

## House attacks abortion, diversity policies

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House on Friday approved a sweeping annual defense bill that provides an expected 5.2% pay raise for service members but strays from traditional military policy with political additions from Republicans to block abortion coverage, diversity initiatives at the Pentagon and transgender issues that deeply divided the chamber.

Democrats voted against the package, which had sailed out of the House Armed Services Committee on an almost unanimous vote just weeks ago, but was being loaded up with the Republican priorities during a heated late-night floor debate heading into Friday's session.

The final vote was 219-210, with four Democrats voting with the GOP, and four Republicans opposed. The bill is expected to go nowhere in the Democratic-majority Senate.

Efforts to halt U.S. funding for Ukraine in the war against Rus-

sia were turned back, but Republicans tacked on provisions to stem the Defense Department diversity initiatives and to restrict access to abortions. The abortion issue has been championed by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., who is singularly stalling Senate confirmation of military officers, including the new Commandant of the Marine Corps.

"We are continuing to block the Biden Administration's 'woke' agenda," said Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., ahead of Friday's vote.

Turning the must-pass defense bill into a partisan battleground underscores how deeply the nation's military, a once hallowed institution, has been unexpectedly swept up in the political culture wars over race, equity and women's health care that are now driving the Republican Party priorities in a deepening national divide.

During one particularly tense moment, Rep. Joyce Beatty of

Ohio, a former chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, spoke of how difficult it was to look across the aisle as Republicans chip away at gains for women, Black people and others in the military.

"You are setting us back," she said during a debate over an amendment from Rep. Eli Crane, R-Ariz., that would prevent the Defense Department from requiring participation in race-based training for hiring, promotions or retention.

Crane argued that U.S. adversaries Russia and China don't mandate diversity measures in their military operations, and neither should the U.S. "We don't want our military to be a social experiment," he said. "We want the best of the best."

When Crane used the pejorative phrase "colored people" for Black military personnel, Beatty asked for his words to be stricken from the record.

The defense bill authorizes \$874.2 billion in the coming

year for the defense spending, keeping with President Joe Biden's budget request. The funding itself is to be allocated later, when Congress handles the appropriation bills, as is the normal process.

The package sets policy across the Defense Department and this year focuses particularly on the U.S. stance toward China, Russia and other national security fronts.

Republican opposition to U.S. support for the war in Ukraine drew a number of amendments, including one to block the use of cluster munitions that Biden just sent to help Ukraine battle Russia. It was a controversial move since the devices, which can leave behind unexploded munitions endangering civilians, are banned by many other countries.

But mostly those efforts to stop U.S. support for Ukraine failed as most lawmakers voted to continue supporting the war effort against Russia.

## Biden assails senator's block on military nominations

*Associated Press*

HELSINKI — President Joe Biden on Thursday said it is "irresponsible" of a Republican senator from Alabama to block confirmation of military officers in protest of a Defense Department policy that pays for travel when a service member has to go out of state to get an abortion or reproductive care.

"He's jeopardizing U.S. security by what he's doing," Biden said of Sen. Tommy Tuberville. "It's just totally irresponsible in my view."

More than 260 nominations are stalled by Tuberville, including Biden's pick for the

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, America's top military officer.

The U.S. Marine Corps is currently without a confirmed leader for the first time in a century because of the block. It also affects scores of one-, two- and three-star officers who are assigned to new base commands.

"I'd be willing to talk to him if I thought there was any possibility of changing his ridiculous position," Biden said during a press conference with the president of Finland. Biden traveled to Finland as a show of support for the new NATO member, following the NATO summit in

Lithuania this week.

"The idea that we're injecting into fundamental foreign policy decisions what, in fact, is a domestic social debate on social issues is bizarre," Biden said.

There were also efforts at the Pentagon to encourage Tuberville to drop his opposition. The senator told reporters later Thursday that he had just spoken with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and expected to speak with him again.

The block also affects the families of nominees, who usually relocate over the summer to their new military communities so school-age children

can get settled in before fall.

And it stretches to hundreds more younger military personnel who don't need Senate confirmation but are still affected by the hold because they are assigned to serve as staff or aides to the relocating generals. Those aides move their families as well. So they are essentially stuck, too.

A proposal last month to hold a Senate debate over Pentagon abortion policies as part of the annual defense bill negotiations was seen by some senators as the best prospect for getting Tuberville to lift those holds, but he opposed it.

# Assault suit against general ends in settlement

*The Washington Post*

A civil case filed by an Army colonel accusing a high-ranking general of sexual assault ended Wednesday in a nearly \$1 million settlement from the Justice Department, the first known resolution of its kind involving an active-duty service member, according to the plaintiff's attorney.

Kathryn Spletstoser, now a retired Army colonel, accused her former superior, now retired Air Force general John E. Hyten, of making unwanted sexual contact with her on several occasions in 2017 while she worked for him. Hyten denied wrongdoing and lawmakers approved his nomination to become the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 2019, the second-highest ranking military official, following investigations and inquiries about the allegations.

The \$975,000 settlement from the Justice Department closes the four-year proceedings, ending in what Spletstoser's legal team described as an unprecedented victory that could open

avenues for military sexual assault survivors to pursue damages. Justice Department attorneys had claimed the Feres doctrine, which broadly shields the government from legal liability for injuries incurred in military service, applied in the case.

The investigation ended without a determination of "guilt or innocence," or a conclusion about whether Spletstoser's allegations had been "substantiated or unsubstantiated."

A spokesperson for the Justice Department declined to comment on the settlement.

Hyten, who retired in 2021 after a two-year term with the Joint Staff, heads the foundation arm of the space venture company Blue Origin, focusing on developing interest in science and exploration among students, along with duties advising senior executives.

A spokesperson for Blue Origin did not return a request for comment. (The company's founder, Jeff Bezos, also owns The Washington Post.) Hyten is also on staff at the consultant firm Pallas Advisors, which did

not return a request for comment.

Spletstoser hopes "the successful outcome of the case will embolden other survivors of military sexual violence to come forward, regardless of how high ranking the perpetrator is," said her attorney, Ariel E. Solomon. The most egregious of the sexual assault accusations occurred in December 2017, when Spletstoser said Hyten ejaculated after pinning her against him in her hotel room at the Reagan National Defense Forum.

"The military almost never prosecutes those accused of rape or sexual assault and usually loses on the rare occasions it does," Don Christensen, a former Air Force prosecutor who worked on the case, including the negotiations over the settlement, said in a statement. "Frustrated by the lack of accountability, sexual assault survivors serving their country have turned to civil courts to hold their offenders accountable ... those efforts have failed until today."

The outcome is a "significant" amount of money that signaled federal attorneys had a dim outlook on the prospects of the defense, Christensen said in an interview.

"There was strong evidence of his guilt," he said.

It will take legislation to further compel accountability and damages in other sexual assault cases, Christensen added, but the "door has been cracked" for others to pursue similar action.

The Justice Department tried to dismiss the case, saying the Feres doctrine applied because Spletstoser was on duty at the time. Federal judges rejected that effort, and a circuit court judge denied the appeal last year.

"It is unimaginable that plaintiff would have been 'under orders' to submit to Hyten's sexual advances, or that she was performing any sort of military mission in conjunction with the alleged assault," Circuit Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson wrote in his decision, adding that it "could not be considered incident to military service."

## Chinese defense official accuses US of militarizing space

*Associated Press*

BEIJING — Amid a freeze in military-to-military contacts, China is accusing the United States of militarizing outer space, a day after it protested the passage of a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine aircraft through the Taiwan Strait.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Kefei said on Friday that U.S. actions, including the establishment of the Space Force in 2019 as the newest branch of the military, have "had a great negative impact on space security and global strategic stability."

"In recent years, the United States has accelerated the militarization of space," Tan said. "I would like to reiterate here that China adheres to the peaceful use of space, firmly opposes the weaponization and the making of space into a battlefield, and opposes any form of arms race in space."

The ministry said that Tan was responding to recent concerns expressed by Space Force leaders over China's rising capabilities, calling that "classic cognitive dissonance." China's advances in space include its own orbiting space station and

plans for a crewed lunar mission. In 2007, it faced international condemnation after using a missile to blow up one of its defunct weather satellites, leaving a field of debris that continues to threaten other objects in orbit.

While the U.S. has sent officials to Beijing including Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, ties remain at a historic low. China has pointedly refused to reestablish contact between the two militaries, possibly as a protest against U.S. sales of defensive weaponry to Taiwan and sanctions against

Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu.

Although it is recognized as international waters and airspace and functions as a crucial route for international trade, China continues to claim a proprietary role over the Taiwan Strait that separates the mainland from the self-governing island democracy.

China regards close U.S. ally Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary, and regularly sends planes and warships to harass the island's military and seeks to intimidate its 23 million citizens.

# Man drowns in Vermont's 1st recorded flooding death

Associated Press

A man who died as a result of a drowning accident in his home is Vermont's first death related to recent storms and historic flooding, the state's emergency management agency said.

Stephen Davoll, 63, of Barre, died on Wednesday, said Mark Bosma, spokesperson for Vermont Emergency Management.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner investigated the death, in cooperation with local police, Bosma said in a news release late Thursday afternoon. He said Vermonters are urged to continue to take extra care as they return to their homes and repair damage.

"The loss of a Vermonter is always painful, but it is particularly so this week," Vermont U.S. Sen. Peter Welch said in statement.

It was the second flood-related death stemming from a storm system and epic flooding in the Northeast this week. The first was in New York — a woman whose body was found after she was swept away in Fort Montgomery, a small Hudson River community about 45 miles north of New York City.

More rain came through the region Thursday evening. There were no reports of any flash flooding from the storm, the emergency management agency said. A tornado warning was issued for parts of the state and Vermont. There were high winds, but no confirmation of a tornado and no major damage reports.

As floodwaters receded, the good news was that there were no new rescue missions, dams were holding up and more roads reopened. The bad news was that the storms aren't over. More rain was expected Friday, Sunday and into next week.

"The period we are more concerned about is Sunday because that could be more widespread and heavier, but not nearly on the scale of what we saw earlier in the week," National Weather Service meteorologist Seth Kutikoff said.

Gov. Phil Scott said it's important for Vermonters to be vigilant, and that includes not going into the water.

"We've seen many pictures on social media of kids swimming in floodwaters. This is not typical rainwater — it's filled with chemicals, oil, waste and more. It's simply not safe," he said.

# One-third of people in US under extreme heat advisories

Associated Press

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — More than a third of Americans were under extreme heat advisories, watches and warnings Thursday as a blistering heat wave that's been baking the nation spread further into California, forcing residents to seek out air conditioning or find other ways to stay cool in triple-digit temperatures.

The sweltering conditions were expected to build Friday and through the weekend in Central and Southern California, where many residents should prepare for the hottest weather of the year, the National Weather Service warned. Highs in inland desert areas could top 120 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, and remain in the 80s overnight, offering little relief.

In the desert city of Palm Springs, many homeless people were left to contend with the heat on their own, with just 20 indoor beds at the lone overnight shelter.

John Summers, a homeless resident, climbed through a dry riverbed Thursday to seek shade at an encampment.

"I basically just use water as much as I can. And hit shade. And, you know, the mall, wherever they'll let you in," he said.

Roman Ruiz, the city's homeless services coordinator, said homeless residents struggle daily just to find a place with enough shade.

"I don't know how anyone can do it really," he said. "I feel so bad, and yet there's not much I can do."

Elsewhere, officials prepared to repurpose public libraries, senior centers and police department lobbies as cooling centers, especially in desert areas.

The heat wave came as the California State Fair prepared to kick off Friday in Sacramento, forcing organizers to cancel planned horseracing events due to concerns for animal safety.

Forecasters said the long-duration heat wave is extremely dangerous, especially for older people, homeless residents and other vulnerable populations. The heat could persist into next week as a high pressure dome moves west from Texas.

Phoenix hit 110 degrees for the 14th consecutive day Thursday, putting it on track for a possible new record next week.

# Flash flooding swamps Mississippi

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Miss. — Torrential rain fell for several hours Thursday in central Mississippi, flooding roads, homes and businesses in Winston County and Louisville, where the mayor declared a state of emergency.

"Please do not travel anywhere in Louisville or Winston County unless it is an absolute emergency," Mayor Will Hill said Thursday morning on Facebook. "This is not a typical flash flood and like no thing we've experience(d) in our area, maybe ever."

Winston County Sheriff Jason Pugh said law enforcement officers rescued at least eight people from vehicles and removed several others from homes as the water rose.

Swift water washed one car into a ditch, but the driver escaped before it submerged. The man stood knee-deep in the floodwater on top of his car as officers rescued him,

Pugh told The Associated Press.

About 17,500 people live in Winston County. Louisville, the largest town, is about 95 miles northeast of Jackson.

No deaths or serious injuries had been reported in the county by the evening, the mayor said.

"We are on the opposite end of the storm now with blue skies and calm weather and the water has subsided," Hill said. "But what we experienced was not just a 100-year flood but a 1,000-year flood." He added that 12 inches of rain had fallen "in a very short time."

The mayor said the immediate focus was on safety, and he and others had just gotten a first look around the city of about 6,000. He estimated that a couple hundred homes had water damage, as well as some businesses.

He added that officials were contending with debris, drainage problems, erosion and damage to streets and homes, with some taking on about 2 feet of water.



# Judge to consider hold on Iowa's abortion measure

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — An Iowa judge on Friday afternoon was to consider a request to postpone the state's new ban on most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, just as Gov. Kim Reynolds is scheduled to sign the measure into law in front of 2,000 conservative Christians barely a mile away.

The split screen punctuates a bitter battle between abortion advocates and opponents in Iowa that has dragged on for years and will likely, for now, remain unresolved as the courts assess the law's constitutionality.

Abortion is currently legal in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy but will be far more restricted when Reynolds puts pen to paper Friday — unless or until the district court judge issues a temporary hold.

The new legislation prohibits almost all abortions once cardiac activity can be detected, which is usually around six weeks of pregnancy and before many women know they are pregnant. The bill passed with exclusively Republican support on Tuesday at the end of a rare, 14-hour special legislative session.

The legal challenge was filed Wednesday morning by the ACLU of Iowa, Planned Parenthood North Central States and the Emma Goldman Clinic.

The new measure will be considered in the context of decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court and Iowa's Supreme Court last year, when both reversed themselves on rulings that had affirmed a woman's fundamental

constitutional right to abortion.

Those decisions prompted Reynolds to ask the court to reinstate her blocked 2018 law, which is nearly identical to the new one. The state's high court deadlocked last month, prompting Reynolds to call lawmakers back to the Iowa Capitol.

"The Iowa Supreme Court questioned whether this legislature would pass the same law they did in 2018, and today they have a clear answer," Reynolds said Tuesday in a statement. "Justice for the unborn should not be delayed."

Planned Parenthood North Central States said Wednesday they are preparing to have to refer patients to other states if the law isn't blocked but are hopeful there will not be an interruption in their services.

"We are seeking to block the ban because we know that every day this law is in effect, Iowans will face life-threatening barriers to getting desperately needed medical care — just as we have seen in other states with similar bans," Rita Bettis Austen, legal director for the ACLU of Iowa, said in a statement.

There are limited circumstances under the measure that would allow for abortion after the point in a pregnancy where cardiac activity is detected: rape, if reported to law enforcement or a health provider within 45 days; incest, if reported within 145 days; if the fetus has a fetal abnormality "incompatible with life"; or if the pregnancy is endangering the life of the pregnant woman.

# Striking actors to picket along with the writers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Striking screen actors were to begin picketing alongside writers in New York and Los Angeles on Friday in what has become the biggest Hollywood labor fight in decades.

The double-barreled strike will shut down the small number of productions that continued shooting in the two months since screenwriters stopped working.

Many actors made a show of solidarity on the writers' picket lines, including Fran Drescher, the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists president and former star of "The Nanny." The union's 65,000-member actors' branch will now formally join them as fellow strikers.

The two guilds have similar issues with studios and streaming services. They are concerned about contracts keeping up with inflation, residual payments in the streaming era and putting up guardrails against the use of artificial intelligence mimicking their work on film and television shows.

The famous faces of Oscar and Emmy winners will likely be seen with some regularity on picket lines, adding star power to the writers' demonstrations outside studios and corporate offices.

No talks are planned, and no end is in sight for the work stoppage, the first time both guilds have walked off sets since 1960. During that strike, then-actor Ronald Reagan was SAG's leader.

# IRS collects \$38M from high-income tax delinquents

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The IRS is showcasing its new capability to aggressively audit high-income tax dodgers as it makes the case for sustained funding and tries to avert budget cuts sought by Republicans who want to gut the agency.

IRS leaders said they collected \$38 million in delinquent taxes from more than 175 high-income taxpayers in the past few months.

In one case, an individual had used money owed to the government to buy a Maserati and a Bentley, and roughly 100 high-income individuals attempted to get favorable tax treatment through Puerto Rico without meeting certain tax requirements.

Many of those cases are expected to face criminal investigation.

"It just shows you how much money is out there in delinquent taxes, and there are so many more cases for us to tackle," said new IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel, just four months into the job. "There's just a significant opportunity there."

The agency did not provide figures for how those high-dollar tax collections compared with those of previous years.

Werfel, in a call with reporters on Thursday, said the federal tax collector's enhanced ability to identify tax delinquents comes from resources provided by the Inflation Reduction Act passed last August by Democrats.

The agency was in line for an \$80 billion infusion of funds under the law but that money is vulnerable to potential cutbacks.

House Republicans built a \$1.4 billion reduction to the IRS into the debt ceiling and budget cuts package passed by Congress earlier this summer. The White House said the debt deal also includes a separate agreement to take \$20 billion from the IRS over the next two years and divert those funds to other non-defense programs.

Now, the agency is trying to show the value of the Inflation Reduction Act funding for taxpayers as appropriations season closes in, and to show the impact of its efforts to do more to audit high-income taxpayers.

# FTC probing ChatGPT creator OpenAI

Associated Press

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission has launched an investigation into ChatGPT creator OpenAI and whether the artificial intelligence company violated consumer protection laws by scraping public data and publishing false information through its chatbot.

The agency sent OpenAI a 20-page letter requesting detailed information on its AI technology, products, customers, privacy safeguards and data security arrangements.

An FTC spokesperson had no comment on the investigation, which was first reported by the Washington Post on Thursday.

The FTC document the Post published told OpenAI the agency was investigating whether it has “engaged in unfair or deceptive privacy or data security practices” or practices harming consumers.

OpenAI founder Sam Altman tweeted disappointment that the investigation was disclosed in a “leak,” noting that the move would “not help build trust,” but added that the company will work with the FTC.

“It’s super important to us that our technology is safe and pro-consumer, and we are confident we follow the law,” he wrote. “We protect user privacy and design our systems to learn about the world, not private individuals.”

The FTC’s move represents the most significant regulatory threat so far to the nascent but fast-growing AI industry, although it’s not the only challenge facing these companies.

Comedian Sarah Silverman and two other authors have sued both OpenAI and Facebook parent Meta for copyright infringement, claiming that the companies’ AI systems were illegally “trained” by exposing them to datasets containing illegal copies of their works.

On Thursday, OpenAI and The Associated Press announced a deal under which the AI company will license AP’s archive of news stories.

## FDA gives approval to nation’s 1st over-the-counter birth control pill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal regulators on Thursday approved the nation’s first over-the-counter birth control pill in a landmark decision that will soon allow American women and girls to obtain contraceptive medication as easily as they buy aspirin and eyedrops.

The Food and Drug Administration cleared once-a-day Opill to be sold without a prescription, making it the first such medication to be moved out from behind the pharmacy counter. The manufacturer, Ireland-based Perrigo, won’t start shipping the pill until early next year, and there will be no age restrictions on sales.

Hormone-based pills have long been the most common form of birth control in the U.S., used by tens of millions of women since the 1960s. Until now, all of them required a prescription.

Medical societies and women’s health groups have pushed for wider access for decades, noting that an estimated 45% of the 6 million annual pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. Teens and girls, women of color and those with low incomes report greater hurdles in getting prescriptions and

picking them up. The challenges can include paying for a doctor’s visit, getting time off from work and finding child care.

“This is really a transformation in access to contraceptive care,” said Kelly Blanchard, president of Ibis Reproductive Health, a nonprofit group that supported the approval. “Hopefully this will help people overcome those barriers that exist now.”

Perrigo says Opill could be an important new option for the estimated 15 million U.S. women who currently use no birth control or less effective methods, such as condoms. They are a fifth of women who are child-bearing age.

But how many women will actually gain access depends on the medication’s price, which Perrigo plans to set later this year.

“The reason why so many of us worked tirelessly for years to get over-the-counter birth control pills is to improve access ... cost shouldn’t be one of those barriers,” said Dr. Pratima Gupta of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Most older birth control pills cost \$15 to \$30 for a month’s supply without insurance coverage.

## Soda sweetener aspartame now listed as hazard

Associated Press

The World Health Organization’s cancer agency has deemed the sweetener aspartame — found in diet soda and countless other foods — as a “possible” cause of cancer, while a separate expert group looking at the same evidence said it still considers the sugar substitute safe in limited quantities.

The differing results of the coordinated reviews were released early Friday. One came from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a special branch of the WHO. The other report was from an expert panel selected by WHO and another U.N. group, the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The Lyon, France-based cancer agency periodically reviews potential cancer hazards, but doesn’t determine how likely they are to cause cancer in their evaluations which range from “possibly” carcinogenic to “probably” cancer-causing.

Aspartame joins a category with more than 300 other possible cancer-causing agents, including things like aloe vera extract, Asian-style pickled vegetables and carpentry work.

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# Djokovic defeats Sinner at Wimbledon

*Associated Press*

WIMBLEDON, England — This was the moment. If Novak Djokovic was going to be stopped in the Wimbledon semifinals, if his much younger and harder-hitting opponent, Jannik Sinner, was going to turn things around Friday, the monumental comeback required would need to start immediately.

Djokovic knew it. Sinner knew it. The 15,000 or so Centre Court spectators knew it.

After taking the first two sets, Djokovic trailed 5-4 in the third, and a flubbed forehand made the game score 15-40 as he served. Two chances for Sinner to finally break. Two chances for him to actually take a set. Djokovic hit a fault, which drew some sounds of approval from the stands. Djokovic sarcastically used his racket and the ball to applaud the noise-makers, then flashed a thumbs up.

He can back up any such bravado. Djokovic simply does not lose at the All England Club lately. Or at any Grand Slam tournament, for that matter. So he calmly collected

the next four points to claim that game, looked toward the crowd and mockingly pretended to wipe away a tear. Twenty minutes later, the match was over, and the 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory over Sinner allowed Djokovic to close in on a record-tying eighth title at Wimbledon and fifth in a row.

Djokovic repeatedly served himself out of potential trouble, saving all six break points he faced, to reach his ninth final at the All England Club. It's also his 35th final at all Grand Slam tournaments, more than any man or woman in tennis history.

Djokovic will meet No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz or No. 3 Daniil Medvedev for the trophy on Sunday. Alcaraz and Medvedev were scheduled to play their semifinal later Friday.

As great as he is as a returner, as superb as his defense is — over and over, he would sprint and lean and stretch to reach a ball that extended a point until Sinner made a mistake — Djokovic possesses a serve that might be the part of his game he's improved

the most over his career.

That showed Friday, and it's showed throughout this fortnight: In his half-dozen matches during the tournament, Djokovic has won 111 of his 114 service games and saved 20 of 23 break points.

Sinner is the one who hit serves at up to 132 mph and pounded one fault that clanged against the speed readout board in a corner of the arena with such force it sounded as if he might have broken the thing. Of more concern to Sinner: It was followed by another fault in a game he would get broken to trail 2-1 in the second set.

In truth, talented as Sinner is, he didn't really generate any more frustration for Djokovic than chair umpire Richard Haigh did.

In one game in which Djokovic would face — and erase — a break point, he argued to no avail after forfeiting a point because Haigh called him for hindrance for letting out a lengthy yell while the ball was still in play. Moments later, Haigh issued Djokovic a warning for letting the serve-clock expire.

## Jabeur, Vondrousova each seek 1st Grand Slam title

*Associated Press*

WIMBLEDON, England — Ons Jabeur left Wimbledon a year ago without the trophy but more confident than ever that she would win a Grand Slam title one day.

Marketa Vondrousova was at the All England Club in 2022, too. Not to play, mind you, but only to be a tourist in London and to cheer for her best friend — and doubles partner — while wearing a cast on her surgically repaired left wrist, unsure of what her tennis future might look like.

They play similarly varied games, with drop shots and changes of pace. They also are a combined 0-3 in major finals. That will change Saturday, when No. 6 seed Jabeur and the unseeded Vondrousova play each other at Centre Court for the women's singles championship.

"I would say I always believed. But sometimes you would question and doubt it if it's going to happen, if it's ever going to happen. Being in the last stages, I think it does help you believe more," said Jabeur, a 28-year-old from Tunisia.

She is the only Arab woman and only North African woman to participate in the final at a Grand Slam tournament.

Last season, Jabeur lost the title matches at Wimbledon to Elena Rybakina and at the

U.S. Open to Iga Swiatek.

"For me, I'm going to learn a lot from not only Wimbledon's final but also U.S. Open final, and give it my best," Jabeur said Thursday after defeating No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-3 in the semifinals. "Maybe this year was all about trying two times and getting it right the third time."

Jabeur needed to get through quite a list of opponents over the past fortnight.

The big-hitting Sabalenka, who won the Australian Open in January, was the fourth past Grand Slam champion eliminated by Jabeur, a list that also includes Rybakina, two-time Wimbledon winner Petra Kvitova and 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu.

Only two women in the 55-year history of the sport's professional era have won a major tournament after needing to get past that many previous Slam champs along the way: Serena Williams at the 1999 U.S. Open and Justine Henin at the 2005 French Open.

"I want to make my path worth it," Jabeur said.

Vondrousova, who beat Jabeur twice earlier this year, also made it through a tough portion of the bracket over the past 1½ weeks.

Not as tough, perhaps, but plenty tough.

Her 6-3, 6-3 win against Elina Svitolina in the semifinals came after victories against four seeded women: No. 4 Jessica Pegula, No. 12 Veronika Kudermetova, No. 20 Donna Vekic and No. 32 Marie Bouzkova.

The 24-year-old left-hander from the Czech Republic is the first unseeded finalist at the All England Club since Billie Jean King made it that far 60 years ago.

As a teenager, Vondrousova was the runner-up to Ash Barty at the 2019 French Open.

"It was just too much for me back then," Vondrousova said.

That final came on red clay. This one will be on grass, hardly Vondrousova's preferred surface.

Before going 6-0 during this trip to Wimbledon, she owned only four career main-draw wins on grass and never had been past the second round at the All England Club.

During Jabeur's groundbreaking run 12 months ago, her cellphone carried a lock-screen photo of the Venus Rosewater Dish, the trophy given to the women's champion at Wimbledon.

A reporter asked her Thursday what image she chose this time around.

"Can I answer," Jabeur responded, "after the final?"



# Northwestern, WVU face legal headaches

*Associated Press*

The legal headaches could only be starting for Pat Fitzgerald and Bob Huggins — and their schools.

Fitzgerald was fired this week as Northwestern's football coach following hazing allegations — but after the school had first announced a two-week suspension. West Virginia said Huggins had resigned after the Hall of Fame basketball coach's arrest last month on a drunken-driving charge — but he now says he made no such decision.

Attorneys are looking to sort it all out, a process that requires a precise review of their contracts, but industry observers are stunned by the awkward-at-best handling of two high-profile contracts worth millions of dollars. If the cases wind up in court, it would be in everyone's best interest to seek a quick resolution, said Marty Greenberg, a Milwaukee attorney specializing in coaches' contracts and terminations.

"A lot of these things end up settled because no one wants to hang their dirty laundry out," Greenberg said.

Northwestern originally suspended Fitzgerald for two weeks without pay July 7, saying a law firm's investigation did not find sufficient evidence that the coaching staff knew about ongoing hazing. On Monday, following the publication of stories alleging not only hazing but racism in the football program by the Daily Northwestern student newspaper, the school changed its stance and fired Fitzgerald. President Michael Schil said the hazing was "widespread" and not a secret. Northwestern's assistant coaches and support staff will be retained.

A lawyer for Fitzgerald told ESPN that the school breached an oral agreement.

"Without a doubt the Northwestern one is most puzzling for the fact that the university told him he was getting a two-week suspension," said Andrew Rhoden, a Dallas lawyer who has represented college coaches. "For them to reverse the decision is actually the most puzzling thing I've heard of."

Fitzgerald signed a 10-year contract in 2021 and he reportedly had more than \$40 million coming though the life of the deal.

The Fitzgerald situation is "kind of a mess because nobody outside of there really even knows what all of the allegations are," said Bill Robers, who teaches sports law at the University of Colorado and has represented sports entities, athletes and coaches in contract negotiations.

If Fitzgerald's case is messy, Huggins' predicament is downright bizarre.

West Virginia announced the day after Huggins' June 16 arrest that he had resigned, based in part on a text message sent from the cell phone of Huggins' wife to a deputy athletic director. A week later, an interim replacement was named for the 2023-24 season.

It wasn't until July 8 that Huggins released a statement saying he never officially stepped down and wants to keep his job.

"It's very odd, obviously, to come back and say 'yeah, uh, nevermind,'" Robers said.

West Virginia is sticking with its stance that Huggins resigned, even though the coach accused the university of issuing a "false statement" sent in his name.

Add to that Huggins' use of a homophobic slur and denigration of Catholics during a radio interview in May. After that incident, Huggins was suspended for three games, his salary of \$4.15 million was cut by \$1 million and his contract was reduced to a year-by-year review.

Huggins is facing a DUI charge. Under the contract he signed in 2021, the university could fire him for cause for conduct resulting in criminal charges, regardless of a conviction.

University presidents and governing boards have the last say in contract decisions that could get dragged into an ugly legal battle. That's why they typically turn to their attorneys for guidance. But general counsels often have other daily duties, too.

Rhoden suggested every Power Five conference school should dedicate part of its general counsel office to sports, especially with the recent emergence of name, image and likeness compensation for athletes.

"It's no longer possible to just rely on your general counsel," Rhoden said. "What we're going to start seeing, especially with this NIL stuff and these investigations, is that it's too much for that individual to try to take on."

The experts aren't sure whether coach firings, especially "for cause" misconduct or other serious violations, have become more challenging. But as coaching salaries have ballooned, their contracts now include layers of provisions concerning duties and responsibilities, rules enforcement, moral standards and upholding a school's reputation, among other things.

## Jets reach 4-year, \$96M deal with star DT Williams

*Associated Press*

All-Pro defensive tackle Quinnen Williams and the New York Jets agreed Thursday to a four-year contract extension worth \$96 million, according to a person with knowledge of the deal.

Williams is now the second-highest paid defensive tackle in the NFL behind only the Rams' Aaron Donald, who is making \$31.7 million per year.

The deal for Williams includes \$66 million in guaranteed salary, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the team didn't announce terms of the contract. The guarantee is the largest in Jets history, surpassing the \$51 million line-

backer C.J. Mosley got as a free agent in 2019.

"Quinnen is the epitome of a Jet," owner Woody Johnson said in a statement issued by the team in announcing the agreement.

Williams will average \$24 million per year on the contract that will keep him in New York through the 2027 season. The Titans' Jeffery Simmons (\$23.5 million), Commanders' Daron Payne (\$22.5 million) and Giants' Dexter Lawrence (\$22.5 million) all received new deals this offseason, but Williams surpassed them all.

"The success of this organization is beyond important to me and completing this deal allows me to turn all my attention to positively impacting that," Williams said

in a statement. "I am thrilled to put forth my best efforts alongside my brothers to get prepared for this season ahead of us."

Williams did not attend the Jets' voluntary workouts while waiting for his agent and the Jets to reach an agreement.

Jets coach Robert Saleh was optimistic throughout the offseason, maintaining his belief the sides would have a contract in place before the team opens training camp next week.

"I'll let the business guys handle all that stuff, but it's going to get done," Saleh said last month. "He'll be here for (training) camp, he'll be ready to roll. And once he is, I'm sure he'll be the same guy he was a year ago."

# PGA Tour, Saudi backers drop no-poaching clause

Associated Press

The PGA Tour and the Saudi backers of LIV Golf responded to a Justice Department inquiry by dropping a provision in their agreement that would have prohibited the poaching of players, the PGA Tour said Thursday.

The New York Times first reported the development, which stems from the Justice Department's antitrust review that began last summer and expanded when the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's national wealth fund agreed to become business partners.

The non-solicitation clause was part of the framework agreement announced June 6 and signed by the PGA Tour, European tour and Public Investment Fund.

The agreement, still being negotiated and requiring PGA Tour board approval, is for the parties to form a for-profit company that would pool commercial businesses and rights. During a Senate hearing on Tuesday, PGA Tour Chief Operating Officer Ron Price said PIF would contribute at least \$1 billion.

Key to the agreement was dropping all antitrust litigation, which a federal judge signed off on last month. Below that section was the non-solicitation clause that said PIF, the PGA Tour and European tour would no longer "solicit or recruit any players who are members of the other tours or organizations to become members of their respective organizations."

The clause was effective May 30, when the agreement was signed.

"Based on discussions with staff at the Department of Justice, we chose to remove specific language from the Framework Agreement," the PGA Tour said in a statement. "While we believe the language is lawful, we also consider it unnecessary in the spirit of cooperation and because all parties are negotiating in good faith."

LIV Golf signed deals reported to be \$100 million or more last year when the rival league began, marquee names ranging from Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson to Phil Mickelson and Bryson DeChambeau. The rival league added more players last August, including British Open champion Cameron Smith, after the PGA Tour season ended.

A new batch of defectors for the second season included Mito Pereira, Thomas Piefers and Brendan Steele.

The Times reported antitrust experts have warned the clause could violate federal law if it threatened the integrity of the labor market and promised to stifle competition for players, who are independent.

The agreement sets a Dec. 31 deadline for finalizing the deal, though both sides can agree to an extension.

LIV Golf has a set 48-man roster for this season — alternates are available for injury — so it was unlikely any player would have left for LIV until the 2024 season.

Still to be determined is the future of LIV.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan is to be the CEO of the new company, with assets that include LIV.

## McIlroy says he'd retire if LIV was only option

Associated Press

GULLANE, Scotland — Rory McIlroy laughed off a Saudi-backed idea that he and Tiger Woods own LIV Golf teams, saying Thursday he would retire if playing for LIV was the only option.

The concept came from an April document titled "The Best of Both Worlds," provided to Congress ahead of a Senate subcommittee hearing Tuesday on the PGA Tour's agreement to partner with the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia.

"LIV is proposing that Rory McIlroy and Tiger Woods would own teams and play in at least 10 LIV events. This and the participation of other leading players is subject to further discussions," one item in the proposal said.

That was brought to McIlroy's attention after his opening round of the Scottish Open, and he looked bemused.

"If LIV Golf was the last place to play golf on earth, I would retire. That's how I feel about it," McIlroy said. "I'd play the majors. I'd be pretty comfortable."

That was part of several pie-in-the-sky proposals in the eight-page presentation geared toward finding a compromise between the golf circuits.

It was produced by Amanda Staveley of British-based PCP Capital Partners. She helped broker the Public Investment Fund acquiring Newcastle United of the English Premier League and is advising the Saudis in golf.

## Georgia athletics, Carter sued by passenger in crash

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A woman seriously injured in the January car crash that killed Georgia offensive lineman Devin Willock and an athletics staffer has sued the school's athletics association and former Bulldogs defensive tackle Jalen Carter for damages.

Victoria S. Bowles was riding in the backseat of the rented Ford Expedition driven by fellow UGA recruiting analyst Chandler LeCroy, who died in the Jan. 15 crash along with Willock while racing Carter at more than 104 mph following the Bulldogs' College Football Playoff championship celebration.

Bowles' lawsuit filed Wednesday in Gwinnett County State Court accuses the UGA Athletics Association of negligent entrustment of LeCroy and states that the association was aware that she had at least two "super speeder" violations among four speeding tickets prior to the crash.

Bowles sustained multiple serious injuries in the crash including lumbar and rib fractures, a spinal cord injury and lacerations to the kidney and liver, the lawsuit stated. She also sustained a closed head injury with neurological damage and severe eye pain.

Former Georgia offensive lineman Warren McClendon was also in the vehicle that

crashed. He sustained minor injuries.

The lawsuit, which includes the estate of LeCroy as a defendant, requests at least \$171,595 in general damages along with punitive damages. It accuses the athletic association, LeCroy and Carter of varying degrees of negligence.

The athletic association said in a statement that while it has supported Bowles during her recovery, it disputes her lawsuit and will "vigorously" defend itself in court. The statement added that staff members were to use rental vehicles for recruiting purposes only, and they were not authorized for personal use on the night of the crash or any other time.