

Groton Daily Independent

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Tuesday, Nov. 12

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, fries.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.

Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

Volleyball SoDak16: 7 p.m.: Groton Area vs. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton at the Huron Arena.

School Board Meeting, 7 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 13

Senior Menu: Turkey with dressing, mashed potatoes with gravy, glazed baby carrots, pumpkin bar, dinner roll.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Beef stew with a biscuit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, time to be determined.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Groton C&MA: Missions Night with Mike Picconatto (for all ages), 7 p.m.

FCCLA Food Drive, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 14

Senior Menu: Chicken cacciatore, rice pilaf, Italian blend, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, wedge fries.

JH GBB hosts Webster (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Groton Lions Club meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

Friday, Nov. 15

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, sweet potato, Normandy blend, chocolate pudding with banana, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.

School Lunch: Cheese pizza, green beans.

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FROSTY CLUE

I/My.....

12. I am in a business partnership



Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

GT
Groton Area
Tigers



SoDak16
Groton Area

vs.

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton

Tuesday, Nov. 12

7 p.m.

Huron Arena

**Free Viewing
on
GDILIVE.COM**

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

Trump Team Rollout

President-elect Donald Trump's future administration has begun taking shape with a wave of recently announced picks.

Rep. Elise Stefanik (R, NY-21)—a vocal supporter of Israel—has been tapped to serve as the US ambassador to the United Nations. Former New York congressman Lee Zeldin (R) was selected to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. Both Cabinet-level roles are likely to secure confirmation from the Republican-led Senate.

In the White House, Trump picked longtime strategist Susie Wiles for chief of staff, the first woman to fill the role, and yesterday named adviser and speechwriter Stephen Miller as deputy chief of staff. Trump also named Rep. Mike Waltz (R, FL-6)—a hardliner on China—to serve as his national security adviser.

Tom Homan—a former Immigration and Customs Enforcement official under the Obama and Trump administrations—was selected for the unofficial role of border czar, including overseeing maritime and aviation security. Homan's role won't require Senate confirmation.

The announcements come as control of the House remains undetermined. As of this writing, Republicans hold 214 of 218 seats needed for a majority, and Democrats hold 205 seats.

Delphi Murders Verdict

Richard Allen, 52, has been found guilty in the 2017 murders of two teenage girls near the small Indiana town of Delphi. A jury yesterday convicted Allen of two counts of murder and two counts of murder while kidnapping. The verdict comes more than seven years after an investigation began into one of Indiana's most high-profile cases, which has drawn national attention.

Abigail "Abby" Williams, 13, and Liberty "Libby" German, 14, went missing Feb. 13, 2017, after hiking near their hometown of 3,000 people. Their bodies were found a day later in a wooded area near the Delphi Historic Trail. Prosecutors presented evidence of Allen's voice captured on German's cellphone video instructing the girls to go "down the hill." Investigators had also seized a .40-caliber pistol from Allen's house and linked it to an unspent bullet (one that wasn't fired) found between the girls' bodies.

Allen will be sentenced Dec. 20. He faces a potential sentence of up to 130 years in prison.

COP29 Summit Begins

The UN climate summit, COP29, has opened in Azerbaijan, with representatives from nearly 200 nations discussing climate change solutions. Dubbed the "finance Conference of the Parties," the gathering will focus on increasing funding for developing nations to adapt to global warming. Although roughly \$1.5T has been spent on climate finance since 2022, less than 3% has reached the world's least developed countries.

Discussions include establishing a new annual climate finance target to replace an expiring \$100B pledge to support poorer nations in transitioning to clean energy. A UN report suggests an annual funding requirement between \$455B and \$584B from 98 countries is needed. COP29 also aims to update national emission reduction targets and strategies for transitioning away from fossil fuels, with 2024 expected to be the hottest year on record.

Notably, leaders from China, the US, and India—the top three carbon emitters—are absent. G20 nations produce roughly 77% of greenhouse gases, and experts say global investment must increase fivefold to limit warming within the Paris Agreement goals.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Shaboozey's "A Bar Song (Tipsy)" tops Billboard Hot 100 for 17th week, the second-longest stint at No. 1 in the chart's 66-year history.

Washington Spirit, NY/NJ Gotham FC, Orlando Pride, and Kansas City Current advance to National Women's Soccer League semifinals.

Taylor Swift is big winner at MTV Europe Music Awards with four wins; see complete list of winners.
2024 Booker Prize for fiction announced this afternoon (4:45 pm ET).

Science & Technology

Amazon to develop prototype smart glasses to help give delivery drivers step-by-step instructions to the correct address.

Researchers create a 3D hologram of a mouse embryo with 8 million distinct cells; approach could be extended to any species, allowing study of fetal development with unprecedented precision.

Astronomers find Voyager 2's 1986 flyby of Uranus may have coincided with a dramatic solar event, skewing scientists' understanding of the planet's magnetosphere for the past four decades.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow +0.7%, Nasdaq +0.1%); Dow closes above 44,000 for first time as postelection rally continues.

Bitcoin sets another record, surpasses \$87K.

Chipotle Mexican Grill names interim chief Scott Boatwright as permanent CEO roughly three months after former Chipotle CEO Brian Niccol left to lead Starbucks.

US highway safety regulator opens investigation into Honda and Acura on reports of possible engine failures in as many as 1.4 million vehicle models from between 2016 and 2020.

Politics & World Affairs

Haiti's international airport shuts down after gangs open fire at commercial flight landing in the country's capital of Port-au-Prince; comes day after Haitian interim prime minister was fired.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba survives run-off vote in parliament to stay in his role; vote comes after his Liberal Democratic Party lost its parliamentary majority in last month's general election.

Atmospheric rivers to bring back-to-back snow and rain to Pacific Northwest and Northern California this week.

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion

Annual Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



Surviving Thanksgiving

Editor's note: A memory from a Thanksgiving past.

I'm going to end the suspense right now. No one died from my Thanksgiving Day dinner.

I did not realize that for the many years I have been making turkeys for the holidays, I have been putting people in mortal danger.

This all started last week, when I was setting up tables and chairs and finalizing plans to host our family Thanksgiving in the repurposed Congregational Church I moved to my property several years ago.

Anyway, I have the space, and I thought I would give my Mom a break. But even from 60 miles away, this thing was micromanaged from the start. I decided to do festive, but disposable, place settings, rather than drag all of that from the main house.

Then Mom called. "Did you put the turkey in the refrigerator to thaw?"

"Of course not. I've been thawing birds in cold water in the sink since the '80s. Thanksgiving is four days away."

But, she explained, as one does to the dim-witted, in short succinct sentences, that it was much safer to do it her way. Well, I got up at 5:30 a.m. Thanksgiving Day and threw a ham into one oven and then trudged across the yard to start the turkey.

The turkey was a brick. It might have even been more frozen! I was so mad at my mother. None of this would have happened, if she had just let me continue my annual unintentional killing spree.

I went from despair to anger. I considered calling her at that ungodly hour to chew her out, but thought better of it. I realized she'd probably just give me more bad advice.

Meanwhile, my sister, Sherry, who is bossier than my mom, and my sister-in-law Pam, who I have nothing bad to say about, because she scares me, were already contemplating the disaster that awaited them. They wondered what I would forget, or what I would burn. And about the phone number of the county coroner.

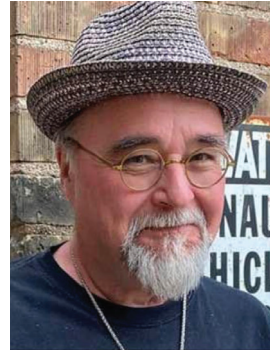
Meanwhile, I called the Butterball hotline. I never got a real answer. Just hysterical laughter. Can you cook a frozen turkey? As a matter of fact, yes. It came out a delicious brown and the meat fell off the bone. And it was done on schedule. I'd rather not talk about the giblets.

The minute Mom arrived, I lit into her, though, just as a matter of principle. Our family functions are usually combative anyway, so throwing the first punch is a widely-respected strategy. I had her on her heels all day. No matter what the subject, I brought it right back to flawed turkey-thawing methods and the heroic efforts required to overcome them.

My brother, Mike, prayed before we ate. "Please Jesus, don't make us eat this food. Amen."

Mom called the next day to report that the debriefing went well. Everyone was suitably impressed with my organizational and culinary skills.

Mike was still praying, though, in case of a delayed reaction.



That's Life
by Tony Bender

Groton Area Veteran's Day Program



Gretchen Dinger and Faith Traphagen were the masters of ceremony for the Veteran's Day Program held Monday. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



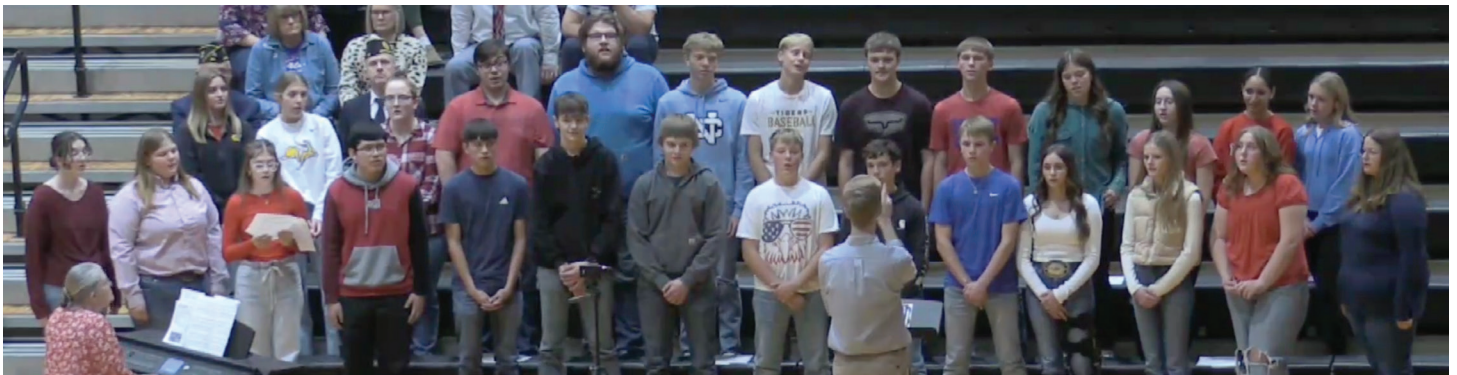
The All-State Chorus students, under the direction of Landon Brown, sang the "Star Spangled Banner." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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The middle school band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, performed, "Heroes and Glory." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



The high school choir, under the direction of Landon Brown, sang, "American Hymn." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



The middle school choir, under the direction of Landon Brown, sang, "America the Beautiful."

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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The second and third graders, under the direction of Landon Brown, sang, Solider, This Song I Sing for You.” (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



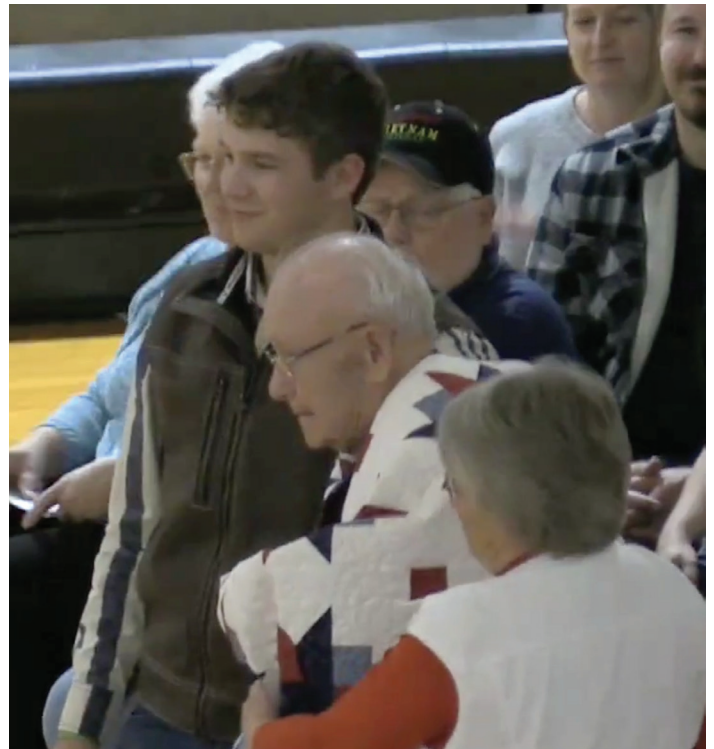
The junior kindergarten, kindergarten and first graders, under the direction of Landon Brown, sang, “This Land is Your Land.” (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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Emerlee Jones read the story of Ron Falk. Tami Zimney and Wright presented Falk with his quilt of honor. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Kaden Kampa read the story of his grandpa, Lloyd Dennert. Kampa and Tami Zimney presented Dennert with his quilt of honor. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Jaedyn Penning read the story of Gary Hoops, who was unable to make it to the event. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Laila Roberts read the story of Doug Hamilton. Tami Zimney and Roberts presented Hamilton with his quilt of honor. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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Jerica Locke read the story of Gary Sombke. Tami Zimney and Locke presented Sombke with his quilt of honor. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Talli Wright read the story of Clint Jacobson. Laila Roberts and Wright presented Jacobson with his quilt of honor. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Bruce Babcock, Groton American Legion commander, presented the Groton Legion Auxiliary with the Outstanding Education Program Award. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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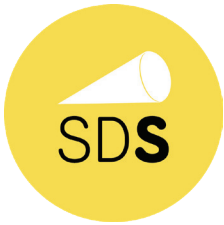


The high school band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, performed the "Service Songs."

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Jayden Schwan performed "Taps" at the end of the ceremony. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Trump pressures senators, including Thune, vying to be U.S. Senate GOP leader

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 11, 2024 3:23 PM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump is making demands of the next Senate Republican leader ahead of a closed-door election this week, writing on social media that whoever is chosen should recess the chamber early next year so he can appoint whoever he wants without having to go through the confirmation process.

"Any Republican Senator seeking the coveted LEADERSHIP position in the United States Senate must agree to Recess Appointments (in the Senate!), without which we will not be able to get people confirmed in a timely manner," Trump wrote. "Sometimes the votes can take two years, or more. This is what they did four years ago, and we cannot let it happen again."

If the Senate were to recess for an extended period after Inauguration Day on Jan. 20, it would ensure Trump could freely make appointments to top-ranking positions in government, including the secretary of Defense and Treasury secretary, without needing the support of centrist GOP lawmakers. Senate Republicans are on track for a majority of 53 seats, with one race, in Arizona, still undecided.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn, Florida Sen. Rick Scott and South Dakota Sen. John Thune — who are competing for the majority leader post — all quickly got in line with social media posts of their own about what are called recess appointments.

"It is unacceptable for Senate Ds to blockade President @realDonaldTrump's cabinet appointments," Cornyn wrote on social media. "If they do, we will stay in session, including weekends, until they relent. Additionally, the Constitution expressly confers the power on the President to make recess appointments.

"Article II, Section 2, Clause 3: The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session."

Thune wrote: "We must act quickly and decisively to get the president's nominees in place as soon as possible, & all options are on the table to make that happen, including recess appointments. We cannot let Schumer and Senate Dems block the will of the American people." Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, is the Senate majority leader.

Scott commented on Trump's original post, saying that he agreed "100%"

"I will do whatever it takes to get your nominations through as quickly as possible," Scott said.

Skipping over the Senate's advice and consent power would likely mean no committee hearings for nominees named through recess appointments, preventing them from having to answer lawmakers' questions about their experience and policy goals.

It would also prevent senators from having to take what might be difficult floor votes on possibly controversial Trump nominees.

Trump has just started to announce who he's selecting for posts in his next administration, naming a "border czar," ambassador to the United Nations and EPA administrator as of Monday afternoon.

Supreme Court ruling

The Senate has avoided recessing for more than three days in the middle of a session for years, under both Republican and Democratic majorities.

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Instead, when the Senate leaves Capitol Hill for weeks at a time, the chamber holds what's known as a pro forma session every three days to prevent recess appointments. Those usually last just a few minutes and don't typically include any legislative business.

The pro forma sessions, in part, stem from a unanimous Supreme Court ruling in June 2014 that held a president could fill vacancies during a congressional recess if it lasted more than 10 days.

"In light of historical practice, a recess of more than 3 days but less than 10 days is presumptively too short to fall within the Clause," the justices wrote in *National Labor Relations Board v. Noel Canning*.

That case began after then-President Barack Obama made three appointments to the National Labor Relations Board in 2012, even though the Democratic-controlled Senate was holding pro forma sessions every few days.

Opposition to Obama recess appointments

Republicans in Congress, including Thune and Cornyn, praised the Supreme Court's decision at the time, sharply criticizing Obama for having tried to get around the Senate.

Thune released a written statement, saying the Supreme Court had blocked Obama from attempting "to violate the separation of powers."

"When the president couldn't get his appointments through the Senate, he decided to ignore the law and attempt an end run around Congress," Thune wrote. "I am pleased that the Supreme Court unanimously rejected the president's attempt to circumvent the Constitution. Today's decision reaffirms the fact that Congress, not the president, has the authority to determine its own rules."

Cornyn criticized Obama for making "unilateral actions" that gave "the perception he doesn't care what Congress says."

"As a matter of fact, this morning the Supreme Court rebuked the President on an illegal recess appointment — unconstitutional recess appointment," Cornyn said during a floor speech, according to the *Congressional Record*.

Scott was not a member of Congress when the Supreme Court issued its ruling.

Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley at the time praised "the Supreme Court's decision to strike down President Obama's illegal recess appointments."

"Article II, section 2 of the Constitution provides for only two ways in which Presidents may appoint certain officers: First, it provides that the President nominates and, by and with the advice of the Senate, appoints various officers," Grassley said. "Second, it permits the President to make temporary appointments when a vacancy in one of those offices happens when the Senate is in recess."

During Trump's first term in office, Senate Republicans held pro forma sessions as a way to avoid recess appointments and ensure the chamber had the time to vet the people Trump wanted to run some of the most powerful institutions in the country, including the Defense Department.

Any recess appointments Trump might make in the future would expire at the end of the Senate's "next session," meaning he would need to go through the process all over again within two years, according to a report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

Election planned Wednesday

Senate Republicans will hold closed-door, secret ballot leadership elections Wednesday to select new colleagues to fill the top positions.

Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, who has held the Republican leader title since 2007, opted not to continue in that role once the new Congress begins, leading to a three-way race between Cornyn, Scott and Thune.

Whoever Republicans elect as their next leader, along with the other members of the leadership team, will have a significant role determining the Senate's agenda for the next two years as well as setting the tone with the incoming Trump administration.

They'll also need to broker deals with Democrats on must-pass legislation, like the annual government funding bills and yearly defense policy bill.

Wyoming's John Barrasso is running unopposed for the whip position, currently held by Thune and previously held by Cornyn.

Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton and Iowa's Joni Ernst are competing to hold the No. 3 leadership position of Conference Chair, currently held by Barrasso.

Republicans will also elect a Policy Committee Chairman, Vice Chairman of the Conference and chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee to round out the six-person Senate leadership team.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Summit pipeline decision in Minnesota could come Dec. 12

BY: JEFF BEACH, NORTH DAKOTA MONITOR - NOVEMBER 11, 2024 3:02 PM

An administrative law judge report recommends that Minnesota approve a small segment of the massive Summit Carbon Solutions project that would pass through states including South Dakota and store millions of tons of carbon dioxide underground in North Dakota.

A final decision from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission could come at its Dec. 12 meeting, a spokesperson for the agency said in an email.

The 28-mile segment in Otter Tail and Wilkin counties would connect the Green Plains ethanol plant at Fergus Falls in northwest Minnesota to about 2,500 miles of pipeline planned by Summit Carbon Solutions.

If built, the five-state pipeline network would send carbon emissions from ethanol plants to a permanent underground storage area northwest of Bismarck.

The report filed last week by an administrative law judge said an environmental impact statement is adequate and the project is unlikely to pollute Minnesota's natural resources.

CURE, a Minnesota environmental group opposed to the project, said the report "fails to address the many concerns that impacted landowners and hundreds of community members have raised in written comments and public hearings."

The group said the commission "will be setting a dangerously low bar for environmental review for Summit's current project and the other pipelines it has plans to build in the state."

In an emailed statement, Summit said "this report reflects the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in ensuring the project meets rigorous standards."

Summit says it has secured 89% of the 28-mile route through voluntary easements. In Minnesota, Summit does not have the option of using eminent domain to obtain right-of-way for the pipeline.

Eminent domain is a point of contention with landowners in other states.

Summit did not say when it expects to file for a route permit for the larger larger part of its project in west-central and southern Minnesota.

Summit is awaiting rulings in North Dakota on permit applications for its pipeline route and underground storage.

Iowa has granted Summit a permit, and the company says it plans to apply again on Nov. 19 for a permit in South Dakota. The project also includes Nebraska, which has no state agency in charge of issuing permits for CO2 pipelines.

The report says Summit plans to begin construction in Minnesota in the third quarter of 2025.

North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

COMMENTARY

Lower ag greenhouse gas emissions driven by market, climate shifts — not policy

DAVE DICKEY, INVESTIGATE MIDWEST

The president of the American Farm Bureau Federation has gotten it totally wrong on why agricultural greenhouse gas emissions have fallen in the EPA's most recent annual emissions inventory report.

The EPA report showed agricultural emissions nationwide dropped an admirable 1.8% from 2021 to 2022. U.S. agricultural emissions in 2022 were 634 million metric tons in CO2 equivalents — 9.99% of all U.S. greenhouse emissions. The 2022 ag decline was the largest decrease of all sectors that EPA reports on including transportation, energy and industrial usage.

On the surface, that's great news for combating climate change brought on by greenhouse gas warming the planet. Right? But check under the hood, and it's a different story.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall would have you believe that new and improved on-the-farm practices were primarily responsible for the decline.

"The latest numbers demonstrate farmers' and ranchers' commitment to growing the food and fiber America's families rely on while improving the land, air and water, a benefit to the farm and the climate. The drop in agricultural emissions highlights the success and importance of voluntary and market-based programs that support farmer efforts in sustainable agriculture practices."

Not so fast, Zippy.

The EPA report paints a different story: "From 2021 to 2022, emissions decreased by 2 percent, largely driven by a decrease in beef cattle populations."

Yup. There were fewer cattle in the U.S. USDA reported the U.S. all-cattle inventory fell by 1.9 million head in 2021 to 91.9 million. And cattle are the number one driver of U.S. methane discharges.

This past January, USDA reported 87.2 million head of cattle and calves on U.S. farms. And cattle production this year continues to decline.

All of which could potentially further lower agricultural greenhouse emissions.

Fewer cattle in 2021 was also responsible for lower nitrous oxide emissions from concentrated animal feeding operations' manure lagoons. Fewer cattle equals less poop.

The truth of the matter is that drought was primarily responsible for falling U.S. agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in 2021. Yes. Drought.

Going into the fall of 2021, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported, "90% of the West region (including Colorado and Wyoming) is characterized as 'in drought' with 54% in Extreme Drought or Exceptional Drought."

Dryer than a James Bond vodka martini.

Let's connect the dots. Severe drought blanketed U.S. cattle producing states in 2021. The drought decimated available grassy pasture and reduced water supplies.

Simply put, the weather forced many cattle producers to cull their herds.

And the drought accelerated into 2022, reaching record proportions.

Fertilizer usage also contributes to nitrous oxide emissions in the U.S. In 2021, retail fertilizer prices spiked higher due to supply chain shortages linked to Russia's war on Ukraine.

USDA reported in its Crop Production 2022 Summary that corn for grain production was estimated at 13.7 billion bushels, down 9% from the 2021 estimate. Meanwhile, soybean production totaled 4.28 billion bushels, down 4% from 2021. Overall, the area harvested for grain was estimated at 79.2 million acres, down 7% from the 2021 estimate.

Faced with sky-high fertilizer prices in 2021, farmers either reduced planted acreage on their farms or switched when possible from corn to soybeans, which uses less fertilizer.

In 2021, farmers made pragmatic fertilizer decisions based on profitability, rather than on any new policy, law or regulation.

Which is to say that U.S. agricultural greenhouse gas emission numbers are squishy, requiring interpre-

tation to understand their implications to fighting climate change.

Fertilizer prices rise and fall. If it's profitable, cattle producers will begin increasing herd size.

In short, the 1.8% decline in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 isn't sustainable.

Much more needs to be done to improve measurement, monitoring, reporting, and verification of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration in climate-smart agriculture and forestry.

Fortunately, that effort could soon be underway — if it isn't somehow torpedoed by the November elections. USDA has named seven areas of focus including establishment of "a soil carbon monitoring and research network with a perennial biomass component," and improving "models and tools for assessing greenhouse gas outcomes at operational, state, regional, and national scales."

It's important that USDA be allowed to proceed to better understand climate change outcomes brought on by U.S. contribution to global warming, with an eye toward giving farmers additional greenhouse gas mitigation opportunities not based on drought or supply and demand.

David Dickey served tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy, is a 1988 graduate of the University of Illinois College of Media, and spent 28 years at the University of Illinois NPR member station WILL-AM 580. During the last 13 years of his career at WILL, he served as the station's director of agricultural programming. He started contributing on a freelance basis to Investigate Midwest in 2015. His focus is on national agricultural issues that often cross over into state agricultural or local agricultural policy.

For EPA chief, Trump picks former Congressman Lee Zeldin of New York

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - NOVEMBER 11, 2024 3:50 PM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump Monday said he will nominate former U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin of New York to serve as head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Zeldin, also a former GOP candidate for New York governor, said on social media that it would be an honor to be appointed to Trump's Cabinet. The Senate, which Republicans will control next year, will have to confirm Zeldin's nomination.

Zeldin does not necessarily come from an environmental background. He's an attorney and currently serves as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. While in Congress from 2015 to 2023, he served on the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee and on the House Financial Services Committee.

"We will restore US energy dominance, revitalize our auto industry to bring back American jobs, and make the US the global leader of AI," Zeldin wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "We will do so while protecting access to clean air and water."

In a statement, Trump said that Zeldin comes from a "strong legal background," and "has been a true fighter for America First policies."

Zeldin serves as a chair of America First Policy Institute, a right-wing think tank that is packed with former Trump officials.

"He will ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions that will be enacted in a way to unleash the power of American businesses, while at the same time maintaining the highest environmental standards, including the cleanest air and water on the planet," Trump said. "He will set new standards on environmental review and maintenance, that will allow the United States to grow in a healthy and well-structured way."

During Zeldin's run for New York governor in 2022, a man attacked him on stage, but was quickly apprehended and Zeldin was uninjured. New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul won the race.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Trump selects U.S. House member from New York as ambassador to the United Nations

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - NOVEMBER 11, 2024 11:18 AM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump has tapped U.S. House Republican Conference Chair Elise Stefanik for the position of United Nations ambassador, according to an exclusive his transition team provided Sunday to the New York Post.

Trump told the conservative outlet Stefanik, a New York Republican, is “an incredibly strong, tough, and smart America First fighter.”

States Newsroom reached out to both Trump’s transition team and Stefanik’s office for comment but has not received replies.

Stefanik, an enthusiastic Trump surrogate, campaigned for the president-elect and was considered among Trump’s potential vice presidential candidate picks.

Stefanik enjoyed the limelight late last year for escalating the ouster of two university presidents after she questioned them on antisemitism on college campuses.

The New York Republican introduced a resolution in June 2023 to expunge Trump’s 2019 and 2021 impeachments, but the measures, brought forth with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, did not advance.

Stefanik was a staunch defender of Trump during his 2019 impeachment sparked by Trump’s threat to withhold aid to Ukraine unless the country’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy investigated President Joe Biden, then Trump’s 2020 presidential race rival.

Stefanik ascended, with Trump’s support, to the No. 3 position of GOP conference chair in 2021 after the party removed former Rep. Liz Cheney from the spot. Cheney, a Wyoming Republican, voted to impeach Trump in 2021 following his refusal to concede his loss in the 2020 presidential election, which culminated in a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Stefanik holds positions on the House committees on the Armed Forces, and Education and Workforce. She also sits on the Select Committee on Intelligence.

U.S House Majority Leader Steve Scalise issued a statement Monday calling Stefanik a “fantastic choice” for the position.

“I will miss Elise, who has become a dear friend in the House as well as a respected leader as our Republican Conference Chair. She is extremely qualified for this new role in public service, and the House’s loss will be a huge gain for the Trump Administration and the country. There is nobody better to represent President Trump’s foreign policy and America’s values at the United Nations than Elise Stefanik,” the Louisiana Republican said.

Control of the House has not yet been determined as ballot counting continues for several races, but the split as of Monday stands at 214 Republicans and 203 Democrats, according to calls by The Associated Press.

Stefanik was not always a Trump loyalist and voted against the then-president’s signature tax law in 2017.

Ashley Murray covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Trump taps former acting ICE director as his new ‘border czar’

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - NOVEMBER 11, 2024 10:58 AM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump late Sunday announced he will appoint Tom Homan as “border czar” in his administration as Trump seeks to carry out his campaign commitment of mass deportations of immigrants who lack permanent legal status.

Homan is the former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the previous Trump administration who backed the controversial “zero tolerance” policy that separated families at the southern border.

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Homan will have authority over the southern border, northern border, the maritime border and aviation security, according to a post from Trump's social media site, Truth Social. Trump did not in the social media post specify what exact government post Homan would occupy.

"I've known Tom for a long time, and there is nobody better at policing and controlling our Borders," Trump said. "I have no doubt he will do a fantastic, and long awaited for, job."

Another former Trump official who played a heavy role in immigration policy, Stephen Miller, will be appointed as White House deputy chief of staff for policy, according to CNN. Vice president-elect J.D. Vance congratulated Miller on X, formerly known as Twitter.

As the incoming Trump administration plans to carry out mass deportations of people without proper legal status, Trump said Homan will be in charge of sending deported people back to their countries of origin. In order for that to happen, the country of origin must agree to accept those people the United States wants to deport.

Homan served as acting director of ICE from 2017 to 2018. In a recent interview with CBS News, he said that deportations would be targeted.

"It's going to be a well-targeted, planned operation conducted by the men of ICE. The men and women of ICE do this daily. They're good at it," Homan said. "When we go out there, we're going to know who we're looking for. We most likely know where they're going to be, and it's going to be done in a humane manner."

There are more than 14.4 million individuals who live in mixed status families, meaning that at least one member has a different legal status. During the interview, Homan was asked if mass deportations could happen without separating families.

"Of course there is," he said. "Families can be deported together."

Under the 2018 "zero tolerance" policy, at least 5,000 migrant families were separated. The Department of Homeland Security has reunited about 74% of those families, but there are still 998 children who have not been reunited.

Trump has previously declined to say whether he would resume family separations in a second term.

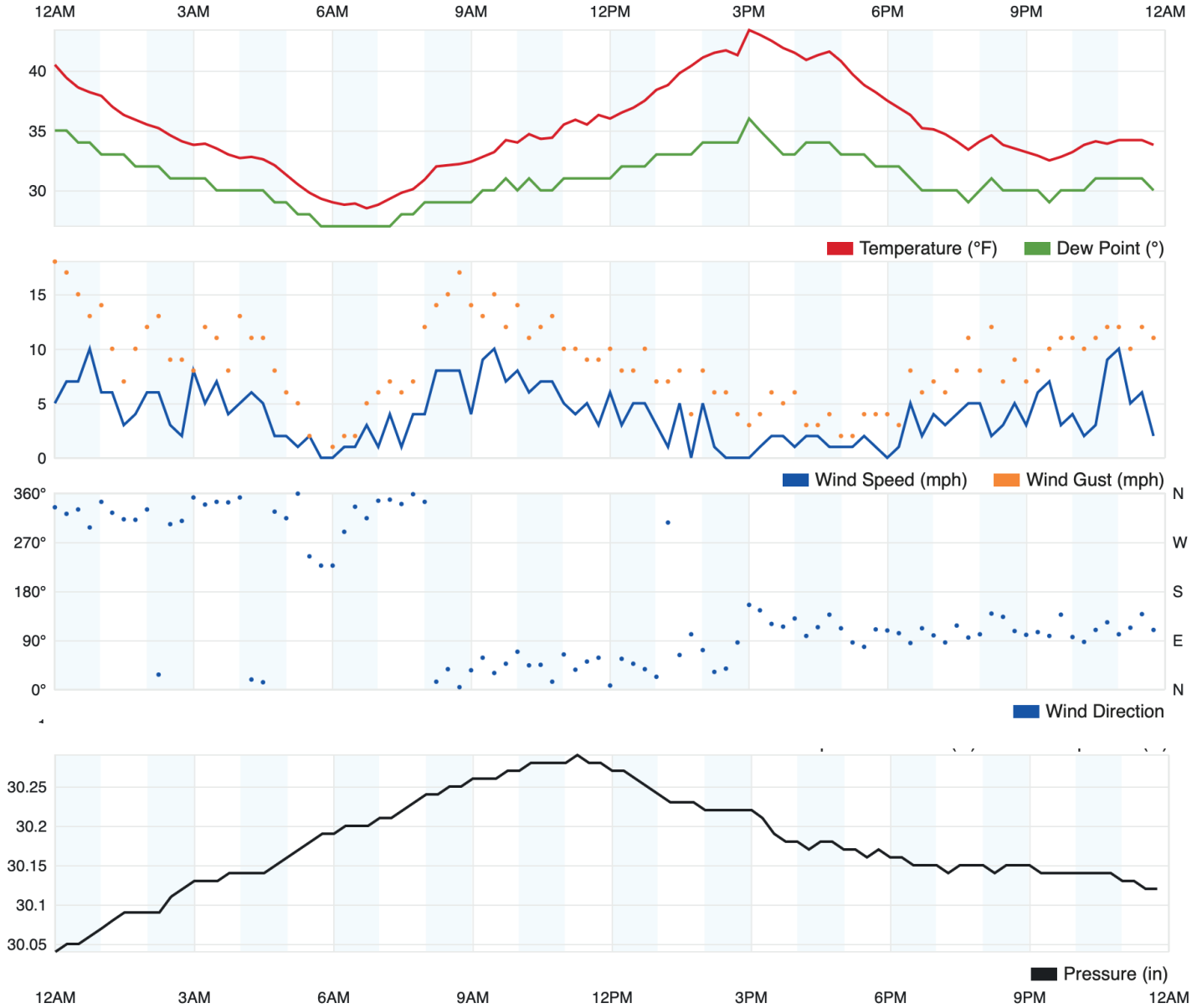
"Well, when you have that policy, people don't come. If a family hears that they're going to be separated, they love their family. They don't come. So I know it sounds harsh," Trump said during a CNN town hall in May 2023.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

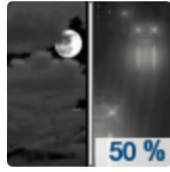
Tonight

Wednesday

Wednesday Night

Thursday

Thursday Night



High: 53 °F

Low: 41 °F

High: 51 °F

Low: 26 °F

High: 52 °F

Low: 27 °F

Mostly Sunny and Breezy

Mostly Cloudy then Chance Rain

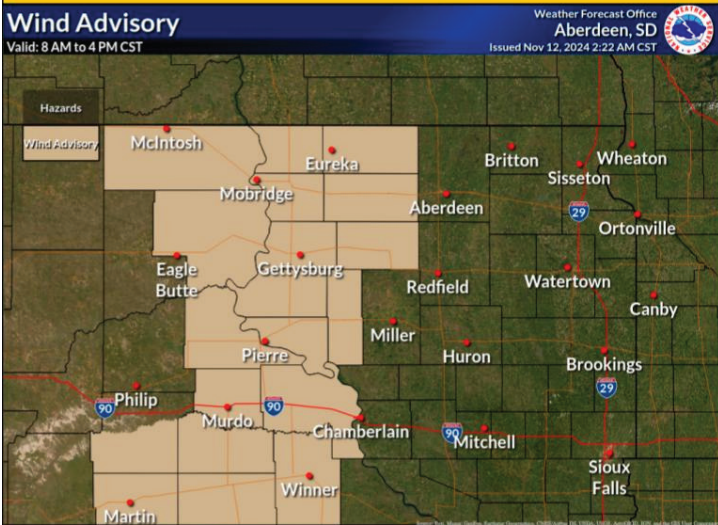
Chance Rain then Slight Chance Rain

Partly Cloudy

Sunny

Mostly Clear

Strong Winds Today



Key Messages

- Strongest winds will be over central South Dakota today with sustained southerly winds between 25 to 35 mph, gusts up to 45 mph
- Winds will diminish a bit tonight

	Wind Gust Forecast (mph)									
	11/12 Tue					11/13 Wed				
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	Maximum	
Aberdeen	30	35	37	37	31	30	23	20	37	
Britton	28	32	36	38	35	33	28	23	38	
Brookings	26	33	33	36	32	31	31	28	36	
Chamberlain	29	33	37	39	28	28	21	22	39	
Clark	30	32	35	37	35	35	30	24	37	
Eagle Butte	39	41	44	37	23	26	33	33	44	
Ellendale	29	35	39	39	31	28	22	18	39	
Eureka	36	40	44	44	31	24	17	21	44	
Gettysburg	32	38	40	39	30	23	20	23	40	
Huron	31	36	37	39	32	31	28	24	39	
Kennebec	31	36	40	40	31	24	22	29	40	
McIntosh	35	38	40	33	22	24	28	28	40	
Milbank	21	25	30	31	28	28	25	22	31	
Miller	31	35	38	38	31	28	22	23	38	
Mobridge	35	36	38	35	28	23	22	24	38	
Murdo	32	36	41	38	26	24	29	31	41	
Pierre	30	35	37	35	28	21	21	25	37	
Redfield	31	33	37	38	31	30	24	21	38	
Sisseton	29	31	33	35	31	30	28	23	35	
Watertown	28	31	33	35	33	33	31	28	35	
Webster	30	33	36	38	37	36	31	26	38	
Wheaton	28	31	33	37	31	30	28	24	37	

Winds today will be sustained out the south between 25 to 35 mph, with gusts up to 45 mph. Strongest winds will be over central South Dakota. Winds will diminish a bit tonight.

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Rain Returns Wednesday

November 12, 2024
4:18 AM

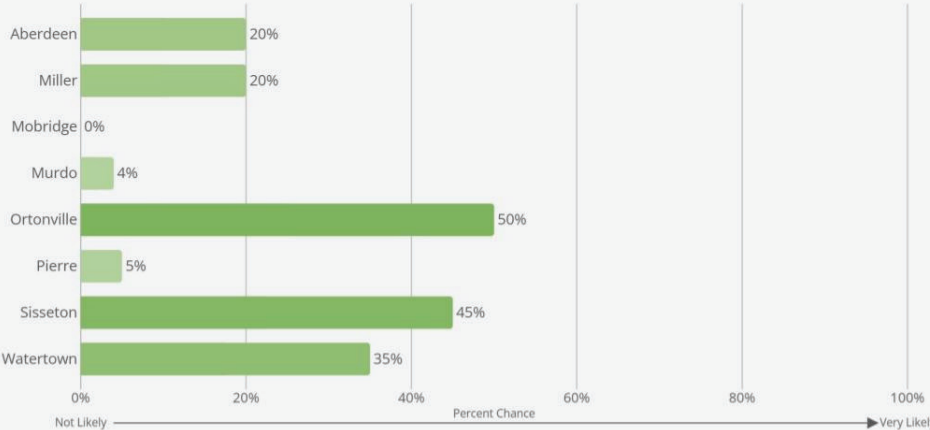
Key Messages



- Highest rain chances (50 - 90%) will be mainly along and east of the James River early Wednesday
- Probability of rainfall over 0.25" ranges from 35 to 50% in this area.

Chance of 24 hr Precipitation Greater Than 0.25 in

Ending Thursday Morning, Nov 14



Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	11/12	11/13						
	Tue	Wed						
	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	20	40	45	40	30	15	5	0
Britton	15	40	65	75	40	35	15	0
Brookings	20	55	50	75	75	70	45	0
Chamberlain	40	50	40	20	10	10	5	0
Clark	15	75	70	70	50	45	25	0
Ellendale	15	40	45	40	20	20	5	0
Eureka	20	35	25	15	15	5	0	0
Gettysburg	20	30	10	20	10	5	0	0
Huron	25	55	50	50	40	30	20	0
Kennebec	40	30	15	10	10	5	5	0
McIntosh	15	10	10	5	0	0	0	0
Milbank	5	65	75	90	85	75	45	5
Miller	30	40	45	30	15	20	10	0
Mobridge	25	25	20	10	0	0	0	0
Murdo	5	15	15	5	0	0	0	0
Pierre	5	15	15	10	5	0	0	0
Redfield	15	30	55	45	30	20	10	0
Sisseton	10	65	75	80	75	65	40	5
Watertown	15	70	75	80	80	65	35	0
Webster	20	70	65	80	60	45	30	0
Wheaton	5	55	80	90	85	75	50	5

A system will bring 20 to 90 percent chance of rain with the highest probabilities east of the James River over northeastern SD into west central MN. Probability of a quarter of an inch is 20 to 45 percent in this area, highest over western MN

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 44 °F at 3:05 PM

Low Temp: 28 °F at 6:45 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 12:10 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 40 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 68 in 1905

Record Low: -14 in 1896

Average High: 44

Average Low: 21

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.36

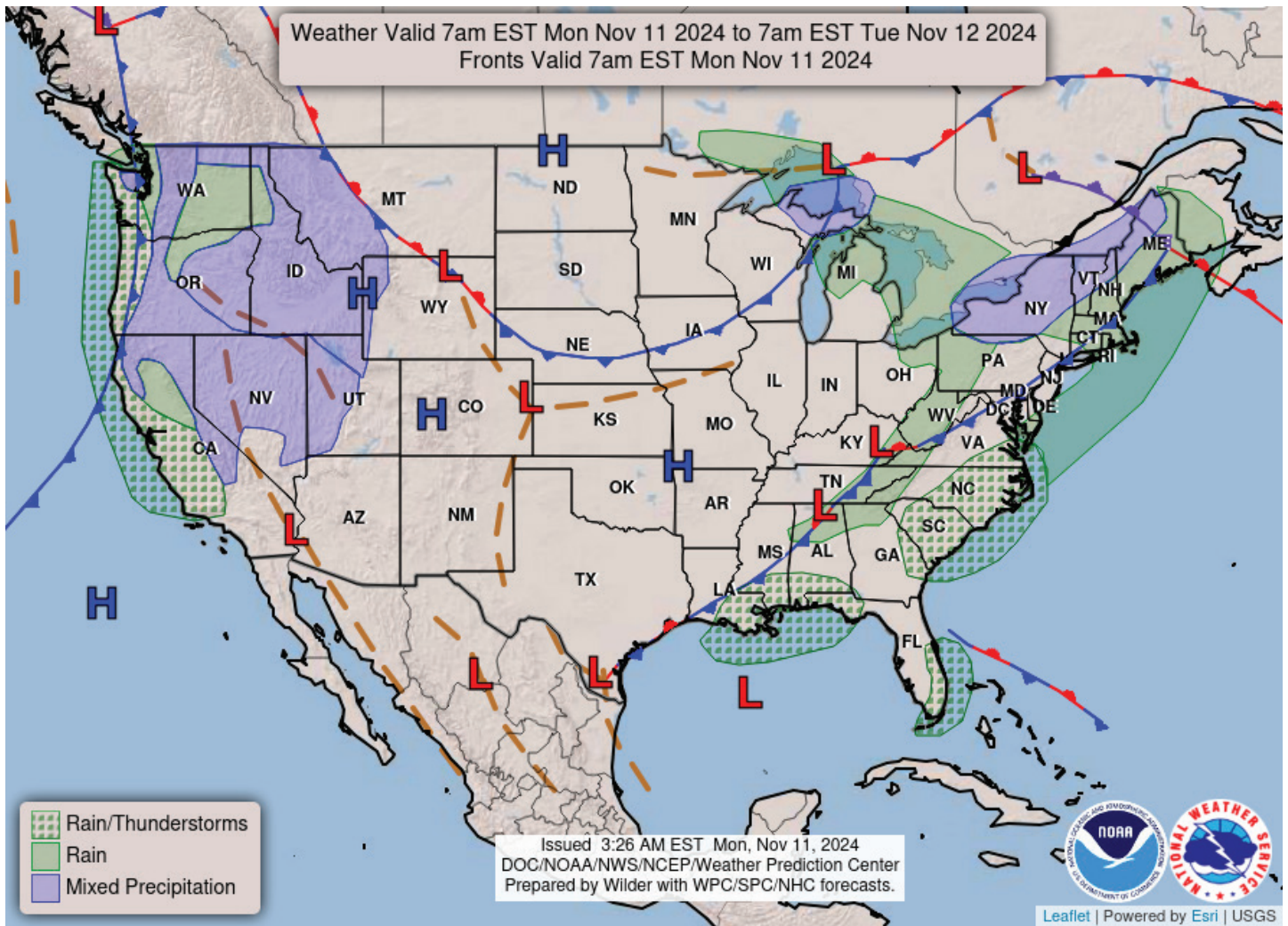
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.76

Average Precip to date: 20.83

Precip Year to Date: 20.64

Sunset Tonight: 5:06:39 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27:59 am



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Today in Weather History

November 12, 1993: A winter storm moved through the area on November 12th and 13th. A wintry mix of precipitation in the form of freezing rain, sleet, and snow began during the afternoon on the 12th in western portions of Minnesota, while heavy snow fell in a swath from southwest South Dakota through central and northeast parts of the state, with generally four to eight inches reported. Freezing rain also preceded the snow in south-central South Dakota. Significant accumulation of ice occurred within about a 70-mile wide area from west central Minnesota into the Arrowhead region. Up to five inches of snow fell on top of the ice, making travel extremely hazardous. In South Dakota, locally heavier snowfall amounts included 12 inches at Midland and 10 inches central Hughes County. Several schools and other community events were closed due to the ice and snow. In south central South Dakota, trees were damaged by heavy ice, some of which fell on power lines, causing an outage. Other snowfall amounts include; 8.0 inches in Blunt; 7.0 inches in Murdo and near Victor; and 6.0 inches near Onida, Faulkton, Highmore, and Leola.

November 12, 2003: High winds brought down a 70-foot gas station sign in Kennebec. The sign fell onto a shed, causing considerable damage to the shed. A 25-foot radio tower on the Kennebec courthouse was also knocked down by the winds.

1906 - The mercury soared to 106 degrees at Craftonville, CA, a November record for the U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1959 - Between Noon on the 11th and Noon on the 12th, a winter storm buried Helena, MT, under 21.5 inches of snow, which surpassed their previous 24 hour record by seven inches. (The Weather Channel)

1968 - A severe coastal storm produced high winds and record early snows from Georgia to Maine. Winds reached 90 mph in Massachusetts, and ten inches of snow blanketed interior Maine. (David Ludlum)

1970: The deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded, and one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern times occurred on this day in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The Bhola Cyclone first formed over the Bay of Bengal on November 8 and traveled north. This cyclone reached peak intensity, Category 3, on the 11, and made landfall on the coast of East Pakistan the following afternoon. The Bhola Cyclone killed an estimated 500,000 people and caused nearly \$90 million in damage (1970 USD).

1974 - A great Alaska storm in the Bering Sea caused the worst coastal flooding of memory at Nome AK with a tide of 13.2 feet. The flooding caused 12 million dollars damage, however no lives are lost. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Heavy snow spread across much of New England. Totals in Massachusetts ranged up to 14 inches in Plymouth County. The seven inch total at the Logan Airport in Boston was their highest of record for so early in the season, and the 9.7 inch total at Providence RI was a record for November. Roads were clogged with traffic and made impassable as snowplow operators were caught unprepared for the early season snowstorm. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the afternoon and early evening hours. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Bovina MS. Morning thunderstorms drenched Atlanta TX with more than four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-three cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s from the Southern and Central Plains to the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast Region. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Scottsbluff NE was a record for November, and highs of 76 degrees at Rapid City SD and 81 degrees at Chattanooga TN were the warmest of record for so late in the season. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - Thunderstorms developed in southern California and produced torrential downpours across parts of the Los Angeles area. More than 5 inches of rain fell in just 2 hours in southern Los Angeles, producing severe urban flooding. Small hail also accompanied the storms, accumulating several inches deep in some areas of the city. Nearly 115,000 electrical customers lost power as the storms affected the area (Associated Press).



FAITH OR FEAR?

When Mario Marini, a famous Italian painter and sculptor, was young, he fashioned a series of figures of men on horses. The first one he sculpted appeared young, strong, fierce, formidable and triumphant with expressions of extreme confidence. But as he continued his series of bronze figures, each rider and horse appeared to become less confident and certain of being victorious. In fact, the last figure in the series portrays a rider and his horse frozen in terror.

When asked about the way his series changed from triumph to terror, he replied, "That is because I believe that we are approaching the time of a sorry end to the world."

How different for the Christian! Rather than fear, we have faith. In place of horror, we have hope. Because of our God we know that we shall be given eternal life through Christ our Savior and Lord, and we will be with Him throughout eternity.

How blest we are to have the words of the Psalmist: "Even though I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I do not need to be possessed by fear, for You, Creator of life, are with me to protect me!"

Our Savior will guide us and guard us and grant us victory. One day we will also say with the Psalmist, "Your goodness and unending kindness has been with me all of my life, and afterwards I will live with You in Your home – forever!"

Prayer: Grant us, Father, Your peace that passes all understanding and the assurance that You are the God of all comfort and that we do not fear the threats of life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.08.24

25 28 42 64 69 19

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$361,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 57 Mins
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.11.24

15 38 39 50 52 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$14,430,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 12
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.11.24

5 11 17 19 30 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 27 Mins
DRAW: 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.09.24

5 6 18 25 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$96,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 27
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.11.24

16 23 38 40 57 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 56
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.11.24

3 21 24 34 46 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$113,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 56
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
Cancelled: Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
12/14/2024 Santa Day at Professional Management Services, downtown Groton
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary Salad Luncheon
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/20/2025 NSU Gypsy Day
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

News from the **AP** Associated Press

A record 13 women will be governors next year after New Hampshire elected Kelly Ayotte

By ISABELLA VOLMERT and SEJAL GOVINDARAO Associated Press

The election of Republican Kelly Ayotte as New Hampshire's governor means 13 women will serve as a state's chief executive next year, breaking the record of 12 set after the 2022 elections.

Governors hold powerful sway in American politics, shaping state policy and often using the experience and profile gained to launch campaigns for higher offices.

"It matters to have women in those roles to normalize the image of women in political leadership and even more specifically in executive leadership, where they're the sole leader, not just a member of a team," said Kelly Dittmar, director of research at the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was floated as a potential Democratic nominee for president after President Biden exited the race. Republican South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was thought to be in the running for President-elect Donald Trump's vice presidential post.

Ayotte, a former U.S. senator, defeated the Democratic nominee Joyce Craig, a former mayor of Manchester, New Hampshire's largest city.

Still, 18 states have never had a woman in the governor's office.

"This is another side of political leadership where women continue to be underrepresented," Dittmar said. "Thirteen out of 50 is still underrepresentation."

With two women vying for governor in New Hampshire, a new record for female governors was inevitable. The state has a long history of electing women. As a senator, Ayotte was part of the nation's first all-female congressional delegation. It was also the first state to have a female governor, state Senate president and House speaker at the same time, and the first to have a female majority in its Senate. Ayotte will be the state's third woman to be governor.

"Being a woman isn't really that critical to her political persona," Linda Fowler, professor emerita of government at Dartmouth College, said of Ayotte.

Both Ayotte and Craig said their gender hasn't come up on the campaign trail although reproductive rights often took front and center.

In her campaign, Craig attacked Ayotte's record on abortion, and both candidates released TV ads detailing their own miscarriages. Ayotte said she will veto any bill further restricting abortion in New Hampshire where it is illegal after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

When Ayotte is sworn in, five Republican women will serve as governor at the same time, another new high. The other eight are Democrats.

New Hampshire's was one of the few competitive gubernatorial races among the 11 this year. More inroads or setbacks for women's representation could come in 2026 when 36 states will elect governors.

Most voters tend to cast their ballots based on party loyalty and ideology rather than gender, Dittmar said. However, she noted female candidates often face layers of scrutiny that male counterparts largely avoid, with voters judging such things as a woman's intelligence, appearance and even dating history with a sharper lens.

The small gain for women in governor's offices comes as Vice President Kamala Harris failed in her effort to become the first female president.

"I would not suggest to you that Kamala Harris lost a race because she was a woman, because she was a Black and South Asian woman," Dittmar said. "We would also fail to tell the correct story if we didn't acknowledge the ways in which both gender and race shapes the campaign overall, and also had a direct effect on how Kamala Harris was evaluated by voters, treated by her opponents and even in the media and other spaces."

Executive roles, especially the presidency with its associations like commander in chief, often carry mas-

culine stereotypes that women must work harder to overcome, Dittmar said.

Experts say women confront these perceptions more acutely in executive races, such as for governor and president, than in state legislatures, where women are making historic strides as leaders, filling roles such as speaker and committee chairs.

"Sexism, racism, misogyny, it's never the silver bullet. It's never why one voter acts one way or another," said Erin Vilardi, CEO of Vote Run Lead Action, a left-leaning nonpartisan group that supports women running for state legislatures. "But we have so much of that built in to how we see a leader."

Israeli strikes set off explosions in Beirut suburbs and kill 14 Palestinians in Gaza, medics say

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli airstrikes hit a cafeteria and a home in Gaza, killing at least 14 people, medical officials said. In Lebanon, warplanes struck the capital Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday after the military ordered a number of houses there to evacuate.

The new bombardment on both fronts comes on the verge of a deadline set by the United States for Israel to dramatically ramp up humanitarian aid allowed in Gaza or risk possible restrictions on U.S. military funding. A group of eight international aid agencies said in a report on Tuesday that Israel has failed to meet the U.S. demands.

In Lebanon, large explosions shook Beirut's southern suburbs — an area known as Dahiyeh where Hezbollah has a significant presence — soon after the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for 11 houses there.

There was no immediate word on casualties. The military said the houses contained Hezbollah installations, but the claim could not be independently confirmed.

Late Monday night, a strike hit the village of Ain Yaacoub in northern Lebanon, killing at least 16 people, the Lebanese civil defense said. Four of the killed were Syrian refugees, and there were another 10 people wounded. There was no immediate Israeli military comment on the strike.

Israel has been carrying out intensified bombardment of Lebanon since late September, vowing to cripple Hezbollah and put a stop to more than year of cross-border fire by the Lebanese militant group onto northern Israel.

At the same time, Israel has continued its campaign in Gaza, now more than 13 months old, triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel.

An Israeli strike late Monday hit a makeshift cafeteria used by displaced people in Muwasi, the center of a "humanitarian zone" that Israel's military declared earlier in the war.

At least 11 people were killed, including two children, according to officials at Nasser Hospital, where the casualties were taken. Video from the scene showed men pulling bloodied wounded from among tables and chairs set up in the sand in an enclosure made of corrugated metal sheets.

Another strike early Tuesday hit a house in the urban Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing three people including a woman, according to al-Awda Hospital, which received the casualties. The strike also wounded 11 others, it said.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes.

Hours earlier, the Israeli military announced a small expansion of the humanitarian zone, where it has told Palestinians evacuating from other parts of Gaza to take refuge. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering in sprawling tent camps in and around Muwasi, a largely desolate area of dunes and agricultural fields with few facilities or services along the Mediterranean coast of southern Gaza.

Israeli forces have also been besieging the northernmost part of Gaza since the beginning of October, battling Hamas fighters it says regrouped there.

With virtually no food or aid allowed in for more than a month, the siege has raised fears of famine among the tens of thousands of Palestinians believed still sheltering there.

An Oct. 13 letter signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin

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gave Israeli 30 days to, among other things, allow a minimum of 350 truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day.

So far, Israel has fallen short. In October, 57 trucks a day entered Gaza on average, and 70 a day in the 10 days of November, according to Israeli figures. The U.N. puts the number lower, at 37 trucks daily since the beginning of October.

Israel has announced a flurry of measures in recent days to increase aid, including opening a new crossing into central Gaza. But so far the impact is unclear.

The military said Tuesday it had allowed hundreds of packages of food and water into Jabaliya and Beit Hanoun, two areas under siege in the far north of Gaza. The Palestinian civil defense agency said three trucks carrying flour, canned food and water reached Beit Hanoun.

It was only the second delivery allowed into the area since the beginning of October; a smaller cargo was let in last week, though not all of it reached shelters in the north, according to the U.N.

The military announced Tuesday that four soldiers were killed in Jabaliya, bringing to 24 the number of soldiers killed in the assault there since it began. Palestinian health officials say hundreds of Palestinians have been killed, though the true numbers are unknown as rescue workers are unable to reach buildings destroyed in strikes. Israel has ordered residents in the area to evacuate. But the U.N. has estimated some 70,000 people remain.

Many Palestinians there fear Israel aims to permanently depopulate the area to more easily keep control of it. On Tuesday, witnesses told The Associated Press that Israeli troops had encircled at least three schools in Beit Hanoun, forcing hundreds of displaced people sheltering inside to leave.

Drones blared announcements demanding people move south to Gaza City, said Mahmoud al-Kafarnah, speaking from one of the schools as sounds of gunfire could be heard. "The tanks are outside," he said. "We don't know where to go."

Hashim Afanah, sheltering with at least 20 other people in his family home, said the forces were evicting people from houses and shelters.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities that do not distinguish between civilians and militants in their count but say more than half the dead are women and children. Israel says it targets Hamas militants and blames the militant group for civilian deaths, saying it operates in residential areas and infrastructure, and among displaced people.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted about 250 as hostages. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, about a third of them believed to be dead.

A pair of Trump officials have defended family separation and ramped-up deportations

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Donald Trump's first picks for immigration policy jobs spent the last four years angling for this moment.

Stephen Miller and Thomas Homan had critical roles in the first Trump administration and are unapologetic defenders of its policies, which included separating thousands of parents from their children at the border to deter illegal crossings. With Trump promising sweeping action in a second term on illegal immigration, the two White House advisers will bring nuts-and-bolts knowledge, lessons from previous setbacks and personal views to help him carry out his wishes.

After Trump left office in 2021, Miller became president of America First Legal, a group that joined Republican state attorneys general to derail President Joe Biden's border policies and plans. Homan, who worked decades in immigration enforcement, founded Border 911 Foundation Inc., a group that says it fights against "a border invasion" and held its inaugural gala in April at Trump's Florida estate.

Homan "knows how the machine operates," said Ronald Vitiello, a former Border Patrol chief and acting Immigration and Customs Enforcement director under Trump. "He did it as a front line, he did it as a super-

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visor, and he did it as the lead executive. He doesn't have anything to learn on that side of the equation."

Miller, he said, is deeply knowledgeable, has firm ideas about how the system should work, and has Trump's confidence.

Trump has promised to stage the largest deportation operation in American history. There are an estimated 11 million people in the country illegally. Questions remain about how people in a mass raid would be identified and where they would be detained.

Miller and Homan portray illegal immigration as a black-and-white issue and applaud Trump's policy of targeting everyone living in the country without status for deportation.

Trump frequently and sharply attacked illegal immigration during his campaign, linking a record spike in unauthorized border crossings to issues ranging from drug trafficking to high housing prices. The arrival of asylum-seekers and other migrants in cities and communities around the country has strained some budgets and broadly shifted political debate over immigration to the right, with Democratic nominee Kamala Harris during her campaign reversing several of her old positions questioning immigration enforcement.

Miller, 39, is a former Capitol Hill staffer who rose to prominence as a fiery Trump speechwriter and key architect of his immigration policies from 2017 to 2021. He has long espoused doomsday scenarios of how immigration threatens America, training his rhetoric on people in the country illegally but also advocating curbs on legal immigration.

Trump, Miller said at the former president's Madison Square Garden rally last month, was fighting for "the right to live in a country where criminal gangs cannot just cross our border and rape and murder with impunity."

"America is for Americans and Americans only," he added.

Homan, 63, decided on a career in law enforcement as a boy in West Carthage, New York, watching his father work as a magistrate in the small farming town. After a year as a police officer in his hometown, he joined the Border Patrol in San Diego and remembers thinking, "What the hell did I just do?"

Homan, then working in relative obscurity as a top ICE official, said in a 2018 interview with The Associated Press that he got "a seat at the table" under President Barack Obama's homeland security secretary, Jeh Johnson, to deliberate on policy change. Homan told others that he worried he may have been disrespectful and when word got back to the secretary, Johnson told him, "I may not agree with what you say, but I need to know what the effects are going to be if I don't listen to you."

Johnson said Monday that he didn't recall the exchange but doesn't dispute it, saying it sounded like him.

Homan rose to acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement under Trump. He was "significantly involved" in the separation of children from their parents after they crossed the border illegally and parents were criminally prosecuted, said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which successfully sued to halt the practice.

Under a court settlement, families cannot be separated until December 2031 as part of a policy to deter illegal crossings. Trump has defended the practice, claiming without evidence last year that it "stopped people from coming by the hundreds of thousands."

At the National Conservatism Conference in Washington earlier this year, Homan said while he thinks the government should prioritize national security threats, "no one's off the table. If you're here illegally, you better be looking over your shoulder."

In the 2018 interview, Homan said he had no reservations about deporting a man who had been in the United States illegally for 12 years and with two children who are U.S. citizens. He likened it to a ticket for speeding motorists or an audit for a tax cheat.

"People think I enjoy this. I'm a father. People don't think this bothers me. I feel bad about the plight of these people. Don't get me wrong but I have a job to do," he said.

He defended the "zero tolerance" policy that led to family separations when pressed by Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in a congressional hearing. He likened it to arresting someone for driving under the influence with a young child as a passenger.

"When I was a police officer in New York and I arrested a father for domestic violence, I separated that

father," he said, inviting criticism that it was not the right analogy. Children couldn't be quickly reunited with their parents at the border because government computers didn't track that they were families. Many parents were deported while children were placed in shelters across the country.

Critics of zero tolerance have argued separations that happen during criminal cases involving American citizens are different from the separations under "zero tolerance," when in many cases parents were deported without their children, who were sent to government-run facilities.

Miller and Homan do not require Senate approval, unlike homeland security secretary, ICE director and commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the Border Patrol. Those appointees will be tasked with carrying out orders from the White House.

Biggest name world leaders missing at United Nations climate talks, but others try to fill the void

By SETH BORENSTEIN, MELINA WALLING and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — World leaders are converging Tuesday at the United Nations annual climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan although the big names and powerful countries are noticeably absent, unlike past climate talks which had the star power of a soccer World Cup.

But 2024's climate talks are more like the International Chess Federation world championship, lacking the recognizable names but big on nerd power and strategy. The top leaders of the 13 largest carbon dioxide-polluting countries will not appear. Their nations are responsible for more than 70% of 2023's heat-trapping gases.

The world's biggest polluters and strongest economies — China and the United States — aren't sending their No. 1s. India and Indonesia's heads of state are also not in attendance, meaning the four most populous nations with more than 42% of all the world's population aren't having leaders speak.

"It's symptomatic of the lack of political will to act. There's no sense of urgency," said climate scientist Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics. He said this explains "the absolute mess we're finding ourselves in."

Leaders highlight inevitable transition to clean energy

The world has witnessed the hottest day, months and year on record "and a master class in climate destruction," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the world leaders who did show up.

But Guterres held out hope, saying, in a veiled reference to Donald Trump's re-election in the United States, that the "clean energy revolution is here. No group, no business, no government can stop it."

United Nations officials said in 2016, when Trump was first elected, there was 180 gigawatts of clean energy and 700,000 electric vehicles in the world. Now there's 600 gigawatts of clean energy and 14 million electric vehicles.

Host Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev kicked off two scheduled days of world leaders' speeches by lambasting Armenia, western news media, climate activists and critics who highlighted his country's rich oil and gas history and trade, calling them hypocritical since the United States is the world's biggest oil producer. He said it was "not fair" to call Azerbaijan a "petrostate" because it produces less than 1% of the world's oil and gas.

Oil and gas are "a gift of the God" just like the sun, wind and minerals, Aliyev said. "Countries should not be blamed for having them. And should not be blamed for bringing these resources to the market because the market needs them."

As the host and president of the climate talks, called COP29, Aliyev said his country will push hard for a green transition away from fossil fuels, "but at the same time, we must be realistic."

Officials downplay the lack of heavyweights

Aliyev, United Kingdom's prime minister Keir Starmer and Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan are the headliners of around 50 leaders set to speak on Tuesday.

There'll also be a strong showing from the leaders of some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Several small island nations presidents and over a dozen leaders from countries across Africa are

set to speak over the two-day World Leaders' Summit at COP29.

As a sense of how the bar for celebrity has lowered, on Tuesday morning photographers and video cameras ran along side one leader walking through the halls of the meeting. It was the emergency management minister for host country Azerbaijan.

United Nations officials downplayed the lack of head of state star power, saying that every country is represented and active in the climate talks.

One logistical issue is that next week, the leaders of the most powerful countries have to be half a world away in Brazil for the G20 meetings. The United States recent election, Germany's government collapse, natural disasters and personal illnesses also have kept some leaders away.

The major focus of the negotiations is climate finance, which is rich nations trying to help poor countries pay for transitioning their economies away from fossil fuels, coping with climate change's upcoming harms and compensating for damages from weather extremes.

Nations are negotiating over huge amounts of money, anywhere from \$100 billion a year to \$1.3 trillion a year. That money "is not charity, it's an investment," Guterres said.

"Developing countries must not leave Baku empty-handed," Guterres said. "A deal is a must."

'A hollow and limited apology.' New Zealand survivors of abuse in care speak in their own words

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Hundreds of survivors of abuse in state, foster and faith-based care arrived at New Zealand's Parliament in Wellington on Tuesday, each representing thousands more.

They came to hear the government formally apologize for the "unimaginable" horrors they suffered as children and vulnerable adults, after a long-running inquiry made its final report about the scale of the abuse in July.

"You deserved so much better and I am deeply sorry that New Zealand did not do better by you," Prime Minister Christopher Luxon told them in Parliament hours later.

Many had T-shirts specially printed. Some used canes or wheelchairs because of the abuse they suffered in hospitals, institutions and care homes after they were taken from their families. A few were familiar faces from decades of advocacy and campaigning, mostly ignored until recent years. The public gallery in New Zealand's Parliament is small — it seats fewer than 200 people — and a total of 500 had been drawn from a ballot to attend.

Many were disappointed that details of financial compensation for their suffering weren't divulged on Tuesday. Luxon promised that a redress system will be "operating next year."

Survivors spoke in their own words about the day:

Tu Chapman, a survivor who advised the inquiry

"Right now I feel alone and in utter despair at the way in which this government has undertaken the task of acknowledging all survivors. Once again, like our decades of fight, we are having to validate our care experiences and our existence.

"We continue living with the decimation of our identities, the raping and pillaging of our cultures through incompetent decision-making and the intentional moves to invalidate our experiences. The clear and utter destruction of lives cannot be downplayed, nor can it be swept under the carpet, as the state, churches and faith-based organizations have done for decades.

"I think it was a hollow and limited apology. It feels like they're just giving consideration to things they can continue tinkering around with. Stop tinkering around and just get on with it."

Helen Beauchamp, who lived in 20 foster homes from age 4

"In my files, they wrote 'not intelligent enough' at age 4. My mum was in a hospital institution at age 12, put there by her dad. So it's been a generational thing.

"Surviving has been a roller coaster and we still don't have a picture of the outcome. It's sad that our system is very slow. That makes it really hard for a lot of us, having the anticipation of just a little bit of

closure, a little bit of light. This is a long, drawn-out timeline to continue to be put through. It takes a toll. "189 survivors were picked out of the ballot to sit in the public gallery today and I was one, so I was quite fortunate just in that. Coming here is a wider and significant way to apologize to our children, to our own families."

Jazmine Te Hiwi, a survivor of two camps for troubled young people

"Being acknowledged is the hardest part of being here. How do you accept that after being denied for 40 years of your life? It almost feels like you're forced to accept the apology.

"What gets me is that we have people in high places who still look down on us, they don't have any real understanding of why we are like this. There's a reason why some of our youth are doing crimes. I see myself in that. We were just innocent kids that were taken advantage of.

"When I hear about these youth getting in trouble, all they're looking for is some kind of attention, some kind of love. But nobody sees that and especially not these people. They think 'the way to fix them up is to send them to boot camp.' But that's what they did to us. And that's why we're here today. It's like it went in one ear and out the other side."

Aid groups say Israel misses US deadline to boost humanitarian help for Gaza

By JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel has failed to meet U.S. demands to allow greater humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip, where conditions are worse than at any point in the 13-month-old war, international aid organizations said Tuesday.

The Biden administration last month called on Israel to "surge" more food and other emergency aid into Gaza, giving it a 30-day deadline that was expiring Tuesday. It warned that failure to comply could trigger U.S. laws requiring it to scale back military support as Israel wages offensives against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel has announced a series of steps toward improving the situation. But U.S. officials recently signaled that Israel still isn't doing enough, though they haven't said if they will take any action against it.

Israel's new foreign minister, Gideon Saar, appeared to downplay the deadline, telling reporters on Monday that he was confident "the issue would be solved." The Biden administration may have less leverage after the reelection of Donald Trump, who was a staunch supporter of Israel in his first term.

Tuesday's report, authored by eight international aid organizations, listed 19 measures of compliance with the U.S. demands. It said that Israel had failed to comply with 15 and only partially complied with four.

An Oct. 13 letter signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called on Israel to, among other things, allow a minimum of 350 truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day; open a fifth crossing into the besieged territory; allow people in Israeli-imposed coastal tent camps to move inland before the winter; and ensure access for aid groups to hard-hit northern Gaza. It also called on Israel to halt legislation that would hinder the operations of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

Despite Israeli steps to increase the flow of aid, levels remain far below the U.S. benchmarks. The promised fifth crossing was set to open Tuesday, but residents remain crammed in the tent camps and access for aid workers to northern Gaza remains restricted. Israel also has pressed ahead with its laws against UNRWA.

"Israel not only failed to meet the U.S. criteria that would indicate support to the humanitarian response, but concurrently took actions that dramatically worsened the situation on the ground, particularly in Northern Gaza," the report said. "That situation is in an even more dire state today than a month ago."

The report was co-signed by Anera, Care, MedGlobal, Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Refugees International and Save the Children.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said last week that Israel had made some progress, but needs to do more to meet the U.S. conditions.

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"What's important when you see all of these steps taken is what that means for the results," he said.

Israel launched a major offensive last month in northern Gaza, where it says Hamas militants had regrouped. The operation has killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands. Israel has allowed almost no aid to enter the area, where tens of thousands of civilians have stayed despite evacuation orders.

Aid to Gaza plummeted in October, when just 34,000 tons of food entered, or less than half the previous month, according to Israeli data.

U.N. agencies say even less actually gets through because of Israeli restrictions, ongoing fighting and lawlessness that makes it difficult to collect and distribute aid on the Gaza side.

In October, 57 trucks a day entered Gaza on average, according to Israeli figures, and 81 a day in the first week of November. The U.N. puts the number lower, at 37 trucks daily since the beginning of October.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid to Gaza, said that the drop in the number of aid trucks in October was because of closures of the crossings for the Jewish high holidays and memorials marking the anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that triggered the war.

"October was a very weak month," an Israeli official said on condition of anonymity in line with military briefing rules. "But if you look at the November numbers, we are holding steady at around 50 trucks per day to northern Gaza and 150 per day to the rest of Gaza."

Aid distribution is also being hampered by the U.N. and other agencies' failure to collect aid that entered Gaza, leading to bottlenecks, and looting from Hamas and organized crime families in Gaza, he said. He estimated as much as 40% of aid is stolen on some days.

Israel on Monday announced a small expansion of its coastal "humanitarian zone," where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have sought shelter in sprawling tent camps. It also has announced additional steps, including connecting electricity for a desalination plant in the central Gaza town of Deir al Balah, and efforts to bring in supplies for the winter.

On Tuesday, COGAT announced a "tactical" delivery of food and water to Beit Hanoun, one of the hardest-hit towns in northern Gaza. Also on Monday night, the Israeli security Cabinet approved increased aid for Gaza, which will increase the number of trucks that enter Gaza each day, according to an official familiar with the matter.

The war began last year when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 people. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasion have killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to local health authorities, who don't say how many of those killed were militants. Around 90% of the population has been displaced, often multiple times, and hundreds of thousands are packed into squalid tent camps, with little food, water or hygiene facilities.

The United States has rushed billions of dollars in military aid to Israel during the war and has shielded it from international calls for a cease-fire, while pressing it to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. The amount of aid entering Gaza increased under U.S. pressure last spring after Israeli strikes killed seven aid workers before dwindling again.

Trump has promised to end the wars in the Middle East without saying how. He was a staunch defender of Israel during his previous term, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says they have spoken three times since his reelection last week.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog, whose role is mostly ceremonial, is scheduled to meet with U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday.

Former U.S. State Department official Charles Blaha, who ran the office in charge of ensuring that U.S. military support complies with U.S. and international law, predicted the Biden administration would find that Israel violated U.S. law by blocking humanitarian aid from reaching Palestinians in Gaza.

"It's undeniable that Israel has done that," Blaha said. "They would really have to torture themselves to find that Israel hasn't restricted ... assistance."

But he said that the administration would likely cite U.S. national security interests and waive restrictions on military support.

"If the past is prologue — no restrictions, and then kick the can down the road to the next administration."

Azerbaijan accused of ramping up repression of critics ahead of hosting UN climate summit

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

As representatives from nearly 200 countries, along with hundreds of journalists, arrived in Azerbaijan in November for the U.N. climate conference known this year as COP29, they bring with them a level of scrutiny the hosts aren't accustomed to — and don't often tolerate.

Azerbaijan has had a poor human rights record for many years and the government has regularly targeted journalists, activists and independent politicians. President Ilham Aliyev and his administration are accused by human rights organizations of spearheading an intensifying crackdown on freedom of speech ahead of the climate summit, including against climate activists and journalists.

Aliyev's father, Haidar, ruled Azerbaijan from 1993 until he died in 2003 and Ilham took over. Both suppressed dissent as the country of almost 10 million people on the Caspian Sea basked in growing wealth from huge oil and natural gas reserves.

Elections since independence from the Soviet Union in the 1990s haven't been regarded as fully free or fair. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said Azerbaijan's most recent parliamentary elections in September took place in a "restrictive" environment. They were marked by turnout of 37% and no opposition party won any seats.

Human Rights Watch said the "vicious" crackdown against journalists and human rights activists has intensified over the last two years with phony criminal charges against critics and highly restrictive laws that make it hard for media and activists to work.

Ahead of COP29, Azerbaijan's authorities have extended the pretrial detention of at least 11 journalists from Azerbaijan's remaining independent news outlets on currency smuggling charges related to alleged funding from Western donors.

Azerbaijani government officials did not respond to numerous requests from The Associated Press for an interview or comment on their actions.

A look at just five of Baku's critics currently detained in Azerbaijan:

Ulvi Hasanli and Sevinj Vagifgizi

Hasanli and Vagifgizi are journalists and leaders of Abzas Media, an independent online outlet. Abzas Media has investigated reports of protests and pollution at a gold mine in western Azerbaijan, reconstruction in the Karabakh region and corruption allegations against high-ranking officials.

Hasanli and Vagifgizi, along with four colleagues, were arrested in November 2023. Azerbaijani officials allege they conspired to smuggle money into Azerbaijan and claim they found more than \$40,000 in Hasanli's home. The journalists deny the allegations and Hasanli said the money was planted.

"That is why they decided to eliminate Ulvi and his team ... to make sure they would no longer be able to expose their wrongdoings," Rubaba Guliyeva, Hasanli's wife told the AP.

Hasanli and Vagifgizi are imprisoned in Baku with no trial date. Guliyeva called conditions there "extremely bad" and said she had seen bruises on her husband and had been told that their meetings and phone calls are monitored. Hasanli is allowed brief visits with his 2-year-old daughter but struggles when she leaves, his wife said.

Vagifgizi's mother Ophelya Maharramova said the prison has water shortages and that the water isn't drinkable. Prisoners "suffer from hair loss and their teeth are rotting," she said.

Despite being imprisoned, Vagifgizi still asks what investigations Abzas Media is publishing, her mother said: "It's what makes her feel motivated."

Guliyeva said states should boycott COP29 because of Azerbaijan's poor human rights record.

Gubad Ibadoghlu

Ibadoghlu is an academic and economist at the London School of Economics who was detained in Azerbaijan in July 2023. He was moved to house arrest in April after spending months in prison.

He was accused by Azerbaijan of selling counterfeit money, but his children dispute the charges. They

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believe he was targeted because he investigated corruption in Azerbaijan's oil and gas industry and because he is an opposition figure. Ibadoghlu's sons say he also set up a charitable organization in the United Kingdom to work with the UK Home Office to try to transfer money confiscated by the National Crime Agency from rich Azerbaijanis to the charity to serve the people of Azerbaijan.

Ibadoghlu is also the chairman of the Azerbaijan Democracy and Prosperity Movement, which has been denied registration as a political party in Azerbaijan.

His son Emin Bayramov told AP his father was arrested by unidentified police officers who beat his mother when she questioned who they were. Ibadoghlu has health issues including diabetes and his family say he is being denied medical care. Another son, Ibad Bayramov, told AP the International Committee of the Red Cross had tried to visit him four times but were not allowed to see him.

Ibadoghlu also has no trial date. His sons have accused Azerbaijan's government of delaying it until after the climate summit to avoid negative publicity.

Azerbaijan hosting COP29 while carrying out a crackdown on freedom of speech brings "shame on the international community," Emin Bayramov said.

Anar Mammadli

Mammadli is a human rights and climate activist who was detained by masked men and driven away while he was on his way to pick up his child from nursery in April in Baku. He has also been accused of smuggling and of trying to unlawfully bring money into Azerbaijan. He denies the charges.

He heads an election monitoring and democracy group that joined others to co-found the Climate of Justice Initiative in Azerbaijan. In an open letter, the groups criticized Azerbaijan as "one of the most problematic countries in Europe in terms of political and civil liberties."

Azerbaijan, the groups said, has not implemented a systematic policy to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate emissions have continued to rise and oil production has polluted land, it said.

Human Rights Watch said Mammadli has been a key defender of human rights in Azerbaijan, highlighting violations of "fundamental freedoms." He has called for freedom for political prisoners and an improved legal and political environment for human rights activists.

In a previous case, Mammadli was sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison in 2014 on charges of tax evasion, illegal business and abuse of office. Amnesty International said the charges were trumped up, and he was awarded the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize shortly after he was sentenced. He was pardoned in 2016.

Like the others, Mammadli is imprisoned awaiting a trial date.

Akif Gurbanov

Gurbanov is chairman of the Institute for Democratic Initiatives, an independent organization that seeks to develop a more open society through democratic initiatives such as training young journalists, human rights defenders and economists.

He was detained in March after police searched his home and raided the IDI's office. Later police accused him and others of currency smuggling. At the same time, authorities raided the offices of the online news platform Toplum TV and the civil society organization Platform III Republic — both co-founded by Gurbanov.

Toplum TV worked with the other organizations to train young journalists, Human Rights Watch said. Platform III Republic is an organization that promotes discussion about Azerbaijani politics, good governance and proposes development strategies for the country's future.

Gurbanov's wife, Ayan Musayeva, told AP that he was arrested for his work "defending human rights, providing alternative information, speaking the truth."

States attending COP29 in Baku, she said, should be calling for his immediate release along with "all other political prisoners in Azerbaijan."

Judge set to rule on whether to scrap Trump's conviction in hush money case

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge is due to decide Tuesday whether to undo President-elect Donald Trump's

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conviction in his hush money case because of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on presidential immunity.

New York Judge Juan M. Merchan, who presided over Trump's historic trial, is now tasked with deciding whether to toss out the jury verdict and order a new trial — or even dismiss the charges altogether. The judge's ruling also could speak to whether the former and now future commander-in-chief will be sentenced as scheduled Nov. 26.

The Republican won back the White House a week ago but the legal question concerns his status as a past president, not an impending one.

A jury convicted Trump in May of falsifying business records related to a \$130,000 payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in 2016. The payout was to buy her silence about claims that she had sex with Trump.

He says they didn't, denies any wrongdoing and maintains the prosecution was a political tactic meant to harm his latest campaign.

Just over a month after the verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that ex-presidents can't be prosecuted for actions they took in the course of running the country, and prosecutors can't cite those actions even to bolster a case centered on purely personal conduct.

Trump's lawyers cited the ruling to argue that the hush money jury got some evidence it shouldn't have, such as Trump's presidential financial disclosure form and testimony from some White House aides.

Prosecutors disagreed and said the evidence in question was only "a sliver" of their case.

Trump's criminal conviction was a first for any ex-president. It left the 78-year-old facing the possibility of punishment ranging from a fine or probation to up to four years in prison.

The case centered on how Trump accounted for reimbursing his personal attorney for the Daniels payment.

The lawyer, Michael Cohen, fronted the money. He later recouped it through a series of payments that Trump's company logged as legal expenses. Trump, by then in the White House, signed most of the checks himself.

Prosecutors said the designation was meant to cloak the true purpose of the payments and help cover up a broader effort to keep voters from hearing unflattering claims about the Republican during his first campaign.

Trump said that Cohen was legitimately paid for legal services, and that Daniels' story was suppressed to avoid embarrassing Trump's family, not to influence the electorate.

Trump was a private citizen — campaigning for president, but neither elected nor sworn in — when Cohen paid Daniels in October 2016. He was president when Cohen was reimbursed, and Cohen testified that they discussed the repayment arrangement in the Oval Office.

Trump has been fighting for months to overturn the verdict and could now seek to leverage his status as president-elect. Although he was tried as a private citizen, his forthcoming return to the White House could propel a court to step in and avoid the unprecedented spectacle of sentencing a former and future president.

While urging Merchan to nix the conviction, Trump also has been trying to move the case to federal court. Before the election, a federal judge repeatedly said no to the move, but Trump has appealed.

Congress returns to unfinished business and a new Trump era

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress returns to a changed Washington as President-elect Donald Trump's hard-right agenda is quickly taking shape, buoyed by eager Republican allies eyeing a full sweep of power on Capitol Hill while Democrats are sorting out what went wrong.

Even as final election results are still being tallied, the House and Senate leadership is pushing ahead toward a second-term Trump White House and what he's called a "mandate" for governing, with mass deportations, industry deregulation and wholesale gutting of the federal government.

Trump is already testing the norms of governance during this presidential transition period — telling the Senate to forgo its advise-and-consent role and simply accept his Cabinet nominees — and he is staffing his administration and finding lawmakers willing to bend those civic traditions.

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"Trump's going to deliver his deportations, the drilling, the wall — it's going to take all of us getting together," said Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., a conservative member of the House Freedom Caucus.

But first, the House and Senate leaders will hold internal party elections this week for their own jobs. Most of the top Republican leaders depend on Trump for their political livelihoods and have worked to draw closer to the president-elect to shore up loyalty.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is on the cusp of keeping a slim majority hold of the chamber with several House races still too early to call, will assemble his leadership team early Tuesday on the Capitol steps for a victory lap and agenda-setting.

In the Senate, where Republicans seized power from Democrats on election night, three Republican senators who are vying to become the new GOP leader have rushed to agree with Trump's plan for quick confirmation of presidential nominees.

"As Congress returns to Washington, we must prepare the Senate to advance that agenda legislatively and ensure that the president-elect can hit the ground running with his appointees confirmed as soon as possible," GOP Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, who is seeking the leadership job, wrote in a Fox News opinion piece.

All told, it's a fundamental reshaping of not only the power centers in Washington, but the rules of governing, as Trump returns to the White House in January with a potential GOP-led Congress that is far less skeptical or wary of his approach than eight years ago, and much more willing to back him.

"This is going to be a very challenging time," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

She described the "horrific immigration policies" that Trump promised voters and she insisted the progressives in Congress will provide an "effective check" on the new White House, much the way Democrats did during his first term by fighting efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and other policies.

At the same time, Jayapal warned Trump will have "many fewer restrictions."

"Our members are ready to take up the fight again," she said, standing alongside a handful of newly elected progressive lawmakers she called the "bright lights" joining Congress.

First tests will come during the "lame duck" period of the remaining days of this Congress, the eight-week sprint until Jan. 3, 2025, when the new lawmakers are sworn into office.

As lawmakers return this week they will be joined by dozens of new names in the House and Senate who are in town for freshmen orientation weeks and the private leadership elections scheduled for Wednesday.

But Republican senators are protesting that one of their own, newly elected Dave McCormick of Pennsylvania, is being excluded from orientation week by Senate Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer because there are still uncounted ballots in his race. Schumer's office has said it is custom to wait until all the ballots are counted.

The Senate leadership race to replace outgoing GOP Leader Mitch McConnell is turning into a test of Trump loyalties, with the president-elect's allies — including billionaire Elon Musk and Make America Great Again influencers — pushing the senators to elect Sen. Rick Scott of Florida.

But Scott has not been the most popular candidate for the leadership post, and senators had been rallying around the two "Johns" — Thune, the second-ranking GOP leader, and Sen. John Cornyn of Texas. The outcome of Wednesday's private balloting behind closed doors is highly uncertain.

In the House, some conservative Republicans are quietly suggesting their own leadership elections should be postponed until the final results of the House races are resolved. Democrats will hold their House and Senate leadership elections later.

Johnson wants to retain the speaker's gavel and told colleagues in a letter last week he is ready to "take the field" with them to deliver on Trump's agenda. But he is expected to face detractors behind closed doors.

While Johnson only needs a simple majority during Wednesday's private voting to become the GOP nominee to be speaker, he will need a 218-member majority in January during a floor vote of the whole House.

A low vote total this week will show the leverage Freedom Caucus members and others have to pry concessions from Johnson, much as they forced then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy into a prolonged vote for the gavel in 2023.

And while Johnson predicts next year will launch the “most consequential” presidency and Congress in modern times, he has had difficulty this year leading Republicans who refused to go along with plans, forcing the speaker to often partner with Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

Johnson’s troubles stem in part from his slim majority, but that could persist if Trump continues to tap House Republicans to fill his administration. Trump has already asked Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., to be ambassador to the United Nations and Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., to be his national security adviser.

“We’re pretty much maxed out,” said Rep. Ronny Jackson, R-Texas. “Everybody understands that.”

In the weeks ahead, Congress faces another deadline, Dec. 20, to fund the federal government or risk a shutdown, and conservatives are redoubling their pressure on Johnson not to cave on their demands to slash spending.

The House and Senate also will consider replenishing the Disaster Relief Fund to help provide aid in the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

And with President Joe Biden preparing to exit and Democrats relinquishing their hold on the Senate, there will be pressure to confirm more judicial nominees and to usher out the door any other bills that could possibly become law before Trump takes over.

Biden funded new factories and infrastructure projects, but Trump might get to cut the ribbons

By JOSH BOAK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — All that’s left is for President-elect Donald Trump to put his name on it — if he wants.

Trump won the White House in large part because of voters’ frustration with high prices and a sense that the United States needs major changes. But when he enters office in January, Trump will inherit an economy primed for growth.

The unemployment rate is low, inflation is easing and President Joe Biden’s administration has teed-up a ready-made list of infrastructure projects that could go from theoretical to reality over the next several years. There’s the TSMC computer chip plant in Arizona, the new Hyundai electric vehicle factory in Georgia and a modernized I-375 in Michigan, among thousands of projects under way that will take years to complete.

All of that means it could be Trump, rather than Biden, who gets to tell Americans that he built the country back better. If he decides to let the projects proceed, that is.

Biden, himself, acknowledged last week that the positive economic impacts from his policies would occur after his term ends in January.

“Much of the work we’ve done is already being felt by the American people, but the vast majority will not be felt, will be felt over the next 10 years,” he said in remarks in the Rose Garden. “It’s going to take time, but it’s there. The road ahead is clear.”

Trump wants to reverse Biden’s policies, but construction is already ongoing

While Trump on the campaign trail railed against Biden’s record, he has offered few details on what initiatives he might scrap. Trump said in September that he would “rescind all unspent funds under the misnamed Inflation Reduction Act” and said on Joe Rogan’s podcast that tariffs would do more for manufacturing than the funding provided by the CHIPS and Science Act.

But Biden aides privately told The Associated Press that they expect Trump to continue the planned projects and take credit for Biden’s accomplishments, just like the Republicans in Congress who’ve celebrated plant openings and infrastructure developments in their districts but voted against them.

The administration has spent millions of dollars to put up road signs to promote Biden’s role in the projects; all Trump would need to do is re-label them with his own name. Biden aides feel confident that Trump won’t want to cut programs that are helping states he won in this year’s election even if Republicans try for a token repeal of some provisions in order to help fund some of their own tax cut plans.

When asked about this possibility, Karoline Leavitt, spokeswoman for the Trump-Vance transition, said:

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"The American people re-elected President Trump by a resounding margin giving him a mandate to implement the promises he made on the campaign trail. He will deliver."

Natalie Quillian, a deputy chief of staff for Biden's White House, said that the administration's programs are already starting to make a positive difference for the economy.

"We have already announced investments for 70,000 infrastructure and clean energy projects, catalyzed nearly \$1 trillion in private sector investment, lowered prescription drug prices, and created 1.6 million construction and manufacturing jobs," she said. "Over the coming months, we will continue to run through the tape and ensure Americans benefit from this president's agenda for years to come."

Trump is entering the White House as the economy is improving

Trump is also inheriting by many measures an increasingly healthy economy, despite his claims that conditions are miserable.

The Republican won the election with the unemployment rate at a healthy 4.1%, inflation at 2.4% and the Federal Reserve cutting its benchmark rates in ways that could support additional growth. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell summarized the situation last week by saying the economy is "strong overall."

Voters, though, felt the economy was weak. They penalized Democrats for inflation that reflected supply chain challenges after the pandemic, the impact of government aid that also energized job growth and Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine causing spikes in energy and food prices.

Voters appeared to care less about the overall rate of inflation, though, than the changes in price levels that occurred over the past four years. Nearly 9 in 10 identified inflation as an important factor for their choice in this year's election, with Trump winning the clear majority of this group, according to AP Vote-Cast, an extensive survey of more than 120,000 voters.

Still, economists who've advised and worked previously with Trump felt the economy was not as solid as the top line numbers suggest. They stressed the high level of government debt that has been driving growth, even though Trump himself showed little appetite for cutting deficits during his previous time in the White House.

"Government spending is keeping the economy afloat," said Joseph LaVorgna, who was the chief economist of White House National Economic Council during Trump's presidency.

LaVorgna also noted that much of the recent job growth has come from government and health care hiring, instead of from manufacturing and other for-profit sectors.

Possible pressure to embrace renewable energy and EVs

There is a recognition among some Republican lawmakers that the energy tax credits that were part of the Inflation Reduction Act were positives and should be preserved. Eighteen GOP House members sent House Speaker Mike Johnson a letter in August asking him to preserve the tax credits.

Economists supporting Trump also note that sales growth for EVs could jump under the incoming administration, which has the support of Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

Trump has wanted to remove Biden's incentives for EVs, which are part of the Inflation Reduction Act. But after getting Musk's backing, Trump said that he's "for electric cars ... because Elon endorsed me very strongly."

That simple shift of Trump talking up EVs could remove politics from the issue and cause the incoming president to fulfill a goal set by Biden, said economist Stephen Moore, an informal Trump adviser and economist at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

"With Biden gone, the EV industry will make a comeback," Moore said. "Biden made EVs toxic because half the country hated Biden, half loved him. The people who hated Biden wouldn't buy an EV out of conscience."

North Korea ratifies major defense treaty with Russia

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea ratified a major defense treaty with Russia stipulating mutual military aid, the North's state media reported Tuesday, as the U.S., South Korea and Ukraine say North

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Korea has sent thousands of troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine.

Russia had completed the ratification of the treaty last week after it was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in June. It is considered both countries' biggest defense deal since the end of the Cold War.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership treaty will take effect when both sides exchange documents on the ratification, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korea ratified the treaty through a decree signed Monday by the country's president of state affairs, KCNA said, using one of Kim's titles.

North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, has the right to ratify treaties but Kim can unilaterally ratify major ones, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

The treaty requires both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. It also calls for the two countries to actively cooperate in efforts to establish a "just and multipolar new world order" and strengthen cooperation on various sectors including peaceful atomic energy, space, food supply, trade and economy.

Some observers speculate the treaty's ratification in both countries could signal North Korea could formally enter the Russia-Ukraine war soon.

According to U.S., South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments, up to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia likely as part of the June treaty. Last week, Ukrainian officials said Ukraine and North Korean troops engaged in small-scale fighting while Ukraine's army fired artillery at North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk border region.

North Korea's troop dispatch threatens to escalate the almost three-year war. South Korea, the U.S. and their partners also worry about what Russia could give North Korea in return. Possible Russian transfer of sensitive technology to enhance North Korea's already-advancing nuclear and missile programs would be an alarming development for the U.S. and its allies.

North Korea and Russia have been significantly strengthening their military and other cooperation. South Korea's spy agency said last month that North Korea had sent more than 13,000 containers of artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia since August 2023 to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles.

Haiti's main airport shuts down as gang violence surges and a new prime minister is sworn in

By EVENS SANON and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haiti's international airport shut down on Monday after gangs opened fire at a commercial flight landing in Port-Au-Prince, prompting some airlines to temporarily suspend operations as the country swore in a new interim prime minister who promised to restore peace.

The Spirit Airlines flight headed from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to Port-Au-Prince was just hundreds of feet from landing in Haiti's capital when gangs shot at the plane striking a flight attendant, who suffered minor injuries, according to the airline, the U.S. Embassy and flight tracking data. The flight was diverted and landed in the Dominican Republic.

Photos and videos obtained by The Associated Press show bullet holes dotting the interior of a plane.

The shooting appeared to be part of what the U.S. Embassy called "gang-led efforts to block travel to and from Port-au-Prince which may include armed violence, and disruptions to roads, ports, and airports." Spirit, JetBlue and American Airlines said Monday they were canceling flights to and from Haiti.

In other parts of Haiti's capital, firefights between gangs and police broke out. Rounds of gunfire echoed through the streets as heavily armed officers ducked behind walls and civilians ran in terror. In other upper class areas, gangs set fire to homes. Schools closed as panic spread in a number of areas.

The turmoil comes a day after a council meant to reestablish democratic order in the Caribbean nation fired the interim prime minister Garry Conille, replacing him with businessman Alix Didier Fils-Aimé. The council has been marked by infighting and three members were recently accused of corruption.

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As he was sworn in, Fils-Aimé said his top priorities were to restore peace to the crisis-stricken nation and hold elections, which haven't been held in Haiti since 2016.

"There is a lot to be done to bring back hope" he said before a room of suit-clad diplomats and security officials. "I'm deeply sorry for the people ... that have been victimized, forced to leave everything they own."

The country has seen weeks of political chaos, which observers warned could result in even more violence in a place where bloodshed has become the new normal. The country's slate of gangs have long capitalized on political turmoil to make power grabs, shutting down airports, shipping ports and stirring chaos.

The United Nations estimates that gangs control 85% of the capital of Port-au-Prince, while a U.N.-backed mission led by Kenyan police to quell gang violence struggles with a lack of funding and personnel, prompting calls for a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Louis-Henri Mars, executive director of Lakou Lapè, an organization working on peace building in violent areas of Haiti, said the political fighting has "allowed the gangs to have more freedom to attack more neighborhoods in the city and expand their control of Port-au-Prince." Civilians, he fears, will suffer the consequences.

"There will be more lives lost, more internal displacement, and more hunger in a country where half the population is on the brink of starvation," he said.

The transitional council was established in April, tasked with choosing Haiti's next prime minister and Cabinet with the hope that it would help quell violence, which exploded after Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in 2021.

The council was meant to pave the way to democratic elections, but it has been plagued with politics and infighting, and has long been at odds with Conille, the interim prime minister they hand picked six months ago, who they fired yesterday. Gangs have capitalized on that power vacuum to make their own power grabs.

Conille railed against the council's decision to fire him, calling it an illegal overreach of their powers.

"This resolution, taken outside of any legal and constitutional framework, raises serious concerns about its legitimacy and its repercussions on the future of our country," he wrote in a letter.

Organizations including the Organization of American States tried and failed last week to mediate disagreements in an attempt to save the fragile transition.

On Monday, U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric urged all involved in Haiti's democratic transition "to work constructively together," although he stopped short of offering an opinion on the move to oust Conille.

"Overcoming their differences and putting the country first remains critical," he said. "What is important is that Haitian political leaders put the interests of Haiti first and foremost."

Trump names former Rep. Lee Zeldin to lead EPA, adviser Stephen Miller to be deputy chief of policy

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, JILL COLVIN, ZEKE MILLER and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump on Monday named former New York congressman Lee Zeldin to lead the Environmental Protection Agency as he continues to build out his future administration with loyal supporters.

Zeldin, a Republican who mounted a failed bid for governor of New York in 2022, will "ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions that will be enacted in a way to unleash the power of American businesses," Trump said in a statement. Zeldin also will maintain "the highest environmental standards, including the cleanest air and water on the planet," Trump said.

Trump's statement misidentified the name of the agency Zeldin was picked to lead, labeling it the Environmental Protective Agency.

Zeldin, who left Congress in January 2023, was a surprising pick for the role. His public appearances both in his own campaigns and on behalf of Trump often had him speaking about issues such as the military, national security, antisemitism, U.S.-Israel relations, immigration and crime.

He was among the Republicans in Congress who voted against certifying the 2020 election results. While

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in Congress, he did not serve on committees with oversight of environmental policy and had a lifetime score of 14% from the League of Conservation Voters during his eight years in Congress.

In the 2022 governor's race, Zeldin vowed to reverse a fracking ban imposed by Democrats.

In an interview Monday on Fox News Channel, Zeldin, 44, said that he will seek to ensure that the United States is able to "pursue energy dominance ... bring back American jobs to the auto industry and so much more."

He's excited to implement Trump's economic agenda, Zeldin said, adding: "I think the American people are so hungry for it. It's one of the big reasons why they're sending him back to the White House."

In 2016 Zeldin pushed to change the designation of about 150 square miles of federal waters in Long Island Sound to state jurisdiction for New York and Rhode Island. He wanted to open the area to striped bass fishing.

Zeldin said at the time that he wanted to restore local control and common sense to fishery management. He later pushed to allow striped bass fishing in an amendment to a federal spending bill. Environmental groups criticized the amendment, which they said risked overfishing in the area.

Trump often pointed to Zeldin's performance in the 2022 gubernatorial race, when the Republican did far better than had been expected against Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul. While Trump didn't win New York state in last week's election, he did far better than he had during previous elections, particularly in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens.

New York Republican chair Ed Cox said Zeldin's surprise appointment was "a testament to President Trump's commitment to revitalizing the original mission of the EPA — an agency created ... under President Richard Nixon to protect our nation's environment."

The announcement came after Trump selected longtime adviser Stephen Miller, an immigration hard-liner, to be the deputy chief of policy in his new administration and named New York Rep. Elise Stefanik as his choice for U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

Trump has also asked Florida Rep. Mike Waltz, a retired Army National Guard officer and war veteran, to be his national security adviser, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter before Trump made a formal announcement.

Miller is one of Trump's longest-serving aides, dating back to his first campaign for the White House. He was a senior adviser in Trump's first term and has been a central figure in many of his policy decisions, particularly on immigration, including Trump's move to separate thousands of immigrant families as a deterrence program in 2018.

Miller has also helped craft many of Trump's hardline speeches, and was often the public face of those policies during Trump's first term in office and during his campaigns.

Since leaving the White House, Miller has served as the president of America First Legal, an organization of former Trump advisers fashioned as a conservative version of the American Civil Liberties Union, challenging the Biden administration, media companies, universities and others over issues such as freedom of speech and religion and national security.

Miller drew large cheers at Trump's rally at Madison Square Garden during the race's final stretch, telling the crowd that, "your salvation is at hand," after what he cast as "decades of abuse that has been heaped upon the good people of this nation — their jobs looted and stolen from them and shipped to Mexico, Asia and foreign countries. The lives of their loved ones ripped away from them by illegal aliens, criminal gangs and thugs who don't belong in this country."

Because it is not a Cabinet position, the appointment does not need Senate confirmation.

On the environment, Zeldin said in 2016 that he disagreed with then-candidate Trump's call to eliminate the EPA. He told a candidate forum on Long Island that he saw "a need to improve the agency," including bettering its relationship with Congress and deferring to lawmakers on some regulations, "which is very different from advocating to eliminate it."

Ishiba survived a rare runoff to remain Japan's prime minister but will face turmoil

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, battered in parliamentary elections last month, has survived a rare runoff vote against the opposition to remain the country's leader but he still faces turmoil ahead.

One of his top priorities is dealing with the aftermath of a major corruption scandal in the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party, in which dozens of lawmakers from the party are alleged to have pocketed profits from event ticket sales as kickbacks.

Ishiba also now has a much-emboldened, opposition eager to push through policies long stymied by the LDP. Support ratings for his Cabinet have fallen to about 30%.

Here is a look at what's happening in Japan's tumultuous politics, and what it might mean for Ishiba and his government as they prepare to navigate a second term of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump.

Why did the vote in parliament take place?

A parliamentary vote for a new leader is mandatory within 30 days of a general election. In the past that was mostly ignored as the head of the LDP usually enjoyed a majority in the Lower House, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament.

This time, though, because Ishiba's LDP and its junior coalition partner lost its majority in the recent election, the runoff on Monday couldn't be avoided — the first in 30 years.

What's next for the prime minister?

Opposition's top leader, Yoshihiko Noda, has noted that nearly half of all lower house steering committees are now headed by the opposition. That's a huge change from the pre-election domination of the LDP, which controlled all but three of the 27 committees.

"We are going to have a new landscape in Japanese politics," Noda said.

Twelve of the committees in key areas, including budget, political reforms, national security and legal affairs, will be headed by Noda's Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and two other main opposition groups.

What's certain is that the era of LDP's one-sided rule is over, for now, and the opposition has a chance to achieve policies long opposed by the ruling conservatives, including on issues like gender equality and diversity.

Noda last Friday said a legal committee that is now headed by his party's gender equality chief, Chinami Nishimura, is aiming to achieve a civil code revision to allow married couples the option of keeping separate surnames. That change has been stalled by LDP conservatives for 30 years despite widespread support by the public and a United Nations panel on discrimination against women.

Who is the opposition kingmaker?

Yuichiro Tamaki is head of the conservative Democratic Party for the People, which quadrupled its seats to 28 in the election. The vote elevated his party from a fringe group to a major player.

He is now being cast as a potential key to Ishiba's survival.

A Harvard-educated former Finance Ministry bureaucrat, the 55-year-old Tamaki has seen success by pushing for the raising of a basic tax-free income allowance and an increase of take-home wages. His messages on social media have appealed to younger voters, who have long been ignored by LDP policies catering to conservative elderly.

Ishiba apparently seems to find Tamaki's 28-member DPP an attractive partner to secure a majority. The two parties, which have common ground in some areas — including support for greater nuclear energy use and a stronger military — have started policy talks.

Ishiba met with both Tamaki and Noda on Monday but Tamaki may be cautious about moving too close to a scandal-plagued LDP ahead of another election next year. Noda is struggling to form a unified opposition to force a change of government, which he says is his next goal.

What does this mean for Ishiba's government?

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For Ishiba, the “hung parliament” requires him to win over opposition forces so he can push his policies. While considered unstable, it might also provide a chance for a more consensus-based policy making process, experts say.

“I’m taking the current situation positively as a chance to get our opposition voice heard more carefully,” Tamaki said.

Ishiba also faces challenges of restoring unity in his own party. A number of senior LDP lawmakers are waiting to overthrow Ishiba, though their priority is to resolidify their footholds, not infighting — and nobody is eager to do damage control at this difficult time anyway.

“The (Ishiba) administration is quite unstable. ... He will have to get opposition parties’ cooperation every time he wants to get a bill approved, which could stall policies,” said University of Tokyo political science professor Yu Uchiyama.

And even if Ishiba survives politically in the coming months, there could be a call for his replacement ahead of next elections.

“Japan is likely to return to a period of short-lived government,” Uchiyama said.

How does this affect Japan’s diplomacy, security and ties with Trump?

Ishiba congratulated Trump hours after his victory and in a brief telephone conversation, they agreed to closely work together to further elevate their alliance.

While experts say Trump understands the importance of U.S.-Japan relations, he may — as he did in his first administration — pressure Japan to pay more for the cost of 50,000 U.S. troops in Japan or to buy more expensive American weapons.

Trump’s possible tariff proposals could also hurt Japanese exporters.

Ishiba on Saturday renewed his pledge to pursue an ongoing military buildup plan under a strategy that calls for a counter-strike capability with long-range cruise-missiles. He has long advocated a more equal Japan-U.S. security alliance but could face difficulty pursuing those plans.

“It will be a fantastic experiment to see if a national unity government can get Japan through until the next election,” said Michael Cucek, an expert in Japanese politics at Temple University in Japan.

Middle East latest: Israeli minister reports some progress toward cease-fire but Hezbollah unaware

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel’s new foreign minister said Monday that there has been “certain progress” in efforts to end the fighting with Lebanon’s Hezbollah. But a spokesman for the militant group said it had not received any official proposal and was prepared to wage a long war if needed.

The Biden administration has spent months trying to broker a cease-fire, and there were reports that U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein might return to the region in the coming days.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said any agreement would have to include enforcement mechanisms to prevent Hezbollah from reconstituting its military infrastructure near the border.

“There is certain progress on the issue. We are working with the Americans,” he told reporters.

Hezbollah began firing into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in solidarity with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Since the conflict erupted, more than 3,200 people have been killed and more than 14,000 wounded in Lebanon, the Health Ministry reported.

The Israel-Hamas war began after Palestinian militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others. Israel’s military response in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 people, Palestinian health officials say. The officials do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, but say more than half of those killed were women and children.

Here’s the latest:

Israel denied or impeded 85% of aid convoys to northern Gaza last month, UN says

UNITED NATIONS – The U.N. humanitarian office says 85% of its attempts to coordinate aid convoys

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and humanitarian visits to northern Gaza — where hunger is acute and Israel is carrying out a major offensive — were denied or impeded last month.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs made 98 requests to Israeli authorities for authorization to go through the checkpoint along Wadi Gaza but only 15 made it, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Monday.

The humanitarian office, known as OCHA, “is worried about the fate of Palestinians remaining in North Gaza, as the siege there continues, and urgently calls on Israel to open up the area to humanitarian operations at the scale needed, given the massive needs.” Dujarric said.

In a new report published Monday, OCHA said humanitarian organizations submitted 50 requests to the Israeli authorities to enter North Gaza governorate in October and 33 were rejected while eight were accepted but faced impediments including delays that prevented their completion, he said.

Over the past three days, Dujarric said, teams from OCHA, the U.N. human rights and de-mining agencies and other humanitarian groups visited nine sites in Gaza City to assess the needs of hundreds of displaced families, many from North Gaza.

The teams say that some were in shelters, abandoned homes, destroyed clinic and some were sleeping in the streets or open fields where they feared stray dogs at night, Dujarric said.

In a severely damaged structure, the team found more than a dozen families — including people with disabilities and some in urgent need of medical care — sheltering in the basement which had no electricity and was full of sewage, he said.

“The assessment teams say that urgent assistance is needed, including medical treatment and essential medication,” Dujarric said. “Palestinians in Gaza city also need blankets, warm clothing, shoes, heaters, and fuel as winter approaches” as well as tarpaulins and flood-resistant tents.

A senior Israeli diplomat meets with top U.S. officials in Washington as Lebanon cease-fire efforts appear to gain momentum

WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s top strategic adviser met with U.S. officials on Monday in Washington.

Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer was meeting Monday with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the State Department said. He also met White House senior advisers Amos Hochstein and Brett McGurk at the White House, according to a U.S. official. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, said that Dermer is also expected to meet on Tuesday with national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

Dermer is also expected to meet with Trump officials during his time in the U.S.

Earlier Monday, Israel’s new foreign minister told reporters there has been “certain progress” in cease-fire efforts with Hezbollah in Lebanon. Dermer is a close confidant of Netanyahu and last week traveled to Russia as part of cease-fire efforts, said an official familiar with the matter.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss behind-the-scenes diplomacy, said Dermer is trying to rally Russian support for enforcing a cease-fire by helping ensure that Iran will no longer smuggle weapons to Hezbollah through Syria, which is a Russian ally.

Aamer Madhani in Washington and Josef Federman in Jerusalem contributed.

UN peacekeeping chief will travel to Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS – The U.N. peacekeeping chief is heading to Lebanon for a three-day visit to support peacekeepers on the front line monitoring the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict and to amplify U.N. calls for de-escalation and a cease-fire.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Monday that’s the message Undersecretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix will be delivering starting on Tuesday when he arrives in Lebanon.

In Beirut, Lacroix is scheduled to meet with caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati; Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, the caretaker foreign and defense ministers, armed forces chief and the diplomatic corps, Dujarric said.

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Lacroix is also scheduled to visit the headquarters of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Naqoura in southern Lebanon and front-line positions along the U.N.-drawn boundary between Lebanon and Israel to meet peacekeepers and "thank them for their dedication in carrying out their work under extremely difficult conditions," Dujarric said.

The force, known as UNIFIL, has continued to monitor the escalating conflict between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah across the boundary known as the Blue Line despite Israeli calls for peacekeepers to pull back 5 kilometers (3 miles) for their safety. UNIFIL has accused Israel of deliberately destroying observation equipment, and a number of peacekeepers have been injured in the military action.

Israeli strike in northern Lebanon kills at least 8, health officials say

BEIRUT — An Israeli airstrike destroyed a home in northern Lebanon on Monday, killing at least eight people and wounding 14 others, the Health Ministry said.

Rescue teams scrambled to pull survivors from under the rubble, Lebanon's state media said, and video widely circulated on social media showed the Lebanese Red Cross moving corpses encased in body bags.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike and the target was not clear. The strike hit the village of Ain Yaaqoub in the northern Akkar region, which is home to Greek Orthodox and Sunni Muslim communities and is far from the Hezbollah militant group's main areas of influence in the south and east.

Israel has struck deeper into Lebanon since its military escalation and ground invasion against Hezbollah in late September. Israel's first strike in the Akkar region was on Nov. 2 and targeted a bridge near a Lebanese army checkpoint, cutting a key road leading to Syria.

On Monday, another Israeli airstrike hit a residential building in southern Lebanon, killing seven people and wounding seven others, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. Israel's military said 190 rockets were fired from Lebanon on Monday, with rescue services saying at least five people were injured.

Israeli minister says he will push to annex parts of the occupied West Bank once Trump takes office

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Israel's finance minister says he will push for Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Bezalel Smotrich said in a speech Monday that he will push "for the inclusion of Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria," using the biblical term for the territory. "2025 will be the year ... of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria," he added.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war and has built scores of settlements to cement its control over the area. But it has never annexed the territory, which is home to 3 million Palestinians who live under military rule.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and Gaza, for an independent state.

The international community overwhelmingly considers the settlements, where some 500,000 Israelis live, to be illegal and obstacles to peace.

Smotrich, along with other settler leaders, are counting on Trump to resume the pro-settler positions he took during his first term as president. During the first Trump administration, the U.S. reversed long-standing U.S. policy and said settlements do not violate international law. Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, made an unprecedented visit to a Jewish settlement.

Lebanon death toll jumps to more than 3,240 people, Health Ministry says

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Health Ministry said Monday that 54 people were killed and 56 wounded on Sunday, raising the total toll from a year of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah to 3,243 killed and 14,134 wounded.

One-quarter of them were women and children, the ministry said, with 2,325 men, 634 women and 201 children killed since the Israel-Hezbollah war began 13 months ago. Before the war intensified on Sept. 23, Hezbollah had said that nearly 500 of its members were killed but the group has stopped updating its death toll since.

On Monday, an Israeli airstrike on a residential building in Al-Saksakiyeh town in Sidon province, South Lebanon, killed seven people and wounded seven others, the Health Ministry said.

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Most of those casualties were women and children, Lebanon's state media said, adding that rescue teams were still searching for more missing people under the rubble.

In the health care sector, the ministry said that 191 health workers have been killed, 308 wounded and 244 medical vehicles damaged since Oct. 8, 2023. Additionally, 88 medical and ambulatory centers have been affected, along with 65 hospitals.

Israel says 190 rockets were fired from Lebanon, with reports that nearly half targeted the area around Haifa

TEL AVIV — Israel's military said at least 190 rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israel on Monday, just as the country's new foreign minister said efforts to reach a cease-fire deal with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah were moving forward.

At least 90 rockets were fired toward Haifa, one of the largest barrages towards the northern port city since the war began last year, according to Israeli media. Israel's rescue services said four people were wounded in the area around Haifa, and another person earlier in the day.

Israel's military said most of the rockets were intercepted, without elaborating.

The volley came the same day Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said "certain progress" was being made toward a U.S.-brokered cease-fire with Lebanon's Hezbollah. The group's leader has said it had not received a proposal and is prepared to keep fighting.

Hezbollah did not immediately claim the volley on Monday evening, but said it was responsible for two rocket attacks in the afternoon it said targeted Israeli military bases near Haifa. Israel said its forces had targeted the Hezbollah launchers responsible for the attack.

Hezbollah began firing rockets at Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in solidarity with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's foreign minister isn't worried over US deadline for increased aid to Gaza

JERUSALEM — Israel's new foreign minister appeared to downplay a looming U.S. deadline for increased aid to Gaza, saying he was confident "the issue would be solved."

The Biden administration warned Israel last month to increase the amount of food and other urgently needed aid entering Gaza to 350 trucks per day or risk a scaling back of American military support. It set a 30-day deadline that expires this week.

The amount of aid entering the war-ravaged territory plummeted in October to its lowest level since the first month of the war, with an average of 57 trucks entering each day, according to Israeli figures.

U.N. agencies say even less is actually being distributed because Israeli restrictions, ongoing fighting and lawlessness often prevent them from retrieving the aid on the Gaza side of the border.

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said Monday that he was "sure we can also reach understanding with our American friends and that issue will be solved."

U.S. President Joe Biden may have less leverage over Israel as it awaits Donald Trump's return to the White House in January.

Trump was a staunch supporter of Israel during his previous term. He has vowed to end the wars in the Middle East without saying how.

Lebanon's caretaker prime minister calls for a cease-fire along the border with Israel

BEIRUT — Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Monday called for an immediate cease-fire along the Lebanon-Israel border, saying the war has had devastating effects on the small nation.

Mikati called for the implementation of a U.N. resolution that ended the Israel-Hezbollah war in the summer of 2006, and the deployment of Lebanese troops along the border with Israel in coordination with U.N. peacekeepers.

Mikati spoke at the opening session of the Arab-Islamic summit in the Saudi capital of Riyadh. He said the war has caused "unprecedented losses" with more than 3,000 people dead, including 775 women and children.

He said the war also had caused \$8.5 billion in losses, including \$3.4 billion caused by the destruction or damage of about 100,000 housing units in different parts of the country.

"No state can take the burden of this huge destruction," Mikati said, adding that Beirut is about to set

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up a fund that will be funded by friendly states for the reconstruction process. He said the fund will be under international supervision and subject to international auditing.

Mikati urged other nations to support the Lebanese state rather than the country's political factions.

Saudi Arabia hosts a summit to discuss Mideast wars

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia on Monday hosted a summit over the ongoing Mideast wars.

Speaking before leaders, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said the kingdom renewed "its condemnation and categorical rejection of the genocide committed by Israel against the brotherly Palestinian people, which has claimed the lives of 150,000 martyrs, wounded and missing, most of whom are women and children."

"We affirm that Israel's continued crimes against innocent people, its persistence in violating the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and its detraction from the pivotal role of the Palestinian National Authority in all Palestinian territories will undermine the efforts aimed at obtaining the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and establishing peace in the region," he added.

The summit is a follow-up from the 2023 Arab-Islamic Summit.

The new Israeli foreign minister says there's 'certain progress' in efforts to end war with Hezbollah

JERUSALEM — Israel's new foreign minister says there has been "certain progress" in efforts to end the fighting with Lebanon's Hezbollah.

But a spokesman for the militant group said Monday that it had not received any official proposal and was prepared to wage a long war if needed.

The Biden administration has spent months trying to broker a cease-fire, and there were reports that U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein might return to the region in the coming days.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said any agreement would have to include enforcement mechanisms to prevent Hezbollah from reconstituting its military infrastructure near the border.

"There is certain progress on the issue. We are working with the Americans," he told reporters.

"The most important thing will not (be) the words but the enforcement," he said, adding that if any agreement is breached, Israel "will act immediately, militarily."

The U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war required both Hezbollah and Israeli forces to withdraw from a buffer zone in southern Lebanon that was to be patrolled by U.N. peacekeepers and the Lebanese army.

Israel says Hezbollah maintained a military presence right up to the border, while Lebanon accused Israel of violating other terms of the resolution. Lebanese officials are opposed to any changes to the resolution.

In Beirut, Hezbollah spokesman Mohammed Afif said the group has enough weapons and supplies to fight a long war with Israel. He said Israeli forces had failed to hold territory six weeks into their ground invasion, pointing to what he said was a failed Israeli attempt last week to enter the southern town of Khiyam.

"As long as you are not able to control areas in the field you will not achieve your political goals," Afif said.

He also denied claims by Israeli officials that Hezbollah has lost most of its missile capabilities, pointing to the fact that it is still launching dozens of projectiles a day and targeting areas in central Israel.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel, and drawing retaliatory strikes, the day after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack out of Gaza ignited the war there. All-out war erupted in September, when Israel carried out a wave of heavy airstrikes and killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and most of his top commanders.

An Israeli strike closes Syria's main north-south highway

DAMASCUS, Syria — Israel's air force attacked an aid convoy and forced the closure of Syria's main north-south highway, Syria state media reported.

There was no immediate word on casualties from Monday's strike, and state TV did not provide details about the convoy.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria in recent years. Israeli officials rarely acknowledge them, but say Israel is determined to disrupt arms shipments to Lebanon's Hezbollah and to prevent Iran from developing military infrastructure near its borders.

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Monday's airstrike occurred in Shamsin, around 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the border with Lebanon. People often gather there after fleeing the war, state TV said.

It said the strike forced the closure of the M5 highway that links the capital, Damascus, with the northern city of Aleppo.

On Sunday, an Israeli airstrike hit a residential building in the Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zeinab. The Syrian Defense Ministry said seven civilians were killed. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor linked to the Syrian opposition, suggested that Hezbollah was targeted.

UN says more than 200 children have been killed in war in Lebanon

BEIRUT — The United Nations children's agency says the war between Israel and Hezbollah has killed more than 200 children in Lebanon.

They include seven children who were among 23 people killed in an Israeli airstrike in northern Lebanon on Sunday.

UNICEF said protecting children from harm during war is a legal obligation and called for a cease-fire.

Lebanon's Health Ministry says at least 3,189 people have been killed and over 14,000 wounded in Lebanon in more than a year of conflict between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group. Some 1.2 million people have been displaced.

On the Israeli side, 68 soldiers and 41 civilians have been killed in the fighting since October 2023, according to the prime minister's office. More than 60,000 people have been displaced from their homes.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel, and drawing retaliatory strikes, the day after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack out of Gaza ignited the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies backed by Iran.

Hezbollah acknowledged the killing of nearly 500 of its fighters in the first 11 months of the conflict but stopped updating that toll after all-out war erupted in September.

Yemen's Houthi rebels say they launched a missile targeting Israel

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Houthi rebels on Monday claimed they launched a missile targeting Israel.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree made the claim in a prerecorded video message, claiming that the rebels launched a Palestine-2 ballistic missile he described as a "hypersonic" toward a military base.

The Israeli military said it "intercepted one projectile that approached Israel from the direction of Yemen." The Israelis also said the fire did not enter Israeli territory.

The Houthis have launched missiles and targeted ships through the Red Sea corridor over the ongoing Mideast wars. The rebels separately said sites in the country came under attack in likely U.S. airstrikes early Monday morning, something not immediately acknowledged by the Americans.

Senior UAE diplomat calls for de-escalation in Mideast wars

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A senior diplomat for the United Arab Emirates called on the world to focus on the plight of civilians and de-escalate the ongoing Mideast wars.

Anwar Gargash's remarks Monday, made at the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, followed the pattern of comments made by the UAE amid the Mideast wars. The UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms home to Dubai, diplomatically recognized Israel in 2020.

"The complexities of the region require a steady hand and a clear and consistent vision," Gargash said. "The recent cycle of escalation between Israel and Iran cannot become a permanent feature of the strategic landscape of our region. This must be addressed through a political framework."

He called for "pragmatism" and a "serious political horizon" to resolve the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reach a two-state solution. He described the war in the Gaza Strip as being "driven by extremists on both sides, from the Israeli and Arab side." Yet he also called the "systemic violence" faced by Palestinians in Gaza "criminal and unacceptable."

He added: "At the present time, it is vital to identify that not all crises stem from the Palestinian issue, yet it undeniably remains central to the conflict in our region."

The UAE has provided aid for both the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in the wars, while maintaining its diplomatic ties with Israel. The UAE has, however, strenuously criticized Israel's conduct at times in public in the wars.

Gargash also offered criticism of governance in both the Palestinian territories and Lebanon.

"In both Palestine and Lebanon, a drastic reform is essential for the world to step in and provide considerable support," Gargash said.

The Latest: Fewer than 20 races to be called as control of Congress hangs in the balance

By The Associated Press undefined

Control over the U.S. House of Representatives still hangs in the balance, teetering between a Republican or Democratic majority with fewer than 20 races left to be called.

Follow the AP's Election 2024 coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024>.

Here's the latest:

Trump taps Rep. Mike Waltz as national security adviser

President-elect Donald Trump has asked U.S. Rep. Michael Waltz, a retired Army National Guard officer and war veteran, to be his national security adviser, a person familiar with the matter said Monday.

The nod came despite simmering concerns on Capitol Hill about Trump tapping members of the House, where the final tally is still uncertain and there are worries about pulling any GOP members from the chamber because that would force a new election to fill the empty seat. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter before Trump made a formal announcement.

The move would put Waltz at the forefront of a litany of national security crises — ranging from the ongoing effort to provide weapons to Ukraine and escalating worries about the growing alliance between Russia and North Korea to the persistent attacks in the Middle East by Iran proxies and the push for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah.

Read more about Rep. Mike Waltz

Elon Musk's PAC spent an estimated \$200 million to help elect Donald Trump, AP source says

The billionaire Tesla and SpaceX CEO provided the vast majority of the money to America PAC, which focused on low-propensity and first-time voters, according to a person familiar with the group's spending, who was not authorized to disclose the figure publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

America PAC's work was aided by a March ruling from the Federal Election Commission that paved the way for super PACs to coordinate their canvassing efforts with campaigns, allowing the Trump campaign to rely on the near-unlimited money of the nation's most high-profile billionaire to boost turnout in deep-red parts of the country. That allowed the campaign to spend the money they saved on everything from national ad campaigns to targeted outreach toward demographics Democrats once dominated.

Read more about America PAC's work to elect Trump

Gov. Gavin Newsom will visit DC as he tries to Trump-proof state policies

California Gov. Gavin Newsom plans to meet with the Biden administration to discuss zero-emission vehicles and disaster relief — issues that have been targeted in the past by President-elect Donald Trump.

The Democratic governor is leaving for Washington on Monday and will return home Wednesday, his office said. Newsom will also meet with California's congressional delegation.

The trip comes days after Newsom called for state lawmakers to convene a special session in December to protect California's liberal policies ahead of Trump's return to office in January.

Read more about Newsom's trip to D.C.

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala says he had 'a great call' with President-elect Donald Trump

Fiala says they talked about Ukraine, Israel and the Middle East.

The Czech Republic is a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its fight against the Russian aggression and is one of the biggest allies of Israel in the European Union.

Fiala said they also talked about Trump's late wife Ivana, who was of Czech origin, and his memories

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of Prague.

"I am looking forward to our close cooperation!" said Fiala, a conservative politician who leads a four-party coalition government.

Trump has chosen former New York Rep. Lee Zeldin as his pick to lead the Environmental Protection Agency

In a statement, Trump said Zeldin "will ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions that will be enacted in a way to unleash the power of American businesses, while at the same time maintaining the highest environmental standards, including the cleanest air and water on the planet."

Zeldin doesn't appear to have any experience in environmental issues, but is a longtime supporter of the former president.

Zeldin wrote on X, that it was an "honor" to be chosen for the job, adding: "We will restore US energy dominance, revitalize our auto industry to bring back American jobs, and make the US the global leader of AI. We will do so while protecting access to clean air and water."

Stock market today: Most of Wall Street rolls higher as bitcoin bounces above \$86,000

Most U.S. stocks are rising Monday, led by those seen as benefiting the most from Donald Trump's re-election as president, but drops for some high-profile Big Tech stocks are keeping indexes in check.

The S&P 500 was up 0.1% in late trading, and two out of every three stocks in the index were climbing. It's coming off its best week of the year, following Trump's presidential victory and a cut to interest rates by the Federal Reserve to bolster the economy.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 332 points, or 0.8%, with roughly an hour remaining in trading, and the Nasdaq composite was 0.1% lower.

Tesla was the strongest force pushing upward on the S&P 500 after rising 7.2%. Its leader, Elon Musk, has become a close ally of Trump's, and its stock jumped nearly 15% the day after the election and has kept rising.

Read more about the financial markets

Will Trump's hush money conviction stand? A judge will rule on the president-elect's immunity claim

A gut punch for most defendants, Donald Trump turned his criminal conviction into a rallying cry. His supporters put "I'm Voting for the Felon" on T-shirts, hats and lawn signs.

"The real verdict is going to be Nov. 5 by the people," Trump proclaimed after his conviction in New York last spring on 34 counts of falsifying business records.

Now, just a week after Trump's resounding election victory, a Manhattan judge is poised to decide whether to uphold the hush money verdict or dismiss it because of a U.S. Supreme Court decision in July that gave presidents broad immunity from criminal prosecution.

Judge Juan M. Merchan has said he'll issue a written opinion Tuesday on Trump's request to toss his conviction and either order a new trial or dismiss the indictment entirely.

Read more about Trump's immunity

Trump names Tom Homan, former director of immigration enforcement, as 'border czar'

President-elect Donald Trump says Tom Homan, his former acting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement director, will serve as "border czar" in his incoming administration, a position that's likely to play a key role in Trump's campaign pledges to secure the U.S.-Mexico border and mount a massive deportation operation.

"I am pleased to announce that the Former ICE Director, and stalwart on Border Control, Tom Homan, will be joining the Trump Administration, in charge of our Nation's Borders," he wrote late Sunday on his Truth Social site.

In addition to overseeing the southern and northern borders and "maritime, and aviation security," Trump said Homan "will be in charge of all Deportation of Illegal Aliens back to their Country of Origin," a central part of his agenda.

Homan is a tough-talking former Border Patrol agent who worked his way up to head Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2017 and 2018 as the acting director. He was never confirmed by the Senate, and his new role doesn't require it.

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Read more about Tom Homan

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto released a video of his congratulatory call to Trump. The video's Monday release offers a rare window into the flood of private conversations the Republican is having with world leaders before he takes office Jan. 20.

"I would like to call personally on you wherever you are, I'm willing to fly to congratulate you in person, sir," Subianto tells Trump. "That's so nice," Trump replies. "We'll do that anytime you want."

Trump told Subianto he was doing an "amazing" job leading Indonesia, before adding, "And your English is so good — very good, the English." Subianto replies that all of his "training is American."

In the three-minute video clip of the conversation, Subianto also expresses relief that Trump survived a pair of assassination attempts during the campaign, while Trump says he'd "like to get to your country sometime."

Trump closes by telling Subianto, "You call anytime you want. You have my number. This is my number," and expressing respect to the people of Indonesia.

Lawmakers prepare for a final lame-duck sprint before making way for the next Congress

Keeping the federal government open. Providing more disaster aid. Passing a defense policy bill. And for Senate Democrats, confirming more judges.

It's a short but important to-do list as Congress returns to Washington this week to begin what's known as a lame-duck session — that period between Election Day and the end of the two-year congressional term.

Republicans are anxious to turn the page and move on to next year when they'll have control of the White House and possibly both chambers of Congress, while Democrats hope to get in as many of their priorities as they can while they still have the majority in the Senate.

Read more about Congress' lame-duck session

Trump is likely to name a loyalist as Pentagon chief after tumultuous first term

President-elect Donald Trump's choice for defense secretary is still up in the air, but it's a sure bet he'll look to reshape the Pentagon and pick a loyalist following his tumultuous first term. Five men held the job as Pentagon chief only to resign, be fired or serve briefly as a stopgap.

While he has yet to announce a decision, the names of potential Pentagon chiefs stretch from the well known — such as Rep. Mike Waltz of Florida — to an array of former administration loyalists, including retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, who held national security posts during Trump's first term.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had been floated, but Trump said on social media Saturday that Pompeo would not be joining the new administration.

Read more about Trump's possible choices for defense secretary

Trump names Stephen Miller to be deputy chief of policy in new administration

Donald Trump is naming longtime adviser Stephen Miller, an immigration hard-liner, to be the deputy chief of policy in his new administration.

Vice President-elect JD Vance posted a message of congratulations Monday to Miller on X and said, "This is another fantastic pick by the president." The announcement was first reported by CNN.

Miller was a senior adviser in Trump's first term and has been a central figure in many of his policy decisions, notably his move to separate thousands of immigrant families as a deterrence program in 2018. Miller helped craft many of Trump's hard-line speeches and plans on immigration.

Since Trump left office, Miller has served as the president of America First Legal, an organization of former Trump advisers fashioned as a conservative version of the American Civil Liberties Union, challenging the Biden administration, media companies, universities and others over issues such as freedom of speech and religion and national security.

Read more about Trump's administration

Biden and Harris make their first joint appearance since her election loss

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are appearing together for the first time since she lost the presidential election to Republican Donald Trump.

Biden and Harris are participating in the annual Veterans Day observance at Arlington National Cemetery

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on Monday. They laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Biden was among officials delivering remarks at the amphitheater.

It was also Harris' first public appearance since last Wednesday when the Democratic vice president delivered a speech at her alma mater Howard University in which she conceded the election to Trump.

The Kremlin rejects reports of a conversation last week between Putin and Trump

The Kremlin on Monday rejected reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke last week with President-elect Donald Trump about the war in Ukraine, and a spokesman for Trump refused to comment on what he called his "private calls" with world leaders.

The Washington Post first reported Sunday, citing anonymous sources, that the two spoke Thursday, with Trump advising Putin not to escalate the war in Ukraine and cited the sizable U.S. military presence in Europe.

In a conference call Monday with journalists, Kremlin press secretary Dmitry Peskov said "there was no conversation" and the report was "completely untrue, it is pure fiction."

Asked about the report, Trump's communications director Steven Cheung said, "We do not comment on private calls between President Trump and other world leaders."

Read more about Trump and Putin

Trump breaks GOP losing streak in nation's largest majority-Arab city with a pivotal final week

Faced with two choices she didn't like, Suehaila Amen chose neither.

Instead, the longtime Democrat from the Arab American stronghold of Dearborn, Michigan, backed a third-party candidate for president, adding her voice to a remarkable turnaround that helped Donald Trump reclaim Michigan and the presidency.

In Dearborn, where nearly half of the 110,000 residents are of Arab descent, Vice President Kamala Harris received over 2,500 fewer votes than Trump, who became the first Republican presidential candidate since former President George W. Bush in 2000 to win the city. Harris also lost neighboring Dearborn Heights to Trump, who in his previous term as president banned travel from several mostly-Muslim countries.

Harris lost the presidential vote in two Detroit-area cities with large Arab American populations after months of warnings from local Democrats about the Biden-Harris administration's unwavering support for Israel in the war in Gaza. Some said they backed Trump after he visited a few days before the election, mingling with customers and staff at a Lebanese-owned restaurant and reassuring people he would find a way to end the violence in the Middle East.

Read more about the election and Arab Americans

Trump has chosen New York Rep. Elise Stefanik as to serve as ambassador to the United Nations

"I am honored to nominate Chairwoman Elise Stefanik to serve in my Cabinet as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations," President-elect Donald Trump said in a statement. "Elise is an incredibly strong, tough, and smart America First fighter."

Stefanik, 40, serves as House Republican Conference Chair and has long been one of Trump's most loyal allies in the House.

Nikki Haley, who challenged Trump for the GOP nomination, was among those who previously held the role in his first term.

A record 13 women will be governors next year after New Hampshire elected Kelly Ayotte

The election of Republican Kelly Ayotte as New Hampshire's governor means 13 women will serve as a state's chief executive next year, breaking the record of 12 set after the 2022 elections.

Governors hold powerful sway in American politics, shaping state policy and often using the experience and profile gained to launch campaigns for higher offices.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was floated as a potential Democratic nominee for president after President Biden exited the race. Republican South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was thought to be in the running for President-elect Donald Trump's vice presidential post.

Ayotte, a former U.S. senator, defeated the Democratic nominee Joyce Craig, a former mayor of Manchester, New Hampshire's largest city.

Still, 18 states have never had a woman in the governor's office.

Read more about this historic record

Young Black and Latino men say they chose Trump because of the economy and jobs. Here's how and why Trump gained a larger share of Black and Latino voters than he did in 2020, when he lost to Democrat Joe Biden, and most notably among men under age 45, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 120,000 voters.

Even as Democrat Kamala Harris won majorities of Black and Latino voters, it wasn't enough to give the vice president the White House, because of the gains Trump made.

The vice president's losses with these groups largely became Trump's gains as he locked down his traditionally older, white base and slightly expanded into a winning coalition.

A combination of the economy and jobs was pinpointed as the issue voters felt was the most important problem the country faced. That was the case, too, for Black and Hispanic voters.

Read more about Trump's victory with these groups

Queen Bey and Yale: The Ivy League university is set to offer a course on Beyoncé and her legacy

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

With a record 99 Grammy nominations and acclaim as one of the most influential artists in music history, pop superstar Beyoncé and her expansive cultural legacy will be the subject of a new course at Yale University next year.

Titled "Beyoncé Makes History: Black Radical Tradition, Culture, Theory & Politics Through Music," the one-credit class will focus on the period from her 2013 self-titled album through this year's genre-defying "Cowboy Carter" and how the world-famous singer, songwriter and entrepreneur has generated awareness and engagement in social and political ideologies.

Yale University's African American Studies Professor Daphne Brooks intends to use the performer's wide-ranging repertoire, including footage of her live performances, as a "portal" for students to learn about Black intellectuals, from Frederick Douglass to Toni Morrison.

"We're going to be taking seriously the ways in which the critical work, the intellectual work of some of our greatest thinkers in American culture resonates with Beyoncé's music and thinking about the ways in which we can apply their philosophies to her work" and how it has sometimes been at odds with the "Black radical intellectual tradition," Brooks said.

Beyoncé, whose full name is Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter, is not the first performer to be the subject of a college-level course. There have been courses on singer and songwriter Bob Dylan over the years and several colleges and universities have recently offered classes on singer Taylor Swift and her lyrics and pop culture legacy. That includes law professors who hope to engage a new generation of lawyers by using a famous celebrity like Swift to bring context to complicated, real-world concepts.

Professors at other colleges and universities have also incorporated Beyoncé into their courses or offered classes on the superstar.

Brooks sees Beyoncé in a league of her own, crediting the singer with using her platform to "spectacularly elevate awareness of and engagement with grassroots, social, political ideologies and movements" in her music, including the Black Lives Matter movement and Black feminist commentary.

"Can you think of any other pop musician who's invited an array of grassroots activists to participate in these longform multimedia album projects that she's given us since 2013," asked Brooks. She noted how Beyoncé has also tried to tell a story through her music about "race and gender and sexuality in the context of the 400-year-plus history of African-American subjugation."

"She's a fascinating artist because historical memory, as I often refer to it, and also the kind of impulse to be an archive of that historical memory, it's just all over her work," Brooks said. "And you just don't see that with any other artist."

Brooks previously taught a well-received class on Black women in popular music culture at Princeton University and discovered her students were most excited about the portion dedicated to Beyoncé. She

expects her class at Yale will be especially popular, but she's trying to keep the size of the group relatively small.

For those who manage to snag a seat next semester, they shouldn't get their hopes up about seeing Queen Bey in person.

"It's too bad because if she were on tour, I would definitely try to take the class to see her," Brooks said.

Bitcoin has topped \$87,000 for a new record high. What to know about crypto's post-election rally

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As money continues to pour into crypto following Donald Trump's victory last week, bitcoin has climbed to yet another record high.

The world's largest cryptocurrency topped \$87,000 for the first time on Monday. As of around 3:45 p.m. ET, bitcoin's price stood at \$87,083, per CoinDesk, up over 28% in the last week alone.

That's part of a rally across cryptocurrencies and crypto-related investments since Trump won the U.S. presidential election last week. Analysts credit much of the recent gains to an anticipated "crypto-friendly" nature of the incoming administration, which could translate into more regulatory clarity but also leeway.

Still, as with everything in the volatile cryptoverse, the future is hard to predict. And while some are bullish, others continue to warn of investment risks.

Here's what you need to know.

Back up. What is cryptocurrency again?

Cryptocurrency has been around for a while now, but has come under the spotlight in recent years.

In basic terms, cryptocurrency is digital money. This kind of currency is designed to work through an online network without a central authority — meaning it's typically not backed by any government or banking institution — and transactions get recorded with technology called a blockchain.

Bitcoin is the largest and oldest cryptocurrency, although other assets like Ethereum, Tether and Dogecoin have gained popularity over the years. Some investors see cryptocurrency as a "digital alternative" to traditional money — but it can be very volatile, and reliant on larger market conditions.

Why are bitcoin and other crypto assets soaring now?

A lot of it has to do with the outcome of last week's election.

Trump was previously a crypto skeptic, but changed his mind and embraced cryptocurrencies during this year's presidential race. He has pledged to make the U.S. "the crypto capital of the planet" and create a "strategic reserve" of bitcoin. His campaign accepted donations in cryptocurrency and he courted fans at a bitcoin conference in July. He also launched World Liberty Financial, a new venture with family members to trade cryptocurrencies.

Crypto industry players welcomed Trump's victory, in hopes that he would be able to push through legislative and regulatory changes that they've long lobbied for. And Trump had previously promised that, if elected, he would remove the chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Gary Gensler, who has been leading the U.S. government's crackdown on the crypto industry and repeatedly called for more oversight.

"Crypto rallied as Election Day progressed into the night and as it became increasingly clear that Trump would emerge victorious," Citi analysts David Glass and Alex Saunders wrote in a Friday research note, pointing to larger industry sentiment around Trump being "crypto-friendly" and a potential shift in regulatory backing.

Even before the post-election rally, assets like bitcoin posted notable gains over the past year or so. Much of the credit goes to early success of a new way to invest in the asset: spot bitcoin ETFs, which were approved by U.S. regulators in January.

Inflows into spot ETFs, or exchange-traded funds, "have been the dominant driver of Bitcoin returns from some time, and we expect this relationship to continue in the near-term," Glass and Saunders noted. They added that spot crypto ETFs saw some of their largest inflows on record in the days following the election.

What are the risks?

Crypto assets like bitcoin have a history of drastic swings in value — which can come suddenly and happen over the weekend or overnight in trading that continues at all hours, every day.

In short, history shows you can lose money as quickly as you've made it. Long-term price behavior relies on larger market conditions.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, bitcoin stood at just over \$5,000. Its price climbed to nearly \$69,000 by November 2021, in a time marked by high demand for technology assets, but later crashed during an aggressive series of Federal Reserve rate hikes aimed at curbing inflation. Then came the 2022 collapse of FTX, which significantly undermined confidence in crypto overall.

At the start of last year, a single bitcoin could be had for less than \$17,000. Investors, however, began returning in large numbers as inflation started to cool — and gains skyrocketed on the anticipation and then early success of spot ETFs. While some crypto supporters see the potential for more record-breaking days, experts still stress caution, especially for small-pocketed investors.

"Investors should only dabble in crypto with money that they can be prepared to lose," Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown, said last week. "Because we've seen these wild swings in the past."

What about the climate impact?

Assets like bitcoin are produced through a process called "mining," which consumes a lot of energy. And operations relying on pollutive sources have drawn particular concern over the years.

Recent research published by the United Nations University and Earth's Future journal found that the carbon footprint of 2020-2021 bitcoin mining across 76 nations was equivalent to the emissions from burning 84 billion pounds of coal or running 190 natural gas-fired power plants. Coal satisfied the bulk of bitcoin's electricity demands (45%), followed by natural gas (21%) and hydropower (16%).

In the U.S., the Energy Information Administration notes that crypto mining across the country has "grown very rapidly over the last several years," adding that grid planners have begun to express concern over increases in related electricity demand. Preliminary estimates released by the EIA in February suggest that annual electricity use from crypto mining probably represents between 0.6% to 2.3% of U.S. electricity consumption.

Environmental impacts of bitcoin mining boil largely down to the energy source used. Industry analysts have maintained that clean energy has increased in use in recent years, coinciding with rising calls for climate protections from regulators around the world.

Elon Musk's PAC spent an estimated \$200 million to help elect Trump, AP source says

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elon Musk's super PAC spent around \$200 million to help elect Donald Trump, according to a person familiar with the group's spending, funding an effort that set a new standard for how billionaires can influence elections.

The billionaire Tesla and SpaceX CEO provided the vast majority of the money to America PAC, which focused on low-propensity and first-time voters, according to the person, who was not authorized to disclose the figure publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

America PAC's work was aided by a March ruling from the Federal Election Commission that paved the way for super PACs to coordinate their canvassing efforts with campaigns, allowing the Trump campaign to rely on the near-unlimited money of the nation's most high-profile billionaire to boost turnout in deep-red parts of the country. That allowed the campaign to spend the money they saved on everything from national ad campaigns to targeted outreach toward demographics Democrats once dominated.

The plan worked for both sides. Trump saw key turnout surges in battleground states, and at the end of the campaign the president-elect credited Musk's role in the race. "We have a new star," Trump said at his election night party in Florida. "A star is born — Elon!"

"The FEC ruling cleared the way for us to gain more benefit from soft money enterprises that were going

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out and doing this work anyway," said James Blair, the Trump campaign's political director.

Blair worked as the main bridge between the Trump operation and groups like America PAC — a far cry from the early days of super PACs having to decide their strategy without communicating officially with the campaigns they were backing.

"By conserving hard dollars, we were able to go wider and deeper on paid voter contact and advertising programs," Blair said. That, he added, included broad ad campaigns aimed at a national audience, as well as — critically — more targeted campaigns looking to boost turnout among Black and Latino men, two areas where Trump saw sweeping gains in 2024.

It wasn't just Musk's money that helped Trump. The billionaire businessman became one of Trump's highest-profile surrogates in the final months of the campaign, often joining the former president onstage. His support gave Trump a clear opening into the universe of younger men who look up to Musk.

Trump also benefited from Musk's ownership of X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, and the company's work to end many of the rules that hampered Trump before he was kicked off in 2021. Like many conservatives, Musk is a fierce critic of social media efforts to counter disinformation, arguing that those efforts amount to pro-government censorship.

Musk is now expected to play a key role in a second Trump administration. The president-elect has said he will place Musk, whose rocket company works with the Defense Department and intelligence agencies, in charge of a new government efficiency commission.

A challenge to conventional wisdom

The work between the Trump campaign and America PAC has potentially longer-lasting implications.

It could yield a wholesale shift in the way presidential races are run, overturning longstanding conventional wisdom about campaigns lacking total control of their field program, the impact billionaires can have in politics and the effectiveness of paid canvassing operations.

One reason for skepticism is that this model had failed spectacularly for past campaigns, most notably during Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' run in the 2024 Republican presidential primary against Trump.

DeSantis, more than any other candidate in the primary, relied on an outside group to buttress his campaign. The group, Never Back Down, was beset by internal issues, and despite spending \$130 million to tout the Florida governor, it was swamped by Trump and his campaign operation in Iowa.

One of the most persistent issues, however, was the blurring of lines around what is legally permissible between the campaign and the outside group, an issue that worried some within the governor's official campaign.

That, however, was before the FEC ruling, meaning Trump and Musk's group were operating in an entirely different universe than a few months earlier during the primary.

The ruling "allowed a much more direct line of communication regarding canvassing," Blair said. "That is a real difference and a critical difference."

Musk's outside group was founded in May, but it wasn't until Musk endorsed Trump in July, after the former president survived an assassination attempt, that the group more clearly began its turnout work. A week later, in an interview with a conservative podcaster, Musk acknowledged the new committee and a host of top Republican operatives with ties to DeSantis joined the effort.

The group ran ads that warned if people sat out the election, "Kamala and the crazies will win." The highest-profile part of America PAC's work was a \$1 million-a-day voter sweepstakes that landed the group in court before a judge said it was allowed to continue. The sweepstakes and subsequent court case drew considerable attention, but much of America PAC's work happened under the radar.

Door knocking was arguably America PAC's most impactful work, with Trump experiencing boosts in turnout in key rural areas in battleground states. The work, however, was not without controversy.

A report from The Guardian found America PAC's efforts were rife with paid canvassers faking their work and saying they had knocked on doors that they had not visited. Multiple reports from Wired alleged that some of those paid canvassers worked in poor conditions, including riding in the back of a rented U-Haul van and facing threats to meet unfeasible quotas. Canvassers were fired after the Wired report, leading

to a lawsuit against America PAC.

A spokesperson for America PAC declined to comment on the record for this story.

Musk, meanwhile, indicated in an election night conversation on X that his PAC will stay involved in politics, "preparing for the midterms and any intermediate elections, as well as looking at elections at the District Attorney and sort of judicial levels."

Harriet Tubman posthumously named a general in Veterans Day ceremony

CHURCH CREEK, Md. (AP) — Revered abolitionist Harriet Tubman, who was the first woman to oversee an American military action during a time of war, was posthumously awarded the rank of general on Monday.

Dozens gathered on Veterans Day at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park in Maryland's Dorchester County for a formal ceremony making Tubman a one-star brigadier general in the state's National Guard.

Gov. Wes Moore called the occasion not just a great day for Tubman's home state but for all of the U.S.

"Today, we celebrate a soldier and a person who earned the title of veteran," Moore said. "Today we celebrate one of the greatest authors of the American story."

Tubman escaped slavery herself in 1849 and settled in Philadelphia. Intent on helping others achieve freedom, she established the Underground Railroad network and led other enslaved Black women and men to freedom. She then channeled those experiences as a scout, spy and nurse for the Union Army during the Civil War, helping guide 150 Black soldiers on a gunboat raid in South Carolina.

Nobody would have judged Tubman had she chosen to remain in Philadelphia and coordinate abolitionist efforts from there, Moore said.

"She knew that in order to do the work, that meant that she had to go into the lion's den," Moore said. "She knew that leadership means you have to be willing to do what you are asking others to do."

The reading of the official order was followed by a symbolic pinning ceremony with Tubman's great-great-great-grandniece, Tina Wyatt.

Wyatt hailed her aunt's legacy of tenacity, generosity and faith and agreed Veterans Day applied to her as much as any other servicemember.

"Aunt Harriet was one of those veterans informally, she gave up any rights that she had obtained for herself to be able to fight for others," Wyatt said. "She is a selfless person."

Tubman's status as an icon of history has only been further elevated within the last few years. The city of Philadelphia chose a Black artist to make a 14-foot (4.3-meter) bronze statue to go on display next year. In 2022, a Chicago elementary school was renamed for Tubman, replacing the previous namesake, who had racist views. However, plans to put Tubman on the \$20 bill have continued to stall.

Gunshots at Tuskegee University sent terrified students running for their lives

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

TUSKEGEE, Ala. (AP) — Tuskegee University student Sid Guynn hid under a car when he heard the gunshots that ripped across his Alabama campus amid homecoming celebrations, then ran back to his dorm, frightened by what sounded to him like a machine gun.

"It was terrifying; I couldn't find my phone or my brother," Guynn said. His brother is not a student at the university, he said, and was visiting when the barrage of gunshots sent students diving to the ground or running for their lives.

The shooting left one man dead and injured at least 16 other people early Sunday, a dozen of them by gunfire, authorities said. An arrest was announced hours later. Many of the injured were students.

The man killed in the homecoming weekend shooting at Tuskegee University has been identified as

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18-year-old La'Tavion Johnson, of Troy, Alabama, who was not a student, the local coroner said Monday. Jaquez Myrick, 25, of Montgomery, was taken into custody while leaving the scene of the campus shooting and had been found with a handgun with a machine gun conversion device, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. Myrick faces a federal charge of possession of a machine gun, the agency said in a statement. It did not accuse him of using the gun in the shooting or provide additional details.

The agency did not say whether Myrick was a student at the historically Black university, where the shooting erupted as the school's 100th homecoming week was winding down.

It was not immediately known if Myrick had an attorney who could speak on his behalf. He was being held in the Montgomery County jail, online booking records show.

Twelve people were wounded by gunfire, and four others sustained injuries not related to the gunshots, the state agency said. Several were being treated at East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika and Baptist South Hospital in Montgomery, the university said in a statement.

Their conditions were not immediately released, but Macon County Coroner Hal Bentley said he understands that at least one of the people injured has been in critical condition.

The FBI joined the investigation and said it was seeking tips from the public, as well as any video witnesses might have. It set up a site online for people to upload video. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also was involved in the investigation, a local prosecutor said.

The school is no longer an open campus, Tuskegee University President Dr. Mark A. Brown said at a press conference Monday outside the campus' main entrance. All students and faculty will have to wear their IDs while on campus.

Brown said there were security checks at all official school events, but the party where the shooting happened was not sanctioned by the school.

"We did not nor could we have planned for security at an event that was not approved in advance or sanctioned by the university," Brown said. But he said the school administration would "take full responsibility" for "implementing corrective actions."

The former campus security chief has been replaced, the president said, and the new security chief will conduct a thorough review of the shooting. When asked, Brown did not provide the name of the new head of campus security.

Brown said that classes were canceled for Monday and Tuesday, all students would be offered counseling, and there would be a town hall to address the community's concerns. All students who live "in the vicinity of the shooting" will be given the opportunity to relocate, Brown said.

The shooting is the latest case in which a "machine gun conversion device" was found, something law officers around the nation have expressed grave concerns about. The proliferation of these types of weapons is made possible by small pieces of metal or plastic made with a 3D printer or ordered online.

Guns with conversion devices have been used in several mass shootings, including one that left four dead at a Sweet Sixteen party in Alabama last year and another that left six people dead at a bar district in Sacramento, California.

"It takes two or three seconds to put in some of these devices into a firearm to make that firearm into a machine gun instantly," Steve Dettelbach, director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said in AP's report on the weapons earlier this year.

After the Tuskegee University shooting, the 18-year-old Guynn said schoolwide group chats have been filled with messages of support for the injured victims, whom he said he knows personally. He came to Tuskegee this year from his home in Iowa because he wanted to learn in a tight-knit Black community, he said.

"Tuskegee, it feels like a family here," Guynn said, adding that "everyone is connected."

The shooting left the entire university community shaken, said Amare' Hardee, a senior from Tallahassee, Florida, who is president of the student government association.

"This senseless act of violence has touched each of us, whether directly or indirectly," he said at the school's homecoming convocation Sunday morning.

Sunday's shooting comes just over a year after four people were injured in a shooting at a Tuskegee

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University student housing complex. Two visitors to the campus were shot and two students were hurt while trying to leave the scene of what campus officials described as an "unauthorized party" in September 2023, the Montgomery Advertiser reported.

About 3,000 students are enrolled at the university about 40 miles (64 kilometers) east of Alabama's capital city of Montgomery.

The university was the first historically Black college to be designated a Registered National Landmark in 1966. It was also designated a National Historic Site in 1974, according to the school's website.

Guynn said he hopes more security will prevent future gun violence on campus. He also said he doesn't want the national attention to define the school and community he loves.

"For something like that to happen, it's nothing like Tuskegee," he said.

Climate talks open with calls for a path away from the 'road to ruin.' But the real focus is money

By SETH BORENSTEIN, MELINA WALLING and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — United Nations annual climate talks stuttered to a start Monday with more than nine hours of backroom bickering over what should be on the agenda for the next two weeks. It then turned to the main issue: money.

In Baku, Azerbaijan, where the world's first oil well was drilled and the smell of the fuel was noticeable outdoors, the talks were more about the smell of money — in huge amounts. Countries are negotiating how rich nations can pay up so poor countries can reduce carbon pollution by transitioning away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy, compensate for climate disasters and adapt to future extreme weather.

In order to try to start the 12 days of talks, called COP29, with a win, Monday's session seemed to find a resolution to a nagging financial issue about trading carbon pollution rights — one that has eluded negotiators for years. It could free up to \$250 billion in spending a year to help poor nations, said new COP29 president, Mukhtar Babayev.

But Erika Lennon, Center for International Environmental Law's Senior Attorney, warned that pushing through resolutions this early in the conference "without discussion or debate, sets a dangerous precedent for the entire negotiation process."

When it comes to discussions on finance, the amount of money being talked about to help poor nations could be as high as \$1.3 trillion a year. That's the need in the developing world, according to African nations, which have produced 7% of the heat-trapping gases in the air but have faced multiple climate crises, from floods to drought.

Whatever amount the nations come up with would replace an old agreement that had a goal of \$100 billion a year. Richer nations have wanted numbers closer to that figure. If an agreement is struck, money is likely to come from a variety of sources including grants, loans and private finance.

"These numbers may sound big but they are nothing compared to the cost of inaction," Babayev, said as he took over.

Signs of climate disasters abound

This year, the world is on pace for 1.5 degrees of warming and is heading to become the hottest year in human civilization.

A goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times was set in the Paris Agreement in 2015. But that's about two or three decades, not one year of that amount of warming and "it is not possible, simply not possible," to abandon the 1.5 goal yet, said World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

The effects of climate change in disasters such as hurricanes, droughts and floods are already here and hurting, Babayev said.

"We are on the road to ruin," he said. "Whether you see them or not, people are suffering in the shadows. They are dying in the dark. And they need more than compassion. More than prayers and paperwork."

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They are crying out for leadership and action.”

United Nations Climate Secretary Simon Stiell, whose home island of Carriacou was devastated earlier this year by Hurricane Beryl, used the story of his neighbor, an 85-year-old named Florence, to help find “a way out of this mess.”

Her home was demolished and Florence focused one thing: “Being strong for her family and for her community. There are people like Florence in every country on Earth. Knocked down, and getting back up again.”

That’s what the world must do with climate change, Stiell said.

A backdrop of war and upheaval hangs over talks

In the past year, nation after nation has seen political upheaval, with the latest being in the United States — the largest historic carbon emitter — and Germany, a climate leading nation.

The election of Donald Trump, who disputes climate change and its impact, and the collapse of the German governing coalition are altering climate negotiation dynamics here, experts said.

“The global north needs to be cutting emissions even faster ... but instead we’ve got Trump, we’ve got a German government that just fell apart because part of it wanted to be even slightly ambitious (on climate action),” said Imperial College London climate scientist Friederike Otto. “We are very far off.”

Initially, Azerbaijan organizers hoped to have nations across the globe stop fighting during the negotiations. That didn’t happen as wars in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere continued.

Dozens of climate activists at the conference — many of them wearing Palestinian kaffiyehs — held up banners calling for climate justice and for nations to “stop fueling genocide.”

“It’s the same systems of oppression and discrimination that are putting people on the frontlines of climate change and putting people on the front lines of conflict in Palestine,” said Lise Masson, a protester from Friends of the Earth International. She slammed the United States, the U.K. and the EU for not spending more on climate finance while also supplying arms to Israel.

Mohammed Ursof, a climate activist from Gaza, called for the world to “get power back to the Indigenous, power back to the people.”

Jacob Johns, a Hopi and Akimel O’odham community organizer, came to the conference with hope for a better world.

“Within sight of the destruction lies the seed of creation,” he said at a panel about Indigenous people’s hopes for climate action. “We have to realize that we are not citizens of one nation, we are the Earth.”

Hopes for a strong financial outcome

The financial package being hashed out at this year’s talks is important because every nation has until early next year to submit new — and presumably stronger — targets for curbing emissions of heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

How much money is on the table could inform how ambitious some nations can be with their climate plans.

Some Pacific climate researchers said that the amount of money on offer was not the biggest problem for small island nations, which are some of the world’s most imperiled by rising seas.

“There might be funding out there, but to get access to this funding for us here in the Pacific is quite an impediment,” said Hilda Sakiti-Waqa, from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. “The Pacific really needs a lot of technical help in order to put together these applications.”

And despite the stalled start, there was still a sense of optimism.

“My experience right now is that countries are really here to negotiate,” said German climate envoy Jennifer Morgan.

“We cannot leave Baku without a substantial outcome,” Stiell said. “Now is the time to show that global cooperation is not down for the count. It is rising to the moment.”

Russian glide bombs, drones and a ballistic missile kill 6, injure 30 in Ukraine

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian glide bombs, drones and a ballistic missile smashed into cities in southern and eastern Ukraine on Monday, officials said, killing at least six civilians and injuring about 30 others.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia has recently intensified strikes that have long tormented civilian areas, in an apparent effort to unnerve Ukrainians and wear down their willingness to keep up a war that is approaching its 1,000-day milestone.

"Every day, every night, Russia commits the same terror," Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram messaging app. "Except that an increasing number of civilian objects are becoming targets."

Both Russia and Ukraine are waiting to see how Washington will change its policy on the war after Donald Trump takes office as the U.S. president in January. The U.S. is the biggest provider of military help to Ukraine, but Trump has chided the Biden administration for giving Kyiv tens of billions of dollars of aid.

The Ukrainian army intends to expand its mobile units, which are primarily tasked with shooting down drones, in the regions most frequently targeted by Russian strikes, Zelenskyy said on Telegram.

He also said that Ukraine is working on producing its own glide bombs as part of a domestic missile program. Russian glide bombs have significantly impacted the battlefield, as their destructive power reduces settlements to rubble and makes it increasingly difficult for Ukrainian forces to hold their defensive fortifications.

Ukrainian forces are being slowly pushed backward in the eastern Donetsk region, where Russia is bringing its greater military might to bear. Zelenskyy said Ukraine would conduct a "substantial reinforcement" in areas near the Donetsk settlements of Kurakhove and Pokrovsk, where Ukraine's army is in danger of being overrun.

Zelenskyy added that Ukraine is holding its positions in Russia's Kursk border region, where Western and Ukrainian officials say Russia is being helped by thousands of newly arrived North Korean troops. He said Russia has deployed some 50,000 troops to Kursk.

Also in Donetsk, near the recently captured settlement of Hirnyk, the Russians have damaged a dam at the Kurakhove reservoir, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

The local water level in the Vovcha River has risen by 1.2 meters, though no homes have been affected, and possible flooding threatens both the Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk regions, he said.

"We continue to monitor the water level in the river and are prepared for any developments," Filashkin said.

The development revived memories of the collapse of the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine in June 2023, killing hundreds of people. An Associated Press investigation found the collapse was likely caused by Russian forces.

The major cities struck Monday by Russia are close to the approximately 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line.

Russian drones hammered the southern city of Mykolaiv, killing five people and injuring a 45-year-old woman, local authorities said. Around two dozen people sought psychological help following the attack that damaged houses and stores, officials said.

Mykolaiv, about 60 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of the front line in the Kherson region, frequently comes under Russian attack.

An overnight attack on Zaporizhzhia, also in the south, with three powerful glide bombs killed one person and injured 21, including a 4-year-old boy, Ukraine's National Police said. The strikes partially destroyed a two-story apartment building and damaged a dormitory.

A five-story apartment building in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's hometown in central Ukraine, was hit by a Russian ballistic missile, injuring at least eight people. The missile destroyed all five stories in one part of the building, said Oleksandr Vikul, head of Kryviy Rih Military Administration.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's intelligence agency claimed in a statement it destroyed a Russian Mi-24 assault

helicopter parked at the Klin-5 airfield in the Moscow region. The claim could not be independently verified. The Russian Defense Ministry said Monday that 17 Ukrainian drones were destroyed over the Russian regions of Kursk, Belgorod and Voronezh overnight and in the morning.

Kremlin rejects reports of a conversation last week between Putin and Trump

By The Associated Press undefined

The Kremlin on Monday rejected reports that President Vladimir Putin spoke last week with President-elect Donald Trump about the war in Ukraine, and a spokesman for Trump refused to comment on what he called his "private calls" with world leaders.

The Washington Post first reported on Sunday, citing anonymous sources, that the two spoke on Thursday, with Trump advising Putin not to escalate the war in Ukraine and cited the sizable U.S. military presence in Europe.

In a conference call Monday with journalists, Kremlin press secretary Dmitry Peskov said "there was no conversation" and the report was "completely untrue, it is pure fiction."

Asked about the report, Trump's communications director Steven Cheung said, "We do not comment on private calls between President Trump and other world leaders."

Speaking at a foreign policy forum Thursday in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, Putin offered congratulations to Trump on his election victory and praised him for what he said was "brave" behavior during an assassination attempt on him in July.

Peskov said "there are no specific plans yet" for a conversation between Putin and Trump. He said previously that contacts between the two before Trump's inauguration "are not ruled out" and pointed to Trump saying that he would call Putin before the inauguration. He denied, however, that Russia's presidential administration or Foreign Ministry had any contacts with Trump's campaign after the election.

During his campaign, Trump repeatedly said he could quickly end the fighting in Ukraine but did not offer details of how he would accomplish that.

Russia has intensified strikes on civilian areas in Ukraine as the war approaches its 1,000-day mark. For its part, Ukraine over the weekend sent a massive wave of drones that rattled Moscow and its suburbs.

Road accident in Ivory Coast leaves 21 dead and at least 10 injured

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Authorities in Ivory Coast said Monday 21 people were killed and at least 10 others injured in a road accident.

The accident Sunday night took place on a stretch of a road linking the southwestern city of Soubré and the south-central town of Gagnoa, the Ministry of Transport said in a statement, without providing further details. However, the statement added an investigation has been launched.

"The Ministry of Transport calls on all road users to be more vigilant in road traffic, by complying with traffic regulations, in particular by being careful when overtaking and by adapting their speed to the different speed limits," it added.

Earlier this year, a tanker truck crashed into a bus in northern Ivory Coast, leaving 13 people dead and injuring 44.

Accidents are common in the west African country due to debilitated roads and reckless driving, killing over 1,000 people annually, according to the ministry.

Last year, authorities introduced a point-based driver's license, granting each driver a total of 12 points that can be gradually taken away depending on the violation. Cameras were also set up on the country's main roads to fine offenders.

'I got my life back.' Veterans with PTSD making progress thanks to service dog program

By NICK INGRAM and JIM SALTER Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — After working at a crowded and dangerous internment camp in Iraq, Air Force Staff Sgt. Heather O'Brien brought home with her anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

A bouncy labradoodle and a Kansas City-area program helped her get back on her feet.

Dogs 4 Valor, operated through the Olathe, Kansas-based organization called The Battle Within, helps retired veterans and first responders work with their service dogs to help manage depression, anxiety and other challenges.

"A lot of times the veteran with severe PTSD is homebound," said Sandra Sindeldecker, program manager for Dogs 4 Valor. "They're isolated. They're very nervous. They won't make eye contact. Some won't leave the house at all."

The program involves both group and one-on-one training. The goal is to get the veteran and the dog comfortable with each other and understanding each other. The group takes outings to help the veterans regain their footing in public places like airports. Program leaders also provide mental health therapy at no cost.

The veterans and dogs graduate in six to nine months, but group gatherings continue.

There is growing evidence of the value of service dogs for veterans with PTSD. A small study published in JAMA Network Open in June looked at a program operated by K9s For Warriors. Service dogs in the program are taught to pick up a veteran's physical signs of distress and can interrupt panic attacks and nightmares with a loving nudge.

Researchers compared 81 veterans who received service dogs with 75 veterans on the waiting list for a trained dog. After three months, PTSD symptoms improved in both groups, but the veterans with dogs saw a bigger improvement on average.

O'Brien, 40, recalled that the camp where she worked in Iraq sometimes had over 20,000 detainees. Violence and rioting were common and it left her with severe anxiety.

"When I got out of the military, I just assumed that you're supposed to be on edge all the time as a veteran," O'Brien said.

O'Brien's mother spotted the frisky lab-poodle mix on Facebook and convinced her daughter to adopt the dog she named Albus. Months later, O'Brien learned about Dogs 4 Valor, and the pair joined the program in October 2023.

O'Brien says she can now go out in public again — she even went on vacation to Branson, Missouri, "things that I never would have thought I would do really, probably ever again."

Mark Atkinson, 38, served in Afghanistan as a corporal in the Marine Corps. He returned home with PTSD and major depressive disorder, causing sleeplessness and anxiety. He adopted Lexi, now 5, in 2020.

Lexi, a muscular cane corso breed, needed Atkinson as much as he needed her. Her previous owner had kept Lexi in chains before surrendering her. Since joining Dogs 4 Valor, the two can get out together and enjoy life.

"I don't really like leaving the house because I'm safe there, you know?" Atkinson said. "And having Lexi has just made me get out to be more social."

Having a group of fellow veterans facing the same challenges has also helped, Atkinson said.

"We come from the same backgrounds, different branches," Atkinson said. "Same issues. You know, PTSD or traumatic brain injuries. And they're all very welcoming, as well. There's no judgment."

O'Brien compared living with Albus to a relationship with a sometimes pushy best friend who often wants to go out.

"The best friend constantly wants to make you do things that make you nervous," O'Brien laughed, acknowledging that it is ultimately up to her.

"I have to decide to walk out and just deal with life," O'Brien said. "And so that has been hard. And it still is hard from time to time, but it's it's getting manageable."

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Some veterans said their family relationships have improved since they started the program.

"I'm able to talk, not fly off the handle and just get along with people and not be as stressed, not have as much anxiety," Atkinson said. "Or even if I do, she (Lexi) is right there with me."

Timothy Siebenmorgen, 61, said his relationships also are better with help from his 1-year-old American bulldog, Rosie, and Dogs 4 Valor, which he joined in July. He served in both the Marines and the Army, deploying 18 times.

"You're in the military, kind of taught not to show weakness," Siebenmorgen said. "So you figure you can tackle everything yourself and you honestly believe that. And then you realize you can't do it on your own."

Veterans said the dogs, and the program, have given them new hope and a renewed ability to move forward.

"I got my life back," O'Brien said.

Ex-UK soldier facing spying charge admits escaping from prison by hiding under a truck

LONDON (AP) — A former British soldier who is facing spying charges has admitted escaping from a London prison by clinging to the underside of a delivery truck.

Daniel Khalife, 23, changed his plea to guilty on Monday, part-way through his trial at London's Woolwich Crown Court.

He continues to deny violating Britain's Official Secrets Act by collecting information useful to an enemy — namely Iran — as well as breaching the Terrorism Act and planting fake bombs at a military base.

Khalife was awaiting trial when he broke out of Wandsworth Prison in September 2023 by using a sling made out of trousers from the prison kitchen to tie himself to the underside of a catering truck. He was arrested while cycling on a canal towpath in west London three days later after an intense nationwide hunt that included helicopter searches and extra security checks at major transport hubs.

"I accept that I left the prison and I didn't have any permission," Khalife told jurors.

He said he escaped in the hope he would be recaptured and sent to a high-security unit at a different prison, where he thought he would be safer.

His trial continues on the other charges. Prosecutors have told the jury that Khalife joined the army at 16 and was a promising soldier, but was told he would not be able to fulfil his goal of joining an intelligence unit because his mother was from Iran.

Prosecutors allege Khalife passed classified information to an Iranian intelligence agent. He says the information was worthless and he was hoping to act as a double agent on behalf of Britain — inspired, in part, by a plotline on the TV spy series "Homeland."

"I was never a real spy," Khalife told the jury earlier this month. "I didn't do anything that harmed our national security. I wanted to put myself in a position where I could help my country."

Today in History: November 12, Ellis Island closes its doors

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 12, the 317th day of 2024. There are 49 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 12, 1954, Ellis Island officially closed as an immigration station and detention center. More than 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States via Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954.

Also on this date:

In 1927, Josef Stalin became the undisputed ruler of the Soviet Union as Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party.

In 1936, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge opened as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a telegraph key in Washington, D.C., and gave the green light to traffic.

In 1948, former Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and several other World War II Japanese leaders were

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sentenced to death by a war crimes tribunal.

In 1970, the Bhola cyclone struck East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The deadliest tropical cyclone on record claimed the lives of an estimated 300,000-500,000 people.

In 2001, American Airlines Flight 587, en route to the Dominican Republic, crashed after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, killing all 260 people on board and five people on the ground.

In 2019, Venice saw its worst flooding in more than 50 years, with the water reaching 6.14 feet (1.87 meters) above average sea level; damage was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

In 2021, a judge in Los Angeles ended the conservatorship that had controlled the life and money of pop star Britney Spears for nearly 14 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-playwright Wallace Shawn is 81. Rock musician Booker T. Jones is 80. Sports-caster Al Michaels is 80. Singer-songwriter Neil Young is 79. Author Tracy Kidder is 79. Democratic Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island is 75. Actor Megan Mullally is 66. Olympic gold medal gymnast Nadia Comăneci (koh-muh-NEECH') is 63. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jason Lezak is 49. Golfer Lucas Glover is 45. Actor Ryan Gosling is 44. Actor Anne Hathaway is 42. Golfer Jason Day is 37. NBA point guard Russell Westbrook is 36.