

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Wednesday, Oct. 9

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, capri blend, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

Community Coffee Hour at United Methodist Church, 9:30 a.m.

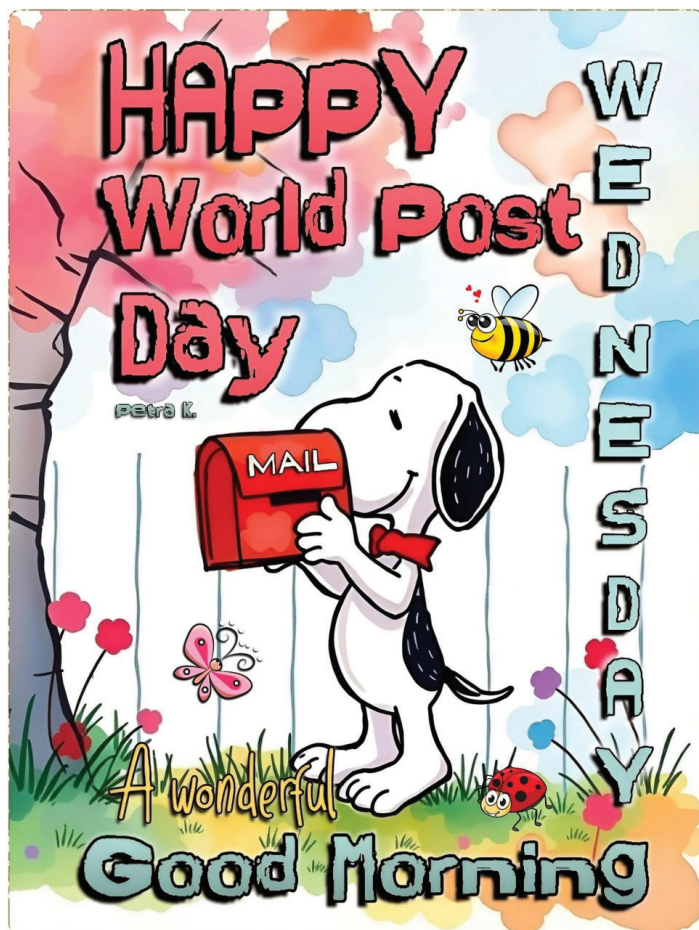
Groton C&MA: Kids' Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study at 7 pm.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

## Thursday, Oct. 10

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes with



gravy, California blend, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, spudsters.

NEC Cross Country at Webster, 1 p.m.

JH Football at Sisseton, 4 p.m.

Volleyball at Milbank (7th at elementary, 4 p.m.; 8th at armory, 4 p.m.; C at 5:15, JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity)

Groton Lions Club meeting, 104 November Main, 6 p.m.

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

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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.**

## Florida Braces for Milton

Hurricane Milton is set to make landfall in the Tampa Bay area this evening as a Category 3 storm with winds of 111-129 mph, the first major hurricane to hit the area in over 100 years.

The region's west-facing geographic location and typical weather patterns make direct hurricane landfalls less common but not impossible. The prevailing east-to-west trade winds often push storms originating in the Gulf of Mexico westward. The shallow continental shelf off the coast—up to 90 miles offshore with depths less than 300 feet—creates ideal conditions for large storm surges, essentially acting as a ramp allowing the water to build up as it approaches the shore.

The last major hurricane to directly hit the region was in 1921 when a Category 3 storm brought 110 mph winds and an 11-foot storm surge that caused severe damage, costing roughly \$180M in 2024 dollars. Milton is expected to move across central Florida before entering the Atlantic Ocean.

## US Lead Pipe Removal

US regulators finalized rules yesterday requiring water utility operators to replace all lead pipes used in water lines within 10 years. The regulation, first announced in November, also requires utilities to test all water systems used by elementary schools, the first-ever national requirement.

Lead replaced iron as the preferred metal for drinking water pipes in the US in the late 1800s due to its durability, malleability, and resistance to corrosion. However, the health effects of lead poisoning—which include developmental issues in children and heart disease in adults—have long been known. By 1900, roughly 70% of large cities used lead in water pipes, as well as in gasoline, paint, and more. Its usage in pipes in new construction was federally banned in 1986, but communities continued to be affected, particularly in Flint, Michigan's water crisis a decade ago.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates more than 9 million US homes are serviced water via lead pipes. Analysts say the cost of replacement could exceed \$45B.

## NYC Scandal Fallout

A former New York City official was arrested yesterday and charged with witness tampering and destroying evidence tied to an ongoing federal probe surrounding Mayor Eric Adams (D) and his administration.

Mohamed Bahi, who served as a senior community affairs liaison and resigned Monday, is the latest person in a growing number of Adams administration officials who have resigned or either been fired, charged, or investigated. Bahi's federal charges stem from illegal contributions to Adams' 2021 mayoral campaign as well as allegedly deleting an encrypted messaging app (used to communicate with Adams and others) hours before federal authorities searched Bahi's home.

New York City's First Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright also resigned yesterday, following the resignations of her husband, Schools Chancellor David Banks, and her brother-in-law, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety Phil Banks.

The latest developments come after Adams was indicted last month on charges including bribery and wire fraud. Adams has vowed to continue his term.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

OpenAI signs deal with Hearst—publishing giant responsible for Esquire, Cosmopolitan, and more—that will provide direct citations to Hearst's content via ChatGPT.

New York Jets fire head coach Robert Saleh after 2-3 start to the NFL season.

Luis Tiant, Cuban-born three-time MLB All-Star pitcher, dies at age 83.

Disney World, Universal Studios, and Sea World among theme parks to close as central Florida braces for Hurricane Milton.

## Science & Technology

Nobel Prize in Physics awarded to John Hopfield (Princeton University) and Geoffrey Hinton (University of Toronto) for foundational work in machine learning.

Study suggests elephants remember former zookeepers by scent more than a decade after separation; findings shed light on the long-term memory and social relationships of the animals.

Engineers demonstrate solar-powered desalination system requiring no external batteries to remove salt from water.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.0%, Dow +0.3%, Nasdaq +1.5%) led by tech stocks.

China imposes tariffs on EU brandy imports following the bloc's tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles; France, which supplies 99% of China's brandy imports, expected to be hard-hit.

PepsiCo reduces 2024 revenue outlook following disappointing Q3 earnings report.

Walmart expands pet care offerings—including veterinary care, grooming—to five locations in Arizona, Georgia.

## Politics & World Affairs

Over a dozen states sue TikTok, accusing the social media platform of harming children's mental health through addictive algorithms, violating consumer protection laws.

Israel says it has killed at least two unnamed, would-be successors to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah; Hezbollah has not commented as of this writing.

FBI arrest Afghan man who was allegedly plotting an Election Day attack in the US.

Supreme Court indicates it is likely to uphold Biden administration's 2022 regulations on sales of unserialized gun part kits, following oral arguments.

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## Girls soccer advance to state championship semifinal game

Groton Area defeated Vermillion, 11-1, in the first round of the state soccer playoffs held Tuesday in Groton. Groton Area will host the semifinal game on Saturday.

### Scoring:

#### First Half:

34:22: Faith Traphagen

26:46: Brooklyn Hansen

6:36: Laila Roberts

1:35: Jerrica Locke assisted by Brooklyn Hansen

Vermillion: 0:34: Taylor Reuvers

35:51: McKenna Tietz

31:06: Brooklyn Hansen

28:15: Jerica Locke

27:24: Kayla Lehr

25:53: Laila Roberts

11:53: Jerica Locke assisted by Kennedy Hansen

5:45: McKenna Tietz - Game ends

The boys travelled to Vermillion and lost their game, 12-0. The game had to go 6- minutes before the mercy rule took effect.



**Jerica Locke (left) and McKenna Tietz (right) squeeze out Vermillion's Marasia Warren.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Laila Roberts gets in front of Vermillion's Taylor Reuvers.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

**Faith Traphagen moves the ball to keep it away from a Vermillion player.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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## Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

- ✓ Pro Police
- ✓ Pro Constitution
- ✓ Pro Family



Visit the Campaign Site  
[ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)



Paid for by Manhart for State House

# MANHART

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE

### DISTRICT 1

[facebook.com/ManhartLogan](https://facebook.com/ManhartLogan) | [ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)

**General Election - Nov. 5**  
**Absentee Voting has begun**

## **South Dakota Minimum Wage Will Increase January 1**

Effective January 1, 2025, South Dakota's minimum wage for non-tipped employees will be \$11.50 per hour, up from \$11.20 per hour in calendar year 2024.

For tipped employees, the hourly minimum wage for calendar year 2025 will be no less than \$5.75 per hour, up from \$5.60 in calendar year 2024.

The changes were posted on the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) website.

The state's minimum wage is adjusted annually as a result of an initiated measure approved by South Dakota voters in 2014. Increases in the state minimum wage rate are based on the national cost of living index. State law requires the rate to be rounded up to the nearest five cents.

With limited exceptions, South Dakota's minimum wage applies regardless of the age of the employee, the number of hours worked each week, or length of employment. When utilizing the tip credit for tipped employees, the wages paid by the employer and tips received by the employee must equal at least the state minimum wage. The employer must keep a record of all tips received by employees.

## **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**



## Specialty Basketball Games Set for 2024-25

Aberdeen, S.D. – Opponents and game dates are set for the Northern State men’s and women’s basketball programs and Northern State Athletics is ready to announce the 2024-25 specialty games for the Wolves today. This season’s specialty games will feature the annual I Hate Winter weekend, throwback night from the Aberdeen Civic Arena, and a Kids Day with the Northern State women.

### Throwback Night at the Aberdeen Civic Arena

The Northern State men and women will face off against Dakota State (women) and Dickinson State (men) from the Aberdeen Civic Arena on Monday, October 28 in a pair of exhibition contests. Tip-off times for the exhibition games are set for 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. with the women followed by the men.

Tickets to the Aberdeen Civic Arena night are not included in the Wolves Club season tickets. Tickets to the contest will be available at the door or can be purchased ahead of time at [nsuwolves.univeristytickets.com](https://nsuwolves.univeristytickets.com). Prices for the doubleheader are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students/kids.

The first 200 students in attendance at the Throwback Night will receive a free Waldo-themed t-shirt when they enter the Aberdeen Civic Arena.

### Kids Day

The Northern State women’s basketball program will host Pittsburg State, Nebraska Kearney, and Minnesota Crookston for the November 8 and 9 weekend in Wachs Arena. Friday’s contest against the Pitt State will tip-off at 12 p.m. with area school districts receiving free admission. School district tickets will be coordinated prior to November 8. Districts looking to take part can contact Sam Masten at [Samuel.masten@northern.edu](mailto:masten@northern.edu) for details and to determine availability.

### I Hate Winter

The annual I Hate Winter weekend returns to Aberdeen January 24 and 25 with Northern State hosting Minnesota State and Winona State. The men will tip-off first each evening with game times slated for 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. on Friday and 4 and 6 p.m. on Saturday. Giveaways and full details will be released at a future date.



## The Life of Loretta Abeln



Loretta K. Abeln, 91, of Aberdeen, SD, passed away Sunday, September 22, 2024, at Avera Mother Joseph Manor.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 12, 2024, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, with Father Greg Tschakert officiating.

A time of fellowship and luncheon will follow Mass at the parish hall.

Interment will be at the Groton Union Cemetery.

Visitation will be 6-7 p.m., Friday, Oct 11, at Schriver's Memorial Chapel with a 7:00 p.m. liturgical wake service.

In lieu of flowers please consider donating to the PEO Chapter AC to help young ladies receiving scholarships for their education as requested by Loretta. Please make checks directly to Chapter AC and give to the family or the PEO Chapter.

Schriver's Memorial Mortuary and Crematory, 414 5th Avenue NW, Aberdeen, is in charge of arrangements. Family and friends may sign the online guestbook at [www.schriversememorial.com](http://www.schriversememorial.com). Services will be recorded and uploaded to our website following the service.

Loretta K. Abeln was born on November 12, 1932 to Andrew and Magdalena (Ehnes) Meier in Roscoe, South Dakota. She attended Glover rural school

and took High School by mail at American School. She attended for one year at Northern State Teachers' College.

She then taught school in Ordway, South Dakota, for one year and then managed Fanny Farmers Candy Shop in Aberdeen for one year. She married Alvin Abeln in Aberdeen on June 27, 1953. They lived in Brookings, Fort Benning, Junction City, Kansas, and Germany while Alvin was in the service for one year. They returned to the farm in Groton.

Loretta was a successful Avon representative for 55 years and used Avon products until the day she passed away. She was a Jaycette District VP for 2 years, PEO, Alter Society, and several bridge clubs, marathons and duplicate. She was very competitive playing cards and loved to win! She belonged to Olive Grove and Moccasin Creek golf clubs. Alvin and she spent several winters in Arizona. Alvin passed away in 1997 and she moved from the farm to a home she built in Aberdeen in 2001.

She belonged to the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Groton and now Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Aberdeen. Alvin and Loretta were big believers in education and hard work. They supported all their grandchildren with college expenses. Her fondest memories with the family were making some of her favorite dishes: egg and noodles, rhubarb crisp, chocolate fudge topping toffee, and poppy seed rolls.

Grateful for having shared her life are her five children, grandchildren, and spouses, Doug (Della) Abeln and children, Bethany and Mark (Kelly) and child Kaden Kampa; Don (Vonne) Abeln and children, Isaac (Nikki), and children Dillon and Alex, Philip (Lindsey), and children Kali and Aubrey, Tony (Kayla) and children Selah, Shema and Lily; Dale (Dianne) Abeln and children, Lisa (Mitch) Thompson and children Kate and Anna, Adam (Katherine); and Rob (Lisa) Abeln and children, Zachary, Taylor and Brady, and Denice (Doug) Dunker; she is also survived by her sister Shirley Gellhaus and brother Andy Meier.

She was preceded in death by her mother and father, Magdalena and Andrew Meier; spouse, Alvin Abeln; and ten brothers and sisters, George Meier, Betty Daschle, Henry Meier, Bernie Meier, Larry Meier, Roy Meier, Margie Veith, Carolyn Heier, Adele Meier, and Frances Meier (died in infancy).

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## Base Kamp Trap Team wins Class B Division

The 2024 Aberdeen Gun Club trap league wrapped up its season last week. Locally sponsored Base Kamp Lodge trap team were champions in the Class B Division. L-R Bruce Babcock, Greg Dennert, Tom Mahan, Gentry Gauer, Lon Gellhaus, and Brett Christianson. (Not pictured Ashton Holmes and Turner Thompson.) (Photo courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Kessler 's trap team were champions in the Class A division. L-R Ron Beldon, Thad Albee, Bob Pray, Colton Hanson, Maggie Hanson, Swede Hanson. (Not pictured Jason Hanson) (Photo

courtesy Bruce Babcock)

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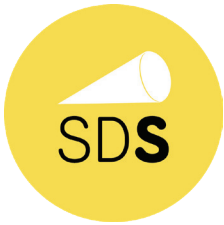
**Gentry Gauer of Base Kamp Lodge earned individual honors as Class B singles 16 yard runner up champion and season singles 50 straight award. Fellow Base Kamp lodge teammate Turner Thompson (not pictured) earned individual awards as well as Class B tied runner-up champion all around singles and champion Class B singles handicap.** (Photo

courtesy Bruce Babcock)



**Swede Hanson won individual awards as Class A 16 yard runner-up champion, champion handicap and all around champion.** (Photo

courtesy Bruce Babcock)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Regents director: Dearth of need-based aid dings South Dakota's college affordability**

**Low tuition rates eclipsed by scholarship options in neighboring states**

**BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 8, 2024 5:53 PM**

South Dakota's state universities have lower tuition prices than any surrounding state, but the final price students pay is still the highest in the region on average.

That's because other states allow their schools to set custom tuition prices for students, and they all have more robust income-based financial aid programs than South Dakota, Board of Regents Director Nathan Lukkes told lawmakers on Tuesday.

The note on "sticker price" vs. net price of regional tuition was part of a discussion on the board's performance measures with the Government Operations and Audit Committee meeting in Pierre.

The price of college in comparison to South Dakota's neighbors was among the metrics Lukkes presented to lawmakers, alongside figures on student retention and academic completion, nursing licensure and the percentage of graduates in teaching, health care, business, science, technology, engineering and math.

Sen. Dean Wink, R-Howes, wanted to know how South Dakota schools' regional net price ranking is so high in spite of their lower tuition rates.

"Where are we getting outgunned? Is it public or is it private?" said Howes.

Private institutions and public universities in other states have advantages South Dakota does not, Lukkes said, even in the face of price controls.

Recent tuition freezes have held down the sticker price at schools like South Dakota State University or Black Hills State University, Lukkes said. In 2020, he said, Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming had lower sticker prices for tuition.

Moving to number one in that metric hasn't moved the needle on South Dakota's regional net price ranking, though. Surrounding states have more financial assistance options for students with lower incomes. Minnesota's North Star Promise program offers free in-state tuition to families with an adjusted gross income of \$80,000 or less each year, Lukkes said.

A 15% increase in funding for the South Dakota's Opportunity Scholarship in 2023 and the launch of the Freedom Scholarship in 2022 have helped improve the options for students with lower incomes.

"Even though we've gotten a lot better, we're way behind the competition," Lukkes said.

Private institutions, as well as a handful of out-of-state public institutions, also adjust prices for students.

"They'll have a sticker price, and then they can essentially cut off 10%, 20%, whatever they think they need to give you to sweeten the deal," Lukkes said. "That's not something that we do here in South Dakota."

There are advantages to that practice, he said, but he also said "it's easy to get in a spot where you're chasing your tail and giving away more than you can recoup with enrollment growth."

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Noem touts SD's top income growth but doesn't mention last year's bottom rank

BY: SETH TUPPER - OCTOBER 8, 2024 5:29 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem celebrated South Dakota's nation-leading growth in a category of household income, but she didn't mention a reason why the state was well positioned to improve: It ranked last during the prior year.

Noem's office issued a news release Tuesday saying South Dakota "once again led the nation in income growth in 2023."

"South Dakotans are thriving because we defend Freedom and advance their opportunities to pursue their dreams," said a statement from the Republican governor, which continued her two-year-old practice of using a capital "F" when writing the word "freedom."

The release cited newly published data from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. The numbers show South Dakota's real median household income grew by 17% percent in 2023, which was the best growth rate in the nation.

But a little digging into the same dataset reveals South Dakota's real median household income fell by 16% in 2022, which was the nation's worst decline that year.

Noem's office did not immediately respond to a Searchlight request for comment about that statistic.

Noem's news release also said South Dakota ranks second in real median household income growth over the past five years, which is true. The state's rate of growth from 2018 to 2023 was 15%, behind only Alaska's rate of 19%.

Real median household income is the inflation-adjusted (i.e., "real") midpoint of all household incomes in a given geography.

South Dakota's real median household income in 2023 was \$81,740, which ranked 22nd in the nation.

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Burn pit law causes spike in claims to state Department of Veterans Affairs

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 8, 2024 4:48 PM

A federal law extending medical benefits to service members exposed to toxic burn pits has hiked the number of claims processed annually by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs since 2021.

Department Secretary Greg Whitlock told the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee on Tuesday in Pierre that the recent spike in claims is directly related to the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins (PACT) Act, signed into law in 2022.

"Our claims office has been processing a record number of claims," Whitlock said.

The act widened the number of veterans eligible for benefits as a result of exposure to toxic burn pit smoke, or to chemicals like Agent Orange, during their service. The law added 23 illnesses to the list of conditions that the federal Department of Veterans Affairs presumes are connected to military service, eliminating the need to prove that the conditions are connected to military service through medical examinations.

Eligibility for benefits is tied to current service-related health concerns, with veterans who don't have current conditions becoming eligible for VA care in phases. Veterans can also be eligible for VA care under previously existing criteria.

The latest data from the federal VA shows 6,956 PACT Act claims filed in South Dakota through Sept. 16.

The state-level veterans department processes applications for benefits, including applications for PACT Act benefits, and forwards them to the appropriate federal agency. Veterans can also apply for PACT Act benefits online through U.S. Veterans Affairs.

In 2021, the department took in fewer than 600 claims a month for all types of veteran benefits, according to a performance metrics document the department delivered to the committee. Today, two years after the PACT Act was signed, Whitlock's team is handling more than 1,000 claims a month, and is on pace to surpass the 2023 annual high of 11,346.

The office has maintained customer service throughout, Whitlock told the lawmakers. Just two of the department's 8,620 claims filed through August of this year have taken more than two business days to process. That's an improvement over 2023, when 42 claims took between three and four days.

In an emailed statement sent after Tuesday's meeting, Whitlock said most of the claims processed in South Dakota were for Vietnam War veterans who'd been denied benefits when they returned home decades ago.

Whitlock wrote that the spike in work, which has not required the department to hire any additional help, is "a good thing."

"Since the passage, our team has worked diligently on outreach to ensure veterans who are entitled to the care receive it," he wrote.

Whitlock also told the committee that his agency is working to address hiring difficulties at the state Veterans Home in Hot Springs. The home is an assisted living facility, but also offers physical and speech therapy, mental health services and a range of other services.

The home has relied on contracted temp employees to help meet its staffing needs since 2022.

"There are two other nursing homes we compete with, plus the VA hospital (in Hot Springs) and the Fall River Hospital," Whitlock said.

The department partnered with Western Dakota Technical College by offering a satellite location for the school's Licensed Professional Nursing program, Whitlock said, and is using a federal grant to help pay for its nursing recruitment efforts in southwestern South Dakota. The department also offers scholarships and student loan repayment programs.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Reproductive rights: Where do Trump and Harris stand?

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - OCTOBER 8, 2024 11:31 AM

WASHINGTON — This year's election marks the first time voters are casting ballots for president since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion and made reproductive rights a pivotal issue for many voters.

Democratic nominee Kamala Harris and Republican candidate Donald Trump have spoken about reproductive rights and abortion access numerous times during the last few months.

Trump's stance has evolved during his bid for the White House. He now contends he wouldn't sign legislation implementing nationwide abortion restrictions and wants regulation left up to the states.

Harris has consistently said a nationwide law guaranteeing access would ensure the choice is left up to women, not politicians.

"I pledge to you, when Congress passes a bill to put back in place the protections of Roe v. Wade, as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law," Harris said during the September presidential debate.

Trump patted himself on the back during the same debate for nominating three justices to the Supreme Court who later ruled with their conservative colleagues that the Constitution didn't provide the privacy rights that two former high court rulings said insulated women's choices about abortion.

"I did something that nobody thought was possible," Trump said about nominating the three justices. "The states are now voting. What she says is an absolute lie. And as far as the abortion ban, no, I'm not in favor of (an) abortion ban. But it doesn't matter because this issue has now been taken over by the states."

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Harris had just said that Trump would sign a nationwide abortion ban if elected and cited Project 2025, the blueprint for a second Trump administration released by the conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation. Trump and his campaign have repeatedly tried to distance themselves from the document and many of its proposals.

Many politicians have misrepresented the Supreme Court's ruling two years ago as sending abortion regulation back to the states. What the conservative justices wrote was that ending *Roe v. Wade* meant the "authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives."

That, of course, includes Congress and the president.

## Trump position varies

Trump's stance on abortion hasn't always been linear or consistent. He told Republicans earlier this year that they should avoid discussing the topic in order to win elections, while also courting organizations that view him as one avenue to ending abortion outright.

Trump got himself into hot water with several anti-abortion organizations and conservative Republicans in April when he announced he didn't want Congress to take action on a nationwide law.

Trump had previously said he would support a 16-week nationwide ban. He reiterated in his April announcement that he supported exceptions to state abortion bans in cases of rape, incest and the life of the pregnant patient.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America President Marjorie Dannenfelser released a statement following Trump's April announcement that she was "deeply disappointed."

"Saying the issue is 'back to the states' cedes the national debate to the Democrats who are working relentlessly to enact legislation mandating abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy," Dannenfelser wrote. "If successful, they will wipe out states' rights."

About a month later, in May, Trump, Dannenfelser, President of the Family Research Council Tony Perkins and South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham had a "terrific meeting," according to a statement released afterward.

Then, this summer, Trump muddied the waters on his abortion stance yet more, when he spoke to an organization in June that describes abortion as the "greatest atrocity facing" the United States that should be "eradicated entirely."

"These are going to be your years because you're going to make a comeback like just about no other group," Trump said to The Danbury Institute's inaugural Life & Liberty Forum. "I know what's happening. I know where you're coming from and where you're going. And I'll be with you side by side."

Then, most recently, Trump posted on social media during the vice presidential debate in early October that he would veto any nationwide abortion restrictions.

Trump wrote in all capital letters that he "would not support a federal abortion ban, under any circumstances, and would, in fact, veto it, because it is up to the states to decide based on the will of their voters (the will of the people!)."

Trump added that he didn't support access to abortion during the seventh, eight or ninth months of pregnancy, nor did he support killing babies, which is already illegal.

During 2021, about 93% of abortions took place within the first 13 weeks of gestation, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed by the Pew Research Center.

Another 6% of abortions took place between 14 and 20 weeks with the remaining 1% taking place after 21 weeks gestation, according to the data.

"Almost half of individuals who obtained an abortion after 20 weeks did not suspect they were pregnant until later in pregnancy, and other barriers to care included lack of information about where to access an abortion, transportation difficulties, lack of insurance coverage and inability to pay for the procedure," according to analysis from KFF Health.

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## Harris position

Harris has repeatedly criticized Trump for celebrating the Supreme Court's decision to end Roe v. Wade and said during the presidential debate that state restrictions have harmed women in innumerable ways.

"Trump abortion bans that make no exception even for rape and incest," Harris said. "Understand what that means — a survivor of a crime, a violation to their body, does not have the right to make a decision about what happens to their body next. That is immoral.

"And one does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government, and Donald Trump certainly, should not be telling a woman what to do with her body."

Harris has called for Democrats to eliminate the Senate's legislative filibuster to ease the passage of a bill that would restore nationwide abortion protections.

That Senate rule requires at least 60 lawmakers vote to advance legislation before that bill can move on to a simple majority passage vote. It is different than the so-called talking filibuster, when one senator, or a group of like-minded lawmakers, talk on the floor for hours to delay a vote.

Democrats would have to maintain their majority in the Senate against long odds to actually carve out an exception to the legislative filibuster, in order to pass a bill restoring Roe v. Wade. Democrats would also need to regain control of the House of Representatives.

A divided Congress, or a few Democrats objecting to rule changes in the Senate, would hinder Harris' efforts to sign nationwide abortion protections.

Democrats tried to pass legislation through the Senate that would have provided nationwide protections for abortion when they had unified control of government in 2022, but were blocked by the filibuster.

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins, Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine, Alaska GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Arizona independent Sen. Kyrsten Sinema later introduced a bipartisan bill that would have had a similar result, but it wasn't scheduled for a floor vote.

The legislation of two years ago likely would again fail to advance if Democrats sweep in the November elections, unless they carved out an exception in the Senate filibuster.

## Swing state voters

Harris' and Trump's stance on abortion access will likely play a role in determining which candidate wins the Electoral College in crucial swing states like Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Democrats are optimistic that abortion access ballot questions in 10 states will bolster Harris' chances through increased voter turnout and higher spending by reproductive rights organizations.

While many of the referendums are in solidly blue or red states, the proposals in Arizona and Florida could affect turnout and motivation.

Louis Jacobson, senior columnist at Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia Center for Politics, wrote earlier this month that a key question on Election Day will be whether "abortion-rights advocates extend their perfect 7-for-7 record since Roe v. Wade was overturned."

Voters will decide on numerous other ballot questions as well, including recreational cannabis, increases in the minimum wage and ranked-choice voting.

In an earlier post about the abortion ballot questions, Jacobson and Samantha Putterman wrote that "(e)very post-Roe measure has been on the ballot during a relatively low turnout election—either the November midterm, a primary ballot, or an off-year election."

"Any measure that makes the ballot in 2024 will face voters in November of a presidential year, when turnout is far higher," they wrote. "This has the potential to hurt abortion rights backers, because moderate and liberal voters have recently flexed their electoral muscles more when turnout is low."

Public opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center for the past three decades have consistently shown support for keeping abortion legal outpacing support for making the procedure illegal in most or all cases.

The 2024 survey showed that 63% of people want abortion legal in most or all cases while 36% believe



it should be illegal in all or most cases.

*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.*

## **Amendment F: Sending the debate over Medicaid work requirements to voters**

**BY: SETH TUPPER - OCTOBER 8, 2024 7:00 AM**

Supporters of work requirements say they're a reasonable modification to Medicaid expansion. Opponents say they're an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on people who need health care.

Voters have a choice between those two perspectives as they consider Amendment F, one of seven statewide questions on South Dakota's Nov. 5 general election ballot.

Medicaid is a federal-state health insurance program for people with low incomes. In the past, Medicaid was not available to able-bodied adults younger than 65, unless they were below the poverty line and had young children.

In 2022, South Dakota voters expanded Medicaid eligibility to adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty level. The expansion is now part of the state constitution and can only be altered by voters. It includes a ban on "greater or additional burdens or restrictions" such as a work requirement.

Earlier this year, legislators decided to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot this fall. Amendment F would allow lawmakers to consider a work requirement if the federal government permits it. The Democratic Biden administration does not allow it, but future Republican presidents might.

Rep. Tony Vehhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, was a prime sponsor of the bill that sent Amendment F to voters. The measure "is not about establishing a work requirement," he said during a September debate in Mitchell.

"It's about removing a prohibition that's in our constitution," he said.

While that's true, a bill to impose work requirements would likely succeed under the current and foreseeable political conditions in South Dakota. Many Republican legislators support a work requirement, and 90% of legislators are Republican, as is the governor.

Venhuizen said those who can work their way off Medicaid should be encouraged to do so.

"I think we have social programs to give people a hand up, help them get back on their feet, help them become self-supporting again," he said during the September debate.

Legislators could include exceptions for people such as cancer patients, students in higher education, and those caring for young kids or sick relatives, he added.

Amendment F's critics say a work requirement would do more harm than good.

Democratic former legislator Mel Olson, who now works for KMIT Radio in Mitchell, spoke critically of work requirements while asking questions during last month's debate. Olson said imposing a work requirement would enlarge state bureaucracy with new employees, regulations and enforcement mechanisms.

Venhuizen replied that South Dakota has administered work requirements in other social programs, "so I'm very confident we'd be able to do it in an efficient way."

Olson also said South Dakota's unemployment rate of about 2% suggests nobody is "freeloading." A 2021 national analysis by KFF, a nonprofit formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation, found that 61% of Medicaid enrollees from ages 19 to 64 were working full- or part-time. Thirty percent were not working because they were caregivers, were ill or disabled, or were attending school. The remaining 9% were retired, unable to find work, or not working for another reason.

Two states, Georgia and Arkansas, have imposed Medicaid work requirements. Georgia is not a typical Medicaid expansion state, having conducted a more limited expansion of eligibility than the one allowed by the federal Affordable Care Act. The Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation focused on health care, reports that Georgia's "stringent requirements for documenting and reporting work hours" have held new enrollments far short of the state's expansion projections.

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A judge invalidated Arkansas' work requirements in 2019 after the Trump administration approved them. The administration failed to adequately consider how the requirements would affect Medicaid's core purpose of providing health care for needy people, the judge ruled.

During the nine months that the Arkansas requirements were in effect, about 18,000 enrollees lost coverage, according to KFF. The Commonwealth Fund said survey research revealed many enrollees "found the reporting process confusing or inaccessible, and nearly a third of the target population was unaware of the policy altogether." People who lost coverage reported delaying care, skipping medications and incurring medical debt, the foundation said, and there was no increase in employment among the target population.

Shelly Ten Napel, CEO of the Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas, called the Arkansas work requirements "an abject failure" during the September debate in Mitchell.

She predicted a similar outcome for work requirements in South Dakota, saying they would hinder efforts to enroll people under the voter-approved expansion.

"We need to head in the right direction, versus rolling this back and implementing a policy that has been proven to keep people from the health care that they need," Ten Napel said.

Venhuizen countered that "there really hasn't been a state that has had the time to get a Medicaid work requirement off the ground in an expansion program and have time to make it work."

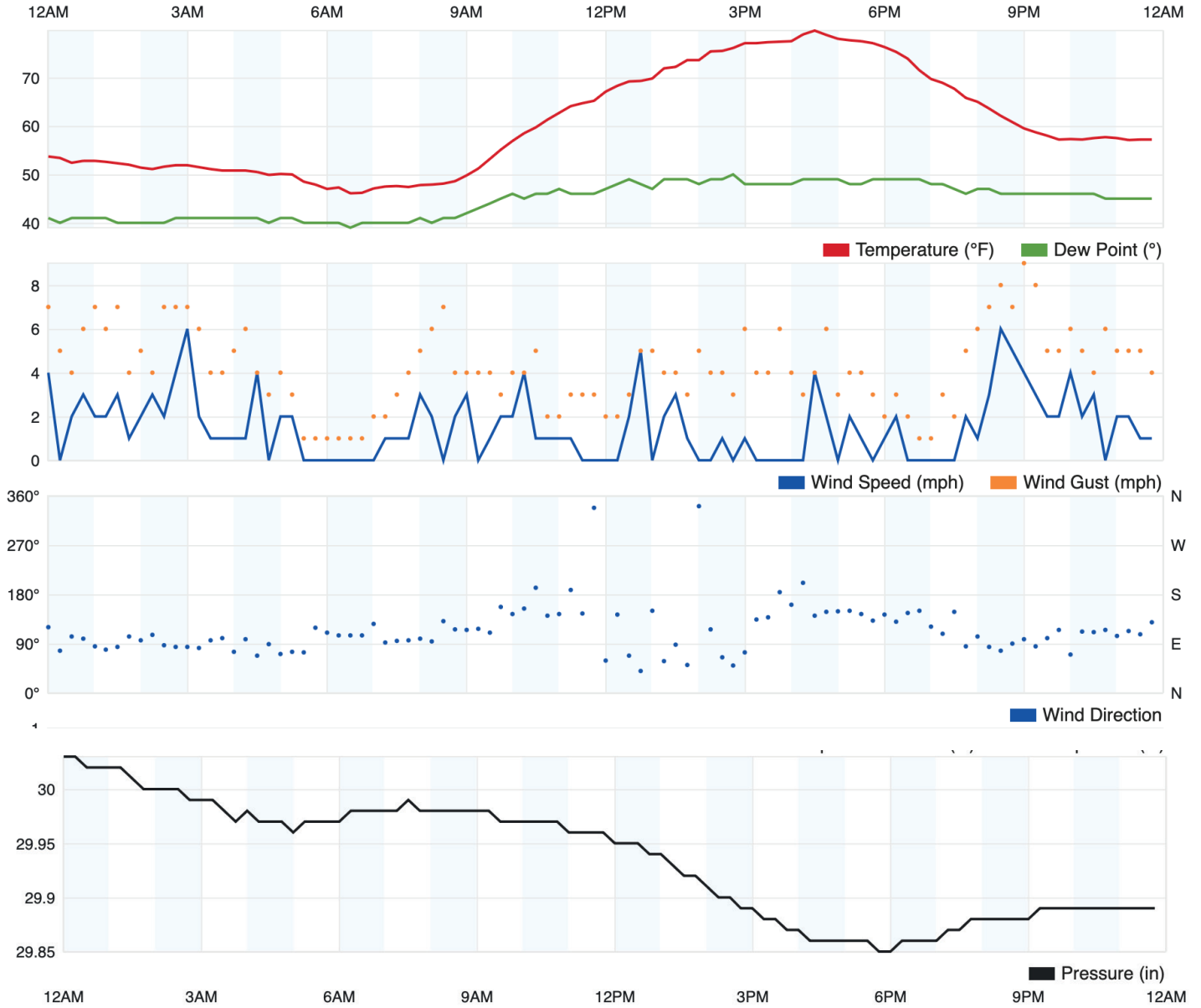
Approximately 145,000 South Dakotans are enrolled in Medicaid, including about 27,000 who've enrolled via expanded eligibility. The state's current annual budget for Medicaid is about \$2 billion, with 70% of the funding from the federal government.

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

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Today



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 47 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 85 °F

Increasing  
Clouds

Thursday  
Night



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 65 °F

Partly Sunny

## Dry and Warm

Today

HAZE



Highs: 79-87°

Tonight

HAZE



Lows: 47-53

Thursday

HAZE



Breezy

Highs: 82-89

Southerly winds  
gusting to 25 mph



Heightened fire  
concerns over  
central SD

Minimum RH Forecast (%)

	10/9 Wed			10/10 Thu		
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm
Aberdeen	56	29	34	71	54	30
Britton	47	26	33	62	47	28
Brookings	47	24	28	63	43	27
Chamberlain	47	25	27	60	46	22
Clark	50	29	34	60	49	33
Eagle Butte	34	18	21	44	33	19
Ellendale	52	25	30	66	47	25
Eureka	46	20	24	57	42	20
Gettysburg	46	26	31	62	45	24
Huron	54	25	30	67	47	26
Kennebec	48	26	29	64	45	21
McIntosh	32	15	18	39	28	18
Milbank	56	28	32	66	41	26
Miller	47	27	31	62	46	27
Mobridge	41	17	21	51	40	19
Murdo	41	22	25	55	37	15
Pierre	48	26	29	64	45	21
Redfield	56	28	31	69	54	28
Sisseton	48	26	32	55	40	26
Watertown	48	27	33	64	49	31
Webster	45	26	30	60	44	29
Wheaton	48	28	32	66	44	25

- Hazy sky due to elevated smoke

- Near surface smoke is possible across central and north central South Dakota

The calendar may say October but it sure does not feel like it as high temperatures today and Thursday will run about 20 to 25 degrees above average! Ongoing fires out west will result in smoke aloft over the area through at least Thursday. Portions of north central to central SD could experience smoke near the surface. Winds will increase on Thursday, with gusts of 25 mph. This in combination with relative humidity values dropping to 15-30% and ongoing dry conditions, leads to a heightened fire weather concern over central to north central SD.

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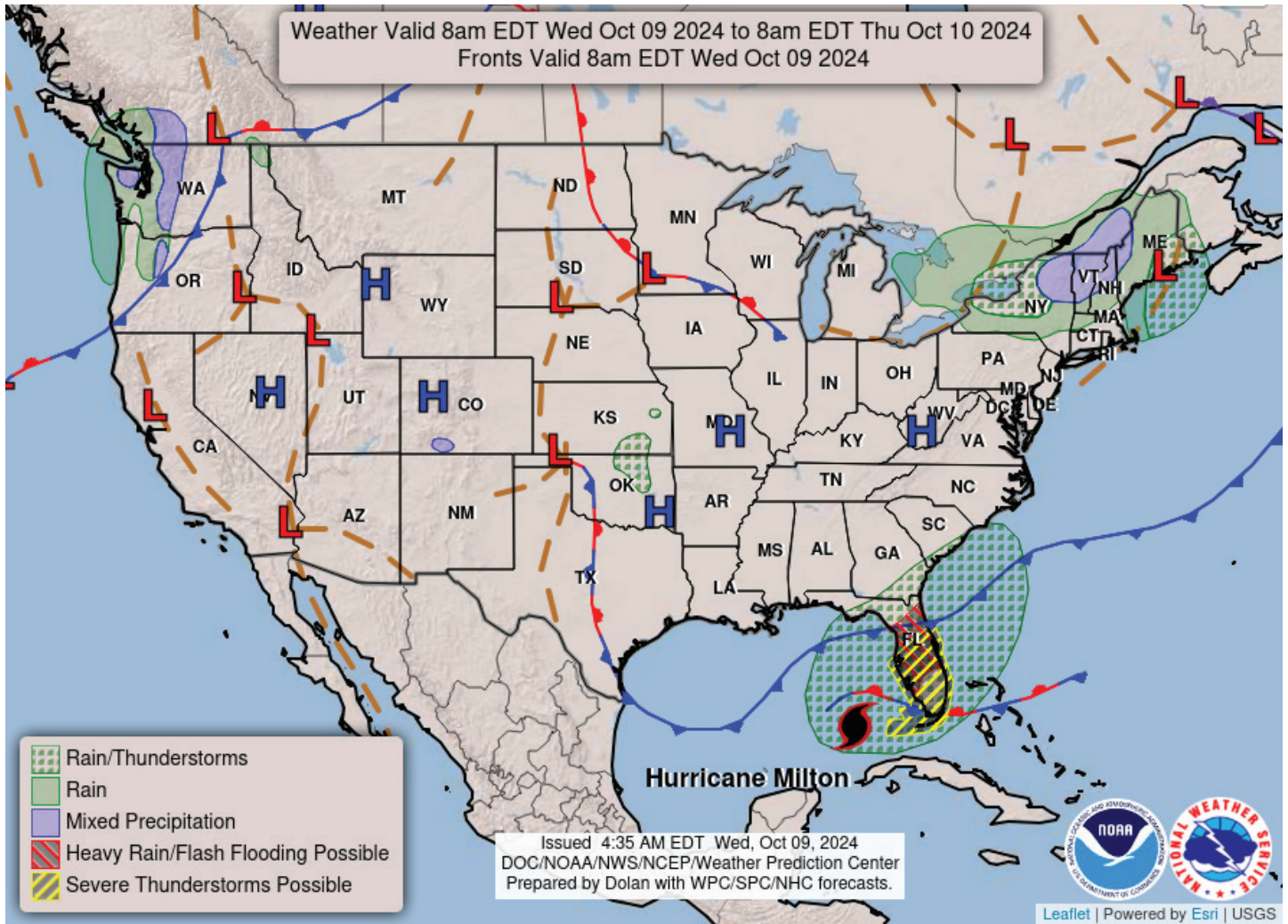
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 80 °F at 4:26 PM**  
**Low Temp: 46 °F at 6:35 AM**  
**Wind: 8 mph at 12:04 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 2020  
Record Low: 14 in 1964  
Average High: 63  
Average Low: 37  
Average Precip in Oct.: 0.68  
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 19.01  
Precip Year to Date: 19.75  
Sunset Tonight: 6:58:32 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41:39 am

Day length: 11 hours, 18 minutes



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## Today in Weather History

October 9, 1964: Record cold occurred on this day in 1964 across parts of central and northeast South Dakota with temperatures falling into the mid-teens to around 20 degrees at many locations. Sisseton had a record low of 20 degrees; Watertown had a record low of 16 degrees, with Kennebec recording the lowest temperature of 13 degrees on this day in 1964. Although not a record low, Aberdeen fell to 14 degrees.

October 9, 1980: On this day in 1980, hot air streamed across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota with highs mostly in the 80s. Record highs were established at Watertown with 86 degrees and both Wheaton and Sisseton with 87 degrees. One of the warmest temperatures across the area was 89 degrees at Kennebec.

1804: The famous Snow Hurricane moved ashore near Atlantic City on this day. After briefly passing through Connecticut and into Massachusetts, cold air was entrained in the circulation with heavy snow falling between New York to southern Canada. Berkshires Massachusetts and Concord New Hampshire record two feet of snow with this hurricane. This storm produced the first observation of snow from a hurricane, but not the last. Hurricane Ginny of 1963 brought up to 18 inches (400 mm) of snow to portions of Maine.

1903 - New York City was deluged with 11.17 inches of rain 24 hours to establish a state record. Severe flooding occurred in the Passaic Valley of New Jersey where more than fifteen inches of rain was reported. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - The temperature at San Juan, Puerto Rico, soared to 98 degrees to establish an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region reported record low temperatures for the date. Asheville NC dipped to 29 degrees, and the record low of 47 degrees at Jacksonville FL marked their fourth of the month. A second surge of cold air brought light snow to the Northern Plains, particularly the Black Hills of South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Ten cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Hartford CT with a reading of 28 degrees. Snow continued in northern New England through the morning hours. Mount Washington NH reported five inches of snow. Warm weather continued in the western U.S. Los Angeles CA reported a record high of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably cold weather continued in the Upper Midwest. Thirteen cities in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana reported record low temperatures for the date, including Marquette MI with a reading of 20 degrees. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the western U.S. as the San Francisco Giants won the National League pennant. San Jose CA reported a record high of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2001: An unusually strong fall outbreak of tornadoes spawned at least 23 twisters across parts of Nebraska and Oklahoma. Hardest hit was the town of Cordell, OK, but a 22 minute lead time led to an amazingly low casualty count: only nine injuries and no fatalities.

2013: The Puglia region of southern Italy saw tornadoes on this day.



## GOD'S MASTER PLAN

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle studied to be a physician. After completing his studies, he established a medical partnership with a friend. It did not go well, and they soon parted ways.

Shortly afterward, he opened his own practice. Initially he had very few patients and to pass away the long, boring days he began to write factious crime stories. His first writings were not well received. But since he had empty hours to fill, he continued to write.

Two of his characters were Sherlock Holmes and Watson. His stories were framed around much of the information he learned while a medical student, and it was his use of "differential diagnosis" in his writings that brought much of the intrigue to his works. It did not take long before his stories gained much attention, and his writing career was established.

It may be intriguing for some to wonder why he did not go directly into writing crime stories rather than the field of medicine. Certainly, that was an option. But it was his understanding of "differential diagnosis" that made his crime stories different and brought him success.

Often we wonder why we are sometimes called to go through "things" that seem foolish and worthless, boring and frustrating. But God has a plan for each of us, and we must be patient with Him until He reveals it.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be patient and open while You are preparing us for our life's work. May we do our best to develop our talents carefully and wisely for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

*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:  
10.08.24

3 19 20 22 66 9

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$150,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 17  
DRAW: Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.07.24

8 26 28 39 45 10

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$11,040,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins  
DRAW: 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.08.24

5 17 22 26 32 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins  
DRAW: 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.05.24

5 9 11 18 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$53,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins  
DRAW: 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.07.24

24 27 47 49 55 11

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins  
DRAW: 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.07.24

18 30 31 52 63 22

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$336,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins  
DRAW: 13 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 Associated Press

### Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press  
PREP VOLLEYBALL=  
Aberdeen Central High School def. Tea, 25-15, 25-20, 25-20  
Arlington def. Deuel, 25-15, 25-11, 25-13  
Beresford def. Flandreau, 22-25, 26-12, 25-12, 27-25  
Bon Homme def. Freeman, 25-19, 24-26, 24-26, 25-20, 15-10  
Bridgewater-Emery def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 23-25, 25-19, 25-10, 25-14  
Britton-Hecla def. Waubay/Summit, 25-16, 25-16, 25-14  
Burke def. Avon, 25-20, 25-7, 25-8  
Canistota def. Menno, 25-19, 13-25, 16-25, 25-17, 15-8  
Castlewood def. Florence-Henry, 25-22, 25-14, 25-23  
Chadron, Neb. def. Rapid City Christian, 25-15, 25-19, 20-25, 25-20  
Chester def. Tri-Valley, 25-15, 25-18, 25-15  
Crow Creek Tribal School def. Marty, 23-25, 25-20, 27-25, 18-25, 15-12  
DeSmet def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-13, 25-20, 25-13  
Dell Rapids def. Vermillion, 25-9, 25-4, 25-5  
Deubrook def. Milbank, 25-21, 25-17, 25-19  
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-20, 25-10, 25-15  
Estelline-Hendricks def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-18, 25-13, 25-11  
Faulkton def. Ipswich, 25-17, 25-15, 25-21  
Garretson def. Dell Rapids St Mary, 27-25, 25-13, 25-13  
Great Plains Lutheran def. Clark-Willow Lake, 25-23, 14-25, 25-15, 25-16  
Hamlin def. Sioux Valley, 25-23, 24-26, 25-21, 21-25, 15-8  
Hanson def. Centerville, 25-19, 25-17, 25-14  
Harding County def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-10, 25-13, 25-17  
Herreid-Selby def. Potter County, 25-17, 26-24, 25-16  
Highmore-Harrold def. Sully Buttes, 25-22, 25-21, 25-13  
Hill City def. Sundance High School, Wyo., 0-0, undefined-undefined, undefined-undefined, undefined-undefined  
Hot Springs def. Custer, 11-25, 25-21, 25-22, 17-25, 15-12  
Huron def. T F Riggs High School, 25-17, 25-12, 24-26, 25-11  
Kadoka def. Lyman, 25-8, 25-17, 25-18  
Kimball-White Lake def. Chamberlain, 25-22, 25-18, 25-19  
Lakota Tech def. St. Francis Indian, 25-16, 25-11, 25-9  
Lennox def. Parker, 25-8, 25-14, 25-13  
McCook Central-Montrose def. Howard, 22-25, 25-14, 25-19, 25-18  
McLaughlin def. Bison, 25-12, 25-23, 19-25, 25-15  
Miller def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton  
North Central def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-16, 25-15, 25-13  
Northwestern def. Aberdeen Christian, 18-25, 25-14, 25-12, 25-14  
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. James Valley Christian, 25-14, 25-10, 25-12  
Parkston def. Platte-Geddes, 24-26, 25-18, 25-23, 25-16  
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-7, 25-6, 25-12  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Canton, 25-20, 25-13, 25-16  
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Brookings, 25-11, 24-26, 25-11, 25-19

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Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 23-25, 25-15, 25-19, 25-19  
St Thomas More def. Philip, 25-19, 25-12, 27-25  
Wagner def. Scotland, 25-22, 25-13, 25-11  
Wall def. New Underwood, 25-18, 25-13, 23-25, 25-15  
Warner def. Hitchcock-Tulare  
Watertown def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-17, 25-18, 25-23  
Webster def. Tiospa Zina, 25-18, 25-10, 25-14  
White River def. Todd County, 25-20, 18-25, 25-22, 25-15  
Winner def. Gregory, 25-19, 25-10, 25-12

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

## **NCAA weighs eligibility change that would allow CHL players to compete on US college teams**

By JOHN WAWROW AP Hockey Writer

The NCAA Division I Council is considering making a landmark change in eligibility rules this week that would allow Canadian Hockey League players to compete at U.S. colleges, as long as they are not paid more than actual and necessary expenses as part of that participation.

The council on Tuesday introduced a proposal that will be considered at its November meeting and, if approved, would go into effect Aug. 1.

"This proposal, focused on a singular issue, represents a pragmatic step in aligning skiing and men's ice hockey with other sports in terms of allowable pre-enrollment activities," said council chair Josh Whitman, who is also the athletic director at Illinois.

The development comes on the heels of a class-action lawsuit filed Aug. 13 in U.S. District Court in Buffalo, New York, challenging the NCAA's ban of players from the CHL's Western Hockey League, Ontario Hockey League and Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League.

"We're hopeful that the NCAA will do the right thing at the upcoming meetings and vote to end the ban on CHL players from NCAA Division I hockey," Stephen Lagos, one of the attorneys who filed the lawsuit, wrote in an email to the AP. "We believe that all players, and hockey more generally, would benefit from this change."

A change in NCAA legislation could be far-reaching with the potential of increasing competition for college-age talent between the CHL and the NCAA, North America's two top producers of NHL draft-eligible players. The lifting of the ban also has the potential to create an influx of Canadian players and displace college roster spots previously held by Americans.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Riley Masterson of Fort Erie, Ontario, who lost his college eligibility two years ago when, at 16, he appeared in two exhibition games for the OHL's Windsor Spitfires. It lists 10 Division I hockey programs, which were selected to show they follow the NCAA's bylaws in barring current or former CHL players.

Online court records show the NCAA has not made any response to the lawsuit since it was filed.

In a separate development last month, Braxton Whitehead said he verbally committed to Arizona State, making him the first CHL player to attempt to play hockey at the Division I U.S. college level. The 20-year-old Whitehead said he plans to play this season for the WHL Regina Pats before playing for the Sun Devils in 2025-26.

The CHL's three leagues are categorized as professional under NCAA bylaws, barring their players from competition.

CHL players receive a stipend of no more than \$600 per month for living expenses, which is not considered as income for tax purposes. College players receive scholarships and now can earn money through endorsements and other use of their name, image and likeness.

## **Nobel Prize in chemistry awarded to David Baker, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for work on proteins**

By DANIEL NIEMANN and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — The Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded Wednesday to David Baker, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for their work with proteins, the building blocks of life.

Baker works at the University of Washington in Seattle, while Hassabis and Jumper both work at Google Deepmind in London.

Baker designed a new protein in 2003 and his research group has since produced one imaginative protein creation after another, including proteins that can be used as pharmaceuticals, vaccines, nanomaterials and tiny sensors, the Nobel committee said.

Hassabis and Jumper created an artificial intelligence model that has been able to predict the structure of virtually all the 200 million proteins that researchers have identified, the committee added.

Heiner Linke, Chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry, said scientists had long dreamt of predicting the three-dimensional structure of proteins.

"Four years ago in 2020, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper managed to crack the code with skillful use of artificial intelligence. They made it possible to predict the complex structure of essentially any known protein in nature," Linke said.

"Another dream of scientists has been to build new proteins to learn how to use nature's multi-tool for our own purposes. This is the problem that David Baker solved," he added. "He developed computational tools that now enable scientists to design spectacular new proteins with entirely novel shapes and functions, opening endless possibilities for the greatest benefit to humankind."

Last year, the chemistry award went to three scientists for their work on quantum dots — tiny particles just a few nanometers in diameter that can release very bright colored light and whose applications in everyday life include electronics and medical imaging.

Six days of Nobel announcements opened Monday with Americans Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun winning the medicine prize. Two founding fathers of machine learning — John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton — won the physics prize.

The awards continue with the literature prize on Thursday. The Nobel Peace Prize will be announced Friday and the economics award on Oct. 14.

The prize carries a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million) from a bequest left by the award's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. The laureates are invited to receive their awards at ceremonies on Dec. 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death.

## **US considers asking court to break up Google as it weighs remedies in the antitrust case**

By SHAWN CHEN AP Technology Writer

The U.S. Department of Justice is considering asking a federal judge to force Google to sell parts of its business in order to eliminate its online search monopoly.

In a late court filing on Tuesday, federal prosecutors also said the judge could ask the court to open the underlying data Google uses to power its ubiquitous search engine and artificial intelligence products to competitors.

Tuesday's filing is the first step in a monthslong legal process to come up with remedies that could reshape a company that's long been synonymous with online search.

"For more than a decade, Google has controlled the most popular distribution channels, leaving rivals with little-to-no incentive to compete for users," the antitrust enforcers wrote in the filing. "Fully remedying these harms requires not only ending Google's control of distribution today, but also ensuring Google cannot control the distribution of tomorrow."

To that end, the department said it is considering asking for structural changes to stop Google from

leveraging products such as its Chrome browser, Android operating system, AI products or app store to benefit its search business.

Prosecutors also zeroed in on Google's default search agreements in the filing and said any remedy proposals would seek to limit or ban these deals. These deals lock in Google services and products as the automatic choice presented to consumers, such as when Safari browsers on Apple iPhones use Google's search engine.

Lee-Anne Mulholland, Google's vice president of regulatory affairs, said in response to the filing that the Department of Justice was "already signaling requests that go far beyond the specific legal issues" in this case. "Government overreach in a fast-moving industry may have negative unintended consequences for American innovation and America's consumers."

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta ruled in August that Google's search engine has been illegally exploiting its dominance to squash competition and stifle innovation. He has outlined a timeline for a trial on the proposed remedies next spring and plans to issue a decision by August 2025.

Google has already said it plans to appeal Mehta's ruling, but the tech giant must wait until he finalizes a remedy before doing so. The appeals process could take as long as five years, predicts George Hay, a law professor at Cornell University who was the chief economist for the Justice Department's antitrust division for most of the 1970s.

In November, federal prosecutors will submit a more detailed proposal on tackling Google's anticompetitive practices. Google in turn will offer its own ideas for how to make fixes in December. Prosecutors will then make their final proposal in March 2025.

Google has been facing intensifying regulatory pressure on both sides of the Atlantic, with European Union antitrust enforcers also suggesting that breaking up the company is the only way to satisfy competition concerns about its digital ad business.

## Israeli offensive in hard-hit northern Gaza kills and wounds dozens and threatens hospitals

By SAMY MAGDY and WAFAA SHURAFYA Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A large-scale Israeli operation in northern Gaza has killed and wounded dozens of people and threatens to shut down three hospitals over a year into the war with Hamas, Palestinian officials and residents said Wednesday.

Heavy fighting is underway in Jabaliya, where Israeli forces carried out several major operations over the course of the war and then returned as militants regroup. The entire north, including Gaza City, has suffered heavy destruction and has been largely isolated by Israeli forces since late last year.

The continuing cycle of destruction and death in Gaza, unleashed by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, comes as Israel expands a week-old ground offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon and considers a major retaliatory strike on Iran.

Residents of Jabaliya, a refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, say heavy airstrikes and evacuation warnings have driven hundreds of people from their homes. An airstrike early Wednesday killed at least nine people, including two women and two children, according to the Al-Ahly Hospital, which received the bodies.

Strikes in central Gaza killed another nine people, including three children, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah. An Associated Press reporter counted the bodies.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Wednesday that the overall Palestinian death toll in Gaza since the start of the war has surpassed 42,000, with more than 97,000 others wounded.

Palestinians huddle inside as fighting rages

Residents of Jabaliya said thousands of people have been trapped in their homes since the operation began Sunday, as Israeli jets and drones buzz overhead and troops battle militants in the streets.

"It's like hell. We can't get out," said Mohamed Awda, who lives in Jabaliya with his parents and six siblings. He said there were three bodies in the street outside his home that could not be retrieved because

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of the fighting.

"The quadcopters are everywhere, and they fire at anyone. You can't even open the window," he told The Associated Press by phone, speaking over the sound of explosions.

He and other residents fear Israel's aim is to depopulate the north and turn it into a closed military zone or a Jewish settlement. Israel has blocked all roads except for the main highway leading from Jabaliya to the south, according to residents.

"We are concerned about the displacement to the south," Ahmed Qamar, who lives in Jabaliya with his wife, children and parents, said in a text message. "People here say clearly that they will die here in northern Gaza and won't go to southern Gaza."

Hospitals are under threat

Fadel Naeem, director of the Al-Ahly Hospital in Gaza City, said it has received dozens of dead and wounded people from across the northern half of the Palestinian enclave since Israel launched its air and ground operation.

Israel's offensive has gutted Gaza's health sector, forcing most of its hospitals to shut down and leaving the rest only partially functioning.

"The situation is tense," Naeem told The Associated Press in text message. "We declared a state of emergency, suspended scheduled surgeries, and discharged patients whose conditions are stable."

He said three hospitals further north — Kamal Adwan, Awda and the Indonesian Hospital - have become almost inaccessible because of the fighting. The Gaza Health Ministry says the Israeli army has ordered all three to evacuate staff and patients. Meanwhile, no humanitarian aid has entered the north since Oct. 1, according to U.N. data.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the hospitals or the apparent suspension of aid delivery in the north.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the military spokesperson, said late Tuesday that Israeli forces were operating in Jabaliya "to prevent Hamas' regrouping efforts" and had killed around 100 militants, without providing evidence. Israel says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it fights in residential areas.

Israel ordered the wholesale evacuation of northern Gaza, including Gaza City, in the opening weeks of the war, but hundreds of thousands of people are believed to have remained there. Israel reiterated those instructions over the weekend, telling people to flee south to an expanded humanitarian zone where hundreds of thousands are already crammed into squalid tent camps.

The war began just over a year ago, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. They are still holding around 100 hostages, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive has killed 42,010 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not say how many were fighters. It has said women and children make up over half of the dead. The offensive has also caused staggering destruction across the territory and displaced around 90% of the population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times.

Israel warns Lebanon that it could end up like Gaza

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep fighting until "total victory" over Hamas and the return of all the captives.

On Tuesday, he warned that Lebanon would meet a similar fate if its people did not rise up against Hezbollah, which began firing rockets into Israel after the initial Hamas attack. That set in motion a cycle of escalation that ignited a full-scale war last month.

"You have an opportunity to save Lebanon before it falls into the abyss of a long war that will lead to destruction and suffering like we see in Gaza," Netanyahu said, addressing the Lebanese people.

In recent weeks Israel has waged a punishing air campaign across large parts of Lebanon, targeting what it says are Hezbollah rocket launchers and other militant sites. In a matter of days, strikes killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and most of his top commanders.

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So far, ground operations appear to be focused on a narrow strip along the border, but Israel has warned people to evacuate dozens of cities and towns across southern Lebanon, many of them north of a buffer zone declared by the United Nations after the last war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006.

Hezbollah's acting leader, Sheikh Naim Kassem, said in a televised statement Tuesday that the group has replaced its slain commanders and was preventing Israeli ground forces from advancing. The militants have extended their rocket fire deeper into Israel, disrupting life but causing few casualties.

Israel is meanwhile considering options for a strike on Iran that could potentially escalate the war on yet another front. Iran, which supports Hezbollah and Hamas, launched a wave of some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel last week in retaliation for the killing of top militants from both groups.

## Middle East latest: 18 dead after Israeli strikes in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Palestinian officials said Wednesday that Israel's bombardment of central and northern Gaza killed at least 18 people, including five children and two women, as the territory's overall death toll passed 42,000.

Two strikes hit tents for displaced people in the urban Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps in central Gaza. The bodies of nine people, including three children, were brought to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah. An Associated Press journalist saw the bodies at the morgue.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday that Israel has killed the successor to the head of Hezbollah, while the militant group's acting leader promised more fighting in southern Lebanon.

A year ago, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed into army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. They are still holding about 100 captives inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel is now at war with Hamas in Gaza and its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, which began firing rockets at Israel on Oct. 8, 2023.

Here is the latest:

Gaza death toll passes 42,000

Gaza's Health Ministry says the Palestinian death toll from the war in Gaza has passed 42,000. The ministry does not differentiate between fighters and civilians in its count, but has said women and children make up more than half of those killed. It said Wednesday that 42,010 Palestinians have been killed and 97,720 wounded since the start of the war, which was ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel.

German police close pro-Palestinian protest camp Greta Thunberg planned to visit

BERLIN — German police say they dissolved a pro-Palestinian protest camp in the western city of Dortmund after organizers told them that Swedish activist Greta Thunberg was planning to visit the camp.

Dortmund police said late Tuesday the decision was made, among other reasons, because Thunberg's appearance would probably have drawn more people to the protest camp than originally permitted.

The dismantling of the camp, which had been in existence for months, was accepted without resistance, police said. Seven protesters were present at the camp on Tuesday, but Thunberg did not appear, German news agency dpa reported.

On Monday, Thunberg participated in a pro-Palestinian protest in Berlin.

18 dead after Israeli strikes in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Palestinian officials say Israeli strikes in central and northern Gaza killed at least 18 people, including five children and two women.

Two strikes hit tents for displaced people in the urban Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps in central Gaza early Wednesday. The bodies of nine people, including three children, were brought to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah. An Associated Press journalist saw the bodies at the morgue.

In northern Gaza, an Israeli strike hit a family home in the Jabaliya refugee camp, killing at least nine people, according to the Civil Defense, a rescue agency operating under the Hamas-run government. The dead were taken to the Al-Ahly Hospital, which said two women and two children were among those killed.



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Footage shared by the Civil Defense showed first responders recovering dead bodies and body parts from under the rubble.

Israel launched an air and ground operation earlier this week in Jabaliya, a densely populated urban refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Israel has carried out several previous operations in Jabaliya, and its forces have repeatedly returned to other areas of Gaza after militants have regrouped.

## Time to evacuate is running out as Hurricane Milton closes in on Florida

By TERRY SPENCER and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Hurricane Milton churned Wednesday toward a potentially catastrophic collision along the west coast of Florida, where some residents insisted they would stay after millions were ordered to evacuate and officials warned that stragglers would face grim odds of surviving.

The Tampa Bay area, home to more than 3.3 million people, faced the possibility of widespread destruction after avoiding direct hits from major hurricanes for more than a century. The National Hurricane Center predicted Milton, a monstrous Category 5 hurricane during much of its approach, would likely weaken but remain a major hurricane when it makes landfall late Wednesday.

Milton was centered early Wednesday about 360 miles (580 kilometers) southwest of Tampa with maximum sustained winds of 160 mph (260 kmh), the National Hurricane Center reported.

Forecasters predicted the storm will retain hurricane strength as it crosses central Florida on Thursday on a path east toward the Atlantic Ocean. The hurricane's precise track remained uncertain, as forecasters Tuesday evening nudged its projected path slightly south of Tampa.

Thousands of fleeing cars clogged Florida's highways ahead of the storm, but time for evacuations was running out Wednesday. Tampa Mayor Jane Castor noted that up to 15 feet (4.5 meters) of storm surge forecast for her city would be deep enough to swallow an entire house.

"So if you're in it, basically that's the coffin that you're in," Castor said.

Milton targets communities still reeling two weeks after Hurricane Helene flooded streets and homes in western Florida along its devastating march that left at least 230 dead across the South.

In the bayside town of Punta Gorda, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of Tampa, streets were still filled Tuesday with 5-foot (1.5-meter) piles of soggy furniture, clothing, books, appliances and other trash dragged from damaged homes.

Many homes sat vacant, but accountant and art collector Scott Joiner remained on the second floor of the New Orleans-style home he built 17 years ago. Joiner said bull sharks swam in the flooded streets and a neighbor had to be rescued by canoe when Helene passed and flooded the first floor of his home.

"Water is a blessing to have," Joiner said, "but it is very deadly."

Joiner said he planned to go another round and ride out Milton, despite the risk.

Authorities have issued mandatory evacuation orders across 11 Florida counties with a combined population of about 5.9 million people, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Officials have warned that anyone staying behind must fend for themselves, as first responders are not expected to risk their lives attempting rescues at the height of the storm.

In Riverview, south of Tampa, several drivers waiting in a long line for fuel Tuesday said they had no plans to evacuate.

"I think we'll just hang, you know — tough it out," said Martin Oakes, of nearby Apollo Beach. "We got shutters up. The house is all ready. So this is sort of the last piece of the puzzle."

Others weren't taking any chances after Helene.

On Anna Marie Island along the southern edge of Tampa Bay, Evan Purcell packed up his father's ashes and was trying to catch his 9-year-old cat, McKenzie, as he prepared to leave Tuesday. Helene left him with thousands of dollars in damage when his home flooded. He feared Milton might take the rest.

"I'm still in shock over the first one and here comes round two," Purcell said. "I just have a pit in my

stomach about this one.”

State and local governments scrambled ahead of the storm to remove piles of debris left in Helene’s wake, fearing that the oncoming hurricane would turn loose wreckage into flying missiles. Gov. Ron DeSantis said the state deployed over 300 dump trucks that had removed 1,300 loads of debris.

In Mexico, authorities in the state of Yucatan reported minor damage from Milton as it passed just offshore. Power lines, light poles and trees were knocked down near the coast, and some small thatched-roof structures were destroyed, Yucatan Gov. Joaquín Díaz said. He did not report any deaths or injuries.

## **Mozambique votes for president and the ruling party could extend its 49 years in power**

By CHARLES MANGWIRO Associated Press

MAPUTO, Mozambique (AP) — Mozambique is voting for a new president on Wednesday in an election that is expected to extend the ruling party’s 49 years in power since the southern African nation gained independence from Portugal in 1975.

Daniel Chapo, 47, is the candidate for the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, or Frelimo, seeking to succeed President Filipe Nyusi, who has served a maximum two terms.

Analysts say the strongest challenge to Chapo and Frelimo’s dominance will likely come from 50-year-old independent Venancio Mondlane, a newcomer to national politics.

People also will vote for the makeup of Parliament and for provincial governors in a country of some 33 million people that went through a bloody, 15-year civil war that ended in 1992, and more recently has been shaken by an ongoing violent jihadist insurgency in the north.

Ending that insurgency and bringing stability to Cabo Delgado province — where 1.3 million fled their homes and more than half remain displaced — is a pledge by both leading candidates, while poverty, youth unemployment and government corruption are top issues for voters.

“I am still selling biscuits at a vegetable market here in Maputo to take care of my two children,” 35-year-old Felicidade Simao said at a polling station. “My husband is unemployed and we are struggling. I want the best for my children and the winner of this election must make the dream of a better life in the future.”

Vote-counting is due to start right after polls close in the one-day election. Preliminary results from some areas are expected from Thursday, and the full results must be delivered to the Constitutional Council within 15 days of polls closing to be validated and formally declared. Around 17 million people are registered to vote.

The credibility of the election will be under scrutiny, with the leftist Frelimo party accused of ballot-stuffing and falsifying results in previous votes, including last year’s local elections.

Frelimo has consistently denied the accusations of election tampering. Teams of regional and international election observers are in Mozambique, including from the European Union.

Frelimo effectively established a one-party state following independence and fought a civil war against the Mozambique National Resistance, or Renamo, for a decade and a half. The country, where Portuguese remains the official language, held its first elections in 1994, two years after a peace agreement.

Renamo is also contesting this election, with party leader Ossufo Momade, a military commander in the civil war, its candidate for president. The peace between Frelimo and Renamo has been fragile, with an outbreak of more fighting in 2013. Momade and outgoing leader Nyusi signed another peace deal in 2019.

But tensions remain, especially between the two political parties that were once at war with each other.

There are four candidates for president: Chapo, Mondlane, Momade and Lutero Simango of the Mozambique Democratic Movement, who is viewed as an outsider.

“I thank the entire Mozambican population for this opportunity we have today,” favorite Chapo said as he voted in the southern city of Inhambane. “We equally salute everyone for this orderly and peaceful environment seen since the beginning of the electoral campaign.”

The independent Mondlane, who broke away from Renamo, has focused his campaign on young Mozambicans frustrated with poverty and unemployment. The country boasts a long coastline of picturesque

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beaches on the Indian Ocean, but that vulnerable area has been battered by cyclones in recent years. A drought this year in the southern African region has left more than a million Mozambicans impacted by hunger.

Meanwhile, it emerged in 2016 that government officials and others had embezzled more than \$2 billion in foreign loans that were kept secret, sending the economy into a crisis from which it is still recovering.

"All Mozambicans have high hopes from the new president," said 69-year-old Baptista Antonio, who was one of the first to vote at an elementary school in the capital and port city of Maputo. "I was born during the colonial era and saw many transformations of the country from wars to development and all I can say is it's a work in progress. There are many challenges ahead."

Mondlane was aligned with a coalition of opposition parties, but they were barred from contesting the election, which raised accusations against Frelimo of attempting to control the election. He is now supported by a new party called Podemos, which means "we can" in Portuguese. A former banker, Mondlane drew large crowds to some of his boisterous pre-election rallies, and his emergence is a new challenge to Frelimo, which has traditionally won national elections comfortably ahead of Renamo.

Most analysts expect Frelimo to remain in power. It was declared the winner with more than 70% of the vote in national elections five years ago.

The Pangea risk company, which provides security and investment advice on developing countries, said Chapo's election has been "carefully stage managed" by Frelimo.

Chapo worked as a radio announcer and television presenter before becoming a law professor. He was the governor of southern Inhambane province — Mozambique's flagship tourism region — but was a surprise winner of an internal party vote in May to become Frelimo's presidential candidate.

Chapo would be Mozambique's first leader born after independence if he wins.

## Trump has long blasted China's trade practices. His 'God Bless the USA' Bibles were printed there

By RICHARD LARDNER and DAKE KANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of copies of Donald Trump's "God Bless the USA" Bible were printed in a country that the former president has repeatedly accused of stealing American jobs and engaging in unfair trade practices — China.

Global trade records reviewed by The Associated Press show a printing company in China's eastern city of Hangzhou shipped close to 120,000 of the Bibles to the United States between early February and late March.

The estimated value of the three separate shipments was \$342,000, or less than \$3 per Bible, according to databases that use customs data to track exports and imports. The minimum price for the Trump-backed Bible is \$59.99, putting the potential sales revenue at about \$7 million.

The Trump Bible's connection to China, which has not been previously reported, reveals a deep divide between the former president's harsh anti-China rhetoric and his rush to cash in while campaigning.

The Trump campaign did not respond to emails and calls seeking comment.

Trump says his Bibles would help America

The largest and most recent load of 70,000 copies of Trump's Bible arrived by container vessel at the Port of Los Angeles on March 28, two days after Trump announced in a video posted on his Truth Social platform that he'd partnered with country singer Lee Greenwood to hawk the Bibles.

In the video, Trump blended religion with his campaign message as he urged viewers to buy the Bible, inspired by Greenwood's ballad, "God Bless the USA." The Bible includes copies of the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights and Pledge of Allegiance.

"This Bible is a reminder that the biggest thing we have to bring back in America, and to make America great again, is our religion, Trump said. Judeo-Christian values, he added, are "under attack, perhaps as never before."

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Trump didn't say where the "God Bless the USA" Bibles are printed, or what they cost; a copy hand-signed by the former president sells for \$1,000. Trump also didn't disclose how much he earns per sale.

A version of the \$59.99 Bible memorializes the July 13 assassination attempt on the former president in Pennsylvania. Trump's name is on the cover above the phrase, "The Day God Intervened." The wording appears to have been stamped on after the Bible was produced. Trump said Saturday his would-be assassin did not succeed "by the hand of providence and the grace of God."

The Bibles are sold exclusively through a website that states it is not affiliated with any political campaign nor is it owned or controlled by Trump.

A photo posted on the website shows Trump sitting at his desk in the Oval Office with Greenwood standing beside him. In another photo, the former president smiles broadly while holding a copy of the Bible.

Trump's name and image are licensed

The website states that Trump's name and image are used under a paid license from CIC Ventures, a company Trump reported owning in his most recent financial disclosure. CIC Ventures earned \$300,000 in Bible sales royalties, according to the disclosure. It's unclear what period that covers or how much Trump received in additional payments since the disclosure was released in August.

AP received no response to questions sent to an email on the Bible website and to a publicist for Greenwood.

For years, Trump has castigated Beijing as an obstacle to America's economic success, slapping hefty tariffs on Chinese imports while president and threatening even more stringent measures if he's elected again. He blamed China for the COVID-19 outbreak and recently suggested, without evidence, that thousands of Chinese immigrants are flooding the U.S. to build an "army" and attack America.

But Trump also has an eye on his personal finances. Pitching Bibles is one of a dizzying number of for-profit ventures he's launched or promoted, including diamond-encrusted watches, sneakers, photo books, cryptocurrency and digital trading cards.

The web of enterprises has stoked conflict of interest concerns. Selling products at prices that exceed their value may be considered a campaign contribution, said Claire Finkelstein, founder of the nonpartisan Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law and a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

"You have to assume that everything that the individual does is being done as a candidate and so that any money that flows through to him benefits him as a candidate," Finkelstein said. "Suppose Vladimir Putin were to buy a Trump watch. Is that a campaign finance violation? I would think so."

Selling Bibles, she added, "strikes me as a profoundly problematic mixing of religion and state."

Potential conflicts of interest

As president, Trump would be in a position to influence policies and markets to benefit businesses in which he and his family have financial stakes. While president, his administration exempted Bibles and other religious texts from tariffs imposed on billions of dollars of Chinese goods.

There's a potentially lucrative opportunity for Trump to sell 55,000 of the "God Bless the USA" Bibles to Oklahoma after the state's top education official ordered public schools to incorporate Scripture into lessons for grades 5 through 12. Oklahoma plans to spend \$3 million on Bibles that initially matched Trump's edition: a King James Version that contains the U.S. founding documents. The request was revised Monday to allow the U.S. historical documents to be bound with the Bible or provided separately.

Oklahoma's Department of Education did not answer AP's questions about whether the Bibles must be printed in the United States or if any department officials have discussed the proposal with Trump or his representatives.

"There are hundreds of Bible publishers and we expect a robust competition for this proposal," said department spokesman Dan Isett.

Chinese printing company confirms shipments

China is one of the world's leading producers of Bibles, so it's not unusual for the Trump-endorsed version to be printed there.

The first delivery of Trump Bibles was labeled "God Bless USA," according to the information from the Panjiva and Import Genius databases. The other two were described as "Bibles." All the books were shipped

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by New Ade Cultural Media, a printing company in Hangzhou that describes itself as a "custom Bible book manufacturer." They were sent to Freedom Park Design, a company in Alabama that databases identified as the importer of the Bibles.

Tammy Tang, a sales representative for New Ade, told AP all three shipments were "God Bless the USA" Bibles. She said New Ade received the orders via the WhatsApp messaging service and confirmed they were from Freedom Park Design. The books were printed on presses near the company's Hangzhou office, she said. Tang did not disclose the sales price or other details, citing customer confidentiality.

"They didn't come to meet us," Tang said by telephone. "We just do the production."

She declined further comment and referred interview requests to Freedom Park Design.

Freedom Park Design was incorporated in Florida on March 1, according to business registration records. An aspiring country singer named Jared Ashley is the company's president. He also co-founded 16 Creative, a digital marketing firm that uses the same Gulf Shores address and processes online orders for branded merchandise sold by entertainers and authors.

Ashley hung up on a reporter who called to ask about the Bibles.

Greenwood is a client of 16 Creative, according to the firm's website. He launched the American-flag emblazoned Bible in 2021. His song, "God Bless the USA," was released 40 years ago and is a staple at Trump rallies. Greenwood has also appeared at the former president's campaign events.

Critics call Trump Bible a 'toxic mix'

The King James Version used in the Trump Bible is in the public domain. Greenwood had initially planned to use the best-selling New International Version licensed in North America by HarperCollins Christian Publishing. But the publisher abandoned the arrangement amid pressure from religious scholars and authors who denounced the merger of Scripture and government documents as a "toxic mix" that would fuel Christian nationalism sentiments in evangelical churches.

Christian nationalism is a movement that fuses American and Christian values, symbols and identity and seeks to privilege Christianity in public life. Christian nationalists are likely to believe the U.S. Constitution was inspired by God and that the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation.

Other critics called the Trump Bible blasphemous.

"Taking what has long been understood as a global message religiously and stamping it with the flag of one nation is the type of thing that for centuries theologians would call heresy," said Brian Kaylor, a Baptist minister and president of the Christian media company Word&Way.

'Love of money'

Tim Wildsmith, a Baptist minister who reviews Bibles on his YouTube channel, said he quickly noticed the signs of a cheaply made book when his "God Bless the USA" Bible arrived wrapped in plastic inside a padded mailer.

It had a faux leather cover, and words were jammed together on the pages, making it hard to read. He also found sticky pages that ripped when pulled apart, and there was no copyright page or information about who printed the Bible, or where.

"I was shocked by how poor the quality of it was," Wildsmith said. "It says to me that it's more about the love of money than it is the love of our country."

## What presidential campaign? The Electoral College puts most American voters on the sidelines

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — On a table at the office of the Waukegan Township Democrats sits a box of postcards with Wisconsin addresses that were collected during a postcard-writing pizza party to help turn out voters there. Leaning against the table are homemade Harris-Walz signs.

"We know they're handing these out everywhere in Wisconsin," said Matt Muchowski, chair of the Democratic club. "Here in Waukegan, it's been harder to get a hold of Harris yard signs, so we're printing out

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our own.”

One reason they’ve been in short supply: Waukegan is in Illinois, which is not a presidential swing state. It just sits across the border from one.

Muchowski said this is emblematic of the limited attention cities outside of swing states receive from presidential campaigns. The United States’ unique Electoral College system, which replaces the popular vote, puts disproportionate voting power in the hands of a relative few states that are evenly divided politically and ensures that the majority of campaign dollars — and attention from the presidential candidates — goes to those states.

The lack of attention leaves voters in much of the country feeling as if they and the issues they care about have been sidelined. It’s a dividing line that is felt acutely in places such as Waukegan, one of Chicago’s farthest-flung suburbs.

The last time a presidential candidate set foot in the working class, majority Latino city was when former President Donald Trump landed at its airport in 2020. Trump walked off Air Force One, gave a single wave, and then immediately climbed into an SUV headed across the border to Kenosha, Wisconsin.

‘Lost in the national conversation’

In Racine, a Wisconsin city of a similar size just 50 miles north of Waukegan, Trump hosted a rally in June near a harbor overlooking Lake Michigan, where he gushed about the development along the lakeshore, spoke about revitalization efforts in Racine and the Milwaukee metropolitan area, and emphasized their voters’ importance in his attempt to return to the White House.

Just a month earlier, before he dropped out of the race, President Joe Biden lauded a new Microsoft center in Racine County during a campaign stop in the city. The city just south of Milwaukee has become a common stomping ground for presidential hopefuls as Wisconsin, one of just seven battleground states likely to determine this year’s presidential race, remains heavily targeted by the campaigns of Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Cities such as Waukegan become “lost in the national conversation” during presidential elections, said Muchowski, who has lived in the area most of his life.

“It’s not so much the candidates as it is the anti-democratic Electoral College,” he said. “... It’s frustrating that certain voters’ votes count for more, and they discount and discredit the votes of more urban, more people of color voters.”

Campaigns visits to neighboring Wisconsin: 27

Illinois is a reliably Democratic state — it hasn’t voted for a Republican presidential candidate since George H.W. Bush in 1988. That predictability is reflected in the presidential campaigns every four years.

Except for fundraisers, the Republican and Democratic presidential tickets have been to Illinois just twice this year — once for an appearance by Trump before a group representing Black journalists and once by Harris when she came to Chicago for her party’s national convention. By comparison, they had visited Wisconsin 27 times through Tuesday, including when Biden was the presumptive nominee.

This year’s presidential battleground states — Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — represent 18% of the country’s population but have dominated the attention of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates and their running mates.

Through Tuesday, they have had just over 200 total campaign stops — three-quarters of which have been to those seven states, according to a database of campaign events that is based on Associated Press reporting. Pennsylvania alone has been visited 41 times, the most of any state.

But it’s not just the state visits: The presidential campaigns are tailoring their appearances to specific counties they believe are crucial to their success. The AP’s database shows their campaign events in the seven battleground states have been concentrated in counties with 22.7 million registered voters — just 10% of all voters registered nationally for this year’s presidential election.

Electoral College, a system of ‘neglect’

Many residents of Waukegan wish it also could get on the candidates’ radar. They said they’re proud of how multiculturalism has shaped their city, a place where almost 60% of residents are Latino and more than 16% are Black, according to 2020 U.S. Census data.

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The working class community was largely built on factory jobs that once offered residents a comfortable, middle class life. But after companies abandoned the city's lakefront, starting in the 1960s, tens of thousands of jobs disappeared.

Waukegan never fully recovered.

Its poverty and unemployment rates rise well above the state and national averages. Its school district is one of the worst-funded in the county, struggles with understaffing and has dismal graduation rates. And its lakeshore is a sagging reminder of the city's heyday: An asbestos manufacturing plant, a coal plant and a gypsum factory all sit silent beside public beaches. Beside them are a crisscrossed network of abandoned railroad tracks.

The industries brought with them another problem — a legacy of environmental damage. The city of around 86,000 residents has five federal Superfund sites. In 2019, the state's pollution control board ruled that Waukegan's coal plant violated environmental regulations and contaminated groundwater, and it was shuttered three years later.

The scene in Waukegan contrasts with Racine's pristine lakefront marina, where luxury condos flank coffee shops, restaurants and hotels.

Thomas Maillard, the Democratic State Central Committeeman for Illinois' 10th Congressional District and a lifelong Lake County resident, said the contrast between the two cities is clear. In Waukegan, he said he worries about gun violence and access to well-paying jobs, affordable housing, child care and health care.

"The history of Waukegan, unfortunately, is the history of this country's neglect of those Rust Belt communities, especially along the Great Lakes," he said. "... People are struggling."

Maillard pointed to the Electoral College system as a culprit, calling it "a system of potential neglect."

'You need to hear us'

Sam Cunningham, a former mayor of Waukegan, said people feel forgotten in the city that he's called home since elementary school. It's clear, he said, that the national agenda prioritizes some states over others.

"They're probably thinking, 'Why should we put money over here when we need it in these battleground states?'" he said. "I understand the logic, but understand how we feel. Do we feel slighted? Of course we do. It doesn't mean it doesn't hurt."

Margaret Padilla Carrasco, who has lived in the Waukegan area her entire life, drove to Milwaukee in August to see Harris speak. If Harris were to visit Waukegan, Carrasco said she would take her to the deteriorating houses on the south side of the city, to assisted living facilities where senior citizens are struggling to pay their bills and to a homeless shelter near her home.

Her message to Harris, she said, is to not count on their votes. Saddled with job losses and a rising cost of living, people in Waukegan are frustrated, she said. While she still plans to vote for Harris, Carrasco hears of more and more Waukegan voters pulling away from the Democratic Party, which has long won the lion's share of the city's votes.

"If you don't spend the time with us, then don't expect us to vote for you," said Carrasco, 65, who trains young Latinas in Waukegan to ride horses in traditional Mexican Charro style. "You need to hear us. You need to talk to us."

James Richard Wynn, a 35-year-old father of nine, said he feels doubly forgotten in Waukegan as a conservative in the predominantly Democratic city. He said he and the issues he cares most about — homeschooling, abortion restrictions, Second Amendment rights and government spending — often go ignored by presidential candidates.

"There is probably a mindset amongst a lot of conservatives, especially in Illinois, who think there's no point in saying anything," he said.

'A city of grit and imagination'

Despite limited political attention, several residents praised what they described as Waukegan's do-it-yourself spirit, which often translates into grassroots political organizing around issues such as housing and environmental justice.

On a sunny Tuesday recently, Pastor Julie Contreras, who helps support recent immigrants in the city, had a long to-do list. She was gathering community members to rebuild the roof for an undocumented couple whose house was damaged in a storm. Then she had to collect diaper donations for a woman who had just given birth.

This is the Waukegan most people don't see, said Contreras, an advocate with the local nonprofit United Giving Hope. She chastised candidates for just dropping in to the city's airport before they head to Wisconsin without engaging with the voters there about their struggles.

"They're missing out on a wonderful community right here," she said.

Muchowski, of the Waukegan Township Democrats, said when the city feels ignored, its residents take care of each other. It's something they've gotten used to, he said.

"Waukegan, for a lot of people, is a city of grit and imagination," Muchowski said. "I don't know a lot of people who are like, 'I want to move across the country to Waukegan.' But the people that come here really see the potential."

If only, he said, candidates would see the potential, too.

## Climate change boosted Helene's deadly rain and wind and scientists say same is likely for Milton

By ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press

Human-caused climate change boosted a devastating Hurricane Helene's rainfall by about 10% and intensified its winds by about 11%, scientists said in a new flash study released just as a strengthening Hurricane Milton threatens the Florida coast less than two weeks later.

The warming climate boosted Helene's wind speeds by about 13 miles per hour (20.92 kilometers per hour), and made the high sea temperatures that fueled the storm 200 to 500 times more likely, World Weather Attribution calculated Wednesday from Europe. Ocean temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico were about 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) above average, WWA said.

"Hurricane Helene and the storms that were happening in the region anyway have all been amplified by the fact that the air is warmer and can hold more moisture, which meant that the rainfall totals — which, even without climate change, would have been incredibly high given the circumstances — were even higher," Ben Clarke, a study co-author and a climate researcher at Imperial College London, said in an interview.

Milton will likely be similarly juiced, the authors said.

The scientists warned that continued burning of fossil fuels will lead to more hurricanes like Helene, with "unimaginable" floods well inland, not just on coasts. Many of those who died in Helene fell victim to massive inland flooding, rather than high winds.

Helene made landfall in Florida with record storm surge 15 feet (4.57 meters) high and catastrophic sustained winds reaching 140 miles per hour (225.31 kilometers per hour), pummeling Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Virginia. It decimated remote towns throughout the Appalachians, left millions without power, cellular service and supplies and killed over 230 people. Search crews in the days following continued to look for bodies. Helene was the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina in 2005.

Helene dumped more than 40 trillion gallons of rain — an unprecedented amount of water — onto the region, meteorologists estimated. That rainfall would have been much less intense if humans hadn't warmed the climate, according to WWA, an international scientist collaborative that runs rapid climate attribution studies.

"When you start talking about the volumes involved, when you add even just a few percent on top of that, it makes it even much more destructive," Clarke said.

Hurricanes as intense as Helene were once expected every 130 years on average, but today are about 2.5 times more likely in the region, the scientists calculated.

The WWA launched in 2015 to assess the extent which extreme weather events could be attributed to climate change. The organization's rapid studies aren't peer-reviewed but use peer-reviewed methods.



The team of scientists tested the influence of climate change on Helene by analyzing weather data and climate models including the Imperial College Storm Model, the Climate Shift Index for oceans and the standard WWA approach, which compares an actual event with what might have been expected in a world that hasn't warmed about 1.3 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times.

A separate analysis of Helene last week by Department of Energy Lawrence Berkeley National Lab scientists determined that climate change caused 50% more rainfall in some parts of Georgia and the Carolinas, and that observed rainfall was "made up to 20 times more likely in these areas because of global warming." That study was also not peer-reviewed but used a method published in a study about Hurricane Harvey.

Kim Cobb, director of the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, wasn't involved in either study. She said there are uncertainties in exactly how much climate change is supercharging storms like Helene, but "we know that it's increasing the power and devastation of these storms."

She said Helene and Milton should serve "as a wake up call" for emergency preparedness, resilience planning and the increased use of fossil fuels.

"Going forward, additional warming that we know will occur over the next 10 or 20 years will even worsen the statistics of hurricanes," she said, "and we will break new records."

Analysis is already indicating climate change made possible the warmed sea temperatures that also rapidly intensified Milton. Clarke said the two massive storms in quick succession illustrates the potential future of climate change if humans don't stop it.

"As we go into the future and our results show this as well, we still have control over what trajectory this goes in as to what risks we face in the future, what costs we pay in the future," he said. "That just hinges on how we change our energy systems and how many more fossil fuels we burn."

## **A kitchen staffed by trans women is a refuge for Mexico City's LGBTQ+ community**

By MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Karolina Long Tain González Rodríguez plops another corn cake into the piping hot oil of a large pan. As she grabs a set of tongs to flip them one by one, she yells across the kitchen realizing she's pressed for time.

"We open in 15 minutes!" she shouts over the cumbia music playing in the background.

At Casa Lleca, an LGBTQ+ shelter in Mexico City's Peralvillo neighborhood, a community kitchen was founded two months ago to provide employment opportunities to transgender women — and serve surrounding residents in the area.

As González, 36, reaches over for more of the corn cakes to fry, Thalia Trejo busies herself stuffing shredded pork into small masses of dough. While they've only worked together for a short time, González says she runs a kitchen based on mutual respect and communication.

"We know how to talk to each other... and we know how to find a solution. We're a really united trans community, we're really understanding," she said.

The community kitchen was born after Casa Lleca received approval from city authorities to open through a social welfare program, as many trans women in the shelter were having trouble finding work.

Casa Lleca's founder and human rights activist Victoria Sámano, 30, had brought up the idea to González, who came from a culinary background.

"She (Victoria) saw the opportunity to employ our friends who arrived unhoused and gave them dignified work," González said.

Much of the funding for the kitchen came from the women themselves, who purchased appliances, chairs and tables to create an authentic dining experience.

González, a native of Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, arrived at Casa Lleca seven months ago seeking refuge and a fresh start as a trans woman. She had studied cooking in middle and high school, but then dropped out, and after working in a kitchen in Oaxaca, she left for Mexico City to begin her transition.

Once in the capital, she was recommended to a plastic surgeon who gave her faulty breast implants

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and, after one of them ruptured, he refused to give her a warranty — or operate her again.

That's when she said her life began to spiral.

"I acquired lots of bad vices, lots of bad habits, and that took me to a lot of dark places," she recalled. "But God always has a plan for us."

When she arrived at Casa Lleca, things began to turn around.

Sámamo approached her after noticing her active involvement in the shelter and strong work ethic. She thought González could be a good fit to lead the kitchen. Along with her other helpers, González runs a tight crew. All kitchen employees are up by 7 a.m. to bathe and drink coffee. They start cooking at 8:30 a.m. and prepare for customers' arrival at 1 p.m.

For González, the kitchen has become a safe space where she can also use all of her culinary knowledge. "Now that I found this kitchen, this project and this rhythm of life, I've found a way to fulfill my dreams as a young person," she said.

Though the kitchen initially began as an idea to serve and employ their community, as soon as it opened, residents in the surrounding neighborhood started to flock in. Out in front of Casa Lleca, Sámamo guides customers into the small dining room set up for the community kitchen. Etched onto a whiteboard hung on a steel door, the menu reads in big black letters, "chicharrón gorditas, soup, beans and dessert." A full meal for only 11 pesos (about 50 cents).

They cook lunch for up to 150 people a day, including workers like 31-year-old Alan Olivares, who has become a regular. Olivares, a cleaner who works in the nearby Cuauhtemoc neighborhood, has been eating at the kitchen for the past couple of weeks.

"In addition to saving some money, the food is delicious," he said, adding that he was happy to see the shelter thriving in its new business. "Mexico needs to have a more open mind, we're all human and it's part of our diversity," he said.

Sámamo founded Casa Lleca in 2020, right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, in an effort to help LGBTQ+ folks and sex workers who were unhoused or at risk of losing their homes. As hotels remained shut down, many had been left without a home or workplace. She said many of the shelters that were opened by the government at that time didn't know how to address the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

"When they arrive in these spaces, they are often violated or discriminated against," said Sámamo. "In part by other residents, but (also) by the staff who don't know where to place them because of their gender identity."

"One day, when we leave this place, we're going to say 'thank you, Casa Lleca' for showing me how to live," said González. "Thank you for showing me new progress in my life."

Still, many trans individuals like González are not given the space and support to embrace who they are, and are often vulnerable to dangerous situations.

Mexico's trans community continues to face challenges, and transgender individuals continue to be killed, sparking protests and anger. So far this year, 36 trans people have been killed in Mexico, according to an August report from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Some progress has been made. At least 20 Mexican states have passed legislation to protect trans people. Mexico City in July passed the Paola Buenrostro law, named after a trans woman and sex worker killed in 2016, making transfemicides a crime punished by a prison sentence of up to 70 years.

Sámamo believes adopting laws to support trans individuals is crucial. She points at laws passed recently in Spain and Colombia that cover everything, from access to medical services to labor protections for trans people.

"(These laws) address many areas of life for a trans person, and put emphasis on the tools for them to overcome and — in some cases — to survive," said Sámamo.

For residents of Casa Lleca, the community kitchen has also helped to raise awareness about who they are and what role they play in the neighborhood.

"Now that they've tried the food, and they saw we opened the kitchen with a really nice atmosphere, people started to approach us," said González. "How should I refer to you all? They ask... 'We're trans women,' I would tell them. People have been really accepting."

## This camp provides a safe space for kids to learn and play after Hurricane Helene

By GABRIELA AOUN ANGUIERA Associated Press

BREVARD, N.C. (AP) — The Weissmans still have much to do to recover from Hurricane Helene flooding their home last month.

They need to chase down private insurance claims and fill out applications for the Small Business Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Because the storm killed power to western North Carolina, they worry about mold.

The storm also wrecked Max Weissman's office, leaving the 45-year-old therapist with nowhere to meet patients. And it leveled the building that housed the tea company where his wife, Aviva Weissman, worked.

But the Weissmans haven't had time to deal with any of that because like all parents their utmost priority is their children. Schools have been closed since the storm and their son Avi, 11, helped Max bleach the basement last week. Aviva briefly took their 7-year-old daughter Reyna to stay with family in South Carolina before returning home.

Like all children, both now need a routine, and to play.

On Monday morning, Weissman took Avi and Reyna to a free, pop-up day camp where dozens of kids were making bracelets, drawing, and playing oversized games of Jenga and Connect Four in a large playroom. Outside, girls bounced through a hopscotch court as a fierce basketball game heated up behind them.

The camp is hosted by the the LA-based nonprofit Project:Camp. As storms become more frequent and severe, the organization is increasingly traveling to disaster-affected communities to set up spaces where kids can process the disruption and devastation of a disaster while their parents start the long recovery process.

"I feel pretty guilty telling them all the time, 'I've never dealt with this,'" said Weissman. "This is the first time we're dealing with a pandemic. This is the first time we're dealing with a flood.' And I feel like it just keeps on."

He lingered outside the playroom, anxiously peering through the window to check on the kids as he responded to messages from his patients.

The Brevard camp opened Monday and will run until Friday. Schools here are expected to open next week. Project:Camp is talking with nearby communities about where to set up next.

Schools can't reopen until water is restored. For some counties, it's still unclear when that can happen.

As of Tuesday, 15 school districts and the majority of the 21 charter schools in the region impacted by the storm remained closed, according to the state's Department of Public Instruction. Three districts are set to resume classes Wednesday, with more to follow next week.

With Hurricane Milton approaching Florida, Project:Camp was also preparing for the possibility it would be needed there, too.

"It's always been the case that there's a lack of this," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, founding director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University and an adjunct professor of pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "As quickly as possible, we have to begin reestablishing some level of post-disaster normalcy for children ... The necessity for play should not be understated," he said.

Project:Camp volunteers are trained in trauma recovery. Kids participate in gratitude circles, refocusing them on positive thoughts, and do mental and emotional checks, or "Me" checks, where they rate how they feel and learn to assess their own wellbeing.

They also just have fun.

"Camp is an inherently therapeutic space for kids," said Henry Meier, director of external affairs at the organization and leader of the Brevard pop-up. "They process through play, they process with their peers. So just having a space that they recognize, that they feel safe and comfortable in, is the best environment for them right now."

On Tuesday morning, the Weissmans returned to Project:Camp. Max looked more relaxed. He'd gotten

some things done, and the power was supposed to return that day.

When he'd picked up the kids the evening before, Reyna told him it was the "best camp ever." Avi said it was OK, but that was enough for Max.

"In 11-year-old language," he said. "That means it was fantastic."

## **Grazer beats the behemoth that killed her cub to win Alaska's Fat Bear Contest**

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — In a storyline better befitting a melodrama than a popularity vote, Grazer won her second Fat Bear Contest Tuesday by defeating the male behemoth that killed her cub this summer.

Grazer beat Chunk by more than 40,000 votes cast by fans watching live cameras at explore.org of Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Fans cast votes online for their favorite chunky competitor in tournament-style brackets that begins with 12 bears. They picked the bear they believe best exemplifies winter preparedness by the fat they have accumulated over the summer feeding on the sockeye salmon that return to Brooks River.

The bears often perch at the top of a falls in the river, grabbing leaping salmon out of the air as the fish attempt to hurdle the waterfall to spawn upstream.

This is where Grazer's cub died after it slipped over the waterfall and was killed by Chunk, perhaps the most dominant brown bear on the river. Grazer fought Chunk in an effort to save the cub, but it later died. The death was captured on the live cameras.

Another death was captured live by the cameras just last week, delaying the release of the tournament bracket for a day. Bear 402, a female bear that was supposed to be a contestant in this year's contest, was killed by a male brown bear the day the brackets were expected to be released.

Grazer has conspicuously blond ears and a long, straight muzzle, according to her bio page at explore.org. "She is a formidable presence on Brooks River. Her fearlessness and strength have earned her respect, with most bears avoiding confrontation," it says.

Her other surviving cub from her third litter placed second two weeks ago in the Fat Bear Junior contest.

Chunk is perhaps the largest bear on the river, with narrow-set eyes, dark brown fur and a distinctive scar across his muzzle, his bio says. He used his size to rise to the top of the river hierarchy this year and secured the prime fishing spots.

"Chunk's confidence and aggression paid off, allowing him to feast on 42 salmon in 10 hours," it says. "His physical success is evident in his bulky form."

Adult male brown bears typically weigh 600 to 900 pounds (about 270 to 410 kilograms) in mid-summer. By the time they are ready to hibernate after feasting on migrating and spawning salmon — each eats as many as 30 fish per day — large males can weigh well over 1,000 pounds (454 kilograms). Females are about one-third smaller.

The annual contest, which drew more than 1.3 million votes last year, is a way to celebrate the resiliency of the 2,200 brown bears that live in the preserve on the Alaska Peninsula, which extends from the state's southwest corner toward the Aleutian Islands.

In addition to the live cameras, Katmai has become a bucket list tourist destination and viewing stands have been built on the river to allow people to watch the brown bears fish for salmon.

## **How Waffle House helps Southerners — and FEMA — judge a storm's severity**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

Golden hashbrowns, gravy-smothered biscuits and crispy waffles with a hearty helping of maple syrup are among the classic Southern comfort foods. But when hurricanes tear through Southeastern towns, the hot meals and bold yellow signs of the local Waffle House provide another kind of comfort.

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If a Waffle House stays open in town, even in a limited capacity, neighbors are reassured that the coming storm is unlikely to cause devastation. A closed location of the dependable diner chain has come to indicate impending disaster. The metric is known as the Waffle House Index.

What might sound like silly logic has become one of the most reliable ways for Southerners — and even federal officials — to gauge a storm's severity and identify communities most in need of immediate aid.

About two dozen Waffle House locations remained closed in the Carolinas and the chain's home state of Georgia on Tuesday, nearly two weeks after the states were among those battered by Hurricane Helene. Several other locations were open but serving a limited menu.

As Hurricane Milton barrels toward Florida communities still recovering from Helene, many Waffle House locations along the Gulf Coast, including those in Tampa, Cape Coral and St. Petersburg, have closed in preparation.

What is the Waffle House Index?

The South's favorite disaster authority provides an informal measure of how significantly a storm will affect or has affected a community.

A map of the chain's over 1,900 locations, concentrated in the Southeast and mid-Atlantic, helps residents of storm-prone states assess whether they're likely to lose power, experience severe flooding or endure other extreme conditions that might cause a resilient restaurant to close its doors. For some, it's a telltale sign of whether they need to evacuate.

Waffle House is known not just for serving breakfast 24/7, 365 days a year, but also for its disaster preparedness. For decades, people across the South have noticed that the local Waffle House seemed to be the only business still open during a storm or the first to reopen after it passed.

The restaurant chain's reputation for remaining open when people desperately needed a place to warm up, charge devices and grab a hot meal became a fairly reliable — albeit amusing — source to help track recovery efforts.

How does the index work?

Waffle House's social media shares color-coded maps of its restaurant locations in certain regions that will soon be hit or are recovering from storm damage. The Federal Emergency Management Agency also offers some live tracking.

Green means the location is serving a full menu, indicating minimal damage in the surrounding area. The lights are on and the syrup is flowing.

Yellow means the restaurant is serving a limited menu, a signal that it's pulling power from a generator and might have a low food supply. The area might not have running water or electricity, but there's enough gas to fry up bacon for hungry customers.

Red means the location is closed, a sign of unsafe operating conditions and severe destruction to the restaurant or nearby communities.

How did the index start?

Former FEMA administrator Craig Fugate has said he thought the Waffle House Index while leading Florida's emergency management efforts in 2004. He had been searching for something to eat while surveying the devastation left by Hurricane Charley and was only able to find a Waffle House serving a limited menu.

His team began to notice other open Waffle Houses in communities without power or running water. The restaurants eventually became a key feature on a color-coded map that his team provided to help the public and local officials identify where storm damage was most severe.

Fugate continued to use his color-coded map when he joined FEMA under President Barack Obama. He was the agency's administrator in 2011 when a deadly tornado tore through the town of Joplin, Missouri. Both of the town's Waffle Houses reportedly stayed open.

The restaurant chain's disaster readiness is no coincidence. Seven locations were destroyed and 100 more shut down in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina, but company executives saw business skyrocket at restaurants that reopened quickly.

They soon embraced a business strategy centered around keeping their restaurants operable during and

after a disaster, according to the company's website. The chain said it has invested in portable generators, bought a mobile command center and trained employees on what they can still serve if they lose electricity.

What does the index say about Hurricane Milton?

Waffle House has closed many Florida locations before Hurricane Milton has made landfall, indicating the damage will likely be severe.

Milton was upgraded back to a Category 5 storm Tuesday as it churned toward Florida's west coast. The ferocious storm could land a once-in-a-century direct hit on Tampa and St. Petersburg, engulfing the populous region with towering storm surges and turning debris from Helene's devastation into projectiles.

## Fearful residents flee Tampa Bay region as Hurricane Milton takes aim at Florida coast

By TERRY SPENCER and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Fearful Florida residents streamed out of the Tampa Bay region Tuesday ahead of what could be a once-in-a-century direct hit from Hurricane Milton, as crews worked furiously to prevent furniture, appliances and other waterlogged wreckage from the last big storm from becoming deadly projectiles in this one.

Tuesday marked the last chance for millions of people in the Tampa metro area to prepare for lethal storm surges, ferocious winds and possible tornadoes in a place that has narrowly avoided a head-on blow from a major storm for generations.

"Today's the last day to get ready," said Craig Fugate, a former FEMA director who previously ran the state's emergency operation division. "This is bringing everything."

Gov. Ron DeSantis said the state deployed over 300 dump trucks that had removed 1,300 loads of debris left behind by Hurricane Helene by Tuesday afternoon. In Clearwater Beach, Nick Szabo spent a second long day hauling away 3-foot (0.9-meter) piles of soggy mattresses, couches and drywall after being hired by a local resident who was eager to help clear the roads and unwilling to wait for overwhelmed city contractors.

"All this crap is going to be missiles," he said. "It's like a spear coming at you."

Residents evacuate as Milton regains strength

After weakening slightly, Milton regained strength Tuesday afternoon and became a Category 5 storm again, with winds of 160 mph (260 kph). It could make landfall Wednesday night in the Tampa Bay area, which has a population of more than 3.3 million people. The 11 Florida counties under mandatory evacu-



**Duke Energy project manager Tiger Yates, bottom center, walks among the hundreds of lineman trucks staged, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2024, at The Villages, Fla. in preparation for Hurricane Milton.**

(Stephen M. Dowell/Orlando Sentinel via AP)

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ation orders are home to about 5.9 million people, according to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Fluctuations in the storm's intensity are likely while Milton moves across the Gulf of Mexico, the National Hurricane Center said, but it is expected to be a dangerous storm when it reaches Florida.

Milton's forecasted trajectory also wobbled slightly Tuesday, which means it could make landfall Wednesday in the less populated areas a bit south of Tampa Bay, according to the center.

Still, the whole region is expected to get slammed by the storm.

It is difficult to predict an exact landfall location even about a day before it's expected to come ashore. Predictions can be off by a little over 60 miles (96 kilometers), the hurricane center said.

Those who defy evacuations orders are on their own, and first responders are not expected to risk their lives to rescue them at the height of the storm.

"You do not have to get on the interstate and go far away," DeSantis told a news conference, assuring residents there would be enough gasoline to fuel their cars for the trip. "You can evacuate tens of miles. You do not have to evacuate hundreds of miles away."

Milton is forecast to cross central Florida and to dump as much as 18 inches (46 centimeters) of rain while heading toward the Atlantic Ocean, according to the hurricane center. That path would largely spare other states ravaged by Helene, which killed at least 230 people on its path from Florida to the Carolinas.

Tampa prepares for possible historic storm fueled by warming waters

The arrival of back-to-back hurricanes that rapidly intensified into mighty storms comes as climate change exacerbates conditions that are allowing them to thrive in warming waters. Milton is the 13th named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which started June 1.

Most of Florida's west coast was under a hurricane or tropical storm warning as the system spun just off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, creeping toward shore and sucking energy from the Gulf of Mexico's warm waters. Hurricane warnings were extended early Tuesday to parts of the state's east coast.

Tampa Bay has not been hit directly by a major hurricane since 1921, and authorities fear its luck is about to run out. Tampa Mayor Jane Castor issued increasingly dire warnings, noting that a 15-foot (4.5-meter) surge could swallow an entire house.

"So if you're in it, basically that's the coffin that you're in," she said.

There's no good recent example of how bad it could be because even historic hurricanes such as Andrew, Harvey and Katrina did not actually directly hit a major metropolitan area. They were all to the side, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

"It's hard to see places coming out of this very well," McNoldy said. "If it's not the worst case ... even the next worst case is very bad."

Fuel lines, missed flights and heavy traffic

In Riverview, south of Tampa, several drivers waiting in a long line for fuel Tuesday morning said they had no plans to evacuate.

"I think we'll just hang, you know — tough it out," said Martin Oakes, of nearby Apollo Beach. "We got shutters up. The house is all ready. So this is sort of the last piece of the puzzle."

Ralph Douglas, who lives in neighboring Ruskin, said he, too, will stay put, in part because he worries about running out of gas trying to return after the storm or getting blocked by debris.

"Where I'm at right now, I don't think I need to evacuate," he said.

At the Tampa airport, John Fedor and his wife were trying to catch a cab to a storm shelter after missing multiple flights home to Philadelphia. They had hoped taking a Caribbean cruise would bring them closer, but tensions were rising after they spent nearly \$1,000 on unplanned transportation and hotel rooms due to travel delays. After a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) walk to the airport, Fedor's suitcase cracked open and the wheels broke. They considered driving home or taking a train, but nothing worked out.

"We're kind of like stranded here," Fedor said.

President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration for Florida, and the White House announced Tuesday that he would postpone a trip to Germany and Angola to monitor the storm.

"This could be the worst storm to hit Florida in over a century," Biden told reporters. "God willing it won't

be. But that's what it's looking like right now."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has almost 900 staff members in the region and has stocked two staging areas with 20 million meals and 40 million liters of water, the White House said.

Stragglers were a problem during Helene and Ian in 2022. Many residents said they evacuated during previous storms only to have major surges not materialize. But there was evidence Tuesday that people were heeding the warnings to get out before Milton arrives.

The Florida Highway Patrol reported heavy traffic northbound and eastbound on all roadways and said state troopers were escorting fuel tankers to assist with gasoline delivery.

About 150 miles (240 kilometers) south of Tampa, Fort Myers Beach was nearly a ghost town. Ian devastated the community two years ago with its 15-foot (4.5-meter) storm surge. Fourteen people died there. On Tuesday, the nearby Callosahatchee River was already choppy, slapping hard against the sea wall.

## **FBI arrests Afghan man who officials say planned Election Day attack in the US**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI has arrested an Afghan man who officials say was inspired by the Islamic State militant organization and was plotting an Election Day attack targeting large crowds in the U.S., the Justice Department said Tuesday.

Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi, 27, of Oklahoma City told investigators after his arrest Monday that he had planned his attack to coincide with Election Day next month and that he and a co-conspirator expected to die as martyrs, according to charging documents.

Tawhedi, who arrived in the U.S. in September 2021, had taken steps in recent weeks to advance his attack plans, including by ordering AK-47 rifles, liquidating his family's assets and buying one-way tickets for his wife and child to travel home to Afghanistan, officials said.

The arrest comes as the FBI confronts heightened concerns over the possibility of extremist violence on U.S. soil, with Director Christopher Wray telling The Associated Press in August that he was "hard pressed to think of a time in my career where so many different kinds of threats are all elevated at once."

"Terrorism is still the FBI's number one priority, and we will use every resource to protect the American people," Wray said in a statement Tuesday.

An FBI affidavit does not reveal precisely how Tawhedi came onto investigators' radar, but cites what it says is evidence from recent months showing his determination in planning an attack. A photograph from July included in the affidavit depicts a man investigators identified as Tawhedi reading to two young children, including his daughter, "a text that describes the rewards a martyr receives in the afterlife."

Officials say Tawhedi also consumed Islamic State propaganda, contributed to a charity that functions as a front for the militant group and communicated with a person who the FBI determined from a prior investigation was involved in recruitment and indoctrination of people interested in extremism. He also viewed webcams for the White House and the Washington Monument in July.

Tawhedi's alleged co-conspirator was not identified by the Justice Department, which described him only as a juvenile, a fellow Afghan national and the brother of Tawhedi's wife.

After the two advertised the sale of personal property on Facebook, the FBI enlisted an informant last month to respond to the offer and strike up a relationship. The informant later invited them to a gun range, where they ordered weapons from an undercover FBI official who was posing as a business partner of the informant, according to court papers.

Tawhedi was arrested Monday after taking possession of two AK-47 rifles and ammunition he had ordered, officials said. The unidentified co-conspirator was also arrested but the Justice Department did not provide details because he is a juvenile.

After he was arrested, the Justice Department said, Tawhedi told investigators he had planned an attack for Election Day that would target large gatherings of people.

Tawhedi was charged with conspiring and attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State,



which is designated by the U.S. as a foreign terrorist organization. The charge is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

He appeared in court Tuesday and was ordered detained. An email to an attorney listed as representing him did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

It was not immediately clear if he had a lawyer who could speak on his behalf.

A for-sale sign stood in the yard outside a modest, two-story brick home listed as being connected to Tawhedi's family in the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore.

A woman who identified herself as Tawhedi's wife declined to discuss the case.

"We don't want to talk in the media," said the woman, who did not give her name.

Tawhedi entered the U.S. on a special immigrant visa in 2021 and has been on parole status pending the conclusion of his immigration proceedings, the Justice Department said. The program permits eligible Afghans who helped Americans, despite great personal risk to themselves and their loved ones, to apply for entry into America with their families.

Eligible Afghans include interpreters for the U.S. military as well as individuals integral to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. While the program has existed since 2009, the number of applicants skyrocketed after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

Shawn VanDiver, the president of #AfghanEvac, a coalition of organizations dedicated to helping Afghans trying to leave Afghanistan, said that though the charges are serious, "it's critical that we do not assign blame to an entire community for the actions of one individual. Thousands of Afghans who resettled in the United States are working to build new lives and contribute to our shared future."

"These are the same individuals who stood shoulder to shoulder with us in Afghanistan for over two decades, defending the values we hold dear," he said in a statement. "Now, they are our neighbors, and we must support them as they seek safety and stability in their new home."

## Hezbollah steps up rocket fire as Israel sends more troops into Lebanon

By BASSEM MROUE and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hezbollah fired another barrage of rockets into Israel on Tuesday, and the militant group's acting leader vowed to keep up pressure that has forced tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes near the Lebanese border. The Israeli military said it sent more ground troops into southern Lebanon and that a senior Hezbollah commander was killed in an airstrike.

Dozens of rockets fired by Hezbollah were aimed as far south as Haifa, and the Israeli government warned residents north of the coastal city to limit activities, prompting the closure of more schools. The Israeli military said Hezbollah launched about 180 rockets across the border.

Sheikh Naim Kasseem, Hezbollah's acting leader, said its military capabilities remain intact after weeks of heavy Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon, and attacks that killed its top commanders in a matter of days. He said Israeli forces have not been able to advance since launching a ground incursion into Lebanon last week.

Kasseem, speaking by video from an undisclosed location, said Hezbollah will name a new leader to succeed longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, "but the circumstances are difficult because of the war."

In a statement addressed to the people of Lebanon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Hezbollah "weaker than it has been for many, many years." He added: "We took out thousands of terrorists, including Nasrallah himself, and Nasrallah's replacement, and the replacement of his replacement," but without naming them.

Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut last month. Hashem Safieddine, a cousin of Nasrallah who oversees the group's political affairs, was generally regarded as the heir apparent. But no announcement has been made on a successor, and Safieddine has not appeared in public or made any public statements since Nasrallah's death.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, said Tuesday night that Israel was still checking

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the status of Safieddine, and accused Hezbollah of trying to hide details of a recent strike in Beirut on a location where he was believed to have been.

The Israeli military said it has dismantled militant infrastructure along the border and killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters.

There was no way to confirm battlefield claims made by either side.

The Israeli military said it deployed a fourth division in southern Lebanon and that operations have expanded to the west, but its focus still appears to be a narrow strip along the border.

A day after marking a year of war in Gaza, Israeli forces fought heavy battles Tuesday with Palestinian militants in the north, where residents have been ordered to evacuate.

Hezbollah stresses support for Palestinians in Gaza

Hezbollah's acting leader said Hezbollah backs efforts by Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to reach a cease-fire. Berri, a close ally of Hezbollah, has been seen as the main interlocutor between the militant group and the United States, and has been trying to broker a cease-fire.

In a follow-up to Kassem's speech, the group issued a statement saying it will "not abandon our support and backing for our steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip."

The statement came in apparent response to reports that interpreted Kassem's speech as suggesting the group would agree to a cease-fire in Lebanon without a cease-fire in Gaza, contrary to Hezbollah's public stance that the two fronts are linked.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel the day after Hamas' surprise attack into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 ignited the war in Gaza. Hezbollah and Hamas are both allied with Iran. Most rockets have been intercepted or fallen in open areas.

The Israeli army on Tuesday said about 180 rockets were launched from Lebanon toward northern Israel, with most intercepted. A 70-year-old woman was wounded by shrapnel, and Israeli media aired footage of what appeared to be minor damage to buildings near Haifa.

The military said late Tuesday that Israeli strikes over the past 24 hours had killed 50 Hezbollah fighters, including six whom it described as senior commanders. Israel says it will keep fighting until tens of thousands of displaced Israeli citizens can return to their homes in the north.

More than 1,300 people have been killed in Lebanon and over a million displaced since the fighting escalated in mid-September.

Israel's response to Iran's missile barrage

Last week, Iran launched its own barrage of some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel, in what it said was a response to the killing of Nasrallah, along with an Iranian general who was with him at the time, and Ismail Haniyeh, the top leader of Hamas killed in an explosion in Tehran in July.

Israel has vowed to respond to the missile attack, without saying when or how.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant was to meet in Washington with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, but Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said Tuesday the meeting, expected for the following day, had been postponed. Asked for the reason, she referred reporters to Israeli officials. Netanyahu's office had no immediate comment.

The Biden administration says it is opposed to an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, which could further escalate regional tensions.

Heavy fighting and evacuation orders in Gaza

Heavy fighting raged in northern Gaza, the first target of Israel's ground offensive in the war. Entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble, and Israeli troops have largely isolated the region — which includes Gaza City — since last October, when up to a million people fled south following Israeli evacuation orders.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the Israeli military called for three hospitals in northern Gaza — Kamal Adwan, Awda and the Indonesian Hospital — to evacuate patients and medical staff.

"The military contacted me directly and said in a threatening way, 'tomorrow all the patients and staff in Kamal Adwan must be removed or they will be exposed to danger.' Clearly, it's a clear threat," said the

hospital's director, Hossam Abu Safiya.

"We have told all sides that the north is still crowded with people ... and we have the right to provide them services," Abu Safiya said. "We are staying firm and will continue to provide services no matter what the cost."

Israeli forces are also battling Hamas militants in Jabaliya, a densely populated urban refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Palestinian residents said Israeli warplanes and artillery were pounding Jabaliya as well as Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya.

Earlier, Kamal Adwan Hospital said at least 15 people, including two women, four children and four people trying to retrieve bodies, were killed Tuesday in the fighting in Jabaliya.

"The situation is extremely difficult. The bombing and explosions haven't stopped," said Jabaliya resident Mahmoud Abu Shehatah. "It's like the first days of the war."

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed around 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. They do not say how many were fighters, but say women and children make up more than half of all fatalities.

## Woodward book reveals Trump's calls with Putin and Biden's private remarks on Obama and Netanyahu

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump has had as many as seven private phone calls with Vladimir Putin since leaving office and secretly sent the Russian president COVID-19 test machines during the height of the pandemic, Bob Woodward reported in his new book, "War."

The revelations were made in the famed Watergate reporter's latest book, which also details President Joe Biden's frustrations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's assortment of burner phones. The Associated Press obtained an early copy of the book, which is due out next week.

Trump denied the reporting in an interview with ABC News' Jonathan Karl. "He's a storyteller. A bad one. And he's lost his marbles," Trump said of Woodward.

Trump had previously spoken to Woodward for the journalist's 2021 book, "Rage." Trump later sued over it, claiming Woodward never had permission to publicly release recordings of their interviews for the book. The publisher and Woodward denied his allegations.

Here is more from the new book:

Trump has had multiple calls with Putin since his White House term ended

Woodward reports that Trump asked an aide to leave his office at his Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago, so that the former president could have a private call with Putin in early 2024. The aide, whom Woodward doesn't name, said there have been multiple calls between Trump and Putin since Trump left office, perhaps as many as seven, according to the book, though it does not detail what they discussed.

Trump senior adviser and longtime aide Jason Miller told Woodward that he had not heard Trump was having calls with Putin and said, "I'd push back on that." But Miller also said, according to the book, "I'm sure they'd know how to get in touch with each other."

Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, said none of the stories in Woodward's books are true. In a statement on Tuesday, he called them "the work of a truly demented and deranged man who suffers from a debilitating case of Trump Derangement Syndrome."

Trump's relationship with Putin has been scrutinized since his 2016 campaign for president, when he memorably called on Russia to find and make public missing emails deleted by Hillary Clinton, his Democratic opponent. "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," he said.

U.S. intelligence agencies later determined that Russia had meddled in the 2016 election to help Trump,

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though an investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller found no conspiracy between the Trump team and Russia. In 2018, Trump publicly questioned that finding following an in-person meeting with Putin in Helsinki.

In recent years, Trump has criticized U.S. support for Ukraine as it fights off Russia's invasion. He has said Ukraine should have made concessions to Putin before Russia invaded in 2022. He also previously touted his good relationship with Putin and called the Russian leader "pretty smart" for invading Ukraine.

Trump sent COVID-19 test machines to Putin for his personal use

Woodward reports that Trump sent Putin COVID-19 test machines for his personal use as the virus began spreading in 2020.

Putin told Trump not to tell anyone because people would be mad at Trump over it, but Trump said he didn't care if anyone knew, according to the book. Trump ended up agreeing not to tell anyone.

The book doesn't specify when the machines were sent but describes it as being when the virus spread rapidly through Russia. It was previously reported by The Associated Press and other agencies that Trump's administration in May 2020 sent ventilators and other equipment to several countries, including Russia.

Vice President Kamala Harris, in an interview Tuesday with radio host Howard Stern, accused Trump of giving the machines to a "murderous dictator" at a time when "everyone was scrambling" to get tests.

"This person who wants to be president again, who secretly is helping out an adversary while the American people are dying by the hundreds every day," said Harris, the Democratic presidential candidate.

Biden highlighted the report during a stop in Pennsylvania on Tuesday.

"You see what came out today?" Biden said at a fundraiser for Sen. Bob Casey. "So he calls his good friend Putin — not a joke — and makes sure he had the tests. He had the tests."

Biden's anger at Netanyahu has boiled over in private

The book also details Biden's complicated relationship with Netanyahu as well as private moments when the president has been fed up with him over the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden's "frustrations and distrust" of Netanyahu "erupted" this past spring, Woodward writes. The president privately unleashed a profanity-laden tirade, calling him a "son of a bitch" and a "bad f----- guy," according to the book. Biden said he felt, in Woodward's accounting, that Netanyahu "had been lying to him regularly." With Netanyahu "continuing to say he was going to kill every last member of Hamas." Woodward wrote, "Biden had told him that was impossible, threatening both privately and publicly to withhold offensive U.S. weapons shipment."

Biden and Netanyahu have long been acquainted, although their relationship has not been known to be close or overly friendly. Last week, Biden 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.

Asked about the book's reporting, White House spokesperson Emilie Simons told reporters Tuesday that "The commitment that we have to the state of Israel is ironclad."

Simons, when pressed on the details, said she wouldn't comment on every anecdote that may come out in reporting. She added of Biden and Netanyahu: "They have a long-term relationship. They have a very honest and direct relationship, and I don't have a comment on those specific anecdotes."

Biden criticized Obama's handling of the Russian invasion of Crimea

The book details Biden's criticism late last year of President Barack Obama's handling of Putin's earlier invasion of Ukraine, when Russia seized Crimea and a section of the Donbas in 2014, at a time when Biden was serving as the Democrat's vice president.

"They f----- up in 2014," Woodward wrote that Biden said to a close friend in December, blaming the lack of action for Putin's actions in Ukraine. "Barack never took Putin seriously."

Biden was angry while speaking to the friend and said they "never should have let Putin just walk in there" in 2014 and that the U.S. "did nothing."

Biden regrets choosing Garland as attorney general

Woodward reports Biden was privately furious with Attorney General Merrick Garland for appointing a special counsel to investigate Biden's son Hunter in a tax-and-gun prosecution.

"Should never have picked Garland," Biden told an associate, according to Woodward. The journalist did

not name the associate.

Hunter Biden was convicted in June on federal gun charges and faces sentencing in federal court in Delaware in December. He pleaded guilty to federal tax charges in California and is also set to be sentenced in that case in December.

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Graham says going to Mar-a-Lago is 'a little bit like going to North Korea'

One of Trump's longest-term allies, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, blamed Trump's ongoing false claims that the 2020 election was rigged to a cult of personality in which the former president's ensconcement at Mar-a-Lago and circle of aides and advisers "constantly feed this narrative," according to the book.

The weekend after Russia invaded Ukraine, Graham was with Trump at Mar-a-Lago, which the senator characterized as "a little bit like going to North Korea." Graham added that "everybody stands up and claps every time Trump comes in."

On politics, Woodward wrote that Graham's counsel was part of what persuaded Trump to run again for the presidency.

In March, during one of his many visits to the Middle East since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, Graham told Woodward that he had been meeting with the Saudi crown prince when Graham suggested they call Trump. From "a bag containing about 50 burner phones," Prince Mohammed "pulled out one labeled 'TRUMP 45.'" On another trip, Woodward wrote, the Saudi leader retrieved another burner phone, "this time labeled JAKE SULLIVAN" when the men called Biden's national security adviser.

## **The AP has called winners in elections for more than 170 years. Here's how it's done**

By ROBERT YOON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One question will be asked over and over on election night: Who won?

The Associated Press will answer that question for nearly 5,000 contested races across the United States and up and down the ballot, from president and state ballot measures to a variety of local offices.

The AP has compiled vote results and declared winners in elections for more than 170 years, filling what could otherwise be a critical information void of up to a month between Election Day and the official certification of results.

What goes into determining the winners? A careful and thorough analysis of the latest available vote tallies and a variety of other election data, with the ultimate goal of answering this question: Is there any circumstance in which the trailing candidate can catch up? If the answer is no, then the leading candidate has won.

Analyzing the vote

Race calls are based on provable facts, primarily from the AP's vote count, which is compiled from state and local election offices around the nation.

As more and more ballots are tabulated starting on election night, the AP will monitor the incoming vote at the county level and analyze who is in the lead and what areas the votes are coming from.

At the same time, the AP tries to determine throughout the night how many ballots are uncounted and from what areas. State and local election officials don't immediately know by election night exactly how many ballots were cast in every contest. Determining how many remain has become more complicated because of the growing number of ballots cast by mail that may arrive after Election Day, which is Nov. 5 this year.

This means there are usually no official and exact tallies of the outstanding vote to rely on once the vote counting gets underway. As a result, the AP estimates the turnout in every race based on several factors and uses that estimate to track how much of the vote has been counted and how much remains.

The AP also tries to determine how ballots counted so far were cast, and the types of vote — such as mail ballots or Election Day in-person — that remain.

That's because the method a voter chooses often speaks to whom they voted for. Since the issue of

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voting by mail became highly politicized in the 2020 election, most mail votes nationally have been cast by Democratic voters, while most in-person Election Day votes have been cast by Republicans.

In many states, it is possible to know which votes will be counted first from past elections or plans announced by election officials. In some others, votes counted so far are clearly marked by type.

This helps to determine if an early lead is expected to shrink or grow. For example, if a state first counts votes cast in person on Election Day, followed by mail-in votes, that suggests that an early Republican lead in the vote count may narrow as more mail ballots are tabulated. But if the reverse is true and mail ballots are counted first, an early Republican lead could be the first sign of a comfortable victory.

## Finding clues from election data

The AP's analysis to determine the winners is also greatly informed by other election data, especially the long-standing voting trends in a given area. Past election results over time show that states and counties with a long history of lopsided Republican or Democratic victories tend to continue the same voting patterns from one election to the next.

Even in closely contested races, comparing current vote patterns with those in past races can provide important clues.

For example, if a Democratic candidate is performing a few percentage points better across all counties that have reported votes in a state a Democrat previously won by a narrow margin, that could be a sign of a more comfortable Democratic victory. But if the Republican is performing a few percentage points better, that could point to an exceedingly close race or even a flipped result.

Large changes in an area's voting patterns that differ substantially from statewide trends are certainly possible but tend to take root over a time frame of multiple elections. This helps analysts understand whether one candidate's lead is an expected result or a sign of tight race. It also helps determine whether the remaining uncounted ballots are from areas that would likely benefit one candidate over another.

Demographic data can also shed light on the vote count. For example, shifts that differ from statewide patterns might be explained by a shift among a specific group, such as Hispanic voters or white voters without college degrees.

## Harnessing AP VoteCast

Another tool available to the AP's decision teams is AP VoteCast, a comprehensive, 50-state election survey that provides a detailed snapshot of who voted in an election and what was on their minds when they voted. Data from AP VoteCast makes it possible in some cases to call non-competitive or less competitive races as the polls close or shortly afterward with the initial release of votes.

When considering poll-close calls, the AP will only declare a winner if AP VoteCast data confirms the expected result in that contest based on past vote history and other preelection data.

## When does the AP call a race?

In almost all cases, races can be called well before 100% of the votes have been counted. The AP's team of election journalists and analysts will call a race as soon as a clear winner can be determined. That may sound obvious, but it is the guiding principle that drives the organization's election race-calling process.

The AP's race calls are not predictions and are not based on speculation. They are declarations based on an analysis of vote results and other election data that one candidate has emerged as the winner and that no other candidate in the race will be able to overtake the winner once all the votes have been counted.

## Why might the AP not declare a winner?

The AP may delay calling a winner if the vote results go against the expected outcome of the contest as indicated by the available election data. In other words, if the vote results show a large lead for one candidate but some combination of the past vote history, demographic data or AP VoteCast data point to a different outcome, the AP would carefully review the vote results before making any determination.

In competitive races, AP analysts may need to wait until additional votes are tallied or to confirm specific information about how many ballots are left to count.

The AP may declare that a race is "too close to call" if a race is so close that there's no clear winner even once all ballots except for provisional and late-arriving absentee ballots have been counted.

Competitive races where votes are actively being tabulated — for example in states that count a large

number of voters after election night — might be considered “too early to call.” The “too close to call” designation is not used for these types of races.

The AP may also decide not to call a race if the margin between the top two candidates is less than 0.5 percentage points unless it determines that the margin is wide enough that it could not change in a recount.

Things that don't affect a call

AP race calls are never made based on lobbying from campaigns or political parties or announcements made by other news organizations, or on candidate victory speeches. Although it will never call a winner based on a concession speech, in some cases, a concession is the final piece of the puzzle in confirming that there will be no recount in a close race.

## Harris gets personal in media blitz, balks at breaking with Biden on policy

By ZEKE MILLER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Kamala Harris wanted to help voters get to know her better with a cascade of media appearances Tuesday, but the most lasting impression might have been her unwillingness to break with Joe Biden.

Asked on ABC's “The View” how she would be different from the president she's served under for four years, Harris said “we're obviously two different people” and “I will bring those sensibilities to how I lead.”

However, she was not able to identify a decision where she would have gone another way. “There is not a thing that comes to mind,” Harris said.

The exchange encapsulated Harris' struggle to portray herself as a candidate who can deliver the change voters crave while also remaining loyal to the current administration. Some Harris aides privately winced as gleeful Republicans swiftly circulated clips of her response and Donald Trump swiped at her in a social media post, calling it “her dumbest answer so far.”

It wasn't until later in the show that Harris named something that she would do differently than Biden — she would put a Republican in her Cabinet.

The Democratic nominee said she would welcome contributions from the other party “because I don't feel burdened by letting pride get in the way of a good idea.”

The interview was a reminder that friendly media venues — the women of “The View” were nearly rapturous in their embrace of Harris — can be as treacherous for politicians to navigate as hardball journalistic interrogations. And it came at a delicate moment for Harris, whose motorcade whisked her from studio to studio in New York on Tuesday.

She faced a similar question during a taping of CBS' “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, who asked Harris “what would the major changes be” from Biden. She offered nothing other than saying “I'm obviously not Joe Biden, so that would be one change” — then emphasized that she's also not Trump.

Even though Harris' abbreviated and unexpected bid for the presidency is more than half over, she is still racing to introduce herself to voters who haven't made up their minds about her or whether to cast ballots in this year's election. Her interviews Tuesday, which included sitting down with radio host Howard Stern, were an attempt to reach as many people as possible with only four weeks to go until the end of the campaign. She also recently spoke to CBS' “60 Minutes,” which aired Monday night, and Alex Cooper's podcast “Call Her Daddy,” which was released Sunday.

It's a kaleidoscopic media blitz intended to reach key demographics, from men who are longtime fans of Stern to young women who follow Cooper's frank conversations about sex and relationships.

Harris' decision to open up is a sharp shift after largely avoiding interviews since replacing Biden at the top of the ticket, and it's an acknowledgment that she needs to do more to defeat Trump.

Getting personal has never been easy for Harris, a lawyer by training whose first job in public life was making opening and closing arguments as a courtroom prosecutor.

“It feels immodest to me to talk about myself,” Harris said to Stern. “A friend of mine actually said, ‘Look, this is not a time to worry about modesty, because obviously you gotta let people know who you are.’”

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By the time she was finished with the interview, Harris had, by her standards, bared her soul. Some examples:

She ate a family sized bag of Doritos after Trump beat Hillary Clinton. She works out on an elliptical every day. Her first job was cleaning test tubes at her mother's laboratory, and she got fired. Her favorite Formula One driver is Lewis Hamilton. She went to see U2 at the Sphere in Las Vegas, and she recommends going with a "clear head," meaning not high on drugs, because "there's a lot of visual stimulation."

Harris also said "I literally lose sleep" over the election because "the stakes are so high."

Anna Greenberg, a Democratic pollster, said Harris has to energize people who have tuned out politics because they believe "all the politicians are the same, they all say the same thing, they don't know anything about my life, I can't relate to them at all."

"They want to like and trust you," she said.

As if to drive the point home, Colbert's show included a very literal riff on the old political adage that Americans want politicians that they could have a beer with, and he pulled out two cans of Miller High Life.

Harris took a sip and said the last time she had drunk beer was at a baseball game with her husband.

Jennifer Harris, the former White House senior director of international economics, said Harris has a steeper hill to climb because of the way she became the Democratic nominee.

"We did not have a good long primary to meet Kamala Harris in the way most voters are accustomed to," she said. Harris has to find a way to demonstrate the instincts and principles that "will be guiding any number of hundreds of specific policy questions that will come up in the course of the presidency."

Harris used her Tuesday appearance on "The View" to discuss her proposal to have Medicare cover in-home care for the elderly, helping to relieve the burden faced by an increasing number of families.

She spoke about taking care of her own mother when she was dying of cancer, including cooking for her and picking out soft clothing that wouldn't irritate her. And she criticized Trump as selfish and uninterested in helping Americans. If you watch his grievance-filled rallies, she said, "he does not talk about what your parents need, what your children need."

Instead, Harris said, "he talks about his needs."

It was a moment that Harris' campaign would much rather get noticed than her answer about Biden. They believe that a small yet pivotal numbers of undecided voters want to know more about Harris before making up their minds, and that the more those voters see Harris, the more they like her.

Republican communications strategist Kevin Madden said defining Harris in voters' eyes is the central challenge of the campaign.

"This race is actually pretty simple in the sense that the next few weeks are about who's going to fill in the blanks on who Harris is," he said.

Harris' name recognition grew when she became vice president, but 1 out of 10 people still said they didn't know enough about her to have an opinion, according to AP-NORC polling. Recent shifts in her favorability numbers suggest that views on Harris may still be somewhat malleable.

Other polls have similar results. One-quarter of likely voters said they still feel like they need to learn more about Harris, according to a New York Times/Siena College poll conducted after her debate against Trump, while about three-quarters say they pretty much already know what they need to know about her.

Near the end of Harris' interview on the "Call Her Daddy" podcast, Cooper confronted the vice president with one of the central questions of this campaign.

So many people, Cooper said, are "frustrated and just exhausted with politics in general," so "why should we trust you?"

Harris answered by saying "you can look at my career to know what I care about."

"I care about making sure that people are entitled to and receive the freedoms that they are due," she said. "I care about lifting people up and making sure that you are protected from harm."



## Florida hospitals and health care facilities in Hurricane Milton's path prepare for the worst

By DEVNA BOSE and DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writers

Hospitals and other health care facilities on Florida's Gulf Coast — still reeling from Hurricane Helene — are now revving up for Hurricane Milton.

The system, which is shaping up to be one of the most powerful to hit the region in years, is projected to make landfall a bit south of the Tampa area late Wednesday. Long-term care facilities in counties where mandatory evacuations have been issued are taking their patients elsewhere, while hospitals are largely on guard, preparing to stay open through the storm.

According to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' website, 10 hospitals have reported evacuations as of Tuesday afternoon. Three hundred health care facilities have evacuated as of this morning, the most many of the staff working there could remember, said Florida Agency for Health Care Administration deputy secretary Kim Smoak. That count included 63 nursing homes and 169 assisted living facilities.

Steve McCoy, chief of the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Emergency Medical Oversight, said it is the state's "largest evacuation ever."

Health officials are using almost 600 vehicles to take patients out of the storm's path, tracking them with blue wristbands that show where they were evacuated from and where they are being sent. They plan to keep getting patients out through the night, until winds reach sustained speeds of 40 mph and driving conditions become unsafe.

"I've lived on the Gulf Coast my entire life and in Sarasota for 20 years. I've never seen anything like this," said David Verinder, CEO of Sarasota Memorial Health Care System. "Our anxieties are high, but we're as prepared as we know how to be."

Hospitals brace for hurricane

Tampa General Hospital has stocked up on more than five days of supplies, including food, linens and 5,000 gallons of water, in addition to an on-site well. In the event of a power disruption, the hospital also has an energy plant with generators and boilers located 33 feet above sea level.

Tampa General deployed an "aquafence" to successfully prevent storm-surge flooding during Hurricane Helene two weeks ago. The barrier will be up again when Milton makes landfall and can withstand a storm surge of 15 feet. The U.S. National Hurricane Center estimates Milton's surges will be 10 to 15 feet high at their peak.

No one will be working on the first floor of Tampa General Hospital for the foreseeable future — just in case.

"While AquaFence has proven effective in the past, it is just the first line of defense and one of many mitigation efforts we've implemented this week to safely continue care for our patients," said Jennifer Crabtree, chief of staff at Tampa General.

The Tampa health system has shuttered many urgent care and imaging locations, but its four hospital campuses are prepared to remain open through the storm.

HCA Florida Healthcare, one of the state's largest health care networks, has evacuated patients from five hospitals to sister facilities. The closed HCA Florida hospitals are Pasadena Hospital in St. Petersburg, Largo West Hospital in Largo, Florida Englewood Hospital in Englewood, West Tampa Hospital in Tampa and Fawcett Hospital in Port Charlotte, where strong winds and flooding caused major damage in 2022 during Hurricane Ian.

AdventHealth North Pinellas evacuated its 40 patients Tuesday afternoon, transferring them to nearby hospitals in their health system. The hospital's emergency department remains open. Randy Haffner, CEO and president of AdventHealth Florida, said in an emailed statement that the system is "as prepared as we can be with water, generators, sandbags, satellite phones and the best caregivers there are."

Hospitals are shuttering nearby, but Sarasota Memorial Health Care System also plans to stay open through the storm and shelter in place, Verinder said. Still, "we are concerned about the many unknowns," he said.

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Verinder estimates the system, stocked with enough food, water, linens and medications for at least seven days and 200,000 gallons of fuel, will be expected to shelter and support more than 4,000 people during the hurricane, though they are already close to capacity.

More than 2,500 staff members are gearing up for multiple nights in the hospital starting Tuesday, so Sarasota Memorial is providing childcare and pet shelters at both of its campuses.

"We are not a designated medical shelter, but we are working with the county to care for medically dependent persons assigned to the hospital because of the acuity of their needs ... and patients evacuated from other hospitals in the region," he said.

Dr. Matt Shannon, director of community emergency medicine at University of Florida Health, said the state's flagship is prepared to take patients.

"The emergency department... we never close," he said. "We have five emergency departments, all of which are open and functioning. This is not our first rodeo — we've been through this many times before."

Repeated rough hurricane seasons have hardened Florida facilities and prepared them for Milton, said Mary Mayhew, president and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association. Still, the sheer power of Hurricane Milton and the back-to-back nature of storms will affect "a wide swath of the state and the hospitals."

"It's increasing the vulnerabilities in the area, from flooding to clogged drains to debris that hasn't been removed that may exacerbate the situation that is already forecasted to be catastrophic," Mayhew said. "Area hospitals routinely prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

Long-term care facilities evacuate

In a briefing Tuesday, state officials and long-term care industry representatives urged nursing homes and assisted living facilities to prepare for long power outages, damage to sewer systems and being unable to access electronic health records.

"We want to remind you that all emergencies are local," said Emmett Reed, CEO of the Florida Health Care Association, which represents nursing homes and assisted living providers in the state. "You need to start with your local emergency office to report any questions you might have."

Florida's west coast, which includes Pinellas, Manatee and Hillsborough counties, has the highest concentration of nursing centers in the state, Florida Health Care Association spokesperson Kristen Knapp said.

"Based on what has been reported, at a minimum you're talking about 5,000-6,000 nursing home residents that have evacuated," Knapp said in an email.

In counties under state of emergency orders, nursing homes and assisted living facilities are required to have enough emergency generator fuel to power life-saving equipment and keep indoor temperatures at a safe level for 96 hours.

Deborah Franklin, a member of the Florida Health Care Association's emergency response team, said centers should be printing resident documents, including medications, dietary restrictions and more, even if they are not in the worst of the hurricane's path. She also urged staff to consider the mental health of their residents, some of whom are moving for the second time in just a few weeks.

"You must address — after the storm or even during the storm — trauma-informed care for these residents," Franklin said. "They could be worried about their families. They could be worried about if they're going to have a home to go back to."

Sixty-seven year old Lillie Whiting said she doesn't plan on evacuating the assisted living facility where she lives a few blocks from the bay in Clearwater. But she may have to pack up anyway, if staff at Magnolia Manor determine that residents need to be relocated to another facility across town.

"We might have to evacuate, but they doubt it, saying we'll see what goes on," Whiting said. "If we do, they got another place we can go."

The retired housekeeper took advantage of the clear weather Tuesday afternoon to get some fresh air, supported by the walker she uses to get around. She is getting more nervous as Hurricane Milton barrels towards the Gulf Coast, but she said she feels confident the facility will take care of her and the other residents.

"Kinda scared," she said. "But I be praying all the time."

Concerns raised about at-home care

Shannon from UF Health said most people with lung issues who rely on oxygen at home have backup oxygen bottles prepared, and some new devices even have backup batteries.

But he is concerned about elderly people and those who live in rural areas.

"We see them in the emergency room when backups fail or they don't have access to a generator," Shannon said.

Dialysis facilities across the state are trying to provide even shortened treatments to as many patients as possible before closing for the storm.

"Helene, they were able to get back up and running pretty quickly. But with the wind, this could be a different kind of event," said Helen Rose of Health Services Advisory Group, which is helping coordinate disaster response for kidney patients. The network has established a phone helpline and will keep an updated list of open facilities during and after the storm.

## Musk's X to be reinstated in Brazil after complying with Supreme Court demands

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — The Brazilian Supreme Court's Justice Alexandre de Moraes on Tuesday authorized the restoration of social media platform X's service in Brazil, over a month after its nationwide shutdown, according to a court document that was made public.

Elon Musk's X was blocked on Aug. 30 in the highly online country of 213 million people — and one of X's biggest markets, with estimates of its user base ranging from 20 to 40 million. De Moraes ordered the shutdown after a monthslong dispute with Musk over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation. Musk had disparaged de Moraes, calling him an authoritarian and a censor, even though his rulings, including X's suspension, were repeatedly upheld by his peers.

Despite Musk's public bravado, X ultimately complied with all of de Moraes' demands. They included blocking certain accounts from the platform, paying outstanding fines and naming a legal representative in the country. Failure to do the latter had triggered the suspension.

"The resumption of (X)'s activities on national territory was conditioned, solely, on full compliance with Brazilian laws and absolute observance of the Judiciary's decisions, out of respect for national sovereignty," de Moraes said in the court document.

"X is proud to return to Brazil," the company said in a statement posted on its Global Government Affairs account. "Giving tens of millions of Brazilians access to our indispensable platform was paramount throughout this entire process. We will continue to defend freedom of speech, within the boundaries of the law, everywhere we operate."

Just two days before the ban, on Aug. 28, X said it was removing all its remaining staff in Brazil "effective immediately," saying de Moraes had threatened with arrest its legal representative in the country, Rachel de Oliveira Villa Nova Conceição, if X did not comply with orders to block accounts.

Brazilian law requires foreign companies to have a local legal representative to receive notifications of court decisions and swiftly take any requisite action — particularly, in X's case, the takedown of accounts. Conceição was first named X's legal representative in April and resigned four months later. The company named her to the same job on Sept. 20, according to the public filing with the Sao Paulo commercial registry.

In an apparent effort to shield Conceição from potential violations by X — and risking arrest — a clause has been written into Conceição's new representation agreement that she must follow Brazilian law and court decisions, and that any legal responsibility she assumes on X's behalf requires prior instruction from the company in writing, according to the company's filing.

Conceição works for BR4Business, a business services firm. Its two-page website provides no insight into its operations or staff. "Something great is on its way," the top of the site's main page reads in English. Its other page is an extensive privacy policy.

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At three of its listed Sao Paulo offices, receptionists told the AP that the company's offices are empty and employees work remotely. Neither Conceição nor BR4Business returned multiple phone calls and emails from the AP.

There is nothing illegal or suspect about using a company like BR4Business for legal representation, but it shows that X is doing the bare minimum to operate in the country, said Fabio de Sa e Silva, a lawyer and associate professor of International and Brazilian Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

"It doesn't demonstrate an intention to truly engage with the country. Take Meta, for example, and Google. They have an office, a government relations department, precisely to interact with public authorities and discuss Brazil's regulatory policies concerning their businesses," Silva added.

Indeed, it is rare for an established, influential company such as X to have only a legal representative, said Carlos Affonso Souza, a lawyer and director of the Institute for Technology and Society, a Rio-based think tank. And that could be problematic going forward.

"The concern now is what comes next and how X, once back in operation, will manage to meet the demands of the market and local authorities without creating new tensions," he said.

Some of Brazilian X's users have migrated to other platforms, such as Meta's Threads and, primarily, Bluesky. It's unclear how many of them will return to X. In a statement to the AP, Bluesky reported that it now has 10.6 million users and continues to see strong growth in Brazil. Bluesky has appointed a legal representative in the South American country.

Brazil was not the first country to ban X — far from it — but such a drastic step has generally been limited to authoritarian regimes. The platform and its former incarnation, Twitter, have been banned in Russia, China, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Venezuela and Turkmenistan. Other countries, such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt, have also temporarily suspended X before, usually to quell dissent and unrest.

X's dustup with Brazil has some parallels to the company's dealings with the Indian government three years ago, back when it was still called Twitter and before Musk purchased it for \$44 billion. In 2021, India threatened to arrest employees of Twitter (as well as Meta's Facebook and WhatsApp), for not complying with the government's requests to take down posts related to farmers' protests that rocked the country.

Musk's decision to reverse course in Brazil after publicly criticizing de Moraes isn't surprising, said Matteo Ceurvels, research firm Emarketer's analyst for Latin America and Spain.

"The move was pragmatic, likely driven by the economic consequences of losing access to millions of users in its third-largest market worldwide, along with the millions of dollars in associated advertising revenue," Ceurvels said. "Although X may not be a top priority for most advertisers in Brazil, the platform needs them more than they need it."

## As FEMA prepares for Hurricane Milton, it battles rumors surrounding Helene recovery

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The rumors surrounding Hurricane Helene are many. There are false claims that people taking federal relief money could see their land seized. Or that \$750 is the most they will ever get to rebuild. Or that the agency's director — on the ground since the storm hit — was beaten up and hospitalized.

As the U.S. agency tasked with responding to disasters, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been fighting misinformation since Helene slammed into Florida nearly two weeks ago and brought a wide swath of destruction as it headed north. The false claims are being fueled by former President Donald Trump and others just ahead of the presidential election, and are coming as the agency is gearing up to respond to a second major disaster: Hurricane Milton is set to strike Florida on Wednesday.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell told reporters Tuesday that she has never seen the disinformation problem as bad as it's been with Helene, which hit hard in North Carolina, a state key to winning the election.

"It's absolutely the worst that I have ever seen," an uninjured Criswell said.

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She said the online rumors are demoralizing for staff or volunteers who have left family behind to deploy to a disaster zone. And she said there's a real risk that local residents will hear these rumors and be too afraid to apply for the help they're entitled to.

Drew Reisinger, a Democratic registrar of deeds in Buncombe County, North Carolina, said part of the problem is that the affected regions have been largely without means of communication, so outside voices have an easier time setting the narrative.

"It's almost easier to let misinformation happen when all of our phone lines and internet lines have been down for so many days that we can't refute it," he said.

For days after Helene hit, his office did wellness checks when relatives or friends reached out to say that they hadn't been able to get in touch with people in the area. The vast majority of people were OK. But at one point, his office said it had done 15,000 wellness checks and that was mistakenly interpreted as meaning 15,000 people were missing.

He pushed back on suggestions that relief supplies weren't getting to people.

"Even in my office and the registered deeds office, we are taking so much stuff out into every holler, and we're finding that there's already so much food and water at every local Baptist church ... at the Elks Club and at the homeless shelter," he said.

U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, a North Carolina Republican, put out a statement Tuesday debunking "outrageous rumors" that FEMA is halting trucks from bringing in supplies, abandoning rescue efforts to bulldoze the mountain town of Chimney Rock, is running out of money and more. FEMA also has set up a website debunking conspiracy theories.

But others questioned where FEMA and other help has been. Pete Loftin and Crystal Pierce Clontz were talking Monday outside a donation center set up in Sunny View, North Carolina. They compared notes about how many bars they had been able to get on their cellphones — not many. Loftin had spent two days trying to cut his way out of his damaged driveway but wasn't sure how he could even apply for FEMA help.

"We all come together and are fending for ourselves," he said.

FEMA said Tuesday that federal assistance for survivors of Helene, which has killed 236 people across six states, has hit \$286 million. It's also sent about half a million tarps, 210 generators, more than 16 million meals and other supplies to the affected regions.

This is not the first time that rumors have run rampant following a disaster, although experts say social media has supercharged the phenomenon. Criswell said they ran into similar problems in 2023 after a massive wildfire in Maui.

During Helene, false claims have swirled that residents will only get \$750 from FEMA and nothing more. That amount specifically refers to one-time payments that people can receive for immediate needs like buying medicine or baby food. People also can apply for a host of other types of assistance, like money for rent while they're displaced or money to store their belongings while they repair their homes.

The agency also has been falsely accused of confiscating donations intended for Helene and pivoting those supplies to Ukraine. Those are separate pots of money distributed by Congress.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue has tracked the disinformation and misinformation circulating in Helene's wake. The London-based think tank that tracks online hate, disinformation and extremism said it found 33 posts on the platform X containing claims already debunked by FEMA or others that had generated 160 million views as of Monday.

After a disaster, there's usually a period where residents work together to dig out and get supplies to strangers and friends alike, said Jeannette Sutton, an assistant professor at the University of Albany who studies how best to communicate with people during a disaster.

But at some point, there is often a transition where that altruism is replaced by a feeling of competition for resources. She's concerned about what disinformation could do to push communities into competition even faster.

"You can imagine that if people started to come in from the outside kind of stirring things up, that that could help to kind of push people into that more corrosive environment," she said.

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It's all coming as FEMA is preparing for Hurricane Milton, which is set to hit Florida's Tampa region Wednesday. Agency officials have said repeatedly that they can respond to multiple disasters at once — a message that Criswell hammered home Tuesday.

"FEMA has done this before. We manage complex incidents. We've managed multiple complex incidents," she said.

Craig Fugate, who was FEMA administrator during the Obama administration and before that was Florida's director of emergency management, reinforced that message.

He said the agency historically has been designed to be able to respond to two major disasters at any one time as well as a number of medium to small disasters. They have layers of staffing that can be deployed, ranging from reservists who get called up to work a disaster to staff at headquarters who agree when they're hired to deploy as needed.

The agency can pull staff working on long-term disaster recovery to focus on what's needed immediately — such as Milton response — and can pull from other parts of the Homeland Security Department if needed, Fugate said.

Criswell said the agency has enough money right now to respond to both Helene and Milton. But she did raise concerns that the agency could run into problems around December or January if it doesn't get more funding. In that case, they might have to pull back from long-term recovery projects to conserve money for the next big disaster, unless they get more funding from Congress.

Another agency key to disaster recovery is ringing the alarm that funds are running low. The Small Business Administration gives loans to uninsured or underinsured homeowners and to businesses to help them rebuild. President Joe Biden said in a letter to Congress that aid could run out "in a matter of weeks" if more federal funding is not approved.

## **A retired Houston officer gets 60 years in a couple's drug raid deaths that revealed corruption**

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A former Houston police officer was sentenced to 60 years in prison on Tuesday for the murder of a married couple during a drug raid that revealed systemic corruption in the department's narcotics unit and prompted criticism of the law enforcement agency and its tactics.

Gerald Goines was convicted in the January 2019 deaths of Dennis Tuttle, 59, and Rhogena Nicholas, 58. The couple were shot along with their dog after officers burst into their home using a "no-knock" warrant that didn't require them to announce themselves before entering.

Prosecutors said Goines lied to get the search warrant approved and that his actions were part of a pattern of wrongful drug arrests and convictions of innocent individuals during his 34-year law enforcement career.

"Gerald Goines has been a stain on the reputation of every honest cop in our community, a community that he terrorized through corruption worthy of the movie 'Training Day,'" said Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg.

Goines, 60, looked down but had no visible reaction as he heard the sentences for each count of murder, which will run concurrently. The jury, which had deliberated for more than 10 hours over two days on his sentence, also fined him \$20,000. Legal experts have said it is rare for a police officer to be charged and convicted for an on-duty killing.

Goines didn't make eye contact when Ryan Tuttle sat on the witness stand after the sentencing, with a framed photograph of his father and stepmother, and said his family was still waiting for answers from the ex-officer about why he targeted the couple. Goines, who did not testify during the monthlong trial, remained silent.

"My father and my stepmother were not involved in any drug dealing. They were good people. They did not deserve this," Ryan Tuttle said, and then stared at Goines as he walked away.

During closing arguments in the trial's punishment phase, prosecutors had asked for a life sentence. Goines' attorneys had asked for the minimum sentence of five years, saying Goines had dedicated his life

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to keeping drugs off the streets.

"We still don't believe legally that he is guilty of the crime of felony murder and we look forward to having the appellate courts review this," Nicole DeBorde, one of Goines' attorneys, told reporters after the sentence was read.

Goines had been free on bond since he was charged, but he was taken into custody following his conviction last month by the same jury.

Prosecutors said Goines falsely claimed an informant had bought heroin at the couple's home from a man with a gun, setting up the violent confrontation in which the couple was killed and four officers, including Goines, were shot and wounded, and a fifth was injured. A Texas Ranger who investigated the raid testified that the officers fired first, killing the dog and likely provoking Tuttle's gunfire.

His lawyers acknowledged he lied to get the search warrant, but sought to diminish the impact. Two witnesses — a fellow officer and the judge who signed the warrant — said the raid never would have happened if Goines had told the truth.

Investigators later found only small amounts of marijuana and cocaine in the house, and while Houston's police chief at the time, Art Acevedo, initially praised Goines as being "tough as nails," he later suspended him when the lies emerged. Goines later retired as the probes continued.

The probe into the drug raid uncovered allegations of much wider corruption. Goines was among a dozen officers tied to the narcotics squad who were later indicted on other charges. A judge dismissed charges against some of them, but a review of thousands of cases involving the unit led prosecutors to dismiss many cases, and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals has overturned at least 22 convictions linked to Goines.

Ryan Tuttle said he hoped the deaths of his father and stepmother would spur police reform not just in Houston but around the country.

"If it's happening in Houston, it's happening everywhere," Tuttle said. "We have to make sure this stops."

Ogg said the police department reviewed various policies after the raid but that a thorough revamping of narcotics enforcement by the agency has yet to happen.

An audit of the narcotics unit done after the raid found officers made hundreds of errors in cases, often weren't thorough in their investigations and lacked supervision.

In a brief statement after the jury's sentence, Houston police said, "We respect the jury's decision in the trial involving Gerald Goines and thank the jurors for their time and service."

"This is not an indictment against police officers. There are 99% upstanding police officers. This was also about sending a message to them, that we believe in them, we support them. What we don't support is corruption," said prosecutor Tanisha Manning.

Goines also made a drug arrest in 2004 in Houston of George Floyd, whose 2020 death at the hands of a Minnesota police officer sparked a nationwide reckoning on racism in policing. A Texas board in 2022 declined a request that Floyd be granted a posthumous pardon for that drug conviction.

Goines also faces federal criminal charges in connection with the raid, and federal civil rights lawsuits filed by the families of Tuttle and Nicholas against Goines, 12 other officers and the city of Houston are set to be tried in November.

## **Biden sets 10-year deadline for US cities to replace lead pipes nationwide**

By MATTHEW DALY and MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A decade after the Flint, Michigan, water crisis raised alarms about the continuing dangers of lead in tap water, President Joe Biden on Tuesday set a 10-year deadline for cities across the nation to replace their lead pipes, finalizing an aggressive approach aimed at ensuring that drinking water is safe for all Americans.

Biden announced the final Environmental Protection Agency rule during a visit to the swing state of Wisconsin in the final month of a tight presidential campaign. The announcement highlights an issue — safe drinking water — that Kamala Harris has prioritized as vice president and during her presidential campaign.

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The new rule supplants a looser standard set by former President Donald Trump's administration that did not include a universal requirement to replace lead pipes.

"Folks, what is a government for if it cannot protect the public health?" Biden asked a crowd of union members at a cavernous Department of Public Works warehouse in Milwaukee. The city has the fifth-highest number of lead pipes in the nation, according to the EPA.

Decades after the dangers of lead pipes were clear, more than 9 million lead pipes remain in use, a fact Biden called shameful.

"We're finally addressing an issue that should've been addressed a long time ago in this country," he said. "We are showing up as a partner to get it done."

EPA Administrator Michael Regan said Milwaukee is one of many cities across the country taking steps to remove lead pipes from their drinking water. Officials are using money from the federal infrastructure law to accelerate lead-pipe replacement work and meet a goal to remove all lead pipes within 10 years, down from an initial 60-year timeframe.

"Everyone wants this lead out," Regan told reporters. "The science has been clear for decades — there is no safe level of lead in our drinking water."

The new EPA rule is the strongest overhaul of lead-in-water standards in roughly three decades. Lead, a heavy metal used in pipes, paints, ammunition and many other products, is a neurotoxin that can cause a range of disorders from behavioral problems to brain damage. Lead lowers IQ scores in children, stunts their development and increases blood pressure in adults.

The EPA estimates the stricter standard will prevent up to 900,000 infants from having low birth weight and avoid up to 1,500 premature deaths a year from heart disease.

The new regulation is stricter than one proposed last fall and requires water systems to ensure that lead concentrations do not exceed an "action level" of 10 parts per billion, down from 15 parts per billion under the current standard. If high lead levels are found, water systems must inform the public about ways to protect their health, including the use of water filters, and take action to reduce lead exposure while concurrently working to replace all lead pipes.

Lead pipes often impact low-income urban areas the most. They are most commonly found in older, industrial parts of the country, including major cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Detroit and Milwaukee. The rule also revises the way lead amounts are measured, which could significantly expand the number of cities and water systems that are found to have excessive levels of lead, the EPA said.

To help communities comply, the agency is making available an additional \$2.6 billion for drinking water infrastructure through the bipartisan infrastructure law. The agency also is awarding \$35 million in competitive grants for programs to reduce lead in drinking water.

The 10-year timeframe won't start for three years, giving water utilities time to prepare. A limited number of cities with large volumes of lead pipes may be given a longer timeframe to meet the new standard.

Lead pipes can corrode and contaminate drinking water; removing them sharply reduces the chance of a crisis. In Flint, a change in the source of the city's drinking water source more than a decade ago made it more corrosive, spiking lead levels in tap water. Flint was the highest-profile example among numerous cities that have struggled with stubbornly high levels of lead, including Newark, New Jersey, Benton Harbor, Michigan, and Washington, D.C.

The original lead and copper rule for drinking water was enacted by the EPA more than 30 years ago. The rules have significantly reduced lead in tap water but have included loopholes that allowed cities to take little action when lead levels rose too high.

"EPA's action today is a leap forward in protecting the health of tens of millions of Americans from this scourge," said Erik Olson, a health and food expert at the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council.

Actually getting the lead pipes out of the ground will be an enormous challenge, however. The infrastructure law approved in 2021 provided \$15 billion to help cities replace their lead pipes, but the total cost will be several times higher. The requirement also comes as the Biden administration proposes strict new drinking water standards for harmful "forever chemicals" called PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. These standards will cost billions of dollars.



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The American Water Works Association, which represents water utilities, said it supports EPA's goals but warned that removal of lead pipes "poses cost challenges." Ultimately, most of the costs will fall to consumers through higher water bills, said AWWA CEO David LaFrance.

Fifteen Republican attorneys general, led by Kris Kobach of Kansas, have criticized the EPA rule as "unworkable, underfunded and unnecessary." The GOP officials said they are concerned that homeowners in some places might have to pay to replace pipe sections under their property – a requirement Kobach said Congress did not authorize. Federal grants worth billions of dollars will help communities replace their pipes, the EPA said, but cost decisions ultimately are up to local utilities.

Regan said the benefits of the rule far outweigh the costs. "We believe we've done it in a very strategic way — a legally sound way — supported by the science," he said.

Another hurdle is finding the lead pipes. Initial pipe inventories are due this month, and many cities have said they don't know what substances their pipes are made of. Without knowing their location, it is hard to efficiently replace them, according to Eric Schwartz, co-founder of BlueConduit, a company formed in response to the Flint crisis that helps cities find their lead pipes.

Avenel Joseph, interim executive vice president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, called access to safe, affordable water a basic human right.

"For generations, lead exposure has silently robbed millions of children — especially those living in communities of color — of this right," she said. "With this regulation in place, our country finally says: no more."

## **US scrambled to urge Putin not to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Woodward book says**

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Months into Russia's war in Ukraine, the United States had intelligence pointing to "highly sensitive, credible conversations inside the Kremlin" that President Vladimir Putin was seriously considering using nuclear weapons to avoid major battlefield losses, journalist Bob Woodward reported in his new book, "War."

The U.S. intelligence pointed to a 50% chance that Putin would use tactical nukes if Ukrainian forces surrounded 30,000 Russian troops in the southern city of Kherson, the book says. Just months before, in the far northeast, Ukrainian troops had stunned the Russians by recapturing Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, and were pivoting to liberate Kherson, strategically located on the Dnieper River not far from the Black Sea.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan stared "with dread" at the intelligence assessment — described as coming from the best sources and methods — in late September 2022, seven months after Russia's invasion, the book says. It caused alarm across the Biden administration, moving the chance of Russia using nukes up from 5% to 10% to now 50%.

According to Woodward's account, President Joe Biden told Sullivan to "get on the line with the Russians. Tell them what we will do in response."

He said to use language that was threatening but not too strong, the book says. Biden also reached out to Putin directly in a message, warning of the "catastrophic consequences" if Russia used nuclear weapons.

The famed Watergate reporter's latest book also details Donald Trump's conversations with Putin since leaving office, Biden's frustrations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and more. The Associated Press obtained an early copy of Woodward's book, which is due out next week.

The book provides intriguing inside details about the U.S. assessment of the possibility of Putin deploying nukes, but the Biden administration's concerns that Russia might use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine were not secret. From the president on down, numerous officials warned Putin against it.

Putin and other Kremlin voices also have frequently threatened the West with Russia's nuclear arsenal. In a strong, new warning to the West late last month, Putin said any nation's conventional attack on Russia that is supported by a nuclear power will be considered a joint attack on his country.

The threat was aimed at discouraging the West from allowing Ukraine to strike deep into Russia with

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longer-range weapons and appears to significantly lower the threshold for the possible use of Russia's nuclear arsenal. Biden has held off on allowing Ukraine to hit military targets deeper inside Russia with U.S.-provided missiles over fears of escalating the war, even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleads for permission.

In another heated conversation laid out in Woodward's book, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin confronted his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, in October 2022.

"We know you are contemplating the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine," Austin said, according to Woodward. "Any use of nuclear weapons on any scale against anybody would be seen by the United States and the world as a world-changing event. There is no scale of nuclear weapons that we could overlook or that the world could overlook."

As Shoigu listened, Austin pressed on, noting that the U.S. had not given Ukraine certain weapons and had restricted the use of some of those it had provided. He warned that those constraints would be reconsidered. He also noted that China, India, Turkey and Israel would isolate Russia if it used nuclear weapons.

"I don't take kindly to being threatened," Shoigu responded, the book says.

"Mr. Minister," Austin said. "I am the leader of the most powerful military in the history of the world. I don't make threats."

According to a U.S. official, Austin's Oct. 21, 2022, call to Shoigu was indeed to warn Russia against any use of nuclear weapons. The official said the call was contentious. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, confirmed there were intelligence reports at the time that referred to increased indications of Russia's potential use of nuclear weapons and they triggered growing concerns within the administration. The official said leaders across the government were instructed to call their counterparts to deliver the same message.

U.S. intelligence officials saw China as having the most influence over Russia, and Biden called Chinese President Xi Jinping about the need for deterrence, Woodward wrote.

Xi agreed to warn Putin, according to the book. Biden and Xi met and agreed in November 2022 that "a nuclear war should never be fought" and noted their opposition to the use or threat to deploy nuclear weapons in Ukraine, a White House statement said at the time.

In terms of the war starting at all, the book details Biden's criticism late last year of President Barack Obama's handling of Russia seizing Crimea and a section of the Donbas in 2014, at a time when Biden was serving as the Democrat's vice president.

"They f----- up in 2014," Woodward wrote that Biden said to a close friend in December, blaming the lack of action for Putin's aggression in Ukraine. "Barack never took Putin seriously."

Biden was angry while speaking to the friend and said they "never should have let Putin just walk in there" in 2014 and that the U.S. "did nothing."

White House spokeswoman Emilie Simons told reporters that "there are plenty of books that are being written about this administration and others" and that "we're not going to comment on each anecdote that may come out of different reporting."

## **Jets owner says firing of Saleh will bring 'new energy' to one of franchise's 'most talented teams'**

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr. AP Pro Football Writer

Woody Johnson sensed his struggling New York Jets needed a change — and now.

So the owner made the stunning decision Tuesday to fire coach Robert Saleh just five games into his fourth season after the team's 2-3 start following a 23-17 loss to Minnesota in London on Sunday.

"This is one of the most talented teams that has ever been assembled by the New York Jets," Johnson said during a conference call with reporters. "I wanted to give this team the most opportunity to win this season. I feel that we had to go in a different direction and that's why I did that today.

"This change, the change that we made today — that I made — I believe will bring new energy and positivity that will lead to more wins, starting now."

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Saleh was 20-36 as coach of the Jets, who are trying to snap the NFL's longest active playoff drought at 13 seasons. The move marks the first time in Johnson's 25-year tenure that a head coach has been fired during the season.

Defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich will serve as interim coach for the rest of the season — with the Jets maintaining expectations to make the playoffs.

"He's going to add a spark of positivity," Johnson said of Ulbrich.

The surprising move came a day after Saleh said he was confident Aaron Rodgers and the Jets would be able to turn things around after losing two straight, including falling to undefeated Minnesota. Rodgers had his worst game with New York, throwing three interceptions.

"I'm not panicked," Saleh said. "Nobody in the building is panicked."

But Johnson had seen enough from Saleh, who became the NFL's first coach fired this season. Saleh, who had one year remaining on his contract, had the worst winning percentage — .357 — of any Jets coach with at least 40 games.

"It's not just the last two games that has precipitated this decision," Johnson said. "It's a longer time frame. I've had a couple of years to think about this and I just think we can do better. The team can do better. As we have this new leadership, I think that's going to bring out the best in these players, I really do. I feel confident that that's going to happen."

Johnson said he spoke with Rodgers — but not about a possible coaching change — on Monday. He also chatted with general manager Joe Douglas, but added "this was my decision and my decision alone."

It's the 12th time since 2000 that a team has changed coaches just five games or fewer into a season, and the first since Matt Rhule was fired by Carolina after five games in 2022.

The Jets face the Buffalo Bills (3-2) on Monday night, when they have a chance to share the AFC East lead with a victory. But instead of Saleh, it will be the 47-year-old Ulbrich leading the team on the sideline.

Ulbrich, who played linebacker for 10 seasons with San Francisco, joined the Jets as part of Saleh's initial staff in 2021. He opened a video call with reporters by thanking Saleh for sticking by him when the Jets' defense struggled in their first season together.

"Today's an exciting day for myself from the standpoint of getting this opportunity," Ulbrich said. "But at the same time, heavy in my heart for Robert."

Ulbrich was an assistant with Atlanta for six seasons before coming to New York and was part of another midseason coaching change when the Falcons fired Dan Quinn five games into the 2020 season.

"We're not playing to our potential," Ulbrich said. "We're not. We're too talented to be putting the product we put out there the last couple of weeks, especially. We have to take a hard look at everything and be honest with ourselves."

After success as San Francisco's defensive coordinator for four seasons, Saleh replaced the fired Adam Gase in January 2021 after the Jets went 9-23 in his tenure.

Saleh, the son of Lebanese parents, was believed to be the first Muslim head coach in NFL history when the Jets hired him. Saleh wore a patch of Lebanon's flag on his left arm during the game in London on Sunday, something he also did at times last season. The NFL encouraged players and coaches to represent their heritage.

Saleh's tenure began with a major decision as he and Douglas moved on from quarterback Sam Darnold — the No. 3 overall pick in 2018 — to draft Zach Wilson with the second overall pick in 2021.

While Saleh and Ulbrich's defense was a strength for the Jets, Wilson and the offense struggled mightily.

The Jets traded for Rodgers in April 2023, adding the four-time NFL MVP to a franchise looking for a winner. But last season was short-circuited when Rodgers tore his left Achilles tendon four snaps into his debut.

New York limped to a 7-10 record and while Johnson wouldn't specifically say there was a playoff mandate for this season, the owner made it clear during the offseason he needed to see marked improvement by saying "we have to do a lot better than seven games."

Rodgers healed and was ready for the season opener, but he has been banged up the past two weeks and is dealing with a sprained ankle that hobbled him throughout the Jets' loss to Darnold and the Vikings.

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Saleh said Monday that preliminary tests indicated Rodgers should be able to play against the Bills. But now Saleh will be only a spectator.

There were questions about his relationship with the 40-year-old Rodgers, but both denied any friction as recently as last week in London when the quarterback said "there's some driving force trying to put a wedge outside the facility" between the two.

The Jets now will try to become the third team to make the playoffs with an interim coach leading the way, hoping to join the 2021 Raiders with Rich Bisaccia and the 1961 Oilers with Wally Lemm.

"This is a new day for the team and it's a new day that's welcome," Johnson said. "And as the team realizes what opportunity this is for them, I think they're going to go to a level that we haven't seen in a while."

## Pioneers in artificial intelligence win the Nobel Prize in physics

By DANIEL NIEMANN, SETH BORENSTEIN and MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Two pioneers of artificial intelligence — John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton — won the Nobel Prize in physics Tuesday for helping create the building blocks of machine learning that is revolutionizing the way we work and live but also creates new threats for humanity.

Hinton, who is known as the godfather of artificial intelligence, is a citizen of Canada and Britain who works at the University of Toronto, and Hopfield is an American working at Princeton.

"These two gentlemen were really the pioneers," said Nobel physics committee member Mark Pearce.

The artificial neural networks — interconnected computer nodes inspired by neurons in the human brain — the researchers pioneered are used throughout science and medicine and "have also become part of our daily lives," said Ellen Moons of the Nobel committee at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Hopfield, whose 1982 work laid the groundwork for Hinton's, told The Associated Press, "I continue to be amazed by the impact it has had."

Hinton predicted that AI will end up having a "huge influence" on civilization, bringing improvements in productivity and health care.

"It would be comparable with the Industrial Revolution," he said in an open call with reporters and officials of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

"We have no experience of what it's like to have things smarter than us. And it's going to be wonderful in many respects," Hinton said.

"But we also have to worry about a number of possible bad consequences, particularly the threat of these things getting out of control."

Warning of AI risks

The Nobel committee also mentioned fears about the possible flipside.

Moons said that while it has "enormous benefits, its rapid development has also raised concerns about our future. Collectively, humans carry the responsibility for using this new technology in a safe and ethical way for the greatest benefit of humankind."

Hinton, who quit a role at Google so he could speak more freely about the dangers of the technology he helped create, shares those concerns.

"I am worried that the overall consequence of this might be systems more intelligent than us that eventually take control," Hinton said.

For his part, Hopfield, who signed early petitions by researchers calling for strong control of the technology, compared the risks and benefits to work on viruses and nuclear energy, capable of helping and harming society. At a Princeton news conference, he made reference to the concerns, bringing up the dystopia imagined in George Orwell's "1984," or the fictional apocalypse inadvertently created by a Nobel-winning physicist in Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle."

Neither winner was home to get the call

Hopfield, who was staying with his wife at a cottage in Hampshire, England, said that after grabbing coffee and getting his flu shot, he opened his computer to a flurry of activity.

"I've never seen that many emails in my life," he said. A bottle of champagne and bowl of soup were

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waiting, he added, but he doubted there were any fellow physicists in town to join the celebration.

Hinton said he was shocked at the honor.

"I'm flabbergasted. I had no idea this would happen," he said when reached by the Nobel committee on the phone. He said he was at a cheap hotel with no internet.

Hinton's work is considered 'the birth' of AI

Hinton, 76, helped develop a technique in the 1980s known as backpropagation instrumental in training machines how to "learn" by fine-tuning errors until they disappear. It's similar to the way a student learns, with an initial solution graded and flaws identified and returned to be fixed and repaired. This process continues until the answer matches the network's version of reality.

Hinton had an unconventional background as a psychologist who also dabbled in carpentry and was genuinely curious about how the mind works, said protege Nick Frosst, who was Hinton's first hire at Google's AI division in Toronto.

His "playfulness and genuine interest in answering fundamental questions I think is key to his success as a scientist," Frosst said.

Nor did he stop at his pioneering 1980s work.

"He's been consistently trying out crazy things and some of them work very well and some of them don't," Frosst said. "But they all have contributed to the success of the field and galvanized other researchers to try new things as well."

Hinton's team at the University of Toronto wowed peers by using a neural network to win the prestigious ImageNet computer vision competition in 2012. That spawned a flurry of copycats and was "a very, very significant moment in hindsight and in the course of AI history," said Stanford University computer scientist and ImageNet creator Fei-Fei Li.

"Many people consider that the birth of modern AI," she said.

Hinton and fellow AI scientists Yoshua Bengio and Yann LeCun won computer science's top prize, the Turing Award, in 2019.

"For a long time, people thought what the three of us were doing was nonsense," Hinton told the AP in 2019. "My message to young researchers is, don't be put off if everyone tells you what you are doing is silly."

Many of Hinton's former students and collaborators followed him into the tech industry as it began capitalizing on AI innovations, and some started their own AI companies, including Frosst's Cohere and ChatGPT maker OpenAI. Hinton said he uses machine learning tools in his daily life.

"Whenever I want to know the answer to anything, I just go and ask GPT-4," Hinton said at the Nobel announcement. "I don't totally trust it because it can hallucinate, but on almost everything it's a not-very-good expert. And that's very useful."

Physics prize for pioneer AI work is significant

Hopfield, 91, created an associative memory that can store and reconstruct images and other types of patterns in data, the Nobel committee said.

Just as Hinton came to the field from psychology, Hopfield stressed how cutting edge science comes from crossing the borders of scientific fields like physics, biology and chemistry instead of researchers staying in their lane. It's why this prize is a physics prize, he said, pointing out that his neural network borrows from condensed matter physics.

With big complex problems in scientific fields, "if you are not motivated by physics, you just don't tackle the class of problems," Hopfield said.

While there's no Nobel for computer science, Li said that awarding a traditional science prize to AI pioneers is significant and shows how boundaries between disciplines have blurred.

Disagreement on AI risks

Not all of their peers agree with the Nobel laureates about the risks of the technology they helped create.

Frosst has had many "spirited debates" with Hinton about AI's risks and disagrees with some of Hinton's warnings but not his willingness to publicly address them.

"Mostly we disagree on timescale and on the particular technology that he's sounding the alarm on,"

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Frost said. "I don't think that neural nets and language models as they exist today pose an existential risk."

Bengio, who has long voiced concerns about AI risks, said what really alarms him and Hinton is "loss of human control" and whether AI systems will act morally when they're smarter than humans.

"We don't know the answer to these questions," he said. "And we should make sure we do before we build those machines."

Asked whether the Nobel committee might have factored in Hinton's warnings when deciding on the award, Bengio dismissed that, saying "we're talking about very early work when we thought that everything would be rosy."

Six days of Nobel announcements opened Monday with Americans Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun winning the medicine prize. They continue with the chemistry prize Wednesday and literature on Thursday. The Nobel Peace Prize will be announced Friday and the economics award on Oct. 14.

The prize carries a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million) from a bequest left by the award's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. The laureates are invited to receive their awards at ceremonies on Dec. 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death.

## AP Elections Top 25: The people, places, races, dates and things to know about Election Day

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans will cast roughly 160 million ballots by the time Election Day comes to a close — in several different ways, including many submitted a few weeks before polls even open.

They will choose a president, members of Congress and thousands of state lawmakers, city council members, attorneys general, secretaries of state — and in Texas, a railroad commissioner who has nothing to do with the trains.

This year's election also comes at a moment in the nation's history when the very basics of how America votes are being challenged as never before by disinformation and distrust.

It can be tough to make sense of it all. To help better understand the way America picks its president and its leaders — all the way down the ballot — The Associated Press offers the following thoughts on the Top 25 people, places, races, dates and things to know about Election Day. A guidebook, of sorts, to American democracy as it nears its 250th birthday.

No. 1: People: Donald Trump & Kamala Harris

It's said that every presidential election makes history. Perhaps. But while some are destined to be included in the history books, others become the subject of books all of their own. Put 2024 down to get a whole shelf at the library. Will Americans choose to return Donald Trump to the White House, electing a former president to a new term for only the second time — and picking for the first time a person convicted of a felony to sit behind the Resolute Desk? Or will voters decide Kamala Harris ought to be the nation's first woman to take up office in the Oval Office, a candidate who didn't win a single primary yet landed at the top of her party's ticket by acclamation. No list of the Top 25 things to know about this year's general election can begin without an acknowledgment that no matter who America chooses, Trump and Harris will make history this Election Day. (Or a few days later.)

No. 2: People: Elon Musk

There might not be anyone as all-in on returning Trump to the White House as Elon Musk, the world's richest person. "President Trump must win to preserve the Constitution. He must win to preserve democracy in America," the founder of SpaceX and Tesla told a rally crowd in early October when Trump returned to the site of his first attempted assassination in Pennsylvania. Along with his unfathomable personal wealth, Musk's ownership of X, formally known as Twitter, gives him an unprecedented ability to try and convince voters of his belief that electing Trump is a "must-win situation." Musk is spending heavily on get-out-the-vote efforts and using his perch as X's CEO to amplify misinformation and push into millions of timelines his argument that the country will not survive should Kamala Harris win the White House. It's a foreboding message that seems to get bleaker by the day — and Musk knows it. "As you can see, I am

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not just MAGA," he told Trump's backers from the rally stage. "I am Dark MAGA."

No. 3: People: Jotaka Eaddy

The founder of Win With Black Women, Jotaka Eaddy has for the past four years hosted Sunday evening video conferences on Zoom to chat politics. On July 21, she couldn't get into her own meeting. Earlier that day, Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race and endorsed Kamala Harris as his replacement to be the Democratic nominee, and once Zoom changed some settings, 44,000 people were online and ready to talk about it. It was a pep talk and a telethon. People prayed and sang. About an hour after the Zoom started, Star Jones shared a donation link and by early the next morning they had raised more than \$1 million. The meeting spawned a domino effect as Eaddy turned a tool made essential by the coronavirus pandemic into an essential place for Harris' supporters to gather. Soon, Black men and white women and white dudes and Taylor Swift fans were logging on. "It has allowed us to organize in a way to bring people together that otherwise would not connect," Eaddy said.

No. 4: People: Garrett Archer

Now that how a ballot is cast is as much of a red/blue choice as the candidate getting the vote, figuring out who will win a close election often depends on knowing the kind of ballots left to be counted. Garrett Archer, a former analyst at the Arizona Secretary of State's office who is now a data journalist, was one of the first of Twitter's election seers to understand how nit-picky those details can be. Were the advance votes still to be counted cast in person, mailed or left at a drop box? How soon before Election Day did those mail ballots arrive? Or might those mail votes actually be "late earlyies" dropped off at a polling place? Archer goes deep into those details in his job with ABC's Phoenix affiliate, but most of us will get his analysis of Arizona's election results online, as we wait every afternoon after Election Day for his trademark Tweet that begins: "Maricopa incoming..."

No. 5: People: Shenna Bellows

About a week after Election Day, Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows is likely to star in a livestream via laptop webcam to announce results of ranked choice voting. The instant-runoff system, used when no candidate initially wins an outright majority, might be a downballot novelty if not for the state's 2nd Congressional District. Behind by about 2,000 votes in 2018, Democrat Jared Golden emerged the winner and ousted the GOP incumbent once the ranked choice process awarded him the votes of two trailing independents. Maine also awards two of its Electoral College votes by congressional district, and while it may be unlikely, the road to 270 electoral votes could theoretically end with ranked choice results in Maine's 2nd District. In that case, should Golden's come-from-behind win of 2018 repeat itself, it would fall to Bellows to announce that ranked choice voting had put a second-place finisher into the White House.

No. 6: Places: Adak, Alaska

On an Aleutian island closer to the Russian border than mainland Alaska and more than 4,000 miles from the White House, the question isn't who wins on Election Day. It's who will be the very last American to vote. "People have a little bit of fun on that day, because, I mean, realistically everybody knows the election's decided way before we're closed," said Layton Lockett, the city manager in Adak, Alaska. The country's last polling place to close is the only one still open from midnight ET to 1 a.m., when things wrap up on the island and former World War II military base. The honor of being the last voter was Mary Nelson's in 2012, when the community of a few hundred people did away with early voting in favor of casting ballots in person. She was a poll worker that Election Day, too, meaning her historic moment was short-lived. "When I opened the curtain to come back out, the city manager took my picture ... and they were waiting for us in Nome to call with our vote count," she said.

No. 7: Places: Nash County, North Carolina

Out of more than 500 counties in the seven battleground states in this year's election, only 10 voted for Trump in 2016 before flipping to Biden in 2020. The first to complete its count this Election Day ought to be North Carolina's Nash County, which by 10 p.m. ET could provide an early indication of which candidate is performing best among the swing voters likely to decide a closely contested White House. That's especially true should there be a decisive winner in the community northeast of Raleigh, unaffected by

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Hurricane Helene. Two decades have passed since any presidential candidate won Nash by more than a point. Confirmation won't come for hours (or days), but more intelligence will arrive about a half hour later when North Carolina's other Trump-Biden county — New Hanover on the state's Atlantic Coast — should wrap up its count. The other eight counties to watch: Erie and Northampton in Pennsylvania; Maricopa in Arizona; Kent, Saginaw and Leelanau in Michigan and Sauk and Door in Wisconsin.

No. 8: Places: Apache County, Arizona

There's more to Arizona than Maricopa County. Seriously! Yes, it's true that Biden eked out a win in 2020 among the more than 60% of Arizona voters who live in the sprawling home of Phoenix and its suburbs. But Biden may not have won Arizona and its 11 electoral votes without his win in Apache County, where he beat Trump by 11,851 votes out of roughly 35,000 cast. His statewide margin? Just 10,457. Apache County is far from the typical Democratic urban stronghold. Much of the rural county is part of the Navajo Nation, and it also includes lands belonging to the Apache people who gave the county its name. In all, more than 70% of people living there are Native American. America's indigenous population is often overlooked in presidential elections: the states with the largest percentages of Native people — Alaska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and South Dakota — are not often competitive. Arizona's emergence as a battleground makes the voters in Apache County — and the roughly 5% of Arizonans who are Native American — a potential factor in this year's election.

No. 9: Places: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Trump won Wisconsin by about 20,000 votes in 2016 — and he and the country had to wait on Milwaukee County to know which way that margin would fall. The state's largest county and Democratic stronghold is one of a handful in Wisconsin that releases results of mail ballots all at once, rather than combining them with other ballots counted at precinct polling places. In 2016, confirmation there weren't enough mail votes left to count in the City of Milwaukee to flip the race from Trump to Hillary Clinton allowed AP to declare the Republican the winner of the state — and the White House. In the 2022 midterms, it was only when AP confirmed there were no ballots remaining to be counted in Milwaukee and Dane County, Wisconsin's other largest source of Democratic votes, that it was able to say incumbent Republican Ron Johnson would return to the Senate. Milwaukee might not be among the final counties in Wisconsin to report its results this year, but don't count out its chances to be the decisive county once it does in this crucial battleground state.

No. 10: Places: Drop boxes

Election officials nationwide found no cases of fraud, vandalism or theft related to the use of drop boxes that that could have affected the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. And yet no place in this year's election may face more scrutiny than the drop box — a tool designed to make voting easier that's become the source of conspiracy theories that they played a role ( they didn't ) in stealing the election from Trump ( it wasn't ). Several states have enacted laws restricting their use since 2020, while in others they remain the subject of fascination. The Wisconsin Supreme Court reversed itself in July and dumped a ruling that limited drop boxes to only election clerks' offices. Prosecutors are currently investigating the removal of Wausau's drop box last month by the mayor without consulting with the city clerk. Election officials typically have detailed processes to ensure the security of ballots left in drop boxes, which are often monitored remotely by camera. Still, drop boxes remain a place where opponents wrongly believe their vote is neither safe nor secure.

No. 11: Races: Pennsylvania president

There are 538 electoral votes to win from the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but the Trump and Harris campaigns are seriously contesting only seven states this year as battlegrounds: Arizona and Nevada out West, North Carolina and Georgia in the South, Michigan and Wisconsin amid the Great Lakes and Pennsylvania as the final boss. Eight years ago, Pennsylvania was the last state called for Trump before he won the election by winning in Wisconsin in the early morning hours after Election Day. Four years ago, Biden's win there four days after polls closed — by roughly 80,000 votes out of more than 6.8 million cast — was the difference. Both presidential hopefuls can get to the 270 electoral votes needed to win



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the White House without the Keystone State, but their path to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue gets a whole lot easier if they grab Pennsylvania's 19 electoral votes along the way.

No. 12: Races: Abortion ballot measures

Supporters of abortion rights are 7-for-7 in statewide votes since the U.S. Supreme Court " returned to the people and their elected representatives " the ability to decide on the legality of abortion. Come Election Day, voters in nine more states will get the chance via ballot measure to do the same. The states range from the reliably blue (Colorado, Maryland) to the resolutely red (South Dakota, Missouri, Nebraska ), with a few presidential battlegrounds and/or states with key races for U.S. Senate – Arizona, Nevada and Montana – in between. And then there's Florida, a state Hillary Clinton hoped would provide her with a powerful push into the White House. Instead, the Sunshine State was in 2016 (and again in 2020) a cornerstone of Trump's Electoral College count. A Trump loss in Florida would undoubtedly sink his bid to return to the White House, but it's hardly clear that the chance to vote on social issues – even one as potent as abortion – can sway enough voters to truly affect an outcome at the top of the ticket.

No. 13: Races: New York's 19th Congressional District

Republicans can likely hold the U.S. House of Representatives even if they lose a couple of seats in New York, where a messy redistricting process two years ago helped the GOP win six districts carried by Biden. But if those losses include freshman Rep. Marc Molinaro in the state's 19th District, it will make for an uncomfortable election night for House Speaker Mike Johnson. Molinaro has styled himself as a pragmatist as he seeks reelection for the first time, avoiding the circus of former GOP Rep. George Santos in New York's 3rd District – a seat his party has already lost – and the inconveniently timed headlines of rising party star and 17th District Rep. Mike Lawler. Democrat Josh Riley, who nearly won the district in 2022, has raised more money than Molinaro ahead of their November rematch, as Democrats run candidates nationwide who came up just short in the 2022 midterms. If that's a winning strategy in New York's 19th District and elsewhere, the celebrations might be the most raucous in Brooklyn at the election night party of New York 8th District Rep. Hakeem Jefferies: the Democratic leader and House Speaker-in-waiting.

No. 14: Races: Texas Senate (and Florida, too!)

Pay enough attention to politics and you'll have heard the bit about Democrats being one election away from winning in Texas. Then Election Day arrives and Republicans have the cattle while Democrats are once again holding their hat. Is this the year that changes? Democrats say they're investing serious cash into the state with the hope that an unpopular incumbent (Sen. Ted Cruz) is at risk to a rising star (former NFL player and current Rep. Colin Allred). Sound familiar? Six years ago, Cruz was an unpopular incumbent running against a rising Democratic star from the U.S. House named Beto O'Rourke. Some say O'Rourke ran the perfect campaign...and Cruz won by a comfortable 2.6 points. It's been 30 years since a Democrat won statewide in Texas, so maybe the odds are better for Democrats in Florida? They're spending money there, too, to try and take down incumbent Sen. Rick Scott. Ask the GOP what to make of these moves and they'll tell you Democrats need that kind of dramatic upset to keep control of the Senate.

No. 15: Races: California's 13th Congressional District

John Duarte might be in one of the closest races of the cycle – and possibly faces the longest waiting time to find out if he's returning to Congress. The California Republican won his 2022 race by 564 votes in a race that was so close that the AP needed until the first week of December to declare Duarte the winner. Now he has to do it all again: He faces a rematch in the state's 13th Congressional District against former state Assemblyman Adam Gray. California's count takes so long in large part because the state conducts its elections entirely by mail. In the 13th, there are also no major cities – no L.A., no Bakersfield, not even Fresno – that would provide enough votes at the beginning of the night to make clear who has won. If the House majority comes down to Duarte's race, the nation's attention will focus on a long count in five counties of California's agricultural Central Valley.

No. 16: Dates: Nov. 5, 2024

The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November is Election Day, established in 1875 under 2 U.S. Code § 7 for the election "in each of the States and Territories of the United States, of Representatives

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and Delegates to the Congress." In modern U.S. elections, Election Day is perhaps best thought of as the LAST day of the general election: it's the final chance for voters to cast ballots in person, for mail ballots to arrive and be counted, or, in some states, the day by which mail ballots must be postmarked.

No. 17: Dates: Nov. 25, 2024

Three weeks later comes the last day a mail ballot can arrive in Washington state and still be counted — Nov. 25 is the latest deadline for any state that accepts votes cast by mail to arrive with an Election Day postmark. In all, 17 states and the District of Columbia allow mail ballots to arrive after Election Day, while 32 others require they be in the ballot box on Election Day. Only Louisiana requires mail ballots to arrive early in order to be counted — the deadline there for mail ballots is the day before Election Day.

No. 18: Dates: Dec. 11, 2024

After supporters of Trump stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in an insurrection that aimed to overturn his loss to then-President-elect Joe Biden, Congress updated the Electoral Count Act to, among other things, establish the date by which every state's governor must certify the results of the presidential election and submit their slate of electors. Any legal challenges should then be completed by Dec. 16, because those members of the Electoral College will vote the next day.

No. 19: Dates: Dec. 17, 2024

Wait, there's another election day? Indeed! The Constitution says it's not the people who pick a president, but rather a group of "electors" as selected by each state for the job. But the founders also wrote that states get to decide how to pick their members of the Electoral College, and almost all require they vote for the winner of their state's popular vote (Maine and Nebraska do it just a little differently). This ritual takes place about a week before Christmas, the deadline for the electors' cast ballots to arrive in Washington.

No. 20: Dates: Jan. 6, 2025

More ceremony in early January as the members of the 119th Congress, having taken office a few days earlier, count those Electoral College ballots under the rules of the updated Electoral Count Act. Objections are still possible, but much harder to raise, and the revised law makes plain the vice president is there only to announce the results as president of the Senate. Once the electoral votes are officially cast and counted, the final step of the election comes at the new president's inauguration on Jan. 20, 2025.

No. 21: Things to Know: Paper ballots

Almost all of the roughly 160 million ballots that will be cast in this year's election will be made of paper. And almost all will be counted by machine. Election officials say without such machines, counting those ballots by hand would take much longer, cost taxpayers far more and result in errors that would then take even more time and money to fix. "Human beings are really bad at tedious things, and counting ballots is among the most tedious things we could do," said Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Charles Stewart. "Computers are very good at tedious things. They can count very quickly and very accurately." Still, the desire to have humans involved in the process lingers. Officials in Georgia remain at odds over a recent directive from the state's election board requiring poll workers to count the total number of ballots by hand.

No. 22: Things to Know: 'Too close to call'

At The Associated Press, a race is "too early to call" if election officials are still tabulating votes and there is no clear winner. Regardless of how tight the margin may be between the leading candidates, AP won't say a race is "too close to call" unless election officials have tallied all outstanding ballots — save for provisional ballots and late-arriving mail and absentee votes — and the winner still remains unclear. In those cases, it's likely AP won't be able to say who has won until election officials certify the results — a process that may take up to several weeks after Election Day. By the way, elections headed to a recount aren't automatically "too close to call." In fact, depending on how many votes separate the trailing candidates from the leader, AP may declare a winner even if a recount is possible.

No. 23: Things to Know: Recounts

Here's the thing about recounts: They might be required by law, they might be requested by a candidate, they might be ordered by a court. But they're not very likely to do anything but drag out the inevitable.

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"Recounts are shifting a very small number of votes," said Deb Otis of the nonpartisan organization Fair Vote. "We're going to see recounts in 2024 that are not going to change the outcome." They almost never do. In the 36 recounts of a statewide general election since America's most famous recount in 2000, none moved the margin by more than a few hundred votes. The average change? Just 0.03 percentage points. The biggest? A move of 0.11 points in the 2006 race for Vermont state auditor – a rare race that did flip as a 137-vote lead in the initial count for Republican Randy Brock became a 102-vote recount win by Democrat Thomas Salmon. "The count is pretty accurate because the machines work," said former Arizona election official Tammy Patrick. "We have recounts ... to make sure we got it right." As hopeful trailing candidates will soon learn, the first count almost always is.

No. 24: Things to Know: Estimated vote

Looking for "precincts reporting" when watching as results are reported in this year's election? Chances are, you'll find an estimate of "expected vote" instead. The Associated Press and other news organizations have moved away from precincts reporting as a measure of election turnout for several reasons – the fact that well more than half of voters no longer cast their ballot in person at a neighborhood "precinct" on Election Day chief among them. Instead, AP will estimate how much of the vote election officials have counted – and how many ballots they have left to count – based on a number of data points, including details on advance ballots cast, registration statistics and turnout in recent elections. Those estimates will change as votes are counted and more information about the exact number of ballots cast becomes available. AP's estimates of ballots cast won't reach 100% until election results are certified as final and complete.

No. 25: Things to Know: When we'll know

More often than not, in a nation as evenly divided as the United States, not on Election Day — or, at the least, not on Election Day on the East Coast. Since it took 36 days for George W. Bush's win in the 2000 presidential race to play out in Florida and before the Supreme Court, only in Barack Obama's two victories has AP declared a White House winner before midnight Eastern Time. Trump didn't win until 2:29 a.m. ET in 2016 and he didn't lose in 2020 until the Saturday morning after Election Day — that's how long it took for Biden to claim 270 electoral votes by emerging as the clear winner in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, the sheer number of U.S. Representatives from California — a state where officials will be counting mail ballots for weeks — could make for a long wait to know which party will control the House. The election for Speaker? That's a whole other matter.

## **Not everything will run perfectly on Election Day. Still, US elections are remarkably reliable**

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On Election Day, some voting lines will likely be long and some precincts may run out of ballots. An election office website could go down temporarily and ballot-counting machines will jam. Or people who help run elections might just act like the humans they are, forgetting their key to a local polling place so it has to open later than scheduled.

These kinds of glitches have occurred throughout the history of U.S. elections. Yet election workers across America have consistently pulled off presidential elections and accurately tallied the results — and there's no reason to believe this year will be any different.

Elections are a foundation of democracy. They also are human exercises that, despite all the laws and rules governing how they should run, can sometimes appear to be messy. They're conducted by election officials and volunteers in thousands of jurisdictions across the United States, from tiny townships to sprawling urban counties with more voters than some states have people.

It's a uniquely American system that, despite its imperfections, reliably produces certified outcomes that stand up to scrutiny. That's true even in an era of misinformation and hyperpartisanship.

"Things will go wrong," said Jen Easterly, the director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Se-

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curity Agency.

None of these will mean the election is tainted or rigged or is being stolen. But Easterly said election offices need to be transparent about the hiccups so they can get ahead of misinformation and attempts to exploit routine problems as a way to undermine confidence in the election results.

"At the end of the day, we need to recognize things will go wrong. They always do," Easterly said. "It will really come down to how state and local election officials communicate about those things going wrong."

An election problem? It's likely human error

It wasn't that long ago when American voters accepted the results, even if their preferred presidential candidate lost.

Even in 2000, when 104 million votes came down to a 5-to-4 Supreme Court decision that effectively made Republican George W. Bush the president, his opponent, Democrat Al Gore, quickly conceded. The republic moved on peacefully.

Times have changed dramatically since then.

The internet, false claims and a voting public susceptible to conspiratorial theories about widespread voter fraud have changed that. Trust in the system is low, particularly among Republican voters whose perceptions have been shaped by a steady drumbeat of lies about the 2020 election by Donald Trump, the former president who is the Republican nominee on the Nov. 5 ballot.

At his campaign rallies, Trump continues to claim that the only way he can lose is if the other side rigs the election. In fact, it would be virtually impossible for anyone to rig a U.S. presidential race given the decentralized nature of the country's elections, which are run by thousands of municipal or county voting jurisdictions.

What is more likely are simple mistakes and technical mishaps that occur during every election.

"When elections are very close and you have to look under the hood, sometimes you find some problems. Almost always those problems are the result of human error, incompetence — not malfeasance," said Rick Hasen, an election law expert and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"Both voter fraud and election administrator fraud is currently very rare in the United States. When it does happen, it's not that hard to catch because of the safeguards in the system."

Why do we need this discussion?

Distrust in elections is real and has serious consequences. Lies about the 2020 election being rigged were a catalyst for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

This has come despite Trump and his allies losing dozens of court cases aimed at reversing his loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Even a commission Trump created while president to investigate the 2016 election in hopes of identifying widespread voter fraud found none. Special police units established by a few Republican governors came up similarly empty-handed when they searched for widespread fraud during the 2022 midterm elections.

In addition to the court cases, Trump's own attorney general and reviews, recounts and audits in the presidential battleground states found no evidence of widespread fraud and affirmed Biden's victory.

That hasn't mattered.

As late as 2023, a sizable portion of Republicans believed Biden was not the legitimately elected, and election conspiracy theories have taken root in Republican-leaning communities.

It would be incorrect to say there is never any fraud associated with elections. But in the 2020 election, an Associated Press investigation in the battleground states where Trump disputed his loss found an amount too small to alter the election. In most cases, it was individuals acting alone, not as part of a grand conspiracy to throw the election.

"The story of the last few decades is that voting systems in the United States are very secure," said Robert Lieberman, a political science professor at Johns Hopkins University.

If not fraud, then what should we expect?

Basic mistakes, whether human or technical.

In Jackson, Mississippi, a ballot problem was blamed on inexperience and lack of training. In Luzerne

County, Pennsylvania, inexperience was again the culprit when polling places ran out of ballots.

Sometimes the envelopes used to return the mailed ballots can create problems. The Pennsylvania Department of State recently announced on X that because of high humidity levels in much of the state, "some voters are finding that their mail-in ballots have the return envelope already sealed." It advised voters to contact their local election office for next steps.

Paper was the culprit in a Maricopa County, Arizona, in 2022 when the ballot printers had problems and caused large backups in voter lines.

Potential problems on the horizon

One of the major concerns heading into the 2024 presidential election is the high turnover in election offices across the country, in particular in some of the presidential battlegrounds, said Edward B. Foley, a law professor who leads Ohio State University's election law program.

Before the 2022 midterms, for example, 10 of Nevada's 17 counties had turnover among their clerk or registration positions, which oversee voting.

Threats and harassment from those who believe election conspiracy theories have fueled the attrition. Despite all the training election workers receive, there's no substitute for the experience of going through a major election cycle.

Many of those who have left had years and even decades of experience. In some cases, they have been replaced by people with little or no experience, and who at times have peddled conspiracy theories.

"If you're looking for something to watch out for and be concerned about," Foley said, "that is one place."

## **Milton's storm surge is a threat that could be devastating far beyond the Tampa Bay region**

By BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Two weeks ago, Hurricane Helene "spared" the Tampa Bay region a direct hit and yet storm surge still caused catastrophic damage, flooding homes, drowning people who decided to stay near the coast and leaving massive piles of debris that still sit along roadsides.

Now that Hurricane Milton, a more powerful storm, is heading straight for the same region, what can residents expect?

"Worse. Much worse," said former Federal Emergency Management Director Craig Fugate, a Florida resident who previously ran the state's emergency management division.

The cities near the mouth of Tampa Bay saw some of the worst storm surge in memory during Helene even though the storm landed more than 100 miles (161 kilometers) to the north. Now forecasters say the low-lying region could be hit with 15 feet (5 meters) of storm surge.

"This isn't water that rises slowly. This is fast-moving water with waves. It's like a battering ram," Fugate said. "You just don't want to be in that area. That's how we lost a lot of lives in all those surge areas where people didn't get out. They either drowned or were crushed by their houses collapsing on them."

What is storm surge?

Storm surge is the level at which sea water rises above its normal level.

Much like the way a storm's sustained winds do not include the potential for even stronger gusts, storm surge doesn't include the wave height above the mean water level of the surge itself.

Surge is also the amount above what the normal tide is at the time, so a 15-foot (5-meter) storm surge at high tide with 10-foot (3-meter) waves on top of that can level buildings with ease, knock down bridges and flatten anything in its path.

How could it affect Florida's west coast?

Florida's west peninsular coast contains the Tampa Bay region, though it's not just the city of Tampa that's at risk. St. Petersburg and densely populated barrier islands are on the Gulf of Mexico near the mouth of the bay. And the threat from storm surge extends about 150 miles (241 kilometers) to the north into the state's Big Bend region and more than 150 miles (241 kilometers) to the south to Naples and into

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the Florida Keys.

Milton will have an enormous impact no matter where it lands, but the worst surge will be to the south of Milton's eye. If that includes Tampa Bay and the 3.3 million people who live in the region, flooding could be catastrophic. The region hasn't had a direct hit from a major hurricane in more than 100 years.

If it hits to the south of Tampa Bay, cities like Sarasota, Venice, Fort Myers and Naples could be devastated just two years after Hurricane Ian caused catastrophic damage, washed away homes and businesses and made bridges to barrier islands impassable.

What will happen to the debris still on the ground after Helene?

State and local governments are moving as quickly as they can to remove storm tree limbs, furniture, appliances and other debris left in huge piles after Helene. But they won't get rid of all of it.

While state and local officials fear Milton's wind and surge can turn debris into deadly projectiles, Fugate points out that it won't kill anybody if they evacuate and that property damage will be severe with or without debris blowing and washing around.

"I have the feeling everything that's still standing will become debris and you won't be able to distinguish it," Fugate said. "If you've got enough water to move that stuff around, it's going to be moving houses, cars and other things as well."

But the storm could weaken, right?

Sure, Milton could weaken from a Category 5 to a Category 3 before landfall, but that won't make a big difference when it comes to storm surge.

"Wind doesn't have memory, storm surge does. So, what a storm is doing a day out will have a lot of impact on storm surge," Fugate said. "Once that energy is in the water and your pushing it, even if you saw some weakening, it doesn't really change."

And the area where Milton's heading has a large number of creeks, canals and rivers that will could cause problems beyond the immediate coast.

"This is the type of storm that too many people get fixated on the category and the track and they really need to be listening to the local weather services offices and the hurricane center on impacts," Fugate said. "Storm surge is not tied to the winds, it's related."

## Why and how AP counts the vote for thousands of US elections

By MAYA SWEEDLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There isn't an easier way to count votes than to count the votes.

The Associated Press has been tallying results in national, state and local elections since 1848. In broad terms, the process is the same today as it was then: Vote count reporters collect election results at a local level as soon as polls close, then submit those results for the AP to collate, verify and report.

This year, AP will count the votes in about 5,000 contested races around the United States, from the presidency and Congress to state legislatures and ballot measures.

The U.S. doesn't have a nationwide body that collects and releases election results. Elections are administered locally, by thousands of offices, following standards set by the states. In many cases, the states themselves don't even offer up-to-date tracking of election results.

The AP plays a role in collecting and standardizing the results.

The AP's vote count fills a gap by bringing together information that otherwise might not be available online for days or weeks after an election or is scattered across hundreds of local websites. Without national standards or consistent expectations across states, it also ensures the data is in a standard format, uses standard terms and undergoes rigorous quality control.

Data collection efforts begin when Americans start voting, which in almost every race means well before Nov. 5 this year.

The AP requests information from state and local election administrators about the number of absentee ballots requested and the number of early votes cast as soon as voting begins. (You can track those numbers here.) These figures don't contain results, which aren't released until after polls close, but they

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can provide valuable insights into the people who have voted by Election Day.

The big effort begins once polls close, when approximately 4,000 AP vote count reporters fan out across voting precincts and county election offices. An AP vote count reporter will be stationed at nearly every county election office on Election Day, as well as in key cities and towns, collecting data straight from the source.

Many vote count reporters have a substantial amount of experience collecting accurate vote count information for the AP. In the most recent general election, about half of them had worked for the AP for at least 10 years. Hundreds more have experience collecting vote count data in primary and general elections.

They work with local election officials to collect results directly from counties or precincts where they are first counted and collected and submit them, by phone or electronically, as soon as they're available. The results are transmitted to the AP's vote entry center, which employs an additional 800 to 900 people.

Because many states and counties display election results on websites, the AP monitors those sites and enters the results into the same system. The vote entry center also takes in feeds of results directly from election officials where they are provided, and uses automated tools to collect results from official government websites.

In many cases, counties will report more votes as they count ballots throughout the night. The AP is continuously updating its count as these results are released. In a general election, the AP will make as many as 21,000 race updates per hour.

Mistakes can happen, such as test data accidentally getting published on a state's website or a stringer accidentally transposing two candidates' vote totals. Having multiple sources helps the AP figure out where these mistakes happen and often prevents them from getting published.

Sometimes counting errors need to be corrected, such as when a county has made a correction to its data or someone accidentally entered an extra zero. In some cases, that can lead to a drop in the total number of votes counted when the problem is identified and fixed.

This is why it helps to have multiple sources of updates.

On general election nights, the AP can have up to five or six potential sources of election results in each county and can choose between them depending on which is most up-to-date and accurate. Those multiple sources don't just serve as a backup to each other; they also provide a check to help ensure the vote totals reported are correct.

## Who can vote in US elections, and what steps must you take to do so?

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

So you want to cast a ballot on Election Day? Or maybe vote by mail? It helps to know the rules.

The federal government sets some basic standards: U.S. citizens age 18 or older are eligible to vote. But each state can adopt additional voting requirements and restrictions. For example, many states disqualify voters serving a prison sentence for felony crimes.

Many states also require people to register to vote in advance of Election Day, so poll workers can check names off a list when people show up to vote. The majority of states also ask voters to show some form of identification, so carrying an ID may be important.

Here's a look at some of the most common rules and requirements when it comes to casting a ballot.

What's the age requirement to vote?

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution sets the voting age at 18. You must be at least that old by Election Day, which this year is Nov. 5.

States may allow people to register to vote while age 17, or in some cases 16, so long as they turn 18 by Election Day.

What's the citizenship requirement to vote?

A 1996 U.S. law makes it illegal for noncitizens to vote in elections for president or members of Congress. Violators can be fined and imprisoned for up to a year. They can also be deported. When people register

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to vote, they confirm under penalty of perjury that they are U.S. citizens.

No state constitutions explicitly allow noncitizens to vote. Many states have laws that prohibit noncitizens from voting for state offices such as governor or attorney general. There are ballot measures in several states this November asking voters whether to explicitly add such a prohibition to the state's constitution.

Some municipalities in California, Maryland and Vermont, as well as the District of Columbia, do allow voting by noncitizens in some local elections such as for school board and city council. In Arizona, voters must prove their citizenship to participate in local and state races.

Do you have to register to vote?

North Dakota is the only state that does not require people to register to vote before casting a ballot. Elsewhere, people must register their names and addresses with election officials. That can be done in-person at state or local election offices or state motor vehicles offices. Many states also allow voter registrations to be mailed or submitted online.

About 20 states allow people to register on Election Day and then immediately cast a ballot.

The remaining states require some sort of advance registration, with deadlines ranging from three to 30 days before an election. Many of the states with voter registration deadlines more than two weeks ahead of the election are located in the South.

Do you need identification to vote?

About three-quarters of states ask for identification from voters at the polls. Twenty-one states request a photo identification, such as a driver's license or government-issued card, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Fifteen additional states accept nonphoto identification, such as a utility bill or bank statement that lists a person's name and address.

If voters don't have identification, they may still be able to vote. In some states, voters can sign an affidavit of identity. In other states, they can cast a provisional ballot that is counted if election workers later verify their signature or if they return later with identification.

States that don't require proof of identify use other means to verify voters, such as signatures or asking for home addresses.

People voting absentee or by mail could face additional requirements, such as getting a witness to sign their absentee ballot envelope.

What's the residency requirement to vote?

Federal law prohibits states from imposing a residency requirement longer than 30 days before an election. But it's up to voters to designate the address where they reside.

Students who live in one state but attend college elsewhere typically have the choice of voting at their home address or college address. But they still must follow state identification requirements. Some states do not accept student IDs as identification.

Can people convicted of crimes vote?

In all jurisdictions except Maine, Vermont and the nation's capital, people convicted of felony crimes lose the right to vote while incarcerated.

In half the states, felony voting restrictions extend after incarceration, often including their time on probation or parole, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. In some states, convicted felons lose their voting rights indefinitely for certain crimes.

## Supreme Court seems open to upholding regulations on ghost guns, hard to trace weapons used in crime

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court seemed likely Tuesday to uphold a Biden administration regulation on ghost guns, the difficult-to-trace weapons found in increasing numbers at crime scenes.

In arguments that ranged from classic cars to Western omelets, key conservative justices seemed open to the government's argument that kits allowing people to make nearly untraceable guns at home can be



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regulated like other firearms.

Two conservative justices, Chief John Roberts and Amy Coney Barrett, previously joined with the three liberals to allow the rule to go into effect and seemed skeptical of the arguments that the Biden administration overstepped by trying to regulate gun parts rather than finished weapons.

Many of the justices' questions focused on whether the kits were close enough to functioning weapons to be regulated as guns.

Justice Samuel Alito compared the components to food, suggesting eggs, peppers and ham aren't necessarily a Western omelet so shouldn't be treated like one.

Barrett, though, proposed gun kits are more like meal kits ordered online that contain everything needed to make a specific dinner, like turkey chili.

Roberts, for his part, seemed skeptical of the challengers' position that the kits are mostly popular with hobbyists who enjoy making their own weapons, like auto enthusiasts might rebuild a car on the weekend.

Many ghost gun kits require only the drilling of a few holes and removal of plastic tabs.

"My understanding is that it's not terribly difficult for someone to do this," he said. "Drilling a hole or two, I would think, doesn't give the same sort of reward that you get from working on your car on the weekend."

A ruling is expected in the coming months.

While guns are at the center of the case, *Garland v. VanDerStok*, the legal issues are about the power of federal agencies rather than Second Amendment rights. The case comes after the high court struck down another firearm regulation, a Trump-era ban on gun accessories known as bump stocks that enable rapid fire. In that case, the court found that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives wrongly categorized the accessories as machine guns.

The ghost gun regulation came after their numbers around the country soared, going from fewer than 4,000 recovered by law enforcement in 2018 to nearly 20,000 in 2021, according to Justice Department data. The number of ghost guns has since flattened out or declined in several major cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Baltimore, according to court documents.

Finalized at the direction of President Joe Biden, the rule requires companies to treat the kits like other firearms by adding serial numbers, running background checks and verifying that buyers are 21 or older.

Challengers to the rule argue that most people who commit crimes use traditional guns and that the kits can be hard to assemble.

"Congress, in the Gun Control Act, did not seek to pursue its purposes of controlling access to firearms to the nth degree," said attorney Peter Patterson, representing manufacturers, gun rights groups and people who own firearms parts.

U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor in Texas agreed with the challengers and struck down the rule in 2023. The U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals largely upheld his decision. The administration appealed to the Supreme Court, which allowed the rule to go into effect while the litigation played out.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh said he was concerned that businesses might accidentally run afoul of the regulation. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar responded that the regulation is not aimed at unwitting sellers, an answer Kavanaugh called helpful.

Prelogar argued that regulation of weapons that can be "readily converted" to shoot is well within ATF's authority, and law-abiding hobbyists can still buy the kits with the regulation place.

"Our nation has seen an explosion in crimes committed with ghost guns," she said. "The evidence shows that these guns were being purchased and used in crime."

## France's minority government survives a no-confidence vote, 2 weeks after taking office

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's minority government survived a no-confidence vote on Tuesday, two weeks after taking office, getting over the first hurdle placed by left-wing lawmakers to bring down new conservative

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Prime Minister Michel Barnier.

The vote was a key test for Barnier, whose Cabinet is forced to rely on the far right's good will to be able to stay in power, as the nation grapples with economic challenges exacerbated by global inflation.

The no-confidence motion was brought by a left-wing coalition, the New Popular Front, composed of the hard-left France Unbowed, Socialists, Greens and Communists. It received 197 votes, far from the 289 votes needed to pass.

Following the June-July parliamentary elections, the National Assembly, France's powerful lower house of parliament, is divided into three major blocs: the New Popular Front, Macron's centrist allies and the far-right National Rally party. None of them won an outright majority.

The far-right National Rally group, which counts 125 lawmakers, abstained from voting the no-confidence motion. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, herself a lawmaker, said she decided to "give a chance" to the government for now.

Barnier's Cabinet is mostly composed of members of his Republicans party and centrists from French President Emmanuel Macron's alliance who altogether count just over 210 lawmakers.

Left-wing lawmakers denounced the choice of Barnier as prime minister as they were not given a chance to form a minority government, despite securing the most seats at the National Assembly. This government "is a denial of the result of the most recent legislative elections," the motion read.

Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party, denounced a "democratic hijacking," adding that "on July 7, it was the New Popular Front that came out on top."

Barnier strongly rejected Faure's accusations his government is "illegitimate."

"I don't need the government to be reminded it's a minority one," Barnier said. "Nobody has an absolute majority."

The new government is soon to face its biggest challenge as Barnier made a priority of remedying France's indebted public finances.

"The reality we have to tell the French is that we are spending too much... This cannot go on," Barnier said.

"We must fix the (state) budget, reduce our public spending, and we will indeed be asking for an exceptional tax from companies and the wealthiest French people... It's always better to seek to be responsible rather than popular."

France is under pressure from the European Union's executive body to reduce its colossal debt.

The country was placed earlier this year by the EU's executive arm under a formal procedure for running up excessive debt, the first step in a long process before any member state can be hemmed in and moved to take corrective action.

In his inaugural speech to parliament last week, Barnier said he will seek to reduce France's deficit from an estimated 6% of Gross Domestic Product now to 5% next year through a 60 billion (\$66 billion) budget squeeze, with the aim to reach 3% by 2029.

To do so, he promised to cut state expenses, spend money more "efficiently" and fight tax evasion and other frauds.

The government is to formally present its 2025 budget bill on Thursday, ahead of an expected heated debated at parliament, as labor unions and left-wing opposition parties prepare to push back against some austerity measures.

## **A series of deaths and the 'Big Fight': Uncovering police force in one Midwestern city**

By RYAN J. FOLEY and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. (AP) — It was the day of the "Big Fight" at the police academy, and rookie sheriff's deputy Asson Hacker groaned as the hulking instructor pressed down on his chest.

Playing the role of a combative suspect, the trainer challenged Hacker to battle like his life was on the

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line. He punched Hacker, wrapped him in headlocks and tossed him against a padded gym wall.

"C'mon, you got to go home!" another instructor yelled. The message: Hacker needed to fight harder to survive violent encounters on the street.

After seven exhausting minutes, Hacker managed to snap a handcuff on the trainer. Instructors and recruits ringing the gym clapped. Hacker toppled from his knees onto his back.

Within hours, the 33-year-old father of four young sons was dead. A classmate who fought the same instructor shortly after was himself rushed to the hospital with a disabling injury. The public would not be told the full story of that March 2023 day, which authorities described as routine training in which Hacker died of exertion tied to a genetic condition.

The Big Fight at the Southwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy underscores a culture of aggression that persists at some police departments, where officers are taught to view virtually everyone they encounter as a potentially deadly threat. That mindset can lead officers to resort quickly to physical force and weapons on patrol.

A few years before the academy tragedy, four people died over just 14 months on Evansville's streets after officers used tactics that are not intended to kill – yet have contributed to the deaths of civilians across the nation, an Associated Press investigation found.

That cluster stood out for a mid-sized city among the more than 1,000 deaths AP documented after force such as Tasers and holds. At the same time, the deaths echoed encounters elsewhere in which officers misused force during difficult behavioral and medical emergencies.

AP found a pattern after the fatal incidents involving civilians and at the academy the Evansville Police Department runs: Authorities downplayed the violence, the county coroner who worked 25 years in law enforcement ruled that force did not contribute to the deaths, and no officer was criminally charged.

Video and records that AP unearthed show official narratives omitted key details of the force or mockery officers directed at those who would die. Operating with little independent oversight, Evansville police have been able to shield themselves from criticism, but not always liability. The city paid the parents of one deceased man nearly \$1 million to drop their lawsuit and keep quiet.

City officials declined interview requests and didn't answer a list of questions. A city lawyer said force by Evansville officers has "overwhelmingly been deemed lawful" when challenged in court.

Evansville was among the departments where AP found use-of-force training, tactics and oversight that was similar to practices in cities where the U.S. Department of Justice has raised concerns over the past decade. In June, for example, the DOJ faulted Phoenix police for training and oversight deficiencies that contribute to escalation and force.

Hacker's relatives feel abandoned and suspicious that the law enforcement family he wanted to join is covering up the role the Big Fight played in his death.

"If they can't get it right with one of their own," said Asson's younger brother, Lij Hacker, "then they're definitely not going to get it right with the public."

A fallen recruit

While Asson Hacker was thrilled to be a rookie deputy, he confided to his brother he was dreading the Big Fight, the culmination of a grueling week of training that already had given him a bruised face and sore ribs.

Hacker had been recruited to join the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office by a deputy who lived next door. A 6-foot-3-inch, 230-pound former college basketball player who became a competitive bodybuilder, Hacker told relatives he felt a calling to help people. As a Black man born in New York City, he would bring diversity to an overwhelmingly white department on Indiana's border with Kentucky.

Hacker shaved the beard he wore as a coal miner and proudly showed off his uniform to family. He thought wearing the badge would make him a role model for his boys — all under age 12.

First, Hacker had to complete four months at the academy.

For fight day, he was paired with Mike Fisher, a sheriff's major from a nearby county. A longtime instructor, Fisher had pummeled recruits during a boxing drill two days earlier in what one described as a "beatdown."

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Police academies have long held fight days or similar drills to toughen up rookies before they hit streets, where one misstep could be deadly. Evansville's was based on a real-world scenario in which an officer ran up the stairs of an apartment building to apprehend two combative suspects.

Hacker paced a hallway before the drill, holding his ribs. When his turn came, he ran up the two-story building's stairs, punched a bag, ran across the gym and kned another bag. Then he lay down on the mat so the fight could begin.

A little more than halfway in, video obtained by AP under Indiana's open records law shows, Hacker wobbled like a fighter in danger of being counted out. He continued listlessly for three more minutes as instructors urged him on and afterward slumped against the ropes of a nearby boxing ring.

About 15 minutes later, four instructors and recruits carried an unconscious Hacker across the gym as another fight continued. They anxiously waited for an ambulance before rushing Hacker to the hospital in the back of a police car.

Instructors told recruits that Hacker was probably just dehydrated or overheated. Among them was Tanner Corum, the Evansville Police rookie next up to face Fisher.

Before his fight, Corum gave a classmate his wife's number and said to call her if anything happened. He asked for a prayer.

Video shows Fisher sitting and lying on Corum's chest, holding him to the mat with an arm around his neck and punching him in the stomach as Corum fought to break free. Corum told Fisher he couldn't breathe, and one recruit later said the restraint "appeared to be suffocating" him. Fisher put him in a headlock and took him back to the mat.

Afterwards Corum couldn't move his head. His neck felt tight, his right arm trembled. He started walking to his truck to get Tylenol and collapsed.

Summoned to the gym, Corum's wife drove him to the hospital. As Corum checked in word spread that Hacker was dead.

Hospital doctors concluded that Hacker had rhabdomyolysis, a potentially life-threatening condition sometimes caused by excessive exercise or trauma in which muscles release chemicals that damage the kidneys. Corum had both rhabdomyolysis and a spinal injury in his neck that caused weakness in his limbs. He could not walk without help and was hospitalized for two weeks.

When dozens of uniformed officers gathered at an Evansville church for Hacker's funeral a week after he died, Corum was up front – in a wheelchair. Vanderburgh County Sheriff Noah Robinson told the crowd they could honor Hacker by committing themselves to the "truth" – a message, he acknowledged later to AP, intended to stop chatter about what caused Hacker's death.

## 'Rough training'

Evansville police announced Hacker's death in a news release, saying he and an unidentified second recruit had suffered medical ailments during "routine physical tactics training." The department vowed to cooperate with an Indiana State Police investigation and pledged transparency.

Many departments around the U.S. face outside investigations into deaths involving officers, but for Evansville it was extraordinary. For decades the department had almost always itself investigated whether officers did anything criminally wrong during fatal encounters.

Even with outside scrutiny, records show some recruits worried the state investigation was influenced by efforts to protect the academy from liability. Investigators repeatedly asked about unfounded claims that steroid use could be to blame and questioned Hacker and Corum's diets and exercise habits. One recruit was concerned his interview could cause "Hacker's family to not be compensated."

Some of the rookie officers said they saw nothing wrong with the training. But others felt investigators ignored the physical force the men endured and a culture in which recruits were pushed to the point of injury. One complained they "were being told a narrative" that absolved the instructors.

A state police spokesperson said the agency conducted a thorough investigation.

Five experts interviewed by the AP said Evansville's training appeared similar to "defensive tactics" drills used elsewhere, including some that have been linked to deaths and serious injuries.

Spencer Fomby, a longtime use-of-force trainer, questioned the design of Evansville's scenario, saying

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police on patrol would very rarely — if ever — fight a larger person on top of them while exhausted without backup or weapons. He said recruits should be taught to avoid trading strikes or engaging in prolonged ground fights, and instead transition to Tasers or other options.

"We're not supposed to be training police officers to be MMA fighters," Fomby said.

Had academy instructors stopped when Hacker was clearly exhausted, he would have recovered, said Dr. Randy Eichner, a retired University of Oklahoma professor who has studied exertion-related deaths. While the instructor let up at the end, that was too late, he said: "By then, Asson was fighting a different fight — fighting just to live."

Determining Hacker's official cause and manner of death was the job of Vanderburgh County Coroner Steve Lockyear. He was elected after working 25 years at the sheriff's office that hired Hacker, including as a detective.

"We work very closely and we don't have any problems," Lockyear said in an interview of his office's relationship with local law enforcement.

A pathologist contracted by Lockyear's office conducted Hacker's autopsy. During the procedure, police officials showed him videos of the fights and said they reflected normal training, records show.

The coroner announced his ruling weeks later: Hacker died from "exertional sickling due to sickle cell trait." During exertional sickling, red blood cells become misshapen, causing a drop in blood flow.

Lockyear told AP that combat training had "absolutely" contributed to Hacker's death by causing him to strenuously exert himself. But he said he ruled the death natural — not a homicide, an accident or undetermined — because Hacker had been born with sickle cell trait.

Sickle cell trait carriers generally have no symptoms, though in rare cases military recruits and athletes have died after suffering heat stroke and muscle breakdown when doing intense exercise. Asson Hacker had known since childhood that he carried the genetic characteristic, but his doctors said it was benign. Exertion had never been a problem for Hacker when he competed in football, basketball or bodybuilding, his brother Lij said.

Dr. Michael Baden, a former New York City medical examiner who has testified in dozens of police-involved deaths, reviewed Hacker's death for AP. He said several factors likely contributed, including exertion, body blows and dehydration.

He said sickle cell trait may have been a contributing factor but Hacker's medical records don't prove that. Testing at the hospital did not reveal any sickling — that was only detected later, at the autopsy, when it would be expected after cells were deprived of oxygen.

"He died as a result of the rough training," Baden said. "Here they had all these people looking around and nobody said, 'We ought to stop it.'"

The day the coroner announced his ruling, Sheriff Robinson said officials had been unaware Hacker carried sickle cell trait and his department would start testing recruits for it. Robinson told AP that he saw no misconduct by Fisher and defended the Big Fight.

"It can get violent out there and that violence oftentimes is perpetrated upon us," the sheriff said. "We have to have the skills to protect ourselves and to protect others."

Fisher, the academy instructor who is a major with the Knox County Sheriff's Office, declined an interview. He told investigators that he wanted to put Hacker and Corum into uncomfortable positions that would cause their hearts to race, but that he wasn't there to hurt anyone.

After the coroner's ruling, state police closed their investigation. A prosecutor wrote on a form: "Evidence shows no crime was committed."

"I have seen many fights on body camera and the exercise pales in comparison to the real fights that officers sometimes encounter in the field," County Prosecutor Diana Moers said later of her office's decision.

'Whoever I am dealing with may try and kill me'

Evansville has not had an officer killed in nearly a century, but some have been seriously injured, including last December when two were attacked while responding to a domestic violence call. The city's violent crime rate has been higher than the national average, with the closing of manufacturing plants leading to population losses and concerns about poverty, drug use and mental illness.

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As a prior recruit at the same academy Hacker attended, Trevor Koontz learned to expect violence. As a rookie on Evansville's streets, Koontz's field trainer drilled home that message.

Before patrol shifts, training Officer Matthew Taylor required Koontz to recite a saying out loud: "Whoever I am dealing with may try and kill me. I will not make a mistake so that my wife is a widow." Koontz, who had served stateside in the Army, would later describe it as a profound reminder of the dangers of his new job.

It was 2019, and Evansville officers had been using force more often than before, according to internal statistics. A longtime Evansville police supervisor blamed anti-police sentiment, saying in sworn testimony, "They're resisting more than they have in the past. And if you resist more, you have more uses of force."

Training records show Taylor believed Koontz remained too trusting, and needed to learn that even seemingly friendly people could be hiding a weapon. Taylor stressed to his trainee that Koontz must quickly handcuff and pat down people they encountered.

One September evening, a manager at a Honda dealership called 911, worried that an apparently intoxicated man looking for his truck would stumble into traffic. The man, Edward Snukis, a 55-year-old construction contractor and grandfather, was a 12-hour drive from home in St. Clair, Pennsylvania. He had no criminal history and was unarmed but, his son recalled, had started using methamphetamine after a painful divorce.

Taylor and Koontz found Snukis standing on a sidewalk, his shirt unbuttoned. Hopping out of the patrol car and striding toward Snukis, Koontz ordered him to put his hands on his head, body-camera video shows.

"Why?" asked Snukis. "Why, what's going on?"

Instead of answering, Koontz grabbed Snukis' arm and started to pull it behind his back for handcuffing. Koontz would later say he thought Snukis took a "fighting stance," something that's not clear from the video.

A startled Snukis swung his arm to break free and hit Koontz, then ran. Taylor fired his Taser, and darts delivering a jolt of electricity caused Snukis to fall.

"Get on the ground or you'll get it again," Taylor yelled. Snukis was on the ground. Taylor shocked him a second time.

Snukis managed to get up and run about a block before tripping.

The officers piled on his back and held him face down under their weight, a position that police have long been warned can dangerously restrict breathing. They tried to pull Snukis' arms from under him. Taylor later said in his report that Snukis tried to grab his holster and groin, so he punched Snukis six times in the head to make him stop.

A backup officer arrived and put his knee on Snukis' shoulder near his neck as he secured handcuffs. Officers turned Snukis over. Dirt caked his face.

Four minutes after he'd encountered Koontz and two minutes after being held face down, Snukis wasn't breathing. Officers and paramedics could not revive him.

Witnesses were stunned. A woman told police that Snukis was just standing there before the officer grabbed his arm. "I didn't see him do anything," she said.

Her son, Brentlee Spurlock, told police that officers stayed on Snukis too long while he was struggling to breathe. He reiterated that the force seemed excessive in an interview with AP.

A department clears itself

Under the Evansville Police Department's practice of investigating itself, the job of examining the Snukis case fell to Detective Josey Lewis.

Lewis once worked on the department's bomb squad with training Officer Taylor and occasionally socialized with him outside work, records show.

Taylor and Koontz declined to speak with the detective and exercised their right to remain silent – something that doesn't happen everywhere after a death, but was routine in Evansville. With help from a lawyer provided by the police union, Taylor and Koontz wrote in their reports that Snukis caused the escalation.

Lewis would later say in a lawsuit deposition he didn't see anything remarkable in body-camera footage. He never learned Taylor required Koontz to recite the saying – which was not department-wide practice — or that Taylor repeatedly punched Snukis. Lewis never talked to the backup officer who in deposition

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testimony questioned why officers didn't try to talk to Snukis first. Both Lewis and police union representatives did not respond to AP's requests for comment.

The department's investigation turned back on the deceased. Investigators concluded Snukis was aggressive and fought officers immediately – even though Koontz had put his hands on Snukis first.

Two police supervisors who evaluated the Snukis case concluded the force was reasonable. Taylor wrote that his trainee “did a good job of maintaining control during a high-stress situation.”

The pathologist who examined Snukis was the same one who several years later would conduct Hacker's autopsy. The doctor pointed to methamphetamine in Snukis' system and an enlarged heart as the cause of death. He added that Snukis' behavior was consistent with “excited delirium,” a term coined to describe potentially fatal agitation that the medical community now disavows.

Coroner Lockyear ruled Snukis' death was an accident caused by meth. He acknowledged to AP that it is “extremely dangerous” for officers to pile on suspects who are face down but said that's not why Snukis died, saying Evansville has long been a “meth capital” and the drug causes aggression. Lockyear also said he would only rule a restraint death a homicide – a death at the hands of another – if officers acted recklessly or showed an intent to kill.

“You can't blame the police for everything,” he said.

AP's investigation found that coroners or medical examiners elsewhere have blamed preexisting health conditions or drug use in many deaths that involved significant police force.

The police department cited the coroner's ruling in closing its investigation as “non-criminal.” While local or state prosecutors in many places review police custody deaths for potential criminal charges and issue public rulings, the Snukis case was never forwarded for a legal examination.

Baden, the former New York City medical examiner, reviewed the Snukis records for AP and said he would have ruled the death a homicide caused by restraint asphyxia. Baden said the level of meth in Snukis was high, but would not normally be fatal. He said video shows Snukis stopped breathing soon after officers put pressure on his back.

The pathologist who conducted Snukis' official autopsy testified he could not rule out asphyxia as the cause, but added he could not tell since video didn't clearly show the force. He said if he'd been told that Taylor repeatedly punched Snukis' head, he would have examined the skull and brain more carefully.

Koontz acknowledged under oath that his body-camera video did not support his written claim that Snukis “approached me yelling and throwing his hands in the air.”

A policing expert hired by the family and an outside expert contacted by AP both said that Koontz made a rookie mistake by quickly trying to handcuff Snukis, rapidly escalating a routine welfare check.

“He was not the aggressor,” Snukis' son, Ed Jr., said in an interview. “Yes, he was going through a hard time, but everybody goes through hard times. That's life. The cops had no sympathy for his life at all.”

Neither Koontz nor Taylor faced disciplinary action. But weeks later, at the end of his probationary period, Koontz resigned. Department officials had informed him that his attention to officer safety still fell short. Koontz did not return messages seeking comment.

Taylor, who also did not reply to requests for comment, testified he regretted “that Mr. Snukis' decisions on that day have caused pain and suffering for his family.”

Earlier this year, a federal judge dismissed the Snukis family's lawsuit, finding the force was reasonable given Snukis' resistance. The family has appealed.

## String of deaths

Snukis' death in September 2019 was followed by three other deaths involving Evansville police restraint, according to the AP investigation, done in collaboration with FRONTLINE (PBS) and the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism.

In February 2020, 25-year-old Dean Smith fled after an Evansville officer pulled over his vehicle to arrest him on a warrant. A police dog caught Smith and bit his legs. Bleeding and handcuffed, Smith told officers he had asthma and couldn't breathe. An officer told Smith, who was Black, “Boy, you're being overly dramatic.” Soon after medics arrived, Smith suffered cardiac arrest.

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The next month, police responded to a motel where an agitated man had been scaring guests. After Steven Beasley resisted handcuffs, an officer threw him to the ground and his head struck a wall, bystander cellphone video showed. Another shocked Beasley with a Taser while he was handcuffed face down, saying he was kicking and trying to bite an officer. Several officers put pressure on his back and head, at times joking and laughing as Beasley, 37, became unresponsive.

The department said in a news release officers were "attempting to save Mr. Beasley's life" after a struggle, without mentioning the takedown, the Taser use or the prolonged restraint. Internal reports supported those uses of force.

In November 2020, officers chatted for several minutes while Evan Terhune, hands cuffed behind his back and his face covered by a spit hood, screamed and banged his head against metal in a police van parked outside a hospital. The 20-year-old was hallucinating on LSD, having been shocked with a Taser and arrested after becoming violent at a party and punching an officer.

"It's not a good day for this guy," an officer said of Terhune. By the time officers opened the van, he was unresponsive. In a previously unreported legal settlement that AP obtained under a records request, the city agreed earlier this year to pay Terhune's parents \$987,600. Under the terms, the family must keep the amount confidential and never make any "disparaging" statements about Evansville police.

William Harmening, a retired law enforcement officer who wrote a book about officers using excessive force, reviewed all four Evansville deaths in AP's database. He found officers made mistakes in each, from misusing restraint tactics to delaying immediate medical help.

"You have a department that's poorly supervised," he said.

Billy Bolin, who was Evansville's chief at the time of all five deaths, didn't respond to interview requests. He left the department earlier this year and is now chief in nearby Henderson, Kentucky.

The coroner ruled that Smith died from complications of sickle cell trait, as he later would with Hacker. He ruled that Beasley's death was "undetermined" after an autopsy report said he had suffered extensive blunt force trauma to his head and body but also had excited delirium. And he found that Terhune died from self-inflicted head trauma. None of the rulings cited police force or restraint in the cause.

The department closed its investigations of the officers without finding fault, and the county prosecutor's office said it had no record of reviewing any of the four cases.

Brother seeks answers

The fallout from the training tragedy continues.

Hacker's estate, represented by his widow, Kourtney Hacker, filed a lawsuit in September alleging the instructor used excessive force and impeded Hacker's breathing. The lawsuit said the Big Fight amounted to hazing, and the academy failed to have adequate medical personnel available. Another instructor was negligent by encouraging a distressed Hacker to keep fighting and failing to intervene, alleges the suit.

Sheriff Robinson said the lawsuit contained allegations that were "either inaccurate or misleading" and he expects the academy and its instructors to present a robust defense.

Corum notified the city that he may also file a lawsuit. He said he still suffers severe pain in his back, numbness on his left side and neck pain that causes frequent headaches. He resigned from a desk job in the records department he'd gotten because he could not patrol the streets, and a city board later approved his application for a disability pension.

"Everything's just been life-changing," said Corum, 29, who lamented how he can't pick up his young sons for long or run without pain or numbness.

Citing potential litigation, Keith Vonderahe, an outside lawyer representing the city, directed Evansville's mayor and police chief to cancel interviews with AP.

"We're not aware of any facts or evidence that our training procedures caused the tragic death of Mr. Hacker or Mr. Corum's injuries," Vonderahe said.

Lij Hacker, who once wanted to join his brother to fight crime in Evansville, has asked the FBI to investigate. He said he recently met with an agent but the status of any inquiry is unclear.

What Lij Hacker wants now is for people to see how his brother died, and accountability and change



within law enforcement in Evansville.

"If this slips through the cracks and no one is held accountable," he said, "the justice system has failed us."

## **An unusual hurricane season goes from ultra quiet to record busy and spawns Helene and Milton**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Explosively intensifying Hurricane Milton is the latest freaky system to come out of what veteran hurricane scientists call the weirdest storm season of their lives.

Before this Atlantic hurricane season started, forecasters said everything lined up to be a monster busy year, and it began that way when Beryl was the earliest storm to reach Category 5 on record. Then, nothing. From Aug. 20 — the traditional start of peak hurricane season — to Sept. 23 it was record quiet, said Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

Then five hurricanes popped up between Sept. 26 and Oct. 6, more than double the old record of two. On Sunday and Monday, there were three hurricanes in October at the same time — something that never happened before — Klotzbach said. In just 46.5 hours, Hurricane Milton went from just forming as a tropical storm with 40 mph winds to a top-of-the-charts Category 5 hurricane with 160 mph winds and then it got even stronger.

"I was looking as far back as the Atlantic records go and there's not really any good analogs for this season, just how neurotic it's been," Klotzbach said. "You know, obviously the season ain't over yet. We'll see what pops up after Milton."

MIT meteorology professor Kerry Emanuel has been studying hurricane seasons since the 1980s and he's never seen anything quite like this year. That includes a year when there were so many storms forecasters ran out of names and had to use the Greek alphabet.

Before hurricane season started June 1, forecasters such as Klotzbach and the federal government looked at the record hot oceans and an embryonic La Nina cooling of parts of the Pacific that brings winds and other conditions that foster hurricane formations. They made bold predictions of an extremely busy season. It was nearly unanimous.

When Beryl became a Category 5 hurricane in early July, they were looking prescient.

Then came mid August. Aug. 20 is such a milestone marking the beginning of peak hurricane season — which runs to mid October — that hurricane season forecasting pioneer Bill Gray used to ring a bell as sort of a starter's pistol. This year when a student rang the bell, the storm activity seemed to ground nearly to a halt. When computing a combination of storm strength and duration, the next month was the lowest on record, Klotzbach said.

That was strange because the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean and parts of the Atlantic were at record or near record high temperatures, acting as giant gas stations for hurricanes. But the air was also warming to an unusual degree and more than sea surface temperature. It's the difference between water and air temperatures that matter and that was just too low, Emanuel said.

Add to that a natural weather phenomenon pushed air from high up to sink down low over the Atlantic, which made it tougher for hurricanes to form, said University of Albany atmospheric scientist Kristen Corbosiero.

And dust in the African Sahara was expanding and interfering with the development of systems that could eventually become hurricanes, said Bernadette Woods Placky, chief meteorologist for Climate Matters that looks at weather events for fingerprints of human-caused climate change.

"I found it encouraging that we weren't seeing as many hurricanes," Woods Placky said. "Even if it did bust the forecast a little bit, of course, we don't want to see these devastating storms."

But it didn't last.

The upper air got cooler, the sinking air moved away, and in the Gulf of Mexico the Central American Gyre — a whirling overarching weather system — took over. That started the spin that kept kicking out

hurricanes, Corbosiero said. Hurricane Helene formed, followed by Isaac, Kirk, Leslie and now a monstrous Milton.

Helene was one of the largest storms in size in recent decades, with tropical storm force winds that end-to-end stretched 420 miles wide before landfall, the third largest Gulf storm since 1988 and larger than the state of Georgia. That allowed it to gather more moisture from the Gulf of Mexico and it plowed inland till it hit the mountains, which caused even more rain to fall. The warmer Gulf made it rain more and human-caused climate change made the hotter waters more than 300 times more likely, Woods Placky said, using her organization's calculations. A flash study by researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab found that climate change boosted Helene's rainfall by 50% in some parts of Georgia and the Carolinas.

Helene rapidly intensified in those warm waters, but when Milton came along it gained strength at a much higher clip, quadrupling in wind speed in less than two days. Milton became the seventh storm in the last 20 years to gain at least 75 mph in wind speed in just 24 hours and none did so between 1950 and 2000, Klotzbach said.

Corbosiero, Klotzbach and Emanuel said random chance, other weather conditions, perhaps the 2022 undersea volcano eruption that shot lots of water vapor into the atmosphere all could have also played a role in the weird hurricane season.

Woods Placky said the future looks grim.

"The warmer we get, the worse these are going to become," she said. "There's a direct connection between the damage we're seeing in communities far and wide and the amount of greenhouse gases we put into the atmosphere."

## What polling shows about Black voters' views of Harris and Trump

By MATT BROWN and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Black registered voters have an overwhelmingly positive view of Vice President Kamala Harris, but they're less sure that she would change the country for the better, according to a recent poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll, which was conducted in mid-September, found about 7 in 10 Black voters have a somewhat or very favorable view of Harris, with few differences between Black men and women voters on how they view the Democratic candidate. Younger and older Black voters also had similar views of the vice president.

Black voters' opinions of former President Donald Trump, by contrast, were overwhelmingly negative, underscoring the challenges that the Republican candidate faces as he seeks to erode Harris' support among Black men. Black voters are an important Democratic constituency, and few are aligned with the Republican Party. According to the survey, two-thirds of Black voters identify as Democrats, about 2 in 10 identify as independents and about 1 in 10 identify as Republicans.

But the poll also found that despite this dramatic gap in views of the candidates, Black voters are less certain of whether Harris would set the country on a better trajectory, or make a substantial difference in their own lives. Only about half of Black voters say "would change the country for the better" describes Harris very or extremely well, while about 3 in 10 say it describes her "somewhat well" and about 2 in 10 say it describes her "not very well" or "not well at all." And only about half believe the outcome of this presidential election will have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of impact on them personally, an assessment that's in line with Americans overall.

"The Democratic Party is not strong enough for me," said Raina Johnson, 53, a safety case manager in Chicago. Johnson predicted that Harris would "try to do something for the people" but she felt that Harris would be limited as it was "with (Barack) Obama, because the Republican Party shut him down."

While Johnson felt that the stakes of the election were extremely high, she did not think it would have a large personal impact on her.

"Because I'll still live my life. I'll just have to roll with the punches," she said.

Most Black voters think Harris is better on the issues

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When asked which candidate would do a better job handling their top issues, including the economy, health care and crime, Black voters had the same answer: Harris.

Like voters overall, about 8 in 10 Black voters said the economy is one of the most important issues to their vote. But about three-quarters of Black voters said health care was one of their most important issues, compared to slightly more than half of registered voters, and they were also more likely than the electorate as a whole to say gun policy and crime were top issues.

In all of those areas, as well as on other topics like abortion and climate change, Harris held a commanding advantage over Trump among Black voters. But the size of that edge was bigger on some issues than others. About 6 in 10 Black voters said Harris was better positioned to handle the economy, while about 2 in 10 said this about Trump, giving Harris about a 40-point advantage. On abortion policy, she had around a 60-point advantage over Trump.

The Trump campaign has stepped up with some outreach to Black communities this year. The former president's campaign believes that his message on the economy, immigration and traditional values can make notable inroads into the Democrats' traditional base of support among Black voters, especially younger Black men.

Rod Wettlin, a retired Air Force veteran in Surprise, Arizona, who wants greater action on issues like health care and immigration, said he was deeply opposed to Trump and was concerned about the implications of the election for American democracy.

"What's going on now is the culmination of a lot of stuff that's been in our face for years," said Wettlin. "Hopefully after the election it is civil, but these cats out here are already calling for bedlam. And that's their right, I fought for them to have that right. But don't infringe on mine."

There are signs that some groups of Black voters see Harris as a stronger figure, though. Black women voters and older Black voters were especially likely to describe Harris as someone who would "fight for people like you," compared to Black men and younger Black voters.

Black voters view Trump negatively, and some are skeptical about Biden

Relatively few Black voters have a positive view of Trump, or see him as a candidate who has important qualities for the presidency. The poll found that about 8 in 10 Black voters have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of Trump, while just 15% have a somewhat or very favorable view. About 1 in 10 said "would change the country for the better" or "would fight for people like you" describes Trump at least very well, and a similarly low share of Black voters said that Trump would make a good president.

"I think we're headed in the right direction if Kamala Harris gets it," said Roslyn Coble, 63, and a resident of Oakboro, North Carolina. "But if Donald Trump gets it, it's going to be bad. He already told us what he's going to do. He's going to be a dictator."

About 7 in 10 Black voters say the phrase "will say anything to win the election" describes Trump at least very well.

In a sign of how former President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw as the Democratic candidate in July may have altered the race, only 55% of Black men voters have a favorable view of Biden, compared to 7 in 10 Black women voters.

"He did his best," said Wettlin. He said that Biden should have bowed out of the presidential race far sooner and was skeptical of some of his achievements.

Black voter engagement organizations say they have also seen a burst of energy from voters and advocates since Harris' entrance into the race, and both the Harris and Trump campaigns are continuing to focus on this group.

The Trump campaign has been conducting listening sessions and community events in Black neighborhoods in cities like Philadelphia, Detroit and Milwaukee. The campaign has also coordinated a "Black Voices for Trump" bus tour across cities in September. Meanwhile, the Harris campaign has held a number of events geared toward Black voters, especially Black men, and has deployed a number of high-profile surrogates, including lawmakers, celebrities and civil rights leaders, to Black communities in recent weeks.

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## Today in History: October 9, Barack Obama wins Nobel Peace Prize

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 9, the 283rd day of 2024. There are 83 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 9, 2009, President Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for what the Norwegian Nobel Committee called "his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

Also on this date:

In 1910, a coal dust explosion at the Starkville Mine in Colorado left 56 miners dead.

In 1962, Uganda won autonomy from British rule.

In 1963, a mega-tsunami triggered by a landslide at Vajont Dam in northern Italy destroyed villages and caused approximately 2,000 deaths.

In 1967, Marxist revolutionary guerrilla leader Che Guevara, 39, was executed by the Bolivian army a day after his capture.

In 1985, Strawberry Fields in New York's Central Park, a memorial to former Beatle John Lennon, was dedicated.

In 2010, a drill broke through into an underground chamber where 33 Chilean miners had been trapped for more than two months.

In 2012, former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was sentenced in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, to 30 to 60 years in prison following his conviction on 45 counts of sexual abuse of boys.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Nona Hendryx is 80. Musician Jackson Browne is 76. Actor Robert Wuhl is 73. TV personality Sharon Osbourne is 72. Actor Tony Shalhoub is 71. Actor Scott Bakula is 70. Actor-TV host John O'Hurley is 70. Football Hall of Famer Mike Singletary is 66. Jazz musician Kenny Garrett is 64. Film director Guillermo del Toro is 60. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron is 58. Singer P.J. Harvey is 55. Film director Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave") is 55. Golf Hall of Famer Annika Sorenstam is 54. Musician Sean Lennon is 49. Actor Brandon Routh is 45. Author-TV presenter Marie Kondo is 40. Comedian Melissa Villasenor is 37. Actor Tyler James Williams is 32. NFL tight end George Kittle is 31. Country singer Scotty McCreery (TV: "American Idol") is 31. Model Bella Hadid is 28. Actor Jharrel Jerome is 27. Tennis player Ben Shelton is 22.