

Earth's 16-month record heat streak ends but warming remains

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — Earth's 16-month sizzling streak of record high temperatures is finally over, according to one group of federal meteorologists.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said last month's 60.6 degrees (15.9 Celsius) was merely the second hottest September on record for the globe. That's ever so slightly cooler — a few hundredths of a degree — than the record set in 2015. But it was quite a bit warmer — 1.6 degrees (0.9 Celsius) — than the 20th century average.

Global average temperatures include both land and sea surface readings. And while oceans were cooling off a tad, global land temperatures in September still set a record high, NOAA climate scientist Jessica Blunden said. It was an unusually hot month in much of Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

NASA, which averages global temperature differently,

considers last month as record hot. But the space agency didn't have a big consecutive hot streak because it didn't consider last June as record hot.

"It's kind of nice to see it cool down a little bit even though it will go back up again," Blunden said. "It may not be a record now because we have natural variations in weather and climate. There's always going to be ups and downs but that doesn't mean global warming isn't happening."

The fact that despite the end of El Niño — a warming of the central Pacific that tends to spike global temperatures — the world came close to setting another heat record "is quite a feat and offers evidence that global climate change is contributing to these monthly records/near records," University of Oklahoma meteorology professor Jason Furtado said in an email.

The end of El Niño will "just give us a brief respite, since the global trend will continue mercilessly until we stop it by

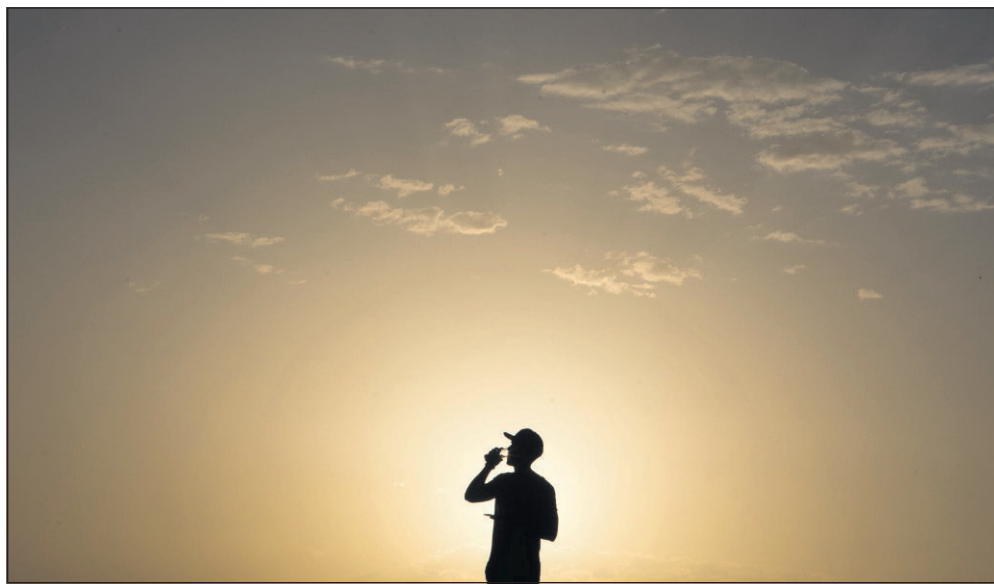
getting off fossil fuels," said climate scientist Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam Institute in Germany.

Burning coal, oil and gas puts heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the air, a main contributor in climate change.

Blunden said this year is still on pace to be the hottest on record, beating the mark set in 2014 and then broken last year. Meteorologists said three record hot years in a row would be unprecedented.

Through September, this year is 1.6 degrees warmer than the 20th century average and nearly a quarter of a degree warmer than the first nine months of 2015.

Records go back to 1880.



AP Photo/Paul White

A youth takes a drink on a hill overlooking the city after a long hot day in Madrid, Spain.

Five more states vote on minimum wages as federal wage stalls

By **KRISTEN WYATT**
Associated Press

DENVER — Congress' inaction on the \$7.25 hourly minimum wage is again playing out on state ballots, with voters in four states considering an increase and another considering wages for the youngest workers, even though the states already exceed the federal. In some cases voters are also deciding whether to add sick-leave policies to help the working poor.

The ballot proposals in Arizona, Colorado, Maine and Washington come two years after voters in five other states passed minimum-wage hikes. South Dakota voters are taking a second crack at wages, two years after raising them to \$8.50 an hour.

Is it a slam dunk that this year's measures will pass, too? Maybe. Even the classic opponents to a higher minimum wage — restaurant associations and small-business groups — are running muted campaigns to oppose the wage measures.

"It almost always passes when it gets on the ballot," said Jerold Waltman, a political scientist at Baylor University who has written extensively about minimum wage and politics.

"Most Americans have a fundamental sense of fairness, that if you work, you ought to make enough to make a living wage on. Democrats and Republicans seem to agree on this."

Slight differences

Four of the wage measures are only slightly different. Arizona, Colorado and Maine are considering phased-in \$12 hourly minimum wages by 2020. In Washington state, where the minimum wage is \$9.47 an hour, voters are considering a higher minimum wage, \$13.50 an hour by 2020. The measures in Arizona and Washington also require employers to give paid sick leave.

Voters in South Dakota are looking at the minimum wage for the second time in as many years. They will consider a so-called "referred law" to overturn a state law passed in reaction to a 2014 vote raising the minimum to \$8.50, with the wage pegged to inflation.

South Dakota lawmakers lowered the minimum wage to \$7.50 for workers under 18, with no inflation adjustment for those youngest workers. The ballot measure asks voters to choose between keeping lawmakers' approach to younger workers, or requiring higher wages for all working teens.

The campaigns are talking about folks like Mayra Pride in Colorado, a 25-year old mother of three. Born and raised in Denver, Pride and her husband are considering moving after the birth of a fourth child because they can't make ends meet on his pay for landscaping

and construction jobs.

"It's not close to enough," Pride said after a recent shopping trip to a discount store that sells cheap toiletries and paper goods. "We pay over \$1,000 a month rent. That basically eats it all up. We can't afford anything else sometimes."

Arguing over words

Opponents of the wage campaigns are trying a nuanced approach, opposing not higher wages but how the measures are worded.

In Colorado and Washington, for example, the opposing campaigns are arguing that minimum wages should be lower in rural, lower-cost areas.

"It's not the cities, the big businesses that are going to suffer," said Tyler Sandberg of Colorado's wage opposition campaign, called Keep Colorado Working. "A big corporation in Denver is going to be treated the same as a small mom-and-pop business" in a small town, he said.

In Maine, opponents are also talking about a provision in that state related to restaurant servers and other tipped employees. The measure would gradually repeal a law permitting an employer to take a tip credit toward its minimum wage obligation for tipped employees.

"We believe it is time the minimum wage in Maine does need to go up, but it needs to be something and more reasonable and sustainable for small employers," said Peter Gore of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, which says the wage should be \$10 an hour, with a continued tip credit.

Labor unions support the wage hikes and want South Dakota voters to reject the law lowering wages for workers under 18. In many states they have enlisted clergy members and other advocates for the poor to their side.

"The ballot measures are part of a much bigger picture and a much larger message from workers that they can't get by on the minimum wage," said Laura Huizar, staff attorney for the National Employment Law Project, which favors raising the wages.

What's less clear is whether minimum-wage ballot measures raise voter turnout overall, or change the prospects for one party or another.

"It certainly doesn't hurt turnout, but if you take surveys, even a vast majority of Republicans support raising the minimum wage," Waltman said.

And the growing list of states that have raised wages from the \$7.25 federal minimum, in effect since 2009, don't translate into national change, he said.

"If I'm a congressman from Alabama, what do I care that Colorado just raised the minimum wage? These state campaigns don't have much influence on Congress," Waltman said.

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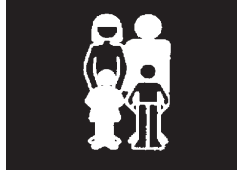
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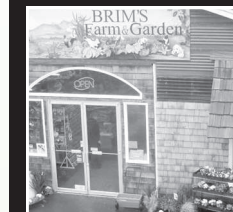
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Q: Should I cut back my roses and perennials that are done blooming? What else needs attention this time of year?
A: Don't cut roses back so hard, now that they don't have good cold resistance. Do take out the lighter tips and extra long branches that are prone to breaking in storms. Perennials also need a light cleanup now, but be especially careful not to take too much off lavenders, rosemary, lavender and cistus, to name a few. A light "buzz cut" to remove spent blooms and make the plants more compact will help plants hold up in winter storms. It's okay to leave some blooms for the birds on sedum, rudbeckia and echinacea. A one-inch layer of compost will give the garden a layer of feed and insulation that will carry your plants into next spring. Stop in for gloves, wheel barrels, rakes, slug bait, apple pickers and pruners for big and little fall cleanup jobs.



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