

# [***Astronomical Event Takes Over U.S. Skies; Donald Trump Abortion Position; Joe Biden Pushes Student Loan Relief; Merrick Garland Refuses To Give Congress Joe Biden Audio; Rights Comparison Between States; Patchwork Of Laws Frustrates Homeowner Efforts; Biden Administration Promises NATO Membership; Israeli Defense Forces Planning Battle Against Hamas And Possibly Hezbollah In Lebanon; House Speaker Mike Johnson Faces Possible Ouster If He Allows Vote On Ukraine Funding Bill; President Trump Releases Video Stating Legality Of Abortion Should Be State Decision; President Biden Proposes New Plan To Relieve Student Loan Debt***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BRX-JK21-F072-X002-00000-00&context=1516831)

Fox News FOX SPECIAL REPORT WITH BRET BAIER 6:00 PM EST

April 8, 2024 Monday

Copyright 2024 Fox News Network LLC All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Domestic

**Length:** 7101 words

**Byline:** Bret Baier, Jacqui Heinrich, David Spunt, Jonathan Hunt, Madison Scarpino, Danamarie McNicholl, Gillian Turner, Trey Yingst, Brit Hume, Jessica Tarlov, Bill McGurn, Kimberly Strassel

**Body**

JESSE WATTERS, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Thank you very much.

GREG GUTFELD, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: He feels guilty.

DANA PERINO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Judge, do you want to go.

JEANINE PIRRO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL LEGAL ANALYST: No, I'll wait until tomorrow.

PERINO: Harold, do you want to go?

HAROLD FORD JR., FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONTRIBUTOR: I do not. It's going to be a great game tonight. Who do you got?

GUTFELD: I'm watching Fox. I don't know what you're doing, Harold.

PERINO: That's great.

PIRRO: Oh, yes.

PERINO: I don't know. All right, that's it for us, everybody. Have a great night.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Hi, Dana, Perdue.

PERINO: Hey, Perdue.

BAIER: Don't even need the points. All right, thanks.

GUTFELD: No name calling.

BAIER: Former President Donald Trump declines to endorse the national abortion ban. Tonight, the fallout from all sides.

Meantime, President Biden is going to try again to forgive student loan debt for millions of Americans after courts have shut down previous attempts.

And what rights do accused squatters have? Well, it depends on where they're squatting. We'll bring you that.

Good evening, I'm Bret Baier. Tens of millions of Americans look to the skies today to catch hopefully a protected glimpse of a rare total eclipse of the sun. Weather cooperated along much of the path of totality, the lighting people who had ventured from around the world to what were supposed to be prime viewing locations, many others witnessed varying degrees of a partial eclipse.

Chief Correspondent Jonathan Hunt has a complete wrap up tonight from one of those prime spots, Indianapolis. Good evening, Jonathan.

JONATHAN HUNT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CHIEF CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Bret. It has been an incredible day for so many Americans, awe inspiring, breathtaking in its beauty, a cosmic coincidence that we won't see in the U.S. again for 20 years.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HUNT (voice over): With telescopes and eyes pointed to the sky, tens of millions of Eclipse watches from Mexico to Maine took in a rare and extraordinary total eclipse of the sun.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It was definitely tearworthy, once in a lifetime.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's incredible. It's everything people say it is.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I felt like a -- I just felt like whoa.

HUNT (voice over): In the United States, the sky first darkened in Texas on the border with Mexico around 12:30 p.m. local time. With totality, the sun entirely covered by the moon experienced for roughly three to four plus minutes in more than a dozen states along the path of the eclipse, a stunning moment for all of us privileged enough to witness it.

It really does make you appreciate the beauty of the earth, the beauty of the moon and the sun, the beauty of the universe that we are so privileged to be a part of. It's just quite an extraordinary thing.

Those under clear skies saw partial sun coverage until just before totality when points of light appeared around the edges of the moon, the result of sunlight moving through valleys on the lunar surface.

And finally, one last bright spot like a diamond ring. Before the sun appeared as a black disc with only its outer atmosphere or corona visible, then the process reversed as the sun slowly reemerged.

In the U.S. the eclipse from start to finish lasted about an hour and 10 minutes, ending in northeastern Maine.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: When it got totally dark, I literally was like screaming the whole time. Actually cried a little tear too, little, because it was like overwhelming.

HUNT (voice over): With the moon blocking the sun, temperatures dropped, winds change direction, shadows felt differently and birds stopped chirping. Scientists took full advantage of the opportunity for research.

NOAH PETRO, NASA GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER: We learned a lot about the interaction of the sun with the Earth and atmosphere from these events. We learned about the size of the sun from these events. So, it is an educational experience, as well as an immersive one.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HUNT (on camera): So, for scientists, today was a huge research opportunity. For the rest of us, the tens of thousands who were here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the millions more who witnessed the eclipse firsthand across the country. It was a physical and emotional even a spiritual experience and a memory that will certainly last a lifetime, Bret.

BAIER: Jonathan Hunt live in Indianapolis. Jonathan, thank you.

Breaking tonight, former President Donald Trump is now on the record about his current position on abortion. The presumptive Republican nominee released a video today saying the issue should be left to the states in the post Roe vs. Wade era. Now reaction from all sides coming in. Correspondent Madison Scarpino is in Palm Beach, Florida tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The states will determine by vote or legislation or perhaps both. And whatever they decide must be the law of the land.

MADISON SCARPINO, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Former President Trump clarified his stance on abortion and in speculation that he was qualifying his prolife position.

TRUMP: Many states will be different. Many will have a different number of weeks.

SCARPINO (voice over): The former president declined to endorse a federal abortion ban after his campaign floated a 15 week ban earlier this year. Trump said he supports it exceptions for rape, incest and life of the mother.

TRUMP: You must follow your heart or in many cases, your religion or your faith.

SCARPINO (voice over): But Trump's announcement was swiftly denounced by one of the nation's leading prolife groups and evangelicals, including former Vice President Mike Pence who said it was, "A slap in the face to millions of prolife Americans who previously voted for Trump."

The Biden administration also slammed Trump for his role in overturning Roe v. Wade and restricting abortion rights.

KAMALA HARRIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: If he were to be put back in a position where he could sign off on a law. He would sign off on a national abortion ban.

SCARPINO (voice over): The latest Fox News poll shows that most voters believe abortion should be legal. It's an issue that ranks high on the list for voters in key swing states where Trump and Biden are campaigning this week. Trump raised more than $50 million at a private dinner on Saturday in Palm Beach, nearly doubling what Biden brought in from an event with former presidents Clinton and Obama last month.

But in terms of cash on hand, Trump trails Biden, who has $192 million to Trump's $93 million.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

SCARPINO (on camera): Former President Trump also reiterated that he supports in vitro fertilization and says that under his leadership, the Republican Party will always support the miracle of life, Bret.

BAIER: Madison Scarpino live in Palm Beach. Madison, thanks.

Also breaking tonight, a New York Appeals Court judge is rejecting former President Trump's bid to delay his April 15th criminal trial overpayments to a former adult film actress. The president is seeking to move that case out of Manhattan. It's the first of four criminal indictments slated to go to trial. This would be the first criminal trial ever of a former president of the United States.

President Biden is once again trying to come up with a way to get American taxpayers to foot the bill for millions of people who took out loans to go to college. He has already been rebuffed by the U.S. Supreme Court on this effort, but this is an election year and the efforts continue.

White House Correspondent Jacqui Heinrich is at the White House tonight live on the North Lawn. Good evening, Jacqui.

JACQUI HEINRICH, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Bret. Top officials fanned out in swing states today to promote Biden's bid to fulfill a campaign promise he made ahead of his first term as he seeks a second. They say the majority of Americans with federally held student debt will benefit if this plan sticks.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Folks, I will never stop to deliver student debt relief from hardworking Americans.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

HEINRICH (voice over): In swing state, Wisconsin, President Biden announcing plans to slash student debt for nearly 30 million Americans, wiping out up to $20,000 and accrued interest for borrowers who owe more now than when they took out their initial loan and also giving automatic relief to those who qualify for certain programs or have been in repayment for decades.

Trying to stave off legal challenges, the administration is framing it as a financial hardship program designed to address low value degrees and cancel runaway interest.

BIDEN: Some of my Republican friends and elected officials and special interest sued us and the Supreme Court blocked us. But that didn't -- that didn't stop us.

HEINRICH (voice over): Critics say Biden is overstepping his authority again.

GREGG JARRETT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL LEGAL ANALYST: Biden is brazenly defying the law and then he has the audacity, the arrogance to brag about it.

What he's really doing is shredding the Constitution. He changed his method of loan forgiveness in the latest plan but you know, the same legal principles that make it unconstitutional still apply.

HEINRICH (voice over): Republican state attorneys general already planning court challenges. Biden's campaign tying it back to Trump saying, "It's what's to be expected from a fraud like Trump who screwed over students with a fake university and is running to make himself and his friends even richer at our expense."

Meantime, Biden also trying to tamp down discontent within his base, making veiled threats to condition future aid to Israel if Netanyahu is government continues to ignore Biden's warnings against an operation in Rafah.

SEN. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN (D-MD): The president has made requests to the Netanyahu government, they have ignored those requests and we've sent more 2,000 pound bombs, we cannot revert back to that.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HEINRICH (on camera): Today, officials denied reports that Israel plans to go into Rafah within days, saying They've vowed to wait for a broader discussion on viable options and alternatives.

Meantime, as pressure mounts from the left, families of U.S. citizens being held hostage, our meeting with national security adviser Jake Sullivan here at the White House, Bret.

BAIER: Jacqui, later this week, the House will deliver to the Senate articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. What's the White House saying on that tonight?

HEINRICH: Well, they seem pretty confident the Democrat led Senate isn't taking this anywhere. Instead framing it as a cynical political stunt. They wrote misstatement, "The worst part is this extreme Republicans have promoted this silly baseless stunt at the same time they've killed an actual bipartisan border security bill that would have addressed the challenges at the border and delivered needed resources to DHS."|

The White House also cited legal experts calling it unconstitutional, Bret.

BAIER: Jacqui Heinrich live at the North Lawn. Jacqui, thank you.

Stocks were mixed ahead of new inflation data this week. The Dow lost 11, the S&P 500 resolved two, the NASDAQ gained five.

Attorney General Merrick Garland is standing up to House Republicans tonight and could be facing a contempt of Congress vote himself. GOP lawmakers want audio recordings of President Biden's interview with the Special Counsel last fall. Attorney General Garland says no.

Correspondent David Spunt has the latest tonight from the Justice Department.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DAVID SPUNT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (voice over): Attorney General Merrick Garland refusing to turn over to Congress audio interviews between President Biden and then Special Counsel Robert Hur. The DOJ writing, the committee's interests may not be in receiving information in service of legitimate oversight or investigatory functions, but to serve political purposes that should have no role in the treatment of law enforcement files.

House Republicans threatened Garland with contempt of Congress if he didn't produce the audio. Hur interviewed Biden for parts of a two day period in October.

MERRICK GARLAND, U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL: I'm here today to announce the appointment of Robert Hur as a special counsel

SPUNT (voice over): Garland appointed Hur as special counsel in early 2023 to investigate declassified documents found at several locations connected to the president, including his Wilmington, Delaware garage. Hur criticized the president's handling of the documents, though no criminal charges were filed.

Last month, Garland released the transcript of the interview. Several Democrats privately tell Fox News. They believe Republicans want the audio to make President Biden look bad during an election year. His memory mentioned several times in the report.

ROBERT HUR, SPECIAL COUNSEL: I could have written my report theoretically in a way that omitted references to the president's memory. But that would have been an incomplete and improper report.

SPUNT (voice over): Garland released Hur's report in full to the public weeks ago. The DOJ did cooperate in part today by handing over a transcript featuring the ghost writer of Biden's book.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

SPUNT (on camera): And Bret, late this afternoon, we received a statement from Republican House Oversight Chairman James Comer. He's not happy. He says in part, the Biden administration does not get to determine what Congress needs and does not need for its oversight of the executive branch. It's curious, the Biden administration is refusing to release the audio of President Biden's interview with the Special Counsel after releasing the transcript. Why shouldn't the American people be able to hear the actual audio of his answers?

No word yet on when or if possibly, a actual contempt vote could take place over in the House, Bret.

BAIER: David Spunt at the Justice Department. David, thanks.

Up next, we're hearing a lot about migrant squatters these days, different cities. So, what are the laws surrounding this activity? We'll take a look.

First, here's what some of our Fox affiliates around the country are covering tonight. Fox 5 in New York as actor Jonathan Majors avoids jail time for assaulting his former girlfriend. He was sentenced to probation in order to complete a yearlong counseling program. The 34-year-old actor had faced up to a year behind bars after he was convicted of misdemeanor assault by a Manhattan jury in December.

Fox 17 in Nashville as country music star Morgan Wallen is arrested and accused of throwing a chair from a rooftop bar. The incident happened last night on six storey building and the chair landed close to two police officers. No one was hurt though. The singer's attorney says he is cooperating fully with authorities.

And Fox 4 in Billings, Montana with the start of a trial against Warren Buffett's BNSF Railway, at issue are the lung cancer deaths of two people who lived in a small Montana town where thousands of people were exposed to asbestos from a mine.

Plaintiff say the railroad stored harmful materials in a large rail yard in the town and failed to contain the dust from them. The railway is expected to argue there is no proof the victims were exposed to above normal asbestos levels.

And this is a live look at State Farm stadium in Glendale, Arizona from Fox 10, our affiliate there. One of the big stories there tonight, UConn and Purdue meet for the college basketball national championship.

University of Connecticut is defending champion. Purdue has two time National Player of the Year Zach Edey. Tip off is scheduled for 9:20 Eastern time.

That's tonight's live look outside the Beltway from SPECIAL REPORT. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Salvage crews are removing containers from the deck of the cargo ship that crashed and collapsed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore. It's an important step toward the full reopening of one of the nation's main shipping lanes.

Authorities say the removal of the containers from the deck of the Dali will continue this week as weather permits.

We are hearing a lot lately about migrants alleged least staying illegally in buildings owned by other people. It turns out squatters' rights vary significantly from state-to-state.

Correspondent Danamarie McNicholl, takes a look tonight from Miami.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DANAMARIE MCNICHOLL, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT (voice over): All 50 states have some form of squatter-related laws, but they vary wildly, and sometimes do seemingly little to protect property owners.

Today, in almost all states, to remove a squatter, landlords must go through a lengthy and expensive legal battle and eviction court, depending on the state. That process could take weeks, months, even years.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Oh my God.

MCNICHOLL (voice over): A homeowner in Florida tells us it took six weeks to get squatters out. During that time, she suffered $40,000 in damages and was physically assaulted.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Do not touch --

PATTI PEEPLES, HOMEOWNER: Bricks thrown at my car. They chased us with scissors, they threatened that they had the right to bear arms. They threw human feces at us.

MCNICHOLL (voice over): Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina have some of the fastest and owner-oriented eviction processes in the country, often removing spotters within weeks. Whereas, New York, Washington, D.C. and California on average take more than five months, according to the American Apartment Owners Association.

An eviction moratorium enacted during the height of COVID caused a backlog of cases. In New York, right now, there are nearly 200,000 active eviction cases up from 33,000 before the pandemic.

ALEXANDRA ALVARO, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & EDUCATION, AMERICAN APARTMENT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION: I think there are many inefficiencies in certain states and how the eviction courts work. There is really no one way that they all operate in across the board.

MCNICHOLL (voice over): After several messy cases, New York and three states have introduced new squatter-related legislation that would speed up the legal process and give homeowners more rights.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MCNICHOLL (on camera): Here in Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has criminalized squatting. A new law allows law enforcement to remove squatters quickly. Bret.

BAIER: Danamarie, thank you very much.

Up next, President Biden's top diplomat says Ukraine's future is in NATO. We'll bringing you that story.

First, beyond our borders tonight. The Vatican declares gender affirming surgery and surrogacy as grave violations of human dignity. That puts them in the same category as abortion and euthanasia, as practices that reject God's plan for human life.

Advocates for LGBTQ Plus immediately criticized the position as outdated, harmful, and contrary to the stated goal of recognizing the infinite dignity of all God's children.

A makeshift ferry sinks off of Mozambique's northern coasts local media report 94 people dead so far. The island administrator says the ferry was overcrowded and that there were 130 people on board. He says many who drowned were children.

And this is a live look at London. One of the big stories there tonight. French troops join their British counterparts in the famous changing of the guard ceremony outside Buckingham Palace for the first time. The personnel marched together in a display of solidarity between Britain and France, amid the war in Ukraine.

Just some of the other stories, "BEYOND OUR BORDERS" tonight. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Secretary of State Antony Blinken says Ukraine will become a member of the NATO alliance. This comes amid continued pressure on Congress to get a major aid package to the president's desk soon.

State Department correspondent Gillian Turner has the store tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ANTONY BLINKEN, UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE: Ukraine's future is in NATO.

GILLIAN TURNER, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: The Biden administration is going full steam ahead on NATO membership for Ukraine.

Well, sort of. First, the State Department says the war against Russia must end.

MATTHEW MILLER, SPOKESMAN, UNITED STATES STATE DEPARTMENT: Ultimately that's a process that moves forward at the end of this conflict.

Then, Ukraine needs to meet certain conditions to qualify.

BLINKEN: Ukraine is attracting more and more private investment. And it is valiantly holding ground on the battlefield in the face of an ongoing Russian onslaught.

TURNER: President Zelenskyy, though, says his military desperately needs more weapons and funding now or Putin will win.

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE (through translator): That will be a tragedy for all of us, not only for Ukraine.

TURNER: But the White House says it's Congress's fault.

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: Ukraine is losing ground in the battlefield, and that's because of congressional inaction.

TURNER (voice over): Speaker Mike Johnson faces pressure to get an aid package done this week. The sticking point, Republicans in both chambers.

SEN. J.D. VANCE (R-OH): That he brings up a foreign aid package sending billions of dollars to Ukraine without doing anything on the southern border, it will be a disgrace.

TURNER (voice over): But rather than vote on the Senate to $95 billion bill, Johnson is pushing the Repo Act.

REP. MIKE JOHNSON (R-LA): If we can use to seized assets of Russian oligarchs to allow the Ukrainians to fight them, that's just pure poetry.

TURNER: Most House Republicans acknowledge the stakes are high.

REP. MIKE LAWLER (R-NY): If Ukraine falls, other former Soviet satellite countries like Moldova will fall with it. And that would be an apoplectic crisis across the globe.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

TURNER: Well, the timeline for both Ukraine's NATO membership as well as this aid package going forward are uncertain tonight, as is Speaker Mike Johnson's leadership spot. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene has been threatening to vacate the speakership if Ukraine goes forward in its current form, meaning it could just take one member of Congress to cast him out of the speakership, Bret.

BAIER: That could happen this week. Gillian Turner live at the State Department. Gillian, thanks.

We're getting new information tonight about Israel's battle plan against Hamas. This comes amid speculation about the true meaning of recent Israeli troop movements inside Gaza. Correspondent Trey Yingst reports tonight from Tel Aviv.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER (through translator): This victory requires entering Rafah and eliminating the terrorist battalions there. This will happen. There is a date.

TREY YINGST, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu laying out clear indications that his troops will enter Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah. The comments come after a surprise move over the weekend with Israel withdrawing nearly all its forces from Gaza, leaving just one brigade with a few thousand soldiers behind. But Israeli officials say the tactical decision is not an indication the war against Hamas is over, rather a recalibration amid emerging regional threats.

SEN. CHRIS COONS, (D-DE) SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE: I presume this is a tactical decision by the IDF and Israeli leadership in the face of a threat of a real attack from the north, from Hezbollah, or a direct attack from Iran.

YINGST: As fighting grinds to a halt on Israel's southern front, negotiators met Monday in Cairo, Egypt, to hammer out the details of a cease-fire proposal. Teams from Israel, the United States, and Hamas all vying for an agreement that could end the conflict, unlike past negotiations that aimed for a temporary pause. Hamas claims no progress was made in the talks, but the meetings are seen as a last-ditch effort to avert an Israeli operation into Rafah and rescue the remaining hostages.

With ongoing cease-fire talks about Gaza, Israeli forces now look north to Lebanon where this morning a Hezbollah field commander was killed in an Israeli airstrike.

LT. GEN. HERZI HALEVI, ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES: This is not routine. We are in a multi-arena war. There is no reason for panic, but also no place for complacency. We must be aware of the situation and always prepared.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

YINGST (on camera): Israel is now faced with a multifront conflict that could escalate further if Iran gets directly involved. Bret?

BAIER: Trey, thank you.

Let's bring in FOX News chief political analyst Brit Hume. Brit, good evening. Your thoughts about where the situation stands with the Israel- Hamas war and the administration's reaction to it?

BRIT HUME, FOX NEWS SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, we see in Trey Yingst's report tonight the threat of a wider war, deeper involvement by Iran, involvement by the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israeli -- the Israelis could end up fighting on two or even three fronts. This is disturbing, and alarming. And meanwhile, of course, we have the continuing situation in eastern Europe.

And one senses that we could be looking at the kind of drift toward war that has often been seen in the past prior to major world outbreaks. It's something everyone wants to avoid. The fastest way to avoid the problem, or to deal with the problem, including civilian casualties and the rest of it in Israel, is for Israel to go ahead and finish the job it set out to do, which it set out to do with full blown American support. It continues to enjoy American support in the form of material, but the Biden administration has largely begun to criticize Israel and has withdrawn its rhetorical support. One wonders what the rest of the world thinks of that.

BAIER: There are headlines on the sidelines of this. Some of them here, "Politico," "Democrats fear Netanyahu may have undermined Biden's image among voters." "Daily Beast," "Jerry Nadler," a congressman, "booed at a hostage rally for backing humanitarian aid to Gaza." BBC, "Germany faces genocide case over Israel weapons sale." It really is amazing how things have shifted since October 7th.

HUME: It certainly has, Bret. And the longer it goes on, not only will the problems I outlined a minute ago persist, but the political problems for people who have supported Israel and are now finding their constituents turning against them will persist as well. The best outcome now is for Israel to rapidly finish the job, get this war over with.

Wars do excite passions on all sides, and can be very destructive to political standing no matter where you are in these things. And the United States, I think, overwhelmingly the people of the United States support Israel and would be pleased to see Israel finish the job and put Hamas completely out of business. All these other ideas in between with cease- fires and so on, leave the job undone, and the job undone probably won't do, because there is no reason to think that Hamas wouldn't continue to be just as terroristic has it has always been if it survives.

BAIER: Yes, quickly, you mentioned Ukraine. Now there is this moment up on Capitol Hill about funding. Speaker Mike Johnson, "The Wall Street Journal" editorial board, "Mike Johnson's Ukraine moment. It has been dispiriting to see how quickly some on the right have derided the conservative Mr. Johnson as a swamp sellout on Ukraine. It's easier to shout from the cheap seats than to govern, which Mr. Johnson is obliged to do. The particulars of the bill will be forgotten within weeks. What America's allies and adversaries will remember is whether the U.S. cuts and runs on its friends in a fight." Your thoughts?

HUME: There's been too much cutting and running, I think, between, you know, you look at Afghanistan, you look at now the beginning of the withdrawal of the support for Israel, and now the situation with Ukraine. Yes, it's controversial and to some extent unpopular, this measure that is pending in the House has passed the Senate and is hanging by a thread in the House because of a tiny, a tiny little coterie backbench hard right members who are threatening to depose the speaker, which in a very closely divided House they can do, or they are in a position where they could do if he brings this measure up.

And he clearly supports it. He clearly wants to see it passed. But they are asking -- he is in a situation where his political career could end if he does it. It is a very undesirable situation for this country to be in since we have been pulling the plug in various conflicts around the world, and look, I think, to adversaries in places like Beijing and Moscow like weak friends and poor allies. It's a dangerous situation.

BAIER: Brit, as always, thank you.

Up next, the panel, Jessica Tarlov, Bill McGurn, Kim Strassel on abortion ***politics*** and student debt.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT: Now that we have abortion where everybody wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation or, perhaps, both. And whatever they decide must be the law of the land.

MARC THIESSEN, COLUMNIST, "WASHINGTON POST": He's telling voters the truth. It's a false promise to the pro-life movement to tell them that they're going to somehow have restrictions of abortion at the federal level.

DOUGLAS SCHOEN, FORMER CLINTON POLLSTER: I think Trump would have been better served saying 15 weeks is my position and my policy. I think this going to hurt him.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: The former president out with a video today on abortion, saying it's up to states to determine that after Roe v. Wade was overturned two years ago. From the right, his vice president, Mike Pence tweets out "President Trump's retreat on the right to life is a slap in the face to the millions of pro-life Americans who voted for him in 2016 and 2020." Meantime, the Biden campaign from the other side, saying, "Trump is scrambling. He is worried that since he's the one responsible for overturning Roe the voters will hold him accountable in 2024. Well, I have news for Donald -- they will."

BAIER: What about this, the stance and what lies next? Let's bring in our panel, "THE FIVE" co-host Jessica Tarlov, Bill McGurn, columnist for "The Wall Street Journal," and Kimberley Strassel, a member of the editorial board at "The Wall Street Journal" as well.

Kimberley, first to you. Your thoughts on former President Trump's announcement and what this means politically for him.

KIMBERLEY STRASSEL, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Yes. I would argue that this was actually a shrewd decision, and here is why. First of all, look, he has been taking credit for putting those justices on the court who came out with Dobbs. So this completes the circle as it was, because a fundamental part of that decision was saying, look, this is something that is probably going to have to be sorted out at the state, at the political level.

But it's also an acknowledgment that this has been hurting Republicans in elections, and it's a message to down ballot Republicans, look, we are trying to neutralize this at the national level. You need to get your position straight at a state level in a way that reflects the attitudes of your particular districts and states. Stop looking to hide behind a national number because it's the state level where the initiatives are happening and where Republicans have found themselves without answers. So, this is sort of a license for them to now go out, find their spot, and try to go on offense in terms of this issue.

BAIER: Jessica, this is what the U.S. Supreme Court said essentially with Roe, is that it wasn't in the Constitution, thereby, it fell to the 10th Amendment that goes to the states to determine this. States are making decisions, and abortion will be on the ballot in a number of states already so far, could be more. But right now, it is New York, Maryland, and Florida. Most controversial, perhaps, is Florida with a six-week ban. Your thoughts on where this stands?

JESSICA TARLOV, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: I think this issue has obviously been an incredibly enormous political loser for the Republicans. Donald Trump is aware of that, but he can't stop the fact that it was he himself who set this in motion by appointing those justices that ended up taking away this right. And, of course, it was not enshrined in the Constitution as abortion. It was a privacy decision, which is how it was seven to two, and there were conservatives that voted in favor of it. And I remember well in Ruth Bader Ginsburg said that she thought it was improperly decided.

But the problem with leaving it up to the states is that the states have gone so much further than the American population wants them to. And there are 24 states across the country that are not even allowing these ballot initiatives. So if Donald Trump had gotten up there this morning and said, somehow, I hereby decree that every single state in America has to have a ballot initiative so that we can actually know what they think versus 12 random guys in the legislature, for instance, or the Texas Supreme Court -- I should note, there is a very powerful Biden campaign ad that just came out this afternoon about a young woman in Texas, wanted pregnancy, miscarriaged at 18 weeks, could not get the care she needed, ended up in sepsis and doesn't know if she will be able to conceive again.

The Democrats are fully in the right here to be using these very real stories about women who want these pregnancies -- and we know that 60 percent of abortions are given to women who actually have had children before, facing catastrophic circumstances often. And Donald Trump is scrambling, and now is he going to spend all night going after Lindsey Graham for coming out there for the 15-week ban again.

BAIER: Right. And it's not just Lindsey Graham. You heard Doug Schoen there, Bill, saying it may have been better to stake your ground and stake your ground and say that past that is extremist, and that point is where many European countries are.

If you look at our poll, FOX poll, abortion ranks among the issues that are extremely important to voters -- economy, election integrity, immigration, healthcare, and then abortion. What about this and how much it plays? We didn't think it was going to play that big, I don't think, in 2022, as big as it did, and it really did, that and threat to democracy.

BILL MCGURN, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Right. It's been a hard road for pro- lifers post Dobbs. I'm not as distressful of the states as Jessica is. And I think Alito had it right.

There's two parts to the question. One is constitutional. How are we going to do this. And I think they decided in Dobbs that was good. The other is political. And I think what Donald Trump is doing is getting in the position to make his case that it's the Democrats who are extreme. As you pointed out in 2016 in a debate, he hammered Hillary for saying you wouldn't ban abortion up to the moment of birth, and she had no answer for him. I think he is gearing up to do that now. If you look at his whole statement, he made a pretty forceful statement on what abortion is and where the Democrats are.

BAIER: yes. Last thing, Kimberley, are these states now, some of them, regretting maybe going as far as they did on this issue and some of them dialing it back? Florida clearly is not.

STRASSEL: Yes, I think they are certainly regretting those that haven't come up with a position, because look, what we have seen out there in the elections and these initiatives is that when sometimes the question simply comes to voters and its' the legislature who hadn't already given them a position that they're often being overturned.

And look, as this has initiative has not gone on, Democrats have fear- mongered on this issue well enough without a Republican answer that these initiatives have not gone their way. So again, the important thing is here, I think the signal from Donald Trump is look, you have to figure out your own way. You have to have an answer so that you can go on offense like Bill said and talk about which party is actually extreme on this. That's just going to be really important.

And the other thing is, look, realistically, this is also honesty. Republicans are not going to have 60 votes to get through a 15-week position through the Senate. So he is also being straight with people.

TARLOV: Can I add he really quickly?

BAIER: Yes, very quickly, very quickly.

TARLOV: People are not having the abortions in the eighth and the ninth month unless there are catastrophic medical circumstances. That's a fallacy that the right is trying to push about Democrats. And what Democrats are saying is that this is a decision between you and your doctor to make sure that you can have a safe delivery and a viable child if you are that far along in your pregnancy.

So we're going to be pushing back hard against that. The numbers just don't support that kind of argument. And there are harrowing stories when a woman has to have an abortion somewhere close to the end of the ninth month level, for instance.

BAIER: Understood, but there should be support for no late term abortion legislation across the board, bipartisan.

TARLOV: Well, but the issue there is that that could take away the rights of doctors and the woman who is carrying the fetus to make a decision that's best for her health if she is in a state that has a ban on late term --

BAIER: Again, we could go around here, Jessica.

TARLOV: I'm sure we will.

BAIER: But if you have exceptions, life the mother and health, you can have a lot of exceptions in whatever legislation is built. There is where we are. We're going to move on.

Up next, President Biden tries again to eliminate college tuition debt. And later, remembering one of the great accomplishment in sports history.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, (D) PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Tens of millions of people's debt was literally about to get canceled. But then some of my Republican friends and elected officials and special interests sued us, and the Supreme Court blocked us.

(BOOS)

BIDEN: That didn't stop us. I mean it sincerely. We continue find to pass to reduce student debt payment --

(APPLAUSE)

BIDEN: -- that are not challengeable.

GREGG JARRETT, FOX NEWS LEGAL ANALYST: By dictate, what he is really doing is shedding the Constitution. He changed his method of loan forgiveness in the latest plan, but the same legal principles that make it unconstitutional still apply. He is transferring billions of debt from borrowers to taxpayers. And under the Constitution, only Congress has the power to do that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Well, student loan debt forgiveness back on the table with the president. It is an election year. The White House saying the outline for the new plans to deliver student debt relief, borrows eligible for debt cancelation entered repayment over 20 years ago, enrolled in low financial value programs and experiencing hardship repaying the loan. Politically -- back with the panel now -- Kimberley, politically is this a winner for President Biden?

STRASSEL: You know what it is? It's incredibly cynical, Bret. It's amazing. The Supreme Court said you can't do it under this one statute. And then they come around and go OK we are going to do it under this one instead. And what that misses is the Supreme Court said that this is a major question, either way. No matter how you want to go about getting rid of this debt, and it has to be decided by Congress.

So think about what they are doing here. They are essentially saying we are going to jam through these rules at the last minute as we are coming up to an election and see if you, the Supreme Court, can do anything about it before we have received some sort of political benefit by Election Day. It's antithetical to the rule of law and, really, I mean, just an absolutely obnoxious step for this White House.

BAIER: We understand, Jessica, how it works perhaps to get young people engaged. But what about folks who have paid off their college debts and they worked really hard to do that?

TARLOV: I do understand that perspective, and I have never been someone who is in favor of wholesale student loan debt forgiveness. But I think that's part of the genius of the way that President Biden and his administration is going about this. They have looked at the polling. About 60 percent of Americans think that some or part of student debt should be forgiven. And they are targeting people, mostly lower and middle class who have been doing things like paying off their debt for 20 years or only owe $10,000, and it would absolutely change their lives if that were to be able to be forgiven. That's a lot more palatable to the American people. And I think that a majority of us can sympathize with that rather than someone, let's say, who is earning $500,000 a year but has a huge chunk of debt to be forgiven. It doesn't seem like the middle ground approach, and is he taking legal avenues at this point to do it.

BAIER: Bill?

MCGURN: Yes, it's a middle ground approach between the Constitution doing what's wrong. I think this whole thing can be explained. If you look at the FOX poll, I think last week, Joe Biden was 18 points behind in the under 30 demographic in a FOX News poll. That's what he is worried about. And just old fashioned trying to buy the votes for the election. And, as Kim points out, just ignores the Supreme Court, finds another way. And he figures by the time the court catches up to him, it will either be done or he will have gotten the political benefit.

BAIER: Yes. Meantime, a big haul for the Trump campaign said it raised record $50.5 million at a Florida fundraiser on Saturday night. Panel, thanks so much.

TARLOV: Thanks, Bret.

BAIER: Ginally tonight, today's throwback.

Today's throwback. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: -- left-center field. That ball is going to be out of here. It's gone. It's 7:15. There's a new homerun champion of all time, and it's Henry Aaron.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Fifty years ago today legendary Atlanta Braves outfielder Hank Aaron hit his 715th home run to become the all-time leader. The blast broke Babe Ruth's record which he set in 1935. Aaron's eventual career mark of 755 was broken in 2007 by Barry Bonds, although many fans still consider Aaron the true homerun king, all in.

Tomorrow on SPECIAL REPORT, we'll talk to retired general Jack Keane about the fighting in Ukraine and Israel.

Remember, if you can't catch us live, set your DVR.

Thanks for inviting us into your home tonight. That's it for this SPECIAL REPORT, fair, balanced, and still unafraid.

**Load-Date:** April 9, 2024

**End of Document**