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## TEXAS HOUSE: TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

The House abruptly adjourned Tuesday after swiftly passing bills on property tax relief and migrant smuggling — the sole items that Gov. Greg Abbott demanded from a special session that began Monday. TEXAS, 3



# Southwest Journalist

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN ■ DOW JONES NEWS FUND CENTER FOR EDITING EXCELLENCE ■ SWJOURNALIST.COM ■ WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2023



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a member of the House Rules Committee who represents Boerne, Fredericksburg, New Braunfels and other central Texas cities, joins other lawmakers from the conservative House Freedom Caucus at a news conference to voice their objections to the debt limit deal.

## Debt deal splits House GOP

LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING AND  
STEPHEN GROVES  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Under fire from conservatives, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy worked furiously Tuesday to sell fellow Republicans on the debt ceiling and budget deal he negotiated with President Joe Biden and win approval in time to avert a potentially disastrous U.S. default.

Leaders of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus lambasted the compromise as falling well short of the spending cuts they demand, and they vowed to try to halt passage by Congress.

A much larger conservative faction, the Republican Study Committee, declined to take a position. Even rank-and-file centrist conservatives were not sure, leaving McCarthy desperately hunting for votes.

With tough days ahead, the speaker went into overtime, assembling lawmakers behind closed

doors Tuesday evening at the Capitol, after publicly urging skeptical GOP colleagues to “look at where the victories are.” Earlier, he said on “Fox and Friends” that “There’s nothing in the bill for” Democrats — hardly a helpful statement for Biden.

In one late development, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the spending restrictions in the package would reduce deficits by \$1.5 trillion over the decade, a top goal for Republicans trying to curb the debt load.

The GOP’s drive to impose work requirements on older Americans receiving food stamps ended up boosting spending by \$2.1 billion over the time period.

The final deal exempted veterans and homeless people, expanding the food stamp rolls by some 78,000 people monthly, the CBO said.

A key test camelater Tuesday, when the House Rules Committee considered the 99-page bill and voted on sending it to the full House for a vote ex-

pected Wednesday evening.

Quick approval by both the House and Senate would ensure government checks will continue to go out to Social Security recipients, veterans and others, and prevent financial upheaval worldwide by allowing Treasury to keep paying U.S. debts.

The deal would restrict spending over the next two years, but it includes environmental policy changes and expanded work requirements for some older food aid recipients that Democrats strongly oppose.

With few lawmakers expected to be fully satisfied, Biden and McCarthy are counting on pulling majority support from the political center, a rarity in divided Washington, to prevent a federal default. Some 218 votes are needed for passage in the 435-member House.

McCarthy could expect no help from the far right. “This deal fails, fails completely, and that’s why these members and others will be absolutely op-

■ DEBT, Page 2

## Disgraced CEO imprisoned in Texas

LEKAN OYEKANMI  
AND MICHAEL LIEDTKE  
Associated Press

BRYAN — Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes entered Texas prison where she could spend the next 11 years for overseeing a blood-testing hoax that became a parable about greed and hubris in Silicon Valley.

Holmes, 39, entered a federal women’s prison camp located in Bryan — where the federal judge who sentenced Holmes in November recommended she be incarcerated. The minimum-security facility is about 95 miles northwest of Houston, where Holmes grew up aspiring to become a technology visionary along the lines of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

As she begins her sentence, Holmes leaves be-

hind two young children — a son born in July 2021, a few weeks before the start of her trial, and a 3-month-old daughter who was conceived after a jury convicted her on four felony counts of fraud and conspiracy in January 2022.

She was living in the San Diego area with the children’s father, William “Billy” Evans, when she was out free on bail.

The couple met in 2017 around the same time Holmes was under investigation for the collapse of Theranos, a startup she founded after dropping out of Stanford University when she was just 19.

While she was building up Theranos, Holmes grew closer to Ramesh “Sunny” Balwani, who would become her romantic partner as well as an investor and fellow executive in the Palo Alto, California, company.

Together, Holmes and Balwani promised Theranos would revolutionize health care with a technology that could quickly scan for diseases and other problems with a few drops of blood taken with a finger prick.

The hype surrounding that purported breakthrough helped Theranos raise nearly \$1 billion from enthralled investors, which turned Holmes into a Silicon Valley sensation with a fortune valued at \$4.5 billion on paper in 2014.

But it all blew up after serious dangerous flaws in Theranos’ technology were exposed in a series of explosive articles in The Wall Street Journal that Holmes and Balwani tried to thwart. Holmes and Balwani, who had been secretly living together while running Theranos, broke up after the Journal’s revelations, and the company

collapsed. In 2018, the U.S. Justice Department charged both with a litany of white-collar crimes in a case aimed at putting a stop to the Silicon Valley practice of overselling the capabilities of a still-developing technology — a technique that became known as “fake it ‘til you make it.”

Holmes admitted making mistakes at Theranos, but steadfastly denied committing crimes during seven often-fascinating days of testimony on the witness stand during her trial. At one point, she told the jury about being sexually and emotionally abused by Balwani while he controlled her in ways that she said clouded her thinking.

Balwani’s attorney steadfastly denied Holmes’

■ PRISON, Page 2

## AG trial poses conflict of interest

JIM VERTUNO AND PAUL J. WEBER  
Associated Press

On the way to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton’s becoming a rising figure in the GOP, his wife, Angela, used to entertain crowds with a guitar and a song.

“I’m a pistol-packin’ mama, and my husband sues Obama,” she sang at campaign events and Republican clubs in Texas.

When it came time for the high school teacher and guidance counselor to launch her own political career, a \$2 million loan from her husband propelled Angela Paxton to a narrow victory for a state Senate seat in the booming Dallas suburbs. Once elected, she filed bills to expand his office’s powers, and approved budgets over his state agency and salary.

Now, Sen. Paxton is a key figure in the next phase of Ken Paxton’s historic im-

peachment: as a “juror” in a Senate trial that could put her husband back in office or banish him permanently.

It’s a role that raises an ethical cloud over the Senate proceeding. State law compels all senators to attend but is silent on whether she must participate.

“If it were a trial in the justice system, she would be completely required to (step aside),” said Kenneth Williams, professor of criminal procedure at the South Texas College of Law in Houston. “It’s a clear conflict of interest.”

The trial is to start no later than Aug. 28, and it promises to be quite personal for Angela Paxton.

The 20 articles of impeachment brought against Ken Paxton include sweeping charges of abuse of office and unethical behavior. They include a bribery charge related to an extramarital affair with an aide to a state senator.

Another suggested Angela Paxton was involved in the installation of \$20,000 countertops at their home, paid for by a political donor.

Angela Paxton hasn’t said if she’ll recuse herself from the trial. She declined comment when approached by The Associated Press outside the Senate chamber on Monday.

State Rep. Andrew Murr, who led the impeachment investigation in the state House, declined to say if he thinks Angela Paxton should step aside. The Senate gets to set the rules, he said.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick tightly controls the Senate and its 19-12 Republican majority. He suggested to a Dallas television station before last week’s House impeachment vote that Angela Paxton will participate in the trial.

■ SPOUSE, Page 2



ERIC GAY / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Texas state Sen. Angela Paxton, R-McKinney, sits in the Senate chamber at the Capitol. The historic impeachment of her husband, Attorney General Ken Paxton, is plunging Republicans into a bruising fight over whether to banish one of their own in America’s biggest red state.

## STARS ELIMINATED



GARETH PATTERSON / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vegas center William Karlsson celebrates with right wing Michael Amadio during Game 6 of the NHL Western Conference Final, as the Golden Knights eliminated Dallas. The Stars rallied from a 3-0 series deficit before losing 6-0 at home. Vegas will meet the Florida Panthers in the Stanley Cup Final.

# Moscow targeted in drone strike

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**MOSCOW** — A drone attack targeted Moscow on Tuesday and lightly damaged three apartment buildings, angered Russia's hawks, who scathingly criticized President Vladimir Putin and the military brass for failing to protect the heart of Kremlin power more than 310 miles from the front line.

The attack exposed glaring breaches in Russia's air defenses and underlined the capital's vulnerability.

Five of the eight drones that took part in the raid were shot down, the Defense Ministry said, while three others were jammed and forced to veer off course.

The attack followed a May 3 drone strike on the Kremlin that lightly damaged the roof of the palace that includes one of Putin's official residences. Other drones have crashed near Moscow in what Russian authorities described as botched Ukrainian attempts to attack the city and

infrastructure facilities in the suburbs. Last week, the Russian border region of Belgorod was the target of one of the most serious cross-border raids since the war began, with two far-right pro-Ukrainian groups claiming responsibility.

Ukrainian authorities rejoiced over Tuesday's drone attack, but customarily avoided a claim of responsibility, a response similar to what they said after previous attacks on Russian territory.

The Russian military pummeled the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and other cities with cruise missiles and exploding drones for the past three nights, a significant spike in such attacks that have been regularly launched since October. The Ukrainian military said it shot down most of the missiles and remained coy about reporting damage from the strikes.

Putin cast the attack on Moscow as a Ukrainian attempt to intimidate its residents. He said Moscow's air defenses worked as expected, but admitted that

protecting a huge city is a daunting task. Military watchers said the drones used were relatively crude and cheap but could have a range of up to over 620 miles. They predicted more could follow.

Some of the drones seen flying toward Moscow were the Ukrainian-made UJ-22s, capable of carrying explosives; others spotted in the skies near Moscow were similarly small vehicles.

Mark Cancian, a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies International Security Program, noted that part of the reason why drones could make it all the way to Moscow undetected was because Russian air defenses are mostly focused on fending off attacks by more sophisticated weapons.

The Russian military will likely move some of its air defense assets from the front line to help protect Moscow, Cancian said, a move that would weaken Russian troops in the face of a Ukrainian counter-offensive.

# Scientists, tech leaders warn of AI risks

MATT O'BRIEN  
Associated Press

Scientists and tech industry leaders, including high-level executives at Microsoft and Google, issued a new warning Tuesday about the perils that artificial intelligence poses to humankind.

"Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war," the statement said.

Sam Altman, CEO of ChatGPT maker OpenAI, and Geoffrey Hinton, a computer scientist known as the godfather of artificial intelligence, were among the hundreds of leading figures who signed the statement, which was posted on the Center for AI Safety's website.

Worries about artificial intelligence systems outsmarting humans and running wild

have intensified with the rise of a new generation of highly capable AI chatbots such as ChatGPT. It has sent countries around the world scrambling to come up with regulations for the developing technology, with the European Union blazing the trail with its AI Act, expected to be approved later this year.

The latest warning was intentionally succinct to encompass a broad coalition of scientists who might not agree on the most likely risks or the best solutions to prevent them, said Dan Hendrycks, executive director of the San Francisco-based nonprofit Center for AI Safety, which organized the move.

"There's a variety of people from all top universities in various different fields who are concerned by this and think that this is a global priority," Hendrycks said. "So we had to get people to sort of come out of the closet, so to speak, on this issue because many were

sort of silently speaking among each other." More than 1,000 researchers and technologists, including Elon Musk, had signed a much longer letter this year calling for a six-month pause on AI development, saying it poses "profound risks to society and humanity."

The latest statement was endorsed by Microsoft's chief technology and two Google executives who lead its AI policy efforts. It doesn't propose specific remedies but some have proposed a regulator along the lines of the U.N. nuclear agency.

### MORE ON AI

■ **What it can do, from driving to art to housekeeping.** Page 6

## Spouse could have impeachment vote

■ SPOUSE from Page 1

"I will be presiding over that case and the senators — all 31 senators — will have a vote," Patrick told WFAA-TV. "We'll set the rules for that trial as we go forward and we'll see how that develops."

On Tuesday, Patrick declined comment as to whether Sen. Paxton would participate in the trial, saying he could not take questions about the impeachment proceedings.

The state constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the chamber to convict. But there is little historic precedent in drafting impeachment trial rules, and nothing with a similar spousal conflict, Williams said.

In nearly 200 years of Texas history, Ken Paxton is just the third official to be impeached and the first statewide official impeached since Gov. James "Pa" Ferguson in 1917.

There's no legal mechanism to force Angela Paxton out of the trial like there would be a criminal trial, Williams said.

"It's up to her ethical standards and compass, basically," Williams said.

The trial comes not only after Paxton was overwhelmingly reelected in November, but so was his wife, who cruised to a second term backed by wide support among conservative activists. They included Jonathan Saenz, president and attorney of Texas Values, who has worked closely with the senator on legislation, including a bill she carried this year that banned sexual content in public school libraries.

He said Sen. Paxton "has earned the right to decide what she thinks is best in this situation."

"Senator Paxton is certainly in the highest category of elected officials in how she treats people and her position. I have high confidence in her moral compass in coming down on the side of what she thinks is best," Saenz said.

The Paxtons come to each other's aid in

politics and legal fights.

Angela pushed Ken to chase his political ambitions in his first run for a House seat in 2002. In 2018, she touted Ken's political expertise in her first campaign for the Senate, which included the \$2 million loan from his reelection campaign.

One of Angela Paxton's first moves as a state lawmaker was filing a bill to give the attorney general's office new powers over licensing exemptions for investment advisers. Ken Paxton was indicted in 2015 for failing to register as an investment adviser while raising money for a technology startup where he was invested and being paid. He has yet to go to trial on the felony charge.

Angela Paxton insisted her bill had nothing to do with his criminal charges. The bill ultimately failed.

In 2022, Angela was the get-away driver when Ken jumped in the truck to avoid a process server with a subpoena in a federal abortion lawsuit.

Ken Paxton called the House impeachment process a politically motivated sham.

## McCarthy hunting votes to back debt ceiling deal

■ DEBT from Page 1

posed to the deal." Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., the chairman of the Freedom Caucus, said, flanked by others outside the Capitol. "We will do everything in our power to stop it."

Ominously, the conservatives warned of potentially trying to oust McCarthy over the compromise.

"There's going to be a reckoning," said Rep. Chip Roy of Texas.

Liberal Democrats decried the new work requirements for older Americans, those 50-54, in the food aid program.

And some Democratic lawmakers were leading an effort against a surprise provision to greenlight a controversial Mountain Valley Pipeline natural gas project through Appalachia.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said she appreciated that Biden was able to minimize the "extreme demands" Republicans made on spending, but she raised serious concerns about the food stamps and other environmental policy changes.

She also had this warning for McCarthy: "He got us here and it's on him to deliver the votes."

Biden spent part of the Memorial Day holiday working the phones, calling lawmakers in both parties.

"I feel very good about it," Biden told reporters Monday, adding he had also spoken to Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, a past partner in big bipartisan deals who largely has been sitting this one out.

Wall Street was taking a wait-and-see approach. Stock prices were mixed in Tuesday's trading. U.S. markets had been closed when the deal was struck over the weekend.

Overall, the package is a tradeoff that would impose some federal spending reductions for the next two years along with a suspension of the debt limit into January 2025, pushing the volatile political issue past the next presidential election.

Raising the debt limit, now \$31.4 trillion, would allow the Treasury to continue borrowing to pay the nation's already incurred bills.

All told, it would hold spending essentially flat for the coming year, while allowing increases for military and veterans accounts. It would cap growth at 1% for 2025.

Some senators are insisting on amendments to reshape the package from both the left and right flanks. That could require time-consuming debates that delay final approval of the deal.

## Holmes begins 11-year prison sentence in Texas

■ PRISON from Page 1

allegations, which was one of the key reasons they were tried separately.

Balwani, 57, was convicted on 12 felony counts of fraud and conspiracy in a trial that began two months after Holmes' ended. He is serving a nearly 13-year sentence in a Southern California prison.

Maintaining she was treated unfairly during the trial, Holmes sought to remain free while she appeals her conviction. But that bid was rejected by U.S. District Judge Edward Davila, who presided over her trial, and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, leaving her no other avenue left to follow but the one that will take her to prison nearly 20 years after she founded Theranos.

Attorneys representing Holmes did not immediately respond when contacted by The Associated Press for a statement on Tuesday.

FPC Bryan encompasses about 37 acres of land and houses about 650 women. Most federal prison camps don't even have fences and house those the Bureau of Prisons considers to be the lowest security risk. The prison camps also often have minimal staffing and many of the people incarcerated there work at prison jobs.

While at the facility, Holmes will have the option to work, earning between 12 cents and \$1.15, according to the 2016 FPC Bryan inmate handbook.

## Deputy who failed Parkland on trial

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.** — A former Florida sheriff's deputy will be tried on child neglect and negligence charges for failing to confront the gunman who murdered 17 people at a Parkland high school in 2018.

Former Broward County Sheriff's Deputy Scot Peterson remained outside a three-story classroom building at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School during Nikolas Cruz's six-minute attack.

Peterson, 60, is charged with seven counts of felony child neglect for four students killed and three wounded on the third floor.

He arrived at the building with his gun drawn 73 seconds before Cruz reached that floor, but instead of entering, he backed away as gunfire sounded. He said he didn't know where the shots were coming from.

Peterson is also charged with three counts of misdemeanor culpable negligence for the adults shot, including a teacher and an adult student who died.

He also faces a perjury charge for allegedly lying to investigators. He could get nearly a century in prison if convicted.

Peterson "is just a coward," parent Andrew Pollack said, calling him an obscenity. His 18-year-old daughter Meadow was the adult student murdered on the third floor.

"He wouldn't have gone in with full body armor and a bazooka," Pollack said. Other victims' relatives have made similar statements.



Peterson

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**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

## BRIEFS

## Special session set to replace ousted GOP state Rep

Gov. Greg Abbott announced Tuesday that Nov. 7 will be the date of a special election to fill the seat of disgraced former state Rep. Bryan Slaton, R-Royse City.

The House unanimously voted May 9 to expel Slaton after an internal investigation found he had sex with a 19-year-old aide after getting her drunk.

The candidate filing deadline for the special election is Sept. 6, with early voting to start Oct. 23.

Nov. 7 is the date of local elections across Texas, including the Houston mayoral contest.

The seat in House District 2 is solidly Republican and covers three rural counties in Northeast Texas.

At least five Republicans have already announced they are running.

Slaton was the first member of the Texas Legislature to be removed from office since 1927.

He submitted his resignation a day earlier, but the House moved forward with expulsion anyway.

## Futuro and Frontline, Texas Tribune collab on Uvalde doc

The Texas Tribune, Frontline and Futuro Investigates collaborated on a documentary about last year's school shooting in Uvalde. "After Uvalde: Guns, Grief & Texas Politics" premiered Tuesday on PBS stations nationally.

The documentary follows journalist Maria Hinojosa as she examines the aftermath of the deadliest school shooting in Texas history.

Tribune reporter Zach Despart tells how officers on the scene knew their gear wouldn't protect them against an AR-15.

## President prospect DeSantis will make stops in Texas

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is set to visit Texas on June 7-9, according to a schedule obtained by The Texas

Tribune. He will be in Midland on June 7; Fort Worth, Dallas and Houston on June 8; and The Woodlands and Austin on June 9.

It will be DeSantis' first visit to the state since he officially launched his White House bid last week, stepping forward as the most viable Republican challenger to former President Donald Trump.

The events are drawing some of the most prolific donors in Texas GOP politics, according to some of the invitations.

Tickets for the fundraisers start at \$3,300 per person and go up to \$13,200 per couple, with donations going toward both the primary and general elections.

## Employees under AG Paxton take leave in solidarity

Six top officials and employees at the Texas attorney general's office have taken a leave of absence to help defend suspended Attorney General Ken Paxton in his impeachment trial this summer.

Those employees are Solicitor General Judd Stone, the agency's top appellate lawyer; Assistant Solicitors General Joseph N. Mazzara and Kateland Jackson; Chris Hilton, chief of the general litigation division; senior attorney Allison Collins; and executive assistant Jordan Eskew.

Prior to Tuesday, it was unclear who would serve as Paxton's lawyers in the impeachment trial before the Texas Senate.

Twenty articles of Impeachment, including allegations of bribery, abuse of office and obstruction of justice, were presented Monday to the Senate.

Paxton, who was temporarily suspended from office pending his trial in the Senate, decried the impeachment proceedings as a "political sham" and expressed hope senators will swiftly clear his name.

Permanent removal from office would require the support of two-thirds of the Senate, which includes Paxton's wife, state Sen. Angela Paxton, R-McKinney.

The Senate created a seven-member committee Monday to propose rules for the impeachment process by June 20.

Senators also agreed to hold a trial no later than Aug. 28, but no date has been set.

## Rangers out-slug Tigers 10-6

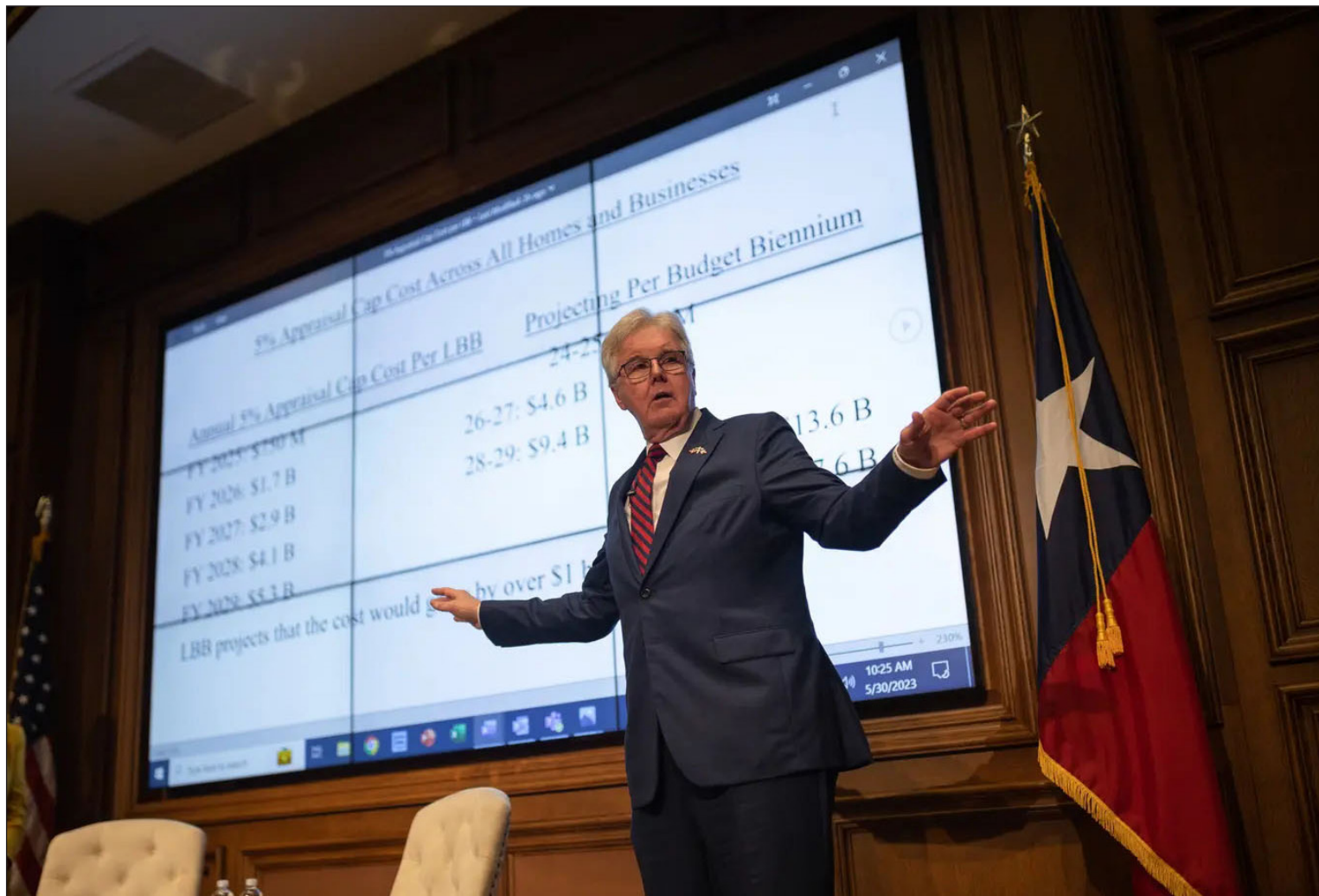
The Texas Rangers beat the Detroit Tigers in a Tuesday night faceoff. The Rangers won with a 10-6 lead, leaving the team with a 35-19 record overall.

They are ranked first in the American League West. The Tigers have a 25-28 record overall, ranking second in the American League Central.

It was the second meeting between the teams this season.

ASSOCIATED PRESS AND TEXAS TRIBUNE

## LEGISLATURE



Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick recaps the regular legislative session at the Texas Public Policy Foundation headquarters in downtown Austin on May 30.

## House adjourns on property tax — for now

JOSHUA FECHTER  
ALEX NGUYEN  
The Texas Tribune

After weeks of bickering over whose property tax cut proposal is better, House Speaker Dade Phelan sent a clear message to Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, his Senate counterpart, on Tuesday: Take our pitch or leave the special session with nothing.

That message came when the House abruptly adjourned Tuesday after swiftly passing bills on property tax relief and migrant smuggling — the sole items Gov. Greg Abbott demanded from a special session that began Monday night.

The adjournment means the chamber can't meet for the rest of the special session, leaving the Senate to accept the version of the bills the House passed or not pass any bill this session.

That bold legislative gambit appeared to be an effort to force the Senate to accept two House bills — one that would increase the minimum sentence for someone convicted of smuggling people and operating a stash house to at least 10 years, and another that would use \$12.3 billion in state funds to reduce school property taxes across the state.

For property taxes, a final bill would

require Patrick to accept what Phelan is pushing without making any changes. Given how Patrick and Phelan have been at odds over property taxes essentially all year, that might be tough.

Abbott sided with Phelan over Patrick after their monthslong battle over property taxes shortly after the vote on the House bill.

"It provides more cuts to property tax rates than any other proposal at this time," Abbott said.

The Republican heads of each legislative chamber have been at odds about how to direct the \$12.3 billion set aside for property tax cuts over the next two years. House Bill 1 and a related resolution, both of which sailed through the chamber Tuesday with no floor debate, would lower school district property tax rates across the board, essentially spreading out the collective \$12.3 billion in savings to all property owners.

The House version does not include an expansion of the homestead exemption and was backed by Ab-

"It's time to call some of these things out, because things have to change."

LT. GOV. DAN PATRICK

bott, Phelan and the business community, but was a nonstarter for Patrick and senators, who wanted to concentrate more of the savings on homeowners, who make up more than 60% of adult

Texans.

Tuesday afternoon, the Senate filed, passed through committee and unanimously approved Senate Bill 1, a measure that would lower school district property tax rates and expand the homestead exemption, which allows Texans who own their primary residence to subtract a large chunk from the taxable value of their homes. The chamber then recessed until Friday.

The current homestead exemption allows homeowners to deduct \$40,000 from their home value before paying school district taxes. During most of the regular legislative session that ended Monday, the Senate proposed raising the school district homestead exemption to \$70,000, plus an additional bump for seniors. In the Senate's latest proposal passed Tuesday, senators raised the proposed exemption

to \$100,000 and kept the additional increase for seniors.

According to the fiscal analysis of the Senate's new bill, the proposal would direct \$12.1 billion to pay for the homestead exemption hike and to help school districts lower their tax rates — an idea known as "tax rate compression." It's unclear how an additional \$200 million already allocated for new tax cuts would be used.

Abbott's call for property tax relief said it must be achieved "solely by reducing the school district maximum compressed tax rate." After determining that the Senate's legislation went beyond Abbott's narrow agenda for the special session, Phelan said he would not assign the bills to a House committee for consideration. The House later Tuesday quickly passed HB 1.

That morning, Patrick had used a speech before a conservative think tank to criticize his counterpart in the House and promote his preferred approach to property taxes. Patrick declared that Phelan runs a "dysfunctional chamber."

"It's time to call some of these things out because things have to change," Patrick told a gathering of the Texas Public Policy Foundation in downtown Austin.



LEILA SAIDANE/THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

While Isabel Torres was completing her associate degree at Austin Community College, she was able to use the campus daycare for her daughter.

## Texas bills aid student mothers after Dobbs

KATE MCGEE  
The Texas Tribune

Isabel Torres enrolled at Austin Community College and decided to earn an associate degree after finding out she was pregnant at 36 years old. That meant raising her daughter while balancing work, a work-study job and classes. A two-year degree took four years to complete. Torres said it took a lot of dedication and help from a slew of resources offered at ACC.

"I was able to access child care support. I was able to access book lending programs ... I was able to qualify for a work-study [job]," she said. "I don't know how I would have done it without those resources."

According to national statistics, 1 in 5 college students have children, one of the many identified barriers that can make it difficult for students to complete a certificate or credential. Most student parents are women, and more than 2 in 5 are single mothers like Torres.

Texas is adjusting to a near-total ban on abortion after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs v. Jackson struck down Roe v. Wade last year. Texas lawmakers on both sides recognized that the number of pregnant and parenting students will likely increase in the state.

This legislative session, lawmakers passed multiple bills that would provide more support to students with children and codify their rights in state law.

One bill allows students with children to register early for classes. Another requires colleges and universities to designate an employee as a liaison specifically for parenting students to connect them with resources they might need on campus. A third bill codifies existing rights for parents in state law.

Multiple women who testified in support of the legislation shared experiences in which schools suggested they take a leave of absence or provided little information on possible accommodations to continue attending classes.

Torres was assigned a work-study job on campus to help other students access resources to support their needs in and out of the classroom. As she was about to graduate, a full-time position opened up. She decided to stay and continue helping other students get to graduation.

"These laws are crucial," she said. "It really [makes] a difference of the students finishing their program or not."

## Korean language team helps ease barriers

ALEXA URA  
The Texas Tribune

Woori Juntos, a Houston community group serving Korean residents, began the 2023 legislative session with the hope that they could convince the Legislature to do on a statewide scale what they do at home: break down language barriers so Texans who don't speak English can access crucial state services.

Juntos' most coveted goal was a bill that would require health agencies to translate benefit application forms and other important documents into languages beyond English and Spanish.

The Texas Legislature's treatment of the bill would prove to be a test of whom lawmakers listen to — and whose needs they prioritize.

Juntos managed to get legislation filed just before a March deadline after a mad dash to secure sponsors. But the group's legislation was just one of nearly 8,000 bills filed, and members knew only a fraction would get to the point of even being considered by a committee. Just a sliver of those would actually become law.

Back home, the Juntos staff continued its daily work helping community members — Korean-speaking Texans who know little or no English — over the language blockades to apply for benefits like Medicaid or food stamps.

They were rewarded for their determination and reached a legislative milestone in April with a long-awaited public hearing on the bill.

Juntos collected signatures and testimonies from multiple community organizations in support of the cause and convinced two Republicans — state Reps. Matt Shaheen of Plano and Richard Hayes of Denton — to sign on as joint authors, ensuring their legislation was a bipartisan measure as they had originally envisioned.

Unfortunately, the bipartisan support came too late. The Republicans signed on to the bill the Friday before a Monday deadline for it to be voted out of committee. The bill never emerged from the House committee where it was considered.



EVAN L'ROY/THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Steven Wu watches proceedings from the Senate gallery waiting to hear votes on HB 7 and HB 800 May 22.

Later, they were waiting to see if their one remaining aspiration had survived — a few paragraphs that had been included in drafts of the state budget that would require the state's health commission to study the costs of developing a language access plan, including the translations.

A study was in some ways the legislative equivalent of a consolation prize, but it was one the activists would gladly accept.

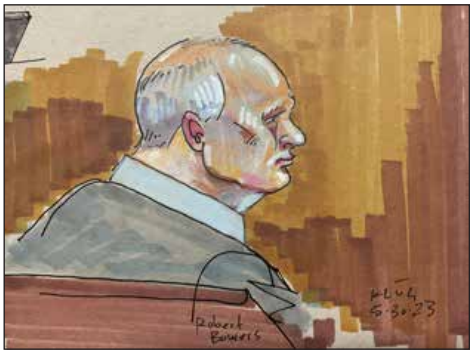
However, even with a \$321.3 billion budget, including funds drawn from a record \$32.7 billion surplus, not a penny was allocated to even study improving language accessibility to state services.

"It's disappointing," Steven Wu, Woori Juntos' organizing and policy manager, said about the final budget. "They had so much money in the surplus."

Even after their legislation died, Woori Juntos remained a constant presence at the Capitol. The group is pursuing an interim charge from the speaker of the House directing lawmakers to study their cause ahead of the next legislative session in 2025.

Juntos is trying to begin conversations with the state's health commission to see what improvements could be made to the state's language options without legislation.

"It was a grounding moment. We made it farther than we thought," said Nicole Ma, the group's organizing and policy associate. "Our bill didn't die. It's going to evolve. The work isn't done here."



Artist renderings of suspect Robert Bowers, Judge Robert Colville and 911 dispatcher Shannon Basa-Sabol, who fielded calls from the the 2018 synagogue massacre. Bowers could face the death penalty if convicted of some of the 63 counts he faces in the shootings, which claimed the lives of worshippers from three congregations who were sharing the building: Dor Hadash, New Light and Tree of Life.

# Pittsburgh massacre trial begins

PETER SMITH  
Associated Press

**PITTSBURGH** — The trial of the man charged in the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history opened Tuesday with his own lawyer acknowledging that the defendant planned and carried out the 2018 massacre at a Pittsburgh synagogue and made hateful statements about Jewish people.

Robert Bowers went to Tree of Life synagogue on Oct. 27, 2018, and “shot every person he saw,” defense attorney Judy Clarke acknowledged in her opening statement.

Bowers, 50, could face the death penalty if he’s convicted of some of the 63 counts he faces in the attack, which claimed the lives of 11 worshippers from three congregations who shared the building. Charges include 11 counts each of obstruction of free exercise of religion resulting in death and hate crimes resulting in death.

Bowers also injured seven, including five police officers who responded to the scene, investigators said.

In the long run-up to the trial, Bowers’ lawyers did little to dispute whether he was the gunman and instead focused on saving his life. Bowers, a truck driver from the Pittsburgh suburb of Baldwin, had offered to plead guilty in exchange for a life sentence, but federal prosecutors denied him.

In her opening statement, Clarke questioned whether Bowers was acting out of hatred or an irrational belief that by killing Jews he would save others from the genocide he claimed they were enabling by helping immigrants enter the U.S.

“The depths of the defendant’s malice and hate can only be proven in the (victims’) broken bodies.”

SOO C. SONG

“He had what to us is this unthinkable, nonsensical, irrational thought that by killing Jews he would attain his goal,” Clarke said. “There is no making sense of this senseless act. Mr. Bowers caused extraordinary harm to many, many people.”

In their opening statement to the jury, prosecutors described how Bowers barged into the synagogue and shot every worshipper he could find.

“The depths of the defendant’s malice and hate can only be proven in the (victims’) broken bodies,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Soo C. Song said.

Twelve jurors and six alternates — chosen Thursday from more than 200 candidates — are hearing the case.

Members of the three congregations arrived at the courthouse in a school bus and entered together. The atmosphere in the large, wood-paneled courtroom was grim and somber as the gallery filled with media, survivors and family members.

As an indication that the guilt-or-innocence

phase of the trial seemed almost a foregone conclusion, Bowers’ lawyers spent little time during jury selection asking how potential jurors would come to a verdict.

Instead, they focused on how jurors would decide whether to impose the death penalty in a case of a man charged with hate-motivated killings in a house of worship. The defense also probed whether potential jurors would consider factors such as mental illness or a difficult childhood. Bowers’ attorneys recently said he has schizophrenia and brain impairments.

The families of those killed are divided about whether the government should pursue the death penalty, but most voiced support for it.

The trial is taking place in the downtown Pittsburgh courthouse of the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania, presided over by Judge Robert Colville, an appointee of former President Donald Trump.

Prosecutors have said Bowers made incriminating statements to investigators and left an online trail of antisemitic statements, which they said shows the attack was motivated by religious hatred. Police shot Bowers three times before he surrendered.

In a filing earlier this year, prosecutors said Bowers “harbored deep, murderous animosity towards all Jewish people.”

The three congregations have spoken out against antisemitism and other forms of bigotry since the attack. The Tree of Life congregation is working to overhaul its current building by creating a complex that would house a sanctuary, museum, memorial and center for fighting antisemitism.

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# Minnesota 23rd state to legalize marijuana

TRISHA AHMED  
Associated Press

**ST. PAUL, Minn.** — Surrounded by dozens of cheering people in green clothes, Minnesota Democratic Gov. Tim Walz signed a bill Tuesday to legalize recreational marijuana for people over the age of 21, making Minnesota the 23rd state to legalize the substance for adults.

“This has been a long journey with a lot of folks involved,” Walz said.

Among them was one of the first governors in the U.S. to openly support marijuana legalization.

“For me personally, it’s very wonderful to see a dream of yours over

20 years ago finally happen today, and I’m still alive to see it,” said Jesse Ventura, Minnesota’s governor from 1999-2003.

Under the new law, cannabis will be legal by Aug. 1 to possess, use and grow at home. Possession of cannabis flower will be limited to 2 pounds at home and 56 grams in public. Other possession caps include 800 milligrams of THC in gummies and other edibles and 8 grams of cannabis concentrate.

Retail sales at dispensaries will probably be at least a year away. Once licensed, stores will charge sales tax plus a 10% cannabis tax.

Minnesotans who have been convicted of misdemeanor or petty misdemeanor possession will also get their records automatically expunged. However, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension estimated it will take until August 2024 to process all cases. Others with more serious convictions, such as those with possession offenses that exceeded the new limits, may also be able to apply for reduced sentences.

Expunging criminal records of those charged with marijuana-related offenses is one of the most important pieces of the legislation, Democratic Sen. Lindsey Port, of Burnsville, said at the ceremony. It ensures “that we

are undoing some of the harm that we have done as a state through the prohibition of cannabis,” she said.

Supporters of the legislation have said it will improve public health and safety and further social justice, while opponents have said health and safety will worsen. Supporters have largely been Democrats, and opponents have largely been Republicans this session.

Walz has long been a supporter of legalizing recreational marijuana for adults. In 2021, the Democratic-controlled House passed a legalization bill with several Republicans voting yes, but the GOP-controlled Senate never gave it a vote.



Police cordoned off an area as they respond to a shooting near the Hollywood Beach Broadwalk in Hollywood, Florida.

# Fla. police search for three gunmen

TERRY SPENCER  
Associated Press

**HOLLYWOOD, Fla.** — Police launched a search Tuesday for three suspects they believe opened fire along a crowded Florida beachside promenade on Memorial Day, wounding a 1-year-old and eight others.

Hollywood police sought the public’s help in identifying the gunmen, who ran from the scene during the chaos as hundreds of people fled for their lives and dove for cover.

Two people involved in the altercation that led to the shooting have already been arrested on firearms charges, police said. Of five handguns recovered, one had been reported stolen in the Miami area and another in Texas, they said.

Police and witnesses said the shooting began as a group of people fought in front of a busy stretch of shops on the Hollywood Oceanfront Broadwalk about 7 p.m. Monday.

Police spokesperson Deanna Bettineschi said four children between the ages of 1 and 17 were hit, along with five adults between 25 and 65. Six of those shot remain hospitalized in stable condition and three have been released, police said.

The names of those arrested and those wounded have not been released.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy said he was “deeply saddened and angered” by the shooting. In a statement he added that dozens of officers are assigned to the beach on busy holiday weekends, allowing for an immediate response and detention of multiple people.

# US stock market returns Wall Street mixed after news of debt deal

STAN CHOE  
Associated Press

**NEW YORK** — Wall Street churned to a mixed finish Tuesday as a long list of worries looms, even if the most pressing crisis seems to be calming as Washington moves to avoid a default on its debt.

The S&P 500 edged up by 0.07, or less than 0.1%, to 4,205.52, hovering close to its highest level since August. The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 50.56 points, or 0.2%, to 33,042.78. The Nasdaq composite, meanwhile, led the market with a 0.3% gain as excitement builds about artificial intelligence. It rose 41.74 to 13,017.43.

Tuesday marked the U.S. stock market’s first trading since President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy struck a deal to allow the U.S. government to borrow more money, which would allow it to avoid a default on its debt. They must now convince Congress to approve it before the U.S. government runs out of cash to pay its bills, which could happen as soon as Monday.

Some on Capitol Hill are unhappy about the deal’s details, and Biden and McCarthy are both working to gather votes. The wide expectation on Wall Street has been for Washington to reach a deal in the 11th hour because failure would likely mean tremendous pain for the economy and financial markets.

Even if there is no default, all the partisan brinkmanship could further erode faith and trust in the U.S. government. That could trigger another downgrade to its credit rating, following Standard & Poor’s rating cut in 2011.

Beyond the drama surrounding the nation’s debt limit, financial markets have been battling a long list of concerns. The economy is slowing, inflation is still high and interest rates may be heading even higher, which would further tighten the reins on the economy and financial markets.

The worries are also global, with China’s economic recovery weaker than expected following its relaxation of pandemic restrictions.

U.S. stocks have rallied recently despite such worries after companies reported drops in profit for the start of the year that weren’t as bad as feared.

Reports in recent weeks showing a resilient job market and other signals that the slowing economy may avoid a recession have helped prop up Wall Street.

Rich Weiss, senior vice president at American Century Investments, said the job market has remained much better than he expected under the weight of higher interest rates but pointed to weakness in the housing market, manufacturing, corporate profits and other areas that often fall before the labor market ahead of a recession.

“The job market will follow the others, not the other way around,” Weiss said.

He also highlighted how concentrated the stock market’s gains have been this year among a handful of companies, many benefiting from AI. The majority of stocks in the S&P 500 are down for the year so far, partially because of worries about the economy.

A report Tuesday morning showed that confidence among consumers is falling and remains well below where it was before the pandemic, though it remains stronger than economists expected. That’s key because continued spending by households has been one of the main pillars forcing investors to push out their predictions for an upcoming recession by another three to six months.

On the losing end of Wall Street were companies in the energy industry. Exxon Mobil fell 0.9%, as the price of crude oil fell even more steeply amid worries about demand for fuel.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased as fears about a possible default diminished.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 3.69% from 3.81% late Friday. It helps set rates for mortgages and other loans.

The yield on the two-year Treasury fell to 4.46% from 4.57%. It more closely tracks expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do.

Traders are largely bracing for another hike in short-term interest rates from the Fed at its next meeting in two weeks, but the hope is that it may be the final one after more than a year of rapid increases.

Higher interest rates help to slow inflation but do so by dragging on the entire economy, raising the risk of a recession and hurting prices for investments.

## NATIONAL

### Woman who threatened House speaker convicted

A Pennsylvania restaurant owner who screamed death threats directed at then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi while storming the U.S. Capitol was sentenced Tuesday to more than two years in prison.

Pauline Bauer was near Pelosi’s office suite Jan. 6, 2021, when she yelled at police officers to bring out the California Democrat so the mob of Donald Trump supporters could hang her.

In January, U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden convicted Bauer of riot-related charges after hearing trial testimony without a jury. The judge sentenced her to two years and three months of imprisonment.

McFadden convicted Bauer of all five counts in her indictment, including a felony charge that she obstructed the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress that certified President Joe Biden’s 2020 electoral victory.

Defense attorney Komron Jon Maknoon said Bauer never intended to interfere with the process of certifying the Electoral College vote. She “genuinely regrets her past actions” and doesn’t pose a threat to the public, her lawyer said.

### US adults say don’t ban race in college admissions

**WASHINGTON** — As the Supreme Court decides the fate of affirmative action, most U.S. adults say the court should allow colleges to consider race as part of the admissions process, yet few believe students’ race should ultimately play a major role in decisions, according to a new poll.

The May poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 63% say the Supreme Court should not block colleges from considering race or ethnicity in their admission systems. The poll found little divide along political or racial lines.

However, those polled were more likely to say factors such as grades and standardized test scores should be important, and 68% of adults said race and ethnicity should not be a significant factor.

### Rosalynn Carter, former first lady, has dementia

**ATLANTA** — Former first lady Rosalynn Carter has dementia, her family announced Tuesday.

Carter, now 95, remains at home with former President Jimmy Carter, 98, who has been at home receiving hospice care since early this year.

“She continues to live happily at home with her husband, enjoying spring in Plains and visits with loved ones,” the family said via The Carter Center, the global humanitarian organization the couple founded in 1982, less than two years after Jimmy Carter’s landslide defeat.

Rosalynn Carter has spent her long public life advocating for individuals and families affected by mental illness and for those in caregiving relationships with loved ones, according to the family’s statement.

The family has not disclosed any specific diagnosis. The Tuesday statement said the Carter family would have no further comment.

### Sick workers tied to 40% of restaurant food poisonings

Food workers who showed up while sick or contagious were linked to about 40% of restaurant food poisoning outbreaks with a known cause between 2017 and 2019, federal health officials said Tuesday.

Norovirus and salmonella, germs that can cause severe illness, were the most common cause in the 800 outbreaks studied, which encompassed 875 restaurants.

Investigators with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called for better enforcement of policies like hand washing and keeping sick workers off the job.

Although 85% of restaurants said they had policies restricting staff from working while sick, only about 16% of the policies were detailed enough to require workers to notify managers and to stay home if they had symptoms.

About 44% of managers told the CDC their restaurants provided paid sick leave to workers.

Mitzi Baum, the chief executive of STOP Foodborne Illness, a nonprofit advocacy group, said it can be hard for consumers to know when sick workers might be on the job, but there are some signs to look for: “Is your server sniffing? Are they sneezing? How are they handling the utensils?”

### Controversial fertility doctor dies in hand-built plane

**YATES, N.Y.** — A New York fertility doctor who was accused of using his own sperm to impregnate several patients died Sunday when the hand-built airplane he was in fell apart midflight and crashed, authorities said.

Dr. Morris Wortman, 72, was a passenger in the experimental aircraft that went down in a pasture in Orleans County. The pilot was also killed, according to the county sheriff.

Wortman, a well-known OB-GYN in western New York, was sued in 2021 by the daughter of one of his patients, who became pregnant in the 1980s. The lawsuit said the doctor secretly used his own sperm while telling the patient the donor had been a local medical student. It said the doctor kept the secret even after the daughter, his biological offspring, became his gynecology patient.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

### Jordan celebrates first royal wedding in decades

AMMAN, Jordan — Crown Prince Hussein, 28, is to marry Saudi architect Rajwa Alseif, 29, on Thursday at Zahrain Palace in downtown Amman, the same wedding venue previously chosen by the prince's father, King Abdullah II, and his grandfather, the late King Hussein. The nuptials come after a rough patch for the royals, including a public rift between the king and his half-brother, and are seen as a way of shoring up public support at a time of persistent economic difficulties. One of the last attention-generating royal weddings in Jordan took place in June 1993 when Abdullah married Rania, who was born to a Palestinian family in Kuwait. They had met in Amman earlier that year, when he was not yet crown prince and she worked in marketing.

### Musk meets with Chinese foreign minister

China's foreign minister met Tesla Ltd. CEO Elon Musk on Tuesday and said strained U.S.-Chinese relations require "mutual respect," while delivering a message of reassurance that foreign companies are welcome. U.S.-Chinese relations are especially tense after Washington shot down a Chinese balloon believed to be gathering intelligence and warned Beijing against supplying arms to Russia for its war against Ukraine. The Wall Street Journal reported China has rejected a request for its defense minister to meet the U.S. defense secretary when both are in Singapore this weekend. "We need to keep the steering wheel in the right direction of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," Qin Gang told Musk, according to a ministry statement. The two sides should "avoid 'dangerous driving,'" Qin said. Musk's visit comes at a time when the ruling Communist Party is trying to revive investor interest in China's slowing economy. Tesla opened the first wholly foreign-owned auto factory in China in 2019 after Beijing eased ownership restrictions to increase competition and speed up industry development.

### 8 killed in Cameroon by Boko Haram fighters

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Extremist fighters killed eight people including soldiers in multiple attacks in northern Cameroon on Tuesday, a regional official said. Fighters with Boko Haram killed three customs officers, three soldiers and two civilians in separate attacks in the towns of Mora and Zigage on the border with Nigeria, said Midjiyawa Bakari, governor of the region. Boko Haram is a homegrown extremist group in Nigeria that launched an insurgency in 2009 to fight against Western education and to establish Islamic Shariah law in the country's northeast. Their rebellion has spread over the years to neighboring West African countries, including Cameroon, Niger and Chad. The insurgency has killed more than 36,000 people mainly in Nigeria, and displaced around 3 million, according to the United Nations. Cameroon's government said that Boko Haram fighters crossed into the country from Nigeria in large numbers on Monday evening before carrying out the attacks. Cameroon's military has been deployed to protect civilians on the border.

### Mosque demolition sparks protests in China

BEIJING — China's government is calling on protesters to turn themselves in after a crowd clashed with police over plans to demolish a mosque in the country's southwest. Protesters threw water bottles at officers with helmets and shields outside the blue-domed Najjiaying Mosque in Yuxi, a city in Yunnan province, according to videos on social media. One punched a police officer's helmet but little other violence was shown. The protesters were Hui, whose ancestors were members of China's majority Han ethnic group and adopted Islam, according to the videos. In the northwest, some 1 million members of the mostly Muslim Uyghur minority have been confined to detention centers, according to foreign researchers, although government officials say they are for job training and to combat radicalism.

### US shows support for united Bosnia-Herzegovina

A pair of U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers flew low over Sarajevo and several other Bosnian cities on Tuesday as a sign of support amid continued secessionist threats by the staunchly pro-Russia Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik. The flights were a demonstration of "a rock-solid commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Bosnia, said Michael Murphy the U.S. ambassador to the Balkan country. U.S. Ambassador Michael Murphy added that The United States "remains steadfast and committed" to the relationship with the Bosnian armed forces "in the face of political stability within (Bosnia) and the acute threat from malign actors outside" the country. Dodik, who is the president of Bosnia's Serb-run part, Republika Srpska, has repeatedly advocated for the breakup of the country and voiced his admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

# North Korea launch reveals spy plans

KIM TONG-HYUNG AND JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Tuesday it would launch its first military spy satellite in June and described space-based reconnaissance as crucial for monitoring U.S. "reckless" military exercises with South Korea. The statement came a day after North Korea notified Japan's coast guard that the launch, sometime between Wednesday and June 11, might affect waters in the Yellow Sea, in the East China Sea and east of the Philippines' Luzon Island. Japan's defense minister warned its forces to shoot down the satellite or debris if any entered Japanese territory. While North Korea's rivals have condemned the country's planned launch as a banned test of ballistic missile technology, it's less clear whether the satellite itself is advanced

enough to support the North's stated goals of tracking and monitoring U.S. and South Korean military activities in real time.

Satellite images taken Tuesday analyzed by The Associated Press showed activity at a main pad at North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Station — suggesting the satellite's blastoff would be soon.

All that movement taken together, along with the announcement of a pending launch, means one is likely imminent, said Dave Schmerler, a senior research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, which is part of the Middle-

bury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Schmerler said it was highly unusual for North Korea to be assembling the rocket in daylight, knowing that satellites overhead would be able to watch the site, as opposed to constructing it under a rail-mounted transfer structure as they have in the past.

Meanwhile, North Korean workers also have quickly built in the span of a month a new launch pad just 1.6 miles southeast of the launch pad where all the activity Tuesday was seen. The pace of both North Korea's weapons testing and U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises have increased



Satellite photo shows new launch pad near Tongchang-ri, North Korea.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a news conference after attending the Group of Seven nations' summit in Hiroshima, Japan, May 22.

# SOUTH AMERICA UNITED

## Leaders discuss potential for unified currency

CARLA BRIDI Associated Press

BRASILIA — Brazil's president proposed the creation of a regional trade currency to rival the U.S. dollar on Tuesday as he hosted a regional summit in a bid to revive a bloc of South America's 12 politically polarized countries. The Union of South American Nations, or Unasur, was launched in 2008 to boost cooperation but became largely defunct about a decade later in disputes over leadership. Countries with right-leaning leaders at the time — including Brazil — saw the bloc as having a leftist bent and objected especially to the inclusion of Venezuela's authoritarian leftist President Nicolás Maduro.

Brazil's new leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has proposed restarting the bloc now that the region has a greater number of leftist and centrist leaders. He called a South America Summit in Brasilia that has drawn all but one of the region's presidents.

In his opening speech, Lula said the group should discuss creating a currency to challenge the hegemony of the U.S. dollar, as well as a common energy market and integration of the region's defense and security.

"As long as we're not united, we won't make South America a developed continent in all its potential," Lula said.

Lula, a former trade unionist who

took office in January, welcomed Maduro in their first bilateral meeting Monday ahead of the summit. He criticized the economic sanctions that countries such as the U.S. have imposed to get Venezuela to liberalize its politics, calling them "completely exaggerated."

Lula said it is up to Maduro to "make Venezuela a sovereign country once again. And our opponents will have to apologize for the damage they've done."

Lula's predecessor, the right-wing populist Jair Bolsonaro, had followed the lead of other right-leaning leaders and pulled Brazil out of Unasur in 2019. A key priority of Lula is to re-establish ties with regional neighbors that were severed under Bolsonaro.

Pablo Ibañez, who teaches geopolitics at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, said it was urgent for Lula to mend ties with Venezuela in part because of their shared border and the need to deal with Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

But Lula's warm welcome of Maduro on Monday, which the Brazilian leader called "historic," may have gone too far and risks reviving tensions among other members of the South American bloc, Ibañez said.

"The Brazilian government gave massive ammunition to opposition groups," Ibañez said.

Including Lula and Maduro, 11 South American presidents are attending the summit, as well as the

leader of the Council of Ministers of Peru, where the president, Dina Boluarte, faces charges and cannot leave the country.

Political analysts say Lula sensed an opportunity for integration because of the political affinities of the region's current governments, but they say it will be a challenge to have the bloc survive the region's political shifts and instability.

Jorge Arias, Argentine director of the consulting agency Polilat, said that Brazil would seek to "imprint a less ideological stamp" on the current integration initiative to achieve some unity and try to ensure that it lasts.

While the majority of South America's current presidents are leftist or centrist, there's no guarantee the situation will remain that way. This was underscored in May by the success of right-wingers in Chile in a vote to select commission members to write a new constitution.

A similar swing toward the right is possible in Argentina, given that incumbent President Alberto Fernández will not seek reelection this year amid rampant inflation.

In a sign of the diverse initiatives on the minds of South American leaders, Colombia's leftist President Gustavo Petro told reporters that Tuesday's meeting could promote progress on climate change, by developing systems in which creditor nations provide debt relief for debtor nations in return for their commitments to reduce carbon.



# US, China defense talks falter at Singapore summit

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — Prospects for a renewed high-level military dialogue between China and the U.S. remain dim, with Beijing saying their defense chiefs will not hold a bilateral meeting while both are attending a weekend security conference in Singapore.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning on Tuesday blamed the U.S., saying Washington should "earnestly respect China's sovereignty and security interests and concerns, immediately correct the wrongdoing, show sincerity, and create the necessary atmosphere and conditions for dialogue and communication between the two militaries."

Mao gave no details, but tensions between the sides have spiked over Washington's military support and

sales of defensive weapons to self-governing Taiwan, China's assertions of sovereignty to the contested South China Sea and its flying of a suspected spy balloon over the U.S.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is scheduled to address the Shangri-La Dialogue on Saturday, while Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu will speak at the gathering on Sunday.

Austin met privately with Li's predecessor, Wei Fenghe, at last year's Shangri-La Dialogue, which appeared to

do little to smooth relations between the sides. In his address to the forum, Wei accused the U.S. of seeking to contain China's development and threatening to assert its claim to Taiwan by military force.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden met on the sidelines of the Group of 20 meeting of large economies in November in Indonesia, but contacts have proceeded only sporadically since then, with only side meetings on neutral territory. Secretary of State Antony Blinken

in past months in a tit-for-tat cycle. In comments published by North Korean state media, senior military official Ri Pyong Chol criticized the combined U.S.-South Korean military exercises, which the North has long described as invasion rehearsals.

Last week, the South Korean and U.S. militaries conducted large-scale live-fire drills near the border with North Korea — the first of five rounds of exercises marking 70 years since the establishment of their alliance. South Korea has warned that North Korea will face consequences if it goes ahead with the satellite launch.

Spy satellites are among an array of high-tech weapons systems Kim Jong Un has publicly vowed to develop. Other weapons systems on his wish list include solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-powered submarines, hypersonic missiles and multiwarhead missiles.

# Notre Dame cathedral roof resurrected

JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

SAINT-LAURENT-DE-LA-PLAINE, France — If time travel were possible, medieval carpenters would surely be amazed to see how woodworking techniques they pioneered in building Notre Dame Cathedral more than 800 years ago are being used again today to rebuild the world-famous monument's fire-ravaged roof.

Certainly the reverse is true for the modern-day carpenters using medieval-era skills. Working with hand axes to fashion hundreds of tons of oak beams for the framework of Notre Dame's new roof has, for them, been like rewinding time. It's given them a new appreciation of their predecessors' handiwork that pushed the architectural envelope back in the 13th century.

"It's a little mind-bending sometimes," said Peter Henriksen, one of the carpenters. He said there are times when he's whacking a mallet on a chisel that he finds himself thinking about medieval counterparts who were cutting "basically the same joint 900 years ago."

The use of hand tools to rebuild the roof that flames turned into ashes in 2019 is a deliberate, considered choice, especially since power tools would undoubtedly have done the work more quickly. The aim is to pay tribute to the astounding craftsmanship of the cathedral's original builders and to ensure that the centuries-old art of hand-fashioning wood lives on.

"We want to restore this cathedral as it was built in the Middle Ages," said Jean-Louis Georgelin, the retired French army general who is overseeing the reconstruction. "It is a way to be faithful to the (handiwork) of all the people who built all the extraordinary monuments in France."

Facing a tight deadline to reopen the cathedral by December 2024, carpenters and architects are also using computer design and other modern technologies to speed up the reconstruction.

The 61-year-old American is from Grand Marais, Minnesota. The bulk of the other artisans working on the timber frame are French. The roof reconstruction hit an important milestone in May, when large parts of the new timber frame were assembled and erected at a workshop in the Loire Valley, in western France.

The dry run assured architects that the frame is fit for purpose. The next time it is put together will be atop the cathedral. Unlike in medieval times, it will be trucked into Paris and lifted by a mechanical crane into position.

The rebuilt frame "is the same wooden frame structure of the 13th century," he said. "We have exactly the same material: oak. We have the same tools, with the same axes that were used, exactly the same tools. We have the same know-how. And soon, it will return to its same place."

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CHECK ONE: THIS POEM WAS WRITTEN BY  
 a third grader  artificial intelligence



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Ameca, a humanoid robot designed for robot-human interaction, creates a drawing for visitors of the International Conference on Robotics and Automation, taking place in London through Friday.

# AI ROBOTS REPLICATE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

*The artificial becomes our reality*

KEVIN CHAN  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LONDON** — Ameca can speak French, Chinese or dozens of other languages, instantly compose a poem or sketch a cat on request. Ask for a smile, and you’ll get a clenched grin on her rubbery blue face.

Ameca is a humanoid robot powered by generative artificial intelligence that gives it the ability to respond to questions and commands and interact with people. It’s one of hundreds of robots on display this week at the International Conference on Robotics and Automation, or ICRA, in London, where visitors got a glimpse at the future.

The event is analogous to the Olympics of the robot world, where student teams compete in a host of challenges including robot cooking and autonomous driving contests. Also at the conference, academics present their research and startups

show off their latest technology.

It comes as scientists and tech industry leaders, including executives at Microsoft and Google, warned Tuesday about the perils of artificial intelligence to mankind, saying “mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority.”

Packs of robotic dogs swarmed the exhibition floor. Visitors used virtual reality headsets and joysticks to move the arms of android sentries on wheels. Students from the University of Bonn showed off their prize-winning effort, an avatar system that lets operators wearing VR glasses manipulate robotic hands to move chess pieces, flip switches or operate a drill.

One of the key challenges was building a system that someone who’s not a member of the team could start using quickly, Ph.D. student Max Schwarz said.

“It means we have to build an intuitive system that people can learn in a very short time, like half an hour,” he said. New artificial intelligence systems are part of the buzz at this year’s show, said Kaspar Althoefer, general chair of conference’s 2023 edition.

“ChatGPT is a good example where AI has really gone through the roof. And there is, of course, also a lot of interest to combine this with robotics,” Althoefer said. “For example, if you had ChatGPT combined with a robotic device, then maybe you could tell the robot what to do and there would be no programming necessary.”

Will Jackson, director of Engineered Arts, the British company that created Ameca, said his company’s robots are designed for tasks that involve interacting with humans, such as helping visitors in amusement parks.

“Humanoid robots are all about

communication with people: So it’s about facial expression, it’s about gestures — so that conversation, storytelling, entertainment, those are the things that we’re interested in,” he said.

AI has developed so quickly that the biggest robotic challenge is mechanical engineering, he said.

Ameca has so far mainly gone to museums and research institutions. It uses the AI image generator Stable Diffusion to draw and OpenAI’s GPT-3 to come up with responses. When asked to compose a poem, Ameca took a few seconds to come up with a few verses:

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Ameca, a robot created by English company Engineered Arts, can hold conversations in dozens of languages and execute drawing and creative writing requests.



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Robotic dogs and remote-controlled sentries on show for visitors at the International Conference on Robotics and Automation in London.



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A prize-winning robot created by German university students plays chess, remotely directed by an operator who sees the board through a virtual reality headset.