

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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



## Sunday, Dec. 1

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m.; Zion at 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Choir, 6 p.m.

FFA State LDE, Rapid City

Pancake Sunday: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center (proceeds benefit the Historical Society's jail restoration.

Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m., GHS Gym.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. (Daniel and Karla Grenz will be speaking); worship, 10:30 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde at 8:30 a.m.; Groton at 10:30 a.m.; No Sunday School, Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

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Newsweek

## The Bulletin



Happy Thanksgiving, everyone! As you kick off your holiday weekend, here are some stories to dive into:

President Joe Biden is putting together a fresh military aid package for Ukraine, according to a new report, as the outgoing administration hurries to ferry more provisions to Kyiv ahead of President-elect Donald Trump striding back into the White House.

Meanwhile, Trump says that he had a “wonderful” conversation with Mexico’s new President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo and that Mexico will immediately “stop people from going to our Southern Border.”

In global news, the recent escalation of the Russia-Ukraine war has led to increasing talk of nuclear war, especially following repeated threats from Russian President Vladimir Putin against NATO countries.

Finally, the housing market could be showing signs of change as mortgage applications rose for the third consecutive week, according to new data released from the Mortgage Bankers Association.

### WORLD IN BRIEF

**Fairmont employee arrested armed:** On Tuesday morning, an employee at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel was arrested for allegedly bringing a loaded firearm to work during Vice President Kamala Harris's stay, according to ABC.

**Weather warnings:** The National Weather Service has issued a Lake Effect Snow Warning for Oswego, Jefferson, and Lewis counties in New York from Friday, Nov. 29, at 7 a.m. EST until Monday, Dec. 2, at 7 p.m. EST.

**Trump appoints special envoy:** President-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday tapped retired Army Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg as his special envoy to Ukraine and Russia.

**Court blocks border razor wire removal:** A federal appeals court prohibited the Biden administration from removing razor wire that Texas officials installed along the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Gabbard's ties to India's Modi:** Tulsi Gabbard, Donald Trump's pick to be the director of national intelligence, has ties to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a right-wing Hindu nationalist movement with longstanding links to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This connection has raised concerns for some.

**Store hours and flight delays:** While retail giants Target, Walmart and Sam's Club will all close for the holiday, several other retailers, include Kroger, Wegmans and Whole Foods, will let you pick up those last-minute ingredients. Meanwhile, hundreds of flights have been delayed across the U.S.

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## FROSTY CLUE

I/My.....

28. Was on the winning Schieble  
Tournament Baseball Team



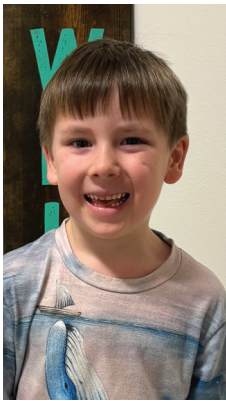
### **\*\*LAND AUCTION\*\***

Up for auction is 66+/- acres land. 22.91 acres of tillable, 24.10 acres of CRP/CREP, 19.12+/- acres of hunting in Groton, SD on US Hwy 12. No easements on any of the acres. Unlimited possibilities ranging from recreational property of development property. You can bid online at [HIBid.com](http://HIBid.com) up until we start the live auction Dec. 7th at 1 p.m. From there we will be taking live bids and internet bids. Auction will be held at the American Legion in Groton at 1 p.m.

Terms of the auction, 10% down on sale day (non-refundable). Closing within 20 days of auction at Kolker Law Office in Groton SD.

SAM HANSON, EXIT REALTY CONNECTION  
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[shauctioneer@hotmail.com](mailto:shauctioneer@hotmail.com)

## Groton Area Junior Kindergarteners are thankful for . . .



**Lucas Davis**, son of Anthony and Christine Davis – I am thankful for my mommy, daddy, and sisters because they love me.



**River Anderson**, daughter of Taylor and Laura Anderson – I am thankful for my house because it is cozy, and my family lives there.



**Collyns Dunbar**, daughter of Michael and Kassie Dunbar – I am thankful for food because it tastes good and makes me strong.



**Isaac Flihs**, son of Blake and Danielle Flihs – I am thankful for my remote-control dinosaurs and combine because I like them.



**Whitton Free-land**, son of Justin and Jessica Free-land – I am thankful for my mom because she makes good food and my dad because he lets me drive the tractor.



**Alandra Graff**, daughter of Michelle Barrow and Wesley Graff – I am thankful for my bed because I like to sleep in it with my stuffed animals.



**Ronnie Gruenstein**, son of Kaitlin Roemmick – I am thankful for my uncle and aunt because they watch me and take me lots of places.



**Faith Johnson**, daughter of Matt and Casey Johnson – I am thankful for my friends because they are nice and play Legos with me.



**Blake Locke**, daughter of Mitchell and Heidi Locke – I am thankful for my family because they love me and take care of me.



**Memphis Monson**, son of Cody and Michele Monson – I am thankful for my friends because they play outside with me and give me toys.



**Beau Traphagen**, son of Trent and Heather Traphagen – I am thankful for my mommy and daddy because I like them, and they give me hugs when I go to bed.



**Max Wieseler**, son of Michael and Emily Wieseler – I am thankful for the Groton pool because we do not have to drive a long way to swim.



## Processing wild game still a challenge for South Dakota hunters

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

PIEDMONT, S.D. – Earlier this year, well before big-game hunting season began in South Dakota, Josh Clark invested time and money into expanding his wild-game processing capabilities to take advantage of high demand for the service.

As the number of commercial and self-employed meat cutters willing to process wild game in South Dakota has dwindled, Clark saw an opportunity in 2024 to profit off the trend at Cutting Edge Meat Market in Piedmont, where he is the manager.

Prior to hunting season, he added another skinning station, expanded capacity to hang and move animals and created more refrigeration space. He also did some summer advertising to let hunters know he is still taking in deer, elk and other large animal carcasses for full-service processing into steak, burgers and sausages.

"I don't know if it's just the lack of processors still out there, but we're up 30% to 40% over last year in terms of animal drop-offs," Clark told News Watch last week. "We're slammed right now."

Clark said he recently contacted several other West River meat shops and found that no one he spoke to is taking in whole deer or other game for processing.

Butchers who still take full deer carcasses said other processors who no longer take wild game or require it to be deboned first may be facing worker shortages, have higher expenses that cut into profitability or simply do not want the hassle of dealing with wild game processing that often occurs one customer with one animal at a time and creates a mad rush of business each fall.

The month of November – the heart of the deer hunting season in South Dakota – is always busy for butchers who process wild game, as hunters bring in tens of thousands of deer and antelope shot with rifles or bow and arrow. In 2023, South Dakota hunters killed about 49,000 deer, roughly 2,800 antelope and 114 elk, according to the state.

Clark said prior News Watch coverage of the processor shortage generated even more business for him, including from Custer State Park, where officials shipped him some buffaloes for processing after culling park animals after the annual Buffalo Roundup.

### South Dakota butchers exiting wild game market

Some butcher shops have closed or shifted focus away from wild game, while others no longer take any game animals, and a few will only process wild meat that is already skinned and deboned by the customer.

Whereas commercial livestock producers schedule delivery of animals to be slaughtered and butchered during normal work hours and with several animals at once, big game hunters usually arrive at butcher shops with one or two animals at whatever time of day they happen to make a kill.

Paul Sorum, co-owner of Renner Corner Meats, about 10 miles north of Sioux Falls, said his shop usually processes about 1,000 deer and other big-game carcasses a year. Sorum said he feels a strong commitment to helping hunters have a place to take full carcasses. But he also wants to continue taking whole animals as a way to maintain the South Dakota hunting economy and to uphold conservation goals.

"If it weren't for the hunters, we'd have an overabundance of deer that are not easy on crops, not to mention the damage they do to vehicles (when struck)," he said.

The shortage of wild-game processors has been a boon to Sorum's bottom line in the fall. He's now taking in a lot of deer from western Minnesota and has had elk, moose, caribou, bear and antelope shipped in from other states for processing in Renner.

One concern is that if hunters who lack the skills or equipment to skin, quarter and debone carcasses on their own can't find a processor willing to take a whole carcass, the animals could be dumped in the

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garbage or left to rot in the field. Some hunters may choose to give up hunting if they know in advance they won't be able to get a full animal carcass processed.

"The deer hunters, they need a place to take their animals to be processed correctly and to know they're going to get a great product, so we still provide that service because there's not that many of us out there," Sorum said. "It's a busy time, and it's difficult work, but I have a great staff and we get through it."

## Hunters can donate animals to charity

Hunters who want to donate the meat from a deer or antelope to charitable food pantries across the state can work with South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger. Under the program, hunters with animals can contact one of roughly two dozen butchers in South Dakota and drop off an animal carcass or deboned meat for full processing. In most cases, the participating butcher shops assume the cost of processing female animals, while donating a buck typically results in the hunter paying the processing fee.

Some of the butchers enrolled in the program require that the animal be skinned and deboned before being dropped off for processing, and the program does nothing to help hunters who want to eat the wild game meat from animals they have killed.

The wild game processing industry is not overseen or regulated by the state Game, Fish & Parks Department, which manages state hunting seasons, though butcher shops are subject to regular inspection by state and federal regulators. GFP spokesman Nick Harrington sent an email to News Watch in 2023 saying the department "is currently not seeing a lack of game processors acting as a barrier to hunters participating in the sport."

"Conversely, applications for many big game seasons including deer and elk are either holding steady or gradually rising each year," Harrington wrote. "There are some big-game hunters who utilize processors, while others process themselves. This is each individual hunter's choice and personal preference."

## Home-based butchers help fill the need

The commercial butcher shops that handle wild game have long been bolstered by a network of small, home-based meat processors who take animals killed in the fall. However, those processors are also dropping out of the industry or slowing down due to age, increasing volumes or burnout.

But some home-based butchers continue to provide the service of processing wild game from carcass to usable meat portions wrapped in butcher paper, though they often can only be found through word-of-mouth connections.

Rex Roseland and his wife, Cheryl, have processed wild game at their home north of Rapid City for decades, but they've seen demand for processing rise in recent years.

"When you get swamped, it just takes time to get caught up," Rex Roseland told News Watch in 2023. "We get a lot of people from previous years, and they keep coming back. But every year it seems like we pick up more people."

Cheryl Roseland said they enjoy the work and want to help hunters out, but it's getting harder to handle the increasing flow of animals being brought in.

"We've heard from people who are saying, 'Help us because we can't find anyplace that will take it,'" she said. "But the thing is, while we can do it, do we have room to add another animal? We will take overflow when we can, but we're overflowing ourselves out here."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at [sdnewswatch.org](https://sdnewswatch.org) and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Bart Pfankuch at [bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org](mailto:bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org).

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## Wedding Reception

A wedding reception will be held for Julianna (Kosel) and Isaac Moll on Saturday, Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Paul and Tina Kosel home, 110 N Washington St. The reception will be held in the garage.

The couple was married on July 30, 2024 at Sarasota, Fla. Julianna and Isaac are coming home for the Thanksgiving break.



## 90th Birthday Card Shower

A card shower is requested for Darrell Henderson on his 90th birthday, December 1, 2024.

Darrell and Deanna have two children: Jeffrey and Beth, with Jeff's wife, Joyce, and grandson, Dustin, and a great granddaughter, Avianna.

**Cards may be sent to:**  
**Darrell Henderson**  
**PO Box 494**  
**Groton, SD 57445**

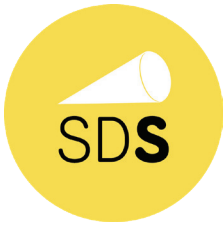
## Thank You!

It is hard to believe that I have been your newspaper publisher for 38 years. I came to Groton as a single person, ended up being married to my wonderful wife, Tina, and having two great daughters, Jeslyn and Julianna. It's been an up and down time, but overall, it has been a fun challenge. For you to read this article this morning is a feat in itself. The Groton Daily Independent is the only publication of this type in the state and probably one of the few in the nation. When we first launched the Groton Daily Independent, we had a whole some of six subscribers. To go through the work of publishing it would seem like a lost cause. Today, we have over 250 subscribers.

I hope you enjoy our publication nearly every day of the year, published from here in Groton and even published all the way from Florida. It takes team work to pull this off. Our family has been instrumental in this process. I also appreciate our reporters Dorene Nelson and Elizabeth Varin, and also thankful to our regular contributors which include April Abeln and Bruce Babcock. And if you have news to contribute, feel free to send it to [news@grotonsd.net](mailto:news@grotonsd.net).

From all of us from the GDI, Happy Thanksgiving!





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Q&A: South Dakota attorney general talks about advising Trump team

**Jackley says little about president-elect's Gaetz pick but praises Bondi, says she'll lead Justice Department in a 'different direction'**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 27, 2024 3:33 PM**

Prior to President-elect Donald Trump's ill-fated choice of Matt Gaetz as his first pick for U.S. attorney general, Trump and his team had been getting advice for several years from a group of Republican state attorneys general that includes South Dakota's Marty Jackley.

Jackley said the "America First Attorney General Advisory Council" has convened through calls and meetings, including gatherings at Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida with various Trump transition staff members.

In a recent interview with South Dakota Searchlight, Jackley, who's also a former U.S. attorney for South Dakota, had little to say about Gaetz.

"At the time of that announcement, I had not met Congressman Gaetz, so I didn't really have an opinion formulated," Jackley said. "I want to be fair to him. I never had the opportunity at the time of that announcement to meet him."

Gaetz's tenure as the expected nominee lasted eight days. During that time, he resigned his seat as a Republican congressman from Florida. All the while, debate swirled about investigations into his alleged drug use and payments for sex, including with an underage girl. Gaetz ultimately withdrew himself from consideration as Trump's nominee.

Trump has since said he'll nominate Republican former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi. Jackley said he's known her since 2009.

"I'm happy that the president has looked to the state attorney general community and Attorney General Bondi," he said. "Somebody that has the prosecutorial experience to lead the Department of Justice in a different direction."

Following are excerpts from Searchlight's interview with Jackley, edited for length and clarity.

How did you find yourself in this advisory role with the Trump team?

Well, a couple of years ago, through America First [America First Policy Institute], a group of us attorney generals were put together on what I would call the "America First Attorney General Advisory Council."

That includes occasional calls. It includes occasional meetings together. Most recently, several of us gathered at Mar-A-Lago. And really, the focus is not on politics, but the rule of law and providing advice, like several other advisory groups do.

That focus, at least for me, has always been, what is the rule of law? What relationships can be better established between federal, state and local prosecutors? What is the role of the Department of Justice?

I openly talk about having been a U.S. attorney. I care deeply about the Department of Justice. I left being a partner in a law firm to be a part of that. And I've seen it go away from a direction that I would hope that it is brought back to. And I believe that Attorney General Bondi is the right person for that, to have it more focused on the rule of law, public safety and protecting relationships between all prosecutors.

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What do you mean when you say you've seen the Department of Justice go "a direction" you don't like? I'll use an example. Recently, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland came to South Dakota. He never reached out to the attorney general. He never reached out. I was the outgoing chairman of the attorney generals. There was no discussion about the things that you and I just talked about: How can there be stronger federal partnerships?

The type of conversation that you would expect is, "How are federal and state relations?" They're good in South Dakota. I feel that my relationship with the U.S. attorney is very strong. We are one of the few states that I'm aware of that our attorney general forensic lab in Pierre does some of the evidence forensic testing for the FBI.

Certainly, I've built and maintained strong relationships with our tribes. I would have liked to see a conversation about how can federal, state and tribal authorities work together and what can we do to partner? And so, that's an example.

Another example is, there seems to be a lot of special prosecutors.

I think if you look from my approach as attorney general, you don't see me doing that. Sometimes when you're the attorney general, you have to make the hard decisions, and the danger of a special prosecutor is they can get political, they don't have proper oversight at times, and I think Jack Smith demonstrated that. There were concerns about things that he brought, and then right after an election he dismissed them. [Smith prosecuted Trump for election interference and mishandling classified documents, and recently dropped the cases for the time being, saying it would be unconstitutional for his office to continue prosecuting the incoming president.]

If you look at me as an example, I once as attorney general had to indict a Republican United States Senate candidate [Annette Bosworth, convicted of a dozen felony counts of election law violations in 2015]. I did not do that at election time, despite some criticism from the public and from the media. I waited until after the election to bring that indictment. It resulted in a conviction, but I didn't want to affect an election.

And so, those types of examples are what many of us attorney generals want to see the Department of Justice get back to: working with local, state and other federal prosecutors, U.S. attorneys, to bring public safety, and to protect basic freedoms, and to not be overly political.

What happened during your trips to Mar-A-Lago?

I've gone the last two years, and as part of that trip, using an example, we had an opportunity to gather and talk with several of us and leadership of what I would call the Trump transition about these various topics — the rule of law, what we as attorney generals would advise and like to see. I think that location is just generally where a lot of the transition is taking place.

Why do you like the choice of Pam Bondi as nominee for U.S. attorney general?

I've had the opportunity to serve with Attorney General Bondi. She came to South Dakota for the Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner in 2017.

I want to speak for myself: I'm happy that the president has looked to the state attorney general community and Attorney General Bondi, somebody that has the prosecutorial experience to lead the Department of Justice in a different direction.

What do you think picking Gaetz and then Bondi says about the president-elect's judgment?

I feel strongly that he made the right choice in Attorney General Pam Bondi. And I look forward to the support that I foresee the attorney general community giving her during the confirmation process, and I look forward to serving with her once again in her now role, once confirmed, as attorney general of the United States.

What's next for the state attorney general group advising Trump?

I don't know that this advisory role will change. I believe in the Department of Justice and what it stands

for, and I hope and I believe that the direction will focus more on those things I've talked about: the relationships with the prosecutors in the field, the rule of law, not having politics play such a role in the actions of the Department of Justice.

I, first and foremost, am the attorney general of South Dakota, and that is my utmost interest, and to the extent we can be advisers on other issues, to me, the border is exceptionally important. Every day I come to work, I witness what an open border does with methamphetamine, fentanyl, the illegal gun trade and the other dangers that affect almost every household in South Dakota. I think the attorney general plays a very important role in that nationally.

I would say human trafficking is another area Attorney General Bondi was strong on. That along with opioids.

And so those are the points that I will advocate that, I believe, affect us here in South Dakota that the Department of Justice and the presidential administration should focus on.

*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.*

## Scheels board chair emeritus honored with North Dakota Rough Rider Award

BY: JEFF BEACH - NOVEMBER 27, 2024 9:01 AM

FARGO — Steve D. Scheel was described Tuesday as a man who created opportunities for his employees, joy for his customers and pushed wild ideas onto his business associates — all to great success.

"I do remember the looks I got from board members across the table when I brought up the idea of the two-level store in Iowa City, or a Ferris wheel in Omaha or an aquarium in Reno, or a candy Fuzziwig's shop in Springfield, Illinois," Scheel said, standing in front of the Ferris wheel at the Fargo flagship store. "Looking back, it took me far too long to understand the importance of entertainment and attractions in retail."

Scheel, who transformed Scheels from a local hardware and general store to the operator of the world's largest sporting goods stores, was honored Tuesday as the 50th recipient of the Rough Rider Award, North Dakota's highest honor.

The transformation snowballed when Steve Scheel went against the advice of his father, Fred.

In 1980, Steve Scheel dropped the hardware from the store to focus solely on outdoors merchandise at the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, store he was managing.

"Steve took all the hammers and nails, washing machines and cake decorations and he threw them out the door," Matt Hanson, chief executive officer of Scheels said Tuesday. "It worked and we're all very fortunate that it worked. Steve had the vision."

Scheels now operates the 25 largest sporting goods stores in the world, with the largest being more than 330,000 square feet in Boise, Idaho, and Dallas.

Scheel, now board chair emeritus for Scheels, recalled moving the corporate office from Billings, Montana, to Fargo in 1989. He was one of two people in the corporate office at the time.

Today, there are 467 associates on the Fargo headquarters campus. There are 34 stores in 16 states and more than 13,000 employees.

Scheels transformed into an employee-owned business. "I believe our owners are the key," Scheel said, after his portrait was unveiled.

Hanson, the CEO, started as a part-time cashier in Mankato, Minnesota.

"It's nearly impossible to sum up what Steve has done in his nearly 50-plus years at Scheels," Hanson said. "But I think it's best summed up in three areas: Steve's vision, Steve's leadership, Steve's philanthropy."

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said the legacy of Scheels can be seen across the state, supporting

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institutions across the state like the University of Mary in Bismarck and the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, supporting youth sports and promoting outdoor recreation.

He said Scheels has provided careers that made the American dream possible for employees.

"You've created the American dream for thousands," Burgum said.

The Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award recognizes current and former North Dakotans who have been influenced by the state in achieving national recognition in their fields.

The ceremony's emcee was Monsignor James Shea, president of the University of Mary, who noted Scheel's Christian upbringing in Fargo.

Shea said the Ferris wheels and candy shops in Scheels stores are a reflection of the joy in Steve Scheel.

"Steve loves giving," She said. "He is a man of joy, unfettered by selfish concern, and that is a man worth honoring in the way in which we do it this day."

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

## How ambiguity cleared Kristi Noem's path to national prominence

**The governor said 'should' instead of 'shall,' and the rest is history**

**Seth Tupper**

"This is what South Dakotans should do," the governor said, emphasizing "should."

I was perplexed. It was March 23, 2020, almost two weeks since the first COVID-19 cases were reported in the state. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem was conducting a news conference about an executive order listing 20 things that "should" be done. People "should" engage in social distancing. Businesses "should" prevent customers from congregating in close quarters. Health-care facilities "should" postpone elective surgeries.

Noem used the word 13 times in her 12-minute news conference.

In these frightening early days of a global pandemic, speculation and misinformation were rampant. Clear communication from the governor was paramount. Another baffled reporter who'd called in to the news conference asked Noem about her choice of words.

"Is that a legal requirement, or is that advice?"

"It's telling them what they should do," Noem replied.

I pressed her further. "To put the finest point possible on it, you said you're 'telling' organizations, cities, etcetera, what to do, but it sounds like it's still their choice?" I asked. "You're not necessarily ordering something with the force of law?"

"I am telling them what they should be doing in this state," Noem said.

At the time, I chalked this oddity up to the ramblings of an overwhelmed governor.

Noem's ambiguity foisted difficult decisions on local officials. Some imposed their own legal restrictions on people and businesses, only to backtrack weeks or months later under a hail of protest from their loudest critics. All the while, Noem and her health advisers floated above the fray.

The governor eventually took her hands-off approach to the extreme of going maskless at a mask factory, while South Dakota was suffering one of the world's worst COVID-19 death rates. When criticism came, Noem combatively touted the state's open and comparatively less-devastated economy.

As the pandemic wore on, Noem's lack of clarity that day back in March 2020 proved to be a pivotal moment. Until then, she was relatively unknown nationally as a rural-state governor and former congresswoman.

By leaving her pandemic orders murky, she was eventually able to proclaim she never shut down her state. That attracted the attention of then-President Donald Trump, giving Noem the standing to invite him to a July 2020 fireworks show at Mount Rushmore. He accepted, and she nurtured the relationship all the way to a pick as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security in Trump's second administration.

Now, I'm left wondering if Noem's use of "should" was a stumbling error or a shrewd calculation.

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Anti-lockdown researcher Trump's pick to lead National Institutes of Health

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - NOVEMBER 27, 2024 3:42 PM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump said Tuesday he has selected a Stanford University professor of health policy and skeptic of COVID-19 precautions to run the National Institutes of Health, the sweeping federal agency tasked with solving many of the country's biggest health challenges.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya will require Senate confirmation before taking over the role officially, but assuming he can secure the votes next year when the chamber is controlled by Republicans, he'll have significant sway over where the federal government directs billions in research dollars.

"Dr. Bhattacharya will work in cooperation with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to direct the Nation's Medical Research, and to make important discoveries that will improve Health, and save lives," Trump wrote in the announcement. Kennedy is Trump's pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

Bhattacharya posted on social media that he was "honored and humbled" by the nomination and pledged to "reform American scientific institutions so that they are worthy of trust again and will deploy the fruits of excellent science to make America healthy again!"

In addition to Kennedy, other Trump nominees for health-related positions include former TV personality and onetime Pennsylvania U.S. Senate candidate Mehmet Oz to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, former Florida Congressman Dave Weldon to run the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Marty Makary for commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration and Fox News medical contributor Dr. Janette Nesheiwat as the next surgeon general.

"Together, Jay and RFK Jr. will restore the NIH to a Gold Standard of Medical Research as they examine the underlying causes of, and solutions to, America's biggest Health challenges, including our Crisis of Chronic Illness and Disease," Trump wrote in his announcement.

### Health economist

Bhattacharya received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University in 1990 before earning his medical degree from its School of Medicine in 1997 and a Ph.D. from the university's Economics Department in 2000.

He focuses his research on health economics and outcomes, according to his curriculum vitae, the academic version of a resume.

Bhattacharya's biography on Stanford's website says that in addition to being a professor of health policy, he runs its Center for Demography and Economics of Health and Aging, in addition to working as a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

"Dr. Bhattacharya's research focuses on the health and well-being of vulnerable populations, with a particular emphasis on the role of government programs, biomedical innovation, and economics," according to the biography.

Among his research areas is the "epidemiology of COVID-19 as well as an evaluation of policy responses to the epidemic."

### 'A fringe component'

Bhattacharya testified before the U.S. House Oversight Committee's Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic in February 2023 that he believed there was "near universal agreement that what we did failed."

"Official counts attribute more than one million deaths in the United States and seven million worldwide," he said.

Bhattacharya was one of three authors of The Great Barrington Declaration in October 2020, arguing that younger, healthy people should have gone about their normal lives in an effort to contract COVID-19, since they were somewhat less likely to die than at-risk populations.

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The brief declaration says that "(a)dopting measures to protect the vulnerable should be the central aim of public health responses to COVID-19." But it doesn't list what those measures should include and never brings up masking, physical distancing, or vaccination.

Several public health officials and researchers rejected the declaration, noting that it didn't cite any research, data or peer-reviewed articles.

Former NIH Director Francis S. Collins, who ran the agency from 2009 through 2021, told The Washington Post in October 2020 that the Barrington Declaration authors' beliefs were not held "by large numbers of experts in the scientific community."

"This is a fringe component of epidemiology. This is not mainstream science. It's dangerous. It fits into the political views of certain parts of our confused political establishment," Collins said in the Post interview. "I'm sure it will be an idea that someone can wrap themselves in as a justification for skipping wearing masks or social distancing and just doing whatever they damn well please."

One of the many reasons public health experts recommended masking, working from home and physical distancing before there was a COVID-19 vaccine was to prevent patients from overwhelming the country's health care system.

There were concerns during some of the spikes in COVID-19 infections that the country would have so many ill people at one time there wouldn't be enough space, health care professionals or equipment to provide treatment.

## Wide-ranging agency

The NIH is made up of 27 different centers and institutes that each focus on health challenges facing Americans.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, formerly run by Dr. Anthony Fauci, became one of the more well known institutes during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when he would regularly appear beside Trump at press briefings.

Other components at NIH include the National Cancer Institute, National Institute on Aging, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and the NIH Clinical Center that's also referred to as America's research hospital.

Congress approved \$48 billion in discretionary spending for NIH during the last fiscal year, continuing a broadly bipartisan push that for years has increased funding to the agency to provide grants to research some of the most challenging diseases and illnesses facing Americans.

The current NIH director, Monica M. Bertagnolli, testified before Congress in early November about how the agency was working to rebuild trust following the pandemic.

Bertagnolli told U.S. House lawmakers the NIH was focusing some of its research on finding cures for rare diseases, since for-profit companies often don't have the financial incentive to do so.

She also rejected the notion that NIH leaders have allowed politics to interfere with the agency's mission.

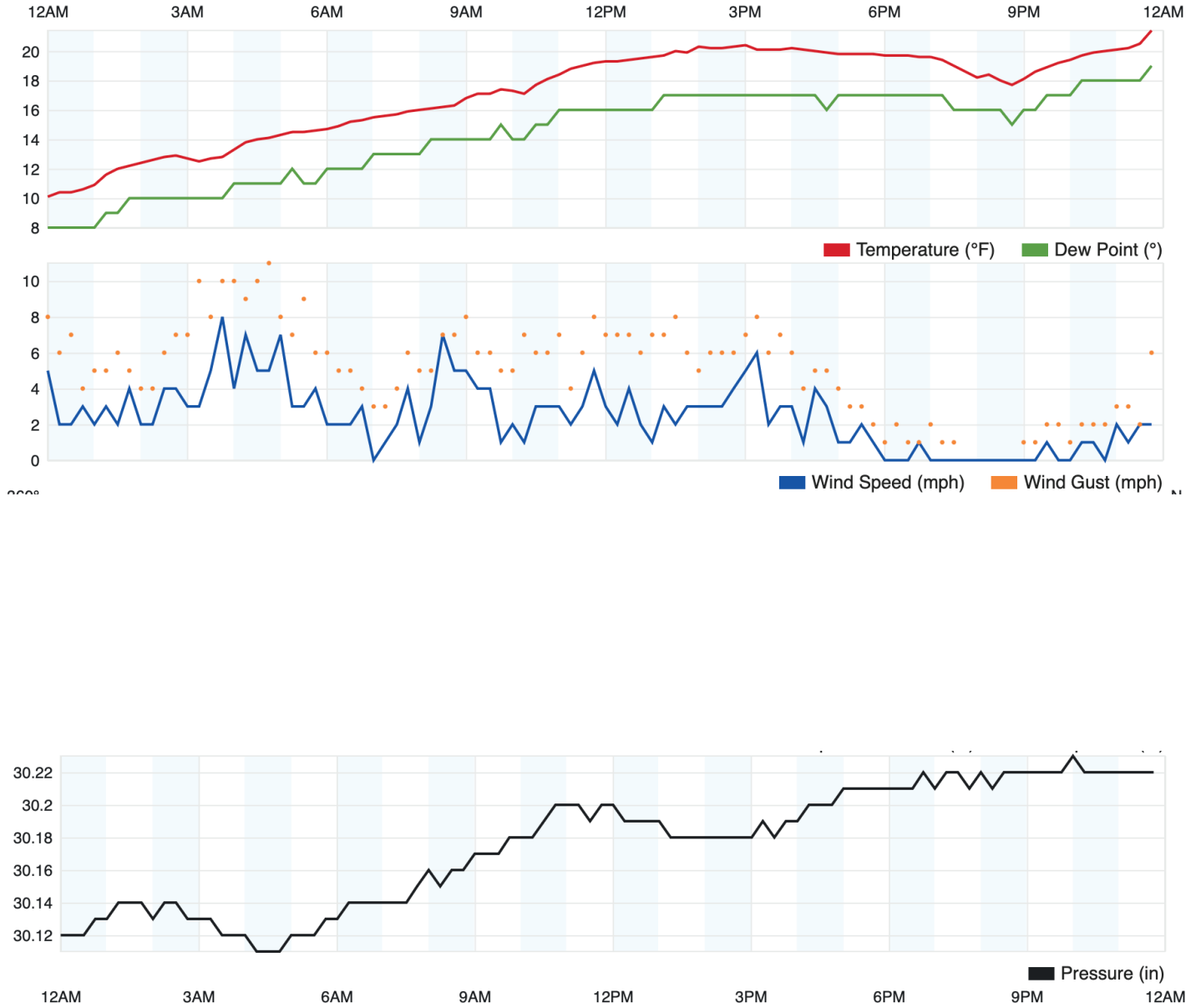
"First and foremost, NIH concentrates on science, not on politics," Bertagnolli said. "We actually have an integrity mandate against political interference in our work. That is the law for us and we abide by that completely."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Thanksgiving  
Day



High: 20 °F

Cloudy then  
Slight Chance  
Snow

Tonight



Low: -2 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 15 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: -4 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 14 °F

Mostly Sunny

TODAY

HIGHS: 18 - 27°F  
LOWS: -3 - +8

LIGHT SNOW ACROSS MUCH OF  
CENTRAL AND NORTHEAST SD AND  
WEST CENTRAL MN

Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at NWS Aberdeen! We hope you have a safe and enjoyable day. There is a 15 to 25% chance for light snow moving west to east across the area today so be careful if you are driving. Accumulations are expected to be less than half an inch.



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## Chilly Temperatures Through The Holiday Weekend

November 28, 2024  
3:11 AM

### Key Messages

- High confidence on well below normal temperatures through the weekend
- Highs will overall range in the teens and 20s (left graph)
- Lows in the single digits above zero to single digits below zero (right graph)
- Temperatures will start to warm up on Tuesday

	Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)					Minimum Temperature Forecast (°F)					
	11/28 Thu	11/29 Fri	11/30 Sat	12/1 Sun	12/2 Mon	11/28 Thu	11/29 Fri	11/30 Sat	12/1 Sun	12/2 Mon	
Aberdeen	20	15	15	16	17	Aberdeen	6	1	0	1	-1
Britton	17	11	11	12	14	Britton	6	-1	-6	-1	-1
Brookings	21	16	17	20	21	Brookings	9	1	0	5	9
Chamberlain	28	24	25	28	27	Chamberlain	13	5	10	9	8
Clark	18	11	11	16	15	Clark	7	1	0	1	1
Eagle Butte	24	20	23	25	25	Eagle Butte	13	9	7	7	7
Ellendale	18	14	14	14	15	Ellendale	4	0	-5	0	-1
Eureka	18	14	15	18	18	Eureka	6	-3	-3	1	-1
Gettysburg	22	18	20	22	22	Gettysburg	9	2	2	2	4
Huron	24	19	19	22	22	Huron	10	2	4	5	8
Kennebec	28	24	26	29	29	Kennebec	14	6	10	4	7
McIntosh	20	16	19	24	22	McIntosh	8	2	3	4	4
Milbank	19	13	13	16	18	Milbank	9	4	2	4	2
Miller	24	20	20	22	22	Miller	11	3	2	2	4
Mobridge	24	19	21	26	25	Mobridge	12	7	4	8	6
Murdo	27	24	26	29	30	Murdo	15	8	11	7	9
Pierre	28	23	26	29	28	Pierre	14	7	10	6	9
Redfield	22	17	16	18	19	Redfield	9	5	2	3	1
Sisseton	22	11	11	14	16	Sisseton	8	3	-1	4	3
Watertown	18	12	13	16	18	Watertown	7	2	0	2	2
Webster	20	9	9	13	15	Webster	6	1	-1	1	1
Wheaton	18	10	10	13	15	Wheaton	7	3	1	3	2



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

We are expecting well below normal temperatures to last through the weekend with highs in the teen to low 20s. Wind chills Friday morning could be in the single digits to teens below zero. Please bundle up if you plan to go outside!

**DRESSING FOR COLD WEATHER**

adding layers will help keep you warm as the temperature drops

**CHILLY**

- 1-2 layers
- long layer
- outer layer to keep out wind, rain
- warm shoes water proof

**COLD**

- 2-3 layers
- gloves
- warm hat
- outer layer to keep out wind, wet snow
- boots water proof
- 1-2 layers

**EXTREME COLD**

- 3+ layers 1 insulating
- gloves
- warm hat
- face mask
- outer layer to keep out wind
- boots water proof
- 2+ layers

weather.gov/safety

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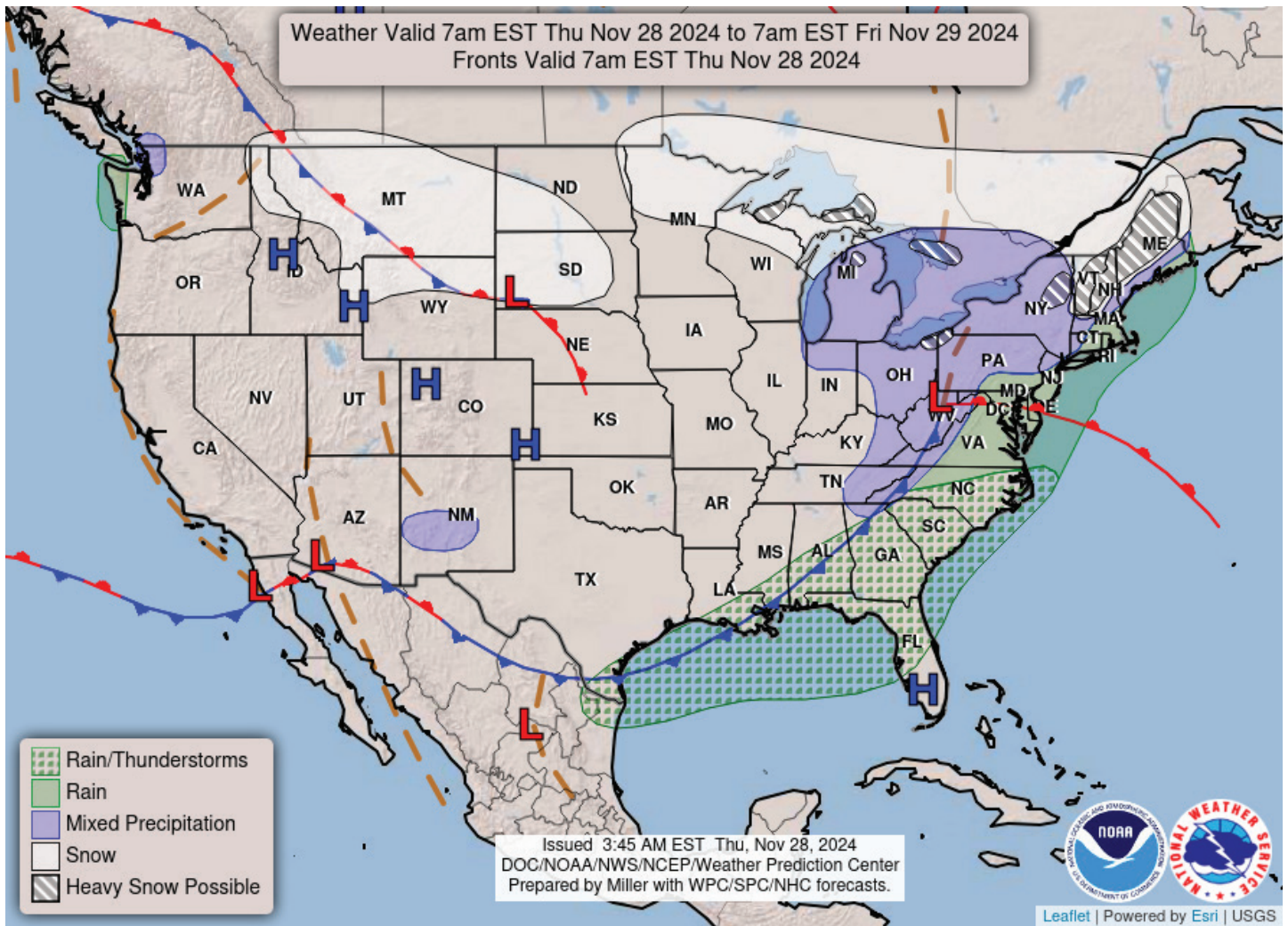
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 20 °F at 3:02 PM**  
**Low Temp: 10 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 11 mph at 4:45 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 9 hours, 6 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 2020  
Record Low: -21 in 1985  
Average High: 36  
Average Low: 14  
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.70  
Precip to date in Nov.: 1.83  
Average Precip to date: 21.17  
Precip Year to Date: 21.71  
Sunset Tonight: 4:53:41 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:48:42 am



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## Today in Weather History

November 28, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of northeast South Dakota, causing travel difficulties and school closings. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Britton, Roy Lake, Webster, Waubay, Summit, and Wilmot; 8 inches at Columbia and south of Bristol; and 9 inches at Houghton.

November 28, 2005: A significant winter storm visited the region on November 27-29, 2005, producing a wide range of wintry precipitation across the area. Snow and blizzard conditions occurred across central and north central South Dakota, while freezing rain and ice accumulations took front stage in northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Across most of central and north central South Dakota, snow began in the late afternoon and early evening hours of the 27th, with significant snowfall accumulations occurring by the time the snow ended later in the day on the 28th. Snowfall accumulations ranged from as little as two inches to as much as 20 inches. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to 70 mph, caused widespread blizzard conditions from the early morning until the late afternoon hours of the 28th. Visibilities were reduced to zero many times across the area with snowdrifts of 5 to 10 feet in some places. Some power lines were also brought down in the Pierre and Fort Pierre area due to snow accumulation and high winds. Many roads, including Interstate 90, were closed due to the treacherous travel conditions. Several accidents occurred during the storm, and many motorists were also stranded. Several people had to be rescued. Schools, businesses, government offices, and many other organizations were closed. FEMA, state officials, and the governor surveyed the storm damage. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Eureka, 8 inches at Onaka, 10 inches at Onida and Fort Thompson, 11 inches near Presho, 16 inches at Highmore, and 21 inches at Kennebec. To the east of this heavy snow and blizzard area, widespread freezing rain began during the morning to early afternoon of the 27th, creating significant ice accumulations of 1 to over 2 inches. The freezing rain changed to snow on the 28th, and northwest winds increased to 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 60 mph. The high winds and heavy ice accumulations caused several thousand power poles (some steel), along with several thousand miles of power lines, to come down, resulting in widespread power outages. The ice and winds also damaged several hundred miles of high-voltage power lines and towers. Some power substations were also shut down by the ice and wind. Thousands of trees were also either damaged or downed due to the heavy ice accumulations and the wind. Many of the fallen trees and branches caused damage to homes and vehicles. The radio station in Milbank went off the air due to its collapsing radio tower. Tens of thousands of people in many communities and rural areas were without power for several days, with some people without power for as long as two weeks. Telephone and cellular phone service was also down for several days. Countless schools, businesses, government offices, and other organizations were closed for several days. FEMA, state officials, and the governor also toured this damaged area, resulting in a presidential disaster declaration. Hundreds of utility workers from South Dakota, Minnesota, and nine other surrounding states worked 14- to 18-hour days in cold conditions to bring power back to the area. The National Guard also helped with getting generators, cots, blankets, and meals to storm shelters. Generators supplied power to many communities and rural areas, while others continued without power. Shelters were set up for those who did not have generator power or another place to go. There were also problems with livestock with the water supplies cut off for some time. One electric cooperative stated that repairs to the infrastructure would continue for months and years to restore a system that took decades to build. Roads were treacherous with many accidents and rollovers, some resulting in injuries. Due to the icy road conditions, many roads were closed, including Interstate 29. Around noon on the 27th, on US Highway 212 two miles west of Zell in Faulk County, a 59-year old man was killed when his car spun out of control and hit an oncoming pickup truck. Around 1:30pm on the 28th, on Day County Road One about two miles south of Waubay, a 17-year old girl was killed and three others were injured when one vehicle spun out of control and struck a truck in the oncoming lane. Air traffic was also brought to a halt across much of the area. This was one of the largest ice storms in the region's history. One electric cooperative said it was the most damage they had in their 65 years of existence. After the icing came snowfall of 2 to 12 inches, which combined with the high winds to bring blizzard conditions and low wind chills to northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota from the morning of the 28th until the early morning of the 29th. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Watertown, 8 inches at Waubay, 10 inches at Redfield, and 12 inches at Sisseton.



## WHAT DO YOU SEE?

The citizens of a small community were overwhelmed with discouragement. The drought had destroyed the crops of the farmers, and they were facing bankruptcy. The merchants were unable to purchase inventory for their stores because their customers could not pay their bills. And things went downhill from there.

Everyone was heartbroken and depressed except one elderly man of God. He invited the leaders of the community to his home for a meeting to see if he could encourage them to continue a little longer.

His friends came to his home and sat around his kitchen table. Standing before them he hung a large piece of white paper on a wall and asked them to turn and look at it. As they did, he placed a black dot in the center. He then asked, "Gentlemen, what do you see?"

In unison they said, "A black dot." Not one of them mentioned the white paper that surrounded the one small black dot.

"Gentlemen," he asked, "are there some blessings in your life that we can place around the black dot that might make it not so obvious?" One by one they thought of some of the good things that they had been overlooking in their time of loss and grief.

God's goodness sometimes disappears from our horizon. When days are difficult and nights are long, it is easy to see the dot and not the One who can remove it.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to be aware of all that we have because of Your grace. Give us faith to proceed through difficulties of life through Your strength. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

*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:

11.26.24

5 22 24 39 42 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$514,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 15  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.27.24

2 20 23 24 29 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$16,180,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 30  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.27.24

5 16 22 25 45 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 45 Mins  
DRAW: 42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.27.24

4 5 18 22 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$125,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 45  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.27.24

19 37 41 42 62 13

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 14  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.27.24

1 6 7 13 40 5

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$214,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 14  
DRAW: Mins 42 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

### **Connor Essegian scored 29 points and makes 6 3-pointers to help Nebraska beat South Dakota 96-79**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Connor Essegian scored a career-high 29 points and made six 3-pointers, Brice Williams added 21 points and four 3-pointers, and Nebraska beat South Dakota 96-79 on Wednesday night.

One of Essegian's five assists led to Ahron Ulis' half-court shot just before the halftime buzzer to give Nebraska a 54-35 lead. South Dakota missed a 3-pointer and Andrew Morgan grabbed the defensive rebound with about three seconds left. Morgan got it to Essegian, who quickly found Ulis at midcourt for his first made basket of the game.

Nebraska's lead did not drop below 12 points in the second half. Its largest advantage was 23 at 60-27.

Braxton Meah had 12 points for Nebraska (5-1). Essegian, who entered averaging 10.4 points per game, scored his most points since notching 24 in an overtime game against Michigan while playing for Wisconsin in the 2022-23 season.

South Dakota (6-3) got 20 points from Chase Forte. Dre Bullock added 16 points and Isaac Bruns scored 12.

The Cornhuskers were coming off a 74-63 win over No. 14 Creighton on Friday for the Bluejays' worst home loss since 2019.

Nebraska remains home to play North Florida on Sunday before opening Big Ten play against Michigan State on Dec. 7. South Dakota returns home to host Idaho State on Dec. 4.

### **Trump's picks for key positions in his second administration**

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

President-elect Donald Trump has filled the key posts for his second term in office, prioritizing loyalty to him after he felt bruised and hampered by internal squabbling during his first term.

Some of his choices could face difficult confirmation fights in the Senate, even with Republicans in control, and one candidate has already withdrawn from consideration.

Former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz was Trump's initial pick for attorney general, but he ultimately withdrew following scrutiny over a federal sex trafficking investigation he was embroiled in.

Here's a look at Trump's choices:

CABINET:Secretary of state: Marco Rubio

Trump would turn a former critic into an ally as the nation's top diplomat.

Rubio, 53, is a noted hawk on China, Cuba and Iran, and was a finalist to be Trump's running mate before the slot went to JD Vance. Rubio is vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

His selection punctuates the hard pivot Rubio has made with Trump, whom the senator once called a "con man" during his own unsuccessful campaign for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination. Their relationship improved dramatically while Trump was in the White House.

Defense secretary: Pete Hegseth

Hegseth, 44, was a co-host of Fox News Channel's "Fox and Friends Weekend" and had been a contributor with the network since 2014. He developed a friendship with Trump, who made regular appearances on the show.

Hegseth served in the Army National Guard from 2002 to 2021, deploying to Iraq in 2005 and Afghanistan in 2011 and earning two Bronze Stars. He lacks senior military and national security experience and would oversee global crises ranging from Europe to the Middle East.

A woman told police that she was sexually assaulted in 2017 by Hegseth after he took her phone, blocked the door to a California hotel room and refused to let her leave, according to a detailed investigative re-



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port recently made public. Hegseth told police at the time that the encounter had been consensual and has denied any wrongdoing.

Treasury secretary: Scott Bessent

Bessent, 62, is a former money manager for George Soros, a big Democratic donor, and an advocate for deficit reduction. He founded the hedge fund Key Square Capital Management after having worked on and off for Soros Fund Management since 1991. If confirmed by the Senate, Bessent would be the nation's first openly gay treasury secretary.

He told Bloomberg in August that he decided to join Trump's campaign in part to attack the mounting U.S. national debt. That would include slashing government programs and other spending.

Director of national intelligence: Tulsi Gabbard

Gabbard, 43, is a former Democratic House member from Hawaii who has been accused of echoing Russian propaganda. She unsuccessfully sought the party's 2020 presidential nomination and left the party in 2022. Gabbard endorsed Trump in August and campaigned often with him.

Gabbard has served in the Army National Guard for more than two decades and deployed to Iraq and Kuwait. If confirmed she would come to the role as an outsider compared to her predecessor. The current director, Avril Haines, spent several years in top national security and intelligence positions.

Attorney general: Pam Bondi

Bondi, 59, was Florida's first female attorney general, serving between 2011 and 2019. She was on Trump's legal team during his first impeachment trial in 2020.

Considered a loyalist, Bondi also has served with the America First Policy Institute, a Trump-allied group that has helped lay the groundwork for his future administration.

Bondi was among a group of Republicans who showed up to support Trump at his hush-money criminal trial in New York that ended in May with a conviction on 34 felony counts. A fierce defender of Trump, she also frequently appeared on Fox News and has been critical of the criminal cases against him.

Labor secretary: Lori Chavez-DeRemer

The Republican U.S. House member narrowly lost her reelection bid on Nov. 5 but had received strong backing from union members in her district.

As a potential labor secretary, Chavez-DeRemer would oversee the department's workforce and budget and put forth priorities that affect workers' wages, health and safety, ability to unionize, and employer's rights to fire employers, among other responsibilities.

Chavez-DeRemer is one of a few House Republicans to endorse the "Protecting the Right to Organize" or PRO Act that would allow more workers to conduct organizing campaigns and penalize companies that violate workers' rights. The act would also weaken "right-to-work" laws in more than half the states.

Commerce secretary: Howard Lutnick

Lutnick heads the brokerage and investment bank Cantor Fitzgerald and is a cryptocurrency enthusiast. He is co-chair of Trump's transition operation, charged along with Linda McMahon, a former wrestling executive who previously led Trump's Small Business Administration, with helping the president-elect fill key jobs in his second administration.

As secretary, Lutnick would play a key role in carrying out Trump's plans to raise and enforce tariffs. He would oversee a sprawling Cabinet department whose oversight ranges from funding new computer chip factories and imposing trade restrictions to releasing economic data and monitoring the weather.

Homeland security secretary: Kristi Noem

Noem is a well-known conservative who used her two terms as South Dakota's governor to vault to a prominent position in Republican politics.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Noem did not order restrictions like other states, instead declaring South Dakota "open for business." More recently, Noem faced sharp criticism for writing in her memoir about shooting and killing her dog.

She is set to lead a department crucial to the president-elect's hardline immigration agenda as well as other missions. Homeland Security oversees natural disaster response, the U.S. Secret Service and Transportation Security Administration agents who work at airports.

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CIA director: John Ratcliffe

Ratcliffe, a former U.S. House member from Texas, was director of national intelligence during the final year and a half of Trump's first term. He led U.S. government's spy agencies during the coronavirus pandemic. If confirmed, Ratcliffe will have held the highest intelligence positions in the U.S.

Health and human services secretary: Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Kennedy, 70, ran for president as a Democrat, then as an independent before he dropped out and then endorsed Trump. He's the son of Democratic icon Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968 during his own presidential campaign.

Kennedy's nomination alarmed people who are concerned about his record of spreading unfounded fears about vaccines. For example, he has long advanced the debunked idea that vaccines cause autism.

Agriculture secretary: Brooke Rollins

Rollins, 52, is president and CEO of the America First Policy Institute, a group helping to lay the groundwork for Trump's second administration.

She is a Texas attorney who was Trump's domestic policy adviser and director of his office of American innovation during his first term. Rollins previously was an aide to former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who also served in Trump's first term. Rollins also ran the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Transportation secretary: Sean Duffy

Duffy is a former House member from Wisconsin who was one of Trump's most visible defenders on cable news. Duffy served in the House for nearly nine years, sitting on the Financial Services Committee and chairing the subcommittee on insurance and housing. He left Congress in 2019 for a TV career and has been the host of "The Bottom Line" on Fox Business.

Before entering politics, Duffy was a reality TV star on MTV, where he met his wife, "Fox and Friends Weekend" co-host Rachel Campos-Duffy. They have nine children.

Veterans affairs secretary: Doug Collins

Collins is a former Republican congressman from Georgia who gained recognition for defending Trump during his first impeachment trial. Trump was impeached for urging Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden in 2019 during the Democratic presidential campaign, but was acquitted by the Senate.

Collins also served in the armed forces himself. He is a chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve Command.

Interior secretary: Doug Burgum

The North Dakota governor, 68, is a former Republican presidential primary contender who endorsed Trump after he dropped out of the running. Burgum then became a serious contender to be Trump's vice presidential choice in part because of his executive experience and business savvy. He also has close ties to deep-pocketed energy industry CEOs.

Trump said Burgum would chair a new National Energy Council and have a seat on the National Security Council, which would be a first for the Interior secretary.

Energy secretary: Chris Wright

A campaign donor and CEO of Denver-based Liberty Energy, Wright is a vocal advocate of oil and gas development, including fracking — a key pillar of Trump's quest to achieve U.S. "energy dominance" in the global market.

He also has been one of the industry's loudest voices against efforts to fight climate change. Wright said the climate movement around the world is "collapsing under its own weight." The Energy Department is responsible for advancing energy, environmental and nuclear security of the United States.

Education secretary: Linda McMahon

McMahon, a billionaire professional wrestling mogul, would make a return appearance in a second Trump administration. She led the Small Business Administration from 2017 to 2019 in Trump's first term and twice ran unsuccessfully in Connecticut as a Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate. She served on the Connecticut Board of Education for a year starting in 2009 and has spent years on the board of trustees for Sacred Heart University. She has expressed support for charter schools and school choice.

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Environmental Protection Agency administrator: Lee Zeldin

Zeldin does not appear to have any experience in environmental issues, but is a longtime supporter of the former president. The 44-year-old former U.S. House member from New York wrote on X, "We will restore US energy dominance, revitalize our auto industry to bring back American jobs, and make the US the global leader of AI" and "we will do so while protecting access to clean air and water."

Trump often attacked the Biden administration's promotion of electric vehicles, and incorrectly referred to a tax credit for EV purchases as a government mandate. Trump also often said his administration would "drill, baby, drill," referring to his support for expanded petroleum exploration.

Housing and Urban Development: Scott Turner

Turner is a former NFL player and White House aide. He ran the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council during Trump's first term in office. Trump, in a statement, credited Turner, the highest-ranking Black person he's yet selected for his administration, with "helping to lead an Unprecedented Effort that Transformed our Country's most distressed communities."

U.S. Trade Representative: Jamieson Greer

Greer is a partner at King & Spalding, a Washington law firm. If confirmed by the Senate, he would be responsible for negotiating directly with foreign governments on trade deals and disputes, as well as memberships in international trade bodies such as the World Trade Organization. He previously was chief of staff to Robert Lighthizer, who was the trade representative in Trump's first term.

WHITE HOUSE STAFF: Chief of staff: Susie Wiles

Wiles, 67, was a senior adviser to Trump's 2024 presidential campaign and its de facto manager.

She has a background in Florida politics, helping Ron DeSantis win his first race for Florida governor. Six years later, she was key to Trump's defeat of him in the 2024 Republican primary.

Wiles' hire was Trump's first major decision as president-elect and one that could be a defining test of his incoming administration considering her close relationship with him. Wiles is said to have earned Trump's trust in part by guiding what was the most disciplined of Trump's three presidential campaigns.

National security adviser: Mike Waltz

Waltz is a three-term Republican congressman from east-central Florida. A former Army Green Beret, he served multiple tours in Afghanistan and worked in the Pentagon as a policy adviser when Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates were defense chiefs.

He is considered hawkish on China, and called for a U.S. boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing due to its involvement in the origin of COVID-19 and its mistreatment of the minority Muslim Uighur population.

National Economic Council: Kevin Hassett

Hassett, 62, is a major advocate of tax cuts who was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers in the first Trump term. In the new role as chairman of the National Economic Council, Trump said Hassett will play an important role in helping American families recover from inflation as well as in renewing and improving tax cuts Trump enacted in 2017, many of which are set to expire after 2025.

Border czar: Tom Homan

Homan, 62, has been tasked with Trump's top priority of carrying out the largest deportation operation in the nation's history.

He led the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Trump's first administration. Democrats have criticized Homan for defending Trump's "zero tolerance" policy on border crossings in the first term, which led to the separation of thousands of parents and children seeking asylum at the border.

Office of Management and Budget: Russell Vought

Vought, 48, held the position during Trump's first presidency. He the founded the Center for Renewing America, a think tank that describes its mission as "renew a consensus of America as a nation under God." Vought also was closely involved with Project 2025, a conservative blueprint for Trump's second term that Trump tried to distance himself from during the campaign.

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Deputy chief of staff for policy: Stephen Miller

Miller, an immigration hardliner, was a vocal spokesperson during the presidential campaign for Trump's priority of mass deportations. The 39-year-old was a senior adviser during Trump's first term.

Miller has been a central figure in some of Trump's policy decisions, notably his move to separate thousands of immigrant families. Trump argued throughout the campaign that the nation's economic, national security and social priorities could be met by deporting people living illegally in the U.S.

Deputy chief of staff: Dan Scavino

Scavino was an adviser in all three of the president-elect's campaigns and was described by the transition team as one of "Trump's longest serving and most trusted aides." He will be deputy chief of staff and assistant to the president. Scavino previously ran Trump's social media profile in the White House.

Deputy chief of staff: James Blair

Blair was political director for Trump's 2024 campaign and for the Republican National Committee. He will be deputy chief of staff for legislative, political and public affairs and an assistant to the president. Blair was key to Trump's economic messaging during his winning White House comeback campaign.

Deputy chief of staff: Taylor Budowich

Budowich is a veteran Trump campaign aide who launched and directed Make America Great Again, Inc., a super PAC that supported Trump's 2024 campaign. He will be deputy chief of staff for communications and personnel and assistant to the president.

White House press secretary: Karoline Leavitt

Leavitt, 27, was Trump's campaign press secretary and currently a spokesperson for his transition. She would be the youngest White House press secretary in history. Leavitt worked in the White House press office during Trump's first term. In 2022, she ran for Congress in New Hampshire, winning a 10-way Republican primary before losing to Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas.

White House Counsel: William McGinley

McGinley was Cabinet secretary during Trump's first administration and was outside legal counsel for the Republican National Committee's election integrity effort during the 2024 campaign.

**AMBASSADORS, ENVOYS AND OTHER KEY POSTS:**Special envoy to the Middle East: Steven Witkoff

The 67-year-old Witkoff is the president-elect's golf partner and they were golfing at Trump's club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Sept. 15, when the former president was the target of a second attempted assassination. Trump also named Witkoff co-chair, with former Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler, of his inaugural committee.

Special envoy for Ukraine and Russia: Keith Kellogg

Kellogg, 80, is a highly decorated retired three-star general and one of the architects of a staunchly conservative policy book that lays out an "America First" national security agenda for Trump's second term. He has long been Trump's top adviser on defense issues and served as national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence. Kellogg also was chief of staff of the National Security Council under Trump and stepped in as an acting national security adviser for Trump after Michael Flynn resigned the post.

Ambassador to Israel: Mike Huckabee

Huckabee is a staunch defender of Israel and his intended nomination comes as Trump has promised to align U.S. foreign policy more closely with Israel's interests.

Huckabee, who ran unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 and 2016, has been a popular figure among evangelical Christian conservatives, many of whom support Israel due to Old Testament writings that Jews are God's chosen people and that Israel is their rightful homeland.

Huckabee has rejected a Palestinian homeland in territory occupied by Israel. His daughter, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, served as White House press secretary in Trump's first term.

Ambassador to the United Nations: Elise Stefanik

Stefanik, 40, is a U.S. representative from New York and one of Trump's staunchest defenders dating to his first impeachment trial. She was elected chair of the House Republican Conference in 2021, the

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third-highest position in House leadership, after then-Rep. Liz Cheney was removed from the post after she publicly criticized Trump for falsely claiming he won the 2020 election.

Stefanik's questioning of university presidents over antisemitism on their campuses helped lead to two of those presidents resigning, further raising her national profile.

Ambassador to NATO: Matthew Whitaker

A former acting attorney general during Trump's first administration and tight end on the University of Iowa football team, Whitaker, 55, has a background in law enforcement but not in foreign policy.

A fierce Trump localist, Whitaker, is also a former U.S. attorney in Iowa and served as acting attorney general between November 2018 and February 2019 without Senate confirmation, until William Barr was confirmed for the role. That was when special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election interference was drawing to a close.

Whitaker also faced questions about his past business dealings, including his ties to an invention-promotion company that was accused of misleading consumers.

Ambassador to Canada: Pete Hoekstra

A Republican congressman from Michigan who served from 1993 to 2011, Hoekstra was ambassador to the Netherlands during Trump's first term.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: Dr. Mehmet Oz

Oz, 64, is a former heart surgeon who hosted "The Dr. Oz Show," a long-running daytime TV talk show. He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate as the Republican nominee in 2022 and is an outspoken supporter of Trump, who endorsed Oz's bid for elected office.

Food and Drug Administration: Dr. Marty Makary

Makary is a Johns Hopkins surgeon and author who argued against pandemic lockdowns. He routinely appeared on Fox News during the COVID-19 pandemic and wrote opinion articles questioning masks for children. He cast doubt on vaccine mandates but supported vaccines generally. Makary also cast doubt on whether booster shots worked, which was against federal recommendations on the vaccine.

Surgeon General: Dr. Janette Nesheiwat

Nesheiwat is a general practitioner who serves as medical director for CityMD, a network of urgent care centers in New York and New Jersey. She has been a contributor on Fox News.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Dr. Dave Weldon

Weldon is a former Florida congressman who recently ran for a Florida state legislative seat and lost; Trump backed Weldon's opponent.

In Congress, Weldon weighed in on one of the nation's most heated debates of the 1990s over quality of life and a right-to-die and whether Terri Schiavo, who was in a persistent vegetative after cardiac arrest, state should have been allowed to have her feeding tube removed. He sided with the parents who did not want it removed.

National Institutes of Health: Dr. Jay Bhattacharya

Bhattacharya, 56, is a critic of pandemic lockdowns and vaccine mandates. As head of the NIH, the leading medical research agency in the United States, Trump said Bhattacharya would work with Kennedy Jr. to direct U.S. medical research and make important discoveries that will improve health and save lives. Bhattacharya is professor at Stanford University School of Medicine and was one of three authors of the Great Barrington Declaration, an October 2020 open letter maintaining that lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic were causing irreparable harm.

WITHDRAWNMatt Gaetz for Attorney General:

Gaetz, 42, withdrew from consideration to become the top law enforcement officer of the United States amid fallout over a federal sex trafficking investigation that cast doubt on his ability to be confirmed by the Senate. In choosing Gaetz, Trump had passed over more established lawyers whose names had been floated as possible contenders for the job.

Gaetz resigned from Congress after Trump announced him on Nov. 13. The House Ethics Committee has been investigating an allegation that he paid for sex with a 17-year-old. Gaetz has denied wrongdoing.

## Latest 'massive' Russian aerial attack cuts power to 1 million homes in Ukraine

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia conducted a "massive" attack against Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Thursday, firing nearly 200 missiles and drones and leaving more than a million households without power, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia's second major aerial attack on Ukraine's power grid in less than two weeks amplified fears that the Kremlin aims to cripple the country's power generation capacity before winter.

"Attacks on energy facilities are happening all over Ukraine," Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko said in a post on Facebook. He added that emergency power outages were implemented nationwide.

Russia in previous years has targeted Ukraine's electricity generation, aiming to deny civilians critical heating and drinking water supplies during the bitter winter months and break Ukrainian spirits. The attacks also seek to hobble Ukraine's defense industry that is now producing missiles, drones and armored vehicles, among other military assets.

In some regions on Thursday, Kalibr cruise missiles with cluster munitions smashed into civilian targets, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, calling it "an insidious escalation." Cluster munitions release numerous small bombs over a wide area, making them dangerous to civilians both during and after an attack.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed his forces struck 17 Ukrainian targets Thursday, including military facilities and their "support systems," with 100 drones and 90 missiles.

But the Ukrainian air force claimed to have shot down 76 cruise missiles and three other types of missile as well as 32 drones. It added that it lost track of 62 Russian drones, which most likely were jammed by electronic warfare.

Ukrainian officials have warned recently that Russia was stockpiling cruise and ballistic missiles, presumably for another pre-winter aerial campaign against Ukraine's power grid. Ukrainian officials have in the past accused Russia of "weaponizing winter." Such massive attacks have been a regular feature of the war.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during the almost three years of war with Russia, and rolling electricity blackouts are common. Kyiv's Western allies have sought to help Ukraine protect power generation with air defense systems and funds for rebuilding.

The war has been going in Russia's favor in recent months as its bigger army uses its advantages in manpower and equipment to push Ukrainian forces backward in eastern areas, though its offensive has been slow and costly.

Putin said that over the past two days Russia had fired 100 missiles and 466 drones at Ukraine, saying they were a response to Ukraine using American-made missiles to hit targets on Russian soil after gaining permission to do so from President Joe Biden.

Speaking at a summit in Kazakhstan of a security alliance of former Soviet nations, Putin threatened to use a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, called Oreshnik, against "decision-making centers" in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.

The missile launched for the first time at Ukraine last week has six warheads and flies at 10 times the speed of sound, according to Putin, who declared that it can't be intercepted by any modern air defense systems.

Explosions in Thursday's Russian attack were reported in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Lutsk, and many other cities in central and western Ukraine.

Zelenskyy urged Western countries to accelerate delivery of promised air defense weaponry. Ukrainian officials in the past have grumbled that military aid is slow to arrive.

"Each such attack proves that air defense systems are needed now in Ukraine, where they save lives, and not at storage bases," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.

The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andrii Yermak, said in a Telegram post that Russia had stockpiled missiles to strike Ukrainian infrastructure and wage war against civilians during the cold season. "They

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were helped by their crazy allies, including from North Korea," he wrote.

Western governments and South Korea say North Korea in recent months has intensified its military support for Russia.

The head of the Lviv region in western Ukraine, Maksym Kozytskyi, said the attack left more than half a million households without electricity.

Over 280,000 households in the northwestern Rivne region were without electricity because of the attack, according to regional Gov. Oleksandr Koval. Running water supplies were also patchy in affected areas. Some schools in Rivne city switched to online classes.

There were also strikes on the bordering Volyn region, where 215,000 households had no electricity, regional head Ivan Rudnytskyi said. All critical infrastructure that lost power was switched to generators.

Energy infrastructure was also targeted in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region, local officials said. Air defenses were activated there, and emergency power outages were introduced.

Local officials ordered the opening of "points of invincibility" — shelter-type places where people can charge their phones and other electrical devices and get refreshments during blackouts.

In Kyiv, where the air raid alert lasted over nine hours, missile debris fell in one neighborhood, local officials said. No casualties were reported.

## At least 13 dead after landslides bury 40 homes in villages in eastern Uganda

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — At least 13 people have died in eastern Uganda after landslides buried 40 homes in six villages, relief officials said Thursday.

The Uganda Red Cross Society said 13 bodies have been recovered and the rescue effort is continuing. Local media reported that authorities expect the death toll could rise to 30.

The landslides happened after heavy rains on Wednesday night in the mountainous district of Bulambuli, where landslides are common. The district is about 280 kilometers (173 miles) east of the capital, Kampala.

A journalist in the area told The Associated Press that local officials said an excavator would be brought to assist in the rescue efforts, but the roads were covered in mud and the rain was still falling.

The affected area is about 50 acres (20ha) with homesteads and farmlands spread downhill.

Photos and videos of people digging through mud in search of victims were shared on social media platforms. Some of the houses were completely covered by mud while others only had a roof showing above the ground.

The Daily Monitor newspaper reported that most of the bodies recovered so far were those of children.

The prime minister's office issued a disaster alert on Wednesday stating that heavy rains across the country had cut off major roads.

Two rescue boats capsized on Wednesday during a rescue mission on River Nile where Pakwach bridge was submerged.

## 'AI Jesus' avatar tests man's faith in machines and the divine

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

LUCERNE, Switzerland (AP) — Would you trust an "AI Jesus" with your innermost thoughts and troubles?

Researchers and religious leaders on Wednesday released findings from a two-month experiment through art in a Catholic chapel in Switzerland, where an avatar of "Jesus" on a computer screen — tucked into a confessional — took questions by visitors on faith, morality and modern-day woes, and offered responses based on Scripture.

The idea, said the chapel's theological assistant, was to recognize the growing importance of artificial intelligence in human lives, even when it comes to religion, and explore the limits of human trust in a machine.

After the two-month run of the "Deus in Machina" exhibit at Peter's Chapel starting in late August, some

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900 conversations from visitors – some came more than once – were transcribed anonymously. Those behind the project said it was largely a success: Visitors often came out moved or deep in thought, and found it easy to use.

A small sign invited visitors to enter a confessional – chosen for its intimacy – and below a lattice screen across which penitent believers would usually speak with a priest, a green light signaled the visitor's turn to speak, and a red one came on when "AI Jesus" on a computer screen on the other side was responding.

Often, a lag time was needed to wait for the response – a testament to the technical complexities. After exiting, nearly 300 visitors filled out questionnaires that informed the report released Wednesday.

Of love, war, suffering and solitude

Philipp Haslbauer, an IT specialist at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts who pulled together the technical side of the project, said the AI responsible for taking the role of "AI Jesus" and generating responses was GPT4o by OpenAI, and an open-source version of the company's Whisper was used for speech comprehension.

The Interactive Avatar from Heygen was used to produce voice and video from a real person, he said. Haslbauer said no specific safeguards were used "because we observed GPT4o to respond fairly well to controversial topics."

Visitors broached many topics, including true love, the afterlife, feelings of solitude, war and suffering in the world, the existence of God, plus issues like sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church or its position on homosexuality.

Most visitors described themselves as Christians, though agnostics, atheists, Muslims, Buddhists and Taoists took part too, according to a recap of the project released by the Catholic parish of Lucerne.

About one-third were German speakers, but "AI Jesus" — which is conversant in about 100 languages — also had conversations in languages like Chinese, English, French, Hungarian, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

'Work of the Devil'?

"What was really interesting (was) to see that the people really talked with him in a serious way. They didn't come to make jokes," said chapel theologian Marco Schmid, who spearheaded the project. Most visitors were aged 40 to 70, and more Catholics respondents found the experience stimulating than did Protestants, the report showed.

Schmid was quick to point out that the "AI Jesus" – billed as a "Jesus-like" persona – was an artistic experiment to get people thinking about the intersection between the digital and the divine, not substitute for human interaction or sacramental confessions with a priest, nor was it intended to save pastoral resources.

The Catholic Church from the Vatican on down has been wrestling with the challenges – and possible opportunities – presented by the explosion in public interest in AI since generative artificial intelligence captured the world's attention two years ago when ChatGPT made its debut.

The Vatican has appointed a friar from a medieval Franciscan order as its top expert on AI, and a Lutheran church in Bavaria served up sermons delivered by a chatbot last year. Pope Francis, in his annual peace message for this year, pushed for an international treaty to ensure the ethical use of AI technology.

Haslbauer acknowledged his own sort of Doubting Thomas moment: He's sensitive to public reaction and has noted chatter on social media that the project is "blasphemous" or the "work of the devil."

"If you read comments on the internet about it, some are very negative — which is scary," Haslbauer, whose long-haired look featured as a basis for the image of the virtual Jesus.

In a demonstration of the technology in the chapel, Haslbauer queried AI Jesus about its message for a troubled world, and about whether AI could be helpful as a way for people to find God.

"All knowledge and wisdom ultimately come from God," the chatbot said in a soothing voice, after a pause to respond, and the image briefly crackled. "If used wisely, AI can indeed be a tool to explore the wonders of creation, deepen our understanding of Scripture, and foster connections among people."

"Yet it remains essential to seek God with all your heart and soul beyond any technology," it added.

A good side, and Downsides

Kenneth Cukier, a journalist, author and expert with the U.S.-based nonprofit group called "AI and Faith,"



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said if "AI Jesus" helps people connect deeper to themselves and the world, it "has to be a good thing."

"It will lead to better individuals and a better world," he said. "However — and there's a big however — this does feel a little bit infantile, and pardon my pun, machine-like."

"The risk is that it pulls people, ultimately, farther away from that which is more meaningful, deeper and authentic in spirituality," said Cukier, co-author of "Big Data: A Revolution that Will Transform How We Work, Live and Think."

For Schmid, the exhibit was a pilot project — and he doesn't foresee a second coming of AI Jesus anytime soon.

"For us, it was also clear it was just a limited time that we will expose this Jesus," he said, adding that any return would need to be done after deeper thought.

"We are discussing ... how we could revive him again," he said, noting interest from parishes, school-teachers, researchers and others as the project got media attention in Switzerland and beyond. "They all are interested and would like to have this AI Jesus. So we have now a little bit to reflect on how we want to continue."

## **China releases 3 Americans it imprisoned for years, and Beijing says US returned 4 people to China**

By ERIC TUCKER, AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three American citizens imprisoned for years by China have been released and are returning to the United States, the White House said Wednesday, announcing a rare diplomatic agreement with Beijing in the final months of the Biden administration.

The Chinese government also announced Thursday that the U.S. had returned four people to China, including at least three Chinese citizens who it said had been held for "political purposes," and a person who had been sought by Beijing for crimes and had been living in the United States. It did not identify the four.

The three Americans released by Beijing are Mark Swidan, Kai Li and John Leung, all of whom had been designated by the U.S. government as wrongfully detained by China. Swidan had been facing a death sentence on drug charges while Li and Leung were imprisoned on espionage charges.

"Soon they will return and be reunited with their families for the first time in many years," the White House said in a statement.

The release comes just two months after China freed David Lin, a Christian pastor from California who had spent nearly 20 years behind bars after being convicted of contract fraud.

U.S.-China relations have been roiled for years over major disagreements between the world's two largest economies on trade, human rights, the production of fentanyl precursors, security issues that include espionage and hacking, China's aggressiveness toward Taiwan and its smaller neighbors in the South China Sea, and Beijing's support for Russia's military-industrial sector.

The release of Americans deemed wrongfully detained in China has been a top agenda item in each conversation between the U.S. and China, and Wednesday's development suggests a willingness by Beijing to engage with the outgoing Democratic administration before Republican President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House in January.

Trump took significant actions against China on trade and diplomacy during his first term. He has pledged to continue those policies in his second term, leading to unease among many who fear that an all-out trade war will greatly affect the international economy and could spur potential Chinese military action against Taiwan.

Still, the two countries have maintained a dialogue that has included a partial restoration of military-to-military contacts. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met this month to discuss potential improvements.

In a separate but related move, the State Department on Wednesday lowered its travel warning to China to "level two," advising U.S. citizens to "exercise increased caution" from the norm when traveling to the mainland. The alert had previously been at "level three," telling Americans they should "reconsider travel"

to China in part because of the “risk of wrongful detention” of Americans.

The new alert removes that wording but retains a warning that the Chinese government “arbitrarily enforces local laws, including exit bans on U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries, without fair and transparent process under the law.”

The Biden administration had raised the cases of the detained Americans with China in multiple meetings over the past several years, including this month when Biden spoke to Xi on during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru.

Politico was first to report the men’s release, which it said was part of a prisoner swap with the U.S. The White House did not immediately confirm that any Chinese citizens in American custody had been returned home.

However, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning announced in Beijing on Thursday that “three Chinese citizens have returned to the motherland safe and sound.”

“China always firmly opposes U.S. suppression and persecution of Chinese nationals out of political purposes, and we will continue taking necessary measures to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese nationals,” she said.

She added that a fourth person, “a fugitive who escaped to the U.S. many years ago, has also been repatriated to China.”

The fourth person’s nationality was not identified. Mao said “this shows that there will be no safe haven forever for criminals. The Chinese government will continue our efforts to repatriate the fugitives and recover criminals and illegal possessions until every fugitive is held accountable.”

Senators from both U.S. political parties praised the release of the Americans. Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas said he was “overjoyed” — Swidan’s mother lives in Texas — and credited senior Biden administration officials with having “worked tirelessly to secure this achievement.”

Li, a Chinese immigrant who started an export business in the U.S. and lived in New York, was detained in September 2016 after flying into Shanghai. He was placed under surveillance, interrogated without a lawyer and accused of providing state secrets to the FBI. A U.N. working group called his 10-year prison sentence arbitrary and his family has said the charges were politically motivated.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who said he had worked for years to try to secure Li’s release, welcomed the news.

“Even when it felt like there was no hope, we never stopped believing that one day Mr. Li would return home,” Schumer said in a statement.

Leung was sentenced last year to life in prison on spying charges. He was detained in 2021, by the local bureau of China’s counterintelligence agency in the southeastern city of Suzhou after China had closed its borders and imposed tight domestic travel restrictions and social controls to fight the spread of COVID-19.

After Leung’s sentencing, the U.S. recommended — though without citing specific cases — that Americans reconsider traveling to China because of arbitrary law enforcement and exit bans and the risk of wrongful detentions.

Swidan had been jailed for the last 12 years on a drug charge and, along with Li and Leung, was considered by the State Department to be wrongfully detained.

## **Boise State withdraws from Mountain West volleyball tournament rather than play San Jose State**

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Boise State, which twice boycotted regular-season matches with San Jose State, pulled out of the Mountain West women’s volleyball tournament Wednesday night even after securing a spot in the semifinals against the Spartans.

San Jose State, which received six forfeit victories because of boycotts from Mountain West opponents, is seeded second in the conference tournament and received a first-round bye. Now the Spartans will

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advance all the way to Saturday's championship match rather than take the court Friday.

Boise State released a statement that read: "The decision to not continue to play in the 2024 Mountain West Volleyball Championship tournament was not an easy one. Our team overcame forfeitures to earn a spot in the tournament field and fought for the win over Utah State in the first round on Wednesday. They should not have to forgo this opportunity while waiting for a more thoughtful and better system that serves all athletes."

San Jose State said it would issue a statement Thursday.

Boise State's announcement came hours after the Broncos defeated Utah State 25-19, 18-25, 25-20, 25-23 in the quarterfinals.

Boise State didn't commit immediately after the match to playing San Jose State. What went into its decision to withdraw from the tournament was unclear, whether it was by a team vote or more of a university decision.

The title match likely will go on as scheduled. San Jose State will play either top-seeded Colorado State or No. 5 San Diego State. Both teams played the Spartans this season rather than sit out.

Mountain West members Boise State, Wyoming, Utah State and Nevada as well as Southern Utah canceled games this season against the Spartans. Nevada's players stated they "refuse to participate in any match that advances injustice against female athletes," without providing further details.

Idaho Gov. Brad Little signed an executive order Aug. 28 called the Defending Women's Sports Act that challenges how Title IX rules are interpreted in that state.

"Biological males – men and boys – have physical differences that give them an unfair advantage when competing with women and girls in athletics," Little said at the time.

A lawsuit was recently filed in Colorado by players from various schools against the conference and San Jose State officials calling for a Spartans player not to be allowed participation in the tournament, citing unspecified reports asserting there was a transgender player on the San Jose State volleyball team, even naming her.

U.S. Magistrate Judge S. Kato Crews in Denver ruled Monday that the player is allowed to play, and a federal appeals court upheld the decision the following day.

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

Wyoming and Nevada did not qualify for the tournament.

Participation of transgender women in women's sports is apparently why the five teams canceled their games against San Jose State, and the topic became a hot political topic ahead of the recent election.

## 'It's a bird! It's a plane!'

### In Alaska, it's both, with a pilot tossing turkeys to rural homes

By MARK THIESSEN and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — In the remotest reaches of Alaska, there's no relying on DoorDash to have Thanksgiving dinner — or any dinner — delivered. But some residents living well off the grid nevertheless have turkeys this holiday, thanks to the Alaska Turkey Bomb.

For the third straight year, a resident named Esther Keim has been flying low and slow in a small plane over rural parts of south-central Alaska, dropping frozen turkeys to those who can't simply run out to the grocery store.

Alaska is mostly wilderness, with only about 20% of it accessible by road. In winter, many who live in remote areas rely on small planes or snowmobiles to travel any distance, and frozen rivers can act as makeshift roads.

When Keim was growing up on an Alaska homestead, a family friend would airdrop turkeys to her family and others nearby for the holidays. Other times, the pilot would deliver newspapers, sometimes with a

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pack of gum inside for Keim.

Her family moved to more urban Alaska nearly 25 years ago but still has the homestead. Using a small plane she had rebuilt with her father, Keim launched her turkey delivery mission a few years back after learning of a family living off the land nearby who had little for Thanksgiving dinner.

"They were telling me that a squirrel for dinner did not split very far between three people," Keim recalled. "At that moment, I thought ... 'I'm going to airdrop them a turkey.'"

She decided not to stop there. Her effort has grown by word of mouth and by social media posts. This year, she's delivering 32 frozen turkeys to people living year-round in cabins where there are no roads.

All but two had been delivered by Tuesday, with delivery plans for the last two birds thwarted by Alaska's unpredictable weather.

Among the beneficiaries are Dave and Christina Luce, who live on the Yentna River about 45 miles (72 kilometers) northwest of Anchorage. They have stunning mountain views in every direction, including North America's tallest mountain, Denali, directly to the north. But in the winter it's a 90-minute snowmobile ride to the nearest town, which they do about once a month.

"I'm 80 years old now, so we make fewer and fewer trips," Dave Luce said. "The adventure has sort of gone out of it."

They've known Keim since she was little. The 12-pound (5.44-kilogram) turkey she delivered will provide more than enough for them and a few neighbors.

"It makes a great Thanksgiving," Dave Luce said. "She's been a real sweetheart, and she's been a real good friend."

Keim makes 30 to 40 turkey deliveries yearly, flying as far as 100 miles (161 kilometers) from her base north of Anchorage toward Denali's foothills.

Sometimes she enlists the help of a "turkey dropper" to ride along and toss the birds out. Other times, she's the one dropping turkeys while her friend Heidi Hastings pilots her own plane.

Keim buys about 20 turkeys at a time, with the help of donations, usually by people reaching out to her through Facebook. She wraps them in plastic garbage bags and lets them sit in the bed of her pickup until she can arrange a flight.

"Luckily it's cold in Alaska, so I don't have to worry about freezers," she said.

She contacts families on social media to let them know of impending deliveries, and then they buzz the house so the homeowners will come outside.

"We won't drop the turkey until we see them come out of the house or the cabin, because if they don't see it fall, they're not going to know where to look," she said.

It can be especially difficult to find the turkey if there's deep snow. A turkey was once missing for five days before it was found, but the only casualty so far has been a lost ham, Keim said.

Keim prefers to drop the turkey on a frozen lake if possible so it's easy to locate.

"As far as precision and hitting our target, I am definitely not the best aim," she joked. "I've gotten better, but I have never hit a house, a building, person or dog."

Her reward is the great responses she gets from families, some who record her dropping the turkeys and send her videos and texts of appreciation.

"They just think it's so awesome that we throw these things out of the plane," Keim said.

Ultimately, she hopes to set up a nonprofit organization to solicit more donations and reach people across a bigger swath of the state. And it doesn't have to stop at turkeys.

"There's so many kids out in the villages," she said. "It would be cool to maybe add a stuffed animal or something they can hold."

## Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade kicks off a century after its first trip through Manhattan

NEW YORK (AP) — A century after the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the annual holiday tradition kicks off Thursday in New York City with new Spider-Man and Minnie Mouse balloons, zoo and pasta-themed floats, performances from Jennifer Hudson and Idina Menzel, and more.

This year's star-studded lineup is a far cry from the parade's initial incarnation, which featured floats showing scenes from Mother Goose, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Miss Muffet and the Spider, and other fairy tales.

Some things remain the same, though. As in 1924, there will be plenty of marching bands and lots of clowns, followed by the grand finale of Santa Claus riding through Manhattan and ushering in the holiday season.

This year's parade features 17 giant, helium-filled character balloons, 22 floats, 15 novelty and heritage inflatables, 11 marching bands, 700 clowns, 10 performance groups, award-winning singers and actors, and the WNBA champion New York Liberty.

One new float will spotlight the Rao's food brand, featuring a knight and a dragon in battle made with actual pasta elements. Another will celebrate the Bronx Zoo's 125th anniversary with representations of a tiger, a giraffe, a zebra and a gorilla.

"The work that we do, the opportunity to impact millions of people and bring a bit of joy for a couple of hours on Thanksgiving morning, is what motivates us every day," said Will Coss, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade executive producer.

The parade begins at 8:30 a.m. on Manhattan's Upper West Side and ends 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) away around noon at Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street, which serves as a stage and backdrop for performances.

It'll happen rain or shine — the parade has only been canceled three times, from 1942 to 1944 during World War II — but organizers will be monitoring wind speeds throughout the festivities to make sure it's safe for the big balloons to fly.

So far, the forecast calls for rain with temperatures in the upper-40s and winds around 10 mph (16 kph), well within the acceptable range for letting Snoopy, Bluey and their friends soar. New York City law prohibits Macy's from flying the full-size balloons if sustained winds exceed 23 mph (37 kph) or wind gusts are over 35 mph (56 kph).

The parade airs on NBC with hosts Savannah Guthrie, Hoda Kotb and Al Roker and streams on the network's Peacock service. Carlos Adyan and Andrea Meza will host a Spanish simulcast on Telemundo.

## The Australian Senate debates the world's first social media ban for children under 16

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — The Australian Senate was debating a ban on children younger than 16 years old from social media Thursday after the House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported the age restriction.

The bill that would make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent young children from holding accounts.

It is likely to be passed by the Senate on Thursday, the Parliament's final session for the year and potentially the last before elections, which are due within months.

The major parties' support for the ban all but guarantees the legislation will become law. But many child welfare and mental health advocates are concerned about unintended consequences.

Unaligned Sen. Jacqui Lambie complained about the limited amount of time the government gave the

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Senate to debate the age restriction, which she described as “undercooked.”

“I thought this was a good idea. A lot of people out there thought it was a good idea until we looked at the detail and, let’s be honest, there’s no detail,” Lambie told the Senate.

Opposition Sen. Maria Kovacic said the bill was not radical but necessary.

“The core focus of this legislation is simple: It demands that social media companies take reasonable steps to identify and remove underage users from their platforms,” Kovacic told the Senate.

“This is a responsibility these companies should have been fulfilling long ago, but for too long they have shirked these responsibilities in favor of profit,” she added.

Sen. David Shoebridge, from the minor Greens party, said mental health experts agreed that the ban could dangerously isolate many children who used social media to find support.

“This policy will hurt vulnerable young people the most, especially in regional communities and especially the LGBTQI community, by cutting them off,” Shoebridge told the Senate.

The House of Representatives on Wednesday overwhelmingly carried the bill 102 votes to 13.

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland urged senators to pass the bill which she said reflected the Australian community’s view.

“The ... government is on the side of supporting parents and protecting young people,” Rowland told the House.

Once the legislation becomes law, the platforms would have one year to work out how they could implement the ban before penalties are enforced.

The platforms complained that the law would be unworkable, and urged the Senate to delay the vote until at least June next year when a government-commissioned evaluation of age assurance technologies made its report on how young children could be excluded.

Critics argue the government is attempting to convince parents it is protecting their children ahead of general elections due by May. The government hopes that voters will reward it for responding to parents’ concerns about their children’s addiction to social media. Some argue the legislation could cause more harm than it prevents.

Criticisms include that the legislation was rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny, is ineffective, poses privacy risks for all users, and undermines parental authority to make decisions for their children.

Opponents of the bill also argue the ban would isolate children, deprive them of the positive aspects of social media, drive them to the dark web, discourage children too young for social media to report harm and reduce incentives for platforms to improve online safety.

## **‘Everything is expensive!’ Bolivia faces a shocking economic collapse**

By PAOLA FLORES and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

EL ALTO, Bolivia (AP) — Fuel is rapidly becoming one of Bolivia’s scarcest commodities.

Long lines of vehicles snake for several kilometers outside gas stations all over Bolivia, once South America’s second-largest producer of natural gas. Some of the queues don’t budge for days.

While frustration builds, drivers like Victor García now eat, sleep and socialize around their stationary trucks, waiting to buy just a few gallons of diesel — unless the station runs dry.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen, but we’re going to be worse off,” said García, 66, who inched closer to the pump Tuesday as the hours ticked by in El Alto, a bare-bones sprawl beside Bolivia’s capital in the Andean altiplano.

Bolivia’s monthslong fuel crunch comes as the nation’s foreign currency reserves plummet, leaving Bolivians unable to find U.S. dollars at banks and exchange houses. Imported goods that were once commonplace have become scarce.

The fuel crisis has created a sense that the country is coming undone, disrupting economic activity and everyday life for millions of people, hurting commerce and farm production and sending food prices soaring.

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Mounting public anger has driven crowds into the streets in recent weeks, piling pressure on leftist President Luis Arce to ease the suffering ahead of a tense election next year.

"We want effective solutions to the shortage of fuel, dollars and the increase in food prices," said Reinerio Vargas, the vice rector of Gabriel René Moreno Autonomous University in the eastern province of Santa Cruz, where hundreds of desperate truckers and residents flooded main squares Tuesday to vent their anger at Arce's inaction and demand early elections.

In a similar eruption of discontent, protesters shouting "Everything is expensive!" marched through the streets of the capital, La Paz, last week.

Bolivians say Arce's image has suffered not only because of the crisis but also because his government insists that it doesn't exist.

"Diesel sales are in the process of returning to normal," Economy Minister Marcelo Montenegro said Tuesday.

Arce has repeatedly vowed that his government will end the fuel shortages and lower the prices of basic goods by arbitrary deadlines. On Nov. 10, he again promised he would "resolve this issue" in 10 days.

As the deadlines come and go, the black market currency exchange rate has risen to nearly 40% more than the official rate.

Arce's office did not respond to interview requests.

"The queues are getting longer and longer," said 38-year-old driver Ramiro Morales, who needed a bathroom after four hours in line Tuesday but feared losing his place if he went searching for one. "People are exhausted."

It's a shocking turnaround for the landlocked nation of 12 million people that was a South American economic success story in the 2000s, when the commodities bonanza generated tens of billions of dollars under the nation's first Indigenous president, former President Evo Morales.

Morales, Arce's one-time mentor, is his present-day rival in the fight to be the ruling party's candidate next year.

But when the commodities boom ended, prices slumped and gas production dwindled. Now, Bolivia spends an estimated \$56 million a week to import most of its gasoline and diesel from Argentina, Paraguay and Russia.

Economy Minister Montenegro on Tuesday pledged that the government would continue providing fuel subsidies that critics say it can't afford.

Banners from two years ago boasting that Bolivia's inflation is the lowest in South America still greet tourists arriving at El Alto International Airport. Now, inflation is among the highest in the region.

Fuel shortages prevent farmers from getting their produce to distribution centers and markets, triggering a sharp price hike for food staples.

Last week in La Paz and neighboring El Alto, hungry Bolivians jostled in long lines to buy rice after much-delayed shipments finally arrived from Santa Cruz, the country's economic engine some 850 kilometers (528 miles) away.

With the diesel shortage affecting everything from the operation of tractors to the sourcing of machinery parts, the shortage is also hurting farmers during the crucial planting season.

"Without diesel, there is no food for 2025," said Klaus Frerking, the vice president of the Eastern Agricultural Chamber of Bolivia.

The prices of potatoes, onions and milk have doubled in El Alto's main wholesale food market in the past month, vendors said, overshooting the country's nearly 8% inflation rate.

Nervous Bolivians are cutting back on their consumption.

"You have to search a lot to find the cheapest food," said 67-year-old Angela Mamani, struggling to pull together meals for her six grandchildren at El Alto's open-air market Tuesday. She planned to buy vegetables but didn't have enough cash and went home empty-handed.

This week, Arce's government presented a 2025 budget — with a 12% increase in spending — that drew backlash from lawmakers and business leaders who said it would lead to more debt and more inflation.

While the governing Movement Toward Socialism party tears itself apart in the power struggle between

Arce and Morales, both politicians have seen the economic morass as a way to strengthen their positions ahead of 2025 elections.

"They deny there are problems. They blame external contexts and conflicts," said Bolivian economic analyst Gonzalo Chávez.

Morales' supporters last month launched 24-day protest partly targeting Arce's handling of the economy that blocked main roads and stranded commercial shipments, costing the government billions of dollars.

Security forces broke up the rallies almost a month ago. But on Tuesday, Arce's government continued to blame Morales' blockades for spawning the ubiquitous fuel lines.

"We need change," said Geanina García, a 31-year-old architect scouring the grocery hub of El Alto for cheap deals — a once-routine errand that she said had turned into a nightmare.

"People don't live off politics, they live day to day, off of what they produce and what they earn."

## **Trump claims a win on immigration after a call with Mexico's president. But she suggests no change**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump declared a win on stopping illegal immigration through Mexico on Wednesday after talking with that country's leader. But Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Mexico was already doing its part and had no interest in closing its borders.

The two spoke just days after Trump threatened to impose sweeping new tariffs on Canada and Mexico as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs.

Trump said Sheinbaum "agreed to stop Migration through Mexico." Sheinbaum indicated separately on social media that she told Trump that Mexico is already "taking care of" migrant caravans, calling it an "excellent conversation."

"We reiterate that Mexico's position is not to close borders but to build bridges between governments and between peoples," Sheinbaum added.

While the state of the proposed tariffs remained unclear, Trump said in a post on his Truth Social account that this was "effectively closing our Southern Border." He called it a "very productive conversation."

The exchange between the two leaders appeared to confirm for Trump the value of threatening to disrupt trade with import taxes. His initial social media post moved financial markets and gave him a response he was quick to describe as a win. Even if the proposed tariffs fail to materialize, Trump can tell supporters that the mere possibility of them is an effective policy tool and continue to rely on tariff threats.

Sheinbaum wrote on social media that the leaders "discussed Mexico's strategy on migration issues, and I told him the caravans are not reaching the northern (U.S.) border, because Mexico is taking care of them."

"We also talked about reinforcing cooperation on security issues, within the framework of our sovereignty, and the campaign we are carrying out to prevent fentanyl consumption," she said.

Illegal migration across the Mexico border is down in part because the Biden administration secured some stepped-up cooperation from Mexico — the sort Trump seems to be celebrating.

Arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border have dropped 40% from an all-time high in December. U.S. officials mostly credit Mexican vigilance around rail yards and highway checkpoints.

Driven by mounting pressure from the U.S. to block migrants going north, in the past few years Mexican authorities have turned to rounding them up across the country and sending them to southern Mexico, in a strategy seen by experts as an attempt to wear migrants out until they give up.

Neither side clarified the status of the tariffs. But their implementation could fuel higher prices and slow economic growth, potentially blowing up the trade agreement among the U.S., Canada and Mexico that was finalized in 2020 during Trump's previous time in the White House.

Trump on Monday said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders upon taking office on Jan. 20. He also proposed an additional 10% tariff on China tied to its exporting of materials used in the production of fentanyl.

In announcing his plans, he railed against the flow of fentanyl and migrants crossing into the U.S. illegally,



even though southern border apprehensions have been hovering near four-year lows.

On Wednesday, Trump also posted that he plans a large scale ad campaign to explain "how bad Fentanyl is for people to use," predicting it would educate people on "how really bad the horror of this Drug is."

The dangerously powerful opioid was developed to treat intense pain from ailments like cancer but has increasingly been mixed with other drugs in the illicit drug supply.

Through September, the United States has imported \$378.9 billion in goods from Mexico, \$322.2 billion from China and \$309.3 billion from Canada.

## **Trump's tariffs in his first term did little to alter the economy, but this time could be different**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump loved to use tariffs on foreign goods during his first presidency. But their impact was barely noticeable in the overall economy, even if their aftershocks were clear in specific industries.

The data show they never fully delivered on his promised factory jobs. Nor did they provoke the avalanche of inflation that critics feared.

This time, though, his tariff threats might be different.

The president-elect is talking about going much bigger — on a potential scale that creates more uncertainty about whether he'll do what he says and what the consequences could be.

"There's going to be a lot more tariffs, I mean, he's pretty clear," said Michael Stumo, the CEO of Coalition for a Prosperous America, a group that has supported import taxes to help domestic manufacturing.

The president-elect posted on social media Monday that on his first day in office he would impose 25% tariffs on all goods imported from Mexico and Canada until those countries satisfactorily stop illegal immigration and the flow of illegal drugs such as fentanyl into the United States.

Those tariffs could essentially blow up the North American trade pact that Trump's team negotiated during his initial term. But on Wednesday, Trump posted on social media that he had spoken with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and she had agreed to stop unauthorized migration across the border into the United States.

Trump also posted on Monday that Chinese imports would face additional tariffs of 10% until Beijing cracks down on the production of materials used in making fentanyl.

Democrats and business groups warn of risks from Trump's tariff threats

Business groups were quick to warn about rapidly escalating inflation. House Democrats put together legislation to strip a president's ability to unilaterally apply tariffs this drastic, warning that they would likely lead to higher prices for autos, shoes, housing and groceries.

Sheinbaum initially said Wednesday that her administration is already working up a list of possible retaliatory tariffs "if the situation comes to that." Similarly, the Canadian government has also started to explore retaliatory tariffs if Trump takes action.

House Democrats on Tuesday introduced a bill that would require congressional approval for a president to impose tariffs due to claims of a national emergency, a largely symbolic action given Republicans' coming control of both the House and Senate.

"This legislation would enable Congress to limit this sweeping emergency authority and put in place the necessary Congressional oversight before any president — Democrat or Republican — could indiscriminately raise costs on the American people through tariffs," said Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash.

But for Trump, tariffs are now a tested tool that seems less politically controversial even if the mandate he received in November's election largely involved restraining inflation.

The tariffs he imposed on China in his first term were continued by President Joe Biden, a Democrat who even expanded tariffs and restrictions on the world's second largest economy. Biden administration officials looked at removing Trump's tariffs in order to bring down inflationary pressures, only to find they were unlikely to help significantly.

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Tariffs were “so new and unique that it freaked everybody out in 2017,” said Stumo, but they are now seen as part of the policy toolkit by the United States and other countries.

Trump’s first term tariffs had a modest impact on economy

Trump imposed tariffs on solar panels and washing machines at the start of 2018, moves that might have pushed up prices in those sectors even though they also overlapped with plans to open washing machine plants in Tennessee and South Carolina.

His administration also levied tariffs on steel and aluminum, including against allies. He then increased tariffs on China, leading to a trade conflict and a limited 2020 agreement that failed to produce the promised Chinese purchases of U.S. goods.

Still, the dispute changed relations with China as more U.S. companies looked for alternative suppliers in other countries. Economic research also found the United States may have sacrificed some of its “soft power” as the Chinese population began to watch fewer American movies.

The Federal Reserve kept inflation roughly on target, but factory construction spending never jumped in a way that suggested a lasting gain in manufacturing jobs. Separate economic research found the tariff war with China did nothing economically for the communities hurt by offshoring, but it did help Trump and Republicans in those communities politically.

When Trump first became president in 2017, the federal government collected \$34.6 billion in customs, duties and fees. That sum more than doubled under Trump to \$70.8 billion in 2019, according to Office of Management and Budget records.

While that sum might seem meaningful, it was relatively small compared with the overall economy. America’s gross domestic product is now \$29.3 trillion, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The total tariffs collected in the United States would equal less than 0.3% of GDP.

Trump wants much more far-reaching tariffs going forward

The new tariffs being floated by Trump now are dramatically larger and there could be far more significant impacts.

If Mexico, Canada, and China faced the additional tariffs proposed by Trump on all goods imported to the United States, that could be roughly equal to \$266 billion in tax collections, a number that does not assume any disruptions in trade or retaliatory moves by other countries. The cost of those taxes would likely be borne by U.S. families, importers and domestic and foreign companies in the form of higher prices or lower profits.

Former Biden administration officials said they worried that companies could piggyback on Trump’s tariffs — if they’re imposed — as a rationale to raise their prices. This would mirror price increases by many companies in 2022 that were made possible because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up food and energy prices and gave the companies cover to further raise their own prices.

“I’m very worried about the total indiscriminate tariffs on more than China — that it gives cover to firms to jack up prices,” said Jen Harris, a former Biden White House official who is now director of the Economy and Society Initiative at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

But what Trump didn’t really spell out is what might cause him to back down on tariffs and declare a victory. What he is creating instead with his tariff threats is a sense of uncertainty as companies and countries await the details to figure out what all of this could mean.

“We know the key economic policy priorities of the incoming Trump administration, but we don’t know how or when they will be addressed,” said Greg Daco, chief U.S. economist at EY-Parthenon.

## Police deny sitting on evidence as Netflix doc brings renewed attention to JonBenet Ramsey’s killing

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Amid renewed interest in the killing of JonBenet Ramsey triggered in part by a new Netflix documentary, police in Boulder, Colorado, refuted assertions this week that there is viable evidence and leads about the 1996 killing of the 6-year-old girl that they are not pursuing.

JonBenet Ramsey, who competed in beauty pageants, was found dead in the basement of her family's home in the college town of Boulder the day after Christmas in 1996. Her body was found several hours after her mother called 911 to say her daughter was missing and a ransom note had been left behind. The details of the crime and video footage of JonBenet competing in pageants propelled the case into one of the highest-profile mysteries in the United States.

The police comments came as part of their annual update on the investigation, a month before the 28th anniversary of JonBenet's killing. Police said they released it a little earlier because of the increased attention on the case, apparently referring to the three-part Netflix series "Cold Case: Who Killed JonBenet Ramsey."

In a video statement, Boulder Police Chief Steve Redfearn said the department welcomes news coverage and documentaries about the killing of JonBenet, who would have been 34 this year, as a way to generate possible new leads. He said the department is committed to solving the case but needs to be careful about what it shares about the investigation to protect a possible future prosecution.

"What I can tell you though, is we have thoroughly investigated multiple people as suspects throughout the years and we continue to be open-minded about what occurred as we investigate the tips that come into detectives," he said.

The Netflix documentary focuses on the mistakes made by police and the "media circus" surrounding the case.

JonBenet was bludgeoned and strangled. Her death was ruled a homicide, but nobody was ever prosecuted.

Police were widely criticized for mishandling the early investigation into her death amid speculation that her family was responsible. However, a prosecutor cleared her parents, John and Patsy Ramsey, and brother Burke in 2008 based on new DNA evidence from JonBenet's clothing that pointed to the involvement of an "unexplained third party" in her slaying.

The announcement by former district attorney Mary Lacy came two years after Patsy Ramsey died of cancer. Lacy called the Ramseys "victims of this crime."

John Ramsey has continued to speak out for the case to be solved. In 2022, he supported an online petition asking Colorado's governor to intervene in the investigation by putting an outside agency in charge of DNA testing in the case. In the Netflix documentary, he said he has been advocating for several items that have not been prepared for DNA testing to be tested and for other items to be retested. He said the results should be put through a genealogy database.

In recent years, investigators have identified suspects in unsolved cases by comparing DNA profiles from crime scenes and to DNA testing results shared online by people researching their family trees.

In 2021, police said in their annual update that DNA hadn't been ruled out to help solve the case, and in 2022 noted that some evidence could be "consumed" if DNA testing is done on it.

Last year, police said they convened a panel of outside experts to review the investigation to give recommendations and determine if updated technologies or forensic testing might produce new leads. In the latest update, Redfearn said that review had ended but that police continue to work through and evaluate a "lengthy list of recommendations" from the panel.

## **Ex-TV host Charlie Rose settles sexual harassment lawsuit years after his #MeToo-era ouster**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former TV host Charlie Rose has resolved a sexual harassment lawsuit brought by three women in the wake of his #MeToo-era ouster from CBS News in 2017 and the cancellation of his long-running, eponymous PBS talk show.

In settling, the plaintiffs said they assign no "ill intent" to Rose and realize now that his conduct could be subject to interpretation.

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Lawyers for Rose and the women — younger employees who accused him of “predatory behavior” and “blatant and repeated sexual harassment” — filed court papers this week confirming that the lawsuit has been resolved. An online court docket listed the case as settled. The terms were not disclosed.

The lawsuit had been set to go to trial Monday in Manhattan after years of sparring over the women’s allegations and the dismissal of their retaliation claims against Rose.

Plaintiffs Katherine Brooks Harris, Sydney McNeal and Yuqing Wei said in a statement that the litigation process and the required pretrial exchange of evidence known as discovery had enabled both sides to “better understand each others’ points of view.”

“On reflection, and after having the benefit of discovery, we realize that different people could interpret the conduct in different ways, and therefore we have resolved the claims,” the women said. “We do not assign any bad motive or ill intent to Charlie Rose.”

A lawyer for Rose, 82, and his production company, Charlie Rose Inc., declined comment.

The veteran TV host has apologized in the past for his behavior, including in a statement on the eve of his November 2017 firing after at least eight women had come forward to accuse him of misconduct.

“It is essential that these women know I hear them and I deeply apologize for my inappropriate behavior,” Rose said. “I am greatly embarrassed. I have behaved insensitively at times, and I accept responsibility for that, though I do not believe that all of these allegations are accurate. I always felt that I was pursuing shared feelings, even though I now realize I was mistaken.”

Rose’s downfall was part of America’s #MeToo reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures — a social media-fueled movement that also took down “Today” host Matt Lauer and movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, among others.

Rose is now hosting an interview show on YouTube where his recent guests have included author Michael Lewis and broadcaster Bob Costas.

Harris, McNeal and Wei sued Rose and CBS in state court in New York in May 2018, about six months after CBS fired him as an anchor on its morning show, then called “CBS This Morning,” and PBS and Bloomberg Television dropped his nightly “Charlie Rose Show.”

Harris was a broadcast associate at “CBS This Morning,” and she later worked as an associate producer for Rose’s PBS show. McNeal was Rose’s executive assistant. Wei was a news associate and later an anchor assistant for Rose at “CBS This Morning.”

The women, all in their early 20s when they were hired, accused the much older Rose of subjecting them to repeated physical and verbal sexual harassment, including inquires about their sex lives and boasts about his own. They accused CBS of knowingly failing to prevent Rose’s harassment.

CBS settled in December 2018 for an undisclosed sum. The network said at the time that the women had requested the terms be kept confidential.

Had the lawsuit gone to trial, Rose’s lawyer said in court papers that he would challenge the credibility of Harris, McNeal and Wei’s claims with evidence showing they had previously expressed little or no concern about the ex-anchor.

Among the evidence, lawyer Jonathan Bach wrote in a Nov. 13 filing, were documents showing that Wei told a CBS human resources officer that she experienced nothing “sexually inappropriate” while working for Rose and that McNeal confided in her therapist at the time that she had no personal experience of sexual harassment by Rose.

Other evidence cited by Bach showed that Harris had told her therapist that any harassment by Rose was “very subtle” and that she wrote to Rose two months after working for him that his interactions with her were “always professional and respectful.”

## White House pressing Ukraine to draft 18-year-olds so it has enough troops to battle Russia

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is urging Ukraine to quickly increase the size of its military by drafting more troops and revamping its mobilization laws to allow for the conscription of those as young as 18.

A senior Biden administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private consultations, said Wednesday that the outgoing Democratic administration wants Ukraine to lower the mobilization age to 18 from the current age of 25 to expand the pool of fighting-age men available to help a badly outnumbered Ukraine in its nearly three-year-old war with Russia.

The official said "the pure math" of Ukraine's situation now is that it needs more troops in the fight. Currently Ukraine is not mobilizing or training enough soldiers to replace its battlefield losses while keeping pace with Russia's growing military, the official added.

The White House has pushed more than \$56 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's February 2022 invasion and expects to send billions more to Kyiv before Biden leaves office in less than months.

But with time running out, the Biden White House is also sharpening its viewpoint that Ukraine has the weaponry it needs and now must dramatically increase its troop levels if it's going to stay in the fight with Russia.

White House National Security Council spokesman Sean Savett in a statement said the administration will continue sending Ukraine weaponry but believes "manpower is the most vital need" Ukraine has at the moment.

"So, we're also ready to ramp up our training capacity if they take appropriate steps to fill out their ranks," Savett said.

The Ukrainians have said they need about 160,000 additional troops to keep up with its battlefield needs, but the U.S. administration believes they probably will need more than that.

More than 1 million Ukrainians are now in uniform, including the National Guard and other units.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been hearing concerns from allies in other Western capitals as well that Ukraine has a troop level problem and not an arms problem, according to European officials who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic conversations.

The European allies have stressed that the lack of depth means that it may soon become untenable for Ukraine to continue to operate in Russia's Kursk border region. The situation in Kursk has become further complicated by the arrival of thousands of North Korean troops, who have come to help Moscow try to claw back the land seized in a Ukrainian incursion this year.

The stepped-up push on Ukraine to strengthen its fighting ranks comes as Ukraine braces for President-elect Donald Trump to take office on Jan. 20. The Republican said he would bring about a swift end to the war and has raised uncertainty about whether his administration would continue the vital U.S. military support for Ukraine.

"There are no easy answers to Ukraine's serious manpower shortage, but lowering the draft age would help," said Bradley Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "These are obviously difficult decisions for a government and society that has already endured so much due to Russia's invasion."

Ukraine has taken steps to broaden the pool of draft-eligible men, but the efforts have only scratched the surface against a much larger Russian military.

In April, Ukraine's parliament passed a series of laws, including one lowering its draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25, aimed at broadening the universe of men who could be called on to join the grinding war.

Those laws also did away with some draft exemptions and created an online registry for recruits. They were expected to add about 50,000 troops, far short of what Zelenskyy said at the time was needed.

Zelenskyy has consistently stated that he has no plans to lower the mobilization age. A senior Ukrainian

official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Ukraine does not have enough equipment to match the scale of its ongoing mobilization efforts.

The official said Ukrainian officials see the push to the lower the draft age as part of an effort by some Western partners to deflect attention from their own delays in providing equipment or belated decisions. The official cited as an example the delay in giving Ukraine permission to use longer-range weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory.

The Ukrainians do not see lowering the draft age to recruit more soldiers as a substitute for countering Russia's advantage in equipment and weaponry, the official said.

Conscription has been a sensitive matter in Ukraine throughout the war. Russia's own problems with adequate troop levels and planning early in the war prevented Moscow from taking full advantage of its edge. But the tide has shifted and the U.S. says the Ukrainian shortage can no longer be overlooked.

Some Ukrainians have expressed worry that further lowering the minimum conscription age and taking more young adults out of the workforce could backfire by further harming the war-ravaged economy.

The senior Biden administration official added that the administration believes that Ukraine can also optimize its current force by more aggressively dealing with soldiers who desert or go absent without leave.

## Massive balloons take shape ahead of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

NEW YORK (AP) — They're up, up and — almost — away.

The massive helium balloons that will float through New York City for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade took shape on Wednesday, when they were filled with helium ahead of the big event.

"You see these giant balloons come to life and they're really, really huge," said Stephanie Senkevich, one of dozens of people helping inflate the stars of Thursday's show. "You can see them start on the ground right next to you where you look taller than them. And slowly, slowly, they start to raise right above you."

This year, 17 giant character balloons and other inflatables will travel from Manhattan's Upper West Side to Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street, alongside floats, performers, marching bands and more.

New balloons for 2025 will feature characters including Minnie Mouse, Goku from "Dragon Ball" and Spider-Man, joining longtime favorites such as Smokey Bear and SpongeBob SquarePants.

## Trump transition says Cabinet picks, appointees were targeted by bomb threats, swatting attacks

By JILL COLVIN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A number of President-elect Donald Trump's most prominent Cabinet picks and appointees have been targeted by bomb threats and "swatting attacks," Trump's transition team said Wednesday. The FBI said it was investigating.

"Last night and this morning, several of President Trump's Cabinet nominees and Administration appointees were targeted in violent, unAmerican threats to their lives and those who live with them," Trump transition spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said in a statement.

The attacks ranged from bomb threats to swatting, in which attackers initiate an emergency law enforcement response against a target victim under false pretenses, she said. The tactic has become a popular one in recent years.

Leavitt said law enforcement and other authorities acted quickly to ensure the safety of those who were targeted and Trump and his transition team are grateful.

Among those targeted were New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, Trump's pick to serve as the next ambassador to the United Nations; Matt Gaetz, Trump's initial pick to serve as attorney general; Oregon Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer, whom Trump chose to lead the Department of Labor, and former New York congressman Lee Zeldin, who has been tapped to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

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Law enforcement officials are also looking into whether Susie Wiles, Trump's incoming chief of staff, and Pam Bondi, the former Florida attorney general whom Trump has chosen as Gaetz's replacement, and other incoming administration officials were also victims — as well as how each was targeted, according to a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity as the investigation continues.

Wiles and Bondi did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The FBI said in a statement that it was "aware of numerous bomb threats and swatting incidents targeting incoming administration nominees and appointees" and was investigating with its law enforcement partners.

White House spokesperson Saloni Sharma said President Joe Biden had been briefed and the White House is in touch with federal law enforcement and Trump's transition team.

Biden "continues to monitor the situation closely," Sharma said, adding the president and his administration "condemn threats of political violence."

Stefanik's office said that, on Wednesday morning, she, her husband, and their 3-year-old son were driving home from Washington for Thanksgiving when they were informed of a bomb threat to their residence in Saratoga County.

Police swept Stefanik's home on Wednesday morning in response to the bomb threat but did not locate any explosive devices, New York State Police said.

Zeldin said in a social media post that he and his family had also been threatened.

"A pipe bomb threat targeting me and my family at our home today was sent in with a pro-Palestinian themed message," he wrote on X. "My family and I were not home at the time and are safe."

In Florida, the Okaloosa County sheriff's office said on Facebook that it "received notification of a bomb threat referencing former Congressman Matt Gaetz's supposed mailbox at a home in the Niceville area" Wednesday.

While a family member resides at the address, the office said, Gaetz "is NOT a resident." No threatening devices were found.

Gaetz was Trump's initial pick to serve as attorney general, but he withdrew from consideration after allegations that he paid women for sex and slept with underage women. Gaetz has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, and a Justice Department investigation into sex trafficking allegations ended with no charges against him.

The threats follow a political campaign marked by disturbing and unprecedented violence. In July, a gunman opened fire at a Trump rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, grazing the then-candidate in the ear with a bullet and killing one of his supporters. The Secret Service later thwarted a subsequent assassination attempt at Trump's West Palm Beach, Florida, golf course when an agent spotted the barrel of a gun poking through a perimeter fence while Trump was golfing.

Trump was also the subject of an Iranian murder-for-hire plot, with a man saying he had been tasked with planning the assassination of the Republican president-elect.

Also this week, authorities arrested a man they say posted videos on social media threatening to kill Trump, according to court documents. In one video posted on Nov. 13, Manuel Tamayo-Torres threatened to shoot the former president while holding what appeared to be an AR-15 style rifle, authorities said.

Among the other videos he posted was one from an arena in Glendale, Arizona on Aug. 23, the same day Trump held a campaign rally there, according to court papers. An attorney for Tamayo-Torres did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Public figures across the political spectrum have been targeted in recent years by hoax bomb threats and false reports of shootings at their homes.

About a year ago the FBI responded to an uptick in such incidents at the homes of public officials, state capitols and courthouses across the country around the holidays. Many were locked down and evacuated in early January after receiving bomb threats. No explosives were found and no one was hurt.

Some of those targeted last year were Georgia Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu and Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost.

The judges overseeing the civil fraud case against Trump in New York and the criminal election interference case against him in Washington were both targeted earlier this year. Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith, who recently abandoned the two criminal cases he brought against Trump, was also the subject of a fake emergency call on Christmas Day last year.

Earlier this year, schools, government buildings and the homes of city officials in Springfield, Ohio, received a string of hoax bomb threats after Trump falsely accused members of Springfield's Haitian community of abducting and eating cats and dogs.

And in 2022, a slew of historically Black colleges and universities nationwide were targeted with dozens of bomb threats, with the vast majority arriving during the celebration of Black History Month.

The U.S. Capitol Police said in a statement Wednesday that anytime a member of Congress is the victim of a swatting incident, "we work closely with our local and federal law enforcement partners." The force declined to provide further details, in part to "minimize the risk of copy-cats."

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson called the threats "dangerous and unhinged."

"This year, there was not just one but TWO assassination attempts on President Trump," he wrote on X. "Now some of his Cabinet nominees and their families are facing bomb threats." He added: "It is not who we are in America."

## Trump selects longtime adviser Keith Kellogg as special envoy for Ukraine and Russia

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday that he has chosen Keith Kellogg, a highly decorated retired three-star general, to serve as his special envoy for Ukraine and Russia.

Kellogg, who is one of the architects of a staunchly conservative policy book that lays out an "America First" national security agenda for the incoming administration, will come into the role as Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters its third year in February.

Trump, making the announcement on his Truth Social account, said, "He was with me right from the beginning! Together, we will secure PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH, and Make America, and the World, SAFE AGAIN!"

Kellogg, an 80-year-old retired Army lieutenant general who has long been Trump's top adviser on defense issues, served as national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence, was chief of staff of the National Security Council and then stepped in as an acting security adviser for Trump after Michael Flynn resigned.

As special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, Kellogg will have to navigate an increasingly untenable war between the two nations.

The Biden administration has begun urging Ukraine to quickly increase the size of its military by drafting more troops and revamping its mobilization laws to allow for the conscription of those as young as 18.

The White House has pushed more than \$56 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's February 2022 invasion and expects to send billions more before Biden leaves office in less than two months. The U.S. has recently stepped up weapons shipments and has forgiven billions in loans provided to Kyiv.

Trump has criticized the billions the Biden administration has spent in supporting Ukraine and has said he could end the war in 24 hours, comments that appear to suggest he would press Ukraine to surrender territory that Russia now occupies.

As a co-chairman of the American First Policy Institute's Center for American Security, Kellogg wrote several of the chapters in the group's policy book. The book, like the Heritage Foundation's "Project 2025," is designed to lay out a Trump national security agenda and avoid the mistakes of 2016 when he entered the White House largely unprepared.

Kellogg in April wrote that "bringing the Russia-Ukraine war to a close will require strong, America First leadership to deliver a peace deal and immediately end the hostilities between the two warring parties."

Trump's proposed national security adviser, U.S. Rep. Michael Waltz of Florida, tweeted Wednesday



that "Keith has dedicated his life to defending our great country and is committed to bringing the war in Ukraine to a peaceful resolution."

Kellogg featured in multiple Trump investigations dating to his first term. He was among the administration officials who listened in on the July 2019 call between Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in which Trump prodded his Ukrainian counterpart to pursue investigations into the Bidens.

The call, which Kellogg would later say did not raise any concerns on his end, was at the center of the first of two House impeachment cases against Trump, who was acquitted by the Senate both times.

On Jan. 6, 2021, hours before pro-Trump rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol, Kellogg, who was then Pence's national security adviser, listened in on a heated call in which Trump told his vice president to object or delay the certification in Congress of President Joe Biden's victory.

He later told House investigators that he recalled Trump saying to Pence words to the effect of: "You're not tough enough to make the call."

## Ohio governor signs bill limiting bathroom use by transgender students

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Transgender students from kindergarten through college at Ohio public and private schools will be banned from using multiperson bathrooms that fit their gender identities under a measure that Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said Wednesday that he has signed.

DeWine signed the law out of public view Tuesday over the objections of Democrats, teachers' unions and civil rights groups, which had hoped that his objections to a ban on gender-affirming care for minors last year would carry through and prompt another veto. It takes effect in 90 days.

The governor issued no statement regarding the signing.

The Republican-backed measure — labeled the "Protect All Students Act" — requires public and private schools, colleges and universities to designate separate bathrooms, locker rooms and overnight accommodations "for the exclusive use" of either males and females, based on one's gender assigned at or near birth, in school buildings and other facilities used for school-sponsored events. It contains no enforcement mechanism.

"It revolves around safety, security, and, I think, common sense. It protects our children and grandchildren in private spaces where they are most vulnerable," said Republican Ohio state Sen. Jerry Cirino, the bill's sponsor.

School employees, emergency situations and people assisting young children or someone with a disability are exempted from the restrictions and schools can still offer single-use or family bathrooms.

Aaron Baer, president of the Center for Christian Virtue, which backed the bill, said in a statement, "Common sense is on a winning streak in America today. No student should be forced to go into the bathroom or locker room with a student of the opposite sex, and Ohio's kids are better protected now because of Governor DeWine's decision to sign this bill."

The ACLU of Ohio was among the groups that had lobbied for a veto, condemning the measure as a violation of the right of privacy of LGBTQ+ Ohioans that will make them less safe.

Equality Ohio, the state's LGBTQ+ advocacy and legal aid organization, said the law poses risks to transgender youth "or anyone perceived as transgender by authorities."

"We are deeply disappointed that Governor DeWine has allowed this dangerous bill to become law that puts vulnerable trans youth at risk for abuse and harassment," Executive Director Dwayne Steward said in a statement. The group said it will continue to fight "for a state that embraces and respects all its residents."

With DeWine's signature, Ohio adds to the pushback that's cropped up nationally among many Republican politicians, including President-elect Donald Trump, as transgender people have gained more visibility and acceptance on some fronts in recent years.

Twenty-six states have now adopted laws restarting or banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments Dec. 4 on whether Tennessee's ban on such treatments can continue to be enforced; any ruling is likely to impact policies in other states, too.

At least 11 states have adopted laws, like Ohio's, barring transgender girls and women from girls and

women's bathrooms at public schools – and in some cases, in other government facilities.

And at least 24 states have laws dictating which sports competitions transgender girls and women can join. Ohio's bathroom bill was debated for 19 months before finally clearing the GOP-led Legislature on Nov. 13, during Transgender Awareness Week. It was tacked onto a separate piece of legislation by the Ohio House that related to the state's College Credit Plus program, which allows high-schoolers to earn college credit.

Trump's campaign leaned heavily into opposing transgender rights in the last weeks of his race against Vice President Kamala Harris, including Trump's vow at a Madison Square Garden rally that "we will keep men out of women's sports" and campaign ads saying, "Kamala's for they/them. President Trump is for you."

It's not clear what policies Trump might adopt once he takes office in January. But bills relating to gender issues are already being queued up in state legislatures that come into session early in 2025.

In Texas, for instance, there are proposed measures to bar using state money to pay for "gender re-assignment," to use state money to pay to reverse gender transitions, and to give people who receive gender-affirming care before they turn 15 until they turn 25 to sue their doctors for malpractice, among others. Democrats in the Republican-dominated legislature there have also introduced some bills intended to protect people from discrimination on the basis of "gender identity or expression."

In Ohio, a law that both bars gender-affirming care for minors and blocks transgender girls and women from participating in girls and women's sports competitions took effect in August. It took a rocky path, though. The measure became law only after the legislature overrode DeWine's veto. And after that, a judge put enforcement on hold for about four months before allowing it.

## **Conservatives love him. Liberals disdain him. For residents of a Maine town, it's more complicated**

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

NORTHEAST HARBOR, Maine (AP) — When Donald Trump was elected president this month, Caroline Pryor's mind turned immediately to the man who lives down the road — Leonard Leo.

Few people in America have done more to advance conservative causes than Leo. Years ago, the then-unknown conservative lawyer began executing a plan that has helped reshape the U.S. courts and Republican politics, an effort that culminated in Trump's first term with the appointment of three conservative Supreme Court justices.

The success moved Leo out of the shadows, turning him into a hero to conservatives and a villain to liberals. But for his neighbors on a sparsely populated island off the coast of Maine, the equation is more complicated.

The conservative's presence — despite significant charitable giving to local nonprofits and big spending locally — has generated fissures in a place known for tranquility. That anxiety has only spiked since Trump's victory.

"It feels very personal," said Pryor, a 65-year-old island resident.

Leo draws protesters

Those feelings were on display on a brisk morning in October, just two weeks before November's election. With sunlight flickering through the yellowing leaves, Pryor and a dozen other people — mostly women — gathered outside Leo's estate.

They came armed with a cartoonish life-sized puppet of Leo, a rainbow arch for runners to pass through and blue and pink chalk with which they scribbled slogans — "You Are Amazing, Leonard Leo Is Not" — across the road.

"We are making people on the island aware of who he is, and they might question taking his money," Mary Jane Schepers, one of the protesters, said as she urged runners to flip off Leo's home.

In response to written questions, Leo responded: "While I disagree with them and with what some of them do and say, they are people created by God with dignity and worth and their presence has been an invitation to pray for them." He declined an interview request.

Money sparks controversy

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Leo, 59, and his family have vacationed on Mount Desert Island for decades.

In 2018, he purchased a \$3.3 million, 8,000-square-foot Tudor-style estate in Northeast Harbor, one of Mount Desert Island's wealthiest towns. Backlash swiftly followed Leo's arrival. The protests grew near the end of Trump's first term and spiked after the conservative-dominated Supreme Court in 2022 overturned the constitutional right to abortion.

"He felt he could come here, and it would be a place to get away" from the negative attention for his politics, said Murray Ngoima, a regular protester.

Leo told AP that the protests have "strengthened our conviction to be as active as possible in helping various institutions on the island."

He and his wife, Sally, gave over \$50,000 in 2020 to the Island Housing Trust, an organization seeking to boost the amount of affordable housing on the island, according to the trust's annual giving report. They made similar donations over the next three years, trustrecordsshow. Leo and his wife were also listed as donors to the Mount Desert Island Hospital. The Leos have also been listed as regular donorsto theNortheast Harbor Library.

Those donations have raised suspicion, with protesters urging the groups to return the money and comparing the donations to the way Leo has used the money to influence Republican politics.

"He is a wolf in sheep's clothing," said Susan Covino Buell, an island resident. Buell, 75, resigned her position on the housing nonprofit's campaign committee when Leo got involved. The trust's executive director did not respond to a request for comment.

Anti-Leo activists also penned an open letter urging the hospital to return the donation. Mariah Cormier, a hospital spokesperson, said the institution accepts "charitable donations that aid in strengthening the health and vibrancy of our community."

Leo dismissed the idea he and his wife were aimed at buying acceptance. "People who have taken the time to actually get to know me personally can judge for themselves why I do what I do," Leo wrote.

It isn't just Leo's philanthropy that is controversial. His business at local establishments presents a quandary for shop owners and service workers. Many said they oppose Leo's political positions, but they need his money to sustain their enterprises.

Leo, a devout Roman Catholic, has also used money to influence the island's Catholic churches. Sacred Spaces Foundation, a nonprofit that counts Leo as its president and sole member, purchased St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Northeast Harbor for \$2.65 million in 2023 from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Portland, according to records obtained from the county government.

Leo is a regular at another parish, Holy Redeemer, a large stone sanctuary in Bar Harbor. His presence has driven off some longtime congregants, residents said. Asked about people leaving the island church, Leo wrote he was "thankful for every person who takes the time to come to Holy Redeemer."

'He isn't going anywhere'

Not everyone is upset about Leo's Maine move.

Since 2020, Leo's network has funneled over \$1 million to conservative causes in the state, including around \$800,000 to a policy institute that funds a conservative website and over \$300,000 to a conservative state representative's political network.

Those donations have only deepened the opposition to Leo among his most frequent protesters. Though energized, they have come to accept that they may never drive Leo from the island.

"He is succeeding," admitted Bo Greene, a 63-year-old who lives in Bar Harbor, citing the way nonprofits have taken his money. "We are making him uncomfortable, and he hates us," she said. "But he is still here."

## US consumer price increases accelerated last month with inflation pressures resilient

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumer price increases accelerated last month, the latest sign that inflation's steady decline over the past two years has stalled in recent months.

According to the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, consumer prices rose 2.3% in October from a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Wednesday. That is up from just 2.1% in September, though it is still only modestly above the Fed's 2% target.

Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called "core" prices also picked up, climbing 2.8% last month from a year earlier, up from 2.7% in September, according to Commerce's personal consumption expenditures price index. Economists closely watch core prices because they typically provide a better read on where inflation is headed.

Inflation has fallen sharply since it peaked at 7% in mid-2022, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Yet yearly core inflation has fluctuated between 2.6% and 2.8% since February. Price increases have remained elevated in services, including apartment rents, restaurant meals, and car and home insurance.

The elevated reading could make the Federal Reserve less likely to cut its key rate at the next meeting in December. Next month's inflation data, some of which will be issued a week before the meeting, may play a key role in the Fed's decision.

"This report will likely provide further ammo to Fed officials who prefer to lower rates gradually," Omair Sharif, chief economist at Inflation Insights, wrote in a client note, "and may strengthen the argument for a pause at the December FOMC meeting."

Many economists, however, expect that the Fed will reduce its rate by a quarter-point in December, then delay further cuts while gauging the impact of the reductions they've made so far.

"The momentum in inflation toward the Fed's 2% target has sputtered recently but not enough, in our view, to prevent the Fed from cutting interest rates in December," Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, wrote in a client note.

Last month, grocery prices barely rose and gas costs fell, providing some relief to household budgets. Prices at the pump have continued to decline since October, reaching a nationwide average of \$3.07 a gallon Wednesday, down six cents from a month earlier, according to AAA.

Used car and truck prices, however, shot up 2.8% from September to October, though they are still 5% lower than a year ago. Air fares jumped 1.5% just last month and have risen 5.1% from a year earlier, while hotel room prices rose 0.5% from September to October. Restaurant prices moved up 0.3% in October and 3.6% from a year earlier. All the yearly increases are higher than they were pre-pandemic.

Wednesday's report also underscored that Americans' incomes and spending remained healthy, a key reason the economy has kept growing this year despite widespread fears of a slowdown. Incomes grew 0.6% from September to October, faster than economists had expected, while consumer spending rose by a solid 0.4% last month.

President-elect Donald Trump's victory could also slow Fed rate cuts. His proposals to cut taxes and reduce government regulation could spur faster growth, but could also overheat the economy and lift inflation. And his threats to impose widespread tariffs, if carried out, would likely push up prices.

The Fed had signaled it would cut rates four times next year, but financial markets now expect just two reductions.

## **Fossilized dinosaur feces and vomit help scientists reconstruct the creatures' rise**

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Using fossilized feces and vomit samples from Poland, scientists have reconstructed how dinosaurs came to dominate the Earth millions of years ago.

Researchers aren't sure whether dinosaurs' rise over the course of 30 million years happened because of luck, skill, climate or some combination. But they came away knowing this: "It was not a sudden thing," said study co-author Martin Qvarnström from Uppsala University.

The new study, published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, analyzed hundreds of dino droppings to reconstruct who was eating whom 200 million years ago.

The first dinosaurs were go-getters, Qvarnström said, eating whatever they could — including insects, fish and plants.

When climate conditions changed, they were quick to adapt. Plant-eating dinosaurs, for example, ate a greater variety of greens than other vegetarians of the time, so it was easier to expand their palates when wetter conditions gave rise to new plant species.

Since the study's findings were limited to Polish fossils, Qvarnström said he'd like to see if their ideas hold steady against fossil records from around the world.

It's not uncommon for scientists to study ancient fecal matter to understand creatures of the past, said Emma Dunne, a paleobiologist at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. But fossilized feces can resemble blobs or chunks of rock, and they are not always found near fossils of the animal that made them — which makes it hard for scientists to know where they came from.

In this study, researchers found fish scales, insect bits and bone shards nestled within the droppings.

"They are a really unassuming, quite plain part of the background," said Dunne, who was not involved with the new research. "But they hold so much delicate, fine information."

## **New York City generates 44 million pounds of garbage a day.**

### **The city has a plan to contain the mess**

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For half a century, New York City residents have taken out their trash by flinging plastic bags stuffed with stinking garbage straight onto the sidewalk.

When the bags inevitably leak or break open, they spill litter into the street, providing smorgasbords for rats. In the winter, the trash mounds get buried in snow and remain frozen in place for days, sometimes weeks, reinforcing the city's reputation as filthy.

Now, New Yorkers are slowly adjusting to a radically new routine, at least for America's biggest city: putting their trash in bins. With lids.

Covered bins became a requirement this month for all residential buildings with fewer than 10 living units. That's the majority of residential properties. All city businesses had to start using bins earlier this year.

"I know this must sound absurd to anyone listening to this who lives pretty much in any other city in the world," said Jessica Tisch, the city's former sanitation commissioner, who oversaw the new measures before becoming the city's new police commissioner this week. "But it is revolutionary by New York City's standards because, for 50 years, we have placed all our trash directly on the curbs."

Residents who've already experienced trash containerization elsewhere agree it's long overdue for New York City to catch up.

"You see plastic bags open with the food just rotting and stinking and then it leaking out over the sidewalk and into the road," said John Midgley, who owns a brownstone in Brooklyn and has lived in London, Paris and Amsterdam. "Just the stink of it builds up, you know, week after week after week."

New York City's homes, businesses and institutions put about 44 million pounds (20 million kilograms) of waste out on the curb every day, about 24 million pounds (11 million kilograms) of which is collected by

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the city's sanitation department. Much of the rest is handled by private garbage carters.

In the early 20th century, New York City required trash to be placed in metal cans. But in the era before widespread plastic bag use, refuse was thrown directly into the bins, making them filthy and grimy.

Then in 1968, the city's sanitation workers went on strike. For more than a week, trash cans overflowed. Garbage mounds piled high on sidewalks and spilled into the streets like some dystopian nightmare.

Plastic bag makers donated thousands of bags to help clean up the mess, and New Yorkers never looked back, said Steven Cohen, a Columbia University dean specializing in public affairs.

"It had to do with convenience," he said. "After the strike, the sanitation workers preferred the modern advance of lighter and seemingly cleaner sealed plastic bags."

Plastic kept more odors in, compared to the old metal bins. A worker could grab the neck of a bag and easily fling it into a truck.

But Democratic Mayor Eric Adams' administration has deemed trash bag mounds Public Enemy No. 1 in his well-documented war against the city's notorious rats.

Rats have little problem getting into a plastic bag. Durable bins with closing, locking lids should, in theory, do a better job of keeping them out.

The bin requirement, which took effect Nov. 12, comes with its own challenges. Among them: Finding a place for large, wheeled bins in neighborhoods where most buildings don't have yards, alleys or garages. Landlords and homeowners also have to collect the empty bins and bring them back from the curb in the morning — something you didn't have to do with plastic bags.

Caitlin Leffel, who lives in Manhattan, said residents of her building had to hire someone "at surprisingly high cost" to bring out the bins the night before and bring them back in three times a week.

"I know there are problems with the way this city has collected trash for years," she said. "But the way this program has been rolled out, it has not taken into account many of the nuances of living in New York City."

Building superintendents are also grumbling about the added work of bringing bins back from the curb.

"It's completely rearranged our lives," says Dominick Romeo, founder of NYC Building Supers, a group of building managers that recently rallied in front of City Hall against the new requirements. "Folks are running around like crazy."

Eventually, the largest residential buildings — those with more than 31 units — will have their own designated container on the street. New trash trucks built with automated, side-loading arms — another innovation that is already common in many other countries — will then clear them out.

The upgrades should make pickups easier and cleaner, even if it might take longer for trash collectors to make the rounds, says Harry Nespoli, president of the union representing some 7,000 city sanitation workers.

For now, he says, workers are still tossing trash into their trucks manually, which has its own downsides.

"Some places, they're not even using bags. They're just putting their trash into the bins," Nespoli said. "It's going to take time to get everyone to do it the right way, but at the end of the day, it's our job to pick it up."

Tisch believes New Yorkers will eventually come around to the new reality.

City officials, for now, are issuing written warnings for non-compliance. Not everyone knows about the new rules yet. But come Jan. 2, fines ranging from \$50 to \$200 will kick in.

"No one wants to live on a dirty block," Tisch said. "No one wants to walk past a heaping mound of trash and trash juice when they are leaving to go to work or they are walking their kids home from school."

## Schools are bracing for upheaval over fear of mass deportations

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS AP Education Writer

Last time Donald Trump was president, rumors of immigration raids terrorized the Oregon community where Gustavo Balderas was the school superintendent.

Word spread that immigration agents were going to try to enter schools. There was no truth to it, but

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school staff members had to find students who were avoiding school and coax them back to class.

"People just started ducking and hiding," Balderas said.

Educators around the country are bracing for upheaval, whether or not the president-elect follows through on his pledge to deport millions of immigrants who are in the country illegally. Even if he only talks about it, children of immigrants will suffer, educators and legal observers said.

If "you constantly threaten people with the possibility of mass deportation, it really inhibits peoples' ability to function in society and for their kids to get an education," said Hiroshi Motomura, a professor at UCLA School of Law.

That fear already has started for many.

"The kids are still coming to school, but they're scared," said Almudena Abeyta, superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools, a Boston suburb that's long been a first stop for Central American immigrants coming to Massachusetts. Now Haitians are making the city home and sending their kids to school there.

"They're asking: 'Are we going to be deported?'" said Abeyta.

Many parents in her district grew up in countries where the federal government ran schools and may think it's the same here. The day after the election, Abeyta sent a letter home assuring parents their children are welcome and safe, no matter who is president.

Immigration officials have avoided arresting parents or students at schools. Since 2011, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has operated under a policy that immigration agents should not arrest or conduct other enforcement actions near "sensitive locations," including schools, hospitals and places of worship. Doing so might curb access to essential services, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas wrote in a 2021 policy update.

The Heritage Foundation's policy roadmap for Trump's second term, Project 2025, calls for rescinding the guidance on "sensitive places." Trump tried to distance himself from the proposals during the campaign, but he has nominated many who worked on the plan for his new administration, including Tom Homan for "border czar."

If immigration agents were to arrest a parent dropping off children at school, it could set off mass panic, said Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles.

"If something happens at one school, it spreads like wildfire and kids stop coming to school," she said.

Balderas, now the superintendent in Beaverton, a different Portland suburb, told the school committee there this month it was time to prepare for a more determined Trump administration. In case schools are targeted, Beaverton will train staff not to allow immigration agents inside.

"All bets are off with Trump," said Balderas, who is also president of ASSA, The School Superintendents Association. "If something happens, I feel like it will happen a lot quicker than last time."

Many school officials are reluctant to talk about their plans or concerns, some out of fear of drawing attention to their immigrant students. One school administrator serving many children of Mexican and Central American immigrants in the Midwest said their school has invited immigration attorneys to help parents formalize any plans for their children's care in case they are deported. The administrator spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Speaking up on behalf of immigrant families also can put superintendents at odds with school board members.

"This is a very delicate issue," said Viridiana Carrizales, chief executive officer of ImmSchools, a nonprofit that trains schools on supporting immigrant students.

She's received 30 requests for help since the election, including two from Texas superintendents who don't think their conservative school boards would approve of publicly affirming immigrant students' right to attend school or district plans to turn away immigration agents.

More than two dozen superintendents and district communications representatives contacted by The Associated Press either ignored or declined requests for comment.

"This is so speculative that we would prefer not to comment on the topic," wrote Scott Pribble, a spokesperson for Denver Public Schools.

The city of Denver has helped more than 40,000 migrants in the last two years with shelter or a bus ticket elsewhere. It's also next door to Aurora, one of two cities where Trump has said he would start his mass deportations.

When pressed further, Pribble responded, "Denver Public Schools is monitoring the situation while we continue to serve, support, and protect all of our students as we always have."

Like a number of big-city districts, Denver's school board during the first Trump administration passed a resolution promising to protect its students from immigration authorities pursuing them or their information. According to the 2017 resolution, Denver will not "grant access to our students" unless federal agents can provide a valid search warrant.

The rationale has been that students cannot learn if they fear immigration agents will take them or their parents away while they're on campus. School districts also say these policies reaffirm their students' constitutional right to a free, public education, regardless of immigration status.

## **The Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire quiets one front but Gaza sees no end to war**

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — For many across the Middle East, the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire came as a relief: the first major sign of progress in the region since war began more than a year ago.

But for Palestinians in Gaza and families of hostages held in the territory, the news appeared only to inaugurate a newer, grimmer period of the conflict there. For them, it marked yet another missed opportunity to end fighting that has stretched on for nearly 14 months.

Palestinians had hoped that any ceasefire deal with Hezbollah would include a truce in Gaza as well. The families of people kidnapped when Hamas-led militants stormed southern Israel in October 2023, meanwhile, wanted part of the agreement to include returning their loved ones. Instead, the ceasefire was confined only to the fighting in Lebanon.

"We feel this is a missed opportunity to tie in the hostages in this agreement that was signed today," said Ruby Chen, whose son, Itay Chen, was taken hostage from an Israeli military base and has been declared dead.

As much as they were intertwined, the two wars have been very different. In Lebanon, Israel said its aim was to drive Hezbollah back from the countries' shared border and end the militant group's barrages into northern Israel. The ceasefire that took effect Wednesday is intended to do that.

In Gaza, Israel's goals are more sweeping. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been resolute in insisting that Hamas must be completely destroyed and Israel must retain lasting control over parts of the territory. Months of talks have failed to get Netanyahu to back down from those demands — or to convince Hamas to release hostages under those terms.

For Palestinians in Gaza, that means continuing misery under an Israeli campaign that has demolished much of the territory and driven almost the entire population from their homes. Hundreds of thousands are going hungry while living in squalid tent cities as the second winter of the war brings cold rains and flooding.

"They agree to a ceasefire in one place and not in the other? Have mercy on the children, the elderly and the women," said Ahlam Abu Shalabi, living in tent in central Gaza. "Now it is winter, and all the people are drowning."

Palestinians feel resigned to continued war

The war between Israel and Hamas began on Oct. 7, 2023, when militants attacked Israel from Gaza, killing around 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive has rained devastation on the Palestinian territory, killing over 44,000 people, according to local health officials. The officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and fighters in their count, say over half of the dead are women and children.



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Hezbollah began firing into Israel a day after Hamas' attack in solidarity with the Palestinian militant group. The two sides have exchanged near-daily barrages since. Moving thousands of troops to its northern border, Israel ramped up bombardment of southern Lebanon and launched a ground invasion there two months ago, killing many of Hezbollah's leaders.

Palestinians now fear Israel's military can return its full focus to Gaza — a point that Netanyahu made as he announced the ceasefire in Lebanon on Tuesday.

"The pressure will be more on Gaza," said Mamdouh Younis, a displaced man in a central Gaza tent camp. Netanyahu, he said, can now exploit the fact that "Gaza has become alone, far from all the arenas that were supporting it, especially the Lebanon front."

Israeli troops are already engaged in fierce fighting in Gaza's north, where a two-month offensive has cut off most aid and caused experts to warn a famine may be underway. Strikes all over the territory regularly kill dozens.

In signing onto the ceasefire deal, Hezbollah reversed its long-held position that it wouldn't stop its barrages across the border unless Israel ends the war in Gaza.

"This could have a psychological impact, as it will further entrench the understanding that Palestinians in Gaza are alone in resisting against their occupiers," said Tariq Kenney Shawa, a U.S. policy fellow at Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank.

Hamas may dig its heels in

It also leaves Hamas — its capabilities already severely damaged by Israel's offensive — to fight alone. Hamas official Osama Hamdan appeared to accept Hezbollah's new position in an interview Monday.

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

Khalil Sayegh, a Palestinian analyst, said the ceasefire could make Hamas even less popular in Gaza, by proving the failure of its gambit that its attack on Israel would rally other militant groups to the fight.

"It's a moment where we can see the Hamas messaging become weaker and weaker, as they struggle to justify their strategy to the public," said Sayegh.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire could help force Hamas to the negotiating table because it would show the group that the "cavalry is not on the way."

But Hamas experts predicted that it would only dig in both on the battlefield and in talks. Hamas has insisted it will only release all the hostages in return for a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

"I expect Hamas will continue using guerrilla warfare to confront Israeli forces in Gaza as long as they remain," said Shawa.

Hostage families lose hope

Dozens of Israelis thronged a major highway in Tel Aviv on Tuesday night, protesting for the return of the hostages as the country waited to hear if a ceasefire in Lebanon had been agreed.

Around 100 people taken hostage are still held in Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. Most of the other hostages seized by Hamas were released during a ceasefire last year.

Ricardo Grichener, the uncle of 23-year-old hostage Omer Wenkert, said the ceasefire with Hezbollah showed how the Israeli government was openly disregarding the hostages.

Even though Israel has inflicted greater damage on Hamas in Gaza than on Hezbollah in Lebanon, he said "the decision to postpone a deal in Gaza and release the hostages is not based on the same military success criteria."

The most recent effort to wind down the war stalled in October. U.S. President Joe Biden said Tuesday he would begin a renewed push, but his administration is now in its waning days after the reelection of former President Donald Trump.

"This ceasefire doesn't concern our hostages. I believe that Netanyahu forgot about them, and he just wants to keep fighting in Gaza," said Ifat Kalderon, clutching a photo of her cousin, Ofer Kalderon, who is a hostage and a father to four.

"Ofer yesterday had his 54th birthday. His second birthday in Gaza," she said. "It's unbelievable that he's still there."

## Border Patrol trains more chaplains as the job and polarizing immigration debate rattle agents

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

DANIA BEACH, Florida (AP) — As immigration remains a hotly contested priority for the Trump administration after playing a decisive role in the deeply polarized election, the Border Patrol agents tasked with enforcing many of its laws are wrestling with growing challenges on and off the job.

More are training to become chaplains to help their peers as they tackle security threats, including the powerful cartels that control much of the border dynamic, and witness growing suffering among migrants — all while policies in Washington keep shifting and public outrage targets them from all sides.

“The hardest thing is, people ... don’t know what we do, and we’ve been called terrible names,” said Brandon Fredrick, a Buffalo, New York-based agent some of whose family members have resorted to name-calling.

Earlier this month, he served as a training academy instructor for Border Patrol chaplains, whose numbers have almost doubled in the last four years. It’s an effort to help agents motivated by the desire to keep the U.S. borders safe cope with mounting distress before it leads to family dysfunction, addiction, even suicide.

### Chaplains academy trains agents to tackle emotional distress

During the latest academy, held at a Border Patrol station near Miami, Fredrick evaluated pairs of chaplains-in-training as they role-played checking on a fellow agent who hadn’t reported for work.

They discovered he’d been drowning in alcohol his angst at being deployed away from his family for the holidays at one of the border’s hotspots. The training scenario was aching real for the South Florida-based agent role-playing the distressed one — he had struggled when relocated for 18 months to Del Rio, Texas, away from his two children — and also for Fredrick, who overcame alcoholism before becoming a chaplain.

Interacting with chaplains can reduce the agents’ reluctance to express their emotional trials, Fredrick said.

“My mission every day is that there’s not a young agent Fredrick suffering alone,” he added. Fredrick, a Catholic, has been an agent for more than 15 years and worked tragic cases like a smuggling attempt where an Indian family froze to death at the Canada-U.S. border.

### Confidential support, with a side of faith

Unlike the police or military, which recruits faith leaders for help with everything from suicide prevention to dealing with the unrest after George Floyd’s murder, the Border Patrol trains mostly lay agents endorsed by their faith denominations to become chaplains.

After graduating, they join about 240 other chaplains and resume their regular jobs — but they’re constantly on call to provide largely confidential care for their 20,000 fellow agents’ well-being.

While most chaplains are Christian, Muslim and Jewish agents also have been trained recently. The chaplains don’t offer faith-specific worship and only bring up religion if the person they’re helping does first.

“I’m not there to convert or proselytize,” said academy instructor Jason Wilhite, an agent in Casa Grande, Arizona, and a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A chaplain since 2015, he was previously involved in the agency’s nonreligious, mental health-focused peer support program after a fellow agent died in a car accident.

Agent Jesus Vasavilbaso decided to join the Border Patrol’s peer support program after witnessing the trauma of repeatedly responding to calls from lost and dying migrants in the unforgiving desert southwest of Tucson, Arizona.

“Sometimes you go home and keep thinking you didn’t find them,” he said. “That’s why it’s so important we check on each other all the time.”

### Training to deal with deaths at the border

At the most recent chaplain academy, which lasted 2.5 weeks, the 15 chaplains-in-training — mostly from the Border Patrol, plus a few Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management officers — practiced real-life scenarios, including responding to a deadly wreck involving agents and notifying a spouse their loved one died on the job.

Chris Day, a chaplain since 2017, evaluated trainees trying to comfort an agent who kept screaming that

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it was all his fault his partner was killed. In the training scenario, their car crashed as they chased someone crossing the border illegally.

Day praised the trainees' efforts to get the agent to talk, but advised them not to say, "I understand. Because you don't."

Later, Day told the class he had helped an agent who watched the smugglers he was chasing smash their car into a family, gravely injuring a toddler. He said the agent had "ugly cried" at the scene and kept repeating that his child was the same age, so Day took him aside briefly and followed up after.

"We hugged it out," said Day, a Baptist with a Psalm verse tattooed on his right arm.

He also has helped the wife of an agent who killed himself, and prayed for migrants who request it. More than 100 migrants have died so far this year in New Mexico's desert, where Day is stationed.

"The smells and visuals stay with you forever," Day said. "We have empathy for people coming across."

Combining vigilance with empathy on and off duty

Trying to comfort migrant children in their custody, including the thousands who cross the border alone, is also a wrenching task for agents.

At the academy, Trinidad Balderas, a father and medic in McAllen, Texas, and Yaira Santiago, a former schoolteacher who runs a Border Patrol migrant processing center at the other end of the southern border in San Diego, California, said they both seek to provide some calm in the chaos of the children's situation.

"One tries to give them support within the limits of what your work allows. I always have the biggest smile," Santiago said.

Border Patrol assistant chief and chaplaincy program manager Spencer Hatch highlighted the need to maintain both the "hypervigilance" of law enforcement and the humanitarian instinct to empathize with migrants and fellow agents.

He also taught strategies to protect the agents' families from "spillover trauma." Divorces increase when agents are redeployed during migrant surges — some up to 9 times over 18 months during the record border crossings early in the Biden Administration.

Many agents' children are scared to reveal their parent's job — especially in border communities. They might be going to school with children of cartel members, or of undocumented migrants, or those who see the Border Patrol as "keeping people from living the American dream," in Hatch's words.

"That's a really hard thing to deal with, as things tend to flip from one side to the other, and we're still in the crossfire," he added.

Hatch uses as a case study of moral injury, a 2021 incident in Del Rio where agents on horseback appeared in some viral photos to be whipping immigrants with their reins — which a federal investigation later determined hadn't happened.

"For one picture to be taken out of context and to have the highest levels of government shaming those people, that was very disheartening. That hurt all of us," Hatch said.

Wrestling with moral standards and a higher calling

Dealing with that "dissonance" of enforcing immigration laws, including rescuing migrants, and hearing their jobs demonized by the public, is a major challenge, said Tucson-area chaplain Jimmy Stout. He was one of first four chaplains when the program was started through a grassroots effort at the southern border in the late 1990s.

"We go over this on day one," Stout said. "Is what they're doing meeting their personal standards?"

For the agents who got their chaplain pins last week, those standards now involve a higher calling, too.

Class speaker Matt Kiniery, a father of three who joined the Army after 9/11 and the Border Patrol in El Paso, Texas, in 2009, decided to become a chaplain after an on-duty car wreck so bad the doctor called his survival miraculous.

"The guy upstairs has got something for you. I took that to heart," Kiniery said. Chaplains helped his wife Jeanna then, and the couple is now eager to support his new role.

"Even in moments of uncertainty, your presence is often enough," the 6-foot-5 agent told the graduating class, before his voice broke. Several instructors in the audience wiped away tears.

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## Biggest November snowstorm in half century hits Seoul and grounds flights

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The biggest November snowstorm to hit South Korea's capital in more than a half century blanketed the capital on Wednesday, grounding hundreds of flights, disrupting commuter traffic and leaving at least two dead.

South Korea's weather agency said 20 to 26 centimeters (7.8 to 10 inches) of snow fell in northern areas of Seoul and nearby areas. The agency said it was the heaviest snowstorm Seoul has experienced in November in 52 years. A storm on Nov. 28, 1972, dumped 12 centimeters (4.7 inches).

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said one person died and four others were injured in a five-vehicle accident in the eastern town of Hongcheon.

In the town of Yangju, a tent-type garage collapsed and killed a person who was removing snow, according to South Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety. The snow caused temporary power outages at about 230 homes in the city of Gwangju, near Seoul, according to the Gyeonggi provincial government.

The storm blanketed much of the country, with the central, eastern and southwestern regions recording about 10 to 28 centimeters (3.9 to 11 inches) of cover.

At least 317 flights were canceled or delayed at airports nationwide, while authorities ordered around 90 ferries to remain at port. They also shut down hundreds of hiking trails.

Icy road conditions slowed down the morning commute in Seoul and led to massive crowds at subways, causing delays. Emergency workers across the country responded to fallen trees, road signs and other safety risks.

Officials at the Safety Ministry said they couldn't confirm any school closures as of Wednesday afternoon.

Visitors dressed in traditional hanbok garb were busy taking photographs at Seoul's snow-covered medieval palaces while snowmen popped up in playgrounds and schoolyards across the country.

The weather agency said snow will continue in most parts of the country until noon Thursday.

President Yoon Suk Yeol instructed the safety and transport ministries to mobilize all available relevant personnel and equipment to prevent traffic and other accidents.

## Today in History: November 28, the debut of the Grand Ole Opry

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Nov. 28, the 333rd day of 2024. There are 33 days left in the year. Today is Thanksgiving in the United States.

Today in history:

On Nov. 28, 1925, the Grand Ole Opry (known then as the WSM Barn Dance) debuted on radio station WSM in Nashville, Tennessee; it continues today as the longest-running radio broadcast in U.S. history.

Also on this date:

In 1520, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan reached the Pacific Ocean after passing through the South American strait that now bears his name.

In 1942, fire engulfed the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston, killing 492 people in the deadliest nightclub blaze ever.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin met in Tehran for the first time to discuss Allied cooperation during World War II.

In 1961, Ernie Davis of Syracuse University became the first Black college football player to be named winner of the Heisman Trophy.

In 1964, the United States launched the space probe Mariner 4 on a course toward Mars, which it flew past in July 1965, sending back pictures of the red planet.

In 2001, Enron Corp., once the world's largest energy trader, collapsed after would-be rescuer Dynegy Inc. backed out of an \$8.4 billion takeover deal. (Enron filed for bankruptcy protection four days later.)

In 2022, Payton Gendron, a white gunman who massacred 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket,

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pleaded guilty to murder and hate-motivated terrorism charges in an agreement that gave him life in prison without parole.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Berry Gordy Jr. is 95. Football Hall of Famer Paul Warfield is 82. Former "Late Show" band leader Paul Shaffer is 75. Actor Ed Harris is 74. Former NASA astronaut Barbara Morgan is 73. Actor S. Epatha (eh-PAY'-thah) Merkerson is 72. Actor Judd Nelson is 65. Film director Alfonso Cuarón (kwahr-OHN') is 63. Rock drummer Matt Cameron is 62. Comedian and talk show host Jon Stewart is 62. Actor Colman Domingo is 55. Musician apl.de.ap (Black Eyed Peas) is 50. Actor Mary Elizabeth Winstead is 40. R&B singer Trey Songz is 40. Actor Karen Gillan is 37. Actor-rapper Bryshere Gray is 31.