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The Augusta Chronicle

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PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Answers sought after Louisiana massacre



The Pugh and Elkins families gather while grieving the shooting deaths of family members on April 19 in Shreveport, Louisiana. Eight children were killed and two women injured. BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

Man kills 8 children; 7 were his own

Christopher Cann, Makenzie Boucher and N'dea Yancey-Bragg

USA TODAY NETWORK

SHREVEPORT, LA – Residents of this historic riverfront city remained shaken a day after a gunman opened fire April 19 and killed eight children in the nation's deadliest mass shooting since January 2024.

They were looking for explanations –

and authorities were trying to provide them, piecing together information on the tragedy.

Police said the suspect, identified as Shamar Elkins, also shot the mother of his children and another woman, both of whom survived with serious injuries. Elkins then fled the scene on foot and stole a car at gunpoint, leading to a police chase that ended with officers shooting him dead, according to police.

The victims killed were Jayla Elkins, 3; Shayla Elkins, 5; Kayla Pugh, 6; Layla Pugh, 7; Markaydon Pugh, 10; Sariah Snow, 11; Khedarrion Snow, 6; and Bray-

lon Snow, 5, the Caddo Parish Coroner's Office said. Seven of them were Shamar Elkins' children.

"I just don't know what to say – my heart is just taken aback," Shreveport Police Chief Wayne Smith said on April 19, adding that the attack was unlike anything he had ever seen in his more than four decades in law enforcement.

"It's indescribably disturbing," said U.S. Rep. Cleo Fields, who represents Shreveport, "perhaps one of the worst tragedies this city has ever seen."

See **SHOOTING**, Page 2A

Climate change worsening allergies

Erica Van Buren

Augusta Chronicle
USA TODAY NETWORK

Spring brings warm weather – and peak allergy season – which means more intense hay fever symptoms for many people.

Climate change is contributing to rapidly rising spring temperatures, more frequent extreme heat events and heavier rainfall, according to Climate Central.

Those shifts, driven by human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, are leading to longer growing seasons and more volatile weather patterns. Climate Central is a nonprofit climate reporting organization.

How climate change affects hay fever

Climate change is worsening hay fever symptoms in several ways, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health experts:

- **Longer pollen seasons:** Warming temperatures cause plants to flower earlier in spring and persist later into fall, extending pollen seasons by weeks in many regions.
- **More potent pollen:** Higher carbon dioxide levels and warmer conditions cause plants to produce more pollen – and pollen that is often more allergenic.
- **Increased exposure:** As pollen exposure increases, so do allergy symptoms, diagnoses and health care use.
- **Worsening air pollution:** Climate change contributes to higher levels of air pollution, including ozone, particulate matter and wildfire smoke, which can amplify allergic responses.

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Ossoff stresses affordability during local campaign swing

Joe Hotchkiss

Augusta Chronicle
USA TODAY NETWORK

Lowering health care premiums and returning consumers to financial affordability mean electing leaders instead of rulers, the state's senior U.S. senator said during a campaign swing through Augusta on Saturday.

With public criticism mounting against the Trump administration's handling of the economy, rising health care premiums and a war with Iran, Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff mounted an offensive to urge voters to fight for the ways of life he said they deserve.

"We were told MAGA was for the working class. Do you remember that?" he asked the assembly of more than

1,000 people at the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center. "But this is a government of, by and for the ultra-rich. They are the elites they pretend to hate. That's why they gutted Medicaid and let health insurance premiums double for nearly 20 million Americans: to fund another tax cut for the rich."

Ossoff emphasized flashpoint election-year issues including the afford-

bility of, and improved access to, health care and home ownership. He has launched an inquiry into how staffing shortages at Augusta's Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center have affected timely, quality health care for veterans.

The money to improve health care and housing affordability is there, he

See **OSSOFF**, Page 2A

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