

# [***California Bill Would Ban After-Hours Contact With Employees; Severe Weather Threat; U.S. Military Racing to Remove Francis Scott Key Bridge Debris; Gas Prices Rising as Mideast Tensions Grow; Iran Vows Response After Alleged Israeli Strike; Judge Rejects Bid to Dismiss Hunter Biden Tax Charges; Trump Targets Biden Over Immigration***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPH-FXT1-F072-X000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Guests:** Tom Dupree, Carly Cooperman, Lee Carter

**Body**

SANDRA SMITH, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Thank you, Martha.

Former President Donald Trump putting the border front and center today in the race for the White House, Trump just wrapping those remarks in Michigan before heading to Wisconsin, two states that he won in 2016, but then lost in 2020.

So how is this issue resonating in these key battleground states this time around?

Welcome, everyone. I'm Sandra Smith, in for Neil Cavuto, and this is "Your World."

We have got FOX team coverage kicking off a new hour for you with Mark Meredith on how this border battle is playing out and Griff Jenkins on how the White House is digging in.

We begin with Mark -- to you first, Mark.

MARK MEREDITH, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Sandra, good afternoon to you.

Within the last hour, former President Trump surrounded himself with law enforcement officials in Michigan. He vowed, if reelected, to tackle two big issues, crime and illegal immigration. Those two issues could be a game changer in Michigan and Wisconsin, two states Democrats consider to be their blue wall.

And Trump's visit today to Grand Rapids comes amid a story which is getting a lot of attention, police recently finding the body of 25-year-old Ruby Garcia. She was found on the side of a highway and the man who she was romantically linked to has been charged with her murder. The suspect is here in the U.S. illegally from Mexico.

Trump and the RNC today launched a new Web site to highlight similar cases nationwide, which Trump calls a national security threat.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (R) AND CURRENT U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We have a new form of crime. It's called migrant crime. They're having fist fights with our police officers right in the middle of streets. They're sending prisoners, murderers, drug dealers, mental patients and terrorists, the worst they have in every country, all over the world.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MEREDITH: Polling shows Americans are increasingly concerned about border security, but Democrats insist Trump has no real solutions to these real- world problems.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL TYLER, BIDEN CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: This man is not a person who actually cares about crime, who actually cares about solving issues. He's only interested in absolving himself.

So, this campaign is going to make sure the American people understand that every single day between now and November.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MEREDITH: Now, Trump is going to be rallying supporters tonight in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

And we learned today that President Biden, he's planning to head to Wisconsin next week as well, an indication, Sandra, how much both men are going to be chasing each other in these swing states.

Also want to mention that Trump made some news at the end of his remarks, saying he's going to talk about abortion next week, given some of the developments we have seen in Florida -- Sandra.

SMITH: We will be watching all of it, Mark Meredith in Washington.

Mark, thank you.

So what is the White House saying about this?

For that, we turn to Griff Jenkins. He's live at the White House. He has the latest for us.

Hey, Griff.

GRIFF JENKINS, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hey, good afternoon, Sandra.

And the White House appears to be settling into a standard pivot on border questions, simply blaming congressional Republicans for failing to take action. A little earlier this afternoon, things got pretty heated between John Kirby and our own Peter Doocy. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN KIRBY, NSC COORDINATOR FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: To the folks that are concerned about border security, the president will be the first one to stand up here and say he agrees that the border does need some security capabilities, that we do need more Border Patrol agents.

And all that has to happen is for the speaker to do his job, put that supplemental on the floor. Let's get a vote. Let's get those 1,300 additional Border Patrol agents down there to do their jobs.

PETER DOOCY, FOX NEWS WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: But everybody in this room knows that the bill that you guys keep talking about as a solution is dead at the moment and...

KIRBY: Says you. It doesn't need to be dead, does it?

DOOCY: The bill's dead.

KIRBY: Says you.

DOOCY: When's the vote?

KIRBY: You -- ask Speaker Johnson that. It doesn't need to be dead, Peter.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JENKINS: This comes as former President Trump is blasting Biden over the border in Grand Rapids, as Mark just laid out.

Now, Trump is striking, Sandra, at the issue that voters cite most often as Biden's biggest failure, according to FOX's latest poll. You see here 67 percent disapproving of his handling on immigration, worse than on the economy or inflation.

Now, part of the sentiment may be stemming from the flow of fentanyl across our southern border, which was part of the call today between President Biden and China's President Xi, which the White House called a candidate and constructive call. They also talked about renewed ties between the two militaries, the need to address A.I. risk and maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait.

There was also a pledge made between the two presidents to talk as regularly as needed. And we learned finally, Sandra, that Secretaries Yellen and Blinken will make trips to China in the coming days and weeks -- Sandra.

SMITH: All right, Griff Jenkins live at the White House on that for us.

Griff, thank you.

So is this border issue resonating in key battleground states?

With us now, GOP pollster Lee Carter and Democratic pollster Carly Cooperman.

Thanks to both of you, ladies, for joining us.

So, Lee, tell us what you're seeing on that front.

LEE CARTER, REPUBLICAN POLLSTER: Look, I think it matters a lot.

We're seeing a huge shift in polls. Immigration has become the number one issue to Americans over the economy for the first time over the last several weeks. And we're seeing the severity of people's concern about immigration has really shifted; 32 percent of Americans say that immigration poses a major risk to them personally.

And that's an increase from when Donald Trump was president. Only 17 percent said the same thing. So we're seeing a real shift in how people are viewing this. Now, the question is, is Trump going to be able to capitalize? Obviously, Biden is trying out there and the Democrats are trying to say that he doesn't have real solutions, although 55 percent of Americans felt safer -- or feel safer with Trump's policies over 33 percent to Biden.

SMITH: You know, Carly, if we put up on the screen those presidential results going back to 2016, as John would say, the way back machine, you look at the 47.5 to 40 -- the 0.2 margin of victory that Trump pulled off in that state, in Wisconsin as well.

And you see him focusing on this issue of immigration in these key battleground states. And you wonder if this is resonating with voters, Carly.

CARLY COOPERMAN, DEMOCRATIC POLLSTER: I do think it's resonating voters. The polling has consistently showed that immigration has come to the top in terms of what's most important to voters, and it consistently shows that they disapprove of how President Biden has handled the border issue thus far.

And that is why we are hearing time and time again now the Biden administration is talking about wanting to take on this issue. They're advocating to get this border bill passed that was a bipartisan effort put forward by the Senate, which congressional Republicans killed once Trump said he didn't approve of it.

And that's despite the fact that 59 percent of voters approved of that bipartisan bill. And they're also talking about considering things like executive actions. The Biden administration knows that they have to address this issue if they want to be successful in these states.

SMITH: And you look at the 2020 results and how Biden turned things around and won by a small margin of victory there in Michigan and Wisconsin as well. And you wonder what happens this time around in the battle for Michigan right now.

RCP polling for the 2024 election has Trump at 47.4 percent to Biden's 43.9 percent. In Wisconsin, that margin is smaller, 48.3 percent to 47.5 percent for Joe Biden. But if, Lee, you look at the performance that voters are giving Joe Biden on immigration, it is worse than inflation. It is worse than the economy.

Griff just showed these numbers from the White House. And as we saw in the primaries, this is where the focus was at for voters. They're worried about what they're seeing at the southern border and they are experiencing more and more every day what that crisis at the southern border means for them all over this country, Lee.

CARTER: Yes, I think it's really going to be telling.

And this is an issue that a lot of Democrats have tried to push and say this is now the Republicans' fault because they are not making a deal. This is on Speaker Johnson. That's not the way the American people view it right now. The American people right now are very much saying they're blaming Democrats.

They have had power for the last 3.5 years and they haven't done anything to make things better. In fact, they feel much worse. And so I think that blame-shifting really does hurt the Democrats and only helps the Republicans.

I think the issue that's going to be hardest for Republicans to navigate right now, because everything else is in their favor, the biggest issue -- and Donald Trump said that he's going to address it next week -- is, where are we going to land on abortion?

SMITH: Gotcha. So we will see what more we hear about that. And we are hearing that former President Trump is going to be making remarks soon that front.

Carly, I want to end with this on a separate topic. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s campaign is saying that it has enough votes to get on the ballot in another key battleground state, North Carolina.

So, Carly, how could that impact this race?

COOPERMAN: Yes, look, R.F. Kennedy's ability to be impactful in this election 100 percent corresponds to how many ballots he can get on across the country.

North Carolina, in particular, is a state that the Biden administration has been targeting as a pickup state. Joe Biden lost by fewer than two points in that state in 2020. And if RFK ultimately is successful in getting on that state, it is something that is going to be -- it will be difficult for the Biden campaign, because RFK is pulling from voters for both sides.

But the Biden administration is really concerned about this. And so there is an effort to counter this narrative, but it certainly will make things troublesome for Democrats in North Carolina if he's successful.

SMITH: Lee, how about you? How do you see this? How does this impact Trump and Biden, RFK getting on another ballot?

CARTER: I think it actually impacts in meaningful ways. I think one of the big things that I have been looking at is, yes, RFK Jr. is pulling from both sides, but, in particular, he's pulling from the left.

And now he's got a V.P. pick who is very anti-war. I think he's going to pick up a lot of those pro-Palestinian, free Palestinian Democrats who are out there protesting President Biden. I think it's going to be a big issue for him.

SMITH: Very interesting.

Thanks to both of you, Carly, Lee. Great to see you.

CARTER: Thank you.

COOPERMAN: Thank you.

SMITH: OK.

And, by the way, did you see the markets today? Stocks falling on new worries about higher energy prices. That could send inflation even higher. You have got oil and gasoline prices up. And there's a big question whether that could delay the Fed's plan for an interest rate cut this year.

Remember, they were suggesting there could be even three? Well, now the markets are questioning that. All three markets fell into the red, the Dow down almost a full 400 points, 1 percent drop there.

All right, a judge smacking down Hunter Biden's request to dismiss those tax charges.

And what happens now that Donald Trump has posted that $175 million bond? The surprising new twist that could come from both developments just ahead.

Then, how that suspected Israeli strike on an Iranian target over there could soon be hitting drivers already paying higher prices here, as Iran vows revenge. We will have the latest.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SMITH: All right FOX News Alert.

Hunter Biden's legal team is responding now after a federal judge says no way to dismissing those tax charges.

Jonathan Hunt has the details from Los Angeles for us -- Jonathan.

JONATHAN HUNT, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Sandra.

And as a result of that decision, we look to be back on track for a trial of Hunter Biden beginning June 20 after Judge Mark Scarsi, having said he'd need a couple of weeks, instead ruled against every one of Hunter Biden's eight motions to dismiss the charges within just a few days of hearing them.

Biden's lead attorney, Abbe Lowell, argued in court here in L.A. last Wednesday that the tax charges should never have been brought. Chief among his arguments was that the case amounts to political persecution of Hunter Biden and is motivated more by his client's last name than by actual wrongdoing.

Judge Scarsi gave short shrift to that argument, saying in his ruling -- quote -- "The motion is remarkable in that it fails to include a single declaration, exhibit, or request for judicial notice. Instead, defendant cites portions of various Internet news sources, social media posts, and legal blogs. These citations, however, are not evidence."

In essence, the judge ruled that there is indeed a case to answer over allegations that Hunter Biden evaded more than $1.5 million in taxes, spending his money instead, according to prosecutors on drugs, escorts, and girlfriends, exotic cars, and clothing.

Biden's attorney said Judge Scarsi's decision not to dismiss the charges was flat wrong, saying in his statement -- quote -- "We strongly disagree with the court's decision and will continue to vigorously pursue Mr. Biden's challenges to the abnormal way the special counsel handled this investigation and charged this case."

It's worth noting the language there, Sandra, vigorously pursuing challenges. Hunter Biden's legal team seems intent on appealing this decision and doing everything in their power to push that June 20 trial date back, with a clear hope of ultimately ensuring a trial never happens - - Sandra.

SMITH: OK, Jonathan Hunt live on that out of Los Angeles for us.

Jonathan, thank you.

To former President Donald Trump's courtroom battles now. What's next after he just posted up $175 million bond in the New York civil fraud case?

Eric Shawn has those details for us -- Eric.

ERIC SHAWN, FOX NEWS SENIOR CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Sandra.

Well, he's got the money. New York Attorney General Letitia James now has to keep hands off of former President Trump's properties, at least for now. Trump has secured that $175 million bond that stemmed from his real estate fraud trial. He turned to an insurance company headed by California billionaire and Trump supporter Don Hankey.

Hankey and his family owned the large company Knight Insurance. Hankey told FOX Business that ***politics*** had nothing to do with his backing Trump's bond.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DON HANKEY, CHAIRMAN, KNIGHT INSURANCE GROUP: It's a big bond for us to underwrite, but Trump -- Donald Trump came up with all cash. So at the end, it was an easy decision and with almost no risk.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SHAWN: Meanwhile, back in New York, Trump's lawyers are also apparently trying to get Judge Juan Merchan, who's overseeing that Stormy Daniels cover-up trial, well, thrown off the case.

In court papers, his lawyers say Trump is -- quote -- "submitting a pre- motion letter seeking leave to file a recusal motion based on changed circumstances and newly discovered evidence."

His lawyers for now are not yet publicly saying exactly what that newly discovered evidence is, but it does turn out that Merchan's daughter is president of a large progressive political consulting firm that works for Democrats, among them, President Biden and his campaign, Vice President Harris, the Democratic House minority leader, Hakeem Jeffries, among many other prominent Democrats.

But the New York State Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics has already declared there is no conflict for the judge. It issued a ruling saying -- quote -- "A relative's independent political activities do not provide a reasonable basis to question a judge's impartiality."

Well, Trump is also now waiting to see if New York state's appellate court will completely overturn the full amount of that judgment against him -- it was $454 million, before the appellate court cut that by less than half -- or, if in the end, the former president will finally be on the hook for that full amount -- Sandra.

SMITH: Got it, Eric Shawn, live out of our New York City newsroom for us.

Eric, thank you.

So what is next for the former President Trump after posting this bond in the civil fraud case?

Let's ask former Deputy Assistant Attorney General Tom Dupree. He's here now on that for us.

So, what is next, Tom? Hello.

TOM DUPREE, FORMER JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sandra, the next step is the Appellate Division, which is the appeals court that supervises the trial court in New York. And that's where former President Trump will go to fight the battle as he tries to get this judgment overturned.

The appellate court will consist of three brand-new judges to the case who look at what happened in the trial court. They will look at the penalties that the trial judge imposed. They will look at the nature of the sanction, the amount of the punishment, and then they will decide whether or not it was lawfully imposed or whether it needs to be set aside.

So the battle will continue, but now it shifts to the Court of Appeals.

SMITH: What's the timeline look for all of this? Obviously, we are in an election year.

DUPREE: Yes, it's probably going to move fairly slowly.

Typically, unless there's some reason to decide things quickly -- and I'm not sure I see a reason here -- it can take months. It can sometimes take up to a year for an appellate court to reach a decision. You're going to have to have briefs filed. You're going to have oral arguments. So there will be a hearing.

And then the courts will often take months to decide the issue. They will have to write an opinion. So it's a fairly long process. But the significance of Trump posting a bond means that the attorney general can't come and grab Trump Tower or his other properties while the former president's appeal moves ahead.

SMITH: Because we have been highlighting that portfolio that would have been up for grabs, Trump Tower, the Trump Park Avenue, 40 Wall Street. We remember covering all this leading up to this moment.

So, considering that, Tom, New York Attorney General Letitia James must wait for Donald Trump's appeal to play out before she can take any further action now. And George Washington Law Professor Jonathan Turley says that appeal could go all the way to the Supreme Court. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JONATHAN TURLEY, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: There were no victims here. There wasn't a single penny that was lost by anyone. The banks involved testified that they wanted more business from Trump.

So to come up with this astronomical figure really shocks the conscience. Now, on appeal, he's going to have trouble with this New York law. It is unique. It doesn't require victims. It doesn't require losses, but they still have to justify the amount. And that could go all the way to the Supreme Court.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SMITH: Thoughts on that, Tom?

DUPREE: Yes, I agree with that.

Look, this is a complicated case. I think, as Professor Turley correctly points out, there are questions about how this law is applied. And there are also questions about, even if this law was fairly applied to former President Trump, what about the amount of the penalty? I mean, it really is a shocking amount of a penalty.

And I think the appellate judges are going to very, very carefully scrutinize the record. They will take a fresh look at all of the evidence, at all of the legal arguments and they will come to their own conclusion about whether any portion of this penalty can stand.

SMITH: Very interesting.

And, Tom, switching gears for a moment here to the Hunter Biden case, a federal judge has just rejected his team's request to have those tax charges thrown out. Now a trial is expected to start in June. So was that the right call?

DUPREE: I think it absolutely is.

Look, Sandra, I am a big fan of creative legal arguments, don't get me wrong, but Hunter Biden's arguments were terrible. And you saw the judge actually called out his lawyers for, well, basically bad lawyering. He said he found their arguments very unpersuasive. He didn't see any evidence that would cause him to throw out these charges.

And he's telling Hunter Biden, look, it's time to face the music. You are going to be standing trial in my courtroom in a few months. I don't think there's any way for Hunter Biden to postpone this day of reckoning.

SMITH: All right, Tom Dupree on the news for us.

Tom, thanks so much for joining us. Great to see you.

DUPREE: Thank you.

SMITH: All right, severe weather we are watching, it is threatening states from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes. Right now, more than 75 million Americans are at risk. We're going to have the latest for you.

Plus, some signs of progress in Baltimore, as the nation's economy is seeing impacts from that closure of the vital waterway. How much longer until shipping is free-flowing again? We're on it.

But, first, Iran vowing revenge today after that suspected Israeli strike on its embassy in Syria. What is Israel now saying? And what could it mean for our forces in the region, as protesters in Tehran lash out?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SMITH: Tensions escalating in the Middle East, as protesters in Iran burn Israeli and American flags. General Jack Keane on where this is heading.

Plus, oil surging on that news. The impact for you here at home -- next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(CHANTING)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SMITH: Iranian protesters burning American and Israeli flags in response to the killing of a top military commander in a suspected Israeli strike, Iran vowing retaliation for that strike.

FOX News' Trey Yingst is in Tel Aviv, Israel, for -- with the very latest from there for us.

Hi, Trey.

TREY YINGST, FOX NEWS FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Sandra. Good afternoon.

I do want to start with some breaking news out of Jerusalem. We understand tonight that police are clashing with protesters outside of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence. I spoke with one person in the city who indicated police are on horseback and they are using water cannons to push away these anti-government demonstrators.

All of this comes as we are learning more about that strike yesterday in Damascus, Syria. Reports indicate seven members of Iran's IRGC were killed, including two top Iranian generals. Protesters took to the streets overnight of Tehran, burning both American and Israeli flags. They chanted "Death to America" and called on their own government to respond.

Iranian officials echoed these calls today, with the country's supreme leader posting to X, saying -- quote -- "We will make the Zionists regret this crime of attacking the Iranian Consulate in Syria and other crimes like this by God's power and strength."

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi also said the attack would not go unanswered. In the past, Iran has threatened harsh responses and then done nothing, but given the current state of affairs, Israeli forces are on high alert.

We're also following one other developing story today out of the Middle East. Overnight, a series of Israeli strikes killed seven members of the World Central Kitchen. Among the dead are a number of foreign citizens, including one American. Graphic videos circulated showing the bodies of these aid workers, some wearing protective gear.

They were inside of an armored car when the explosions occurred. The Israelis are taking credit for what they call a tragic and unintentional incident. Israel says they will conduct an independent and thorough investigation and then release the findings -- Sandra.

SMITH: Trey Yingst from Tel Aviv for us at this hour.

Trey, thank you.

So what does the U.S. need to do to be prepared in the wake of this suspected Israeli strike?

Joining us now is FOX News strategic analyst and retired Four-Star General Jack Keane.

General, great to see you tonight. Thank you so much for joining us.

So what do we need to do to be prepared for this?

GEN. JACK KEANE (RET.), FOX NEWS SENIOR STRATEGIC ANALYST: Well, certainly, this -- if there's going to be retaliation -- and we're not certain of that yet -- it's largely going to be focused on Israel, for all the obvious reasons.

For our audience to understand, for the last few years, 3.5 about, the Israelis have been conducting close to 300 airstrikes in Syria against Iranian proxies and IRGC targets. And why is that? Because they're preventing them from establishing missile bases and the transit of missiles into Lebanon through Syria.

Some of these targets, they have hit right at the Damascus International Airport as they begin to load missiles into warehouses. So this is part of a campaign that they have been conducting for some time. Obviously, there's war in Gaza that's accelerated all of the concern about this.

And the target they selected is someone that they have been trying to get for some time. And they happen to be able to have the right intelligence and they acted on it very decisively. Iran will likely focus on them. They could attack using their own resources from Iran to do that, much like they did when we took down the Qasem Soleimani in January 2020.

Or they could use their proxies in the reason, the Hezbollah or the Houthis, to do it, who have the capability certainly to do that. In terms of us, I think likely our forces have been told to protect themselves even more so, given the potential of an attack against our bases in Iraq and Syria, would be the most likely if they were going to do something.

And they would more likely choose the proxies that operate and been delivering those attacks for so long. Now, our audience needs to know that there have not been attacks on our bases in Iraq and Syria for weeks after we killed the leader of the militia group operating in Iraq that Iran was backing.

And Iran ordered the militias not to attack our bases as a result of that. So we will see what happens here. The likely focus will be on Israel. And, listen, a lot of talk and wringing of hands that this could escalate into World War III. That is not going to happen. Iran does not want a direct confrontation with the United States and go to war with the United States.

All of their objectives in the Middle East that they're trying to achieve, domination and control, are gone because they lose their regime. They know that. And they understand that. And their actions have been along those lines.

SMITH: Yes.

KEANE: When we take action against them, they take measured action against us. And I think that's what we will see here.

SMITH: I have only -- General, thank you for your thoughts on that. I have only got about 30 seconds left or so, but I want to get this in here, because President Biden has just put out a tweet on the official White House account about his call he had today with China's Xi Jinping.

He says: "Today, I had a candid conversation with President Xi of the People's Republic of China on a range of issues, including areas of cooperation and areas of difference. I emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the South China Sea and raised concerns over the PRC's support for Russia's defense industrial base, their unfair trade practices, and economic and technological practices that harm American workers and families. I look forward to responsibly managing our relationships in the weeks and months ahead."

I wanted to get your quick response to that, General.

KEANE: Yes, well, certainly talking -- these two leaders having a dialogue makes sense. And we have always done that in the past with other adversaries.

But, also, you have got to deal with a grain of salt here. I mean, President Xi is an aggressive adversary. He's increased the repression at home, and he's increased the aggression abroad. Our sources are telling us with some credibility that he doesn't want any kind of increase in aggression that would lead to some kind of confrontation in the next couple of years, which is very different from what he said in the past, because of the economic challenges he has at home.

And -- but he has made an exception to that, and that's what's going on with the Philippines.

SMITH: Yes.

KEANE: He is completely frustrated by the Philippines giving us four military bases to use. And he's going after Marcos, because Marcos is completely different than his predecessor.

Marcos has aligned wholly with the United States. And that is one of the issues that the president was talking to him about in his aggression towards the Philippines.

SMITH: General, always appreciate a discussion with you. Appreciate you joining us. Thank you.

KEANE: Yes, great talking to you, Sandra. Thank you.

SMITH: OK. Thank you, sir.

New signs a growing conflict between Israel and Iran over there could be hitting drivers here.

Plus, 75 million Americans bracing for severe weather across a wide swathe of the nation this hour. We have got the latest on its track.

And, later, the same state now mandating a $20 fast-food minimum wage could soon be making it illegal for most bosses to contact their workers after hours. Is it needed or is it a step too far?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SMITH: Stocks rocked, as oil rises on new worries Israel and Iran could enter into a direct conflict, and it's coming as drivers are already seeing higher prices as we enter the busy driving season, all this reigniting inflation fears.

Joining us now is oil analyst and FOX News contributor Phil Flynn.

Phil, I don't watch the oil markets as closely as you do, but all of a sudden the other day I looked, and I said, whoa, oil's back at $85 a barrel? Do you see this going even higher? And does that mean we're going to see prices go up at the pump?

PHIL FLYNN, FOX BUSINESS CONTRIBUTOR: You know, I'm afraid so, Sandra. You're absolutely right.

I mean, we saw oil hit $85 a barrel, and it's one of the concerns that I have had. Not only do you have this rising geopolitical risk around the world. You really have a situation where global demand is exceeding supply.

And all this talk that electric vehicles and the change in our way of life would reduce oil demand isn't happening. In fact, global oil demand is going to hit a record high, and we have been selling America a bill of goods, and we're not prepared for it. And I'm afraid we're going to pay for it at the pump.

SMITH: Really interesting.

Just had a discussion with the transportation secretary, Pete Buttigieg. It happened earlier today on "America Reports." And I asked him, Phil, if the market is ready for this White House push for electric vehicles. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SMITH: They're extremely expensive. I mean, the electricity obviously uses fossil fuels anyway to power these vehicles. So, I mean, is this just premature, this push right now?

PETE BUTTIGIEG, U.S. TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY: Yes, these are all really interesting and important questions.

But I would say, we know it's not premature because more Americans every single year choose electric than the year before. And if you look at the surveys, it is extremely rare for anybody who has gone electric to want to go back to the old gas car technology.

Now, look, to be clear, it's not for everybody and it's not happening overnight. Our goal is, by the end of this decade, we're about half and half with new car sales. But the reason we can't just sit back and let this happen on its own pace is that there is a race going on.

Either China or the United States will dominate the E.V. future.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SMITH: But, hello, the difference is that we have got the resources, right? We have got the fossil fuel-rich country.

FLYNN: Right.

SMITH: But it's a question we keep asking, Phil, and one that we talked to Bjorn Lomborg a lot about, he writes in The Wall Street Journal, is, if they're so popular and people love these vehicles so much, why would we have to mandate them?

FLYNN: That's absolutely correct.

And he makes this false assumption that we're in a race somehow with China to control the electric market. And, Sandra, if that's the case, we're losing that race only because China has an electric Trojan horse, because they control the rare earth minerals that you're going to need to build these electric cars.

So you're absolutely right. And the thing is, is that there would be no electric -- we wouldn't even be talking about electric car if it wasn't the private sector, guys like Elon Musk that they used to laugh at 20 years ago and now they're looking at electric cars as a savior.

And it's the private sector that drove this. Make no mistake about it. China is laughing at the way the United States is rushing into this, because it's making our economy less efficient. It's making us less stable. And they would love -- because they look at the big picture. They'd love for their economy to overtake us.

And our push towards electric vehicles is going to be a major mistake that I think is going to set our economy back and give them an edge.

SMITH: Yes. And I just saw a statistic the other day. About 75 percent of these charging stations are actually efficient and up and running and working properly. I mean, you get to some of these charging areas and they're just not ready to go. And that's a problem for these drivers.

Phil, it was great to see you.

FLYNN: Thank you.

SMITH: And, also, we want to thank the secretary for joining us. We will continue the discussion in this country, for sure.

Phil, thanks. Great to see you.

To Baltimore now, where the U.S. military is racing to clear bridge debris and fully reopen that waterway. Why officials say the process is more complicated than expected.

Plus, severe weather storming through the heartland and set to disrupt travel. What you need to know. We will have the latest.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SMITH: The first vessel to leave the Port of Baltimore since the Key Bridge collapse last week took off Monday using a temporary channel to bypass the wreckage.

Now the U.S. military is working as fast as possible to remove the massive debris and reopen the waterway.

FOX News' Jennifer Griffin has the details. She's live from the Pentagon for us.

Hi, Jennifer.

JENNIFER GRIFFIN, FOX NEWS CHIEF NATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Sandra.

The Coast Guard has joined the U.S. military and they are working as fast as possible to reopen the Port of Baltimore. A tugboat, as you mentioned, pushed a fuel barge through a newly opened alternate channel late Monday. And, today, some more good news from Baltimore.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. WES MOORE (D-MD): We have opened two temporary channels that can support commercial traffic. We are still a long way from being able to get the size and the cadence of the commercial traffic back to where it was before the collapse.

REAR ADM. SHANNON GILREATH, U.S. COAST GUARD: We have reopened that northern channel that we spoke about yesterday with our first two barges to traffic through there. And we just reopened that southern channel today at a draft of 14 feet.

We're going to continue working and planning for a third alternate channel.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRIFFIN: The Army Corps of Engineers has provided 1,100 soldiers who specialize in construction to assist in the clearance effort. The Navy has provided 12 crane and support vessels, tugs, survey and dive crew boats, four massive barges, including one with a 400-ton lift capacity, another capable of lifting 1,000 tons.

During its first crane operation, military crews removed 200 tons of steel from the now-ruined Key Bridge, a piece of that steel almost the size of the Statue of Liberty. It took 10 hours to remove the first 200 tons. Up to 4,000 tons of steel sit on top of the Dali cargo ship that took down the bridge.

President Biden plans to visit the site of the wreckage on Friday, Sandra. Adding to the horror, the 21 crew members of the MV Dali remain on board the freighter that crashed into the Key Bridge exactly a week ago. That freighter remains trapped by a tangle of steel wreckage -- Sandra.

SMITH: Jennifer Griffin live on that from the Pentagon for us.

Jennifer, thank you.

And to the severe weather threat across the heartland and into the Northeast tomorrow. It's expected to wreak havoc on travel.

FOX meteorologist Adam Klotz has the very latest for us.

Some crazy stuff expected out there, Adam.

ADAM KLOTZ, FOX NEWS METEOROLOGIST: Yes, you're absolutely right, Sandra.

Already seeing some of these severe storms as it works its way across portions of the Midwest, stretching back across the Southeast. We have seen big storms and tornado watches in place, largely covering Kentucky, down into most of Tennessee. That's running all the way until the evening hours because the ingredients are present.

Even though it's a bit of a bullseye there across Northern Kentucky and portions of Ohio, the tornado threat is fairly widespread. We're looking at EF-2 tornadoes or greater from the Midwest from Ohio, stretching all the way down close to the Gulf Coast, so a really big area where we could see tornadoes this evening.

Now, this entire system continues to push its way off towards the east,not really a tornado threat so much tomorrow, but by the time you get late to tomorrow and then the next couple of days, kind of shocking, but a low- pressure system sits off the Northeast Coast. And then, suddenly, some of these interior areas, we're talking about feet of snowfall coming down for days, particularly at some of these higher elevations.

Don't be shocked if areas across New Hampshire or Vermont see several feet of snow. Now, it's this moving system that's going to be the concern for any kind of travel trouble here the next couple of days. You're seeing these spots in orange or yellow. Those are areas where we see at least some risk of slowdowns for airports.

Not a surprise. This is a big system, Sandra, impacting a whole lot of people.

SMITH: Wow. We will be watching that for many hours to come.

KLOTZ: Yes, we will.

SMITH: Adam, thank you for the update.

All right, a new proposal in California would guarantee workers are off the hook when they're off the clock. But could this bill to keep bosses at bay backfire?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SMITH: Going after bosses for contacting their workers after hours, it's a new push in California.

The bill would allow employees to ignore calls and texts from their boss after they're off the clock. We have reached out to the lawmaker behind this, but is something like this needed or does it go too far?

Let's ask Strategic Wealth Partners president Mark Tepper and New York Post columnist Rikki Schlott.

Mark, is this necessary?

MARK TEPPER, STRATEGIC WEALTH PARTNERS: No. No. This is definitely a step too far.

I mean, these are arrangements and agreements that should be between employers and employees. We all have free will. If you have an overbearing boss, there's 8.7 million jobs. You can go and get a job elsewhere. And I would have to say most small business owners are very reasonable.

Most of them aren't going to have expectations that you work way after hours or on weekends. However, as a small business owner myself, while I don't have those expectations, it certainly doesn't go unnoticed. It's very much appreciated when someone responds after hours.

SMITH: So they would have the right -- this bill would force them to have the right to investigate and fine companies that show a pattern of barging in on their employees' personal time, Rikki. What do you think?

RIKKI SCHLOTT, THE NEW YORK POST: I mean, I think that there are bigger fish to fry and problems to solve out in California than this.

And it certainly feels like it's not the place of an over-busy politician to, as Mark said, basically iron out something that should be interpersonal. But, I mean, the only -- only argument that I can really think of in this sense is that the Zoom era and the work from home era has allowed, what, home life and work life to blend together in a way?

But we need to talk through that and what that looks like in a hybrid situation going forward, not have legislators do it for us.

SMITH: I think Rikki has a great point, Mark. I mean, isn't there just a reasonable expectation? And can't you still send the text and say get back to me at your availability or perhaps in the morning?

TEPPER: Yes.

SMITH: Mark, the writer of the bill said, to Rikki's point, that the return -- these -- this bill would return working standards from before the smartphone era, which has -- quote -- "blurred the boundaries between work and home life."

TEPPER: Sandra...

SMITH: I think most people listening at home, they -- maybe that resonates with them a little bit, right? We don't just close the door and leave our office.

(CROSSTALK)

TEPPER: Correct.

But I will tell you what, Sandra. What this really is to me is, their is, just another display of equity in the workplace, right?

We can't let the go-getters who go above and beyond, who respond to e-mails at 10:00 p.m., we can't allow them to get ahead. We have to cater to the least motivated group of employees. And that's exactly what you have going on here. That's exactly what they're doing.

SMITH: Yes, I guess, Rikki, the question is, and obviously the bigger picture here is that California already has some of the strictest, most stringent small business laws on the books.

It's just getting harder and harder for some of these small businesses to stay in business.

SCHLOTT: Absolutely.

And a lot of these regulations often backfire, like their exorbitant minimum wage, which is -- it makes it difficult for teens to get summer jobs. It makes it difficult for small businesses to make ends meet. I think that, really, the government needs to step away from the interpersonal relationship between bosses and employees.

And California is basically the test case for why that's a problem.

SMITH: Mark, do you answer your texts and phone calls after hours?

TEPPER: I do, of course. I mean, I own the business, so I got to do it. What if a client has a problem? I got to address it immediately.

SMITH: Yes.

TEPPER: And I would hope that if one of my employees had a solution, they'd respond rather promptly.

SMITH: Very interesting.

I think that the aspect of most small businesses and small business owners, they're reasonable.

TEPPER: Right.

SMITH: But there are emergencies and there are situations that have to be immediately addressed.

I appreciate the conversation, Rikki, Mark. Great to see you both. Thank you so much.

And hard to believe an hour has flown by. Thanks so much for joining us. You can catch me tomorrow alongside John Roberts 1:00 p.m. Eastern time on "America Reports." Again, thank you for joining us here.

For now, here is "The Five."

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