



**A SWEET START TO THE DAY**  
This cookbook makes breakfast a treat  
**TASTE**



**THURSDAY**  
May 4, 2023

# StarTribune

**75°** **47°**  
Dry, lukewarm weather  
spills into tomorrow. **B6**

2021 PULITZER PRIZE FOR BREAKING NEWS

## RICO charges target two Mpls. gangs

U.S. uses racketeering conspiracy statute to indict alleged members of Highs, Bloods.

By STEPHEN MONTEMAYOR  
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Federal prosecutors have charged 45 people they accuse of belonging to two of Minneapolis' most prominent street gangs with complex conspiracy charges in what law enforcement leaders are

billing as a major shift in the government's year-old initiative to counter violent crime in the city.

For the first time, prosecutors are levying racketeering conspiracy charges to go after Minneapolis gangs linked to allegations of murder, robbery, drug conspiracy and

gun crimes. The statute — also referred to as the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) — was first rolled out in the 1970s to bring down organized crime families and requires approval from the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

"Today's announcement marks a fundamental change for federal law enforcement," U.S. Attorney Andrew Luger said Wednesday, as two indict-

ments were unsealed. "We are now addressing gang violence for what it is: organized criminal activity."

Of the 45 defendants — linked either to the Highs or the Bloods gangs — 30 are charged across two indictments and 15 other members are being charged in separate documents with drug and gun crimes. Luger said that those charged engaged in a "brutal and unrelenting trail of

violence" spanning multiple years, with membership of the gangs swelling since the 2020 onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unrest that followed George Floyd's murder.

Some two dozen shooting victims — a blend of targeted murders and bystanders who survived — are referenced in the charges, with the shootings dating as far back as 2014.

Luger said agents had arrested all but two of those

charged as of Wednesday afternoon.

The Justice Department's organized crime and gang section is assisting with the prosecution, and investigators from the Minneapolis Police Department have been embedded within the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minnesota. Wednesday's announcement arrived on the anniversary of Luger launching a coordinated effort  
See **GANGS** on All ▶

## 'I feel like a human again'



Misti Okerlund cried as client Cindy Hagen left the Mayo Clinic hospital in Austin, Minn., after 10 months.

### Woman home after legal saga kept her in hospital 294 days

Story by CHRIS SERRES • Photo by ELIZABETH FLORES • Star Tribune staff

Cindy Hagen was overwhelmed as she leaned back in her wheelchair and inhaled outside air for the first time in 294 days.

A group of friends and relatives huddled in the drizzle outside a hospital in Austin, Minn., last week as Hagen, 49, a quadriplegic with limited movement of her limbs, relished her newfound freedom.

"What is that?" asked Hagen, her eyes filling with tears. "Is that fresh air that I'm breathing?"

Moments later, Hagen wheeled herself into a Dodge van and began a 90-minute journey home to Mankato. Gazing out the window at the passing landscape, Hagen excitedly pointed out the spring wildflowers. "I've been away too long," she said.

For Hagen, the journey home marked a victory in a monthslong struggle to regain her independence — one that galvanized many in Minnesota's disability

community and prompted renewed calls to protect the civil rights of people with significant disabilities.

Hagen had been living at the Mayo Clinic hospital in Austin since last July after seeking treatment for an infection. Even after she was healthy enough to leave, she could not do so, because she could not retain enough staff to provide care at the apartment in Mankato where she had lived for 21 years.

After several failed attempts to move Hagen to a senior facility, a Blue Earth County District Court judge in January placed her under an emergency guardianship — which gave an outside entity control over virtually every aspect of Hagen's life. Hagen and her attorney argued that she was capable of making decisions on her own and that a guardian was not necessary.

For four months, Hagen lived in fear that a guardian  
See **HAGEN** on A13 ▶

## Fed signals possible pause in rate hikes

Quarter-point increase puts benchmark at its highest level since 2007.

By JEANNA SMIALEK  
New York Times

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve officials raised interest rates by a quarter-point Wednesday, the 10th-straight increase in an aggressive campaign to tame rapid inflation. But they also opened the door to a pause as their policies combine with bank turmoil to weigh down the economy.

Central bankers lifted rates to a range of 5% to 5.25%, a level they have not reached since summer 2007. The move capped the fastest series of rate increases since the 1980s as central bankers attempt to cool price increases by slowing growth.

But in their statement

announcing the decision, policymakers also tempered language around future rate increases, saying that additional moves "may" be appropriate. Fed Chair Jerome Powell underscored in a news conference following the release that any additional changes would hinge on incoming economic data.

Taken together, those statements were a meaningful shift in the Fed's stance. For months, officials had assumed that additional increases would be needed. Now, they could stop raising interest rates at any upcoming meeting — perhaps as soon as their gathering June 13-14.

Yet, central bankers were careful to keep their options open at a hugely uncertain economic moment, suggesting that they could continue to raise rates if the economy and  
See **RATE** on All ▶

## Riot recovery aid working its way through Legislature

By JESSIE VAN BERKEL  
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Looters broke into Rob Yang's footwear stores in Minneapolis and St. Paul in 2020, wiping out an overflowing inventory of shoes that had piled up as pandemic restrictions blocked sales.

Yang is still struggling to bounce back after his insurance coverage fell far short of his losses. It's a common story along riot-damaged corridors.

"Things are slowly coming back," Yang said Wednesday as he surveyed renovation

work on a University Avenue property he bought in St. Paul's Midway neighborhood in early 2021. "A lot of people pulled out of this area. ... For us to revitalize this area again and get developers to come in, we really need to reinvest in ourselves."

Nearly three years after the police murder of George Floyd sparked unrest across the Twin Cities, community groups and business owners are pressing Minnesota leaders to give more money to businesses and nonprofits for  
See **RIOT DAMAGE** on A13 ▶



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Rob Yang, left, who got \$166,000 in state aid to rehab a building he bought in 2021, said many other businesses need help, too.

## Mortgage past due on landmark IDS Center in Mpls.

By BURL GILYARD  
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The deadline to pay off a large mortgage balance has come and gone for the owner of the IDS Center in downtown Minneapolis without resolution.

The deadline to pay was Monday.

The loan balance is listed at \$154.4 million by Cred Iq, a Pennsylvania-based firm that tracks commercial real estate data, analytics and valuations.

IDS Center owner Accesso Partners said that it is continuing talks to resolve the issue.

"We are working with a lender to refinance the asset and are negotiating a forbear-

ance agreement with the special servicer to allow us time to close the new loan," the firm said in a statement.

Forbearance temporarily postpones loan payments. JPMorgan Chase & Co. provided the original \$182.5 million loan.

Cred Iq's report indicates  
See **IDS** on All ▶

**\$154.4 million**  
Loan balance listed for the IDS Center

**\$182.5 million**  
The original loan provided by JPMorgan Chase & Co.

**\$253.5 million**  
Amount paid for the IDS Center a decade ago

**TOP NEWS**

### TRUMP WON'T CALL WITNESSES

In recorded testimony rather than in person, ex-president calls rape claim "made up." **A4**



**NATION & WORLD**

**First RSV vaccine OK'd:** Doses are expected this fall for people 60 and older. **A2**

**Ex-FBI agent charged in 1/6 riot:** He allegedly urged mob to kill police. **A10**

**MINNESOTA**

**Taste of Minnesota:** The July 4th party, formerly in St. Paul, heads to Mpls. **B1**

**Metro Transit crime is up 66%:** New police chief calls for accountability. **B1**

**SPORTS**

**Not worried about draft:** Vikes' Cousins says proving himself goes with job. **C1**

**A rearmed ace:** Gophers' Autumn Pease is back to be a top Big Ten pitcher. **C1**

**BUSINESS**

**Stores close, opportunities open:** Big-box shutdowns free up space. **D1**

**U.S. Bancorp catches young aces' pitches:** Students present ideas. **D1**

**HAVE YOU HEARD?**

**Galactic gulp:** For the first time, astronomers see a star eat a planet — a rare preview of Earth's eventual demise. **A9**

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# Lawmakers working on riot recovery aid

◀ **RIOT DAMAGE** from AI redevelopment.

Yang, who plans to rent his building to a small business, said he learned two weeks ago that he will get \$166,000 from the state to help with the project. He said he knows many other businesses also need aid.

Minnesota legislators previously passed \$80 million for a Main Street Economic Revitalization Program. This year, the House has proposed \$126 million and the Senate suggested \$100 million for grants and loans.

The two chambers, both led by Democrats, included the cash in their economic development budget bills. Since the details and dollar figures diverge, lawmakers are sorting through the differences this week.

The Senate's Promise Act takes the more expansive approach. It goes beyond damage from unrest and aims to help with broad economic challenges statewide. The proposal would devote \$100 million over the next two years to communities hurt by civil unrest, structural racism, lack of access to capital, population losses or a regional lack of economic diversification.

"How do you think about communities that have been traditionally disenfranchised, but also other parts of our state that have other issues that need to have an economic infusion?"

said bill sponsor Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, DFL-Minneapolis. "How do we make sure we don't forget about anyone, as best we can, while also paying attention to those that were affected by civil unrest?"

Meanwhile, the House version would dedicate almost \$126 million for the Empowering Enterprise Program focused on the Twin Cities. The bill would give money to Minneapolis, St. Paul and various community organizations based in the two cities. The dollars could be used for economic relief programs "with the primary goal of assisting communities adversely affected by civil unrest during the peacetime emergency," the proposal says.

Rep. Hodan Hassan, DFL-Minneapolis, declined to be interviewed about the approach in the House bill she sponsored, but said in a statement that legislators are trying to strike a balance between advocating for their districts and for Minnesota as a whole.

"There are several areas in need of infrastructure improvements, and many of them are located in primarily BIPOC communities in Minneapolis and Saint Paul," Hassan said in the statement, using the acronym for Black, Indigenous and people of color.

"These once vibrant, pedestrian-friendly areas have store-



Businessman Rob Yang, left, and Bill Leshner of Drake Bank looked over the renovation of a St. Paul building Yang bought in 2021 after his shoe stores were ransacked in riots after George Floyd's murder. Yang plans to rent the building to a small business.

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fronts still boarded up, broken windows, and low foot traffic. The House and the Senate are united in our commitment to investing in these areas."

The House version provides a clear path to fund real estate development, and that is the "missing piece" to reconstruction and recovery along corridors such as Lake Street, said Russ Adams, manager of Corridor Recovery Initiatives at the Lake Street Council in Minneapolis. The council would receive about \$11 mil-

lion to distribute under the plan.

Adams stressed that enormous needs left in the unrest's wake still linger.

"We put traumatic events in the back of our minds; our instincts are to try to move forward and not dwell," Adams said. "That's a bit of a challenge in terms of maintaining public and policymaker focus on some of this. It's important to remember the catastrophic destruction."

The state dollars that

groups have been distributing through the Main Street program have been "pretty narrowly defined," said Warren McLean, president of the Northside Economic Opportunity Network in Minneapolis. He said that in north Minneapolis, much of the money was restricted to businesses along W. Broadway.

McLean said he hopes to see more flexibility in whatever lawmakers pass and stressed that the state's massive surplus provides a key moment

to address longstanding problems.

"It's more of an opportunity to deal with disinvestment over years, over decades," he said. "You have a smoldering of conditions that once an incendiary act like George Floyd's murder occurs, then you have an explosion. And so if you start dealing with the underlying causes, you will not have a civil unrest that erupts."

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# Case galvanized disability-rights advocates

◀ **HAGEN** from A1

would move her to a nursing home or other institution far removed from Mankato. Confined to a room for 24 hours a day, with a window that looked out on a blank wall, Hagen felt her mental and physical health deteriorate, day by day. She had frequent panic attacks and nightmares of being kidnapped.

Now, her legal saga has come to an end. This week, Blue Earth County Human Services asked the court to dismiss its guardianship petition — after Hagen met the terms of a legal agreement that called for her transition from the hospital to her home before May 12.

"It feels like I've been freed from prison," said Hagen, who is quadriplegic from a childhood car accident. "But in prison, I would have enjoyed more civil liberties."

Ecstatic, Hagen yelled out, "I'm home!" as her father swung open the doors to her apartment in Mankato — a place that had sat vacant for nearly 10 months. She did several tight circles with her wheelchair. Hagen was pleased to see that the tree outside her window was bursting with green buds and that her large collection of stuffed animals stood like sentries in her living-room cabinet, just as she had left them.

"Never, ever underestimate a quad," she said, smiling.

As the evening bells of nearby St. John the Baptist Catholic Church tolled, Hagen pondered the hours and days ahead. First, she would need a shower. Her long brown hair, which hung in a ponytail, had only been washed once since Christmas. "I'm sick of these greasy locks!" she exclaimed. Second, she would look into adopting a cat. Eventually, as her stamina improved, Hagen would reconnect with old friends and fellow disability advocates in Mankato.

"I finally feel like I'm back to living where I'm wanted, and everyone wants to be where they're wanted," she said.

Hagen acknowledged that her freedom still hangs in the balance, largely because the conditions that landed her in the hospital last summer have not gone away.

A crisis-level shortage of people willing to care for adults with disabilities has made it difficult for them to get essential help, from bathing and dressing to being transferred from their beds to their wheelchairs. Some have been forced to move into group



Cindy Hagen navigated her chair after arriving at her Mankato apartment on April 28 after 293 days in the hospital following a legal battle over guardianship.



Photos by ELIZABETH FLORES • liz.flores@startribune.com

Photos of Cindy Hagen when she was younger were displayed in her home after her father and aunt cleaned and painted her apartment for her arrival in Mankato on April 28.

*"It feels like I've been freed from prison.  
But in prison, I would have enjoyed more civil liberties."*

Cindy Hagen

homes and nursing facilities, where they are more isolated and have less control over their lives, say disability advocacy groups and service providers.

Statewide, vacancies for home health care jobs have more than tripled over the past three years, to 13,529 at the end of 2022, with roughly 1 in 10 positions going vacant, according to the most recent state workforce data.

"We've never seen a staffing shortage this dire," said Dena Belisle, president of the Minnesota First Provider Alliance, a state association of personal care assistant providers. "It's heartbreaking to say this, but if you don't have family and friends, and you are relying on [personal care] agencies to provide supports, then it's almost impossible to make that work right now."

Already, Hagen's in-home support team is starting to fray. Hagen and her attorney, Misti Okerlund, had recruited a team of eight caregivers, as well as relatives, to provide her with round-the-clock care. Within 72 hours, one of her home care aides had to leave with a back injury and another didn't show

up for a second shift. The challenge, said Hagen, is that Medicaid's reimbursement rate for personal care aides hasn't kept pace with inflation. Workers can make the same or more money doing less-demanding jobs, such as flipping burgers, she said.

"It used to be that, once you had your [care] team in place, you knew they would almost always show," she said. "Now you're always wondering if they're going to come back. ... It feels like a roller-coaster ride that never ends."

Even so, Hagen is relieved to be in charge of her own decisions, such as hiring her own support staff. On her first night home, Hagen sat among relatives in her tidy kitchen and savored a cocktail — a small glass of rum and cream soda.

For the first time in months, Hagen could get lost in her own thoughts without the cacophony of hospital sounds — the beeping of phones and hospital staff opening and closing her door at all hours.

"I feel like a human again," she said.

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