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CATHY WURZER: It's *Minnesota Now*. I'm Cathy Wurzer. 15,000 Minnesota nurses have voted to strike. If they do, it could be the largest such strike in US history. Details in a few minutes. An international chess tournament is happening this weekend in the Twin Cities. We'll talk with a chess champion about why so many love the game.

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Access to abortion in the states surrounding Minnesota is changing. We'll hear what's happening in Iowa. The Red Lake Nation has a thriving herd of bison, including Jumbo the bull and Lady Gaga as part of their plan to be food sovereign in the next decade or so. We'll hear all about it. And what's so special about Minnesota rocks? We'll find out from a Minnesota geologist with a new great course anyone can take. We also have the Minnesota Music Minute and the song of the day. All that and more right after the news.

LAKSHMI SINGH: Live from NPR News in Washington, I'm Lakshmi Singh. A federal judge plans to hold a hearing Thursday about a dispute over whether to unseal documents related to the recent search of former President Donald Trump's Florida estate. Trump says he wants the affidavit released. And as NPR's Carrie Johnson tells us, he's not alone.

CARRIE JOHNSON: News organizations are demanding to know more about the unprecedented FBI search of former President Donald Trump's residence in Florida last week. The Justice Department says releasing the affidavit supporting the search warrant would compromise the ongoing criminal probe and could result in harassment of witnesses in this and other investigations.

DOJ has been probing possible violations of obstruction and government records laws that involve highly classified material. Trump says on social media he wants more information about the search to be made public even though he refused to share the search warrant and property receipt for days. Carrie Johnson, NPR News, Washington.

LAKSHMI SINGH: Though the subject of multiple investigations, Trump's endorsement power is being put to the test yet again today. He's backing primary candidates running against representative Liz Cheney in Wyoming and senator Lisa Murkowski in Alaska-- two of his strongest Republican critics in Congress. In a special election in Alaska, voters are also deciding whether to send former governor and 2008 GOP vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin to Congress. She is Trump's pick to serve the remainder of the term in Alaska's sole US House seat.

The White House is looking to capitalize on President Biden's policy wins ahead of the midterm elections. That includes the landmark legislation Biden plans to sign this afternoon dubbed the Inflation Reduction Act that includes the largest ever US investment to combat climate change. It also addresses taxes, energy, and health care. Well, the Bidens are again observing COVID-19 health precautions. The White House says First Lady Jill Biden has tested positive for the coronavirus and is experiencing mild symptoms. Here's NPR'S Asma Khalid.

ASMA KHALID: The first lady is double vaccinated and twice boosted. Like her husband, President Biden, who first tested positive earlier last month, she's been prescribed a course of the antiviral drug Paxlovid. She plans to stay in South Carolina where she had been vacationing with the president and will not return home until she receives two consecutive negative COVID tests. That's according to a statement from her communications director.

President Biden will continue on with his schedule, which includes signing the Inflation Reduction Act at the White House. The president is deemed to be a close contact of the First Lady, and so the White House says he'll wear a mask for 10 days while indoors and in close proximity to other people. Asma Khalid, NPR News.

LAKSHMI SINGH: US stocks are mixed this hour. The Dow Jones industrial average is up more than half a percent or 220 points at \$34,132. From Washington, this is NPR News.

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CATHY WURZER: Around Minnesota right now skies are sunny to cloudy with some rain in far northern Minnesota. Highs today will be in the 70s. It's a little sticky. At noon in Green Lake it's raining hard. It's 61. In Brainerd it's sunny and 76. And outside Art's Dairy Freeze in Montevideo it's sunny at 74. I'm Cathy Wurzer with Minnesota news headlines. Taxes in Minneapolis could go up to pay for what Mayor Jacob Frey calls investments in public safety. Frey released his budget blueprint yesterday. His plan includes a 6.5% property tax increase in 2023 and a 6.2% increase in 2024.

JACOB FREY: Since the start of the pandemic, cuts have been required to keep the boat afloat. And our city is moving. With hiring freezes, contract cancellations, and diminished city staff capacity, just taking care of the easy stuff, the basic daily services has neither been easy nor basic. So this year we're focusing on the services you can and should count on now.

CATHY WURZER: Frey's budget proposal includes funding for additional law enforcement for a total of 731 sworn police officers and an additional nearly \$9 million in overtime, \$1.5 million for contracting with other law enforcement entities. Frey's total proposal comes out to more than \$3 billion over the next two years, including funding for affordable housing and public works.

More than 214,000 Minnesotans who applied for pandemic bonus pay might not get the cash. State officials say nearly 1.2 million people applied for the extra money set aside for those who are on the front lines during COVID-19. But because some made more money than allowed under the program or couldn't prove their identity or that their work qualified, their applications could be denied. People have until the end of the month to appeal the denials.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And here's our top story. Thousands of Minnesota nurses have voted in favor of a strike at seven different health systems in the Twin Cities and Duluth.

MARY TURNER: And I'll tell you what, we are the voice right now in this nation. We are the voice of all the nurses all across the nation because I don't care what state you go to, we're all in the same boat. Right now we are heroines and heroes to every single nurse across this nation as they applaud us for standing together and working together to get 15,000 nurses all marching in the same direction. Do you know why? Because of what you heard behind us. We are forced to do this because our profession is at risk. When I can get on a news report and comment on a report that came out that 51% of the nurses across the nation will potentially leave the bedside as of next year, that is a public health crisis. Half of the nurses leaving the profession. So we are doing this to save our profession. We are doing this to save health care.

CATHY WURZER: It's the latest update in negotiations between the Minnesota Nurses Association and the hospitals which have been at the table since last March. NPR'S Tim Nelson's been following the vote. He's with us. Welcome back, Tim.

TIM NELSON: Hi, Cathy.

CATHY WURZER: So what do we know about how many nurses want to strike? How did the vote break down?

TIM NELSON: Well, we don't really know. The Minnesota Nurses Association says it's policy not to provide actual vote tallies either for who voted in favor of strike or not or by bargaining unit or facility. You know, it's kind of a standard practice for labor unions not to publicly disclose this kind of information that might divide their bargaining units by indicating maybe some locations or units might have doubts about a strike or a contract agreement.

And you know, that's not a trifling matter here. Four health care union bargaining units in the state have voted out unions this year, including Minnesota Nurses Association members that work for the Mayo Clinic down in Mankato. This strike comes amid unprecedented challenges to union health care worker solidarity.

And that's really-- you heard that a little bit from President Mary Turner there in that opening comments. She was raising that very issue this morning. They're hoping to assemble what they call the biggest coalition of union nurses ever in a job action and really add some pressure to these hospitals to settle.

CATHY WURZER: So which hospitals could be affected?

TIM NELSON: Well, there's 15 of them. Here in the Twin Cities they include M Health Fairview facilities, Riverside, Southdale, St. Joseph's, and St. John's. Abbott Northwestern, Mercy, United, and Unity are Allina hospitals. Those four are Allina hospitals. There are two children's hospitals in both Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as Methodist-- that's a HealthPartners hospital-- and North Memorial. Up north in the Twin Ports this includes St. Mary's in Duluth and Superior. They're both Essentia hospitals. As well as St. Luke's in Duluth.

You might hear here that there are some key hospitals that are not in this list, including the big level one trauma centers, you know, Regents Hospital and St Paul, Hennepin Healthcare in Minneapolis. So we're talking about a lot of hospital beds but not all of the hospitals in the region. But you know, there's no question this has a potential to really have a major impact on health care.

CATHY WURZER: Right. What issues are at play here?

TIM NELSON: There's a lot of things. You know nurses this morning talked about scheduling issues, about protective measures against COVID, about nurses-- as you heard Ms. Turner saying, nurses quitting and not being replaced. They're leaving more work for the people left on the job. They're talking also about what they say are the risks of dwindling staffing ratios for patients.

And they're also talking about some of the same things that people are worrying about outside hospitals-- about safety and security. They're worried about their safety in parking lots and the hospital hallways, even in patient rooms. Here's Tracy Ducksworth, a mental health nurse at Fairview this morning.

TRACY DUCKSWORTH: I have witnessed multiple coworkers assaulted by patients, verbally assaulted by patients and families with no help or support from our hospitals. We are asking for safety measures from our hospitals. They are telling us it costs too much. We are asking for staffing. They are telling us it costs too much.

CATHY: So, Tim, what have the hospitals said in response?

WURZER:

TIM NELSON: Well, the hospitals, like the nurses say, they don't want to strike. They want to keep their facilities open. They want to care for patients. They express some disappointment that the nurses union took a strike vote yesterday in a statement in response to that vote. They called for the MNA, the Nurses Association, to join them in mediation. They said that worked for contract talks three years ago.

In sort of the nuts and bolts they say they're offering the biggest wage increases in 15 years-- between 10% and 12% total over the next three years. They also say they're not profitable and that's really all they can afford. Sort of on the benefit side they're promising to keep pension benefits. That's kind of a rarity in the modern workplace. And they say they've reached some agreements already in matters like diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce.

They say they want to keep these hospitals going. They aren't detailing what measures they'll take in response to a possible strike here. Nurses dispute these economics. They say hospital executives are being handsomely paid. And they say the hospitals can afford to pay them more and make the changes they're asking for in working conditions.

CATHY: You know-- well, you know that this is not the first time if there's going to be a strike that MNA would have walked off the job, right? There's been other nurses strikes in the past in the Twin Cities, but this feels big, unprecedented. I can't remember--

TIM NELSON: You're right.

CATHY: --how long has it been since the last nurses strike?

WURZER:

TIM NELSON: Well, the big one was back in 2016. There was a big Allina strike. There's also been some smaller ones here and there. But most people remember that big one in 2016 and the one-day one in 2010. That last one six years ago, that went on for 37 days-- almost the longest in state history.

It ended only after Governor Mark Dayton brought everybody to the governor's residence and had this big marathon negotiating session. That strike in 2010 is coming up again. Actually came up again today. Mary Turner alluded to that, noting that was multiple hospital systems that went out together, and it only lasted a day before it settled.

CATHY Mm, I remember that.

WURZER:

MARY TURNER: The moral of the story, and I've said this more times than I can count, is that we all stick together. And now we have the added benefit of the Duluth contracts were up in June 30th. So we now have another 2,500 nurses in northern Minnesota. And I want to point out that Duluth handles all of the Michigan Peninsula, all across northern Minnesota all the way to North Dakota. They are like the safety net of the north. And now those two hospitals will be on strike. They have to think about that.

TIM NELSON: So they may have some critical mass here that they're putting together.

CATHY Right. Now, the vote does not mean nurses are going to immediately walk off the job, right?

WURZER:

TIM NELSON: That's right. The union officials say they're meeting tonight to talk about their strategy, including a potential first and last day of the strike. MNA President Mary Turner told me that it wasn't going to be an open-ended strike like the 2016 walkout, but she also said this wasn't going to be another one-day strike like that informational job action that nurses took back in June.

They probably aren't going to offer a lot of detail on that tonight or tomorrow. But whatever happens, they're going to have to give a 10-day notice and wait through a cooling off period before they walk out of the hospitals. Turner also said they're willing to keep bargaining up until the very last minute.

CATHY And no idea, Tim, in terms of what hospitals plan to do to staff up in case there is a strike?

WURZER:

TIM NELSON: No. You know, obviously hospital staffing is a complex system of human resource management, licensing, compensation, other factors. There have been some nurses that came in to work as replacements in the past, but it's really unclear post-pandemic and amidst existing recruiting crisis what the availability of other nurses is going to be. I'd expect there's going to be some limits to admissions and postponements of non-emergency care and procedures if they're really short of nurses in a walkout.

CATHY All right. Tim Nelson, thank you so much.

WURZER:

TIM NELSON: You're welcome.

[MUSIC - BUTCH THOMPSON, "ECHO OF SPRING"]

CATHY Oh, we just had to play this. Is the Minnesota Music Minute, and this is *Echo Of Spring* by the incredibly talented
WURZER: Minnesota jazz pianist Butch Thompson. Sadly, Butch passed away this past Sunday from Alzheimer's disease. He was 78. Butch was a virtuoso jazz musician playing both piano and clarinet.

He specialized in stride and ragtime piano. He was well respected and well loved by fellow musicians. He toured across Europe and played in a number of bands. He spent 12 years as the pianist and music director for *A Prairie Home Companion*. Butch Thompson said he wanted to play his music as long as he could.

BUTCH THOMPSON: I know how powerful this music is and stuff from New Orleans. And I know if you get a good band together and play the music right, you're going to please people. That's really what it's all about for me. And I've been lucky enough to be able to do it. That's as good as it gets for me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

CATHY WURZER: Butch Thompson died at his home in Marine on St. Croix a few days ago. His wife told the *Star Tribune* she was glad he knew he was home with her and the dogs and his music before he passed. 12:16 here on *Minnesota Now*. Boy, Butch Thompson was an amazing guy. Thanks for joining us.

Well, the words check mate, pawn, and end game are words that turn up in everyday conversation, right? But to people like Alex BETANELI they represent a way of life. BETANELI is a national chess master and the co-organizer of the first ever Minnesota International Chess Festival that kicks off this Friday in Bloomington. Alex is on the line right now. Thanks for joining us here on *Minnesota Now*.

ALEX BETANELI: Hi. Thank you, Cathy.

CATHY WURZER: I'm so glad you're here. Well, I'm curious about how you managed to get into chess?

ALEX BETANELI: Well, I have been playing since I was in elementary school. My older brother used to be a chess player and I kind of went after his steps and joined the chess scene back in the former USSR.

CATHY WURZER: And I'm betting that probably chess in the former USSR was as popular, if not more so, than soccer?

ALEX BETANELI: It was pretty close. It was between chess and soccer actually, number one and two, yeah. Mm-hmm.

CATHY WURZER: So you were introduced. You started to play. I am betting that you probably ran up against some pretty impressive chess players in Russia?

ALEX BETANELI: Well, I mean, I was a little kid back then, but I did get to see the world championship match live, and that really stuck with me. In 1985, I got to see two of the greatest players face each other. So that left a mark, for sure.

CATHY WURZER: I bet it did. Now, you moved to the US with your family in 1991. Is that right?

ALEX BETANELI: That's correct, mm-hmm. Yeah, it was still USSR back then. Yeah.

CATHY WURZER: Got it. OK. So you're here in 1991. Gosh, what'd you think of the chess scene in the United States?

ALEX It was different but very vibrant. And I played in my first tournament in Green Bay in Wisconsin and really enjoyed the atmosphere. And I never really left the chess scene since 1991.

BETANELI:

CATHY I have never seen a tournament or a chess match live, so I'm curious. If you watch though on TV it looks like, well, it lasts for quite some time. It seems very intense, stressful at times, quite methodical, at least that's what appears that is happening from the inside outside. But what is the experience like for someone who's actually participating in the match?

WURZER:

ALEX Well, I mean, it can be very different, you know? I mean, chess tournaments, they can be very formal or not nearly as much. Ours, the Minnesota International Tournament, will see players from different ages and different groups participate. And some of the players will be taking the games very seriously and probably preparing for their next opponent for a couple of hours possibly. And some other players will just play their game and go have lunch and come back to play another game.

BETANELI:

CATHY Oh, what are you thinking about when you're in the midst of a match? What's going through your head?

WURZER:

ALEX Oh, well, usually you just anticipate what the opponent is trying to do and either prevent it or allow it depending on if you think it's a good idea. So you're just trying to calculate a couple steps ahead to the best of your ability.

BETANELI:

CATHY You make it sound so easy.

WURZER:

[LAUGHTER]

ALEX Well, it's actually a very easy game to learn but very, very difficult game to master.

BETANELI:

CATHY Well, let me ask you about those who are called Grandmasters. Can you explain what is a Grandmaster, and will you have any at the tournament?

WURZER:

ALEX Yes, so a Grandmaster is actually the highest title you can have in chess. There is a system that assigns a rating and then a title to a chess player. So for example, at the beginning of everybody's chess career, they're rated about 1,000. And then the world champion is rated around 2,800. Everybody else falls somewhere in between. There are a total of about 1,000 Grandmasters. And then the best Grandmaster is the world champion. And at the Minnesota International Tournament, we'll have at least six Grandmasters from different countries.

BETANELI:

CATHY Wow, that's impressive. By the way, I need to ask about this young woman Alice Lee. I did some research. Is she coming? Can you tell me about her?

WURZER:

ALEX She's a very impressive player. She's only middle school and she has played to the National Championship already, so definitely a young star in Minnesota. I'm not sure if she will be participating, but she will definitely be watching games if she is not there.

BETANELI:

CATHY So she's a chess prodigy?

WURZER:

ALEX Oh, for sure, yes. There will be a very talented chess player who is a Grandmaster, Andrew Tang. He's a local.

BETANELI: He's from Minnesota. He will be one of the participants. Then we'll have, you know, lots of young, up-and-coming chess players mostly from Minnesota who try to improve their rankings and get the experience of playing the best players in the world.

CATHY What's it like to be a part of the tournament just watching it? Because if you're into chess, I bet you probably

WURZER: soak up a lot of other knowledge by watching somebody else play.

ALEX Well, yeah. If you're a chess player, it's probably a little bit more interesting. But you know, I have lots of

BETANELI: students, and their parents don't necessarily play the game but they watch and spectate and enjoy it immensely. So on surface it seems, you know, very quiet and stoic, but if you look closely, you will notice that people are nervous, people are clearly thinking. You know, you can even see the pupils dilate sometimes.

The nice thing about chess, though, is that you don't have to watch it live. You can replay the game later on. We record all our games, and people can go through them at their own pace because we write them down and download, and it's freely available to everybody.

CATHY I love what you said about watching someone's pupils dilate. It's almost like a poker tournament. It's kind of the

WURZER: same thing, you know? I'm wondering, how big is the chess scene in Minnesota, especially among kids, school kids?

ALEX Oh, it's very popular. There are chess clubs at many schools. Usually it's as extracurricular. And whenever there

BETANELI: is a scholastic tournament in Minnesota, it's extremely well attended. So in the United States in general and in Minnesota specifically, chess among kids is really, really through the roof, I want to say.

CATHY Now, tell me, how do you try to convince a young person-- what's your argument to them to get them involved?

WURZER: Why is it such a good game to learn?

ALEX Well, you know, if I talk to a parent, that's pretty easy because whenever they play chess, they focus and learn to

BETANELI: be patient and learn to think ahead, learn to be responsible for their own decisions. And most importantly perhaps, whenever they play chess, they're not playing video games.

But when I talk to kids, it's a little bit different. But it's very concrete. You get the feedback immediately. You know, if you make the wrong move, the opponent will jump at the opportunity to beat you. And the nice thing is, if you lose a game, you can learn from your mistakes, move on, and then apply your knowledge almost immediately.

CATHY Good life lessons. Now, give me the particulars, Alex. Where and when, the tournament?

WURZER:

ALEX The tournament is going to start on Friday night, this Friday night, at the Embassy Suites of Bloomington.

BETANELI: Bloomington, Minneapolis. It will be a huge ballroom filled up with chess players. It will be completely quiet. Probably about 150 participants or so. You know, people will be playing at a pretty slow pace.

They get about 90 minutes each for the entire game. And there will be chess clocks used, you know, just so people don't think infinitely. And the most of the tournament will happen over the weekend-- Friday, Saturday, Sunday. But the international section, the upper level players are going to play all the way through Wednesday.

CATHY Wow.

WURZER:

ALEX And there will be only two games per day actually.

BETANELI:

CATHY Wow, so it'll be pretty intense. Alex, I do appreciate your time here today. Thank you so much, and best of luck.

WURZER:

ALEX Yeah, thank you for inviting me. And good luck to all your listeners. I hope they can come by and spectate.

BETANELI:

CATHY It would be interesting. Thank you, Alex. Alex BETANELI is the national chess master, co-organizer of the

WURZER: Minnesota International Chess Festival taking place the 19th to the 24th of August in Bloomington.

ANNOUNCER: Programming is supported by CenterPoint Energy's home service plus whose team of professionals repair, replace, and maintain home appliances for thousands of Minnesotans every day. Learn more about HSP's everyday expertise at CenterPointEnergy.com/HSP.

CATHY Let's get a news update from Todd Melby. Todd?

WURZER:

TODD MELBY: Hey. Thanks, Cathy. Wyoming Congressman Liz-- Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney, a leader in the Republican resistance to former President Donald Trump, is fighting to save her seat in the house today. Voters in Alaska as well as Wyoming are weighing in on the direction of the GOP. Cheney's team is bracing for a loss against a Trump-backed candidate. In Alaska, a new nonpartisan primary system is giving a periodic Trump critic Senator Lisa Murkowski an opportunity to survive the former president's wrath.

President Joe Biden arrived at the White House promising to Build Back America. And today, he's signing into law legislation with a slimmer version of that idea. It includes the biggest US investment ever to fight climate change, a \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap on prescription drug costs for people in the Medicare program, and new corporate minimum tax to ensure that big businesses pay their fair share. And billions will be left over to pay down federal deficits. Critics say that the Inflation Reduction Act, the name of the actual bill may not do much to immediately tame inflationary price hikes.

Explosions and fires have ripped through an ammunition depot in Russian-annexed Crimea in the second suspected Ukrainian attack on the peninsula in just over a week. The blast forced the evacuation of more than 3,000 people. Russia is blaming the explosions on an act of sabotage without naming the perpetrators. Ukraine stopped short of publicly claiming responsibility. Last week's explosions destroyed nine Russian planes at another Crimean air base. Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and has used it to launch attacks against the country in the war that began nearly six months ago.

And federal officials today are expected to announce water cuts that would further reduce how much Colorado River water some users in the seven US states reliant on the river and Mexico receive. Cities, farms, and water managers in Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico are widely anticipating the reductions. This is NPR News

CATHY WURZER: Thank you, Todd. This is *Minnesota Now* on MPR News. I'm Cathy Wurzer. Since the Supreme Court overturned the Roe decision that federally protected the right to have an abortion, decision makers at the state level are busy clarifying abortion access within their boundaries. Minnesotans who want an abortion can still get one, but neighboring states are now battlegrounds over abortion rights. Iowa residents are already seeing changes to access to abortion, and more restrictions may be on the way. The headlines are almost dizzying.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOURNALIST: The Iowa Constitution does not guarantee the right to abortion. That's the new ruling this morning from Iowa's Supreme Court.

JOURNALIST: Governor Kim Reynolds breaking her silence on abortion legislation in Iowa since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. Reynolds intends to revisit past state abortion legislation, some she spearheaded and other put into motion by her predecessors.

JOURNALIST: Governor Kim Reynolds is again pushing for a 24-hour waiting period and a ban to abortions at six weeks. Just hours ago she announced she's asking the Iowa Supreme Court to take up the cases related to those previously passed laws knowing the justices will take the US Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v. Wade* into consideration.

CATHY WURZER: Katie Akin is on the line right now to catch us up. She's a political reporter with the *Des Moines Register*. Hey, Katie. How are you?

KATIE AKIN: I'm good. How are you, Cathy?

CATHY WURZER: Thanks. Thanks for being with us. I'm fine. For folks maybe not paying attention to what's happening in Iowa, where does abortion stand legally in Iowa opposed to Roe?

KATIE AKIN: So abortion is still legal in Iowa until about 20 weeks. The only change that's happened since the overturn of Roe is that now there's a 24-hour waiting period before someone could get an abortion. So they have their first appointment, they wait 24 hours, and then they can have the procedure.

CATHY WURZER: I'm wondering, we just had this court case that struck down a lot of the remaining restrictions to abortion in Minnesota. In Iowa, I understand, a recent state Supreme Court decision looks like it might pave the way for more restrictions. Is that right?

KATIE AKIN: That's right. So Iowa had a fundamental right to an abortion that was decided in a 2018 Iowa Supreme Court case. Just one week before Roe was overturned at the federal level, the Iowa State Supreme Court overturned that 2018 case and erased the fundamental right to an abortion in Iowa. That means that it sort of remains to be seen exactly how far restrictions could go if lawmakers pass new laws on abortion, but Iowa does not have the same legal protections it did just a few months ago.

CATHY WURZER: Mm-hmm. Some states are considering constitutional amendments banning abortion. Kansas recently voted to reject theirs.

JOURNALIST: The Kansas electorate surprised pretty much everyone Tuesday by overwhelmingly voting against a ballot initiative that would have removed constitutional protections for abortion in the state. In fact, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America Spokesperson Mallory Carroll, who backed the ballot measure, told the *Washington Post* the vote was, quote, a wake up call for the pro-life movement. Kansas Republican Senator Roger Marshall, also very much pro-life, was quoted by *Politico* calling the result a gut punch, saying, quote, "I'm shocked, absolutely shocked. But regardless, I respect the process."

CATHY WURZER: I understand there's a similar amendment that could be on the ballot in Iowa in 2024. Is that likely to pass?

KATIE AKIN: So that amendment that's in the process, it's already passed through the legislature once in 2021. It will need to pass through the legislature again in '23 or '24. That amendment states that Iowa does not recognize the fundamental right to an abortion. It's kind of redundant now that the Supreme Court has already overturned their previous decision. But if lawmakers decide to go ahead with it, it's likely that it will pass the state house again in '23 and then be on the ballot in 2024.

CATHY WURZER: Mm-hmm. So what are polls saying about where Iowans stand on abortion?

KATIE AKIN: The most recent poll by the *Des Moines Register* found that 60% of Iowans favor legal abortions in most or all cases. That's a little bit out of step with our current government balance. We have a Republican governor who does not support abortion and Republican majorities in both chambers of the state house who do not support abortion broadly. But a majority of Iowans say that they do support the procedure being legal at least sometimes.

CATHY WURZER: I'm also wondering about those who are against abortion, the opponents who are activists. What are they focusing on in the Iowa state house? What are the next steps?

KATIE AKIN: So the next steps-- some opponents of abortion are still pushing to get this constitutional amendment passed just to make sure that a future Supreme Court couldn't change things up again and once again find a fundamental right to an abortion. Beyond that, our Governor Kim Reynolds is calling for courts to reinstate a law that she signed into law in 2018 that would ban most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy.

That's called the fetal heartbeat law. She's pushing for that law, which was blocked by the courts to be put into effect. If that doesn't work, lawmakers may come back in January and pass new restrictions or just pass that six-week law again.

CATHY WURZER: OK, so it sounds like there's a lot of churn still around the issue of abortion in Iowa.

KATIE AKIN: Absolutely. And a lot of legal questions remain too. It's unclear exactly how courts are going to rule on some of this. So everyone is sort of waiting for the next shoe to drop, if you will.

CATHY WURZER: Mm-hmm. And by the way, what's happening with those who are abortion rights activists? What are they saying?

KATIE AKIN: Abortion rights activists are really making a push for people to understand exactly what the law is right now.

JOURNALIST: Our Democratic party chair Ross Wilburn released a statement reading in part, quote, "Control over your own body gets at the heart of what it means to be free, and Iowa Democrats believe that everyone has the right to decide their own destiny."

KATIE AKIN: With all of the churn nationally and in Iowa, some people are confused about whether abortions are legal at all. So many abortion rights groups are really just focused on putting out the message that abortion continues to be legal in Iowa for now and holding protests and events and fundraising for abortion access groups.

CATHY WURZER: All right. Katie, I appreciate the overview that you've given us. Thank you so much.

KATIE AKIN: Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

CATHY WURZER: Katie Akin is a political reporter with the *Des Moines Register*. She's tracking the changes Iowa lawmakers and courts are making to abortion.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

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CATHY WURZER: I want you to think about this for just a minute. Only a couple of hundred years ago, 20 million to 30 million bison lived in vast herds across North America. There's a sustained effort by some native tribes to reestablish bison herds in Minnesota. The Red Lake Nation in far northern Minnesota started a herd back in 2021, and we thought we'd check in to see how they're doing. Cherilyn Spears joins us right now. She's the director of the Red Lake Nation's new Department of Agriculture. Cherilyn, welcome.

CHERILYN SPEARS: Welcome to you too.

CATHY WURZER: Nice to have you. Nice to have you. Say, for folks who are not familiar, why is the bison so important to Native culture?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Well, the buffalo are more than just a tourist attraction for us. We hold the seven teachings of the Anishinaabe very sacred to us-- love, respect, truth, humility, honesty, bravery, and wisdom. And the buffalo represents respect. We respect them as they provided shelter, clothing, food, tools for our ancestors. And we're going to be teaching our youth on how to utilize every part of the buffalo when we process our first one just as our ancestors did.

CATHY WURZER: OK, so let me ask you about the herd that you've got started. How big is it?

CHERILYN SPEARS: We started out with seven buffalo. The following year we had four little ones that joined us. Then the following year we got 15 from Wind Cave National Park. And that brought us to 27. And then four more were born this year, so we're up to 31 buffalo.

CATHY So you're growing. You're getting there.

WURZER:

CHERILYN Yes, we are.

SPEARS:

CATHY I'm kind of curious as to what got the band to start this herd to begin with?

WURZER:

CHERILYN Well, our current chairman Mr. Darrell Seki, when he first came on in 2014 he held a series of meetings and asked the citizens of Red Lake what their concerns were and what projects they'd like to see happen on Red Lake. They expressed the concern that our food was transported in and why we couldn't grow our own food here because we have so much land, and why we couldn't have buffalo available as a meat source.

SPEARS:

So as a project coordinator for economic development at that time, I was tasked with starting a buffalo ranch. I reached out to some friends of mine who own the Native American Foods. They also have Tanka Bars, one of their products. She said if the tribe wants to start a tribal business to start a bison ranch and they'd buy up all our bison we could produce.

So one of the things that the tribe looks at when you're starting a tribal business, they want to make sure you have a buyer. So right from the get go I had a buyer. And from then on there, I contacted the InterTribal Buffalo Council. They were very, very helpful in giving us technical assistance. And they also provide grants. And so then we just started building our fence and putting our water infrastructure in. And then we had our buffalo transported here from Wind Cave National Park.

CATHY Wow, so you really had to learn a lot about buffalo pretty quick?

WURZER:

CHERILYN We did. We did. I hired a tribal member to come and help look after the bison after we got it because we didn't have the training prior to it. And I knew he was a hunter, gatherer, and a farmer. And so I knew he was the one to bring on. And we attended-- my part only is to order the mineral tubs and supplemental feed and write the grants. And so as our herd grew, we brought on another tribal member. We all attended training in herd management from the InterTribal Buffalo Council. And Fred, who I originally hired, is not a farm manager. And Jim Kingbird is now our buffalo manager.

SPEARS:

CATHY Wow. You know, from my interactions with buffalo, they can be a little ornery. What do you think?

WURZER:

CHERILYN Well, the buffalo are like one big family. Where the bull goes, so does the rest of the herd. Our original herd is young. Maybe when we got them they were just young adults or even teenagers when we first brought them here. Then we received 15 more last year, and they were teenagers. So the older ones, the first herd, they had to teach them how to behave. They're just like a family. They're just like, you know, teenagers and young adults. And so they all looked after the young ones that were born this year.

SPEARS:

We had one bison that was going around a fence like he was trying to get out this year. He must have made one of them upset at him. But anyway, we prayed for him to stay because if he tried to get out we would have had to put him down, and we didn't want to do that. Two days later, he was back with the herd like nothing happened.

And Fred watches them day in and day out. And when we first got them, I was told, do not name the buffalo because you get attached to them. So one day my friend asked him if they had names and he looked at me and he said, well, there's Jumbo, Buffy, Lady Gaga. So he must have seen some personalities and named our first herd.

CATHY WURZER: I love that story. So OK, have you had the chance to slaughter any bison at this point? Are you going to wait on that for a little bit?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Well, they're too young to slaughter.

CATHY WURZER: OK.

CHERILYN SPEARS: Our oldest one is the bull. And of course, we don't want to-- you know what happens if you slaughter the bull. And we don't have any more buffalo. So next year he'll be the oldest one. And then the following year is when we'll be able to process more. So in 2024 is when we're looking we'll be able to process more than one.

CATHY WURZER: And then will the band share in the meat?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Yes. Yes, we'll be distributing it to community elders and programs and the schools. We really want to try to get it into our schools. We have an immersion school right now, and that's who we'll definitely get started because we're able to-- because we'll have our own food court code, we'll be able to provide meat to them without going through the USDA.

But our public school system will have to go through the USDA. And we're currently going to build a buffalo processing facility with the commercial grade kitchen and butchering facilities in it, so we should be able to pass inspection for the USDA.

CATHY WURZER: You know what I'm wondering, Cherilyn, when that first buffalo is processed, would there be maybe a ritual or something that you might perform?

CHERILYN SPEARS: We'll have a ceremony. There are different ceremonies of the different cultures on how they process. We'll be inviting our Lakota sister Lisa Iron Cloud from Pine Ridge to come and help us process our first one. And what she does is she utilizes every part of the buffalo.

So prior to that, we're going to be training our youth in the different parts of the buffalo that the InterTribal Buffalo Council provides is a box with all the different parts of the buffalo and what it can be used for. And so when we process our first buffalo, she'll be our trainer. And the youth will learn how to cut the different pieces up, and we're going to be tanning our first hide with all the youth. So we're going to be sharing with our members and our youth in processing the buffalo and utilizing every part.

CATHY WURZER: Terrific. So this is part of this larger agriculture effort by Red Lake. How extensive do you think this is going to be?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Well, currently we have set aside almost 600 acres for the buffalo pasture. And we currently have 280 acres fenced in, and we'll be fencing in 300 more this year. Across the road from it, we have an eight acres that's fenced in with an 8-foot high deer fence because if we don't fence it in, the deer are going to come in and enjoy all our vegetables. And we want to share it with the members first.

So across the road we have an 8 acre, and in there we've got two high tunnels. We're going to have a green house. We have close to 60 fruit-bearing orchard trees. Our goal is to produce an acre of potatoes, an acre of onions, acre of carrots, and an acre of celery, which is what everybody uses. We'll be selling half of it to our casinos, to our schools, to our stores, and any other to our tribal programs. And then we'll reach out to the community members.

CATHY WURZER: Wow, this is a really big operation. And I'm wondering, are other tribal nations in Minnesota, are they looking to Red Lake to find out how you're doing it?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Well, recently Shakopee reached out, and this is really like a full circle. I really like this here part that what happened is Wozupi Tribal Gardens Shakopee was our mentor for our gardening, our production, our large scale production of vegetables. Now they're reaching out to us on how to start a buffalo ranch of their own.

CATHY WURZER: Gosh, in 10 years from now, 10, 15, even 20 years, do you think that the Red Lake Nation will be almost completely self-sustainable when it comes to food?

CHERILYN SPEARS: Yes, that is our goal. Food sovereignty is about growing your own food and being able to feed your people. I've said it before and I'll say it again-- you are not sovereign unless you can feed your own people. It's all about having locally-grown food available to your members. Without any pesticides, our farm is going to be 100% organic. And we do plan on expanding our buffalo. We're currently looking for a larger area because our herd is growing so fast.

CATHY WURZER: Wow. Well, thank you for the update. It was really interesting. And Cherilyn, we wish you all the best.

CHERILYN SPEARS: Thank you.

CATHY WURZER: I love Cherilyn's enthusiasm. Cherilyn Spears is the head of the Red Lake Nation's Department of Agriculture.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Here's a question for you. Where can you find some of the oldest rocks on Earth? Well, they might be under your feet right here in Minnesota. Professor Jim Cotter teaches geology at the University of Minnesota, Morris. His lectures cover the history that took place not thousands but millions and billions of years ago. And he's got a new platform for his passion for Minnesota geology. He's featured in a new Great Courses series that you can get at your local library or by ordering it online. Professor Cotter is on the line. Welcome to *Minnesota Now*.

JIM COTTER: Thank you, Cathy. It's nice to be here.

CATHY WURZER: Thanks for being here. That's an interesting fact that some of the oldest rocks in the world are in Minnesota. Why is that?

JIM COTTER: It really is an amazing thing. Minnesota was part of the first continent that came together very early on in geologic history that ultimately would become North America, but for a short time it was a micro continent. And the rocks that underlie Minnesota and up into Canada are grouped into a term called the Canadian Shield. And they represent very, very old rocks that the rest of the continent was added onto over time.

CATHY WURZER: Wow. What stories can geology tell us that history books can't?

JIM COTTER: Well, the geology record is one of just a diverse history of both life and Earth processes. In Minnesota, for example, the rocks that underlie the St. Cloud region, they were once a mountain range that would have rivaled the modern Himalaya. It was a huge range. But over time and through geologic processes, they're worn down.

On the paleontological side, one of the most common fossils in western Minnesota is shark's teeth. There was an ocean about the time that dinosaurs existed. And it's one of the reasons why Minnesota doesn't have a record of dinosaurs. But the record of sharks is just amazing. They diversified and they took on all different sizes and they ate different things. It's just an amazing history that's preserved in the rock record.

CATHY WURZER: I had no idea really that we had mountain ranges around the St. Cloud area. That is one of the flattest areas of Minnesota.

JIM COTTER: You have to have a good imagination to be a geologist. It's true. But it is true. The rocks that are exposed at, say, Quarry Park in St. Cloud, those rocks originally formed 10 to 15 miles deep in the Earth. They're an igneous rock-- a rock that's formed from a magma.

And the only way that magma could have cooled as slowly as it did would be to have a protective layer of the Earth materials above it. So when you think about it, 10 miles of material have been removed through running water, glaciers. And the end result is over vast amounts of time, literally billions of years, a mountain range is worn down to-- its not exactly the flattest place, but it's pretty low.

CATHY WURZER: No. OK, OK, you're right. Maybe Fargo, Moorhead. [INAUDIBLE] go up there. OK, you're right, you're right. So you sound like you are-- well, you clearly are jazzed about geology. Where did that love come from?

JIM COTTER: When I was a freshman, I took a course in geology. I didn't really know what I wanted to major in as a student. And I took a geology course. And a fellow on my dorm floor was in the same class, and we just got excited about it. And of course, with many geologists, the key was getting out in the field. And we took a field trip, and I really had never seen anything like what that field trip showed me. It was in the folded Appalachians and the valley and ridge. And it was just a great experience. And over time, I got more and more excited.

CATHY WURZER: And you've been teaching ever since.

JIM COTTER: I've--

CATHY WURZER: And-- go ahead.

JIM COTTER: I've been teaching it at Morris since 1984.

CATHY WURZER: Yep, exactly. And I know your students love ya. So now you kind of have a wider platform with the course, the Great Courses series through the teaching company. How did that opportunity come about for ya?

JIM COTTER: I got an email out of the blue from Great Courses. And you know, with a lot of emails as kind of anybody who gets email, I would have probably hit the Delete button. But my wife had given me a Great Courses both maybe a Father's Day and a birthday, and so I knew what they were. And so I responded, sure, I'll talk to you about it.

And they said, would you do a course? And I said, yeah, that sounds interesting. Sounds a lot like what I teach. And then a couple of months into the process they said, hey, the geologist that we had that was doing practical geology has decided not to do it. Would you switch gears and do practical geology? And I said, sure, let's try it. So I asked initially who had suggested my name, and the recruiter didn't know it offhand. And he said, if you want, I could look it up. And I figured I'd just let it lie. I never followed up.

CATHY WURZER: It had to have been a student of yours. It had to have been a student, don't you think?

JIM COTTER: I wonder if that's true, yeah. They get me into trouble frequently.

[LAUGHTER]

CATHY WURZER: Well, I'm going to get you into trouble right now. As a geologist, what is your favorite part of Minnesota? It's like asking who your favorite kid is, I know.

JIM COTTER: Yeah, yeah. It's a tough question to answer because Minnesota's got great geology, and they've got great parks to visit. I must admit, I'm kind of partial to Pipestone. I like that place. I like the geology. It's really interesting. There are a lot of questions. And I like the use of the geology in history and in very, very important culture. It's just a great park to visit, and I recommend it fully.

CATHY WURZER: Never been there. I have got to go.

JIM COTTER: [LAUGHS]

CATHY WURZER: I know, right? What questions are interesting to you in that part of the state? You mentioned questions.

JIM COTTER: Right, so the pipestone is a kind of unique layer in a very resistant red rock that shows up throughout the Midwest. It's called the Sioux quartzite. And so the Sioux quartzite formed as a beach. It was once the southern edge of that micro continent I talked about a little while ago. And in a beach, you wouldn't expect to find the fine grained materials that make up that pipestone layer.

And so the chemistry is also very different. So the chemistry of the Sioux quartzite is quartz. But the pipestone has no quartz in it. So how do you get this very, very interesting and soft layer of rock that's going to become an important component of Indigenous history in the middle of a very, very hard and resistant rock-- the Sioux quartzite. It's just a great thing to think about.

CATHY Uh-huh. It is, it is. I have loved our conversation. Thank you so much. And best of luck with the course. Who
WURZER: knows where this leads.

JIM COTTER: Thanks, Cathy. I appreciate it.

CATHY All the best. Professor Jim Cotter is a professor of geology at the University of Minnesota, Morris. You can find his
WURZER: Great Courses lecture series online or at your local library. Clearly I'm going to have to get myself out to southwestern Minnesota around Pipestone and take a tour of that State Park.

You know what, very nice day out there for some of us. Rain across far northern Minnesota. It's raining around Eveleth right now. 68 degrees. But it's sunny in Fergus where it's 79. Sunny in Winona where it's 75 degrees. Austin and Albert Lea check in with a temperature of 75 under sunshine. Partly sunny skies in the Twin Cities where it's 75.

Chance of rain throughout the day mainly in northern Minnesota. Highs in the 70s. Really nice day. Enjoy today because more rain is going to move into the forecast into the region by the end of the week. Certainly we do need the rain. Thanks for listening to *Minnesota Now* here on MPR News.

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So I mentioned that it is 75 degrees in the Twin Cities, partly sunny. The high today, oh, just a few more. Upper 70s. Southeast winds around 5:00. Partly sunny skies. Very nice. Tomorrow-- in fact I laughed out loud. A listener said, I'm going to clover seed my lawn starting tomorrow because of the rain that's coming in. Other people are going to put some grass seed down. Good idea.

Tonight there's a slight chance of rain. Tomorrow a 30% chance for showers and storms. Better chance for rain tomorrow night. It's Thursday, Thursday night, and Friday. Showers and thunderstorms are likely all the way into Friday night. So yeah, go ahead and seed your lawn.