month before voters cast their ballots, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report showing a strong labor market with growing wages, a lower unemployment rate, and the addition of 254,000 jobs to the economy.

Eighty-one percent of registered voters say the economy is key to their vote for president this fall, according to a September Pew Research report.

"We saw job creation beating expectations, unemployment rate ticking ever so slightly down, and we saw great wage growth which has continued to outpace inflation," said Kitty Richards, senior strategic advisor at Groundwork Collaborative, a progressive economic policy think tank. "We don't have the new inflation numbers for last month, but wage growth is strong and has been outpacing inflation for about 16 months now and those are all really good things."

The unemployment rate in September was 4.1% compared to 4.2% in August and 4.3% in July. A rising unemployment rate earlier in the year had caused some economists to worry that the Federal Reserve's decision in the past few months not to cut the federal funds rate was beginning to hurt the labor market.

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In September, the Fed decided to cut the rate by half a percentage point, allaying those worries.

The Fed began an aggressive campaign to beat inflation by raising rates in March 2022 and stopped in mid-2023 but the rate remains high and has affected the economy, particularly the housing market, economists say. Inflation has significantly cooled since its peak in June 2022.

"If today's job report had said that the labor market was softening further, I think a lot of us would be more aggressively concerned about the risks posed to the labor market by high interest rates," Richards said. "It's great to see that those risks have not tipped over yet ... But there are risks and we need to be really mindful of what it would mean if we started to see the unemployment rate picking up again."

The report also showed continued job growth in healthcare, government, social assistance and construction last month.

Wage growth was strong, rising 4% over the past year. Adult men saw their unemployment rate fall, at 3.7%, last month. Women, Black people, Asian people, white people, Hispanic people, and teens all had little or no change in their unemployment rates in September.

The prime-age employment-to-population ratio, which is a measure of how well the economy provides jobs for people who are interested in working, remains at a 23-year high in today's jobs report.

"I think the labor market continues to be healthy and strong and it's great to see labor force participation and employment-to-population rates staying high," Richards said. "That's what we want to see in the kind of economy that is going to drive wage gains for working people and continue some of the gains that we've seen since the COVID recession."

But she added that there is still room for those measures to grow.

"We've seen that the economy can outperform what a lot of people thought before we had this really prolonged period of low unemployment coming out of the COVID recession. And I hope that we continue to see this kind of growth," she said.

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



The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report showing a strong labor market with growing wages, a lower unemployment rate, and the addition of 254,000 jobs to the economy. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

CDC conducting extensive probe into bird flu contracted by Missouri resident

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - OCTOBER 4, 2024 2:10 PM

WASHINGTON — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should have results later this month that provide more insight into how a Missouri resident, who hadn't had any contact with infected animals or food, contracted a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Demetre Daskalakis, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC, said on a call with reporters Friday the agency is working through its investigation of that bird flu case, while providing several more details.

"As we previously reported, CDC would be able to perform partial sequencing of the avian influenza H5 virus from the case in Missouri, despite a nearly undetectable level of viral RNA in the patient sample," Daskalakis said.

That process is complex and time-consuming, in part because the patient had rather small amounts of the virus in their system when the test was taken.

Another contributing factor, he said, is "that the virus has two potentially important mutations, meaning two amino acid differences, in comparison with the viruses previously characterized during this event that could affect antigenicity."

Daskalakis explained that antigenicity is when someone is able to produce "a specific immune response, such as creation of specific antibodies."

Both the mutations and small sample size have presented challenges for the CDC, but the agency expects to announce results of the test later this month after completing the complicated lab process, he said.

Two cases in California

The Missouri case is the only bird flu diagnosis in the United States this year where the person hadn't had direct contact with infected poultry or dairy cattle.

The remainder of the 16 people diagnosed with H5N1 during this calendar year had direct contact with farm animals, with nine of those cases linked to poultry and six related to dairy cows.

One of those cases was diagnosed in Texas, two in Michigan, two in California just this week and 10 in Colorado.

Public health officials on the call emphasized that the risk to the general public remains low and that several studies undertaken by the Food and Drug Administration show pasteurized dairy products as well as other foods remain safe to eat.

Since February, the CDC has tested more than 50,000 samples that would have "detected Influenza A, H5 or other novel influenza viruses," Daskalakis said.

The Missouri case was the first case of bird flu detected through that influenza surveillance system, he said.

Public health officials at the state and federal level have been trying to determine how the Missouri patient, who officials are not identifying for their privacy, contracted the virus through a series of "intense interviews," Daskalakis said.



A case of bird flu in a Missouri resident is the only diagnosis in the United States this year where the person did not have contact with infected dairy cattle or poultry. (Photo by Stephen Ausmus/

Animal Research Services, USDA)

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That is how they learned someone living in the same house had been symptomatic with various gastrointestinal issues at the same time the patient had been ill.

That simultaneous onset of symptoms implied "a common exposure, rather than human-to-human transmission," Daskalakis said, before reinforcing that the second person never tested positive for the virus and isn't considered a case of bird flu.

"At the time of the interview, the household contact had also completely recovered and had not been tested for influenza while they were sick," he said. "To be clear, there is only one case of H5N1 influenza detected in Missouri."

Because the person living in the same house as the Missouri patient had been symptom-free for more than 10 days when they were interviewed by public health officials, Daskalakis said there was "no utility in testing the contact for acute influenza."

Instead, officials in Missouri took blood samples from the two people so the CDC could test for "antibodies against H5 to assess for possible infection with this virus," he said.

A separate investigation was taken at the hospital where the Missouri patient had been diagnosed to see if any health care workers had contracted H5N1.

Out of 118 health care workers who interacted with the patient in some way, 18 had higher-risk interactions before the patient was diagnosed and began using what Daskalakis referred to as "droplet precautions."

Six of those health care workers later developed respiratory symptoms, though only one of them had symptoms by the time the public health investigation had begun retroactively, he said.

That one person's PCR test for acute influenza came back negative and the other five health care workers, who had recovered, did not require a PCR test, he said.

"Since exposures could only be assessed retrospectively, Missouri has also obtained blood specimens from these individuals for antibody or serology testing at CDC to search for any evidence to support the unlikely possibility that their symptoms were related to H5 infection resulting from their interaction with the patient," Daskalakis said. "Despite the low risk, this testing is important to complete the public health investigation of this case."

The CDC began working on that serology testing in mid-September when it received the samples from Missouri, though the complicated process likely won't conclude until later in October.

"For serology testing to be conclusive, it needs to be done using a virus that is genetically identical to the one obtained from the human case from Missouri or there is a risk of a false negative test," Daskalakis said. "Since this H5 virus was not recoverable, we could not grow it because there was not enough for the Missouri specimen."

The CDC, he explained, has to "create the right virus for the test using reverse genetics to match the one from Missouri, so that we can use it in these serology tests."

"We realize people, including all of us at CDC, are anxious to see results from this testing," he said. "CDC is moving at a very accelerated pace while conducting rigorous science to assure the validity of these results."

Poultry, dairy cases

In addition to human cases, bird flu continues to infect poultry flocks and dairy herds within the United States.

While the poultry industry has had years of experience supplying its workers with personal protective equipment and culling affected farms, the dairy industry has had to figure out how to address the virus this year.

Eric Deeble, deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs at USDA, said on the call Friday that Colorado's mandatory testing program of bulk milk tanks, which began in July, offered a hopeful case study for ridding farms throughout the country of H5N1.

"Initially, this revealed a significant local prevalence, about 72% of dairies, centered in Weld County," Deeble said.

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But following months of hard work by farmers and public health officials, Colorado has just one dairy herd that's currently affected by H5N1 out of 86 dairy herds within the state, he said.

"Mandatory surveillance in the state allows for continuous monitoring of herds and helps detect any instances of non-negative results early on, ensuring timely intervention," Deeble said. "This decrease in Colorado cases, even in the absence of a vaccine, gives us further confidence that H5N1 can be eliminated in the national herd, even in places where we have seen an initial rapid increase in cases."

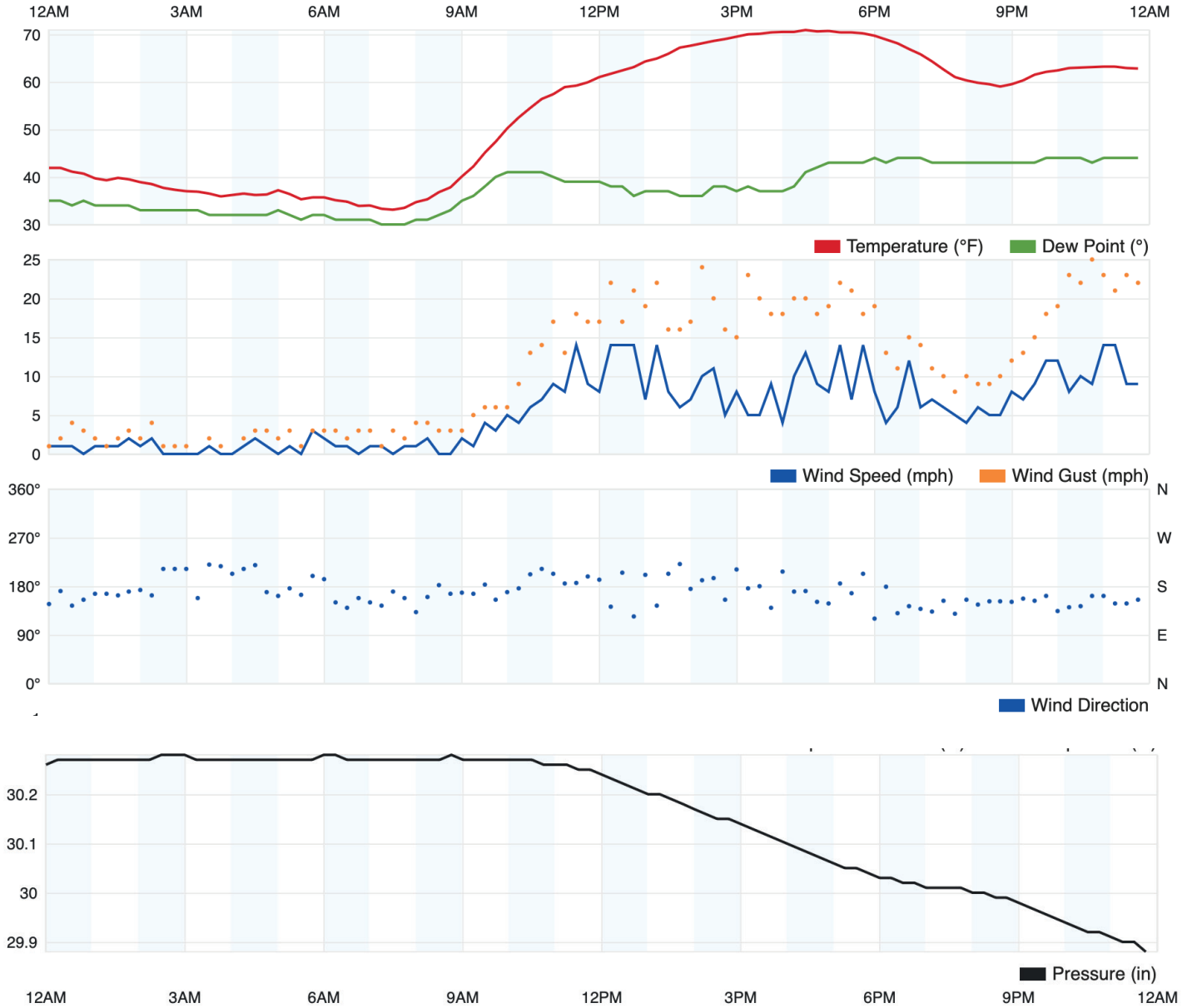
Data from the USDA show that during the past month, three dairy herds in Idaho and 53 in California have tested positive for H5N1.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Red Flag Warning					
Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	
					
High: 73 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 71 °F	
Becoming Sunny and Breezy	Clear and Breezy then Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	

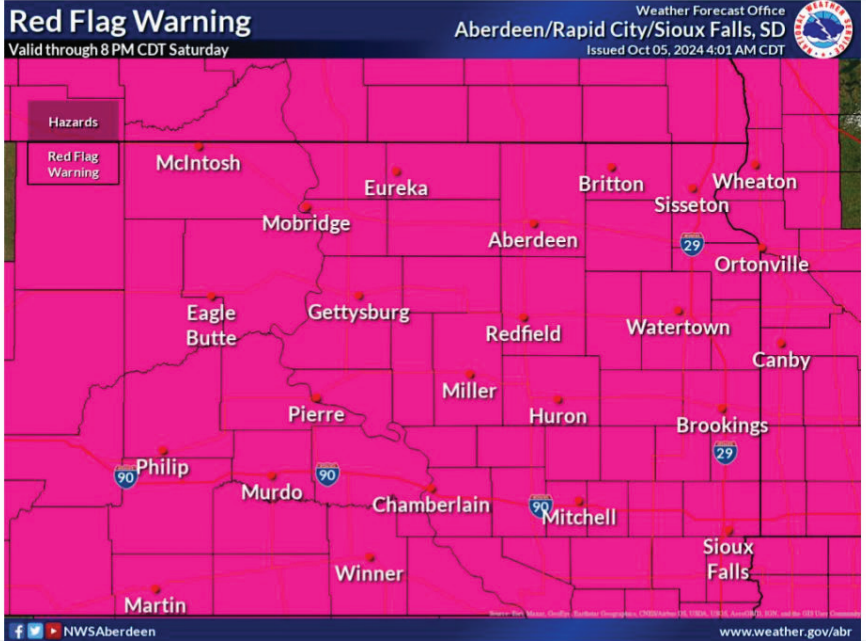
Elevated Fire Danger Through Saturday

October 5, 2024 4:17 AM

This Should Be The Final Planned DSS Packet Update

Key Messages

- ★ Red Flag Warning now includes Big Stone and Traverse Counties in west central Minnesota
- ★ Red Flag Warning in effect through 8 PM CDT this evening
- ★ Cold frontal passage this morning. South winds will shift to west/northwest with gusts increasing to between 40 and 55 mph; especially over north central South Dakota
- ★ Minimum Relative Humidity values will be 20-30% today
- ★ Fires will spread rapidly and be difficult to contain. Avoid burning, parking in tall grass; discard cigarette butts properly and have water available if engaged in agricultural operations...



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The Red Flag Warning continues through the day today for central and northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Winds will switch from south to northwest through the morning hours and then increase to 25 to 40 mph with gusts up to 55 mph. Fires that ignite will spread rapidly and be difficult to contain. Please avoid burning.

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Low Relative Humidities

October 5, 2024
4:25 AM

Red Flag Warning Valid through 8PM CDT Saturday

Key Messages

- Warm, Dry, and Windy conditions expected to continue today.
- Minimum RH values between 20-30 percent

	Minimum RH Forecast (%)													Minimum		
	10/5 Sat															
	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm		10pm	11pm
Aberdeen	65	47	39	32	28	27	24	23	23	24	26	31	32	36	37	23
Britton	71	59	46	39	32	29	27	25	25	26	29	35	38	38	41	25
Brookings	87	70	59	46	34	29	26	23	26	24	28	33	37	40	41	23
Chamberlain	54	34	30	26	23	21	21	19	20	20	22	27	31	32	34	19
Clark	75	63	48	37	30	25	25	23	23	23	26	31	35	35	36	23
Eagle Butte	39	37	33	32	29	26	24	23	23	23	26	29	34	37	39	23
Ellendale	59	44	37	32	29	27	25	25	24	24	27	29	35	36	40	24
Eureka	51	43	39	32	29	27	26	25	24	25	28	32	35	39	42	24
Gettysburg	48	40	36	33	31	27	25	25	23	25	27	30	37	39	39	23
Huron	71	53	37	30	26	23	21	20	21	22	24	31	34	37	38	20
Kennebec	41	33	29	28	25	23	20	20	19	22	23	27	33	35	36	19
McIntosh	47	41	37	32	29	27	24	24	24	24	26	31	36	40	43	24
Milbank	81	64	54	41	35	32	26	25	25	25	30	34	37	38	36	25
Miller	54	40	33	28	27	25	24	22	23	24	26	31	33	33	35	22
Mobridge	47	39	35	30	25	23	22	21	22	23	25	31	35	37	38	21
Murdo	37	35	31	29	25	23	21	20	20	21	21	28	31	32	35	20
Pierre	44	38	32	29	27	24	22	22	22	22	26	30	32	37	38	22
Redfield	66	46	35	29	25	24	22	20	21	21	24	30	34	33	36	20
Sisseton	72	57	46	38	31	28	26	24	25	26	27	33	35	35	36	24
Watertown	83	69	54	40	32	28	26	26	25	26	29	32	36	36	38	25
Webster	69	59	47	39	31	29	26	25	24	25	27	32	36	35	36	24
Wheaton	84	70	53	43	34	31	26	24	25	26	30	36	37	38	38	24



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Relative humidity values as low as 20 to 30 percent this afternoon, when merged with cured fine fuels, and strong winds, will create Red Flag conditions. Avoid causing a fire to start, as they will be difficult to contain and extinguish.



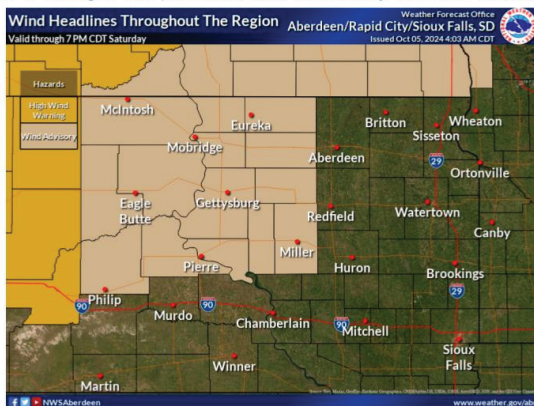
Wind Advisory Today

October 5, 2024
4:30 AM

Valid through 7 PM CDT Saturday

Key Messages

- Northwest sustained speeds of 25-40 mph with gusts up to 55 mph.
- Damaging winds could blow down trees and power lines. Power outages are possible, and travel may become difficult.



	Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)													Maximum				
	10/5 Sat																	
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm		7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm
Aberdeen	38	39	40	39	38	39	38	38	38	39	40	40	40	32	31	30	30	28
Britton	39	41	44	40	37	38	38	37	37	38	40	41	39	35	32	32	31	32
Brookings	38	38	39	38	36	33	31	31	33	35	36	35	31	28	25	24	25	
Chamberlain	33	31	33	38	40	41	41	40	41	41	39	36	33	30	28	25	24	25
Clark	39	40	41	39	37	35	36	36	36	36	36	37	37	30	29	28	29	28
Eagle Butte	31	38	48	49	51	52	52	49	49	48	47	46	43	37	36	33	32	31
Ellendale	33	37	41	41	41	41	41	43	43	44	46	49	41	38	36	33	32	46
Eureka	23	28	39	45	49	51	53	54	56	56	55	53	49	45	43	40	39	37
Gettysburg	15	21	35	40	44	48	48	47	47	46	46	45	40	36	33	32	31	48
Huron	39	39	37	36	35	35	35	36	37	37	36	35	31	28	25	24	24	39
Kennebec	25	29	36	40	45	46	46	46	44	41	40	39	37	31	29	28	28	46
McIntosh	21	31	48	52	53	54	54	54	54	54	55	54	51	47	44	40	37	55
Milbank	30	32	36	35	32	32	32	33	35	36	39	30	25	24	25	26	36	36
Miller	46	45	43	43	44	44	43	41	41	40	39	39	30	29	28	28	26	46
Mobridge	26	30	39	43	45	45	45	45	44	43	40	37	36	30	28	26	33	35
Murdo	24	30	41	45	46	47	46	45	44	43	43	40	38	32	31	29	28	47
Pierre	16	23	33	38	41	43	43	41	40	39	40	39	36	32	30	28	25	43
Redfield	33	35	37	36	35	36	36	36	36	36	37	36	32	29	26	25	25	37
Sisseton	31	36	41	39	36	35	35	35	35	35	36	36	30	30	30	30	31	41
Watertown	38	40	44	45	41	39	37	37	37	37	38	38	35	30	30	30	30	45
Webster	36	39	46	45	41	41	41	41	43	43	42	40	40	36	35	35	35	46
Wheaton	30	33	37	33	30	30	30	29	30	29	30	30	28	24	24	25	28	37



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Wind Advisory is in effect across north central South Dakota and a portion of central South Dakota today as west to northwest winds 25 to 40 mph with gusts up to 55 mph develop behind a cold frontal passage. Tree or property damage along with power outages are possible.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 71 °F at 4:30 PM

Low Temp: 33 °F at 7:35 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 10:45 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 30 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 96 in 1963

Record Low: 19 in 1935

Average High: 66

Average Low: 39

Average Precip in Oct.: .39

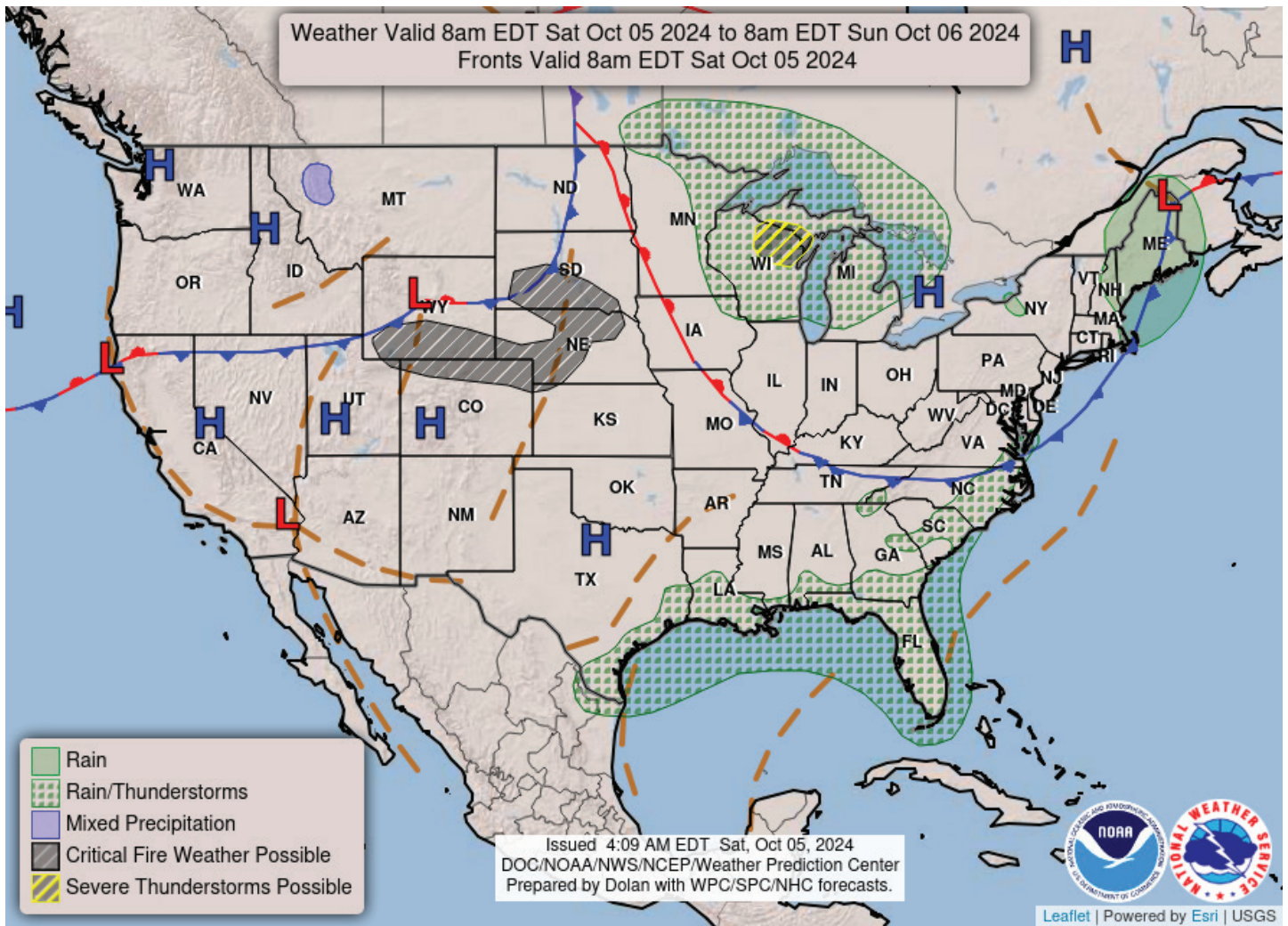
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 18.72

Precip Year to Date: 19.75

Sunset Tonight: 7:05:55 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36:30 am



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Today in Weather History

October 5, 1982: Strong thunderstorms developed across central South Dakota and raced into portions of southwest Minnesota. The storms were prolific lightning producers in South Dakota, setting several structures on fire. An electrical substation was damaged near Salem, an elementary school was set ablaze in Aberdeen, and several homes in Sioux Falls were struck. One house in Sioux Falls had a hole knocked in a wall by a lightning strike.

Numerous fires were also started in southern Minnesota by the same line of storms. Strong thunderstorm winds leveled several buildings, damaged a house, and moved a hog shed off its foundation on three separate farms near Worthington. The winds also turned over railroad cars near Pipestone. Worthington narrowly escaped damage as a small tornado touched down two miles southwest of town and moved southeast. Fortunately, the tornado's damage was confined to trees and crops.

October 5, 2013: A historic blizzard pounded western South Dakota with record-setting snowfall and high winds for almost 48 hours from October 3 through the afternoon of October 5. One to two feet of snow was reported over the plains of western South Dakota, with three to five feet of snow falling over the northern and central Black Hills. Wind gusts to 70 mph across the plains produced significant blowing and drifting snow, with visibilities near zero for much of the day on October 4. The heavy wet snow and strong winds downed trees and power lines, causing prolonged outages and impassable highways. The roofs of several businesses, a middle school, and a community center collapsed from the heavy snow. Thousands of livestock were killed from hypothermia, suffocation, or drowning. The South Dakota Animal Industry Board received over 21,000 cattle; over 1300 sheep; 400 horses; and 40 bison deaths from the storm. Tree and debris removal costs were several million dollars. An unyielding low-pressure area moving across the region brought an early fall blizzard to most of the counties west of Missouri River on October 4th and 5th. The snowfall and blizzard conditions occurred mainly along with the western parts of the counties. The snowfall amounts varied broadly from 1 to 2 inches to as much as 22 inches in far western Corson County. Very strong northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts to 60 mph brought blizzard conditions and significant travel problems. Interstate-90 was closed from Murdo to the Wyoming border from 7 pm on October 4th to October 8th. No travel was advised on all roads west of the Missouri River. Many cattle were also lost in western Corson County due to the storm. The heavy snow, along with strong winds, resulted in some power outages and some downed tree branches. The snowfall began in the late morning hours of the 4th and ended in the early afternoon hours of the 5th. Some snowfall amounts that occurred were 1 inch at Murdo; 2 inches at Timber Lake and 5 miles west of Hayes; 4 inches at McIntosh; 16 inches southeast of Morrystown; and 22 inches southwest of Keldron.

1638 - The journal of John Winthrop recorded that a mighty tempest struck eastern New England. This second severe hurricane in three years blew down many trees in mile long tracks. (David Ludlum)

1786: The famous "Pumpkin Flood" occurred on the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. Harrisburg, PA, reported a river stage of twenty-two feet.

1864: A tropical cyclone hit India near Calcutta, devastating the city and killing about 60,000 people.

1917 - The temperature at Sentinel, AZ, soared to 116 degrees to establish an October record for the nation. (The Weather Channel)

1972: Tropical Storm Joanne, earlier a hurricane, moved across the Baja California peninsula and came ashore in western Mexico south of Ajo. The storm brought heavy rain and flooding to much of Arizona. This storm is the first documented tropical storm to reach Arizona, with its cyclonic circulation intact. Over 5 inches of rain was reported on the Mogollon rim southeast of Flagstaff. Additional rainfall amounts included 4.44 at Flagstaff, 3.80 at Prescott, 2.21 at Yuma, 1.95 at Phoenix, 1.63 at Nogales, and 1.63 at Tucson.

2010: Large hail pounded Phoenix, Arizona, causing nearly \$3 billion in damage.



IS YOUR LIGHT SHINING?

It was in the darkness of night that we called on a mechanic to fix a problem with our car. As he worked under the hood, his helper stood by holding a flashlight so he could see what he was doing.

After a short amount of time, the helper became bored, began to watch our dog and turned the light away from the problem the mechanic was repairing.

"Shine your light on the engine," demanded the mechanic. "That's why you're here."

Jesus said that His followers were like "a city on a mountain, glowing in the night, for all to see." What an interesting picture to consider.

If you have ever flown in an airplane at night and looked out of the window, you have no doubt been fascinated to see the lights of the cities below. If the night is clear, their light cannot be hidden. Their "glow" can be seen for miles in every direction.

What is true of the lights of those cities can be true of the Christian. We always have the opportunity to "glow" like those lights for Christ. As His witnesses in His world, we are to be known for the "light" we can provide to those looking through the darkness of this world for directions to Christ, our Savior. Our faith must be seen if we are to have any value to the lost who are looking for their way in the world. Jesus said, "Don't hide your light, let it shine!"

Prayer: Help us, Jesus, to be the light You planned us to be in Your world. May our light shine brightly so that our words and deeds will lead and guide others to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden." Matthew 5:14

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.24

21 39 42 43 45 3

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$129,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.02.24

8 10 17 20 28 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$10,510,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 15 Mins
39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.04.24

1 4 34 39 42 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 30 Mins
39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.02.24

4 6 7 22 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$49,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 30 Mins
39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.02.24

39 44 45 46 66 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 59 Mins
40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.02.24

1 2 21 37 43 21

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$295,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 59 Mins
40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Central High School 48, Mitchell 8

Arlington 42, Iroquois-Lake Preston 20

Avon 30, TDAACDC 26

Brandon Valley 39, Sioux Falls Lincoln 13

Britton-Hecla 49, Waubay/Summit 0

Brookings 29, Tea 22

Castlewood 54, Waverly-South Shore 3

Chamberlain 22, Parker 0

Clark-Willow Lake 26, Deuel 7

Colman-Egan 54, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 8

Corsica/Stickney 44, Sunshine Bible Academy 0

Dakota Valley 33, Beresford 12

Dell Rapids 26, West Central 0

Elk Point-Jefferson 49, Wagner 8

Elkton-Lake Benton 42, Garretson 0

Estelline-Hendricks 20, Deubrook 12

Faulkton 43, North Central 0

Florence-Henry 20, Wilmot 8

Freeman-Marion-FA 68, Centerville 13

Gayville-Volin High School 37, Sioux Falls Lutheran 12

Groton 29, Aberdeen Roncalli 23, 2OT

Hamlin 64, DeSmet 0

Harding County 26, Dupree 14

Harrisburg 49, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 13

Herreid-Selby 32, Potter County 22

Hill City 53, Philip 0

Hot Springs 48, Custer 21

Howard 36, Hanson 6

Huron 36, Douglas 0

Ipswich 42, Hitchcock-Tulare 8

Kadoka 34, Bennett County 14

Kimball-White Lake 55, Stanley County 0

Lemmon High School 32, Timber Lake 8

Lennox 44, Canton 16

Leola-Frederick High School def. Northwestern, forfeit

Madison 21, Tri-Valley 12

McCook Central-Montrose 36, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 28

Milbank 42, Sisseton 0

Mobridge-Pollock 22, Webster 0

New Underwood 36, Lyman 22

Parkston 46, Platte-Geddes 12

Rapid City Central 3, Sioux Falls Washington 0

Rapid City Christian 53, Lakota Tech 0

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Scotland/Menno 51, Colome 0
Sioux Falls Christian 43, Vermillion 7
Sioux Falls Jefferson 56, Rapid City Stevens 13
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 42, T F Riggs High School 14
Sioux Valley 31, Flandreau 13
Spearfish 27, Watertown 20
St Thomas More 48, Belle Fourche 0
Sully Buttes 54, Faith 0
Viborg-Hurley 68, Chester 25
WWSSC 62, Miller 20
Wall 62, Jones County 8
Warner 49, Redfield 0
Winnebago, Neb. 40, Little Wound 0
Winner 16, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 0
Wolsey-Wessington 38, Bon Homme 14
Yankton 35, Sturgis Brown High School 0

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

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Belle Fourche, 25-17, 25-8, 25-14

LNI Invitational=

Pool A=

Crow Creek Tribal School def. Oelrichs, 25-15, 20-25, 25-18

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 26-24, 25-10

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Marty, 25-21, 25-14

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Wyoming Indian, Wyo., 25-22, 21-25, 25-12

Marty def. Oelrichs, 25-20, 14-25, 25-19

Marty def. White River, 25-4, 25-14

White River def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-11, 25-16

White River def. Oelrichs, 25-11, 25-8

White River def. Wyoming Indian, Wyo., 23-25, 25-9, 25-17

Wyoming Indian, Wyo. def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 24-26, 25-22, 25-19

Pool B=

Custer def. Lodge Grass, Mont., 25-17, 25-11

Custer def. St. Francis Indian, 25-7, 25-9

Custer def. St. Stephens, Wyo., 25-11, 25-10

Lodge Grass, Mont. def. Tiospa Zina, 25-19, 25-23

Santee, Neb. def. St. Francis Indian, 18-25, 25-20, 25-14

Tiospa Zina def. Santee, Neb., 26-24, 25-18

Tiospa Zina def. St. Francis Indian, 26-24, 25-19

Pool C=

Bennett County def. Pine Ridge, 25-17, 25-16

Bennett County def. Takini, 25-3, 25-4

Bennett County def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-13, 25-10

Lakota Tech def. Pine Ridge, 25-20, 25-19

Lakota Tech def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-5, 25-5

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Lakota Tech def. Wakpala, 25-12, 25-13
Pine Ridge def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-8, 25-10
Pine Ridge def. Wakpala, 25-3, 25-10
Tiospaye Topa def. Takini, 20-25, 25-18, 25-21
Wakpala def. Takini, 11-25, 25-19, 25-18
Pool D=
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Crazy Horse, 25-12, 25-15
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Little Wound, 25-14, 25-21
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. McLaughlin, 25-20, 26-24
Lower Brule def. Crazy Horse, 25-21, 25-15
Lower Brule def. Little Wound, 22-25, 25-13, 26-24
Lower Brule def. McLaughlin, 22-25, 25-19, 25-22
McLaughlin def. Crazy Horse, 25-12, 25-17
Todd County def. Little Wound, 25-20, 25-7
Todd County def. Lower Brule, 25-12, 25-15
Todd County def. McLaughlin, 21-25, 25-16, 25-12
Southwest Minn. State Tournament=
Watertown def. Adrian, Minn., 25-11, 25-14
Watertown def. Renville County West, Minn., 25-11, 25-14

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

Idaho state senator tells Native American candidate 'go back where you came from' in forum

KENDRICK, Idaho (AP) — Tensions rose during a bipartisan forum this week after an audience question about discrimination reportedly led an Idaho state senator to angrily tell a Native American candidate to "go back where you came from."

Republican Sen. Dan Foreman left the event early after the outburst and later denied making any racist comments in a Facebook post. He did not respond to a voice message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Trish Carter-Goodheart, a Democratic candidate for the House District 6 seat and member of the Nez Perce Tribe, said the blowup left her shaken and thinking about security needs for future public events. It also forced some tough conversations with her two young children, Avery and Lavender, who were in attendance.

"Having conversations about racism with an 8-year-old and a 5-year-old is not something me and my husband Dane were prepared for," Carter-Goodheart said Friday. "They've never seen a grown adult man have a meltdown like that. They were scared. I was scared."

The event was held by Democratic and Republican precinct committee members from the small north-Idaho town of Kendrick on Monday night, The Lewiston Tribune reported. It was for House and Senate candidates from the local district, including Foreman; his Democratic opponent, Julia Parker; Republican Rep. Lori McCann; and her Democratic opponent, Carter-Goodheart.

About an hour into the event, someone asked a question about a state bill addressing discrimination. The candidates were each given two minutes to answer, and when it was Carter-Goodheart's turn, she pushed back on earlier comments that suggested discrimination is not a major issue in Idaho.

She said state hate crime laws are weak, and noted that the neo-Nazi group Aryan Nations made northern Idaho its home base for many years. She also talked about being the only candidate there who was a person of color.

"I pointed out that just because someone hasn't personally experienced discrimination doesn't mean it's not happening," she said. "I was making my statement, and then he shot up out of his seat and said, 'I'm

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so sick of your liberal (expletive). Why don't you go back to where you came from?"

The Nez Perce Tribe has lived on the Columbia River Plateau in the Pacific Northwest for more than 11,500 years, including the area where Kendrick is located. The northern edge of its reservation, while only a small fraction of the tribe's historical territory, is less than 10 miles (16 kilometers) from the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall where the forum was held.

"It was like slow motion," Carter-Goodheart said. "I just remember thinking, 'Go back to where you came from?' That's within miles of where this forum is taking place. We have literal plots of land that are being leased out to family farms nearby."

In his Facebook post, Foreman called the incident a "quintessential display of race-baiting" and said the Democratic attendees made personal attacks and "proclaimed Idaho to be a racist state."

"Well, here is a news flash for the lefties out there. There is no systemic racism in America or Idaho," Foreman said. "Idaho is a great state — the best in the Union!"

He then added an attack on supporters of abortion rights, saying: "And furthermore, it is immoral and against the law of God to kill unborn babies in the womb. You do not have any right to murder the unborn. There is no such thing as your self-proclaimed 'Women's Reproductive Rights.' There is no such body of rights in the state or federal constitutions. And we don't do designer rights in Idaho."

During the exchange at the forum, Parker and McCann both said, Foreman stood up and yelled after Carter-Goodheart's response.

"I stood up and faced (Foreman) and tried to defuse what was going on," Parker said.

McCann said Carter-Goodheart's description of the incident matched her own recollection.

"Her statement is accurate," McCann told the Tribune. "(Carter-Goodheart) leaned over to me and said, 'Where am I supposed to go?'"

The event continued for about 20 minutes after Foreman left. Carter-Goodheart said she found herself watching the only door, worried he would come back, and the female candidates checked on each other later.

"I really appreciate that about the people who are running, specifically Lori McCann," she said. "She's my elder and I appreciate her and her commitment to our community. We do have a big difference in our values and what we want to do for our communities, but she checked on me and I checked on her, and that was the right thing to do."

More candidate forums are planned in coming weeks, Carter-Goodheart said. Organizers for an upcoming League of Women Voters event emailed Carter-Goodheart on Friday to say police would be there as a precaution, she said, and the Idaho Secretary of State's Office offered guidance about security measures her campaign can pay for.

"We've been told, you know, it's not a bad idea to get security," she said. "And we need to have honest discussions about race and discrimination and the inequalities and disparities that exist not only in Idaho but across the country."

Homeowners hit by Hurricane Helene face the grim task of rebuilding without flood insurance

By SALLY HO Associated Press

A week after Hurricane Helene overwhelmed the Southeastern U.S., homeowners hit the hardest are grappling with how they could possibly pay for the flood damage from one of the deadliest storms to hit the mainland in recent history.

The Category 4 storm that first struck Florida's Gulf Coast on September 26 has dumped trillions of gallons of water across several states, leaving a catastrophic trail of destruction that spans hundreds of miles inland. More than 200 people have died in what is now the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina, according to statistics from the National Hurricane Center.

Western North Carolina and the Asheville area were hit especially hard, with flooding that wiped out buildings, roads, utilities and land in a way that nobody expected, let alone prepared for. Inland areas in

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parts of Georgia and Tennessee were also washed out.

The Oak Forest neighborhood in south Asheville lives up to its name, with trees towering over 1960s era ranch-style houses on large lots. But on Sept. 27, as Helene's remnants swept through western north Carolina, many of those trees came crashing down, sometimes landing on houses.

Julianne Johnson said she was coming upstairs from the basement to help her 5-year-old son pick out clothes that day when her husband began to yell that a giant oak was falling diagonally across the yard. The tree mostly missed the house, but still crumpled part of a metal porch and damaged the roof. Then, Johnson said, her basement flooded.

On Friday, there was a blue tarp being held on the roof with a brick. Sodden carpet that the family torn out lay on the side of the house, waiting to go to the landfill. With no cell phone service or internet access, Johnson said she couldn't file a home insurance claim until four days after the storm.

"It took me a while to make that call," she said. "I don't have an adjuster yet."

Roof and tree damage are likely to be covered by the average home insurance policy. But Johnson, like many homeowners, doesn't have flood insurance and she's not certain how she'll pay for that part of the damage.

Those recovering from the storm may be surprised to learn flood damage is a completely separate thing. Insurance professionals and experts have long warned that home insurance typically does not cover flood damage to the home, even as they espouse that flooding can happen anywhere that rains. That's because flooding isn't just sea water seeping into the land – it's also water from banks, as well as mudflow and torrential rains.

But most private insurance companies don't carry flood insurance, leaving the National Flood Insurance Program run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the primary provider for that coverage for residential homes. Congress created the federal flood insurance program more than 50 years ago when many private insurers stopped offering policies in high-risk areas.

North Carolina has 129,933 such policies in force, according to FEMA's latest data, though most of that protection will likely be concentrated on the coast rather than in the Blue Ridge Mountains area where Helene caused the most damage. Florida, in comparison, has about 1.7 million flood policies in place statewide.

Charlotte Hicks, a flood insurance expert in North Carolina who has led flood risk training and educational outreach for the state's Department of Insurance, said the reality is that many Helene survivors will never be made whole. Without flood insurance, some people may be able to rebuild with the help of charities but most others will be left to fend for themselves.

"There will absolutely be people who will be financially devastated by this event," Hicks said. "It's heart-breaking."

Some may go into foreclosure or bankruptcy. Entire neighborhoods will likely never be rebuilt. There's been water damage across the board, Hicks said, and for some, mudslides have even taken the land upon which their house once stood.

Meanwhile, Helene is turning out to be a fairly manageable disaster for the private home insurance market because those plans generally only serve to cover wind damage from hurricanes.

That's a relief for the industry, which has been under increasing strain from other intensifying climate disasters such as wildfires and tornadoes. Nowhere is the shrinking private market due to climate instability more evident than in Florida, where many companies have already stopped selling policies — leaving the state-backed Citizens Property Insurance Corporation now the largest home insurer in the state.

Mark Friedlander, spokesman for the Insurance Information Institute, an industry group, said Helene is a "very manageable loss event," and estimates insurer losses will range from about \$5 billion to \$8 billion. That's compared to the insured losses from the Category 4 Hurricane Ian in September 2022 that was estimated in excess of \$50 billion.

Friedlander and other experts point out that less than 1% of the inland areas that sustained the most catastrophic flood damage were protected with flood insurance.

"This is very common in inland communities across the country," Friedlander said. "Lack of flood insur-

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ance is a major insurance gap in the U.S., as only about 6% of homeowners carry the coverage, mostly in coastal counties.”

Amy Bach, executive director of the consumer advocacy group United Policyholders, said the images of the flood destruction in North Carolina shook her despite decades of seeing challenging recovery faced by victims of natural disasters.

“This is a pretty serious situation here in terms of people disappointed. They are going to be disappointed in their insurers and they are going to be disappointed in FEMA,” Bach said. “FEMA cannot match the kind of dollars private insurers are supposed to be contributing to the recovery.”

This week, FEMA announced it could meet the immediate needs of Helene but warned it doesn’t have enough funding to make it through the hurricane season, which runs June 1 to Nov. 30 though most hurricanes typically occur in September and October.

Even if a homeowner does have it, FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program only covers up to \$250,000 for single-family homes and \$100,000 for contents.

Bach said that along with homeowners educating themselves about what their policies do and don’t cover, the solution is a national disaster insurance program that does for property insurance what the Affordable Care Act did for health insurance.

After Hurricane Floyd in 1999, the state of North Carolina started requiring insurance agents to take a flood insurance class so they could properly advise their clients of the risk and policies available, Hicks said. The state also requires home insurance policies to clearly disclose that it does not cover flood.

“You can’t stop nature from doing what nature is going to do,” Hicks said. “For us to think it’s never going to be this bad again would be a dangerous assumption. A lot of people underestimate their risk of flooding.”

Trump is returning to the site of Pennsylvania assassination attempt for a rally with Vance and Musk

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

BUTLER, Pa. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump plans to return Saturday to the site where a gunman tried to assassinate him in July, setting aside what are now near-constant worries for his physical safety in order to fulfill a promise — “really an obligation,” he said recently — to the people of Butler, Pennsylvania.

“I’ll probably start off by saying, ‘As I was saying ...’” the Republican presidential nominee has joked, in a bit of black humor about a speech cut short when a bullet struck Trump’s ear and he was whisked off stage — fist aloft — with blood dripping across his face.

Trump’s running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, also will be on hand at the Butler Farm Show grounds, as will billionaire Elon Musk, as the campaign elevates the headline-generating potential of his return with just 30 days to go in their tight campaign against Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

The campaign is predicting tens of thousands of people will attend what is being pitched as a “tribute to the American spirit.” Local hotels, motels and inns are reportedly full and some eager rallygoers were already arriving Friday, according to a local Facebook page.

“President Trump looks forward to returning to Butler, Pennsylvania to honor the victims from that tragic day,” said Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt. “The willingness of Pennsylvanians to join President Trump in his return to Butler represents the strength and resiliency of the American people.”

Trump will use the 5 p.m. Eastern time event to remember Corey Comperatore, a volunteer firefighter struck and killed at the July 13 rally, and to recognize the two other rallygoers injured, David Dutch and James Copenhaver. They and Trump were struck when 20-year-old shooter Thomas Matthew Crooks, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, opened fire from an unsecured rooftop nearby before he was fatally shot by sharpshooters.

How Crooks managed to outmaneuver law enforcement that day and scramble on top of a building within easy shooting distance of the ex-president is among myriad questions that remain unanswered about the worst Secret Service security failure in decades. Another is his motive, which has never been determined.

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Butler County District Attorney Rich Goldinger told WPXI-TV this week that “everyone is doubling down on their efforts to make sure this is done safely and correctly.”

Mike Slupe, the county sheriff, told the station he estimates the Secret Service — which has undergone a painful reckoning over its handling of two attempts on Trump’s life — is deploying “quadruple the assets” it did in July.

Butler County, on the western edge of a coveted presidential swing state, is a Trump stronghold. He won the county — where turnout hovers around an impressive 80% — with about 66% of the vote in both 2016 and 2020. About 57% of Butler County’s 139,000 registered voters are Republicans, compared with about 29% who are Democrats and 14% something else.

Three months later, townspeople are divided over the value of his return. Heidi Priest, a Butler resident who started a Facebook group supporting Harris, said Trump’s last visit fanned political tensions in the city.

“Whenever you see people supporting him and getting excited about him being here, it scares the people who don’t want to see him reelected,” she said.

But Trump needs to drive up voter turnout in conservative strongholds like Butler County, an overwhelmingly white, rural-suburban community, if he wants to win Pennsylvania in November. Harris, too, has targeted her campaign efforts at Pennsylvania, rallying there repeatedly as part of her aggressive outreach in critical swing states.

Israel strikes Lebanon, hitting Beirut suburbs and the north

By MELANIE LIDMAN and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel expanded its bombardment in Lebanon on Saturday, hitting Beirut’s southern suburbs with 12 airstrikes and striking a Palestinian refugee camp deep in northern Lebanon for the first time.

The attack on the Beddawi refugee camp near the northern city of Tripoli killed an official with Hamas’s military wing, along with his wife and two young daughters, the Palestinian militant group said in a statement. Tripoli is much farther north than the majority of Israel’s strikes, which have been concentrated in southern Lebanon and Beirut.

Israel has killed several Hamas officials in Lebanon since the Israel-Hamas war began in October last year, in addition to most of the top leadership of Hezbollah.

At least six people were killed in more than a dozen Israeli airstrikes overnight and into Saturday, according to National News Agency, Lebanon’s official news agency.

The Israeli military said special forces were carrying out targeted ground raids against Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon, destroying missiles, launchpads, watchtowers and weapons storage facilities. The military said troops also dismantled tunnel shafts that Hezbollah used to approach the Israeli border.

Some 1,400 Lebanese, including Hezbollah fighters and civilians, have been killed and some 1.2 million driven from their homes since Israel escalated its strikes in late September aiming to cripple Hezbollah and push it away from the countries’ shared border. On Tuesday, Israel launched what it called a limited ground operation into southern Lebanon. Nine Israeli troops have been killed in close fighting in the area in the past few days, the military said.

Also on Saturday, Palestinian medical officials say Israeli strikes in northern and central Gaza early Saturday have killed at least 9 people, including two children.

One strike hit a group of people in the northern town of Beit Hanoun, killing at least five people, including two children, according to the Health Ministry’s Ambulance and Emergency service.

Another strike hit a house in the northern part of the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing at least four people, the Awda hospital said. The strike also left a number of people wounded, it said.

The Israeli military did not have any immediate comment on the strikes, but it has long accused Hamas of operating from within civilian areas.

The Israeli military warned Palestinians to evacuate along the strategic Netzarim corridor in central Gaza, which was at the heart of obstacles to a ceasefire deal earlier this summer. The military told people in

parts of the Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps to evacuate to Muwasi, an area along Gaza's shore the military has designated a humanitarian zone.

It's unclear how many Palestinians are currently living in the areas ordered evacuated, parts of which were evacuated previously.

Almost 42,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during the nearly year-long war, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths.

Floods inundate Thailand's northern tourist city of Chiang Mai

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Chiang Mai, Thailand's northern city popular with tourists, was inundated by widespread flooding Saturday as its main river overflowed its banks following heavy seasonal rainfall.

Authorities ordered some evacuations and said they were working to pump water out of residential areas and clear obstructions from waterways and drains to help water recede faster.

Dozens of shelters were set up across the city to accommodate residents whose home were flooded. The Chiang Mai city government said the water level of the Ping River, which runs along the eastern edge of the city, was at critically high levels and was rising since Friday.

However, the provincial irrigation office on Saturday forecast that the water level was likely to remain stable and recede to normal in about five days.

Thai media reported that efforts to evacuate elephants and other animals from several sanctuaries and parks on the outskirts of the city were continuing Saturday. About 125 elephants along with other animals were taken to safety from the Elephant Nature Park, from where some escaped on their own to seek higher ground. About 10 animal shelters in the area have been flooded.

Chiang Mai Gov. Nirat Pongsitthavorn said that the latest flooding, the second in six weeks, exceeded expectations.

Thailand's state railway suspended service to Chiang Mai, with trains on the northern line from Bangkok terminating at Lampang, about 1 1/2 hours ride to the south. Chiang Mai International Airport said it was operating as usual on Saturday.

Flooding was reported in 20 Thai provinces on Saturday, mostly in the north. At least 49 people have died and 28 were injured in floods since August, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said.

In the Thai capital Bangkok, the government said Saturday it will let more water flow out of the Chao Phraya Dam in the central province of Chai Nat over the next seven days, as it risks exceeding its capacity. The release of the water may affect residents downstream who live near waterways in Thailand's central region, including Bangkok and surrounding areas.

Harris is heading to North Carolina to survey Helene's aftermath one day after Trump visited

By COLLEEN LONG and AYANNA ALEXANDER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris is heading to North Carolina on Saturday as the state recovers from Hurricane Helene, arriving there one day after a visit by Republican Donald Trump, who is spreading false claims about the federal response to the disaster.

Earlier in the week, Harris was in Georgia, where she helped distribute meals, toured the damage and consoled families hard-hit by the storm. President Joe Biden, too, visited the disaster zone. During stops over two days in the Carolinas, Florida and Georgia, Biden surveyed the damage and met with farmers whose crops have been destroyed.

The two have been vocal and visible about the government's willingness to help, and the administration's efforts so far include covering costs for all of the rescue and recovery efforts across the Southeast for several months as states struggle under the weight of the mass damage.

In a letter late Friday to congressional leaders, Biden wrote that while the Federal Emergency Manage-

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ment Agency's Disaster Relief Fund "has the resources it requires right now to meet immediate needs, the fund does face a shortfall at the end of the year." He also called on lawmakers to act quickly to restore funding to the Small Business Administration's disaster loan program.

More than 200 people have died. It's the worst storm to hit the U.S. mainland since Katrina in 2005, and scientists have warned such storms will only worsen in the face of climate change.

But in this overheated election year, even natural disasters have become deeply politicized as the candidates crisscross the disaster area and in some cases visit the same venues to win over voters in battleground states.

Trump has falsely claimed the Biden administration isn't doing enough to help impacted people in Republican areas and has harshly criticized the response. He has, in Helene's aftermath, espoused falsehoods about climate change, calling it "one of the great scams of all time."

During a stop in Fayetteville, North Carolina on Thursday, Trump renewed his complaints about the federal response and cited "lousy treatment to North Carolina in particular." In fact, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper said this week that more than 50,000 people have registered for FEMA assistance and about \$6 million has been paid out.

Biden has suggested that House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., is withholding money for disaster relief needs.

Harris' visits present an additional political test in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. She's trying to step into a role for which Biden is well known — showing the empathy that Americans expect in times of tragedy — in the closing stretch of her White House campaign.

Until this week, she had not visited the scene of a humanitarian crisis as vice president. That duty was reserved for Biden, who has frequently been called on to survey damage and console victims after tornadoes, wildfires, tropical storms and more.

Harris said this week that she wanted to "personally take a look at the devastation, which is extraordinary." She expressed admiration for how "people are coming together. People are helping perfect strangers."

She said that shows "the vast majority of us have so much more in common than what separates us," an echo of a line she frequently uses on the campaign trail.

"We are here for the long haul," she said.

One year in, war casts a shadow over every aspect of life in Israel

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — At a busy Tel Aviv entertainment district, diners spill into outdoor seating and clink glasses as music fills the air. There's laughter, there's life. But all around the patrons, staring down from lampposts and shop windows, are pictures of hostages held in Gaza, stark reminders that Israel is at war and forever scarred by the deadliest attack in its history.

As Israel's war with Hamas reaches its one-year mark, it can seem on the surface that much of life in the country has returned to normal. But with many still reeling from Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, hostages remaining in captivity and a new front of war with Hezbollah in the north, many Israelis feel depressed, despondent and angry as the war stretches into its second year.

Uncertainty over the future has cast a pall over virtually every part of daily life, even as people try to maintain a sense of normalcy.

"The conversation about the situation is always there," said activist Zeev Engelmayer, whose daily postcard project featuring illustrations of hostages or Israel's new reality has become a fixture at anti-war protests. "Even those who are sitting in coffee shops, they're talking about it, in every single situation I see it. It's impossible to get away from it. It has entered into every vibration of our life."

Rattled Israelis feel hopeless

Hamas' attack in which some 1,200 people were killed and 250 kidnapped shattered Israelis' sense of security and stability in their homeland.

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Many have been rattled by the war's evolution. Nearly 100 hostages remain in Gaza, with less than 70 believed to be alive. Israelis have experienced attacks — missiles from Iran and Hezbollah, explosive drones from Yemen, fatal shootings and stabbings — as the region braces for further escalation.

They've watched as Israel is accused of committing war crimes and genocide in Gaza and becomes increasingly isolated internationally.

"I'm almost 80 — we grew up in this country with a feeling that we have short wars, and we win them quickly," said Israeli historian Tom Segev, who described new feelings of utter hopelessness. "We're not used to a long war."

Israelis have long harbored a sense that their country, born of the Holocaust's ashes and surviving a panoply of regional threats, is a success story, Segev said. They've strived, he added, for a normality akin to that of European and North American people, though their reality for decades has been anything but.

"I think that history is going backward," he said of the past year. "Everything we have achieved on our way to becoming a normal state isn't happening."

Reminders are everywhere. At a Hebrew University graduation in Jerusalem, a large yellow ribbon was placed in front of the stage. A graduate who didn't attend because his brother was killed in Gaza the previous day was honored.

Internal divisions grow

Israel's longstanding internal divisions briefly eased in the aftermath of Hamas' attack, but have only intensified since. Weekly protests calling for a cease-fire deal that would free hostages are attended mostly by secular Jewish Israelis who oppose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government.

According to a September poll by Jerusalem-based think tank Israel Democracy Institute, 61 percent of right-wing Jewish Israelis — Netanyahu's base — support the war continuing.

Occupied with their own trauma, most Israelis paid scant attention to the ongoing destruction in Gaza, even as the Health Ministry there put the Palestinian death toll at more than 41,000. Israeli media have reported little on the devastation. Israelis calling for a cease-fire are driven overwhelmingly by the hostages' plight.

Many Israelis are furious at leaders and the military for not preventing Hamas' attack. Tens of thousands of people are expected at an alternative ceremony marking one year since then, as a statement against the government's official commemoration. The state ceremony is being prerecorded without a live audience, in part because of fears of heckling and disruptions.

"The thing we lost on Oct. 7 — and we haven't gotten it back — is our feeling of security," Muli Segev, executive producer of "Eretz Nehederet," a popular sketch comedy show. "Despite everything, we have been able to create a life here that's pretty open and Western.

"Especially in Tel Aviv, we go about our lives, and we don't think about the fact that our lives are really just pauses between wars and between explosions of violence."

In the war's early months, the show's sketches were gentler, focusing on what united Israeli society, such as the massive civilian volunteer response. Over time, they featured more pointed satire, including a reimagining of negotiations if the hostages were Israeli politicians' children — released in less than two hours.

Parts of life have rebounded — beaches full of people, bustling cafes, concerts and sports back on schedules. But residents also check for the nearest bomb shelter, deal with school cancellations when violence flares up, and avoid domestic travel hubs that are now off-limits. Heartbreaking news arrives regularly, including the deaths of six hostages in August.

"It's a nightmare; we're just getting used to it," said Maya Brandwine, a 33-year-old graphic designer who witnessed the Jaffa shooting that killed seven on Tuesday. "I have so little hope. I'm sure the situation will only get worse."

Dror Rotches, a 47-year-old graphic designer, said from a Tel Aviv coffee shop: "We try to go out when we can, meet friends and try to forget for a few hours. Then we go home and keep slogging through the mud."

Others simply can't return home. More than 60,000 from Israel's northern border with Lebanon are

displaced. Thousands from the southern towns ransacked Oct. 7 are in temporary housing. Tens of thousands of reserve soldiers are serving their second or third tour of duty, straining their families and jobs.

"As the war goes on and on and we can't see the end, there's also a type of very large worry over the future, and, for some, if there is even a future here," Muli Segev said.

At this cafe, life meets war

Cafe Otef seems like any of Tel Aviv's ubiquitous coffee shops: Patrons laugh and sip specialty coffee beside a playground; light rock music plays. But next to the sandwiches and cakes are chocolates made from the recipes of Dvir Karp, who was killed in the Oct. 7 attack, and cheeses from Kibbutz Be'eri, where more than 100 died and 30 were taken hostage. Totes and T-shirts for sale declare "We shall thrive again."

The cafe, named for the region next to the Gaza border, is run by residents of Re'im, one of the kibbutzes struck. It's the second shop in the new chain, each aiming to support people of a southern Israeli town where lives were upended.

"The war still continues for almost a year, and I feel that if we won't live, we will die," said Reut Karp, cafe owner and Dvir's ex-wife. She lives with most of her kibbutz in temporary housing nearby.

The cafe gives her purpose as her community deals with trauma and the uncertainty of returning home. While it's strange to see people flowing through the doors, going about life as normal, she and the staff have found comfort in the routine.

"We must take ourselves out of bed and continue to live and to work and to have the hope," Karp said. "Because without this hope, we don't have anything."

Solar power companies are growing fast in Africa, where 600 million still lack electricity

By KEMO CHAM and JESSICA DONATI Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) — Companies that bring solar power to some of the poorest homes in Central and West Africa are said to be among the fastest growing on a continent whose governments have long struggled to address some of the world's worst infrastructure and the complications of climate change.

The often African-owned companies operate in areas where the vast majority of people live disconnected from the electricity grid, and offer products ranging from solar-powered lamps that allow children to study at night to elaborate home systems that power kitchen appliances and plasma televisions. Prices range from less than \$20 for a solar-powered lamp to thousands of dollars for home appliances and entertainment systems.

Central and West Africa have some of the world's lowest electrification rates. In West Africa, where 220 million people live without power, this is as low as 8%, according to the World Bank. Many rely on expensive kerosene and other fuels that fill homes and businesses with fumes and risk causing fires.

At the last United Nations climate summit, the world agreed on the goal of tripling the capacity for renewable power generation by 2050. While the African continent is responsible for hardly any carbon emissions relative to its size, solar has become one relatively cost-effective way to provide electricity.

The International Energy Agency, in a report earlier this year, said small and medium-sized solar companies are making rapid progress reaching homes but more needs to be invested to reach all African homes and businesses by 2030.

About 600 million Africans lack access to electricity, it said, out of a population of more than 1.3 billion.

Among the companies that made the Financial Times' annual ranking of Africa's fastest growing companies of 2023 was Easy Solar, a locally owned firm that brings solar power to homes and businesses in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The ranking went by compound annual growth rate in revenue.

Co-founder Nthabiseng Mosia grew up in Ghana with frequent power cuts. She became interested in solving energy problems in Africa while at graduate school in the United States. Together with a U.S. classmate, she launched the company in Sierra Leone with electrification rates among the lowest in West Africa.

"There wasn't really anybody doing solar at scale. And so we thought it was a good opportunity," Mosia

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said in an interview.

Since launching in 2016, Easy Solar has brought solar power to over a million people in Sierra Leone and Liberia, which have a combined population of more than 14 million. The company's network includes agents and shops in all of Sierra Leone's 16 districts and seven of nine counties in Liberia.

Many communities have been connected to a stable source of power for the first time. "We really want to go to the last mile deep into the rural areas," Mosia said.

The company began with a pilot project in Songo, a community on the outskirts of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown. Uptake was slow at first, Mosia said. Villagers worried about the cost of solar-powered appliances, but once they began to see light in their neighbors' homes at night, more signed on.

"We have long forgotten about kerosene," said Haroun Patrick Samai, a Songo resident and land surveyor. "Before Easy Solar we lived in constant danger of a fire outbreak from the use of candles and kerosene."

Altech, a solar power company based in Congo, also ranked as one of Africa's fastest growing companies. Fewer than 20% of the population in Congo has access to electricity, according to the World Bank.

Co-founders Washikala Malango and Iongwa Mashangao fled conflict in Congo's South Kivu province as children and grew up in Tanzania. They decided to launch the company in 2013 to help solve the power problems they had experienced growing up in a refugee camp, relying on kerosene for power and competing with family members for light to study at night.

Altech now operates in 23 out of 26 provinces in Congo, and the company expects to reach the remaining ones by the end of the year. Its founders say they have sold over 1 million products in Congo in a range of solar-powered solutions for homes and businesses, including lighting, appliances, home systems and generators.

"For the majority of our customers, this is the first time they are connected to a power source," Malango said.

Repayment rates are over 90%, Malango said, helped in part by a system that can turn off power to appliances remotely if people don't pay.

Alleged plots against US campaign are only the latest examples of Iran targeting adversaries

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran has emerged as a twofold concern for the United States as it nears the end of the presidential campaign.

Prosecutors allege Tehran tried to hack figures associated with the election, stealing information from former President Donald Trump's campaign. And U.S. officials have accused it of plotting to kill Trump and other ex-officials.

For Iran, assassination plots and hacking aren't new strategies.

Iran saw the value and the danger of hacking in the early 2000s, when the Stuxnet virus, believed to have been deployed by Israel and the U.S., tried to damage Iran's nuclear program. Since then, hackers attributed to state-linked operations have targeted the Trump campaign, Iranian expatriates and government officials at home.

Its history of assassinations goes back further. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran killed or abducted perceived enemies living abroad.

A look at Iran's history of targeting opponents:

A history of hacks

For many, Iran's behavior can be traced to the emergence of the Stuxnet computer virus. Released in the 2000s, Stuxnet wormed its way into control units for uranium-enriching centrifuges at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility, causing them to speed up, ultimately destroying themselves.

Iranian scientists initially believed mechanical errors caused the damage. Ultimately though, Iran removed the affected equipment and sought its own way of striking enemies online.

"Iran had an excellent teacher in the emerging art of cyberwarfare," wryly noted a 2020 report from the

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King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia.

That was acknowledged by the National Security Agency in a document leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden in 2015 to The Intercept, which examined a cyberattack that destroyed hard drives at Saudi Arabia's state oil company. Iran has been suspected of carrying out that attack, called Shamoon, in 2012 and again in 2017.

"Iran, having been a victim of a similar cyberattack against its own oil industry in April 2012, has demonstrated a clear ability to learn from the capabilities and actions of others," the document said.

There also were domestic considerations. In 2009, the disputed reelection of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sparked the Green Movement protests. Twitter, one source of news from the demonstrations, found its website defaced by the self-described "Iranian Cyber Army." There's been suspicion that the Revolutionary Guard, a major power base within Iran's theocracy, oversaw the "Cyber Army" and other hackers.

Meanwhile, Iran itself has been hacked repeatedly in embarrassing incidents. They include the mass shutdown of gas stations across Iran, as well as surveillance cameras at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison and even state television broadcasts.

Hacks offer low costs and high rewards

Iranian hacking attacks, given their low cost and high reward, likely will continue as Iran faces a tense international environment surrounding Israel's conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran's enrichment of uranium to near weapons-grade levels and the prospect of Trump becoming president again.

The growth of 3G and 4G mobile internet services in Iran also made it easier for the public — and potential hackers — to access the internet. Iran has over 50 major universities with computer science or information technology programs. At least three of Iran's top schools are thought to be affiliated with Iran's Defense Ministry and the Guard, providing potential hackers for security forces.

Iranian hacking attempts on U.S. targets have included banks and even a small dam near New York City — attacks American prosecutors linked to the Guard.

While Russia is seen as the biggest foreign threat to U.S. elections, officials have been concerned about Iran. Its hacking attempts in the presidential campaign have relied on phishing — sending many misleading emails in hopes that some recipients will inadvertently provide access to sensitive information.

Amin Sabeti, a digital security expert who focuses on Iran, said the tactic works.

"It's scalable, it's cheap and you don't need a skill set because you just put, I don't know, five crazy people who are hard line in an office in Tehran, then send tens of thousands of emails. If they get 10 of them, it's enough," he said.

For Iran, hacks targeting the U.S. offer the prospect of causing chaos, undermining Trump's campaign and obtaining secret information.

"I've lost count of how many attempts have been made on my emails and social media since it's been going on for over a decade," said Holly Dages, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who once had her email briefly hacked by Iran. "The Iranians aren't targeting me because I have useful information swimming in my inbox or direct messages. Rather, they hope to use my name and think tank affiliation to target others and eventually make it up the chain to high-ranking U.S. government officials who would have useful information and intelligence related to Iran."

Iran's killings and abductions abroad

Iran has vowed to exact revenge against Trump and others in his former administration over the 2020 drone strike that killed the prominent Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

In July, authorities said they learned of an Iranian threat against Trump and boosted security. Iran has not been linked to the assassination attempts against Trump in Florida and Pennsylvania. A Pakistani man who spent time in Iran was recently charged by federal prosecutors for allegedly plotting to carry out assassinations in the U.S., including potentially of Trump.

Officials take Iran's threat seriously given its history of targeting adversaries.

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, its leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini signaled how Iran would target

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perceived enemies by saying, "Islam grew with blood."

"The great prophet of Islam, he had the Quran in one hand, and a sword in the other hand — a sword to suppress traitors," Khomeini said.

Even before creating a network of allied militias in the Mideast, Iran is suspected of targeting opponents abroad, beginning with members of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's former government. The attention shifted to perceived opponents of the theocracy, both in the country with the mass executions of 1988 and abroad.

Outside of Iran, the so-called "chain murders" targeted activists, journalists and other critics. One prominent incident linked to Iran was a shooting at a restaurant in Germany that killed three Iranian-Kurdish figures and a translator. In 1997, a German court implicated Iran's top leaders in the shooting, sparking most European Union nations to withdraw their ambassadors.

Iran's targeted killings slowed after that, but didn't stop. U.S. prosecutors link Iran's Revolutionary Guard to a 2011 plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to Washington. Meanwhile, a suspected Israeli campaign of assassinations targeted scientists in Iran's nuclear program.

In 2015, Iran signed a nuclear deal that saw it greatly reduce its enrichment in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. Two years later, Trump was elected pledging to unilaterally withdraw America from the accord. As businesses backed away from Iran, Tehran renewed a campaign of targeting opponents abroad, but this time capturing them and bringing them to Iran for trial.

Belgium arrested an Iranian diplomat, Assadollah Assadi, in 2018 and ultimately convicted him of masterminding a thwarted bomb attack against an exiled Iranian opposition group. Iran also increasingly has turned to criminal gangs for some attempts, such as what U.S. prosecutors have described as plots to kill or kidnap opposition activist Masih Alinejad.

Among those targeted after Soleimani's death was former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton. The U.S. has offered a reward of up to \$20 million for information leading to the capture or conviction of a Revolutionary Guard member it said arranged to kill Bolton for \$300,000.

An FBI agent quoted Guard Gen. Esmail Ghaani as saying in 2022 in a court filing, "Wherever is necessary we take revenge against Americans by the help of people on their side and within their own homes without our presence."

A Texas execution is renewing calls for clemency. It's rarely granted

By NADIA LATHAN and SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas man set to die this month is at the center of another push for clemency in the U.S., this time backed by several GOP lawmakers and bestselling author John Grisham, who say a father's 2002 conviction for killing his infant daughter deserves a second look.

Their pleas to spare Robert Roberson, who is set to die by lethal injection on Oct. 17, comes after Missouri and Oklahoma carried out executions last month over calls to grant two condemned men lesser punishments, underlining how rare clemency remains for death row prisoners.

The cases highlight one of a governor's most extraordinary powers — whether to allow an execution to proceed. In Texas, the state's parole board and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott have yet to weigh in on Roberson, whose defenders say was convicted based on faulty scientific evidence.

In Missouri, the execution of Marcellus Williams on Sept. 24 reignited calls for transparency in the decision-making process after a prosecutor and the victim's family had urged Republican Gov. Mike Parson to reduce the sentence. Parson said multiple courts had not found merit in Williams' innocence claims.

"Capital punishment cases are some of the hardest issues we have to address in the Governor's Office, but when it comes down to it, I follow the law and trust the integrity of our judicial system," Parson said in a statement before Williams' execution.

Clemency is rare

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Clemency is the process that allows a governor, president or independent board to lessen the sentence of a person convicted of a crime. In most states, a state board recommends clemency to the governor before it can be approved.

Clemencies are usually a last push by defendants on death row to have their sentence reduced after all other efforts in the judicial system have failed.

Historically, grants for clemency are rare. Aside from a few mass orders from governors to commute all death sentences in their state, less than two have been granted on average per year since then, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Executions in Oklahoma, Missouri

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt rejected a recommendation from the state's parole board to spare the life of Emmanuel Littlejohn before he was executed. In a 3-2 vote, the board appeared convinced by Littlejohn's attorneys, who questioned if he or a co-defendant were responsible for a 1992 killing of a store owner.

Stitt — who has granted clemency just once out of the five times the board has recommended it during his nearly six years in office — said in a statement that he did not want to overturn a jury's decision to execute Littlejohn "as a law and order governor."

In Missouri, Williams' execution followed public outcry from the victim's family and prosecutor last month in a historic week of five executions in a seven-day span.

It's unclear if Missouri's Parole Board, which makes confidential recommendations to the governor on clemency requests, advocated for Williams' execution. Williams' defense attorneys said those records should be public.

"Transparency is a hallmark of Democracy, and it is woefully missing here," they said in a statement.

Governors are usually balancing a few things when deciding to commute a sentence, including the severity of a crime or if they're remorseful, according to Arizona State University law professor Dale Baich, an attorney who has represented people facing execution.

But Baich also suspects other factors can come into play. "I think it all comes down to politics," Baich said.

Some Texas lawmakers urge pause

Eighty-six state representatives — as well as medical experts, death penalty attorneys, a former detective on the case and Grisham — are supporting Roberson because they believe his conviction was based on faulty scientific evidence.

Roberson was sentenced to death for killing his 2-year-old daughter, Nikki Curtis, in 2002. Prosecutors claimed he violently shook her to death from what's known as shaken baby syndrome. In a letter sent to the board last month, medical professionals claimed that Curtis' injuries aligned with pneumonia and not shaken baby syndrome.

Prosecutors have claimed that the science of shaken baby syndrome has not changed significantly since Roberson's conviction and that the evidence against him still holds.

"We want our justice system to work. And I think Texans deserve to know that if a man is going to be executed, that it is right and he is guilty," state Rep. Lacey Hull, a Republican from Houston who is one of 30 GOP state representatives to support clemency for Roberson, said last week after she and other lawmakers visited Roberson in prison. "And if there's even a shadow of a doubt that he is innocent, we should not be executing him."

Some Republicans view Roberson's case as a parental rights issue about the safeguards that need to be put in place to prevent parents from being falsely accused of child abuse.

Abbott can only grant clemency after receiving a recommendation from the the Texas Board of Pardons and Parole. He has commuted a death sentence only once in nearly a decade as governor.

Middle East latest: An Israeli airstrike cuts a major highway linking Lebanon with Syria

By The Associated Press undefined

An Israeli airstrike has cut off a main highway linking Lebanon with Syria, leaving two huge craters on either side of the road.

The airstrike Friday rendered the road unusable for cars, leaving people to go on foot to the Masnaa Border Crossing where tens of thousands of people fleeing war in Lebanon have crossed into Syria in the past two weeks.

Israel began a ground incursion into Lebanon on Tuesday against the Hezbollah militant group, while continuing strikes in Gaza. The Israeli military said nine soldiers have died in the conflict in southern Lebanon.

Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire across the Lebanon border almost daily since the day after Hamas' cross-border attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which killed 1,200 Israelis and took 250 others hostage. Israel declared war on the Hamas militant group in the Gaza Strip in response. More than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed in the territory, and just over half the dead have been women and children, according to local health officials.

Nearly 2,000 people have been killed in Lebanon since then, most of them since Sept. 23, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

Here is the latest:

South Korea evacuates 97 people from Lebanon

SEOUL, South Korea — A military plane evacuating 97 people from Lebanon was expected to arrive in South Korea on Saturday, the Foreign Ministry said.

The ministry said the group on the plane includes South Korean nationals and their family members. There are about 30 South Koreans left in Lebanon besides diplomats and embassy workers who are staying.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol instructed officials Wednesday to send military aircraft to conflict areas in the Middle East as he called a meeting to discuss the impact of the intensified fighting in the region. There are about 480 South Korean nationals living in Israel and 110 in Iran.

Hospital in southern Lebanon says it was shelled after being warned to evacuate

BEIRUT — A hospital in southern Lebanon said in a statement that it had been shelled by Israeli forces Friday after being warned to evacuate.

The statement from Salah Ghandour Hospital in the town of Bint Jbeil said the shelling "resulted in nine members of the medical and nursing staff being injured, most of them seriously," while most of the medical staff were evacuated.

A day earlier, the World Health Organization says 28 health workers in Lebanon had been killed in the past 24 hours.

Earlier on Friday, the Israel military in a statement alleged that rescue vehicles were being used by Hezbollah to transport militants and weapons.

UN says at least 20 killed in attacks on schools sheltering Palestinians in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS — A U.N. agency reports that three schools where it has been sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza have been attacked in the past two days, killing more than 20 people.

U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Friday that the agency helping Palestinian refugees in Gaza, UNRWA, stresses that "schools are not a target and cannot be used for any military purposes by anyone."

Dujarric says the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, and its humanitarian partners reported this week that at least 87% of school buildings in Gaza have been directly hit or damaged since Israel launched its offensive following Hamas' attacks in southern Israel last Oct. 7.

He says one third of the buildings were UNRWA schools.

Dutch military transport plane evacuates 185 people from Lebanon

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A Dutch military transport plane carrying 185 people out of Lebanon has landed at an airbase in the southern city of Eindhoven, the government announced.

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More than 100 of those on board the Airbus A330 plane were Dutch citizens and the remainder were repatriated at the request of Belgium, Finland and Ireland.

"It's great that these people are safely back in the Netherlands. These have been tense times for them," Christiaan Rebergen, secretary-general of the foreign ministry, said after they landed Friday.

A second Dutch military flight is scheduled for Saturday.

Biden says unclear if Netanyahu is trying to influence the US election

President Joe Biden says he doesn't know whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding up a peace deal in order to influence the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election.

"No administration has helped Israel more than I have," Biden said Friday. "None. None, none. And I think Bibi should remember that. And whether he's trying to influence the election, I don't know but I'm not counting on that."

Biden was responding to comments made by one of his allies, Sen. Chris Murphy, who said this week that he was concerned Netanyahu had little interest in a peace deal in part because of U.S. politics.

The UN releases more funds for humanitarian relief in Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations humanitarian coordinator in Lebanon has released an additional \$2 million from the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund to help address the deteriorating situation. That's according to Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

This comes in addition to \$10 million already released from the Lebanon fund, and an additional \$10 million from the U.N.'s main Central Emergency Response Fund.

Dujarric says a flight carrying medical supplies from the U.N.'s World Health Organization to treat tens of thousands of injured people arrived in Beirut on Friday. Additional flights are expected later Friday and in the coming days.

US military says it hit Houthi targets in Yemen

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military says it hit several Houthi targets in Yemen, going after weapons systems, bases and other equipment belonging to the Iranian-backed rebels.

A U.S. official has told The Associated Press that U.S. aircraft and ships struck Houthi strongholds on Friday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet publicly released.

The exact number of targets was not yet available as the mission was just ending.

According to the Houthi media, seven strikes hit the airport in Hodeida, a major port city, and the Katheib area, which has a Houthi-controlled military base. Four more strikes hit the Seiyana area in Sanaa, the capital, and two strikes hit the Dhamar province.

Associated Press writer Lolita C. Baldor contributed to this report.

Israeli military says 2 soldiers killed by a drone in northern Israel

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military says two soldiers have been killed by a drone strike in northern Israel. It says at least two other soldiers were "severely injured" by the drone strike Friday, and that the drone entered the country from the east. It did not elaborate.

Later Friday, an umbrella group of Iran-backed militias in Iraq calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced it had launched drone strikes on "three targets in three separate operations in the Golan and Tiberias," a city in Israel. The group regularly claims drone strikes targeting Israel, but the strikes have rarely landed.

The military has said that nine soldiers have also been killed in Israel's ground incursion into southern Lebanon, which began this week.

Germany is evacuating 219 more of its nationals from Lebanon

BERLIN — Germany is flying another 219 of its nationals out of Lebanon on its third military flight this week.

The foreign and defense ministries said Friday's flight is being carried out by an Airbus A330 belonging to the Multinational Multirole Tanker Transport Unit, an international air transport fleet.

It brings to 460 the number of German citizens evacuated from Lebanon on German military flights. Two

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previous flights left Beirut on Monday and Wednesday.

The Foreign Ministry posted on the social platform X that the plane also delivered "several" tons of aid for civilians in Lebanon.

Israeli airstrike kills five paramedics in southern Lebanon

BEIRUT — An Israeli airstrike on first responders in south Lebanon has killed five paramedics and two hospitals are ceasing operations due to the intensity of attacks.

The head of the Marjayoun government hospital, Mounes Kalakesh, told The Associated Press that five paramedics were killed and seven were wounded in the drone strike Friday near the hospital.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reports that the staff of the hospital in Marjayoun were evacuated leaving the medical center out of service. A state-run hospital in the border village of Mais al-Jabal has also said it is ceasing activities, after staff were evacuated and because of a lack of fuel, medicine and electricity.

Japan evacuates 18 people from Lebanon

TOKYO — A Japanese Self Defense Force transport aircraft has evacuated 16 people from Lebanon, according to Japan's Foreign Ministry.

The ministry says two other Japanese citizens left Lebanon on a ship to Cyprus chartered by the Japanese government.

It says the flight carried 11 Japanese nationals, a non-Japanese relative of one of them, and four French nationals to Jordan. It has provided no further details.

Dutch military plane lands in Beirut to pick up civilians fleeing Lebanon

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A Dutch military transport plane landed in Beirut early Friday afternoon to pick up citizens of the Netherlands fleeing Lebanon amid fighting between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group.

Scores of people are expected to board the A330 plane in what the Dutch foreign ministry called a repatriation flight.

The defense ministry says that if there were spare seats on the plane, it could also take citizens of other countries out of Beirut.

Meanwhile Japan's foreign ministry announced that 11 Japanese and 4 French nationals were evacuated from Lebanon and arrived in Jordan Friday.

Israel launched a ground incursion into Lebanon on Tuesday and its forces have been clashing with Hezbollah militants in a narrow strip along the border. Israeli jets also have been carrying out airstrikes in Lebanon, including one Friday that cut off a main highway linking Lebanon with Syria.

War in Gaza leaves scores of children under the sole care of grandparents

KHAN YOUNIS, the Gaza Strip — Almost a year of war in Gaza has left thousands of children either orphaned or separated from their parents, leaving their grandparents with the task of raising them on their own.

Amir Ashour, 12, and his sister Fatima Ashour, 10, lost their parents and their 5-year-old brother Gheith when their house in Rafah was struck by the Israeli military in December 2023.

They are now being taken care of by their Atta Ashour, their grandfather from their mother's side.

Sitting inside a tent, Fatima told The Associated Press she misses her parents and brother.

"My mother would comb my hair, dress me, and give me everything, and when I came back from school, she would help with schoolwork," she said.

The war also left four orphans in the care of their 52-year-old grandmother Najah al-Eish, who is concerned that she will not live for long to take care of them.

"No matter how much I care for them and raise them, I might not always stay with them," she said.

UNICEF estimates that 19,000 children are either unaccompanied, separated from family, or orphaned. The U.N. agency doesn't have the exact number of orphans across the enclave.

Iran warns of harsh retaliation if Israel carries out an attack on Iran

BEIRUT — Iran's foreign minister warned Israel on Friday that if it carries out an attack on Iran, Tehran will retaliate in a harsh way.

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Abbas Araghchi was in Beirut for meetings with Lebanese officials. His visit came three days after Iran launched at least 180 missiles into Israel, the latest in a series of rapidly escalating attacks that threaten to push the Middle East closer to a regionwide war.

"If the Israeli entity takes any step or measure against us, our retaliation will be stronger than the previous one," Araghchi said after meeting Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Israel says it struck an underground tunnel between Lebanon and Syria

JERUSALEM — Israel's military said Friday its fighter jets struck an underground tunnel between Lebanon and Syria and areas around a key border crossing used by many in recent days fleeing Israel's offensive.

Thursday's strikes around the Masnaa Border Crossing effectively cut off the main highway linking Lebanon with Syria, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported. Tens of thousands of people fleeing fighting in Lebanon have used crossing into Syria over the past two weeks.

The military said that its fighter jets had struck the 3.5 kilometer-long (2.17 miles) underground tunnel between Lebanon and Syria because Hezbollah has used it to smuggle weapons from Iran and other proxies into the country. It said it struck the sites around the Masnaa border crossing because they were being used as militant infrastructure.

There are half a dozen border crossings between the two countries, most of which are still open.

Hezbollah is believed to have received much of its weapons from Iran via Syria.

UN refugee agency says main Lebanon-Syria border closed to vehicles

GENEVA — The U.N. refugee agency says Israeli airstrikes overnight near the main border crossing where people have been fleeing from Lebanon into Syria has "put a halt on traffic" and closed the route to vehicles.

UNHCR spokesperson Rula Amin said the border crossing between Masnaa, Lebanon, and Jdaidit Yabws in Syria has been the main thoroughfare between the two countries, even though three other border crossings remain open.

Amin, a spokesperson for UNHCR's Middle East and North Africa operations, also noted government figures that up to 1 million people have fled to places across Lebanon, and more than 185,000 have gone to Syria.

Speaking from Amman, Jordan, to reporters in Geneva on Friday, Amin said most of the nearly 900 government-established collective shelters in Lebanon were full, forcing many people to sleep in the open air -- including along Beirut's famed seaside Corniche.

She said 60% of people who have crossed from Lebanon to Syria were children or adolescents, some of whom arrived alone.

Israeli military says it killed Hezbollah communications chief

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Friday that a strike in Beirut the day before killed Mohammed Rashid Skafi, the head of Hezbollah's communications division.

The military said in a statement that Skafi was "a senior Hezbollah terrorist who was responsible for the communications unit since 2000" and was "closely affiliated" with high-up Hezbollah officials.

Hundreds of Americans leave Lebanon on US contract flights

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department says some 350 American citizens, green card holders and family members have now left Lebanon on US-organized contract flights this week.

The department announced the new number — up by about 100 since Thursday — after another flight from Beirut landed early Friday in Frankfurt, Germany. The flight had the capacity to carry 300 passengers but only 97 people were aboard, it said.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Thursday that the U.S. would continue to organize such flights as long as the security situation in Lebanon is dire and as long as there is demand.

More than 6,000 American citizens have contacted the U.S. embassy in Beirut seeking information about departing the country over the past week since the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has escalated. Miller said the department understood that some Americans, many of them dual U.S.-Lebanese nationals and long-time residents of the country, may choose to stay.

Iran's leader praises missile strike on Israel in a speech at Friday prayers

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TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised the country's recent missile strike on Israel, state TV reported Friday.

Khamenei was leading Friday prayers and was to deliver a rare public sermon in the Iranian capital, Tehran, that was being watched for signs of what Iran might plan next.

In a 40-minute speech, he praised Tuesday's missile barrage against Israel as a shining job by Iranian armed forces. "It will be done in the future again if it becomes necessary," he said.

There was a commemoration ceremony for the late Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah beforehand. Most high-ranking Iranian officials, including President Masoud Pezeshkian and the Revolutionary Guard's top generals, attended the ceremony.

Iran is Hezbollah's main backer and has sent weapons and billions of dollars to the group over the years.

Also on Friday, Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Beirut, where he was expected to discuss the ongoing war between Israel and Hezbollah with Lebanese officials. Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Iran sent its first shipment of aid to Lebanon, including 10 tons of food and medicine.

Japan prepares to evacuate citizens from Lebanon, urging nationals in Iran to leave, too

TOKYO — As Japan prepared to evacuate its citizens from Lebanon, the government also urged those in Iran to leave as soon as possible, while commercial flights are still operating.

Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya told reporters Friday that Japan's embassy in Iran renewed its safety advisory to Japanese nationals this week after Iran fired missiles into Israel.

On Thursday, the Japanese Defense Ministry dispatched two C-2 transport aircraft to Jordan to stand by for an evacuation of about 50 Japanese nationals from Lebanon. Iwaya said the government has not decided whether to also dispatch defense aircraft to Iran, where about 440 Japanese citizens are based, but "we will do our utmost so that we can respond to any contingency in order to protect the safety of Japanese citizens."

Iran's foreign minister is in Beirut to meet with Lebanese officials

BEIRUT — Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Beirut where he will discuss with Lebanese officials the ongoing war between Israel and Hezbollah.

Iran is the main backer of Hezbollah and has sent weapons and billions of dollars to the group over the years.

The Iranian official arrived in Lebanon as Israel launched new airstrikes on different parts of Lebanon, including Beirut's southern suburb, south Lebanon, and the eastern Bekaa Valley.

Araghchi's visit to Beirut came after Iran launched at least 180 missiles Tuesday into Israel, part of a series of rapidly escalating attacks that threaten to push the Middle East closer to a regionwide war.

Israeli strike cuts a main highway linking Lebanon with Syria

BEIRUT — Lebanon's state-run National News Agency says an Israeli airstrike has cut a main highway linking Lebanon with Syria.

The agency gave no further details about Friday's airstrike that led to the closure of a road near the Masnaa Border Crossing, from where tens of thousands of people fleeing war in Lebanon have crossed into Syria over the past two weeks. It's the first time this major border crossing has been cut off since the beginning of the war.

Lebanese General Security recorded more than 250,000 Syrian citizens and over 80,000 Lebanese citizens crossing into Syrian territory during the last week of September, after Israel launched a heavy bombardment of southern and eastern Lebanon.

Dama Post, a pro-government Syrian media outlet, said Israeli warplanes fired two missiles and damaged the road between Masnaa Border Crossing in Lebanon and the Syrian crossing point of Jdeidet Yabus.

There are half a dozen border crossings between the two countries and most of them remain open. Lebanon's minister of public works said all border crossings between Lebanon and Syria work under the supervision of the state.

Hezbollah is believed to have received much of its weapons from Iran via Syria. The Lebanese group has a presence on both sides of the border where it fights alongside Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces.

Australia's prime minister condemns comments by Iranian ambassador praising Hezbollah's slain leader
SYDNEY — Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Friday condemned the Iranian ambassador's comments praising a recently slain Hezbollah leader, but rejected opposition advice to expel the envoy.

Ambassador Ahmad Sadeghi described Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed by an Israeli missile strike in September in Lebanon, as a "remarkable leader" on social media.

"The government condemns any support for terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah. We condemn the ambassador's comments," Albanese told reporters in Sydney.

"Australia has maintained a relationship with Iran since 1968 that has been continuous. Not because we agree with the regime, but because it's in Australia's national interest," Albanese added.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton, who could become prime minister at elections due by May, called for Sadeghi to be expelled over his post. Dutton described Sadeghi's words as "completely and utterly at odds with what is in our country's best interests."

Sadeghi did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Australia officially rebuked Sadeghi in August for endorsing Hamas spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin's hope that "wiping out the Zionist plague out of the holy lands of Palestine happens no later than 2027."

Idaho state senator tells Native American candidate 'go back where you came from' in forum

KENDRICK, Idaho (AP) — Tensions rose during a bipartisan forum this week after an audience question about discrimination reportedly led an Idaho state senator to angrily tell a Native American candidate to "go back where you came from."

Republican Sen. Dan Foreman left the event early after the outburst and later denied making any racist comments in a Facebook post. He did not respond to a voice message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Trish Carter-Goodheart, a Democratic candidate for the House District 6 seat and member of the Nez Perce Tribe, said the blowup left her shaken and thinking about security needs for future public events. It also forced some tough conversations with her two young children, Avery and Lavender, who were in attendance.

"Having conversations about racism with an 8-year-old and a 5-year-old is not something me and my husband Dane were prepared for," Carter-Goodheart said Friday. "They've never seen a grown adult man have a meltdown like that. They were scared. I was scared."

The event was held by Democratic and Republican precinct committee members from the small north-Idaho town of Kendrick on Monday night, The Lewiston Tribune reported. It was for House and Senate candidates from the local district, including Foreman; his Democratic opponent, Julia Parker; Republican Rep. Lori McCann; and her Democratic opponent, Carter-Goodheart.

About an hour into the event, someone asked a question about a state bill addressing discrimination. The candidates were each given two minutes to answer, and when it was Carter-Goodheart's turn, she pushed back on earlier comments that suggested discrimination is not a major issue in Idaho.

She said state hate crime laws are weak, and noted that the neo-Nazi group Aryan Nations made northern Idaho its home base for many years. She also talked about being the only candidate there who was a person of color.

"I pointed out that just because someone hasn't personally experienced discrimination doesn't mean it's not happening," she said. "I was making my statement, and then he shot up out of his seat and said, 'I'm so sick of your liberal (expletive). Why don't you go back to where you came from?'"

The Nez Perce Tribe has lived on the Columbia River Plateau in the Pacific Northwest for more than 11,500 years, including the area where Kendrick is located. The northern edge of its reservation, while only a small fraction of the tribe's historical territory, is less than 10 miles (16 kilometers) from the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall where the forum was held.

"It was like slow motion," Carter-Goodheart said. "I just remember thinking, 'Go back to where you came

from? That's within miles of where this forum is taking place. We have literal plots of land that are being leased out to family farms nearby."

In his Facebook post, Foreman called the incident a "quintessential display of race-baiting" and said the Democratic attendees made personal attacks and "proclaimed Idaho to be a racist state."

"Well, here is a news flash for the lefties out there. There is no systemic racism in America or Idaho," Foreman said. "Idaho is a great state — the best in the Union!"

He then added an attack on supporters of abortion rights, saying: "And furthermore, it is immoral and against the law of God to kill unborn babies in the womb. You do not have any right to murder the unborn. There is no such thing as your self-proclaimed 'Women's Reproductive Rights.' There is no such body of rights in the state or federal constitutions. And we don't do designer rights in Idaho."

During the exchange at the forum, Parker and McCann both said, Foreman stood up and yelled after Carter-Goodheart's response.

"I stood up and faced (Foreman) and tried to defuse what was going on," Parker said.

McCann said Carter-Goodheart's description of the incident matched her own recollection.

"Her statement is accurate," McCann told the Tribune. "(Carter-Goodheart) leaned over to me and said, 'Where am I supposed to go?'"

The event continued for about 20 minutes after Foreman left. Carter-Goodheart said she found herself watching the only door, worried he would come back, and the female candidates checked on each other later.

"I really appreciate that about the people who are running, specifically Lori McCann," she said. "She's my elder and I appreciate her and her commitment to our community. We do have a big difference in our values and what we want to do for our communities, but she checked on me and I checked on her, and that was the right thing to do."

More candidate forums are planned in coming weeks, Carter-Goodheart said. Organizers for an upcoming League of Women Voters event emailed Carter-Goodheart on Friday to say police would be there as a precaution, she said, and the Idaho Secretary of State's Office offered guidance about security measures her campaign can pay for.

"We've been told, you know, it's not a bad idea to get security," she said. "And we need to have honest discussions about race and discrimination and the inequalities and disparities that exist not only in Idaho but across the country."

A week after Helene hit, thousands still without water struggle to find enough

By MICHAEL PHILLIS, JEFF AMY and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Nearly a week after Hurricane Helene brought devastation to western North Carolina, a shiny stainless steel tanker truck in downtown Asheville attracted residents carrying 5-gallon containers, milk jugs and buckets to fill with what has become a desperately scarce resource — drinking water.

Flooding tore through the city's water system, destroying so much infrastructure that officials said repairs could take weeks. To make do, Anna Ramsey arrived Wednesday with her two children, who each left carrying plastic bags filled with 2 gallons (7.6 liters) of water.

"We have no water. We have no power. But I think it's also been humbling," Ramsey said.

Helene's path through the Southeast left a trail of power outages so large the darkness was visible from space. Tens of trillions of gallons of rain fell and more than 200 people were killed, making Helene the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina in 2005. Hundreds of people are still unaccounted for, and search crews must trudge through knee-deep debris to learn whether residents are safe.

It also damaged water utilities so severely and over such a wide inland area that one federal official said the toll "could be considered unprecedented." As of Thursday, about 136,000 people in the Southeast were served by a nonoperational water provider and more than 1.8 million were living under a boil water

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advisory, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Western North Carolina was especially hard hit. Officials are facing a difficult rebuilding task made harder by the steep, narrow valleys of the Blue Ridge Mountains that during a more typical October would attract throngs of fall tourists.

"The challenges of the geography are just fewer roads, fewer access points, fewer areas of flat ground to stage resources" said Brian Smith, acting deputy division director for the EPA's water division in the Southeast.

After days without water, people long for more than just a sponge bath.

"I would love a shower," said Sue Riles in Asheville. "Running water would be incredible."

The raging floodwaters of Helene destroyed crucial parts of Asheville's water system, scouring out the pipes that convey water from a reservoir in the mountains above town that is the largest of three water supplies for the system. To reach a second reservoir that was knocked offline, a road had to be rebuilt.

Boosted output from the third source restored water flow in some southern Asheville neighborhoods Friday, but without full repairs schools may not be able to resume in-person classes, hospitals may not restore normal operations, and the city's hotels and restaurants may not fully reopen.

Even water that's unfit to drink is scarce. Drew Reisinger, the elected Buncombe County register of deeds, worries about people in apartments who can't easily haul a bucket of water from a creek to flush their toilet. Officials are advising people to collect nondrinkable water for household needs from a local swimming pool.

"One thing no one is talking about is the amount of poop that exists in every toilet in Asheville," he said. "We're dealing with a public health emergency."

It's a situation that becomes more dangerous the longer it lasts. Even in communities fortunate enough to have running water, hundreds of providers have issued boil water notices indicating the water could be contaminated. But boiling water for cooking and drinking is time consuming and small mistakes can cause stomach illness, according to Natalie Exum, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"Every day that goes by, you could be exposed to a pathogen," Exum said. "These basic services that we take for granted in our everyday lives actually do do a lot to prevent illness."

Travis Edwards' faucet worked immediately after the storm. He filled as many containers as he could for himself and his child, but it didn't take long for the flow to weaken, then stop. They rationed water, switching to hand sanitizer and barely putting any on toothbrushes.

"(We) didn't realize how dehydrated we were getting," he said.

Federal officials have shipped millions of gallons of water to areas where people also might not be able to make phone calls or switch on the lights.

Power has been restored to about 62% of homes and businesses and 8,000 crews are out working to restore power in the hardest hit parts of North Carolina, federal officials said Thursday. In 10 counties, about half of the cell sites are still down.

The first step for some utilities is simply figuring out how bad the damage is, a job that might require EPA expertise in extreme cases. Ruptured water pipes are a huge problem. They often run beneath roads, many of which were crumpled and twisted by floodwaters.

"Pretty much anytime you see a major road damaged, there's a very good chance that there's a pipe in there that's also gotten damaged," said Mark White, drinking water global practice leader at the engineering firm CDM Smith.

Generally, repairs start at the treatment plant and move outward, with fixes in nearby big pipes done first, according to the EPA.

"Over time, you'll gradually get water to more and more people," White said.

Many people are still missing, and water repair employees don't typically work around search and rescue operations. It takes a toll, according to Kevin Morley, manager of federal relations with the American Water Works Association.

"There's emotional support that is really important for all the people involved. You're seeing people's

lives just wiped out," he said.

Even private well owners aren't immune. Pumps on private wells may have lost power and overtopping floodwaters can contaminate them.

There's often a "blind faith" assumption that drinking water won't fail. In this case, the technology was insufficient, according to Craig Colten. Before retiring to Asheville, he was a professor in Louisiana focused on resilience to extreme weather. He hopes Helene will prompt politicians to spend more to ensure infrastructure withstands destructive storms.

And climate change will only make the problem more severe, said Erik Olson, a health and food expert at the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council.

"I think states and the federal government really need to step back and start looking at how we're going to prepare for these extreme weather events that are going to be occurring and recurring every single year," he said.

Edwards has developed a system to save water. He'll soap dirty dishes and rinse them with a trickle of water with bleach, which is caught and transferred to a bucket — useable for the toilet.

Power and some cell service have returned for him. And water distribution sites have guaranteed some measure of normalcy: Edwards feels like he can start going out to see friends again.

"To not feel guilty about using more than a cup of water to, like, wash yourself ... I'm really, really grateful," he said.

Trump and Georgia Gov. Kemp use hurricane recovery to make first 2024 appearance together

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

EVANS, Ga. (AP) — After making up privately, Donald Trump and Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp used the aftermath of Hurricane Helene to put their détente on public display, with the former president praising a fellow Republican he blistered just months ago and promising to treat the state well if he returns to the White House.

Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, and Kemp, a popular second-term governor, appeared outside Augusta to tout recovery efforts after Helene made landfall in Florida and wrought widespread damage as it moved inland through Georgia and other states.

"I want to thank President Trump for coming back to our state a second time ... and keeping the national focus on our state as we recover," Kemp said, speaking as Trump stood silently over his right shoulder, both of them surrounded by water, paper products, diapers and other relief supplies.

The appearance in the town of Evans involved none of the vitriol that has defined the two Republicans' relationship since November 2020, when Trump insisted falsely that he defeated Democrat Joe Biden and chided Kemp for refusing to help him overturn the result.

Kemp and Trump met privately before addressing reporters. Trump was accompanied on the trip by his top campaign advisers, Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita, and his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, who is his handpicked Republican National Committee co-chair.

Once in front of cameras, Trump said Kemp is doing a "fantastic job," and he extolled the storm response in Georgia. The former president seemingly contradicted his praise, however, by later repeating his false assertions that Biden's administration has been flat-footed and left affected states to suffer.

Earlier this week in Valdosta, Trump even claimed that Biden had not spoken to Kemp at all. In a separate appearance, Kemp confirmed that Biden called him personally and offered whatever assistance Georgia might need.

"I missed him and called him right back and he just said 'Hey, what do you need?' And I told him, you know, we've got what we need, we'll work through the federal process," Kemp said of Biden. "He offered if there are other things we need just to call him directly, which I appreciate that."

In Evans on Friday, Kemp did not take questions from reporters, ensuring he would not have to contradict Trump while standing beside him. The governor left the pavilion where they spoke by the time Trump

began taking questions and repeating his criticisms of Biden.

Kemp did, during his remarks, note that the federal government has approved all of his recommended disaster declarations for Georgia counties — the legal step required for federal reimbursement to cover the storm response. Kemp said he expected more counties will be added to the list.

After Trump departed, National Guard service members were seen dismantling the display of supplies that served as the backdrop for the governor and former president.

As recently as August, Trump used social media posts and an Atlanta rally to accuse Kemp of “fighting Unity and the Republican Party” and criticizing Georgia first lady Marty Kemp for saying she planned to write in her husband’s name on her presidential ballot. Kemp had been saying for months that he would support “the Republican ticket,” but without naming Trump specifically.

That spectacle raised concerns among Republicans in Georgia and nationally that GOP dissension would lead to a repeat of 2020, when Biden won the state by fewer than 12,000 votes out of 5 million cast.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham and Trump’s running mate JD Vance helped negotiate a detente, with Kemp finally stating in a cable news interview that he supported Trump’s comeback bid and Trump, in turn, praising the governor on social media. Not long after, Vance and Kemp spoke at a Faith & Freedom Coalition gala in Georgia and met privately backstage.

During his speech at the dinner, Kemp did explicitly call for returning Trump to the White House. But he still spent most of his argument criticizing Democratic nominee and Vice President Kamala Harris rather than extolling Trump.

Marty Kemp, meanwhile, did not appear Friday with her husband and the former president.

California vineyard owner says he was fined \$120K for providing free housing to his employee

By The Associated Press undefined

Saratoga, Calif. (AP) — A California vineyard owner is suing Santa Clara County after officials fined him for allowing his longtime employee to live in an RV on his property for years.

Michael Ballard, whose family owns Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards in a town south of San Francisco, alleges he was fined a total of more than \$120,000 after the county said he violated local zoning laws that ban anyone from living in an RV on public or private property, according to the The Mercury News.

Marcelino Martinez, manager of the vineyard, which is around 2.6 million square feet (243,000 square meters), said his family lost their lease on a trailer they were living in years ago and had limited options for affordable housing in the area. The Ballard family agreed to allow them to live in an RV at the vineyards. Martinez, his wife and children have lived there for free since, 2013, according to The Mercury News.

“I couldn’t make a family homeless for arbitrary reasons,” Ballard told the newspaper. “The human impact exceeded any damage or nuisance that their continued living in the trailer was going to create.”

But in July 2019, the county began fining the Ballards \$1,000 daily for the RV, then lowered the penalty to \$250 a day, the vineyard owner said.

The county disputed that it fined Ballard \$120,000 and said he refused to agree to deadlines to reduce the violations, according to the newspaper. Officials have made multiple offers to drastically cut fines if he removes the RV, they said.

The county was imposing “excessive fines” and violating the U.S. Constitution with its actions against Ballard, his attorney Paul Avelar told The Mercury News.

Ballard doesn’t agree with the county spending so much time penalizing him when it is facing greater issues.

“Just drive anywhere in the county, there are mobile homes parked all over the place. There are encampments everywhere you go,” he told the newspaper. “The problem is obvious and overt, yet they’re choosing to prosecute us in probably the least intrusive example of this, where we are letting someone live on private property in a private location and we’re not bothering anyone.”

In Michigan, Harris doesn't get hoped-for firefighters endorsement amid shifting labor loyalties

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press
REDFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — It was the perfect place to welcome the endorsement of the firefighters union — a gleaming new firehouse in a blue-collar town just outside of Detroit in the key battleground state of Michigan.

But by the time Kamala Harris showed up in Redford Township on Friday, there was no endorsement waiting for her.

By a slim margin, the International Association of Firefighters declined to back any candidate, a reminder of the Democratic nominee's struggle to lock down the same support from organized labor that President Joe Biden won four years ago. The Teamsters also balked at an endorsement last month.

Harris is still gaining more endorsements than she's losing. National teachers unions, building trade unions, the AFL-CIO and the United Auto Workers backed the vice president shortly after Biden ended his run for a second term. And the leader of the Michigan firefighters union, Matthew Sahr, showed up for Harris in Redford Township — although not to bestow the endorsement.

"We could have chosen to stay away. But what kind of message would that send?" Sahr said.

A spokesman for the union declined Friday to comment beyond a previously released statement that said there would be no endorsement for Harris or her opponent, former President Donald Trump.

"The vice president is proud to have the support of organized labor, including firefighters across key battlegrounds like those who joined her in Michigan Friday," said Harris campaign spokesman Brian Fallon. "She is the only candidate in this race who always stands with workers and has fought to protect overtime pay, worker pensions, and the right to organize."

What unfolded nonetheless reflects the shifting loyalties in American politics as Harris vies with Trump for support among working-class voters who for years could be more solidly counted on to support Democrats.

Still, Harris didn't mince words when she spoke at the firehouse, saying Trump "has been a union-buster his entire career" and would launch a "full-on attack" against organized labor.

Harris said Trump supports "right-to-work" laws that often make it more difficult to unionize, and said he had weakened federal employees' unions. While he was president, Trump used a series of 2018 executive orders designed to reduce those unions' powers to collectively bargain.

He has expressed support for right-to-work since his initial run for president in 2016 — while also making comments more generally supportive of labor rights when speaking to union audiences since then.

Harris also accused the former president of "making the same empty promises to the people of Michigan that he did before, hoping you will forget how he let you down."

Her remarks followed U.S. dockworkers suspending their strike in hopes of reaching a new contract, sparing the country a damaging episode of labor unrest that could have rattled the economy. A tentative agreement that has been hailed by Harris was reached to raise salaries, although other issues still need to be resolved.

The vice president later addressed an evening rally in Flint. She spoke after basketball legend Magic Johnson, who said "nobody is going to outwork her," and UAW President Shawn Fain, who described Trump as "a scab."

Harris said that, unlike what Trump says about the Biden administration's rules on electric vehicles, "I will never tell you what kind of car you have to drive."

"But here's what I will do, I will invest in communities like Flint," she said.

Harris also criticized Trump and his running mate, JD Vance, after Vance, while campaigning in Michigan on Wednesday, refused to commit to continue federal support going to a GM plant in Lansing, Michigan's state capital.

"Donald Trump's running mate suggested that if Trump wins, he might let the Grand River Assembly Plant in Lansing close down," Harris said as the crowd booed.

She said that, by contrast, the Biden administration had fought to keep the plant open, adding, "Michi-

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gan, we, together, fought hard for those jobs and you deserve a president who won't put them at risk." Questions remain, though, about whether Harris can cement backing from most rank-and-file union members.

Justin Pomerville, the business manager at UA Local 85 in Michigan, said 70% of his members' work hours are tied to the CHIPS and Science Act, which the Biden administration championed and pumped billions of dollars into semiconductor manufacturing.

The workers lay complex networks of pipes that carry exhaust, water and chemicals through high-tech facilities. However, Pomerville said some members aren't aware of the connection between their jobs and the legislation.

"Unless someone tells them they're working because of that, they don't know," he said.

The Democrats, meanwhile, have increased their support among white-collar professionals while Republicans try to make inroads among voters who didn't attend college.

During a rally in Saginaw, Michigan, on Thursday, Trump said Republicans are now "the party of the American worker," glossing over his anti-union record as president.

The former president also made a trip to Flint last month in an event billed as focusing on the auto industry, a pillar of the battleground state. The two candidates have been in the same cities — and in some cases the exact same venues — within days or weeks of each other.

Trump spent Friday in Georgia with Gov. Brian Kemp, the latest sign that he's patched up his rocky relationship with the top Republican in a key battleground state. The former president and the governor appeared in Evans, Georgia, standing before pallets of goods including bottled water, diapers and paper towels.

"I have no doubt that whatever can be done is going to be done," Trump said. "It's a lot of effort. It's a very heartbreaking situation."

Later Friday, he held a town hall in Fayetteville in another storm-ravaged state, North Carolina. Speaking to an audience comprised largely of people with military connections, he pledged to change the name of nearby Fort Liberty back to its prior name, Fort Bragg. The base, one of the U.S. military's largest, was rechristened in 2022 in a push to rename military installations named for Confederate service members.

Trump repeated his promise to fire "woke generals," blasted the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan and said he'd make it easier for veterans to seek medical care outside the Veterans Administration health care system.

One man, introduced as a Vietnam War veteran named Dwight, gave Trump the Purple Heart he was awarded for injuries sustained while serving. He referenced the bullet that grazed Trump's ear during a rally in Pennsylvania and Trump's response.

"I couldn't think of anybody more deserving to have a Purple Heart," Dwight said to Trump. "You took it, you laid down there, you got back up and the first words out of your mouth were 'fight, fight, fight.' You didn't even have anything to shoot back at him."

Trump got a series of deferments to avoid the draft during the Vietnam War, including one obtained with a physician's letter saying he had bone spurs in his feet. In the 1990s, he said trying to avoid sexually transmitted infections was "my personal Vietnam."

When will the power return? Weary Carolinas residents long for relief after Helene's fury

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — The weary and worn residents of Julianne Johnson's neighborhood in Asheville have been getting by without electricity since Hurricane Helene tore through the Southeast last week and upended their lives. They've been cooking on propane stoves and using dry erase boards to keep up with local happenings while wondering when the lights would come back on.

Johnson, who has a 5-year-old son and works for a land conservation group, received a text from Duke Energy promising her power would be restored by Friday night. But as of midday, utility poles and wires

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were still draped at odd angles across the streets, pulled down by mangled trees.

"I have no idea what's next," said Johnson, whose family does have some power thanks to a generator. "Just the breadth of this over the whole region, it's kind of amazing."

She and her neighbors have been taking care of each other since Helene came ashore Sept. 26 as a Category 4 hurricane and carved a path of destruction as it moved northward from Florida, killing at least 220 people in six states, including at least 72 in Buncombe County, which includes Asheville. Block captains set out whiteboards with information about who can provide first aid and where to get tools repaired.

Nearly 700,000 homes and businesses — mostly in the Carolinas and Georgia — were still without electricity Friday, according to poweroutage.us. That's an improvement over the more than 2 million customers without power five days ago, and Duke Energy, the dominant provider in North Carolina, said it hoped to have the lights back on by Sunday night for many of its affected customers. But for roughly 100,000 customers in places with catastrophic damage, it could be next week or longer, according to company spokesperson Bill Norton.

"We're talking about places where the homes no longer exist," Norton said, adding that some roads where utility poles once stood have been completely washed away.

The company said it would miss its Friday goal of restoring power to almost all of its customers in South Carolina, and it was now shooting for Sunday. Dominion Energy also said it would take longer than initially expected to restore power to the hardest hit counties in the state.

Utility work is slow going

Along Swannanoa River Road on Asheville's east side, Duke Energy and its contractors spread out Friday afternoon to set about 20 new electricity poles in an area where floodwaters snapped or swept away many of the old ones.

David Martin, who has done engineering work for Duke for three decades in the area, said the damage is far worse than anything he has seen before.

"Repairing, most of your facility is there, it's just putting wire back up, normally," Martin said. "In this case we've got to start all new — new poles, new wires, new transformers, new services, everything. It's all been washed out."

Just digging the hole and placing one pole can take up to two hours, Martin said. And that doesn't count the time needed to attach equipment or string the lines. The company can't use a drill-like boring machine to dig many of the holes along the road because of underground utilities.

"A lot of them, you have to hand-dig the holes because there are gas lines," Martin said.

While there were a few pre-storm poles that workers were trying to save, much of the infrastructure was totally gone. Some of Duke's lines were washed into the middle of a fairway on the city golf course, tangled up with utility poles and trees.

And like in many places in western North Carolina, someone must first rebuild the washed-out road before the utility can finish restoring the line.

Dreaming of a hot shower

The storm damaged water utilities so severely and over such a wide area that one federal official said it "could be considered unprecedented." Repairs could take weeks.

The lack of clean running water just added to Asheville's woes.

"I would love a shower," said Sue Riles, who lives in the tourist-friendly city known for its art galleries, shops and breweries. "Running water would be incredible."

Even water that's unfit to drink is scarce. Some people have been hauling buckets from a creek to flush their toilets. Officials also are advising people to collect nondrinkable water for household needs from a local swimming pool.

Without full repairs to the water systems, schools might not be able to resume in-person classes, hospitals might not restore normal operations and hotels and restaurants might not fully reopen.

Lives lost across the Southeast

In Florida, a dozen people died in the Tampa area, with the worst damage on the narrow, 20-mile (32-kilometer) string of barrier islands that stretch from St. Petersburg to Clearwater.

"The water, it just came so fast," said Dave Behringer, who rode out the storm in his home after telling his wife to flee. "Even if you wanted to leave, there was no getting out."

Among the dead was Aiden Bowles, a retired restaurant owner who didn't want to leave his Indian Rocks Beach home on a barrier island north of St. Petersburg. Caregiver Amanda Normand begged the 71-year-old widower to stay with her inland.

"He said, 'It's going to be fine. I'm going to go to bed,'" Normand said of their final phone call the night of Sept. 26.

In North Carolina, exhausted rescue crews and volunteers continued to navigate past washed out roads, downed power lines and mudslides to reach the isolated and the missing. In Buncombe County, officials said Friday, about 75 active missing persons cases remained.

"We know these are hard times, but please know we're coming," Buncombe Sheriff Quentin Miller said. "We're coming to get you. We're coming to pick up our people."

Judge denies an order sought by a Black student who was punished over his hair

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal judge on Friday denied a request by a Black high school student in Texas for a court order that the student's lawyers say would have allowed him to return to his high school without fear of having his previous punishment over his hairstyle resume.

Darryl George had sought to reenroll at his Houston-area high school in the Barbers Hill school district after leaving at the start of his senior year in August because district officials were set to continue punishing him for not cutting his hair. George had spent nearly all of his junior year serving in-school suspension over his hairstyle.

The district has argued that George's long hair, which he wears to school in tied and twisted locs on top of his head, violates its policy because if let down, it would fall below his shirt collar, eyebrows or earlobes.

George, 19, had asked U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Brown in Galveston to issue a temporary restraining order that would have prevented district officials from further punishing him if he returned and while a federal lawsuit he filed proceeds.

But in a ruling issued late Friday afternoon, Brown denied George's request, saying the student and his lawyers had waited too long to ask for the order.

George's request had come after Brown in August dismissed most of the claims the student and his mother had filed in their federal lawsuit alleging school district officials committed racial and gender discrimination when they punished him.

The judge only let the gender discrimination claim stand.

In his ruling, Brown said he also denied George's request for a temporary restraining order because the school district was more likely to prevail in the lawsuit's remaining claim.

Brown's ruling was coincidentally issued on George's birthday. He turned 19 years old on Friday.

Allie Booker, an attorney for George, and a spokesperson for the Barbers Hill school district did not immediately return a call or email seeking comment.

George's lawyer had said the student left Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu and transferred to another high school in a different Houston area district after suffering a nervous breakdown over the thought of facing another year of punishment.

In court documents filed this week, attorneys for the school district said George didn't have legal standing to request the restraining order because he is no longer a student in the district.

The district has defended its dress code, which says its policies for students are meant to "teach grooming and hygiene, instill discipline, prevent disruption, avoid safety hazards and teach respect for authority."

George's federal lawsuit also alleged that his punishment violates the CROWN Act, a recent state law prohibiting race-based discrimination of hair. The CROWN Act, which was being discussed before the dispute over George's hair and which took effect in September 2023, bars employers and schools from penalizing

people because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including Afros, braids, locs, twists or Bantu knots. In February, a state judge ruled in a lawsuit filed by the school district that its punishment does not violate the CROWN Act.

Israeli airstrikes rock southern suburbs of Beirut and cut off a key crossing into Syria

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israel carried out another series of punishing airstrikes Friday, hitting suburban Beirut and cutting off the main border crossing between Lebanon and Syria for tens of thousands of people fleeing the Israeli bombardment of the Hezbollah militant group.

The overnight blasts in Beirut's southern suburbs sent huge plumes of smoke and flames into the night sky and shook buildings kilometers (miles) away in the Lebanese capital. Additional strikes sent people running for cover in streets littered with rubble in the Dahiyeh neighborhood, where at least one building was leveled and cars were burned out.

The Israeli military said it targeted Hezbollah's central intelligence headquarters around midnight. It did not say who it was aiming for or if any militants were killed in that strike, but it claimed to have killed 100 Hezbollah fighters in the last 24 hours.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported more than 10 consecutive airstrikes in the area. Some 1,400 Lebanese, including Hezbollah fighters and civilians, have been killed and some 1.2 million driven from their homes since Israel escalated its strikes in late September aiming to cripple Hezbollah and push it away from the countries' shared border.

And a hospital in southern Lebanon said it was shelled Friday evening after being warned to evacuate. The Salah Ghandour Hospital in the city of Bint Jbeil said in a statement that the shelling "resulted in nine members of the medical and nursing staff being injured, most of them seriously," while most of the medical staff were evacuated. A day earlier, the World Health Organization said 28 health workers in Lebanon had been killed in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah launched about 100 rockets into Israel on Friday, the Israel military said.

The Israeli military also said that a strike in Beirut the day before killed Mohammed Rashid Skafi, the head of Hezbollah's communications division. The military said in a statement that Skafi was "a senior Hezbollah terrorist who was responsible for the communications unit since 2000" and was "closely affiliated" with high-up Hezbollah officials.

Thursday's strike along the Lebanon-Syria border, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of Beirut, led to the closure of the road near the busy Masnaa Border Crossing — the first time it has been cut off since Hezbollah and Israel began trading fire almost a year ago.

Israel said it targeted the crossing because it was being used by Hezbollah to transport military equipment across the border. It said fighter jets had struck a tunnel used to smuggle weapons from Iran and other proxies into Lebanon.

Hezbollah is believed to have received much of its weaponry through Syria from Iran, its main backer.

Associated Press video footage showed two huge craters on each side of the road. People got out of cars, unable to pass, carrying bags of their possessions as they crossed on foot. More than 250,000 Syrians and 82,000 Lebanese have fled across the border into Syria during the escalation of the past two weeks. There are a half-dozen crossings between the two countries, and most remain open.

Israel launched its ground escalation in Lebanon on Tuesday, and its forces have been clashing with Hezbollah militants in a narrow strip along the border. Israel has vowed to put an end to Hezbollah fire into northern Israel, after nearly a year of exchanges between the two sides that drove tens of thousands of people from their homes on both sides of the border. Israeli strikes over the past two weeks killed some of Hezbollah's key members, including longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah.

On Thursday, Israel warned people to evacuate communities in southern Lebanon, including areas beyond the buffer zone declared by the United Nations after Israel and Hezbollah fought a monthlong war in 2006.

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Israeli Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani told reporters Friday that the ground operations were limited, aimed at rooting out Hezbollah militants and making the border safe for northern residents of Israel to return to their homes,

"First of all, our mission is to make sure they're (Hezbollah) not there," Shoshani said. "Afterwards we will talk about how we make sure they don't come back."

Nine Israeli troops have been killed in close fighting in the area, which is saturated with arms and explosives, the military said.

Two more soldiers were killed and two were severely wounded by a drone attack in northern Israel, military officials said.

An umbrella group of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq said it carried out three drone strikes Friday in northern Israel. In recent months, the group has regularly claimed drone strikes launched at Israel, but the strikes have rarely landed.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who was in Beirut on Friday to meet Lebanese officials, warned that if Israel carries out an attack on Iran, Tehran would retaliate more powerfully than it did this week when it launched at least 180 missiles into Israel in retaliation for Israeli strikes on Hezbollah.

The missile barrage amid a series of rapidly escalating attacks has threatened to push the Middle East closer to a regionwide war.

"If the Israeli entity takes any step or measure against us, our retaliation will be stronger than the previous one," Araghchi said after meeting Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri.

In the Iranian capital, Tehran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei led Friday prayers and delivered a speech in which he praised the country's missile strikes on Israel and said Iran was prepared to conduct more strikes if needed.

He spoke to thousands of people at Tehran's main prayer site, the Mosalla mosque, which was decorated with a huge Palestinian flag.

Hezbollah began firing into Israel the day after Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, in which the militants killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. Since then, Israel's campaign in Gaza in retaliation has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, just over half them women and children, according to local health officials.

An assessment this week by the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, and its humanitarian partners found that at least 87% of school buildings in Gaza have been directly hit or damaged since Israel launched its offensive, U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Friday.

Meanwhile, Israel carried out its deadliest strike in the occupied West Bank since the Gaza war began, hitting a cafe in the Tulkarem refugee camp. At least 18 Palestinians were killed, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. Relatives said a family of four, including two children, were among the dead. The Israeli military said several Hamas militants were killed, including the group's leader in the camp.

The Israeli military said Friday that militants in Gaza fired two rockets into Israeli territory, the first time Israel has seen rocket fire from the territory in a month.

The military said one of the rockets was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system and the other fell in an open area near a kibbutz across the border from Gaza.

Biden talks election, economy and Middle East in surprise news briefing

By JOSH BOAK ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — After 1,080 days as president, Joe Biden on Friday decided to pop in and take questions in the White House briefing room for the first time, striding in with a grin after a strong monthly jobs report and the temporary settlement of a strike by ports workers.

The president has been less available than his recent predecessors to questions from White House press corps, making his surprise appearance welcome to the gathered reporters who waited as his press secretary's daily briefing was moved up 15 minutes, then delayed for nearly one hour.

The president stepped through the press room's blue door in a dark gray suit and red tie and proceeded

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to make news in response to questions about comments on the 2024 presidential election, the latest jobs numbers and the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

The 81-year old stepped aside from the Democratic nomination this summer, backing Vice President Kamala Harris instead. He acknowledged doubts about whether the November election would be peaceful, given comments by former President Donald Trump that the results could be rigged.

"I'm confident it will be free and fair. I don't know whether it will be peaceful," Biden said. "The things that Trump has said, and the the things that he said last time when he didn't like the outcome of the election, were very dangerous."

Biden has tried to rebut a political movement that has at times openly trafficked in conspiracy theories, with the latest revolving around the government reporting Friday that employers added 254,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate ticked down to 4.1%.

"Another fake jobs report out from Biden-Harris government today," Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., posted on social media. "But all the fake numbers in the world aren't going to fool people dealing with the Biden-Harris economic disaster every day."

The jobs reports are legitimate and have capped a solid run for the U.S. economy. Growth has stayed solid even as the inflation rate has dropped from a four-decade high in 2022 to an annual rate of 2.5%.

Consumer confidence has been weak relative to overall economic growth, a sign that many people still don't feel the strength seen in the latest jobs and inflation numbers. But Biden stressed that he was operating on valid data despite unfounded claims of falsification by supporters of Trump's Make America Great Again movement.

"If you notice, anything the MAGA Republicans don't like they call 'fake,'" Biden said. "The job numbers are what the job numbers are. They're real. They're sincere."

The president also highlighted the deal reached Thursday to suspend a strike by 45,000 dockworkers on East and Gulf coast ports until Jan. 15, creating time to try to hash out a new contract.

Still, challenges remain for Biden as his final months as president involve the risk of a wider war in the Middle East.

Since Hamas attacked Israel nearly a year ago, Israel has retaliated by bombarding the Gaza region in ways that have raised human rights concerns, as well as killing Hezbollah leaders and launching airstrikes in Lebanon. On Tuesday, Iran fired at least 180 missiles into Israel and there are concerns about additional retaliation that could cause the conflict to deepen.

When asked, Biden clarified his comments from a day earlier about Israel possibly striking Iranian oil facilities, which caused the price of the commodity to jump on the prospect of supplies being squeezed.

"Look, the Israelis have not concluded what they're going to do in terms of a strike," Biden said Friday. "That's under discussion. I think if I were in their shoes, I'd be thinking about other alternatives than striking oil fields."

The president emphasized that he and Harris are "singing from the same song sheet" on foreign and domestic policy, calling her a "major player in everything we've done."

As Biden began to leave the room, he was asked if he would reconsider his decision to exit the race. Biden cocked his head and smiled.

"I'm back in," he joked.

Biden says he doesn't know whether Israel is holding up peace deal to influence 2024 US election

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden had terse words for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday, and said he didn't know whether the Israeli leader was holding up a Mideast peace deal in order to influence the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election.

"No administration has helped Israel more than I have. None. None. None. And I think Bibi should re-

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member that," he said, referring to the Israeli leader by his nickname. "And whether he's trying to influence the election, I don't know, but I'm not counting on that."

Biden, in a rare appearance in the White House press briefing room, was responding to comments made by one of his allies, Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who told CNN this week that he was concerned Netanyahu had little interest in a peace deal in part because of U.S. politics.

"I don't think you have to be a hopeless cynic to read some of Israel's actions, some of Prime Minister Netanyahu's actions, as connected to the American election," Murphy said.

Biden and Netanyahu have long managed a complicated relationship, but they're running out of space to maneuver as their views on the Gaza war diverge and their political futures hang in the balance.

For Biden, a diplomatic deal would help resolve a deep divide among Democrats over the war and shore up support for Vice President Kamala Harris, making one fewer global conflict for her to manage should she win next month. Netanyahu has his own political concerns closer to home: His far-right coalition would abandon him if he stopped the war, and he could lose power and have to face his own legal problems. And Israel has been decimating Hezbollah's leadership, so there is little incentive to stop now.

Biden has long pushed for a diplomatic deal, and he and his aides have indicated several times over the past few months that such an agreement was close. But it never seems to materialize, and in some cases, Netanyahu has publicly resisted the prospect while U.S. and Israeli officials continue to talk in private about eking out a deal.

Just last week, the U.S., France and other allies jointly called for an immediate 21-day Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire, and expected Israel to welcome if not fully endorse the plan. Instead, Netanyahu publicly rejected it, telling leaders gathered for the U.N. General Assembly that Israel would "continue degrading Hezbollah until all our objectives are met."

Israel has pressed forward on two fronts, killing top Hezbollah leaders and pursuing a ground incursion into Lebanon and conducting strikes in Gaza that killed dozens, including children. And the nation has vowed to retaliate for Iran's ballistic missile attack this week.

Oil prices rose 5% Thursday as concerns mounted that Israel would hit Iranian oil facilities as payback; a surge in gas prices so close to the election would be a blow to Harris, particularly after strong economic news Friday.

Biden said there had been no decision yet on what type of response there would be toward Iran, though "I think if I were in their shoes, I'd be thinking about other alternatives than striking oil fields."

He pushed back against the idea that he was seeking a meeting with Netanyahu to discuss the response to Iran. He isn't, he said.

"I'm assuming when they make a decision on how they're going to respond, we will then have a discussion," he said.

But Netanyahu has grown increasingly resistant to Biden's public charm offensives and private pleading, prompting the president's more assertive pushback. And Biden has in turn publicly held up delivery of heavy bombs to Israel and increasingly voiced concerns over an all-out war in the Middle East.

Despite their long acquaintanceship, the two are not close or particularly friendly. When Biden was visiting Israel as vice president under Barack Obama, he and other U.S. officials were taken aback by an Israeli government announcement of new Jewish settlements in the West Bank, something the administration strongly opposed.

Nevertheless, Biden has remained consistent in his support for Israel's defense and security. In the aftermath of the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attacks in Israel, he hugged Netanyahu on the tarmac of the airport in Tel Aviv. Since then, with few exceptions, Biden has supported ongoing and enhanced U.S. arms transfers to Israel while at the same time cautioning the Israelis to be careful in their responses to avoid civilian casualties.

"The Israelis have every right to respond to the vicious attacks on them, not just from the Iranians, but from everyone from Hezbollah to Houthis," Biden said Friday. "But the fact is that they have to be very much more careful about dealing with civilian casualties."

Biden has also ordered the U.S. military to step up its profile in the region to protect Israel from attacks by Hamas, Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and Iran itself. In April, and again earlier this week, the U.S. was a leading player in shooting down missiles fired by Iran into Israel.

By contrast, Republican Donald Trump and Netanyahu have had a much more cordial relationship. Trump hosted Netanyahu in July. While president, Trump initiated policy changes that Netanyahu applauded, including recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, moving the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights and rescinding a decades-old U.S. legal determination that Jewish settlements in the West Bank were inconsistent with international law.

Relatives say a whole family was killed in Israel's deadliest West Bank strike since Oct. 7

By NASSER NASSER and AREF TUFAHA Associated Press

TULKAREM, West Bank (AP) — An Israeli airstrike on a West Bank cafe that the military said targeted Palestinian militants also killed a family of four, including two young children, relatives told The Associated Press on Friday.

The strike slammed into a three-story building in the Tulkarem refugee camp late Thursday, setting it on fire, destroying a popular cafe and killing at least 18 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry. It was the deadliest strike in the West Bank since the start of the Israel-Hamas war nearly a year ago.

On Friday, paramedics searched the rubble inside the blasted-out coffee shop, gathering human remains into small boxes. Young boys and men walked among the ruins of the shop, with holes in the ceiling and debris blanketing the ground, digging past bloodstained furniture and dislodged iron beams for anything to salvage.

Among the dead was the Abu Zahra family: Muhammad, a bakery worker; his wife, Saja; and their two children, Sham, 8, and Karam, 6, according to the man's brother, Mustafa Abu Zahra, who said the family lived above the coffee shop. He added that one of Muhammad's brothers-in-law was also in the apartment at the time and was killed.

The Israeli military said the strike killed at least nine militants who were gathering to plan an attack against Israel, including Hamas' leader in the camp, whom it accused without providing evidence of taking part in multiple attacks against Israeli civilians. It also said a "key operative" of Islamic Jihad, another Palestinian militant group, was killed in the strike. Tulkarem, known to be a hotbed of Palestinian militancy, is a frequent target of Israeli military raids.

Hundreds of mourners packed the streets of the camp Friday during a mass funeral for the 18 killed, some brandishing Hamas flags. Hamas did not immediately claim any of the dead as its fighters but released a statement condemning the strike and calling for Palestinians in Tulkarem to rise up.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the loss of lives in the Israeli airstrike on the Tulkaram camp and called for strict compliance with international law requiring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Israel has carried out several large-scale raids in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza, ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. While airstrikes used to be rare in the Palestinian territory, they have grown more common since the outbreak of war as Israeli forces clamp down, saying they aim to prevent attacks on their citizens.

Israeli fire has killed at least 722 Palestinians in the West Bank since Oct. 7, Palestinian health officials say. In that time, Palestinian militants have launched a number of attacks on soldiers at checkpoints and within Israel.

A shooting attack in Tel Aviv earlier this week that Israeli police said was carried out by Palestinians from the West Bank left at least six people dead.

Nimer Fayat, the owner of Dr. Coffee, said the cafe was full of "regular customers coming to eat and drink" when the strike occurred around 10:15 p.m.

"What happened was a very strong blow, the likes of which we had not seen in the past since the Al-

Aqsa Intifada," he said, using a Palestinian term for the second intifada, or uprising, in the early 2000s.

Paramedics rushing to the area encountered a ghastly scene, with body parts flung onto power lines by the force of the blast, said Nebal Farsakh, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Red Crescent, whose teams brought nine dead to the hospital.

A full list of the dead and wounded was not immediately released by the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Yasser Jibra, another relative of the Abu Zahras, said the strike was "like a lightning bolt."

"Look around, the destruction is so obvious," he said, adding that it was difficult to identify the bodies of his loved ones.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on civilian deaths in the strike. Israel says it takes care to guard against such deaths.

But to Jibra, that means little.

"This is the work of the criminal occupation, which does not take into account the presence of a child or a woman, or an elderly or young person," he said, as he stood inside the blasted-out cafe. "Everything is permissible for them."

Helene's powerful storm surge killed 12 near Tampa. They didn't have to die

By DAVID FISCHER and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Aiden Bowles was stubborn, so even as Florida officials told residents of the barrier island north of St. Petersburg that Hurricane Helene's storm surge could be deadly, the retired restaurant owner stayed put.

Caregiver Amanda Normand begged the 71-year-old widower to stay with her inland, but there had been many evacuation warnings over the years as hurricanes neared his Indian Rocks Beach home — the storm surge never got more than knee-high. As Helene and its strong winds pushed north in the Gulf of Mexico, he wasn't worried — its eye was 100 miles (160 kilometers) offshore.

"He said, 'It's going to be fine. I'm going to go to bed,'" Normand said of their final phone call on the night of Sept. 26.

But it wasn't fine. In that night's darkness, a wall of water up to 8-feet high (2.4 meters) slammed ashore on the barrier islands. It swept into homes, forcing some who had ignored the evacuation orders to climb into upper floors, attics or onto their roofs to survive. Boats got dumped in streets, and cars dumped into the water.

Bowles and 11 others perished as Helene hit the Tampa Bay area harder than any hurricane in 103 years. By far the worst damage in the area happened in Pinellas County on the narrow, 20-mile (32-kilometer) string of barrier islands that stretch from St. Petersburg to Clearwater. Mansions, brightly colored single-family homes, apartments, mobile homes, restaurants, bars and shops were destroyed or heavily damaged in minutes.

"The water, it just came so fast," said Dave Behringer, who rode out the storm in his home after telling his wife to flee. His neighborhood got hit with about 4 feet (1.2 meters) of water. "Even if you wanted to leave, there was no getting out."

While the property damage was mostly unavoidable, there didn't have to be any deaths — the National Hurricane Center issued its first storm surge warning two days before Helene arrived, telling the barrier islands' residents they should pack up and get out. The relatively shallow waters of Florida's Gulf Coast make it particularly vulnerable to storm surge and forecasters predicted Helene's would hit Pinellas County hard.

"We really want people to take the warning seriously because their lives are seriously at risk," Cody Fritz, leader of the hurricane center's storm surge team, said, adding that warnings are never issued lightly.

Pinellas County echoed the warnings, issuing mandatory evacuation orders — but that doesn't mean police officers force out residents. In Florida, mandatory evacuation orders simply mean that anyone who stays behind is on their own, and first responders aren't required to risk their lives to save stragglers.

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"We made our case. We told people what they needed to do, and they chose otherwise," Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said. Still, his deputies did try to save residents, but the surge forced their boats and vehicles back.

The Tampa Bay area has been extremely lucky over the last century. Since the last major storm scored a direct hit in 1921, Tampa, St. Petersburg and their environs have grown from about 300,000 combined residents to more than 3 million today.

Tampa Bay has been in the crosshairs of many storms over the decades, but they always turn into the Florida peninsula south of the area or make a beeline north into the Panhandle.

Helene was never predicted to hit Tampa — its eye made landfall 180 miles (290 kilometers) north. But at more than 200-miles (320-kilometers) wide and winds whipping at nearly 140 mph (225 kph) near its core, it created surges that hit all along the Florida peninsula's Gulf Coast. Most weren't deadly, but on Pinellas' barrier islands, the water wall came from all directions.

"It doesn't require a storm making landfall directly on top of Tampa Bay or just to its north to cause a lot of surge problems, especially when you have a large storm like Helene," said Philip Klotzbach, a hurricane researcher at Colorado State University.

It will take time for the islands to return to normal. In the 90-degree (32.2 C) heat, residents spent this week piling water-logged furniture, appliances, cupboards and dry wall outside to be hauled away. Bulldozers pushed sand back onto the beach. Employees at stores and restaurants threw out what couldn't be saved, while the owners figured out how and when they could reopen. Some might not.

Laura Rushmore, who has owned the Reds on the Boulevard bar for 20 years, might walk away. She cried as she described the damage. A cooler full of beer had been tossed on its side, the bar's interior ruined. She isn't sure what insurance will cover.

"It's too much," she said.

Then there are the deaths — the people can't be replaced.

Frank Wright had been the outdoors type, perfect for living in Madeira Beach, a small barrier island community. But a few years ago, the 71-year-old got a degenerative autoimmune disease.

"He went from being pretty active, outside and everything, to being in a wheelchair," his neighbor Mike Visnick said.

He thinks Wright probably believed he would be safe, given the prior warnings that didn't pan out. But he drowned in the surge.

"It's really sad to me how he died. He lived a good life. He loved the beach," Visnick said.

Farther north in Honeymoon Mobile Home Park, retired hairdresser Patricia Mikos had never before tempted fate, her neighbor Georgia Marcum said. The beach community is onshore, but that area was also in the surge's predicted path.

The 80-year-old always fled when hurricanes neared, so when Marcum left the park before the storm to care for her 95-year-old father, she was certain her friend would also leave.

But for some reason she didn't and as the waters rose, Mikos found herself in trouble. She called a nearby friend. When he arrived, he told her, "Let's get out of here," according to Marcum. But when she went back into her home to get something, the water trapped her inside.

The friend "couldn't get back in there. He's not talking to nobody. He's not even talking to us. I'm sure he blames himself," Marcum said.

About 10 miles (16 kilometers) to the south in Indian Rocks Beach, two of Bowles' neighbors, Donna Fagersten and Heather Anne Boles decided to ride out Helene in their homes as they had done with other storms.

Fagersten, 66, was four days from retiring after 35 years teaching, most recently second grade. In retirement, she would have time to watch the crime dramas she loved and spend time with her two sons, her friends and her cat.

Boles told WTVT-TV that when the water slammed ashore, she and Fagersten tried to drive away, but couldn't. They fled into the home of Boles' mother and rushed to the third floor.

After a bit, the storm seemed to weaken, so Fagersten decided to go home and check on her cat but got caught in the water. She couldn't be saved. Her cat was found safe.

Earlier this week at Bowles' wrecked home, Normand, 34, was cleaning up the mess Helene left behind. She had long worked for Bowles and his late wife, Sabrina, at the Salt Public House. They were beloved by their employees, she said.

"He was just very genuine. He was the best person I know on this earth. Just talking about it gives me goosebumps," she said.

She became Bowles' caregiver after his wife died two years ago and he retired. She took him to the doctor and bought his groceries. They were each other's shoulder to cry on.

On the morning after the surge, Normand tried desperately to reach Bowles, but the bridge was blocked. She called one of his neighbors, who found his body.

"Every day I wake up thinking, 'Was he calling for me? Was he like trying to get me or something?'" Normand said, her voice sometimes breaking. "I just hope that he wasn't in pain."

Her 6-year-old son considered Bowles to be a grandfather and didn't understand what happened.

"He says to me, 'Mommy we're going to go get Mr. Bowles and open the doors and get all the water out,'" she said. "It just broke my heart."

Rainstorms and heavy floods hit large parts of Bosnia, killing at least 16 people

By ELDAR EMRIC Associated Press

KISELJAK, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — A severe rainstorm struck Bosnia overnight Friday, killing at least 16 people in floods and landslides in several towns and villages in central and southern parts of the country, with surging waters rushing into people's homes as they were sleeping.

Rescue services in the south said several people were missing and called on volunteers and the army to assist as roads were closed and houses left without electricity.

Josip Kalem, a resident of Fojnica, one of the towns hit by the floods, said his dog's barking woke him up at around 4 a.m. When he came out on the terrace, he saw the water rising rapidly.

"I came down, woke up my wife, and we looked around, we could not get out of the house. We saw more and more water coming in," he said. "All of a sudden, the water was flooding the garage, basement, my car — everything. The water swept it all away, including my dog. Flood took it downstream."

Andja Milesic, another resident of Fojnica, also said she was caught by surprise in the middle of the night. "When I woke up, my bedroom floor was already soaked. I walked into the hallway — water was everywhere — the living room, everywhere," she said. "It was horrible."

Darko Juka, a spokesman for the local administration, said at least 14 people had died in and around the southern town of Jablanica. Officials later said two more bodies have been found.

"Those are the ones who have been discovered by rescuers," he said. "We still don't know the final death toll."

"I don't remember such a crisis since the war," Juka said referring to the 1992-95 war in Bosnia that left the country in ruins. "The scale of this chaotic situation is harrowing."

Defense Minister Zukan Helez told N1 regional television that troops have been engaged to help and that the casualties were reported.

Helez said that "hour after hour we are receiving news about new victims. ... Our first priority is to save the people who are alive and buried in houses where the landslides are."

A pregnant woman lost her baby after she was rescued from the floods and transferred to a hospital in the regional center of Mostar. Authorities said doctors were fighting for her life as well. Separately, a child was successfully rescued and hospitalized, local officials said.

Rescue services in the towns of Jablanica and Kiseljak said the power was off overnight and mobile phones lost their signal.

The Jablanica fire station said that the town was completely inaccessible because roads and trainlines were closed.

"The police informed us that the railroad is also blocked," the state rescue service said in a statement.

"You can't get in or out of Jablanica at the moment. Landline phones are working, but mobile phones have no signal."

It urged people not to venture out on the flooded streets.

Human-caused climate change increases the intensity of rainfall because warm air holds more moisture. This summer, the Balkans were also hit by long-lasting record temperatures, causing a drought. Scientists said the dried-out land has hampered the absorption of floodwaters.

Drone footage broadcast on Bosnian media showed villages and towns completely submerged under water, while videos on social networks showed dramatic scenes of muddy torrents and damaged roads.

One of the busiest roads linking Sarajevo with the Adriatic coast via Jablanica was swept into a river, together with a railway line in a huge landslide, according to photos.

"Many people are endangered because of big waters and landslides. There is information about victims and many injured and missing persons," said the civic protection service.

Authorities urged people to stay on the upper floors of their homes. Reports said surging waters swept away domestic animals and cars as the water swiftly filled up lower floors of buildings.

The heavy rains and strong winds were also reported in neighboring Croatia, where several roads were closed and the capital of Zagreb prepared for the swollen Sava River to burst its banks.

Heavy winds have hampered traffic along the southern coast of the Adriatic Sea, and flash floods caused by heavy rain threatened several towns and villages in Croatia.

Floods caused by torrential rains were also reported in Montenegro, south of Bosnia, where some villages were cut off and roads and homes flooded.

In Senegal, the bastion of the region's Francophonie, French is giving way to local languages

By MONIKA PRONCZUK Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — For decades Senegal, a former French colony in West Africa, has been touted as the bastion of the French language in the region. Leopold Sedar Senghor, the country's first president and a poet, is considered one of the founding fathers of the concept of Francophonie, a global alliance of French-speaking countries.

But many say a shift is underway. While French remains the country's official language, inscribed into its constitution, its influence is waning. It is giving way to Wolof, the most widely spoken local language — and not just on the street, where the latter has always been dominant, but in the halls of power: government offices, university corridors and mainstream media.

As the French president hosts the annual Francophonie summit north of Paris, Senegal's president is not attending in person. He sent the foreign minister as his representative instead.

"Wolof is on the rise because Senegalese people want to be seen," said Adjaratou Sall, professor of Linguistics at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, who began researching the Wolof language in 1998. "They want to detach themselves from the colonial heritage and reclaim their own cultural identity."

There are 25 languages in Senegal. Six of them have the status of national languages, but Wolof is largely dominant. Out of the population of 17 million people, over 12 million speak Wolof, compared to around 4 million French speakers.

But like in most former colonies, French has traditionally been the language of Senegalese political and cultural elites. The vast majority of schools across the country and all universities are French speaking. All official documents are issued in French. With the education rate in Senegal at around 60%, this excludes a large part of the population.

President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the youngest elected leader in Africa, was voted in six months ago on an anti-establishment platform, and his rise reflected the frustration of the Senegalese youth with the traditional, elderly political class. He has made a point in making all of his official speeches in both languages, French and Wolof, and pledged to give local languages the primary role in schools, with French introduced later.

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The shift comes as most West African nations are rethinking their relationship with France, which is losing its clout in the region. In some cases, like in Burkina Faso and Mali, which are ruled by military juntas, the divorce with the French language has been abrupt: They dropped French as the official language and banned many French-speaking media outlets.

The decline of French in Senegal has been more subtle. But to a careful observer, the signs are everywhere: More and more billboards are either bilingual, or in Wolof. Although all university courses are still conducted in French, Sall said that professors and students speak Wolof to each other in the corridors, which would have been unthinkable when she started working. Some Senegalese writers are publishing their books in Wolof, and not in French.

"Surely, the nationalism which began to take root with the new government is playing a role," said Fall. "But another important factor has been the revolution in the media, which started with Sud FM."

Sud FM, the first private radio station in Senegal, started broadcasting programs in Wolof in 1994. The morning news program in Wolof now has over 2 million listeners, said its director, Baye Oumar Gueye.

"We replied to a real need: providing information to the population, who does not speak French," Gueye said in an interview in his office. "They can now participate in the exchange of information."

He added: "The use of the French language is decreasing. When you want to reclaim your sovereignty, the first thing is to have your own language."

El Hadj Aip Ndiaye, who has been driving a taxi in Dakar for the past 45 years, said he remembers well the launch of Sud FM. "Everyone listened to it," he recalled.

Ndiaye, who did not go to school and speaks a very limited French, said he listens to the radio everyday from 5 a.m. until midnight, as he drives across the dusty roads of Dakar in his yellow, rickety taxi.

"Before, all the news on the radio was in French," he said. "I could not understand it. But with news in Wolof, you can understand what they are saying. You understand the world better, and you can take part in the conversation."

"People are now proud to speak Wolof," he said. "Before, when you spoke Wolof, you were judged as a peasant. But now, even our president speaks Wolof a lot, so people are not afraid to speak it."

But even the biggest proponents of Wolof do not want a revolution. Fall, the linguistics professor, said she dreamed of university courses being held in Wolof, and children being taught in their local language, whether it would be Wolof, Serrer or Peul.

"We will get there, but it's a process," she said. "And we need French as well. It is the language of openness, which allows us to communicate with others in the region."

For migrant women who land in Colorado looking for jobs, a common answer emerges: No

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer
AURORA, Colo. (AP) — East Colfax Avenue was the best place to find a job. That's what everyone told Sofia Roca.

Never mind the open drug use, the sex workers or the groups of other migrant women marching the sidewalks soliciting work at the very same Mexican restaurants and bakeries.

On East Colfax in Aurora, Colorado, bosses would speak Spanish and might be willing to hire someone like Roca — a 49-year-old immigrant from Colombia — without legal authorization to work. That was the rationale for going back each morning, fruitless as it was.

"Do you know how to cook Mexican food?" asked one woman when Roca inquired about a kitchen position. Roca's accent was a giveaway: not Mexican.

"I can learn," Roca replied in Spanish.

Responded the woman: "We're not hiring."

As record numbers of South Americans attempt to cross the U.S. southern border, many are landing in communities that are unprepared for them — and sometimes outright hostile.

Women are leaving Colombia, and to a greater extent Venezuela, to escape starvation and violence, to

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provide for their children and to seek medical care. They represent some of the more than 42,000 migrants who have arrived in the Denver area over two years. Many didn't know anyone in Denver. But it was the closest city to which Texas was offering free bus rides, both to relieve pressure on its towns and to make a political point to liberal-leaning cities about immigration's impact on the border.

From Denver, untold numbers made their way to the suburb of Aurora, lured by cheaper rent and abundant Spanish speakers. But finding a job has been anything but easy, and women face their own particular challenges.

Last year, nearly 900,000 women and girls tried to cross the U.S. southern border, more than a fivefold increase over the last decade, U.S. Customs and Border Protection data shows. Like many of them, Roca came to the U.S. to help her children. Her adult daughter in Colombia suffers from lupus and can't afford "the good medicines."

After making it across the U.S. border, Roca told U.S. agents she was seeking asylum. She heard from a shelter worker in El Paso that Denver was offering migrants free housing and Texas would pay to get her there.

Roca arrived in November and stayed two weeks in a shelter. When she went looking for work along East Colfax, she observed an icy reception.

She didn't know the benefits many recent migrants have received — specifically, a path to a temporary work visa and with it better-paying jobs — were causing resentment among Aurora's large Mexican community. Many have loved ones in the country illegally or have themselves lived for years in the United States without legal permission to work.

Resentment for newcomers was building in another corner of Aurora, too — City Hall. Aurora officials in February had warned other communities against housing migrants there, vowing not to spend city money to help them. This summer, Aurora's mayor repeated a landlord's claim that a notorious Venezuelan gang had taken over an apartment building. Even though police say that's false, former President Donald Trump took up the claim, mentioning it at his campaign rallies. The mayor last month walked back some of his comments.

Roca never made a deliberate decision to settle in Aurora. To her, it wasn't clear where Denver ended and Aurora began.

So when Roca's time is almost up at the Denver shelter, she does the only thing she knows to do: She heads to East Colfax in Aurora.

A man standing by his truck outside a thrift store catches her attention. He says he can help her, but not in Colorado. She can come to Kentucky with him and his family.

After more than a week of staying with the family in Kentucky, Roca learns the man's wife works in el negocio, or "the business." There is not much work in Kentucky, so she earns her money through sex work, she tells Roca, while her kids play a few feet away.

A few days later, a Mexican man in his 30s pulls up outside the couple's trailer in a pickup truck.

He'd seen a picture of Roca and liked her — and would pay \$1,000 for two nights with Roca, the wife says. Roca would keep \$600, the couple would get \$400.

In her month in the United States, Roca has come to understand she'll have to make sacrifices in this country. But subjecting herself to the whims of a stranger in such an intimate and vulnerable way?

"No," she tells the woman. "I'm not going anywhere with anyone."

The man is told to leave. The insults start immediately.

How are you going to earn money, girl? asks the woman. You're not going to just live here for free.

Back to Aurora and East Colfax Avenue.

On most days walking along Colfax, Roca says, men would solicit her for sex, holding up their fingers to signal how many hundreds of dollars they were willing to pay.

As she looked for work in March, she came across what looked like an old motel. A man behind a plexiglass window urged her to try the bar in the back.

At a few Mexican cantinas around Aurora and Denver, "ficheras," as the women are known in Spanish, sell beers at a markup to men and pocket the profits. It can be a fast way to earn money, but also a route

to sex trafficking.

"I don't think I have to do that yet," Roca said. "But this street — it only offers prostitution."

Since returning to Aurora, Roca had discovered she has few options for establishing legal residence or working legally in the U.S. She told U.S. Border Patrol officials she plans to plead for asylum at her deportation hearing, but she doubts they will grant it.

She had gotten in touch through Facebook with a friend from Colombia living in the northeastern U.S. "She's told me she can get me a job at a hotel and I can stay with her," she said.

Two days later, with about \$80 in her pocket, Roca boarded a Greyhound bus paid for by the city of Denver. (The Associated Press is not identifying her new location. Roca is afraid the Cuban couple might seek her out after she spoke about them in the media.)

Roca's friend followed through on her promises, connecting her to a job cleaning hotel rooms. She walks through the city with ease — and anonymously.

"It's a huge difference from my life in Denver," she says. "There's less chaos, and no one has disrespected me."

She's not sure how long she'll stay. But Sofia Roca will never live in Aurora, Colorado, again.

Supreme Court steps into a fight over plans to store nuclear waste in rural Texas and New Mexico

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Friday to step into a fight over plans to store nuclear waste at sites in rural Texas and New Mexico.

The justices said they will review a ruling by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that found that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission exceeded its authority under federal law in granting a license to a private company to store spent nuclear fuel at a dump in West Texas for 40 years. The outcome of the case will affect plans for a similar facility in New Mexico.

Political leaders in both states oppose the facilities.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas has said his state "will not become America's nuclear waste dumping ground."

The push for temporary storage sites is part of the complicated politics of the nation's so far futile quest for a permanent underground storage facility.

Roughly 100,000 tons (90,000 metric tons) of spent fuel, some of it dating from the 1980s, is piling up at current and former nuclear plant sites nationwide and growing by more than 2,000 tons a year. The waste was meant to be kept there temporarily before being deposited deep underground.

A plan to build a national storage facility northwest of Las Vegas at Yucca Mountain has been mothballed because of staunch opposition from most Nevada residents and officials.

The fight over storing nuclear waste is among 13 cases the justices added to their agenda for the term that begins Monday. Other notable cases include a plea by gun makers to end a lawsuit in which Mexico seeks to blame them for gun violence south of the border and an appeal from a death row inmate in Texas whose execution the high court halted at the last minute in July.

In the NRC case, there are two issues before the justices, which will be argued early next year.

The NRC contends that the states forfeited their right to object to the licensing decisions because they declined to join in the commission's proceedings.

Two other federal appeals courts, in Denver and Washington, that weighed the same issue ruled for the agency. Only the 5th Circuit allowed the cases to proceed.

The second issue is whether federal law allows the commission to license temporary storage sites. Texas and environmental groups, unlikely allies, both relied on a 2022 Supreme Court decision that held that Congress must act with specificity when it wants to give an agency the authority to regulate on an issue of major national significance.

In ruling for Texas, the 5th Circuit agreed that what to do with the nation's nuclear waste is the sort of

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"major question" that Congress must speak to directly.

The Biden administration told the court that the commission has long-standing authority reaching back to the 1954 Atomic Energy Act to deal with nuclear waste.

The NRC granted the Texas license to Interim Storage Partners LLC for a facility that could take up to 5,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel rods from power plants and 231 million tons of other radioactive waste. The facility would be built next to an existing dump site in Andrews County for low-level waste such as protective clothing and other material that has been exposed to radioactivity. The Andrews County site is about 350 miles (563.27 kilometers) west of Dallas, near the Texas-New Mexico state line.

New Mexico officials, led by Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, are opposed to a license the commission granted to Holtec International for a similar temporary storage site in Lea County, in the south-eastern part of the state near Carlsbad. The 5th Circuit also has blocked that license.

A decision is expected by the middle of next year.

For Pittsburgh Jews, attack anniversary adds to an already grim October

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Jewish communities everywhere reacted with horror at last year's Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel, but the approaching one-year commemoration of the assault hits home particularly hard in Pittsburgh's Jewish community, which already marks a grim anniversary each October.

It was here on Oct. 27, 2018, that a gunman carried out the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, killing 11 worshippers from three congregations at the Tree of Life synagogue.

Adding to the intense feelings is the arrival of the Jewish High Holy Days — days that bracket the Oct. 7 anniversary with rituals focused on mortality and recalling the deaths of loved ones and ancient martyrs. Many are taking consolation in the rituals as they mark an emotionally fraught milestone.

"The trauma here runs deep in our community," said Rabbi Seth Adelson of Congregation Beth Shalom, a Conservative synagogue near Tree of Life in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood, the heart of Jewish Pittsburgh. "You can't really separate the trauma of Jews being attacked in Pittsburgh and Jews being attacked in Israel."

The attacks do have differences.

The Pittsburgh attack was carried out by a right-wing extremist who targeted Jews for their aid to immigrants. It was followed by widespread civic support for the Jewish community.

The Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, killed 1,200 Israelis and triggered a still-ongoing war in Gaza, whose health ministry says Israel has killed more than 41,500 Palestinians and wounded more than 96,000 others. Israel is now intensifying attacks on Hamas ally Hezbollah with deadly attacks in Lebanon, while Iran has attacked Israel with missiles.

The attacks have common threads, say local Jewish leaders. The synagogue attack violated the sanctuary of a place of worship. The Hamas attack has been followed by an upsurge of antisemitic incidents around the world.

"The similarity of what Oct. 7 and Oct. 27 hold together is a question of safety for Jews," said Maggie Feinstein, director of the 10.27 Healing Partnership, which aids those traumatized by the 2018 attack.

Emboldened far-right extremists have been spreading Holocaust denial and other antisemitic screeds. Some on the left have expressed antisemitism along with criticism of Israel's conduct of the war, while debate persists over the line between robust criticism and hate speech.

Nationally, nearly two-thirds of Jews feel less secure than they did a year previously, according to an American Jewish Committee survey earlier this year.

In Pittsburgh, a man was charged in September for allegedly attacking two university students wearing yarmulkes, the skullcap worn by observant Jews.

A synagogue and the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh office were targeted with graffiti. Parents of Jewish college students say their children have endured antisemitism amid protests critical of Israel.

Rabbi Daniel Yolcut of Congregation Poale Zedeck in Squirrel Hill said it's become "unremarkable" for

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his children to hear antisemitic slurs shouted by motorists.

Rabbi Adelson said that unlike in 2018, local Jews haven't felt widespread community solidarity.

"There's this feeling that Israel was attacked and then the attacks just continued here," he said.

Many in Pittsburgh have lived in Israel or have friends or relatives there. For Yolcut, one connection is especially poignant.

As a rabbi in Virginia years ago, his congregants included the family of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who in 2023 was taken hostage by Hamas.

"I remember him just as a small child running around my synagogue," Yolcut recalled. He was devastated to learn weeks ago that Goldberg-Polin was killed by Hamas at age 23, along with five other hostages.

As Oct. 7 approaches, Feinstein said Pittsburgh Jews are already familiar with the "anniversary effect" — the emotional churn around a traumatic calendar date. Each year since 2019, the community has held memorial services honoring the 11 lives lost on 10/27, as the synagogue attack is known locally.

She reminds people that emotions around anniversaries are natural: "Whatever we're feeling, we shouldn't feel shame."

Members of all three congregations worshipping at Tree of Life were killed that Sabbath morning in 2018 — the host congregation, Dor Hadash and New Light.

News of last year's Hamas raid arrived on another Sabbath, just weeks after the conclusion of a lengthy federal trial in which the Pittsburgh assailant was sentenced to death on 63 criminal counts.

That trial confirmed in previously unknown detail how the gunman absorbed white supremacist ideology online and spread the slander that Jews were bringing in immigrants of color to replace white Americans. He targeted Dor Hadash in particular for its support of a national Jewish agency that helps refugees.

Then came Oct. 7.

"The timing was very difficult because some people had not calmed down from their very high level of anxiety from the trial," said Rabbi Amy Bardack of Congregation Dor Hadash. Both attacks raised gut-level questions: "Are Jews safe in the world?"

The war has worsened divisions on the left. Most U.S. Jews are liberal politically and vote Democratic, but many progressive Democrats have supported Palestinians and say Israel's attacks amount to war crimes and genocide — charges that Israel and its supporters strenuously dispute.

Some Jewish groups dissent from the broad pro-Zionist consensus of established Jewish groups and oppose U.S. military aid to Israel.

Jewish community members acknowledge broad differences within their families and congregations, though most support Israel as a Jewish state and safe haven for Jews.

"Everybody wants peace," Adelson said, "But there is a strong feeling that Israelis deserve to live in peace and not to be subject to the threats and rocket attacks from Hamas and Hezbollah."

The disputes have flared locally, such as a recent failed effort by some Pittsburgh organizations to bar the city from doing business with entities linked to Israel.

Rebecca Elhassid now volunteers for the new Beacon Coalition, which researches local politicians' views on Israel and Jews.

Until now, "we didn't think to understand what a city councilperson thought about the Jewish community they represent," she said.

"For many years, we were able to put our Jewish identity aside in terms of our social priorities," she said. "We were able to dedicate much of our social resources toward supporting other marginalized communities and identifying other problems in societies. We are going to have to stand up for ourselves in a way we weren't aware we had to before."

The danger from the far right was well-known, but antisemitism from parts of the progressive left has hit closer to home.

"All my old colleagues, with whom I've done many things over the years with civil rights and voting rights and gay rights and all kinds of women's rights, and I'm seeing them on the other side of an issue," said Tree of Life member Audrey Glickman, a survivor of the 2018 attack. "That's been personally difficult for me, because it's hard to talk to people when they think you're choosing the wrong side."

But she's determined to maintain dialogue and has continued to visit schools and other settings, spreading the word against antisemitism and other hatreds.

"If we don't talk to each other, we don't get anywhere," she said. "I always feel more motivated to get out there and pull people together. If you don't keep your optimism going, what good is it?"

The High Holy Days add to the sober commemorations of this season.

"It's in our prayers that we need to understand the precariousness of life and our mortality," Bardack said. "There's also joyful themes, but it's with the understanding that we don't know what the future holds."

She said her congregation has had hard discussions about the war and Israeli policy. She sees her job as helping congregants navigate the complex moment.

"We can't control the Israel-Hamas war, and we can't control antisemitism," she said. "There's only one thing we can control, which is how we treat each other, how we keep loving and kind connections to each other across differences of ideology."

Filing in Trump case details remarkable schism with Pence over rejecting 2020 election loss

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Days before rioters roamed the halls of the U.S. Capitol threatening to "hang Mike Pence," Donald Trump told his vice president that people are going to "hate your guts" and "think you're stupid" if he failed to stop the 2020 election certification.

The New Year's Day warning wasn't the first time Trump pressured Pence to overturn the election results. Nor was it the last. In what came to be known as "Operation Pence Card," Trump spent weeks publicly and privately pushing his vice president to help him stay in power after losing.

"You're too honest," Trump berated his vice president in that Jan. 1 morning call.

After they hung up, the president tweeted a reminder for his followers to come to Washington for the "BIG Protest Rally" just days away — what would become the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol.

The exchanges between the president and his vice president, detailed in special counsel Jack Smith's court filing this week, show the extraordinary lengths Trump went to overturn the 2020 election, even as he lays the groundwork to challenge this year's contest, if he loses.

Pence is no longer standing beside Trump, and has refused to endorse the Republican nominee's bid to return to the White House. Trump and his new vice presidential running mate, JD Vance, still refuse to accept the 2020 election results that delivered the presidency to Joe Biden.

At a pivotal moment during this week's debate between Vance and Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Walz, Vance declined to say whether he accepted the results of the last election. In a stark retort, Walz said, "That's why Mike Pence isn't on this stage."

Much of the special counsel's filing recounts the tumultuous months after the November election, when Trump — surrounded by allies including Steve Bannon, his former campaign manager turned podcast host, who is now in jail after a contempt of Congress conviction — directed his team to fight to keep him in office. The former president, indicted on criminal charges in the conspiracy to overturn the 2020 election, called the new filing "election interference" and has sought to have the case dismissed.

The day after the election, Trump told Pence to "study up" on the claims of voter fraud in the states they had previously won, when they first ran for office together in 2016.

"It was just look at all of it, let me know what you think," Pence recalled of their Nov. 4 phone call. "But he told me the campaign was going to fight, was going to go to court and make challenges."

That weekend, as Biden was projected the winner, Pence tried to "encourage" Trump "as a friend" to consider all that he had accomplished.

"You took a dying party and gave it a new lease on life," Pence told Trump on Nov. 7.

As the days went on, the campaign team was giving Trump what Pence described as a "sober and somewhat pessimistic report" on the state of the election challenges they were waging.

"Pence gradually and gently tried to convince the defendant to accept the lawful results of the election,

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even if it meant they lost," the court filing said.

"Don't concede but recognize the process is over," Pence said he told his defeated running mate on Nov. 12.

Four days later at a private lunch, Pence encouraged the president to accept the results and run again in four years. "I don't know, 2024 is so far off," Trump responded, according to the filing.

By early December there was a shift. Trump was starting to think about Congress' role in the election process.

"For the first time, he mentioned to Pence the possibility of challenging the election results in the House of Representatives," the filing said, citing a Dec. 5 phone call.

It was the beginning of an intensifying public and private campaign, orchestrated by Trump, that in the coming weeks would bear down on Pence, and ultimately raise concern for his own safety. Some of the details are described in Pence's own book, "So Help Me God."

Trump and his team of outside lawyers, headed by Rudy Giuliani, "developed a new plan" after their legal challenges all failed. It was focused on seven states Trump had lost, guided by a proposal from law professor John Eastman to create alternate slates of electors who would claim the defeated president, in fact, had won.

And they turned their attention to Pence.

They falsely claimed that Pence, in his ministerial role as president of the Senate, could decide on Jan. 6 which slates of electors to select, or send them both back to the states for reconsideration, the prosecutors said.

"They lied to Pence, telling him there was substantial campaign fraud and concealing their orchestration of the plan," the prosecutor wrote. "And they lied to the public, falsely claiming that Pence had the authority during the certification proceeding to reject electoral votes."

Members of Trump's campaign staff called the plan "crazy" and referred derogatorily to those organizing it as characters from the "Star Wars bar."

Trump told Pence of his plans for a Jan. 6 rally and expressed the thought it would be a "big day," the filing said.

As they had lunch together a couple days later, on Dec. 21, Pence again encouraged Trump not to look at the election as a loss but "just an intermission."

Pence told the president that if they still came up short, "after we have exhausted every legal process in the courts and Congress," then Trump should "take a bow."

But Trump would not relent. On Dec. 23, Trump retweeted "Operation Pence Card," and began to "directly and repeatedly pressure Pence," prosecutors said, and continued "summoning" his supporters to amass in Washington.

On Christmas Day, when Pence called the president to wish him a Merry Christmas, Trump told him he had the discretion over certification while presiding in Congress.

"You know I don't think I have the authority to change the outcome," Pence said.

As Jan. 6 approached, the days were becoming more desperate for Trump. The president tore into his vice president during the New Year's morning phone call. The next day he asked the Georgia secretary of state to "find 11,780 votes" that could prove he won the election in that state. He later told Pence a senator would be seeking a 10-day delay in certification during the proceedings. "You can make the decision," Trump told Pence.

Pence took five pages of contemporaneous notes during a meeting at the White House when Trump directed his team to outline the plan for Pence and said, "When there's fraud the rules change."

Pence told them, "I'm not seeing this argument working."

"The conspirators were undeterred," the prosecutor wrote, and Trump continued to publicly pressure Pence.

"I hope Mike Pence comes through for us," Trump said at a rally in Georgia.

Meeting privately in the Oval Office on Jan. 5, the defeated president told his vice president once more,

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"I think you have the power to decertify."

When Pence was unmoved, Trump threatened to criticize him publicly: "I'm going to have to say you did a great disservice."

This concerned Pence, the prosecutor wrote, and the vice president's Secret Service detail was alerted.

Trump called Pence later that evening, with his lawyers, to again raise the issue of sending the electors back to the states. Trump called Pence again late that night: "You gotta be tough tomorrow."

The next morning, Jan. 6, before Trump took the rally stage, he made one more call to Pence.

When Pence again refused the request, the prosecutor wrote, Trump was incensed.

Trump reinserted remarks targeting Pence into his speech. And Trump sent a crowd of angry supporters to the Capitol.

Iranian supreme leader praises missile attack on Israel, saying Iran will do it again if necessary

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Friday praised the country's recent missile strike on Israel and said it was ready to do it again if necessary, state TV reported.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in his first appearance as leader at Friday prayers in about five years, called the missile strike a "shining" job by Iran's armed forces.

On Tuesday, Iran launched at least 180 missiles at Israel, the latest in a series of rapidly escalating attacks between Israel and Iran and its allies that threaten to push the Middle East closer to a nationwide war. Israel said it intercepted many of the missiles, and officials in Washington said U.S. destroyers assisted in Israel's defense.

Iran said most of its missiles hit their targets. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Khamenei, 85, said in a 40-minute speech to thousands of people at the Mosalla mosque, the main prayer site in Tehran, that the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel nearly a year ago on Oct. 7, 2023, was a legitimate action by the Palestinian people.

He said Tuesday's missile barrage was based on international law, the country's law and Islamic beliefs.

He urged nations from "Afghanistan to Yemen and from Iran to Gaza and Yemen" to be ready to take action against the enemy, and praised those who had died doing so.

"Our resisting people in Lebanon and Palestine, you brave fighters, you loyal and patient people, these martyrdoms and the blood that was shed shouldn't shake your determination but make you more persistent," he said.

Khamenei gave half of the speech in Arabic as he addressed his comments to Arab nations.

His last appearance at Friday prayers was after the death of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in 2020 in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad.

A ceremony commemorating the death of Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was held before Khamenei's speech. Most high-ranking Iranian officials, including President Masoud Pezeshkian and top Revolutionary Guard generals, attended the ceremony.

Iran is Hezbollah's main backer and has sent weapons and billions of dollars to the group.

Also on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, where he was expected to discuss ongoing fighting between Israel and Hezbollah with Lebanese officials.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Iran sent a shipment of aid to Lebanon, including 10 tons of food and medicine.

Today in History: October 5, Steve Jobs dies at 56

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Oct. 5, the 279th day of 2024. There are 87 days left in the year.

Today in history:

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On Oct. 5, 2011, Steve Jobs, the Apple founder and former chief executive who invented and master-marketed ever-sleeker gadgets that transformed everyday technology, died in Palo Alto, California, at age 56.

Also on this date:

In 1892, the Dalton Gang, notorious for its train robberies, was practically wiped out while attempting to rob a pair of banks in Coffeyville, Kansas.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman delivered the first televised White House address as he spoke on the world food crisis.

In 1953, Earl Warren was sworn in as the 14th chief justice of the United States, succeeding Fred M. Vinson.

In 1958, racially desegregated Clinton High School in Clinton, Tennessee, was nearly leveled by an early morning bombing.

In 1983, Solidarity founder Lech Walesa (lek vah-WEN'-sah) was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1986, Nicaraguan Sandinista government soldiers shot down a cargo plane carrying weapons and ammunition bound for Contra rebels; the event exposed a web of illegal arms shipments, leading to the Iran-Contra Scandal.

In 1989, a jury in Charlotte, North Carolina, convicted evangelist Jim Bakker of using his television show to defraud followers. Initially sentenced to 45 years in prison, Bakker was freed in December 1994 after serving 4 1/2 years.

In 2001, tabloid photo editor Robert Stevens died from inhaled anthrax, the first of a series of anthrax cases in Florida, New York, New Jersey and Washington.

In 2018, a jury in Chicago convicted white police officer Jason Van Dyke of second-degree murder in the 2014 shooting of Black teenager Laquan McDonald.

In 2020, President Donald Trump made a dramatic return to the White House after leaving the military hospital where he was being treated for COVID-19.

Today's Birthdays: College Football Hall of Fame coach Barry Switzer is 87. Rock musician Steve Miller is 81. Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, D-Md., is 81. Rock singer Brian Johnson (AC/DC) is 77. Actor Karen Allen is 73. Singer-songwriter Bob Geldof is 73. Writer-filmmaker Clive Barker is 72. Astrophysicist-author Neil deGrasse Tyson is 66. Architect-designer Maya Lin is 65. Golf Hall of Famer Laura Davies is 61. Hockey Hall of Famer Mario Lemieux is 59. Hockey Hall of Famer Patrick Roy is 59. Actor Guy Pearce is 57. Actor Josie Bissett is 54. Actor Parminder Nagra (pahr-MIHN'-da NAH'-grah) is 49. Actor Kate Winslet is 49. Actor Jesse Eisenberg is 41. NFL tight end Travis Kelce is 35. Actor Jacob Tremblay is 18.