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WORDSMITH WIZARDS

Before the Scripps National Spelling Bee finals on Thursday, 21 panelists gathered to narrow down the final word list, revealing the bee's process for the first time.

FEATURES, 6



Southwest Journalist

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN ■ DOW JONES NEWS FUND CENTER FOR EDITING EXCELLENCE ■ SWJOURNALIST.COM ■ TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023



Texas Legislature ends historic session

BY KATE MCGEE AND
MATTHEW WATKINS
Texas Tribune

Texas lawmakers entered into 2023 predicting a historic legislative session, one in which they had a \$32.7 billion budget surplus to spend and a host of conservative priorities to rally around.

On Monday, they indeed gave out of a historic session. But perhaps not for the reasons they expected.

Flailing legislative negotiations about property taxes and "school choice" were overshadowed by the Texas House overwhelmingly voting to impeach embattled Attorney

General Ken Paxton.

As both chambers gave out Monday, House Speaker Dade Phelan confirmed that at least one more round of lawmaking — in the form of a special session called by Gov. Greg Abbott — was essentially guaranteed.

Indeed, Abbott immediately called the first of "several" special sessions Monday night, hours after lawmakers completed the regular legislative session without passing numerous key bills that state leaders had identified as priorities.

Abbott said in a statement that the special session officially began at 9

p.m. and will be focused on property tax relief and border security. "Many critical items remain that must be passed," Abbott said.

Instead of the normal day of ceremony to mark the end of a grueling 140 days of lawmaking, Monday was unusually eventful. Both chambers and the governor's office spent hours going back and forth to try and hash out a deal on property taxes. Then, the House appointed 12 representatives to a board of managers to prosecute the case against Paxton.

Before the Senate gave out, the chamber's secretary announced seven

appointed senators would return June 20 to discuss rules for impeachment proceedings and that the trial will begin before the end of August.

When it comes to policy, lawmakers failed to strike a deal to reduce property taxes or increase the state's law enforcement presence at the border. They couldn't find a school voucher plan palatable to both Abbott and a House majority, nor did they raise teacher salaries during an unprecedented teacher shortage. Faculty tenure still exists at Texas' public universities despite Patrick's best efforts — though lawmakers will have more power over the long-

standing practice.

The conservative majority did vote to provide state money for loans to upgrade or build new gas- fueled power plants. They struck a deal to make ineligible voting punishable as a felony and eliminated offices that focused on diversity, equity and inclusion on public college campuses. They also toughened criminal penalties for people who sell fentanyl or commit certain crimes with guns. Each of those measures has been sent to the governor's office and is poised to become law.

■ TEXAS LEGISLATURE, Page 2



HYOSUB SHIN / ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION VIA AP

Army Pfc. Luther Herschel Story, survived by niece Judy Wade, was awarded the Medal of Honor after he went missing in battle during the Korean War and was buried on Memorial Day near his hometown in Georgia. Wounded Story was last seen on Sept. 1, 1950, when he stayed behind to cover his infantry unit's retreat.

Hero put to rest 73 years later

BY RUSS BYNUM
Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Soldiers of the 9th Infantry Regiment made a desperate retreat as North Korean troops closed around them. A wounded 18-year-old Army Pfc. Luther Story feared his injuries would slow down his company, so he stayed behind to cover their withdrawal.

Story's actions in the Korean War on Sept. 1, 1950, ensured he was remembered. He was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, which is now displayed alongside his portrait at the National Infantry Museum, an hour's drive from his hometown of Americus, Georgia.

But Story wasn't seen alive again, and his resting place long remained a mystery.

"In my family, we always believed that he would never be found," said Judy Wade, Story's niece and closest surviving relative.

That changed in April, when the U.S. military revealed lab tests had matched DNA from Wade and her late mother to bones of an unidentified American soldier recovered from Korea in October 1950. The remains belonged to Story, a case agent told Wade. After nearly 73 years, he was coming home.

A Memorial Day burial with military honors took place Monday at the Andersonville National Cemetery. A police

escort with flashing lights escorted Story's casket through the streets of nearby Americus on Wednesday after it arrived in Georgia. Residents lined the streets as the funeral procession drove by, WALB-TV, a station based in south Georgia, reported.

"I don't have to worry about him anymore," said Wade, who was born four years after her uncle went missing overseas. "I'm just glad he's home."

Story grew up about 150 miles south of Atlanta in Sumter County, where his father was a sharecropper. As a young boy, Story, who had a keen sense of humor and liked baseball, joined his parents and older siblings in the fields to help harvest cotton. The work was hard, and it didn't pay much.

In 1948, his mother agreed to sign papers allowing Story to enlist in the Army. She listed his birthdate as July 20, 1931. But Wade said she later obtained a copy of her uncle's birth certificate that showed he was born in 1932 — which would've made him just 16 when he joined.

On Sept. 1, 1950, near the village of Agok on the Naktong River, Story's unit came under attack by three divisions of North Korean troops that moved to surround the Americans and cut off their escape.

■ VETERAN, Page 2

Russia fires at Kyiv in drone strike

BY HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Explosions rattled Kyiv on Monday as Russian ballistic missiles took aim at the Ukrainian capital, hours after a more common nighttime barrage of the city by drones and cruise missiles.

Russian forces fired 11 ballistic and cruise missiles at Kyiv at about 11:30 a.m. local time, Ukraine's chief of staff, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, said. All of them were shot down, he said, and puffs of white smoke could be seen in the blue sky over the city from street level.

Debris from the intercepted missiles fell in Kyiv's central and northern districts during the morning, landing in the middle of traffic on a city road and also starting a fire on the roof of a building, the Kyiv military administration said. At least one civilian was reported hurt.

The blasts unnerved some locals, already under strain after being awakened by the night attack.

"After what happened last night, I react sharply to every siren now. I was terrified, and I'm still trembling," Alina Ksenofontova, a 50-year-old woman who took refuge in the Kyiv subway with her dog Bublik, said.

For Artem Zhyla, a 24-year-old who provides legal services abroad, he has no intention of giving up and plans to attend his yoga class to recharge. "This is certainly not enough to break us," he said while sheltering in Teatralna, the central station.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and first lady Olena Zelenska both posted a video of what they said were frightened school children running and screaming down a Kyiv street toward a bomb shelter as sirens wailed.

"This is what an ordinary weekday looks like," the

■ KYIV, Page 2



GRACE GARCES BORDALLO / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arnold Balbin bails out water from a commercial parasailing boat moored at the Gregorio D. Perez Marina in Hagatna, Guam on Thursday after Typhoon Mawar went through the area.

World markets up after US debt deal

BY ELAINE KURTENBACH
AP Business Writer

World shares mostly increased Monday after President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached a final agreement on a deal to raise the U.S. national debt ceiling.

The U.S. Congress must approve the measure.

Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Sydney and Shanghai advanced marginally, while Hong Kong fell 1%. Markets in London and Seoul were closed Monday, as were U.S. markets for Memorial Day.

The agreement on the U.S. debt eased what had been a potentially huge threat to markets worldwide.

Biden and McCarthy worked over the weekend to try to ensure enough support in Congress to pass the measure before a June 5 deadline and avert a disruptive federal default.

Markets are "reacting cautiously" so far after the debt ceiling agreement, Clifford Bennett, chief economist at ACY Securities, said in a commentary.

"This agreement merely rolls the issue to



EUGENE HOSHIO / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stock prices in Asia were mostly higher after President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached an agreement on a deal to raise the U.S. national debt ceiling.

potentially more politically friendly times post the presidential election in two years," Bennett said. "It is possible resolution will be even more difficult then, than it has been on this occasion."

Technology stocks Friday powered solid gains for Wall Street. Marvell Technology

surged a record-setting 32.4% after the chipmaker said it expects AI revenue in fiscal 2024 to at least double from the prior year.

On Thursday, fellow chipmaker Nvidia soared when it forecast upcoming sales related to artificial intelligence.

The S&P 500 rose 1.3%, and the Dow industrials gained 1%.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq notched the biggest gains, surging 2.2%. The index rose 2.5% for the week.

A key measure of inflation that's closely watched by the Federal Reserve ticked higher than economists expected in April.

The persistent pressure from inflation complicates the Fed's fight against high prices. The central bank has been aggressively raising interest rates since 2022 but recently signaled it will likely forgo a rate hike when it meets in mid-June.

The latest government report on inflation is raising concerns about the Fed's next move.

In other trading Monday, U.S. benchmark crude oil added 14 cents to \$72.81 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It picked up 84 cents to \$72.67 per barrel on Friday.

Philippines begins evacuation ahead of Typhoon Mawar

BY JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine officials began evacuating thousands of villagers and shut down schools and offices Monday as Typhoon Mawar approached the country's northern provinces a week after battering the U.S. territory of Guam.

The typhoon is packing maximum sustained winds of 96 mph and gusts up to 118 mph but isn't expected to directly hit the Philippines' northern mountainous region. Current projections show the typhoon veering northeast by midweek toward Taiwan or southern Japan.

Authorities warned of dangerous tidal surges, flash floods and landslides as the typhoon blows past Cagayan and the northernmost province of Batanes from Tuesday to Wednesday. Gusty winds lashed eastern villages of Cagayan on Monday, causing an old and unoccupied warehouse to collapse and prompting more villagers to move to evacuation centers.

Nearly 5,000 people have sheltered in Cagayan, Batanes and other provinces, Raffy Alejandro, assistant secretary of the Office of Civil Defense, said. He added the number was

■ PHILIPPINES, Page 2



EVGENIY MALOLETKA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

People take cover at a metro station during a Russian rocket attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday. Explosions rattled Kyiv during daylight as Russian ballistic missiles fell on the Ukrainian capital, hours after a more common nighttime attack by drones and cruise missiles.

Kyiv citizens 'terrified' by rare daytime strike

■ KYIV from Page 1

president wrote on Telegram, an instant messaging platform.

Russia used Iskander short-range missiles in the morning attack, the spokesman for Ukraine's air force, Yuriy Ihnat, said on local TV.

The missiles were fired from north of Kyiv, Ihnat said, without clarifying if he meant Russian territory. Kyiv is around 236 miles from the Russian border.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it launched a series of strikes early Monday targeting Ukrainian air bases with precision long-range air-launched missiles. The strikes destroyed command posts, radars, aircraft and ammunition stockpiles, it said. It didn't say anything about hitting cities or other civilian areas.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba warned against indifference, saying the repeated strikes on civilian areas amounted to "war crimes."

"Russia's drone and missile attacks on peaceful Ukrainian cities cannot be seen as

usual, no matter how frequent they grow," he tweeted.

During the previous night, Ukraine air defenses brought down more than 40 targets as Russian forces bombarded Kyiv with a combination of drones and cruise missiles in their 15th nighttime attack on the capital so far this month, Serhii Popko, the head of Kyiv's military administration, said.

Kyiv on Saturday night was subjected to the largest drone attack since the start of Russia's war. At least one person was killed, local officials said.

The Kremlin's strategy of long-range bombardment has brought many sleepless nights for Ukrainians.

Over the winter, Russian forces aimed their missiles and drones at power plants and other infrastructure. The apparent goal was to weaken Ukraine's resolve and compel the Ukrainian government to negotiate peace on Moscow's terms, but Ukrainians swiftly and defiantly repaired the damage.

In recent months, Ukraine has been receiving advanced air defense systems from its Western allies, improving its ability to fend off bombardments by the Kremlin's forces.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency will speak Tuesday at the U.N. Security Council about safety at southeastern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is the largest in Europe and under Russian control and endangered by the fighting.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to international organizations in Vienna, said IAEA head Rafael Grossi was expected to "set out specific ideas" about how to strengthen security at the plant.

Across the country, the Ukrainian air force said that over Sunday night it shot down 37 out of 40 cruise missiles and 29 of 35 drones launched by Kremlin forces.

Four civilians were killed and around two dozen others were injured, including three children and a pregnant woman, in Russian shelling elsewhere across the country, authorities said.

Russian warplanes dropped bombs Monday on the town of Toretsk, killing three civilians, Donetsk regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

Strikes on the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region killed two people, officials said.

Meanwhile, in the Belgorod region of Russia on the border with Ukraine, one person was killed by a Ukrainian shelling of the village of Grafovka, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Russian missiles also slammed into a military airport in the western Khmelnytskyi region of Ukraine, destroying five aircrafts and damaging the runway, local Gov. Serhyi Hamaliy said on TV.

The strike, he added, sparked fires at nearby warehouses storing fuel and military equipment.

Texas baseball programs hit the road

ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — For the first time since 2013 — and second time since the tournament went to its current format in 1999 — no team from the state of Texas will host a regional for the NCAA Baseball Tournament, the Division I Baseball Committee announced Sunday night.

Eight of the 16 regional hosts selected for the tournament are from the Southeastern Conference. The hosts have locked up spots in the national tournament, and the rest of the 64-team field was unveiled Monday.

The selection committee chose six participants from Texas — No. 2 seeds Texas (38-20), Texas A&M (36-25), Dallas Baptist (45-14) and TCU (37-22), and No. 3 seeds Sam Houston State (38-23) and Texas Tech (39-21).

Each regional is made up of four teams playing in a double-elimination format. All games are scheduled from Friday to Monday.

Regional winners advance to a best-of-three super regional, and those eight winners go on to the College World Series in Omaha beginning June 16.

Wake Forest (47-10), among four Atlantic Coast Conference teams to be named hosts, is the No. 1 overall seed after winning the league's regular-season championship and leading the nation in wins.

SEC hosts are Alabama (40-19), Arkansas (41-16), Auburn (34-21-1), Florida (44-14), Kentucky (36-18), LSU (43-15), South Carolina (39-19) and Vanderbilt (41-18).

TCU, Texas Tech and Sam Houston State will travel to Arkansas, Florida and LSU, respectively.

Joining Wake Forest as ACC hosts are Clemson (43-17), Miami (40-19) and Virginia (45-12).

Miami will welcome the Longhorns to Coral Gables, Florida.

Oklahoma State (41-18) is the only Big 12 host, and Stanford (38-16) is the only one from the Pac-12. Dallas Baptist and Texas A&M, respectively, will visit them.

Coastal Carolina (39-19) of the Sun Belt Conference and Indiana State of the Missouri Valley (42-15) are the other hosts. Indiana State is hosting for the first time in school history.

Miami (29), LSU (27) and Stanford (21) have each hosted regionals at least 20 times.

Auburn, Florida, Miami, Oklahoma State and Stanford hosted in 2022.

BY THE NUMBERS

10

Years since a Texas team hasn't hosted a regional

6

Texas teams in the tournament

45

Wins for Dallas Baptist — most of Texas teams in the tournament

18

Years since a team from Texas won the NCAA baseball tournament

SOURCE: Associated Press

Veteran's remains identified, buried after 73 years

■ VETERAN from Page 1

Story seized a machine gun and fired on enemy soldiers crossing the river, killing or wounding about 100, according to his Medal of Honor citation. As his company commander ordered a retreat, Story rushed into a road and threw grenades into an approaching truck carrying North Korean troops and ammunition. Despite being wounded, he continued fighting.

"Realizing that his wounds would hamper his comrades, he refused to retire to the next position but remained to cover the company's withdrawal," Story's award citation said. "When last seen, he was firing every weapon available and fighting off another hostile assault."

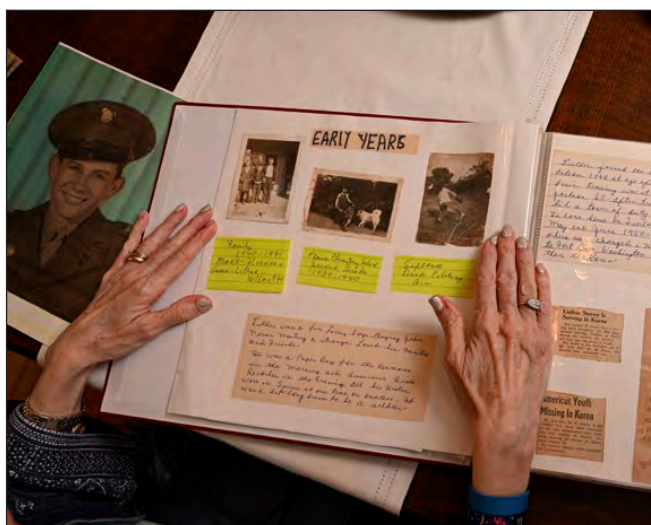
Story was presumed dead. He was 18 years old, according to the birth certificate Wade obtained.

In 1951, his father received Story's Medal of Honor at a Pentagon ceremony. Story was also posthumously promoted to corporal.

About a month after Story went missing in Korea, the U.S. military recovered a body in the area where he was last seen fighting. The unidentified remains were buried with other unknown service members at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, more than 7,500 Americans who served in the Korean War remain missing or their remains haven't been identified. That's roughly 20% of the nearly 37,000 U.S. service members who died in the war.

Remains of the unknown soldier recovered near Agok were disinterred in 2021 as part of a broader military effort to determine the



HYOSUB SHIN / AIC

Luther Story's niece, Judy Wade, shows a memory scrapbook of Story that her mother put together. Story's remains were identified in April and he received a Memorial Day burial with military honors.

identities of several hundred Americans who died in the war. Eventually, scientists compared DNA from the bones with samples submitted by Wade and her mother before she died in 2017. They matched.

President Joe Biden announced the breakthrough April 26 in Washington, joined by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol.

"Today, we can return him to his family," Biden said of Story, "and to his rest."

objection from former President Donald Trump.

It's no wonder people seemed to forget Georgetown Sen. Charles Schwertner was arrested on suspicion of drunk driving a mere three months ago.

All the infighting and scandal leaves considerable unfinished business. In addition to a likely special session, a trial in the Senate over Paxton's political future looms on the horizon.

"This session, if you would have told me it would be even more interesting and more challenging than last session, I would not have believed you," Phelan told House members Monday. "But it has been. It's been a very interesting, challenging session, not just for the Texas House but for the state of Texas."

Texas Legislature closes out 2023

■ TEXAS LEGISLATURE from Page 1

Over the last five months, the House expelled one of its own members, former Roysce City Rep. Bryan Slaton, after an internal investigation determined he provided alcohol to a 19-year-old aide and had sex with her. Paxton called for the resignation of House Speaker Dade Phelan, suggesting that a video of him presiding over the House during a marathon late-night session showed him drunk. Phelan has not commented on the video.

Then, the session climaxed with the impeachment of Paxton, despite a last-minute

MORE ON TEXAS LEGISLATURE

See Page 3

- Ken Paxton's impeachment proceedings.
- A bill banning drag performances.
- Legislative efforts to block transgender athletes from competing in college sports.

2023 ATTENDEES

ISABELLA AVILA
University of Oklahoma
NerdWallet

FRANCESCA BERMUDEZ
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles Times

MATTHEW BROWN
UC Berkeley
San Francisco Chronicle

COLIN CRAWFORD
Northwestern University
The New York Times

LISET CRUZ
Columbia Graduate School of Journalism
Associated Press

JOY DIAMOND
UC Berkeley
The New York Times

ISABEL FUNK
Northwestern University
San Francisco Chronicle

DORI GRAY
Ohio University
The New York Times

AARON HUGHES
Eastern Michigan University
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

GRANT JOHNSON
James Madison University
The Washington Post

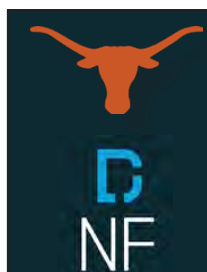
SPENCER OTTE
California State University - Fullerton
Bay City News Foundation

ROBERT STEWART
University of Arkansas
Stars and Stripes

ANDREA TERES-MARTINEZ
Boise State University
The Wall Street Journal

ETHAN THOMAS
University of Texas at El Paso
The Texas Tribune

SOPHIE YOUNG
Kent State University
The New York Times



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BRIEFS

Texas firefighter stabbed

A Texas firefighter was stabbed in the thigh early Monday morning by a man accused of starting multiple fires that firefighters were putting out along Interstate 35 in Austin, authorities said.

Austin Fire Department shift commander Eddie Martinez told the Austin American-Statesman that the firefighter's injuries weren't life-threatening.

Martinez said the man accused of starting the fires had walked onto the interstate, and as firefighters tried to remove him from the roadway, he became agitated and stabbed the firefighter.

The fire department said on Twitter that the injured firefighter was treated at a hospital and released and was doing OK.

Fire officials say the suspect was arrested on the scene.

Authorities did not immediately say what object the firefighter was stabbed with.

Lanes on I-35 near the incident were closed for a time but had reopened by 5:45 a.m.

Abbott signs CROWN act

Gov. Greg Abbott signed into law a bill prohibiting race-based hair discrimination in Texas workplaces, schools and housing policies.

House Bill 567, introduced by Democratic Rep. Rhetta Bowers of Rowlett, sailed through both chambers of the Legislature with overwhelming support after the same bill stalled during the legislative session in 2021. The policy, which Abbott signed Saturday, will go into effect Sept. 1.

Twenty states have passed the CROWN Act — an acronym for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, according to the CROWN Coalition, an organization that champions the legislation. Harris County, the state's most populous, and the city of Austin have adopted versions of the legislation.

The movement against natural hair discrimination reached national headlines in 2020 with a series of instances, including two students near Houston who were told to cut their hair or be disciplined.

Rapper Takeoff's shooter indicted on murder charge

HOUSTON — The man accused of fatally shooting Migos rapper Takeoff last year outside a Houston bowling alley has been indicted on a murder charge, according to court records.

Patrick Xavier Clark had been freed on a \$1 million bond when a grand jury in Houston indicted him Thursday.

Letitia Quinones-Hollins, one of Clark's attorneys, said the indictment was not unexpected.

"When we get inside a courtroom and in front of a jury, where we will be able to put on our evidence and cross-examine the state's witnesses ... we expect the jury will come back with a verdict of not guilty," Quinones-Hollins said Thursday in a statement.

Takeoff was shot in the head and back as more than 30 people were leaving a private party at the bowling alley around 2:30 a.m. Nov. 1. Houston police have said the gunfire followed a disagreement over a "lucrative" game of dice outside the bowling alley, but that the 28-year-old rapper was not involved and was "an innocent bystander."

Clark, 33, who worked as a DJ and nightclub promoter, was arrested on Dec. 1.

Authorities allege that surveillance video showed Clark was holding a wine bottle in one hand when he fired his gun. Fingerprints found on the bottle were later used to identify him. FBI sources had also pointed to Clark being present at the shooting, according to police.

Clark's next court hearing is set for Aug. 23.

TSU president retires after 2 years

Texas Southern University President Lesia Crumpton-Young has retired from her position just two years after joining the historically Black university in Houston.

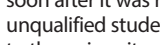
In a May 15 letter to the chair of the TSU board of regents announcing her decision to leave, Crumpton-Young said she was "called to expand my commitment to transforming lives by helping elevate HBCUs to a broader national stage."

It's unclear if she has secured a new position.

In a statement, Albert Myers, TSU board of regents chair, said the board unanimously agreed to Crumpton-Young's request to retire. TSU did not respond to additional questions Friday.

The board has appointed regent Mary Evans Sias to manage a transition oversight committee in the meantime. Crumpton-Young came to TSU soon after it was revealed that unqualified students were admitted to the university and given more than \$2 million worth of scholarships between 2017 and 2019; meanwhile, other applications weren't reviewed. The scandal led to the ousting of former president Austin Lane. Ultimately, the board and Lane came to a confidential departure agreement that did not accuse him of wrongdoing. He is now the chancellor of Southern Illinois University.

Crumpton-Young



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Prosecutors named for Paxton trial

BY PATRICK SVITEK
AND RENZO DOWNEY
The Texas Tribune

The Texas Senate agreed Monday to start its trial of impeached Attorney General Ken Paxton no later than Aug. 28, shortly after the House named 12 members to prosecute the case.

The flurry of activity came on the last day of the regular legislative session and two days after it voted overwhelmingly to impeach Paxton, alleging a yearslong pattern of misconduct and wrongdoing. Paxton has blasted the impeachment as a "politically motivated sham" and expressed hope the Senate will swiftly clear his name.

On Monday evening, the Senate unanimously adopted a resolution that laid out an initial timeline for the next steps. The Senate appointed a seven-member committee that will prepare recommendations on the rules of procedure for the trial and then present them to the full Senate on June 20. And then Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick can pick a date "not later than" Aug. 28 on which the chamber will convene as a court of impeachment.

A two-thirds vote is required in the Senate to remove Paxton from office.

Earlier Monday, the House announced a Republican-majority board of managers to handle the prosecution, made up of seven Republicans and five Democrats. The group immediately left the House chamber to deliver the 20 articles of impeachment to the Senate.

Rep. Andrew Murr, the Junction Republican and chair of the board of impeachment managers, will be joined by the board of managers Rep. Ann Johnson, D-Houston, the vice chair. Murr and Johnson are also the chair and vice chair of the House General Investigating Committee, which investigated Paxton and recommended his impeachment.

As for the Senate panel that will make recommendations on rules of procedure, it will be chaired by Sen. Brian Birdwell, R-Granbury. Its vice chair is Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, D-McAllen. The other five members are Sens. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe; Pete Flores, R-Pleasanton; Joan Huffman, R-Houston; Phil King, R-Weatherford; and Royce West, D-Dallas.

The managers were named after the House adopted a resolution creating the board by a vote of 136-4.

The vote to impeach Paxton on Saturday was overwhelming and bipartisan, with 121 of 149 members supporting impeachment. Almost as many Republicans as Democrats voted to impeach Paxton.

On Sunday, The Dallas Morning News reported that the Office of the Attorney General had delivered documents to senators' offices that outlined Paxton's defense. That packet included a letter signed by Brent Webster, the first assistant attorney general who has taken over Paxton's duties while he is suspended from office.



State Rep. Andrew Murr, R-Junction, delivered the articles of impeachment for Attorney General Ken Paxton to Secretary of the Senate Patsy Spaw Monday.

12 impeachment managers

- Rep. Andrew Murr (board chair)
- Rep. Ann Johnson, D-Houston (vice chair)
- Rep. Charlie Geren, R-Fort Worth
- Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso
- Rep. Terry Canales, D-Edinburg
- Rep. Jeff Leach, R-Plano
- Rep. Oscar Longoria, D-Mission
- Rep. Morgan Meyer, R-University Park
- Rep. Briscoe Cain, R-Deer Park
- Rep. Cody Vasut, R-Angleton
- Rep. David Spiller, R-Jacksboro
- Rep. Erin Gámez, D-Brownsville



Members of Austin's LGBTQ+ community have expressed concern over an approved bill that would place restrictions on drag shows. Gov. Greg Abbott is expected to sign the bill into law.

Child protection bill threatens to criminalize drag shows

BY JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

Texas would expand what is considered an illegal public performance of sexual conduct, under a bill approved late Sunday by state lawmakers that drag artists fear will be used to criminalize their shows.

The bill approved by the Republican-controlled Legislature is part of a broader effort in Texas and other conservative states to crack down on drag shows and limit LGBTQ+ rights. Texas earlier this month became the largest state to ban gender-affirming care for minors, and lawmakers also approved another measure that would restrict transgender athletes in college sports.

The Texas bill on sexual content in performances was initially meant

to bar children from attending drag shows. It was changed to remove specific references to drag shows, but it also broadened the scope of what would be illegal.

The bill would ban real or simulated groping, real or simulated arousal, and display of a sex toy if done in a "prurient" manner in front of a minor or on public property. It also includes a definition of sexual conduct that bars wearing accessories or prosthetics that enhance the female or male form in front of a minor or on public property.

Violators could face up to a year in jail, and businesses hosting performances deemed illegal could be fined \$10,000 for each violation.

Some drag performers and LGBTQ+ activists call the new restrictions too vague and worry they will

be unevenly targeted. Supporters of the bill say it's needed to protect children from seeing sexually explicit content, although some critics worry the vague nature of the potential violations could ensnare suggestive performances at rock concerts, professional sports cheerleading routines, or even behavior in private homes.

The bill now goes to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who is expected to sign it into law.

In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is seeking the Republican nomination for president in 2024, earlier this month signed into law new restrictions on drag shows that would allow the state to revoke the food and beverage licenses of businesses that admit children to adult performances.

Trans athletes could face bans in college sports

BY KATE MCGEE
The Texas Tribune

The Republican-controlled Texas Senate approved a bill Wednesday that would restrict which college sports teams transgender athletes can join.

The legislation expands on a 2021 law that prohibits K-12 public school students from playing on sports teams that align with their gender identity. The bill will now move on to the Texas House, where a majority of state representatives have already expressed support for similar legislation.

"We are watching the denial right now of one of the most basic truths out there, which is a refusal to acknowledge the biological difference between men and women," said Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston, on the Senate floor Tuesday, when the bill received preliminary approval. "We hope every woman in this great state has a fair opportunity at athletic excellence through achievement and this bill protects that opportunity."

LGBTQ+ advocates say that argument is flawed and ignores that transgender students have varying athletic abilities that do not automatically guarantee an advantage. They argue

the legislation discriminates against transgender students and further stigmatizes them.

Senate Bill 15 requires athletes to join the college sports teams that align with their sex assigned at birth, regardless of their gender identity. It provides whistleblower protections for people who report violations at a university athletics program and allows people to file civil lawsuits against a college or university if they believe the institution has violated the law.

The legislation allows female athletes to participate on men's sports teams if a school does not have a women's team for the same sport. The legislation would also prevent transgender athletes outside of Texas from participating in competitions that are hosted in the state.

The proposal has broad conservative support across the Texas Legislature. It is a priority for Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Every Republican senator except Sen. Brian Birdwell, R-Granbury, is listed as authoring the bill. In early March, a majority of Texas House members signed on as co-authors to a similar bill from Rep. Valoree Swanson, R-Spring, giving it slightly

more support to pass the 150-member House. Gov. Greg Abbott also said he supports the measure.

The Williams Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles estimated in 2022 that 19,800 Texans between the ages of 18 and 24 identify as trans, approximately 0.71% of the country's population in that age group.

For more than a decade, the NCAA has allowed transgender women to participate in women's sports if they had at least one year of testosterone suppression medication to treat gender dysphoria.

But last year, the NCAA's board of governors adopted a new policy requiring the organization to determine the qualifications for trans athletes' participation in each particular sport under their umbrella.

LGBTQ+ advocates criticized the change, which was largely seen as the NCAA bowing to political pressure from critics who disapproved of the organization's decision to allow Lia Thomas, a trans woman, to compete on the women's swimming team at the University of Pennsylvania.

The new policy is still being phased in. As of now, trans athletes who want

to participate in college sports must meet previous policy requirements set in 2010 and report their testosterone levels at the start of the season and six months into competition.

In 2021, the NCAA board said it would not host championships in states that discriminate against transgender athletes. If the Texas Senate's bill passes, it could impact whether the NCAA will host future championship events in the state. This year, the women's basketball Final Four championship is in Dallas, and the men's will be in Houston.

The NCAA has not commented on SB 15 or taken a position on similar legislation that has passed across the country.

Legal experts say the legislation could open up universities to Title IX lawsuits. In 2021, the Biden administration said that law, which was created more than 50 years ago to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, applies to LGBTQ+ students. The U.S. Department of Education said it would enforce the law in cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Jim Crow-era law comes to an end

Nonunanimous verdicts found unconstitutional

BY KEVIN MCGILL
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Evangelisto Ramos walked out of a New Orleans courthouse and away from a life sentence accompanying a 10-2 jury conviction, thanks in large part to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision bearing his name.

Ramos v. Louisiana outlawed nonunanimous jury convictions as unconstitutional, with justices on the 6-3 majority acknowledging the practice as a vestige of racism from the era of “Jim Crow” laws enforcing racial segregation.

The 2020 ruling meant a new trial for Ramos, who was acquitted in March — this time by a unanimous jury — after defense lawyers highlighted weakness in the investigation leading to his prosecution.

“I knew my case was important because a lot of people were going to get their freedom back,” Ramos, a Black immigrant from Honduras, told The Associated Press in an email.

But prospects for freedom remain murky for hundreds of people convicted on 10-2 or 11-1 jury votes whose appeals were exhausted before the Ramos case was decided. The advocacy group Promise of Justice Initiative estimates there are more than 1,500 such people locked up in Louisiana.

The U.S. Supreme Court and the Louisiana Supreme Court rejected arguments to apply the ruling retroactively.

The latest potential remedy stalled in the House and appears dead after representatives voted 50-38 against the measure Thursday. It is unlikely supporters can revive the bill with two weeks left in the legislative session.

Instead of retroactively granting new trials, the legislation would establish a commission with three retired state appellate or Supreme Court judges empowered to decide whether the verdict “resulted in



KEVIN MCGILL / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Attorneys and criminal justice advocates stand outside Louisiana's Supreme Court on May 10, 2022. Nonunanimous verdicts are no longer legal but courts have refused to make the policy retroactive in Louisiana.

a miscarriage of justice,” and whether parole is warranted.

Prosecutors had argued mandatory new trials would strain the court system, renew emotional pain for crime victims and their families and burden prosecutors with years-old evidence and, in some cases, witnesses who have died or cannot be found.

Ramos was arrested in 2014 and tried on a second-degree murder charge in the stabbing death of a woman. All but two jurors found him guilty in 2016. Retrial defense attorneys noted DNA from two people, neither of them Ramos, was found under the

victim's fingernails.

Nonunanimous jury policies were rooted in post-Civil War policy and designed to make conviction of Black defendants easier, even with one or two Black jurors.

In 2018, Louisiana voters prohibited nonunanimous verdicts for crimes committed after Jan. 1, 2019. The 2020 Ramos decision affected active cases even for crimes committed before 2019. But progress stalled when the high courts refused to make the Ramos decision retroactive.

Prosecutors ask for fines on top of prison for Jan. 6 rioters

BY MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Less than two months after he pleaded guilty to storming the U.S. Capitol, Texas resident Daniel Goodwyn appeared on Tucker Carlson's then-Fox News show and promoted a website where supporters could donate money to Goodwyn and other rioters the site called “political prisoners.”

Justice Department officials now want Goodwyn to give up more than \$25,000 he raised — part of a growing effort by the government to prevent rioters from being able to profit personally from participating in the attack that shook the foundations of American democracy.

An Associated Press review of court records shows that prosecutors in the more than 1,000 criminal cases from Jan. 6, 2021, are increasingly asking judges to impose fines on top of prison sentences to offset donations from supporters of the Capitol rioters.

Dozens of defendants have set up online fundraising appeals for help with legal fees, and prosecutors acknowledge there's nothing

wrong with asking for help for attorney expenses. But the Justice Department has, in some cases, questioned where the money is really going because many of those charged have had government-funded legal representation.

Most of the fundraising efforts appear on the website GiveSendGo,

\$390,000

Sought by prosecutors this year in fines against 21 riot defendants

\$450 to \$71,000

In ranging fines against defendants

\$524,000

Ordered in total by judges to cover \$2.8 million in damages to U.S. Capitol

GRAPHIC BY MATTHEW BROWN

which bills itself as “The #1 Free Christian Fundraising Site” and has become a haven for Jan. 6 defendants barred from using mainstream crowdfunding sites, including GoFundMe, to raise money. The rioters often proclaim their innocence and portray themselves as victims of government oppression, even as they cut deals to

plead guilty and cooperate with prosecutors. The rioters' fundraising success suggests that many people in the U.S. still view Jan. 6 rioters as patriots and cling to the baseless belief that Democrats stole the 2020 presidential election from Donald Trump. The former president himself has fueled that idea, pledging to pardon rioters if he is elected.

So far this year, prosecutors have sought more than \$390,000 in fines against at least 21 defendants, in amounts ranging from \$450 to more than \$71,000, according to the AP's tally. Judges have imposed at least \$124,127 in fines against 33 riot defendants this year. In the previous two years, judges ordered more than 100 riot defendants to collectively pay more than \$240,000 in fines.

Separately, judges have ordered hundreds of convicted rioters to pay more than \$524,000 in restitution to the government to cover more than \$2.8 million in damage to the Capitol and other Jan. 6-related expenses.

More rioters facing the most serious charges and longest prison terms are now being sentenced.

ABORTION

Supporters of Indiana doctor decry board reprimand

BY TOM DAVIES
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Supporters of an Indianapolis doctor are frustrated with the Indiana medical board's decision that she violated patient privacy laws when she talked with a newspaper reporter about providing an abortion to a 10-year-old Ohio rape victim.

The board's vote last week to issue a letter of reprimand against Dr. Caitlin Bernard won't limit her ability to practice medicine in Indiana, and the hospital system where she works said it stood by its finding that she followed privacy rules. The medical board rejected allegations that Bernard failed to properly report suspected child abuse and was unfit to have a medical license.

Some of Bernard's colleagues criticized the Medical Licensing Board's vote and the state attorney general's

pursuit of disciplinary action against her.

Dr. Tracey Wilkinson, a pediatrician who works with Bernard at Indiana University Health, attended the board hearing in support of Bernard and called her case “political persecution.”

Bernard's case was especially controversial in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned Roe v. Wade last summer. Some news outlets and Republican politicians falsely suggested Bernard fabricated the story until a 27-year-old man was charged with the rape in Columbus, Ohio.

The board's split decision on the Bernard allegations left no clear winner in the case, said Laura Iosue, a lawyer who formerly led medical licensing investigations at the state attorney general's office.

New S.C. abortion law on hold pending state court review

BY JEFFREY COLLINS
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — A judge put South Carolina's new law banning most abortions around six weeks of pregnancy on hold last week until the state Supreme Court can review the measure.

Judge Clifton Newman's ruling that put the state's abortion law back at roughly 20 weeks came about 24 hours after Gov. Henry McMaster signed the bill into law without any notice, which left dozens of people seeking abortions in limbo and created the potential for a legal abortion becoming illegal as a doctor performed it.

The South Carolina measure joins stiff limitations pending in North Carolina and Florida, states that had

been holdouts in the South providing wider access to the procedure, threatening to further delay abortions as appointments pile up in the region.

The state has seen the number of abortions climb sharply as other Southern states passed near-total bans.

The law passed last week by the General Assembly is similar to a ban on abortion once cardiac activity can be detected that lawmakers passed in 2021.

The state Supreme Court decided in a 3-2 ruling that the 2021 law violated the state constitution's right to privacy.

Planned Parenthood immediately sued after the law went into effect Thursday.

BRIEFS

Indy 500: New ring for Newgarden

INDIANAPOLIS — After 11 years of frustration, Josef Newgarden of Team Penske is this year's Indy 500 champion.

Newgarden spent Sunday morning posing for victory photographs, doing interviews and getting his picture taken so his face could be sculpted on the Borg-Warner Trophy. He passed Marcus Ericsson in a last-lap sprint to the finish. The 32-year-old is the first American to win the Indy 500 since 2016.

He finished eighth in 2018, fourth the next year and fifth in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the race to be run in August. The last two years, Newgarden failed to finish in the top 10.

“This is the single most difficult race in the world to win,” Newgarden said. “I'll stand by that. There's no doubt.”

Russia issues arrest warrant for Lindsey Graham

MOSCOW — Russia's Interior Ministry issued an arrest warrant Monday for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham following his comments related to the fighting in Ukraine. After meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday, Zelenskyy's office released an edited video of their encounter in which Graham notes that “the Russians are dying” and describes U.S. military assistance to Ukraine as “the best money we've ever spent.”

The short video caused outrage in Russia. Graham commented on Twitter, saying that “to know that my commitment to Ukraine has drawn the ire of Putin's regime brings me immense joy.”

“I will continue to stand with and for Ukraine's freedom until every Russian soldier is expelled from Ukrainian territory,” he tweeted. “I will wear the arrest warrant issued by Putin's corrupt and immoral government as a Badge of Honor.”

Illinois police fatally shoot man armed with knife

FOX LAKE, ILL. — Police in Northwest Illinois fatally shot a man after they tried to arrest him. Officers responded to a call describing a man who had damaged a vehicle Sunday night at a residence in a Fox Lake neighborhood.

“When Fox Lake officers told the man he was under arrest, the man pulled a knife out of his pocket and pointed it toward the police officers,” a Fox Lake task force said in a statement.

Police fired when the 47-year-old Wauconda man refused to drop the knife and instead lunged at them, investigators said.

A 43-year-old woman at the home was hit in the leg by a police gunshot, though the wound was not life-threatening.

U.S. health officials hope to prevent wave of mpox

NEW ORLEANS — The mpox health emergency has ended, but U.S. health officials are aiming to prevent a repeat of last year's outbreaks.

Mpox infections exploded early in the summer of 2022 in the wake of Pride gatherings. More than 30,000 U.S. cases were reported last year, most of them spread during sexual contact between gay and bisexual men. About 40 people died.

With Pride events planned across the country in the coming weeks, health officials and event organizers say they are optimistic that this year infections will be fewer and less severe.

A bigger supply of the vaccine, more people with immunity, and readier access to a drug to treat mpox are among the reasons. But they also worry that people may think of mpox as last year's problem.

“Out of sight, out of mind,” said Dr. Demetre Daskalakis, who is advising the White House on its mpox response. “But we are beating the drum.”

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a health alert to U.S. doctors to watch for new cases.

On Thursday, the agency published a modeling study that estimated the likelihood of mpox resurgence in 50 counties that have been the focus of a government campaign to control sexually transmitted diseases.

Mass. beach reopens after series of weekend shootings

REVERE, MASS. — Massachusetts State Police temporarily closed Revere Beach because of a pair of shootings that injured three people over the holiday weekend.

The popular beach reopened on Memorial Day, hours after bedlam erupted Sunday evening in Revere. Two people were shot and one person was grazed by a bullet, but none of the injuries was believed to be life-threatening, state police said.

A teenager questioned in one of the shootings was arrested for illegal possession of a firearm, state police said, but the investigation was ongoing to determine whether the teen was involved in the incidents.

The shootings happened about 15 minutes apart, but there is no indication they were related.

The first happened around 7:10 p.m. Sunday as a large fight was taking place with shots fired into a group of people, injuring a 17-year-old girl, police said.

A short time later, a 51-year-old woman was shot nearby and a 17-year-old was grazed by a bullet, police said.

ASSOCIATED PRESS



J. DAVID AKE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man checks his footing as he wades through the Morris Canal Outlet in Jersey City, N.J., as the sun sets on the lower Manhattan skyline of New York City, May 31, 2022.

New York City is sinking

BY BOBBY CAINA CALVAN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — If rising oceans aren't worrying enough, add this to the risks New York City faces: The city is slowly sinking under the weight of its skyscrapers.

New research estimates the city's landmass is sinking at an average rate of 1 to 2 millimeters per year, referred to as “subsidence.”

This natural process happens everywhere as the ground is compressed, but the study published in May in the journal “Earth's Future” sought to estimate how the massive weight of the city is hurrying things along.

More than 1 million buildings are spread across the city's five boroughs. Researchers calculated that all structures add up to about 1.7 trillion tons of concrete, metal and glass — about the mass of 4,700 Empire State buildings — pressing down on the Earth.

The rate of compression varies throughout the city. Midtown Manhattan's skyscrapers are built largely on rock, which compresses very little, while some parts of Brooklyn, Queens and downtown Manhattan are on looser soil and sinking faster.

While the process is slow, lead researcher Tom Parsons of the U.S. Geo-

logical Survey said parts of the city will eventually be underwater.

“It's inevitable. The ground is going down, and the water's coming up. At some point, those two levels will meet,” said Parsons, whose job is to forecast hazardous events.

But no need to invest in life preservers just yet, Parsons assured.

The study merely notes buildings themselves are contributing incrementally to the shifting landscape, he said. Parsons and his team of researchers reached their conclusions using satellite imaging, data modeling and a lot of mathematical assumptions.

Already, New York City is at risk of flooding because of massive storms that can cause the ocean to swell inland or inundate neighborhoods with torrential rain.

The resulting flooding could have destructive, deadly consequences, as demonstrated by Superstorm Sandy a decade ago and the still-potent remnants of Hurricane Ida two years ago.

“We can't sit around and wait for a critical threshold of sea level rise to occur,” said Andrew Kruczkiewicz, a senior researcher at Columbia University's Climate School. “Waiting could mean we would be missing out on taking anticipatory action and preparedness measures.”

BRIEFS

Guyana teen charged as adult, 19 counts of murder

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — A teenage student whom police in Guyana accuse of deliberately setting a fire in a girl's dormitory that killed 18 schoolmates and a 5-year-old boy was charged as an adult Monday with 19 counts of murder.

The 15-year-old girl appeared virtually at the hearing in a court south of the capital, Georgetown, and was ordered held in custody pending further court proceedings.

Investigators allege she ignited the blaze at Mahdia Secondary School on May 21 in anger with the administrator over the confiscation of her mobile telephone. If found guilty, the defendant could face life in prison.

More than two dozen students were injured while rescuers pulled at least 20 others from the heavily iron-grilled building. All five doors were locked with keys from inside.

Japan prime minister's son resigns post party scandal

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday his son is resigning as his executive policy secretary to take responsibility for using the prime minister's residence for a private party, which was exposed in magazine photos that triggered public outrage.

Shotaro Kishida, his father's executive secretary for political affairs and eldest son, invited a group of people including relatives to a party on Dec. 30 at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

He said he severely reprimanded his son for the party, but that failed to quell ongoing criticism from opposition lawmakers and public outrage which have pushed down his support ratings.

Kishida appointed his son as policy secretary, one of eight secretary posts for the prime minister, in October.

Saudi Arabian citizen kidnapped, says officials

BEIRUT — Assaults kidnapped a Saudi Arabian citizen in Beirut, but the motive behind the abduction was not immediately clear, Lebanon's interior minister and security officials said Monday.

State-run Saudi TV station Al-Ekhabariya reported that the kidnapped man works for Saudia, the Saudi national airline, and that the kidnapers demanded a \$400,000 ransom.

The officials in Beirut said the man was kidnapped around midnight Saturday on the road leading to the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, and search operations were underway to find him.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, gave no further details.

Lebanon's caretaker Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi tweeted that members of the intelligence department of Lebanon's police have been searching for the Saudi citizen since Sunday. Mawlawi did not release the name of the Saudi citizen.

"We are working with an iron fist" to liberate the kidnapped person, Mawlawi tweeted. He said those behind the kidnapping will be punished.

South American leaders to gather in Brazil

BRASILIA, Brazil — South America's leaders will gather in Brazil's capital on Tuesday as part of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's attempt to reinvigorate regional integration efforts that have previously floundered amid the continent's political swings and polarization.

Analysts say Lula senses an opportunity because of the political affinities of the region's current governments and appears to want to test leaders' willingness to cooperate through a revived Union of South American Nations, or Unasur.

After 2017, disagreements over Unasur's leadership and the participation of Venezuela's authoritarian President Nicolás Maduro led seven countries to withdraw, including Brazil in 2019 under Lula's predecessor, the far-right Jair Bolsonaro.

"After 8 years, President Maduro returns to visit Brazil and we get back the right to do our foreign affairs policy with the seriousness we always had, especially with countries which share borders with Brazil," Lula said.

Mass shooting in Puerto Rico, 2 killed, 13 injured

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Assaults in Puerto Rico who killed two people and injured 13 when they fired indiscriminately outside a bar during a birthday party were targeting just one man in a drug trafficking feud, police said Monday.

No arrests have been made in the weekend shooting.

Police believe the target was a man in his 20s who was killed outside the Piel Kanela bar in San Juan when assailants in cars opened fire early Sunday. Col. Roberto Rivera told The Associated Press in an interview.

The man, Luis E. Guzmán González, 28, had eluded earlier attempts at assassination in attacks linked to drug trafficking. All of the other victims were bystanders, Rivera said.

Eight people were being treated in hospitals for wounds suffered in the attack, and five had been treated and released.

ASSOCIATED PRESS



BEN CURTIS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man walks on a mountain of plastic bottles as he carries a sack of them to be sold for recycling in Nairobi, Kenya on Dec. 5, 2018. Negotiators from around the world gather at UNESCO in Paris on Monday for a second round of talks aiming toward a global treaty on fighting plastic pollution in 2024.

Plastic pollution treaty underway, due 2024

THOMAS ADAMSON
AND JENNIFER MCDERMOTT
Associated Press

PARIS — Charged with developing the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Plastics met in Paris on Monday. There is little agreement yet on what the outcome should be.

This is the second of five meetings due to take place to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024.

At the first meeting, held six months ago in Uruguay, some countries pressed for global mandates, some for national solutions and others for both.

Because it's a short timeline for treaty negotiations, experts say in this second session it's critical that decisions are made about the objectives and scope of the text — such as what kind of plastics it will focus on. But that is easier said than done.

Over 2,000 participants, including governments and observers, from nearly 200 countries have descended on the meeting hosted at the Paris-based U.N. cultural agency, UNESCO.

One fundamental issue considered Monday was the system of voting on decisions for each nation, which has already produced lively debate and delays in the sessions that are due to end Friday.

Humanity produces more than 430 million tons of plastic annually, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become waste. The waste pollutes the ocean and often works its way into the human food chain, the United Nations Environment Program said in April.

Plastic waste produced globally is set to almost triple by 2060, with about half ending up in landfills and under a fifth recycled, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The agreement should require national action plans as that will most effectively eliminate plastic pollution specific to a country's situation.

JOSHUA BACA

The treaty could focus on human health and the environment, as desired by the self-named "high ambition coalition" of countries, led by Norway and Rwanda, with limits on plastic production and restrictions on some of the chemicals used in plastics.

The coalition is committed to an international, legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution by 2040. It says this is necessary to protect human health and the environment while helping to restore biodiversity and curb climate change.

Alternatively, the treaty could have a more limited scope to address plastic waste and scale up recycling, as some of the plastic-producing and oil and gas exporters want. Most plastic is made from fossil fuels.

Countries supporting this plan include the United States, Saudi Arabia and China. The U.S. delegation in Uruguay said national plans would allow governments to prioritize the most important sources and types of plastic pollution.

Many plastics and chemical companies want this approach too, with a plastic waste treaty that prioritizes recycling.

The International Council of Chemical Associations, the World Plastics Council, the American Chemistry Council and other com-

panies that make, use and recycle plastics say they want an agreement that eliminates plastic pollution while "retaining the societal benefits of plastics." They're calling themselves the "global partners for plastics circularity."

The groups say modern plastic materials are used around the world to create essential and often life-saving products, many of which are critical to a lower-carbon, more sustainable future.

Joshua Baca, vice president of plastics at the American Chemistry Council, said countries are so different "a one-size-fits-all approach won't be effective, equitable or implementable. Instead, the agreement should require national action plans as that will most effectively eliminate plastic pollution specific to a country's situation."

The International Pollutants Elimination Network wants a treaty that restricts the use of toxic and environmentally hazardous chemicals in plastic production.

"To focus on plastic waste in this treaty would be a failure because you have to look at plastic production to solve the crisis — including the extraction of fossil fuels and the toxic chemical additives," said Dr. Tadesse Amera, the network's co-chair.

IPEN's international coordinator, Björn Beeler, said countries need to make a plan by the end of this week to write up an initial draft of the treaty text so it can be negotiated at the third meeting.

"If there's no text to negotiate, you're just continuing to share ideas," he said. "Then because of the timeline, we could be looking at an early failure."

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THEMBA HADEBE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Activists hold placards during a protest against Uganda's anti-gay bill in Pretoria, South Africa, on April 4.

Judge inspects South African weapons trade

GERALD IMRAY
Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — South African President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed a judge to oversee an inquiry into allegations that the country supplied arms to Russia on a ship that docked secretly at a naval base in December.

The allegations were made this month by the U.S. ambassador to South Africa, who said he was sure weapons and ammunition were loaded onto the Russian-flagged cargo ship Lady R when it docked at the Simon's Town naval base near Cape Town late last year.

Ambassador Reuben Brigety indicated that the U.S. had intelligence to sustain the allegation.

South Africa has denied there was any government-sanctioned deal to provide weapons to Russia, although it hasn't ruled out that an unofficial transaction took place involving another entity.

Judge P.M.D. Mojaelo, a former Supreme Court of Appeal judge, was appointed chairman of a three-member panel to investigate the incident. A lawyer and a former minister of justice were also appointed.

The panel has six weeks to complete its investigations and another two weeks after to provide a report to Ramaphosa, the president's office said.

South Africa could be in breach of international law and its own laws regarding weapons sales if it is found to have supplied arms to Moscow for the war in Ukraine.

South African Defense Minister Thandi Modise has refused to release cargo documents related to the visit by the Lady R after requests by opposition parties, saying they're classified. She said she will release them to the inquiry.

Uganda pres. signs anti-gay law
UN Human Rights Office 'appalled'

RODNEY MUHUMUZA
Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda — Uganda's president has signed into law anti-gay legislation supported by many in this East African country but widely condemned by rights activists and others abroad.

The version of the bill signed by President Yoweri Museveni doesn't criminalize those who identify as LGBTQ+, a key concern for some rights campaigners who condemned an earlier draft of the legislation as an egregious attack on human rights.

But the new law still prescribes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality," which is defined as cases of sexual relations involving people infected with HIV, as well as with minors and other categories of vulnerable people.

A suspect convicted of "attempted aggravated homosexuality" can be imprisoned for up to 14 years, according to the legislation.

Parliamentary Speaker Anita Among said in a statement that the president had "answered the cries of our people" in signing the bill.

"With a lot of humility, I thank my colleagues, the Members of Parliament, for withstanding all the pressure from bullies and doomsday conspiracy theorists in the interest of our country," the statement said.

Museveni had returned the bill to the national assembly in April, asking for changes that would differentiate between identifying as LGBTQ+ and actually engaging in homosexual acts.

That move angered some lawmakers, including some who feared the president would veto the bill amid international pressure. Lawmakers passed an amended version of the bill earlier in May.

LGBTQ+ rights campaigners say the new legislation is unnecessary in a country where homosexuality has long been illegal under a colonial-era law criminalizing sexual activity "against the order of nature." The punishment for that offense is life imprisonment.

The U.S. had warned of economic consequences over legislation described by Amnesty International as "draconian and overly broad."

In a statement from the White House on Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden called the new law "a tragic violation of universal human rights — one that is not worthy of the Ugandan people,

and one that jeopardizes the prospects of critical economic growth for the entire country."

"I join with people around the world — including many in Uganda — in calling for its immediate repeal. No one should have to live in constant fear for their life or being subjected to violence and discrimination. It is wrong," Biden said.

The U.N. Human Rights Office said it was "appalled that the draconian and discriminatory anti-gay bill is now law," describing the legislation as "a recipe for systematic violations of the rights" of LGBTQ+ people and others.

In a joint statement the leaders of the U.N. AIDS program, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund said they were "deeply concerned about the harmful impact" of the legislation on public health and the HIV response.

"Uganda's progress on its HIV response is now in grave jeopardy," the statement said. "The Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 will obstruct health education and the outreach that can help end AIDS as a public health threat."

That statement noted that "stigma and discrimination associated with the passage of the Act has already led to reduced access to prevention as well as treatment services" for LGBTQ+ people.

Rights activists have the option of appealing the legislation before the courts. One group of activists and academics later on Monday petitioned the constitutional court seeking an injunction against enforcement of the law.

An anti-gay bill enacted in 2014 was later nullified by a panel of judges who cited a lack of quorum in the plenary session that had passed that particular bill.

Any legal challenge this time is likely to be heard on merits, rather than on technical questions.

Anti-gay sentiment in Uganda has grown in recent weeks amid news coverage alleging sodomy in boarding schools, including a prestigious school for boys where a parent accused a teacher of abusing her son.

Homosexuality is criminalized in more than 30 of Africa's 54 countries. Some Africans see it as behavior imported from abroad and not a sexual orientation.

SPELLING BEE



NATHAN HOWARD / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Associate Pronouncer Brian Sietsema attends a pre-bee meeting of the word panel to finalize the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee words on Sunday, at National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Md. ■ Backup Associate Pronouncer Christian Axelgard, and Frank Cahill talk during a meeting of the word panel, which has met since 1985. ■ Members of the word panel debate proposed word definitions and sentence use. ■ Sietsema during a meeting of the word panel, when members choose between about 100,000 words from the dictionary.

TELEVISED MAY 30-JUNE 1 ON ION

Exclusive secrets of the spelling bee

OXON HILL, Md. — As the final pre-competition meeting of the Scripps National Spelling Bee's word selection panel stretches into its seventh hour, the pronouncers no longer seem to care.

Before panelists can debate the words picked for the bee, they need to hear each word and its language of origin, part of speech, definition and exemplary sentence read aloud. Late in the meeting, lead pronouncer Jacques Bailly and his colleagues — so measured in their pacing and meticulous in their enunciation during the bee — rip through that chore as quickly as possible. No pauses. No apologies for flubs.

By the time of this gathering, two days before the bee, the word list is all but complete. Each word has been vetted by the panel and slotted into the appropriate round of the nearly century-old annual competition to identify the English language's best speller.

For decades, the word panel's work has been a closely guarded secret. This year, Scripps — a Cincinnati-based media company — granted The Associated Press exclusive access to the panelists and their pre-bee meeting, with the stipulation that The AP would not reveal words unless they were cut from the list.

The 21 panelists sit around a makeshift, rectangular conference table in a windowless room tucked inside the convention center outside Washington where the bee is staged every year. They are given printouts including words Nos. 770-1,110 — those used in the semifinal rounds and beyond

— with instructions that those sheets of paper cannot leave the room.

For the panelists, the meeting is the culmination of a yearlong process to assemble a word list that will challenge but not embarrass the 230 middle- and elementary-school-aged competitors — and preferably produce a champion within the two-hour broadcast window for Thursday night's finals.

IT'S NOT JUST PICKING WORDS

This year's meeting includes five full-time bee staffers and 16 contract panelists. The positions are filled with word-of-mouth within the spelling community or recommendations from panelists. The group includes five former champions: Barrie Trinkle, 1973; Bailly, 1980; George Thampy, 2000; Sameer Mishra, 2008; and Shivashankar, 2009.

Trinkle, who joined the panel in 1997, used to produce the majority of her submissions by reading periodicals like *The New Yorker* or *The Economist*.

"Our raison d'être was to teach spellers a rich vocabulary that they could use in their daily lives. And as they got smarter and smarter, they got more in contact with each other and were studying off the same lists, it became harder to hold a bee with those same types of words," Trinkle says.

Not everyone on the panel submits words. Some work to ensure the definitions, parts of speech and other accompanying information are correct; others are tasked with ensuring words of similar difficulty are asked

at the right times in the competition; others focus on crafting the bee's new multiple-choice vocabulary questions. Those who submit words are given assignments throughout the year to come up with a certain number at a certain level of difficulty.

HOW THE BEE HAS EVOLVED

The panel meets a few times per year, often virtually, to go over words, edit definitions and sentences, and weed out problems. The process seemed to go smoothly through the 2010s, even amid a proliferation of so-called "minor league" bees, many catering to offspring of highly educated, first-generation Indian immigrants — a group that has come to dominate the competition.

In 2019, a confluence of factors — among them, a wild-card program that allowed multiple spellers from competitive regions to reach nationals — produced an unusually deep field of spellers. Scripps had to use the toughest words on its list just to cull to a dozen finalists. The bee ended in an eight-way tie, and there was no shortage of critics.

Scripps, however, didn't fundamentally change the way the word panel operates. It brought in younger panelists more attuned to the ways contemporary spellers study and prepare. And it made format changes designed to identify a sole champion. The wild-card program was scrapped, and Scripps added onstage vocabulary questions and a lightning-round tiebreaker.

The panel also began pulling words

avoided in the past, like place names, trademarks and words with no language of origin. As long as a word isn't archaic or obsolete, it's fair game

THERE'S GREAT CARE TAKEN

Since the bee resumed after its 2020 pandemic cancellation, the panel has been scrutinized largely for the vocabulary questions, which have added a capricious element, knocking out some of the most gifted spellers even if they don't misspell a word.

Last year's champion, Harini Logan, was briefly ousted on a vocabulary word, "pullulation" — only to be reinstated minutes later after arguing that her answer could be construed as correct.

"That gave us a sense of how very, very careful we need to be in terms of crafting these questions," says Ben Zimmer, the language columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* and a chief contributor of words for the vocabulary rounds.

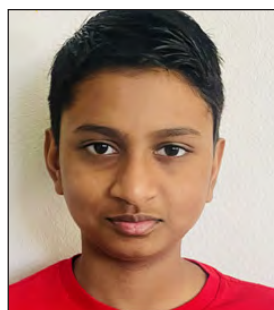
Zimmer is also sensitive to the criticism that some vocabulary questions are evaluating the spellers' cultural sophistication rather than their mastery of roots and language patterns. This year's vocabulary questions contain more clues that will guide gifted spellers to the answers, he says.

There will always be complaints about the word list, but making the competition as fair as possible is the panel's chief goal. Missing hyphens or incorrect capitalization, ambiguities about singular and plural nouns, or transitive and intransitive verbs — no question is too insignificant.

"MOORHEN" IS DEFINED AS "THE FEMALE OF THE RED GROUSE."



AUSTIN
Tarini Nandakumar
Tarini has many hobbies including reading, singing, dancing, building with LEGO and playing with her pets, Simba and Beau.



AUSTIN
Shrethan Botla
Shrethan is very adventurous and enjoys trying new things and exploring new ideas. Shrethan is fascinated with medical science and hopes to be a doctor when he grows up in the future.



NEW BRAUNFELS
Siyona Kandala
Siyona loves reading books, writing poetry, singing, volunteering and playing with her little sister. As a volunteer for a non-profit organization, she has worked with the the San Antonio Food Bank.



VICTORIA
Lucas Lee
Lucas was born in California but moved to Texas when he was just three months old. At school, he plays the saxophone in the band and enjoys being a part of the robotics club.



WACO
Gabriella Chiang
Gabriella played piano when she was younger, and placed first in the Houston Young Artists Forum Competition. She hopes to have a career in music performance as a professional violinist or pianist.

FACTS ABOUT THE SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

Harini Logan, a 14-year-old speller from San Antonio, Texas, is the champion of the 2022 Scripps National Spelling Bee in the competition's first-ever spell-off. ■ The Spelling Bee champion receives a \$50,000 cash prize, a commemorative medal, and the Scripps Cup, the official trophy of the championship. ■ **This year, 22 spellers have relatives who have participated in a combined 38 Scripps National Spelling Bees.** ■ Coming into this year, 49 spellers have competed in previous Scripps National Spelling Bees. ■ **Texas has the largest representation with 21 national competitors. Ohio and California are next with 15 each, followed by Illinois with 14.** ■ Frank Neuhauser was 11 when he won the first Bee in 1925. His prizes? A stack of gold coins worth \$500 and a visit with President Calvin Coolidge.