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Tuesday, Nov. 26
Senior Menu: Macaroni and cheese with kielbasa, Italian blend, vanilla pudding with oranges, whole wheat read.
Senior Menu: Egg omelets.
School Lunch: Sloppy joes, fries.
United Methodist: No Bible Study
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

Wednesday, Nov. 27
Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, fruit.
Emmanuel Lutheran: No Confirmation
St. John's Lutheran: Thanksgiving Eve Service, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
No School - Thanksgiving Break

Thursday, Nov. 28
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
No School - Thanksgiving Break
Community Thanksgiving Dinner, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

Friday, Nov. 29
No School - Thanksgiving Break

Saturday, Nov. 30
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

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

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FROSTY CLUE

I/My.....
26. Am the biggest Roncalli Fan living in Groton



Snow Queen Contest is Sunday

The 79th Groton Area Snow Queen Contest will be held on Sunday, December 1st in the GHS Old Gymnasium at 4:30pm. The contest will feature three high school seniors and seven high school freshmen vying for the Senior and Junior Snow Queen Titles, the crowning of a kindergarten prince and princess, a talent contest that will exhibit a senior and five junior talent entries, ice cream refreshments, and the unveiling of the mystery frosty (\$100 Chamber Bucks for the correct guess – must be present to win)! The Groton Area Snow Queen Committee welcomes all to come and enjoy the show!



Rebecca Poor,
daughter of
David and
Anissa Poor



Gretchen Dinger,
daughter of
Weston Dinger
and Elizabeth
Bahr



Abby Yeadon,
daughter of
Jeremy and
Diane Yeadon

Senior Candidates

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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 Charges Dropped

The judge overseeing the Jan. 6 election interference case against President-elect Donald Trump dropped charges yesterday, following a request from Special Counsel Jack Smith. Smith similarly moved to dismiss charges against Trump, accusing him of illegally retaining classified documents after leaving office.

In filings, Smith said his view of the case remained unchanged but cited the Justice Department's long-standing legal perspective that federal prosecution of a sitting president is unconstitutional. In the election interference case, prosecutors alleged Trump conspired to interfere with the 2020 election and obstruct the official certification of electoral votes.

Charges were brought last August, with the trial delayed by a legal challenge in which the Supreme Court ultimately ruled former presidents have some immunity to criminal prosecution for acts in office. Smith subsequently refiled updated charges 10 weeks ahead of the election.

In related news, the president-elect said yesterday evening he would look to impose 25% tariffs on all goods coming from Canada and Mexico and additional tariffs on Chinese goods on his first day back in office.

Israel Weighs Hezbollah Deal

Israel's Cabinet is expected to vote today on the terms of a proposed ceasefire deal with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The deal—which does not cover the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza—would reportedly include a 60-day Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon as Hezbollah fighters move north of the Litani River. The Lebanese army would monitor the border in a process overseen by five countries, led by the US and France. Israel could continue to take military action to disrupt Hezbollah's ability to smuggle weapons and reestablish a border presence.

Hezbollah renewed its conflict with Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, launching thousands of rockets into the country following Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks. Since then, around 60,000 people have been displaced in Israel and more than 1 million people in Lebanon. Israeli attacks in Lebanon—including a ground invasion this year—have killed more than 3,500 people and wounded over 15,000 others; Hezbollah attacks have killed around 140 people in Israel.

Dancing in the Mini Moonlight

Earth's temporary "mini moon," a 33-foot asteroid known as 2024 PT5, is departing after spending two months near our planet. The space rock began its horseshoe-shaped path around Earth in late September but was never fully captured as a true satellite.

Scientists believe the bus-sized rock may be a chunk of our own moon based on its composition and characteristics, finding its makeup closely matches lunar samples collected by Russian and NASA missions in the past. The asteroid's spectral characteristics resemble material from the moon's maria regions—dark lunar areas formed by ancient lava flows—suggesting it may have been ejected from a lunar crater millions of years ago.

The asteroid will make a brief reappearance in January, passing within 1.1 million miles of our planet—about five times the distance from Earth to the moon. After the flyby, it won't return until 2055.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

General Motors to join Formula 1 as its 11th team beginning in 2026 under GM's Cadillac brand.
Rapper Drake accuses Universal Music Group and Spotify of conspiring to artificially inflate the streaming numbers for Kendrick Lamar's diss track song "Not Like Us".
Elton John loses eyesight in his right eye for last four months due to an infection.
Barbara Taylor Bradford, romance novelist best known for "A Woman of Substance," dies at age 91.

Science & Technology

Chipmaker Nvidia debuts Fugatto, an AI model that creates audio from text prompts and can modify existing songs.
Neuroscientists pinpoint brain circuit responsible for the rejection of mating partners by female mammals.
Elon Musk's Neuralink to launch feasibility study of brain implant that can control robotic arms.
Researchers unearth the oldest firearm in the US, a bronze cannon used during a 16th-century Spanish expedition into the southwest.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow +1.0%, Nasdaq +0.3%) following news President-elect Donald Trump selects hedge fund manager Scott Bessent to lead the Treasury Department.
Macy's delays reporting Q3 earnings after discovering an employee hid as much as \$154M in delivery expenses over the past three years; figures expected Dec. 11.
Kohl's CEO to be replaced by Michaels CEO in January; transition marks company's third leadership change since 2018.
Blackstone invests \$3.5B in US natural gas company EQT, gaining minority stakes in Mid-Atlantic pipelines expected to see a surge in demand amid expected growth of data centers powering AI.

Politics & World Affairs

Charlotte airport workers strike, calling for higher wages ahead of record holiday travel season; airport is a hub for American Airlines.
Los Angeles judge delays hearing on Menendez brothers resentencing to January 2025, allowing for incoming district attorney to weigh in on the case.
Uruguay's presidential election won by center-left opposition candidate Yamandú Orsi, continuing global trend of incumbents being voted from office.

Jackson County Fatal Crash

What: Three-vehicle fatal crash

Where: I-90, mile marker 135, 15 miles west of Kadoka, SD

When: 3:12 p.m., Sunday, November 24, 2024

Driver 1: 80-year-old male from Belvidere, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 1997 Dodge Ram 1500

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: 33-year-old male from Rapid City, SD, minor injuries

Vehicle 2: 2024 Honda Civic

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger: 11-year-old male from Rapid City, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Driver 3: 36-year-old male from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, no injuries

Vehicle 3: 2024 Freightliner Cascadia

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Jackson County, S.D.- A Belvidere, SD man died following a collision Sunday afternoon near Kadoka, SD.

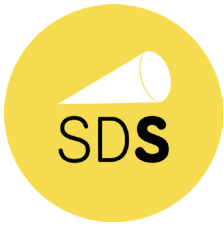
The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 1997 Dodge Ram was traveling eastbound on I-90 near mile marker 157. At the same time, a 2024 Honda Civic and 2024 Freightliner Cascadia were traveling westbound on I-90. The driver of the Dodge Ram lost control of the vehicle in icy conditions, crossed the median, entered the westbound lanes, and struck the other two vehicles.

The driver of the Ram was transported to a Rapid City hospital. He passed away from his injuries November 25.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Open Meetings Commission finds multiple violations by local governments

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 25, 2024 6:38 PM

South Dakota's Open Meetings Commission decided Monday in Pierre that five local governments violated open meetings laws.

The commission found no violation in another case, and postponed a decision on another. Written reprimands will be issued for the violations.

The commission is a five-member body of state's attorneys appointed by the state attorney general.

Last week, the commission met for the first time in nearly four years following a period of inactivity under a previous attorney general and problems maintaining a full roster of commission members. At last week's meeting, the commission found violations in five of six cases considered.



The South Dakota Capitol grounds and lake in Pierre. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

Executive session violations

Some of the cases heard Monday involved closed-door meetings known as "executive sessions."

State law allows executive sessions only for certain topics, such as personnel matters, consulting with lawyers about litigation and discussing contract negotiations. Government bodies must have the item on the agenda, state the reason for entering the executive session, pass a motion to conduct the executive session, stick to the intended topic while in the executive session, and conduct any final actions on the matter in open session.

In Pennington County, two county commissioners filed complaints about executive sessions against the rest of the county's five-member commission.

The Open Meetings Commission found that the county commission violated open meetings laws on Nov. 7, 2023, when it conducted an executive session discussion about compensation comparisons between counties. The board had strayed from the stated purpose of the executive session, which was a discussion of a particular employee's performance.

At the same meeting, the board violated open meetings laws when it came back into open session and voted to deny the employee's request for a salary increase. The request was not on the commission's agenda.

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The Open Meetings Commission did not find a violation in a third accusation against the Pennington County Commission for a June 6, 2023, meeting. During that meeting, the county commission was in an executive session while it allegedly directed an employee to conduct a wage study and market analysis for department heads. The complaint alleged that the action was improper for an executive session and should have been taken in an open session.

The Sturgis City Council was found to have violated executive session laws on two occasions. On May 6 of this year, the council entered a closed session without stating a purpose. On Feb. 16, 2023, the council improperly deliberated in private on whether a city manager or city administrator was better for the community. The discussion was deemed improper for a closed session because it was about the positions in general, rather than a review of a specific employee.

Public notice violations

The Carlyle Township Board of Supervisors in Beadle County was found to have violated state law by failing to post an agenda in advance of a meeting in October 2023.

The Charles Mix County Commission was found to have violated state law by failing to post an agenda for its May 23, 2024, meeting.

The Tripp City Council committed a similar infraction when it failed to post an agenda before a special meeting where a police officer's resignation was accepted. The city attorney acknowledged the error and noted that the vote was retaken at a subsequent meeting where it was listed on the agenda.

No violation found

The Open Meetings Commission did not find a violation in a case against the City of Lead Commission. The local government body voted in January of this year to support legislation for a community center and authorized an employee to travel to Pierre to lobby for it. The complaint centered on whether the agenda item, labeled "Community Center Update," adequately informed the public of a pending vote.

Decision postponed

The Open Meetings Commission deferred its decision on a complaint against the Green Valley Sanitary District in Pennington County. A complaint alleged that three trustees secured a \$200,000 loan for the district without a public vote. The district's attorney argued that open-meetings laws may not apply to sanitary districts. The commission postponed a ruling pending further research.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Noem mandates training as fallout continues from alleged crimes by state employees

Governor also hires additional internal control officer and says legislation is forthcoming

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 25, 2024 4:36 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem signed an executive order Monday and signaled the preparation of a legislative package to strengthen internal controls in South Dakota state government after several cases of allegedly criminal state employee conduct.

Noem did not directly mention any of those specific cases in the executive order or a news release.

"We are taking enhanced measures to strengthen the fortitude of our financial infrastructure and make sure that we are taking care of taxpayer dollars," Noem said in the news release. "And we will guarantee that state employees are responsible stewards for the people that they serve."

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Gov. Kristi Noem presents her fiscal year 2025 budget address to the South Dakota Legislature on Dec. 5, 2023, at the Capitol in Pierre. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Noem's office did not immediately respond to further South Dakota Searchlight questions about the legislation and training program.

Noem will deliver her annual budget address next week, and the annual legislative session will begin in January. That's the same month the governor is expected to be formally nominated as President-elect Donald Trump's secretary of Homeland Security.

Separately, state Attorney General Marty Jackley has said he plans to propose legislation this session, which would include requirements for state employee supervisors to report questionable employee behavior to his office, protections for whistleblowers, stronger protections for the state auditor, and transparency requirements for reporting on allegations of state employee misbehavior.

State departments have also told lawmakers they're making their own improvements, and that impending technology changes to the accounting and motor vehicle systems will provide more accountability. Meanwhile, the head of a legislative audit committee has said further legislative proposals addressing internal controls may have to wait until pending criminal cases are resolved and lawmakers have complete information.

Jackley's office has brought charges against several former state employees recently.

A former state Department of Social Services worker pleaded not guilty in August to stealing an estimated \$1.8 million from the department's Division of Child Protection Services over the course of 13 years. She allegedly created and approved fraudulent financial support orders for children.

In the state Department of Revenue, a deceased former employee allegedly used her position to create 13 fake vehicle titles used to secure \$400,000 in loans, according to the Attorney General's Office. The office filed charges in a related case last month against two other former employees — one who allegedly created a false vehicle title to claim she had a trade-in vehicle, allowing her to avoid some excise taxes, and another employee who allegedly failed to report the situation and cooperate with law enforcement. The two women have pleaded not guilty.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

The executive order requires state employees to participate in training covering the concepts of public trust, duty to act, internal controls, conflict of interest and a "service mindset for the citizens of South Dakota." The commissioner of the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration will develop the program. State employees and supervisors will take the training on an annual basis.

Noem said her "four cornerstones" approach to strengthening fiscal oversight also includes more support for the State Board of Internal Control — including hiring an additional internal control officer, which Noem said she's already done — and "enhancements" to policies, procedures, systems and technology.

Noem did not release any specific legislative proposals but indicated her legislative package would include "clearer and stronger accountability measures."

Unlikely Trump can actually eliminate Education Department, experts say

SD's Sen. Mike Rounds has filed a bill to abolish the agency

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - NOVEMBER 25, 2024 10:48 AM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to get rid of the U.S. Department of Education will be far easier said than done.

As Trump seeks to redefine U.S. education policy, the complex logistics, bipartisan congressional approval and redirection of federal programs required make dismantling the department a challenging — not impossible — feat.

It's an effort that experts say is unlikely to gain traction in Congress and, if enacted, would create roadblocks for how Trump seeks to implement the rest of his wide-ranging education agenda.

"I struggle to wrap my mind around how you get such a bill through Congress that sort of defunds the agency or eliminates the agency," Derek Black, an education law and policy expert and law professor at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law, told States Newsroom.

"What you can see more easily is that maybe you give the agency less money, maybe you shrink its footprint, maybe we've got an (Office for Civil Rights) that still enforces all these laws, but instead of however many employees they have now, they have fewer employees," Black, who directs the school's Constitutional Law Center, added.



The Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building pictured on Nov. 25, 2024. (Shauneen Miranda/
States Newsroom)

What does the department do?

Education is decentralized in the United States, and the federal Education Department has no say in the curriculum of public schools. Much of the funding and oversight of schools occurs at the state and local levels.

Still, the department has leverage through funding a variety of programs, such as for low-income school districts and special education, as well as administering federal student aid.

Axing the department would require those programs be unwound or assigned to other federal agencies to administer, according to Rachel Perera, a fellow in Governance Studies in the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution.

Perera, who studies inequality in K-12 education, expressed concern over whether other departments would get additional resources and staffing to take on significantly more portfolios of work if current Education Department programs were transferred to them.

Sen. Mike Rounds introduced a bill last week that seeks to abolish the department and transfer existing programs to other federal agencies.

In a statement, the South Dakota Republican said "the federal Department of Education has never educated a single student, and it's long past time to end this bureaucratic Department that causes more harm than good."

The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 proposed a detailed plan on how the department could be

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dismantled through the reorganization of existing programs to other agencies and the elimination of the programs the project deems "ineffective or duplicative."

Though Trump has repeatedly disavowed the conservative blueprint, some former members of his administration helped write it.

The agenda also calls for restoring state and local control over education funding, and notes that "as Washington begins to downsize its intervention in education, existing funding should be sent to states as grants over which they have full control, enabling states to put federal funding toward any lawful education purpose under state law."

Title I, one of the major funding programs the department administers, provides billions of dollars to school districts with high percentages of students who come from low-income families.

Black pointed to an entire "regulatory regime" that's built around these funds.

"That regime can't just disappear unless Title I money also disappears, which could happen, but if you think about Title I money — our rural states, our red states — depend on that money just as much, if not more, than the other states," he said. "The idea that we would take that money away from those schools — I don't think there's any actual political appetite for that."

'Inherent logical inconsistencies'

Trump recently tapped Linda McMahon — a co-chair of his transition team, Small Business Administration head during his first term and former World Wrestling Entertainment CEO — as his nominee for Education secretary.

If confirmed, she will play a crucial role in carrying out his education plans, which include promoting universal school choice and parental rights, moving education "back to the states" and ending "wokeness" in education.

Trump is threatening to cut federal funding for schools that teach "critical race theory," "gender ideology" or "other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on our children," according to his plan.

On the flip side, he wants to boost funding for states and school districts that adhere to certain policy directives.

That list includes districts that: adopt a "Parental Bill of Rights that includes complete curriculum transparency, and a form of universal school choice;" get rid of "teacher tenure" for grades K-12 and adopt "merit pay;" have parents hold the direct elections of school principals; and drastically reduce the number of school administrators.

But basing funding decisions on district-level policy choices would require the kind of federal involvement in education that Trump is pushing against.

Perera described seeing "inherent logical inconsistencies" in Trump's education plan.

While he is talking about dismantling the department and sending education "back to the states," he's "also talking about leveraging the powers of the department to punish school districts for 'political indoctrination,'" she said.

"He can't do that if you are unwinding the federal role in K-12 schools," she said.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

DOJ special counsel Smith drops federal criminal cases against Trump

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - NOVEMBER 25, 2024 4:52 PM

WASHINGTON — The federal election interference case against President-elect Donald Trump is over, at least during his forthcoming presidency.

Federal Judge Tanya Chutkan ordered the case's dismissal late Monday afternoon after U.S. Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith requested to dismiss the case without prejudice — meaning it could be tried again in the future once Trump's term is over.

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Trump had faced four felony counts relating to fraud and obstruction for his role in scheming to overturn the 2020 presidential election results, which eventually erupted into political violence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Smith also filed a dismissal request Monday in Florida to drop the case pertaining to Trump's mishandling of classified documents.

Citing the Justice Department's "careful consideration" of the unprecedented situation, Smith told federal courts in Florida and Washington, D.C., that it would be unconstitutional for his office to continue prosecuting the incoming president, who is set to take the oath of office on Jan. 20.

"(T)he Department and the country have never faced the circumstance here, where a federal indictment against a private citizen has been returned by a grand jury and a criminal prosecution is already underway when the defendant is elected President," Smith wrote in a filing in federal court in D.C.

A federal grand jury handed up an indictment of Trump in August 2023 and a superseding indictment this past August.

Despite the prohibition on continuing the case against Trump, Smith wrote that the government "stands fully behind" the foundation of it.

"The Government's position on the merits of the defendant's prosecution has not changed," Smith wrote. "But the circumstances have..."

A Trump representative hailed Smith's decision as a "major victory for the rule of law."

"The American People and President Trump want an immediate end to the political weaponization of our justice system and we look forward to uniting our country," Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, said in a statement Monday.

The question of prosecuting a president has come up twice in recent U.S. history, but only while that president was already in office. Both times — in 1973, under President Richard Nixon, and in 2000, during Bill Clinton's administration — the Justice Department blocked cases, citing constitutional constraints and harm to the president's ability to perform the role.

Classified documents case

The special counsel also requested to drop the government's appeal to pursue charges against Trump for his alleged hoarding of classified documents at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate after he left office.

Judge Aileen Cannon of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida dismissed the case in July.

Smith will continue the appeal against Trump's two co-defendants, Trump's valet Waltine Nauta and Mar-a-Lago property manager Carlos De Olivera, who are also accused of mishandling the classified material.

The federal investigations were two of four criminal prosecutions that Trump faced while campaigning to win back the presidency.

Trump made history in May as the first former president to become a convicted felon when he was found guilty of 34 counts of falsifying business records in New York. The case centered on Trump's cover-up of hush money paid to an adult film actress ahead of his election in 2016. His sentencing, scheduled for Tuesday, has been indefinitely postponed.

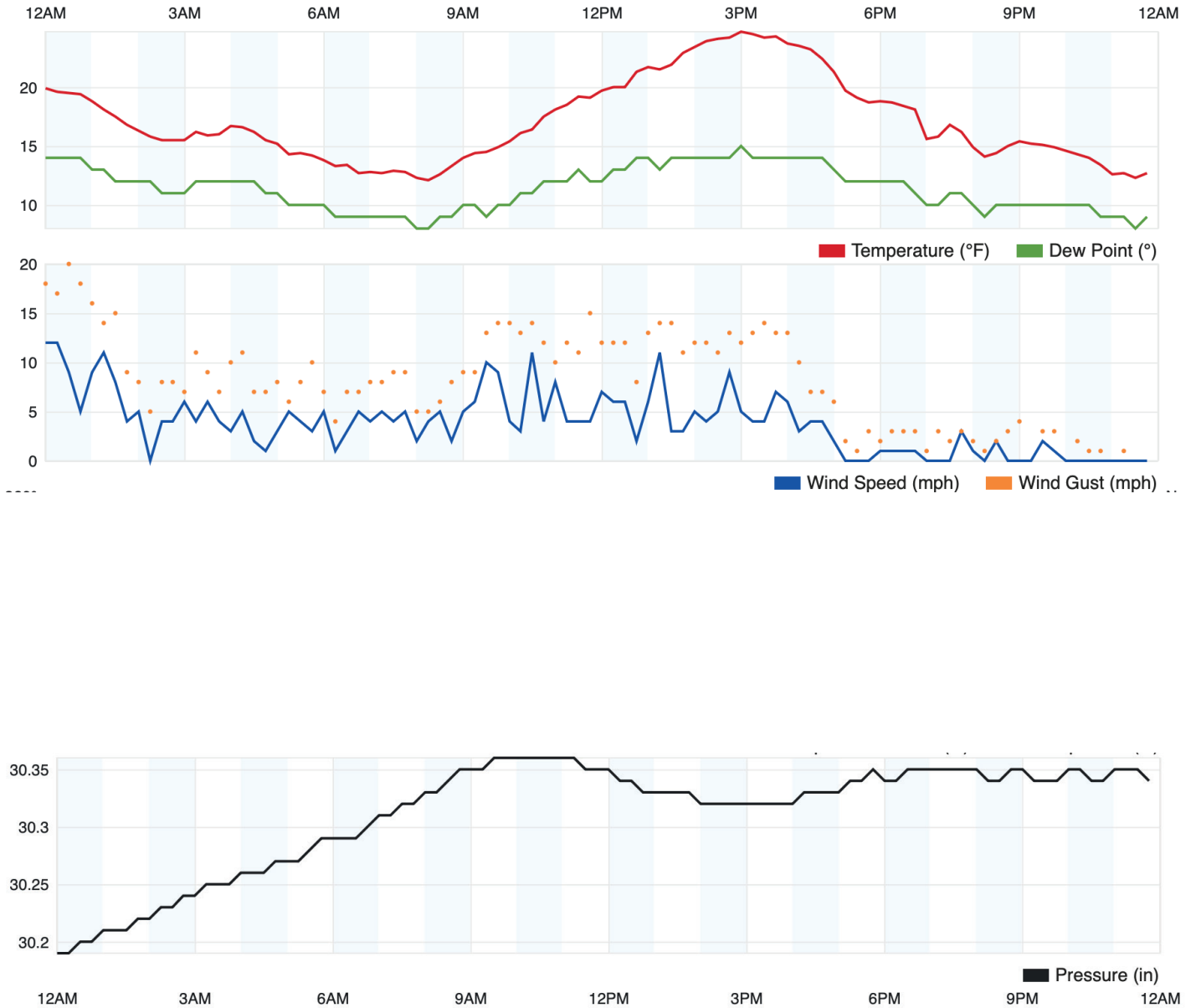
Trump's criminal election interference investigation in Georgia has been in a prolonged holding pattern during a drawn-out dispute over the prosecutor's ethics. While Trump's Georgia prosecution will likely be dropped, the state could continue its case against the 14 co-defendants.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 25 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 13 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 26 °F

Chance Snow
then Mostly
Cloudy

Wednesday
Night



Low: 11 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thanksgiving
Day



High: 19 °F

Partly Sunny

Today

Highs: 21-31°F
Lows: 12-16°F



Wednesday

Highs: 24-32°F
Lows: 10-16°F

~30% chance of light snow ne SD



Thanksgiving

Highs: 15-27°F
Lows: -4-+4°F



Friday

Highs: 8-23°F
Lows: -1-+6°F
Wind chills Friday morning between -3 to -15°F



INTO
THE
HOLIDAY
WEEKEND



No major weather systems are expected, however some light snow will be possible Wednesday across northeastern SD (30% chance). Little to not accumulation is expected. Starting Thursday night, cold air sets in and will remain through at least the end of the holiday weekend. Make sure to bundle up Friday morning if you expect to be out and about!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 25 °F at 2:53 PM

Low Temp: 12 °F at 8:07 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 12:28 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 9 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 63 in 1914

Record Low: -24 in 1996

Average High: 37

Average Low: 15

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.66

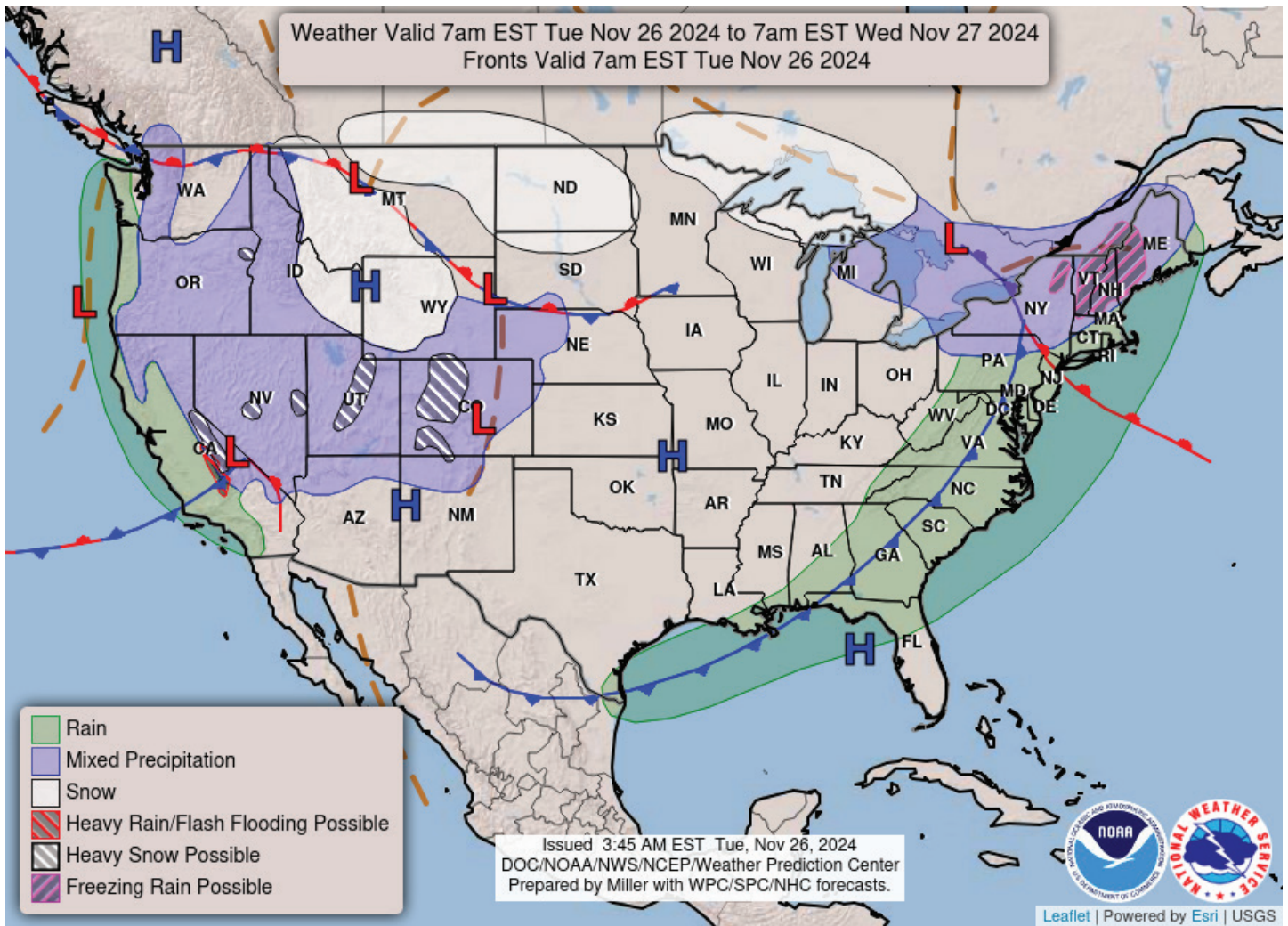
Precip to date in Nov.: 1.83

Average Precip to date: 21.13

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:54:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:46:19 am



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Today in Weather History

November 26, 1989: Snow began falling in western South Dakota during the early evening of the 26th and swept across the state and into west central Minnesota that night and through much of the 27th. Almost two feet of snow fell in parts of the Black Hills, while one to two inches fell in the southeast part of South Dakota. Icy roads caused by rain that preceded the snow in central and eastern parts of the state combined with strong northerly winds on the 27th to make for dangerous traveling conditions. Numerous accidents were reported, and many cars went into ditches. Some of the heavier snow amount in central, north central, and northeast South Dakota were reported at Leola with 6 inches; Mellette and Onida with 5 inches; and Eureka, Faulkton, and Aberdeen with 4 inches.

November 26, 2001: Heavy snow of 6 to 12 inches, along with strong north winds of 20 to 40 mph, caused near-blizzard conditions and challenging travel conditions across most of central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Snowfall amounts were 6 to 12 inches in South Dakota and 10 to 14 inches in west central Minnesota. Most schools were closed or started late on both the 26th and 27th and some businesses were also closed. Many flights were also delayed or canceled. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eagle Butte, Fort Thompson and Webster; 7 inches at Eureka, Onida, Doland, and Watertown; 8 inches at Highmore, Miller, Onaka, Castlewood, and Selby; 9 inches at Sisseton and Peever; 10 inches at Ortonville, Faulkton, Blunt, Murdo, Kennebec, and Stephan; 11 inches at Victor and Gettysburg; 12 inches at Milbank, White Rock, and Clear Lake; 13 inches at Wheaton; and 14 inches at Browns Valley.

1888 - A late season hurricane brushed the East Coast with heavy rain and gale force winds. The hurricane passed inside Nantucket and over Cape Cod, then crossed Nova Scotia. (David Ludlum)

1896 - Snow and high winds hit the Northern Plains and the Upper Mississippi Valley, with a Thanksgiving Day blizzard across North Dakota. The storm was followed by a severe cold wave in the Upper Midwest. The temperature at Pokegama Dam MI plunged to 45 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A Thanksgiving Day storm in the northeastern U.S. produced heavy snow in northern New England and upstate New York. Snowfall totals in Maine ranged up to twenty inches at Flagstaff Lake. Totals in New Hampshire ranged up to 18 inches at Errol. Gales lashed the coast of Maine and New Hampshire. A second storm, over the Southern and Central Rockies, produced nine inches of snow at Kanosh UT, and 13 inches at Divide CO, with five inches reported at Denver CO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Central Gulf Coast States during the late morning and afternoon hours. Five tornadoes were reported in Mississippi, with the tornadoes causing a million dollars damage at Ruleville, and in Warren County. In Utah, the town of Alta was blanketed with 15 inches of snow overnight, and during the day was buried under another 16.5 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A massive storm over the western U.S. produced heavy snow in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The storm produced more than two feet of snow in the higher elevations of northern and central Utah, bringing more than sixty inches of snow to the Alta Ski Resort in the Wasatch Mountains. Winds in Utah gusted to 60 mph at Bullfrog. The storm brought much needed snow to the ski resorts of Colorado, with 19 inches reported at Beaver Creek. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2007: Lightning and heavy rain delay the start of the Monday Night Football game at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field between the Miami Dolphins and the Pittsburgh Steelers by 25 minutes. The muddy field conditions contribute to one of the lowest scoring NFL games won by the Steelers, 3-0. The teams combined 375 yards, and the winning field goal occurred with 17 seconds left in the game.



TO BELIEVE IS TO ACHIEVE

A group of men was preparing to climb Mount Everest. As the final pieces of their plan fell into place, a psychologist asked if he could interview them. They agreed and he met with them at their camp.

Looking at each one of them carefully and asking them individually, he asked, "Tell me, will you get to the top?"

The first answered, "I certainly hope so." The second responded, "I'll do my best." The third, "I'm going to give it all I've got." And the fourth said, "Yes, I will." And he did – and he was the only one!

Our body can achieve what our hearts believe, and our hearts believe what comes from our minds. A lack of faith enlarges our fears and turns them into facts. The shadows that our minds create become so dreadful that we are afraid to face them. Our worries eventually become walls that we cannot climb over or around.

Often when we are asked to do "something" for the Lord, our minds create fears that are not based on facts or shadows that have no substance or windows of opportunity that become walls without end.

Isaiah the Prophet boldly declared, "See, God has come to save me, I will trust in Him and not be afraid! The Lord God is my strength and my song, he has become my salvation!"

If we truly trust God, all things are possible.

Prayer: Lord, in Your grace You bring so many opportunities and challenges into our lives that allow us to honor You. Help us to trust in You and be victorious. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2

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:
11.22.24

13 20 26 32 65 2

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$489,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 51 Mins
DRAW: 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.25.24

12 14 16 25 33 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$15,950,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 6
DRAW: Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.25.24

7 10 14 33 36 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 17 Hrs 21 Mins
DRAW: 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.23.24

18 20 28 30 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$118,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 21
DRAW: Mins 51 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.25.24

2 13 25 27 39 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 50
DRAW: Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.25.24

5 35 45 60 63 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$196,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 50
DRAW: Mins 52 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

Proposals to repeal no-fault divorce cause concern even as efforts stall

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Married couples across the U.S. have had access to no-fault divorce for more than 50 years, an option many call crucial to supporting domestic abuse victims and key to preventing already crowded family courts from drowning in complicated divorce proceedings.

But some advocates for women worried as old comments from now Vice President-elect JD Vance circulated during the presidential campaign opposing no-fault divorce. And after President-elect Donald Trump and Vance won the election, warnings began popping up on social media urging women who might be considering divorce to “pull the trigger” while they still could. Some attorneys posted saying they were seeing a spike in calls from women seeking divorce consultations.

Trump — who is twice-divorced — hasn’t championed overhauling the country’s divorce laws, but in 2021 Vance lamented that divorce is too easily accessible, as have conservative podcasters and others.

“We’ve run this experiment in real time and what we have is a lot of very, very real family dysfunction that’s making our kids unhappy,” Vance said during a speech at a Christian high school in California, where he criticized people being able to “shift spouses like they change their underwear.”

Despite concerns, even those who want to make divorces harder to get say they don’t expect big, swift changes. There is not a national coordinated effort underway. And states determine their own divorce laws, so national leaders can’t change policy.

“Even in some of the so-called red states, it hasn’t gotten anywhere,” said Beverly Willett, co-chair of the Coalition for Divorce Reform, whose group has unsuccessfully attempted to convince states to repeal their no-fault divorce laws.

Mark A. Smith, a political science professor at the University of Washington, said that while many Americans have become accustomed to no-fault divorce being an option, Vance’s previous comments on making it more difficult to separate from a spouse could help jumpstart that effort.

“Even though he’s not directly proposing a policy, it’s a topic that hasn’t gotten a ton of discussion in the last 15 years,” Smith said. “And so to have a national profile politician talk that way is noteworthy.”

Meanwhile, Republican Party platforms in Texas and Nebraska were amended in 2022 to call for the removal of no-fault divorce. Louisiana’s Republican Party considered something similar earlier this year but ultimately declined to do so.

A handful of proposals have been introduced in conservative-led statehouses over the years, but all immediately stalled after they were filed.

In January, Oklahoma Republican Sen. Dusty Deever introduced legislation that would have removed married couples from filing for divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. Deever backed the bill after writing a piece declaring no-fault divorce was an “abolition of marital obligation.”

Similarly, in South Carolina, two Republican lawmakers in 2023 filed a bill that would have required both spouses to file for a no-fault divorce application rather than just one. And in South Dakota, a Republican lawmaker has attempted to remove irreconcilable difference as grounds for divorce since 2020.

None of the sponsors of these bills responded to interview requests from The Associated Press. All are members of their state’s conservative Freedom Caucus.

Nevertheless, some Democratic lawmakers say they remain worried about the future of no-fault divorce. They point to the U.S. Supreme Court overturning the constitutional right to abortion in 2022 as an example of a long-accepted option that was revoked through a decades-long effort.

“When you choose to be silent, you allow for this to creep in,” said Democratic South Dakota Rep. Linda Dube. “These are the bills that gain a foothold because you choose to be silent.”

Before California became the first state to adopt a no-fault divorce option in 1969, married couples had to prove their spouse had violated one of the approved “faults” outlined in their state’s divorce law or risk

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a judge denying their divorce, said Joanna Grossman, a law professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Qualified reasons varied from state to state, but largely included infidelity, incarceration or abandonment.

The system was a particular burden on domestic violence victims, often times women, who could be stuck in dangerous marriages while they try to prove their partner's abuse in court through expensive and lengthy legal proceedings.

"If there was any evidence that the couple both wanted to get divorced that was supposed to be denied because divorce was not something you got because you wanted it, it was something you got because you've been wronged in a way that the state thought was significant," Grossman said.

To date, every state in the U.S. has adopted a no-fault divorce option. However, 33 states still have a list of approved "faults" to file as grounds for divorce — ranging from adultery to felony conviction. In 17 states, married people only have the option of choosing no-fault divorce to end their marriages.

Calls to reform no-fault divorce have remained fairly silent until the late 1990s, when concern pushed by former President George Bush's administration over the country's divorce rate sparked a brief movement for states to adopt "covenant marriages." The option didn't replace a state's no-fault divorce law, but provided an option for couples that carried counseling requirements and strict exceptions for divorce.

Louisiana was the first state to embrace covenant marriage options, but the effort largely stopped after Arizona and Arkansas followed suit.

Christian F. Nunes, president of the National Organization for Women, said she is "extremely worried" about the possibility of no-fault divorce being removed with the incoming Trump administration, Republican-controlled Congress and wide range of conservative state leaders.

"With so many states focusing on a misogynistic legislative agenda, this will turn back the clocks on women's rights even more," Nunes said in a statement. "This is why removing 'no fault' divorce is another way for the government to control women, their bodies, and their lives. Eliminating no-fault divorce is also a backdoor way of eliminating gay marriage, since this implies that a marriage is only between a man and a woman."

With Trump's reelection, Willett, whose group opposes no-fault divorce, said she's cautiously optimistic that the political tide could change.

"Was what he said an indication of things to come? I don't know," Willett said. "It's a good thing but it's certainly not anything that has been really discussed other than a few high profile conservatives who talk about it."

Bruns' 20 help South Dakota take down Randall 112-50

By The Associated Press undefined

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Paul Bruns had 20 points in South Dakota's 112-50 win over Randall of the National Christian College Athletic Association on Monday.

Bruns went 8 of 9 from the field (3 for 4 from 3-point range) for the Coyotes (6-2). Jevon Hill added 18 points while finishing 6 of 8 from 3-point range while they also had six rebounds. Isaac Bruns had 14 points and shot 5 of 12 from the field, including 2 for 6 from 3-point range, and went 2 for 3 from the line.

The Saints were led by Braeson Barrs-Richardson, who posted 16 points. Koby Reed added 11 points for Randall. Jordan Jones had eight points and two steals.

Buchanan scores 28 off the bench, Boise State downs South Dakota State 83-82

By The Associated Press undefined

GEORGE TOWN, Cayman Islands (AP) — Javan Buchanan's 28 points off of the bench led Boise State to an 83-82 victory against South Dakota State on Monday.

Buchanan went 11 of 17 from the field (4 for 8 from 3-point range) for the Broncos (5-1). Alvaro Cardenas

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Torre added 16 points while going 6 of 13 (3 for 6 from 3-point range) while they also had seven assists. Julian Bowie went 4 of 4 from the field (3 for 3 from 3-point range) to finish with 13 points.

Oscar Cluff finished with 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Jackrabbits (5-2). Joe Saylor added 19 points for South Dakota State. Kalen Garry had 13 points and five assists.

Stock market today: Global shares mostly fall on worries about Trump's tariffs

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares retreated on Tuesday as worries spread over President-elect Donald Trump's comment that he plans to impose sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China as soon as he takes office.

France's CAC 40 declined 0.9% in early trading to 7,195.07, while Germany's DAX slipped 0.6% to 19,288.75. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.5% to 8,253.24. The futures for the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average were nearly flat.

In Asian trading, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 dropped 0.9% to finish at 38,442.00. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.7% to 8,359.40. South Korea's Kospi dipped 0.6% to 2,520.36.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng was little changed, inching up less than 0.1% to 19,159.20. The Shanghai Composite fell 0.1% to 3,259.76.

On Monday, stocks rose on Wall Street, led by shares likely to benefit from lower interest rates. The S&P 500 climbed 0.3%. The Dow jumped 1% to a new record. The Nasdaq gained 0.3%.

Treasury yields eased earlier this week in what some analysts called a "Bessent bounce" after Trump said he wants Scott Bessent, a hedge fund manager, to be his Treasury Secretary.

Bessent, a billionaire, has argued for reducing the U.S. government's deficit, which is how much more it spends than it takes in through taxes and other revenue. Such an approach could soothe worries on Wall Street that Trump's policies may lead to a much bigger deficit, which in turn would put upward pressure on Treasury yields and drive prices lower.

The Federal Reserve began cutting its main interest rate just a couple months ago from a two-decade high, hoping to keep the job market humming after bringing inflation nearly all the way down to its 2% target.

But immediately after Trump's victory, traders had reduced bets for how many cuts the Fed may deliver next year. They were worried Trump's preference for lower tax rates and higher spending on the border would balloon the national debt.

A U.S. report coming on Wednesday could influence how much the Fed may cut rates. Economists expect it to show that an underlying inflation trend the Fed prefers to use accelerated to 2.8% last month from 2.7% in September. Higher inflation would make the Fed more reluctant to cut rates as deeply or as quickly as it would otherwise.

Much focus has been on the resilience of U.S. shoppers, given high prices and still-high interest rates.

In other dealings early Tuesday, benchmark U.S. crude added 45 cents to \$69.39 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added 40 cents to \$73.88 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar slipped to 154.02 Japanese yen from 154.20 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0509 from \$1.0495.

Imran Khan supporters breach lockdown in Pakistani capital, at least 6 people killed in violence

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Supporters seeking the release of imprisoned Pakistani former premier Imran Khan on Tuesday broke through a ring of shipping containers locking down the capital Islamabad, while at least six people have died in protest-related violence. Protesters battled security forces and ignored a govern-

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ment threat to respond with gunfire.

The dead included four members of the security services and one civilian who were killed when a vehicle rammed them on a street. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced the attack on Tuesday, saying an "anarchist group" was deliberately targeting law enforcement personnel. There were no claims of responsibility for the ramming. A police officer died in a separate incident.

Thousands of security forces have poured into central Islamabad. Pakistan's army took control of D-Chowk, a large square in downtown Islamabad's Red Zone, which is an area that houses key government buildings and is the final destination for the protesters. Paramilitary rangers formed the next layer of deterrence at the site and police made up the third. Rangers urged everyone to leave the area, including journalists, and fired warning shots into the air.

"We have now allowed police to take any decision according to the situation," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said while visiting the square.

Earlier Naqvi threatened security forces would respond with live fire if protesters fired weapons at them.

Visiting Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko was staying in the Red Zone as part of his official trip.

One protestor, Shahzor Ali, said people were on the streets because Khan had called for them to be there. "We will stay here until Khan is among us. He will decide what to do next."

"If they again fire bullets, the bullet will be responded with the bullet," he said.

Police are using tear gas to try and disperse the crowds. Scores of people have been injured, including journalists who were attacked by demonstrators. Dozens of Khan supporters beat a videographer covering the protest for The Associated Press and took his camera. He sustained head injuries and was treated in a hospital.

Pakistani media have mostly stopped filming and photographing the rally, instead focusing on the security measures and the city's deserted streets.

People are closing in on the Red Zone. Naqvi said Khan's party rejected a government offer to rally on the outskirts of the city. By Tuesday afternoon, fresh waves of protestors were making their way unopposed to the rally site. Most had the party flag around their shoulders or wore its tricolor on accessories.

Khan, who has been in jail for over a year and faces more than 150 criminal cases, remains popular. His party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, or PTI, says the cases are politically motivated.

Authorities say only courts can order the release of Khan, who was ousted in 2022 through a no-confidence vote in Parliament. He has been imprisoned since his first conviction in a graft case, in August 2023, and has been sentenced in several other cases.

Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, who is leading the protest, told people to keep marching toward the Red Zone peacefully. She said another plan of action would be conveyed to protesters if Khan was not released. She also urged the government not to harm the demonstrators.

In a bid to foil the protest, police have arrested more than 4,000 Khan supporters since Friday and suspended mobile and internet services in some parts of the country. On Thursday, a court prohibited rallies in the capital and Naqvi said anyone violating the ban would be arrested.

Travel between Islamabad and other cities has become nearly impossible because of shipping containers blocking the roads. All educational institutions remain closed. Mobile internet services and messaging platforms are experiencing severe disruption in the capital.

The PTI relies heavily on social media to demand his release and uses messaging platforms like WhatsApp to share information, including details of events. The X platform, which is banned in Pakistan, is no longer accessible even with a VPN.

Hong Kong's top court rules in favor of equal inheritance and housing benefits for same-sex couples

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's top court on Tuesday upheld earlier rulings that favored subsidized housing benefits and equal inheritance rights for same-sex married couples, in a landmark victory for the city's LGBTQ+ community.

The Court of Final Appeal's dismissal of the government's appeals ended some yearslong legal battles over the differential treatment facing same-sex couples married overseas under Hong Kong's Housing Authority policies and two inheritance laws.

The unanimous decisions are expected to have a far-reaching impact on the lives of same-sex couples, who have traditionally had fewer rights compared to their heterosexual counterparts in the global financial hub.

Chief Justice Andrew Cheung said in his judgement that exclusionary housing policies were argued to be beneficial to opposite-sex married couples because they increase the supply of subsidized housing for them and thereby support the institution of traditional families.

But Cheung said authorities failed to provide evidence showing the potential impact on opposite-sex couples if those policies were relaxed.

"The challenged policies cannot be justified," he wrote.

On the inheritance laws, judges Roberto Ribeiro and Joseph Fok ruled that the disputed provisions are "discriminatory and unconstitutional" in their written judgement.

The Housing Authority said in a statement it respects the court's decisions, adding it will study the judgements and seek legal advice, if necessary, on follow-up actions.

Hong Kong does not recognize same-sex marriage, prompting some couples to marry elsewhere.

Currently, the city only recognizes same-sex marriage for certain purposes such as taxation, civil service benefits and dependent visas. Many of the government's concessions were won through legal challenges, and the city has seen a growing social acceptance toward same-sex marriage.

In September 2023, the top court ruled that the government should provide a framework for recognizing same-sex partnerships. This ruling, along with other successful legal challenges brought by members of the LGBTQ+ community, made Hong Kong the only place in China to grant such recognition for same-sex couples.

In separate judgements handed down in 2020 and 2021, a lower court had ruled that the housing policies involved in Tuesday's cases violated the constitutional right to equality, and that excluding same-sex spouses from inheritance law benefits constituted unlawful discrimination.

The government had challenged these decisions at the Court of Appeal but subsequently lost in October 2023. It then took the cases to the top court.

Nick Infinger, who first launched a judicial review against the Housing Authority in 2018, told reporters that Tuesday's rulings "acknowledged same-sex couples can love each other and deserve to live together."

"This is not only fighting for me and for my partner, but this is fighting for all the same-sex couples in Hong Kong," he said outside the court building.

But he added he was still "a bit pessimistic" about whether Hong Kong could become like Taiwan and Thailand in legalizing same-sex marriage.

Hong Kong Marriage Equality, a non-governmental organization, said in a statement that the judges' decisions made it clear that discrimination and differential treatment on the grounds of sexual orientation violate human dignity and equality. It called on the government to immediately end the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage.

The top court's rulings also concluded a long legal journey taken by Henry Li and his late partner, Edgar Ng. After they married in Britain in 2017, Ng bought a subsidized flat as his matrimonial home with Li.

The Housing Authority, however, said Li could not be added as an authorized occupant of the flat in the capacity of Ng's family member because same-sex married partners do not fall within its definition of

"spouse." Ng was also concerned that if he died intestate, his properties would not be passed to Li, the court heard.

Ng died in 2020 after suffering years of depression.

After the rulings, Li posted a message on his Facebook account, saying that although he has lived in pain in the absence of Ng, he has not given up his husband's aspiration to pursue equality.

"Without you by my side, the arguments of the government and the Housing Authority in the cases seemed to become more cruel, causing me even more distress," he wrote to Ng in the message. "I hope you can still hear everyone's recognition of you."

Auto industry's shift toward EVs is expected to go on despite Trump threat to kill tax credits

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — If President-elect Donald Trump makes good on his threat to kill federal tax credits for electric vehicle purchases, it's likely that fewer buyers will choose EVs.

Yet tax credits or not, auto companies show no intention of retreating from a steady transition away from gas-burning cars and trucks, especially given the enormous investment they have already made: Since 2021, the industry has spent at least \$160 billion on planning, designing and building electric vehicles, according to the Center for Auto Research.

In campaigning for the presidency, Trump condemned the federal tax for EV buyers — up to \$7,500 per vehicle — as part of a "green new scam" that would devastate the auto industry. His transition team is reportedly working on plans to abolish the tax credits and to roll back the more stringent fuel-economy rules that were pushed through by the Biden administration. It is far from clear, though, that the Trump administration could actually rescind the credits.

Trump's argument — one that most economists dispute — is that a rapid U.S. shift toward electric vehicles would lead to most EVs being made in China and would swell prices for America's auto buyers. He has said he would redirect federal revenue recaptured from a canceled tax credit to build roads, bridges and dams.

Ending the credits, which were a key provision of President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, almost certainly would reduce EV sales, which have been growing in the United States this year, though not nearly as fast as automakers had expected. The slowing growth has forced nearly all auto companies to scale back EV production and delay construction of battery factories that are no longer needed to handle a more gradual transition.

Jonathan Chariff, an executive at Midway Ford in Miami, one of the company's top EV-selling dealers, said he thinks ending the tax credits would severely hurt sales. The credits reduce monthly payments, he noted, making an EV closer in price to a gasoline counterpart.

"It becomes more affordable," he said. "Otherwise, those individuals won't be able to afford the payments."

Chariff calculated that the \$7,500 credit could shrink a buyer's monthly payment by between \$200 and \$250, allowing many to afford an EV. On average, electric vehicles sell for about \$57,000, compared with around \$48,000 for a gasoline vehicle, according to Cox Automotive. (Though they cost more up front, EVs generally are cheaper to operate because maintenance costs are lower, and in most cases electricity is much cheaper than gasoline.)

To qualify for the credits, EVs must be built in North America. EVs that contain battery parts or minerals from China or any other nation that is deemed an economic or security threat to the United States qualify for only half the federal credit. Because of that restriction, most of the 75 EV models on sale in the U.S. are not eligible for the full credit. All EVs, though, can receive the full credit toward a lease — a benefit that Trump likely will target. Some plug-in gas-electric hybrids qualify for the credits, too.

Asked about the president-elect's opposition to EV tax credits, Trump's transition team would say only that he has "a mandate to implement the promises he made on the campaign trail."

Elon Musk, a close adviser to Trump and co-leader of a commission that intends to identify ways to vastly shrink the federal government, appears to be aligned with the president-elect in canceling the tax

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credits. Musk, the billionaire CEO of Tesla who spent an estimated \$200 million to help elect Trump, has said that ending the credits would hurt his rival companies more than it would Tesla, the U.S. sales leader in EVs by far.

"I think it would be devastating for our competitors and would hurt Tesla slightly," he said.

Even so, it might prove difficult for Trump to rescind the credits without help from the new Republican-led Congress, many of whose members represent districts where the EV credit is popular. Trump has floated the idea of using a constitutional theory by which a president could decide whether or not to spend money Congress has appropriated. The president-elect has promoted the concept of "impoundment," under which congressional appropriations set a ceiling — but not a floor — for spending federal money.

John Helveston, an assistant professor at George Washington University who studies electric vehicles and policies, said that in his view, the impoundment theory wouldn't apply in this circumstance because the EV tax credits affect government revenue and are not an appropriation.

In any case, Helveston said he doubts Trump could persuade Republican lawmakers to remove the credits from the Inflation Reduction Act because so many congressional districts benefit from the tax breaks.

"Cutting the EV tax credit makes it harder for the battery factory in their town to sell their product," he noted.

A 1974 federal law bars a president from substituting his own view of spending programs, said David Rapallo, associate law professor at Georgetown University. If Trump cancelled the tax credits, Rapallo said, it would be challenged in court.

Research by J.D. Power shows that once people know about the tax credits, they're far more likely to consider an electric vehicle. In the meantime, federal subsidies, not only for buyer tax credits but also for converting factories to EV production, are helping General Motors, Ford and Stellantis make the enormously expensive transition away from gasoline vehicles. It's also helping Detroit's Big Three compete with foreign rivals, notably Chinese automakers that received government subsidies and had a head start in developing EVs, said Sam Fiorani, a vice president at the consultancy AutoForecast Solutions.

At present, Ford and GM, while profitable overall, are losing money on EVs, unlike Tesla, though both expect their electric-vehicle operations to generate positive earnings in the coming years as costs ease and more vehicles are sold.

Eliminating the federal tax credits, Fiorani suggested, would "hurt the Detroit Three in the long run as they become less competitive against global players making the technological leaps" for electric vehicles.

GM, Ford and Stellantis all declined to comment, though their executives have said in the past that they will continue to develop EVs while still selling gasoline vehicles and hybrids. The Alliance for Automotive Innovation, a trade group that represents most automakers, has written to Trump in support of the tax credits, arguing that they help ensure that the U.S. "continues to lead in manufacturing critical to our national and economic security."

Hyundai, the Korean automaker, which has spent more than \$7 billion on an EV factory in Georgia, could also suffer. The company sped up construction of the huge plant near Savannah and is now building EVs in the United States to try to capitalize on the tax credits for buyers.

In the end, most automakers say their ambitious plans for transitioning to electric vehicles won't change regardless of policy changes in Washington.

"We plan for the long term, so political considerations aren't a factor in how we approach product development or capital investments," said David Christ, vice president of Toyota North America, which is building a battery factory in North Carolina.

Philippine investigators summon VP Duterte over her public threats against President Marcos

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine authorities handed a subpoena to Vice President Sara Duterte's office Tuesday, inviting her to answer investigators' questions after she publicly threatened to have the president, his wife and the House of Representatives speaker assassinated if she were killed in an unspecified plot herself.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday described her threat as a criminal plot and vowed to fight it and uphold the rule of law in the country in a looming showdown between the country's two top leaders.

The national police and the military expressed alarm and immediately boosted Marcos's security. National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said the threats were a national security concern.

Duterte, a 46-year-old lawyer, said her remarks were not an actual threat but an expression of concern over her own safety due to unspecified danger to her life. The Marcos administration's statements against her were "a farce" and part of efforts to persecute critics like her, Duterte said.

The subpoena ordered Duterte to appear before the National Bureau of Investigation on Friday to "shed light on the investigation for alleged grave threats."

Duterte said Monday she was willing to face an investigation but demanded the Marcos administration also respond to her questions, including alleged irregularities in government.

Under Philippine law, such public remarks may constitute a crime of threatening to inflict a wrong on a person or their family and are punishable by a prison term and fine.

Marcos ran with Duterte as his vice-presidential running mate in 2022 elections and both won landslide victories on a campaign call of national unity. In the Philippines, the two positions are elected separately.

The two leaders and their camps, however, soon had a bitter falling out over key differences, including in their approaches to China's aggressive territorial claims in the disputed South China Sea.

Duterte resigned from the Marcos Cabinet in June as education secretary and head of an anti-insurgency body and became one of the most vocal critics of the president, his wife and his cousin Martin Romualdez, who heads the House of Representatives.

The House has been investigating alleged misuse of confidential government funds by Duterte as vice president and when she headed the Department of Education.

Trump threatens to impose sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China on first day in office

By JILL COLVIN and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump threatened on Monday to impose sweeping new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China as soon as he takes office as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs. He said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico, and an additional 10% tariff on goods from China, as one of his first executive orders.

The tariffs, if implemented, could dramatically raise prices for American consumers on everything from gas to automobiles to agricultural products. The U.S. is the largest importer of goods in the world, with Mexico, China and Canada its top three suppliers, according to the most recent U.S. Census data.

Trump made the threats in a pair of posts on his Truth Social site in which he railed against an influx of illegal migrants, even though southern border apprehensions have been hovering near four-year lows.

"On January 20th, as one of my many first Executive Orders, I will sign all necessary documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25% Tariff on ALL products coming into the United States, and its ridiculous Open Borders," he wrote, complaining that "thousands of people are pouring through Mexico and Canada, bringing Crime and Drugs at levels never seen before," even though violent crime is down from pandemic highs.

He said the new tariffs would remain in place "until such time as Drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and all Illegal Aliens stop this Invasion of our Country!"

"Both Mexico and Canada have the absolute right and power to easily solve this long simmering problem.

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We hereby demand that they use this power," he went on, "and until such time that they do, it is time for them to pay a very big price!"

A senior Canadian government official said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Trump spoke after Trump's posts. The two spoke about the border and trade and had a good conversation, the official said. The official was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump also turned his ire on China, saying he has "had many talks with China about the massive amounts of drugs, in particular Fentanyl, being sent into the United States – But to no avail."

"Until such time as they stop, we will be charging China an additional 10% Tariff, above any additional Tariffs, on all of their many products coming into the United States of America," he wrote.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington cautioned on Monday that there will be losers on all sides if there is a trade war.

"China-US economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature," embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu posted on X. "No one will win a trade war or a #tariff war." He added that China had taken steps in the last year to help stem drug trafficking.

It is unclear whether Trump will actually go through with the threats or if he is using them as a negotiating tactic before he returns to the White House in the new year.

Trump's nominee for treasury secretary, Scott Bessent — who if confirmed, would be one of several officials responsible for imposing tariffs on other countries — has on several occasions said tariffs are a means of negotiation.

He wrote in a Fox News op-ed last week, before his nomination, that tariffs are "a useful tool for achieving the president's foreign policy objectives. Whether it is getting allies to spend more on their own defense, opening foreign markets to U.S. exports, securing cooperation on ending illegal immigration and interdicting fentanyl trafficking, or deterring military aggression, tariffs can play a central role."

Trump won the election in large part due to voter frustration over inflation, but his threatened tariffs pose the risk of pushing prices even higher for food, autos and other goods. If inflationary pressures increase, the Federal Reserve might need to keep its benchmark interest rates higher.

Trump's threats come as arrests for illegally crossing the border from Mexico have been falling. The most recent U.S. numbers for October show arrests remain near four-year lows, with U.S. Border Patrol making 56,530 arrests in October, less than one third of the tally from October last year.

Meanwhile, arrests for illegally crossing the border from Canada have been rising over the past two years. The Border Patrol made 23,721 arrests between October 2023 and September 2024, compared with 10,021 the previous 12 months. More than 14,000 of those arrested on the Canadian border were Indian — more than 10 times the number two years ago.

Last week, a jury convicted two men on charges related to human smuggling for their roles in an international operation that led to the deaths of a family of Indian migrants who froze while trying to cross the Canada-U.S. border during a 2022 blizzard.

Much of America's fentanyl is smuggled from Mexico. Border seizures of the drug rose sharply under President Joe Biden, and U.S. officials tallied about 21,900 pounds (12,247 kilograms) of fentanyl seized in the 2024 government budget year, compared with 2,545 pounds (1,154 kilograms) in 2019, when Trump was president.

If Trump were to move forward with the threatened tariffs, the new taxes would pose an enormous challenge for the economies of Canada and Mexico, in particular.

The Canadian dollar weakened sharply in foreign exchange markets immediately following Trump's post.

During Trump's first term, his move to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and reports that he was considering a 25% tariff on the Canadian auto sector were considered an existential threat in Canada. Canada is one of the most trade-dependent countries in the world, and 75% of Canada's exports go to the U.S.

The tariffs would also throw into doubt the reliability of the 2020 trade deal brokered in large part by Trump with Canada and Mexico, the USMCA, which replaced NAFTA and is up for review in 2026.

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It's unclear from Trump's social media post how he would legally apply tariff hikes on those two pivotal U.S. trade partners, but the 2020 deal allows for national security exceptions.

Trump transition team officials did not immediately respond to questions about what authority he would use, what he would need to see to prevent the tariffs from being implemented and how they would impact prices in the U.S.

When Trump imposed higher tariffs during his first term in office, other countries responded with retaliatory tariffs of their own. Canada, for instance, announced billions of new duties in 2018 against the U.S. in a tit-for-tat response to new taxes on Canadian steel and aluminum.

Many of the U.S. products were chosen for their political rather than economic impact. For example, Canada imports just \$3 million worth of yogurt from the U.S. annually and most of it comes from one plant in Wisconsin, the home state of then-Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan. That product was hit with a 10% duty.

The Canadian government, in a joint statement from Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, emphasized the close relationship between the two countries and said they will discuss the border and vast economic ties with the incoming administration.

"Canada places the highest priority on border security and the integrity of our shared border. Our relationship today is balanced and mutually beneficial, particularly for American workers," the statement read.

Freeland, who chairs a special Cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations to address concerns about another Trump presidency, has said the president-elect's promise to launch a mass deportation and concern that that could lead to an influx of migrants to Canada, is a top focus of the committee.

A second senior Canadian official had said before Trump's posts that Canadian officials were expecting him to issue executive orders on trade and the border as soon as he assumes office. The official was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mexico's Foreign Relations Department and Economy Department also had no immediate reaction to Trump's statements. Normally such weighty issues are handled by the president at her morning press briefings.

Last week, a senior Chinese commerce official said higher tariffs on Chinese exports would backfire by raising prices for consumers. Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen also said China can manage the impact of such "external shocks."

What to know about the Menendez brothers' resentencing plea

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Erik and Lyle Menendez will have to wait until next year for a decision on whether they should have the possibility of freedom from prison more than 30 years after killing their parents, a judge said.

The shotgun killings of Jose and Kitty Menendez on Aug. 20, 1989, in their Beverly Hills mansion captured the public's attention. Prosecutors argued the Menendez brothers killed their parents for financial gain. The brothers' attorneys never disputed the pair killed their parents, but argued that they acted out of self-defense after years of emotional and sexual abuse by their father.

After an initial mistrial, the brothers were convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Los Angeles County prosecutors recommended the resentencing for the brothers last month, arguing that they had demonstrated good behavior and rehabilitation in prison. They have support from their family, and attorneys have presented new evidence of the sexual abuse the brothers allege they suffered at the hands of their father.

Here are some things to know about the case:

What happened Monday?

LA County Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic held a hearing to discuss the Menendez brothers' bid for freedom.

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Their lawyers first filed a habeas corpus petition — a request for a court to examine whether someone is being lawfully detained — in May 2023, asking a judge to consider new evidence of their father’s alleged sexual abuse.

After renewed public interest in the case since the recent Netflix drama and documentary released, Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón asked the judge to give the brothers a new sentence of 50 years to life, which could make them immediately eligible for parole because they were less than 26 years old when they killed their parents.

On Monday, however, Jestic said he could not move forward with the hearing scheduled for Dec. 11 due to the amount of evidence he needed to go through. He postponed the hearing to Jan. 30.

Who supports the brothers’ release?

Erik and Lyle Menendez have the support of almost their entire extended family, who gathered to call for their release last month.

The brothers’ two aunts took the stand on Monday in support of their release. Joan Andersen VanderMolen, Kitty Menendez’s sister who turns 93 on Tuesday, and Teresita Baralt, Jose’s older sister who is 85, both said they wanted their nephews to come home. They said they had kept in contact with the brothers while they have been in prison, though they had not seen them in person for years.

Andersen VanderMolen said the abuse Erik and Lyle Menendez had to suffer was “unconscionable.”

Baralt noted that she was close to Jose and lived for years across the street from him and Kitty, who Baralt described as her best friend.

“We miss those who are gone tremendously,” Baralt testified through tears. “But we miss the kids too.”

What might the judge consider?

The judge might consider new evidence that the brothers’ attorneys say corroborate their allegations that they were sexually abused by their father. Much of the evidence and testimony from family members that related to the alleged abuse was excluded during the trial that ultimately convicted them.

The brothers’ attorneys said the new evidence includes a letter Erik Menendez wrote in 1988 — the year before the murders — to his uncle Andy Cano, describing the sexual abuse he had endured from his father. The brothers asked their lawyers about it after it was mentioned in a 2015 Barbara Walters television special. The lawyers hadn’t known of the letter and realized it had not been introduced at their trials.

More new evidence emerged when Roy Rossello, a former member of the Latin pop group Menudo, recently came forward saying Jose Menendez drugged and raped him when Rossello was a teen in the 1980s. Menudo was signed under RCA Records, where Jose Menendez was chief operating officer. Rossello spoke about his abuse in the Peacock docuseries “Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed,” and provided a signed declaration to the brothers’ lawyers.

The judge may also consider the brothers’ prison record.

In a document filed by the district attorney’s office recommending resentencing, prosecutors pointed to the brothers’ educational achievements — both have attained several degrees — and contributions to the community. One is a GreenSpace prison beautification program Lyle Menendez started. Both brothers also received low-risk assessment scores, and the document notes that Lyle had not been in a single fight during his 30 years in prison.

Who else could weigh in?

Prosecutors who believe the brothers should not be freed are expected to make their own arguments to the judge.

The brothers’ attorneys have submitted papers requesting clemency from California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has the power to free them. However, Newsom said last week that he won’t decide until incoming Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman, who takes office on Dec. 2, has the opportunity to review the case.

Hochman, a Republican-turned-independent who unseated the progressive Gascón, said the judge’s decision to delay the hearing will give him enough time to “review the extensive prison records, transcripts of two lengthy trials and voluminous exhibits, as well as consult with prosecutors, law enforcement, defense counsel and victim family members.”

Trump transition team suggests sidelining top adviser over pay-to-play allegations

By ZEKE MILLER White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top lawyer on Donald Trump's transition team investigated a longtime adviser to the president-elect over allegations he used his proximity to Trump to score payments from those seeking roles or influence in the new administration.

The review conducted by lawyer David Warrington recommended that Trump aides sharply constrain adviser Boris Epshteyn's access to the president-elect, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an internal matter.

The personnel drama spotlights the unusual and often-disorganized cast of characters around Trump who contributed to the chaos of his first term, some of whom are part of the transition to the second as he looks to build out his administration before he takes office on Jan. 20.

Among those Epshteyn is alleged to have sought payments from is Scott Bessent, Trump's nominee to be treasury secretary. Bessent mounted a months-long campaign to win the job but was opposed by Epshteyn allegedly after the hedge fund executive didn't agree to pay him a substantial retainer.

The review also examined a complaint from former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens, who resigned in scandal but has expressed interest in joining Trump's administration. Greitens signed a declaration last week recounting a Nov. 7 conversation with Epshteyn that alleged that his "overall tone and behavior gave me the impression of an implicit expectation to engage in business dealings with him before he would advocate for or suggest my appointment to the President. This created a sense of unease and pressure on my part."

Epshteyn isn't accused of doing anything illegal — securing fees for access to senior government officials is the bread and butter of Washington's lobbying establishment — but the investigation appeared designed to weaken or eliminate his prominent position within Trump's orbit. The president-elect has long chafed at those he viewed as using him for their own personal gain.

"As is standard practice, a broad review of the campaign's consulting agreements has been conducted and completed, including as to Boris, among others," said Trump communications director Steven Cheung. "We are now moving ahead together as a team to help President Trump Make America Great Again."

Veterans of other presidential campaigns and transitions said such a review was anything but standard, and Cheung did not comment on Epshteyn's role going forward.

Epshteyn, who served briefly in a mid-level role in Trump's first White House, became a central player in Trump's life after he left office in 2021. He was one of the architects of Trump's legal team and strategy as the former president faced an array of criminal and civil threats after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol and his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Epshteyn himself was indicted on state charges in Arizona related to alleged efforts by Trump allies to subvert that election and has pleaded not guilty. He holds the title of senior counsel and senior adviser to Trump, but even before the review he was not expected to take a role in the incoming administration.

"I am honored to work for President Trump and with his team," Epshteyn said in a statement. "These fake claims are false and defamatory and will not distract us from Making America Great Again."

Eric Trump, the president-elect's son who went to college with Epshteyn, told Fox News that if the reported allegations were true, his old friend might not be around the campaign much longer.

"Listen, I have known Boris for years, and I have never known him to be anything but a good human being," Eric Trump said Monday. "So, that said, I will tell you, my father's been incredibly clear. You do not, you do not do that under any circumstance. And, believe me, there will be repercussions if somebody was."

The investigation into Epshteyn was first reported by the conservative website Just the News.

"I suppose every President has people around them who try to make money off them on the outside. It's a shame but it happens," Trump told the website. "But no one working for me in any capacity should be looking to make money. They should only be here to Make America Great Again."

During the 2022 midterms, some in Trump's orbit also represented candidates seeking his endorsement, leading to accusations that aides were profiting off their proximity to the former president.

Walmart becomes latest - and biggest - company to roll back its DEI policies

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Walmart, the world's largest retailer, is rolling back its diversity, equity and inclusion policies, joining a growing list of major corporations that have done the same after coming under attack by conservative activists.

The changes, confirmed by Walmart on Monday, are sweeping and include everything from not renewing a five-year commitment for an equity racial center set up in 2020 after the police killing of George Floyd, to pulling out of a prominent gay rights index. And when it comes to race or gender, Walmart won't be giving priority treatment to suppliers.

Walmart's moves underscore the increasing pressure faced by corporate America as it continues to navigate the fallout from the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in June 2023 ending affirmative action in college admissions. Emboldened by that decision, conservative groups have filed lawsuits making similar arguments about corporations, targeting workplace initiatives such as diversity programs and hiring practices that prioritize historically marginalized groups.

Separately, conservative political commentator and activist Robby Starbuck has been going after corporate DEI policies, calling out individual companies on the social media platform X. Several of those companies have subsequently announced that they are pulling back their initiatives, including Ford, Harley-Davidson, Lowe's and Tractor Supply.

But Walmart, which employs 1.6 million workers in the U.S., is the largest one to do so.

"This is the biggest win yet for our movement to end wokeness in corporate America," Starbuck wrote on X, adding that he had been in conversation with Walmart.

Walmart confirmed to The Associated Press that it will better monitor its third-party marketplace items to make sure they don't feature sexual and transgender products aimed at minors. That would include chest binders intended for youth who are going through a gender change, the company said.

The Bentonville, Arkansas-based retailer will also be reviewing grants to Pride events to make sure it is not financially supporting sexualized content that may be unsuitable for kids. For example, the company wants to make sure a family pavilion is not next to a drag show at a Pride event, the company said.

Additionally, Walmart will no longer consider race and gender as a litmus test to improve diversity when it offers supplier contracts. The company said it didn't have quotas and will not do so going forward. It won't be gathering demographic data when determining financing eligibility for those grants.

Walmart also said it wouldn't renew a racial equity center that was established through a five-year, \$100 million philanthropic commitment from the company with a mandate to, according to its website, "address the root causes of gaps in outcomes experienced by Black and African American people in education, health, finance and criminal justice systems."

And it would stop participating in the Human Rights Campaign's annual benchmark index that measures workplace inclusion for LGBTQ+ employees.

"We've been on a journey and know we aren't perfect, but every decision comes from a place of wanting to foster a sense of belonging, to open doors to opportunities for all our associates, customers and suppliers and to be a Walmart for everyone," the company said in a statement.

The changes come soon after an election win by former President Donald Trump, who has criticized DEI initiatives and surrounded himself with conservatives who hold similar views, including his former adviser Stephen Miller, who leads a group called America First Legal that has challenged corporate DEI policies. Trump named Miller to be the deputy chief of policy in his new administration.

A Walmart spokesperson said some of its policy changes have been in progress for a while. For example, it has been moving away from using the word DEI in job titles and communications and started to use the word "belonging." It also started making changes to its supplier program in the aftermath of the Supreme Court affirmative action ruling.

Some have been urging companies to stick with their DEI policies. Last month, a group of Democrats in Congress appealed to the leaders of the Fortune 1000, saying that DEI efforts give everyone a fair chance at achieving the American dream.

Osprey ferrying White House staff in New York grounded due to safety issue, witness reports flames

By AAMER MADHANI and TARA COPP Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — An Osprey being used to ferry White House staff and government officials from an event in New York on Monday was grounded due to a safety concern, with one witness reporting flames under the right engine.

The staff and officials were removed from the aircraft, part of the Marine Corps HMX-1 presidential helicopter fleet, and transferred to a second Osprey to continue their trip accompanying President Joe Biden at a “Friendsgiving” event with members of the U.S. Coast Guard in Staten Island.

The issue caused only a minor delay for Biden’s return to Washington on Monday evening.

The incident occurred the same day lawmakers sent a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin asking him to re-ground the military’s entire fleet of V-22 Ospreys until solutions can be put in place to address safety and design issues identified by The Associated Press in its recent in-depth investigation of the aircraft’s accident record.

The Marine Corps did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the New York incident. A journalist traveling with the president reported seeing a fire under the right engine shortly before staff were notified the Osprey would be grounded.

It’s not the first time White House staff or reporters have had to be removed from an Osprey during a trip due to safety concerns. In November 2023 an Osprey ferrying White House reporters and staff returned to the ground shortly after takeoff after four loud “pops” were heard and smoke was seen.

In the letter sent Monday to Austin, Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, and Rep. Richard Neal, all Democrats from Massachusetts, said that “given the current concerns about the safety of the V-22, the aircraft should be grounded, and should not be deployed again until the platform’s significant deficiencies are fully addressed.”

The Osprey, which flies like both a helicopter and an airplane, has been in more than 21 major accidents, many of which can be tied back to choices made in its design, the AP found.

The whole fleet was grounded for three months this year following a deadly crash in Japan in November 2023 that killed eight service members, including one from Massachusetts.

Ospreys, which are operated by the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps and used in the presidential fleet, have now returned to flight operations, with some restrictions.

Osprey pilots have told the AP they do not want to see the aircraft grounded, despite safety concerns, because of its unique capabilities. Program officials have said they are working on fixes to improve the V-22’s safety and reliability.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter.

The lawmakers also cited the AP’s reporting that pilots are having to push the V-22’s “interim power” feature to be able to land safely — but are advised against it because it can wear down parts. Interim power was a factor in the most recent accident in October when a Japanese self-defense forces Osprey violently tilted and struck the ground on takeoff. An investigation determined the pilots were to blame for not turning on the interim power during takeoff.

“The reality for pilots is that they have to push the aircraft to its limits to stay safe,” the lawmakers wrote.

What’s blocking a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah?

By ABBY SEWELL and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Diplomats and other officials say there have been several sticking points in ceasefire talks to end the war between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, even as conditions for an agreement appear to be ripe.

Israel’s military has killed nearly all of the militant group’s top leaders, but it continues to fire missiles into Israel. Tens of thousands of Israelis who were evacuated from the border months ago are pressuring

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their government to help them go home. And the world wants to stop regional conflict from spreading after more than a year of fighting.

Following the latest visit to the region by a U.S. mediator, Israel hit central Beirut over the weekend, and Hezbollah responded with its biggest barrage in weeks as each applied pressure to reach a deal.

Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged fire almost daily since the day after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, setting off the war in Gaza.

Israel launched a widespread bombardment of Lebanon two months ago, then a ground invasion. More than 3,500 people in Lebanon have been killed, many of them civilians.

More than 70 have been killed in Israel, over 40 of them civilians. In addition, over 50 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive.

Here's a look at the proposal and the sticking points.

A proposed two-month ceasefire to start

The proposal under discussion to end the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah calls for an initial two-month ceasefire during which Israeli forces would withdraw from Lebanon and Hezbollah would end its armed presence along the southern border south of the Litani River.

The withdrawals would be accompanied by an influx of thousands more Lebanese army troops, who have been largely sidelined in the war, to patrol the border area along with an existing U.N. peacekeeping force.

An international committee would be set up to monitor implementation of the ceasefire agreement and of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which was passed in 2006 to end a monthlong war between Israel and Hezbollah but never fully implemented. Hezbollah never ended its presence in southern Lebanon, while Lebanon said Israel regularly violated its airspace and occupied small patches of its territory.

It is not clear whether a new deal would be any more successfully implemented than the one in 2006.

Michael Herzog, Israel's ambassador to Washington, told Israeli Army Radio on Monday that the deal aimed to improve surveillance and enforcement of the previous resolution. While he said there were still certain points that needed to be finalized, a deal was close and could be clinched "within days."

A U.S. official said negotiations continued to progress on Sunday, but the parties still need to work out some outstanding issues to close the deal. The official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks, declined to detail the outstanding issues.

Israel wants freedom to strike Hezbollah and other disagreements

Two Western diplomats described several points of dispute to The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss ongoing negotiations.

They said Israel was asking for more guarantees to ensure that Hezbollah's weapons are removed from the border area. Israeli officials, concerned about the possibility of Hezbollah launching the kind of attack that Hamas carried out from Gaza into southern Israel, have said they would not agree to a ceasefire deal that doesn't explicitly grant them freedom to strike in Lebanon if they believe Hezbollah is violating it.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the sensitive talks, said the issue remained a point of contention, although he said the talks were headed in a "positive direction."

Lebanese officials have said agreeing to such a deal would violate Lebanon's sovereignty. Hezbollah leader Naim Kasseem has said the militant group would not agree to a deal that does not entail a "complete and comprehensive end to the aggression" and does not protect Lebanon's sovereignty.

Lebanon and Israel have also disagreed over which countries would sit on the international committee overseeing implementation of the deal and Resolution 1701.

In a sign of progress, Israel appeared to have dropped its opposition to France, which has remained close with Lebanon since its colonial rule there ended and has recently been at odds with Israel.

On Monday, an official familiar with the talks, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing behind-the-scenes negotiations, said that France would be part of the monitoring committee. Lebanon's deputy parliament speaker, Elias Bousaab, also said Israel had accepted France.

But Lebanon has refused to allow Britain, a close ally of Israel. It was unclear Monday if Lebanese officials had dropped their opposition following Israel's concession.

Meanwhile, Israel does not want to enter into negotiations on 13 disputed points along the border as part of a ceasefire deal, the diplomats said.

Both sides have an interest in ending the war

A ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the strongest of Iran's armed proxies, is expected to significantly calm regional tensions that have led to fears of war between Israel and Iran directly. It's not clear how it would affect the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Hezbollah had long insisted that it would not agree to a ceasefire until the war in Gaza ends, but it has now dropped that condition.

One diplomat said there are fears that if no ceasefire is reached, the war will expand further into Syria and Iraq as Israel attempts to cut off the supply of weapons from Iran to Hezbollah. Israel has carried out regular airstrikes on Iran-linked groups in Syria and has threatened to strike in Iraq, where Iran-backed militias have periodically launched drone attacks on Israel.

Geir Pedersen, the U.N. special envoy for Syria, said during a visit to Damascus on Sunday that ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon are critical to "avoid Syria being dragged even further into the conflict."

Analysts say Hezbollah has been weakened but continues to keep up steady fire into Israel, including strikes far from the border.

On Sunday, Hezbollah fired about 250 rockets and other projectiles into Israel, wounding seven people in one of the militant group's heaviest barrages in months, in response to deadly Israeli strikes in Beirut. Violent clashes continue in southern Lebanon as Israeli forces attempt to take control of strategic towns.

Israel says its goal in the war with Hezbollah is to enable displaced Israelis to safely return home. In Lebanon, a quarter of the population has been displaced, and parts of the country, particularly in south Lebanon and areas south of the capital Beirut, have been destroyed.

In Lebanon, where officials and residents are anxious for war to end, an initial rush of optimism dissipated after the Biden administration's point man on Israel and Lebanon, Amos Hochstein, left the region last week without a deal.

Many now believe no agreement will be reached before President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

Judge in LA delays until January decision on resentencing Menendez brothers

By JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A judge on Monday delayed until January his decision on whether to resentence Erik and Lyle Menendez for killing their parents in their Beverly Hills mansion 35 years ago, squashing their family's hope the brothers would be released and home for the holidays.

Superior Court Judge Michael Jesic said at the hearing in Los Angeles that he needed time to review 17 boxes of documents and give a new district attorney in Los Angeles County time to weigh in on the case.

"I'm not ready to go forward," Jesic said, setting the hearing for the resentencing request for Jan. 30 instead of Dec. 11 as originally planned.

The brothers were scheduled to be seen in court for the first time in decades at the hearing but technical problems prevented them from appearing virtually from a San Diego prison. They were found guilty of murdering Jose and Kitty Menendez in 1989 and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

While their defense attorneys argued at trial that they had been sexually abused by their father, prosecutors denied that and accused them of killing their parents for money. In the years that followed, they repeatedly appealed their convictions without success.

Now, at 53 and 56, Erik and Lyle Menendez are making a new bid for freedom. Their lawyers filed a habeas corpus petition — a request for a court to examine whether someone is being lawfully detained — in May 2023, asking a judge to consider new evidence of their father's sexual abuse. The brothers are being held at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego.

Jesic allowed the brothers' two aunts to take the stand on Monday after their attorney argued that it was difficult for them to travel for the hearing.

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Joan Andersen VanderMolen, Kitty Menendez's sister who turns 93 on Tuesday, and Teresita Baralt, Jose's older sister who is 85, asked for their release, saying 35 years was a long time for the brothers after suffering abuse as children. Andersen VanderMolen had said last month that she had hoped her nephews would be released and home for her birthday or the holidays.

Baralt noted that she was close to Jose and lived for years across the street from him and Kitty, who Baralt described as her best friend.

"We miss those who are gone tremendously," Baralt testified through tears. "But we miss the kids too."

Both aunts said they had kept in contact with the brothers, though they had not seen them in person for years.

The hearing lasted less than an hour. Mark Geragos, an attorney for the brothers, started to address the media outside the courthouse but he cut it short and walked off as journalists crowded him.

The recent releases of the Netflix drama "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" and the documentary "The Menendez Brothers" in 2024 brought renewed attention to their plight.

Rose Castillo, a 28-year-old true crime enthusiast, arrived from Miami five minutes too late to enter the lottery and win one of the few seats offered to the public to attend the hearing, but glimpsed the brothers' family members before they entered the courthouse.

"That was crazy," Castillo said.

A courthouse bailiff told people to stop taking pictures of the relatives as they waited in the hallway before the hearing began.

Prosecutors recommended resentencing for the brothers last month, saying they have worked on redemption and rehabilitation and demonstrated good behavior inside prison.

Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón asked for new sentences that could make them immediately eligible for parole.

The brothers' extended family has said they deserve to be free after decades behind bars. Several family members have said that in today's world — which is more aware of the impact of sexual abuse — the brothers would not have been convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life.

Not all Menendez family members support resentencing. Attorneys for Milton Andersen, the 90-year-old brother of Kitty Menendez, filed a legal brief asking the court to keep the brothers' original punishment. "They shot their mother, Kitty, reloading to ensure her death," Andersen's attorneys said in a statement last month. "The evidence remains overwhelmingly clear: the jury's verdict was just, and the punishment fits the heinous crime."

The new evidence includes a letter Erik Menendez wrote in 1988 to his uncle Andy Cano, describing the sexual abuse he had endured from his father. The brothers asked their lawyers about it after it was mentioned in a 2015 Barbara Walters television special. The lawyers hadn't known of the letter and realized it had not been introduced at their trials, making it effectively new evidence that they say corroborates allegations that Erik was sexually abused by his father.

More new evidence emerged when Roy Rossello, a former member of the Latin pop group Menudo, recently came forward saying he had been drugged and raped by Jose Menendez when he was a teen in the 1980s. Menudo was signed under RCA Records, where Jose Menendez was chief operating officer.

Rossello spoke about his abuse in the Peacock docuseries "Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed," and provided a signed declaration to the brothers' lawyers.

Had these two pieces of evidence been available during the brothers' trial, prosecutors would not have been able to argue that there was no corroboration of sexual abuse, the petition states.

While clemency might be another pathway to freedom for the brothers, California Gov. Gavin Newsom said last week that he won't decide until incoming Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman, who takes office on Dec. 2, reviews the case.

Hochman, a Republican-turned-independent who unseated the progressive Gascón, said Jesic's decision to delay the hearing will give him enough time to "review the extensive prison records, transcripts of two lengthy trials and voluminous exhibits, as well as consult with prosecutors, law enforcement, defense counsel and victim family members."

Judge rejects request to sideline a San Jose State volleyball player on grounds she's transgender

By MEAD GRUVER and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

A judge on Monday rejected a request to block a San Jose State women's volleyball team member from playing in a conference tournament on grounds that she is transgender.

The ruling by U.S. Magistrate Judge S. Kato Crews in Denver will allow the player, who has played all season, to compete in the Mountain West Conference women's championship this week in Las Vegas.

The ruling comes in a lawsuit filed by nine current players against the conference challenging league policies for allowing transgender players to participate. The players argued that letting her compete poses a safety risk and is unfair.

While some media have reported those and other details, neither San Jose State nor the forfeiting teams have confirmed the school has a trans woman volleyball player. The Associated Press is withholding the player's name because she has not commented publicly on her gender identity. School officials also have declined an interview request with the player.

Crews' ruling referred to the athlete as an "alleged transgender" player and noted that no defendant disputed that the San Jose State roster includes a transgender woman player.

San Jose State will "continue to support its student-athletes and reject discrimination in all forms," the university said in a statement, confirming all its student-athletes are eligible to participate under NCAA and conference rules. "We are gratified that the Court rejected an eleventh-hour attempt to change those rules. Our team looks forward to competing in the Mountain West volleyball tournament this week."

The conference said it was "satisfied" with the judge's decision and would continue upholding policies established by its board of directors, which "directly align with NCAA and USA Volleyball."

"We are excited to proceed with the Mountain West Conference Women's Volleyball Championship," its statement added.

The players filed a notice for emergency appeal with the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Crews said the players could have sought relief much earlier, noting the individual universities had acknowledged that not playing their games against San Jose State this season would result in a loss in league standings. He refused a request to re-seed the tournament without the forfeited losses.

The judge said injunctions are meant to preserve the status quo. The conference policy regarding forfeiting for refusing to play against a team with a transgender player had been in effect since 2022 and the San Jose State player has been on the roster since 2022 — making that the status quo.

The player competed at the college level three previous seasons, including two for San Jose State, drawing little attention. This season's awareness of her reported identity led to an uproar among some players, parents and also politicians in a major election year.

Crews' ruling also said injunctions are meant to prevent harm, but in this case, he argued, the harm has already occurred. The games have been forfeited, the tournament has been seeded and the participants have confirmed they're playing.

The tournament starts Wednesday and continues Friday and Saturday. Colorado State is seeded first and San Jose State, second. The teams split their regular-season matches and both get byes into Friday's semifinals.

San Jose State will play the winner of Wednesday's match between Utah State and Boise State — teams that forfeited matches to SJSU during the regular season. Boise State associate athletic director Chris Kutz declined to comment on whether the Broncos would play SJSU if they won their first-round tournament game. Utah State associate athletic director Doug Hoffman said the university is reviewing the order and the team is preparing for Wednesday's match.

The tournament winner gets an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. San Jose State coach Todd Kress, whose team hasn't competed in the national tournament since 2001, has said they've been getting "messages of hate" that have taken a toll on the players.

Several teams refused to play against San Jose State this season, earning losses in the official confer-

ence standings. Boise State and Wyoming each had two forfeits while Utah State and Nevada both had one. Southern Utah, a member of the Western Athletic Conference, was the first to cancel against San Jose State this year.

Nevada's players stated they "refuse to participate in any match that advances injustice against female athletes," without elaborating. Nevada didn't qualify for the conference tournament.

The nine current players and others now suing the Mountain West Conference, the California State University Board of Trustees and others include San Jose State senior setter and co-captain Brooke Slusser. Slusser says the player is transgender and hits the volleyball with more force than other teammates, raising fear during practices of suffering concussions from a head hit, according to the complaint.

The Independent Council on Women's Sports is funding a separate lawsuit against the NCAA for allowing transgender women to compete in women's sports. Both lawsuits claim the landmark 1972 federal antidiscrimination law known as Title IX prohibits transgender women in women's sports. Title IX prohibits sexual discrimination in federally funded education; Slusser is a plaintiff in both lawsuits.

Several circuit courts have used a U.S. Supreme Court ruling to conclude that discriminating against someone based on their transgender status or sexual orientation is sex-based discrimination, Crews wrote. That means case law does not prove the "likelihood of success" needed to grant an injunction.

An NCAA policy that subjects transgender participation to the rules of sports governing bodies took effect this academic year. USA Volleyball says a trans woman must suppress testosterone for 12 months before competing. The NCAA has not flagged any issues with San Jose State.

The Republican governors of Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming have made public statements in support of the team cancellations, citing fairness in women's sports. President-elect Donald Trump likewise has spoken out against allowing transgender women to compete in women's sports.

Crews was a magistrate judge in Colorado's U.S. District Court for several years before President Joe Biden appointed him as a federal judge in January.

Israel launches new airstrikes on Lebanon as leaders draw closer to a ceasefire with Hezbollah

By SALLY ABOU ALJOUD, JOSEF FEDERMAN and SAM METZ Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israel's military launched airstrikes across Lebanon on Monday, unleashing explosions throughout the country and killing at least 31 while Israeli leaders appeared to be closing in on a negotiated ceasefire with the Hezbollah militant group.

Israeli strikes hit commercial and residential buildings in Beirut as well as in the port city of Tyre. Military officials said they targeted areas known as Hezbollah strongholds. They issued evacuation orders for Beirut's southern suburbs, and strikes landed across the city, including meters from a Lebanese police base and the city's largest public park.

The barrage came as officials indicated they were nearing agreement on a ceasefire, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Security Cabinet prepared to discuss an offer on the table.

Airstrikes kill at least 31

Massive explosions lit up Lebanon's skies with flashes of orange, sending towering plumes of smoke into the air as Israeli airstrikes pounded Beirut's southern suburbs. The blasts damaged buildings and left shattered glass and debris scattered across nearby streets. No casualties were reported after many residents fled the targeted sites.

Some of the strikes landed close to central Beirut and near Christian neighborhoods and other targets where Israel had issued evacuation warnings, including in Tyre and Nabatiyeh province. Israeli airstrikes also hit the northeast Baalbek-Hermel region without warning.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said that 26 people were killed in southern Lebanon, four in the eastern Baalbek-Hermel province and one in Choueifat, a neighborhood in Beirut's southern suburbs that was not subjected to evacuation warnings on Monday.

The deaths brought the total toll to 3,768 killed in Lebanon throughout 13 months of war between Israel

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and Hezbollah and nearly two months since Israel launched its ground invasion. Many of those killed since the start of the war between Israel and Hezbollah have been civilians, and health officials said some of the recovered bodies were so severely damaged that DNA testing would be required to confirm their identities.

Israel says it has killed more than 2,000 Hezbollah members. Lebanon's Health Ministry says the war has displaced 1.2 million people.

Israeli ground forces invaded southern Lebanon in early October, meeting heavy resistance in a narrow strip of land along the border. The military had previously exchanged attacks across the border with Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group that began firing rockets into Israel the day after the war in Gaza began last year.

Lebanese politicians have decried the ongoing airstrikes and said they are impeding U.S.-led ceasefire negotiations. The country's deputy parliament speaker accused Israel of ramping up its bombardment in order to pressure Lebanon to make concessions in indirect ceasefire negotiations with Hezbollah.

Elias Bousaab, an ally of the militant group, said the pressure has increased because "we are close to the hour that is decisive regarding reaching a ceasefire."

Hopes grow for a ceasefire

Israeli officials voiced similar optimism about prospects for a ceasefire. Mike Herzog, the country's ambassador to Washington, earlier in the day told Israeli Army Radio that several points had yet to be finalized. Though any deal would require agreement from the government, Herzog said Israel and Hezbollah were "close to a deal."

"It can happen within days," he said.

Israeli officials have said the sides are close to an agreement that would include withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and a pullback of Hezbollah fighters from the Israeli border. But several sticking points remain.

Two Israeli officials told The Associated Press that Netanyahu's security Cabinet had scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, but they said it remained unclear whether the Cabinet would vote to approve the deal. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing internal deliberations.

Danny Danon, Israel's U.N. ambassador, told reporters that he expected a ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah to have stages and to be discussed by leaders Monday or Tuesday. Still, he warned, "it's not going to happen overnight."

After previous hopes for a ceasefire were dashed, U.S. officials cautioned that negotiations were not yet complete and noted that there could be last-minute hitches that either delay or destroy an agreement.

"Nothing is done until everything is done," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said.

The proposal under discussion to end the fighting calls for an initial two-month ceasefire during which Israeli forces would withdraw from Lebanon and Hezbollah would end its armed presence along the southern border south of the Litani River.

The withdrawals would be accompanied by an influx of thousands more Lebanese army troops, who have been largely sidelined in the war, to patrol the border area along with an existing U.N. peacekeeping force.

Western diplomats and Israeli officials said Israel is demanding the right to strike in Lebanon if it believes Hezbollah is violating the terms. The Lebanese government has said that such an arrangement would authorize violations of the country's sovereignty.

A ceasefire could mark a step toward ending the regionwide war that ballooned after Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250.

The lack of a ceasefire has emerged as a political liability for Israeli leaders including Netanyahu, particularly while 60,000 Israelis remain away from their homes in the country's north after more than a year of cross-border violence.

Hezbollah rockets have reached as far south into Israel as Tel Aviv. At least 75 people have been killed, more than half of them civilians. More than 50 Israeli soldiers died fighting in the ground offensive in Lebanon. The Israeli military said about 250 projectiles were fired Sunday, with some intercepted.

A ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the strongest of Iran's armed proxies, is expected to significantly calm regional tensions that have led to fears of a direct, all-out war between Israel and Iran. It's not clear how the ceasefire will affect the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Hezbollah had long insisted that it would not agree to a ceasefire until the war in Gaza ends, but it dropped that condition.

A top Hamas official in Lebanon said the Palestinian militant group would support a ceasefire between its Lebanese ally Hezbollah and Israel, despite Hezbollah's previous promises to stop the fighting in Lebanon only if the war in Gaza ends.

"Any announcement of a ceasefire is welcome. Hezbollah has stood by our people and made significant sacrifices," Osama Hamdan of Hamas' political wing told the Lebanese broadcaster Al-Mayadeen, which is seen as politically allied with Hezbollah.

While the ceasefire proposal is expected to be approved if Netanyahu brings it to a vote in his security Cabinet, one hard-line member, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, said he would oppose it. He said on X that a deal with Lebanon would be a "big mistake" and a "missed historic opportunity to eradicate Hezbollah."

If the ceasefire talks fail, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said, "it will mean more destruction and more and more animosity and more dehumanization and more hatred and more bitterness."

Speaking at a G7 meeting in Fiumicino, Italy, the last summit of its kind before U.S. President Joe Biden leaves office, Safadi said such a failure "will doom the future of the region to more conflict and more killing and more destruction."

White Florida woman sentenced to 25 years in prison for shooting Black neighbor in lengthy dispute

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

A white Florida woman who fatally shot a Black neighbor through her front door during an ongoing dispute over the neighbor's boisterous children was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison for her manslaughter conviction.

Susan Lorincz, 60, was convicted in August of killing Ajike "A.J." Owens, 35, by firing a single shot from her .380-caliber handgun in June 2023. She had faced a maximum of 30 years behind bars. Circuit Judge Robert Hodges opted for a slightly lesser term amid evidence that Lorincz had been abused as a child and had mental health problems.

"The shooting was completely unnecessary in this case," Hodges said during an afternoon hearing. "The shooting, I find, was based more in anger than in fear."

The shooting was the culmination of a long-running argument between the two neighbors over Owens' children playing in a grassy area near both of their houses in Ocala, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) northwest of Orlando.

Prosecutors said Owens had come to Lorincz's home after her children complained that she had thrown roller skates and an umbrella at them, which Lorincz denied. Trial testimony showed Owens, a mother of four young children, was pounding on Lorincz's door and yelling, leading Lorincz to claim self-defense in shooting her neighbor.

Lorincz told detectives in a videotaped interview that she feared for her life. She also said she had been harassed for most of the three years she had lived in the neighborhood. Jurors who heard the trial evidence did not agree that the shooting was in self-defense.

In a statement to the judge, Lorincz apologized to Owens' family but said she was "literally terrified" of Owens the night of the shooting.

"I so wish I could go back and change things so she was still here," Lorincz said. "I never intended to kill anyone."

Owens' family pushed for the maximum prison sentence after Lorincz was convicted by an all-white jury. Owens' mother, Pamela Dias, said in court Monday that she now is the sole caregiver of her daughter's four children and that they are deeply traumatized by the killing.

"We're hurting with a pain that will never, never go away," Dias said. "There's a hole in our heart that will never mend. Susan destroyed our family."

Lorincz's attorney, Assistant Public Defender Amanda Sizemore, sought a more lenient sentence, an unspecified term below the 11.5 years in prison that is the lowest for her crime under state guidelines. Sizemore said in court documents that there were several reasons to justify a downward departure, including a mental disorder and claims that Owens was the aggressor and under "extreme duress" during the confrontation.

The judge said such a departure was not warranted, especially considering the impact of their mother's violent death on her children.

"They'll live their whole lives without their mother, which I think is a very significant harm inflicted by Ms. Lorincz," Hodges said.

There were protests in the Black community in Ocala when prosecutors took weeks to charge Lorincz with manslaughter, a lesser count than second-degree murder, which carries a potential life prison sentence. Marion County, which includes Ocala, has a Black population of about 12%, according to census figures.

Stock market today: Dow hits another record as stocks rise

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks rose Monday, with those benefiting the most from lower interest rates and a stronger economy leading the way.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.3% to pull closer to its all-time high set two weeks ago. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 440 points, or 1%, to its own record set on Friday, while the Nasdaq composite rose 0.3%.

Treasury yields also eased in the bond market amid what some analysts called a "Bessent bounce" after President-elect Donald Trump said he wants Scott Bessent, a hedge fund manager, to be his Treasury Secretary.

Bessent has argued for reducing the U.S. government's deficit, which is how much more it spends than it takes in through taxes and other revenue. Such an approach could soothe worries on Wall Street that Trump's policies may lead to a much bigger deficit, which in turn would put upward pressure on Treasury yields.

After climbing above 4.44% immediately after Trump's election, the yield on the 10-year Treasury fell back to 4.26% Monday, down from 4.41% late Friday. That's a notable move, and lower yields make it cheaper for all kinds of companies and households to borrow money. They also give a boost to prices for stocks and other investments.

That helped stocks of smaller companies lead the way, and the Russell 2000 index of smaller stocks jumped 1.5%. It finished just shy of its all-time high, which was set three years ago. Smaller companies can feel bigger boosts from lower borrowing costs because of the need for many to borrow to grow.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks the market's expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do with overnight interest rates, also eased sharply.

The Fed began cutting its main interest rate just a couple months ago from a two-decade high, hoping to keep the job market humming after bringing inflation nearly all the way down to its 2% target. But immediately after Trump's victory, traders had reduced bets for how many cuts the Fed may deliver next year. They were worried Trump's preference for lower tax rates and higher spending on the border would balloon the national debt.

A report coming on Wednesday could influence how much the Fed may cut rates. Economists expect it to show that an underlying inflation trend the Fed prefers to use accelerated to 2.8% last month from 2.7% in September. Higher inflation would make the Fed more reluctant to cut rates as deeply or as quickly as it would otherwise.

Goldman Sachs economist David Mericle expects that to slow by the end of next year to 2.4%, but he said inflation would be even lower if not for expected tariff increases on imports from China and autos favored by Trump.

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In the stock market, Bath & Body Works jumped 16.5% after delivering stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The seller of personal care products and home fragrances also raised its financial forecasts for the full year, even though it still sees a "volatile retail environment" and a shorter holiday shopping season this year.

Much focus has been on how resilient U.S. shoppers can remain, given high prices across the economy and still-high interest rates. Last week, two major retailers sent mixed messages. Target tumbled after giving a dour forecast for the holiday shopping season. It followed Walmart, which gave a much more encouraging outlook.

Another big retailer, Macy's, said Monday its sales for the latest quarter were in line with its expectations, but it will delay the release of its full financial results. It found a single employee had intentionally hid up to \$154 million in delivery expenses, and it needs more time to complete its investigation.

Macy's stock fell 2.2%.

Among the market's leaders were several companies related to the housing industry. Monday's drop in Treasury yields could translate into easier mortgage rates, which could spur activity for housing. Builders FirstSource, a supplier of building materials, rose 5.9%. Homebuilders, D.R. Horton, PulteGroup and Lennar all rose at least 5.6%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 18.03 points to 5,987.37. The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 440.06 to 44,736.57, and the Nasdaq composite gained 51.18 to 19,054.84.

In stock markets abroad, indexes moved modestly across much of Europe after finishing mixed in Asia.

In the crypto market, bitcoin was trading below \$95,000 after threatening to hit \$100,000 late last week for the first time.

What diversity does — and doesn't — look like in Trump's Cabinet

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration is set to be less diverse than President Joe Biden's administration, but several people of color and women appear likely to serve in top roles.

While Trump vigorously campaigned against diversity and inclusion efforts in business and government, his Cabinet selections and other high-profile staffing choices include some barrier-breaking nominations. The Cabinet, if confirmed, is set to be one-third women and include some historic firsts.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump's pick to lead the State Department, would be the first Latino secretary of state. Scott Bessent, an American hedge fund manager and Trump's pick to lead the Treasury Department, would be the first openly gay man in that post.

Susie Wiles, Trump's choice for White House chief of staff, will also be the first woman to serve in the position.

Scott Turner, a former NFL player who led the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council in the first Trump term, will serve as secretary of housing and urban development. Turner, who is Black, will be the fourth confirmed HUD secretary of color since 2014. Neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who is also Black, served in that post under Trump.

Trump's first administration also included some historic firsts, including Veteran spy Gina Haspel serving as the first female director of the CIA, but, overall, it still lagged behind his predecessors on diversity.

The incoming administration is set to include some people of color in other high-profile roles.

Vivek Ramaswamy, a former biotechnology executive and 2024 GOP presidential candidate, will co-lead an outside advisory committee on government efficiency with billionaire Elon Musk. Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman, is Trump's pick to serve as director of national intelligence, the chief coordinator of the nation's intelligence departments. Gabbard is of Samoan descent and Ramaswamy is Indian American.

Mehmet Oz, a former TV doctor who unsuccessfully ran for Senate in Pennsylvania, has been tapped by Trump to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. And Janette Nesheiwat, a physician and

Fox News personality, is Trump's pick to serve as surgeon general. Nesheiwat is the daughter of Christian Jordanian immigrants; Oz is Turkish American and would be the first Muslim to serve in the role.

Trump's Cabinet also includes a wide breadth of ideological diversity with some nominees holding views broadly considered eccentric in Washington. Others have clashing opinions on priorities for the incoming administration like trade and foreign policy.

Thanksgiving Travel Latest: Airport strike, staff shortages and weather could impact holiday travel

By The Associated Press undefined

Airports and highways are expected to be jam-packed during Thanksgiving week, a holiday period likely to end with another record day for air travel in the United States.

AAA predicts that nearly 80 million Americans will venture at least 50 miles from home between Tuesday and next Monday, most of them by car. However, travelers could be impacted by ongoing weather challenges and those flying to their destinations could be grounded by delays brought on by airline staffing shortages and an airport service workers strike.

Here's the latest:

2.2 billion packages are expected to ship between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve

U.S. airlines are preparing for a Thanksgiving holiday rush, and so are the U.S. Postal Service, United Parcel Service and FedEx.

Shipping companies will deliver about 2.2 billion packages to homes and businesses across the U.S. from Thanksgiving to Dec. 31, said Satish Jindel, a shipping and logistics expert and president of ShipMatrix.

That's down from 2.3 billion packages last year. Because the shopping period is a week shorter than in 2023, consumers are shopping further ahead of Black Friday and more purchases are taking place in physical stores, he said.

The number of holiday package shipments grew 27% in 2020 and by more than 3% the following year during the pandemic. The numbers have been falling since then, with a projected decline of about 6% this holiday season.

Does your airport offer therapy dogs?

Looking to de-stress while waiting for your flight? Many airports have a fleet of therapy dogs — designated fidos and puppies that are eager to receive pets and snuggles from weary travelers.

Rules and schedules vary from airport to airport, but the group AirportTherapyDogs uses online crowd-sourcing to share the locations of therapy dogs across its various social media accounts.

Today, Gracie, a toy Australian shepherd, and Budge, an English bulldog, wandered the concourses at Denver International Airport, and an American Staffordshire Terrier named Hugo greeted travelers at Punta Gorda Airport in Florida.

Some airports even feature other therapy pals.

San Francisco International Airport's fleet of animals includes a Flemish Giant rabbit and a hypoallergenic pig.

What the striking airport workers are saying

"We cannot live on the wages that we are being paid," ABM cabin cleaner Priscilla Hoyle said at a rally earlier Monday. "I can honestly say it's hard every single day with my children, working a full-time job but having to look my kids in the eyes and sit there and say, 'I don't know if we're going to have a home today.'"

Timothy Lowe II, a wheelchair attendant, said he has to figure out where to spend the night because he doesn't make enough for a deposit on a home.

"We just want to be able to have everything that's a necessity paid for by the job that hired us to do a great job so they can make billions," he said.

ABM said it is "committed to addressing concerns swiftly" and that there are avenues for employees to communicate issues, including a national hotline and a "general open door policy for managers at our worksite."

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What are striking Charlotte airport workers' demands?

Employees of ABM and Prospect Airport Services cast ballots Friday to authorize the work stoppage at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, a hub for American Airlines. They described living paycheck to paycheck while performing jobs that keep planes running on schedule.

Most of them earn \$12.50 to \$19 an hour, union officials said. Rev. Glencie Rhedrick of Charlotte Clergy Coalition for Justice said those workers should make \$22 to \$25 an hour.

The strike is expected to last 24 hours. Several hundred workers participated in the work stoppage.

US flights are running normally

Forty-four flights have been canceled today and nearly 1,900 were delayed by midday on the East Coast, according to FlightAware.

According to the organization's cheekily named MiseryMap, San Francisco International Airport is having the most hiccups right now, with 53 delays and three cancellations between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. EST.

While that might sound like a lot of delays, they might not be so bad compared to last Friday when the airport suffered 671 delays and 69 cancellations.

Cutting in line? American Airlines' new boarding tech might stop you now at over 100 airports

In an apparent effort to reduce the headaches caused by airport line cutting, American Airlines has rolled out boarding technology that alerts gate agents with an audible sound if a passenger tries to scan a ticket ahead of their assigned group.

This new software won't accept a boarding pass before the group it's assigned to is called, so customers who get to the gate prematurely will be asked to go back and wait their turn.

As of Wednesday, the airline announced, the technology is now being used in more than 100 U.S. airports that American flies out of. The official expansion arrives after successful tests in three of these locations — Albuquerque International Sunport, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Tucson International Airport.

Tips to make holiday travel a bit easier

Travel can be stressful in the best of times. Now add in the high-level anxiety that seems to be baked into every holiday season and it's clear travelers could use some help calming frazzled nerves.

Here are a few ways to make your holiday journey a little less stressful:

1. Make a checklist of what you need to do and what you need to bring
2. Carry your comfort with you — think noise-canceling headphones, cozy clothes, snacks and extra medication
3. Stay hydrated
4. Keep up to date on delays, gate changes and cancellations with your airline's app

The timing of this year's holiday shapes travel patterns

Thanksgiving Day takes place late this year, with the fourth Thursday of November falling on Nov. 28. That shortens the traditional shopping season and changes the rhythm of holiday travel.

With more time before the holiday, people tend to spread out their outbound travel over more days, but everyone returns at the same time, said Andrew Watterson, the chief operating officer of Southwest Airlines.

"A late Thanksgiving leads to a big crush at the end," Watterson said. "The Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday after Thanksgiving are usually very busy with Thanksgiving this late."

Airlines did a relatively good job of handling holiday crowds last year, when the weather was mild in most of the country. Fewer than 400 U.S. flights were canceled during Thanksgiving week in 2023 — about one out of every 450 flights. So far in 2024, airlines have canceled about 1.3% of all flights.

Advice for drivers

Drivers should know that Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons will be the worst times to travel by car, but it should be smooth sailing on freeways come Thanksgiving Day, according to transportation analytics company INRIX.

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On the return home, the best travel times for motorists are before 1 p.m. on Sunday, and before 8 a.m. or after 7 p.m. on Monday, the company said.

In metropolitan areas like Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle and Washington, "traffic is expected to be more than double what it typically is on a normal day," INRIX transportation analyst Bob Pishue said.

FAA staffing shortage could cause flight delays

Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Mike Whitaker said last week that he expects his agency to use special measures at some facilities to deal with an ongoing shortage of air traffic controllers.

In the past, those facilities have included airports in New York City and Florida.

"If we are short on staff, we will slow traffic as needed to keep the system safe," Whitaker said.

The FAA has long struggled with a shortage of controllers that airline officials expect will last for years, despite the agency's lofty hiring goals.

Thanksgiving travel, by the numbers

5. Auto club and insurance company AAA predicts that nearly 80 million Americans will venture at least 50 miles from home between Tuesday and next Monday. Most of them will travel by car.

6. Drivers should get a slight break on gas prices. The nationwide average price for gasoline was \$3.06 a gallon on Sunday, down from \$3.27 at this time last year.

7. The Transportation Security Administration expects to screen 18.3 million people at U.S. airports during the same seven-day stretch. That would be 6% more than during the corresponding days last year but fit a pattern set throughout 2024.

8. The TSA predicts that 3 million people will pass through airport security checkpoints on Sunday; more than that could break the record of 3.01 million set on the Sunday after the July Fourth holiday. Tuesday and Wednesday are expected to be the next busiest air travel days of Thanksgiving week.

Charlotte airport workers strike over low wages

Workers who clean airplanes, remove trash and help with wheelchairs at Charlotte's airport, one of the nation's busiest, went on strike Monday to demand higher wages.

The Service Employees International Union announced the strike in a statement early Monday, saying the workers would demand "an end to poverty wages and respect on the job during the holiday travel season." The strike was expected to last 24 hours, said union spokesperson Sean Keady.

Employees of ABM and Prospect Airport Services cast ballots Friday to authorize the work stoppage at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, a hub for American Airlines. The two companies contract with American, one of the world's biggest carriers, to provide services such as cleaning airplane interiors, removing trash and escorting passengers in wheelchairs.

Northeast should get needed precipitation

Parts of the Midwest and East Coast can expect to see heavy rain into Thanksgiving, and there's potential for snow in Northeastern states.

A storm last week brought rain to New York and New Jersey, where wildfires have raged in recent weeks, and heavy snow to northeastern Pennsylvania. The precipitation was expected to help ease drought conditions after an exceptionally dry fall.

Heavy snow fell in northeastern Pennsylvania, including the Pocono Mountains. Higher elevations reported up to 17 inches (43 centimeters), with lesser accumulations in valley cities including Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. Around 35,000 customers in 10 counties were still without power, down from 80,000 a day ago.

In the Catskills region of New York, nearly 10,000 people remained without power Sunday morning, two days after a storm dumped heavy snow on parts of the region.

Precipitation in West Virginia helped put a dent in the state's worst drought in at least two decades and boosted ski resorts as they prepare to open in the weeks ahead.

More rain expected after deadly 'bomb cyclone' on West Coast

Two people died in the Pacific Northwest after a rapidly intensifying "bomb cyclone" hit the West Coast

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last Tuesday, bringing fierce winds that toppled trees and power lines and damaged homes and cars. Hundreds of thousands lost electricity in Washington state before powerful gusts and record rains moved into Northern California.

Forecasters said the risk of flooding and mudslides remained as the region will get more rain starting Sunday. But the latest storm won't be as intense as last week's atmospheric river, a long plume of moisture that forms over an ocean and flows over land.

"However, there's still threats, smaller threats, and not as significant in terms of magnitude, that are still going to exist across the West Coast for the next two or three days," weather service forecaster Rich Otto said.

As the rain moves east throughout the week, Otto said, there's a potential for heavy snowfall at higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada, as well as portions of Utah and Colorado.

California's Mammoth Mountain, which received 2 feet (0.6 meters) of fresh snow in the recent storm, could get another 4 feet (1.2 meters) before the newest system clears out Wednesday, the resort said.

Forecasts warn of possible winter storms across US during Thanksgiving week

Another round of wintry weather could complicate travel leading up to the Thanksgiving holiday, according to forecasts across the U.S., while California and Washington state continue to recover from storm damage and power outages.

In California, where two people were found dead in floodwaters on Saturday, authorities braced for more rain while grappling with flooding and small landslides from a previous storm.

Here's a look at some of the regional forecasts:

9. Sierra Nevada: The National Weather Service office issued a winter storm warning through Tuesday, with heavy snow expected at higher elevations and wind gusts potentially reaching 55 mph (88 kph). Total snowfall of roughly 4 feet (1.2 meters) was forecast, with the heaviest accumulations expected Monday and Tuesday.

10. Midwest and Great Lakes: The Midwest and Great Lakes regions will see rain and snow Monday and the East Coast will be the most impacted on Thanksgiving and Black Friday, forecasters said.

11. East Coast: A low pressure system is forecast to bring rain to the Southeast early Thursday before heading to the Northeast. Areas from Boston to New York could see rain and breezy conditions, with snowfall possible in parts of northern New Hampshire, northern Maine and the Adirondacks. If the system tracks further inland, there could be less snow and more rain in the mountains, forecasters said.

'Buy now, pay later' is more popular than ever. It can cost more than you think

By CORA LEWIS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — More shoppers than ever are on track to use 'buy now, pay later' plans this holiday season, as the ability to spread out payments looks attractive at a time when Americans still feel the lingering effect of inflation and already have record-high credit card debt.

The data firm Adobe Analytics predicts shoppers will spend 11.4% more this holiday season using buy now, pay later than they did a year ago. The company forecasts shoppers will purchase \$18.5 billion worth of goods using the third-party services for the period Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, with \$993 million worth of purchases on Cyber Monday alone.

Buy now, pay later can be particularly appealing to consumers who have low credit scores or no credit history, such as younger shoppers, because most of the companies providing the service run only soft credit checks and don't report the loans and payment histories to the credit bureaus, unlike credit card companies.

This holiday season, buy now, pay later users can also feel more confident if a transaction goes awry. In May, the CFPB said buy now, pay later company must adhere to other regulations that govern traditional credit, such as providing ways to demand refunds and dispute transactions.

To use a buy now, pay later plan, consumers typically sign up with bank account information or a debit

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or credit card, and agree to pay for purchases in monthly installments, typically over eight weeks or more. The loans are marketed as requiring no or low interest, or only conditional fees, such as for late payment. Klarna, Afterpay and Affirm are three of the biggest buy now, pay later companies.

But consumer advocates warn that shoppers who sign up for the payment plans using a credit card can be hit with more interest and fees. That's because individuals open themselves up to interest on the credit card payment, if it's carried month to month, on top of any late fees, interest, or penalties from the buy now, pay later loan itself. Experts advise against using a credit card to pay for these plans for this reason.

Consumer watchdogs also say the plans lead consumers to overextend themselves because, for example, not paying full price up front leaves, in the shopper's mind at least, more money for smaller purchases. They also caution consumers to keep careful track of using multiple buy now, pay later services, as the automatic payments can add up, and there is no central reporting, such as with a credit card statement.

"Buy now, pay later can be an innovative tool for purchases you're going to make anyway," said Mark Elliott, chief customer officer at financial services company LendingClub. "The challenge is that it does fuel overspending."

For merchants, that's part of the appeal. Retailers have found that customers are more likely to have bigger cart sizes or to convert from browsing to checking out when buy now, pay later is offered. One report from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York cited research that found customers spend 20% more when buy now, pay later is available.

"The reality is that the increased cost-of-living and inflation have put more people in a situation where they're already relying on revolving credit," Elliott said. "The psychographics of 'buy now, pay later' may be different — people don't think of it as debt — but it is."

If a consumer misses a payment, they can face fees, interest, or the possibility of being locked out of using the services in the future.

Emily Childers, consumer financial expert for personal-finance technology company Credit Karma, said that internal data shows member credit card balances are up more than 50% for Gen Z and millennial members since March 2022, when the Fed started raising interest rates.

"Young people are entering this holiday season already in the red," she said. "And, based on what we're seeing in the data, they're continuing to bury their heads in the sand and spend."

So you're gathering with relatives whose politics are different.

Here are some tips for the holidays

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There's no place like home for the holidays. And that may not necessarily be a good thing.

In the wake of the very contentious and divisive 2024 presidential election, the upcoming celebration of Thanksgiving and the ramp-up of the winter holiday season could be a boon for some — a respite from the events of the larger world in the gathering of family and loved ones. Hours and even days spent with people who have played the largest roles in our lives. Another chapter in a lifetime of memories.

That's one scenario.

For others, that same period — particularly because of the polarizing presidential campaign — is something to dread. There is the likelihood of disagreements, harsh words, hurt feelings and raised voices looming large.

Those who make a study of people and their relationships to each other in an increasingly complex 21st-century say there are choices that those with potentially fraught personal situations can make — things to do and things to avoid — that could help them and their families get through this time with a minimum of open conflict and a chance at getting to the point of the holidays in the first place.

DO assess honestly where you are with it all

For those who feel strongly about the election's outcome, and know that the people they would be spending the holiday feel just as strongly in the other direction, take the time to honestly assess if you're

ready to spend time together in THIS moment, barely a few weeks after Election Day — and a time when feelings are still running high.

The answer might be that you're not, and it might be better to take a temporary break, says Justin Jones-Fosu, author of "I Respectfully Disagree: How to Have Difficult Conversations in a Divided World."

"You have to assess your own readiness," he says, "Each person is going to be very different in this."

He emphasizes that it's not about taking a permanent step back. "Right now is that moment that we're talking about because it's still so fresh. Christmas may be different."

DON'T miss the bigger picture of what the holiday is all about

Keep focused on why you decided to go in the first place, Jones-Fosu says. Maybe it's because there's a relative there you don't get to see often, or a loved one is getting up in age, or your kids want to see their cousins. Keeping that reason in mind could help you get through the time.

DO set boundaries

If you decide getting together is the way to go, but you know politics is still a dicey subject, set a goal of making the holiday a politics-free zone and stick with it, says Karl Pillemer, a professor at Cornell University whose work includes research on family estrangement.

"Will a political conversation change anyone's mind?" he says. "If there is no possibility of changing anyone's mind, then create a demilitarized zone and don't talk about it."

DON'T take the bait

Let's be honest. Sometimes, despite best efforts and intentions to keep the holiday gathering politics- and drama-free, there's someone who's got something to say and is going to say it.

In that case, avoid getting drawn into it, says Tracy Hutchinson, a professor in the graduate clinical mental health counseling program at the College of William & Mary in Virginia.

"Not to take the hook is one of the most important things, and it is challenging," she says. After all, you don't have to go to every argument you're invited to.

DO think about what will happen after the holiday

If you risk getting caught up in the moment, consider engaging in what Pillemer calls "forward mapping." This involves thinking medium and long term rather than just about right now — strategy rather than tactics. Maybe imagine yourself six months from now looking back on the dinner and thinking about the memories you'd want to have.

"Think about how you would like to remember this holiday," he says. "Do you want to remember it with your brother and sister-in-law storming out and going home because you've had a two-hour argument?"

DON'T feel you have to be there uninterrupted

Things getting intense? Defuse the situation. Walk away. And it doesn't have to be in a huff. Sometimes a calm and collected time out is just what you — and the family — might need.

Says Hutchinson: "If they do start to do something like that, you could say, 'I've got to make this phone call. I've got to go to the bathroom. I'm going to take a walk around the block.'"

'Busiest Thanksgiving ever':

How the TSA plans to handle record air travel

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Just as sure as the turkey will taste dry, airports and highways are expected to be jam-packed during Thanksgiving week, a holiday period likely to end in another record day for air travel in the United States.

The people responsible for keeping security lines, boarding areas and jetliners moving — from the U.S. transportation secretary and airline chiefs on down the line — swear they are prepared for the crowds.

Airline passengers might get lucky like they did last year, when relatively few flights were canceled during the holiday week. A repeat will require the weather's cooperation. And even if skies are blue, a shortage of air traffic controllers could create delays.

U.S. flights appeared to be running relatively normally on Monday, with fewer than 40 canceled but more

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than 1,600 delayed by midday on the East Coast, according to FlightAware.

Thanksgiving, by the numbers

Auto club and insurance company AAA predicts that nearly 80 million Americans will venture at least 50 miles from home between Tuesday and next Monday. Most of them will travel by car.

Drivers should get a slight break on gas prices. The nationwide average price for gasoline was \$3.06 a gallon on Monday, down from \$3.26 at this time last year.

The Transportation Security Administration expects to screen 18.3 million people at U.S. airports during the same seven-day stretch. That would be 6% more than during the corresponding days last year but fit a pattern set throughout 2024.

The TSA predicts that 3 million people will pass through airport security checkpoints on Sunday; more than that could break the record of 3.01 million set on the Sunday after the July Fourth holiday. Tuesday and Wednesday are expected to be the next-busiest air travel days of Thanksgiving week.

TSA says it's ready

"This will be the busiest Thanksgiving ever in terms of air travel," TSA Administrator David Pekoske said. "Fortunately, our staffing is also at the highest levels that they have ever been. We are ready."

Pekoske said TSA will have enough screeners to keep general security lines under 30 minutes and lines for people who pay extra for PreCheck under 10 minutes.

A Thanksgiving week airport strike

Workers who clean planes, remove trash and help with wheelchairs at North Carolina's Charlotte Douglas International Airport began what was expected to be a 24-hour strike over their demands for higher wages. Only a handful of flights were canceled, and there were fewer than 100 delays.

The Charlotte airport is the nation's ninth-busiest in passenger volume and serves as a hub for American Airlines. Airport officials expect about 1 million passengers to depart on flights between last Thursday and next Monday.

FAA staffing shortage could create delays

An ongoing shortage of air traffic controllers could cause flight delays at other airports.

Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Mike Whitaker said last week that he expects his agency to use special measures to deal with shortages at some facilities.

"If we are short on staff, we will slow traffic as needed to keep the system safe," he said.

In the last two years, similar measures have slowed down flights in New York City and Florida.

The FAA has long struggled with a shortage of controllers that airline officials expect will last for years, despite the agency's lofty hiring goals.

And the weather

Wintry weather is always a wild card for Thanksgiving and Christmas travel by plane and automobile.

Forecasters predicted more rain in California, where crews were trying to restore power lost to flooding from storms late last week. The Midwest and Great Lakes regions were expected to get rain and snow Monday, while the Northeast was expected to get hit with wet and blustery conditions by Thursday and Friday.

Timing of holiday shapes travel patterns

Thanksgiving Day takes place late this year, with the fourth Thursday of November falling on Nov. 28. That shortens the traditional shopping season and changes the rhythm of holiday travel.

With more time before the holiday, people tend to spread out their outbound travel over more days, but everyone returns at the same time, said Andrew Watterson, the chief operating officer of Southwest Airlines.

"A late Thanksgiving leads to a big crush at the end — the Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday after Thanksgiving are usually very busy with Thanksgiving this late," Watterson said.

Airlines did a relatively good job of handling holiday crowds last year, when the weather was mild in most of the country. Fewer than 400 U.S. flights were canceled during Thanksgiving week in 2023 — about one of every 450 flights. So far in 2024, airlines have canceled about 1.3% of all flights.

Combining work and leisure

The rise of remote work also has caused the Thanksgiving travel period to expand, AAA spokesperson

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Aixa Diaz said.

"The pandemic changed everything," she said. "What we have seen is that post-pandemic, people are leaving at certain times, perhaps even leaving the weekend before Thanksgiving, working remotely from their destination a couple of days, and then enjoying time with their loved ones."

Nightmares of Thanksgivings past have further shaped holiday traffic jams. Motorists who learned to avoid traveling the day before and the Sunday after Thanksgiving have created new bottlenecks on other days, according to Diaz.

"Because we warned for so long (that) Wednesday and Sunday are the worst days to travel, people were like, 'OK, I'm going to leave on Tuesday and come back on Monday to avoid the rush,'" she said. "So now those two days are congested as well."

Advice for travelers

Airport security officials are pleading with passengers to arrive early, not to put lithium-ion batteries in checked bags in case they overheat, and to keep guns out of carry-on bags. TSA has discovered more than 6,000 guns at checkpoints this year, and most of them were loaded.

Holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas bring out many infrequent travelers, and they often have questions about what they can bring on the plane.

TSA has a list on its website of items that are banned or restricted.

Drivers should know that Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons will be the worst times to travel by car, but it should be smooth sailing on freeways come Thanksgiving Day, according to transportation analytics company INRIX.

On the return home, the best travel times for motorists are before 1 p.m. on Sunday, and before 8 a.m. or after 7 p.m. on Monday, the company said.

In metropolitan areas like Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle and Washington, "traffic is expected to be more than double what it typically is on a normal day," INRIX transportation analyst Bob Pishue said.

Supreme Court won't hear challenge to graphic cigarette warning labels

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court won't hear a challenge to a federal requirement that cigarette packages and advertising include graphic images demonstrating the effects of smoking.

The high court declined to hear the case in a brief written order handed down Monday.

Tobacco company R.J. Reynolds appealed to the high court after the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found the warnings do not violate the First Amendment.

They include pictures of smoke-damaged lungs, feet blackened by diminished blood flow and a picture of a woman with a large growth on her neck and the caption "WARNING: Smoking causes head and neck cancer."

The company argued the final image, for example, was misleading because a patient would likely go to the doctor before a growth reached that size.

The Food and Drug Administration countered that all the pictures reflect undisputed risks of smoking.

Nearly 120 countries around the world have adopted larger, graphic warning labels. Studies from those countries suggest the image-based labels are more effective than text warnings at publicizing smoking risks and encouraging smokers to quit. The U.S. has not updated its labels since 1984.

It's not clear when new labels might appear. Some legal claims remain and the FDA has said it doesn't plan to enforce any new requirements until at least December 2025.

Do not wash your turkey and other Thanksgiving tips to keep your food safe

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Ready or not, the holidays are here. It's a time when many Americans accustomed to preparing simple meals find themselves responsible for safely serving multi-dish feasts.

It's no easy task. Outbreaks of some types of food poisoning tend to rise in November and December, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tainted turkey, undercooked stuffing and germ-laced gravy from holiday buffets have all led to past illnesses — and even deaths — CDC investigators have found.

It can be tricky for occasional cooks to prepare big meals in a way that avoids the common hazards that can make people sick, said Donald Schaffner, a food science expert at Rutgers University.

"Cooking takes longer with big masses of food. Cooling takes longer with big masses of food," said Schaffner, who co-hosts the food-safety podcast "Risky or Not?"

Together with podcast co-host Benjamin Chapman, a food scientist at North Carolina State University, Schaffner outlined common ways to keep holiday meals both festive and safe.

Prepare the turkey

Nearly 90% of U.S. hosts plan to serve turkey on Thanksgiving this year, according to the turkey producer Butterball.

But raw turkey can harbor illness-causing bacteria such as salmonella, campylobacter and other germs. It must be handled safely to prevent those bugs from contaminating refrigerator surfaces, sinks and kitchen counters.

A frozen bird must be thawed first. There are several accepted methods, including in the refrigerator, in the microwave or in cold running water, Schaffner said.

"All of these methods pose risks," he cautioned.

A frozen turkey needs about 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds of weight to thaw in a refrigerator, according to the Agriculture Department. If you use a microwave or the cold water method, the bird must be cooked immediately. For details about safe turkey handling, check out the thawing and cooking calculators created by the USDA.

And don't wash the turkey. It's a bad idea to rinse it in the sink, even though many cooks still insist on the practice, often out of habit, said Chapman.

"Anything that hits that surface and generates spray is going to basically spread contamination around your kitchen," he said.

Instead, pat the turkey dry with paper towels and toss them, or use a kitchen towel and disinfect it in the laundry.

What about roasting?

Turkey needs to reach a cooked temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving. The best way to tell if it's cooked is to use a tip-sensitive digital thermometer inserted in the innermost section of the thigh, not touching the bone.

Don't rely on the plastic pop-up thermometers stuck in some commercial turkeys. Chapman's past research shows that those buttons can activate well before the bird is actually done.

At the same time, don't determine doneness by relying on signs such as golden-brown skin, whether the meat is no longer pink or whether the juices run clear.

"None of those are great indicators of temperature," Chapman said.

Side dishes and leftovers

How you handle the rest of the meal — mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans or yams — is just as important as the main dish. It's crucial to avoid the so-called danger zone of temperatures between 40 degrees and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, where bacteria can easily grow.

The key is to keep hot foods piping hot and cold foods cold — and to refrigerate everything promptly,

Schaffner said.

"The recommendation is that you get those leftovers into the refrigerator within two hours of when they came off of the stove," he said.

Make sure to refrigerate dense foods like sliced turkey, cooked sweet potatoes or gravy in shallow containers to help them cool down fast. Schaffner's recent research showed that foods cooled in containers at a depth of no more than 2 inches posed little risk of growing dangerous germs.

Keep it clean

One key way to avoid food poisoning is through scrupulous cleaning in the kitchen.

Wash your hands before preparing food and after touching raw poultry. Use separate cutting boards, knives and other utensils when handling raw meat and fresh foods such as vegetables and salads.

Pay close attention to any surface that may be contaminated. It's important to clean first with soap and water and then sanitize with a disinfectant — a two-step process.

Kansas stays at No. 1 ahead of showdown vs. No. 11 Duke; Ole Miss, Mississippi St back in AP Top 25

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Kansas remained solidly entrenched at No. 1 in the AP Top 25 men's college basketball poll Monday ahead of its showdown with No. 11 Duke in Las Vegas, while a pair of schools from the Magnolia State elbowed their way back into the rankings.

Ole Miss returned to the poll at No. 23 while Mississippi State made its season debut at No. 25.

The Jayhawks received 51 of 62 first-place votes from the national panel of media, putting them well ahead of two-time reigning national champion UConn, which was second with six first-place votes. Gonzaga was third with two first-place votes, Auburn was next with three, and Iowa State rounded out a top five that was unchanged from the previous week.

There's a good chance for movement next week, though, with a host of high-profile matchups in holiday tournaments, and that matchup between the Jayhawks and Duke on Tuesday night in the Vegas Showdown.

"Oh yeah, I've watched them," said Kansas coach Bill Self, who picked up his 800th career win by beating UNC Wilmington last week. "They're talented across the board. They're starting three freshmen, and everybody's going to talk about the one (Cooper Flagg), but the other two are potential lottery picks, if not lottery picks too."

So do the Jayhawks, who have already beaten No. 12 North Carolina and Michigan State this season.

Tennessee climbed four spots to No. 7 in this week's poll, followed by SEC rivals Kentucky and Alabama. Marquette was 10th after beating then-No. 6 Purdue and Georgia last week to reach 6-0 for the first time since the 2011-12 season.

The Blue Devils and Tar Heels were followed by Purdue, which fell seven spots in the poll. Indiana and Wisconsin made it three straight Big Ten schools, while Cincinnati, Baylor, Florida, Arkansas and Texas A&M rounded out the top 20.

The last five were Creighton, Ole Miss, Arizona, Mississippi State and BYU. The Wildcats narrowly extended their run in the AP Top 25 to 61 weeks — the fourth-longest active streak in the nation — after back-to-back losses to Wisconsin and Duke.

"We didn't play great," Arizona coach Tommy Lloyd said after the loss to the Blue Devils, "so now we need to take a step back and figure out why. Are there some schematic problems? Are there some problems with how our personnel is kind of put together? And those are the things we're going to take a look at. I love the guys. I mean, I like the plan. But obviously when it's not going as well as you would like, you have to be honest with yourself and try to figure it out."

In and out

Xavier returned to the poll for the first time since the final poll of the 2022-23 season ahead of its trip to the Fort Myers Tip-Off beginning Monday night. Ole Miss is back in the Top 25 after briefly dropping

out, while Mississippi State is back after spending two weeks in the poll last November but just six weeks total over the past six years.

Those three entered at the expense of Illinois, St. John's and Rutgers. The Illini lost to Alabama last week, while St. John's fell to Baylor and Georgia. Rutgers lost 79-77 at Kennesaw State, which beat a ranked team for the first time in school history.

Rising and falling

Marquette made the biggest climb this week, moving up five spots to No. 10. The Golden Eagles catch a breather this week with Stonehill and Western Carolina before back-to-back showdowns with No. 5 Iowa State and No. 15 Wisconsin.

Purdue, Creighton and Arizona all dropped seven spots but remained in the poll. The Boilermakers lost to Marquette while the Bluejays lost to in-state rival Nebraska. The Wildcats dropped to 2-2, the first time they have been .500 at any point in a season since they were 3-3 to start the 2017-18 season.

Conference watch

The SEC leads the way with nine of the Top 25 teams this week, including four in the top 10: Auburn, Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama. The Big 12 is next with six, including three of the first six in top-ranked Kansas, Iowa State and Houston. The Big East had four in the poll, the Big Ten three and the ACC two.

Scuffles in Serbian parliament as deadly station collapse sparks anger at the government

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Scuffles and fistfights broke out between ruling party and opposition lawmakers in Serbia's parliament on Monday, weeks after a deadly rail station roof collapse that ignited tensions in the Balkan state.

The opposition wanted to discuss who is responsible for the crash that killed 15 people in the northern city of Novi Sad on Nov. 1, while governing officials, who have a majority in Serbia's legislature, sought to adopt a bill on next year's state budget.

The opposition displayed a banner showing a red hand print reading "blood is on your hands." The ruling party responded with a banner accusing the opposition of wanting "war while Serbia wants to work."

Scuffles erupted when the two sides tried to grab each other's banner.

The rail station, a major hub, was recently renovated as part of a Serbian-Chinese partnership. Critics allege that corruption, poor oversight and inadequate construction work contributed to the tragedy.

The collapse has fueled widespread anger toward the government and protests, becoming a flashpoint for broader dissatisfaction with Serbia's authoritarian rule. There are growing public demands for transparency while the country undertakes large infrastructure projects, mostly with Chinese state companies.

Serbia's parliament speaker Ana Brnabic on Monday accused the opposition of wanting to come to power by force with help from outside.

"There is not a hint, not a grain of doubt, that these are people who are well organized, who were trained quite well, I believe paid well, to create chaos in Serbia and destabilize our country," she said.

Serbia's autocratic President Aleksandar Vucic said on Instagram that the "daily bullying" and "the savage behavior" of the opposition would not be tolerated.

"I want to reassure the citizens and tell them that we will respond to their rudeness, rudeness and arrogance with even more work in the future." he said. "Today they tried to prevent pensioners from receiving their increased pensions, public sector employees from their increased salaries. They won't succeed."

Opposition leader Dragan Djilas said the speaker had "shut down" the parliament by refusing to allow a debate on who's responsible for the tragedy.

"She started with that when she refused to put on the agenda the request of more than 80 members of the opposition for a debate on confidence in the government because of the murder and crime in Novi Sad," Djilas said.

Donald Trump Jr. emerges as a political force of his own as he helps his father launch a second term

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson, Elon Musk and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. circled up aboard the president-elect's plane over some McDonalds burgers and fries recently, Donald Trump Jr. was seated in the center of that power foursome.

The central spot occupied by Trump's eldest son, as captured in a photo widely shared online, reflects how Trump Jr. has become a prominent player in his father's political orbit and a potential heir to his Make America Great Again movement.

For the son of a president-elect, Trump has already had an outsized impact on the next White House. He lobbied hard for the former president to choose his good friend, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, to be his running mate.

"I exerted 10,000% of my political capital," Trump Jr. said of his effort in an interview with Tucker Carlson on the night of the election. "I may get a favor from my father in like, 2076. I used it all."

As an honorary chair of the Republican president-elect's transition team, Trump Jr. is part of a core group of people deciding who will fill top jobs in the next White House, and his imprint is clear.

Trump Jr. pushed in particular for roles for former Democratic Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, whom the president-elect has chosen to be director of national intelligence, and Kennedy, who is in line to lead Health and Human Services.

Another close ally, Sergio Gor, will be running the personnel office. He and Trump Jr. run a publishing company, Winning Team Publishing, which has published two of the former president's books.

The younger Trump has said he has no plans to join his father's administration in the way his younger sister Ivanka Trump did during the first Trump term. His brother Eric is also an honorary chair of the transition but hasn't been as much of a political player. Eric's wife Lara has been more involved, serving as co-chair of the Republican National Committee.

Trump Jr. is expected to continue to be a vocal supporter of his father and his agenda and has made it clear he wants to be an influential voice from the outside, according to a person familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal planning.

The president-elect's style — brash, indelicate and pugilistic -- is distilled in his son. Donald Trump Jr. often takes a more aggressive tack than his father, in his calls for disrupting government as usual, in the way he dives into the culture wars with gusto and in his enthusiasm for trolling.

"He's probably the best embodiment of the take-no-crap attitude of the Republican Party," said Scott Jennings, a Republican political strategist.

Trump Jr.'s attitude and the way he communicates don't make him sound like a regular political figure, Jennings said, and that's part of the appeal.

"I think that's one thing about the Trumps that is probably broadly true but certainly for him: They just don't participate in the normal political pablum that sort of pre-Trump politicians were schooled in or trained to do."

The 46-year-old is fluent in the online world of conservative politics and attuned to cultural issues that catch on with the MAGA faithful.

The posts on Trump's X account, where he has more than 13 million followers, are often peppered with exclamation points and emojis. On Instagram, he is a prolific poster of conservative memes.

He flexes between interviews on established media outlets like Fox News and an array of podcasts influential among young conservatives, and he hosts his own twice a week, "Triggered With Don Jr." During the campaign, he pushed for the former president to make appearances on podcasts as part of an effort to reach young men, including the popular Joe Rogan podcast.

Trump Jr.'s aggressive style has particular appeal with younger men.

"I think that's one of the reasons a lot of these young men like it because that's how they talk," Jennings said.

Trump Jr. has said he has no plans to run for office himself, but he's been working to cultivate the next

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generation of his father's movement, boosting like-minded, communication-savvy Republicans.

Beyond his political activity, the father of five also serves as executive vice president at the Trump organization's main family business, has launched a new crypto platform and recently announced he's joining a venture capital firm that invests in conservative-focused businesses.

In an earlier time, Trump Jr. appeared with his father on "The Apprentice," the reality show that helped propel the billionaire's first presidential campaign. When Donald Trump launched his White House bid in 2015 and faced skepticism from swaths of the Republican Party, Trump Jr.'s outreach helped his father win more support, especially among conservatives who saw someone who espoused their views and as an avid hunter and fisherman who is a staunch supporter of the 2nd Amendment right to bear arms.

He's been increasingly visible in Republican politics since then, campaigning not just for his father but for like-minded candidates. He was a backer of Vance in his 2022 Ohio Senate race, nudging his father to do the same, and this year threw his support heavily behind successful Republican Senate candidates Jim Banks in Indiana, Bernie Moreno in Ohio and Tim Sheehy in Montana.

Trump Jr. helped broker a relationship with Kennedy as the Democrat-turned-independent suspended his presidential campaign, working to bring him into the MAGA fold and endorse his father. He floated the idea of Kennedy joining the administration early, saying in an interview with conservative host Glenn Beck that "I loved the idea," of Kennedy joining a Trump White House.

"I love the idea of giving him some sort of role in some sort of major three-letter entity or whatever it may be and let him blow it up," Trump Jr. said, a reference to the many initials for government agencies.

The two hit it off, and Trump Jr., an avid outdoorsman, shared images on social media in October of a day he spent with Kennedy enjoying the latter's favored hobby: falconry.

The choice of anti-vaccine activist Kennedy to run the nation's public health agencies is sure to draw tough scrutiny during confirmation proceedings in the Senate, even with a Republican majority,

Trump Jr., in a recent interview on Fox News, acknowledged some of his father's choices will face pushback. "They are going to be actual disrupters," he said. "That's what the American people want."

UCLA moves up to No. 1 in AP Top 25 women's basketball poll for first time in history

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

UCLA is the new No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 women's basketball poll after a historic win that lifted the school to its first appearance in the top spot.

The Bruins knocked off South Carolina, the defending national champion that had held the top spot in the previous 23 polls, on Sunday with a dominant 77-62 victory that snapped UCLA's 0-20 record against No. 1 teams. It came in front of a raucous, star-studded crowd, too.

"I think the piece that really hits me is that we're doing something for the first time in school history and we shared it with decades of alum," UCLA coach Cori Close said Monday as the poll was released. "It was great to have so many alumni in our locker room to share it with. The people that blazed the trail for us we're walking in is really special."

UCLA, which was No. 5 in the poll last week, earned 20 first-place votes from the 32-member national media panel. UConn remained second, garnering nine first-place votes after a historic week of its own with coach Geno Auriemma setting the NCAA all-time victories record.

Notre Dame, which pulled off its own upset over the weekend in Los Angeles by beating then-No. 3 USC, moved up to third. The Fighting Irish received the other three No. 1 votes in a week that saw only four teams remain in the same spots from last week's poll.

South Carolina dropped to fourth after its 43-game winning streak came to an end. Texas was fifth. USC fell to sixth with LSU, Oklahoma, Kansas State and Maryland finishing off the top 10. Iowa State dropped from eighth to 15th after a 12-point loss to Northern Iowa.

The Bruins are the 26th different school to hold the No. 1 spot in the history of the women's Top 25 that began in the 1976-77 season.

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"We came here saying we want to be an elite basketball program and to be in that company as the 26th program ever to be a No. 1 team is significant," Close said. "I'm grateful."

Iowa's back

Iowa entered the Top 25 for the first time this season jumping into the poll at No. 22.

The Hawkeyes made it all the way up to No. 2 last season behind star guard Caitlin Clark, who is now flourishing in the WNBA. This year's team is 6-0 and has used stellar defense to stay unbeaten so far, holding four of its six opponents to under 60 points. Baylor fell out of the poll after a loss to Indiana.

Climbing the charts

Illinois moved up to No. 19 this week, the school's best ranking since it was 13th on Jan. 17, 2000. With South Carolina's loss, the Illini now have the longest active winning streak in the country with 10 consecutive victories. The team won the inaugural WBIT last season and is 5-0 this year.

Gamecock dominance

South Carolina had been No. 1 in 61 of the past 62 polls with the lone exception coming in the preseason Top 25 on Oct. 17, 2023, when then-defending champion LSU was the top choice. The Gamecocks then moved back up to No. 1 in the first regular season poll, climbing from No. 6, the biggest leap in the history of the poll to the top spot.

The last time South Carolina was not No. 1 before that was March 15, 2021, the final poll that season.

How good have the Gamecocks been recently? The loss to UCLA was the Gamecocks' biggest margin of defeat since the 2019 Sweet 16 and the school's first road loss since December 2021.

Coach Dawn Staley says her team will get back to work.

"Taking a loss will help us focus on anybody that we play," she said.

At the crossroads of news and opinion, 'Morning Joe' hosts grapple with aftermath of Trump meeting

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

One of the striking things about how furiously many people reacted to the news last week that MSNBC "Morning Joe" hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski met with President-Elect Donald Trump was how quaint their defenders sounded.

"It is insane for critics to NOT think all of us in the media need to know more so we can share/report more," Jim VandeHei, co-founder of Axios and Politico, said on social media.

It would be journalistic malpractice for the hosts of a morning television news program not to take a meeting with a president-elect, right? But "Morning Joe" isn't traditional journalism, and last week's incident is a telling illustration of the broader trend of impartial fact-finding being crowded out in the marketplace by opinionated news and the expectations that creates.

Scarborough, a former congressman, and his wife, veteran newswoman Brzezinski, didn't just talk about the presidential campaign from their four-hour weekday perch. They tirelessly and emotionally advocated for Democrat Kamala Harris, likening Trump to a fascist-in-waiting.

"They have portrayed themselves as bastions of integrity standing up to a would-be dictator," says Frank Sesno, a former CNN Washington bureau chief now professor at George Washington University's school of media and public affairs. "What the followers see is the daily procession of people on the show constantly talking about the evils of Donald Trump and then Joe and Mika show up and have high tea with the guy."

A quick and intense blowback from viewers

The social media blowback was instant and intense. "You do not need to talk to Hitler to cover him effectively," was one of the nicer messages.

More telling is the people who have responded with action.

"Morning Joe" had 770,000 viewers last Monday, its audience — like many shows on MSNBC — down from its yearly average of 1.09 million because some of the network's liberal-leaning viewers have tuned away after what they regard as depressing election results. That's the day Scarborough and Brzezinski announced they had met with Trump the previous Friday.

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By Tuesday, the “Morning Joe” audience had slipped to 680,000, according to the Nielsen company, and Wednesday’s viewership was 647,000. Thursday rebounded to 707,000. It’s only three days of data, but those are the kind of statistics about which television executives brood.

“The audience for the polarized news-industrial complex has become unforgiving,” says Kate O’Brian, outgoing head of news of the E.W. Scripps Co.

The Washington Post learned this last month when it lost a reported 250,000 subscribers — presumably the bulk of them non-Trump supporters — after announcing it would not endorse a candidate for president. A draft of an editorial endorsing Harris had already been in the works.

Mixing news and opinion isn’t new; many U.S. newspapers in the 1800s were unabashedly partisan. But for most of the past century, there was a vigorous effort to separate the two. Broadcast television, licensed to serve the public interest, built up fact-based news divisions. What began to change things was the success of Fox News in building a conservative audience that believed it was underserved and undervalued.

Now there’s a vigorous industry catering to people who want to see their points of view reflected — and are less interested in reporting or any content that contradicts them.

The most notable trend in 2024 campaign coverage was the diminishing influence of so-called legacy news brands in favor of outlets like podcasts that offered publicity-hungry politicians a friendly, if not supportive, home. Trump, for example, visited several podcasters, including the influential Joe Rogan, who awarded Trump with an endorsement.

“I won’t even call it journalism,” Sesno says. “It’s storytelling.”

The past decade’s journey of Megyn Kelly is one illustration of how opinion can pay off in today’s climate. Once one of the more aggressive reporters at Fox News, she angered Trump in a 2015 debate with a pointed question about his treatment of women. She moved to the legacy outlet NBC News, but that didn’t work for her. She has since started a flourishing podcast with conservative, and Trump-friendly, opinion.

Among cable TV-based news brands, CNN has tried hardest to present an image of impartiality, even if many conservatives disagree. So the collapse in its ratings has been noteworthy: the network’s audience of 4.7 million people for its election night coverage was essentially half the 9.1 million people it had for the same night in 2020.

O’Brian is leaving Scripps at the end of the year because it is ending its 24-hour television news network after finding impartiality was a tough business. Scripps is continuing a streaming news product.

What’s the place for non-partisan news in today’s environment?

That’s the environment Scarborough and Brzezinski work in on “Morning Joe.”

“They are very talented show hosts,” Sesno says. “But they are not out on the front lines doing journalism, seeking truth in the way that a professional journalist does.”

Hours after the hosts’ announcement that they had met with Trump, an MSNBC colleague, legal contributor and correspondent Katie Phang, said on X that “normalizing Trump is a bad idea.” Scarborough had made a point of saying that was not what he was attempting to do.

“It’s not up to you or your corrupt industry to ‘normalize’ or not ‘normalize’ any politician who wins an election fair & square,” Christina Pushaw, the pugnacious aide to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, replied to Phang. “Americans had their say; Trump will be your president come January whether you ‘normalize’ it or not. I would suggest journos should accept reality.”

Quaintness alert: Sesno is among those who believe the “Morning Joe” hosts did the right thing.

Whatever the motivations — and there are some who believe that worries that a Trump administration could make life difficult very difficult for them was on the hosts’ minds — opening a line of communication to ensure that a show based on politics is not completely cut off from the thinking of a presidential administration makes business sense, he says. A little humility doesn’t hurt.

Even if her own job has proven that it’s not a great business now, Scripps’ O’Brian has seen enough focus groups of people who yearn for a more traditional journalism-based approach to believe in its importance.

“I think that there is still a need for nonpartisan news,” says the former longtime ABC News producer, “and maybe what brings it back to where it used to be will be an exhaustion from the hyper-polarized climate that we currently live in.”

Russia reportedly captures a Briton fighting for Ukraine as Russian troops advance

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's military captured a British national fighting with Ukrainian troops who have occupied part of Russia's Kursk region, according to reports Monday, as Moscow began daylight drone attacks on civilian areas of Ukraine and its ground forces accelerated gains along parts of the front line.

The Briton was identified by state news agency Tass and other media as James Scott Rhys Anderson. Tass quoted him as saying that he had served as a signalman in the British army for four years and then joined the International Legion of Ukraine, formed early on in Russia's nearly 3-year-old war against its neighbor.

On the battlefield, Ukrainian forces are straining to hold at bay a push by Russia's bigger army at places in the eastern Donetsk region. Russian forces recently have gained ground at "a significantly quicker rate" than they did in the whole of last year, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank.

The Russians have detected and are exploiting weaknesses in the Ukrainian defenses, it said in an analysis late Sunday.

The war surpassed 1,000 days last week, and the milestone coincided with a significant escalation in hostilities.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's air force said Russia is adapting its drone tactics, as it fired 145 Shahed drones at Ukraine.

Russia has started launching drones during the day, whereas in the past most drone attacks occurred during the night, the air force said.

Andrii Kovalenko, the head of the National Security Council's Counter-disinformation Center, said earlier this month that the Russians were looking to conserve their stocks of more destructive but more expensive missiles and also terrorize civilians.

The air force said it stopped almost all the drones before they struck.

But a morning missile attack on downtown Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the northeast, injured at least 23 people, according to Mayor Ihor Terekhov. He said the attack on a densely populated residential area was carried out by a modified surface-to-air S-400 missile.

A Russian ballistic missile also struck the southern Ukraine city of Odesa in the middle of the day, injuring 10 people as it landed in the downtown area, officials said.

Ukraine, meantime, continued its attacks on logistical targets inside Russia that support the Kremlin's war effort.

Ukrainian drones set off explosions and a fire at an oil depot in Russia's Kaluga region overnight, about 200 kilometers (120 miles) from the border, a military intelligence official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the rules of his job do not allow him to be quoted by name.

Russia made no comment about the alleged strike. It was not possible to independently verify Ukraine's claim.

The father of the British man says he was told by a Ukrainian commander of his capture

The captured Briton reportedly served as an instructor for Ukrainian troops and was deployed to the Kursk region against his will. Tass published a video of the man saying in English that he doesn't want to be "here."

The report couldn't be independently verified, but if confirmed it could be one of the first publicly known case of a Western national captured on Russian soil while fighting for Ukraine.

The U.K. Embassy in Moscow said officials were "supporting the family of a British man following reports of his detention" but provided no further details.

The Russian Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The soldier's father, Scott Anderson, told Britain's Daily Mail newspaper that his son's Ukrainian commander had informed him that the young man had been captured.

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Scott Anderson said his son had served in the British military for four years, then briefly worked as a police custody officer before going to Ukraine to fight. He said he tried to convince his son not to join the Ukrainian military, and now he fears for his safety.

"I'm hoping he'll be used as a bargaining chip, but my son told me they torture their prisoners and I'm so frightened he'll be tortured," he told the newspaper.

The International Legion for Defense of Ukraine was created at the request of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy shortly after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The Legion is a unit of Ukraine's Ground Forces that consists mostly of foreign volunteers. Apart from the Legion, Ukraine recruits foreigners to other units of its army, filling squads, companies, or even battalions.

Early on in the war, Ukraine's authorities said over 20,000 people from 52 countries came to Ukraine to help it defend itself against Russia's aggression. Ever since, the numbers of foreign fighters in the ranks of the Ukrainian military have been classified.

Today in History: November 26 Mumbai terror attacks of 2008 begin

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 26, the 331st day of 2024. There are 35 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 26, 2008, teams of heavily armed militants from the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba stormed luxury hotels, a popular restaurant and a crowded train station in Mumbai, India, leaving at least 175 people dead (including nine of the attackers) in a rampage spanning four days.

Also on this date:

In 1791, President George Washington held his first full cabinet meeting; in attendance were Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of War Henry Knox and Attorney General Edmund Randolph.

In 1864, English mathematician and writer Charles Dodgson presented a handwritten and illustrated manuscript, "Alice's Adventures Under Ground," to his 12-year-old friend Alice Pleasance Liddell; the book was later turned into "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," published under Dodgson's pen name, Lewis Carroll.

In 1917, the National Hockey League was founded in Montreal, succeeding the National Hockey Association.

In 1941, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull delivered a note to Japan's ambassador to the United States, Kichisaburo Nomura (kee-chee-sah-boor-oh noh-moo-rah), setting forth U.S. demands for "lasting and extensive peace throughout the Pacific area." The same day, a Japanese naval task force consisting of six aircraft carriers left the Kuril Islands, headed toward Hawaii.

In 1942, the film 'Casablanca,' starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, premiered at the Hollywood Theater in New York City.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, told a federal court that she'd accidentally caused part of the 18-1/2-minute gap in a key Watergate tape.

In 2000, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris certified George W. Bush the winner over Al Gore in the state's presidential balloting by a 537-vote margin.

Today's Birthdays: Impressionist Rich Little is 86. Football Hall of Famer Jan Stenerud is 82. Author Marilynne Robinson is 81. Bass guitarist John McVie (Fleetwood Mac) is 79. Football Hall of Famer Art Shell is 78. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., is 71. Football Hall of Famer Harry Carson is 71. NASCAR Hall of Famer Dale Jarrett is 68. Country singer Linda Davis is 62. Actor-TV personality Garcelle Beauvais is 58. Actor Peter Facinelli is 51. DJ-music producer DJ Khaled (KAL'-ehd) is 49. Country musician Joe Nichols is 48. Pop singer Natasha Bedingfield is 43. Actor-singer-TV personality Rita Ora is 34.