

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, Oct. 11

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish with peas, mixed vegetables, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Pizza, green beans.
Lake Region Marching Festival in Groton, 10 a.m.
Football at Sisseton, 7 p.m.

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



Everyone makes mistakes in life, but that doesn't mean they have to pay for them for the rest of their lives. Sometimes, good people make bad choices. It doesn't mean they're bad, it means they're human.

Saturday, Oct. 12

Girls Soccer Playoff: Groton Area hosts Dakota Valley at noon.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

Sunday, Oct. 13

Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) monthly meeting.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; No Sunday School; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Charge Conference, 11:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m., No Sunday School.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School, Choir, 6 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

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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.

Inflation Ticks Down

The consumer price index dropped to an annual inflation rate of 2.4% in September, the lowest annual level since February 2021. Separately, weekly jobless claims surged to 258,000 last week, the highest number in 14 months—possibly the consequence of a chain of hurricanes and recent labor strikes.

The consumer price index—a data tool dating to the 1910s—takes roughly 80,000 price measurements of more than 500 types of goods each month, with the percent change indicating overall price movements. The measure peaked at an annual rate of 9.1% in June 2022, but has steadily dropped to near the Federal Reserve's target annual rate of 2%.

The Federal Reserve last month made its first cut to the federal funds rate in four years, with more cuts expected. The inflation report is the last before the Nov. 5 presidential election, for which surveys suggest the economy is the most important issue.

Honk if You Like Robotaxis

Tesla CEO Elon Musk unveiled the highly anticipated robotaxi last night, a driverless, \$30K vehicle called the Cybercab. Tesla says the car—which lacks pedals and steering wheels—will go into production by 2027. The company also debuted a 20-person robovan and touted its Optimus robots.

The debut is almost a decade in the making and comes amid a series of lawsuits and investigations over Tesla's supervised driving vehicles. The company's investors hope robotaxis will generate almost 90% of Tesla's value and earnings by 2029. This would involve drivers being able to rent their vehicle through an app when not in use, earning passive income in a "part Uber, part Airbnb" model. Tesla hopes electric vehicle sales will eventually account for only 9% of Tesla's value.

Tesla is not the first company to pursue this model; Google's Waymo already services 100,000 paid rides per week, including in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Phoenix. Amazon's Zoox is coming soon to San Francisco.

'King of Clay' Retires

Professional tennis legend Rafael Nadal announced his retirement yesterday, with his final match set for next month's Davis Cup finals in Malaga, Spain. Nadal has played in only nine tournaments since the start of 2023 due to injuries and recovery from surgery.

The 38-year-old Spaniard achieved remarkable success during his 23-year career. He won 22 Grand Slam titles, including a record 14 French Open championships, and secured 92 ATP titles, with 36 at the Masters 1000 level, a tier below Grand Slams. He holds the record for the longest winning streak on a single surface in the Open Era, winning 81 consecutive matches on clay courts, and boasts a 1,080–227 record, second behind Novak Djokovic. He has two Olympic gold medals, spent a total of 209 weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings, and earned nearly \$135M in prize money.

Beyond tennis, Nadal is a five-time Laureus Award winner for his foundation, which provides opportunities for at-risk adolescents through sports and education.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Author Han Kang, best known for surreal novel "The Vegetarian," becomes South Korea's first winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature; Han previously won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize in 2016.

Sean "Diddy" Combs makes first court appearance in sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy case; judge sets May 2025 trial start date.

Disney World and Universal Orlando to reopen today after Hurricane Milton forced rare closures.

Tropicana Field, home to baseball's Tampa Bay Rays, may take weeks to assess damage done after its roof was torn off during the storm.

Science & Technology

Apple unveils Depth Pro, an AI-powered application calculating the depth of scenes represented in two-dimensional images.

Previews of Apple's 14-inch MacBook Pro continue to be shared online; analysts say it marks the company's worst leak since an iPhone 4 was left at a bar in 2010 prior to consumer release.

Engineers develop the world's most powerful electron "gun," capable of accelerating the particles from rest to 80% the speed of light; beam system will help investigate the physics of individual atoms.

Solar storm reaches Earth, causes aurora borealis along parts of the US West Coast; radiation burst from the sun triggered the second-ever warning from the National Weather Service.

Business & Markets

TD Bank agrees to pay \$3B in penalties, faces limits on US growth in settlement with US regulators over bank's failure to monitor drug cartel money laundering; TD Bank shares close down 5% on news of largest-ever penalty imposed by the US on a bank for antimoney laundering violations.

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq -0.0%) following latest US inflation and jobless claims data.

US average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rises to 6.3%, up from 6.1% in the previous week.

Politics & World Affairs

At least 12 people dead, over 3 million without power after Hurricane Milton lands as Category 3 storm in Siesta Key, Florida, about 70 miles south of Tampa; storm dumped up to 18 inches of rain in some areas and spawned at least 150 tornadoes but fell short of worst-case scenario predictions.

Ethel Kennedy, social activist and widow of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D), who was assassinated in 1968, dies at age 96 after being hospitalized following a stroke in her sleep Oct. 3; Ethel never remarried and raised 11 children.

More than 20 people killed, over 100 wounded in Israeli airstrikes in central Beirut, marking the third time Israel has targeted Lebanon's capital since beginning its recent offensive against Hezbollah.



Veteran's Supper

All local Veterans
are invited to attend

Sponsored by the Groton American Legion Post #39

Monday, Oct. 14, 2024

6 p.m. Supper

Groton Legion Hall

Legion Meeting to Follow

Lake Region Marching Festival

Friday October 11th

10:00 am

Groton, SD

10:00 Groton High School- Exhibition

Combined

10:06- Sully Buttes

10:12- Frederick Area

10:18- Hoven

10:24- Aberdeen Roncalli

10:30- Ipswich

10:36- Lake Preston

10:42- Leola

10:48- Langford Area

High School

10:54- Britton

11:00- Redfield

11:06- Great Plains Lutheran

11:12- Warner

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

11:24- Northwestern

Middle School

11:30- Holgate/Simmons

11:36- Milbank

11:42 Groton Middle School- Exhibition

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- ✓ Pro Constitution
- ✓ Pro Family



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DISTRICT 1

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General Election - Nov. 5
Absentee Voting has begun

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Successful SD State Fair Delivers a Memorable Celebration for All Ages

HURON, S.D. –Tens of thousands of visitors from across the state gathered at the 2024 SD State Fair to enjoy six days of family fun, incredible entertainment, and timeless traditions. From exciting live music performances to mouth-watering fair food, the SD State Fair continues to be a cherished destination where friends and families come together to create lifelong memories.

The Fair, which ran from August 28 – September 2, offered family friendly attractions, six stages of entertainment, thrilling carnival rides, world class livestock shows, agricultural education, and endless shopping opportunities.

Youth Participation and Education

Nearly 1,500 exhibitors entered more than 8,000 exhibits in open class livestock and non-livestock competitions.

The Arts & Education Building hosted more exhibits than last year with 6,300 education exhibits being displayed.

9,515 4-H display exhibits, livestock exhibits, and youth in action entries participated in the Fair.

367 FFA exhibitors showcased over 975 entries.

Over 600 students and teachers representing 35 schools participated in South Dakota's Largest Classroom.

Nearly 50 schools and libraries participated in the Read and Win program sponsored by Ag Performance and Agri-Dynamics, handing out 8,000 youth daily admission gate passes to young readers.

Attendance and Economic Impact

186,255 guests passed through the gates, a four percent increase over 2023, while nearly 2,000 campers filled the fairground's campsites, setting the stage for a highly successful State Fair.

More than \$3.2 million was spent by fairgoers on goods, services, and concessions.

The Fair generated over \$266,000 in tax revenue, a 20 percent increase over 2023.

Improving the Fairgrounds

A groundbreaking was held for The SHED on Thursday, August 29. The SHED will be the new home for Open Class Sheep at the South Dakota State Fairgrounds and serve as a multi-purpose facility including a show arena and educational center. The indoor educational center will provide a place for interactive learning about the sheep industry, opportunities in agriculture, and our state's rich agricultural history. Construction is underway now!

The 140th South Dakota State Fair dates are Wednesday, August 27 – Monday, September 1, 2025. For more information about the South Dakota State Fair, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit www.sdstatefair.com or find them on Facebook, Instagram, and X.

COMMON CENTS is moving to the Groton Community Center (109 N 3rd St) for a 3-Day \$10 Bag Sale!

Plus, join us for a meal during the sale to support the restoration of the Groton SoDak 1912 Jail.

SHOP

THURS, OCT. 10TH 2-7PM

FRI, OCT. 11TH 9AM-3PM

SAT, OCT. 12TH 9AM-3PM



HENRY TOWNSHIP WEED NOTICE

Henry Township owners and tenants of Henry Township are hereby notified and required according to law, to cut all weeds in road ditches adjacent to their property or tenanted by them within said township on or before October 15, 2024, or someone will be hired by the township board and \$250.00 per half mile charged to the abutting property.

By order of the township board.

Darlene Sass, Township Clerk

Social Security Announces 2.5 Percent Benefit Increase for 2025

Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for more than 72.5 million Americans will increase 2.5 percent in 2025, the Social Security Administration announced today. On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by about \$50 per month starting in January.

Over the last decade the COLA increase has averaged about 2.6 percent. The COLA was 3.2 percent in 2024.

Nearly 68 million Social Security beneficiaries will see a 2.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) beginning in January 2025. Increased payments to nearly 7.5 million people receiving SSI will begin on December 31, 2024. (Note: Some people receive both Social Security benefits and SSI).

"Social Security benefits and SSI payments will increase in 2025, helping tens of millions of people keep up with expenses even as inflation has started to cool," said Martin O'Malley, Commissioner of Social Security.

Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) is slated to increase to \$176,100 from \$168,600.

Security begins notifying people about their new benefit amount by mail starting in early December.

This year, for the first time, Social Security beneficiaries will receive a newly designed and improved COLA notice that makes it easier for customers to find the information they need most. The simplified COLA notice is now only one page, uses plain and personalized language, and provides exact dates and dollar amounts of a person's new benefit amount and any deductions.

Individuals who have a personal my Social Security account can view their COLA notice online, which is secure, easy, and faster than receiving a letter in the mail. People can set up text or email alerts when there is a new message--such as their COLA notice--waiting for them in my Social Security.

People will need to have a personal my Social Security account by Nov. 20 to see their COLA notice online. To get started, visit www.ssa.gov/myaccount.

Information about Medicare changes for 2025 will be available at www.medicare.gov. For Social Security beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare, the 2025 benefit amount will be available via my Social Security's Message Center starting in late November. Those who have not opted to receive messages online will receive their COLA notice by mail in December.

The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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Netters post clean sweep win over Milbank

Groton Area's volleyball teams all posted minimum wins in a clean sweep over Milbank on Thursday. The matches were played at Milbank.

The Tigers won the varsity match, 25-16, 25-17 and 25-21.

Chesney Weber: 20 of 21 in attacks with eight kills, seven of nine in serves with two ace serves, 13 assists.

Rylee Dunker: 12 of 16 in attacks with seven kills, three assisted blocks.

Jaedyn Penning: 17 of 21 in attacks with six kills, 14 of 15 in serves with three ace serves, 14 digs.

Jerica Locke: three ace serves, 16 digs.

Taryn Traphagen: three kills.

Laila Roberts: two kills, nine digs.

Kella Tracy: two kills, one solo and one assisted block.

Sydney Locke: 15 of 15 in serves with two ace serves.

Elizabeth Fliehs: 17 assists.

Milbank's Claire Snaza had seven kills and two assisted and one solo block and Avery Schuneman had four kills.

Groton Area is now 13-5 on the season and will travel to Britton on Monday. Milbank falls to 11-9.

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

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-19 and 25-14.

Makenna Krause had seven kills and three ace serves, Emerlee Jones had five kills, Liby Althoff had five ace serves and two kills, Sydney Locke had five ace serves, McKenna Tietz had four kills, Talli Wright had three kills and three ace serves and Kella Tracy had three kills and one ace serve. The junior varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright.

Groton Area won the C match, 25-7 and 25-15.



Finally got it done. The Groton Independent letters are as old as the hills. Ha! Morris and Virginia Spencer had them on the building when I bought the Paper back in October of 1986. The word "Daily" was added about 30 years ago.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State official says employee error led to 273 non-US citizens on voter rolls

One of the noncitizens voted, according to Secretary of State's Office

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 10, 2024 6:09 PM

The South Dakota Secretary of State's Office is blaming the state Department of Public Safety for errors that allowed 273 non-U.S. citizens to register to vote.

"These non U.S. citizens had marked 'no' to the citizenship question on their driver's license application but were incorrectly processed as U.S. citizens due to human error by the Department of Public Safety," wrote Rachel Soulek, director of the Division of Elections in the Secretary of State's Office, in response to South Dakota Searchlight questions.

Noncitizens can obtain a driver's license or state ID if they are lawful permanent residents or have temporary legal status. There's a part of the driver's license form that allows an applicant to register to vote. That part says voters must be citizens.

Searchlight shared Soulek's statement with the Department of Public Safety on Thursday and asked for a response, but the department did not immediately reply.

State election offices are responsible for reviewing the submitted registration forms, according to the Bipartisan Policy Institute. Verification can involve cross-referencing databases, such as the Social Security Administration or state records, to confirm the applicant's eligibility.

The improper registrations are being purged, state officials said earlier this week.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, while noncitizen voting is illegal in federal elections, mistakes can occur during the registration process. They say such mistakes are typically accidental and not driven by malicious intent.

Soulek said only one of the 273 noncitizens had ever cast a ballot. That was during the 2016 general election.

Searchlight sought the added information after the Department of Public Safety issued a news release Monday announcing it had worked with the Secretary of State's Office and the state Bureau of Information and Telecommunications to purge the noncitizens from voter rolls.

"This discovery was part of a review to ensure the integrity of South Dakota's elections and safeguard against improper voter registration," the news release said.



A Sioux Falls resident votes in the city and school board election at Southern Hills United Methodist Church on April 9, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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The department said nothing further in the news release about how the noncitizens were discovered on the voter rolls, how they became registered in the first place, what counties they registered in, or whether any of the noncitizens had ever cast a ballot.

Spokesman Brad Reiners, who shared the news release with South Dakota media, responded Monday to Searchlight questions about the news release by saying "the press release speaks for itself" and referring questions to the Secretary of State's Office.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota alleged Tuesday that the state violated the National Voter Registration Act. The act prohibits voter list maintenance within 90 days of a federal election unless it's based on individualized information or investigations, the ACLU said.

Samantha Chapman, ACLU of South Dakota's advocacy manager, said the state can make individualized inquiries into specific voters with evidence to support its claims that an individual is not legally eligible to vote, but "it cannot enact blanket purges based on potentially inaccurate databases this close to the election."

"The risk of disenfranchising eligible voters at this late stage is simply too high when voters have a mere 13 days before the voter registration deadline," Chapman said.

Counties where noncitizens registered to vote

Rachel Soulek, of the Secretary of State's Office, said the 273 noncitizens were registered in the following counties. She did not provide a breakdown by county. Aurora, Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Brule, Charles Mix, Clark, Clay, Codington, Corson, Custer, Davison, Deuel, Douglas, Grant, Hamlin, Hughes, Lake, Lawrence, Lincoln, Lyman, McCook, McLaughlin, Meade, Minnehaha, Moody, Pennington, Perkins, Potter, Roberts, Sanborn, Stanley, Sully, Todd, Tripp, Union, Walworth, Yankton.

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

COMMENTARY

Too many newspapers stand by mute while the rest of the world has opinions

BY DANA HESS

It was July of 1984 and I had just been named editor and general manager of The Redfield Press. That was quite a gamble for the people who owned the newspaper as all I had to recommend me was five years as an advertising salesman and a degree in English.

Their gamble paid off in the best learning experience of my life. I learned how to write feature stories, cover government meetings, lay out newspaper pages and write editorials. It seemed only natural to me that the newspaper have an editorial every week. I grew up in Huron where the Plainsman had an editorial on most days. I'd just finished working for The Brookings Register where there was an editorial published in the paper every day.

Teaching me how to write editorials held some urgency since the publisher, Roger Matz, and his wife were set to crew on a sailing ship that would take them on a weeks-long voyage around the Mediterranean. In those pre-internet days, there was no way Roger could email his editorial. I had to do it.

Roger offered me, what I came to learn later, was a fairly remedial course in editorial writing. There were two kinds of editorials, he said: I could "point with pride" or "view with alarm." His standard was that I had to point with pride 10 times before I could view with alarm once. (Years later, at a gathering of newspaper editors, I talked about Roger's editorial writing lesson. Watertown Public Opinion Editor Gordon Garnos laughed and said there was one more kind of editorial. If I got real good at it, Gordon said, I could

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“damn with faint praise.”)

My career eventually led me to Pierre where I was the editor of the Capital Journal, which published five days a week. The newspaper was owned by the Hipple family. The family patriarch, Robert Hipple, in his time as editor and publisher of the Capital Journal, was known for often writing two editorials a day.

Robert was retired when I knew him but, retired or not, I listened when he took me aside one day and said that I had to quit using columns from elected officials as “guest editorials.” Readers expect an editorial every day from their newspaper, Robert said, and that’s what I should give them.

I took that instruction to heart and wrote five editorials a week for the 17 years that I worked at the Capital Journal. Some people, when they do the math on that, will have the opinion that it’s way past time for me to just shut up already.

You’ve just waded through the world’s longest preamble because I wanted you to get a sense that I know, or at least I think I know, a thing or two about writing editorials.

That’s why it pains me so when I look at the state of editorial writing in South Dakota newspapers.

During National Newspaper Week, Oct. 6-12, we celebrate newspapers and all that they do for their communities. To this day, newspapers are the best source for local news, sports, advertising and public notices. Editorials, however, have all but disappeared.

Many newspapers, both weeklies and dailies, will dutifully publish “Editorial” pages. But those pages offer no locally produced editorials. Others may publish “Opinion” pages, but they steadfastly refuse to have any opinions themselves. Instead of editorials, on those pages you find editorial cartoons, letters to the editor and columns like this one.

The newspaper landscape has changed since that time 40 years ago when I first set foot in the office of The Redfield Press. Advertisers have found other places to invest, causing staff sizes to dwindle. Just as staffs were getting smaller, along came the internet. In addition to putting out a newspaper, editors had to figure out how to update a website.

Something had to give and, for most editors in South Dakota, it sure looks like they chose not to invest the time and effort it takes to write an editorial. That’s too bad, because those editorials are needed now more than ever.

In its best form, a newspaper editorial offers a reasoned, well-thought-out take on an issue of the day. It can serve as the inspiration for turning the editorial page into a lively public square where ideas are exchanged in a way that is thoughtful and well-mannered. That makes the editorial page a far better place than social media to exchange ideas. On those platforms, points are often made by using all caps and many, oh so many, exclamation points.

With newspapers manned by editors who refuse to share their opinions, readers are the ones who suffer. There’s no one to point with pride when an Eagle Scout project turns an unkempt local park into a thing of beauty. There’s no one to view with alarm when the city council develops an unhealthy fondness for conducting its business in executive session. There’s no one to damn with faint praise at the retirement of a county commissioner who wintered in Florida, calling in to the commission meetings when he wasn’t busy basking in the sun.

Every newspaper editor’s goal is a publication that’s interesting and relevant to readers. One of the best



October 6-12, 2024, is National Newspaper Week.

(Jill Ferry Photography/Getty Images)

ways to do that is with lively, locally produced editorials. It will give readers one more reason to pick up the newspaper while providing a feature that television and radio will never match.

The rest of the world has opinions that they usually express badly and at the top of their lungs. Newspapers were once the place where readers could count on a reasoned approach to the issues of the day. Editors need to reclaim that tradition. (Dang, now I have to point with pride 10 times.)

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Investigation prompts state parole board to request information on sex offender supervision

Board members want refresher course on guidelines

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 10, 2024 3:14 PM

SIOUX FALLS — The South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles will hold a refresher training for its members on sex offender supervision in the coming months in light of an investigation into a parolee by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Some board members said the situation is a signal that the state's supervisory system for high-risk offenders is working, but others wanted more information to give them confidence when making release decisions.

Federal agents allegedly found multiple cell phones in the Sioux Falls home of 53-year-old convicted sex offender Toby Wade Ferguson in late September, Board Chairman Myron Rau told his fellow parole board members Thursday morning.

Ferguson is on parole with a condition that requires him to get permission before obtaining internet-connectable devices.

He is currently in custody in Sioux Falls and awaits a parole revocation hearing before the board. There are no federal charges currently pending against him in the U.S. District Court of South Dakota.

"The fact that Homeland Security is involved, that's not good for Toby," Rau said.

Homeland Security did not immediately return a request for comment on the situation.

Ferguson was convicted in 1993 on first-degree rape and sexual contact charges in a case involving eight underage male victims, according to the South Dakota Sex Offender Registry. He served 21 years of his 180-year sentence before his release by the parole board in 2014.

Just one current member of that 2014 board remains: Ken Albers, who was one of two members to vote against Ferguson's release.

The board spent part of its Thursday meeting talking about how parolees like Ferguson are supervised. He was classified a "high-risk" offender, which typically calls for additional supervision based on an of-



The South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles hears from Department of Corrections staffer Stacy Cole on July 13, 2023, at the Jamison Annex of the South Dakota State Penitentiary. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

fender's individual risk factors.

Besides the requirement to seek parole officer approval of electronic devices with internet access, Ferguson was required to undergo more frequent polygraph testing than most paroled sex offenders, was ordered to visit the parole board periodically for interviews, and had to submit to more frequent searches of his residence. He also wore a GPS ankle monitor for four years.

Parole Board Vice Chairwoman Kirsten Aasen said the discovery of the devices alone constitutes a serious parole violation, based on his history and the strict conditions under which he was released.

"The mere fact that he had them in his residence is enough," Aasen said.

Aasen also said the discovery shows that the Department of Corrections' Sex Offender Management Program works.

Rau agreed, noting that Ferguson was in state custody for the alleged parole violation within hours of the federal agency's search.

Albers and Board Member Peter Lieberman, however, both wanted more information on the supervision program. Albers said it's not clear to him that Ferguson's behavior would've been discovered without the federal investigation.

Lieberman said it's important for board members to understand the supervision program's guidelines and guardrails when making decisions that could affect public safety. When a sex offender's victims are children, Lieberman asked, "Do they receive an extra layer of supervision?"

The answer is yes, he was told, but what those layers of supervision look like differ from person to person. Kayla Stucky, a parole services supervisor, told board members that supervision for paroled sex offenders is typically more strict than for others.

With higher-risk offenders, she said, the terms of their release are tailored based on their participation in sex offender coursework in prison, psychiatric evaluations and individual risk factors. All paroled sex offenders are subject to quarterly searches of their residences – sometimes with a warning, sometimes without, she said – and higher-risk offenders are subjected to random monthly searches.

Release and supervision plans could also involve placement in transitional housing. Sex offenders on or off parole are also required by law to submit their address to a public registry and to notify authorities within three days if they move. They cannot live within 500 feet of "community safe zones," which include schools, parks and public pools.

Parole board members agreed to bring in program managers in either November or December to give newer board members more thorough information about the Department of Corrections' Sex Offender Management Program, and to let all the board members ask questions about it.

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

State will 'overcome any disruptions' during election, SD official pledges during summit

BY: ZACH WENDLING, NEBRASKA EXAMINER - OCTOBER 10, 2024 6:28 PM

OMAHA — Four secretaries of state, including South Dakota's, and a federal agency director in cybersecurity described their work Wednesday as a line of defense in upholding election integrity and security ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen, in explaining the reason for Wednesday's summit, asked simply, "Why not?" He said the Midwest states of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and South Dakota have demonstrated that elections can be safe, smooth and secure.

"Election security is not static. Election security is not a one-and-done deal. Election security is dynamic,"



Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen, at the podium, leads an Oct. 9, 2024, news conference at the University of Nebraska at Omaha about election security and integrity. Behind him, from left, are Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, South Dakota Secretary of State Monae Johnson, Director Jen Easterly of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and Director Gina Ligon of the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology and Education Center. (Zach Wendling/Nebraska Examiner)

Yet election confidence remains essential, Pate said, and secretaries of state are doing everything they can to uphold integrity and security.

"It's imperative that Americans, and Iowans, have confidence in those election results because the day after the election, if they don't believe that that's their governor or their senator or their president, our Republic has fallen without a single bullet being fired," Pate said. "That's not acceptable, so we're going to continue to be vigilant and do what we can on our front."

Director Jen Easterly of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, said CISA stands "shoulder to shoulder" with election officials nationwide. She said she has "tremendous confidence" in U.S. elections.

Easterly said CISA was established in 2018 from a previous U.S. Department of Homeland Security agency in part due to foreign attempts to influence the 2016 presidential election and after election infrastructure was designated as "critical" infrastructure.

Security protocols and training

The agency helps state and local election officials to prepare for any threats, including ransomware, physical threats and threats from foreign adversaries (such as Russia, Iran and China). Some of the support the agency provides, Easterly said, are security assessments, hypothetical scenario training and training for de-escalation and anti-active shooter incidents.

"At the end of the day, we know that elections will be safe. They will be secure. They will be free. They will be fair. But there will be things that go wrong," Easterly said. "The good news is these disruptions, while problematic, will not affect how votes are counted and how votes are cast."

Evnen said at the news conference. "If you're going to continue to address these dynamic challenges to elections, then you do so in a dynamic fashion."

The 'imperative' of election confidence

The National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology and Education Center, or NCITE, headquartered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, hosted the event.

Evnen's three counterparts from Iowa (Paul Pate), Missouri (Jay Ashcroft) and South Dakota (Monae Johnson) joined the event, which Evnen said he expects to be repeated in future years. Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab participated in other summit events, including briefings on NCITE research, but was unable to attend the news conference, officials said.

Pate, who is in his fourth term as Iowa's secretary of state, said he has seen elections evolve and become "more aggressive" in the past two decades, particularly through technology.

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Evnen said some of the ways that Nebraska has partnered with CISA in the past two years have included weekly scans of all 93 Nebraska county election websites for vulnerabilities, giving local officials “.gov” emails and website addresses and setting up internal protocols for day-to-day security.

“These are important steps we’re taking across Nebraska to ensure that our cyberinfrastructure is protected,” Evnen said.

Pate said those steps are national standards as officials “plan for the worst and hope for the best.”

Elections for ‘we the people’

All five secretaries of state who partnered with NCITE this week are elected Republicans, and Ashcroft said the officials don’t serve just Republicans or Democrats or Libertarians or any other third parties in their respective states.

He said if officials do their job well, they are the basketball ref or linesman of a football game who “no one notices.”

The secretaries of state and Easterly invited more people to get involved in the election process, such as serving as poll workers or watchers, and for anyone who has questions to ask.

“We run elections for the people of the states,” Ashcroft explained. “We run elections for our government because it is how ‘we the people’ decide that our Republic will move forward.”

Ashcroft added that no matter who wins or loses, or which issues pass or fail, “at the end of the day, the American people can drink their beverage of choice and either celebrate or commiserate, but know that they were a part of the decision, that their votes counted and that the votes made a difference.”

The election officials noted that it is typical for “official” results not to be finalized for up to a week after Election Day, but they said that’s due in part due to the need to process provisional ballots, as well as conducting the “checks and balances” needed to ensure accurate results, particularly in close races, or possibly hand-count some ballots.

But for the most part, the secretaries of state said of their jurisdictions, most election results are typically available within a few hours of polls closing on Election Day.

“I believe in getting quick results out, my colleagues do, but we all believe in getting it right, and we believe in making sure that every American, no matter where Uncle Sam has sent them, has the right to participate in our elections,” Ashcroft said, indicating overseas voters.

Johnson, from South Dakota, said the “greatest unease” about the general election is the period between when polls close and when results are finalized. She said officials are workshoping scenarios with public safety teams to ensure that post-election events proceed smoothly and on time.

“Protecting the voting process and its facilitators is a collaborative process, and we have full faith in our state’s ability to overcome any disruptions,” Johnson said.

NCITE research

Gina Ligon, director of NCITE at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, said the center, which includes 38 partner universities, is working on four projects, such as tracking threats to election workers through federal charges and possible threats from emerging technologies.

Ligon said the federal charges are the “tip of the iceberg” as federal charges are a “really high bar,” while other NCITE research includes threats or violence specifically against election officials in swing states, including Pennsylvania, Arizona and Georgia.

Those states have seen the largest spikes in data in recent years, Ligon said.

That project is extending to Nebraska, partially with the competitiveness of Nebraska’s 2nd Congressional District for president. There are currently no federal charges, according to Ligon.

Other research, out of the University of Arkansas, includes interviews of election workers who have faced threats of violence. Initial research has indicated women don’t always report when they are victims of violence, Ligon said, and that people don’t understand when they cross First Amendment protections from anger to prohibited threats.

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"As much as people say this is nothing new — 'we've experienced this for a long time' — our data just doesn't support that," Ligon said.

'It's up to all of us'

As of this time, Easterly said, there have been no specific election threats from terrorists, though she noted federal authorities thwarted the apparent plans of an Oklahoma City man on Tuesday and charged him with allegedly plotting a terrorist attack on Election Day in support of ISIS.

"If there are other things that we are seeing from the terrorist landscape, we will ensure that election officials are apprised of that immediately," Easterly said.

Easterly said the period between Election Day on Nov. 5 and the presidential inauguration on Jan. 20 will be critical. She said foreign adversaries will try to create a "wedge" and attempt to "shred our institutions" or sow discord as each milestone of certification and validation passes.

"That's why it's up to all of us as Americans — as the secretary [Ashcroft] said, 'We the people' — these elections are for us," Easterly said. "It's up to all of us to do our part in protecting and preserving our democracy."

Zach Wendling is a senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, double-majoring in journalism and political science. He has interned for The Hill and The News Station in Washington, D.C., and has reported for the Nebraska News Service and The Daily Nebraskan.

Immigration: Where do Trump and Harris stand?

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - OCTOBER 10, 2024 4:27 PM

WASHINGTON — Immigration remains at the forefront of the 2024 presidential election, with both candidates taking a tougher stance than in the past on the flow of migrants into the United States.



Aerial view of the Bridge of the Americas Land Port of Entry. One of four crossings in El Paso, the Bridge of the Americas is located on the international border separating El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico and connects with the Mexican port of "Cordova" in Juarez, Chihuahua. (Jerry Glaser/U.S. Customs and Border Protection)

Protection)

GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump has made immigration a core campaign issue, as he did in his two previous bids for the White House, and has expanded his attacks this time around to include false claims about migrants with legal status in specific locations like Springfield, Ohio.

He's often demonized immigrants in speeches and at rallies, and has vowed to enact the mass deportation of millions of people living in the United States without authorization.

Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris, like the Biden administration, has shifted to the right on immigration, embracing limits to asylum and advocating for added border security, as migrant encounters hit a record high at the end of 2023. With those new policies in place, migrant encounters have sharply fallen this year.

Vice President Harris in her remarks on immigration has mainly stuck to her promise to sign into law a bipartisan border security deal that three senators struck earlier this year. That legislation, if enacted, would have been the most drastic change in U.S. immigration law in decades.

The deal never made it out of the Senate. Once Trump expressed his displeasure with the bill,

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House Republicans pulled their support, and the GOP in the upper chamber followed suit.

Harris has not detailed her positions on immigration beyond her support of the border security bill.

Regardless of who wins the White House, the incoming administration will be tasked with the fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which protects a little over half a million undocumented people brought into the United States as children without authorization. A Texas legal challenge threatens the legality of the program, and the case could make its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Additionally, work visas, massive backlogs in U.S. immigration courts and renewing those individuals in Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, will fall to the next administration. Neither candidate has laid out how they would handle those issues.

The Trump campaign did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

The Harris campaign pointed to the vice president's remarks from an Arizona campaign rally where she acknowledged the U.S. has a broken immigration system and put her support behind border security and legal pathways to citizenship.

Harris also took a September trip to the southern border.

Promise: border security deal

Harris has made the bipartisan border deal a centerpiece of her campaign. She's often promised to sign it into law and has used the proposal to criticize Trump.

"We can create an earned pathway to citizenship and secure our border," Harris said during the Democratic National Convention in August.

The bill negotiated by senators would need to reach the 60-vote threshold to advance through the chamber. But after Trump came out against it and it was brought to the floor, the Republican who handled negotiations with Democrats and the White House, Oklahoma's James Lankford, voted against his own bill.

Additionally, House Democrats in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and immigration groups were not supportive of the bill.

"I will bring back the bipartisan border security bill that he killed, and I will sign it into law," Harris said at the DNC.

The measure raises the bar for asylum, and would require asylum seekers to provide greater proof of their fear of persecution.

The bill would have also provided \$20 billion for the hiring of more than 4,000 asylum officers, legal counsel for unaccompanied minors and the purchase of drug screening technology at ports of entry. It would also have provided \$8 billion for detention facilities to add 50,000 detention beds.

The plan did include some legal pathways to citizenship for Afghans who aided the U.S. and fled in 2021 after the U.S. withdrew from the country. It also provided up to 10,000 special visas for family members of those Afghan allies.

It also would have added 250,000 green-card employee and family-based visas over the next five years.

Promise: mass deportations

"Send them back," is chanted at Trump's rallies, where he often promises to carry out mass deportations.

There are roughly 11 million people in the U.S. without legal authorization.

"We're going to have the largest deportation," Trump said at a June campaign rally in Racine, Wisconsin. "We have no choice."

Under Trump's vision, mass deportation would be a broad, multipronged effort that includes invoking an 18th-century law; reshuffling law enforcement at federal agencies; transferring funds within programs in the Department of Homeland Security; and forcing greater enforcement of immigration laws.

Promise: an end to birthright citizenship

In a May 2023 campaign video, Trump said if he wins the White House, one of his first moves would be to issue an executive order ending birthright citizenship, which means anyone born in the U.S., regardless

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of their parents' status, is an American citizen.

This is enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution and would likely face legal challenges.

"As part of my plan to secure the border, on Day One of my new term in office, I will sign an executive order making clear to federal agencies that under the correct interpretation of the law, going forward, the future children of illegal aliens will not receive automatic U.S. citizenship," Trump said.

Promise: deportation of pro-Palestinian students on visas

Across the country, students on college campuses during the past year have set up encampments and protests calling for a cease-fire in Gaza and an end to the Israel-Hamas war.

In the initial attack on Oct. 7, 2023, more than 1,200 people were killed in Israel and hundreds taken hostage. As the war has continued, researchers estimate that as many as 186,000 Palestinians have been killed, directly and indirectly.

At a private dinner in May, Trump told donors that "any student that protests, I throw them out of the country," according to the Washington Post.

"You know, there are a lot of foreign students," Trump said. "As soon as they hear that, they're going to behave."

Trump also made that vow during a campaign rally in October 2023 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

"We'll terminate the visas of all of Hamas' sympathizers, and we'll get them off our college campuses, out of our cities and get them the hell out of our country, if that's OK with you," he said.

The Republican party made it part of its party platform in July.

Promise: an end to parole programs

With immigration reform stalled in Congress, one way the Biden administration has handled mass migration is the use of humanitarian parole programs. Those humanitarian parole programs have been used for Ukrainians fleeing the war with Russia, Afghans fleeing after the U.S. withdrawal and for Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans.

More than 1 million people have been paroled into the U.S. under the executive authority extended by the Biden administration.

Trump said in a November 2023 campaign video he would end this policy on his first day in office.

"I will stop the outrageous abuse of parole authority," Trump said.

Promise: green cards for foreign students

In a June podcast interview, Trump said that he was supportive of giving green cards to foreign students if they graduate from a U.S. college.

"What I will do is, if you graduate from a college, I think you should get, automatically as part of your diploma, a green card to be able to stay in this country," Trump said. "That includes junior colleges, too."

This would be done through rulemaking from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

On the podcast, Trump also said he would extend H-1B visas for tech workers. Those visas allow employers to hire foreign workers for specialized occupations, usually for a high skill role.

Promise: more screenings of immigrants

On social media, the Trump campaign said it would put in place an "ideological screening" for all immigrants and bar those who have sympathies toward Hamas.

Promise: Trump-era immigration policies

Trump has stated in various campaign speeches that he plans to reinstate his immigration policies from his first term.

That would include the continuation of building a wall along the southern border; reissuing a travel ban on individuals from predominantly Muslim countries; suspending travel of refugees; reinstating a public

health policy that barred migrants from claiming asylum amid the coronavirus pandemic; and reinstating the remain in Mexico policy that required asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while awaiting their cases.

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

Biden and Harris issue statements praising Tim Johnson's legacy

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - OCTOBER 10, 2024 12:50 PM



U.S. President Joe Biden delivers remarks on canceling student debt at Culver City Julian Dixon Library on Feb. 21, 2024, in Culver City, California.

(Mario Tama/Getty Images)

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday joined the chorus of tributes for former U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson, D-South Dakota, who died Tuesday at age 77.

Biden issued the following written statement: "Tim Johnson served the people of South Dakota with distinction, and it was an honor to serve alongside him in the United States Senate for over a decade.

"He always put South Dakotans first, and he never forgot where he came from. He worked tirelessly to bring clean drinking water to Americans wherever they lived: rural towns, inner cities, and Tribal lands. And he steered critical investments toward Indian Country and to South Dakota's development and infrastructure.

"As a Senator, Tim improved access to health care for millions of Americans by providing a critical vote on the Affordable Care Act, advocating for veterans' health care funding, and fighting to expand Medicaid in South Dakota.

"We also worked together to establish the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, to defend the backbone of our economy—hardworking Americans.

"Over the years, Jill and I got to know Tim and Barb as true friends. Our hearts are with Barb, his three children, his eight grandchildren, and the people of South Dakota, whose lives Tim touched.

"May God bless Tim Johnson."

Harris also issued a statement:

"Senator Tim Johnson was a tenacious fighter for the people of South Dakota.

"Throughout his career—as a member of the South Dakota legislature, as the state's sole representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, and as a U.S. Senator—he brokered compromise and advanced commonsense solutions that improved the lives of South Dakotans and all Americans.

"Senator Johnson secured support for critical water infrastructure that delivered clean water to communities across South Dakota, including Native reservations and rural communities across the state. He played a vital role in passing the Affordable Care Act, which delivered high-quality, affordable health care to millions of Americans, including tens of thousands of South Dakotans. And as Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, he championed community banks and housing finance reforms to help ensure that rural communities across the nation have the support they need to access safe and affordable housing.

"His life and legacy will be felt by generations of South Dakotans and all Americans to come. Doug and I send our prayers to his wife, Barbara, and the entire Johnson family."

Johnson, a Democrat like Biden and Harris, served a combined 36 years in state and federal offices, more than any other South Dakotan, and never lost an election despite running in a Republican-leaning state.

He suffered stroke-like symptoms from a cerebral arteriovenous malformation in 2006 that continued to affect his speech and mobility until his death.

Johnson served in the state House, state Senate, U.S. House and finally the U.S. Senate before retiring rather than seeking reelection to another U.S. Senate term in 2014.

Johnson's funeral is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Oct. 18 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls.

Amendment H: Opposing sides differ on the likely outcomes of open primaries

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 10, 2024 7:00 AM

Supporters of open primaries say shifting to a top-two primary system will whittle candidates down to those who represent a majority of South Dakota voters. But opponents argue it will limit voters' choices each November.

Amendment H, one of seven statewide questions on South Dakotans' Nov. 5 ballot, proposes opening up future primary elections and placing all candidates, regardless of party, on a single ballot. The top two vote-getters would advance to the general election.

Currently, only registered Republicans are allowed to vote in Republican primaries. Democrats and independents can vote in Democratic primaries.

The measure would amend the state constitution to implement the change. A "yes" vote supports replacing partisan primaries with a top-two system for all state and local offices. A "no" vote opposes the initiative and keeps South Dakota's current primary system in place.

Sioux Falls businessman and longtime Republican Joe Kirby leads South Dakota Open Primaries. He hopes the reform increases voter turnout so independents get a "meaningful vote" and candidates change primary campaigns to appeal to all voters.

Washington became the first state to adopt a top-two primary system in 2004, but wasn't able to implement it until 2008 due to court challenges. California adopted the system in 2010 and implemented it in 2012. Nebraska uses a top-two primary system for state legislative offices, and does not list political parties because the Legislature is nonpartisan.

Both the South Dakota Republican Party and the South Dakota Democratic Party oppose the measure. Democratic Party Executive Director Dan Ahlers said the amendment would not significantly affect voter turnout or candidate moderation.

Increasing voter turnout?

Proponents of Amendment H point to the South Dakota June 2024 primary's 17% voter turnout — the lowest in recent history — as a reason to switch to a top-two system. In a Republican-leaning state, the primary is more important to many Republican candidates than the general election, even though about half of South Dakota registered voters can't cast their vote in Republican primaries.

Aside from this year's primary — which included no statewide races, one Democratic legislative primary



From left, Sioux Falls Republican state Rep. Bethany Soye, Michael Linngren, Drey Samuelson and Dave Knudson participate in a debate on Amendment H hosted by the Downtown Sioux Falls Rotary Club in September 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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and 44 Republican legislative primary races — voter turnout in South Dakota primaries increased over the last decade.

Kirby said a top-two primary would significantly increase voter turnout because it would allow “meaningful” primaries for non-Republican South Dakota voters.

Citing a fiscal estimate from the Legislative Research Council, Kirby said voter turnout would grow by 50,000 voters — which would have increased turnout from 17% to 25% in this year’s primary, or from 32% in 2022 to 40%.

But Ahlers said that estimate is taken out of context. The Legislative Research Council merely estimated the number of extra ballots needed for primaries, not the actual turnout.

“They always have to put a buffer number in there,” he said.

If Amendment H passes, Ahlers doesn’t expect voter turnout to increase significantly. It’s not a primary model that will draw people out to vote but rather the candidates and the issues, Ahlers said. That’s the responsibility of parties, he said, to recruit quality candidates and encourage people to vote.

Average voter turnout in Washington has been lower in some years since the adoption of open primaries, including 31% in 2014, and higher in others, including 54% in 2020. Turnout has been similarly mixed since the implementation of open primaries in California, ranging from 25% in 2014 to 48% in 2016, and never yet equaling the state’s modern, pre-open-primaries high of 58% turnout in the 2006 primary.

Michael Ritter, an assistant professor specializing in election research at Washington State University, said that “more accessible primaries” do boost primary turnout, generally. Open primary models can make voting more accessible to citizens, and it may also increase a person’s commitment to political advocacy, he said.

But, Ritter said, open primary models don’t boost turnout by 10% or more. Just by a few percentage points, or less than 5%.

“That may sound trivial, but it can be important because a lot of elections in this country are decided at the margins,” Ritter said.

Appealing to all South Dakota voters or limiting their options?

Kirby said a top-two primary system shifts away from “party control” and encourages candidates to appeal to all South Dakota voters rather than just a party.

“It’s better to empower the voters of the state,” Kirby said. “Parties will no longer be in control of elections. The voters will be.”

Ahlers said the constitutional amendment is pushed by Republicans who are “frustrated with their own party.” He said the amendment will “disenfranchise voters” because a top-two system could limit the political diversity of candidates on the general election ballot. Two Republicans could appear on the general election ballot rather than a Republican with a Democrat, Libertarian and independent.

“You hear the word ‘open’ and you think, ‘Great. An open process where everyone can participate.’ But this limits your choices. It limits the opportunity for more voices to be heard,” Ahlers said.

In California, the top-two system has motivated new kinds of political strategizing.

Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Adam Schiff ignored his two Democratic opponents in this year’s primary and instead focused attention on Republican candidate Steve Garvey, even though Garvey has little chance at winning the general election in the Democratic-leaning state. That strategy helped Schiff maneuver Garvey into position as Schiff’s preferred general election opponent, a CalMatters columnist wrote earlier this year. Instead of appealing to moderate voters, Schiff made a partisan appeal to manufacture a relatively easy campaign for himself in the general election.

“Gamesmanship happens in politics,” Kirby countered. “That’s not at all a flaw in the open primary system.”

Republican Rep. Bethany Soye, of Sioux Falls, who opposed Amendment H during a recent debate at the Downtown Sioux Falls Rotary, said the top-two system will make it harder for independent or “grass-roots” candidates to run for office because campaigning will be more expensive. They’ll run against more opponents and have a longer campaign cycle, which will “guarantee the perpetual rule of big money” in

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South Dakota, Soye said.

"The general election is going to be in June and there will never be another independent candidate on the ballot in November," Soye said.

Washington's primary came under fire this year as a "bloody mess" because the ballot had an overwhelming number of candidates, wrote a Seattle Times columnist. There were 28 candidates listed on the ballot for governor alone.

There is no limit in Amendment H on the number of candidates that can run in a primary. Kirby said the South Dakota Legislature can address that concern if the measure passes, such as setting the number of petition signatures needed to file a candidacy at a higher level to discourage frivolous campaigns.

The potential for a legal challenge

The attorney general's explanation of Amendment H notes that the amendment might be challenged in court, but doesn't say why. The office did not respond to questions from South Dakota Searchlight.

Ahlers dislikes another portion of the amendment's language, which says "a candidate may select the name of a political party to be listed next to the candidate's name on the primary ballot." Ahlers said that provision "encourages voter deception" by allowing candidates to identify with a party even if they aren't registered with that party.

While candidates can already register under one party and then switch registration once elected, Ahlers said that's harder to pull off under the current system.

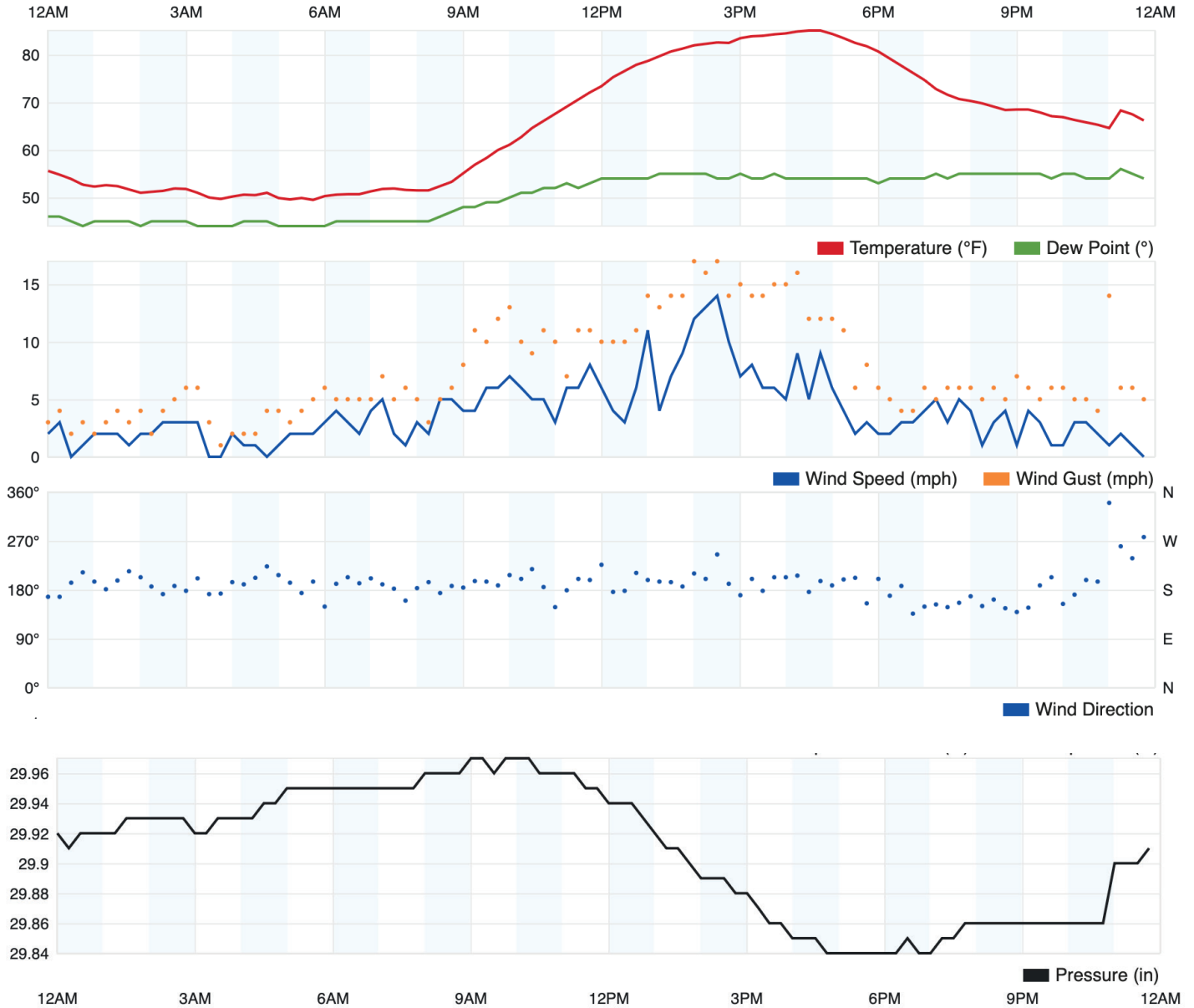
Kirby said if someone is "misrepresenting themselves," political parties and the media will hold them accountable. He said it hasn't been an issue in other states.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 66 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 42 °F

Mostly Cloudy

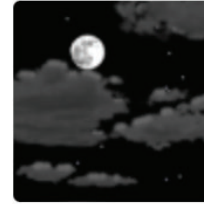
Saturday



High: 71 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 39 °F



Partly Cloudy



Sunday





High: 57 °F

Sunny

Friday Highs: 63-68° 
Lows: 41-46° 

Saturday Highs: 66-75° 
Lows: 36-40° 

Sunday Highs: 53-59° 

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
October 10, 2024 1:59 PM

Cooler temperatures will start to move in over the next few days after a cold front moved through central and eastern SD last evening.



Chance of Min Temperatures Less Than 32°F

Friday Morning, Oct 11 - Thursday Morning, Oct 17

	Fri 10/11	Sat 10/12	Sun 10/13	Mon 10/14	Tue 10/15	Wed 10/16	Thu 10/17
Aberdeen	0%	1%	4%	100%	85%	30%	0%
Miller	0%	0%	0%	70%	50%	4%	0%
Mobridge	0%	0%	1%	70%	40%	4%	0%
Murdo	0%	0%	0%	50%	25%	1%	0%
Ortonville	0%	0%	0%	50%	70%	10%	0%
Pierre	0%	0%	4%	96%	60%	10%	0%
Sisseton	0%	0%	1%	90%	80%	15%	0%
Watertown	0%	0%	3%	99%	85%	25%	2%

Percent Chance (%)

Information:

The table displays the percent chance of a weather event occurring based on model predictions from the National Blend of Models. A higher number means greater certainty.

Additional Details

More Information:

- Monday and Tuesday morning show a strong likelihood to see temperatures less than 32 degrees.
- Most if not all of Northeastern and Central South Dakota will observe these conditions
- There are slight chances for a hard freeze (28 degrees).

Potential Impacts:

- Frost/Freeze could harm outdoor vegetation. Outdoor plants may be killed if left uncovered.

Valid: Fri 07 am CDT - Thu 07 am CDT

Issued: Fri, Oct 11, 2024, 3 am CDT



Sunday night into Monday and Monday night into Tuesday both show a strong likelihood to see temperatures less than 32 degrees across most of Central and Northeast South Dakota. Temperatures may fall into hard freeze territory of 28 degrees or less.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 4:30 PM

Low Temp: 49 °F at 5:07 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 1:49 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 11 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2015

Record Low: 16 in 1935

Average High: 62

Average Low: 36

Average Precip in Oct.: 0.83

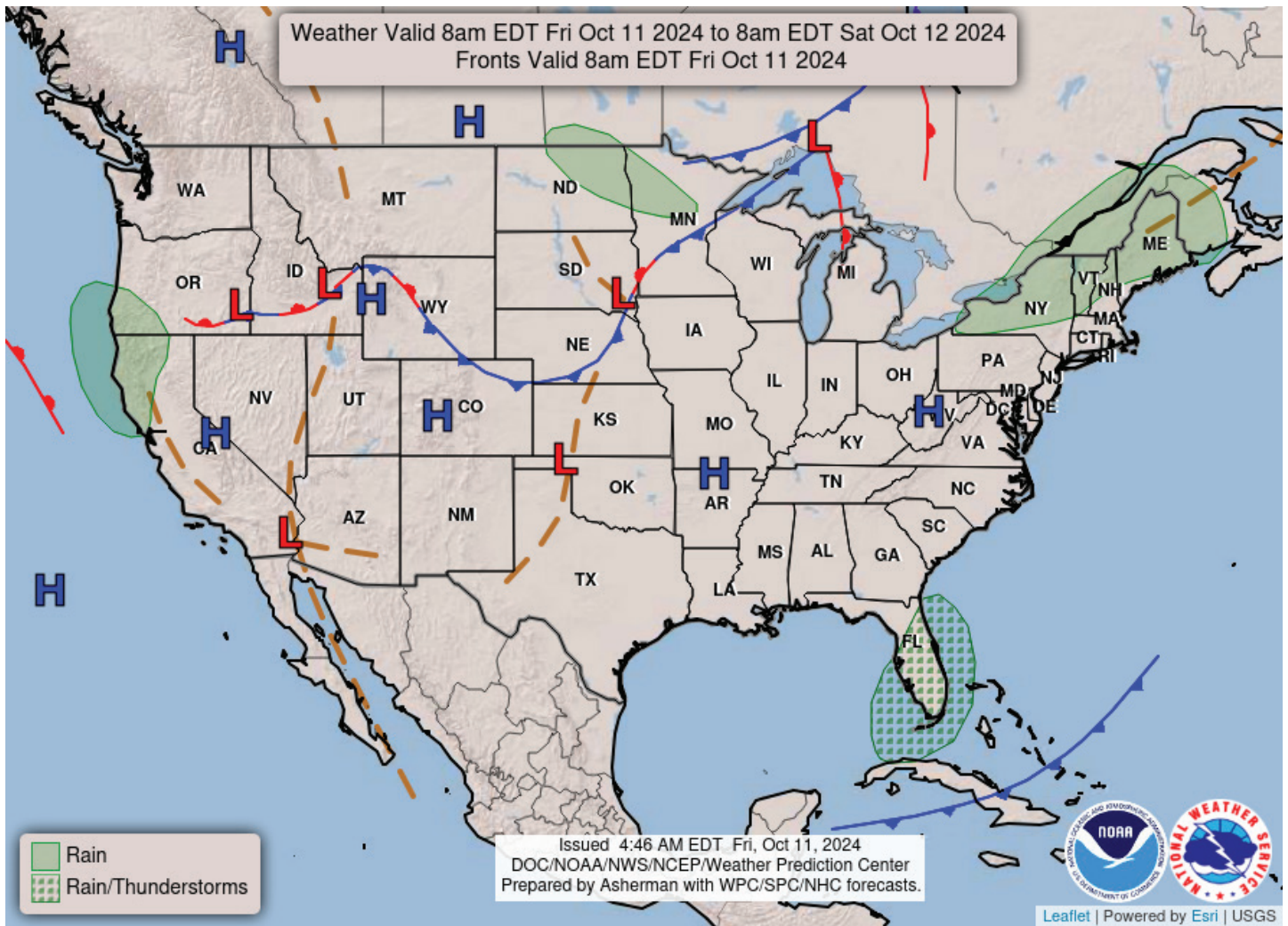
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 19.16

Precip Year to Date: 19.75

Sunset Tonight: 6:54:54 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:44:15 am



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Today in Weather History

October 11, 1997: High winds and hail caused nearly \$20,000 in damage to rural Meade County homes.

1846: A major hurricane, possibly a Category 5, moved through the Caribbean Sea. This Great Havana Hurricane struck western Cuba on 10 October. It hit the Florida Keys on 11 October, destroying the old Key West Lighthouse and Fort Zachary Taylor.

1906: Games 1 and 2 of all Chicago World Series were played amid snow flurries. Snow would not happen again in a World Series until 1997. The high temperature for game 3 played on this day was 43 degrees.

1925 - Widespread early season snows fell in the northeastern U.S., with as much as two feet in New Hampshire and Vermont. The heavy snow blocked roads and cancelled football games. (David Ludlum)

1954 - A deluge of 6.72 inches of rain in 48 hours flooded the Chicago River, causing ten million dollars damage in the Chicago area. (9th-11th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - More than thirty cities in the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including Waterloo IA and Scottsbluff NE where the mercury dipped to 16 degrees. Tropical Storm Floyd brought heavy rain to southern Florida, moisture from Hurricane Ramon produced heavy rain in southern California, and heavy snow blanketed the mountains of New York State and Vermont. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought gale force winds to the Great Lakes Region, with snow and sleet reported in some areas. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. The mercury hit 84 degrees at Cutbank MT and Worland WY. The temperature at Gunnison CO soared from a morning low of 12 degrees to a high of 66 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Much of the nation enjoyed "Indian Summer" type weather. Nine cities in the central U.S. reported record highs for the date as temperatures warmed into the 80s and 90s. Record highs included 90 degrees at Grand Island NE and 97 degrees at Waco TX. Strong winds along a cold front crossing the Northern High Plains Region gusted to 80 mph at Ames Monument WY during the early morning. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: A tropical depression, formerly Hurricane Vince, became the first tropical cyclone to make landfall in Spain since 1842.



GREAT WORK TO DO TODAY

John Tyndall was a nineteenth century physicist who was highly respected and widely recognized for his scientific research in physics. He was the author of seventeen books and his work led to many discoveries that advanced our knowledge about the universe. In fact, many think it was his work that led to the interest of studying the science of physics.

He was once asked by a colleague, "Where did your greatest inspiration come from?"

"A servant," he replied. "Every morning he'd knock at my door and say, 'Arise sir! You have great work to do today.'"

We do, too.

Paul talks about the attitude and perspective we who are Christians should possess. "Work hard," he says, "and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than people."

Ever since the dawn of creation God has given man work to do. And if we view this work as Paul asks us to, it will be done as an act of service and worship to our Creator. Having this view of our daily responsibilities would take away much of the drudgery and dissatisfaction that often make them boring and appear meaningless to us. We might even end our complaining and have less resentment for what we do. Perhaps we might even view our problems as part of the cost of discipleship.

Prayer: Lord, give us thankful hearts, able bodies and sound minds that enable us to work. May we see all that we do as an opportunity to bring You honor and glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. Colossians 3:23-24

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 16 Hrs 4 Mins
DRAW: 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

18 28 32 40 51 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$11,250,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 19
DRAW: Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.10.24

7 8 26 27 47 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 34 Mins
DRAW: 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

3 7 10 16 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$56,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 34
DRAW: Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

4 14 29 33 59 17

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

25 32 43 53 66 10

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$364,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Britton-Hecla, 25-17, 25-13, 25-6

Avon def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-21, 25-19, 25-20

Beresford def. Alcester-Hudson, 16-25, 20-25, 25-10, 25-14, 15-8

Brandon Valley def. Yankton, 25-12, 25-11, 25-19

Centerville def. Scotland, 21-25, 25-19, 25-20, 25-9

Clark-Willow Lake def. Redfield, 25-10, 25-16, 25-19

Corsica/Stickney def. Freeman, 25-16, 25-16, 17-25, 26-24

Custer def. Wall, 25-18, 25-23, 25-23

Dakota Valley def. Madison, 25-15, 25-13, 25-19

DeSmet def. Oldham-Ramona-Rutland, 25-16, 25-13, 25-18

Douglas def. Belle Fourche, 22-25, 25-12, 21-25, 25-21, 15-12

Edgemont def. Sioux County, Neb., 25-10, 25-9, 25-15

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Deubrook, 25-21, 25-17, 36-34

Great Plains Lutheran def. Langford, 25-15, 25-10, 25-23

Groton def. Milbank, 25-16, 25-17, 25-21

Hamlin def. Sisseton, 25-22, 25-6, 25-16

Hanson def. Ethan, 25-22, 25-18, 25-23

Herreid-Selby def. North Central, 25-23, 21-25, 25-9, 25-22

Iroquois-Lake Preston def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-19, 25-11, 25-17

Jones County def. Dupree, 25-15, 25-16, 25-19

Kadoka def. St Thomas More, 22-25, 25-19, 25-23, 25-23

Lemmon High School def. New Underwood, 25-14, 25-21, 25-15

Miller def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 29-27, 25-17, 25-23

Northwestern def. Faulkton, 25-11, 25-17, 25-15

Parker def. Irene-Wakonda, 28-26, 25-19, 25-14

Platte-Geddes def. Gregory, 25-17, 22-25, 25-17, 17-25, 15-12

Rapid City Christian def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-9, 25-21, 25-16

Sanborn Central-Woonsocket def. Tripp-Delmont-Armour, 22-25, 20-25, 25-20, 26-24, 15-0

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Tea, 25-18, 25-10, 25-10

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Washington, 25-16, 25-22, 25-20

Stanley County def. Colome, 25-18, 25-11, 25-18

Wessington Springs def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-17, 25-22, 25-19

West Central def. McCook Central-Montrose, 25-16, 25-13, 17-25, 25-16

Hay Springs Triangular=

Lakota Tech def. Hay Springs, Neb., 25-15, 25-20

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

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Little Wound 42, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 28

Lower Brule 78, Crow Creek Tribal School 0

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 50, McLaughlin 0
Omaha Nation, Neb. 36, White River 28
Pine Ridge 50, Todd County 14
Tiospa Zina 44, Flandreau Indian 14
Winnebago, Neb. 51, St. Francis Indian 0

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

Bacon hogs the spotlight in election debates, but reasons for its sizzling inflation are complex

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

She blames greedy companies for price-gouging. He blames the Biden administration's economic policies. Kamala Harris and Donald Trump agree on one thing: Tapping into sour consumer sentiment about high grocery prices is one way to court voters.

Bacon prices have been a particular focus for Trump. He mentioned them in his Sept. 10 debate with Harris and again a week later during an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"Things are not going, right now, very well for the consumer," Trump said during the interview. "Bacon is up five times."

Trump's math is wrong, but bacon has seen some sizzling price increases. According to federal data, U.S. bacon prices peaked in October 2022 at \$7.60 a pound, up 30% from October 2019.

In September, bacon averaged \$6.95 a pound, 25% higher than five years ago. That's in line with a 29% increase in overall food prices over that period, according to the Labor Department. Still, September bacon prices were 1.8% lower than they were a year ago.

Prices for bacon are always volatile. Among other things, they're subject to weather, animal disease, feed costs, seasonal demand and, according to Harris and other critics, some price gouging by giant food conglomerates.

Bacon prices typically go up in the summer when Americans have a hankering for BLTs, for example. A president's policies generally have little direct impact on the prices consumers pay for bacon or food overall.

Prices for not just bacon but groceries in general — and most other products — began surging in 2021 as the economy rebounded with unexpected speed from the pandemic recession, causing snarled supply chains and goods shortages. The price spikes worsened later after Russia invaded Ukraine. Food costs jumped across the world, not just in the United States.

Though U.S. inflation has tumbled from its peak in mid-2022, average food prices remain elevated. The impact of those price spikes, though, has been cushioned in part by a comparable rise in average wages.

Here are some factors that have made it more expensive to bring home the bacon.

COVID-19 spread quickly in meat processing

Workers stand close together on production lines in the U.S. meat processing industry. Big bacon producers like Smithfield Foods and Tyson Foods temporarily closed plants in the spring of 2020 after thousands of workers got sick and some died. While plants were closed, millions of pigs got too big to be processed and were culled instead, leading to shortages just as home-bound Americans were shopping for more breakfast bacon, said David Ortega, a professor of food economics at Michigan State University.

Demand from China jumped

China's growing demand in 2020 contributed to lower pork supplies at home. U.S. pork exports to China jumped 75% in 2020 as Beijing scrambled to replace hogs that were lost to an outbreak of African swine fever, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Over the course of 2020, U.S. bacon prices rose 6%.

Meat processors faced higher costs

Meat companies paid out pandemic bonuses and invested in protective gear in order to get plants running again. Tyson Foods required all its 139,000 workers to receive COVID vaccines.

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By the end of 2021, Tyson said it had spent more than \$800 million on bonuses, vaccine clinics and other COVID-related measures. It was also paying more for packaging and transportation in a supply chain that had been mangled by COVID. To recoup those costs, the company jacked up the prices of pork products by 25% in its 2021 fiscal year.

Labor costs took a toll

After risking their lives to keep working during the pandemic, many workers sought better pay and benefits. In June 2021, unionized workers at a Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, threatened to strike after contract negotiations broke down. The coronavirus killed four workers at the plant and infected nearly 1,300.

Smithfield Foods, which is owned by the Chinese pork company WH Group, eventually agreed to higher wages and \$520 bonuses for its Sioux Falls workers. U.S. bacon prices rose 24% over the course of 2021.

Moscow's war against Ukraine sent prices up

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 caused global wheat and corn prices to surge. That made it costlier to raise hogs. According to Iowa State University, feed costs rose 24% between 2021 and 2022. Early in 2022, Brazil-based JBS, another major U.S. pork processor, said it was raising prices to cover the higher cost of animal feed.

Did corporate profits play a role?

Harris has proposed a ban on "price gouging" by food companies, arguing that some of the companies kept raising prices long after pandemic-related supply problems dissipated so they could boost their profits.

There's no strict definition of "price gouging," though it generally refers to sharp price increases that companies impose after a supply disruption. Three big bacon producers — Tyson, Hormel and JBS — reported record sales in 2022, when bacon prices hit a peak of \$7.61 a pound.

Eventually, those higher prices reduced demand. In the year ending Oct. 1, 2022, U.S. consumers bought 8% fewer packages of bacon than in the prior year, according to Nielsen. By the end of the 2022, prices were falling.

Over the course of 2022, U.S. bacon prices fell 3.7% to \$6.95 a pound.

Animal welfare law had an effect

In 2018, California voters approved a law requiring more space for breeding pigs, egg-laying hens and veal calves. Producers in other states must meet those standards if they want to sell pork, eggs or veal in California. The pork industry sued, supported by the Biden administration. But the U.S. Supreme Court declined to overturn the law, which took effect on July 1, 2023. Because not all pork producers are meeting the standards, less bacon is available to Californians, thereby driving up prices.

Daniel Sumner, a professor of research and agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis, estimates that prices for pork products will be 7% to 10% higher in California over the long term because of the law.

The election raises uncertainty

Joe Glauber, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and a former economist for the USDA, said food price inflation was a global issue over the past few years, not one caused by the Biden administration. Past run-ups in food prices, he noted, have occurred regardless of which party was in office.

One wild card this time is Trump's promise to impose a 20% tariff on everything the U.S. imports. Chad Hart, an agricultural economist at Iowa State University, noted that the U.S. generally exports between 20% and 25% of its pork, and other countries would likely retaliate by imposing tariffs on U.S. pork. If that happened, more pork might remain in the U.S., which would cause bacon prices to fall. Yet the price of dozens of other imported products would rise.

"If you want a BLT, the bacon may be a little cheaper, but the lettuce and tomato will cost a fair amount more," Hart said.

Harris has denounced Trump's proposed sweeping tariffs, though she has supported targeted tariffs on Chinese imports.

Harris has vowed to crack down on unfair mergers that give big food companies too much pricing power. She's also said she would investigate and prosecute price-fixing, an ongoing issue in the heavily consolidated meat industry. McDonald's recently sued four big beef companies, including Tyson and JBS, accusing them of price-fixing.

Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Japanese organization of atomic bombing survivors Nihon Hidankyo

By MIKE CORDER and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded Friday to Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese organization of survivors of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for its activism against nuclear weapons.

Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said the award was made as the "taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is under pressure."

In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a shift in his country's nuclear doctrine, in a move aimed at discouraging the West from allowing Ukraine to strike Russia with longer-range weapons. It appeared to significantly lower the threshold for the possible use of Russia's nuclear arsenal.

Watne Frydnes said the Nobel committee "wishes to honor all survivors who, despite physical suffering and painful memories, have chosen to use their costly experience to cultivate hope and engagement for peace."

Hidankyo's Hiroshima branch chairperson, Tomoyuki Mimaki, who was standing by at the city hall for the announcement, cheered and teared up when he received the news.

"Is it really true? Unbelievable!" Mimaki screamed.

Efforts to eradicate nuclear weapons have been honored in the past by the Nobel committee. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons won the peace prize in 2017, and in 1995 Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs won for "their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international politics and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms."

This year's prize was awarded against a backdrop of devastating conflicts raging in the world, notably in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan.

"It is very clear that threats of using nuclear weapons are putting pressure on the important international norm, the taboo of using nuclear weapons," Watne Frydnes said in response to a question on whether the rhetoric from Russia surrounding nuclear weapons in its invasion of Ukraine had influenced this year's decision.

"And therefore it is alarming to see how threats of use is also damaging this norm. To uphold an international strong taboo against the use is crucial for all of humanity," he added.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X that "the spectre of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still looms over humanity. This makes the advocacy of Nihon Hidankyo invaluable. This Nobel Peace Prize sends a powerful message. We have the duty to remember. And an even greater duty to protect the next generations from the horrors of nuclear war."

Alfred Nobel stated in his will that the peace prize should be awarded for "the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

Last year's prize went to jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi for her advocacy of women's rights and democracy, and against the death penalty. The Nobel committee said it also was a recognition of "the hundreds of thousands of people" who demonstrated against "Iran's theocratic regime's policies of discrimination and oppression targeting women."

In a year of conflict, there had been some speculation before the announcement that the Norwegian Nobel Committee that decides on the winner would opt not to award a prize at all this year. The prize has been withheld a total of 19 times since 1901, including during both world wars. The last time it was not awarded was in 1972.

In the Middle East, persistently spiraling levels of violence over the past year have killed tens of thousands

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of people, including thousands of children and women. The war, sparked by a bloody raid into Israel by Hamas-led militants on Oct. 7, 2023 that left about 1,200 people dead, mostly civilians, has spilled out into the wider region.

In the past week, Israel sent ground troops into Lebanon to pursue Hezbollah militants firing rockets into Israel, while Iran – which backs both Hamas and Hezbollah – fired a barrage of ballistic missiles into Israel. Israel has yet to respond, but its defense minister vowed this week that its retaliation would be both devastating and surprising.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 42,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says more than half are women and children. In Lebanon, more than 1,400 people have been killed, with thousands more injured and around 1 million displaced since mid-September, when the Israeli military dramatically expanded its offensive against Hezbollah.

The war in Ukraine, sparked by Russia's invasion, is heading toward its third winter with a massive loss of human life on both sides.

The U.N. has confirmed more than 11,000 Ukrainian civilian dead, but that doesn't take into account as many as 25,000 Ukrainians believed to have died during the Russian capture of the city of Mariupol or unreported deaths in the occupied territories.

The Nobel prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million). Unlike the other Nobel prizes that are selected and announced in Stockholm, founder Alfred Nobel decreed the peace prize be decided and awarded in Oslo by the five-member Norwegian Nobel Committee.

The Nobel season ends Monday with the announcement of the winner of the economics prize, formally known as the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

Residents clean up and figure out what's next after Hurricane Milton

By JULIO CORTEZ, KATE PAYNE and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Florida residents repaired damage from Hurricane Milton and tried to figure out what to do next Friday after the storm smashed through coastal communities and tore homes to pieces, flooded streets and spawned a barrage of deadly tornadoes.

At least eight people were dead, but many expressed relief that Milton wasn't worse. The hurricane spared densely populated Tampa a direct hit, and the lethal storm surge that scientists feared never materialized.

Arriving just two weeks after the devastating Hurricane Helene, the system flooded barrier islands, tore the roof off the Tampa Bay Rays' baseball stadium and toppled a construction crane.

As the cleanup continued, over 2.5 million customers in Florida remained without power Friday morning, according to poweroutage.us. But the state's vital tourism industry started to return to normal, with several theme parks preparing to reopen.

A flood of vehicles headed south Thursday evening on Interstate 75, the main highway that runs through the middle of the state, as relief workers and evacuated residents returned to assess the aftermath. At times, some cars even drove on the left shoulder of the road. Bucket trucks and fuel tankers streamed by, along with portable bathroom trailers and a convoy of emergency vehicles.

As residents raced back to find out whether their homes were destroyed or spared, finding gas was still a challenge. Fuel stations were still closed as far away as Ocala, more than a two and a half hour drive north of where the storm made landfall as a Category 3 near Siesta Key in Sarasota County on Wednesday night.

Natasha Ducre and her husband, Terry, were just feeling lucky to be alive. Milton peeled the tin roof off of their cinderblock home in their neighborhood a few blocks north of the Manatee River, about a 45-minute drive south of Tampa. She pushed to leave as the storm barreled toward them Wednesday night after he resisted evacuating their three-bedroom house where he grew up and where the couple lived with their three kids and two grandchildren. She believes the decision saved their lives.

They returned to find the roof of their home scattered in sheets across the street, the wooden beams of what was their ceiling exposed to the sky. Inside, fiberglass insulation hung down in shreds, their belong-

ings soaked by the rain and littered with chunks of shattered drywall.

"It ain't much, but it was ours. What little bit we did have is gone," she said. "It's gone."

With shelters no longer available and the cost of a hotel room out of reach, they plan to cram into Terry Ducre's mother's house for now. After that, they're not sure.

"I don't have no answers," Natasha Ducre said. "What is my next move? What am I going to do?"

Meanwhile, Florida theme parks including Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando and SeaWorld planned to reopen Friday after an assessment of the effects of the storm.

Orlando International Airport, the state's busiest, said departures for domestic flights and international flights would resume Friday, after resuming domestic arrivals Thursday evening. The airport had minor damage, including a few leaks and downed trees.

Milton prevented Simon Forster, his wife and their two children from returning to Scotland as planned Wednesday evening, so they enjoyed an extra two days of their two-week vacation on a bustling International Drive in Orlando's tourism district on Thursday. Hurricanes seem to follow them since 2022's Hurricane Ian kept them from returning to Scotland after another Orlando vacation.

"Two extra days here, there are worse places we could be," he said.

Israel's deadliest strike in central Beirut leaves Lebanese stunned as they dig through the rubble

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Rescue workers searched through the rubble of a collapsed building in central Beirut on Friday morning, hours after two Israeli strikes hit the Lebanese capital, killing at least 22 people and wounding dozens.

The air raid was the deadliest attack on central Beirut in over a year of war, hitting two residential buildings in neighborhoods that have swelled with displaced people fleeing Israeli bombardment elsewhere in the country.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar television and Israeli media said the strikes aimed to kill Wafiq Safa, a top security official with the group. Al-Manar said Safa was not in either building at the time. The Israeli military had no comment on the reports.

Thursday night's strikes came as Israel escalates its campaign against Hezbollah with waves of heavy airstrikes across Lebanon and a ground invasion at the border, after a year of exchanges of fire between the two rivals. The same day as the Beirut explosions, Israeli forces fired on United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and wounded two peacekeepers from Indonesia, drawing widespread condemnation.

Hezbollah has expanded its rocket fire to more populated areas deeper inside Israel. While disrupting life for Israelis, most of Hezbollah's barrages have not caused casualties. But early Friday, an anti-tank missile fired from Lebanon killed a man from Thailand working on a farm in northern Israel.

In Beirut's Burj Abi Haidar neighborhood, civil defense members and municipal workers dug through the pile of concrete and twisted metal from a three-story building knocked down by Thursday night's strike.

In an adjacent building that was badly damaged, Ahmad al-Khatib stood in the apartment of his in-laws where he, his wife, Marwa Hamdan, and their 2 1/2-year-old daughter, Ayla, suffered injuries. He had just picked up his wife from work and she was performing the evening Muslim prayers at home when the blast hit.

"The world suddenly turned upside down and darkness prevailed," said the 42-year-old, tears running down his cheeks. He pulled his daughter out from under the debris of a wall that collapsed in a bedroom. Al-Khatib, who works for the postal service, said he found the force of the explosion had thrown his wife against a wall and a piece of metal had hit her in the head.

"I looked in her face and shouted, 'Say something!'" he said, but she only responded with sounds of pain. His wife remains in the ICU at a Beirut hospital. His daughter suffered only minor injuries.

Mohammed Tarhani said he had moved in with his brother nearby in the neighborhood after fleeing around southern Lebanon to escape airstrikes the past weeks. His children were out on the veranda, and

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he was in the living room when the strike hit.

"We rushed out to look for the children," he said. "Where is one supposed to go now?"

Civil defense official Walid Hashash said they don't expect more bodies under the rubble as no people are missing. He added that once operations are over they will issue a final death toll.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in support of Hamas and the Palestinians, drawing Israeli airstrikes in retaliation. Israel says its stepped-up campaign since late September aims to push Hezbollah away from the border to allow tens of thousands of its citizens evacuated from the area to return home.

More than 2,100 Lebanese — including Hezbollah fighters, civilians and medical personnel — have been killed the past year by Israeli strikes, more than two thirds of them in the past few weeks. Hezbollah attacks have killed 29 civilians as well as 39 Israeli soldiers in northern Israel since October 2023 and in southern Lebanon since Israel launched its ground invasion on Sept. 30. So far, Israeli troops have been operating in a narrow strip of a few kilometers (miles) along the border.

The war threatens to spiral even further, with Israel aiming to strike a crippling blow to its longtime adversary Hezbollah. Netanyahu this week warned Lebanese they would suffer the same destruction that Israel's campaign against Hamas has inflicted in Gaza unless they take action against Hezbollah.

Israel has also vowed to strike back against the Lebanese group's supporter, Iran, after it launched some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel last week. Iran's barrage was in retaliation for previous Israeli strikes that killed Hamas' leader in Tehran and senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard figures in Lebanon.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday reiterated U.S. support for Israel's escalated campaign against Hezbollah. He said Israel had a "clear and very legitimate" interest to try to ensure the return of tens of thousands of its citizens who were evacuated from their homes near the border because of Hezbollah fire since last October.

He told a news conference after attending an annual meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Laos that the U.S. is "extremely focused" on reaching a diplomatic solution to the war.

Meanwhile the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, was rearranging some of its personnel after its positions were repeatedly hit by Israeli forces Thursday.

UNIFIL said an Israeli tank directly fired on an observation tower at the force's headquarters in the town of Naqoura, Lebanon, and that soldiers attacked a bunker near where peacekeepers were sheltering, damaging vehicles and a communication system. It said an Israeli drone was seen flying to the bunker's entrance.

The Israeli military acknowledged opening fire at a U.N. base in southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it had ordered the peacekeepers to "remain in protected spaces."

Afterward, the U.N. peacekeeping chief said 300 peacekeepers in frontline positions on southern Lebanon's border have been temporarily moved to larger bases. Plans to move another 200 will depend on security conditions as the conflict escalates. Jean-Pierre Lacroix told an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that peacekeepers with UNIFIL are staying in their positions, but because of air and ground attacks they cannot conduct patrols.

UNIFIL, which has more than 10,000 peacekeepers from dozens of countries, was created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon after Israel's 1978 invasion. The United Nations expanded its mission following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, allowing peacekeepers to patrol a buffer zone set up along the border.

Israel accuses Hezbollah of establishing militant infrastructure along the border in violation of the U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 war.

1 person dies and 12 are rescued after elevator malfunctions at Colorado gold mine tourist site

By JESSE BEDAYN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — One person was killed and 12 people were rescued after being trapped for about six hours at the bottom of a former Colorado gold mine when an elevator malfunctioned at the tourist site, authorities said.

The elevator was descending into the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine near the town of Cripple Creek when it had a mechanical problem around 500 feet (152 meters) beneath the surface, creating a “severe danger for the participants,” Teller County Sheriff Jason Mikesell said.

The cause of the visitor’s death was not immediately provided.

The 12 adults who were trapped about 1,000 feet (305 meters) below ground had access to water and used radios to communicate with authorities, who told them there was an elevator issue, Mikesell said.

Mikesell said during a nighttime briefing that authorities do not know yet what caused the malfunction and an investigation is underway. Engineers worked to make sure the elevator was working safely again before bringing the stranded visitors back up on it. They had been prepared to bring them up by rope if necessary, had they not been able to get the elevator fixed.

Mikesell declined to reveal the identification of the victim.

The incident, which was reported to authorities at about noon, happened during the final week of the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine season before it shuts down for the winter, Mikesell said.

Earlier in the afternoon, while the 12 were stuck at the bottom, 11 other people who were riding the elevator were rescued. Four had minor injuries but the sheriff did not elaborate on how they were injured.

The elevator ride typically takes about two minutes, travelling about 500 feet (152 meters) per minute, according to the mine’s website.

Mikesell said the last time there was an incident was in the 1980s when a couple of people were trapped on the elevator. Nobody died in that incident.

Mines that operate as tourist attractions in Colorado must designate someone to inspect the mines and the transportation systems daily, according to the state Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety. Mikesell said he didn’t know the date of the last inspection. Records of the inspections weren’t immediately available online.

Gov. Jared Polis sent state resources including a mine rescue team.

Cripple Creek is a town of about 1,100 in the Rocky Mountains southwest of Colorado Springs.

The mine opened in the 1800s and closed in 1961, but still operates tours. Its website describes a one-hour tour in which visitors descend 1,000 feet (305 meters). It says they can see veins of gold in the rock and ride an underground tram.

A woman named Mollie Kathleen Gortner discovered the site of the mine in 1891 when she saw quartz laced with gold, according to the company’s website.

AI is having its Nobel moment.

Do scientists need the tech industry to sustain it?

By MATT O’BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Hours after the artificial intelligence pioneer Geoffrey Hinton won a Nobel Prize in physics, he drove a rented car to Google’s California headquarters to celebrate.

Hinton doesn’t work at Google anymore. Nor did the longtime professor at the University of Toronto do his pioneering research at the tech giant.

But his impromptu party reflected AI’s moment as a commercial blockbuster that has also reached the pinnacles of scientific recognition.

That was Tuesday. Then, early Wednesday, two employees of Google’s AI division won a Nobel Prize in chemistry for using AI to predict and design novel proteins.

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"This is really a testament to the power of computer science and artificial intelligence," said Jeanette Wing, a professor of computer science at Columbia University.

Asked about the historic back-to-back science awards for AI work in an email Wednesday, Hinton said only: "Neural networks are the future."

It didn't always seem that way for researchers who decades ago experimented with interconnected computer nodes inspired by neurons in the human brain. Hinton shares this year's physics Nobel with another scientist, John Hopfield, for helping develop those building blocks of machine learning.

Neural network advances came from "basic, curiosity-driven research," Hinton said at a press conference after his win. "Not out of throwing money at applied problems, but actually letting scientists follow their curiosity to try and understand things."

Such work started well before Google existed. But a bountiful tech industry has now made it easier for AI scientists to pursue their ideas even as it has challenged them with new ethical questions about the societal impacts of their work.

One reason why the current wave of AI research is so closely tied to the tech industry is that only a handful of corporations have the resources to build the most powerful AI systems.

"These discoveries and this capability could not happen without humongous computational power and humongous amounts of digital data," Wing said. "There are very few companies — tech companies — that have that kind of computational power. Google is one. Microsoft is another."

The chemistry Nobel Prize awarded Wednesday went to Demis Hassabis and John Jumper of Google's London-based DeepMind laboratory along with researcher David Baker at the University of Washington for work that could help discover new medicines.

Hassabis, the CEO and co-founder of DeepMind, which Google acquired in 2014, told the AP in an interview Wednesday his dream was to model his research laboratory on the "incredible storied history" of Bell Labs. Started in 1925, the New Jersey-based industrial lab was the workplace of multiple Nobel-winning scientists over several decades who helped develop modern computing and telecommunications.

"I wanted to recreate a modern day industrial research lab that really did cutting-edge research," Hassabis said. "But of course, that needs a lot of patience and a lot of support. We've had that from Google and it's been amazing."

Hinton joined Google late in his career and quit last year so he could talk more freely about his concerns about AI's dangers, particularly what happens if humans lose control of machines that become smarter than us. But he stops short of criticizing his former employer.

Hinton, 76, said he was staying in a cheap hotel in Palo Alto, California when the Nobel committee woke him up with a phone call early Tuesday morning, leading him to cancel a medical appointment scheduled for later that day.

By the time the sleep-deprived scientist reached the Google campus in nearby Mountain View, he "seemed pretty lively and not very tired at all" as colleagues popped bottles of champagne, said computer scientist Richard Zemel, a former doctoral student of Hinton's who joined him at the Google party Tuesday.

"Obviously there are these big companies now that are trying to cash in on all the commercial success and that is exciting," said Zemel, now a Columbia professor.

But Zemel said what's more important to Hinton and his closest colleagues has been what the Nobel recognition means to the fundamental research they spent decades trying to advance.

Guests included Google executives and another former Hinton student, Ilya Sutskever, a co-founder and former chief scientist and board member at ChatGPT maker OpenAI. Sutskever helped lead a group of board members who briefly ousted OpenAI CEO Sam Altman last year in turmoil that has symbolized the industry's conflicts.

An hour before the party, Hinton used his Nobel bully pulpit to throw shade at OpenAI during opening remarks at a virtual press conference organized by the University of Toronto in which he thanked former mentors and students.

"I'm particularly proud of the fact that one of my students fired Sam Altman," Hinton said.

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Asked to elaborate, Hinton said OpenAI started with a primary objective to develop better-than-human artificial general intelligence "and ensure that it was safe."

"And over time, it turned out that Sam Altman was much less concerned with safety than with profits. And I think that's unfortunate," Hinton said.

In response, OpenAI said in a statement that it is "proud of delivering the most capable and safest AI systems" and that they "safely serve hundreds of millions of people each week."

Conflicts are likely to persist in a field where building even a relatively modest AI system requires resources "well beyond those of your typical research university," said Michael Kearns, a professor of computer science at the University of Pennsylvania.

But Kearns, who sits on the committee that picks the winners of computer science's top prize — the Turing Award — said this week marks a "great victory for interdisciplinary research" that was decades in the making.

Hinton is only the second person to win both a Nobel and Turing. The first, Turing-winning political scientist Herbert Simon, started working on what he called "computer simulation of human cognition" in the 1950s and won the Nobel economics prize in 1978 for his study of organizational decision-making.

Wing, who met Simon in her early career, said scientists are still just at the tip of finding ways to apply computing's most powerful capabilities to other fields.

"We're just at the beginning in terms of scientific discovery using AI," she said.

One Tech Tip: Here's what you need to do before and after your phone is stolen or lost

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Phones hold so much of our digital lives — emails, social media and bank accounts, photos, chat messages and more — that if they ever get stolen or go missing, it can cause major disruption beyond just the loss of a device.

In some places, phone thefts have surged so much it's now an everyday problem, with thieves on electric bikes snatching them out of pedestrians' hands, swiping them off restaurant tables or pickpocketing them on the subway.

In Britain, where 200 phones are stolen every day in "snatch thefts," the government has pledged to crack down on the crime and is meeting with tech companies and device makers to come up with solutions.

Here are steps you can take before and after your phone goes missing:

Basic protections

There are things you can do to make it less painful if your phone is stolen. Because some of these features are more technical in nature, people often overlook them.

Lock down as much as you can. At a minimum, require a password or biometric scan to unlock the device. You can also add similar requirements to important individual apps — like your banking account, WhatsApp or Signal — to protect your finance or chats from thieves.

Also, activate the find my device feature, which is available for both iOS and Android. Samsung also offers its own service called SmartThings Find.

You'll probably have lots of precious photos saved on your camera roll. It's a good idea to back them up, along with contacts, calendar items and other files. Google and Apple offer cloud-based backup services, although the free versions have limited storage space. You can also back up your files to an external hard drive, memory card or a laptop.

Some police forces and phone companies advise turning off message previews, which prevents thieves trying to break into your accounts from seeing reset or login codes when the phone is locked. To do this on an iPhone, for example, go to the Notifications section of your settings menu and tap Show Previews. You can also scroll down the app list to turn previews off for individual apps but leave them on for less risky ones like news or weather.

Turn on newer features

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Recent iOS and Android updates include a number of new functions designed to make thefts less attractive. iPhone users can turn on Stolen Device Protection, which makes it a lot harder for phone thieves to access key functions and settings. Many thieves will want to wipe the data off and reset so they can resell it, but with this feature on, they'll need a face or fingerprint scan to do so. Apple also recently updated its "activation lock" feature to make it harder for thieves to sell parts from stolen phones.

Android phones, meanwhile, can now use artificial intelligence to detect motion indicating someone snatched it out of your hand and is racing away on foot or a bike, and then lock the screen immediately. And there's a feature called Private Spaces that lets you hide sensitive files on your phone.

Jot down your device number

Take note of your phone's serial number, also known as an IMEI number. It can link you to the phone if it does eventually get recovered. Call it up by typing (asterisk)#06# on your phone's keypad. If you've already lost your phone you can also find it in other places like the box it came in.

If it's stolen

If you're unlucky enough to have your phone stolen, notify police. Call your insurance company if you have a policy that covers the device. Inform your phone company so they can freeze your number and issue a replacement SIM card or eSIM. Notify your bank so they can watch out for suspicious transactions.

Tracking your device

Try to locate your phone with the find my device feature. For iPhones, go to [iCloud.com/find](https://icloud.com/find) from a web browser while Android users should head to www.google.com/android/find. Samsung also has its own service for Galaxy phones.

These services will show your phone's current or last known location on a map, which is also handy if you've just lost track of it somewhere in the house. Apple says even if a phone can't connect to the internet or has been turned off, it can use Bluetooth to ping any nearby Apple devices using the same network behind its AirTags tracking devices. Google says newer Pixel phones can be located "for several hours" after they've been turned off using similar technology.

You can get the phone to play a sound, even if it's on silent. You can also put the phone in lost mode, which locks it and displays a message and contact details on the screen for anyone who finds it. Lost mode on iOS also suspends any Apple Pay cards and passes.

If the device shows up in an unfamiliar location on the map, and you suspect it has been stolen, experts say it's better to notify police rather than trying to get it back yourself.

Cybersecurity company Norton says, "Confronting a thief yourself is not recommended."

Final steps

If you can't find your phone, there are some final steps to take.

Log yourself out of all your accounts that might be accessible on the phone, and then remove it from your list of trusted devices that you use to get multifactor authentication codes — but make sure you can get those codes somewhere else, such as email.

Then, as a last resort, you can erase the phone remotely so that there's no chance of any data falling into the wrong hands. However, take note: Apple says that if the iPhone is offline, the remote erase will only happen the next time it come back online. But if you find the phone before it gets erased, you can cancel the request.

Google warns that SD memory cards plugged into Android phones might not be remotely erased. And after the phone has been wiped, it won't show up with find my device.

South Koreans are joyful after Han Kang wins Nobel Prize for literature

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Koreans reacted with joy and astonishment on Thursday after learning that homegrown writer Han Kang won the Nobel Prize in literature, an unexpected moment that stoked national pride about the country's growing cultural influence.

Han, known for her experimental and often disturbing stories that explore human traumas and violence and incorporate the brutal moments of South Korea's modern history, is the country's first writer to win the preeminent award in world literature.

Han's triumph adds to the growing global influence of South Korean culture, which in recent years included the successes of director Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning "Parasite," the brutal Netflix survival drama "Squid Game" and K-pop groups like BTS and BLACKPINK.

"I'm so surprised and honored," Han, 53, said in a telephone interview posted on the X account of the Nobel Prize.

As the news spread in South Korea, some online bookstores temporarily froze following a sudden jump in traffic. South Korean social media were flooded with jubilant messages expressing admiration and pride. Some internet users found it meaningful that Han was the first Asian woman to win the award and portrayed it as a statement toward the country's traditionally male-dominated literature scene.

"It's always the women who do the big things," one Facebook user wrote.

In South Korea's parliament, multiple government hearings were paused as lawmakers cheered and applauded Han's award.

While visiting Laos for a meeting of Asian leaders, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol issued a statement, congratulating Han on her award, calling it a "great achievement in the history of Korean literature" and a "special moment for the nation."

"You converted the painful wounds of our modern history into great literature," Yoon wrote. "I send my respects to you for elevating the value of Korean literature."

Han, the daughter of renowned South Korean novelist Han Seung-won, made her publishing debut as a poet in 1993. She won the International Booker Prize in 2016 for the novel "The Vegetarian," a story in which a woman's decision to stop eating meat brings devastating consequences and raises concern among family members that she's mentally ill. The book sold more than 100,000 in the U.S.

Another one of Han's well-known novels is "Human Acts," which is set in 1980 in her birth city of Gwangju and follows a boy searching for the body of a friend who was killed in a violent suppression of a student protest. South Korea's former military government that year sent troops to Gwangju for a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters that left around 200 people dead and hundreds of others injured.

"The decision came all too sudden. I could also describe it as a feeling of bewilderment," Han Seung-won, Han's father, told reporters Friday about the moment he heard the news that his daughter had won the Nobel Prize.

He praised his daughter's writing, which he described as poetic and exhibiting unique "fantastical realism," and also commended British translator Deborah Smith, who translated "The Vegetarian" and "The White Book."

"The translator has somehow managed to convey Han Kang's sentences, bringing to life the delicate and beautiful prose and melancholic sensibility," he said.

Han Kang's award generated excitement among South Korean writers and critics, who in comments to local media expressed hope that it would bring more global attention to South Korean literature. But it remains to be seen whether Han's stories would become widely popular among casual readers around the world, said Brother Anthony of Taize, a British-born scholar and prolific translator of Korean literature.

"It's not always an easy read," he said, describing how her novels are often complicated stories about communication failures, misunderstandings, "unhappy people and troubled relationships and pain."

If Han's works have anything in common with South Korea's other cultural products that garnered international acclaim in recent years, it is that they often reflect the dark side of the country's society. Both

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Parasite and Squid Game provided biting commentaries on the country's deepening inequality and other problems that have many young and poor people describing their lives as a hellish nightmare.

South Korea has one of the largest gaps between rich and poor among developed economies and is grappling with decaying job markets, soaring household debt and a record-low birth rate as struggling couples put off having babies. The country also struggles to deal with the pains of its brutal transition from dictatorship to democracy.

"Korean society is rather dark and it's probably the aspect that resonates," Brother Anthony said.

Jung Yoon-young, a 49-year-old resident in Seoul, said Han's triumph was a refreshing moment for the country during depressing times.

"It's a miraculous event and really a breath of fresh air," she said. "I'm grateful and proud."

Gunmen kill 20 miners in an attack in southwest Pakistan ahead of an Asian security summit

By ABDUL SATTAR Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — Gunmen killed 20 miners and wounded seven others in Pakistan's southwest, a police official said Friday, drawing condemnation from authorities as a search was launched for the assailants.

The latest attack in restive Balochistan province came days ahead of a major security summit being hosted in the capital.

The gunmen stormed the accommodation at a coal mine in Duki district late Thursday night, rounded up the men and opened fire, police official Hamayun Khan Nasir said. He said the attackers also fired rockets and lobbed grenades at the mine and damaged the machinery before fleeing.

Most of the casualties were from Pashtun-speaking areas of Balochistan. Three of the dead and four of the wounded were Afghan. Angered over the violence, local shop owners pulled their shutters down to observe a daylong strike against the killings.

No group claimed immediate responsibility for the attack, but suspicion is likely to fall on the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army, which targets civilians and security forces.

The group launched multiple attacks in August that killed more than 50. They included 23 people, mostly from eastern Punjab province, who were fatally shot after being taken from buses, vehicles and trucks in Musakhail district in Balochistan. Authorities responded by killing 21 insurgents in the province.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his deep sorrow over the coal mine killings and vowed to eliminate terrorism.

Sarfraz Bugti, the chief minister in Balochistan, said "terrorists have once again targeted poor laborers." He said the attackers were cruel and had an agenda to destabilize Pakistan. "The killing of these innocent laborers will be avenged," he said in a statement.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said those who killed the laborers would not be able to escape from the grip of the law.

The province is home to several separatist groups who want independence. They accuse the federal government in Islamabad of unfairly exploiting oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan at the expense of locals.

On Monday, the BLA said it carried out an attack on Chinese nationals outside Pakistan's biggest airport. The bodies of the two slain Chinese engineers were sent to Beijing by a plane Thursday night, according to security officials.

There are thousands of Chinese working in the country, most of them involved in Beijing's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative.

Two suspects linked to a 2021 bombing that killed nine Chinese nationals and four Pakistanis working on a dam in the northwest were killed Friday in eastern Pakistan, counterterrorism police said.

Police said the suspects died when armed men attacked a van transporting the suspects to a prison in Sahiwal, a district in Punjab province. No officer was harmed in the shootout, the statement from coun-

terterrorism police said.

Sunday's airport explosion, which the BLA said was the work of a suicide bomber, has raised questions about the ability of Pakistani forces to protect high-profile events or foreigners in the country.

Islamabad is hosting a summit next week of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a grouping founded by China and Russia to counter Western alliances.

Authorities have increased security in the capital by deploying troops.

The Interior Ministry this week alerted provinces to take additional measures as separatists and the Pakistani Taliban could attack public places and government installations.

The killings of the miners came hours after Saudi and Pakistani businessmen signed 27 investment agreements valued at \$2 billion across various sectors, including mining in Balochistan.

Saudi Arabia also wants to invest in Reko Diq, a district in Balochistan famed for its mineral wealth, including gold and copper.

Balochistan's Gwadar Port is an anchor in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of Beijing's Belt and Road initiative. The BLA has asked the Chinese workers to leave the province to avoid attacks.

At least 22 killed in airstrikes in central Beirut, with Israel also firing on UN peacekeepers

By BILAL HUSSEIN, WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israeli airstrikes on central Beirut on Thursday left two neighborhoods smoldering, killed 22 people and wounded dozens, Lebanon's health ministry said, as well as further escalating Israel's bloody conflict with Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

The air raid on central Beirut — the deadliest in over a year of war — apparently targeted two residential buildings in separate neighborhoods simultaneously, according to an AP photographer at the scene. It brought down one apartment building and wiped out the lower floors of the other.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the reported strikes. Israeli airstrikes have been far more common in Beirut's tightly packed southern suburbs, where Hezbollah bases many of its operations.

After the strikes, Hezbollah's Al Manar TV reported that an attempt to kill Wafiq Safa, a top security official with the group, had failed. It said that Safa had not been inside of either of the targeted buildings.

Thursday's strikes followed a year of tit-for-tat exchanges between Hezbollah and Israel that boiled over into all-out war in recent weeks, with Israel carrying out waves of heavy airstrikes across Lebanon and launching a ground invasion. Hezbollah has expanded its rocket fire to more populated areas deeper inside Israel, causing few casualties but disrupting daily life.

The attack came the same day Israeli forces fired on United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and wounded two of them, drawing widespread condemnation and prompting Italy's Defense Ministry to summon Israel's ambassador in protest.

Israeli strikes hit central Beirut

Witnesses reported a large number of ambulances and people gathering in the rubble of two Beirut sites that were hit, in the Ras al-Nabaa neighborhood and Burj Abi Haidar area.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said 22 people were killed and 117 others wounded, without elaborating on their identities. Recent Israeli airstrikes in neighborhoods adjoining Beirut, in particular the densely populated southern suburbs, have killed Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and other senior commanders.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in support of Hamas and the Palestinians, drawing Israeli airstrikes in retaliation.

Hezbollah kept up rocket fire into Israel on Thursday, setting off air raid sirens in parts of northern Israel. Several drones heading toward Israel were intercepted, the military said.

Iran — which supports Hamas, Hezbollah and other armed groups across the region — launched some 180 ballistic missiles at Israel last week in retaliation for the killing of top Hamas and Hezbollah militants.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Wednesday that its response to the Iranian missile attack

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will be "lethal" and "surprising," without providing further details, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with President Joe Biden.

Asked about the latest airstrikes in Lebanon, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters in Las Vegas, "We have got to reach a cease-fire, both as it relates to what's happening in Lebanon, and of course Gaza. We are working around the clock in that regard, but we need these wars to end and we've got to definitely de-escalate what is happening in the region."

Before the latest strikes, Lebanon's crisis response unit said Israeli attacks over the past day had killed 28 people, bringing the total to 2,169 killed in Lebanon since the war erupted last October.

Hezbollah attacks have killed 28 civilians as well as 39 Israeli soldiers, both in northern Israel since October 2023 and southern Lebanon since Israel launched its ground invasion on Sept. 30. Israel says the invasion, so far focused on a narrow strip along the border, aims to push militants back so that tens of thousands of Israelis can return to their homes in the north.

UN peacekeepers caught in intensified fighting in Lebanon

The U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, said in a statement that its headquarters and positions "have been repeatedly hit" by Israeli forces.

It said an Israeli tank "directly" fired on an observation tower at the force's headquarters in the town of Naqoura, Lebanon, and that soldiers had attacked a bunker near where peacekeepers were sheltering, damaging vehicles and a communication system. It said an Israeli drone was seen flying to the bunker's entrance.

The two UNIFIL troops wounded in the attacks and hospitalized are Indonesian, Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said.

The Israeli military acknowledged opening fire at a U.N. base in southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it had ordered the peacekeepers to "remain in protected spaces."

Later Thursday, the U.N. peacekeeping chief said 300 peacekeepers in frontline positions on southern Lebanon's border have been temporarily moved to larger bases, and plans to move another 200 will depend on security conditions as the conflict escalates. Jean-Pierre Lacroix told an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that peacekeepers with UNIFIL are staying in their positions, but because of air and ground attacks they cannot conduct patrols.

UNIFIL, which has more than 10,000 peacekeepers from dozens of countries, was created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon after Israel's 1978 invasion. The United Nations expanded its mission following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, allowing peacekeepers to patrol a buffer zone set up along the border.

Israel accuses Hezbollah of establishing militant infrastructure along the border in violation of the U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 war.

The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, sharply condemned Israeli strikes that hit UNIFIL positions as "an inadmissible act, for which there is no justification."

From Italy, which has about 1,000 soldiers deployed as part of UNIFIL, Defense Minister Guido Crosetto went further, claimed Israel deliberately targeted the UNIFIL base in southern Lebanon in strikes that "could constitute war crimes."

Several other countries, including France, Spain and Jordan, also denounced the Israeli attacks.

Aid group says staff killed in strike on school

Even as attention has shifted to Israel's close combat with Hezbollah in Lebanon and rising tensions with Iran, Israel has continued to strike at what it says are Palestinian militant targets across the Gaza Strip.

Earlier on Thursday, an Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced people in central Gaza killed at least 27 people, Palestinian medical officials said. The Israeli military said it targeted Palestinian militants, but people sheltering there said the strike hit a meeting of aid workers.

The dead included a child and seven women, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where the bodies were brought. An Associated Press reporter saw ambulances streaming into the hospital and counted the bodies, many of which arrived in pieces.

The Israeli military said it targeted a militant center inside the school, without providing evidence. Israel

has repeatedly attacked schools that were turned into shelters in Gaza, accusing militants of taking cover in them.

"There were no militants. There was no Hamas," said Iftikhar Hamouda, who had fled from northern Gaza earlier in the war.

"We headed to tents. They bombed the tents ... In the streets, they bombed us. In the markets, they bombed us. In the schools, they bombed us," she said. "Where should we go?"

Israel's offensive in Gaza started after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, when militants stormed into Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 others.

Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not specify between militants and civilians. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced around 90% of its population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times.

Israel's airstrike warnings terrify and confuse Lebanese civilians

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — As the war between Israel and Hezbollah intensifies, Lebanese civilians are increasingly paying the price — and this dangerous reality often becomes clear in the middle of the night: That's when the Israeli military typically warns people to evacuate buildings or neighborhoods to avoid airstrikes.

Moein Shreif was recently awakened at 3 a.m. by a neighbor calling to alert him that Israel planned to strike a nearby building in his middle-class suburb south of Beirut where Hezbollah has a strong presence.

Shreif, his wife and their three children quickly fled their multi-story apartment building and drove away. Within minutes, explosions rang out, he said later that day upon returning to see the smoldering ruins of his building and the one next door.

"I didn't even have time to dress properly, as you can see," said Shreif, a well-known Lebanese folk and pop singer who was still wearing his pajamas from the night before. "I didn't take anything out of the house."

Israel and Hezbollah have been exchanging strikes nearly every day since the start of the war in Gaza. Hezbollah says it will fire rockets into Israel until there's a cease-fire in Gaza; Israel says its fighting to stop those attacks, which have forced tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes.

But it wasn't until late last month, when Israel dramatically expanded its aerial campaign against Hezbollah, that Lebanese people began receiving regular warnings about upcoming airstrikes. Human rights groups say Israel's warnings — which aren't issued before many airstrikes — are inadequate and sometimes misleading.

On Sept. 23, Israel made 80,000 calls into Lebanon, according to Imad Kreidieh, head of the country's telecommunications company — presumably recorded warnings about upcoming airstrikes.

The calls caused panic. Schools shut down. People rushed home early from work. It ended up being the deadliest day of airstrikes in Lebanon in decades, with over 500 people killed — roughly one quarter of all those killed in Lebanon the past year, according to the country's Health Ministry. Women and children make up one quarter of all the deaths, the ministry says.

Israel has issued warnings on social media nearly every day since then.

On Oct. 1, 27 villages in southern Lebanon were told to evacuate to the north of the Awali River, dozens of kilometers (miles) away. "Save your lives," the instructions said.

That is when Salam, a 42-year-old mother of two, fled the village of Ain Ebel. She and her family are now staying with relatives in Beirut. Salam refused to give her full name for fear of reprisals.

So far, Ain Ebel — a mostly Christian village — hasn't been bombarded, although surrounding villages whose residents are predominantly Shiite Muslims have been. Salam's teenage children are terrified of going home, especially since Israel launched a ground invasion.

Salam is still baffled and angry that her village was evacuated.

So far, evacuation notices in Lebanon have been far more limited than in Gaza, but the messages in both places have a common theme. In Gaza, Israel says it is targeting Hamas militants embedded among

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Gaza's civilians. In Lebanon, it warns of similar behavior by Hezbollah, a Hamas ally.

Most of the Israeli military's warnings first appear on the social media accounts of its Arabic spokesperson. They are then amplified by the Lebanese media.

The warnings instruct people to vacate homes "immediately," and they are usually followed by a series of overnight strikes that often cause damage in areas beyond those that were warned. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah fighters, weapons or other assets belonging to the group. Warnings are rarely issued before daytime strikes.

The Lebanese government says at least 1.2 million people have been displaced by the war, the vast majority since Israel ramped up airstrikes across the country last month. Over 800 of some 1,000 shelters are over capacity.

One quarter of Lebanese territory is now under Israeli military displacement orders, according to the U.N.'s human rights division.

"Calling on residents of nearly 30 villages to leave 'immediately' is not effective and unlawfully suggests that civilians who do not leave an area will be deemed to be combatants," said Ramzi Kaiss, a researcher for Human Rights Watch in Beirut.

Kaiss said Israel — which usually issues warnings 30 to 90 minutes ahead of airstrikes — is obligated to protect civilians who refuse to evacuate, or who are physically unable to.

Amnesty International is also critical of Israel's practice of warning entire towns and villages to evacuate. It "raises questions around whether this is intended to create the conditions for mass displacement," Agnes Callamard, the group's secretary general said in a statement on Thursday.

The Israeli military didn't respond to a request for comment. It has previously said it makes a significant effort to save civilian lives with its warnings.

For almost a year, Israel's strikes were mostly concentrated in communities along the border, far from the capital and its populous suburbs. But now people who once felt relatively safe in the outskirts of Beirut are increasingly at risk, and their neighborhoods are receiving a small but growing share of airstrike warnings.

In Shreif's case, he said his neighbor called about five minutes after the Israeli military issued a warning on the social media platform X.

Shreif considers himself lucky: If it wasn't for that wake-up call, his family might not be alive. The AP could not determine whether any people were killed or injured in the strike that destroyed Shreif's building or the one next door.

To the northeast of Beirut, in the Bekaa Valley, Israel recently issued a warning to people to stay at least 1,000 meters (yards) away from their town or village if they are in or near a home that has weapons belonging to Hezbollah.

Some of the warnings have come in the form of animated videos. One shows an elderly woman in a kitchen, suggesting she is unaware of hidden rooms and compartments in her own house that contain weapons for Hezbollah.

"Didn't you know?" the narrator says in Arabic, as the elderly woman discovers rockets under the couch, behind the shower curtains and elsewhere. The video warns viewers to leave their homes immediately if they — or their neighbors — discover weapons.

But in many cases there are no warnings at all.

Last month, in Ain el-Delb near the southern city of Sidon, an Israeli airstrike hit a residential building, burying about 70 people under the rubble.

Achraf Ramadan, 34, and his father were among the lucky one who rescue workers were able to pull out alive. His mother was taken to the hospital alive, but she later died from her wounds. His younger sister Julia, a public relations professional in her late 20s, was found dead. Achraf and Julia together had been leading initiatives to support displaced Lebanese families in and around Sidon.

"This is a nice and peaceful neighborhood," Ramadan said, sounding dejected. "The international community is asleep and not taking initiative. On the contrary, I think it's giving Israel an excuse for its barbarity on the pretext of self-defense."

Back-to-back hurricanes reshape 2024 campaign's final stretch

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A pair of unwelcome and destructive guests named Helene and Milton have stormed their way into this year's presidential election.

The back-to-back hurricanes have jumbled the schedules of Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump, both of whom devoted part of their Thursdays to tackling questions about the storm recovery effort.

The two hurricanes are forcing basic questions about who as president would best respond to deadly natural disasters, a once-overlooked issue that has become an increasingly routine part of the job. And just weeks before the Nov. 5 election, the storms have disrupted the mechanics of voting in several key counties.

Vice President Harris is trying to use this as an opportunity to project leadership, appearing alongside President Joe Biden at briefings and calling for bipartisan cooperation. Former President Trump is trying to use the moment to attack the administration's competence and question whether it is withholding help from Republican areas, despite no evidence of such behavior.

Adding to the pressure is the need to provide more money for the Small Business Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which would require House Republicans to work with the Democratic administration. Biden said Thursday that lawmakers should address the situation immediately.

"Dealing with back-to-back crises will put FEMA under more scrutiny and, therefore, the Biden administration will be under a microscope in the days leading up to the election," said Timothy Kneeland, a professor at Nazareth University in Rochester, New York, who has studied the issue.

"Vice President Harris must empathize with the victims without altering the campaign schedule and provide consistent messaging on the widespread devastation that makes FEMA's work even more challenging than normal," Kneeland added.

Already, Trump and Harris have separately gone to Georgia to assess hurricane damage and pledge support, and Harris has visited North Carolina, requiring the candidates to cancel campaign events elsewhere and use up time that is a precious resource in the final weeks before any election. Both Georgia and North Carolina are political battlegrounds, raising the stakes.

The hurricane fallout is evident in the candidates' campaign events as well.

On Thursday, the first question Harris got at a Univision town hall in Las Vegas came from a construction worker and undecided voter from Tampa, Florida. Ramiro Gonzalez asked about talk that the administration has not done enough to support people after Helene and whether the people in Milton's path would have access to aid — a sign that Trump's messaging is breaking through with some potential voters.

Harris has called out the level of misinformation being circulated by Republicans, but her fuller answer revealed the dynamics at play just a few weeks before an election.

"I have to stress that this is not a time for people to play politics," she said.

On the same day, Trump opened his speech at the Detroit Economic Club by praising Republican governors in the affected states and blasting the Biden-Harris administration.

"They've let those people suffer unjustly," he said about those affected by Helene in North Carolina.

The storms have also scrambled the voting process in places. North Carolina's State Board of Elections has passed a resolution to help people in the state's affected counties vote. Florida will allow some counties greater flexibility in distributing mail-in ballots and changing polling sites for in-person voting. But a federal judge in Georgia said Thursday the state doesn't need to reopen voter registration despite the disruptions by Helene.

Tension has begun to override the disaster response, with Biden on Wednesday and Thursday saying that Trump has spread falsehoods that are "un-American."

As the Democratic nominee, Harris has suddenly been a major part of the response to hurricanes, a role that traditionally has not involved vice presidents in prior administrations.

On Thursday, she participated virtually at a Situation Room briefing on Milton while she was in Nevada for campaign activities. She has huddled in meetings about response plans and on Wednesday phoned

into CNN live to discuss the administration's efforts.

At a Wednesday appearance with Biden to discuss Milton ahead of it making landfall, Harris subtly tied back the issues into her campaign policies to stop price gouging on food and other products.

"To any company that — or individual that might use this crisis to exploit people who are desperate for help through illegal fraud or price gouging — whether it be at the gas pump, the airport, or the hotel counter — know that we are monitoring these behaviors and the situation on the ground very closely and anyone taking advantage of consumers will be held accountable," she said.

Harris warned that Milton "poses extreme danger." It made landfall in Florida late Wednesday and left more than 3 million without power. But the storm surge never reached the same levels as Helene, which led to roughly 230 fatalities and for a prolonged period left mountainous parts of North Carolina without access to electricity, cell service and roadways.

Trump and his allies have seized on the aftermath of Helene to spread misinformation about the administration's response. Their debunked claims include statements that victims can only receive \$750 in aid as well as false charges that emergency response funds were diverted to immigrants.

The former president said the administration's response to Helene was worse than the George W. Bush administration's widely panned handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which led to nearly 1,400 deaths.

"This hurricane has been a bad one, Kamala Harris has left them stranded," Trump said at a recent rally in Juneau, Wisconsin. "This is the worst response to a storm or a catastrophe or a hurricane that we've ever seen ever. Probably worse than Katrina, and that's hard to beat, right?"

Asked about the Trump campaign's strategic thinking on emphasizing the hurricane response, campaign press secretary Karoline Leavitt said it reflects a pattern of "failed leadership" by the Biden-Harris administration that also includes the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and security at the U.S. southern border.

"Kamala has left Americans behind and proven she is not equipped to solve crises at the highest level," Leavitt said.

John Gasper, a Carnegie Mellon University professor who has researched government responses to natural disasters, said storm victims generally want to ensure foremost that they get the aid they need.

"These disasters essentially end up being good tests of leadership for local, state and federal officials in how they respond," he said.

But Gasper noted that U.S. politics have gotten so polarized and other issues such as the economy are shaping the election, such that the debate currently generating so much heat between Trump and the Biden-Harris administration might not matter that much on Election Day.

"On the margin, it will matter," he said. "Will it define the election? Probably not. There's so many other things out there."

The drownings of 2 Navy SEALs were preventable, military investigation finds

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two U.S. Navy SEALs drowned as they tried to climb aboard a ship carrying illicit Iranian-made weapons to Yemen because of glaring training failures and a lack of understanding about what to do after falling into deep, turbulent waters, according to a military investigation into the January deaths.

The review concluded that the drownings of Chief Special Warfare Operator Christopher J. Chambers and Navy Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Nathan Gage Ingram could have been prevented. But both sank quickly in the high seas off the coast of Somalia, weighed down by heavy equipment they were carrying and not knowing or disregarding concerns that their flotation devices could not compensate for the additional weight. Both were lost at sea.

The highly critical and heavily redacted report — written by a Navy officer from outside Naval Special Warfare Command, which oversees the SEALs — concluded there were "deficiencies, gaps and inconsis-

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tencies" in training, policies, tactics and procedures as well as "conflicting guidance" on when and how to use emergency flotation devices and extra buoyancy material that could have kept them alive.

The Associated Press obtained the report upon request before its public release.

The mission's goal was to intercept weapons headed to the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, who have been launching missile and drone attacks against commercial and U.S. Navy ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza began a year ago. U.S. retaliatory strikes have so far not deterred their assaults.

Mission gone wrong

Chambers and Ingram, members of SEAL Team 3, died during a nighttime mission to board an unflagged ship in the Arabian Sea. Their names were redacted in the report, but officials have confirmed Chambers slipped and fell as he was climbing onto the ship's deck and Ingram jumped in to try to save him.

"Encumbered by the weight of each individual's gear, neither their physical capability nor emergency supplemental flotation devices, if activated, were sufficient to keep them at the surface," Rear Adm. Michael DeVore wrote in the report.

The report said Chambers was "intermittently" at the surface for 26 seconds after his fall and Ingram was at the surface for about 32 seconds.

"The entire tragic event elapsed in just 47 seconds and two NSW warriors were lost to the sea," DeVore wrote, referring to Naval Special Warfare Command.

Flotation equipment that was properly maintained, working well and used correctly would have been able to keep them afloat until they were rescued, the report said. Other team members told investigators that while they knew the importance of their tactical flotation system — which includes two inflatable floats that attach to a belt and foam inserts that can be added — few had ever operated one in training and there is little instruction on how to wear it.

The report said the team was operating in 6- to 8-foot seas, and while the vessel they were boarding was rolling in the waves, the conditions were well within their abilities.

As time went on, however, the rolling increased, and Chambers tried to board by jumping from his combat craft's engine compartment to the top rail of the ship they were boarding, the report said. Some of the commandos used an attachable ladder, but because of the waves, others jumped to the top rail, which they said was within reach but slippery.

Chambers' hands slipped off the rail, and he fell 9 feet into the water. Based on video of the mission, he was able to grab the lower rung of the ladder, but when he turned to try to get back to the combat craft, he was swept under by a wave.

Eleven seconds after he fell, Ingram jumped in. For at least 10 seconds, video shows they were above water intermittently and at times were able to grab a ladder extension that was submerged. But both were knocked about by waves. The last sighting of Chambers was about 26 seconds after he fell.

At one point, Ingram tried to climb back on the ladder but was overcome by a wave. He appeared to try to deploy his flotation device, but within two seconds, an unattached water wing was seen about a foot away from him. He also seemed to try to remove some of his equipment, but he slipped underwater and was not seen again. The sea depth was about 12,000 feet.

'Shock and disbelief'

Both were wearing body armor, and Ingram also was carrying radio equipment that added as much as 40 more pounds. Each of the inflatable floats can lift a minimum of 40 pounds in seawater, the report said.

It said members of the SEAL team expressed "shock and disbelief" that Chambers, their strongest swimmer, could not stay at the surface. The report concluded that the conflicting and meager guidance on the flotation devices may have left it to individuals to configure their buoyancy needs, potentially leading to mistakes.

While SEALs routinely conduct pre-mission "buddy checks" to review each other's gear, it said Ingram's flotation equipment may have been incorrectly attached and a more thorough buddy exam could have discovered that.

SEAL team members also told investigators that adding the foam inserts makes the flotation device more bulky and it becomes more difficult to climb or crawl.

The report said SEAL Team 3 members began prompt and appropriate man-overboard procedures "within seconds," and there were two helicopters and two drones overhead providing surveillance, light and video for the mission.

After 10 days, the search was called off because of the water depth and low probability of finding the two. "The Navy respects the sanctity of human remains and recognized the sea as a fit and final resting place," the report said.

Chambers, 37, of Maryland, enlisted in the Navy in 2012 and graduated from SEAL training in 2014. Ingram, 27, of Texas, enlisted in 2019 and graduated from SEAL training in 2021.

Changes to training

In response to the investigation, Naval Special Warfare Command said changes are already being made to training and guidance. It said the command is considering developing a force-wide policy to address water safety during maritime operations and is setting standard procedures for buoyancy requirements.

Other changes would refine man-overboard procedures, pre-mission checks and maintenance of flotation devices. It also said it's looking into "fail safe" buoyancy equipment and plans to review safety processes.

Rear Adm. Keith Davids, who headed the command at the time of the mission, said it would learn from the tragic deaths and "doggedly pursue" recommended changes. Davids left the job in August in a routine change of command and is in the process of retiring.

The report recommends that Ingram receive a commendation for heroism for giving his life while trying to save his teammate. That recommendation is under review. Both were posthumously promoted one rank.

According to a separate Defense Intelligence Agency report, the Jan. 11 mission seized Iranian "propulsion, guidance systems and warheads" for medium-range ballistic missiles and antiship cruise missiles destined for the Houthis.

Harris viewed more positively by Hispanic women than by Hispanic men: AP-NORC poll

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A solid majority of Hispanic women have a positive opinion of Vice President Kamala Harris and a negative view of former President Donald Trump, but Hispanic men are more divided on both candidates, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Hispanic men are also more likely than Hispanic women to say Trump is the candidate who represents their views on key issues, underscoring the potential importance of this group, which both candidates have courted aggressively.

As the election approaches, the extent to which Trump can erode Harris' support among Hispanic voters could be an important factor in swing states like Arizona. Hispanic voters are more supportive of the Democrats overall: According to the poll, nearly half identify as Democrats, about one-third as Republicans, and around 2 in 10 as independents. But the poll signals that Hispanic men, while not overwhelmingly in favor of Trump, are more open to his candidacy than Hispanic women — and less open to Harris'.

Antonio Melcon, 65, a Republican from Florida, said Trump has his vote because he is the best option for the country. In Melcon's view, the Biden administration has taken the nation down a bad path, and Harris has done nothing to stop it.

"She wasn't the one that implemented the route this country has taken, but she's been there and done nothing that merits I vote for her," Melcon said. "I would definitely never vote for her."

Hispanic men and women have different views on Harris

Overall, Hispanic voters are about equally likely to say they have a favorable view of Trump and Harris. But there is a gender divide among Hispanic voters on Harris: About 6 in 10 Hispanic women have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of Harris, compared to 45% of Hispanic men.

Similarly, about half of Hispanic women voters think Harris would make a good president, compared to

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only about one-third of Hispanic men.

For some voters, one candidate may appear in a better light simply because they dislike the alternative. Sonia Montoya, a 68-year-old Democrat from Chicago, said while she agrees with many of Harris' policies, she still sees Harris as the lesser of two evils. Montoya said Harris is more human and has a better understanding of society, while she views Trump as "arrogant, a liar, a cheater."

In addition to having warmer feelings toward Harris, about 6 in 10 Hispanic female voters say Trump would not make a good president, compared to about half of Hispanic male voters.

And Hispanic men are likelier than Hispanic women to think Trump has the toughness the presidency requires. About half of Hispanic men say "tough enough to be president" describes Trump extremely or very well, compared to about one-third of Hispanic women. Hispanic men are also more likely than Hispanic women to say Trump is the candidate who represents their views on important policies.

Plenty of Hispanic men, though, remain supportive of Harris and skeptical about Trump. Sebastian Diaz, 51 and an independent from Massachusetts, views Harris "somewhat favorably" because he agrees with her ideology. He said he has a "very unfavorable" view of Trump because he is "a racist bigot."

The economy is a high priority for Hispanic voters

Despite some divisions in views of the candidates, though, Hispanic voters are largely in agreement that the economy is a major factor as they consider their options for president. Around 8 in 10 Hispanic voters say the economy is "one of the most important issues" during this election season.

Daysi Garcia, 44, a Republican from Pennsylvania, said groceries have gotten so expensive that the candidates' economic plans are guiding her vote. A self-proclaimed Democrat until last year, Garcia said while she does not agree with all of Trump's policies, she is unhappy with the Democrats and thinks Trump would be a better choice to run the country.

"It is so bad right now," Garcia said. "It is so hard to do grocery shopping because everything is through the roof. I don't remember ever seeing everything skyrocket the way it is now."

Melcon agrees that the cost of living is too high. "The economy is the main thing for me," he said. "The environment, immigration — which is also a problem — that's second fiddle."

About 6 in 10 Hispanic voters also say that health care or crime are among the most important issues for their vote, while about half say that about gun policy. Slightly less than half say abortion or immigration are among the most important. Hispanic voters are more likely than voters nationwide to see health care as a top voting priority.

Diaz said health care, like food and water, is a basic need for humans.

"I think universal access to healthcare is incredibly important for the social development of a country," Diaz said.

More Hispanic voters think Harris represents their culture

Harris has one potential advantage over Trump among Hispanic voters: About 4 in 10 say she is the candidate who better represents their background and culture, while about one-quarter say this about Trump. A sizable share are unconvinced that either candidate fits into this role, though: About 3 in 10 say neither candidate represents their background and culture.

The fact that Harris is the daughter of immigrants may give some Hispanic voters a sense of representation, civic engagement advocates say, even though she's not Hispanic herself.

Montoya said as someone who is biracial, Harris represents her identity best. "She knows what it feels like to be insulted or put to the side or feel worthless because of prejudice in this world," Montoya said. "I think she'll fight harder for us than (Trump) ever would."

Although Milton has moved on, at least 8 are dead and millions remain in the dark

By JULIO CORTEZ, KATE PAYNE and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press
ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Rescue teams plucked Florida residents from the flotsam of Hurricane Milton on Thursday after the storm smashed through coastal communities where it tore homes into pieces,

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filled streets with mud and spawned a barrage of deadly tornadoes. At least eight people were dead.

Arriving just two weeks after the misery wrought by Hurricane Helene, the system also knocked out power to more than 3 million customers, flooded barrier islands, tore the roof off a baseball stadium and toppled a construction crane.

Among the most dramatic rescues, Hillsborough County officers found a 14-year-old boy floating on a piece of fence and pulled him onto a boat. A Coast Guard helicopter crew rescued a man who was left clinging to an ice chest in the Gulf of Mexico after his fishing boat was stranded in waters roiled by Hurricane Milton. The agency estimated the man had survived winds of 75 to 90 mph (121 to 145 kph) and waves up to 25 feet (7.6 meters) high during his night on the water.

"This man survived in a nightmare scenario for even the most experienced mariner," Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Dana Grady said.

Despite the destruction, many people expressed relief that Milton wasn't worse. The hurricane spared Tampa a direct hit, and the lethal storm surge that scientists feared never materialized.

The storm tracked to the south in the final hours and made landfall late Wednesday as a Category 3 hurricane in Siesta Key, about 70 miles (112 kilometers) south of Tampa. Damage was widespread, and water levels may continue to rise for days, but Gov. Ron DeSantis said it was not "the worst-case scenario."

"You face two hurricanes in a couple of weeks — not easy to go through — but I've seen a lot of resilience throughout this state," the governor told a briefing in Sarasota. He said he was "very confident that this area is going to bounce back very, very quickly."

Five people were killed in tornadoes in the Spanish Lakes Country Club near Fort Pierce, on Florida's Atlantic Coast, where homes were destroyed, authorities said. Police also found a woman dead under a fallen tree branch in Tampa.

In Volusia County, authorities said two people, a 79-year-old woman in Ormond Beach and a 54-year-old woman in Port Orange, were also killed when trees fell on homes.

Speaking at a White House briefing, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said there were reports of as many as 10 fatalities from tornadoes, but he cautioned that the number was tentative.

At least 340 people and 49 pets have been rescued in ongoing efforts, DeSantis said Thursday afternoon.

South of Tampa, Natasha Shannon and her husband, Terry, felt lucky to be alive after the hurricane peeled the tin roof off their cinder block home in Palmetto. They spent the night in a shelter with their three children and two grandchildren after she pushed them to leave.

"I said, 'Baby, we got to go. Because we're not going to survive this,'" she said.

They returned to find the roof torn into sheets across the street, shredded insulation hanging from exposed ceiling beams and their belongings soaked.

"It ain't much but it was ours," she said. "What little bit we did have is gone."

The worst storm surge appeared to be in Sarasota County, where it was 8 to 10 feet (2.5 to 3 meters) — lower than in the worst place during Helene. The storm also dumped up to 18 inches (45 centimeters) of rain in some areas.

Officials in the hard-hit Florida counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Sarasota and Lee urged people to stay home, warning of downed power lines, trees in roads, blocked bridges and flooding.

Among the dozens of tornadoes was a twister that hit the tiny barrier island of Matlacha, just off Fort Myers. The fishing-and-tourism village also endured a surge, with many of the colorful buildings sustaining serious damage. Tom Reynolds, 90, spent the morning sweeping out 4 feet (1.2 meters) of mud and water and collecting chunks of aluminum siding torn off by a twister that also picked up a car and threw it across the road.

Elsewhere on the island, a house was blown into a street, temporarily blocking it. Some structures caught fire. Reynolds said he planned to repair the home he built three decades ago.

"What else am I going to do?" he said.

In contrast, city workers on Anna Maria Island were grateful not to be wading through floodwaters as they picked up debris Thursday morning, two weeks after Helene battered buildings and blew in piles of sand up to 6 feet (1.8 m) high. Those piles may have helped shield homes from further damage, said

Jeremi Roberts of the State Emergency Response Team.

"I'm shocked it's not more," city worker Kati Sands said as she cleared the streets of siding and broken lights. "We lost so much with Helene, there wasn't much left."

Helene flooded streets and homes in western Florida and left at least 230 people dead across the South. In many places along the coast, municipalities raced to collect and dispose of debris before Milton's winds and storm surge could toss it around and compound any damage.

Power was knocked out across much of the state. More than 3.4 million homes and businesses were without electricity, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

The fabric that serves as the roof of Tropicana Field — home of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team in St. Petersburg — was ripped to shreds by fierce winds. Debris littered the field.

About 80,000 people spent the night in shelters, and thousands of others fled after authorities issued mandatory evacuation orders across 15 Florida counties with a total population of about 7.2 million people.

In Punta Gorda, a 10-foot (3-meter) surge from the Peace River swept into the historic district, damaging homes and depositing six boats along one riverside street. It was the third surge to hit the neighborhood in three months.

Josh Baldwin said he was leaning toward scrapping his 38-foot (11.6-meter) boat rather than pay \$100,000 to fix it. He couldn't get insurance because it was moored in Punta Gorda.

"They don't like to pay out, and this place always gets ruined in hurricanes," he said.

A half-block away, information technology workers Kent and Cathy Taylor and their son were using an SUV attached to a chain to pull waterlogged drywall out of the bottom floor of their three-story home, which they bought in July. The lower level is gutted, but the upper floors are still structurally sound.

"It will be beautiful again — it's just a nick," Cathy Taylor said.

By Thursday afternoon, Milton was headed into the Atlantic Ocean as a post-tropical cyclone with winds of 75 mph (120 kph) — just barely hurricane force.

Crossing the bridge from the mainland to Anna Maria Island early Thursday, Police Chief John Cosby breathed a sigh of relief. Nearly all residents had evacuated. There were no injuries or deaths, and the projected storm surge never happened. After fearing that his police department would be underwater, it remained dry.

"It's nice to have a place to come back to," he said.

The Latest: Milton causes widespread power outages and several deaths in Florida

By The Associated Press undefined

Hurricane Milton brought powerful winds, a dangerous storm surge and flooding to much of Florida after making landfall along the Gulf Coast as a Category 3 storm.

It weakened as it plowed through Florida late Wednesday into Thursday. Power outages were widespread, and at least eight deaths have been reported from severe weather.

The cyclone had maximum sustained winds of 120 mph (205 kph) when it roared ashore in Siesta Key, south of the populated Tampa Bay region, the National Hurricane Center said. High winds, heavy rain and flooding hit areas including densely populated Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota and Fort Myers.

Follow AP's coverage of tropical weather at <https://apnews.com/hub/hurricanes>.

Here's the latest:

Kamala Harris pledges federal help to Florida officials in the wake of Helene and Milton

CHANDLER, Ariz. — Vice President Kamala Harris is pledging to those who have been affected by Hurricane Milton that "we will be with you every step of the way as you recover and rebuild."

Harris spoke at a rally in Chandler, Arizona, on Thursday night, saying the hurricane "has cut a path of devastation across Florida" right on the heels of Hurricane Helene.

Harris said that she had spoken with Republican and Democratic local officials to pledge ongoing federal

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help, adding, "That is who we are."

Milton was not as destructive as expected, FEMA official says

SARASOTA, Fla. — FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said Thursday that Milton's impact was not as destructive as feared, but she is heading out Friday to see damage from some of the tornadoes that touched down in the Florida.

"We did not have the extreme impacts of the worst case scenario that we prepared for, but there's still so many people that have been impacted by this," she said at a press briefing in Sarasota.

She said the 38 twisters that touched down in the state cause "significant damage to a level that Floridians have not seen from tornadoes," she said.

On Thursday, she toured flooded roads and debris, some of which was left from Hurricane Helene, she said.

I-75 south is crowded with people returning after fleeing Milton

OCALA, Fla. — A flood of vehicles headed south Thursday evening on Interstate 75, the main highway that runs through the middle of Florida, as relief workers and evacuated residents headed towards the aftermath of Hurricane Milton.

At times, some cars even drove on the left-hand shoulder of the road, adding an extra travel lane to the highway. Cars, bucket trucks and fuel tankers streamed by, along with portable bathroom trailers and a convoy of emergency vehicles from the Bay and Escambia County Sheriff's Offices.

As residents raced south to find out whether their homes were destroyed or spared, finding gas was still a challenge, with fuel stations still closed as far away as Ocala, more than a two and a half hour drive north of where the storm made landfall.

Milton's 'reverse surge' sucked water away from flood-fearing Tampa

In the hours before Hurricane Milton hit, forecasters were worried it could send as much as 15 feet (4.5 meters) of water rushing onto the heavily populated shores of Florida's Tampa Bay.

Instead, several feet of water temporarily drained away.

Why? "Reverse storm surge" is a familiar, if sometimes unremarked-upon, function of how hurricane winds move seawater as the storms hit land — in fact, it has happened in Tampa Bay before.

NOAA releases longtime hurricane scientist's ashes into Milton's eye

As an award-winning scientist, Peter Dodge had made hundreds of flights into the eyes of hurricanes — almost 400.

On Tuesday, a crew on a reconnaissance flight into Hurricane Milton helped him make one more, dropping his ashes into the storm as a lasting tribute to the longtime National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration radar specialist and researcher.

"It's very touching," Dodge's sister, Shelley Dodge, said in an interview Thursday with The Associated Press. "We knew it was a goal of NOAA to make it happen."

The ashes were released into the eye of the hurricane Tuesday night, less than 24 hours before Milton made landfall in Siesta Key near Sarasota, Florida. An in-flight observations log, which charts information such as position and wind speed, ended with a reference to Dodge's 387th — and final — flight.

Animals at a zoo and an aquarium in Tampa are faring well after the storm

TAMPA, Fla. — A spokesperson for ZooTampa said Thursday all 1,000 animals at the zoo are safe and will remain in their night houses and hurricane shelter locations while habitats are cleared of debris. The Florida Aquarium in Tampa also confirmed their animals are "doing well."

The zoo sustained some damage from the high winds and does not have power, and the spokesperson anticipates the debris cleanup and restoration, which is already underway, will take a few days.

The Florida Aquarium's buildings in downtown Tampa and Apollo Beach also "appear to have minor weather-related damage," the aquarium said in a Thursday press release.

As of Thursday afternoon, both the aquarium and the zoo aim to reopen Saturday, depending on when power is restored.

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Coast Guard rescues a man clinging to an ice chest in the Gulf of Mexico

TAMPA, Fla. — A Coast Guard helicopter crew rescued a man who was left clinging to an ice chest in the Gulf of Mexico after his boat was stranded overnight in waters roiled by Hurricane Milton.

The man's fishing vessel had been disabled Monday off Madeira Beach, Florida, and he was working to repair it Wednesday, hours before the hurricane made landfall, said Coast Guard press officer Nicole Groll. The man, who was not identified, was able to radio the Coast Guard station in nearby St. Petersburg before contact was lost about 6:45 p.m.

But on Thursday searchers located the man about 30 miles (48 kilometers) off Longboat Key, Florida, clinging to an open cooler chest, a video clip provided by the Coast Guard shows. In the video, a Coast Guard diver was lowered from a helicopter and swam to the man to pick him up.

The man was taken to Tampa General Hospital for medical treatment, the Coast Guard said. The fate of his boat was unknown. A hospital spokesperson was not able to provide a condition without the man's name.

This entry has been updated to correct when the man's fishing vessel became inoperative. It was disabled Monday, not Wednesday. The man had been working to repair it Wednesday.

All warnings related to Milton have been discontinued

MIAMI — The U.S. National Hurricane Center discontinued all storm surge and tropical storm warnings related to Milton, now a post-tropical cyclone, as of their latest and final advisory.

Milton was located about 220 miles (335 kilometers) northeast of Great Abaco Island, one of the Bahama's northmost island, and was moving east away from Florida's coastline at 21 mph (33 kph) as of 5 p.m. Thursday. It has sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph) and was expected to continue weakening, the hurricane center said.

DeSantis speaks to the 'resilience' of Floridians during back-to-back hurricanes

SARASOTA, Fla. — "You face two hurricanes in a couple of weeks — not easy to go through — but I've seen a lot of resilience throughout this state," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a Thursday afternoon briefing in Sarasota.

"When you're a Floridian, you kind of just know that these are things that can happen, and you roll with it and you just kind of deal with it," he said. "I've seen a lot of grit, I've seen a lot of determination and I'm very confident that this area is going to bounce back very, very quickly."

Resident rides out Milton in a home his father built to withstand a hurricane's worst

GULFPORT, Fla. — Christian Burke's late father built their three-story concrete home overlooking the bay to withstand a Category 5 storm. Last night, Burke, his mother and his aunt defied mandatory evacuation orders and rode out Hurricane Milton in that home to test it. The watched the storm crash ashore through the near-panoramic view out their third floor windows.

"Looking out, all we could see is just these sheets — it wasn't raining — it was these sheets of rainwater flying by us in every direction," he said. "Movies don't do it justice."

Burke had been bracing for 7 or 8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 meters) of storm surge in the first floor of his home, and had been warily eyeing a sailboat that Hurricane Helene had left stranded on the sidewalk across the street two weeks ago, hoping the waves wouldn't dash it against his house.

But the surge never came, the boat didn't budge, and his home has virtually no damage — a testament to his father's legacy as a builder, Burke said.

"There was no other reason to be here than for that," he said, "other than honoring his legacy and showing that he did what he did. He built what he built."

That said, Burke said he doesn't need to ride out another storm at home. He's made his point.

"If this happened again, I know the house is great," he said, "but maybe I'll just find a hotel somewhere."

Florida hospitals generally fared 'extremely well' during Milton

SARASOTA, Fla. — HCA Florida, which operates 48 hospitals throughout the state, had to evacuate about 235 patients at its hospital in Largo, near St. Petersburg, after the basement flooded.

David Verinder, CEO of Sarasota Memorial Hospital, estimates the hospital has supported and cared for

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4,000 people during the hurricane's course — including seven babies that were delivered as the storm swept through the region.

Both of the system's campuses are on high ground and came out relatively unscathed despite heavy winds, rain and surges — the worst of which were in Sarasota, not Tampa as predicted.

Still, Tampa General Hospital, the region's only Level 1 trauma center, deployed its "aqua fence" for the second time in two weeks to prevent flooding.

Cape Canaveral Hospital sustained damage from tornadoes on Florida's east coast, said Mary Mayhew, president and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association, but officials are optimistic that the damage "is not significant."

Florida hospitals generally fared "extremely well" during Hurricane Milton, Mayhew said. Twenty-one facilities in total evacuated prior to the storm.

Hundreds of people and dozens of pets rescued

At least 340 individuals and 49 pets have been rescued in ongoing search-and-rescue operations, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a Thursday afternoon briefing in Sarasota.

DeSantis said that after flying over some of the hard-hit areas on Thursday, he saw that many of the homes built in recent years fared well in the storm.

"Another thing I think I can say — our buildings that were built in the last 20 or 30 years, they did very well," he said.

Tampa airport says it will reopen Friday despite some damage

Tampa International Airport plans to reopen Friday morning, although the hurricane damaged six jet bridges used to board planes and crews are repairing leaks in the main terminal.

The airport said the Federal Aviation Administration cleared the control tower to resume full operations, roads and parking garages are in good shape, and there are no issues with the wastewater system.

The airport's fuel depot lost power and is running on generator power while repairs are underway.

Historic district of coastal Punta Gorda shaken by Milton

PUNTA GORDA, Fla. — In Punta Gorda's historic district, a 10-foot surge from the Peace River swept blocks inland, seriously damaging homes and depositing six 30-foot-plus boats along a quarter-mile stretch of a riverside street.

The surge was the third to hit the neighborhood the last three months, following a small surge by Hurricane Debby in August and an 8-foot surge by Helene two weeks ago.

Josh Baldwin's 38-foot boat, Alexandra, named after his young daughter, was sitting upright on the street, resting on its hull and flattened propeller, leaning against a utility pole.

The cattle rancher had moored his boat at the marina about 100 yards (91 meters) away and the surge had picked it up and pushed it inland, pulling it off its moorings.

He said he was at home in Sarasota, 60 miles (97 kilometers) away on Thursday morning, when a friend sent him a screenshot of a TV reporter doing a live shot from in front of it.

A few hours later, he was inside removing all the gear that he could to avoid it being stolen and contemplating his options — pay \$100,000 to fix the boat or scrap it. He was leaning toward scraping it.

He couldn't get insurance because he had moored it in Punta Gorda.

"They don't like to pay out and this place always gets ruined in hurricanes," he said.

Biden takes swipe at Trump, says his predecessor is spreading 'misinformation'

President Joe Biden is again criticizing his predecessor, Donald Trump, for spreading misinformation about the federal government's hurricane response efforts, declaring "Get a life, man."

Addressing reporters Thursday about Hurricane Milton's destruction, Biden said he wouldn't call Trump directly. But asked what his message would be for Trump, Biden squared his shoulders and more directly faced the camera.

"Mr. President Trump, former President Trump, get a life man," Biden said. "Help these people."

The White House, and Biden personally, have spent days decrying Trump for making false claims about disaster response, including that federal funding is being diverted for use on people in the country illegally

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and that such assistance is capped at \$750.

With theme parks closed in Orlando, tourists flock to mini-golf

ORLANDO, Fla. — With Orlando's theme parks closed Thursday because of Hurricane Milton, miniature golf was among the few activities available to tourists who had been locked down in their hotel rooms and rental condos during the storm.

There was a line getting into Congo River Golf on International Drive, a major tourist strip. Craig Greig of Glasgow, Scotland would have been at the Magic Kingdom with his wife and 10-year-old if the theme parks had been open.

Instead he was clutching a putter ready to putt golf balls over a man made lagoon filled with baby alligators. "We just wanted to stretch our legs and get out of the hotel," he said.

"Especially for the little one." Even though it was his first experience with a hurricane, he was unfazed and slept through the night as it roared through central Florida.

Florida marks 6th time it has had 3 hurricanes make landfall in a single year

Milton's landfall in Florida marked the sixth time in history that the Sunshine State had three hurricanes make landfall in a single year, according to Colorado State University senior research scientist Phil Klotzbach.

They were: 1871, 1886, 1964, 2004, 2005 and 2024.

The state in 2004 nearly had four hurricanes make landfall in a single year, Klotzbach said. But while Charley, Frances and Jeanne made landfall in Florida, Ivan made landfall in Alabama, just west of the Alabama/Florida border.

Mayorkas calls for more FEMA funding, denounces false information spreading online

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said at the White House briefing that the government has "the capability and the capacity to respond to and recover from multiple simultaneous disasters" in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

Still, Mayorkas cautioned that Congress needs to allocate more funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, saying "we will need additional funds."

Additionally, Mayorkas condemned hate speech and false information spread online following landfall by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

Mayorkas said that falsehoods are having a negative impact on survivors and hurting the morale of rescue workers.

Mayorkas said the government is "seeing horrific, hate speech of all types, propagated on online platforms," pertaining to people trying to help address the damage from the storm.

Entertainment elite donate toward hurricane relief efforts

Hollywood power couple Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds have given \$1 million in relief efforts for Hurricanes Milton and Helene.

Feeding America CEO Claire Babineaux-Fontenot announced the donation from the "Gossip Girl" star and her "Deadpool" husband in an Instagram post Thursday.

They're the latest celebrities to make a seven-figure donation after megastar singer Taylor Swift gave \$5 million earlier.

Five storm-related deaths confirmed in Florida

After confirming 5 storm-related deaths, Gov. Ron DeSantis said he does not have any reports of others at this point, though that may change, he said at a noon briefing Thursday.

"We don't have confirmed reports of other fatalities throughout the rest of the state, but we may as the day goes on," he said.

"My sense is we will be able to release a lot of the search and rescue resources that we've had on hand very soon," DeSantis said, without providing a specific timeline.

St. Lucie County Sheriff Keith Pearson said the deaths were caused by tornadoes that touched down near Fort Pierce.

Jessie Schaper, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Melbourne, Florida, said it's too early to know exactly how many tornadoes touched down Wednesday or how strong they were.

Officials plan to begin their survey on Friday, but it might take some time before results are released.

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Residents rescued from assisted living facility in Tampa

More than 100 residents were rescued from an assisted living facility in Tampa, according to a social media post Thursday morning from Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

The sheriff's office and Hillsborough County Fire Rescue were out with amphibious equipment and the marine unit rescuing residents, Sheriff Chad Chronister said in the video.

It shows deputies in nearly waist-deep water outside the facility and residents with walkers being carried away on boats. The video shows flooded streets and parking lots and rescue workers with a boat floating next to a partially submerged flight of stairs helping an apartment building resident in a life jacket wrap up her cat.

Chronister can be seen offering to take a person in a home surrounded by flood waters to dry ground.

"This is extraordinary to see this type of flooding, especially in this type of area. The University of South Florida area is normally a dry area," Chronister said in the video. "To see this unprecedented flooding, I can only imagine how scary it was."

Tiny barrier island off Fort Myers gets hit by tornado and the effects of hurricane

The tiny barrier island of Matlacha just off Fort Myers got hit by both a tornado and surge from Hurricane Milton, with many of the turquoise, salmon and lavender buildings sustaining serious damage.

Several collapsed or are knocked off their pilings. Utility poles are snapped and there was no power Thursday morning. The fishing and tourism village also got severely hit by Hurricane Helene two weeks ago and Ian two years ago.

Ninety-year-old Tom Reynolds spent Thursday morning sweeping out the four feet of mud and water the surge deposited in his two-story home and collecting the large chunks of his home's aluminum siding that had been ripped off by the tornado. Fortunately for Reynolds and others working outside Thursday, the temperatures were in the low 80s (mid-20s Celsius) and Milton had sucked away all the humidity.

The tornado, he said, had "picked up a car and thrown it across the road." A house had been blown into another street, temporarily blocking it. Some structures caught fire.

Reynolds, who founded the glass and mirror company his son now runs, said he lost many of his power tools – he had stored them high in his shed, but the surge knocked it over.

He said plans to clean up his house, which he built three decades ago, get it fixed and stay.

"What else am I going to do?" Reynolds said.

Residents call on Altamonte Springs to do something to stop repeated flooding

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, Fla. — In the Spring Oaks neighborhood of Altamonte Springs north of Orlando, an impromptu lake formed from floodwaters on a residential street near Rupert and Ernie Gonzales' split-level home.

They have lived in their house for 22 years, but never saw flooding until two years ago with Hurricane Ian.

Now, it's becoming more regular. "The city must do something about this flooding, 100%," Rupert Gonzales said.

"People here have gotten flooded, relocated, come back and gotten flooded again. It's a way of life, it seems." Soon or later, people won't want to buy homes in his neighborhood, Gonzales said. "I'm very concerned because I have to live here and I have to see this flooding every time."

Bradenton Beach chief relieved to see his town for the first time after Milton

BRADENTON BEACH, Fla. — It was a "sigh of relief" when Police Chief John Cosby came across the bridge from the mainland to Anna Maria Island at 4:30 a.m. Thursday and didn't see his community underwater.

"Very close to 100%" of residents evacuated this town ahead of Hurricane Milton, he said, after Hurricane Helene battered this barrier island community just two weeks ago, covering the streets with piles of sand like snowbanks from a blizzard.

"So far, knock on wood, we've had no injuries and no deaths in our community," from Hurricane Milton, he said.

While wind from Milton battered already damaged homes and knocked at least one multi-story home off its pilings, the projected storm surge didn't hit here, he said.

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Piles of debris from Hurricane Helene still line the streets here. Mattresses, refrigerators, stacks of plates — some scattered but others sitting in their heaps — created a mess, but not the barrage of hurricane-driven missiles so many residents had feared.

IV fluids manufacturer says Florida sites remain intact

A manufacturer of IV fluids critical to hospitals nationwide said Thursday that its Florida factory and distribution center were left intact after Hurricane Milton tore through the state.

B. Braun Medical Inc. said it would provide more details later Thursday about the Daytona Beach factory. The company had said earlier this week that it planned to restart production Friday morning.

The factory is seen as an important source of sterile intravenous, or IV, fluid supplies that had grown tight after Hurricane Helene hit Florida and several other states late last month.

That storm forced Baxter International to shut down a North Carolina factory that makes about 60% of the country's IV fluid supply.

MacDill Air Force base in Tampa stays closed

WASHINGTON — According to the U.S. Air Force, MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa was evacuated as of Wednesday, and remains closed.

The base, which is home to U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command, has about 185 personnel working at an emergency operations center out of Raymond James Stadium.

There were 13 KC-135 aircraft evacuated to McConnell Air Force Base, and other aircraft remained in hangars or away on military missions. A hurricane recovery team is enroute to the base to begin assessing damages and Air Forces Northern is working to provide civil air patrol flyovers to get an aerial view of the base.

Aircraft were also moved out of Patrick Space Force Base but there was no personnel evacuation ordered. Space Launch Delta 45 has a team doing damage assessments. Seven F-16 fighter jets from the 482nd Fighter Wing were moved from Homestead Air Reserve Base to San Antonio, Texas.

The U.S. Navy said there was "negligible damage" at the Mayport, Jacksonville and Kings Bay naval bases and they are expected to return to normal operations on Thursday.

Biden pledges federal support for storm-battered Sarasota

SARASOTA, Fla. — Sarasota Mayor Liz Alpert said in a statement that she spoke with President Joe Biden on Wednesday.

Alpert said the call was unexpected and that Biden promised her federal support in the recovery from the storm.

"He understands ... it will take a lot from the federal government to help us recover in Sarasota," Alpert said. "We're grateful for the support and thank President Biden for reaching out."

The city said in a statement that crews are working to clear roadways and assess the damage caused by the storm.

Workers start clearing Bradenton Beach of storm debris

BRADENTON BEACH, Fla. — City workers were feeling grateful not to be wading through deep floodwaters as they picked up storm debris Thursday morning in this beach town on Anna Maria Island.

Just two weeks ago, Hurricane Helene battered homes and businesses and blew in piles of sand four to six feet high along Bradenton Beach's streets.

Residents had feared that the loss of the sand along the beach here may have left it more vulnerable to further erosion from Hurricane Milton, in this community where wooden beach bungalows still stand among newer two- and three-story houses.

Jeremi Roberts of the State Emergency Response Team said the piles of sand may have helped shield homes here from further damage from Milton.

Sarasota assesses damage while asking residents to stay put and conserve water

SARASOTA, Fla. — Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche said in a video statement on social media that the damage from Hurricane Milton doesn't appear as bad as initially feared and the search and rescue operations are underway.

"My ask is please don't rush home right now, we're still trying to assess what's going on," Troche said.

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"We still have downed power lines, we still have trees in the roadway."

The city of Sarasota said in a statement that residents are urged to continue to shelter in place as the storm surge is expected through Thursday afternoon and to conserve water because of numerous broken water lines in the city.

Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Sandra Tapfumaneyi said damage assessments began Thursday morning; roads are being cleared and residents should remain in place.

"We do have power outages across about 75% of the county, but we are doing the best we can to assess," Tapfumaneyi said.

Biden gets briefing on Hurricane Milton; Harris to join in later

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has been briefed on the initial impacts of Hurricane Milton.

Biden was briefed early Thursday by Homeland Security Advisor Liz Sherwood-Randall and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell.

The White House said Biden will hold another briefing on the federal response to the storm, and the role the Pentagon and the Coast Guard are playing in disaster response.

Vice President Kamala Harris will join that briefing by videoconference from Las Vegas, where she is holding campaign events.

Damage assessments are underway in Fort Myers Beach

FORT MYERS BEACH, Fla. — In Fort Myers Beach, a town of about 6,000 on Estero Island about 110 miles (177 kilometers) southwest of Tampa, Mayor Dan Allers told Fox News that damage assessments are underway.

"Our immediate concern is getting the road open so we can get water restored, get power back on and so we can get our residents back," Allers said.

Allers said the damage appears worse than Hurricane Helene, but not as bad as Hurricane Ian in 2022.

Separately, emergency responders have resumed responding to calls in southwestern Florida's Charlotte County, southeast of Tampa. That is according to post on X by Charlotte County Emergency Management.

Florida's governor says his state was spared 'the worst case scenario'

Hurricane Milton was a significant storm but not "the worst case scenario," Florida's governor says.

Gov. Ron DeSantis told reporters Thursday that the worst storm surge appeared to be in Sarasota County, where it was 8 to 10 feet (2.5 to 3 meters) — less than in the worst place during Hurricane Helene just two weeks ago.

"We will better understand the extent of the damage as the day progresses," he said. "The storm was significant but thankfully, this was not the worst case scenario."

Water levels in many Florida rivers are forecast to continue rising, he said. Because of the amount of water flooding happen not just now but in the subsequent days, he said.

Significant damage from Milton is reported in west-central Florida

PLANT CITY, Fla. — There was significant damage in west-central Florida, including in the community of Plant City, an official said.

"One of the most profound things I'm seeing is the flooding. We have flooding in places and to levels that I've never seen, and I've lived in this community for my entire life," City Manager Bill McDaniel said in a video posted online Thursday morning. "It's absolutely staggering, what we're seeing out there. Last night, members of our police and fire department performed rescues of 35 individuals from flooded structures here."

Plant City has about 40,000 people. McDaniel added, "The police and the fire departments have their hands full. we're bringing out crews to clean up the tree debris and get our roadways clear."

Rescue teams are out in full force in the South Daytona area

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Hurricane Milton brought flooding to Florida's Atlantic Coast early Thursday.

In Volusia County, where Daytona Beach is located, high water rescue teams were out in full force in the South Daytona area, sheriff's officials said.

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Many roads in Fort Myers area are under water or blocked by fallen trees

FORT MYERS, Fla. — In Lee County, where Fort Myers is located, the local sheriff's office noted that many roads were either under water or blocked by fallen trees, downed power lines or other debris.

Some areas in Lee County had 3 feet (0.9 meters) of water covering roads.

A draw bridge just east of Matlacha, where about 600 people live on a barrier island, is partially blocked by a house, sheriff's officials said. The Matlacha area was also devastated by Hurricane Ian in 2022.

At least 3 million customers without power due to Milton

Hurricane Milton's tear of destruction across central Florida left more than 3 million homes and businesses without power around 4 a.m. EDT Thursday, according to PowerOutages.us.

Energy companies serve more than 11.5 million customer accounts across the state, according to the website.

Milton's high winds and intense rains continued into Thursday morning. Florida's central Gulf Coast was hardest hit by the outages, including Hardee, Sarasota, Hillsborough and Manatee counties.

Hurricane Milton weakens to Category 1, but danger remains in Florida

MIAMI — The National Weather Service says the storm's maximum sustained wind speed was 90 mph (145 kph) at about 1 a.m. Thursday as it passed east of Lakeland, Florida, on its way across the central peninsula.

The weather service uses the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale to estimate potential property damage caused by a hurricane's sustained wind speed. A Category 1 hurricane is considered to have very dangerous winds that topple shallow-rooted trees, snap tree limbs and damage the exterior of well-constructed frame homes. They can also cause extensive damage to power lines.

Hurricane Milton was a Category 3 storm when it made landfall Wednesday evening. That rating means devastating damage is expected to occur, including roofs torn from well-constructed homes, trees uprooted, and electricity and water systems unavailable for days to weeks.

High wind speeds are not the only dangers caused by hurricanes. Hurricane Milton spawned several devastating tornadoes that wreaked havoc on Florida communities Wednesday afternoon. Heavy rainfall and storm surges also caused dangerous flooding in some coastal areas.

Milton weakens slightly, flash flood emergency statement is issued in west-central Florida

MIAMI — The hurricane had maximum sustained winds of about 100 mph (160 kph) as it hovered near Fort Meade, about 45 miles (72 kilometers) east of Tampa, early Thursday morning, the National Weather Service said.

The hurricane was expected to continue traveling mostly eastward until it enters the Atlantic Ocean sometime late Thursday, the weather service said.

The damaging winds were accompanied by heavy rainfall, and the weather service issued a flash flood emergency statement for portions of west-central Florida. Flash flood emergency statements generally mean life-threatening catastrophic water rising events are already underway or expected to occur in the immediate future.

St. Petersburg officials warned residents that a broken water main forced the city to temporarily shut off its drinking water service at midnight. The city said residents should boil any water used for drinking, cooking or brushing teeth until the system is restored.

Multiple collapsed cranes reported in St. Petersburg

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The National Weather Service says it has received reports of multiple collapsed cranes due to high winds in St. Petersburg, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of Siesta Key, where Milton made landfall.

St. Petersburg Fire Rescue confirmed one collapse late Wednesday about six blocks from the city's pier. There were no reports of injuries.

The crane was at the site of a 515-foot-tall (157-meter-tall) luxury high-rise building under construction that is being billed as one of the tallest buildings on the west coast of Florida. It was scheduled to be completed in summer 2025.

A hurricane scientist logged a final flight as NOAA released his ashes into Milton's eye

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

As an award-winning scientist, Peter Dodge had made hundreds of flights into the eyes of hurricanes — almost 400. On Tuesday, a crew on a reconnaissance flight into Hurricane Milton helped him make one more, dropping his ashes into the storm as a lasting tribute to the longtime National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration radar specialist and researcher.

"It's very touching," Dodge's sister, Shelley Dodge, said in an interview Thursday with The Associated Press. "We knew it was a goal of NOAA to make it happen."

The ashes were released into the eye of the hurricane Tuesday night, less than 24 hours before Milton made landfall in Siesta Key near Sarasota, Florida. An in-flight observations log, which charts information such as position and wind speed, ended with a reference to Dodge's 387th — and final — flight.

"He's loved that aspect of his job," Shelley Dodge said. "It's bittersweet. On one hand, a hurricane's coming and you don't want that for people. But on the other hand, I really wanted this to happen."

Dodge died in March 2023 at age 72 of complications from a fall and a stroke, his sister said.

The Miami resident spent 44 years in federal service. Among his awards were several for technology used to study Hurricane Katrina's destructive winds in 2005.

He also was part of the crew aboard a reconnaissance flight into Hurricane Hugo in 1989 that experienced severe turbulence and saw one of its four engines catch fire.

"They almost didn't get out of the eye," Shelley Dodge said.

Items inside the plane were torn loose and tossed about the cabin. After dumping excess fuel and some heavy instruments to enable the flight to climb further, an inspection found no major damage to the plane and it continued on. The plane eventually exited the storm with no injuries to crew members, according to NOAA.

A degenerative eye disorder eventually prevented Dodge from going on further reconnaissance flights.

Shelley Dodge said NOAA had kept her informed on when her brother's final mission would occur and she relayed the information to relatives.

"There were various times where they thought all the pieces were going to fall in place but it had to be the right combination, the research flight. All of that had to come together," she said. "It finally did on the 8th. I didn't know for sure until they sent me the official printout that showed exactly where it happened in the eye."

Dodge had advanced expertise in radar technology with a keen interest in tropical cyclones, according to a March 2023 newsletter by NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory announcing his death.

He collaborated with the National Hurricane Center and Aircraft Operations Center on airborne and land-based radar research. During hurricane aircraft missions, he served as the onboard radar scientist and conducted radar analyses. Later, he became an expert in radar data processing, the newsletter said.

Dodge's ashes were contained in a package. Among the symbols draped on it was the flag of Nepal, where he spent time as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching math and science to high school students before becoming a meteorologist.

An avid gardener, Dodge also had a fondness for bamboo and participated in the Japanese martial art Aikido, attending a session the weekend before he died.

"He just had an intellectual curiosity that was undaunted, even after he lost his sight," Shelley Dodge said.

Trump seizes on one block of a Colorado city to warn of migrant crime threat, even as crime dips

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — The city of Aurora is roughly the size of pre-evacuation Tampa, Florida. With 400,000 people spread over 164 square miles, it has swank subdivisions, working-class neighborhoods and the high-end resort where Donald Trump will hold a rally Friday to highlight a city turned into “a war zone” by immigrants, in the words of his campaign.

The reality is much different from the one Trump has been portraying to his rally attendees. As with many other American cities, Aurora’s crime rate is actually declining.

The matter that brought the Denver suburb to Trump’s attention occurred in August in a single block of the city, in an apartment complex housing Venezuelan migrants.

It was then that video surfaced of heavily armed men going door to door in the complex, where the New York-based owners claimed a Venezuelan gang was extorting rent from tenants. Someone outside the complex was shot and killed around the time the video was recorded, police said.

Now, two months later, authorities say they have identified the six men in the video and arrested one. Tenants of the building say police check in regularly and the area is safe.

“They left, and it’s been nice and calm,” said Edward Ramirez, 38, of the gunmen as he climbed into his car this week. He was one of more than a dozen of tenants who said in interviews that the threat has ebbed. “It’s quiet, we can work, it’s normal.”

Trump exploits a local crime

Aurora’s crime rate has followed a downward trend seen across the country, a decline that has overlapped with the influx of Venezuelans fleeing their country who have funneled into Colorado and other cities nationwide.

Multiple studies show immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. But Aurora also is an example of how Trump has been able to use real but isolated episodes of migrant violence to tar an entire population. He uses those examples to paint a picture of a country in chaos due to what he regularly calls an immigrant “invasion.”

“Do you see what they’re doing in Colorado? They’re taking over,” Trump, who often warns of “migrant crime,” said of Venezuelan gang members during a rally in Reading, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday. “They’re taking over real estate. They become real estate developers from Venezuela. They have equipment that our military doesn’t have.”

Trump’s sweeping claims about Aurora — his campaign’s announcement of the rally calls the city “a war zone,” linking to a story in the conservative New York Post that uses those words — have drawn sharp rebukes from local residents.

“Former President Trump’s visit to Aurora is an opportunity to show him and the nation that Aurora is a considerably safe city — not a city overrun by Venezuelan gangs,” Mayor Mike Coffman, who was an occasional Trump critic when he served as a Republican congressman, said in a statement. “The reality is that the concerns about Venezuelan gang activity have been grossly exaggerated.”

Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat, noted that Aurora has long fought to shake its reputation as Colorado’s rougher big city. It’s the third most populous in the state and has long lived in the shadow of its neighbor, Denver. One-fifth of Aurora’s residents were born in another country.

“This is a safer town than its been before,” Polis said in an interview. “Things are going really great” in Aurora, Polis added, “and I don’t want this bizarre counter-narrative out there.”

Asked how it could justify its sweeping claims about safety as crime drops in Aurora, the Trump campaign responded with a statement from the Republican National Committee: “The violent gang invasion of Aurora, Colorado, is just one example of how every state is a border state,” spokeswoman Anna Kelly said. “Aurora apartment complexes are war zones, fentanyl is flooding communities, and migrant criminals are raping and murdering victims.”

Trump’s rally will be held at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center, roughly 10 miles (16 kilo-

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meters) from the apartment complexes. His schedule for the day gives no indication he plans to visit the neighborhood.

Aurora became a magnet for Venezuelan migrants

Trump's characterization of the city and the pushback from officials and residents are reminiscent of the falsehoods he and his running mate, JD Vance, spread about Haitian immigrants stealing and eating pets in Springfield, Ohio. Those repeated lies led to multiple bomb threats against schools, government buildings and city officials' homes, forced evacuations and closures, and led the city to cancel an annual celebration of diversity, arts and culture.

Aurora did see a "slight" uptick in crime that coincided with the arrival of large numbers of Venezuelans in the city during September 2023, Police Chief Todd Chamberlain told a press conference last month. But that increase has since ebbed. According to Aurora police data, there were 12% fewer major crimes in the city — ranging from homicide to vehicle theft — last month than in September 2023.

The migrants began arriving in Denver at the end of 2022, which Colorado crime statistics show was the peak of a steady increase in crime in the state since the pandemic. In 2023, when Venezuelans became a staple on some Denver streetcorners selling flowers or offering quick car windshield washes, frustrating many Colorado voters, crime dropped statewide.

Aurora's city council passed a resolution opposing resettlement of the migrants in their city, but nonprofits found willing landlords to take some anyway. Others moved independently, drawn by cheaper rents.

In July, thousands gathered at an Aurora shopping center to mark the elections in Venezuela, and police reported gunfire after the event, intended to celebrate the defeat of President Nicolas Maduro — who instead declared himself the winner despite tallies showing he lost.

It's a rough neighborhood, slowly improving

On the campaign trail, Trump routinely cites specific cases of migrants committing crimes, often grim cases such as that of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old Georgia woman who was killed on a running trail in February. A Venezuelan citizen who entered the country illegally in 2022 has been charged with murder and other crimes in connection with the killing.

Trump has claimed Venezuela and other countries are emptying their prisons, mental institutions and "insane asylums" to send dangerous people to the U.S. and has contended that Venezuela's notoriously violent capital of Caracas is safer than many U.S. cities. The latter claim drew disbelief from Venezuelan migrants who say they feel far safer in Aurora.

"It's a thousand times better than Venezuela here," said Dexe Medina, 44, as she left the Aurora apartment complex.

The buildings have numerous broken windows, the hallway lights don't work, and trash and discarded mattresses spill from a dumpster behind it.

The run-down conditions are part of the reason the August episode grabbed attention. Aurora closed one of three apartment buildings owned by CBZ Management due to unsanitary conditions. Aurora has said conditions have been bad at the complexes for a long time, predating the Venezuelan arrivals. But CBZ countered that it was unable to provide maintenance because a notorious Venezuelan gang, Tren de Aragua, took over the buildings.

The two buildings that remain open are now in receivership, and residents say they hope the new management finally restores regular maintenance. Medina said conditions have improved slightly — before, she said, the courtyards between the three-story buildings had "towers" of debris and trash.

The neighborhood where many Venezuelans settled has long been one of Aurora's rougher stretches, close to Colfax Boulevard, a sometimes run-down drag that bills itself as the nation's longest street and runs from Aurora west through neighboring Denver and into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. On the opposite corner from the apartment complex, a mounted camera sits above the fence around a day care and a recorded voice warns visitors: "You are under video surveillance."

Longtime residents say they've heard the occasional gunshot for years, but that things seem relatively calm now.

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"Honestly, this general area has improved," said Diego Garcia, 18, a high school senior who lives a block away from the complex where the video was filmed. "It used to be a lot worse."

"We're putting them in a terrible situation"

Though residents feel safer, they acknowledge the days in August during which the armed men roamed the neighborhood were terrifying. Richard Rodriguez, 48, got a call from his mother in Venezuela, panicked about his safety once the video aired.

"Remember the fear that put in people's hearts," Rodriguez said of the video. "Imagine how it felt to us to live here."

Dustin Zvonek, an Aurora City councilman, also got concerned calls and texts once the video aired, asking if he was safe.

"I'm like, 'Dude, I live 40 minutes away,'" Zvonek said.

Still, he said the situation was serious and problems remain. It can take many months before many of the Venezuelans awaiting asylum hearing can obtain work permits, leaving them desperate in a new country where they have few connections.

"We're putting them in a terrible situation and it's having an impact on businesses," he said, adding that a nearby Walmart and Walgreens recently closed because of theft concerns.

Zvonek, a Republican, stressed that Aurora remains a safe city with falling crime, but warned against minimizing specific problems like those in the apartment complexes. He noted that residents of the buildings and its immediate neighbors haven't been assuaged when told crime is dropping overall.

"It's always not a big deal," Zvonek said, "until it happens to you."

Sean 'Diddy' Combs' sex trafficking trial set for May

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A May 5 trial date was set Thursday in Sean "Diddy" Combs' sex trafficking case, and a prosecutor argued that the jailed hip-hop mogul's lawyers were trying to exclude a "damning piece of evidence" by claiming it was leaked by the government.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson struck back against the defense's claims during Combs' first appearance before Manhattan federal court Judge Arun Subramanian, who will preside over his trial. Combs' mother flew in from Florida for the proceeding, sitting behind him with his children and other family members in the courtroom gallery.

Johnson took issue with the defense lawyers' argument in a submission late Wednesday that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security leaked a video to the media of Combs punching and kicking his former protege and girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, in a Los Angeles hotel hallway in 2016.

Combs' lawyers said the video, aired by CNN in May, and other alleged government leaks "have led to damaging, highly prejudicial pretrial publicity that can only taint the jury pool and deprive Mr. Combs of his right to a fair trial."

But Johnson urged the judge to see through the defense claims, calling them "baseless and simply a means to try to exclude a damning piece of evidence" from the trial.

"Not a single one of those alleged leaks are from members of the prosecution team," Johnson said.

Still, Subramanian told defense lawyer Marc Agnifilo to write a proposed order that he would sign instructing lawyers on both sides to comply with rules prohibiting them from publicly disclosing information that could taint a jury.

The prospective order would also restrict what both sides can publicly say about the case — something Johnson said was necessary after Agnifilo characterized Combs' indictment in a TMZ interview last month as a "takedown of a successful Black man."

Combs, 54, has pleaded not guilty to racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking charges alleging he coerced and abused women for years with help from a network of associates and employees while silencing victims through blackmail and violence, including kidnapping, arson and physical beatings.

Johnson reasserted that the indictment could be updated to add charges or defendants.

Combs, wearing a beige jail jumpsuit, was more engaged and animated during Thursday's hearing than he had been at two earlier court appearances. When he entered the courtroom, he gave a hearty hug to each of his lawyers and smiled as he spoke with them.

During the proceeding, he turned to attorney Anthony Ricco and whispered in his ear, as Johnson spoke about electronic materials seized from his residences and from him during his arrest.

Ricco said outside the courthouse afterward that Combs is making the best of a difficult situation.

"Dr. King called it the law of unintended consequences," he said, referring to civil rights leader Martin Luther King. "Sometimes the more you push a person down, the stronger they get."

Johnson said 96 electronic devices were seized in raids in March on Combs' residences in Miami and Los Angeles and at an unspecified private airport in Florida. She said another four devices were seized when Combs was arrested last month.

She said eight devices seized in Miami contained over 90 terabytes of information, which she labeled as "extraordinary" as she explained delays in extracting some information for technological reasons.

The judge said Combs can return to court in December unless lawyers agree that hearing is unnecessary.

Much of the hearing featured arguments by lawyers about what is needed to protect an eventual jury from bias, highlighted by Johnson's claims about the hotel video.

After the video was broadcast, Combs posted a social media video apologizing, saying: "I was disgusted when I did it" and "I'm disgusted now."

Responding Wednesday night in a court filing to defense claims that the federal government had leaked the video to CNN, prosecutors told the judge that the government was not in possession of the video before it was aired on CNN.

After the video aired, Combs apologized, saying, "I was disgusted when I did it." His lawyers have described the episode as a lovers' quarrel. In Combs' indictment, prosecutors allege he tried to bribe a hotel security staffer to stay mum about the video.

Combs' lawyers have been trying unsuccessfully to get the Bad Boy Records founder freed on bail. He has been held at a federal jail in Brooklyn since his Sept. 16 arrest.

Two judges have concluded that Combs would be a danger to the community if he is released from the Metropolitan Detention Center, a facility that has been plagued by violence and dysfunction for years. At a bail hearing three weeks ago, a judge rejected a \$50 million bail package, including home detention and electronic monitoring, after concluding that Combs was a threat to tamper with witnesses and obstruct a continuing investigation.

In the meantime, Agnifilo said: "We're making a go of the MDC. The MDC has been very responsive for us."

In an appeal of the bail rulings to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, lawyers for Combs on Tuesday asked a panel of judges to reverse the bail findings, saying the proposed bail package "would plainly stop him from posing a danger to anyone or contacting any witnesses."

They urged the appeals court to reject the findings of a lower-court judge who they said had "endorsed the government's exaggerated rhetoric and ordered Mr. Combs detained."

Rafael Nadal gave his all until he simply couldn't anymore and had to retire: Analysis

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

Rafael Nadal's tennis career will be remembered because of the numbers, yes — the 14 French Open trophies, the 22 Grand Slam titles overall, the nearly two decades in the top 10, and so on — and, without a doubt, because of his riveting rivalries with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

Also, indelibly, because of the all-out effort and energy Nadal brought to the court every time. So long, that is, as his body allowed. His style of play was so rigorous and unforgiving that it contributed to a series of injuries over the years (even his Roland Garros debut as a teen was delayed 12 months, and his last triumph there came thanks only to painkilling injections).

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Perhaps not surprisingly, it was his health that eventually forced Nadal to announce his retirement on Thursday after competing only sparingly the past two seasons. If anything, it is remarkable that he lasted as long as he did; the 38-year-old Nadal said his farewell will come next month when he represents Spain in the Davis Cup finals.

"Really, everything I have experienced has been a dream come true," Nadal said in a video posted on social media that included a montage of clips from his career, including handshakes at the net after matches against Federer and Djokovic, the other members of the so-called Big Three of men's tennis. "I leave with the absolute peace of mind of having given my best."

Before Nadal begins speaking in the video, he takes a deep breath and exhales, as if signifying just how difficult it was for him to make this inevitable decision public and real.

His exit follows that of Federer, who left the game at age 41 in 2022 after 20 Grand Slam titles and plenty of remarkable on-court contests against Nadal, none more noteworthy than their 2008 Wimbledon final. Nadal won that one, 9-7 in the fifth set amidst the dying evening light, part of the left-hander's supremacy head-to-head. Nadal and Djokovic, who is 37 and still on tour with 24 major championships, met more times than any other two men in the Open era (60; Djokovic went 31-29), and their lung-searing, court-covering, mirror-image relentlessness was something to behold.

"Your tenacity, dedication, fighting spirit is going to be taught for decades. Your legacy will live forever. Only you know what you had to endure to become an icon of tennis and sport in general," Djokovic wrote on social media, aptly capturing Nadal's essence. "Thank you for pushing me to the very limit so many times in our rivalry that has impacted me the most as a player."

Djokovic promised to be in Malaga, Spain, to see Nadal's "adios" in Davis Cup.

Wouldn't be surprising if Federer is there, too, as a spectator. After all, Nadal was there for Federer's last match: They teamed together in doubles at the Laver Cup, and who could forget the image of the two of them sitting side-by-side afterward, holding hands while tears flowed for both.

"What a career, Rafa! I always hoped this day would never come," Federer posted Thursday. "Thank you for the unforgettable memories and all your incredible achievements in the game we love. It's been an absolute honor!"

A few months after that Laver Cup, Nadal hurt his hip and eventually would have surgery in June 2023. He kept trying to come back, seeking the form that once made him as feared by opponents as any player, particularly on red clay. Others respected, and admired, his heavy topspin forehand, his returns of serve, his two-handed backhand and, above all, his indefatigable nature. They also found his humility inspiring.

"Your legacy," Alcaraz told Nadal on social media, "won't be matched."

Nothing about Nadal, of course, stands out as much as his unparalleled French Open resume — which is why a larger-than-life steel statue of him was erected outside Court Philippe Chatrier in 2021. He went 112-4 in the Slam held at Roland Garros, with titles arriving in 2005-08, 2010-14, 2017-20 and 2022.

During a news conference at his tennis academy in Manacor, Spain, in May 2023, Nadal said he would miss that year's trip to Paris, the first time he sat out the tournament since entering it for the first time — and, naturally, claiming the championship — in 2005.

"You can't keep demanding more and more from your body, because there comes a moment when your body raises a white flag," Nadal said in Manacor. "Even though your head wants to keep going, your body says this is as far it goes."

He reached that point Thursday.

TD Bank to pay \$3 billion in historic money-laundering settlement with the Justice Department

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — TD Bank will pay approximately \$3 billion in a historic settlement with U.S. authorities who said Thursday that the financial institution's lax practices allowed significant money laundering over multiple years.

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Canada-based TD Bank pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering, the largest bank in U.S. history to do so, Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

"TD Bank created an environment that allowed financial crime to flourish," Garland said. "By making its services convenient for criminals, it became one."

High-level executives were alerted to serious problems with the bank's anti-money laundering program, but failed to correct them as employees openly joked about how easy it seemed to be for criminals to launder money there, Garland said.

The bank is the 10th largest in the United States, and its CEO said the company takes full responsibility and has been cooperating with the investigation. It's been taking steps to fix its U.S. anti-money laundering program, including appointing new leadership and adding hundreds of new specialists, said TD Bank Group CEO Bharat Masrani.

"We know what the issues are, we are fixing them. As we move forward, we're ensuring that this never happens again," Masrani said. "And I'm 100% confident that we get to the other side and emerge even stronger."

The Justice Department said the bank allowed at least three different money laundering networks to move a total of \$670 million through TD Bank accounts over a period of several years.

The institution became the bank of choice for multiple criminals and money laundering organizations, authorities said.

"From fentanyl and narcotics trafficking, to terrorist financing and human trafficking, TD Bank's chronic failures provided fertile ground for a host of illicit activity to penetrate our financial system," said Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo.

In one case, a man moved more than \$470 million in drug proceeds and other illicit funds through TD Bank branches, bribing employees with more than \$57,000 in gift cards.

He chose TD Bank because it had the "most permissive policies," more than once depositing more than \$1 million in cash in a single day and then moving the funds out of the bank with checks or wire transfers, Garland said. It continued despite employees expressing concern about what he was doing.

There were also piles of cash dumped on a bank's counters and ATM withdrawals that totaled 40 times to 50 times higher than the daily limits, said Philip Sellinger, U.S. attorney in New Jersey.

In a separate scheme, five employees worked with criminal organizations to open and maintain accounts that were used to launder \$39 million to Colombia, including drug proceeds, Garland said.

There were also multiple red flags in that case, including that the same Venezuelan passports were used to open multiple accounts, but the bank did not identify the problem until one of the employees was arrested.

In a third scheme, a money laundering network had accounts for at least five shell companies that moved more than \$100 million in illicit funds, but the bank did not file a required suspicious activity report until law enforcement alerted it.

The bank's "long-term, pervasive, and systemic deficiencies" in its policies over a period of nine years allowed such abuses to flourish, prosecutors said.

Two dozen people have been prosecuted for involvement in money-laundering schemes, including two TD Bank employees, Garland said. The investigation is ongoing.

The bank has also agreed to major restructuring of the corporate compliance program in its U.S. operations, as well as three years of monitoring and five years of probation.

Trump's small-dollar donor fundraising is beset by confusion and fatigue

By DAN MERICA, AARON KESSLER and RICHARD LARDNER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's contributions from small-dollar donors have plummeted since his last bid for the White House, presenting the former president with a financial challenge as he attempts to keep pace with Democrats' fundraising machine.

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Fewer than a third of the Republican's campaign contributions have come from donors who gave less than \$200 — down from nearly half of all donations in his 2020 race, according to an analysis by The Associated Press and OpenSecrets, an organization that tracks political spending.

The total collected from small donors has also declined, according to the analysis. Trump raised \$98 million from such contributors through June, a 40% drop compared to the \$165 million they contributed during a corresponding period in his previous presidential race.

The dip has forced Trump to rely more on wealthy donors and groups backed by them, a shift that cuts into the populist message that first propelled him to the White House. The decline in donations could not come at a worse time for Trump. Democrats have raised massive sums from small-dollar donors this cycle. President Joe Biden and then Vice President Kamala Harris have raised a staggering \$285 million from such donors since April 2023, representing more than 40% of their fundraising, according to data from OpenSecrets.

GOP operatives said the trend could portend trouble for the broader party. Trump's fundraising dip raises questions about the party's ability to continue tapping its aging base for funds. Such voters often live on fixed incomes and don't have the extra cash to contribute to candidates, and polls have consistently found that the Republican base is growing older.

Republicans also engaged in a hyperaggressive — often combative — style of digital fundraising that is alienating voters, the operatives said. Campaigns and committees often share or rent lists of donors to each other, leading to voters being flooded with similar solicitations that can be confusing.

"Republican vendors have so mistreated our donors that many grassroots donors don't want to give to us anymore," said John Hall, a Republican fundraising consultant and partner at Apex Strategies. "If you make a donation to almost any Republican candidate today, within three weeks you are going to start getting 30-50 text messages from other candidates you have never heard of before."

Hall's firm sent surveys to Republican donors earlier this year and found that a majority of those who responded said they continued to receive text message solicitations after they had requested to be removed from a list.

"Donors feel like they are never thanked, they feel abused, and they don't know how to get off lists," Hall said. "This has a chilling effect on everyone's fundraising."

Small-dollar donors are frustrated

Small-dollar donors echoed Hall's concerns. They told the AP they stopped giving to Trump's campaign because they were tired of being barraged with solicitations for donations from other Republicans, who presumably got the donor information from the Trump campaign. Others said they were being more careful about their political giving due to financial struggles.

"I am sick of them asking for money," said Susan Brito, 51, of Florida, who gave dozens of small donations totaling \$69 in 2022 and 2023 but hasn't contributed this year. "I am disabled, you are sending me text, after text, after text."

Bill Ruggio, 70, donated nearly every month, a total of \$60, to Trump's campaign over 2022 and 2023. He hasn't contributed anything this year, saying he doesn't have the extra cash and is deeply frustrated by a barrage of text messages he receives from the Republican candidates and committees.

"I don't even look at my texts anymore during the political season. It is just so many that I miss personal ones because there are so many of the political ones," Ruggio said. "It kind of sticks in your craw."

Doug Deeken, the Republican Party chair in Wayne County, Ohio, said such complaints are fairly common. "People get annoyed by the text messages, and the direct mail, and the emails, Deeken said, his phone filled with texts from random conservative groups asking for money. "It is annoying. It annoys me!"

Trump campaign blames Harris for drop-off

Karoline Leavitt, a Trump campaign spokesperson, did not directly respond to the donor drop-off, but blamed the Biden administration and Harris for a bad economy leading people to have less money, something "President Trump completely understands."

Before Trump, Democrats dominated the small-dollar donor playing field, but Trump cut into the advantage in 2016, turning his devoted base into small donations throughout the year. Trump raised \$170

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million from small-dollar donors, about 52% of his total, according to OpenSecrets. The candidate's haul from small donors outpaced the \$164 million that Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton raised from such contributors, a figure that represented just under 30% of her total fundraising. In 2020, Trump continued that fundraising prowess.

The problem this year, said Republican officials and activists in key states, is that the persistent fundraising requests from campaigns and committees have led voters to question whether their money is actually going to Trump. One reason for this issue is major email lists being rented out by smaller campaigns. This means that someone who has signed up to receive emails from Trump, could get emails from a host of Republican candidates, raising skepticism about where their money is actually going.

"It's the total number of texts people are getting and fundraising requests that are coming in. That causes the confusion," said Shannon Burns, a top Republican activist in Ohio and vocal Trump supporter. Burns said donors feel "bombarded" by the often breathless outreach from a range of groups, leading to questions from Trump supporters. Those questions were so frequent, he said, that at one point he began giving out the physical mailing address where a Trump supporter could send a check.

Trump's campaign has tried to stop committees from using his name and likeness in fundraising appeals. In March 2023, the Trump campaign sent Republican digital fundraising vendors a memo that stated the former president "does not consent" to outside groups or candidates using his name or image in fundraising appeals. He also sent a cease and desist letter to the top Republican committees in Washington in 2021, urging them to stop using his name in fundraising appeals.

Still supporting Trump at the ballot box

Trump has experienced spikes in small-dollar fundraising this cycle — like in the days after his felony conviction in May and when a gunman attempted to assassinate the candidate in July. But those jolts have not made up for a steady decline in donations from people like Stephen Buckhalter.

Buckhalter, 78, retired from the insurance industry a year ago and donated \$120 to Trump's campaign in 2022 and 2023. He stopped this year.

"The cost of living has gotten to the point where there is not much left at the end of the month," he said. "When you are paying all this extra money for food and gas and insurance and rent... that doesn't leave a lot of extra money coming in at the end of the month."

When asked if his decision to stop donating indicates he no longer supports Trump, Buckhalter was blunt: "Heck no."

US inflation reaches lowest point in 3 years, though some price pressures remain

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation in the United States dropped last month to its lowest point since it first began surging more than three years ago, adding to a spate of encouraging economic news in the closing weeks of the presidential race.

Consumer prices rose just 2.4% in September from a year earlier, down from 2.5% in August, and the smallest annual rise since February 2021. Measured from month to month, prices increased 0.2% from August to September, the Labor Department reported Thursday, the same as in the previous month.

But excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices, a gauge of underlying inflation, remained elevated in September, driven up by rising costs for medical care, clothing, auto insurance and airline fares. Core prices in September were up 3.3% from a year earlier and 0.3% from August. Economists closely watch core prices, which typically provide a better hint of future inflation.

Alan Detmeister, an economist at UBS Investment Bank, suggested that some items that contributed to higher core inflation last month, notably used cars, may rise again in the coming months, keeping prices a bit elevated. But other items that rose in price in September, like clothing and air fares, are more volatile and should cool soon.

"Things are still gradually coming down, but there is going to be volatility month to month," said Det-

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meister, a former Federal Reserve economist.

Taken as a whole, the September figures show that inflation is steadily easing back to the Fed's 2% target, even if in an uneven pattern. That decline suggests that the Fed will likely keep cutting its benchmark interest rate this year, with two quarter-point reductions in November and December expected by most economists.

On a positive note, apartment rental prices grew more slowly last month, a sign that housing inflation is finally cooling, a long-awaited development that would provide relief to many consumers.

Omair Sharif, founder of Inflation Insights, said that measures of new rents show a steady slowdown, suggesting that the government's gauges of rent should continue to ease over time.

"I think we're on the right path here," Sharif said. "We should see rent cool off quite a bit."

Overall inflation last month was held down by a big drop in gas prices, which fell 4.1% from August to September. Grocery prices jumped 0.4% last month, after roughly a year of mild increases, though they're just 1.3% higher than a year earlier.

Still, food prices have risen nearly 25% from pre-pandemic levels, which has hammered many Americans' budgets and taken on a high profile in the presidential campaign. Trump has often cited the cost of bacon, which soared 30% to a peak of \$7.60 a pound in October 2022, as an example of big increases in the cost of living. Bacon prices have since fallen to \$6.95 but are still elevated.

Restaurant food prices increased 0.3% last month and are up 3.9% in the past year. And clothing prices rose 1.1% from August to September and are up 1.8% from a year ago.

Bryan Tublin, co-founder of Kitava, a casual farm-to-table restaurant in San Francisco, said he has struggled mightily with rising prices for produce, meats and oils for the past three years. Though some of those prices have started to slow, he said, many farmers are still passing on to him their higher costs for things like shipping and labor.

In response, Tublin said, he has changed suppliers in search of cheaper products, substituting a local wild-rice blend for cauliflower rice when cauliflower prices shot higher.

Kitava also started charging extra for beef and other proteins at its two locations.

"I am starting to see signs that our prices are leveling out and the increases are lessening," Tublin said. "There's a little optimism... but it's still very early days."

The improving inflation picture follows a mostly healthy jobs report released last week, which showed that hiring accelerated in September and that the unemployment rate dropped from 4.2% to 4.1%. The government has also reported that the economy expanded at a solid 3% annual rate in the April-June quarter. Growth likely continued at roughly that pace in the just-completed July-September quarter.

Cooling inflation, solid hiring and healthy growth could erode former President Donald Trump's advantage on the economy in the presidential campaign as measured by public opinion polls. In some surveys, Vice President Kamala Harris has pulled even with Trump on the issue of who would best handle the economy, after Trump had decisively led President Joe Biden on the issue.

At the same time, most voters still give the economy relatively poor marks, mostly because of the cumulative rise in prices over the past three years.

For the Fed, last week's much-stronger-than-expected jobs report fueled some concern that the economy might not be cooling enough to slow inflation sufficiently. The central bank reduced its key rate by an out-sized half-point last month, its first rate cut of any size in four years. The Fed's policymakers also signaled that they envisioned two additional quarter-point rate cuts in November and December.

In remarks this week, a slew of Fed officials have said they're still willing to keep cutting their key rate but at a deliberate pace, a signal that any further half-point cuts are unlikely.

The Fed "should not rush to reduce" its benchmark rate "but rather should proceed gradually," Lorie Logan president of the Federal Reserve's Dallas branch, said in a speech Wednesday.

Inflation in the United States and many countries in Europe and Latin America surged in the economic recovery from the pandemic, as COVID closed factories and clogged supply chains. Russia's invasion of Ukraine worsened energy and food shortages, pushing inflation higher. It peaked at 9.1% in the U.S. in June 2022.

Economists at Goldman Sachs projected earlier this week that core inflation will drop to 3% by December 2024. And few analysts expect inflation to surge again unless conflicts in the Middle East worsen dramatically.

Though higher prices have soured many Americans on the economy, wages and incomes are now rising faster than costs and should make it easier for households to adapt. Last month, the Census Bureau reported that inflation-adjusted median household incomes — the level at which half of households are above and half below — rose 4% in 2023, enough to return incomes back to their pre-pandemic peak.

And on Thursday, the Social Security Administration announced that nearly 73 million recipients of Social Security and other benefits will receive a 2.5% cost of living adjustment in January. That is down from a 3.2% increase in 2024 and an outside 8.7% jump the previous year, reflecting an inflation surge that has since subsided.

22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal will retire from tennis after next month's Davis Cup finals

By TALES AZZONI and HOWARD FENDRICH Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Rafael Nadal is retiring from professional tennis at age 38, he announced Thursday, after winning 22 Grand Slam titles — 14 at the French Open — during an unprecedented era he shared with rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

Nadal has competed infrequently the past two seasons because of injuries and said next month's Davis Cup finals will mark his farewell to the sport. He had hip surgery in 2023 and entered just two of the past eight major tournaments.

"The reality is that it has been some difficult years, these last two, especially. I don't think I have been able to play without limitations," Nadal said in a video message. "It is obviously a difficult decision, one that has taken me some time to make. But in this life, everything has a beginning and an end."

Nadal's unrelenting, physical style of play — every point pursued as though it were his last, sprinting and sliding into place for that high-bouncing bullwhip of a lefty forehand — made him one of the greats of the game and the unquestioned King of Clay.

His record 14 French Open championships are more than anyone, man or woman, won at any one of the four major tournaments, a dominance celebrated by a statue of Nadal near the main entrance to the grounds of Roland Garros and in the shadow of its main stadium, Court Philippe Chatrier.

In a result that symbolized where things stood for his body, and career, he exited in the French Open first round this year, a straight-set loss to eventual runner-up Alexander Zverev.

Nadal returned to that site in southwest Paris for the Summer Olympics, where he lost to old rival Djokovic in the second round of singles and reached the quarterfinals of men's doubles with Carlos Alcaraz. Nadal hasn't played since. His goodbye will also come while representing Spain in the Davis Cup at Malaga.

"Your legacy won't be matched," Alcaraz, who is widely seen as Nadal's heir in Spanish tennis, said Thursday. "I have enjoyed you and I will miss you very much when you retire after the Davis Cup."

Soccer greats Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappé were among stars from the sports world also paying tribute to Nadal.

In addition to his French Open triumphs, Nadal won four trophies at the U.S. Open and two apiece at Wimbledon and the Australian Open, giving him a career Grand Slam.

"It is the appropriate time to put an end to a career that has been long and much more successful than I could have ever imagined," Nadal said.

His last pair of major titles arrived in 2022, at Melbourne and Paris, pushing him ahead of Federer, who held the men's record of 20 Grand Slam titles when he announced his retirement at age 41. Federer bid adieu in late 2022 by teaming with Nadal in a doubles match at the Laver Cup.

Both have since been surpassed by Djokovic, 37, who is up to 24 majors.

So much of Nadal's success was seen, fairly or not, through the prism of his encounters with Federer and Djokovic. The tennis world, and plenty outside of it, were consumed with the debate over which was most deserving of the "GOAT" — "Greatest Of All-Time" — moniker. The world, tennis or otherwise, was

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fascinated by their matchups, their differing styles and personalities.

Who among those who witnessed it could possibly forget Nadal vs. Federer in the 2008 Wimbledon final? Or Nadal vs. Djokovic in the 2022 French Open quarterfinals? Or Nadal vs. Djokovic in the 2012 Australian Open final? And so on.

Nadal played Djokovic 60 times, a record for two men in the Open era; Djokovic leads 31-29 overall, while Nadal leads 5-4 in Slam finals.

"You have inspired millions of children to start playing tennis and I think that's probably (the) greatest achievement anyone can wish for," Novak Djokovic said on Instagram. "Your tenacity, dedication, fighting spirit is going to be taught for decades. Your legacy will live forever ... Thank you for pushing me to the very limit so many times in our rivalry that has impacted me the most as a player."

Nadal met Federer 40 times; Nadal led 24-16 overall, including 6-3 in Slam finals.

"Thank you for the unforgettable memories and all your incredible achievements in the game we love," Federer told Nadal via social media.

It's certainly apt that Nadal's last major title came at the French Open (beating Djokovic along the way) two years ago, and while getting painkilling injections for chronic pain in his left foot. He repeatedly dealt with, and frequently overcame, various injury issues over the years, and his 2023 and 2024 seasons were both limited because of hip and abdominal muscle problems.

Nadal hurt his hip flexor during a second-round loss at the Australian Open in January 2023, and wound up missing the rest of the year; there was an operation for that in June.

After briefly making a comeback this January during a tune-up event for the Australian Open, he had to pull out of the year's first major with a torn hip muscle, then was sidelined again until a return on his beloved clay at the Barcelona Open in April.

Dating to late in 2022, when he was beaten in the fourth round at Flushing Meadows by Frances Tiafoe, Nadal is just 14-14, including 12-7 this year.

But his overall resume is unimpeachable: a total of 209 weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings and nearly 18 years' worth of consecutive weeks in the Top 10; 92 singles titles; 1,080-227 win-loss record; just shy of \$135 million in prize money.

"Really, everything I have experienced has been a dream come true," Nadal said. "I leave with the absolute peace of mind of having given my best, of having made an effort in every way."

Han Kang wins the Nobel Prize for literature. She's the first South Korean to do so

By DANIEL NIEMANN, JILL LAWLESS and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — South Korean poet and novelist Han Kang was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature Thursday for a poetic and unsettling body of work that the Nobel committee said "confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life."

A slow-burning international literary star who has won multiple awards in South Korea and Europe, Han is the first Asian woman and the first South Korean writer to win the Nobel literature prize. She was awarded for books, including "The Vegetarian" and "Human Acts," that explore the pain of being human and the scars of Korea's turbulent history.

Nobel literature committee member Anna-Karin Palm said Han writes about "trauma, pain and loss," whether individual or collective, "with the same compassion and care."

"And this, I think, is something that is quite remarkable," Palm said.

Nobel committee chairman Anders Olsson praised Han's "empathy for the vulnerable, often female lives" of her characters.

"She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead," Olsson said.

Han is the second South Korean national to win a Nobel Prize. Late former President Kim Dae-jung won the peace prize in 2000 for his efforts to restore democracy in South Korea during the country's previous

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military rule and improve relations with war-divided rival North Korea.

Speaking to the Swedish Academy by phone, Han said she had just finished having dinner with her son at home in Seoul when she got a call with the news.

She said she was both "honored" and surprised to become South Korea's first Nobel literature laureate. "I grew up with Korean literature, which I feel very close (to)," said Han, whose father and brother are both novelists. "So I hope this news is nice for Korean literature readers and my friends, writers."

As for celebrating the win, she said: "I'm going to have tea with my son and I'll celebrate it quietly tonight."

Han wins the Nobel at a time of growing global influence of South Korean culture, which in recent years has included the success of films like director Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning "Parasite," the Netflix survival drama "Squid Game" and the worldwide fame of K-pop groups like BTS and BLACKPINK.

Han, 53, won the International Booker Prize for fiction translated into English in 2016 for "The Vegetarian," an unsettling novel in which a woman's decision to stop eating meat has devastating consequences.

Accepting that award, Han said writing novels "is a way of questioning for me."

"I just try to complete my questions through the process of my writing and I try to stay in the questions, sometimes painful, sometimes — well — sometimes demanding," she said.

Han made her publishing debut as a poet in 1993; her first short story collection was published in 1995 and her first novel, "Black Deer," in 1998.

Works translated into English include "Greek Lessons" — about the relationship between a woman who can no longer speak and a teacher who is losing his sight — "Human Acts" and "The White Book," a poetic novel that draws on the death of Han's older sister shortly after birth. "The White Book" was an International Booker Prize finalist in 2018.

"Human Acts" — which Olsson, the Nobel committee chair, called a work of "witness literature" — is based on the real-life killing of pro-democracy protesters in Han's home city of Gwangju in 1980. The book won Italy's Malaparte Prize in 2017.

Her most recent novel, "We Do Not Part," is due to be published in English next year. It also confronts a chapter in South Korea's 20th-century history, which saw the country endure war, the division of the Korean peninsula and dictatorship. The novel deals with a 1948-1949 uprising on Jeju, an island south of the Korean mainland in which thousands of people were killed.

Anders Karlsson, a lecturer at London's School of Oriental and African Studies who has translated Han into Swedish, said he was "overjoyed" at the Nobel accolade.

He said Han's "poignant, condensed" prose is able to describe "difficult and dark passages in South Korean history ... in quite open and inviting language that engages and does not deter the reader."

The literature prize has long faced criticism that it is too focused on European and North American writers of style-heavy, story-light prose. It has also been male-dominated — Han is only the 18th woman among its 120 laureates.

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. On Wednesday, three scientists who discovered powerful techniques to decode and even design novel proteins were awarded the chemistry prize.

The Nobel Peace Prize will be announced Friday and the economics award on Monday.

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.

Social Security recipients will get a 2.5% cost-of-living boost in 2025, smaller than in recent past

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of Social Security recipients will get a 2.5% cost-of-living increase to their monthly checks beginning in January, the Social Security Administration announced Thursday.

The cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, for retirees translates to an average increase of more than \$50 for retirees every month, agency officials said.

About 72.5 million people, including retirees, disabled people and children, get Social Security benefit.

But even before the announcement, retirees voiced concern that the increase would not be enough to counter rising costs.

Sherri Myers, an 82-year-old retiree from Pensacola City, Florida, is now hoping to get an hourly job at Walmart to help make ends meet.

"I would like to eat good but I can't. When I'm at the grocery store, I just walk past the vegetables because they are too expensive. I have to be very selective about what I eat — even McDonald's is expensive," she said.

Recipients received a 3.2% increase in their benefits in 2024, after a historically large 8.7% benefit increase in 2023, brought on by record 40-year-high inflation.

The smaller increase for 2025 reflects moderating inflation.

Social Security Commissioner Martin O'Malley told The Associated Press that the upcoming increase will provide a measure of relief for recipients as inflation has cooled and the agency serves a record number of retirees while funding is at a historic low.

His message to those who feel that the adjustment is not enough: "They're not wrong."

"I've heard the stories and it is a struggle for seniors," he said, adding that "in their older years, they have to spend their money on a different array of costs and expenses, including prescription drugs."

He said policies advanced by the Biden-Harris administration should result in many people seeing lower prescription drug costs.

The agency will begin notifying recipients about their new benefit amount by mail starting in early December. Adjusted payments to nearly 7.5 million people receiving Supplemental Security Income will begin on December 31.

The program is financed by payroll taxes collected from workers and their employers and that is slated to increase to \$176,100. The maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll taxes was \$168,600 for 2024, up from \$160,200 in 2023.

The announcement comes as the national social insurance plan faces a severe financial shortfall in the coming years.

The annual Social Security and Medicare trustees report released in May said the program's trust fund will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2035. If the trust fund is depleted, the government will be able to pay only 83% of scheduled benefits, the report said.

AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins said in a statement that "there is more we must do to ensure older Americans can continue to count on Social Security. AARP continues to call on Congress to take bipartisan action to strengthen Social Security and secure a long-term solution that Americans can rely on."

The presidential candidates, Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump, have presented dueling plans on how they would strengthen Social Security.

AARP conducted interviews with both Harris and Trump in late August and asked how the candidates would protect the Social Security Trust Fund.

Harris said she would make up for the shortfall by "making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share in taxes and use that money to protect and strengthen Social Security for the long haul."

Trump said "we'll protect it with growth. I don't want to do anything having to do with increasing age. I won't do that. As you know, I was there for four years and never even thought about doing it. I'm going to do nothing to Social Security."

O'Malley said there is a push for the Social Security Administration to use a different index to calculate the cost-of-living increase that measures price changes based on the spending patterns of older people on things such as health care, food and medicine costs.

The COLA is now calculated according to the Consumer Price Index, a market basket of consumer goods and services. O'Malley said lawmakers who are advocating for a shift "are advancing a very sound policy."

Bacon hogs the spotlight in election debates, but reasons for its sizzling inflation are complex

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

She blames greedy companies for price-gouging. He blames the Biden administration's economic policies. Kamala Harris and Donald Trump agree on one thing: Tapping into sour consumer sentiment about high grocery prices is one way to court voters.

Bacon prices have been a particular focus for Trump. He mentioned them in his Sept. 10 debate with Harris and again a week later during an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"Things are not going, right now, very well for the consumer," Trump said during the interview. "Bacon is up five times."

Trump's math is wrong, but bacon has seen some sizzling price increases. According to federal data, U.S. bacon prices peaked in October 2022 at \$7.60 a pound, up 30% from October 2019.

In September, bacon averaged \$6.95 a pound, 25% higher than five years ago. That's in line with a 29% increase in overall food prices over that period, according to the Labor Department. Still, September bacon prices were 1.8% lower than they were a year ago.

Prices for bacon are always volatile. Among other things, they're subject to weather, animal disease, feed costs, seasonal demand and, according to Harris and other critics, some price gouging by giant food conglomerates.

Bacon prices typically go up in the summer when Americans have a hankering for BLTs, for example. A president's policies generally have little direct impact on the prices consumers pay for bacon or food overall.

Prices for not just bacon but groceries in general — and most other products — began surging in 2021 as the economy rebounded with unexpected speed from the pandemic recession, causing snarled supply chains and goods shortages. The price spikes worsened later after Russia invaded Ukraine. Food costs jumped across the world, not just in the United States.

Though U.S. inflation has tumbled from its peak in mid-2022, average food prices remain elevated. The impact of those price spikes, though, has been cushioned in part by a comparable rise in average wages.

Here are some factors that have made it more expensive to bring home the bacon.

COVID-19 spread quickly in meat processing

Workers stand close together on production lines in the U.S. meat processing industry. Big bacon producers like Smithfield Foods and Tyson Foods temporarily closed plants in the spring of 2020 after thousands of workers got sick and some died. While plants were closed, millions of pigs got too big to be processed and were culled instead, leading to shortages just as home-bound Americans were shopping for more breakfast bacon, said David Ortega, a professor of food economics at Michigan State University.

Demand from China jumped

China's growing demand in 2020 contributed to lower pork supplies at home. U.S. pork exports to China jumped 75% in 2020 as Beijing scrambled to replace hogs that were lost to an outbreak of African swine fever, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Over the course of 2020, U.S. bacon prices rose 6%.

Meat processors faced higher costs

Meat companies paid out pandemic bonuses and invested in protective gear in order to get plants running again. Tyson Foods required all its 139,000 workers to receive COVID vaccines.

By the end of 2021, Tyson said it had spent more than \$800 million on bonuses, vaccine clinics and other

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COVID-related measures. It was also paying more for packaging and transportation in a supply chain that had been mangled by COVID. To recoup those costs, the company jacked up the prices of pork products by 25% in its 2021 fiscal year.

Labor costs took a toll

After risking their lives to keep working during the pandemic, many workers sought better pay and benefits. In June 2021, unionized workers at a Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, threatened to strike after contract negotiations broke down. The coronavirus killed four workers at the plant and infected nearly 1,300.

Smithfield Foods, which is owned by the Chinese pork company WH Group, eventually agreed to higher wages and \$520 bonuses for its Sioux Falls workers. U.S. bacon prices rose 24% over the course of 2021.

Moscow's war against Ukraine sent prices up

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 caused global wheat and corn prices to surge. That made it costlier to raise hogs. According to Iowa State University, feed costs rose 24% between 2021 and 2022. Early in 2022, Brazil-based JBS, another major U.S. pork processor, said it was raising prices to cover the higher cost of animal feed.

Did corporate profits play a role?

Harris has proposed a ban on "price gouging" by food companies, arguing that some of the companies kept raising prices long after pandemic-related supply problems dissipated so they could boost their profits.

There's no strict definition of "price gouging," though it generally refers to sharp price increases that companies impose after a supply disruption. Three big bacon producers — Tyson, Hormel and JBS — reported record sales in 2022, when bacon prices hit a peak of \$7.61 a pound.

Eventually, those higher prices reduced demand. In the year ending Oct. 1, 2022, U.S. consumers bought 8% fewer packages of bacon than in the prior year, according to Nielsen. By the end of the 2022, prices were falling.

Over the course of 2022, U.S. bacon prices fell 3.7% to \$6.95 a pound.

Animal welfare law had an effect

In 2018, California voters approved a law requiring more space for breeding pigs, egg-laying hens and veal calves. Producers in other states must meet those standards if they want to sell pork, eggs or veal in California. The pork industry sued, supported by the Biden administration. But the U.S. Supreme Court declined to overturn the law, which took effect on July 1, 2023. Because not all pork producers are meeting the standards, less bacon is available to Californians, thereby driving up prices.

Daniel Sumner, a professor of research and agricultural economics at the University of California, Davis, estimates that prices for pork products will be 7% to 10% higher in California over the long term because of the law.

The election raises uncertainty

Joe Glauber, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and a former economist for the USDA, said food price inflation was a global issue over the past few years, not one caused by the Biden administration. Past run-ups in food prices, he noted, have occurred regardless of which party was in office.

One wild card this time is Trump's promise to impose a 20% tariff on everything the U.S. imports. Chad Hart, an agricultural economist at Iowa State University, noted that the U.S. generally exports between 20% and 25% of its pork, and other countries would likely retaliate by imposing tariffs on U.S. pork. If that happened, more pork might remain in the U.S., which would cause bacon prices to fall. Yet the price of dozens of other imported products would rise.

"If you want a BLT, the bacon may be a little cheaper, but the lettuce and tomato will cost a fair amount more," Hart said.

Harris has denounced Trump's proposed sweeping tariffs, though she has supported targeted tariffs on Chinese imports.

Harris has vowed to crack down on unfair mergers that give big food companies too much pricing

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power. She's also said she would investigate and prosecute price-fixing, an ongoing issue in the heavily consolidated meat industry. McDonald's recently sued four big beef companies, including Tyson and JBS, accusing them of price-fixing.

Today in History: October 11, Anita Hill testifies at Clarence Thomas hearings

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Oct. 11, the 285th day of 2024. There are 81 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 11, 1991, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Anita Hill accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment; Thomas re-appeared before the panel to denounce the proceedings as a "high-tech lynching."

Also on this date:

In 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered all the city's Asian students segregated into their own school. (The order was later rescinded at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt, who in exchange promised to curb future Japanese immigration to the United States.)

In 1968, Apollo 7, the first manned Apollo mission, was launched with astronauts Wally Schirra (shih-RAH'), Donn Fulton Eisele and R. Walter Cunningham aboard.

In 1984, Challenger astronaut Kathryn D. Sullivan became the first American woman to walk in space as she and fellow Mission Specialist David C. Leestma spent 3 1/2 hours outside the shuttle.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev opened two days of talks in Reykjavik, Iceland, concerning arms control and human rights.

In 1987, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was first displayed, during the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on the National Mall.

In 2017, the Boy Scouts of America announced that it would admit girls into the Cub Scouts starting the following year and establish a new program for older girls based on the Boy Scout curriculum.

In 2021, Jon Gruden resigned as coach of the Las Vegas Raiders following reports about messages he wrote years earlier that used offensive terms to refer to Blacks, gays and women.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry is 97. Actor Amitabh Bachchan is 82. Singer Daryl Hall (Hall and Oates) is 78. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington, is 74. Actor David Morse is 71. Football Hall of Famer Steve Young is 63. Actor Joan Cusack is 62. Actor Jane Krakowski is 56. Rapper MC Lyte is 54. Actor Emily Deschanel is 48. Actor Michelle Trachtenberg is 39. Golfer Michelle Wie is 35. Rapper Cardi B is 32. NFL linebacker T.J. Watt is 30.