

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 1 of 64

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[4- Harry Implement Ad](#)

[5- Olive Grove Holiday Party Ad](#)

[6- Angel Tree tags left](#)

[7- JVT Holiday Open House Ad](#)

[7- Land Auction Ad](#)

[8- Christmas decorations go up](#)

[9- City Council Agenda](#)

[10- Dacotah Bank Ad](#)

[11- Name Released in Charles Mix County Fatal](#)

[Crash](#)

[11- Names Released in McCook County Fatal Crash](#)

[12- SD News Watch: Noem's final budget address?](#)

[Expect belt-tightening, not bravado.](#)

[15- SD SearchLight: Prisons, property taxes & paring down spending: Lawmakers look ahead to Gov. Noem's budget address](#)

[16- SD SearchLight: Ellsworth temporarily moving 17 planes and 800 people to North Dakota](#)

[16- SD SearchLight: With age verification, lawmakers seek solutions for problems best handled by parents](#)

[17- SD SearchLight: U.S. Senate Dem leader urges Thune to conduct traditional confirmation process](#)

[19- Weather Pages](#)

[25- Daily Devotional](#)

[26- Subscription Form](#)

[27- Lottery Numbers](#)

[28- Upcoming Groton Events](#)

[29- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, Dec. 3

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potato with gravy, winter blend, pears, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, bread stick.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid/LWML Christmas Party, noon.

JH GBB hosts Redfield (7th at 6:15 p.m.; 8th at 7:15 p.m.)

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study with Pastor Rob, 10 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Wednesday, Dec. 4

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, mixed vegetables, pineapple, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Cheese stuffed breadstick, Marinara Sauce.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Youth supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton Chamber Board Meeting, 6 p.m., at the Jungle

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

Thursday, Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, catalina blend, oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Italian Rice Bake, corn.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

MS/HS Christmas Program, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 2 of 64

1440

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

SCOTUS Mulls Flavored Vapes

The US Supreme Court heard arguments yesterday in a case challenging the Food and Drug Administration's block on flavored e-cigarette products. The FDA has rejected over a million marketing applications for sweet-flavored vapes, citing youth addiction concerns. The case stems from a challenge by Triton, a company selling products like "Rainbow Road" and "Crème Brulee."

Vaping companies argue the products help adults quit smoking and claim the FDA changed the requirements without notice after the applications were submitted. The FDA contends flavored e-cigarettes pose substantial health risks to children, outweighing potential benefits for adult smokers. The agency said its denial of applications followed procedures outlined in the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs federal agency rulemaking processes.

The case comes as youth vaping usage levels are at their lowest in a decade. Currently, roughly 6% of middle and high school students use e-cigarettes, with nearly 90% of them consuming flavored brands. Those numbers are down from epidemic levels in 2019. The FDA has authorized the marketing of 34 e-cigarette products, all in tobacco and menthol flavors.

How the Chips Fall

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger has abruptly retired, ending a nearly four-year term after a reported ouster by the chipmaker's board. Two high-level Intel executives will serve as interim co-CEOs while the board seeks a permanent replacement.

The shake-up comes as Intel's stock has dropped roughly 57% since 2020, bringing its market cap to \$103B. Founded in 1968, Intel led the semiconductor chip industry for decades and currently powers roughly 78% of personal computers. However, analysts say the company missed two trends: the pivot to mobile in the mid-2000s and the more recent AI chip boom.

Gelsinger was tasked with turning Intel's business around, helping the company win government investment, and seeking to manufacture chips for competitors. But in October, Intel posted a roughly \$16B quarterly loss—the worst performance in its history—amid challenges, including production delays and competition from AI chip giant Nvidia. Meanwhile, Nvidia replaced Intel in the Dow and became the world's second-most valuable company at \$3.4T.

French Government Wavers

French Prime Minister Michel Barnier faces a no-confidence vote as soon as tomorrow after he invoked a constitutional provision yesterday to push through a contentious budget without a final parliamentary vote.

The former Brexit negotiator's move upset lawmakers in France's hung parliament, where no party holds an absolute majority after President Emmanuel Macron called snap elections in June. Opposing parties, including a left-wing alliance and Marine Le Pen's conservative populist National Rally, filed motions yesterday for no-confidence votes, potentially jeopardizing the center-right Barnier and his cabinet. If Barnier is ousted, his government will be the first to fall to a no-confidence vote since 1962 and the most short-lived since its current system, the Fifth Republic, began in 1958.

The 2025 budget seeks to shrink France's deficit and includes \$42B in spending cuts and \$21B in tax increases; it has faced widespread criticism from lawmakers and the public. Amid the impasse, France's financial markets have reeled while the country's borrowing costs have increased to the same level as debt-ridden Greece.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 3 of 64

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Kendrick Lamar's "GNX" album tops Billboard 200 chart, his fifth consecutive album atop the charts; "Wicked" film soundtrack debuts at No. 2.

Fifty-six people die in southeast Guinea from violence and crowd surge following a controversial call made by a referee at a soccer match.

Ted Danson tapped to receive Carol Burnett Award at 2025 Golden Globes (Jan. 5).

"Moana 2" officially breaks all-time five-day Thanksgiving Day weekend US domestic box office record, hauling in \$225M in its debut.

Science & Technology

Paralyzed patients regain control of their leg muscles and ability to walk after scientists apply deep brain stimulation to the lateral hypothalamus; brain region is not typically associated with motor control.

Researchers demonstrate photonic processor—computer chips using light to process information—for potential use in AI applications; would allow ultrafast, high-efficiency AI calculations.

Scientists begin study of remains of a spade-toothed whale in New Zealand; animal is world's rarest whale species, with only seven documented since 1880.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +1.0%); S&P 500, Nasdaq rise to new intraday highs and close at new records.

Stellantis shares close down over 6% after CEO Carlos Tavares resigns following board dispute amid stagnating US sales.

Volkswagen workers in Germany strike in largest walkout since 2018 as company plans to shutter three plants.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk loses legal challenge to reinstate \$56B pay package.

Super Micro Computer shares close up nearly 29% after independent review finds no evidence of accounting fraud; review recommends installing new chief financial officer, chief compliance officer, and general counsel.

Politics & World Affairs

Israel and Hezbollah militants reportedly trade fire at disputed border zone despite US- and French-brokered ceasefire that began last week.

Israeli American soldier thought to have been taken hostage in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack now presumed dead, per Israel's military.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias enter Syria to assist the Assad government's counteroffensive against rebels who have taken control of Syria's largest city of Aleppo.

Jury deliberations to begin today in trial of Daniel Penny, a former Marine charged in the May 2023 death of Jordan Neely on a New York City subway train.

X SERIES | Cub Cadet

PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE.



2X TWO-STAGE POWER

INTELLIPOWER[®] TRAC MAX EFI

When the winters get tough, the Cub Cadet[®] 2X gets tougher. This two-stage snow blower is engineered for clearing between 12-18 inches of powder and slush. If you measure snow in feet instead of inches, step up to the commercial-grade 2X MAX[™] trim package to help tackle the deep stuff. Featuring trigger-controlled power steering, push-button electric start, dual LED headlights, 16-inch X-Trac[™] tires and a 3-year limited warranty.**

ENGINEERED FOR

SNOWFALL DRIVEWAY SURFACES



Up to 18"-23"
(18"-23" for EFI
and MAX[™] units)



Up to
8-15+ cars



Smooth
6 gravel



2X 24" WITH INTELLIPOWER[®]

Clear paths with the 2X 24" snow blower featuring a 243cc Cub Cadet[®] engine with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ▶ IntelliPOWER[®] engine technology delivers consistent power in heavy and wet snow conditions
- ▶ Trigger-control power steering
- ▶ Single-hand remote chute and pitch control
- ▶ 3-year limited residential / 1-year commercial limited warranty**

\$1,199*

Additional models available with 26", 28" clearing width



2X 26" TRAC WITH INTELLIPOWER[®]

Designed to provide steady traction in extreme weather conditions—try the 2X 26" TRAC with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ✦ TRAC drive designed for traction on slopes, inclines and gravel
- ✦ Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- ✦ 23" intake height
- ✦ Heated hand grips
- ✦ High-arc steel chute
- ✦ Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

\$1,999*



2X 30" MAX INTELLIPOWER[®]

Take on winter with the 357cc Cub Cadet[®] engine with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ✦ 14" augers and impeller
- ✦ Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
- ✦ LED light bar on auger housing
- ▶ Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- ▶ 23" intake height
- ▶ Heated hand grips
- ▶ High-arc steel chute
- ▶ Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

\$2,399*

✦ Indicates step-up feature

INDEPENDENT DEALER
Cub Cadet

YOUR INDEPENDENT DEALER – EXPERT SERVICE. LOCALLY OWNED.

The advice, service, selection and support you need to find the right fit for you.

HARRY IMPLEMENT INC.

109 CENTER ST
FERNEY, SD 57439
www.harrysinc.com
605-395-6421

* Restrictions apply. See dealer or cubcadet.com/en_US/financing for details.

** Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

*** See owner's manual for warranty details and information.

† Certain restrictions apply.

© 2024 Cub Cadet SNOW_2X_QUARTER

EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING
OFFERS AVAILABLE!



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 5 of 64



8th Annual Holiday Party
Live & Silent Auctions
Olive Grove Golf Clubhouse
Groton, SD

**Proceeds
raised to
replace
cooler in
clubhouse!**

Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024
Holiday Party - 6 p.m. to close
A variety of snacks served.

Silent Auction Basket Items
Bidding closes at 8:30 p.m.
Live Auctions begin at 8:30 p.m.

**Come on out for a fun evening and
support your local golf course!**

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 6 of 64



Angel Tree Tags left

There are still some Angel tree tags left if you have not picked one up yet . You can find them at city hall and Lori's Pharmacy. Let's give these children a good Christmas. If any questions on the tags you can call Tina Kosel at 605-397-7285.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 7 of 64



NVC/JVT HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSES

Groton - Tuesday, Dec. 3rd 10am-4pm
Redfield - Wednesday, Dec. 4th 11am-2pm
Aberdeen - Thursday, Dec. 5th 10am-4pm

DOOR PRIZES - CHRISTMAS TREATS

Plus register in stores or at nvc.net for the
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS!

****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 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
1001 9th Ave SE., Watertown, SD 57201, 605-520-6349
shauctioneer@hotmail.com

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 8 of 64



Landon Johnson (in the bucket) and Paul Kosel put up the Christmas decorations on Groton's Main Street on Monday. (Courtesy Photo Kellie Locke)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 9 of 64

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

December 3, 2024 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Planning and Zoning Appeal – Denied Special Exception – Larry & Kathy Harry – 906 N 2nd Street
4. Electric/Water Metering
5. Department Reports
6. Reappoint Les Hinds for 5-year Term as Planning and Zoning Representative
7. First Reading of Ordinance No. 783 – Supplemental Appropriations #2
8. Northeast Council of Governments (NECOG) Joint Cooperative Agreement for 2025
9. Minutes
10. Bills
11. Announcement: City Offices Closed on December 23rd, 24th, & 25th for Christmas
12. Reminder: Holiday Lighting Contest on December 19th - \$100, \$75, & \$50 Utility Bill Credits to be Given Away
13. Reminder: 2025 Dog Licenses are Due by December 31st, 2024
14. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
15. Hire Skating Rink Applicants
16. Adjournment



DACOTA BANK

**HOLIDAY
OPEN HOUSE**

Cookies & Calendars

DECEMBER 10 -13

9:00 - 4:00 PM

*Stop in for cookies,
coffee and a calendar!*

7 E. US Hwy 12 | Groton

MEMBER FDIC

Name Released in Charles Mix County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: 395th Avenue and 305th Street, six miles south of Wagner, SD
When: 5:56 a.m., Thursday, November 28, 2024

Driver 1: Jerrica Rose Zephier, 29-year-old female from Marty, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2012 Dodge Charger
Seat belt Used: No

Charles Mix County, S.D.- A 29-year-old woman died in a single vehicle crash Thursday morning six miles south of Wagner, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Jerrica Rose Zephier, the driver of a 2012 Dodge Charger, had entered the west ditch near 395th Avenue and 305th Street. The vehicle vaulted over a culvert, and rolled. Zephier was ejected and sustained fatal injuries from the crash.

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

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

Names Released in McCook County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: SD Highway 42, mile marker 345, 10 miles northeast of Monroe, SD
When: 7:58 a.m., November 26, 2024

Driver 1: Michael Lee Zimmer, 39-year-old male from Monroe, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2012 Volkswagen CC Sport
Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: Daniel James Bannwarth, 52-year-old male from Mitchell, SD, no injuries
Vehicle 2: 2025 Western Tanker Truck
Seat belt Used: Yes

McCook County, S.D.- A 39-year-old man died Tuesday morning in a head-on collision, 10 miles northeast of Monroe, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Michael Lee Zimmer, the driver of a 2012 Volkswagen CC Sport, was traveling east on SD Highway 42 near the intersection of 454th Avenue when his vehicle crossed the center line and collided head-on with an approaching tanker truck.

Zimmer passed away at the scene from his injuries. The driver of the tanker truck, Daniel J. Bannwarth, was not injured.

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 12 of 64



**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Noem's final budget address? Expect belt-tightening, not bravado.

BY STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

If all goes according to plan, Gov. Kristi Noem will deliver her final budget address Dec. 3 at the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre, outlining her economic vision with an eye toward the next stage of her political career.

It's natural for governors to emphasize the positive in these circumstances, but legislators might not have that luxury at a time when lagging state revenue and rising expenses signal significant belt-tightening for the 2025 session, where the budget for fiscal year 2026 will take shape.

"I don't envy the governor's position in putting out this budget," said Rep. Will Mortenson, who served as Republican House majority leader the past two years. "If you're someone coming into this session planning to create some big new government program or spend a bunch of money in a new way, you're going to be in for a rude awakening. We're just not going to have the money."

That's a marked contrast to the "foot on the gas" mantra pushed by Noem the past few years, when federal stimulus money and inflation-fueled sales tax receipts fattened state coffers.

Last year's budget proposal for fiscal year 2025, largely adhered to by the Legislature, called for \$7.3 billion in spending, an increase of nearly 30% from two years earlier.

After budget increases to the big three – education, health care providers and state employees – ranging from 5% to 7% the past three years, a more modest hike is expected for FY 2026 due to flat overall revenue, prison construction costs and a larger state share of Medicaid payments.

"You've got ongoing sales tax collections that are \$22.5 million behind legislative projections, you've got a men's prison with a high maximum cost of \$825 million and you've got conversations about property tax relief coming up," said Nathan Sanderson, executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association.

"Just on those conversations alone, it's going to be a very tight budget year, and I don't know what the answers are going to be."

With Noem nominated as Homeland Security secretary and preparing for confirmation hearings, the long-range responsibility will fall to Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden, who could become the first South Dakotan to take the oath of office in the heat of a legislative session.

The fact that the 65-year-old Meade County rancher is a veteran lawmaker is not lost on those who will work with him to try to make fiscal austerity a guiding principle again in Pierre.

Rhoden served in the state House of Representatives from 2001-09 and 2017-19, including a stint as majority leader from 2005-08. He served in the state Senate from 2009-2015 and chaired the State Affairs Committee.

"Changing horses in the middle of the stream (during session) is unprecedented, and I don't think any of us know what to expect," said Mortenson. "It creates an opportunity where the budget proposed by one governor at the beginning can be adopted and defended in total, or it can be amended in partnership with the legislature. As long as we've got a healthy working relationship with both governors, but probably more importantly with the incoming governor, people shouldn't see a whole lot of disruption."

Here's a look at key factors to watch heading into Noem's budget address and the 2025 legislative session in Pierre:

Sales tax revenue falling short

At a meeting of the Joint Committee on Appropriations on Nov. 14 in Pierre, state economists outlined revenue trends showing that sales tax collections for July through October 2024 were \$22.6 million behind legislative projections, more than 4%. That trend could lead to a shortfall of nearly \$80 million compared to projections for the fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2025.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 13 of 64

Overall tax receipts for fiscal year 2025 fell nearly 3% short of expectations through October.

"There are areas that seem to be showing more weakness than others," Derek Johnson, an economist with the Bureau of Finance and Management, told legislators. "Areas like building materials, hardware, garden supply, home furnishings, durable goods and communications. And then our farm equipment is down as well."

Sales taxes are the largest source of state government revenue in South Dakota, one of seven states without a state income tax. The revenue ceiling is lower because legislators voted during the 2023 session to lower the general sales tax rate from 4.5% to 4.2%. That rate sunsets, or expires, in 2027.

Talk of eliminating that sunset clause and making the sales tax cut permanent might lose steam in this year's session based on the latest state revenue projections.

There are limited ways to fill the revenue void in a volatile economy, with consumers finding a new normal on the heels of federal pandemic stimulus and surging inflation rates. The current U.S. inflation rate is 2.6%, compared to 3.2% at this time last year.

"People might ask, 'Why is consumer spending sluggish?'" said Sanderson, who served as a policy adviser to former Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "Well, we got a whole bunch of money from the feds during COVID. Those dollars have gone away. And we've seen nationally that credit card debt has increased, and savings have decreased. I think people are starting to realize that their former spending habits weren't sustainable, and so they're starting to tighten the belt a little bit."

Problems with property tax relief

When the decision was made to temporarily lower the general sales tax rate in 2023, the other two options were to repeal the state's grocery tax, which Noem supported, and to provide property tax relief.

Voters strongly rejected a grocery tax repeal in the 2024 election, at least temporarily taking that issue off the front burner.

But property tax is a hot topic entering the 2025 session, given that total payments have increased by nearly 60% for homes and nearly 50% for commercial property over the past decade in South Dakota.

The problem with cutting property taxes, which help fund local school districts and city and county governments, is that typically you need to backfill that lost revenue with general fund dollars to pay for education and reduce the local effort for school districts.

That was the formula when former Gov. Bill Janklow pushed through a 30% property tax reduction in 1995, offsetting the lost tax revenue to schools by increasing the state's education contribution. The program also updated the state's education aid formula and established property tax caps.

The difference this time around is that finding money to supplement the education fund will be daunting at best, leaving less aggressive options on the table such as improving the efficiency and accuracy of property tax assessments.

The South Dakota Retailers Association supported property tax relief back in 2023, when legislators opted instead to cut the general sales tax rate. Sanderson said current economic conditions make it more realistic to view the higher rates as a free-market function that ebbs and flows.

"The reality is that most of the property tax challenges are coming because the value of property, particularly in places like the Black Hills and Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties, has just gone up," he said. "And so it's hard to provide property tax relief when the value of the thing being taxed is increasing exponentially. This probably sounds very bureaucratic to say, but some of this is going to just work itself out naturally."

Prison project looms amid budget talk

South Dakota Department of Corrections officials told legislators at the Nov. 14 meeting that the guaranteed maximum price for a planned new men's state prison is \$825 million, higher than previous estimates.

That includes \$737 million in construction for the 1,500-inmate facility at the proposed site between Harrisburg and Canton in Lincoln County, making it the largest one-time capital investment in state history.

The fact that the prison involves "one time" dollars puts it on a different tier of budget discussion from ongoing expenditures such as health care and education funding.

But there are still concerns about higher-than-expected costs and the assessment of operational ex-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 14 of 64

penses for the new facility, which would replace the current Sioux Falls penitentiary that was built in 1881.

The Legislature has already committed \$87 million to build a new women's prison in Rapid City, with a likely completion date of early 2026.

Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko told appropriators that the decision to construct a men's prison "has not been made hastily," adding that there have been six bills related to the project that "had hearings, legislative discussion and were passed by the Legislature."

That process led to \$628 million being placed in a state prison fund, which, accounting for interest and money spent, would leave about \$200 million left to fund and green-light the project.

Noem has proposed using \$80.7 million in budget surplus from FY 2024 for prison construction, underscoring her desire to get the project finalized during her second term. That surplus money was transferred to the state's budget reserves, which now total about \$323 million.

Now that Noem could be leaving for a Cabinet position in Washington, her interest in allocating money to the prison might gain urgency.

State Rep. Tony Venhuizen, a Republican member of Joint Appropriations, said he hopes the payoff target of \$200 million could be reached during the 2025 session.

"It's very smart to pay cash if we can, and the cost will only go up if we wait," said Venhuizen, a former chief of staff to Noem and Daugaard.

Mortenson, however, is skeptical of the target being reached this session given budget realities and opposition to the proposed site from members of the Republican Party's populist faction, some of whom have moved into leadership roles.

"Even if everyone wanted to, I'd be very surprised if we could come up with the dollars to completely fund the bottom-line price for the men's prison," Mortenson said. "That's probably going to take another couple of years."

State's Medicaid payments going up

South Dakota voters passed Medicaid expansion in 2022, extending health care coverage to more low-income residents under the Affordable Care Act, with the federal government covering 90 percent of the cost for the first three years.

That "bonus" in federal payments ends this year, said Venhuizen, who opposed expanding Medicaid without a plan to pay for the state's share. That price tag is about \$35 million for FY 2026 after the state set aside \$31 million earlier to ease the cost.

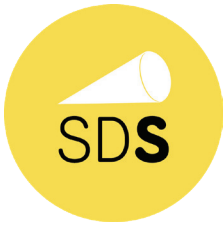
"The good news is that the Legislature and the governor planned for this by beginning to build in these extra costs over the past two years," said Venhuizen. "The bad news is that we have to absorb the rest of it this year, which means it will limit available ongoing revenue that much more."

Additionally, the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for regular Medicaid has changed for South Dakota, with the state's funding responsibility increasing from 45% to 47%, which means as much as \$25 million for FY 2026.

That's a total of nearly \$60 million for Medicaid-related expenditures in a budget already facing headwinds, making Noem's budget address not as rosy as a potentially outgoing governor would like to deliver.

"With no revenue growth and \$60 million that we know we have to spend on Medicaid for no additional services, you start out way behind the 8-ball," said Mortenson. "I would characterize this as going back to a more normal budget year for South Dakota, meaning a lean budget year."

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact investigative reporter Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Prisons, property taxes & paring down spending: Lawmakers look ahead to Gov. Noem's budget address

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 2, 2024 3:16 PM

Lawmakers expect South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem to present a lean budget proposal Tuesday due to lower-than-expected revenues and an end to federal pandemic-era stimulus cash.

Several are keen to hear Noem's plan to fund the proposed \$825 million men's prison south of Sioux Falls. The recently released guaranteed maximum price is \$256 million more than what state lawmakers have set aside for the project over the past few years.

"We've thrown a lot of money at that project over the last two sessions I've been involved with," said incoming Senate Majority Leader Jim Mehlhaff, a Republican from Pierre. "At some point, we should've thrown enough at it to get it done."

The governor's budget address kicks off the annual legislative budgeting process. Lawmakers will consider Noem's budget proposals when they convene for the annual legislative session on Jan. 14.

Tuesday's speech will also provide an opportunity for the governor to highlight her accomplishments during her last six years in office before she's expected to resign in January. President-elect Donald Trump picked Noem as his Homeland Security cabinet secretary pick in November. She'll hand the reins to Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden during the legislative session if she's confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Noem will present the budget address at 1 p.m. CST from the House of Representatives at the Capitol in Pierre. South Dakota Public Broadcasting will carry the speech live.

Fiscal experts anticipate lower-than-projected state revenues for the current fiscal year, which started in July. South Dakota is on track to see negative sales tax revenue growth this fiscal year.

"That makes it difficult to do much new, and the hope is that there's funding available to adequately fund the core priorities of the state," said Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Tony Venhuizen, who serves as vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee. Those core priorities include education, Medicaid, state employee salaries and public safety.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Liz Larson, of Sioux Falls, said she recognizes the lack of "wiggle room" to achieve priorities outside those responsibilities.

The prison project could be a dominant topic during the legislative session — not only the funding but also discussions about the location, which has been opposed by neighboring landowners and is the subject of a lawsuit. Incoming Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said unanswered questions and logistics "still up in the air" need to be addressed before the Legislature moves forward. Mehlhaff said he's open to a bonding discussion if funds aren't available.

Waiting any longer will increase project costs, said Will Mortenson, who was House majority leader during the last legislative session.

"Anybody who wants to bring an objection to this has to have an alternative site ready to present," said Mortenson, a Republican from Fort Pierre. "This is a clear and present need for the state. We can't sit around with indecision for too long."

The new prison would largely replace the existing penitentiary in Sioux Falls, parts of which date to 1881.

A tight budget could also complicate discussions of potential state funding for local property tax relief, which some lawmakers campaigned on. Though the state and cities rely mostly on sales taxes, counties and school districts depend on property taxes.

"Only serious property tax proposals will include where the money comes from," Mortenson said. "The state doesn't spend a dime of property tax revenue and we'll certainly not force a property tax cut on the backs of our schools and counties."

Mehlhoff said he'd prefer to discuss and study revenue and government funding at all levels in the coming year to better understand the state's tax structure and how to alleviate property tax burdens before passing legislation. If there's one-time money available outside of Noem's proposed budget, he'd like to give some relief to county governments.

"As this session goes on and we get a proper picture of what one-time money is available," Mehlhoff said, "we might have some different ideas of where they can go to do the most good for South Dakotans."

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

Ellsworth temporarily moving 17 planes and 800 people to North Dakota

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - DECEMBER 2, 2024 2:00 PM

Seventeen planes and 800 people will temporarily transfer to Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota to accommodate a runway construction project at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, the Air Force said Monday.

The transfer of B-1B Lancers and personnel is expected to begin this month and last about 10 months. The runway construction is one of many projects at Ellsworth to prepare for the B-21 Raider, a new long-range strike bomber under development for the Air Force by Northrop Grumman. The B-21s will eventually replace the B-1s at Ellsworth.

"The runway construction at Ellsworth is a key milestone in ensuring we're ready to receive the B-21 Raider," said Col. Derek Oakley, the commander of the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth, near Rapid City.

Residents around Ellsworth will notice more construction traffic, the Air Force said, and locals in North Dakota's Red River Valley will notice an increase in military vehicle freight and air traffic.

Earlier this year, several of Ellsworth's B-1 bombers relocated to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas. The arrival date of B-21s at Ellsworth is expected "in the mid-2020s," the Air Force said.

COMMENTARY

With age verification, lawmakers seek solutions for problems best handled by parents

by Dana Hess

I spent an inordinate amount of time during my journalism career writing headlines. Sometimes I miss it. Especially when a story comes along about the last meeting of the legislative Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Regulation of Internet Access by Minors.

If I was writing the headline for that story it would say: Lawmakers spend the summer studying porn sites. That ought to get the attention of readers.

Lawmakers on the committee might quibble with that headline, explaining that they were studying how to keep minors away from porn sites, rather than studying the porn sites themselves. If that's the case, then the jury is still out on whether or not they succeeded.

After a summer of study, the consensus on the committee seemed to be — let's do what Texas does.

If their focus is going to be on Texas, some taxpayers may have preferred that lawmakers spend their summer trying to figure out a way to get that state to pay for the National Guard deployments that South Dakota has sent to the southern border without reimbursement.

Instead, lawmakers on the study committee decided to follow the example of a Texas law mandating porn web sites to require age verification for everyone who enters the site. That law was signed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott last year and requires users to upload a photo of a government ID to access a pornographic website. The Texas law carries fines of up to \$10,000 per violation by a site. That fine could go up to \$250,000 per violation if it involves a minor.

The Texas law has had quite a journey through the court system. The law was challenged by a group of pornographic web site operators called the Free Speech Coalition with representation by the American Civil Liberties Union. The law was blocked by a district court judge. The state appealed and that decision was struck down on a 2-1 vote by a federal appeals court. Now the case is in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

According to an article in Forbes, the Free Speech Coalition believes the age-verification process is "invasive and burdensome with significant privacy risks for adult consumers." In the same article, an attorney from the ACLU said the Texas law allows "the government to rob adults of their online privacy and burden their access to protected speech, all under the guise of protecting children."

The Texas law is in effect while the Supreme Court contemplates its decision. This has caused some ramifications in Texas. According to the Texas Tribune, the popular porn site Pornhub has blocked access for users with Texas IP addresses. This has sparked interest by Texans in VPNs or Virtual Private Networks. VPNs hide IP addresses and sell themselves as a service that protects your online privacy.

South Dakota lawmakers may be backing the wrong horse if they're putting their hopes on the Texas law. The Supreme Court has ruled in the past that trying to put limitations on access to pornography is an unconstitutional restriction on free speech.

Putting aside the constitutional question, the size of the task of regulating the internet is monumental. A study by scholars at Michigan State University and the University of Iowa estimated there are at least 4 million adult web sites. That's a stark example of how tough it will be to put the clamps on something that truly is a world wide web. Is someone in state government going to be tasked with visiting each site to see if it's complying with the state's age-verification law?

A state law that seeks to monitor the internet is not the answer. Lawmakers should put their efforts into making sure parents have the resources they need to protect their children themselves. That could mean literature on how to talk to kids about staying safe online or a state stipend that helps with the purchase of web filters or blocking software.

In this case, lawmakers' intentions are good, but they'll never be able to police the internet or take on the responsibilities that are best handled by parents.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

U.S. Senate Dem leader urges Thune to conduct traditional confirmation process

South Dakota U.S. senator says 'we expect a level of cooperation from the Democrats'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - DECEMBER 2, 2024 11:02 AM

WASHINGTON — Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer sent a letter to incoming Republican Leader John Thune on Monday urging him to move nominees through the traditional confirmation process, including committee hearings and floor votes.

The letter is likely a response to President-elect Donald Trump urging Senate Republicans to recess the chamber for at least 10 days next year so he can make recess appointments, getting around the Senate's

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 18 of 64

role confirming nominees. Republicans will be in the majority when the new Congress convenes in January, taking over from Democrats.

"As we transition to the 119th Congress, Senate Democrats stand ready and willing to work with Senate Republicans to provide advice and consent as we evaluate all of the incoming president's nominations," Schumer wrote in the one-page letter. "In particular, we commit to working in a bipartisan fashion to process each nominee by reviewing standard FBI background-investigation materials, scheduling hearings and markups in the committees of jurisdiction, and considering nominees on the Senate floor."

Thune, who GOP senators elected to replace Mitch McConnell next year as their leader, hasn't committed to recessing the chamber for the time needed to allow Trump to appoint nominees single-handedly, but has repeatedly encouraged Democrats not to slow down the process.

"What we're going to do is make sure that we are processing his nominees in a way that gets them into those positions, so they can implement his agenda. How that happens remains to be seen," the South Dakota Republican said in mid-November.

"Obviously, we want to make sure our committees have confirmation hearings, like they typically do, and that these nominees are reported out to the floor," Thune added. "But I've said this and I mean it — that we expect a level of cooperation from the Democrats to work with us to get these folks installed. And obviously, we're going to explore all options to make sure they get moved and they get moved quickly."

Narrow path for nominees

Trump's nominations have received mixed reaction from GOP senators with some, like Florida Sen. Marco Rubio who will likely become secretary of State, receiving widespread praise, while others have received lukewarm receptions.

For example, Trump's first nominee for attorney general, former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz, withdrew eight days after Trump said he wanted him to lead the Justice Department amid widespread concerns from Republican senators about allegations of illegal drug use and paying for sex.

Republicans will have a 53-seat majority in the Senate once the next session of Congress begins on Jan. 3, meaning any nominee can lose the support of three Republican senators and still secure confirmation on a party-line vote with Vice President-elect J.D. Vance breaking the tie.

Democrats may vote for some of Trump's nominees if they believe they're qualified, but are unlikely to support the more controversial picks, like TV personality and former U.S. Pennsylvania Senate candidate Dr. Mehmet Oz, who Trump says he will tap to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

With such narrow margins, centrist Republicans like Maine's Susan Collins, Kentucky's McConnell and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski, could have influence over Trump's Cabinet, unless the chamber allows recess appointments.

Checks and balances

Schumer wrote in his letter the Senate's role confirming nominees should be respected regardless of who holds the Oval Office or which political party controls the chamber.

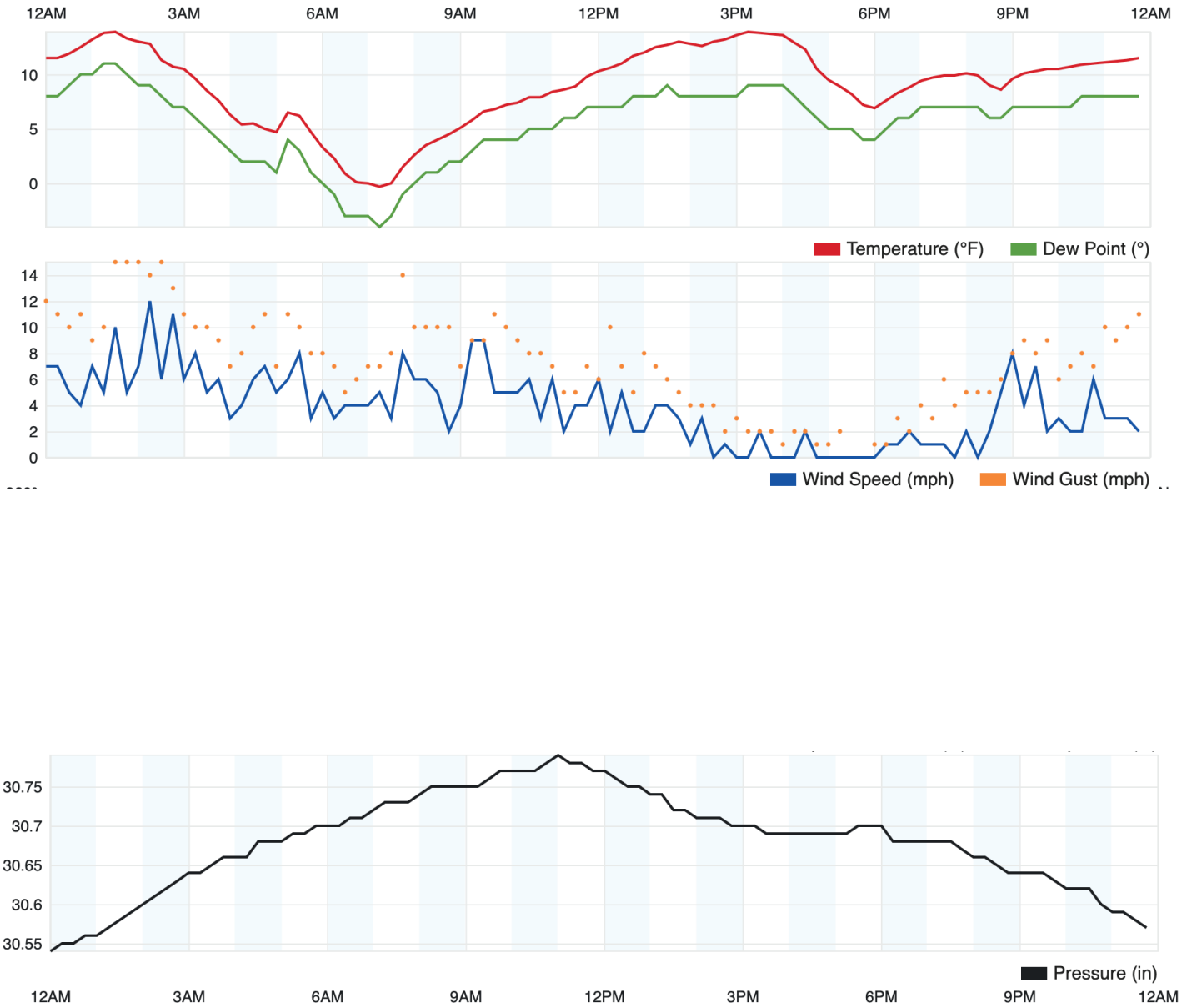
"In our system of checks and balances, the Senate plays a vital role in ensuring the President appoints well-qualified public officials that will dutifully serve the American people and honor their oaths to the Constitution," Schumer wrote. "Regardless of party, the Senate has upheld this sacred duty for generations and we should not and must not waver in our Constitutional duty. We look forward to joining you in these efforts as soon as possible once the Senate and its committees are organized in January."

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 19 of 64

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 20 of 64

Today



High: 30 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 17 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 29 °F ↓↓

Isolated Snow
Showers and
Patchy
Blowing Snow

Wednesday
Night



Low: -3 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 14 °F

Partly Sunny



Warmer and Windier Conditions On the Way

December 2, 2024
1:37 PM

Temperatures close to normal accompany strong winds Tuesday into Wednesday.

TUESDAY



NE South Dakota

25-36° Highs

Wind SW 10-15
Gusts to 30 mph
over Coteau

Central SD

35-50° Highs

Wind SW 10-15

WEDNESDAY



NE South Dakota

26-33° Highs

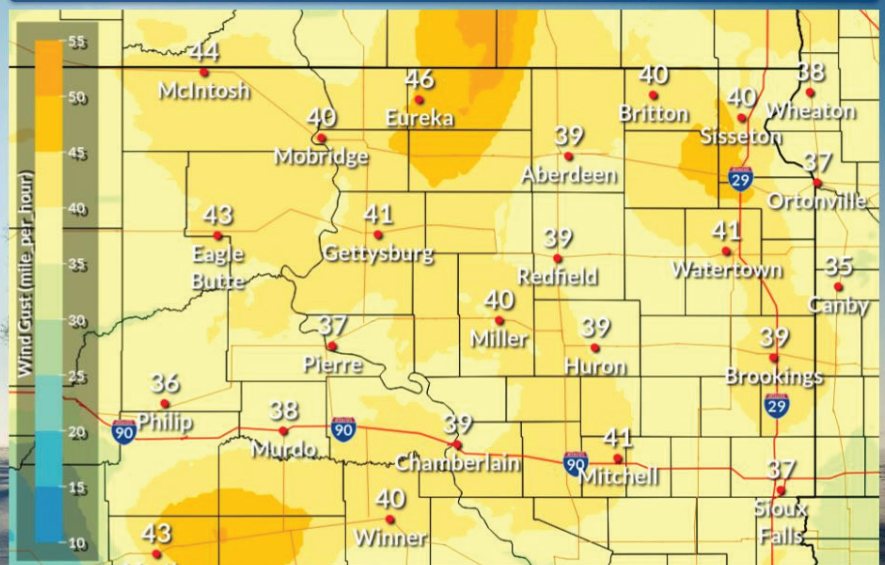
Wind NW 20-25
Gusts to 45 mph

Central SD

30-37° Highs

Wind NW 20-30
Gusts to 45 mph

Maximum Wind Gusts on Wednesday



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Tuesday will see a return to normal or above normal temperatures for central and northeast South Dakota and western Minnesota. Windy conditions will start Tuesday over the Prairie Coteau, gusting to 30 miles per hour. Wednesday will be even windier, gusting to 40 to 45 miles per hour across the forecast area.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 21 of 64



November 2024 Climate Summary

December 2, 2024
7:47 AM

Warm and Wet November across Central and Northeast South Dakota.

	Aberdeen	Sisseton	Mobridge	Pierre	Watertown
Average Temperature	33.3° (41st Warmest)	33.5° (34th Warmest)	35.3° (27th Warmest)	35.1° (37th Warmest)	33.2° (32nd Warmest)
Departure from Normal	+2.4°	+1.6°	+1.8°	+1.0°	+2.6°
Warmest Year	1923 (40.7°)	2016 (42.4°)	2016 (42.8°)	1999 (44.4°)	2001 (40.4°)
Warmest of the month	61° (11/15)	60° (11/16)	64° (11/10)	64° (11/10)	61° (11/02)
Coldest of the month	-4° (11/30)	0° (11/29, 11/30)	1° (11/29)	2° (11/28, 11/29)	1° (11/29)
Rainfall	1.65" (15th Wettest)	2.07" (7th Wettest)	1.23" (6th Wettest)	0.76" (30th Wettest)	2.15" (10th Wettest)
Departure from Normal	+0.91"	+1.43"	+0.80"	-0.01"	+1.47"
Driest Year	4 Years (Trace)	1999 (0.00")	1912 (0.00")	5 Years (Trace)	1907 (0.00")
Wettest Year	1896 (6.92")	1977 (4.77")	1977 (2.72")	1922 (2.68")	1983 (3.11")



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

This November was 1-2 degrees above normal, in part due to the cold stretch this past week helping to offset some of the abnormally warm temperatures from earlier in the month. Most places saw a monthly high temperature above 60 degrees and a monthly low temperature at or below 0. Generally an above normal month in terms of precipitation as well, with the majority of the liquid equivalent precipitation falling as rain. Some sites had a Top 10 wettest November on record.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 22 of 64



Meteorological Fall Climate Summary

December 2, 2024
7:55 AM

September through November 2024 Climate Based on 1991-2020 Normals

	Aberdeen (Since 1898)	Sisseton (Since 1935)	Mobridge (Since 1927)	Pierre (Since 1934)	Watertown (Since 1898)
Average Temperature	51.2°	51.9°	53.7°	53.1°	50.4°
Normal	46.0°	46.5°	48.4°	48.7°	45.5°
Departure	+5.2°	+5.4°	+5.3°	+4.4°	+4.9°
All Time Rank	2nd Warmest	2nd Warmest	Warmest	6th Warmest	4th Warmest
Precipitation	2.48"	2.58"	1.32"	1.87"	2.48"
Normal	4.87"	5.42"	3.76"	4.20"	5.08"
Departure	-2.39"	-2.84"	-2.44"	-2.33"	-2.60"
All Time Rank	21st Driest	23rd Driest	19th Driest	29th Driest	21st Driest



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Meteorological Fall (Sept.-Nov.) has come to a close, and it's one for the record books! This was one of the warmest falls on record, and the warmest fall in nearly 100 years of record keeping at Mobridge. Temperatures were 4 to 5 degrees above average across north central and northeast South Dakota. This fall was also abnormally dry, with sites receiving only about half of the normal amount of precipitation.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 23 of 64

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 14 °F at 1:26 AM

Low Temp: 0 °F at 7:07 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 1:35 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 58 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 63 in 1941

Record Low: -18 in 1905

Average High: 34

Average Low: 12

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.06

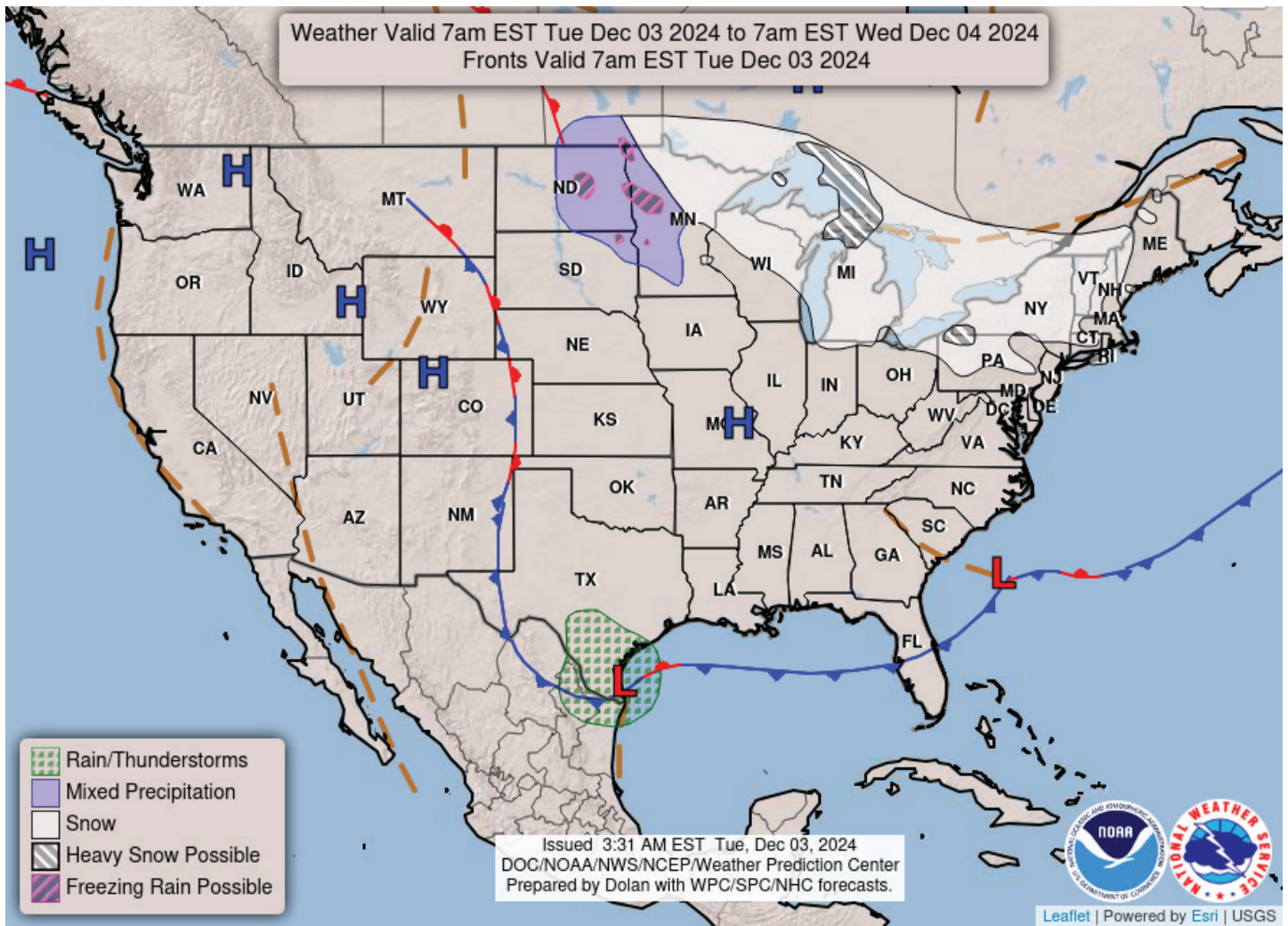
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.27

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:51:45 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54:17 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 24 of 64

Today in Weather History

December 3, 1991: Strong northwesterly winds behind a departing surface low brought blizzard conditions and dangerously cold wind chill readings across west central and southwest Minnesota on the 3rd. A general 1 to 3-inch snowfall occurred across the area and combined with winds gusting to 50 mph at times to generate whiteout conditions from the morning into the evening. Air temperatures coupled with the strong wind produced wind chill values ranging from 30 to 50 below zero. Some schools and businesses were closed during the morning as the storm intensified. Several car accidents and jackknifed tractor-semitrailers littered roadways. Many roads were closed at the height of the storm. Power outages occurred over a small portion of the area due to the strong winds downing ice-covered power lines.

December 3, 1838: Cleveland Abbe, an American meteorologist and advocate of time zones, was born on this day. He was trained as an astronomer and appointed the director of the Cincinnati Observatory in 1868. He eventually turned to meteorology and inaugurated a public weather service that served as a model for today's National Weather Service.

1856 - A severe blizzard began to rage across Iowa and Kansas. It produced as much as 16 inches of snow in Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1926 - Yuma, AZ, was soaked with 1.10 inch of rain, and by the 10th of the month had received 4.43 inches, making it the wettest December of record. The average annual rainfall for Yuma is 3.38 inches. (3rd-10th) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - Birmingham, AL, was drenched with 9.22 inches of rain in 24 hours. The rains caused severe flash flooding which literally submerged traffic. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Stormy weather in the northwestern U.S. finally began to abate, but not before Gold Beach OR was drenched with 7.94 inches of rain in 24 hours. Low pressure spread snow from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Central Appalachians. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Gale force winds ushered cold air into the northeastern U.S., and produced snow squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 48 mph at Buffalo NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Heavy snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in northern New England. Snowfall totals in Maine ranged up to 31 inches, at Limestone. Presque Isle ME reported a record 30 inches of snow in 24 hours, along with wind gusts to 46 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



WHERE'S THE PICCOLO?

Sir Michael Costa was a celebrated and successful conductor in England. He was recognized by others for the demands he placed on musicians to be accurate and to perform with excellence. In fact, many resented him for his adherence to high musical standards.

On one occasion, during a rehearsal of a large choir and orchestra, he brought the music to an abrupt stop. The musicians were puzzled until he shouted, "Where's the piccolo? I can't hear the piccolo."

With all of the musicians playing as loudly as they could, and the choir singing as loudly as it could, the piccolo player thought to himself, "My instrument is so small and the sound it makes is so insignificant it won't be missed." But to Costa, the sound of one small instrument was essential to make the harmony needed for the concert to be complete.

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, said, "Now, all of you together are Christ's body and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it." Here we find him emphasizing the significance that each of us have, though we have our own distinctive talents and skills, that is necessary to do the work of Christ through our church and its various activities.

One of the dangers of comparing ourselves to others is that we come out looking as small as a piccolo. But remember, the Conductor needs us to play our part.

Prayer: Lord, may we each play our part in Your symphony of grace, realizing that if do not play our part, Your Kingdom will be incomplete. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

Tags: 1 Corinthians 12:27

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 26 of 64

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White.....\$48.99/year
- Colored.....\$79.88/year
- Colored.....\$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly*.....\$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month.....\$15.98
- 3 Months.....\$26.63
- 6 Months.....\$31.95
- 9 Months.....\$42.60
- 12 Months.....\$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 27 of 64



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.24

3 29 34 37 38 17

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$541,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 36 Mins
DRAW: 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.02.24

1 20 37 39 47 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$16,280,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 51
DRAW: Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.02.24

5 13 14 31 42 15

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 17 Hrs 6 Mins 11
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.24

9 19 28 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$129,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 6
DRAW: Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.02.24

14 27 34 39 40 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 35
DRAW: Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.02.24

3 9 26 61 67 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$240,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 35
DRAW: Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 28 of 64

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
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo at the Legion (Baseball/softball foundation fundraiser)
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
06/07/2025 Second Annual Day of Play at Groton Baseball Complex
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

These Native tribes are working with schools to boost attendance

By FELIX CLARY of ICT undefined

WATONGA, Okla. (AP) — As the Watonga school system's Indian education director, Hollie Youngbear works to help Native American students succeed — a job that begins with getting them to school.

She makes sure students have clothes and school supplies. She connects them with federal and tribal resources. And when students don't show up to school, she and a colleague drive out and pick them up.

Nationwide, Native students miss school far more frequently than their peers, but not at Watonga High School. Youngbear and her colleagues work to connect with families in a way that acknowledges the history and needs of Native communities.

As she thumbed through binders in her office with records of every Native student in the school, Youngbear said a cycle of skipping school goes back to the abuse generations of Native students suffered at U.S. government boarding schools.

"If grandma didn't go to school, and her grandma didn't, and her mother didn't, it can create a generational cycle," said Youngbear, a member of the Arapaho tribe who taught the Cheyenne and Arapaho languages at the school for 25 years.

This story is part of a collaboration on chronic absenteeism among Native American students between The Associated Press and ICT, a news outlet that covers Indigenous issues.

Watonga schools collaborate with several Cheyenne and Arapaho programs that aim to lower Native student absenteeism. One helps students with school expenses and promotes conferences for tribal youth. Another holds monthly meetings with Watonga's Native high school students during lunch hours to discourage underage drinking and drug use.

Oklahoma is home to 38 federally recognized tribes, many with their own education departments — and support from those tribes contributes to students' success. Of 34 states with data available for the 2022-2023 school year, Oklahoma was the only one where Native students missed school at lower rates than the state average, according to data collected by The Associated Press.

At Watonga High, fewer than 4% of Native students were chronically absent in 2022-23, in line with the school average, according to state data. Chronically absent students miss 10% or more of the school year, for both excused and unexcused reasons, which sets them behind in learning and heightens their chances of dropping out.

About 14% of students at the Watonga school on the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation are Native American. With black-lettered Bible verses on the walls of its hallways, the high school resembles many others in rural Oklahoma. But student-made Native art decorates the classroom reserved for Eagle Academy, the school's alternative education program.

Students are assigned to the program when they struggle to keep up their grades or attendance, and most are Native American, classroom teacher Carrie Compton said. Students are rewarded for attendance with incentives like field trips.

Compton said she gets results. A Native boy who was absent 38 days one semester spent a short time in Eagle Academy during his second year of high school and went on to graduate last year, she said.

"He had perfect attendance for the first time ever, and it's because he felt like he was getting something from school," Compton said.

When students do not show up for school, Compton and Youngbear take turns visiting their homes.

"I can remember one year, I probably picked five kids up every morning because they didn't have rides," Compton said. "So at 7 o'clock in the morning, I just start my little route, and make my circle, and once they get into the habit of it, they would come to school."

Around the country, Native students often have been enrolled in disproportionately large numbers in alternative education programs, which can worsen segregation. But the embrace of Native students by their Eagle Academy teacher sets a different tone from what some students experience elsewhere in the school.

Compton said a complaint she hears frequently from Native students in her room is, "The teachers just don't like me."

Bullying of Native students by non-Native students is also a problem, said Watonga senior Happy Belle Shortman, who is Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho. She said Cheyenne students have been teased over aspects of their traditional ceremonies and powwow music.

"People here, they're not very open, and they do have their opinions," Shortman said. "People who are from a different culture, they don't understand our culture and everything that we have to do, or that we have a different living than they do."

Poverty might play a role in bullying as well, she said. "If you're not in the latest trends, then you're kind of just outcasted," she said.

Watonga staff credit the work building relationships with students for the low absenteeism rates, despite the challenges.

"Native students are never going to feel really welcomed unless the non-Native faculty go out of their way to make sure that those Native students feel welcomed," said Dallas Pettigrew, director of Oklahoma University's Center for Tribal Social Work and a member of the Cherokee Nation.

Native American students miss school at higher rates.

It only got worse during the pandemic

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY, SHARON LURYE and MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SAN CARLOS, Ariz. (AP) — After missing 40 days of school last year, Tommy Betom, 10, is on track this year for much better attendance. The importance of showing up has been stressed repeatedly at school — and at home.

When he went to school last year, he often came home saying the teacher was picking on him and other kids were making fun of his clothes. But Tommy's grandmother Ethel Marie Betom, who became one of his caregivers after his parents split, said she told him to choose his friends carefully and to behave in class.

He needs to go to school for the sake of his future, she told him.

"I didn't have everything," said Betom, an enrolled member of the San Carlos Apache tribe. Tommy attends school on the tribe's reservation in southeastern Arizona. "You have everything. You have running water in the house, bathrooms and a running car."

A teacher and a truancy officer also reached out to Tommy's family to address his attendance. He was one of many. Across the San Carlos Unified School District, 76% of students were chronically absent during the 2022-2023 school year, meaning they missed 10% or more of the school year.

This story is part of a collaboration on chronic absenteeism among Native American students between The Associated Press and ICT, a news outlet that covers Indigenous issues.

Years after COVID-19 disrupted American schools, nearly every state is still struggling with attendance. But attendance has been worse for Native American students — a disparity that existed before the pandemic and has since grown, according to data collected by The Associated Press.

Out of 34 states with data available for the 2022-2023 school year, half had absenteeism rates for Native American and Alaska Native students that were at least 9 percentage points higher than the state average.

Many schools serving Native students have been working to strengthen connections with families, who often struggle with higher rates of illness and poverty. Schools also must navigate distrust dating back to the U.S. government's campaign to break up Native American culture, language and identity by forcing children into abusive boarding schools.

History "may cause them to not see the investment in a public school education as a good use of their

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 31 of 64

time," said Dallas Pettigrew, director of Oklahoma University's Center for Tribal Social Work and a member of the Cherokee Nation.

On-site health, trauma care helped bring students back

The San Carlos school system recently introduced care centers that partner with hospitals, dentists and food banks to provide services to students at multiple schools. The work is guided by cultural success coaches — school employees who help families address challenges that keep students from coming to school.

Nearly 100% of students in the district are Native and more than half of families have incomes below the federal poverty level. Many students come from homes that deal with alcoholism and drug abuse, Superintendent Deborah Dennison said.

Students miss school for reasons ranging from anxiety to unstable living conditions, said Jason Jones, a cultural success coach at San Carlos High School and an enrolled member of the San Carlos Apache tribe. Acknowledging their fears, grief and trauma helps him connect with students, he said.

"You feel better, you do better," Jones said. "That's our job here in the care center is to help the students feel better."

In the 2023-2024 school year, the chronic absenteeism rate in the district fell from 76% to 59% — an improvement Dennison attributes partly to efforts to address their communities' needs.

"All these connections with the community and the tribe are what's making a difference for us and making the school a system that fits them rather than something that has been forced upon them, like it has been for over a century of education in Indian Country," said Dennison, a member of the Navajo Nation.

In three states — Alaska, Nebraska, and South Dakota — the majority of Native American and Alaska Native students were chronically absent. In some states, it has continued to worsen, even while improving slightly for other students, as in Arizona, where chronic absenteeism for Native students rose from 22% in 2018-2019 to 45% in 2022-2023.

AP's analysis does not include data on schools managed by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education, which are not run by traditional districts. Less than 10% of Native American students attend BIE schools.

Schools close on days of Native ceremonial gatherings

At Algodones Elementary School, which serves a handful of Native American pueblos along New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande, about two-thirds of students are chronically absent.

The communities were hit hard by COVID-19, with devastating impacts on elders. Since schools reopened, students have been slow to return. Excused absences for sick days are still piling up — in some cases, Principal Rosangela Montoya suspects, students are stressed about falling behind academically.

Staff and tribal liaisons have been analyzing every absence and emphasizing connections with parents. By 10 a.m., telephone calls go out to the homes of absent students. Next steps include in-person meetings with those students' parents.

"There's illness. There's trauma," Montoya said. "A lot of our grandparents are the ones raising the children so that the parents can be working."

About 95% of Algodones' students are Native American, and the school strives to affirm their identity. It doesn't open on four days set aside for Native American ceremonial gatherings, and students are excused for absences on other cultural days as designated by the nearby pueblos.

For Jennifer Tenorio, it makes a difference that the school offers classes in the family's native language of Keres. She speaks Keres at home, but says that's not always enough to instill fluency.

Tenorio said her two oldest children, now in their 20s, were discouraged from speaking Keres when enrolled in the federal Head Start educational program — a system that now promotes native language preservation — and they struggled academically.

"It was sad to see with my own eyes," said Tenorio, a single parent and administrative assistant who has used the school's food bank. "In Algodones, I saw a big difference to where the teachers were really there for the students, and for all the kids, to help them learn."

Over a lunch of strawberry milk and enchiladas on a recent school day, her 8-year-old son Cameron

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 32 of 64

Tenorio said he likes math and wants to be a policeman.

"He's inspired," Tenorio said. "He tells me every day what he learns."

Home visits change perception of school

In Arizona, Rice Intermediate School Principal Nicholas Ferro said better communication with families, including Tommy Betom's, has helped improve attendance. Since many parents are without working phones, he said, that often means home visits.

Lillian Curtis said she has been impressed by Rice Intermediate's student activities on family night. Her granddaughter, Brylee Lupe, 10, missed 10 days of school by mid-October last year but had missed just two days by the same time this year.

"The kids always want to go — they are anxious to go to school now. And Brylee is much more excited," said Curtis, who takes care of her grandchildren.

Curtis said she tells Brylee that skipping school is not an option.

"I just told her that you need to be in school, because who is going to be supporting you?" Curtis said. "You've got to do it on your own. You got to make something of yourself."

The district has made gains because it is changing the perception of school and what it can offer, said Dennison, the superintendent. Its efforts have helped not just with attendance but also morale, especially at the high school, she said.

"Education was a weapon for the U.S. government back in the past," she said. "We work to decolonize our school system."

New study shows voting for Native Americans is harder than ever

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (AP) — A new study has found that systemic barriers to voting on tribal lands contribute to substantial disparities in Native American turnout, particularly for presidential elections.

The study, released Tuesday by the Brennan Center for Justice, looked at 21 states with federally recognized tribal lands that have a population of at least 5,000 and where more than 20% of residents identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. Researchers found that between 2012 and 2022, voter participation in federal elections was 7 percentage points lower in midterms and 15 percentage points lower in presidential elections than among those living off tribal lands in the same states.

Earlier studies show voter turnout for communities of color is higher in areas where their ethnic group is the majority, but the latest research found that turnout was the lowest on tribal lands that have a high concentration of Native Americans, the Brennan Center said.

"There's something more intensely happening in Native American communities on tribal land," said Chelsea Jones, a researcher on the study.

Jones said the study suggests some barriers may be insurmountable in predominately Native communities due to a lack of adequate polling places or access to early and mail-in ballots. Many residents on tribal lands have nontraditional addresses, meaning they don't have street names or house numbers, making mail-in voting even more difficult. As a result, many Native American voters rely on P.O. boxes, but the study notes that several jurisdictions will not mail ballots to P.O. boxes.

Long distances to the polls that do exist on tribal lands and little to no public transportation creates additional hurdles for Native American voters. In far-flung Alaska Native villages, polling places sometimes simply don't open if there's no one available to run an election, and severe weather can make absentee voting unreliable, The Associated Press reported last month.

"When you think about people who live on tribal lands having to go 30, 60, 100 miles (up to 160 kilometers) to cast a ballot, that is an extremely limiting predicament to be in," Jones said. "These are really, truly severe barriers."

Additionally, Jones said they found Native American voters were denied the ability to vote using their tribal IDs in several places, including in states where that is legally allowed. All of these roadblocks to the ballot can create a sense of distrust in the system, which could contribute to lower turnout, Jones said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 33 of 64

The Brennan Center study also highlights an ongoing issue when it comes to understanding how or why Native Americans vote: a lack of good data.

"There are immense data inequities when it comes to studying Native American communities, especially as it pertains to politics," Jones said.

Native American communities are often overlooked when it comes to polling data and sometimes when they are included those studies do not reflect broader trends for Indigenous voters, said Stephanie Fryberg, the director of the Research for Indigenous Social Action & Equity Center, which studies systemic inequalities faced by Indigenous people.

"Generally speaking, polling is not well positioned to do a good job for Indian Country," said Fryberg, who is also a professor of psychology at Northwestern University. "There are ideas that are held up as the gold standard about how polling works that don't work for Indian Country because of where we live, because of how difficult it is to connect to people in our community."

Fryberg, a member of the Tulalip Tribes in Washington state, was one of several Indigenous researchers who denounced a recent exit poll conducted by Edison Research that found 65% of Native American voters who participated said they voted for Donald Trump. The poll only surveyed 229 self-identified Native Americans, a sample size that she said is too small for an accurate reading, and none of the jurisdictions in the poll were on tribal lands.

"Right there, you're already eliminating a powerful perspective," Fryberg said.

The Indigenous Journalists Association labelled that polling data as "highly misleading and irresponsible," saying it has led "to widespread misinformation."

In a statement to the Associated Press, Edison Research acknowledged that the polling size is small, but said the "goal of the survey is to represent the national electorate and to have enough data to also examine large demographic and geographic subgroups." The survey has a potential sampling margin of error of plus or minus 9%, according to the statement.

"Based on all of these factors, this data point from our survey should not be taken as a definitive word on the American Indian vote," the statement reads.

Native Americans are not just part of an ethnic group, they also have political identities that come with being citizens of sovereign nations. Fryberg said allowing those surveyed to self-identify as Native Americans, without follow-up questions about tribal membership and specific Indigenous populations, means that data cannot accurately capture voting trends for those communities.

Both Fryberg and Jones said that in order to create better data on and opportunities for Native Americans to vote, researchers and lawmakers would have to meet the specific needs of Indigenous communities. Jones said passage of the Native American Voting Rights Act, a bill that has stalled in Congress, would ensure equitable in-person voting options in every precinct on tribal lands.

"This is not an issue that we see across the country," Jones said. "It's very specific to tribal lands. So we need provisions that address that uniquely."

Oscar Cluff's double-double leads South Dakota State to 78-62 victory over Dakota Wesleyan

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Oscar Cluff had 20 points and 12 rebounds to power South Dakota State to a 78-62 victory over Dakota Wesleyan on Monday night.

Cluff also had three blocks for the Jackrabbits (7-2). Stoney Hadnot scored 13 on 6-for-8 shooting. Jaden Jackson had 10 points.

The Tigers were led by Samuel Aslesen with 14 points and two steals. Randy Rosenquist Jr. scored 10 with two steals.

Israeli strikes kill 11 in Lebanon after fire exchanges with Hezbollah that test ceasefire's limits

By NATALIE MELTZER and SALLY ABOU ALJOUND Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel unleashed its largest wave of airstrikes across Lebanon since agreeing to a ceasefire with Hezbollah last week, killing at least 11 people on Monday after the Lebanese militant group fired a volley of projectiles as a warning over what it said were Israeli truce violations.

The projectiles were apparently the first time that Hezbollah took aim at Israeli forces after the 60-day ceasefire went into effect last Wednesday. The increasingly fragile truce aimed to end more than a year of war between Hezbollah and Israel — part of a wider regional conflict sparked by the devastating Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

In the United States, President-elect Donald Trump demanded the immediate release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militant Hamas group in Gaza, saying on social media that if they are not freed before he takes office in January there would be "HELL TO PAY."

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening to directly involve the U.S. military in Israel's ongoing war in Gaza. The U.S. has given Israel crucial military and diplomatic support throughout the nearly 15-month conflict.

A new exchange of fire threatens Lebanon ceasefire

Lebanon's Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike on the southern village of Haris killed five people and wounded two while another airstrike on the village of Tallousa killed four and also wounded two.

Israel's military carried out a string of airstrikes late Monday against what it said were Hezbollah fighters, infrastructure and rocket launchers across Lebanon, in response to Hezbollah firing two projectiles toward Mount Dov — a disputed Israeli-held territory known as Shebaa Farms in Lebanon where the borders of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel meet. Israel said the projectiles fell in open areas and no injuries were reported.

Hezbollah said in a statement that it fired on an Israeli military position in the area as a "defensive and warning response" after what it called "repeated violations" of the ceasefire deal by Israel. It said complaints to mediators tasked with monitoring the ceasefire "were futile in stopping these violations."

Before the Hezbollah projectiles, Israel carried out at least four airstrikes and an artillery barrage in southern Lebanon, including a drone strike that killed a person on a motorcycle, according to Lebanese state media. Another strike killed a corporal in the Lebanese security services.

Israel has said its strikes are in response to unspecified Hezbollah violations, and that under the ceasefire deal it reserves the right to retaliate.

Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri, accused Israel of violating the truce more than 50 times in recent days by launching airstrikes, demolishing homes near the border and violating Lebanon's airspace.

Officials in the U.S. — which along with France helped broker the truce and heads a commission meant to monitor adherence to the deal — played down the significance of Israeli strikes. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said, "Largely speaking, the ceasefire is holding."

"We've gone from dozens of strikes down to one a day maybe two a day," Kirby told reporters, referring to Israeli strikes. "We're going to keep trying and see what we can do to get it down to zero."

Under the deal, Iran-backed Hezbollah has 60 days to withdraw its fighters and infrastructure from southern Lebanon. During that time, Israeli troops are also to withdraw to their side of the border.

'RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!'

In a post on his Truth Social site, Trump called for Palestinian militants to free all of the roughly 100 Israeli hostages still held inside Gaza, around two-thirds of whom are believed to be alive.

If not, Trump said, "Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"

Hours earlier, the Israeli government confirmed the death of Omer Neutra, a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen, whose body is still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza, according to the Israeli government. The Biden administration is mounting a last-ditch effort to try to restart talks between Israel and Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined to comment on Trump's post though Presi-

dent Isaac Herzog welcomed it.

Fears of hunger mount in Gaza

In Gaza, meanwhile, alarm is mounting over increasing hunger. The amount of food allowed in by Israel has plunged over the past two months, compounded by a decision Sunday by the United Nations to halt aid deliveries from the main crossing into the territory because of the threat of armed gangs looting convoys.

Experts have already warned of famine in the northernmost part of Gaza, which Israeli forces have almost completely isolated since early October, saying they're fighting regrouped Hamas militants there.

Displaced families have set up tents surrounded by piles of garbage on the streets of Gaza City. Bilal Marouf, 55, said he and 11 family members fled the Israeli offensive "barefoot and naked."

"We had nothing. Hunger and thirst killed us, and we did not have a single shekel, nor clothes, nor a mattress, nor a blanket," he said, speaking near his tent.

Israel's campaign in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' Oct 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel, has driven almost the entire population of the territory from their homes. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians now live in squalid tent camps, relying on international aid.

The Israeli military said it allowed 40 trucks carrying 600 tons of flour for the World Food Program to enter the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday night, as well as 16 other food trucks.

Israel has said it is working to increase the flow of aid. November saw an increase in the average number of humanitarian trucks it let into Gaza, up to 77 daily from 57 the month before, according to official Israeli figures.

But the levels are still nearly the lowest of the entire 15-month war. And the U.N. says less than half of that actually reaches Palestinians because Israeli military restrictions, fighting and robberies make it too dangerous to deliver the aid.

The World Food Program was able to only deliver aid to some 300,000 Palestinians in November across the Gaza Strip due to ongoing Israeli military offensives and the looting of convoys, Carl Skau, WFP's deputy executive director, said Monday.

In a tent camp in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah, Palestinians lined up at makeshift mud ovens trying to buy a few loaves of flatbread for their families.

With the price of flour mounting because of scarcity, the bakers — women displaced from further north — said they could bake less bread, and families could afford far less.

"They divide them to their children, one loaf every day," said one woman baker, Wafaa al-Attar.

Key players in Syria's long-running civil war, reignited by a shock rebel offensive

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's long civil war has reclaimed global attention after insurgents seized most of its largest city and dozens of nearby towns and villages.

The stunning advance on Aleppo by rebel forces came as several key players in the conflict have been distracted or weakened, triggering the heaviest clashes since a 2020 ceasefire brought relative calm to the country's north.

Russian and Syrian forces have carried out dozens of airstrikes to try to limit the insurgents' advances, inflicting heavy casualties.

Syria's civil war started in 2011 after an uprising against President Bashar Assad's rule. Five foreign powers have a military presence in the country including the U.S., Russia and Iran. Forces opposed to Assad, along with U.S.-backed fighters, control more than a third of the country. Israel holds the Golan Heights, which it seized in its 1967 war with its Arab neighbors.

Here's a look at the key players:

Syrian pro-government forces, backed by Russia and Iran

Syrian government troops have long controlled a large part of the country, thanks to allied forces dispatched by Russia and Iran.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 36 of 64

Assad's forces control most of the major population centers, including the capital Damascus and cities in Syria's center, south and east.

The Syrian government's capture of Aleppo in late 2016 was a turning point in the conflict and their loss of the city in recent days is a major setback.

Iran's military advisers and proxy fighters have played a critical role in shoring up Assad's forces throughout the war. But Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which is backed by Iran, has been weakened in its recent war with Israel and Iran has been distracted by the conflict. On Monday, Iranian-backed Iraqi militias deployed to Syria to back the government's counteroffensive.

Russia's military has supported Assad from the Mediterranean coast, where it maintains its only naval base outside the former Soviet Union, and at the Hemeimeem air base in Latakia province, which is home to hundreds of Russian troops. But much of its attention and resources have been focused on its war in Ukraine.

Insurgent groups, backed mainly by Turkey

Anti-government forces are led by the insurgent Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which long served as al-Qaida's branch in Syria and is considered a terrorist group by the U.N. as well as countries including the U.S.

HTS controls much of northwest Syria and in 2017 set up a "salvation government" to run day-to-day affairs in the region. In recent years, its leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani has sought to remake the group's image, cutting ties with al-Qaida, ditching hard-line officials and vowing to embrace pluralism and religious tolerance.

Other insurgent groups include Nouredine el-Zinki, which was formerly backed by the U.S., before it joined the HTS-led alliance.

A Turkish-backed coalition of groups known as the Syrian National Army has attacked areas including the northern town of Tel Rifaat, controlled by the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

Chinese fighters from the Turkistan Islamic Party and Chechen fighters from the former Soviet Union have taken part in the battles in the country's northwest, according to Syrian opposition activists. Turkey, which controls parts of northern Syria, will not say how many troops it has in the country.

Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the US

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, a U.S.-backed coalition of groups, controls large parts of eastern Syria.

The SDF has battled the Islamic State group, capturing the last sliver of land held by the extremists in eastern Syria. About 900 American troops are stationed in Syria's east to guard against a resurgence by the extremist group.

SDF forces still control several neighborhoods of Aleppo encircled by insurgents. Opposition activists have said that insurgents are willing to let those fighters cross to northeast Syria but it was not immediately clear if the Kurdish-led forces will do so.

Turkey considers the principal Kurdish faction of the SDF to be linked to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which it and allies regard as a terrorist group.

Police say a Hawaii woman disappeared voluntarily and traveled to Mexico

By HALLIE GOLDEN and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Hawaii woman who vanished after landing in Los Angeles three weeks ago disappeared voluntarily as she sought to "step away from modern connectivity" and was last seen crossing into Mexico with her luggage, police said at a news conference where they urged her to contact her distraught family.

Hannah Kobayashi, 30, appeared unharmed as she walked alone into a tunnel at the San Ysidro crossing about 125 miles (201 kilometers) southwest of Los Angeles around noon on Nov. 12, the day after her family reported her missing, LA police said Monday. Authorities made the discovery after reviewing surveillance video from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection late Sunday.

Los Angeles Police Chief Jim McDonnell said there is no evidence Kobayashi was being trafficked or was otherwise a victim of a crime. Her disappearance is now classified as a "voluntary missing person."

"We've basically done everything we can do at this point. She's left the country and in another nation now," he said, adding that if she returns to the U.S., law enforcement will be notified.

McDonnell said she has a right to her privacy, but urged her to reach out to her family or law enforcement. "A simple message could reassure those who care about her," McDonnell said. He explained that the missing person case will remain active until her safety is confirmed by law enforcement.

Kobayashi went missing after the budding photographer from Maui didn't make a connecting flight to New York on Nov. 8 to travel for a new job and to visit relatives. She told her family she would sleep in the Los Angeles International Airport that night.

Family members assumed she was on standby for another flight, according to her aunt, Larie Pidgeon. The next day, Kobayashi texted them to say she was sightseeing in Los Angeles, planning to visit The Grove shopping mall and downtown LA, Pidgeon said.

On Nov. 11, the family received "strange and cryptic, just alarming" text messages from her phone that referenced her being "intercepted" as she got on a Metro train and being scared that someone might be stealing her identity, her aunt said.

Her father, Ryan Kobayashi, who had been in the search party along with volunteers, was found dead by apparent suicide on Sunday, Nov. 24, in a parking lot near LA International Airport, police and her family said.

McDonnell said during a police commission meeting last Tuesday that detectives determined Hannah Kobayashi missed her connecting flight intentionally. Kobayashi's sister, Sydni Kobayashi, disputed his statement in a social media post.

Police said Monday that after Hannah Kobayashi was seen in various locations around LA, she requested that her luggage, which had been checked to New York, be sent back to LAX. She then returned to the airport to retrieve it on Nov. 11 and did not have her phone when she left again, according to police.

Investigators found that she had "expressed the desire to step away from modern connectivity."

Police also identified and questioned a man that Kobayashi was seen with on the Metro. He was "cooperative" and said he met her at LAX, police said.

Sydni Kobayashi did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Members of the public who were in the "Help Us Find Hannah" Facebook group, which garnered the interest of more than 25,000 participants, shared a post from the group Monday that said the family would be shutting the group down after "threats against their lives and the lives of their small children."

The post also said Sydni Kobayashi and her mother would not be responding to any messages.

During the news conference, McDonnell reflected on all that the family had endured these last few weeks.

"My ask would be to anybody considering doing this, think about the people you're leaving behind, your loved ones who are going to be worried sick about you," he said.

Trump says he'll attend Notre Dame Cathedral reopening celebration in Paris this weekend

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump will attend the reopening celebration for Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris this weekend, his first foreign trip since the election.

The cathedral is set to reopen Saturday after more than five years of reconstruction following a devastating fire in 2019 that engulfed and nearly destroyed the soaring Paris landmark. The ceremonies being held Saturday and Sunday will be high-security affairs, with about 50 heads of state and government expected to attend.

Trump announced that he will be among them in a post on his Truth Social site Monday evening.

"It is an honor to announce that I will be traveling to Paris, France, on Saturday to attend the re-opening

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 38 of 64

of the Magnificent and Historic Notre Dame Cathedral, which has been fully restored after a devastating fire five years ago," he wrote. "President Emmanuel Macron has done a wonderful job ensuring that Notre Dame has been restored to its full level of glory, and even more so. It will be a very special day for all!"

The trip will be Trump's first abroad since he won November's presidential election. He traveled to Scotland and Ireland in May 2023, as a candidate, to visit his local golf courses.

Trump was president in 2019 when a massive fire engulfed Notre Dame, collapsing its spire and threatening to destroy one of the world's greatest architectural treasures, known for its mesmerizing stained glass.

Trump watched the inferno in horror, along with the rest of the world.

"So horrible to watch the massive fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris," he wrote on what was then named Twitter, offering his advice to the city.

"Perhaps flying water tankers could be used to put it out. Must act quickly!" he wrote.

French officials appeared to respond shortly after, noting that "All means" were being used to extinguish the flames, "except for water-bombing aircrafts which, if used, could lead to the collapse of the entire structure of the cathedral."

Trump also spoke with Macron and Pope Francis at the time to offer his condolences and said he had offered them "the help of our great experts on renovation and construction."

Trump and Macron have had a complicated relationship.

During Trump's first term in office, Macron proved to be among the world leaders most adept at managing the American president's whims as he tried to develop a personal connection built in no small part on flattery.

Macron was the guest of honor at Trump's first state dinner and Trump traveled to France several times. But the relationship soured as Trump's term progressed and Macron criticized him for questioning the need for NATO and raising doubts about America's commitment to the mutual-defense pact.

As he ran for a second term this year, Trump often mocked Macron on the campaign trail, imitating his accent and threatening to impose steep tariffs on wine and champagne bottles shipped to the U.S. if France tried to tax American companies.

After Trump won another term last month, Macron rushed to win favor with the president-elect. He was among the first global leaders to congratulate Trump — even before The Associated Press called the race in his favor — and beat UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to the punch in delivering a congratulatory phone call.

"Congratulations, President @realDonaldTrump," Macron posted on X early on Nov 6. "Ready to work together as we did for four years. With your convictions and mine. With respect and ambition. For more peace and prosperity."

Macron and other European leaders are trying to persuade Trump not to abandon America's support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia's nearly three-year invasion. European leaders hope to convince Trump that a victory by Russia would be viewed as a defeat for the U.S. — and for the incoming president, by extension — hoping to sell him on the need to pursue an end to the war more favorable to Kyiv than he might otherwise seek.

Trump over the weekend announced that he intends to nominate real estate developer Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to serve as ambassador to France. The elder Kushner was pardoned by Trump in December 2020 after pleading guilty years earlier to tax evasion and making illegal campaign donations.

The reopening of Notre Dame will be an elaborate, multi-day celebration, beginning Saturday.

Paris Archbishop Laurent Ulrich will preside at a reopening service that afternoon, banging on Notre Dame's shuttered doors with his staff to reopen them, according to the cathedral's website.

The archbishop will also symbolically reawaken Notre Dame's thunderous grand organ. The fire that melted the cathedral's lead roofing coated the huge instrument in toxic dust. Its 8,000 pipes have been painstakingly disassembled, cleaned and retuned.

Macron will attend and address the VIP guests.

After the service, opera singers Pretty Yende, from South Africa, and Julie Fuchs, from France; Chinese pianist Lang Lang; Paris-born cellist Yo-Yo Ma; Benin-born singer Angelique Kidjo; Lebanese singer Hiba

Tawaji and others will perform at a concert Saturday evening, according to the show's broadcaster, France Télévisions.

On Sunday morning, the Paris archbishop will lead an inaugural Mass and consecration of the new altar. Nearly 170 bishops from France and other countries will join the celebration, along with priests from all 106 parishes in the Paris diocese. The Mass will be followed by a "fraternal buffet" for the needy.

Ile de la Cité, where the cathedral sits in the middle of the River Seine, will be blocked off to tourists for the events. A public viewing area with room for 40,000 spectators will be set up along the Seine's southern bank.

Delaware judge reaffirms ruling that invalidated massive Tesla pay package for Elon Musk

By RANDALL CHASE AP Business Writer

DOVER, Del. (AP) — A Delaware judge has reaffirmed her ruling that Tesla must revoke Elon Musk's multibillion-dollar pay package

Chancellor Kathaleen St. Jude McCormick on Monday denied a request by attorneys for Musk and Tesla's corporate directors to vacate her ruling earlier this year requiring the company to rescind the unprecedented pay package.

McCormick also rejected an equally unprecedented and massive fee request by plaintiff attorneys, who argued that they were entitled to legal fees in the form of Tesla stock valued at more than \$5 billion. The judge said the attorneys were entitled to a fee award of \$345 million.

The rulings came in a lawsuit filed by a Tesla stockholder who challenged Musk's 2018 compensation package.

McCormick concluded in January that Musk engineered the landmark pay package in sham negotiations with directors who were not independent. The compensation package initially carried a potential maximum value of about \$56 billion, but that sum has fluctuated over the years based on Tesla's stock price.

Following the original court ruling, Tesla shareholders met in June and ratified Musk's 2018 pay package for a second time, again by an overwhelming margin.

Defense attorneys then argued that the second vote makes clear that Tesla shareholders, with full knowledge of the flaws in the 2018 process that McCormick pointed out, were adamant that Musk is entitled to the pay package. They asked the judge to vacate her order directing Tesla to rescind the pay package.

McCormick, who seemed skeptical of the defense arguments during an August hearing, said in Monday's ruling that those arguments were fatally flawed.

"The large and talented group of defense firms got creative with the ratification argument, but their unprecedented theories go against multiple strains of settled law," McCormick wrote in a 103-page opinion.

The judge noted, among other things, that a stockholder vote standing alone cannot ratify a conflicted-controller transaction.

"Even if a stockholder vote could have a ratifying effect, it could not do so here due to multiple, material misstatements in the proxy statement," she added.

Musk expressed his disagreement with the ruling in a post on X, the social media platform he owns. "Shareholders should control company votes, not judges," he wrote.

Meanwhile, McCormick found that the \$5.6 billion fee request by the shareholder's attorneys, which at one time approached \$7 billion based on Tesla's trading price, went too far.

"In a case about excessive compensation, that was a bold ask," McCormick wrote.

Attorneys for the Tesla shareholder argue that their work resulted in the "massive" benefit of returning shares to Tesla that otherwise would have gone to Musk and diluted the stock held by other Tesla investors. They value that benefit at \$51.4 billion, using the difference between the stock price at the time of McCormick's January ruling and the strike price of some 304 million stock options granted to Musk.

While finding that the methodology used to calculate the fee request was sound, the judge noted that the

Delaware's Supreme Court has noted that fee award guidelines "must yield to the greater policy concern of preventing windfalls to counsel."

"The fee award here must yield in this way, because \$5.6 billion is a windfall no matter the methodology used to justify it," McCormick wrote. A fee award of \$345 million, she said, was "an appropriate sum to reward a total victory."

The fee award amounts to almost exactly half the current record \$688 million in legal fees awarded in 2008 in litigation stemming from the collapse of Enron.

Biden's broken promise on pardoning his son Hunter is raising new questions about his legacy

By COLLEEN LONG and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's decision to go back on his word and issue a categorical pardon for his son, Hunter, just weeks before his scheduled sentencing on gun and tax convictions was a surprise that wasn't all that surprising.

Not to those who had witnessed the president's shared anguish over his two sons after the boys survived a car crash that killed Biden's first wife and a daughter more than a half-century ago. Or to those who heard the president regularly lament the death of his older son, Beau, from cancer or voice concerns — largely in private — about Hunter's sobriety and health after years of deep addiction.

But by choosing to put his family first, the 82-year-old president — who had pledged to restore a fractured public's trust in the nation's institutions and respect for the rule of law — has raised new questions about his already teetering legacy.

"This is a bad precedent that could be abused by later Presidents and will sadly tarnish his reputation," Colorado's Democratic Gov. Jared Polis wrote in a post on X. He added that while he could sympathize with Hunter Biden's struggles, "no one is above the law, not a President and not a President's son."

Biden aides and allies had been resigned to the prospect of the president using his extraordinary power in the waning days of his presidency to ensure his son wouldn't see time behind bars, especially after Donald Trump's win. The president's supporters have long viewed Biden's commitment to his family as an asset overall, even if Hunter's personal conduct and tangled business dealings were seen as a persistent liability.

But the pardon comes as Biden has become increasingly isolated since the loss to Trump by Vice President Kamala Harris, who jumped in to the race after the president's catastrophic debate against Trump in June forced his exit from the election.

He is still struggling to resolve thorny foreign policy issues in the Middle East and Europe. And he must reckon with his decision to seek reelection despite his advanced age, which helped return the Oval Office to Trump, a man he had warned time and again was a threat to democratic norms.

Trump has gleefully planned to undo Biden's signature achievements on climate change and reverse the Democrat's efforts to reinvigorate the country's alliances, all while standing poised to take credit for a strengthening economy and billions in infrastructure investments that are in the pipeline for the coming years.

And now, Biden has handed the Republican a pretext to carry through with sweeping plans to upend the Department of Justice as the Republican vows to seek retribution against supposed adversaries.

"This pardon is just deflating for those of us who've been out there for a few years yelling about what a threat Trump is," Republican Joe Walsh, a vocal Trump critic, said on MSNBC. "Nobody's above the law, we've been screaming. Well, Joe Biden just made clear his son Hunter is above the law."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Monday from Air Force One that the president wrestled with the decision but ultimately felt his son's case had been tainted by politics, though she tried to thread the needle — insisting he had faith in the Justice Department.

"He believes in the justice system, but he also believes that politics infected the process and led to a miscarriage of justice," she said.

But Trump has already made very clear his intent to disrupt federal law enforcement with his initial nomi-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 41 of 64

nation of outspoken critics like former Rep. Matt Gaetz to be attorney general and Kash Patel to replace FBI Director Christopher Wray, who nominally still has more than two years left in his term. (Gaetz ended up quickly withdrawing his name amid scrutiny over sex trafficking allegations.)

Reacting to the pardon, Trump spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement, "That system of justice must be fixed and due process must be restored for all Americans, which is exactly what President Trump will do as he returns to the White House with an overwhelming mandate from the American people."

In a social media post, the president-elect himself called the pardon "such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice."

"Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years?" Trump asked. He was referring to those convicted in the violent Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol by his supporters aiming to overturn the 2020 presidential election result.

Biden and his spokespeople had repeatedly and flatly ruled out the president granting his son a pardon.

In June, Biden told reporters as his son faced trial in the Delaware gun case: "I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him."

In July, Jean-Pierre told reporters: "It's still a no. It will be a no. It is a no. And I don't have anything else to add. Will he pardon his son? No."

In November, days after Trump's victory, Jean-Pierre reiterated that message: "Our answer stands, which is no."

Neither Biden nor the White House explained the shift in the president's thinking, and it was his broken promise as much as his act of clemency that was a lightning rod.

He is hardly the first president to pardon a family member or friend entangled in political dealings. Bill Clinton pardoned his brother Roger for drug charges after he had served his sentence roughly a decade earlier. In his final weeks in office, Trump pardoned Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in law, Jared Kushner, as well as multiple allies convicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.

Yet Biden held himself up as placing his respect for the American judicial system and rule of law over his own personal concerns — trying to draw a deliberate contrast with Trump, who tested the bounds of his authority like few predecessors.

Inside the White House, the timing of the pardon was surprising to some who believed Biden would put it off as long as possible, according to three people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter. It came just after Biden spent extended time over the past week with Hunter and other family members on Nantucket in Massachusetts, a family tradition for Thanksgiving.

"I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice — and once I made this decision this weekend, there was no sense in delaying it further," Biden said in a statement announcing the pardon.

Some in the administration have privately expressed anguish that the substance of Biden's statement, including his claim of an unfair politically-tinged prosecution of his son, resembled complaints Trump — who faced now-abandoned indictments over his role in trying to subvert the 2020 election — has been making for years about the Justice Department.

Biden said the charges in his son's cases "came about only after several of my political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose my election." Many legal experts agreed that the charges against the younger Biden were somewhat unusual, but the facts of the offenses were hardly in dispute, as Hunter wrote about his gun purchase while addicted to illegal drugs in his memoir and ultimately pleaded guilty to the tax charges.

The pardon too was unusual, coming before Hunter Biden was even sentenced and covering not just the gun and tax offenses against his son, but also anything else he might have done going back to the start of 2014.

It's a move that could limit the ability of the Trump Justice Department to investigate the younger Biden's unsavory foreign business dealings, or to find new ground on which to bring criminal charges related to

that time period.

Biden, in his statement, asked for consideration: "I hope Americans will understand why a father and a President would come to this decision."

Woman driving drunk who killed bride still in her wedding dress sentenced to 25 years in prison

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

A woman who admitted to drinking and who was driving well over twice the speed limit when she smashed into a golf cart, killing a bride who had just got married at a South Carolina beach, was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison.

Jamie Lee Komoroski pleaded guilty at the Charleston County courthouse to reckless homicide, felony DUI causing death and two counts of felony DUI causing great bodily injury before her sentencing.

Also hurt in the 2023 crash was the groom, Aric Hutchinson, who cried in court as he recalled the last moments he spent with Samantha Miller — some of their only moments as husband and wife.

"On the golf cart, she told me she didn't want the night to end and I kissed her on the forehead and then the next thing I remember is waking up in the hospital," Hutchinson said.

Komoroski, 27, was sentenced to the maximum of 25 years in prison for felony DUI causing death by Judge Deadra Jefferson. She also was sentenced to 15 years in prison for each count of felony DUI causing great bodily injury and 10 years for reckless homicide. The sentences will all run at the same time.

Police said Komoroski drank at several bars on April 28, 2023, and was driving 65 mph (105 kph) on a narrow Folly Beach road with a speed limit of 25 mph (40 kph) when she slammed into the golf cart leaving a wedding. Her blood-alcohol level was 0.26%, which is more than three times the legal limit to drive.

The 34-year-old bride died still wearing her wedding dress. The groom suffered a brain injury and numerous broken bones. The cart was thrown 100 yards (91 meters) by the crash.

After pleading guilty, Komoroski said she realized now she was addicted to alcohol and selfishly didn't care how her actions affected others. She promised to spend the rest of her life helping addicts and warning of the dangers of drinking and driving. She said she was "devastated, deeply ashamed and sorry" for what she did.

"I wish I could go back and undo this terrible tragedy. But I cannot. I will live the rest of my life with intense regret for what happened that night," she said.

She said all her work will be dedicated to Miller's memory.

"I pray God stands by the side of my victims and their families and loved ones for the rest of their lives," Komoroski said.

A number of friends and family of both Miller and Komoroski spoke at the hearing, which lasted nearly three hours. Komoroski's supporters asked the judge to be lenient because she is young, remorseful and can still do good.

Many of Miller's family asked for a harsh sentence, saying they can never get her back and that the decisions Komoroski made that night were selfish and permanently scarred many lives. Komoroski looked at most of Miller's family, including Hutchinson, as they spoke, occasionally wiping away tears.

Hutchinson said he sees more doctors and therapists than he can count because of his physical injuries and the mental anguish of the crash, and that he thinks about it every single day.

"I wish I had died that night. I wish I had seen it coming. I'd have jumped off the golf cart so you would only have run me over," Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson won \$863,000 in legal settlements from three bars that served Komoroski as well as her insurance firm and the company she rented her car from.

Before the sentencing, Miller's father told Komoroski he was disgusted that she appeared to never take responsibility. He told her she could apologize, but he wouldn't listen to a word.

"The rest of my life I'm going to hate you and when I arrive in hell and you come there, I will open the door for you," Brad Warner said. "You have ruined so many people's lives."

Prosecution makes closing argument in murder trial over stabbing death of Cash App founder Bob Lee

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Closing arguments began on Monday in the trial of a tech consultant in the 2023 stabbing death of Cash App founder Bob Lee in San Francisco, an event that shocked the broader tech community whose members mourned the loss of an entrepreneur they called charismatic and kind.

San Francisco prosecutors say Nima Momeni stabbed Lee three times after hearing that Lee's drug dealer friend plied Momeni's younger sister with GHB and other drugs and sexually assaulted her.

"One person called 911 pleading for help, saying somebody stabbed me," said Dane Reinstedt, assistant district attorney, adding that the other person never called police or told anyone what happened that night until the trial.

Defense attorneys will make their closing arguments Tuesday in a trial that started Oct. 14. Prosecutors will then have a chance to respond to the defense's closing.

Defense attorneys say Lee, 43, was on a multi-day drug bender of cocaine and ketamine that made him agitated and violent, and that he attacked the defendant with a knife. They said Momeni was forced to use his Krav Maga martial arts skills in the early morning hours of April 4, 2023, after making a "bad joke" that upset Lee — and did not realize he had stabbed him.

Momeni faces 26 years to life if convicted of murder. He has pleaded not guilty in a case so high profile that San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins stepped into the room Monday for part of the closing.

The trial has been emotionally taxing for family members of both men. Mahnaz Tayarani, mother of the defendant, has sat on one side of the court room while Lee's father, brother and ex-wife sat on the other.

The prosecution on Monday started its closing argument with a 911 call in which Lee could be heard asking repeatedly for help. Lee's ex-wife, Krista Lee, cradled her daughter Scout as the 16-year-old wept on her mother's shoulder. They left the room. The Lees have two children.

Reinstedt on Monday mocked Momeni's defense as he walked jurors through weeks of evidence.

He said Momeni was furious with Lee for introducing Khazar Momeni, with whom he was friends, to a drug dealer who gave her GHB, known as a date-rape drug, hours before the stabbing. They say Momeni grilled Lee earlier in the evening about what happened to his sister at the drug dealer's apartment and sent text messages saying that the two men were creeps and sexual predators.

Then, Momeni met up with Lee at his sister's condo, took a paring knife from her kitchen set, drove Lee to a secluded area by the Bay Bridge and stabbed him three times, Reinstedt said.

"That protectiveness of the defendant's little sister is what led to all of this," Reinstedt said.

Surveillance video shows the two men leaving the posh condo of Khazar Momeni around 2 a.m. and getting into Momeni's BMW. Other surveillance then shows them getting out of the car in an isolated section of the city by the Bay Bridge.

Momeni testified he stopped his car after going over a pothole that caused Lee to spill the beer he was holding. Momeni said he then cracked a joke suggesting Lee should spend his last night visiting the city with family instead of trying to find a strip club to keep the party going.

That's when Lee suddenly pulled a knife out of his jacket pocket, Momeni said. He said Lee later walked away, showing no signs he was injured.

"I was scared for my life," Momeni said in earlier testimony that was at times rambling and contentious.

Reinstedt said Momeni's story made no sense given Lee's peaceful nature. He said Momeni never called police to report Lee's alleged attack or even after he learned Lee had died of stab wounds on the street where he had last seen him.

The prosecutor said the puncture wounds were clean, clear and deep, and not the result of any kind of self-defense tussle, he said. Just about all of the DNA — 99% — found on the handle of the knife belonged to Momeni, the prosecutor said.

Video of the two men by the bridge is grainy, but Reinstedt said it clearly showed Momeni's figure lunging repeatedly at Lee. There was no deflecting and redirecting of any knife in Lee's hand, he said.

Reinstedt also showed video of Momeni and Lee leaving the condo, Lee's jacket flapping to show there was no knife hidden inside.

Lee was found staggering on a deserted downtown San Francisco street at 2:30 a.m., dripping a trail of blood and calling for help. He later died at a hospital.

Lee's death stunned the tech community as fellow executives and engineers penned tributes to his generosity and brilliance. He was chief product officer of cryptocurrency platform MobileCoin when he died.

Cyber Monday shoppers expected to set a record on the year's biggest day for online shopping

By HALELUYA HADERO and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writers

Consumers in the United States are scouring the internet for online deals as they look to take advantage of the post-Thanksgiving shopping marathon with Cyber Monday.

Even though e-commerce is now part and parcel of many people's regular routines and the holiday shopping season, Cyber Monday — a term coined in 2005 by the National Retail Federation — has become the biggest online shopping day of the year, thanks to the deals and the hype the industry has created to fuel it.

Adobe Analytics, which tracks online shopping, expects consumers to spend a record \$13.2 billion on Monday, 6.1% more than last year. That would make it the season's — and the year's — biggest — shopping day for e-commerce.

Online spending is expected to peak between the hours of 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Monday night, per Adobe — reaching an estimated \$15.7 million spent every minute.

For several major retailers, a Cyber Monday sale is a dayslong event that began over the Thanksgiving weekend. Amazon kicked off its sales event right after midnight Pacific time on Saturday. Target's two days of discount offers on its website and app began overnight Sunday. Walmart rolled out its Cyber Monday offers for Walmart+ members on Sunday afternoon and opened it up to all customers three hours later, at 8 p.m. Eastern time.

Consumer spending for Cyber Week — the five major shopping days between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday — provides a strong indication of how much shoppers are willing to spend for the holidays.

Many U.S. consumers continue to experience sticker shock following the period of post-pandemic inflation, which left prices for many goods and services higher than they were three years ago. But retail sales nonetheless have remained strong, and the economy has kept growing at a healthy pace.

At the same time, credit card debt and delinquencies have been rising. More shoppers than ever are also on track to use "buy now, pay later" plans this holiday season, which allows them to delay payments on holiday decor, gifts and other items.

Many economists have also warned that President-elect Donald Trump's plan to impose tariffs next year on foreign goods coming into the United States would lead to higher prices on everything from food to clothing to automobiles.

The National Retail Federation expects holiday shoppers to spend more this year both in stores and online than last year. But the pace of spending growth will slow slightly, the trade group said, growing 2.5% to 3.5% — compared to 3.9% in 2023.

A clear sense of consumer spending patterns during the holiday season won't emerge until the government releases sales data for the period. But some preliminary data from other sources shows some encouraging signs for retailers.

Vivek Pandya, lead analyst at Adobe Digital Insights, notes that discounts from Thanksgiving onward have "exceeded expectations" — and online spending throughout Cyber Week is on track to cross a record \$40 billion mark combined.

U.S. shoppers spent \$10.8 billion online on Black Friday, a 10.2% increase over last year, according to Adobe Analytics. That's also more than double what consumers spent in 2017, when Black Friday pulled in roughly \$5 billion in online sales. Consumers also spent a record \$6.1 billion online on Thanksgiving Day, Adobe said. And on Saturday and Sunday, shoppers spent another \$10.9 billion online, up 5.8% over

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 45 of 64

last year.

Adobe reported Monday that as of 6:30 p.m. ET, shoppers had spent \$8.7 billion on the online shopping holiday. When the final tally is in, Adobe expects consumers will have spent between \$13.2 billion and \$13.5 billion for the day, making Cyber Monday the biggest online shopping day of the year—and of all time, Adobe said.

Meanwhile, software company Salesforce, which also tracks online shopping, estimated that Black Friday online sales totaled \$17.5 billion in the U.S. and \$74.4 billion globally. And Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks in-person and online spending, reported that overall Black Friday sales excluding automotive rose 3.4% from a year ago. The retail sales indicator, which is not adjusted for inflation, showed online sales jumped by double digits, while in-store purchase rose a modest 0.7%.

E-commerce platform Shopify said its merchants raked in a record \$5 billion in sales worldwide on Black Friday. At its peak, sales reached \$4.6 million per minute — with top categories by volume including clothing, cosmetics and fitness products, according to the Canadian company.

Toys, electronics, home goods, self-care and beauty categories were among the key drivers of holiday spending on Thanksgiving and Black Friday, according to Adobe. “Hot products” included Lego sets, espresso machines, fitness trackers, makeup and skin care.

Other data showed physical stores saw fewer customers on Black Friday, underscoring how the huge crowds that were once synonymous with the day after Thanksgiving are now more than happy to shop from the comfort of their homes.

RetailNext, which measures real-time foot traffic in stores, reported that its early data showed store traffic on Friday was down 3.2% in the U.S. compared to last year, with the biggest dip happening in the Midwest.

Sensormatic Solutions, which also tracks store traffic, said its preliminary analysis showed retail store traffic on Black Friday was down 8.2% compared to 2023.

Grant Gustafson, head of retail consulting and analytics at Sensormatic Solutions, noted that in-store traffic was getting spread across multiple days since many retailers offered generous discounts before and after Black Friday.

“Some of the extended Black Friday promotions really ended up leading to a little bit of a softer day-of traffic than expected,” Gustafson said.

While physical items like toys and electronics are always popular around the holidays, experts note that consumers have turned to more “experience-driven spending” in recent years, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic waned.

Jie Zhang, a marketing professor at the University of Maryland’s Robert H. Smith School of Business, told The Associated Press ahead of the post-Thanksgiving shopping weekend that he expected shoppers to “indulge themselves a bit more” when it comes to “self-gifting,” increasing interest in categories like self care.

Adobe notes that shoppers are also buying higher-ticket items this season — with consumers opening their wallets to invest or “trade up” to more premium versions of products like electronics, appliances and sporting goods.

Brie Carere, executive vice president and chief customer officer at FedEx, cited strong shipping volume for Thanksgiving weekend, and CyberMonday has had a good start. She anticipated that FedEx’s shipping volume on the online shopping holiday will be slightly up over the 19 million items shipped a year ago on the holiday.

But she said the truncated season — there are five fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day — is making it harder for her retail customers to forecast.

In fact, Carere said only four of FedEx’s top 20 holiday e-commerce customers got their shipping predictions correct for the week before the Thanksgiving weekend. And she also noted that while FedEx predicts low single-digit percentage growth in shipping volume each day, she thinks that many retail customers will see a decline for the overall holiday period because of the truncated season.

“I do think that we’re going to see some retailers be disappointed in their volume numbers,” she said.

Carere also doesn't anticipate much of a lull in shipping between Thanksgiving weekend and last two weeks before Christmas because of the shorter season.

Jim Katsafanas, president of U.S. Small Business Sales, UPS, agreed, noting last week "we are going to see a pretty consistent surge of volume right through the end."

What is 'lake-effect snow'?

Warm air from large bodies of water is the key ingredient

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

When towns along the Great Lakes get buried in drifts of blowing snow, like several have over the past few days, weather experts start talking about the "lake effect."

Lake-effect snow often occurs in relatively narrow bands that dump copious amounts of snow. The weather phenomenon can drastically increase snowfall totals, and it may slam one area and leave another just miles away untouched.

Over the weekend, parts of upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan saw nearly 4 feet (1.2 meters) of lake-effect snow.

Here's a look at how it works:

Cold air passes over the lakes

In the United States, the lake effect typically begins when cold air — often from Canada — blows in over the Great Lakes' warmer waters.

Warming air from the lakes then pushes the moisture in the sky higher into a zone most conducive to snowfall because of its temperature. That creates clouds capable of dumping lots of precipitation downwind, said Phillip Pandolfo, a meteorologist in the National Weather Service's office in Buffalo, New York.

Most of the moisture needed for lake-effect snow does not actually come from the lakes, but rather from cold air that blows over them.

"It's a common misconception that the lakes are a tremendous source of moisture," Pandolfo said. "In practice, we actually need the air to actually have enough moisture in it before it really starts going over the lakes."

Clouds form, snow falls

With the right conditions, the rising, moisture-laden air causes clouds to form that could bring "some really intense snowfall rates," Pandolfo said.

The results typically are thin bands of clouds that can produce heavy snowfall — 2 to 3 inches (5 to 8 centimeters) per hour and sometimes more. And because the bands are narrow, towns near each other could see significant differences in snowfall totals.

Forecasting lake-effect snow can be difficult; slight changes in wind direction can have a major impact on where the heaviest snow falls, according to the weather service.

Heavy snow is a fact of life near Great Lakes

Lake-effect snow goes hand-in-hand with living near a Great Lake. In many cases, a foot or two (30 to 61 centimeters) of snow will fall, but occasionally it can get out of hand.

In November 2022, lake-effect storms dumped more than 6 feet (1.8 meters) of snow in western New York. Those wintry storms were the worst in New York since at least November 2014, when some communities south of Buffalo were hit with 7 feet (2.1 meters) of snow over the course of three days, collapsing roofs and trapping drivers on a stretch of the New York State Thruway.

In parts of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, snowfall can total more than 20 feet (6 meters) a year as the lake effect bolsters storms, according to researchers at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

The phenomenon can also happen with other very large lakes, including the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

The Coast Guard suspends its search for the crew of a capsized fishing boat in the Gulf of Alaska

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The search for five people believed to be aboard a fishing vessel that capsized in rough seas in the Gulf of Alaska has been suspended, the Coast Guard said Monday.

The search lasted nearly a day and covered more than 108 square nautical miles (370 square kilometers). “We stand in sorrow and solidarity with the friends and family of the people we were not able to find over the past 24 hours,” Chief Warrant Officer James Koon, a search and rescue mission coordinator at Coast Guard Sector Southeast Alaska, said in a statement.

The Coast Guard began the search after the Wind Walker’s crew sent a Mayday call at 12:10 a.m. Sunday that the 50-foot (15-meter) boat was overturning off Point Couverden, southwest of Juneau. The Coast Guard tried to get more information as it mobilized a response, but the crew didn’t answer, according to a Coast Guard press release.

The state ferry Hubbard overheard the broadcast and reached the scene first, followed by a Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter and a response boat, according to the press release. A winter storm warning remained in effect as responders faced heavy snow, winds up to 60 mph (96 kph) and 6-foot (1.8-meter) seas.

Two Coast Guard cutters — the Healy and the Douglas Denman — joined the search. Responders found seven empty cold-water immersion suits and two strobe lights but no other sign of the boat or its crew. The Healy also used underwater sonar but found no signs of the ship.

The helicopter crew spotted the cold-water immersion suits from the air near Spasski Bay, located about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southwest of Point Couverden. Four of the survival suits were in the waters of the bay and three were seen on land, Coast Guard Petty Officer John Hightower said.

The suits were empty, and it was not immediately clear if they had been worn, he said.

The full-body suits are made of a neoprene-like material “that you can put on very quickly and easily over your clothes, and it’s meant to help you survive in cold water,” Hightower said. They also have a floatation device inside them, along with an inflatable pillow so a person in the water can rest their head and remain afloat.

The area searched by the cutters was fairly small since they had the Wind Walker’s emergency beacon GPS coordinates, Hightower said. Since the crew reported the ship was overturning, it’s possible it capsized and sank.

“That seems like the most likely but, you know, we try not to rule anything out since we haven’t been able to confirm it ourselves,” he said.

Up to 17 inches of snow fell in Juneau over the weekend, and the water temperature was about 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7.22 degrees Celsius), the National Weather Service in Juneau said.

Florida woman sentenced to life for zipping boyfriend into suitcase, suffocating him

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

A Florida woman was sentenced Monday to life in prison for zipping her boyfriend into a suitcase and leaving him to die of suffocation amid a history of domestic and alcohol abuse.

Circuit Judge Michael Kravnick imposed the sentence in Orlando on Sarah Boone, 47, for the 2020 killing of 42-year-old Jorge Torres.

A jury deliberated only 90 minutes Oct. 25 before convicting Boone of the second-degree murder of Jorge Torres after a 10-day trial. Boone had insisted she was herself a victim of domestic violence at the hands of Torres and had rejected a plea deal offer of a 15-year sentence.

Torres’ family members testified at the hearing that his death has torn them apart.

“Sarah deserves to rot in jail,” said a sister, Victoria Torres. “Sarah has caused a lifetime of pain.”

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 48 of 64

In her own statement, Boone went through a litany of abuse by Torres she said occurred over many years, decried the way her trial was handled and covered by the media, yet asked forgiveness for her actions.

"I forgive myself for falling in love with a monster. I tried breaking the spell ... I never stopped loving him," said Boone, who has been in jail for 58 months. "I didn't mean for this to happen. Forgive me Jorge. Forgive me Torres family."

At first, Boone told Orange County Sheriff's Office investigators that she and Torres had been drinking heavily and playing hide-and-seek on Feb. 23, 2020, in their Winter Park, Florida, residence when they thought it would be amusing for the 103-pound (47-kilogram) Torres to climb into the suitcase. Winter Park is a suburb of Orlando.

They had been drinking alcohol and she decided to go to sleep, figuring that Torres could get out of the suitcase on his own, she told detectives in an arrest report.

When she woke up the next morning, she didn't find Torres but then remembered he was in the suitcase. She unzipped the suitcase and found him unresponsive, the arrest report said.

Boone was charged with second-degree murder after investigators found videos on her cellphone in which Torres is heard yelling from inside the suitcase that he couldn't breathe and repeatedly calling out Boone's name, according to the arrest report.

"She decided to keep (Torres) in the suitcase when he said he could not breathe in it to terrorize him," prosecutor William Jay said in a court filing. "She then struck him with a baseball bat."

Boone rejected a plea offer from prosecutors that would have imposed a 15-year prison sentence in exchange for her guilty plea to a reduced manslaughter charge.

During her trial, Boone testified that past violent incidents between her and Torres caused her to perceive a threat of imminent harm and that she acted in self-defense by keeping him in the suitcase.

"Yeah that's what you do when you choke me," Boone said in one of the cellphone videos from that night, according to the arrest report. "Oh, that's what I feel like when you cheat on me."

Stock market today: Rising tech stocks pull Wall Street to another record

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Technology stocks pulled Wall Street to another record amid a mixed Monday of trading.

The S&P 500 rose 0.2% from its all-time high set on Friday to post a record for the 54th time this year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 128 points, or 0.3%, while the Nasdaq composite gained 1%.

Super Micro Computer, a stock that's been on an AI-driven roller coaster, soared 28.7% to lead the market.

Following allegations of misconduct and the resignation of its public auditor, the maker of servers used in artificial-intelligence technology said an investigation found no evidence of misconduct by its management or by the company's board. It also said that it doesn't expect to restate its past financials and that it will find a new chief financial officer, appoint a general counsel and make other moves to strengthen its governance.

Big Tech stocks also helped prop up the market. Gains of 1.8% for Microsoft and 3.2% for Meta Platforms were the two strongest forces pushing upward on the S&P 500.

Intel was another propellant during the morning, but it lost an early gain to fall 0.5% after the chip company said CEO Pat Gelsinger has retired and stepped down from the board. Intel is looking for Gelsinger's replacement, and its chair said it's "committed to restoring investor confidence." Intel recently lost its spot in the Dow Jones Industrial Average to Nvidia, which has skyrocketed in Wall Street's frenzy around AI.

Stellantis, meanwhile, skidded following the announcement of its CEO's departure. Carlos Tavares steps down after nearly four years in the top spot of the automaker, which owns car brands like Jeep, Citroën and Ram, amid an ongoing struggle with slumping sales and an inventory backlog at dealerships. The world's fourth-largest automaker's stock fell 6.3% in Milan.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 49 of 64

The majority of stocks in the S&P 500 likewise fell, including California utility PG&E. It dropped 5% after saying it would sell \$2.4 billion of stock and preferred shares to raise cash.

Retailers were mixed amid what's expected to be the best Cyber Monday on record and coming off Black Friday. Target, which recently gave a forecast for the holiday season that left investors discouraged, fell 1.2%. Walmart, which gave a more optimistic forecast, rose 0.2%.

Amazon, which looks to benefit from online sales from Cyber Monday, climbed 1.4%.

All told, the S&P 500 added 14.77 points to 6,047.15. The Dow fell 128.65 to 44,782.00, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 185.78 to 19,403.95.

The stock market largely took Donald Trump's latest threat on tariffs in stride. The president-elect on Saturday threatened 100% tariffs against a group of developing economies if they act to undermine the U.S. dollar. Trump said he wants the group, headlined by Brazil, Russia, India and China, to promise it won't create a new currency or otherwise try to undercut the U.S. dollar.

The dollar has long been the currency of choice for global trade. Speculation has also been around a long time that other currencies could knock it off its mantle, but no contender has come close.

The U.S. dollar's value rose Monday against several other currencies, but one of its strongest moves likely had less to do with the tariff threats. The euro fell amid a political battle in Paris over the French government's budget. The euro sank 0.7% against the U.S. dollar and broke below \$1.05.

In the bond market, Treasury yields gave up early gains to hold relatively steady. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed above 4.23% during the morning before falling back to 4.19%. That was just above its level of 4.18% late Friday.

A report in the morning showed the U.S. manufacturing sector contracted again last month, but not by as much as economists expected.

This upcoming week will bring several big updates on the job market, including the October job openings report, weekly unemployment benefits data and the all-important November jobs report. They could steer the next moves for Federal Reserve, which recently began pulling interest rates lower to give support to the economy.

Economists expect Friday's headliner report to show U.S. employers accelerated their hiring in November, coming off October's lackluster growth that was hampered by damaging hurricanes and strikes.

"We now find ourselves in the middle of this Goldilocks zone, where economic health supports earnings growth while remaining weak enough to justify potential Fed rate cuts," according to Mark Hackett, chief of investment research at Nationwide.

In financial markets abroad, Chinese stocks led gains worldwide as monthly surveys showed improving conditions for manufacturing, partly driven by a surge in orders ahead of Trump's inauguration next month.

Both official and private sector surveys of factory managers showed strong new orders and export orders, possibly partly linked to efforts by importers in the U.S. to beat potential tariff hikes by Trump once he takes office.

Indexes rose 0.7% in Hong Kong and 1.1% in Shanghai.

Trudeau told Trump Americans would also suffer if tariffs are imposed, a Canadian minister says

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told Donald Trump that Americans would also suffer if the president-elect follows through on a plan to impose sweeping tariffs on Canadian products, a Canadian minister who attended their recent dinner said Monday.

Trump threatened to impose tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico if they don't stop what he called the flow of drugs and migrants across their borders with the United States. He said on social media last week that he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, whose responsibilities include border security, attended

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 50 of 64

a dinner with Trump and Trudeau at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club on Friday.

Trudeau requested the meeting in a bid to avoid the tariffs by convincing Trump that the northern border is nothing like the U.S. southern border with Mexico.

"The prime minister of course spoke about the importance of protecting the Canadian economy and Canadian workers from tariffs, but we also discussed with our American friends the negative impact that those tariffs could have on their economy, on affordability in the United States as well," LeBlanc said in Parliament.

If Trump makes good on his threat to slap 25% tariffs on everything imported from Mexico and Canada, the price increases that could follow will collide with his campaign promise to give American families a break from inflation.

Economists say companies would have little choice but to pass along the added costs, dramatically raising prices for food, clothing, automobiles, alcohol and other goods.

The Produce Distributors Association, a Washington trade group, said last week that tariffs will raise prices for fresh fruit and vegetables and hurt U.S. farmers when the countries retaliate.

Canada is already examining possible retaliatory tariffs on certain items from the U.S. should Trump follow through on the threat.

After his dinner with Trump, Trudeau returned home without assurances the president-elect will back away from threatened tariffs on all products from the major American trading partner. Trump called the talks "productive" but signaled no retreat from a pledge that Canada says unfairly lumps it in with Mexico over the flow of drugs and migrants into the United States.

"The idea that we came back empty handed is completely false," LeBlanc said. "We had a very productive discussion with Mr. Trump and his future Cabinet secretaries. ... The commitment from Mr. Trump to continue to work with us was far from empty handed."

Joining Trump and Trudeau at dinner were Howard Lutnick, Trump's nominee for commerce secretary, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Trump's pick to lead the Interior Department, and Mike Waltz, Trump's choice to be his national security adviser.

Canada's ambassador to the U.S., Kirsten Hillman, told The Associated Press on Sunday that "the message that our border is so vastly different than the Mexican border was really understood." Hillman, who sat at an adjacent table to Trudeau and Trump, said Canada is not the problem when it comes to drugs and migrants.

On Monday, Mexico's president rejected those comments.

"Mexico must be respected, especially by its trading partners," President Claudia Sheinbaum said. She said Canada had its own problems with fentanyl consumption and "could only wish they had the cultural riches Mexico has."

Flows of migrants and seizures of drugs at the two countries' border are vastly different. U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border during the last fiscal year, compared with 21,100 pounds at the Mexican border.

Most of the fentanyl reaching the U.S. — where it causes about 70,000 overdose deaths annually — is made by Mexican drug cartels using precursor chemicals smuggled from Asia.

On immigration, the U.S. Border Patrol reported 1.53 million encounters with migrants at the southwest border with Mexico between October 2023 and September 2024. That compares to 23,721 encounters at the Canadian border during that time.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day. About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85% of U.S. electricity imports as well.

Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing for national security.

Some Democrats are frustrated over Joe Biden reversing course and pardoning his son Hunter

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Already reeling from their November defeats, Democrats now are grappling with President Joe Biden's pardoning of his son for federal crimes, with some calling the move misguided and unwise after the party spent years slamming Donald Trump as a threat to democracy who disregarded the law.

The president pardoned Hunter Biden late Sunday evening, reversing his previous pledges with a grant of clemency that covers more than a decade of any federal crimes his son might have committed. The 82-year-old president said in a statement that his son's prosecution on charges of tax evasion and falsifying a federal weapons purchase form were politically motivated.

"He believes in the justice system, but he also believes that politics infected the process and led to a miscarriage of justice," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who along with Biden and other White House officials insisted for months that Hunter Biden would not get a pardon.

That explanation did not satisfy some Democrats, angry that Biden's reversal could make it harder to take on Trump, who has argued that multiple indictments and one conviction against him were a matter of Biden and Democrats turning the justice system against him.

"This is a bad precedent that could be abused by later Presidents and will sadly tarnish his reputation," Colorado Gov. Jared Polis wrote of Biden on the social media platform X.

"When you become President, your role is Pater familias of the nation," the governor continued, a reference to the president invoking fatherhood in explaining his decision. "Hunter brought the legal trouble he faced on himself, and one can sympathize with his struggles while also acknowledging that no one is above the law, not a President and not a President's son."

Rep. Greg Stanton, D-Ariz., said on X: "This wasn't a politically motivated prosecution. Hunter committed felonies and was convicted by a jury of his peers."

Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet said Biden "put personal interest ahead of duty" with a decision that "further erodes Americans' faith that the justice system is fair and equal for all." Michigan Sen. Gary Peters said the pardon was "an improper use of power" that erodes faith in government and "emboldens others to bend justice to suit their interests."

Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., called the pardon "understandable" if viewed only as the "action of a loving father." But Biden's status as "our nation's Chief Executive," the senator said, rendered the move "unwise."

Certainly, the president has Democratic defenders who note Trump's use of presidential power to pardon a slew of his convicted aides, associates and friends, several for activities tied to Trump's campaign and first administration.

"Trump pardoned Roger Stone, Steve Bannon, Michael Flynn and Paul Manafort, as well as his son-in-law's father, Charles Kushner — who he just appointed US ambassador to France," wrote prominent Democratic fundraiser Jon Cooper on X.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Jaime Harrison said there "is no standard for Donald Trump, and the highest standard for Democrats and Joe Biden." Harrison pointed to Trump's apparent plans to oust FBI Director Christopher Wray and replace him with loyalist Kash Patel and suggested the GOP's pursuit of Hunter Biden would not have ended without clemency.

"Most people will see that Joe Biden did what was right," Harrison said.

First lady Jill Biden said Monday from the White House, "Of course I support the pardon of my son."

Democrats already are facing the prospects of a Republican trifecta in Washington, with voters returning Trump to the White House and giving the GOP control of the House and Senate. Part of their argument against Trump and Republican leaders is expected to be that the president-elect is violating norms with his talk of taking retribution against his enemies.

Before beating Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump faced his own legal troubles, including two cases that stemmed from his efforts to overturn his defeat to Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election. Those cases, including Trump's sentencing after being convicted on New York state business fraud charges,

have either been dismissed or indefinitely delayed since Trump's victory on Nov. 5, forcing Democrats to recalibrate their approach to the president-elect.

In June, President Biden firmly ruled out a pardon or commutation for his son, telling reporters as his son faced trial in the Delaware gun case: "I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him."

As recently as Nov. 8, days after Trump's victory, Jean-Pierre ruled out a pardon or clemency for the younger Biden, saying: "We've been asked that question multiple times. Our answer stands, which is no."

The president's about-face came weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges. It capped a long-running legal saga for the younger Biden, who disclosed he was under federal investigation in December 2020 — a month after his father's 2020 victory.

The sweeping pardon covers not just the gun and tax offenses against the younger Biden, but also any other "offenses against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014, through December 1, 2024."

Hunter Biden was convicted in June in Delaware federal court of three felonies for purchasing a gun in 2018 when, prosecutors said, he lied on a federal form by claiming he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs. He had been set to stand trial in September in a California case accusing him of failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes. But he agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor and felony charges in a surprise move hours after jury selection was set to begin.

In his statement Sunday, the president argued that such offenses typically are not prosecuted with the same vigor as was directed against Hunter Biden.

"The charges in his cases came about only after several of my political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose my election," Biden said in his statement. "No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son. ... I hope Americans will understand why a father and a President would come to this decision."

Kansas holds off Auburn for No. 1 in AP Top 25 as SEC grabs 3 of top 4 spots; UConn slides to No. 25

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

Kansas held off Auburn for the No. 1 ranking in The Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll on Monday as Southeastern Conference teams grabbed three of the top four spots and two-time reigning national champion UConn nearly fell out entirely after an 0-3 week at the Maui Invitational.

The Jayhawks earned 35 of 61 first-place votes in the poll, while the Tigers got the remaining 26 and climbed two spots to No. 2 after winning the Maui title. The Huskies fell all the way to No. 25, barely avoiding becoming only the second team to go from No. 2 to unranked in a week in nearly four decades.

It was part of a turbulent week with holiday-week tournaments, leading to six new teams entering the rankings headlined by No. 12 Oregon and No. 16 Memphis.

Kansas (7-0), which beat Duke last week, had increased its margin on the No. 2-ranked team each week since the preseason poll and had a 107-point margin on the Huskies last week. But with the Tigers — ranked No. 1 in KenPom's metrics — beating ranked Iowa State and North Carolina teams in the Maui title run, that margin is just nine points this week.

Auburn was joined by fellow SEC schools No. 3 Tennessee and No. 4 Kentucky, with each team climbing four spots. Marquette was next at No. 5, followed by Iowa State, Gonzaga, Purdue, Duke and Alabama to round out the top 10.

UConn's slide

The Huskies (5-3) had won 17 straight games entering the Maui Invitational, but things quickly went awry with an opening-round overtime loss to Memphis in a game that had coach Dan Hurley fuming about officiating. UConn lost the next day to Colorado, then lost to Dayton in the seventh-place game to finish last in the prestigious tournament.

It was reminiscent of No. 2 Arizona's 0-3 crash at the Battle 4 Atlantis in the Bahamas in November 2017.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 53 of 64

But the Huskies avoided the same poll fate as the Wildcats, who became the first team to go from No. 2 to unranked in a week since Louisville in November 1986 after its tournament flop in the Great Alaska Shootout.

Rising and falling

While Oregon jumped 26 spots to enter the AP Top 25, Marquette, Purdue and No. 13 Florida had the week's biggest climbs within the poll, each rising five spots. No. 11 Wisconsin joined Tennessee and Kentucky with four-spot jumps as 10 teams rose from their spots in last week's poll.

In all, seven teams fell from last week's poll.

While UConn's tumble stood out, No. 17 Houston fell 11 spots after losses to Alabama and now-No. 24 San Diego State in the Players Era Festival in Las Vegas.

North Carolina also had a big fall, sliding eight spots to No. 20 after losses to Auburn and Michigan State in Maui. Gonzaga tumbled four spots to seventh after losing its Battle 4 Atlantis opener to West Virginia.

Status quo

No. 23 Mississippi joined Kansas as the only teams to hold their position from last week.

Welcome

Oregon led the week's six new teams after beating Alabama to win the Players Era Festival championship, followed by Memphis after finishing second to Auburn in Maui.

No. 18 Pittsburgh, No. 19 Illinois, No. 21 Oklahoma – which won the Atlantis title – and San Diego State were the week's other new additions.

Farewell (for now)

Indiana (No. 14), Arkansas (No. 19), Creighton (No. 21), Xavier (No. 22), Arizona (No. 24) and Mississippi State (No. 25) fell out of the poll.

Conference watch

The SEC led all conferences with eight ranked teams, followed by the Big 12 with five. The Big Ten and Atlantic Coast Conference each had three ranked teams, while the West Coast, American Athletic and Mountain West conferences each had one.

Panic among spectators at soccer game kills at least 56 in the West African nation of Guinea

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Chaos erupted at a soccer game in Guinea after fans protested a referee's call and thousands of panicked spectators tried to flee the stadium, leaving at least 56 people dead in the West African nation, officials and witnesses said Monday.

Amid the confusion, security forces used tear gas, local news website Media Guinea reported. Many of the dead were crushed as they tried to escape through the stadium gates, a journalist covering the game for a local sports website told The Associated Press.

"The gates, that's where the stampede happened," said Cissé Lancine, who got away by climbing over one of the stadium walls. "I was saved because I did not rush towards the exit."

The world's latest sports crowd disaster unfurled Sunday in the second-largest city in a military-run nation where information is sparse and government-controlled at the best of times. It was not immediately clear how much the death toll could grow.

Lancine said between 20,000 and 30,000 people were present at the Third of April stadium to watch the local Labe and Nzerekore teams compete in the final of the first national tournament honoring military leader Mamadi Doumbouya.

Checkpoints were set up Monday throughout Nzerekore, a city of about 200,000 that was at a standstill as soldiers guarded the hospital where victims were being treated. Most shops were closed.

Video, apparently from the scene, showed shouting fans protesting the refereeing. People ran as they tried to escape the stadium, many of them jumping the high fence.

"Supporters threw stones. This is why the security services used tear gas," reported Media Guinea, which also wrote that several of the dead were children and some of the injured were in critical condition.

The footage showed people lying on the floor of a hospital as members of a crowd helped the wounded. Enock Loua, a resident of Nzerekore, learned over the phone that his niece Aline Olivier had been killed. "We have a hard time realizing what happened to us, it is as if the sky has fallen on our heads," Loua told The Associated Press.

Authorities are trying to establish who was responsible, Prime Minister Amadou Oury Bah said on national television.

The National Alliance for Alternation and Democracy opposition coalition said the tournament was organized to drum up support for Doumbouya's "illegal and inappropriate" political ambitions.

Doumbouya, who ousted then-President Alpha Conde in 2021, has been eyeing a possible run for the presidential election, for which the date has not been set. The transition charter put in place by his own regime does not allow him to run.

Guinea is one of a number of West African countries — including Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso — where the military has taken power and delayed a return to civilian rule.

Doumbouya said he was preventing the country from slipping into chaos and chastised the previous government for broken promises. He has, however, been criticized for not meeting the expectations that he raised.

Guinea's leader announced three days of national mourning starting on Tuesday, in a presidential decree read on national television.

A top Fed official leans toward December rate cut but says it depends on economic data

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top Federal Reserve official said Monday that he is leaning toward supporting an interest rate cut when the Fed meets in two weeks but that evidence of persistent inflation before then could cause him to change that view.

Speaking at George Washington University, Christopher Waller, a key member of the Fed's Board of Governors, said he was confident that inflation is headed lower and that the central bank will likely keep reducing its key rate, which affects many consumer and business loans.

But he noted that there's a risk that inflation "may be getting stuck above" the Fed's 2% target, which would support an argument for keeping the Fed's rate unchanged this month.

"At present, I lean toward supporting a cut to the policy rate at our December meeting," Waller said in his remarks to a conference held by the American Institute for Economic Research. "But that decision will depend on whether data that we will receive before then surprises to the upside and alters my forecast for the path of inflation."

Waller's caution reflects a notable shift in the economic and inflation outlook in the past month or so. Growth in consumer spending and the broader economy was robust in the July-September quarter. In addition, inflation picked up in October after having slowed for most of this year.

And Donald Trump's election victory has raised the prospect of widespread tariffs and mass deportations of migrants, both of which could elevate inflation. Some economists say they think the Fed might decide to cut its rate more slowly to allow time to evaluate the effects of Trump's policies.

With inflation having steadily fallen from its peak in 2022, the Fed reduced its key rate by a half-point in September and by a quarter-point in November. And it signaled in September that it expected to announce another quarter-point cut later this month. Yet inflation has remained above the Fed's target level, clouding the Fed's next step.

In October, "core" inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy costs, accelerated a bit. It rose 2.8% compared with a year earlier, up from 2.7% in September.

Waller stressed that if future economic reports showed inflation or growth deviating from the Fed's expected paths, he could favor keeping rates unchanged this month.

"If the data we receive between today and the next meeting surprise in a way that suggests our fore-

casts of slowing inflation and a moderating but still-solid economy are wrong, then I will be supportive of holding the policy rate constant," he said.

Even so, Waller said the Fed's benchmark rate is high enough to restrict economic growth and inflation and so a quarter-point rate cut wouldn't involve much risk of reigniting inflation.

"Cutting again will only mean that we aren't pressing on the brake pedal quite as hard," he said.

In his speech, Waller acknowledged some frustration over the recent persistence of inflation.

"I feel like an MMA fighter who keeps getting inflation in a choke hold, waiting for it to tap out, yet it keeps slipping out of my grasp at the last minute," he said. "But let me assure you that submission is inevitable — inflation isn't getting out of the octagon."

In recent remarks, other Fed officials have also suggested that they haven't yet made a final decision on whether to support a rate cut this month.

Earlier Monday, Raphael Bostic, president of the Fed's Atlanta branch, said he was "keeping my options open" when asked whether he favored a rate cut in two weeks.

Trump demands immediate release of Oct. 7 hostages, says otherwise there will be 'HELL TO PAY'

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump is demanding the immediate release of Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza, saying that if they are not freed before he is sworn into office for a second term there will be "HELL TO PAY."

"Please let this TRUTH serve to represent that if the hostages are not released prior to January 20, 2025, the date that I proudly assume Office as President of the United States, there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against Humanity," Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social site.

He added that, "Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening to directly involve the U.S. military in Israel's ongoing campaign against Hamas in Gaza. Trump allies have said he hopes there will be a ceasefire and hostage release deal before he returns to office early next year.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined comment. But the country's president, Isaac Herzog, welcomed Trump's comments in a social media post.

"Thank you and bless you Mr. President-elect @realDonaldTrump," he wrote on X. "We all pray for the moment we see our sisters and brothers back home!"

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage on Oct. 7, 2023. Some 100 are still held inside Gaza, around two-thirds believed to be alive.

Trump's threat came hours after the Israeli government confirmed the death of Omer Neutra, a dual US-Israeli citizen, whose body is still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza, according to the Israeli government.

Days earlier, Hamas released a hostage video of Edan Alexander, who was serving in the Israeli military when he was taken by Hamas to Gaza. Filmed under apparent duress, Alexander calls on Trump to work to negotiate for his freedom and that of the remaining Hamas hostages.

The Biden administration is mounting a last-ditch effort to try to restart talks between Israel and Hamas now that it has brokered a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. But the administration has said that Hamas has yet to show a willingness to reengage in negotiations and that the group isn't concerned for its own lives or the lives of Gaza civilians.

Israel's retaliatory offensive for the attack has left at least 44,429 Palestinians dead, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The war has destroyed vast areas of the coastal enclave and displaced 90% of its population of 2.3 million people — often multiple times.

The International Criminal Court's chief lashes out at threats from Russia and a US senator

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The president of the International Criminal Court lashed out on Monday at Russia for targeting its prosecutors and judges over the panel's investigation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and slammed comments by a U.S. senator threatening the court.

Judge Tomoko Akane said in her address to the annual meeting of the world's top war-crimes court that attacks against the ICC were shameful — referring to Russia's arrest warrants for the court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan and several of its judges.

These individuals are "subjected to arrest warrants from a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, merely for having faithfully and diligently carried out their judicial mandate per the statutory framework and international law," she said.

Moscow issued warrants for Khan and the others in response to the ICC investigation and arrest warrants for Putin over the war in Ukraine.

The Japanese judge also had harsh words for U.S. officials, including Sen. Lindsey Graham, who has called the court a "a rogue and politically motivated organization" after the judges last month issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Graham said he was confident Donald Trump's incoming administration would "respond forcefully" to these actions by the court.

"The court is being threatened with draconian economic sanctions by another permanent member of the Security Council as if it was a terrorist organization," Akane said, without elaborating.

During his last term in office, Trump had sanctioned the court's previous prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, with a travel ban and asset freeze for investigating American troops and intelligence officials in Afghanistan.

What is the ICC meeting about?

Monday's meeting marks the start this week of the Assembly of States Parties, which represents the ICC's 124 member countries, of the ICC's 23rd conference to elect committee members and approve the court's budget against a backdrop of unfavorable headlines.

The ICC was established in 2002 as the world's permanent court of last resort to prosecute individuals responsible for the most heinous atrocities — war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

The court only becomes involved when nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute those crimes on their territory. To date, 124 countries have signed on to the Rome Statute, which created the institution. Those who have not include the United States, Israel, Russia and China.

The ICC has no police force and relies on member states to execute arrest warrants.

Warrants for Netanyahu and his ex-defense minister

The decision to issue warrants for Netanyahu and Israel's former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has been denounced by critics of the court and given only milquetoast approval by many of its supporters, a stark contrast to the robust backing of an arrest warrant for Putin last year over war crimes in Ukraine.

President Joe Biden called the warrants for Netanyahu and the former defense minister outrageous and vowed to stand with Israel. A year ago, Biden said the warrant for Putin justified and said the Russian president had committed war crimes.

France said it would "respect its obligations" but would need to consider Netanyahu's possible immunities. When the warrant for Putin was announced, France said it would "lend its support to the essential work" of the court.

Another member country, Austria, begrudgingly acknowledged it would arrest Netanyahu but called the warrants "utterly incomprehensible." Italy called them "wrong" but said it would be obliged to arrest him. Germany said it would study the decision. Member Hungary has said it would stand with Israel instead of the court.

Global security expert Janina Dill expressed concern such responses could undermine global justice ef-

forts, saying they really have “the potential to damage not just the court, but international law.”

Milena Sterio, an expert in international law at Cleveland State University, told The Associated Press that sanctions against the court could affect a number of people who contribute to the court’s work, such as international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. Clooney advised the current prosecutor on his request for the warrants for Netanyahu and others.

“Sanctions are a huge burden,” Sterio said.

Accusations against ICC’s chief prosecutor

Also hanging heavy over the meeting in The Hague are the internal pressures that Khan, the chief prosecutor, faces. The 54-year-old British lawyer faced allegations that he tried to coerce a female aide into a sexual relationship and groped her, according to an AP report in October.

Two co-workers in whom the woman confided reported the alleged misconduct in May to the court’s independent watchdog, which says it interviewed the woman and ended its inquiry after five days when she opted against filing a formal complaint. Khan was never questioned. He has denied the claims.

The Assembly of States Parties has announced it will launch an external probe into the allegations.

Khan, who took the floor after Akane, did not address the accusations against him or the threats against the court beyond saying the institution was facing “unprecedented challenges.”

He instead highlighted his office’s request last week for an arrest warrant against the head of Myanmar’s military government, senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, for attacks against the country’s Rohingya Muslim minority. Judges have yet to decide on that request.

Khan also said he planned to request warrants related to Afghanistan and Sudan in the coming months.

Late last week, six countries including France, Luxembourg and Mexico asked Khan’s office to look into possible crimes in Afghanistan since the Taliban took control in 2021. While Khan isn’t obligated to open an investigation in response to such a request, historically court prosecutors have done so.

The court, which has long faced accusations of ineffectiveness, will have no trials pending after two conclude in December. While it has issued a number of arrest warrants in recent months, many high-profile suspects remain at large.

Also, ICC member states don’t always act — Mongolia, an ICC member, refused to arrest Putin when he visited in September. Sudan’s former President Omar al-Bashir is wanted by the ICC over accusations related to the conflict in Darfur, but his country has refused to hand him over.

“It becomes very difficult to justify the court’s existence,” Sterio said.

German leader Scholz vows more Ukraine aid and defends his phone call with Putin

By HANNA ARHIROVA and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Ukraine for the first time in more than two years Monday and vowed to keep supporting Kyiv in the war, just weeks after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuked him for having a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The conflict is approaching a pivotal new phase, with the new U.S. administration of Donald Trump taking office next month and potentially determining the trajectory of the war after the president-elect’s pledge to end the fighting, with few details.

Ukraine is sensitive to whether cracks might be appearing in the unity of its Western allies behind helping it against Russia, as Putin banks on outlasting that commitment. Germany is Ukraine’s second-largest military backer after the United States.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby emphasized Monday that the Biden administration’s job is to put Ukraine in the best position of strength to give Zelenskyy leverage when negotiations begin. He underlined that it’s Zelenskyy “who gets to decide if and when he’s ready to negotiate, and he gets to decide what if anything he’s willing to negotiate.”

With the war soon to enter its fourth year, Zelenskyy said he disagreed with Scholz’s call with Putin. Zelenskyy said it could prompt phone calls with other leaders, possibly reducing Putin’s international isolation.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 58 of 64

tion and legitimizing his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Scholz defended the call, saying he wanted to remind Putin that Ukraine is a sovereign and independent state that should be able to decide its own future. He also stressed that he conveyed to Putin that Ukraine is not alone and that its partners will continue their support.

Germany is a vociferous supporter of Ukraine, but Scholz has refused to budge on two of Zelenskyy's key requests: supplying German- and Swedish-made Taurus long-range missiles to Ukraine and inviting it to join NATO quickly.

Scholz, who faces an early election in February, has cast his refusal to send Taurus missiles as part of a "prudent" approach to the conflict that assures Ukraine of strong support without taking the risk of the war escalating into a conflict between NATO and Russia.

"This doesn't lessen our support, which is very wide-ranging and – it is important for me to say – will remain wide-ranging," Scholz said in Kyiv.

In a major shift, Zelenskyy signaled Friday that an offer of NATO membership to territory under Kyiv's control could end "the hot stage of the war" in Ukraine.

Some Western nations granted permission in November for Kyiv to carry out long-range strikes with the weapons they have supplied. Following the decision, Putin said Russia launched a strike on Ukraine with an unstoppable intermediate-range ballistic missile dubbed the Oreshnik that he claimed can't be intercepted.

It marked the first time that such a missile was used in the war or in any other conflict.

Scholz has been cautious about talk of fast-tracking NATO membership for Ukraine. He has emphasized the importance of finding a path to peace, which he insists must not be chosen over Ukraine's head.

Germany, a leader in providing Ukraine with air defense systems, has already supplied five IRIS-T systems, three Patriot systems and over 50 Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, Scholz said. Another batch of military aid being delivered this month will include another IRIS-T system and more Gepards, he added. More material is to follow in 2025.

Russia has kept up a barrage of civilian areas of Ukraine and its power grid. In recent months, Russia launched 347 missiles of various types against Ukraine, Zelenskyy said.

He pleaded for more Western air defense systems, adding that around 20 critical objects are not protected. He didn't elaborate.

More than 3 million travelers screened at US airports in a single day. That's a record

By The Associated Press undefined

Travelers heading home after the Thanksgiving holiday set a record on Sunday, as airport officers screened more than 3 million people.

The Transportation Security Administration said Monday that it handled 3.09 million travelers on Sunday, breaking the previous record by about 74,000. That mark was set on July 7, also a Sunday after a holiday.

Hundreds of thousands of travelers were delayed or had their flights canceled. Airlines canceled about 120 U.S. flights — not an unusually high number — and more than 6,800 flights were delayed, according to FlightAware. The largest numbers of delays were at Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport and Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

Monday was also expected to be a busy day. By midday, there were about 80 canceled flights and more than 2,000 delays.

Amtrak rail service between Philadelphia and New York was temporarily stopped Monday because of damage to overhead electrical wires.

And some travelers trying to return home faced delays on the roads.

Traffic at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport came to a standstill Sunday evening, with the airport using social media to tell motorists to avoid one of the two main entrance roads. Some people posted on X that they missed their flights because of the gridlock.

A DFW Airport spokesperson attributed the gridlock to "the high volume of holiday traffic in a compressed

time frame." She said the airport deployed extra police officers to help get traffic moving.

The TSA had predicted that Thanksgiving week air travel would rise 6% over the same days last year, fitting a pattern of record travel in 2024.

What medical care for transgender minors is at stake in Supreme Court case?

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court will hear arguments in a case involving Tennessee's ban on gender-affirming care for transgender people under age 18.

At least 26 states have adopted laws restricting or banning such care for minors, and most of those states face lawsuits.

The nation's top court will be weighing whether Tennessee's law violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, requiring that people in similar circumstances be treated the same under the law. Both sides in the case claim they are acting to protect minors from harm.

Gender-affirming care is supported by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups. Here's a look at what's typically involved:

Evaluation and diagnosis happen first

Young people who persistently identify as a gender that differs from their sex assigned at birth are often referred to clinics where teams from various medical specialties provide gender-affirming care.

Such care begins with an evaluation, which can include a pediatrician and a mental health specialist who assess the degree of distress, if any, the young person is experiencing.

Those who meet defined criteria may be diagnosed with what's called gender dysphoria if their distress is continuous and significant.

Some young people and their families may decide to try a social transition involving a new hairstyle, clothing, name or pronouns. Experts agree that allowing children to express their gender in a way that matches their identity is beneficial.

Chazzie Grosshandler, 18, of Chicago, said she was 9 years old when she told her parents she was a girl and "not just a boy who likes girly things." She started receiving care two years later.

"The first-ever step of gender-affirming care for me was when I told my parents that I was a girl and that I had felt this way for a long time and that they accepted me," she said. "I think people get really confused when they hear the word 'care' that it has to be something medical. But the truth is that it's more than just medical. It's love and acceptance."

Puberty blockers can be a next step

A subset of young people may be offered additional interventions such as puberty blockers to ease distress and give them time to explore their gender identity.

The drugs, known as GnRH agonists, block the release of key hormones involved in sexual maturation. They've been used for decades to treat precocious puberty, an uncommon medical condition that causes puberty to begin abnormally early.

The medication starts after a young person show early signs of puberty — enlargement of breasts or testicles. This typically occurs around age 8 to 13 for those assigned female at birth and a year or two later for those assigned male at birth.

The drugs can be given as injections every few months or as arm implants lasting up to a year or two. Many of the effects are reversible — puberty and sexual development resume as soon as the drugs are stopped. Researchers are exploring the effects of puberty blockers on bone development, but no research has shown an increased risk for bone fractures.

Young people can stay on puberty blockers for several years.

Some transgender youth may take hormones

After puberty blockers, trans adolescents go through puberty either with or without hormone treatment. Some may choose to take hormones to make their bodies more closely match their gender identity.

They take manufactured versions of either estrogen or testosterone — hormones that prompt sexual development in puberty. Estrogen comes in skin patches and pills. Testosterone is available in injections, implants or gels.

Guidelines recommend starting these when teens are mature enough to make informed medical decisions. Many transgender people take the hormones for life.

If the medication is stopped, some physical changes remain. Testosterone generally leads to permanent voice-lowering, facial hair and development of the Adam's apple. Estrogen can lead to permanent breast development.

Research on long-term hormone use in transgender adults has found potential health risks including a modest risk for blood clots with estrogen and negative cholesterol changes with testosterone.

Surgery is rare

Gender-affirming surgery in transgender teens is far less common than hormone treatment. When it is done among transgender youth, it's almost always breast reduction surgery in older transgender males.

Even so, that type of surgery is extremely rare. Perhaps surprisingly, breast reduction among minors is most frequently performed in males who are not transgender. This is for a condition called gynecomastia, which means having more breast tissue than usual.

A study looking at millions of 2019 insurance claims found 151 breast reductions performed for U.S. minors. Nearly all — 97% — were not transgender.

Hormones and well-being

Research suggests that transgender youth are prone to stress, depression and suicidal thoughts. Some studies suggest treatment for gender dysphoria can improve young people's well-being, but some nuances remain unclear.

In one study, researchers spent two years testing and tracking 315 transgender youth who received hormone therapy. Depression and anxiety symptoms eased and life satisfaction increased among those designated female at birth, but not among those designated male at birth. The researchers speculated that the youth designated male at birth might be more affected by stress from being different from most of their peers.

In the same study, published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, two participants died by suicide — one after six months and the other after a year.

Longer term studies on treatment outcomes are underway.

Josh Allen has TDs passing, rushing and receiving as Bills rout 49ers 35-10 in snow, clinch AFC East

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Josh Allen's memorable week began with singer and actress Hailey Steinfeld accepting his proposal for marriage and ended with the Buffalo Bills quarterback celebrating his three-TD outing in an AFC East-clinching 35-10 win over San Francisco by making snow angels alongside coach Sean McDermott on Sunday night.

"He's the one that got me to do it," Allen said of interrupting McDermott's television interview to lay backwards into a snow pile. "I'm not the biggest snow angel fan, because you get cold down there, my toes are freezing right now ... but it was fun."

As for Steinfeld saying "Yes," during his bye week proposal, Allen said: "Felt good. Felt free."

He could just as well have been referring to his performance by braving bone-chilling temperatures and a persistent snowfall in becoming the NFL's first quarterback and seventh player in the Super Bowl era to score a touchdown passing, rushing and receiving. Sandwiched between his 7-yard touchdown pass to Mack Hollins and an 8-yard scoring run, Allen scored a receiving touchdown on a pass he threw in his latest do-everything performance.

With Amari Cooper corralling a short pass with a one-handed catch, the receiver was in the midst of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 61 of 64

being wrapped up by two Niners defenders when he pitched the ball back to Allen. The QB sprinted to the left corner of the end zone and dived past for the pylon for the score.

"It's got to be up there. I wish he got credited for something there, an assist or a passing touchdown," Allen said of Cooper. "I just kind of chased the ball to be there and we made eye contact. ... It was dope."

Cooper said he acted on instinct in a play that could well have been drawn up in the snow on the sideline. "I was wondering what he was doing over there," Cooper said. "I figured he was over there because he wanted the ball, so I gave it to him."

Snow flew like confetti in celebration from the packed stands as the Bills (10-2) scored on four of five possessions spanning halftime to build a 28-3 lead, starting with Ray Davis' 5-yard run. James Cook scored on a career-high 65-yard run and finished with 107 yards rushing.

The defending NFC champion 49ers (5-7) unraveled as they dropped their third straight and lost running back Christian McCaffrey to what coach Kyle Shanahan said was a potential season-ending injury to the posterior cruciate ligament in his knee.

Shanahan believes McCaffrey was hurt on an 18-yard run up the middle. The All-Pro running back stayed in the game and on the next play appeared to step awkwardly with his left foot on the snow-slicked field and went down immediately. After being examined on the sideline, he limped to the locker room and was ruled out at the start of the second half.

McCaffrey had 53 yards on seven carries when he exited the game, his fourth after missing the first eight of the season with Achilles tendinitis.

"It feels dark and gloomy and absolutely depressing, honestly I'll feel that probably in a couple hours," tight end George Kittle said. "The only way to make this feel better is to go take advantage of next week and try to get a win."

Very little went right for the 49ers in an outing they lost three fumbles and Jake Moody missed two of three field-goal attempts. San Francisco was also missing five starters due to injury and is now in jeopardy of missing the playoffs a season after losing the Super Bowl to Kansas City.

Moody opened the scoring with a 33-yard field goal and Isaac Guerendo scored on a 15-yard run. Brock Purdy, coming back after missing one game with a sore throwing shoulder, finished 11 of 18 for 94 yards.

Allen finished 13 of 17 passing for 148 yards and two touchdowns, three rushes for 18 yards and a score, and zero catches for 7 yards and a TD. He was serenaded by fans with chants of "MVP!" and sat out most of the fourth quarter.

"It's a good feeling. This one feels a little bit different this early in the season," Allen said of clinching the division while also staying in the hunt to catch Kansas City (11-1) for the AFC's top seed. "It's going to be fun, I mean, to go out there and play free and play relaxed and play loose. I think that could be a dangerous team."

Allen now has scored 247 career TDs (186 passing, 59 rushing and two receiving) to break Hall of Famer Jim Kelly's franchise record of 244.

Buffalo has won seven straight since back-to-back losses to Baltimore and Houston, and is 10-2 or better for the fifth time in team history and first since 1991. The Bills became the NFL's eighth team, and first since Indianapolis in 2009, to clinch a division title with five games remaining.

Buffalo extended its run of scoring 30 or more points to six straight games, while the Niners dropped to 0-5 when scoring 20 or fewer.

Up next

49ers: Host Chicago next Sunday.

Bills: At the Los Angeles Rams next Sunday.

Biden pardons his son Hunter despite previous pledges not to

By ZEKE MILLER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden pardoned his son, Hunter, sparing the younger Biden a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions and reversing his past promises not to

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 62 of 64

use the extraordinary powers of the presidency for the benefit of his family.

The Democratic president had previously said he would not pardon his son or commute his sentence after convictions in the two cases in Delaware and California. The move on Sunday night comes weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges, and less than two months before President-elect Donald Trump is set to return to the White House.

It caps a long-running legal saga for the younger Biden, who publicly disclosed he was under federal investigation in December 2020 — a month after his father's 2020 victory — and casts a pall over the elder Biden's legacy.

Biden, who time and again pledged to Americans that he would restore norms and respect for the rule of law after Trump's first term in office, ultimately used his position to help his son, breaking his public pledge to Americans that he would do no such thing.

In a statement released Sunday evening, Biden said, "I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice."

The president's sweeping pardon covers not just the gun and tax offenses against the younger Biden, but also any other "offenses against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014 through December 1, 2024."

In June, Biden categorically ruled out a pardon or commutation for his son, telling reporters as his son faced trial in the Delaware gun case, "I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him."

As recently as Nov. 8, days after Trump's victory, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre ruled out a pardon or clemency for the younger Biden, saying, "We've been asked that question multiple times. Our answer stands, which is no."

The elder Biden has publicly stood by his only living son as Hunter descended into serious drug addiction and threw his family life into turmoil before getting back on track in recent years. The president's political rivals have long used Hunter Biden's myriad mistakes as a political cudgel against his father: In one hearing, lawmakers displayed photos of the drug-addled president's son half-naked in a seedy hotel.

House Republicans also sought to use the younger Biden's years of questionable overseas business ventures in a since-abandoned attempt to impeach his father, who has long denied involvement in his son's dealings or benefiting from them in any way.

"The charges in his cases came about only after several of my political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose my election," Biden said in his statement. "No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son."

"I hope Americans will understand why a father and a President would come to this decision," Biden added, claiming he made the decision this weekend.

The president had spent the Thanksgiving holiday in Nantucket, Massachusetts, with Hunter and his family, and departed for Angola later Sunday on what may be his last foreign trip as president before leaving office on Jan. 20, 2025.

Hunter Biden was convicted in June in Delaware federal court of three felonies for purchasing a gun in 2018 when, prosecutors said, he lied on a federal form by claiming he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs.

He had been set to stand trial in September in the California case accusing him of failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes. But he agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor and felony charges in a surprise move hours after jury selection was set to begin.

David Weiss, the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in Delaware who negotiated the plea deal, was subsequently named a special counsel by Attorney General Merrick Garland to have more autonomy over the prosecution of the president's son.

Hunter Biden said he was pleading guilty in that case to spare his family more pain and embarrassment after the gun trial aired salacious details about his struggles with a crack cocaine addiction.

The tax charges carry up to 17 years behind bars and the gun charges are punishable by up to 25 years

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 03, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 161 ~ 63 of 64

in prison, though federal sentencing guidelines were expected to call for far less time and it was possible he would have avoided prison time entirely.

Hunter Biden was supposed to be sentenced this month in the two federal cases, which the special counsel brought after a plea deal with prosecutors that likely would have spared him prison time fell apart under scrutiny by a judge. Under the original deal, Hunter was supposed to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses and would have avoided prosecution in the gun case as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years.

But the plea hearing quickly unraveled last year when the judge raised concerns about unusual aspects of the deal. The younger Biden was subsequently indicted in the two cases.

Hunter Biden's legal team this weekend released a 52-page white paper titled "The political prosecutions of Hunter Biden," describing the president's son as a "surrogate to attack and injure his father, both as a candidate in 2020 and later as president."

The younger Biden's lawyers have long argued that prosecutors bowed to political pressure to indict the president's son amid heavy criticism by Trump and other Republicans of what they called the "sweetheart" plea deal.

Rep. James Comer, one of the Republican chairmen leading congressional investigations into Biden's family, blasted the president's pardon, saying that the evidence against Hunter was "just the tip of the iceberg."

"It's unfortunate that, rather than come clean about their decades of wrongdoing, President Biden and his family continue to do everything they can to avoid accountability," Comer said on X, the website formerly known as Twitter.

Biden is hardly the first president to deploy his pardon powers to benefit those close to him.

In his final weeks in office, Trump pardoned Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in law, Jared Kushner, as well as multiple allies convicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. Trump over the weekend announced plans to nominate the elder Kushner to be the U.S. envoy to France in his next administration.

Trump, who has pledged to dramatically overhaul and install loyalists across the Justice Department after he was prosecuted for his role in trying to subvert the 2020 presidential election, said in a social media post on Sunday that Hunter Biden's pardon was "such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice."

"Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years?" Trump asked, referring to those convicted in the violent Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol by his supporters.

Hunter Biden said in an emailed statement that he will never take for granted the relief granted to him and vowed to devote the life he has rebuilt "to helping those who are still sick and suffering."

"I have admitted and taken responsibility for my mistakes during the darkest days of my addiction – mistakes that have been exploited to publicly humiliate and shame me and my family for political sport," the younger Biden said.

Hunter Biden's legal team filed Sunday night in both Los Angeles and Delaware asking the judges handling his gun and tax cases to immediately dismiss them, citing the pardon.

A spokesperson for Weiss did not respond to messages seeking comment Sunday night.

NBC News was first to report Biden was expected to pardon his son Sunday.

Today in History: December 3

Toxic gas leak kills thousands in Bhopal

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 3, the 338th day of 2024. There are 28 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 3, 1984, a cloud of methyl isocyanate gas escaped from a pesticide plant operated by a Union Carbide subsidiary in Bhopal, India, causing an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 deaths and more than 500,000 injuries.

Also on this date:

In 1947, the Tennessee Williams play "A Streetcar Named Desire" opened on Broadway.

In 1967, a surgical team in Cape Town, South Africa, led by Dr. Christiaan Barnard (BAHR'-nard) performed the first human heart transplant on Louis Washkansky, who lived 18 days with the donated organ from Denise Darvall, a 25-year-old bank clerk who had died in a traffic accident.

In 1979, 11 people were killed in a crush of fans at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum, where the British rock group The Who was performing.

In 1989, U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev concluded two days of positive bilateral discussions in Malta in a symbolic end to the Cold War.

In 2015, Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered the armed services to open all military jobs to women, removing the final barriers that had kept women from serving in combat.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Jaye P. Morgan is 93. Rock singer Ozzy Osbourne is 76. Rock singer Mickey Thomas is 75. Actor Daryl Hannah is 64. Actor Julianne Moore is 64. Olympic figure skating gold medalist Katarina Witt is 59. Actor Brendan Fraser is 56. Singer Montell Jordan is 56. Actor Holly Marie Combs is 51. Actor/comedian Tiffany Haddish is 45. Actor Anna Chlumsky (KLUHM'-skee) is 44. Actor Amanda Seyfried is 39. Rapper Lil Baby is 30. Actor Jake T. Austin is 30.