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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

**T
R
U
S
T**

Take one day at a time.
Hebrews 13:15

Remember all things work together for good.
Romans 8:28

Under no circumstances should you worry
Phillipines 4:6

Start everyday with prayer and thanksgiving
1 Thess 5:16-18

The Lord will never leave you or forsake you
Hebrews 13:15

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom! *COLOSSIANS 3:17*

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.

Peace Prize Winner

A Japanese anti-nuclear weapons advocacy group—made up of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki—was awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize yesterday, capping off a week of recognitions in physics, literature, and more. The group is the first Japanese recipient since 1974 to receive the Peace Prize.

The organization, Nihon Hidankyo, was founded 11 years after the end of World War II as a grassroots movement to help support roughly 650,000 survivors of the 1945 US bombings in Japan, who suffered radiation exposure and long-term health consequences. As of March, around 106,000 survivors, known as hibakusha (or “bomb-affected people”), have been registered with the Japanese government, with an average age of 85 years.

Next year marks 80 years since the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which ultimately forced Japan to surrender and ended World War II. Roughly 140,000 people were killed as a result of Aug. 6, 1945, when the US dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, and another 70,000 were killed three days later when a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences will be announced Monday.

Hurricane Milton death toll rises to 16, with 2 million still without power.

President Joe Biden is expected to travel to Florida tomorrow to visit areas affected by Hurricane Milton. Federal personnel on the ground have so far assisted with over 4,000 rescues and delivered roughly 2.8 million meals to people. Towns in northeast Florida remain under a coastal flood advisory, while schools in 19 districts across the state reopened Friday.

Over 70,000 new RNA viruses discovered thanks to AI model.

Researchers found 70,500 previously unknown RNA viruses using an AI model that combines machine learning with protein structure prediction to identify viral sequences in genomic data. The breakthrough not only reveals an array of unique viruses, including some found in extreme environments, but also sheds light on AI’s potential in exploring the “dark matter” of the RNA virus universe. The findings could also aid in understanding disease origins and microbial evolution.

One person dead, 23 rescued after elevator mishap at Colorado mine.

The group of people was trapped 1,000 feet underground for about six hours after an elevator malfunctioned at the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine in Cripple Creek, about 50 miles west of Colorado Springs. The 1890s gold mine has been inactive since 1961 and has since been a tourist attraction. Four were injured, while the person who died was a tour guide.

Canada to fully cover costs of contraception and diabetes drugs.

Under legislation passed by Canada’s parliament, the government will cover the costs of contraception and diabetes medications for citizens without drug plan coverage and out-of-pocket expenses for those with coverage. The initiative is part of a broader plan to develop a publicly funded national pharmacare program. Roughly 9 million Canadian women and 3.7 million Canadians living with diabetes are estimated to receive help.

Comet last seen in Stone Age to make closest flyby to Earth today.

The Oort Cloud comet was discovered last year and is believed to orbit the sun roughly every 80,000 years. It is set to make a close approach to Earth today, flying by about 44 million miles away. The comet is about 2 miles wide; its trail of dust and gases is expected to be visible to the naked eye, according to NASA.



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

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Awards presented at Lake Region Marching Festival

The Lake Region Marching Festival was held Friday in Groton. The following awards were presented: Combined: Aberdeen Roncalli had 956 points for Band of Distinction, Langford Area had 913 points for Band of Merit and Ipswich had 912 points for Band of Honor.

In the high school division, Great Plains Lutheran had 856 points for Band of Distinction and Northwestern had 841 points for Band of Merit.

In the middle school, Milbank had 636 points for Band of Distinction and Simmons & Holgate had 606 points for Band of Merit.

In other awards, the Emerald Regiment (T.F. Riggs, Pierre) had best percussion, Great Plains Lutheran had best winds, Langford Area had best drum major, Aberdeen Roncalli was the grand champion, and there was a three-way tie for best color guard with Aberdeen Roncalli, Ipswich and Northwestern.

Sixteen bands participated in this year's festival. The Groton bands did not compete in the competition since they hosted the event.

The event was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Avantara Groton, Bary Keith at, BK Custom T's & More, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Chamber, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency, Lori's Pharmacy, Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc., Rix Farms/R&M Farms, S & S Lumber, The Meat House and the Weismantel Insurance Agency of Columbia



The Groton Area Combined Marching Band is pictured above and the middle school marching band is pictured below. (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



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Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

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



Visit the Campaign Site
ManhartForHouse.com



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 1

facebook.com/ManhartLogan | ManhartForHouse.com

General Election - Nov. 5
Absentee Voting has begun

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NSU Volleyball

No. 21 Wolves Drop Weekend Opener to No. 13 Golden Bears

St. Paul, Minn. – The No. 21 Northern State University volleyball team fell to No. 13 Concordia-St. Paul on the road Friday evening. The Wolves struggled to find a rhythm offensively, hitting just .059 in the match with 26 kills.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 0, CSP 3

Records: NSU 11-3 (3-3 NSIC), CSP 12-4 (7-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 313

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Golden Bears took the match with set scores of 25-20, 25-19, and 25-14

Northern notched 26 kills, 26 assists, six blocks, two aces, and 61 digs, while Concordia tallied 47 kills, 44 assists, seven blocks, six aces, and 67 digs

Hanna Thompson led the team with eight kills, followed by Natalia Szybinska with seven

Abby Meister and Keri Walker led the defense with 18 and 11 digs apiece, while Walker added 21 assists and five blocks

Victoria Persha led the team at the net with six blocks and recorded one ace alongside Mia Hinsz and

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Keri Walker: 21 assists, 11 digs, 5 blocks

Hanna Thompson: 8 kills, 3 digs, 1 block

Abby Meister: 18 digs

Victoria Persha: 6 blocks, 3 kills

UP NEXT

The Wolves remain on the road this evening at Winona State. First serve is set for 5 p.m. against the Warriors.

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

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A lilac bush apparently does not know what season it is as it's blooming right now. The flowers are also attracting bees. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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

October 15, 2024 8:45 A.M.

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

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Moment of Silence in Remembrance of former U.S. Senator Tim Johnson
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Opportunity of Public Comment
5. First Reading of the following Ordinances:
 - a. Ord. #279 – Rezone
 - b. Ord. #280 – Rezone
 - c. Ord. #281 – Rezone
 - d. Ord. #282 - Rezone
6. Approve the 2025 Fairboard Appointments
7. Declare Sheriff's Office Taser Equipment Listed as Surplus
8. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of October 8, 2024
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Request
 - e. Claim Assignment
9. Other Business
10. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
11. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

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

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

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

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

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

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

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

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

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

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

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting October 15, 2024 – 7:00 AM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of September 9, 2024 school board meetings as drafted.
2. Approval of September 2024 District bills for payment.
3. Approve Open Enrollment #25-18.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Groton Football Field Update – Tom Woods
2. Program Overview Presentations
 - a. K-12 Special Education...J. Erdmann, M. Serr, C. Weisenburger, C. Duerre, S. Kurtz, T. Peterson, R. Fuhrman
 - b. K-5 Title/Rtl...A. Schuring, L. Grieve
3. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
4. Approval of September 2024 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
5. Approval of September 2024 School Transportation Report.
6. Approval of September 2024 School Lunch Report.
7. Second reading and adoption of Federal Grants Manual.
8. Second reading and adoption of recommended policy changes: DJB Petty Cash Accounts (Amendment)
9. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Authorize the Business Manager to create custodial accounts for Cross Country, Sunshine Fund, School Store, Teacher Scholarship, and MS/HS Lounge.
2. Approve closing Fund 31 (Bond) and transferring any future delinquent taxes collected to Fund 21.
3. Approve setting unemployment fund balance to \$12,000.
4. First reading of recommended policy changes JFB Education of Homeless Children (amendment), JFB-R(1) Education of Homeless Children – Dispute Resolution Process (new), JFB-E(1) Education of Homeless Children – Dispute Resolution Appeal to the Superintendent (new), JFB-E(2) Education of Homeless Children – Dispute Resolution Appeal to the School Board (new)
5. Appoint delegate to ASBSD Delegate Assembly – November 22, 2024.
6. Approve request from James Valley Thunder for use of District facilities for summer 2025.
7. Approve Sourcewell bus bid for FY2026.
8. Consider Amendment to 2024-2025 School Calendar.
9. Approve hiring Terri Harry, part-time student OST worker.
10. Approve hiring Jordan Carson, Assistant Boys Basketball Coach.
11. Approve resignation from Aleshia Armbright, Special Education Paraprofessional.

ADJOURN



Gretchen Dinger

Dinger named National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalist

Groton Area High School is excited to announce that senior Gretchen Dinger has been named a National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalist. This prestigious honor places her among the top 16,000 high school students nationwide, recognizing her outstanding academic achievements and commitment to excellence.

Gretchen earned this distinction through her exceptional performance on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). As a semifinalist, she is now eligible to compete for a spot as a finalist and for the opportunity to earn one of the approximately 7,140 National Merit Scholarships that will be awarded in the spring of 2025.

The National Merit Scholarship Program honors students who show exemplary academic performance and potential for success in rigorous college studies. Gretchen's semifinalist status demonstrates her strong work ethic and dedication to her studies.

National Merit Scholarship finalists will be announced in February 2025, and scholarship recipients will be notified starting in April 2025.



The Groton Area cheerleaders cheer on the Tiger football team Friday in Sisseton. (Photo by

Jeslyn Kosel)

Tigers wins share of NEC title with win over Sisseton

Groton Area scored five touchdowns in the second quarter to beat Sisseton in football action played Friday in Sisseton, 47-0. Mobridge-Pollock stunned and upset Clark/Willow Lake, 21-0, handing the Cyclones their first loss which creates a two-way tie for first in the Northeast Conference with Groton Area and Clark/Willow Lake.

Groton Area scored on its first drive that went 60 yards in eight plays with three first downs in 3:30 as Brevin Flihs crossed the line with a one yard run at the 8:37 mark of the first quarter. Joao Nunes kicked the PAT and it was 7-0.

Penalties haunted the Tiger second drive and ended up turning the ball over on downs at fourth and 25. Sisseton

was unable to get a first down in the first quarter and the score remained 7-0 going into the second quarter.

Groton's next scoring drive would start late in the first quarter at the Redmen 33 yard line and would score with 54 seconds gone in the second quarter on a Korbin Kucker to Christian Ehresmann pass play for three yards. Joao Nunes would kick the PAT and it was 14-0.

Sisseton ended up punting on fourth and 17, putting the Tigers on the Redmen 38 yard line. Three plays and three first downs later the Tigers would score on a Korbin Kucker 12 yard run. The PAT kick by Joao Nunes was good and it was 21-0 with nine minutes left in the half.

Sisseton's next drive was stopped and the Redmen punted on fourth and 25. Groton started at the 20 yard line of Sisseton and on the first play, Christian Ehresmann would score on a 20 yard pass play from Korbin Kucker. Joao Nunes kicked the PAT and it was 28-0 with 3:01 left in the half.

Sisseton would fumble the ball and Korbin Kucker would pick up the loose ball and would dash 18 yards for the return. Joao Nunes kicked the PAT and was 35-0 with 3:01 left in the half.

Sisseton, still unable to get a first down in the first half, ended up punting and the Tigers were set up on the Redmen 44 yard line. On the next play, Korbin Kucker would connect with Taylor Diegel for a 44 yard touchdown pass play. The PAT kick was no good and it was 41-0 at half time.

Groton Area would put in the younger players in the second half. Sisseton was have two first downs in the second half and Groton Area would score just once. Groton Area would score with 6:50 left in the game on a Bradyn Small pass play to Caden McInerney for 27 yards. The PAT kick was no good and the



Taylor Diegel ended up doing a little dance back and forth trying to avoid the defense. He almost scored but was brought down at the one yard line. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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final score was 47-0.

First downs: Groton Area 25, Sisseton 2.

Rushing: Groton Area: 25 for 172 yards (Skyler Godel 10-90, Ryder Schelle 1-4, Brevin Flihs 3-18, 1 touchdown; Korbin Kucker 7-45, 2 touchdowns; Keegen Tracy 1-1, Christian Ehresmann 3-14). Sisseton: 21-39 (Boe Iverson 9-39, Hayden Hellwig 2-(-13), Taylor Snaza 5-6, Bremer Despiegler 2-7, Jackson Wegener 3-0).

Passing: Groton Area: Korbin Kucker completed 7 of 14 for 140 yards, 2 touchdowns; Brayden Small completed two of two for 40 yards, 1 touchdown. Sisseton: Jackson Wegener completed 1 of 10 for minus 1 yard, 2 interceptions.

Receiving: Groton Area: Christian Ehresmann 3-38, 2 touchdowns; Brevin Flihs 1-31; Keegen Tracy 1-9; Teylor Diegel 2-62, 1 touchdown; Caden McInerney 1-27, 1 touchdown. Sisseton: Gage Hanson 1 for minus 1 yard.

Fumbles: Groton had 2 lost 1. Sisseton had 1, lost 1.

Penalties: Groton: 6 for 45 yards. Sisseton: 9 for 80 yards.

Defensive Leaders: Groton Area: Christian Ehresmann 6 tackles, Tucker Hardy 5 tackles, Caden McInerney and Caleb Mertz each had 4 tackles Teylor Diegel and Lincoln Krause each had an interception. Sisseton: Taylor Snaza and Hayden Hellwig each had 7 tackles and Boe Iverson and Justin Iverson each had 5 tackles.

Record: Groton Area: 5-2 (NEC: 5-1). Sisseton: 0-7 (NEC: 0-4).

Next Games: Groton Area: Friday hosts Baltic. Sisseton: host Aberdeen Roncalli.

The JV football game scheduled for Tuesday with Sisseton has been cancelled.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt from Groton Ford, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover. Justin Olson provided the play-by-play and Jeslyn Kosel operated the camera was in charge of the technology.



Korbin Kucker gets the ball and is ready to throw it down field. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

- Paul Kosel



'People need a choice:' Democrat Sheryl Johnson's improbable dream

By STU WHITNEY
South Dakota News Watch

BURKE, S.D. – On a September afternoon in this South Dakota ranch town not far from the Nebraska border, Sheryl Johnson sidled down Main Street.

Burke's commercial center is a sea of pavement dotted with pickup trucks, a post office, the weekly newspaper and Cahoy's Kitchen, a relatively upscale eatery where Johnson, the Democratic nominee for U.S. House in South Dakota, scheduled a meet-and-greet.

"We sort of had to set it up last-minute," explained the 61-year-old Johnson, who saw a slow trickle of visitors at Cahoy's before deciding to get out and explore the town of about 570 residents.

The stroll was not without challenges for a Sioux Falls Democrat making a stop in Gregory County, a staunchly conservative

hunting hotbed that gave Donald Trump 77% of the presidential vote in 2016 and 78% in 2020.

Johnson, an overwhelming underdog against three-term Republican incumbent Dusty Johnson, explained to several Burke residents that she's a former GOP voter who grew up in rural northeast Iowa before moving to Sioux Falls to raise a family.

She picked beans and pulled corn on her grandparents' Iowa farm and learned the value of hard work, she told them, adding that she believes in limited government and a strong Southern border, not your normal progressive campaign planks.

She made it clear, while handing out "SD Mom for Congress" materials, that she's running as a Democrat



Democratic U.S. House candidate Sheryl Johnson stands on Main Street in Burke, S.D., during a campaign stop on Sept. 18, 2024. The 61-year-old former Sioux Falls School District employee is running against Republican incumbent Dusty Johnson. (Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota

News Watch)

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but considers herself an American first.

'Getting harder and harder to relate'

Some of the folks she encountered on Main Street handed back campaign cards without a glance. Others nodded politely but declined an invitation to attend the meet-and-greet.

Then Johnson entered First Fidelity Bank and made her way to George Kenzy's corner office, where the conversation picked up.

Kenzy is not only the bank president but also father-in-law to former Democratic state legislator Billie Sutton, who lost a narrow race for governor to Kristi Noem in 2018, the last year a South Dakota Democrat ran a competitive statewide campaign.

Sutton, who grew up in Burke and owns a ranch with a view of the Missouri River, works at the bank along with his wife Kelsea, Kenzy's daughter. They have three sons, including 2-year-old twins, and hosted a fundraising event for Sheryl Johnson later in the day.

George Kenzy greeted Sheryl in his bank office, decorated with buffalo artwork, a Crazy Horse portrait and a framed vintage rifle. He was asked about the difficulty of the South Dakota Democratic Party gaining traction among voters in rural areas.

It hasn't won a statewide election since 2008.

"This is a Republican state, and you're out here with very conservative folks," George Kenzy said, standing behind his desk. "They don't go for much, but they all have pretty good heads on their shoulders. And Sioux Falls is turning, well, it's nowhere as big as New York or Los Angeles, but it's turning pretty blue. It's getting harder and harder to relate."

Sheryl told him that she's separating herself from that "urban liberal" persona, highlighting her background as a Navy wife whose husband, Peter, was deployed during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s Gulf War. She lived at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina with their young daughter, and they had three more daughters after they returned to the Upper Midwest.

She said that her campaign travels have taught her that people are not quite as far apart as they seem.

Kenzy responded by holding his hands apart, then slowly bringing them together to demonstrate that both sides need to approach the middle before Democrats will find a foothold to relive the days when Tom Daschle, Tim Johnson and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin all represented South Dakota in Washington.

Raising money has been a challenge

Sheryl Johnson is not naïve about her odds, which most campaign pundits rank as somewhere between slim and non-existent. In the jargon of political prognostication, South Dakota's lone congressional seat is safe and solid red.

She ran a competent 2022 campaign for state Senate in Republican-heavy District 11 but lost with 45% of the vote, following up unsuccessful House bids in 2020 and 2018. Raising \$200,000 has been a struggle during this U.S. House campaign, while her future-focused Republican opponent is sitting on an overall war chest of about \$5 million.

So daunting is her mission that when she approached her husband about breaking her promise to him



"People need a choice. And I'm just fed up with Washington. They are getting nothing done. They're fighting all the time. They're not willing to compromise. And I think it's time to try something different."

South Dakota U.S. House candidate Sheryl Johnson

to never run for office again, his response was, "I suppose you can try, but you'll never beat Dusty."

The quest is about more than winning or losing to Sheryl Johnson, who is retired after working as an education assistant at Roosevelt High School for 13 years and running a small business. After voting Republican for more than three decades, she changed her affiliation to Independent and then Democrat a decade ago after concluding that the GOP didn't align with her "values about caring about people."

When she spoke with South Dakota Democratic Party executive director Dan Ahlers about running for U.S. House, she made her intentions clear.

"I told Dan, 'All right, I'm going to run on one condition: I'm running to win,'" she recalled. "I think they were just looking for somebody to put a name on the ballot."

At a bare minimum, said Jon Schaff, a political science professor at Northern State University, it was important to avoid the optics of allowing another South Dakota Republican to run unopposed by a major party for U.S. House or Senate.

"If the Democrats want to be taken seriously they must reach the lowest rung of the ladder, namely running candidates for statewide races," he said. "I recognize that candidate recruitment for Democrats is very difficult as few want to volunteer for what is most likely a losing effort, but it's where you have to start."

Dusty Johnson, first elected to Congress in 2018, has not faced Democratic opposition in the past two general elections, running instead against Libertarian candidates and winning by margins of 55 and 62 points.

"People need a choice," said Sheryl Johnson. "And I'm just fed up with Washington. They are getting nothing done. They're fighting all the time. They're not willing to compromise. And I think it's time to try something different."



U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, a Republican running for re-election in 2024, speaks at a pinning ceremony for veterans at the Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Sept. 16, 2024. (Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

"I think they were just looking for somebody to put a name on the ballot."

Abortion differences help define race

Like her opponent, Sheryl Johnson has an unassuming appearance that comes off as more academic than adversarial. Both candidates are mentally nimble enough to stay on message and occasionally poke fun at themselves.

The difference is that the Republican incumbent is an experienced politician with a wealth of resources, experience and institutional support, while Sheryl has never held public office, employs a skeleton campaign staff and lacks the money for large-scale advertising.

She sees her role as filling a void in a single-party state at a critical time in South Dakota's history. That means trying to make a difference, one town at a time.

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When the candidates ran into each other in August at the Turner County Fair in Parker, the Republican incumbent, a tireless campaigner by reputation, shook her hand and paid her a compliment.

"He said, 'Oh, wow, you're really out here working hard. We see you all over the place,'" recalled Sheryl Johnson. "And I said, 'Well, Dusty, we're trying to beat you.'"

That means engaging her opponent on wedge issues, with abortion among the most prominent. The candidates will spar on that and other topics in an Oct. 15 debate to be televised on South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

This year's ballot includes Amendment G, which would enshrine the right to abortion in the state constitution and supersede a 2005 state trigger law that took effect when Roe vs. Wade was overturned.

Sheryl Johnson cited personal experience in lamenting South Dakota's law, which makes it a felony for anyone "who administers to any pregnant female or prescribes or procures for any pregnant female" a means for an abortion, except to save the life of the mother. South Dakota is one of 10 states that has banned abortion and does not include exceptions for rape and incest.

"Voters can weigh in, but I honestly think it's a federal issue because women's rights shouldn't depend on what state you live in," she said. "I had a pregnancy years ago and went in for my 4-month checkup to see my ultrasound and it had fetal abnormalities. There was no way it was going to survive, so I had to have a D&C (a procedure to remove tissue from inside the uterus). If that happened to my daughters today, they'd have to go to another state because South Dakota doesn't allow you to end a pregnancy unless the mother's life is in immediate danger."

Dusty Johnson told News Watch that he will respect the decision of South Dakotans on Amendment G but that he will be voting against the measure.

"I know that there are deeply held opinions on both sides of the issue, but I believe that that baby in the womb is a life worthy of protection," he said.

Asked for his opinion on South Dakota's law not including exceptions for rape and incest, Dusty Johnson said such cases are rare and are not his main determinant when weighing the issue.

"I think a lot of people get understandably focused on the exceptions," he said. "I'm interested in saving babies, and so, as a voter, I have voted for (South Dakota) ballot initiatives that restricted abortion and had exceptions, and I voted for abortion restrictions that did not have exceptions. To me, I think it's most important to focus on the 99% of the issue, rather than the 1%."

Democrat embraces landowner rights

Sheryl Johnson's campaign travels have included community meetings on landowner rights, specifically the effort to overturn Referred Law 21, passed in 2024 as part of a legislative package on potential carbon pipeline negotiations.

Summit Carbon Solutions is seeking regulatory approval for a pipeline that would carry liquified carbon dioxide gas from more than 50 ethanol plants in South Dakota and four other states to be stored deep underground in North Dakota.

Sponsors of Referred Law 21 trumpeted a series of landowner protections for potential negotiations



Democratic U.S. House candidate Sheryl Johnson speaks with customers at Cahoy's Kitchen in Burke, S.D., during a campaign stop on Sept. 18, 2024. She's running against Republican incumbent Rep. Dusty Johnson. (Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

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between the Iowa-based company and landowners, including mandated payments per linear foot and minimum depth requirements.

Opponents said the legislation paved the way for Public Utilities Commission approval of the pipeline by usurping the regulatory authority of counties.

The Democratic U.S. House candidate sees it as an issue where she can score bipartisan points by emphasizing rural interests against the Republican establishment, which she views as too connected to the ethanol industry to be objective on the issue.

Her campaign manager, James Jacobson, was listed as one of the organizers of a "No on Referred Law 21" meeting she attended in Platte in September.

"There are a lot of Trump voters at these meetings who would normally never vote for me," said Sheryl Johnson. "But in talking with them, some will support me because I support this issue and can speak from experience. I had an uncle who took over my grandparents' dairy farm and was injured in a tragic farming accident when he was 32. It left him blind and brain-injured and they had to sell off all the cows and eventually they lost the farm. So I understand that relationship to the land, and to think that some private company wants the power to force these pipelines on people and maybe get the power of eminent domain, that is just so unfair to me."

Dusty Johnson characterized Referred Law 21 as a "mixed bag" with concerns about preemption of local governments but also potentially higher payments for landowners. He added that his opponent is trying to use a polarizing state issue for political leverage rather than focusing on national topics more suited to a U.S. House campaign.

"I would observe that Sheryl Johnson spends a lot of time talking about hot-button state issues because hot-button national topics like inflation and the border crisis are not issues that South Dakotans agree with her on," Dusty Johnson told News Watch.

Dormant Farm Bill draws controversy

Another point of contention is the Farm Bill, currently in limbo in Congress until after the election, a delay that Sheryl Johnson attributed to the inefficiency of Republican House leadership.

The legislation was criticized by the nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for curtailing potential funding increases in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) over the next decade, "weakening SNAP's effectiveness in reducing food insecurity and poverty."

Dusty Johnson called those claims inaccurate, saying that the Farm Bill locks in SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, funding based on inflationary increases and merely prevents an administration from unilaterally imposing increases at a higher rate.

"Clearly, we're a rich enough country that we need to have robust programs to make sure that nutritional needs are met," said Dusty Johnson, who serves on the House Agriculture Committee. "And that's why I was happy that in the Farm Bill, we locked in increases for SNAP over the entire period of the bill."

His opponent called for more flexibility of spending to tackle the problem of child hunger. Feeding South Dakota, the state's largest hunger relief organization, estimates that about 106,000 people in South Dakota, more than 11%, are food insecure. Of that number, 1 out of 6 are children.

"To me, there's a big difference between just spending money as an expense and spending money as an investment," Sheryl Johnson said. "I believe we need to invest in the next generation. I worked at Roosevelt High School and saw kids coming to school without breakfast. They have a hard time learning, they're not focused. We need to make sure we're adequately addressing these problems before they get worse."

Republican's future plans questioned

Sheryl Johnson took a brief respite from the campaign trail when her father, Gene Knoploh, died Aug. 15 at age 84 in Iowa. The banker and part-time farmer was a stoic presence in her life whose homespun wisdom she likened to the old EF Hutton commercials.

When he spoke, people listened.

"He was a staunch Republican, but he gave me \$500 (for the campaign), and my parents didn't have

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a lot of money," Sheryl said. "He was very wise and raised us to believe that if you work hard and treat people right, you can do anything in this world."

That includes running against Dusty Johnson, a political wunderkind who grew up in Pierre, was elected to the Public Utilities Commission at age 28, served as former governor Dennis Daugaard's chief of staff and is seeking a fourth term in Congress at 48.

Sheryl Johnson chastised her opponent for raising money with the implicit goal of running for governor in 2026. She compared it to when Noem announced she was running for governor six days after her 2016 re-election to the House, beating a deadline to transfer campaign funds.

"Dusty's a nice guy and he's done some good things, but he's more focused on running for governor now," Sheryl Johnson said. "Why should we elect somebody and let him have a taxpayer salary for two years while he spends that time raising money and running for governor?"

'The proof is in the pudding'

Dusty Johnson bristled at that criticism, citing his work on agricultural trade in Congress and efforts to strengthen the review process for purchases of U.S. farmland by the Chinese Communist Party.

His pragmatic approach as chairman of the Republican Main Street Caucus has earned him a seat at the table for often-testy negotiations over funding packages, with Johnson seeking bipartisan agreement to avoid shutdowns.

"The proof is in the pudding," he said. "I'm consistently ranked as one of the most effective members of the House, particularly in areas that really impact South Dakota. And I think anybody who knows me knows that I am driven every single day to be effective. No matter what the future holds, nothing's going to change that."

The man that House Agriculture Chairman Glenn Thompson calls "whip smart" and a "consensus builder" has been a force in South Dakota politics for nearly 20 years and will likely remain so for at least 20 more.

That reality wasn't on the mind of Sheryl Johnson and her staff as they left Cahoy's Kitchen in Burke and piled into a Chevy Equinox with a "SD Mom for Congress" sticker on the door. They were bound for the next town, with the conviction that fighting for every vote is worth it, regardless of wins or losses.

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact investigative reporter Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org.



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State-Tribal Relations Committee weighs impact of ballot measures on tribal nations

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 11, 2024 4:25 PM

The legislative State-Tribal Relations Committee adopted “determinations” at its Thursday meeting in Rapid City that four measures on the Nov. 5 ballot could impact state-tribal relations.

The committee determined that Initiated Measure 28, which would eliminate state sales taxes on items for human consumption, and Referred Law 21, which would alter and implement new laws on carbon dioxide pipelines, could negatively impact state-tribal relations.



Members of the State-Tribal Relations Committee meet at the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate headquarters in Agency Village on June 26, 2023. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

The committee determined that Initiated Measure 29, which would legalize a limited form of adult recreational marijuana use and possession, and Amendment E, which would update gender references for officeholders in the state constitution, could positively impact state-tribal relations.

No determinations were made regarding the other three ballot questions.

Committee co-chair Sen. Michael Rohl, R-Aberdeen, said the determinations are not endorsements or stances on the ballot measures. The committee facilitated a discussion of the ballot measures, he told South Dakota Searchlight after the meeting, because tribal leaders had inquired about how the seven measures on the ballot could affect their tribal governments and citizens.

“We wanted to make sure we’re highlighting potential impacts these measures have for them and then let them decide whether they agree with that,” Rohl said.

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IM 28

If enacted by voters, Initiated Measure 28 would prohibit the state “from collecting sales or use tax on anything sold for human consumption.”

Proponents of the measure intend for it to apply only to state sales taxes on groceries, and they say it would cost the state budget about \$123.9 million in the form of tax relief. They say that relief would primarily benefit people with low incomes.

But opponents argue the definition of “human consumption” in the measure includes more than groceries, and that the measure could cost the state up to \$646 million annually.

The attorney general’s explanation states that judicial or legislative clarification of the measure will be needed.

Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association, told committee members that no matter how the measure is interpreted, it would affect sales tax agreements with tribal nations.

Eight of South Dakota’s nine tribal nations have tax agreements with the state — eight have tobacco tax agreements and five have sales tax agreements. The agreements allow the state to collect taxes from purchases on tribal land and remit a portion of sales and use taxes to tribal governments.

The elimination of food taxes and potential elimination of tobacco taxes would reduce revenue for eight tribal nations by about \$3.5 million a year, Sanderson said. For food alone, it would be a reduction of about \$1.3 million a year, he said.

Tribal governments can set their own tax rate, but they would have to establish their own system to replace the tax arrangement with the state. That would be difficult to establish, tribal revenue directors told South Dakota Searchlight in 2023.

Gov. Kristi Noem proposed a bill last year that would have reduced the state sales and use tax on groceries to 0%. Tribal governments cautioned against the bill at the time unless the lost revenue was replaced.

Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek spoke against the initiated measure at the State-Tribal Relations Committee meeting, saying that the tribe relies on the tax revenue. Lengkeek said he and other tribal leaders were not consulted about the measure.

Lawmakers present largely agreed that the initiated measure would negatively impact tribes and voted unanimously to recognize that.

“I think it would be a huge mess for the tribes,” said Rep. Tamara St. John, R-Sisseton.

IM 29

Committee members voted 5-2 to adopt a positive determination regarding the recreational marijuana ballot question, Initiated Measure 29. Some committee members said the measure could contribute to economic development in tribal communities, reduce underage access to marijuana and eliminate jurisdictional challenges between the state and tribes.

Currently, a South Dakotan without a state-issued medical marijuana card can legally purchase marijuana from some tribal dispensaries. But once they step off tribal land with the cannabis in hand, they risk an arrest. That jurisdictional issue is especially pronounced near “checkerboarded” tribal trust lands, where tribal, state and private land are mixed in the same area.

The passage of Initiated Measure 29 could eliminate that risk of arrest, although tribes would still have the authority to ban marijuana on their lands. Even if the Legislature decided not to implement a framework to legalize recreational marijuana sales, possession of marijuana alone would be legal within the state.

Tribal dispensaries would still be able to sell cannabis on tribal land, so South Dakotans could purchase recreational marijuana from tribal dispensaries and use it on state land even without a framework for retail sales in the rest of the state.

Sen. Red Dawn Foster and Rep. Peri Pourier, both Democrats and members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, voted against the determination because they wanted to hear from the tribe directly.

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RL 21

Referred Law 21 is a bill passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Kristi Noem during the past legislative session. The legislation includes some new protections for landowners and counties impacted by the construction of carbon dioxide pipelines. Critics say it also requires local authorities to demonstrate to state regulators that their pipeline regulations are reasonable, rather than pipeline companies having to prove to regulators that the local regulations are unreasonable.

Committee members voted 5-2 that upholding the law would have a negative impact on state-tribal relations because the law could affect local control, grasslands and have other environmental consequences.

Foster said the energy sector's growth will open South Dakota and tribal nations up as potential "resources to exploit." She added that tribal nations have "experienced corporate deception and greed" in the past.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Vice Chairman Frank Jamerson spoke against Referred Law 21, comparing the effort to build a carbon capture pipeline in the state to his tribe's battle over the Keystone XL crude oil pipeline. He said the law is "another way to mislead the people."

Lengkeek also stated that Crow Creek is opposed to RL 21.

Sen. Kyle Schoenfish, R-Scotland, and St. John voted against the negative determination. St. John argued the law could promote economic development on tribal lands.

Amendment E

Constitutional Amendment E would replace male pronouns in the constitution such as "he," "him" and "his" with neutral words and phrases such as "the governor," "the lieutenant governor," "the officer," "the elector," "the accused," and so on.

Amendments to the constitution require voter approval. Legislators voted last year to place the amendment on this year's ballot. The vote was 35-0 in the Senate and 58-12 in the House.

The committee unanimously passed a determination that the amendment would positively impact state-tribal relations because it recognizes female leaders in both state and tribal communities.

Other ballot measures

The committee listened to testimony for all ballot measures, but did not make determinations on:

Amendment F, which would authorize the state to consider a work requirement for Medicaid expansion recipients.

Amendment G, which would reestablish abortion rights.

Amendment H, which would establish a top-two open primary system.

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.

Initiated Measure 28: What supporters call tax relief, opponents call a budget problem

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 11, 2024 7:00 AM



Nathan Sanderson, left, executive directors of the South Dakota Retailers Association, and Rick Weiland, chairman of Dakotans for Health, participate in an election forum on Sept. 19, 2024, at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell. (Joshua Haiar/

South Dakota Searchlight)

Initiated Measure 28 would remove the 4.2% state sales tax on goods for "human consumption," excluding alcohol and prepared food. Opponents say the term "human consumption" would cover a broader range of goods, not just groceries as the bill's backers intend.

The South Dakota Legislative Research Council estimates the measure could cause state revenue losses between \$134 million and \$646 million annually, depending on how it's interpreted.

Attorney General Marty Jackley has warned that the measure could impact the state's \$22 million annual legal settlement with tobacco companies intended to reduce smoking. That's because state law defines tobacco products as intended for human consumption, and collecting the settlement money requires a sales tax on tobacco. South Dakota collects about \$43 million annually in tobacco taxes.

If only tobacco and grocery sales taxes were eliminated, the state could face an approximately \$176 million budget reduction, according to the Legislative Research Council. Republican legislative leaders estimate the state would need to cut 7% from its budget, or 5% if revenue growth is strong.

"IM 28 is going to hurt those people who depend the most on public services," Sanderson said during the Mitchell debate. "It impacts low-income South Dakotans the most."

Those potential cuts have the South Dakota Education Association opposing the measure, too. South Dakota is 49th in the nation for average teacher pay. Association President Loren Paul said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight that schools are making progress addressing a teacher shortage, thanks to recent increases in state funding for education.

"IM 28's cuts would undermine this progress, potentially returning South Dakota to its previous position

Backers of a ballot measure intended to remove sales taxes on groceries say it's about helping people with low incomes. Opponents say the measure would affect more than groceries and could cut hundreds of millions in revenue from the budget of an already low-tax state, with no plan to replace it.

The ballot question committee Dakotans for Health gathered the petition signatures to put Initiated Measure 28 on the Nov. 5 ballot, where it's one of seven statewide questions under consideration by voters.

Rick Weiland, chairman of Dakotans for Health, said during a recent debate in Mitchell that opponents are mischaracterizing the measure.

"It's a campaign of fear, and it's a campaign of hypotheticals," he said.

Scope of measure disputed

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of 51st in the nation for teacher pay," Paul said.

Concerns about budget problems also inspired Initiated Measure 28's opponents to hold a press conference in July calling the measure "a trap" that could ultimately result in a push for an income tax to replace the lost revenue. Supporters of the measure say South Dakota's Republican-dominated Legislature and electorate would never support an income tax.

Weiland has little empathy for the budget concerns, considering the state, by its own admission, already has \$1.4 billion worth of sales and use tax exemptions for various categories of businesses and services.

"There are even pipeline sales tax exemptions in here," Weiland said during the debate. "There are sales tax exemptions for bull semen and rodeo clowns. We're talking about families in South Dakota that are struggling."

What's described by his opponents as a loss of state revenue can also be described as tax relief for low-income people, Weiland added.

"We hear a lot from special interest groups in the Capitol every year," he said, "but it's time that we lobby on behalf of the taxpayer."

Effect on cities also in dispute

The measure states it would not affect the ability of cities to impose their own sales taxes on human consumption goods.

Opponents dispute that point. Existing state law says cities can't impose sales taxes on anything the state doesn't tax. That law and Initiated Measure 28 would be in conflict if the measure passes, opponents say, and the conflict might have to be settled in court. Opponents say that would put \$51 million of annual city sales tax revenue at risk.

According to the state's Legislative Research Council and Neal Fulton, dean of the Knudson School of Law at the University of South Dakota, new state law generally supersedes old state law when conflicts arise.

The South Dakota Municipal League does not want to risk cities' budgets on a judge's interpretation. It too is part of the effort to defeat the measure.

Meanwhile, the South Dakota Democratic Party issued a press release in support of the measure, calling it immoral to tax people for buying food.

Among the 45 states that collect a statewide sales tax, South Dakota is currently 36th in combined state and local rates, making it one of the lowest, according to the nonprofit and nonpartisan Tax Foundation. South Dakota and Mississippi are the only sales-tax states that apply their full tax rates to groceries.

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.

Egg suppliers battle over pricing, claims of bird flu outbreak

Lawyer questions company's claim of a bird flu outbreak

BY: CLARK KAUFFMAN, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - OCTOBER 11, 2024 5:38 PM

A group of Midwest egg suppliers are embroiled in litigation over egg prices, with an Iowa company arguing it shouldn't be forced to disclose its pricing information.

A central element of the case is whether a fabricated claim of a bird flu outbreak is to blame for one supplier raising its egg prices and canceling orders.

Grand Prairie Foods of South Dakota, which supplies hotels and convenience stores with breakfast sandwiches, is suing Echo Lake Foods, a Wisconsin company that manufactures precooked egg entrees, for breach of contract and unjust enrichment.



(Photo by Jared Strong/Iowa Capital Dispatch)

At the same time, a third company, Oskaloosa Food Products in Iowa, is attempting to quash a subpoena for company records related to its pricing.

Court records indicate Grand Prairie has purchased egg patties and other products from Echo Lake since at least 2005. In early 2022, Echo Lake's supplier of raw eggs experienced an outbreak of avian influenza, commonly known as the bird flu, resulting in the destruction of more than 6 million laying hens.

Echo Lake then notified its customers, including Grand Prairie, that existing purchase orders for egg patties and other egg products would have to be revised to reflect increased pricing.

According to Grand Prairie's lawsuit, Echo Lake Foods then doubled the price of its egg patties, and while the nationwide market price of eggs eventually decreased, Echo Lake allegedly refused to reduce the price of its egg patties.

Court exhibits show that on July 12, 2022, Grand Prairie's president, Kurt Loudenback, e-mailed Echo Lake's director of national sales, Justin Milbradt, writing, "Justin – I don't understand why we continue to see these high prices," noting that Grand Prairie could purchase eggs from other suppliers at a significantly lower price. "I'm sure you buy WAY more eggs than we do," Loudenback added.

The next day, Loudenback emailed Echo Lake again, proposing that his company sell tankers of whole eggs to Echo Lake for \$1.28 per pound – significantly less than the \$3.60 per pound Echo Lake was charging Grand Prairie for its finished egg products.

"Just trying to get your eggs at (a) lower price to lower my cost," Loudenback explained in his email. "\$3.60 seems pretty high for a \$1.28 input cost."

The two companies eventually agreed on an arrangement whereby Grand Prairie would sell two truckloads of raw eggs each week to Echo Lake. Court records show Echo Lake agreed to pay a "premium price," \$1.70 per pound, for the raw eggs from Grand Prairie. In return, the records show, Echo Lake would sell the finished, processed eggs back to Grand Prairie for \$3.60 per pound — the same price Grand Prairie had previously objected to as being out of line with market prices.

Within a few months, however, Grand Prairie told Echo Lake that an avian flu outbreak had affected its egg supplier, Oskaloosa Food Products, and so Grand Prairie would have to raise its prices. A few weeks later, Grand Prairie said it was unable to find a new supplier and wouldn't be able to fulfill Echo Lake's orders.

Echo Lake then began acquiring eggs elsewhere – but at a higher price. In court documents, Echo Lake

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says Grand Prairie's failure to deliver eggs at the promised price cost Echo Lake more than \$1.1 million. Court exhibits show that in an effort to offset the added expense, Echo Lake withheld payments to Grand Prairie totaling \$567,460. Grand Prairie then sued Echo Lake to recover the \$567,460 it was owed, alleging breach of contract and unjust enrichment. Echo Lake countersued, claiming Grand Prairie had breached the contract.

Was company's bird-flu claim false?

Recently filed court records show that attorneys for Echo Lake are questioning Grand Prairie's stated rationale for its price hike and the eventual cancellation of orders – an avian flu outbreak that affected the Oskaloosa plant.

In July, an Echo Lake attorney wrote to a lawyer for Oskaloosa Food Products, stating that while "Grand Prairie claims it had no choice other than to cancel the remaining purchase orders because of an outbreak of avian influenza among its suppliers, including Oskaloosa," an independent investigation had concluded Oskaloosa reported no such outbreak at that time, despite legal requirements for such reporting.

In addition, the lawyer wrote, the chief operating officer of the Oskaloosa plant had confirmed for Echo Lake that "Oskaloosa did not experience the AI outbreak described by Grand Prairie."

In late May, Echo Lake subpoenaed Oskaloosa Food Products to obtain access to the contract between Grand Prairie and the Oskaloosa company.

Oskaloosa has since filed a motion to quash that subpoena, arguing the agreement includes trade secrets. Echo Lake has responded in court by arguing that the price of eggs is not a trade secret.

That issue is now before a judge in the U.S. District Court for Southern Iowa, while the underlying lawsuit between Grand Prairie and Echo Lake continues to move forward in South Dakota federal court.

Deputy Editor Clark Kauffman of the Iowa Capital Dispatch has worked during the past 30 years as both an investigative reporter and editorial writer at two of Iowa's largest newspapers, the Des Moines Register and the Quad-City Times. He has won numerous state and national awards for reporting and editorial writing. His 2004 series on prosecutorial misconduct in Iowa was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. From October 2018 through November 2019, Kauffman was an assistant ombudsman for the Iowa Office of Ombudsman, an agency that investigates citizens' complaints of wrongdoing within state and local government agencies.

School choice goes before voters in 3 states, faces pushback in others

Voters in Colorado, Kentucky and Nebraska have school choice questions on the November ballot

BY: ELAINE S. POVICH, STATELINE - OCTOBER 11, 2024 2:30 PM

Supporters of school choice in Kentucky are hoping voters will do what the state courts wouldn't — allow a new path for state-supported payments to private schools.

Kentucky is one of three states, along with Colorado and Nebraska, with school choice questions on the ballot this fall. Voters will be asked to decide whether public money should go to support private education. Opponents say the measures would undermine public schools by shifting money from them, while backers maintain that state aid would give parents more control over their kids' education.

The measures come as school choice gains momentum across the country. Thirty-three states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico already have at least one kind of school choice program, according to EdChoice, a nonprofit that advocates for the programs. They range from education savings accounts sponsored by the state to voucher programs to various types of tax credits that help provide scholarships or cover educational expenses for private schools.

But the measures have sparked some controversy. In Arizona, which in 2023 became the first state to make all students, regardless of family income, eligible for a school voucher, parents have tried to use the voucher money for dune buggies and expensive Lego sets.

Teachers unions and other public school professionals generally oppose the school choice plans, while many conservative politicians, religious institutions and private educational groups are in favor, along with some people of color in districts with underperforming public schools.

The choice programs have had difficulty gaining traction in rural areas, where there are fewer private schools than in cities and suburbs.

To overcome that resistance in Texas, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has worked hard to elect like-minded allies to the state's legislature. He led a multimillion-dollar political offensive that resulted in six Republican House members who opposed his school choice initiative being defeated in primaries this year. Stateline reported earlier this year that Abbott is within a couple of votes of being able to enact a school choice program when the legislature reconvenes in January.



A young boy walks down a hallway at Carter Traditional Elementary School on Jan. 24, 2022, in Louisville, Kentucky. (Jon Cherry/Getty Images)

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Ballot measures

In Kentucky, the Republican-dominated legislature approved a program in 2021 to give tax credits to individuals or businesses for donations to nonprofits that provide scholarships for students who attend private schools.

Lawmakers narrowly overrode Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's veto of the measure. But the state's Supreme Court ruled the plan unconstitutional in December 2022.

And last year, a county judge struck down a 2022 Kentucky law that would have allowed public funding of charter schools. Kentucky currently has no operating charter schools. Such schools are publicly funded but run by outside organizations that operate them autonomously, without many of the rules governing traditional public schools.

Now, advocates want Kentucky voters to approve changes to the state constitution that would allow the tax credits and public funding of charter schools.

The proposed constitutional amendment would give the legislature authority to pass laws providing state funding for the education of students outside the public school system. It says lawmakers could do so despite the parts of the Kentucky Constitution that forbid state funds to be used for "any church, sectarian or denominational school."

The ballot measure would give the legislature the authority to pass laws similar to the ones that were thrown out, according to Republican state Sen. Damon Thayer, a strong supporter of the referendum.

"We passed [private education] scholarships in the past," Thayer said in a phone interview. "Those would be on the table in the near future if the amendment is passed."

He said it would give parents "the ability to send a child to a different school if the public school isn't giving them what they need, private or parochial."

But a coalition of public education advocates formed the group Protect Our Schools KY to oppose the amendment. Tom Shelton, a retired Kentucky school superintendent and a leader in the campaign effort, said it is a travesty to send public money "to unaccountable private schools" when public schools in the state could use the funds.

He said rural areas would fare particularly poorly under a proposal that would allow public money to go to private educational entities. Shelton said the vast majority of the private schools in Kentucky are in the two biggest cities of Louisville and Lexington — meaning that rural public schools would lose money diverted to private schools and that rural students would be less able to take advantage of the change.

"Who's going to lose most? The rural poor kids," Shelton said.

In some cases, private schools have raised tuition in states with school choice. And The Wall Street Journal has reported that vouchers tend to mostly benefit families who already have students in private schools.

In Nebraska, voters will choose whether to partially repeal a law enacted this year that allows the state to run a \$10 million educational scholarship program for private school students.

The state's highest court determined in September that the referendum can stay on the ballot.

State Sen. Dave Murman, a proponent of school choice who identifies as a Republican in the nonpartisan Nebraska legislature, said he's disappointed that the referendum was allowed to proceed.

Murman said he expects the referendum vote to be close.

He postulated that public schools are "afraid of the competition. They are afraid they will lose students to private schools." But he said he hopes public schools will improve in the face of competition.

But Tim Royers, president of the Nebraska State Education Association, which supports the referendum, said there is already competition among public schools.

"In 1989, Nebraska created 'option enrollment' that allows any family to attend any public school in the state as long as they are not at capacity," he told Stateline.

He said the teachers union could have fought the law directly in the courts, but thought it would be better to put it on the ballot and let the voters decide. Teachers think parents and students are happy with the public school choices they have now, he said.

In Colorado, the ballot measure would enshrine a school choice option in the state constitution. It would

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add language saying that each “K-12 child has the right to school choice” and that “parents have the right to direct the education of their children.” School choice would explicitly include neighborhood schools, charter schools, private schools, homeschools, open enrollment options and future innovations in education.

Conservative advocacy group Advance Colorado proposed the amendment. Colorado already allows students to attend any public school — even outside their district — for free and has long had charter schools. Critics of the ballot measure say it would open the door to private school vouchers, though backers argue that’s not their intent and that it’s simply meant to protect charter schools. Some Colorado Democrats last year proposed tightening requirements on charter schools.

Ongoing disputes

States with existing school choice programs have encountered pushback this year.

The South Carolina Supreme Court last month threw out the state’s voucher program, leaving parents who already have received funds scrambling. State education officials and Republican Gov. Henry McMaster asked the court to reconsider the ruling, but the high court refused to rehear the case in early October, likely ending any possibility of resuming private tuition payments this year.

In Arizona, reports of misuse of funds to buy equipment not directly tied to a curriculum prompted the state attorney general to open an investigation. The state’s Empowerment Scholarship Account program allows parents to use state money for various educational costs, including tuition and school supplies.

But after the school system clarified documentation requirements that purchases be tied to a curriculum, the Goldwater Institute, a conservative Arizona think tank, sued the state Department of Education over the requirements, on behalf of some homeschool parents. The institute called the verification requirements an “absurd new burden” on homeschooling parents that would prevent them from buying pencils, flash cards and other equipment not specifically called for in homeschool curricula.

The Grand Canyon Institute, a centrist think tank focused on economics, found in a report last month that Arizona’s voucher accounts had \$360 million unspent by parents as of June.

“These parents have chosen not to spend the money on their children’s education,” Dave Wells, research director for the institute, said in a phone interview. “There’s no follow-up to see if the kids are doing well.”

The institute recommended that the state follow up on the money to see whether and where it is being spent.

Responding to the report, education department spokesperson Doug Nick told Arizona radio station KJZZ that the department administers the program as directed under state law.

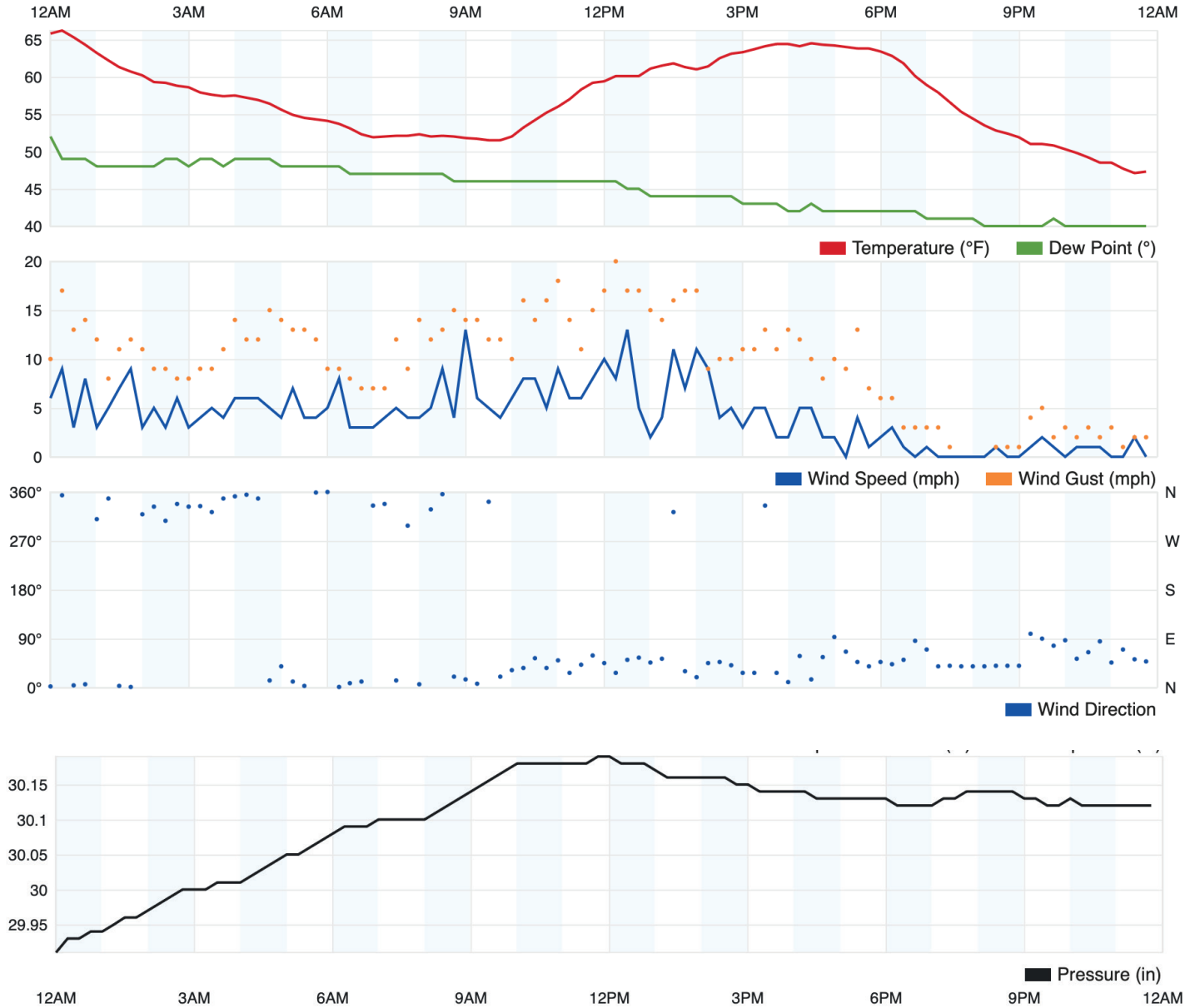
“If the legislature makes changes to the law, we will comply with those changes,” he said.

Elaine S. Povich covers education and consumer affairs for Stateline. Povich has reported for Newsday, the Chicago Tribune and United Press International. Stateline is part of States Newsroom, the nation’s largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 70 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Partly Cloudy

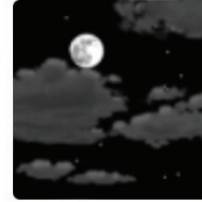
Sunday



High: 56 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 30 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Frost

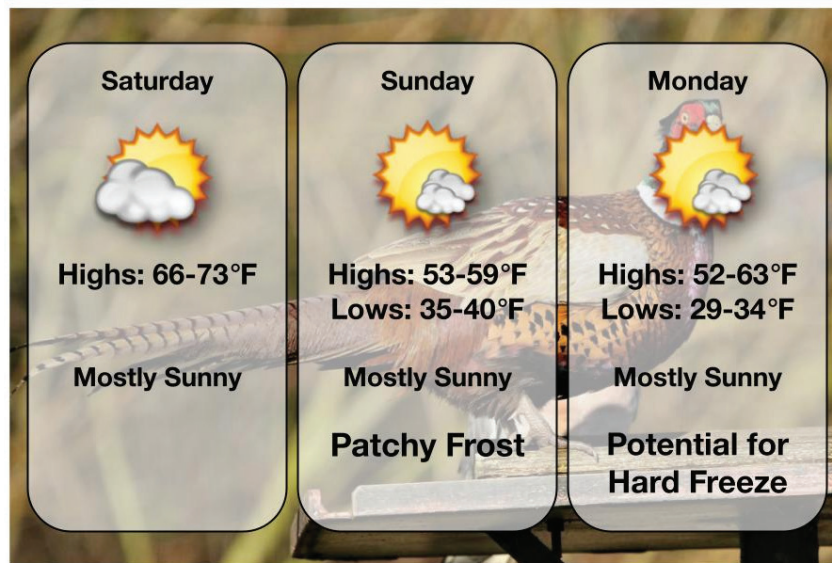
Columbus Day



High: 56 °F

Frost then
Mostly Sunny

Looking Ahead



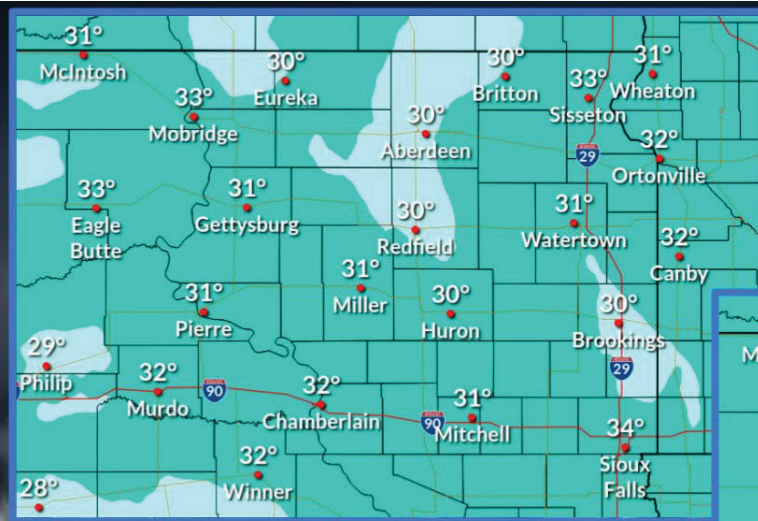
tober 11, 2024 2:20 PM

National Weather Service

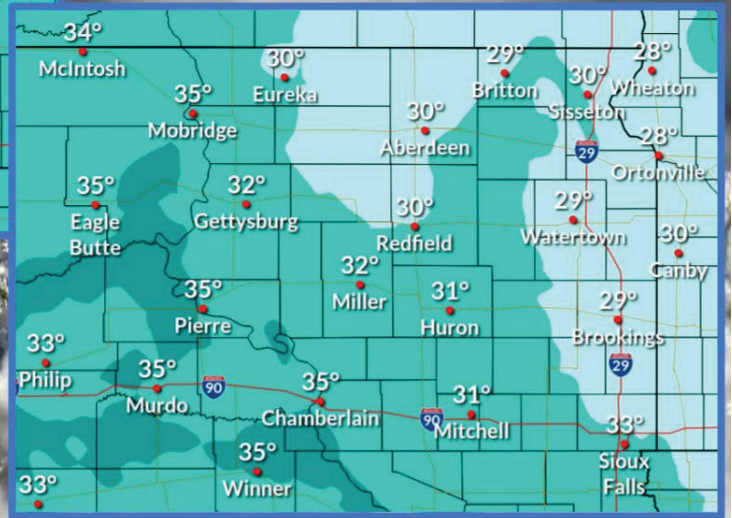
Mild conditions will continue into Saturday with colder air coming in for Sunday. Monday morning, temperatures could drop to or below freezing for much of the area. For the upcoming week expect near normal temperatures and a continuation of dry conditions.

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A freeze is forecasted for Monday morning as well as Tuesday morning. A hard freeze of 28 degrees is also possible. Widespread frost will develop both mornings.



Displayed:
Minimum temperatures for Monday morning (above) and Tuesday morning (right).



Sunday night into Monday and Monday night into Tuesday are both forecasted to have low temperatures below freezing. Widespread frost will develop and a hard freeze is also possible. A frost or freeze could harm outdoor vegetation, and plants may be killed if left uncovered.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 66 °F at 12:05 AM

Low Temp: 47 °F at 11:27 PM

Wind: 20 mph at 12:09 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 8 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 89 in 1910

Record Low: 11 in 1917

Average High: 62

Average Low: 35

Average Precip in Oct.: 0.90

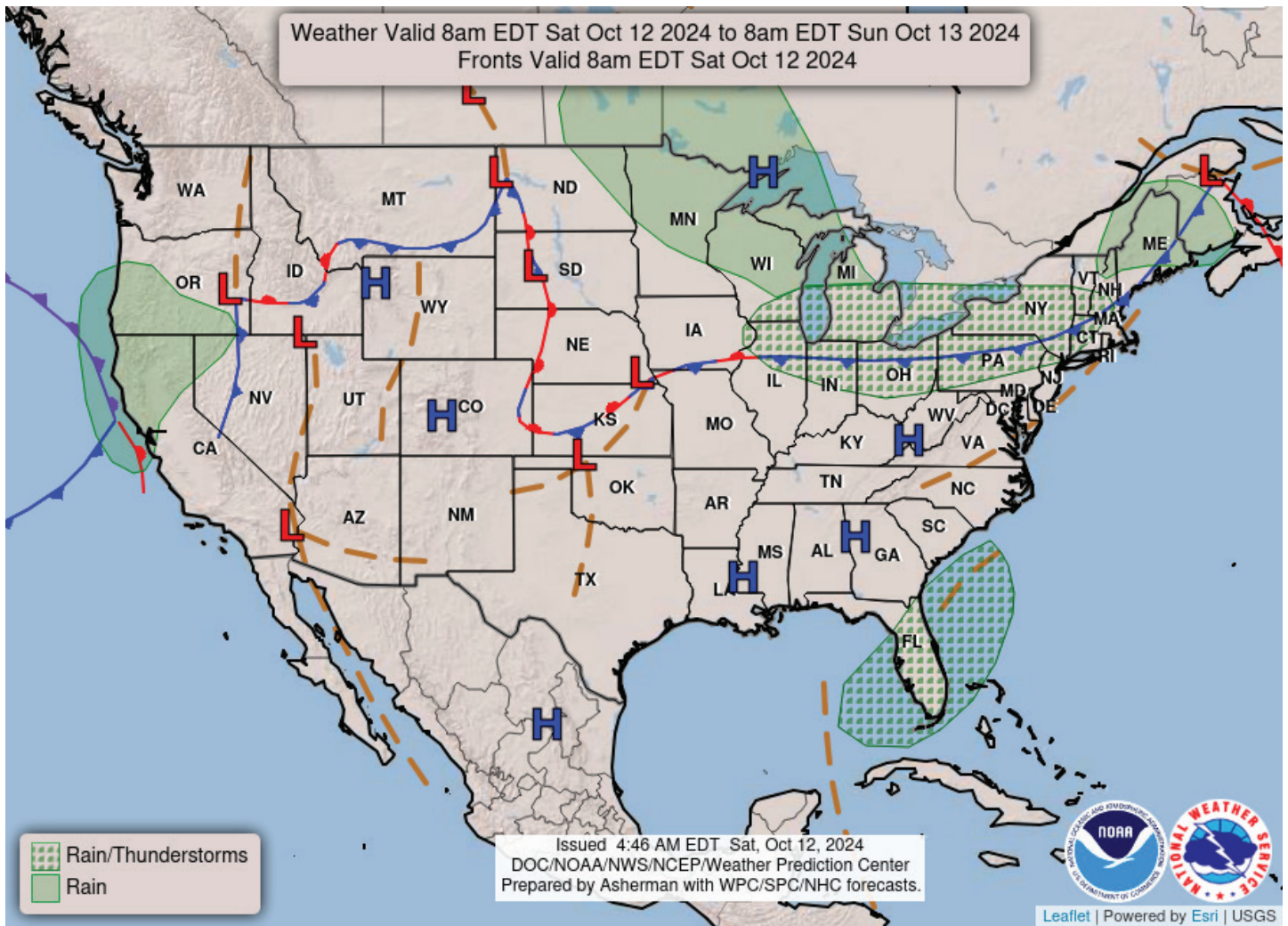
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 19.23

Precip Year to Date: 19.75

Sunset Tonight: 6:53:06 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45:34 am



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Today in Weather History

October 12, 1997: High winds upward of 60 mph were recorded throughout western South Dakota.

1918: On October 10, 1918, two men working near a railroad siding northwest of Cloquet, Minnesota, saw a passenger train pass by the siding, and soon after, that discovered a fire burning through grass and piles of wood. The fire could not be contained, and by October 12, fires had spread through northern Minnesota. At least 450 lives were lost, and 52,000 people were injured or displaced, 38 communities were destroyed, 250,000 acres were burned.

1836 - A third early season storm produced heavy snow in the northeastern U.S. Bridgewater NY received 18 inches, a foot of snow fell at Madison NY, and for the third time all the mountains of the northeastern U.S. were whitened. (David Ludlum)

1962 - The "Columbus Day Big Blow" occurred in the Pacific Northwest. It was probably the most damaging windstorm of record west of the Cascade Mountains. Winds reached hurricane force, with gusts above 100 mph. More than 3.5 billion board feet of timber were blown down, and communications were severely disrupted due to downed power lines. The storm claimed 48 lives, and caused 210 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1979: The lowest barometric pressure ever recorded occurs in the center of Typhoon Tip on this day. A fly reconnaissance mission recorded the low pressure of 870 hPa or 25.69 inHg. Typhoon Tip was the most extensive tropical cyclone on record with a wind diameter of 1380 miles at its peak.

1987 - Floyd, the only hurricane to make landfall the entire season, moved across the Florida Keys. Floyd produced wind gusts to 59 mph at Duck Key, and up to nine inches of rain in southern Florida. Sixteen cities in the Ohio Valley and the Middle Mississippi Valley reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 27 degrees at Paducah KY, and 24 degrees at Rockford IL and Springfield IL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty cities in the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including International Falls MN with a reading of 17 degrees. The town of Embarrass MN reported a morning low of 8 degrees. Snow showers in the northeastern U.S. produced five inches at Corry PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Temperatures again warmed into the 80s in the Central Plains Region and the Middle Mississippi Valley, with 90s in the south central U.S. Six cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Fort Smith AR with a reading of 92 degrees. Strong winds along a cold front crossing the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley gusted to 61 mph at Johnstown PA. (The National Weather Summary)

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HELP NEEDED!

One of the great American authors, Alex Haley, had a picture on a wall in his office that attracted much attention. It always aroused the interest of his visitors because no one could understand its significance to the writer.

On one occasion a visitor with a perplexed look on his face asked, "Alex, why do you have a picture of a turtle sitting on the top of a fence post?"

Haley replied, "Anytime I start to thinking, 'Isn't it marvelous what I've done,' I look at that picture and remember how this turtle – me – got on that post."

Sometimes, perhaps most of the time for some of us, it is difficult to admit that if it were not for the help of others we would not be where we are. From our earliest moments until this present hour, we are encouraged by nearly everyone to believe that we can do it all by ourselves.

God, speaking through Isaiah said, "...encourage one another with the words, 'Be strong!'" What great advice!

Each day God brings into our lives individuals who need help, encouragement, inspiration, words of sympathy or a look of empathy.

A Christian is a life through which Christ lives, a voice through which He speaks and a hand through which He helps.

Blessed is the Christian who encourages others.

Prayer: Father, may we take seriously the fact that You expect us to reach up to You for guidance and then out to others in love to show Your grace and mercy. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: They help each other and say to their companions, "Be strong!" Isaiah 41:6

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:
10.11.24

3 10 29 52 57 20

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$169,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 14 Hrs 26 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.11.24

3 18 29 33 36 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 41 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

3 7 10 16 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$56,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 41 Mins
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.09.24

4 14 29 33 59 17

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 10 Mins
DRAW: 38 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 15 Hrs 10 Mins
DRAW: 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Rapid City Christian def. Mitchell, 25-13, 25-18, 25-23

Rapid City Stevens def. Huron, 23-25, 18-25, 25-23, 25-18, 15-12

Dakota Oyate Challenge=

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, 25-16, 25-23

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Flandreau Indian, 25-13, 25-17

Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud def. Lower Brule, 26-24, 26-13

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

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 18, Milbank 7

Alcester-Hudson 28, Dell Rapids St Mary 22

Avon 58, Scotland/Menno 20

Bon Homme 36, Platte-Geddes 18

Brandon Valley 47, Mitchell 0

Britton-Hecla 71, Wilmot 14

Canistota 16, Chester 13

Castlewood 14, Estelline-Hendricks 6

Centerville 38, Gayville-Volin High School 22

Colman-Egan 56, Arlington 6

Corsica/Stickney 58, Burke 7

Custer 32, Belle Fourche 12

DeSmet 46, Great Plains Lutheran 20

Dell Rapids 62, Canton 22

Deuel 21, Webster 0

Dupree 38, Lemmon High School 6

Elkton-Lake Benton 67, Deubrook 14

Faulkton 48, Hitchcock-Tulare 14

Florence-Henry 42, Redfield 7

Freeman-Marion-FA 52, Irene-Wakonda 0

Groton 47, Sisseton 0

Harding County 56, Faith 6

Harrisburg 21, Sioux Falls Jefferson 14

Hill City 50, Kadoka 16

Howard 54, Garretson 8

Huron 10, Aberdeen Central High School 0

Ipswich 14, Leola-Frederick High School 12, OT

Kimball-White Lake 34, Gregory 14

Lennox 36, Madison 28

McCook Central-Montrose 46, Baltic 14

Mobridge-Pollock 21, Clark-Willow Lake 0

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Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 49, Miller 6
New Underwood 58, Jones County 30
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 32, Iroquois-Lake Preston 0
Parkston 30, Wolsey-Wessington 22
Philip 51, Lyman 26
Rapid City Christian 42, Lead-Deadwood 0
Sioux Falls Christian 49, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 8
Sioux Falls Lincoln 46, Rapid City Central 7
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 35, Sioux Falls Washington 33
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 35, Rapid City Stevens 7
Sioux Valley 42, Beresford 7
Spearfish 58, Douglas 0
St Thomas More 42, Hot Springs 0
Sully Buttes 50, Herreid-Selby 12
T F Riggs High School 17, Sturgis Brown High School 14
TDAACDC 52, Colome 0
Timber Lake 44, Potter County 8
Vermillion 15, Tri-Valley 14
Viborg-Hurley 27, Hanson 14
WWSSC 32, Chamberlain 0
Wall 55, Bennett County 0
Warner 55, North Central 12
Watertown 25, Tea 0
West Central 27, Dakota Valley 24
Winner def. Lakota Tech, forfeit
Yankton 24, Brookings 7

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

Middle East latest: Israeli military renews orders for Palestinians to leave northern Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military on Saturday renewed its orders for Palestinian in the northern Gaza Strip to leave their homes and shelters as troops press on a weeklong offensive against militants.

Most of the fighting in the past week was centered in and around Jabaliya that was pounded by Israeli war jets and artillery. Residents said they have been trapped inside their homes and shelters.

In Lebanon, authorities said Friday that 60 people were killed and 168 wounded in the past 24 hours, raising the total toll over the past year of conflict between Israel and the militant group Hezbollah to 2,229 dead and 10,380 wounded.

Israel has been escalating 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. Israel is now at war with Hamas in Gaza and Hamas' ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times.

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

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Here is the latest:

US military hits Islamic State camps in Syria with airstrikes

The U.S. military said it conducted a series of airstrikes against multiple camps in Syria belonging to the Islamic State group.

The U.S. Central Command said the strikes on Friday will "disrupt the ability of ISIS to plan, organize and conduct attacks against the United States, its allies and partners, and civilians throughout the region and beyond."

It said battle damage assessments were underway and did not include civilian casualties.

There are some 900 U.S. forces in Syria, along with an undisclosed number of contractors, mostly trying to prevent any comeback by the extremist IS group, which swept through Iraq and Syria in 2014, taking control of large swaths of territory.

Speaker of Iran's parliament visits Beirut

BEIRUT — The speaker of Iran's parliament on Saturday toured the scene of an Israeli airstrike in Beirut that killed and wounded dozens, vowing that Tehran would keep supporting Lebanese and Palestinians in fighting against Israel.

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf visited the bombed area after holding talks with caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who said that Lebanon's priority now was working toward a cease-fire.

His office said that Lebanon's government still abides by a 2006 U.N. Security Council Resolution approved at the end of a 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah and was prepared to boost Lebanese army presence along the country's border with Israel.

"We will keep standing with the Lebanese people during these difficult circumstances and also with the Palestinian people," Qalibaf said during the tour, during which he was escorted by several Hezbollah officials.

Qalibaf added that Iran will aid the Lebanese people and "we hope that they will be victorious."

It was the second recent visit by an Iranian official to Beirut after the foreign minister visited earlier this month. Iran is a main backer of Hezbollah that has suffered major setbacks in recent weeks, including the killing of its leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Hezbollah started attacking Israeli army posts in October last year in solidarity with the militant Hamas group in Gaza. Since Sept. 23, Israel has intensified its airstrikes and forced the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese. Last week, Israel began a ground invasion of Lebanon, leading to clashes along the border with Hezbollah fighters.

No food has entered northern Gaza since Oct. 1, UN says

CAIRO — The United Nations food agency said on Saturday that no food aid had entered northern Gaza since Oct. 1.

The World Food Program said that the primary border crossing into the war-ravaged area had been closed for about two weeks, warning that Israel's ongoing ground operation has a disastrous impact on food security for thousands of Palestinians families there.

"The north is basically cut off and we're not able to operate there," said Antoine Renard, the WFP country director of Palestinian territories.

Concerns of a hunger crisis have risen in Gaza roughly a month after the U.N.'s independent investigator on the right to food accused Israel of carrying out a "starvation campaign" against Palestinians.

Israel has denied such allegations and insisted that it has allowed food and other aid into Gaza in significant quantities.

"Israel has not halted the entry or coordination of humanitarian aid entering from its territory into the northern Gaza Strip. As evidence, humanitarian aid coordinated by COGAT and international organizations will continue to enter the northern Gaza Strip in the coming day as well," COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing aid distribution, said in a statement on Wednesday.

The WFP said its food distribution points, as well as kitchens and bakeries in northern Gaza, have been forced to shut down due to airstrikes, military ground operations and evacuation orders. It said that the only

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functioning bakery in North Gaza, supported by WFP, caught fire after being hit by an explosive munition.

The WFP said its last remaining food supplies in the north -- including canned food, wheat flour, high-energy biscuits, and nutrition supplements -- have been distributed to shelters, health facilities and kitchens in Gaza City and three shelters in the northern areas. It is unclear how long these limited food supplies will last, warning that the consequences for fleeing families will be dire if the escalation continues.

EU concerns over Israeli legislation that would ban UNRWA

JERUSALEM — The European Union said Saturday it was deeply concerned about draft Israeli legislation that would ban the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees from operating in Israel and likely scale back aid distribution across war-ravaged Gaza.

Earlier this week, an Israeli parliamentary committee approved a pair of bills this week that would ban UNRWA from operating in Israeli territory and end all contact between the government and the U.N. agency. The bill needs final approval from the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

"If adopted, (the bill) would have disastrous consequences, preventing the U.N. agency from continuing to provide its services and protection to Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and Gaza," the EU said in an online statement.

Israel has alleged that some of UNRWA's thousands of staff members participated in the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that sparked the Israel-Hamas war.

The U.N. has since fired more than a dozen staffers after internal investigations found they may have taken part in the attack that killed 1,200 people in southern Israel.

The U.N. agency has been the main supplier of food, water and shelter to Palestinian civilians during the 12 month conflict in Gaza.

Concern about the Israeli bill was echoed by UNRWA's chief, Philippe Lazzarini, on Wednesday, who said all humanitarian operations in Gaza and the West Bank could "disintegrate" if the bill was implemented.

When UNRWA was created by the U.N. General Assembly in 1949, it was meant to provide health care, education and welfare services to about 700,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 conflict with Israel.

Israeli military renews evacuation orders for northern Gaza

CAIRO — The Israeli military on Saturday renewed orders for Palestinian in the northern Gaza Strip to leave their homes and shelters amid a week of intense fighting with militants there.

Avichay Adraee, a spokesman for the Israeli military, told people that the area includes parts of Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood and other parts in and around Jabaliya, the urban refugee camp.

In a post on X, Adraee asked people living there to head south to Muwasi, a packed area in southern Gaza designed by the military as a humanitarian zone.

Most of past week fighting centered in and around Jabaliya with Israeli war jets and artillery pounding the area. People there said they have been trapped inside their homes and shelters. The military also ordered the three main hospitals in northern Gaza to evacuate patients and medical staff.

Hindus in Bangladesh celebrate their largest festival under tight security following attacks

By JULHAS ALAM and AI EMRUN GARJON Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Schoolteacher Supriya Sarker is glad to celebrate Bangladesh's largest Hindu festival of Durga Puja but feels the festivities would be more jubilant without the fear and violence that overshadow this year's event.

The weeklong celebration that ends in the Muslim-majority Bangladesh on Sunday with immersions of the Hindu Goddess has strained the Hindu community with reports of vandalism, violence and intimidation in parts of Bangladesh, which has seen harassment and attacks on Hindus, who make up about 8% of the country's nearly 170 million people, or more than 13 million people.

Despite pledges to keep the festival safe, this year's version was subdued coming following the ousting of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and attacks on minority groups, especially Hindus. Hasina left the country for India because of a mass uprising spearheaded by a student-led anti-government movement.

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Bangladesh's current interim leader, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, has faced serious challenges in maintaining law and order since he took over in August, and Durga Puja was seen as an acid test of his administration's ability to protect minorities.

Minority communities have blamed the Yunus-led government for failing to adequately protect them, and reports suggest that hardline Islamists are becoming increasingly politically influential and visible since the fall of Hasina.

"It is a challenging time for us Hindus," said Sarker, the schoolteacher, as she joined the Kumari Puja in Dhaka's Uttara district. "We faced problems in the past as well, but we did not see such escalation earlier. This is our country, we want to live here peacefully with our Muslim brothers and sisters and others without discrimination or intimidation."

Her concern comes as the country's leading minority rights group, the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council, said that between Aug. 4 and 20, a total of 2,010 incidents of communal violence targeting minorities, mostly Hindus, were reported. The group's leaders said at least nine people belonging to minority groups were killed, four women were raped, and homes, businesses and temples were torched or vandalized.

In recent weeks, new incidents of vandalism occurred in parts of Bangladesh as the Hindu community prepared their temples for Durga Puja. In Dhaka's Uttara neighborhood, Hindus were forced to hold the festival in a smaller venue after a procession by Muslims called on authorities to not allow them to install idols in an open field.

Jayanta Kumar Dev, president of Sarbajanin Puja Committee, said they have reports of attacks on temples and idols before this year's festival formally began on Oct. 9.

Bangladesh's Home Affairs Adviser Mohammad Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, and incumbent Army Chief Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman, had promised to provide adequate security, Dev said.

"They told us there's nothing to be worried about. We became content and puja is taking place across the country," he said.

But the situation remains tense.

This week, police arrested at least two members of an Islamic cultural group in the southeastern city of Chattogram after six of its members sang Islamic revolutionary songs inviting Hindus to join an Islamic movement after they took the stage of a temple on Thursday.

The video of the singing became viral in social media, drawing criticism as the authorities promised to arrest and punish those involved. Media reports said they belongs to the student wing of the country's largest Islamist party - Jamaat-e-Islami- but the party denied the allegation.

On Friday night, a firebomb was thrown at the Hindu Goddess at a temple in Dhaka's Tantibazar area, creating panic among the devotees who thronged the temple. No one was hurt, police said. Media reports said, quoting volunteers, that at least five people were injured after being stabbed by muggers.

Security was heightened after Friday night's incident at the temple, authorities said.

Ankita Bhowmick, a resident of Dhaka, said she was happy with the security provided by the government, but such a situation is suffocating.

"We won't need any security if we have the mentality and tendency that each individual can practice their religion according to their customs. There will be no fear. There will be no need for comparison between last year's security arrangement and this year's measures," she said at Dhaka's Dhakeswari temple.

Home Affairs Adviser Chowdhury said a special security measures would remain in place until Sunday when the festival ends.

He said apart from police and the usual security agencies, the military, navy and air force have also been deployed to ensure law and order beyond the Hindu festival.

Arpita Barman, a university student, was optimistic.

"People who thronged here are jubilant. In the future we also want to see, more people come here and celebrate puja. I feel happy to see people irrespective of their religions here. We want to see such scenes in the future and a harmonious Bangladesh," she said.

Harris is releasing a report on her health and poking Trump for failing to do likewise

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris plans to release a report Saturday on her medical history and health that a senior campaign aide said would show “she possesses the physical and mental resiliency” needed to serve as president.

Harris’ advisers hope to use the moment to draw a contrast with Republican Donald Trump, who has released only limited information about his health over the years, and raise questions about his fitness to serve, the aide said.

Harris’ office did not go into detail about how thorough the report on her medical history would be. The aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter, said the report concludes Harris “possesses the physical and mental resiliency required to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, to include those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief.”

Trump, for his part, has released very little information, including after his ear was grazed by a bullet during an assassination attempt in July.

Trump, 78, eagerly questioned President Joe Biden’s health when the 81-year-old president was seeking reelection. Since Biden was replaced on the ticket with Harris, who is 59, Trump’s own health has drawn more attention.

Last November, Trump marked Biden’s birthday by releasing a letter from his physician that reported the former president was in “excellent” physical and mental health.

The letter posted on Trump’s social media platform contained no details to support its claims — measures like weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, or the results of any test.

Bomb survivors use Nobel Peace Prize win to share their anti-nuke message with younger generations

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The recipient of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize is a fast-dwindling group of atomic bomb survivors who are facing down the shrinking time they have left to convey the firsthand horror they witnessed 79 years ago.

Nihon Hidankyo, the Japanese organization of survivors of the U.S. atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was awarded for its decadeslong activism against nuclear weapons. The survivors, known as hibakusha, see the prize and the international attention as their last chance to get their message out to younger generations.

“We must seriously think about the succession of our messages. We must thoroughly hand over from our generation to the future generations,” Toshiyuki Mimaki, senior member of the Hiroshima branch of Hidankyo, told reporters Friday night.

“With the honor of the Nobel Peace Prize, we now have a responsibility to get our messages handed down not only in Japan but also across the world.”

The honor rewards members’ grassroots efforts to keep telling their stories — even though that involved recollecting horrendous ordeals during and after the bombings, and facing discrimination and worries about their health from the lasting radiation impact — for the sole purpose of never again let that happen.

Now, with their average age at 85.6, the hibakusha are increasingly frustrated that their fear of a growing nuclear threat and push to eliminate nuclear weapons are not fully understood by younger generations.

The number of prefectural hibakusha groups decreased from 47 to 36. And the Japanese government, under the U.S. nuclear umbrella for protection, has refused to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapon.

But there is hope, and a youth movement seems to be starting, the Nobel committee noted.

Three high school students accompanied Mimaki at the city hall, stood by him as the prize winner was

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announced, and promised to keep their activism alive.

"I had goose bumps when I heard the announcement," said a beaming Wakana Tsukuda. "I have felt discouraged by negative views about nuclear disarmament, but the Nobel Peace Prize made me renew my commitment to work toward abolishing nuclear weapons."

Another high school student, Natsuki Kai, said, "I will keep up my effort so we can believe that nuclear disarmament is not a dream but a reality."

In Nagasaki, another group of students celebrated Hidankyo's win. Yuka Ohara, 17, thanked the survivors' yearslong effort despite the difficulty. Ohara said she heard her grandparents, who survived the Nagasaki bombing, repeatedly tell her the importance of peace in daily life. "I want to learn more as I continue my activism."

In April, a group of people set up a network, Japan Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, connecting younger generations around the country to work with survivors and pursue their effort.

Efforts to document the survivors' stories and voices have grown in recent years around Japan, including in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo. In some places, young volunteers are working with hibakusha to succeed their personal story telling when they are gone.

The first U.S. atomic bombing killed 140,000 people in the city of Hiroshima. A second atomic attack on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, killed another 70,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, bringing an end to its nearly half-century aggression in Asia.

Hidankyo was formed 11 years later in 1956. There was a growing anti-nuclear movement in Japan in response to U.S. hydrogen bomb tests in the Pacific that led to a series of radiation exposures by Japanese boats, adding to demands for government support for health problems.

As of March, 106,823 survivors — 6,824 fewer than a year ago, and nearly one-quarter of the total in the 1980s — were certified as eligible for government medical support, according to the Health and Welfare Ministry. Many others, including those who say they were victims of the radioactive "black rain" that fell outside the initially designated areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are still without support.

UK leader Keir Starmer is marking 100 days in office. It has been a rocky ride

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer marks 100 days in office Saturday with little cause for celebration.

Starmer's center-left Labour Party was elected by a landslide on July 4, sweeping back to power after 14 years. But after weeks of stories about feuding, freebies and fiscal gloom, polls suggest Starmer's personal approval rating has plummeted, and Labour is only slightly more popular than a Conservative Party that was rejected by voters after years of infighting and scandal.

"You couldn't really have imagined a worse start," said Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London. "First impressions count, and it's going to be difficult to turn those around."

Starmer won the election on promises to banish years of turmoil and scandal under Conservative governments, get Britain's sluggish economy growing and restore frayed public services such as the state-funded National Health Service.

His government argues it has made a strong start: It has ended long-running strikes by doctors and railway workers, set up a publicly owned green energy firm, scrapped the Conservatives' contentious plan to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda and introduced bills to strengthen rights for workers and renters.

Starmer has traveled to Washington, the United Nations and European capitals as he seeks to show that "Britain is back" after years of inward-looking wrangling over Brexit. But the United Kingdom, like its allies, has struggled to have much impact on spiraling conflicts in the Middle East and the grinding war in Ukraine.

The new government also has faced crises at home, including days of far-right-fueled anti-immigrant violence that erupted in towns and cities across England and Northern Ireland in the summer. Starmer condemned the rioters as "mindless thugs" and vowed to jail those responsible. So far, more than 800

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people have appeared in court and almost 400 have gone to prison.

Starmer's most intractable problem is Britain's sluggish economy, hobbled by rising public debt and low growth of just 0.2% in August, according to official figures.

Starmer has warned that things will be "tough in the short term" before they get better. He says public spending will be constrained by a 22-billion-pound (\$29 billion) "black hole" in the public finances left by the Conservatives.

One of the government's first acts was to strip millions of retirees of a payment intended to help heat their homes in winter. It was intended to signal determination to take tough economic decisions, but it spawned a sharp backlash from Labour members and sections of the public.

It also sat awkwardly with news that Starmer had accepted thousands of pounds' (dollars') worth of clothes and designer eyeglasses from a wealthy Labour donor. Starmer insisted the gifts were within the rules, but after days of negative headlines agreed to pay back 6,000 pounds' (almost \$8,000) worth of gifts and hospitality, including tickets to see Taylor Swift.

Government officials and advisers have traded blame for the faltering start, with the focus on Downing Street Chief of Staff Sue Gray, and her reported tensions with Labour campaign strategist Morgan McSweeney.

Amid intense media scrutiny — which produced the revelation that Gray earned more than the prime minister — she resigned Sunday, saying stories about her "risked becoming a distraction." McSweeney is replacing her as Starmer's chief of staff.

Anand Menon, director of the political think tank U.K. in a Changing Europe, wrote on its website that the government made "avoidable mistakes" that allowed a "perception of incompetence and dysfunction" to take hold.

The government's focus is now on Oct. 30, when Treasury chief Rachel Reeves will set out her first budget. The government is banking on a mix of public and private investment to spur economic growth, but needs to come up with billions for the task. Reeves has ruled out increasing income tax, sales tax or corporation tax, but also says there will be no "return to austerity" — a hard circle to square. She is thought to be considering hiking levies on wealth such as capital gains or inheritance tax.

The government is hoping it can take painful decisions early and then turn things around by showing a growing economy and improving living standards. And it has time — there does not have to be another election until 2029.

Starmer was working from 10 Downing St. on his 100th day in office, and insisted he would not be "knocked off course."

"You get these days and weeks when things are choppy, there's no getting around that," he told the BBC. "That is in the nature of government.

"It's been much tougher than anything I've done before, but much better."

Bale said the government can rebuild trust with voters, if it shows "not only that it's had a pretty dire inheritance, but that it has a plan to improve the country."

"What's been lacking in some ways is the vision thing," he said. "I don't think people have that much of a sense of what Keir Starmer or indeed Labour is about. And that's something they need to put right very quickly."

What's behind the northern lights that dazzled the sky farther south than normal

By The Associated Press undefined

Another in a series of unusually strong solar storms hitting Earth produced stunning skies full of pinks, purples, greens and blues farther south than normal, including into parts of Germany, the United Kingdom, New England and New York City.

"It was a pretty extensive display yet again," said Shawn Dahl, a space weather forecaster at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center. He said the center

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has gotten reports of northern lights sightings as far south as New Mexico. "It's been a wonderful year."

There were no immediate reports of disruptions to power and communications.

NOAA issued a severe geomagnetic storm alert on Wednesday after an outburst from the sun was detected earlier in the week. Such a storm increases the chance of auroras — also known as northern lights — and can temporarily disrupt power and radio signals.

NOAA's Friday forecast shows continued higher-than-normal activity, but the chances for another overnight show are slim farther south of Canada and the northern Plains states.

What causes northern lights?

The sun sends more than heat and light to Earth — it sends energy and charged particles known as the solar wind. But sometimes that solar wind becomes a storm. The sun's outer atmosphere occasionally "burps" out huge bursts of energy called coronal mass ejections. They produce solar storms, also known as geomagnetic storms, according to NOAA.

The Earth's magnetic field shields us from much of it, but particles can travel down the magnetic field lines along the north and south poles and into Earth's atmosphere.

When the particles interact with the gases in our atmosphere, they can produce light — blue and purple from nitrogen, green and red from oxygen.

Dahl said this storm generated a particularly vibrant display when it hit because the orientation of the storm's magnetism lined up well with the Earth's. "We stayed well connected," he said.

Why have there been so many solar storms lately?

Solar activity increases and decreases in a cycle that last about 11 years, astronomers say. The sun appears to be near the peak of that cycle, known as a solar maximum.

In May, the sun shot out its biggest flare in almost two decades. That came days after severe solar storms pummeled Earth and triggered auroras in unaccustomed places across the Northern Hemisphere.

There will likely be more to come. Dahl said we remain "in the grip" of the solar maximum and it isn't likely to start to fade until early 2026.

"We're in for more of the experiences we had last night," he said.

How can you best see the northern lights?

NOAA advises those who hope to see the northern lights to get away from city lights.

The best viewing time is usually within an hour or two before or after midnight, and the agency says the best occasions are around the spring and fall equinoxes due to the way the solar wind interacts with Earth's magnetic field.

Yamamoto outduels Darvish in historic matchup as Dodgers beat Padres 2-0 to reach NLCS

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles Dodgers shelled out \$1 billion for Japanese talent in the offseason and it's paying off in the playoffs.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto outdueled Yu Darvish in a historic postseason matchup of Japanese-born starters, and the Dodgers got home runs from Kiké Hernández and Teoscar Hernández to beat the San Diego Padres 2-0 on Friday and advance to the National League Championship Series.

"It's pretty sweet," a smiling Freddie Freeman said.

Yamamoto allowed two hits over five innings for the win, getting pulled after 63 pitches in a decisive Game 5 between heated NL West rivals who were meeting in a Division Series for the third time in five years.

He signed a \$325 million, 12-year deal in December, shortly after the Dodgers lured superstar Shohei Ohtani from the Los Angeles Angels with a record \$700 million, 10-year contract.

Ohtani and the Dodgers will play the wild-card New York Mets in the best-of-seven NLCS starting Sunday in Los Angeles.

"We're ready for the next level," manager Dave Roberts said.

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The Dodgers won a decisive Game 5 at home for the first time since taking a 1981 NL Division Series against Houston after a season split into halves following a players' strike.

"We went through a lot of injuries, a lot of ups and a lot of downs. We fight, we fight and keep going," star outfielder Mookie Betts said. "All season everybody says the Dodgers are winning the World Series, the Dodgers are winning the World Series. And we get to this series, and all of a sudden we're the underdog."

Boasting the majors' best regular-season record of 98-64, they successfully avoided a third straight NLDS elimination.

"We'd been in a little bit of a DS funk," said Andrew Friedman, president of baseball operations. "For the guys that had been there, they could feel that after we got down 2-1. The new guys wanted no part of that."

The Padres' big hitters went bust with their season on the line. Three-time batting champion Luis Arraez, Fernando Tatis Jr., Jurickson Profar and Manny Machado were 1 for 14 in Game 5 as Los Angeles pitchers retired their last 19 batters.

"Everybody was picking them to win because we have no pitching, we can't hit with runners in scoring position, this and that," a soaked Kiké Hernández said. "We're the ones popping bottles now."

San Diego's powerful lineup went scoreless for the final 24 innings of the series, dropping the last two games after taking a 2-1 lead back home.

"I think stunning is appropriate," Padres manager Mike Shildt said.

Machado added, "It's a devastating one for sure."

Yamamoto and Darvish were the first Japanese-born starting pitchers to square off in major league playoff history. The 26-year-old Yamamoto was the fifth rookie to start a winner-take-all game in Dodgers history.

"It was awesome to be able to pitch with him, to share the mound on such a big stage," Darvish said through an interpreter. "He's not just a great pitcher, but he is a great human being, too. It was a great night for both of us."

Yamamoto joined Orel Hershiser, Jerry Reuss, Sandy Koufax and Johnny Podres as the only Dodgers pitchers with a scoreless start of at least five innings in a winner-take-all postseason game.

"For Yamamoto, I don't think any of us can appreciate the pressure on a global scale," Roberts said. "He was pitching for the country of Japan."

Yamamoto handed the ball to a stellar bullpen that carried the Dodgers during the regular season when their starters were hit hard by injuries. Evan Phillips got five outs, fanning Profar and Machado in the seventh before Alex Vesia whiffed rookie standout Jackson Merrill to end the inning.

Vesia was warming up for the eighth when he exited with an injury. Michael Kopech came on and worked a perfect inning before Blake Treinen got three quick outs for his third career postseason save and second of the series.

With that, the NL West champs spilled out of the dugout for hugs and then headed back into their clubhouse for another celebration. Clayton Kershaw, Gavin Lux, Kopech, Walker Buehler and Tyler Glasnow huddled in a corner smoking victory cigars.

In the middle of the room, its carpet drenched in alcohol and music blaring, a laughing Ohtani delighted in opening bottles of beer and pouring them over the heads of teammates and staff members.

"Anytime you're smelling like champagne, it means you're doing something good," Betts said.

The 38-year-old Darvish, who was Ohtani's childhood idol, gave up an early home run to Kiké Hernández, then set down 14 in a row. Teoscar Hernández's homer chased Darvish in the seventh and made it 2-0.

The Padres and Dodgers combined to retire 26 consecutive batters — the longest streak in a single game in postseason history.

Darvish gave up three hits in 6 2/3 innings, struck out four and walked one. He dropped to 0-5 in elimination games — four of them quality starts.

"I thought Yu was magnificent again. Had them off balance. Couple of swings got him. Other than that, he was really good," Shildt said.

Darvish and Ohtani teamed to help win last year's World Baseball Classic for Japan, but they were rivals Friday. Ohtani struck out three times, including twice against Darvish in a game watched on Saturday

morning in Japan.

"A lot of fans were looking forward to today's matchup," Yamamoto said through an interpreter.

Ohtani hit a tying three-run homer in Game 1, his playoff debut, but was mostly quiet the rest of the series after becoming the first player in major league history to reach 50 homers and 50 stolen bases in a season.

The teams combined to score 43 runs in the first four games of the series, but the winner-take-all finale was a tense pitching affair in front of a sellout crowd of 53,183 that included Los Angeles Lakers superstar LeBron James and a Hollywood contingent of Brad Pitt, Rob Lowe, Bryan Cranston and Jimmy Kimmel.

The wild-card Padres ended the series scoreless since the second inning of Game 3. They became the first team to lead 2-1 in a best-of-five series and fail to push across a run in the final two games.

Yamamoto successfully covered first base three times after inducing grounders, making it easier on Freeman, who started after missing Game 4 with a sprained right ankle.

Los Angeles led 1-0 on the drive by Kiké Hernández with two outs in the second. It was the 14th career postseason homer for Hernández, who was brought back to the Dodgers this season to make an impact in October.

The Dodgers staved off elimination in San Diego with an 8-0 victory in Game 4 to force the deciding game back home, where fans tossing balls and trash on the field caused a 12-minute delay in a Game 2 loss. The public-address announcer warned fans in the middle of the fifth Friday not to throw objects or go on the field.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Roberts said Vesia complained of cramping. He will have X-rays and an MRI.

UP NEXT

The Dodgers are headed to the NLCS for the 16th time overall and first since 2021 when they lost to Atlanta in six games. Los Angeles went 4-2 against the Mets during the regular season.

The Padres head into the offseason with plenty of promise for next year. They challenged the Dodgers for the NL West title down to the final days of the regular season.

As Hezbollah and Israel battle on the border, Lebanon's army watches from the sidelines

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Since Israel launched its ground invasion of Lebanon, Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants have clashed along the border while the Lebanese army has largely stood on the sidelines.

It's not the first time the national army has found itself watching war at home from the discomfiting position of bystander.

Lebanon's widely beloved army is one of the few institutions that bridge the country's sectarian and political divides. Several army commanders have become president, and the current commander, Gen. Joseph Aoun, is widely regarded as one of the front-runners to step in when the deadlocked parliament fills a two-year vacuum and names a president.

But with an aging arsenal and no air defenses, and battered by five years of economic crisis, the national army is ill-prepared to defend Lebanon against either aerial bombardment or a ground offensive by a well-equipped modern army like Israel's.

The army is militarily overshadowed by Hezbollah. The Lebanese army has about 80,000 troops, with around 5,000 of them deployed in the south. Hezbollah has more than 100,000 fighters, according to the militant group's late leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Its arsenal — built with support from Iran — is also more advanced.

A cautious initial response

Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters have been clashing since Oct. 8, 2023, when the Lebanese militant group began firing rockets over the border in support of its ally Hamas in Gaza.

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In recent weeks, Israel has conducted a major aerial bombardment of Lebanon and a ground invasion that it says aims to push Hezbollah back from the border and allow displaced residents of northern Israel to return.

As Israeli troops made their first forays across the border and Hezbollah responded with rocket fire, Lebanese soldiers withdrew from observation posts along the frontier and repositioned about 5 kilometers (3 miles) back.

So far, Israeli forces have not advanced that far. The only direct clashes between the two national armies were on Oct. 3, when Israeli tank fire hit a Lebanese army position in the area of Bint Jbeil, killing a soldier, and on Friday, when two soldiers were killed in an airstrike in the same area. The Lebanese army said it returned fire both times.

Lebanon's army declined to comment on how it will react if Israeli ground forces advance farther.

Analysts familiar with the army's workings said that, should the Israeli incursion reach the current army positions, Lebanese troops would put up a fight — but a limited one.

The army's "natural and automatic mission is to defend Lebanon against any army that may enter Lebanese territory," said former Lebanese Army Gen. Hassan Jouni. "Of course, if the Israeli enemy enters, it will defend, but within the available capabilities ... without going to the point of recklessness or suicide."

Israeli and Lebanese armies are 'a total overmatch'

The current Israeli invasion of Lebanon is its fourth into the neighboring country in the past 50 years. In most of the previous invasions, the Lebanese army played a similarly peripheral role.

The one exception, said Aram Nerguizian, a senior associate with the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, was in 1972, when Israel attempted to create a 20-kilometer (12-mile) buffer zone to push back Palestinian Liberation Organization fighters.

At that time, Nerguizian said, the Lebanese army successfully slowed the pace of the Israeli advance and "bought time for political leadership in Beirut to seek the intervention of the international community to pressure Israel for a cease-fire."

But the internal situation in Lebanon — and the army's capabilities — deteriorated with the outbreak of a 15-year civil war in 1975, during which both Israeli and Syrian forces occupied parts of the country.

Hezbollah was the only faction that was allowed to keep its weapons after the civil war, for the stated goal of resisting Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon — which ended in 2000.

By 2006, when Hezbollah and Israel fought a bruising monthlong war, the Lebanese army "had not been able to invest in any real-world post-war modernization, had no ability to deter Israeli air power" and "was left completely exposed," Nerguizian said. "The few times that the (Lebanese army) and Israeli forces did engage militarily, there was total overmatch."

International aid has been a mixed blessing

After the 2011 outbreak of civil war in neighboring Syria and the rise of the Islamic State militant group there, the Lebanese army saw a new influx of military aid. It successfully battled against IS on Lebanon's border in 2017, although not alone — Hezbollah was simultaneously attacking the group on the other side of the border.

When Lebanon's financial system and currency collapsed in 2019, the army took a hit. It had no budget to buy weapons and maintain its existing supplies, vehicles and aircraft. An average soldier's salary is now worth around \$220 per month, and many resorted to working second jobs. At one point, the United States and Qatar both gave a monthly subsidy for soldiers' salaries.

The U.S. had been a primary funder of the Lebanese army before the crisis. It has given some \$3 billion in military aid since 2006, according to the State Department, which said in a statement that it aims "to enable the Lebanese military to be a stabilizing force against regional threats" and "strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, secure its borders, counter internal threats, and disrupt terrorist facilitation."

President Joe Biden's administration has also touted the Lebanese army as a key part of any diplomatic solution to the current war, with hopes that an increased deployment of its forces would supplant Hezbollah in the border area.

But that support has limits. Aid to the Lebanese army has sometimes been politically controversial within

the U.S., with some legislators arguing that it could fall into the hands of Hezbollah, although there is no evidence that has happened.

In Lebanon, many believe that the U.S. has blocked the army from obtaining more advanced weaponry that might allow it to defend against Israel — America's strongest ally in the region and the recipient of at least \$17.9 billion in U.S. military aid in the year since the war in Gaza began.

"It is my personal opinion that the United States does not allow the (Lebanese) military to have advanced air defense equipment, and this matter is related to Israel," said Walid Aoun, a retired Lebanese army general and military analyst.

Nerguizian said the perception is "not some conspiracy or half-truth," noting that the U.S. has enacted a legal requirement to support Israel's qualitative military edge relative to all other militaries in the region.

Transit systems are targeting fare evaders to win back riders leery about crime

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Dominique Davenport was waiting for a ride home after getting off the MetroLink light rail one night in East St. Louis, Illinois, when he heard an argument followed by gunshots behind him on the station's platform.

A teenager had been killed, the latest act of violence for a St. Louis-area transit system with a reputation for crime and where anyone could board without even showing a ticket.

"You could just be getting off work and somebody gets an attitude," Davenport said. "Big drug addicts, drug dealers, you've got so many different personalities, so many different types of people who go through things. And everybody catches the train."

As transportation hubs across the country attempt to win back riders who haven't returned since the pandemic — 26% as of September 2023 — one major obstacle is the sometimes inaccurate perception that transit crime is on the rise. Many systems are bulking up enforcement and targeting their efforts on people who try to ride without paying.

MetroLink has begun adding 8-foot (2.4-meter) metal gates to ensure customers can't enter the platform without a valid fare card. That's a major change from the honor system the two-state light rail had employed since its inception in 1993, with fares only enforced through onboard spot checks and the threat of fines for repeat violators.

Transit systems in other metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and San Francisco, already required upfront payments, but lately they have been fortifying the entrance gates to curb the temptation for riders to simply hurdle a turnstile.

But does cracking down on ticketless riders really help eliminate violent crime? As Janno Lieber, chairman and CEO of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, explained, "not every fare evader is a criminal" but virtually all criminals "evaded the fare."

The new gates being installed at the St. Louis-area MetroLink stations are commonly known elsewhere as "fare gates." But Kevin Scott, general manager for security at Bi-State Development, the agency overseeing transit in the region, is quick to correct the reference. They are "security gates," he says, stressing that the \$52 million purchase, which also includes the addition of 1,200 regularly monitored cameras, is less about catching fare-skippers than improving safety.

"We've seen it time and again where something plays out on the street, then everybody runs for the MetroLink platform and that's where the shooting happens or that's where the stabbing happens," Scott said. "We're really trying to impact the overall perception that the system is unsafe. We could have taken five or six steps forward with security, but if we have an incident play out, now we're three or four steps back."

Assaults and homicides on public transit roughly doubled between 2011 and 2023, according to the Federal Transit Administration. Several transit agencies, including the St. Louis MetroLink, have reported

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a recent drop in crime.

There is less current national data about the link between crime and fare evasion. However, people who didn't pay a fare accounted for nearly 94% of those arrested for violent crimes on the Los Angeles Metro from May 2023 through April 2024. Metro is testing taller fare gates and some stations now require customers to tap a card when they exit as well as enter.

Joshua Schank, who wrote a report for the Mineta Transportation Institute examining whether transit should be free, said gated entrances are emblematic of the major question at the root of public transportation: Should it be a service for everybody or just those who can afford to ride?

"There's a tendency to default to the idea that enforcing fares or putting up fare gates is a security solution because it's something concrete you can do," said Schank, a partner with InfraStrategies. "Maybe that is the answer, but it's worth exploring other behavioral elements to improve security and not just defaulting to fare gates."

New York's subway system has long been notorious for fare evasion, with one widely watched YouTube video showing a man squeezing through a turnstile just by pulling it slightly backward, and another showing five people crowding through a gate after paying just one fare. Earlier this year, more than 1,400 turnstiles were modified to prevent slipping through and other alterations are being tested to make them harder to jump over.

Like New York, the Metro subway system in Washington, D.C., has been working to make its gates higher while beefing up patrols for unpaid riders. Police have written more than 10,000 citations for fare evasion this year, nearly three times the number from the same period last year. More than 250 people who were caught skipping a fare were arrested for open warrants and 16 guns were recovered.

Last month, four people were shot to death while sleeping on an elevated train in Chicago. Gate improvements already had been part of the Chicago Transit Authority's plan to bolster security at L stations, along with better patrols and a pilot program to detect guns.

Bay Area Rapid Transit in San Francisco has had fare gates since it opened in 1972, but until 2018 an officer had to actually witness someone evading a fare to write a ticket. Now, customers risk fines if they don't carry proof of payment or a fare card. Also, every gate is being reinforced with security wings, which spokesman Jim Allison says are nearly impossible to push open "unless you're an NFL linebacker and take a full run at it."

"We began to view fare evasion a little differently, as not just a cost of doing business but also a cultural liability," Allison said. "There was a sense that because so many people were observing fare evaders, it was eroding trust in the system."

Sound Transit, which operates the regional light rail system in the Seattle area, has never had fare gates and has no plans to add them after one study concluded the systemwide cost could approach \$200 million.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority in Philadelphia estimates it loses as much as \$68 million annually due to fare evasion. Still, seldom do expensive new gates like the glass ones SEPTA is installing quickly pay for themselves through more effective toll enforcement.

That's why many systems, including the St. Louis MetroLink, justify the purchase less through a financial lens than through other factors such as security and fairness.

The Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center station near where Davenport works in East St. Louis was among the first to be upgraded. Until the fare card system becomes operational, workers open the gate manually when customers show proof of payment.

"I like it," Davenport said. "If they know you're going to pay your fare and take the train home, they're going to let you through."

Data shows migrants aren't taking 'Black jobs' or 'Hispanic jobs,' despite what Trump says

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump promises the biggest deportation event the U.S. has ever seen if he is elected — a promise he has predicated, in part, on the notion that immigrants in the U.S. legally and illegally are stealing what he calls “Black jobs” and “Hispanic jobs.”

But government data show immigrant labor contributes to economic growth and provides promotional opportunities for native-born workers. And a mass deportation event would cost U.S. taxpayers up to a trillion dollars and could cause the cost of living, including food and housing, to skyrocket, economists say.

Here's a look at immigration and the U.S. labor market, and what Trump's plan would mean for the U.S. economy.

What has Trump said?

Trump, who often uses anti-immigrant rhetoric, has referred during his campaign to immigrants he says are taking “Black jobs” and “Hispanic jobs.”

At a recent rally in Reading, Pennsylvania, Trump said, “You have an invasion of people into our country.” “They're going to be attacking — and they already are — Black population jobs, the Hispanic population jobs, and they're attacking union jobs too,” Trump said. “So when you see the border, it's not just the crime. Your jobs are being taken away too.”

Trump's rhetoric about jobs has been widely condemned by Democrats and Black leaders who have called it a racist and insulting way of implying that Black and Hispanic Americans take menial jobs.

Janiyah Thomas, the director of Team Trump Black Media, told The Associated Press that Democrats “continue to prioritize the interests of illegal immigrants over our own Black Americans who were born in this country” and that Biden-era job gains in the labor market were primarily due to illegal immigration.

The latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey data shows that as of 2023, native-born Black workers are most predominantly employed in management and financial operations, sales and office support roles, while native-born Latino workers are most often employed in management, office support, sales and service occupations.

Foreign-born, noncitizen Black workers are most often represented in transportation and health care support roles, and foreign-born, noncitizen Hispanic workers are most often represented in construction, building and grounds cleaning.

How has immigration contributed to U.S. growth?

In 2023, international migrants — primarily from Latin America — accounted for more than two-thirds of the population growth in the United States, and so far this decade they have made up almost three-quarters of U.S. growth.

After hitting a record high in December 2023, the number of migrants crossing the border has plummeted.

The claim that immigrants are taking employment opportunities from native-born Americans is repeated by Trump's advisers. They often cite a report produced by Steven Camarota, research director for the Center for Immigration Studies, a right-leaning think tank that seeks a reduced immigration flow into the U.S. The report combines job numbers for immigrants in the U.S. legally and illegally to reinforce the claim that foreigners are disproportionately driving U.S. labor growth and reaping most of the benefits.

Camarota's report states that 971,000 more U.S.-born Americans were employed in May 2024 compared to May 2019, prior to the pandemic, while the number of employed immigrants has increased by 3.2 million.

It is true that international migrants have become a primary driver of population growth this decade, increasing their share of the overall population as fewer children are being born in the U.S. compared with years past. That's according to the U.S. Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey.

Are immigrants taking native-born workers' jobs?

Economists who study immigrant labor's impact on the economy say that people who are in the U.S. illegally are not taking native citizens' jobs, because the roles that these immigrant workers take on are most often positions that native workers are unwilling to fill, such as agriculture and food processing jobs.

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Giovanni Peri, a labor economist at the University of California, Davis, conducted research that explores the impact of the 1980 influx of Cuban immigrants in Miami (the so-called Mariel Boatlift) on Black workers' employment. The study determined that the wages of Miami's Black and Hispanic workers moved above those in other cities that did not have a surge of immigrant workers.

Peri told the AP that the presence of new immigrant labor often improves employment outcomes for native-born workers, who often have different language and skill sets compared to new immigrants.

In addition, there are not a fixed number of jobs in the U.S., immigrants tend to contribute to the survival of existing firms (opening up new opportunities for native workers) and there are currently more jobs available than there are workers available to take them. U.S. natives have low interest in working in labor-intensive agriculture and food production roles.

"We have many more vacancies than workers in this type of manual labor, in fact we need many more of them to fill these roles," Peri said.

Stan Marek, who employs roughly 1,000 workers at his Houston construction firm, Marek Brothers Holdings LLC, said he has seen this firsthand.

Asked if immigrants in the U.S. illegally are taking jobs from native-born workers, he said, "Absolutely not, unequivocally."

"Many of my workers are retiring, and their kids are not going to come into construction and the trades," Marek said. He added that the U.S. needs an identification system that addresses national security concerns so those who are in the country illegally can work.

"There's not enough blue-collar labor here," he said.

Data also shows when there are not enough workers to fill these roles, firms will automate their jobs with machines and technology investments, rather than turn to native workers.

Dartmouth University economist Ethan Lewis said, "There is a vast amount of research on the labor market impact of immigration in the U.S., most of which concludes the impact on less-skilled workers is fairly small and, if anything, jobs for U.S.-born workers might be created rather than 'taken' by immigrants."

How would mass deportations affect the economy?

Trump has said he would focus on rounding up migrants by deploying the National Guard, whose troops can be activated on orders of a governor.

Peri says a deportation program would cost the U.S. up to a trillion dollars and would result in massive losses to the U.S. economy. The cost of food and other basic items would soar.

"They are massive contributors to our economy and we wouldn't have fruits and vegetables, we wouldn't have our gardens," he said, if the deportation effort comes to fruition.

Since the labor force made up of people in the U.S. illegally makes up roughly 4% of U.S. GDP annually, he estimates that mass deportation would result in a roughly \$1 trillion loss.

"It's a cost that is mind-boggling in terms of income loss, production loss and there will be a logistical cost to organize this," he said.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said this month in a podcast interview with David Axelrod that immigrant labor "is an important source of labor force growth."

"On balance, it helps the economy grow without actually depriving other people of jobs," she said. "It's not in any way a zero-sum game."

Far from where Hurricane Milton hit, tornadoes wrought unexpected damage

By STEPHANY MATAT and CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER Associated Press

WELLINGTON, Fla. (AP) — Tony Brazzale, a diving boat captain who has lived for 10 years in his Wellington home in southeastern Florida, wasn't worried about Hurricane Milton. The storm's center was forecast to make landfall on the opposite side of the peninsula and then cross the state well to the north of his family.

But on Wednesday afternoon as the hurricane began to pummel the state, he stood outside his house and watched as a tornado loomed in the sky. He took video on his phone. The pressure dropped, and his

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wife said her ears were popping. It was time to go inside.

The twister shattered windows in the home, tore off roof shingles, ripped a tree from the ground and left branches and other debris scattered in the yard. Two days later Brazzale was wearing safety goggles and using a chainsaw as he cleaned up the damage.

"The hurricane was a nonevent for us," he said. "Had it not been for an F-3 tornado, the entire thing would have been a nonevent for us."

It was one of dozens of tornadoes spawned by Milton that hit South Florida far from where the storm made landfall near Sarasota. One of them killed at least six people in Spanish Lakes Country Club Village near Fort Pierce, about an hour's drive north from Wellington.

Meteorologists believe there may have been at least 38 tornadoes associated with Milton. The National Weather Service is still reviewing preliminary reports, which could take weeks, but it issued 126 tornado warnings in the state the day the hurricane hit.

When the review is complete, the storm could crack the all-time top-10 list for most tornadoes caused by a hurricane.

The highest number of confirmed tornadoes from a hurricane were the 118 unleashed by Ivan in 2004, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Hurricane Beryl, which hit in July of this year and is still under review, generated at least 65 confirmed tornadoes and currently ranks fifth.

By comparison, Florida overall typically sees about 50 tornadoes a year on average, according to Matthew Elliot, a warning coordination meteorologist for the Storm Prediction Center.

In Wellington, 210 miles (340 kilometers) southeast of Tampa near West Palm Beach on the Atlantic Coast, sheriff's deputies spent Friday morning and afternoon helping residents clean up debris and move large trees that were obstructing roads.

Brazzale toiled to fix roof tiles and replace his shattered windows. Throughout his neighborhood, Pine Trace at Binks Forest, others were doing the same thing — cleaning up debris, putting tarps on damaged roofs and chain sawing fallen trees and branches.

The most important thing is that nobody died here, Brazzale said.

"It's a significant pressure drop when one of those things goes over," he said of the tornado. "You heard it. It was a freight train."

Floridians evacuated for Hurricane Milton after wake-up call from devastating Helene

By RUSS BYNUM, BRENDAN FARRINGTON and TY ONEIL Associated Press

BRANDON, Fla. (AP) — Florida residents who fled hundreds of miles to escape Hurricane Milton made slow trips home on crowded highways, weary from their long journeys and the cleanup work awaiting them but also grateful to be coming back alive.

"I love my house, but I'm not dying in it," Fred Neuman said Friday while walking his dog outside a rest stop off Interstate 75 north of Tampa.

Neuman and his wife live in Siesta Key, where Milton made landfall Wednesday night as a powerful, Category 3 hurricane. Heeding local evacuation orders ahead of the storm, they drove nearly 500 miles (800 kilometers) to Destin on the Florida Panhandle. Neighbors told the couple the hurricane destroyed their carport and inflicted other damage, but Neuman shrugged, saying their insurance should cover it.

Nearby, Lee and Pamela Essenburm made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at a picnic table as cars pulling off the slow-moving interstate waited for parking spaces outside the crowded rest stop. Their home in Palmetto, on the south end of Tampa Bay, had a tree fall in the backyard. They evacuated fearing the damage would be more severe, worrying Milton might hit as a catastrophic Category 4 or 5 storm.

"I wasn't going to take a chance on it," Lee Essenbaum said. "It's not worth it."

Milton killed at least 10 people when it tore across central Florida, flooding barrier islands, ripping the roof off the Tampa Bay Rays' baseball stadium and spawning deadly tornadoes.

Officials say the toll could have been worse if not for the widespread evacuations. The still-fresh devas-

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tation wrought by Hurricane Helene just two weeks earlier probably helped compel many people to flee.

"Helene likely provided a stark reminder of how vulnerable certain areas are to storms, particularly coastal regions," said Craig Fugate, who served as administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency under President Barack Obama. "When people see firsthand what can happen, especially in neighboring areas, it can drive behavior change in future storms."

In the seaside town of Punta Gorda, Mayor Lynne Matthews said rescuers only had to save three people from floodwaters after Milton passed, compared with 121 rescues from Helene's flooding.

"So people listened to the evacuation order," Matthews told a news conference Friday, noting that local authorities made sure residents heard them. "We had teams out with the megaphones going through all of our mobile home communities and other places to let people know that they needed to evacuate."

As of Friday night, the number of customers in Florida still without power had dropped to 1.9 million, according to poweroutage.us. St. Petersburg's 260,000 residents were told to boil water before drinking, cooking or brushing their teeth, until at least Monday.

Traffic slowed to a crawl along stretches of I-75 as evacuees' vehicles crowded alongside a steady stream of utility trucks heading south toward Tampa. While the densely populated city and surrounding Hillsborough County accounted for nearly one-fourth of the remaining power outages, the hurricane spared Tampa a direct hit, and the lethal storm surge that scientists feared never materialized.

Gov. Ron DeSantis warned people to not let down their guard, however, citing ongoing safety threats including downed power lines and standing water that could hide dangerous objects.

"We're now in the period where you have fatalities that are preventable," DeSantis said Friday. "You have to make the proper decisions and know that there are hazards out there."

In coastal Pinellas County, the sheriff's office used high-water vehicles to shuttle people back and forth to their homes in a flooded Palm Harbor neighborhood where waters continued to rise.

Madeleine Jiron, her husband and their dog, Harry Potter, climbed into the sheriff's truck for a ride into their neighborhood. After evacuating to Tallahassee they were just arriving home.

"We don't know what type of damage we have," Jiron said. "We'll see when we get there."

Middle East latest: UN mission in Lebanon is hit again by explosions

By The Associated Press undefined

The United Nations peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon said new explosions hit its headquarters Friday, injuring two peacekeepers a day after Israeli forces targeted the same position and struck central Beirut.

Earlier Friday, cross-border fire from Lebanon killed a man from Thailand who was working on a farm in north Israel.

Lebanon's crisis response unit announced Friday that 60 people were killed and 168 wounded in the past 24 hours, raising the total toll over the past year of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah to 2,229 killed and 10,380 wounded, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

Israel has been escalating 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. Israel is now at war with Hamas in Gaza and Hamas' ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times.

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

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Here is the latest:

At least 8 killed in airstrikes on southern Lebanon, health ministry says

BEIRUT — At least eight people were killed in intensified airstrikes across villages in southern and eastern Lebanon on Friday evening, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

An Israeli airstrike on Baysarieh, a village in Sidon province, killed three people, including a 2-year-old and a 16-year-old, and injured three others, the health ministry said.

In Baalbeck-Hermel province, located in the Bekaa Valley, five more people were killed and five others wounded in additional airstrikes.

On Thursday, 22 people were killed and 117 wounded in two Israeli strikes on two locations in central Beirut. The strike caused the collapse of two residential buildings housing families and displaced individuals.

Critical aid routes into northern Gaza have been cut off, United Nations officials say

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. humanitarian officials say aid entering Gaza is at its lowest level in months and warn that critical aid lifelines into northern Gaza, where Israel has renewed its offensive, have been cut off.

U.N. deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq delivered the grim news Friday, saying the main crossings into the north have been closed and no food or other essential supplies have entered since Oct. 1.

More than 400,000 people who remain in the north are under increasing pressure to move south, Haq said.

On Wednesday, the Israeli military body that oversees aid distribution in Gaza, COGAT, said in a statement that "Israel has not halted the entry or coordination of humanitarian aid" in the north.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian organization MedGlobal, which has worked in Gaza since 2018, said Friday that the Israeli army's renewed military action has driven the remaining health care facilities in the north "to the brink of collapse."

Three hospitals with hundreds of patients including children in intensive care — Kamal Adwan, Al-Awda and the Indonesian Hospital — have been ordered to evacuate by Israeli authorities and are on the verge of running out of fuel.

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan and MedGlobal's lead physician in Gaza, said Friday that the hospital just received "numerous injuries and fatalities due to the targeting of Al Naji area." The hospital's intensive care unit is overcrowded and the "catastrophic situation ... will worsen in the coming hours if there is no fuel for emergency services," he said in a statement.

On the overall dire situation throughout Gaza, Haq said the U.N. World Food Program reports that it has been unable to deliver food parcels to the more than 1 million Palestinians who receive them so far this month "due to constrained access of aid supplies."

In the north, WFP said kitchens, distribution points and bakeries have either been forced to shut down or are at risk of shutting down if the conflict continues, Haq said, adding that the bakeries are also running out of wheat flour.

Despite the challenges, Haq said, the U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA and its partners are distributing bread, meals and flour to designated shelters and beyond.

Government watching situation of Italian peacekeeping contingent, premier says

Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni said Friday that the Italian government is following the situation of the Italian peacekeeping contingent in southern Lebanon "with great attention," reiterating her strong condemnation of the Israeli attacks on the U.N. bases in the area.

The Italian soldiers engaged in the UNIFIL mission "are doing a fundamental, valuable work for the stabilisation of the area," Meloni said, speaking at the final press conference of the Med9 Summit in Cyprus. She recalled that the UNIFIL mission's headquarters and two Italian bases have been hit by gunfire attacks launched by Israeli forces.

"I can't avoid to go back and condemn what happened. It is not acceptable," Meloni said, confirming that the Italian government has "strongly protested" to the Israeli authorities over the attacks.

Meloni added that she was also working with her international colleagues on a common initiative to be discussed during the G7 Defense summit, which will take place in the coming days, "to implement our joint efforts to strengthen the Lebanese armed forces."

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US and Israel defense leaders spoke to discuss operations in Lebanon, Pentagon says

WASHINGTON — U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant on Thursday to discuss Israel's operations in Lebanon.

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said Austin reaffirmed ironclad support for Israel's right to defend itself and reiterated the U.S. commitment to a diplomatic arrangement that safely returns both Lebanese and Israeli civilians to their homes on both sides of the border.

He said Austin emphasized the importance of ensuring the safety of UNIFIL forces in the area and urged Israel to "pivot from military operations to a diplomatic pathway as soon as feasible."

60 killed, 168 wounded over past 24 hours in Lebanon, health ministry says

BEIRUT — Lebanon's crisis response unit announced Friday that 60 people were killed and 168 wounded in the past 24 hours, raising the total toll over the past year of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah to 2,229 killed and 10,380 wounded, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

The casualty toll was notably higher than previous days, with 22 people killed and 117 wounded in two Israeli strikes on two locations in central Beirut. The strike caused the collapse of two residential buildings housing families and displaced individuals.

The crisis response unit report also recorded 57 airstrikes and incidents of shelling in the past day, mostly concentrated in southern Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa Valley.

Some 1,032 centers — including educational complexes, vocational institutes, universities and other institutions — are sheltering 187,000 people, including 39,000 families, displaced by the Israeli offensive in Lebanon, the report said. Among these shelters, 837 have now reached full capacity.

Despite a major border crossing between Lebanon and Syria being out of commission after an Israeli strike hit the road last week, crowds have continued to flow across the border seeking relative safety in Syria. Between Sept. 23 and Oct. 9, Lebanese General Security recorded 317,457 Syrian citizens and 115,044 Lebanese citizens crossing into Syria, the report said.

Fourth Brazilian repatriation flight leaves Beirut

SAO PAULO — Brazil's fourth repatriation plane left Beirut for Brazil on Friday, carrying 211 passengers including 12 infants, according to a statement from Brazil's foreign ministry. The flight is set to land in Sao Paulo on Saturday morning local time after a stop to refuel in Lisbon.

The Brazilian government has evacuated 885 people and 11 pets from Lebanon in one week, the foreign ministry said.

About 21,000 Brazilians live in Lebanon, which is home to the largest community of Brazilians in the Middle East. Two Brazilian adolescents have been killed by Israeli bombardments in Lebanon.

The Brazilian Embassy in Beirut remains in contact with Brazilians and their close family members to organize a new repatriation flight depending on the security conditions, according to the foreign ministry.

2 Sri Lankans serving in UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon wounded

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — The Sri Lankan foreign ministry said two Sri Lankan soldiers who were serving in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in south Lebanon were wounded following the attacks on the U.N. base.

"Sri Lanka strongly condemns the attack at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura, South Lebanon injuring two Sri Lankan UN peacekeepers. Sri Lanka upholds the obligations to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and inviolability of UN premises at all times," the foreign ministry said Friday.

The U.N. force, known as UNIFIL, said new explosions hit its headquarters on Friday morning and injured two peacekeepers a day after Israeli forces struck the same position. The force has more than 10,000 peacekeepers from dozens of countries.

2 Lebanese soldiers killed as airstrike hits near Lebanese Army checkpoint

Two Lebanese soldiers were killed and three others wounded in an Israeli airstrike that hit a building near a Lebanese Army checkpoint in Kafra, Bint Jbeil province, the Lebanese Army said Friday.

Since Israel launched its ground invasion of Lebanon, Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants have clashed along the border while the Lebanese army has largely stood on the sidelines.

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As Israeli troops made their first forays across the border and Hezbollah responded with rocket fire, Lebanese soldiers withdrew from observation posts along the frontier and repositioned about 5 km back.

On Oct. 3, a Lebanese soldier was killed and another injured in an Israeli strike in Taybeh during rescue operations. On Sept. 30, another Lebanese soldier was killed by an Israeli drone targeting a Lebanese Army checkpoint in Wazzani.

2 injured after new explosions hit its base in southern Lebanon, UN says

The United Nations peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon says new explosions hit its headquarters on Friday morning, injuring two peacekeepers, a day after Israeli forces struck the same position.

The force, known as UNIFIL, said the explosions went off close to an observation tower at its headquarters in the southern Lebanese town of Naqoura. One of the injured peacekeepers was taken to a hospital in the nearby city of Tyre, while the other was treated at the site. It did not specify the cause of the blasts.

It also said an Israeli army bulldozer hit the perimeter of another of its positions in southern Lebanon while Israeli tanks moved nearby. Additional peacekeepers were sent to reinforce the position, it said.

Human Rights Watch says Israeli attacks on United Nations peacekeepers amount to war crimes

Human Rights Watch says the Israeli military's deliberate and repeated attacks on the United Nations peacekeeping mission in south Lebanon are unlawful and amount to war crimes.

The New York-based rights group issued a statement amid widespread condemnation of the attack by Israeli forces on the headquarters of the U.N. peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, which wounded two peacekeepers a day earlier.

"Any targeting of UN peacekeepers by Israeli forces violates the laws of war and dangerously interferes with UNIFIL's civilian protection and aid work," said Lama Fakih, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

"With over 2,000 people killed and over a million people displaced in Lebanon since mid-September, it is crucial for UNIFIL to be allowed to fulfil its civilian protection and humanitarian functions," Fakih said.

United Nations appeals for pause in fighting to enable polio vaccinations in Gaza

GENEVA — The U.N. is getting ready for the start a second round of polio vaccinations for children in Gaza next week, and appealed for the implementation of a "humanitarian pause" to enable the campaign.

A first round of vaccinations was concluded last month after the detection of Gaza's first polio case in 25 years. The new round is due to start on Monday and aims to give a second dose to some 591,700 children.

Dr. Rik Peepkorn, the World Health Organization's representative in the Palestinian territories, said Friday that a pause in fighting will once again be a "prerequisite" for a successful second round.

He said that "we renew our request for all parties of the conflict to implement this necessary humanitarian pause" in Gaza. He added that this is "particularly critical as new evacuation orders in the north of Gaza are threatening access to hospitals and protection of health facilities and health and community workers."

Blinken says Israel has 'clear and legitimate' interests in fighting Hezbollah

VIENTIANE, Laos — Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday gave support to Israel's escalated campaign against Hezbollah, saying it had "clear and legitimate" reasons, but said the United States is trying to find a diplomatic solution to the war.

"When the horror of Oct. 7 happened, the next day Hezbollah joined in, trying to create another front in the process," he told a news conference after attending an annual meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Laos.

He said Israel has a "clear and very legitimate interest" in trying to allow the return of its citizens who were evacuated from their homes in northern Israel because of Hezbollah fire. "The people of Lebanon want the same thing," he said, referring to Lebanese who fled homes near the border to escape Israeli bombardment.

"We believe that the best way to get there is through a diplomatic understanding, one that we've been working on for some time and one that we're extremely focused on right now," he said.

Blinken said it was also important that civilians are protected amid fighting in Lebanon and Gaza, adding that not enough humanitarian aid is reaching north Gaza and other areas.

Thai worker in Israel killed by munition from Lebanon

JERUSALEM — Cross-border fire from Lebanon killed a young worker from Thailand in the north of Israel early Friday, Israel's military said.

Israel's military said that the 27-year-old was killed by a rocket that hit farmland. The Thai Embassy in Israel and Israel's paramedic service said he was killed by an anti-tank missile fired from Lebanon. The two accounts could not immediately be reconciled.

The man was a farmworker on Kibbutz Yir'on, a communal farm in the north, the embassy said in a Facebook post Friday. The attack also "severely traumatized" another worker.

The embassy was working on getting in touch with the man's family, a spokesperson for Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said at a news conference in Bangkok.

The Israeli military said two other civilians were injured in the same incident Friday. Hezbollah claimed one missile attack on a military position in the north Friday morning.

Hezbollah and other militants in Lebanon have been exchanging fire with Israel for the past year. Israel recently escalated bombardment in Lebanon and invaded a strip inside the Lebanese border, vowing to push out Hezbollah fighters.

Friday's strike was one of the first civilian deaths in Israel since the escalation began in late September. Two Israelis were killed by rocket debris Wednesday. On the Lebanese side, Israeli strikes have killed more than 1,400 people in the past three weeks, including fighters, civilians and medical personnel.

Turkey condemns Israeli attack that wounded United Nations peacekeepers

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey condemned Israel's attack on United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, characterizing it as "a manifestation of its perception that its crimes go unpunished."

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

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."

"The international community is obliged to ensure that Israel abides by international law," Turkey's Foreign Ministry said in a statement released late Thursday. "We will continue to support all initiatives within the framework of international law to promote peace in the region."

Turkey contributes to UNIFIL Maritime Task Force with a corvette and five personnel, the ministry said.

Residents slog through flooded streets, clear debris after Hurricane Milton tore through Florida

By CHRIS O'MEARA, BRENDAN FARRINGTON and TY O'NEIL Associated Press

LITHIA, Fla. (AP) — Florida residents slogged through flooded streets, gathered up scattered debris and assessed damage to their homes on Friday after Hurricane Milton smashed through coastal communities and spawned a barrage of deadly tornadoes.

At least 10 people were dead, and rescuers were still saving people from swollen rivers, 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.

Gov. Ron DeSantis warned people to not let down their guard, however, citing ongoing safety threats including downed power lines and standing water that could hide dangerous objects.

"We're now in the period where you have fatalities that are preventable," DeSantis said. "You have to make the proper decisions and know that there are hazards out there."

As of Friday night, the number of customers in Florida still without power had dropped to 1.9 million, according to poweroutage.us. St. Petersburg's 260,000 residents were told to boil water before drinking, cooking or brushing their teeth, until at least Monday.

Also Friday, the owner of a major phosphate mine disclosed that pollution spilled into Tampa Bay during the hurricane.

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The Mosaic Company said in a statement that heavy rains from the storm overwhelmed a collection system at its Riverview site, pushing excess water out of a manhole and into discharges that lead to the bay. The company said the leak was fixed Thursday.

Mosaic said the spill likely exceeded a 17,500-gallon minimum reporting standard, though it did not provide a figure for what the total volume might have been.

Calls and emails to Mosaic seeking additional information about Riverview and the company's other Florida mines received no response, as did a voicemail left with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

The state has 25 such stacks containing more than 1 billion tons of phosphogypsum, a solid waste byproduct of the phosphate fertilizer mining industry that contains radium, which decays to form radon gas. Both radium and radon are radioactive and can cause cancer. Phosphogypsum may also contain toxic heavy metals and other carcinogens, such as arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury and nickel.

Florida's vital tourism industry has started to return to normal, meanwhile, as Walt Disney World and other theme parks reopened. The state's busiest airport, in Orlando, resumed full operations Friday.

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

Crews from the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office on Friday were assisting with rescues of people, including a 92-year-old woman, who were stranded in rising waters along the Alafia River. The river is 25 miles (40 kilometers) long and runs from eastern Hillsborough County, east of Tampa, into Tampa Bay.

In Pinellas County, deputies used high-water vehicles to shuttle people back and forth to their homes in a flooded Palm Harbor neighborhood where waters continued to rise.

Ashley Cabrera left with her 18- and 11-year-old sons and their three dogs, Eeyore, Poe and Molly. It was the first time since Milton struck that they had been able to leave the neighborhood, and they were now headed to a hotel in Orlando.

"I'm extremely thankful that we could get out now and go for the weekend somewhere we can get a hot meal and some gas," Cabrera said. "I thought we'd be able to get out as soon as the storm was over. These roads have never flooded like this in all the years that I've lived here."

Animals were being saved, too. Cindy Evers helped rescue a large pig stuck in high water at a strip mall in Lithia, east of Tampa. She had already rescued a donkey and several goats after the storm.

"I'm high and dry where I'm at, and I have a barn and 9 acres," Evers said, adding that she will soon start to work to find the animals' owners.

In the Gulf Coast city of Venice, Milton left behind several feet of sand in some beachfront condos, with one unit nearly filled. A swimming pool was packed full of sand, with only its handrails poking out.

Some warnings were heeded and lessons learned. When 8 feet (2.4 meters) of seawater flooded Punta Gorda during Hurricane Helene last month, 121 people had to be rescued, Mayor Lynne Matthews said. Milton brought at least 5 feet (1.5 meters) of flooding, but rescuers only had to save three people.

"So people listened to the evacuation order," Matthews said.

Heaps of fruit were scattered across the ground and trees toppled over after both Milton and Hurricane Helene swept through Polk County and other orange-growing regions, Matt Joyner of trade group Florida Citrus Mutual said Friday.

Milton arrived at the start of the orange growing season, so it is still too early to evaluate the full scope of the damage.

Florida has already seen orange production diminish over the years, with the industry still recovering from hurricanes of years past while also waging an ongoing battle against a deadly greening disease. Milton could be the knockout punch for some growers, Joyce said.

In the western coastal city of Clearwater, Kelvin Glenn said it took less than an hour early Thursday for water to rise to his waist inside his apartment. He and seven children, ranging in age from 3 to 16, were trapped in the brown, foul floodwaters for about three hours before an upstairs neighbor opened their home to them.

Later that day, first responders arrived in boats to ferry them away from the building.

"Sitting in that cold, nasty water was kind of bad," Glenn said.

Short-term survival is now turning into long-term worries. A hotel is \$160 a night. Everything inside Glenn's apartment is gone. And it can take time to get assistance.

"I ain't going to say we're homeless," Glenn said. "But we've got to start all over again."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has enough money to deal with the immediate needs of people impacted by Helene and Milton but will need additional funding at some point, FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell said Friday.

The disaster assistance fund helps pay for the swift response to hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and other disasters. Congress recently replenished the fund with \$20 billion — the same amount as last year.

Drought is parching the world's largest man-made lake, stripping Zambia of its electricity

By JACOB ZIMBA Associated Press

LAKE KARIBA, Zambia (AP) — Tindor Sikunyongana is trying to run a welding business which these days means buying a diesel generator with costly fuel he can't always afford.

Like everyone in Zambia, Sikunyongana is facing a daily struggle to find and afford electricity during a climate-induced energy crisis that's robbed the southern African country of almost all its power.

"Only God knows when this crisis will end," said Sikunyongana. His generator ran out of diesel and spluttered to a halt as he spoke. "You see what I mean?" he said.

Zambia's worst electricity blackouts in memory have been caused by a severe drought in the region that has left the critical Kariba dam, the source of Sikunyongana's woes, with insufficient water to run its hydroelectric turbines. Kariba is the largest man-made lake in the world by volume and lies 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of Lusaka on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The massive dam wall was built in the 1950s and more than 80 workers died during construction. It was meant to revolutionize the countries' energy supplies by trapping the water of the Zambezi River, turning a valley into a huge lake and providing an endless supply of renewable hydroelectric power.

That's not the case anymore as months of drought brought by the naturally occurring El Nino weather pattern and exacerbated by warming temperatures have put Zambia's hydroelectric station on the brink of completely shutting down for the first time.

The water level is so low that only one of the six turbines on Zambia's side of the dam is able to operate, cutting generation to less than 10% of normal output. Zambia relies on Kariba for more than 80% of its national electricity supply, and the result is Zambians have barely a few hours of power a day at the best of times. Often, areas are going without electricity for days.

Edla Musonda is so exasperated that she's taken to lugging her entire desktop computer — hard drive, monitor, everything — to a local cafe so she can work.

Musonda and others cram into the Mercato Cafe in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, not for the sandwiches or the ambiance but because it has a diesel generator. Tables are cluttered with power strips and cables as people plug in cell phones, laptops and in Musonda's case, a home office. This is the only way her small travel business is going to survive.

Less than half of Zambia's 20 million people had access to electricity before Kariba's problems. Millions more have now been forced to adjust as mothers find different ways to cook for their families and children do their homework by candlelight. The most damaging impact is during the daylight hours when small businesses, the backbone of the country, struggle to operate.

"This is also going to increase poverty levels in the country," said economist Trevor Hambayi, who fears Zambia's economy will shrink dramatically if the power crisis is prolonged. It's a warning call to the Zambian government and the continent in general about the danger to development of relying heavily on one source of energy that is so climate dependent.

The power crisis is a bigger blow to the economy and the battle against poverty than the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, said Zambia Association of Manufacturers president Ashu Sagar.

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Africa contributes the least to global warming but is the most vulnerable continent to extreme weather events and climate change as poor countries can't meet the high financial costs of adapting. This year's drought in southern Africa is the worst in decades and has parched crops and left millions hungry, causing Zambia and others to already declare national disasters and ask for aid.

Hydroelectric power accounts for 17% of Africa's energy generation, but that figure is expected to rise to 23% by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency. Zambia is not alone in that hydroelectric power makes up over 80% of the energy mix in Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda, Ethiopia and Congo, even as experts warn it will become more unreliable.

"Extreme weather patterns, including prolonged droughts, make it clear that overreliance on hydro is no longer sustainable," said Carlos Lopes, a professor at the Mandela School of Public Governance at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

The Zambian government has urged people and businesses to embrace solar power. But many Zambians can't afford the technology, while the government itself has turned to more familiar but polluting diesel generators to temporarily power hospitals and other buildings. It has also said it will increase its electricity from coal-fired stations out of necessity. While neighboring Zimbabwe has also lost much of its electricity generation from Kariba and blackouts there are also frequent, it gets a greater share of its power from coal plants.

At Kariba, the 128-meter-high (420-foot) dam wall is almost completely exposed. A dry, reddish-brown stain near the top marks where the water once reached in better times more than a decade ago.

Leonard Siamubotu, who has taken tourists on boat cruises on the picturesque lake for more than 20 years, has seen the change. As the water level dropped, it exposed old, dead trees that were completely submerged for years after the wall was built. "I'm seeing this tree for the first time," he said of one that's appeared in the middle of the lake.

The lake's water level naturally rises and recedes according to the season, but generally it should go up by around six meters after the rains. It moved by less than 30 centimeters after the last rainy season barely materialized, authorities said. They hope this year's rains, which should start in November, will be good. But they estimate that it'll still take three good years for Kariba to fully recover its hydroelectric capability.

Experts say there's also no guarantee those rains will come and it's dangerous to rely on a changing climate given Zambia has had drought-induced power problems before, and the trend is they are getting worse.

"That's not a solution ... just to sit and wait for nature," said Hambayi.

Trump drives his anti-immigration message in Aurora, Colorado

By JESSE BEDAYN and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — Donald Trump detoured from the battleground states Friday to visit a Colorado suburb that's been in the news over illegal immigration as he drives a message, often using false or misleading claims and dehumanizing language, that migrants are causing chaos in smaller American cities and towns.

Trump's rally in Aurora marked the first time ahead of the November election that either presidential campaign has visited Colorado, which reliably votes Democratic statewide.

The Republican nominee has long promised to stage the largest deportation operation in U.S. history and has made immigration core to his political persona since launching his first campaign in 2015. In recent months, Trump has pinpointed specific smaller communities that have seen large arrivals of migrants, with tensions flaring locally over resources and some longtime residents expressing distrust about sudden demographic changes.

Aurora entered the spotlight in August when a video circulated showing armed men walking through an apartment building housing Venezuelan migrants. Trump has claimed extensively that Venezuelan gangs are taking over buildings, even though authorities say that was a single block of the suburb near Denver, and the area is again safe.

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Ignoring those denials from local authorities, Trump painted a picture of apartment complexes overrun by “barbaric thugs” and streets unsafe to travel, blaming President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump’s Democratic rival.

“They’re ruining your state,” Trump said of the Democrats in the White House.

“No person who has inflicted the violence and terror that Kamala Harris has inflicted on this community can ever be allowed to become the president of the United States,” Trump added.

Trump often used dehumanizing language, referring to his political rivals as “scum” and to migrants as “animals” who have “invaded and conquered” Aurora. The town is “infected by Venezuela,” he said.

“We have to clean out our country,” Trump said. And he reprised the first controversy of his career in politics, when he launched his 2016 campaign by saying migrants are rapists and bring drugs and crime.

“I took a lot of heat for saying it, but I was right,” Trump said Friday, repeating the false claim that other countries are emptying their prisons and mental institutions and dumping their worst criminals in the United States.

To thunderous applause, he called for the death penalty “for any migrant that kills an American citizen or a law enforcement officer.”

Later Friday in Reno, Nevada, Trump insisted the U.S. is “an occupied country,” and added, “I make this vow to you: Nov. 5, 2024, will be liberation day in America. Liberation day.”

Trump announced in Colorado that as president he’d launch “Operation Aurora” to focus on deporting members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, or TDA. The violent gang traces its origins more than a decade to an infamously lawless prison with hardened criminals.

Trump also repeated his pledge to invoke the Alien Enemies Act, a 1798 law that allows the president to deport any noncitizen who is from a country that the U.S. is at war with.

In July, the Biden administration issued a sanction against the gang and offered \$12 million in rewards for the arrest of three leaders.

Aurora resident Jodie Powell, 54, was among the attendees at Trump’s Friday event. She said it’s “not the case” that Venezuelan gangs have taken over the city, as Trump claims. Still, Powell said she’s seen an increase in crime she associates with newcomers, citing a police chase that ended at a store where she was shopping.

“It takes a small amount of people to make a big difference in the community,” said Powell, who ranks immigration as her top concern alongside the economy. “It’s scary, it’s a scary thing.”

At the venue where Trump appeared, posters displayed mug shots of people in prison-orange with descriptions including “Illegal immigrant gang members from Venezuela.”

“Look at all these photos around me,” Stephen Miller, a former top aide who is expected to take a senior role in the White House if Trump wins, told the crowd. “Are these the kids you grew up with? Are these the neighbors you were raised with? Are these the neighbors that you want in your city?” The crowd roared “no” in reply.

Some Colorado officials, including the Republican mayor of Aurora, accused Trump and other Republicans of overstating problems in the city.

“Again, the reality is that the concerns about Venezuelan gang activity in our city — and our state — have been grossly exaggerated and have unfairly hurt the city’s identity and sense of safety,” said Mike Coffman, a former U.S. congressman.

Trump and his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, also have spread falsehoods about a community in Springfield, Ohio, where they said Haitian immigrants were accused of stealing and eating pets.

While Ohio and Colorado are not competitive in the presidential race, the Republican message on immigration is intended for states that are. Vance campaigned recently in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a city of 70,000 that has resettled refugees from Africa and Asia, and touted Trump’s plan to ramp up deportations. He argues smaller communities have been “overrun” by immigrants taxing local resources.

Trump has vowed to deport not only “criminals,” a promise he shares with Harris, but also Haitians living legally in Springfield and even people he has denigrated as “pro-Hamas radicals” protesting on college campuses. Trump has said he would revoke the temporary protected status that allows Haitians to stay

in the U.S. because of widespread poverty and violence in their home nation.

Harris has tacked to the right on immigration, presenting herself as a candidate who can be tough on policing the border, which is perceived as one of her biggest vulnerabilities.

She wrapped up a three-day western swing with a campaign event Friday in Scottsdale, Arizona, where she said she would create a bipartisan council of advisers to provide feedback on her policy initiatives if she makes it to the White House.

"I love good ideas wherever they come from," said Harris, who is making a push to get Republicans with doubts about Trump to support her.

She also accused Trump of letting Iran "off the hook" while he was in office and argued she would be a greater champion for Israel's security.

"Make no mistake, as president, I will never hesitate to take whatever action is necessary to defend American forces and interests from Iran and Iran-backed terrorists," Harris said in a call with Jewish supporters ahead of Yom Kippur. "And I will never allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. Diplomacy is my preferred path to that end. But all options are on the table."

Harris charged that Trump "did nothing" after Iran "attacked U.S. bases and American troops."

The criticism by Harris was a knock on Trump for downplaying a January 2020 missile attack by Iran on a U.S. base in Iraq that left several American troops with concussion-like symptoms, including some who had to be evacuated for treatment. Trump earlier this month referred to the injuries as a "headache."

The Iranian missile attack came days after Trump ordered a strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, and raised tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

Harris participated virtually in a White House briefing with President Biden on the recovery effort from hurricanes Milton and Helene. She sought to reassure those who endured losses from the hurricane that they would get help from the government.

Boeing will lay off 10% of its employees as a strike by factory workers cripples airplane production

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing plans to lay off about 10% of its workers in the coming months, about 17,000 people, as it continues to lose money and tries to deal with a strike that is crippling production of the company's best-selling airline planes.

New CEO Kelly Ortberg told staff in a memo Friday that the job cuts will include executives, managers and employees.

The company has about 170,000 employees worldwide, many of them working in manufacturing facilities in the states of Washington and South Carolina.

Boeing had already imposed rolling temporary furloughs, but Ortberg said those will be suspended because of the impending layoffs.

The company will further delay the rollout of a new plane, the 777X, to 2026 instead of 2025. It will also stop building the cargo version of its 767 jet in 2027 after finishing current orders.

Boeing has lost more than \$25 billion since the start of 2019.

About 33,000 union machinists have been on strike since Sept. 14. Two days of talks this week failed to produce a deal, and Boeing filed an unfair-labor-practices charge against the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

As it announced layoffs, Boeing also gave a preliminary report on its third-quarter financial results — and the news is not good for the company.

Boeing said it burned through \$1.3 billion in cash during the quarter and lost \$9.97 per share. Industry analysts had been expecting the company to lose \$1.61 per share in the quarter, according to a FactSet survey, but analysts were likely unaware of some large write-downs that Boeing announced Friday — a \$2.6 billion charge related to delays of the 777X, \$400 million for the 767, and \$2 billion for defense and space programs including new Air Force One jets, a space capsule for NASA and a military refueling tanker.

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The company based in Arlington, Virginia, said it had \$10.5 billion in cash and marketable securities on Sept. 30. Boeing is scheduled to release full third-quarter numbers on Oct. 23.

The strike has a direct bearing on cash burn because Boeing gets half or more of the price of planes when it delivers them to airline customers. The strike has shut down production of the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling plane, and 777s and 767s. The company is still making 787s at a nonunion plant in South Carolina.

"Our business is in a difficult position, and it is hard to overstate the challenges we face together," Ortberg told staff. He said the situation "requires tough decisions and we will have to make structural changes to ensure we can stay competitive and deliver for our customers over the long term."

Ortberg took over at Boeing in August, becoming the troubled company's third CEO in less than five years. He is a longtime aerospace-industry executive but an outsider to Boeing.

The new CEO faces many challenges to turn the company around.

The Federal Aviation Administration increased scrutiny of the company after a panel blew out of a Max during an Alaska Airlines flight in January. Boeing has agreed to plead guilty and pay a fine for conspiracy to commit fraud tied to the Max, but relatives of the 346 people who died in two Max crashes want tougher punishment.

And Boeing got attention for all the wrong reasons when NASA decided that a Boeing spacecraft wasn't safe enough to carry two astronauts home from the International Space Station.

Are male voters reluctant to vote for a woman? Harris' backers are confronting the question head on

By WILL WEISSERT and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The concern has been there all along, but now it's being talked about openly: Are some men reluctant to vote for Democrat Kamala Harris because she's a woman?

The vice president rarely references her gender on the campaign trail, but her key supporters are starting to make more direct appeals to male voters, hoping to overcome ingrained sexism — or just plain apathy — as Election Day looms.

Former President Barack Obama said he was speaking to Black men in particular when he suggested some "aren't feeling the idea of having a woman as president." Actor Ed O'Neill implores in a new ad, "Be a man: Vote for a woman." And Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, is helping lead "Hombres con Harris" — "Men with Harris" — to help energize Hispanic male voters.

"I think, in many ways, it's other people who need to be the messenger," said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women in Politics at Rutgers University. She added of appeals to men by the vice president, "I don't think she can get up and say, 'Shame on you.'"

"It's sad, but I think she needs these outside validators," Walsh said.

The clearest example is Obama who, while campaigning in Pittsburgh on Thursday night, stopped by a Harris campaign field office to "speak some truths," especially for some Black male voters who aren't enthusiastic about supporting the vice president.

"Part of it makes me think that, well, you just aren't feeling the idea of having a woman as president, and you're coming up with other alternatives and other reasons for that," he said, adding: "You're thinking about sitting out, or supporting somebody who has a history of denigrating you, because you think that's a sign of strength, because that's what being a man is? Putting women down? That's not acceptable."

Keith Edmondson, a 63-year-old retiree from the Phoenix suburb of Gilbert who is Black and attended a Harris rally in Arizona on Thursday night, said he's worried about whether young Black men will turn out for Harris. He said he's trying to convince his three grandsons to vote for Harris even though their father, who is Edmondson's son, is a supporter of the vice president's opponent, Republican Donald Trump.

"There are more Black folks supporting Donald Trump than I thought," he said, blaming what he called misinformation surrounding Harris' background as a former prosecutor.

Trump has a long pattern of disparaging women. At a rally in Reading, Pennsylvania, this week, Trump reacted to Harris' appearance on ABC's "The View," by saying, "People are realizing she's a dumb person."

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And we can't have another dumb president." He also criticized on his social media site "the dumb women" who host the ABC program.

Next week, Trump is set to participate in a Fox News Channel town hall focusing on issues impacting women. But he has more often prioritized doing interviews with podcasts that are popular with younger men. The former president also entered the Republican convention this summer to the sounds of James Brown's "It's a Man's World" and the proceedings were built around promoting masculine themes, including featuring personalities from the wrestling world.

The Lincoln Project, a Republican group that opposes Trump and often produces ads meant to irk him, produced an online spot voiced by O'Neill, of "Modern Family" fame, that urges men, when it comes to Harris to "let her lead," before concluding: "Be a man, vote for a woman."

His message was far more direct than Harris often is. Despite making history as the first woman of color to lead a major party's presidential ticket, she hasn't publicly embraced the trailblazing nature of her candidacy like Hillary Clinton did in 2016.

Instead, she used this summer's Democratic convention to lean heavily into her experience as a prosecutor and promise that the U.S. has "the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world."

"She is speaking, in those moments, to the people that may well not be comfortable, or trusting, that a woman can lead at this highest level," Walsh said.

In 2020, women made up a bigger share of the electorate than men. According to AP VoteCast, a sweeping survey of that cycle's voters, 53% of voters were women and 47% were men. And in that election, men were more likely to support Trump, while women voters were more likely to support Biden.

Polling suggests that electing a woman president isn't a top priority for men or women, but men in particular don't see it as important.

A Pew Research Center poll released last year asked Americans how important it is that a woman be elected president in their lifetime, and found that only 18% of U.S. adults said this is extremely or very important to them. Some 64% said it is not too important or not at all so, or that the president's gender doesn't matter.

The same poll showed that 73% of men and 57% of women said the issue was not too important, not at all important or that the president's gender doesn't matter.

Among some key demographics, Harris' support from men doesn't keep up with levels among women. A majority of Hispanic women have a positive opinion of Harris and a negative view of Trump, but Hispanic men are more divided on both candidates, according to a poll released Friday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The Harris campaign rejects the notion that Harris herself can't deliver a winning message to male voters. Instead, it argues, she is working to reach them personally and also complementing efforts by top male supporters and campaign advertising pushes aimed at things like top sporting events.

Rather than simply appealing to masculinity, the campaign says, it is presenting arguments that can appeal to men built around key issues, like the economy.

Harris is on the digital cover of the latest issue of "Vogue" and recently taped an interview with the "Call Her Daddy" podcast, which is most popular with younger women. But she's also sitting next week for a town hall hosted by popular radio personality Charlamagne tha God.

Senior Harris campaign officials nonetheless admit to being worried about Trump's support among men — including white, Hispanic and Black Americans. They note Trump's brash appeals to "bro" culture have resonated with some, especially young voters — and made some would-be voters more likely to support Trump or sit out the election.

In response, aides have also urged the vice president to explicitly mention cryptocurrency in her speeches and interviews, knowing its salience among men. Trump has a crypto venture with his family, though he differs from Harris in believing that it should be more lightly regulated than she does. The Harris campaign is also expected to launch an aggressive effort to have the vice president and Walz appear in male-skewing media in the race's closing weeks.

Walz has already done some of that, helping launch the "Hombres" group in Arizona and having one of his rallies there livestreamed via Twitch as a streamer on the site played "World of Warcraft" and offered commentary on the event — a forum popular with younger, largely male gamers.

Harris' running mate is also attending a Friday football game in Mankato, Minnesota, where he once was an assistant coach, and plans a hunting outing this weekend.

During a "White Dudes for Harris" fundraising call this summer, Walz said this about the prospect of defeating Trump: "How often in the world do you make that bastard wake up afterward and know that a Black woman kicked his ass?"

Boeing's lawyers argue for settlement opposed by relatives of those killed in 737 Max crashes

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Relatives of passengers who died in two crashes of Boeing 737 Max planes came to a federal court in Texas on Friday to listen as their lawyers asked a judge to throw out a plea agreement that the aircraft manufacturer struck with prosecutors and put the company on trial.

Their lawyers argued that Boeing's punishment — mainly a fine amounting to about \$244 million — would be too light for misleading regulators about a flight-control system that malfunctioned before the crashes. They accused Boeing and the Justice Department of airbrushing facts and ignoring that 346 people died in the crashes.

U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor asked a Boeing lawyer why he should accept the prepackaged plea deal and a sentence negotiated by a defendant.

The Boeing lawyer, Ben Hatch, said Boeing "is a pillar of the national economy and the national defense" and needs to know the punishment before it agrees to plead guilty to conspiracy to commit fraud, a felony. Otherwise, he said, the company could be disbarred from federal contracting.

"All the employees of the company, the shareholders of the company and a global and national supply chain ... all of those are put into doubt if the sentencing" isn't known, possibly for months, Hatch said.

The answer stunned and angered relatives of the victims.

"Boeing is too important for the economy — they're too big to jail. That's what he's saying," Michael Stumo, whose daughter Samya died in the second crash, said after the hearing. "It allows them to kill people with no consequences because they're too big and because their shareholders won't like it."

The government joined Boeing in asking the judge to accept the deal that they struck in July.

Sean Tonolli, senior deputy chief of the Justice Department's fraud section, said the conspiracy count is the most serious crime prosecutors can bring — they can't prove that Boeing's deception of regulators caused the crashes. And, he said, going to trial is risky.

"We are confident in our case, but we don't take for granted that we might not win," he said.

The judge, who had received written arguments from all sides before the hearing in Fort Worth, asked questions but gave no indication if he is leaning one way or the other. He has expressed sympathy for the passengers' families before, writing in a 2023 ruling about "Boeing's egregious criminal conduct."

"You have given me a lot to think about," O'Connor said to all the lawyers as Friday's hearing ended. "I'll get a ruling out just as soon as I can."

In July, Boeing agreed to plead guilty to a single felony count of conspiracy to commit fraud for allegedly deceiving Federal Aviation Administration regulators who were writing pilot-training requirements for the Max.

The FAA approved minimal, computer-based training for Boeing 737 pilots before they could fly the Max, the latest version of the 737. That helped Boeing by avoiding the need for training in flight simulators, which would have raised the cost for airlines to operate the Max.

Airlines began flying the Max in 2017. The first crash occurred in Indonesia in October 2018, followed in March 2019 by the second, in Ethiopia.

The plea agreement calls for Boeing to pay a fine of up to \$487.2 million, but the fine would be cut in

half by giving the company credit for \$243.6 million it paid as part of a \$2.5 billion settlement in 2021 to avoid prosecution. The Justice Department decided in May that Boeing violated terms of that settlement, leading to the new plea deal.

Boeing, which is based in Arlington, Virginia, would also invest \$455 million in compliance and safety programs, and be placed on probation for three years.

The case is among a host of issues with which the manufacturer most contend.

Talks broke down this week with striking factory workers who assemble some of the company's best-selling planes. The company withdrew its offer and S&P Global Ratings put it on its credit watch list, citing increased financial risk because of the labor unrest.

On Thursday, the company filed a complaint over what it calls unfair labor practices against the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Boeing in its complaint with the National Labor Relations Board said that the union's public narrative is misleading and has made it difficult to reach a resolution.

Israeli forces kill 2 Lebanese soldiers and injure 2 UN peacekeepers in separate strikes

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — An Israeli airstrike killed two Lebanese soldiers and wounded three on Friday, Lebanon's military said, just hours after the Israeli military fired on the headquarters of U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, injuring two of them for the second day in a row.

The incidents entangling both Lebanon's official army — which has largely stayed on the sidelines of the conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah — and the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon raised alarm as Israel broadens its campaign against Hezbollah with waves of heavy airstrikes across the country and a ground invasion at the border.

In central Beirut, rescue workers combed Friday through the rubble of a collapsed building, searching for survivors of an Israeli airstrike that killed at least 22 people and wounded dozens in the Lebanese capital the night before.

Hezbollah has been firing rockets into Israel over the past year in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza following Hamas' devastating Oct. 7 attacks on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people and resulted in 250 taken hostage.

In return, Israel's military has pounded Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, killing more than 2,237 Lebanese — including Hezbollah fighters, civilians and medical personnel — according to the Lebanese health ministry.

Among them, the ministry reported late Friday, were a two-year-old and 16-year-old killed by airstrikes in the southern village of Baysarieh.

Hezbollah attacks have killed 29 civilians as well as 39 Israeli soldiers, both in northern Israel since October 2023, and in southern Lebanon since Sept. 30, when Israel launched its ground invasion.

Israel strikes a Lebanese army checkpoint

On Friday, the Lebanese army said an Israeli airstrike hit a building near a military checkpoint in the southern Bint Jbeil province.

The Israeli military said it had been targeting Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon when reports emerged that it had hit several Lebanese army soldiers. The Israeli army said it investigated the incident but remained "unaware of any Lebanese army facilities found in the area of the strike."

Lebanon's army is not a party to the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah — after Israel launched its ground invasion on Sept. 30, Lebanese soldiers withdrew some 5 kilometers (3 miles) from their observation posts along the border.

The only direct clash between the two national armies occurred on Oct. 3, when Israeli tank fire hit a Lebanese army post also in the area of Bint Jbeil, killing a soldier and prompting Lebanese soldiers to return fire.

Both Lebanese troops and U.N. peacekeepers are deployed in southern Lebanon to enforce U.N. Security

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Council Resolution 1701 that ended a bloody monthlong 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah.

But Lebanon's army is no match for Hezbollah, and neither its soldiers nor the peacekeepers have been capable of preventing the Shiite militants from entrenching themselves in the border region. Israel accuses Hezbollah of establishing militant infrastructure along the border in violation of the U.N. resolution.

Israel hits U.N. peacekeepers again, wounding two

The Israeli military opened fire near the U.N. headquarters in Lebanon's southern town of Naqoura on Friday, the army said, hitting the observation post and injuring two peacekeepers for the second time in as many days.

An initial review by the Israeli army found that soldiers in southern Lebanon targeted what they believed to be a threat located some 50 meters (yards) from the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon but ultimately struck the peacekeepers.

One of the injured peacekeepers was hospitalized in the nearby city of Tyre while the other received medical care on site, the United Nations force, known as UNIFIL, said. Both were identified as Sri Lankan.

The army repeated its warning that UNIFIL personnel abandon their positions in areas where Hezbollah militants launch rockets into Israel. Following Thursday's attack, the U.N. peacekeeping chief, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, said 300 peacekeepers in front-line positions on southern Lebanon's border were temporarily moved to larger bases.

In a statement condemning the strike as "a grave violation of international humanitarian law," UNIFIL reported that explosions on Friday hit the same place they did the day before, when Israeli tank fire injured two Indonesian peacekeepers, damaged vehicles and a communication system, and drew sharp international criticism.

"Peacekeepers must be protected by all parties of the conflict, and what has happened is obviously condemnable," said U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The French foreign ministry accused Israel of deliberately firing at peacekeepers and summoned the Israeli ambassador Friday in an official protest.

In a call with his Israeli counterpart, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of UNIFIL forces and urged Israel to "pivot from military operations to a diplomatic pathway as soon as feasible," the Pentagon said.

When President Joe Biden was questioned by reporters whether he was asking Israel to stop striking U.N. peacekeepers, he replied, "Absolutely, positively."

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 U.N. expanded its mission following the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, allowing peacekeepers to patrol a buffer zone set up along the border.

Beirut residents left reeling from Israeli strikes

From the Burj Abi Haidar neighborhood of central Beirut, civil defense workers dug through concrete and twisted metal from a three-story building brought down by an Israeli airstrike the day before — the deadliest Israeli air raid to hit Beirut over the last year of war.

Thursday's airstrikes hit two residential buildings in neighborhoods that have swelled with displaced people fleeing Israeli bombardment elsewhere in Lebanon.

"The world suddenly turned upside down," recalled Ahmad al-Khatib, a 42-year-old Lebanese postal worker who was with his wife and toddler daughter in his in-laws' apartment when the bombs fell on the building next-door.

Al-Khatib said he had pulled his 2 1/2-year-old, Ayla, out from under the debris of a collapsed bedroom wall. The force of the explosion had flung his wife, Marwa Hamdan, against a wall and a piece of metal hit her in the head. She remains in intensive care, he said, tears running down his cheeks.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV channel and Israeli media reported that the strikes aimed to kill Wafiq Safa, a top security official with the group, but he was not in either targeted building at the time of the strike. The Israeli military had no comment on the reports.

Another resident, Mohammed Tarhani, said he had moved in with his brother in Burj Abi Haidar after fleeing southern Lebanon to escape airstrikes in the past weeks.

"Where is one supposed to go now?" he asked.

Hezbollah kept up its rocket fire into Israel Friday, setting off air raid sirens just north of Tel Aviv. Interceptions by Israel's air defense system scattered rocket fragments in the seaside suburb of Herzliya and sent shrapnel flying into a building there, causing damage but no casualties.

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.

Hezbollah's chief spokesperson vowed the group would expand its attacks into more populated areas deeper inside Israel.

"This is only the beginning," Mohammed Afif told reporters from a smoldering street left in ruins by recent Israeli airstrikes in Beirut's southern suburbs. "I tell the enemy that you have only seen the minimum."

Brazil starts blocking irregular online gambling as concern rises over addiction

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil on Friday started blocking over 2,000 gambling websites designated as irregular, part of a push by the government to regulate the sector. The move comes as concerns grow about addiction, especially among tens of millions of vulnerable people.

Authorities have begun enforcing a law signed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in December 2023, regulating and taxing betting companies. Brazil's government estimates more than 52 million people started betting online in the last five years.

Most types of gambling, such as casinos and slot machines, are illegal in Brazil, but online betting was authorized in 2018.

Currently, 96 companies which hold 210 gambling websites remain active. The federal government said in a statement that these firms have demonstrated a willingness to comply with the new legislation and can operate until the end of the year, while their license applications are reviewed.

Some of the betting companies that have not been authorized to operate in Brazil are taking their case to court. Others are seeking state authorizations that could give them the rest of the year to seek approval from the federal government.

Starting Jan. 1, 2025, companies granted operational clearance will be required to pay 30 million reais (\$ 5.3 million) and permanently comply with federal rules to curb fraud, money laundering, and abusive advertisements in order to remain in business.

Dario Durigan, executive secretary of the Ministry of Finance, was quoted as saying the government expects to protect players' integrity with these measures.

Brazil authorized online betting in 2018, but the lack of regulation has raised concerns among finance and health authorities. Psychiatrists have reported an increase in gambling addiction, while banks have noted a rise in related expenses.

Media companies and soccer clubs, however, benefited as betting companies boosted their sponsorship. Almost all the clubs in Brazil's top soccer division are sponsored by betting companies.

The Central Bank of Brazil estimates that Brazilians wager about 20 billion reais (\$3.5 billion) on bets each month. That includes beneficiaries of the cash-transfer federal welfare program Bolsa Familia (Family Grant), who spent 3 billion reais (\$530 million) on online gambling in August.

In late September, the federal government announced plans to implement measures to prevent welfare benefits from being used for gambling. These programs were designed to ensure food security and meet the basic needs of vulnerable families.

The uncertainty over the future of some betting companies has affected Brazilian teams in various sports, chiefly soccer. Local sports executives have expressed concerns about losing revenue if those companies are permanently blocked and have appealed for the federal government to allow them to keep functioning.

Tampa Bay Times keeps publishing despite a Milton crane collapse cutting off access to newsroom

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

It's a reflection of the news industry and modern world of work that Tampa Bay Times editor Mark Katches seems more relaxed than you'd expect after a crane pushed by Hurricane Milton's winds gouged a hole in the building that houses his newsroom.

"It's had zero impact on our operations," Katches said in an interview on Friday.

The crane collapse in downtown St. Petersburg is one of the most visible symbols of Milton's damage, so much so that Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis held a news conference at the scene on Friday.

The Times Publishing Co. used to own the damaged building but sold it in 2016, and the news organization is now one of several tenants there. The building was closed when Milton roared through late Tuesday and early Wednesday, in part because it has no backup generators, so no one working for the Times or anyone else was hurt, the editor said.

The Times is the largest newspaper serving the more than 3.3 million people who live in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area.

Most Times journalists covering the hurricane were working remotely on Tuesday night, or at a hub set up for a handful of editors in the community of Wesley Chapel, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) outside of Tampa.

Katches said he's not sure when newsroom employees will be allowed back in the building. One hopeful factor is that the newsroom is on the opposite side of the building from where the crane fell, he said.

"I'm worried that we're going to find a lot of ruined equipment" from water damage, Katches said.

Newsroom employees became accustomed to working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. "This is a newspaper that won two Pulitzer Prizes when we weren't able to be in a building to meet," he said.

He doesn't expect a return to a newsroom for the foreseeable future. Still, he said he hoped the newspaper would eventually secure space where everyone would be able to work together again.

Nobel Peace Prize given to Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo for its work against nuclear weapons

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."

Last month, 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, Toshiyuki 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 before by the Nobel committee. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) 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."

Beatrice Fihn, who was the executive director of ICAN when it won the Nobel, said honoring Nihon Hidankyo was "quite emotional."

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"We are partners in this fight," she told The Associated Press.

The survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "know nuclear weapons the best. ... They know how it feels like, how it looks like, how it smells when your city is burning from nuclear weapons use," she said.

This year's prize was awarded against a backdrop of devastating conflicts raging 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."

The United States dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, killing 70,000 people, three days after its bombing of Hiroshima killed 140,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, 1945, ending World War II and its nearly half-century of aggression across Asia.

Nihon Hidankyo was formed in 1956 by survivors of the attacks and victims of nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific amid demands for government support for health problems.

"The atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, also known as the hibakusha, are selfless, soul-bearing witnesses of the horrific human cost of nuclear weapons," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a congratulatory statement.

"Nuclear weapons remain a clear and present danger to humanity, once again appearing in the daily rhetoric of international relations," he added. "It is time for world leaders to be as clear-eyed as the hibakusha, and see nuclear weapons for what they are: devices of death that offer no safety, protection, or security."

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 the "theocratic regime's policies of discrimination and oppression targeting women."

In a year of conflict, there was speculation the Norwegian Nobel Committee might opt to not award a prize at all. The prize has been withheld 19 times since 1901, including during both world wars. The last time it was not awarded was in 1972.

In the Middle East, spiraling levels of violence in the past year have killed tens of thousands of people, including women and children. The war, sparked by a raid into Israel by Hamas-led militants on Oct. 7, 2023, that left about 1,200 people dead, mostly civilians, has spilled 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 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 killed during the Russian capture of the city of Mariupol or unreported deaths in occupied regions.

The Nobel prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1 million). Unlike the other 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.

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 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

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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.

Daisy 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."

Sean 'Diddy' Combs to stay in jail while appeals court takes up bail fight

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal appeals court judge has ruled to keep Sean "Diddy" Combs locked up while he makes a third bid for bail in his sex trafficking case, which is slated to go to trial in May.

In a decision filed Friday, Circuit Judge William J. Nardini denied the hip-hop mogul's immediate release from jail while a three-judge panel weighs his bail request.

Combs' lawyers appealed to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Sept. 30 after two judges rejected his release.

Combs, 54, has been held at a federal jail in Brooklyn since his Sept. 16 arrest on charges that he used his "power and prestige" as a music star to induce female victims into drugged-up, elaborately produced sexual performances with male sex workers in events dubbed "Freak Offs."

Combs 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.

At a bail hearing three weeks ago, a judge rejected the defense's \$50 million bail proposal that would've allowed the "I'll Be Missing You" singer to be placed under house arrest at his Florida mansion with GPS monitoring and strict limits on visitors.

Judge Andrew L. Carter Jr., who has since recused himself from the case, said that prosecutors had presented "clear and convincing evidence" that Combs is a danger to the community. He said "no condition or set of conditions" could guard against the risk of Combs obstructing the investigation or threatening or harming witnesses.

In their appeal, Combs' lawyers argued that the judge had "endorsed the government's exaggerated rhetoric" and ordered Combs detained for "purely speculative reasons."

"Indeed, hardly a risk of flight, he is a 54-year-old father of seven, a U.S. citizen, an extraordinarily successful artist, businessman, and philanthropist, and one of the most recognizable people on earth," the lawyers wrote.

Combs' lawyers have not asked the new trial judge, Arun Subramanian, to consider releasing him on bail. At a hearing Thursday, as Combs sat alongside his lawyers in a beige jail jumpsuit, Subramanian suggested he would at least be open to taking up the issue.

After setting a May 5 trial date, Subramanian briefly questioned Combs' lawyers about his treatment at the Metropolitan Detention Center, which has been plagued by violence and dysfunction for years.

Combs lawyer Mark Agnifilo, who had previously sought to have him moved to a jail in New Jersey, told the judge: "We're making a go of the MDC. The MDC has been very responsive for us."

Another Combs lawyer, Anthony Ricco, told reporters outside the courthouse afterward: "He's doing fine. It's a difficult circumstance. He's making the best of the situation."

But, Ricco said: "Nobody's OK with staying in jail for now."

Austin Stowell is emotional about playing stoic Jethro Gibbs in 'NCIS: Origins'

By HILARY FOX Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Once again, Austin Stowell is having the best day ever — all thanks to him winning the role of legendary TV character Leroy Jethro Gibbs in "NCIS: Origins."

"Since I got this job, it has just been day after day after day of the greatest day of my life," says Stowell, smiling.

The actor has his shoulders back and chest up to portray the ex-Marine-turned-naval investigator, set 25 years before audiences first met "NCIS" star Mark Harmon.

Harmon and his son Sean are behind the idea of this origin story of the special agent, who was on-screen for 19 seasons from 2003 to 2021, solving crimes for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service in Virginia.

Stowell says he'll be doing his best to live up to the role Harmon made famous and give viewers a new perspective on "how the hero was born."

Harmon, who narrates and pops up occasionally in the show, has been very supportive of Stowell, making himself available to chat about life, visiting the set and even texting (something technophobic Gibbs would never).

"Mark and I talk a lot about what it means to be the leader of a team, about what it means to be a leader of this set and crew," he says. "Those conversations have been invaluable to me because I don't know what it's like. I've never been No. 1 on a TV show before."

The lessons he's learned: be on time, be kind, respectful and professional.

He's also studied up on the "NCIS" universe, something he knew about but wasn't yet a super fan.

In a pop quiz Stowell correctly names all the franchise's four spin-off shows and only stumbles when it comes to rule three of Gibbs' famous guidelines: "Never believe what you are told."

(He keeps the full list to read from time to time.)

As for the enduring audience appeal of Gibbs, Stowell reckons it comes down to his humanity.

"Gibbs doesn't wear a cape. He just has to use his brain and use his heart. I would argue that that makes him the most super of the heroes because it's real. It's something that we can all accomplish."

"NCIS: Origins" isn't just the procedural that people know and love, says Stowell, despite it having all the crime-solving and fun banter of the franchise.

"This is much more in the vein of a 'True Detective' or, you know, a darker crime piece. And that creates some, what could be uncomfortable situations on set. Very often I find myself kind of in a dark corner."

His co-stars and fellow NIS investigators (the C hadn't been added in 1991 when the show starts) include Mariel Molino as Lala Dominguez and Caleb Foote's Randy.

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It's Gibbs' first job since leaving the Marines. He's got personal trauma and a big reputation, but he's also got the sniper focus and built-in lie detector needed to be an integral part of this mystery solving team based at Camp Pendleton, headed up by Kyle Schmid's charismatic Mike Franks.

"I just got to play this for the first time ... the other night where I look at a character and I just go, 'You know, don't you?' And just get to bury them in my eyes," Stowell says, laughing.

Those eyes have been enhanced by special contact lenses to provide the correct "Mark Harmon crystal blue."

"NCIS: Origins," which debuts Monday on CBS, has been shooting for three and half months. In that time Stowell has come to realize the parallels between himself and Gibbs, a character who mistrusts technology, loves nature and spends years building a boat in his basement.

When he got the call about getting the part, Stowell was off grid in Vermont.

"I'm very much an analog person, so I'm very comfortable in this 1991 world where the reliance is on conversations and relationships as opposed to Siri and Alexa."

Has Stowell learned to trust his gut, Gibbs' style?

"I read the pilot and immediately connected with who this guy was. And so my gut has told me that this is where I've been meant to be from the start," he says, on the verge of tears.

"There is something that has awoken inside of me, almost like it was the character I've been waiting to play my whole life."

Today in History: October 12

Bali nightclub bombings kill more than 200

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Oct. 12, the 286th day of 2024. There are 80 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 12, 2002, bombs blamed on al-Qaida-linked militants destroyed two nightclubs on the Indonesian island of Bali, killing 202 people, many of whom were foreign tourists.

Also on this date:

In 1492, Christopher Columbus's first expedition made landfall on what is now San Salvador Island in the Bahamas.

In 1870, General Robert E. Lee died in Lexington, Virginia, at age 63.

In 1960, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev protested remarks at the United Nations by pounding his shoe on his desk.

In 1968, Mexican track and field athlete Enriqueta Basilio became the first woman to light the Olympic flame at the opening ceremonies of the Mexico City Summer Games.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon nominated House minority leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan to succeed Spiro T. Agnew as vice president.

In 1984, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher escaped an attempt on her life when an Irish Republican Army bomb exploded at a hotel in Brighton, England, killing five people.

In 2000, 17 sailors were killed in a suicide bomb attack on the destroyer USS Cole in Yemen.

In 2019, Eliud Kipchoge became the first person to run a marathon in less than two hours, crossing the finish line of the INEOS 1:59 Challenge in Vienna, Austria, with a time of 1:59:40.

Today's Birthdays: NASCAR Hall of Famer Ned Jarrett is 92. Singer Sam Moore (Sam and Dave) is 89. Broadcast journalist Chris Wallace is 77. Actor Hiroyuki Sanada is 64. Jazz musician Chris Botti (BOH'-tee) is 62. Actor Hugh Jackman is 56. Country musician Martie Maguire (The Chicks) is 55. Actor Kirk Cameron is 54. Olympic gold medal skier Bode Miller is 47. Actor Josh Hutcherson is 32.