

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 1 of 49

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [3- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [5- GDI Fit Ad](#)
- [6- Fall River County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Brown County Fatal Crash](#)
- [8- County Budget Supplement Hearing Notice](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Medical dispensaries are closing after SD's rejection of recreational marijuana](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Fate uncertain for Wounded Knee land bill and medals review as massacre commemoration approaches](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [18- Daily Devotional](#)
- [19- Subscription Form](#)
- [20- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [21- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [22- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, Dec. 28

The Doubleheader with Dakota Valley will now just be a Boys Basketball game at Dakota Valley on Saturday, January 18th

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

## Sunday, Dec. 29

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:30 a.m., at Groton, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

## Monday, Dec. 30

Senior Menu: Chicken alredo, broccoli, pineapple, breadstick.



Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
Girls Varsity Wrestling at Sioux Falls Lincoln.  
Boys Basketball at Westber: C at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

## Tuesday, Dec. 31

Senior Menu: Roast pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, three bean salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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

## Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## Thursday, Jan. 2

Senior Menu: Chicke strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza.

School Lunch: Lasagna bake, garlic toast.

School resumes

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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

© 2024 Groton Daily Independent

**X SERIES** | *Cub Cadet*

## ENGINEERED FOR THE EXTREME.



**3X** **THREE-STAGE POWER**

**INTELLIPOWER**

**HD TRAC MAX**

The heavy-duty 3X<sup>®</sup> is the ace of the X Series<sup>®</sup> line. Three-stage design with durable, center mounted steel accelerator spins 10x faster than the augers to break down and quickly clear heavy, wet snow. Engineered to easily remove up to 23 inches of snowfall and bust through the wall of winter at the end of your driveway.

**ENGINEERED FOR**

SNOWFALL DRIVEWAY SURFACES



Up to 18-23" Up to 8-15+ cars Smooth 8 gravel



**3X 26" INTELLIPOWER**

Bust through the snow with the 3X 26" snow blower featuring a 357cc Cub Cadet<sup>®</sup> engine with IntelliPOWER<sup>®</sup>.

- 21" intake height
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- Heated hand grips
- Dual LED in-dash headlights
- Cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty\*\*

**\$1,699\***



**3X 30" HD INTELLIPOWER**

Gear up for the worst of winter weather with the 3X 30" HD powered by a 420cc Cub Cadet<sup>®</sup> engine with IntelliPOWER<sup>®</sup>.

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- Cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty\*\*

**\$2,099\***



**3X 26" TRAC INTELLIPOWER**

Clear it all with the strength of the 3X 26" TRAC featuring a powerful 357cc Cub Cadet<sup>®</sup> engine with IntelliPOWER<sup>®</sup>.

- Track drive designed for slopes, inclines and gravel driveways
- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty\*\*

**\$2,299\***

• Indicates step-up feature



**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\_3X\_QUARTER

EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING OFFERS AVAILABLE<sup>†</sup>



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 3 of 49

# 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.**

## **US Homelessness Surges**

Homelessness in the US reached the highest level this year since the federal government began keeping records roughly two decades ago. Nearly 772,000 people experienced homelessness on a single night in January, up 18% from 2023, according to federally required tallies taken across the country.

The data, released yesterday, attributed the rise to various factors, including high rents, the end of pandemic-era protections, and an influx of migrants that have overwhelmed shelters in cities like Chicago, New York City, and Denver. (However, since the tallies, migrant border crossings have dropped this year.)

Other data points include family homelessness increasing by 39% and 150,000 children experiencing homelessness, with the latter figure reflecting a 33% rise from 2023. Meanwhile, homelessness among veterans dropped 8% this year to roughly 32,000. Dallas, which made plans in 2021 to overhaul its homelessness response system, saw a 16% drop in homelessness from 2022 to 2024. In Los Angeles, which increased housing for the homeless, the rate has dropped by 5% since 2023.

## **Azerbaijani and US officials suggest plane crash caused by weapons fire.**

Russia's aviation chief claimed a Ukrainian drone attack was occurring in Chechnya as the Azerbaijan Airlines plane that crashed (see previous write-up) was attempting to land in Grozny. The aviation chief did not confirm if Russian air defenses accidentally shot it down. Azerbaijan Airlines attributed the crash to unspecified "physical and technical interference" and has suspended flights to several Russian airports.

## **Fallen cryptocurrency mogul Do Kwon to be extradited to the US.**

Montenegro agreed to release Kwon, the cofounder of the collapsed cryptocurrency firm Terraform Labs, to face federal fraud and conspiracy charges in the US. The collapse of Terraform Labs, triggered by the 2022 crash of its TerraUSD stablecoin and its Luna sister token, caused investors to lose \$40B. Kwon also faces charges in South Korea, which also sought to take custody of him.

## **Longtime CBS Sports broadcaster Greg Gumbel dies.**

Gumbel died Friday at age 78 after a battle with cancer. His broadcasting career spanned over 50 years, during which time he became known for his work on major events like the Super Bowl and NCAA March Madness. He also served as an anchor for ESPN's "SportsCenter" and was an announcer and studio host for NBC Sports in the mid-1990s.

## **South Korea installs second acting president in two weeks.**

Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok will take over as the country's next acting president after the National Assembly voted to impeach the previous acting president, Han Duck-soo. Lawmakers impeached Han for his refusal to fill three vacant seats on the high court; the appointments were needed for the court to rule on the impeachment of former President Yoon Suk Yeol.

## **CDC says bird flu virus likely mutated within a Louisiana patient.**

Genetic analysis of the bird flu virus in a Louisiana patient showed the virus had mutated during infection to become more transmissible to humans, similar to changes seen in a patient in British Columbia. The Louisiana patient is in critical condition after being exposed to sick and dead birds from backyard flocks. According to the CDC, the overall risk to the public remains low, and there's no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 4 of 49

## **NFL Christmas Day doubleheader sets streaming record on Netflix.**

Netflix's doubleheader broke records as the most-streamed NFL games in US history, with an average of 24.3 million viewers for the Ravens-Texans game and 24.1 million for the Chiefs-Steelers game. Both figures outpaced the NBA's five-game Christmas Day lineup, which averaged about 5.25 million viewers per game across its platforms.

## **NASA's Parker Solar Probe survives closest-ever approach to sun.**

The 1,510-pound Parker probe (see overview) successfully came within 3.8 million miles of the sun on Christmas Eve and confirmed its safe status by transmitting a beacon signal back to Earth ahead of schedule late Thursday night. The milestone marks a significant achievement in NASA's mission to study the sun's corona and solar wind, with more detailed data expected to be received Jan. 1.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Joanne C. in San Dimas, California.

"I'm a teacher, and it always makes me smile when I'm thought of during the holidays, especially because I work in a population where many are disadvantaged. On the last day of school, leading into winter break, one of my students brought me a small gift and then a giant box. I was curious what was in that big box! When the time came, I asked the little girl if I could open her gifts. The first little gift was obviously things that she knew I would enjoy, like an ornament and a candle. Then she was so excited she wanted me to open the big gift that was wrapped by her."

"When I proceeded to unwrap the big box, it was a box within a box within a box. It was super cute .... Along with each box was a little note attached like, 'keep going,' 'keep unwrapping,' 'you have another,' etc. It was making me laugh. I think I ended up unwrapping about 10 boxes that led to a tiny little envelope and inside that little envelope was the last little message written in second grade, phonics writing, 'You are my favorite teacher.' That melted my heart! All that effort of wrapping all these boxes in boxes to give me a sweet little message."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 5 of 49

## You have to start some time! Why not **now!**

5 months to get your through the winter!

Student: \$175.75, Single: \$202.40, Couple: \$298.90,  
Family: \$362.15

This will get you into the gym through the end of May!



Gift  
Certificates  
Available!

Daily Pass Available for \$5

Age 65 or older  
Physical Therapy  
\$20 per month

Annual Memberships:

Student: \$255.60

Single: \$319.50

Couple: \$575.10

Family: \$702.26



15 N Main St. - Ste. 101

Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460

Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



**Living Heart Fitness Center**

Open 24/7

## Fall River County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 18, mile marker 25, 11 miles west of Hot Springs, SD

When: 7:49 a.m., Friday, December 27, 2024

Driver 1: 26-year-old male from Hot Springs, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2003 Honda Accord

Seat belt Used: No

Driver 2: 59-year-old male from Iola, WI, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 2024 Peterbilt 579

Seat belt Used: Yes

Fall River County, S.D.- A 26-year-old Hot Springs man was fatally injured after colliding with a semi near Hot Springs, SD this morning.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2003 Honda Accord was traveling eastbound on US Highway 18 near mile marker 25, passing another eastbound vehicle. The driver lost control of his vehicle and entered the westbound lane, and was struck by an oncoming semi. The driver of the Accord was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected.

The driver of the Accord was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the semi 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.

## Brown County Fatal Crash

What: Vehicle/Bicycle fatal crash

Where: North Lincoln Street and 2nd Avenue NE, Aberdeen, SD

When: 9:45 p.m., Thursday, December 26, 2024

Driver 1: 45-year-old male from Aberdeen, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 1: 2005 Ford F150

Seat belt Used: No

Driver 2: 65-year-old male from Aberdeen, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: Bicycle

Helmet Used: Under Investigation

Brown County, S.D.- A bicyclist sustained fatal injuries when struck by a vehicle Thursday evening in Aberdeen, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2005 Ford F-150 was traveling westbound on 2nd Avenue NE near North Lincoln Street when he struck a bicyclist on the shoulder of the road.

The cyclist died from his injuries. The driver of the Ford F-150 was charged with DUI and possession of marijuana.

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.

# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 8 of 49



## BROWN COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Lynn Heupel, Auditor

Accounting | Elections | Licensing | Record-Keeping

### NOTICE OF HEARING

#### 2024 BROWN COUNTY BUDGET SUPPLEMENT

A public hearing will be held by the Brown County Commission on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December 2024 in the Brown County Commission Chambers, Courthouse Annex, Aberdeen, SD to consider supplementing the 2024 Fiscal Year Budget.

The public is invited to attend the hearing and to present comments and testimony regarding the supplements.

ATTEST: Lynn Heupel, Brown County Auditor

## THANK YOU 2024 FOR







## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Medical dispensaries are closing after SD's rejection of recreational marijuana

**At least eight have shuttered over concerns about competition, regulations and falling cardholder numbers**

**BY: JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 27, 2024 7:01 AM**

The trouble signs started about a year in.

B.J. Olson had opened his medical cannabis dispensary, called "Unity Rd.," in the summer of 2022, less than a month after medical pot sales became legal in South Dakota.

That first month or two, things were fine. Olson's revenue lined up nicely with his projections.

Then came the competition. Dispensaries were popping up all over the Sioux Falls metro area, which Olson serviced from his location in Hartford.

"Every time a new dispensary opened, it would be a little less and a little less," Olson told South Dakota Searchlight in a recent interview. "Then it was a race to the bottom on pricing."

Unity Rd. is one of at least eight dispensary businesses that had a license from the state Department of Health last winter but no longer does. An archived version of the state's medical pot website from February listed 78 dispensaries on its licensing page. The December figure, listed on the current version of that same page, lists 70.

Meanwhile, the number of patient cardholders in the state has also been declining, from nearly 14,000 last winter to fewer than 12,000 currently.

The negative cardholder trend and a too-fast expansion of dispensaries were part of the problem for Olson's Hartford shop. He said regulations were another part.

The state's medical cannabis rules prohibit advertising. Social media posts deemed too close to advertising drew warnings from the state, Olson said. The price of an annual dispensary license from the state went up. He had to pay specialty accountants to do his taxes and five times the price of the tax preparation bill he was used to paying in his other business ventures.

Cannabis businesses cannot deduct most business expenses like rent or employee wages, but can deduct



**Unity Rd., a medical cannabis dispensary in Hartford, closed in November.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

cost-of-business expenses. Threading that needle takes a tax preparer versed in the frequently shifting regulations on cannabis business rules.

"It was all the little things that added up," Olson said.

Beyond messages about errant social media posts, there was the warning about a steel door between Olson's medical cannabis shop and the separate smoke shop business he owned on the other side of his building.

Olson called the door "impassable," but the state didn't like that it had hinges. He responded by pulling the door out and installing what he described as an eighth-inch piece of plywood in the empty space to prove he'd physically closed off his medical pot business from his other shop, thereby complying with state rules.

"Even though I could literally put my fist through it, that was OK," Olson said.

Had Initiated Measure 29 passed on Election Day and legalized the possession of recreational marijuana, Olson said, he'd still be in business. But it didn't.

"I was ready to go for the ride," said Olson, who expected it would've taken another two years for lawmakers to set up a legal retail market.

Instead, Olson announced in November he'd be closing both his medical cannabis dispensary and his smoke shop. The market is oversaturated, he said, and it's not worth the hassle.

"I'd already put four years into it," Olson said. "I wanted to be done with it."

## Handful of closures, more expected

Joe Stavig, chief financial officer of Dakota Herb's dispensary and cultivation business, has heard about other dispensary closures since the failure of IM 29 at the ballot box in November.

Stavig is hopeful in one way about the future of the medical marijuana industry in the state. At least some of the people who'd held off on seeking medical pot cards in hopes voters would legalize recreational marijuana might apply for cards now.

Even so, Stavig said, the dropping patient numbers have already done financial damage to the industry.

"What we're seeing is some of these smaller dispensaries closing down, and even potentially some smaller cultivators shutting down, because of what we've seen over the last six months with the patient card count," Stavig said.

Cardholders peaked in February of 2024 at 13,705. This month, that number is 11,635 – a 15% drop.

Alan Welsh, a Dakota Herb co-founder and former Highway Patrol leader, puts at least some of the blame on the increasing availability of pot alternatives like hemp-derived gummies and smokable flower.

Welsh and Stavig like their chances because their company is vertically integrated with cultivation, wholesaling and dispensaries. But Welsh can't see standalone dispensaries competing against smoke shops selling weed-like products with similar effects. Those shops capitalized on a legal loophole in the 2018 federal farm bill to sell products derived from hemp by synthesizing intoxicants found in small amounts in hemp and adding enough to create high-inducing products.

The Legislature passed a bill last winter to bar the sale of weed alternatives, but the law is being challenged in court, and Welsh, Stavig and Olson said the law has done little so far to stem the flow of those products.

"There might be some kind of enforcement coming, but it's never been enforced," Welsh said.

Olson, for his part, said that by offering those products at his smoke shop, he was competing with his medical marijuana dispensary.

"All of these smoke shops that are open all throughout the state of South Dakota, myself included, that's selling legal weed," Olson said. "It's 100% selling legal weed. There's no regulation. I can buy product from anywhere in the country, have it shipped to me and sell it."

Other things could also be done to boost card numbers, said Stavig, of Dakota Herb. He intends to advocate for expanding the list of qualifying conditions for a patient card, and for the addition of an industry representative to the state's Medical Marijuana Oversight Council.

## Regulation issues shutter one shop

The state Department of Health has yet to respond to a South Dakota Searchlight email regarding cease and desist letters, warnings and enforcement actions against state dispensaries.

But Roy Nielsen, owner of a cultivation facility and dispensaries in Sioux Falls and Yankton, is familiar with at least four of them. The Roy's license for its Sioux Falls-based dispensary is on hold until a January hearing, Nielsen said, over its alleged violations of cannabis program rules.

One of the violations, he said, came when a dispensary employee posted an image of cannabis use to their Snapchat story, which disappeared in 24 hours and was only visible to that employees' Snapchat friends.

Even though the employee wasn't acting as an employee, Nielsen said, the company caught a cease and desist letter over the post.

One administrative program rule prohibits social media posts that depict the use of cannabis.

Another came because someone at the Sioux Falls shop had jokingly put a Scooby-Doo mask on a mannequin in the entry area between the shop's front doors and its cardholder-access-only dispensary area.

Another program rule prohibits "using cartoons, toys, or other products or images commonly associated with or marketed to individuals under 21 years of age."

"The state came in and took a picture," said Nielsen, who spent decades selling medication for pets in Iowa before switching to the cannabis business. "It was like a cartoon character."

Nielsen said shutting down the shop until January put him and his employees in a tough spot for the holidays.

"I care about my people," Nielsen said. "I've got to figure out how to pay them."

Like Stavig and Olson, Nielsen said he's hoping to survive what he expects will be a wave of dispensary consolidations in South Dakota. He's hired a medical director to help educate patients and anyone else who'll listen about the benefits of well-regulated medical cannabis.

But he's also not holding his breath for a more welcoming environment. At this point, he's thinking about Minnesota, a neighboring state in the process of setting up a recreational market.

In his previous life as a pet med purveyor, Nielsen said, he grew accustomed to working with regulators on matters of safety, efficacy and drug testing.

"We dealt with the Department of Ag, the EPA, the FDA," Nielsen said. "Nothing's been harder for me to navigate than the Department of Health."

Olson, the former Hartford dispensary owner who claims to have gone from "one of the first dispensaries open to one of the first ones to close," offered a similar sentiment. It wasn't just the tax issues or the competition or the state's concerns about how he kept his smoke shop and pot shop separate.

South Dakota touts itself as business friendly, but Olson said he never felt that love as a dispensary owner.

"They were always in our back pocket, always making us fearful of this, that or the other," Olson said. "No other industry has to live in fear like that."

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Fate uncertain for Wounded Knee land bill and medals review as massacre commemoration approaches

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER AND SETH TUPPER - DECEMBER 26, 2024 5:30 PM**

As the 134th commemoration of the Wounded Knee Massacre nears, efforts to protect the massacre site and review medals awarded to participating soldiers are in limbo.

After years of activism by Lakota people, the U.S. Department of Defense announced in July that the "approximately 20" Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers who participated in the massacre would be subjected to a review. But there hasn't been an announcement of the review panel's recommendations yet, and

President Joe Biden's term ends Jan. 20 when President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office.

The massacre occurred on Dec. 29, 1890. Lakota people were camped near Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, where they were surrounded by hundreds of Army soldiers. A shot rang out while the soldiers tried to disarm the camp, and chaotic shooting ensued.

Fewer than 40 soldiers were killed (some by friendly fire, according to historians), while estimates of

Lakota deaths ran from 200 to 300 or more, depending on the source. After some of the bodies froze on the ground for several days, a military-led burial party dumped them into a mass grave.

The politics and racism of the day influenced the Army's decision to support medals for some of the soldiers, even though Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles condemned the massacre. He led the Division of the Missouri, which included the soldiers who were responsible for the incident.

"I have never heard of a more brutal, cold-blooded massacre than at Wounded Knee," Miles wrote in an 1891 letter that's now held in an archive at Yale.



**Plastic flowers and American flags are placed atop graves at the Wounded Knee Memorial and cemetery on June 30, 2024.** (Makenzie

Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

## **Advocate hopeful that Biden will revoke medals**

Historians have noted that the records associated with some of the medals are incomplete or unclear. Oliver "OJ" Semans, a Rosebud Sioux tribal member who advocates for the revocation of the medals, said he's been told the review panel could not reach a consensus.

He remains hopeful that President Joe Biden will revoke the medals, perhaps before or in conjunction with Sunday's 134th commemoration of the massacre.

"That would be such a mental relief for all of those descendants of the massacre survivors," Semans said.

While Biden was running for president in 2020, Semans' Four Directions voter-rights advocacy group submitted written questions to the candidate, including one about the Wounded Knee medals. Biden said at the time that he supported revoking the medals.

"The Congressional Medal of Honor is our Nation's highest award for gallantry in combat, in defense of our Nation's highest ideals and principles," Biden wrote in January 2020, according to a copy of the letter provided by Semans. "That this medal was awarded for the massacre of hundreds of unarmed Native Americans, including women and children, is abhorrent to those very ideals and lessens what the award represents in integrity and personal sacrifice for all others who have received it."

The review panel included members from the Department of Interior. A spokesperson for that department declined to comment on the status of the review. A spokesperson for the Department of Defense said only that the review panel would provide its recommendations to the secretary of Defense, the secretary would provide recommendations to the president, and "the authority to award or rescind a Medal of Honor resides with the President of the United States."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 13 of 49

## Land bill caught up in dispute over Lumbee recognition

Meanwhile, an effort to push the Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act through Congress failed in November after one senator opposed the bill. The effort to protect 40 acres at the Wounded Knee Massacre site on behalf of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe will have to start over after the 119th Congress begins on Jan. 3.

Two years ago, the two tribes purchased 40 acres at the massacre site from a private owner. The legislation would place the land in restricted-fee status, which means it could not be sold, taxed, gifted or leased without approval by the secretary of the Department of Interior.

The bill passed the House in September after Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, introduced it in May 2023. U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, who introduced a Senate version of the bill in June 2023, tried to have the adopted House version considered by the Senate in November.

"I hope that we can come together to acknowledge this event and work to mend our history through reconciliation and mutual respect," Rounds said on the Senate floor. "Although we can't rewrite this past, this act is one way to show healing and progress."

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-North Carolina, took advantage of Senate rules allowing a single senator to block consideration of a bill.

Tillis has opposed several tribal-related bills in an attempt to get senators to support his own bill to federally recognize the Lumbee Tribe in North Carolina. He called out the leaders of the Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes for allegedly not supporting his efforts.

During a Senate floor speech, Tillis directed his comments to the people of the two tribes in South Dakota. "This is not about you. This is about your leaders and their underhanded, unfair treatment of a tribal nation that deserves recognition," Tillis said. He added that the Wounded Knee bill "really does need to come into law. Just not yet."

Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux tribal leaders did not respond to questions from South Dakota Searchlight on the issue.

Semans said Tillis and the Lumbee were wrong to subject the Wounded Knee land protection bill to a fight over the Lumbee's status.

"It's a terrible thing that they decided to pick one of the most horrific massacres in history to make a point about them wanting to become a federally recognized tribe," Semans said.

Congress recognized the Lumbee in 1956, but denied financial benefits typically associated with federal recognition, such as funding for tribal law enforcement and access to the Indian Health Service.

The tribe has worked toward full recognition for decades, most recently with the North Carolina congressional delegation. Tribal nations typically receive federal recognition through an application with the Department of the Interior. President-elect Donald Trump pledged his support to the tribe in September.

Some other tribal leaders question the validity of the Lumbee's historical claims, according to The Associated Press. Some opponents of Lumbee recognition are concerned it could siphon funding away from existing tribes, and also have concerns that recognition would allow the Lumbee to build a casino, which would compete with other tribal casino operations in the area.

The latest action on Tillis' Lumbee recognition bill was its referral to the Committee on Indian Affairs after the legislation was introduced in February 2023.

*South Dakota Searchlight's Joshua Haiar contributed to this report.*

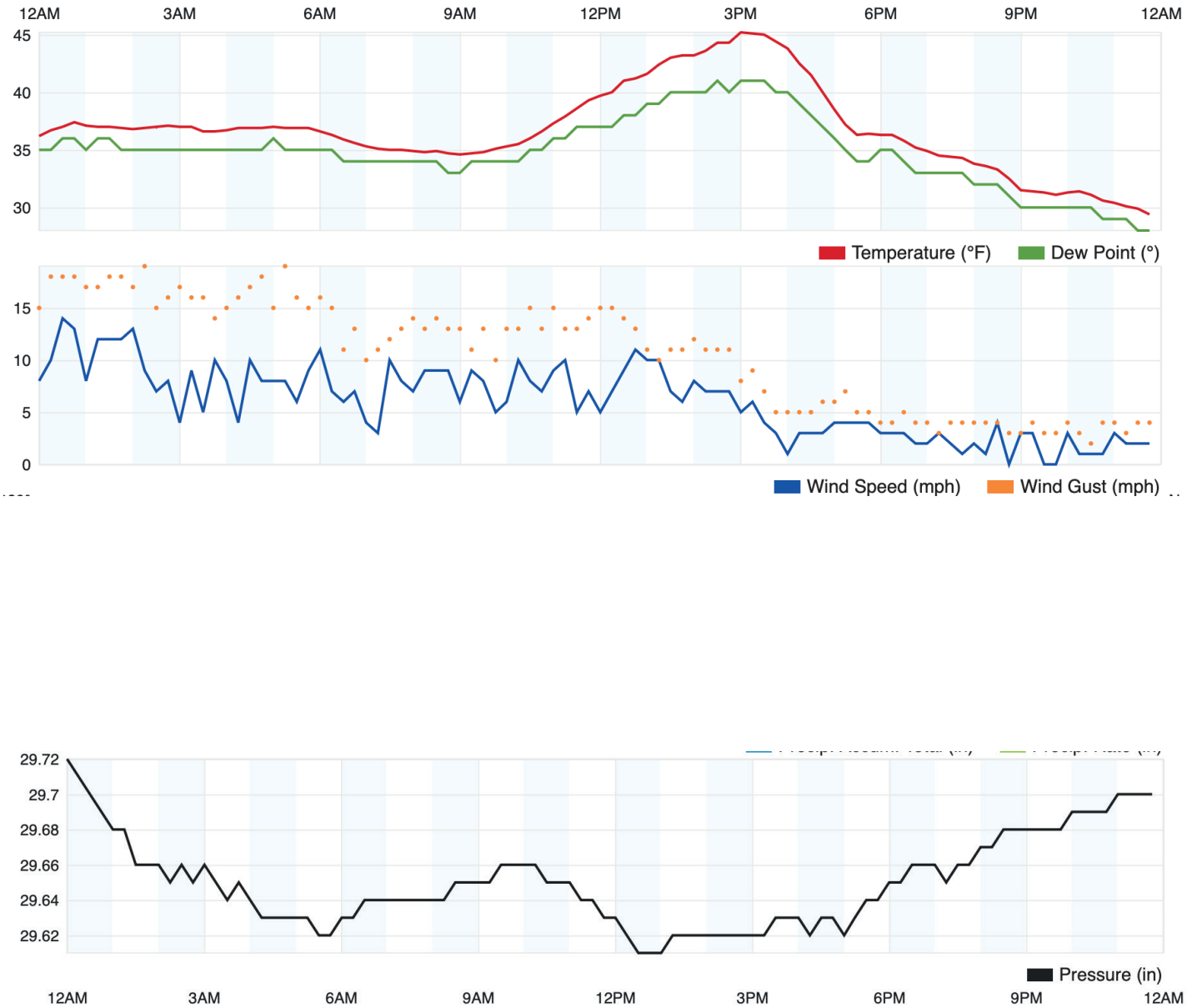
*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was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

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 14 of 49

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 15 of 49

Today



High: 41 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 25 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 42 °F

Patchy Fog  
then Mostly  
Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 21 °F

Increasing  
Clouds

Monday



High: 28 °F

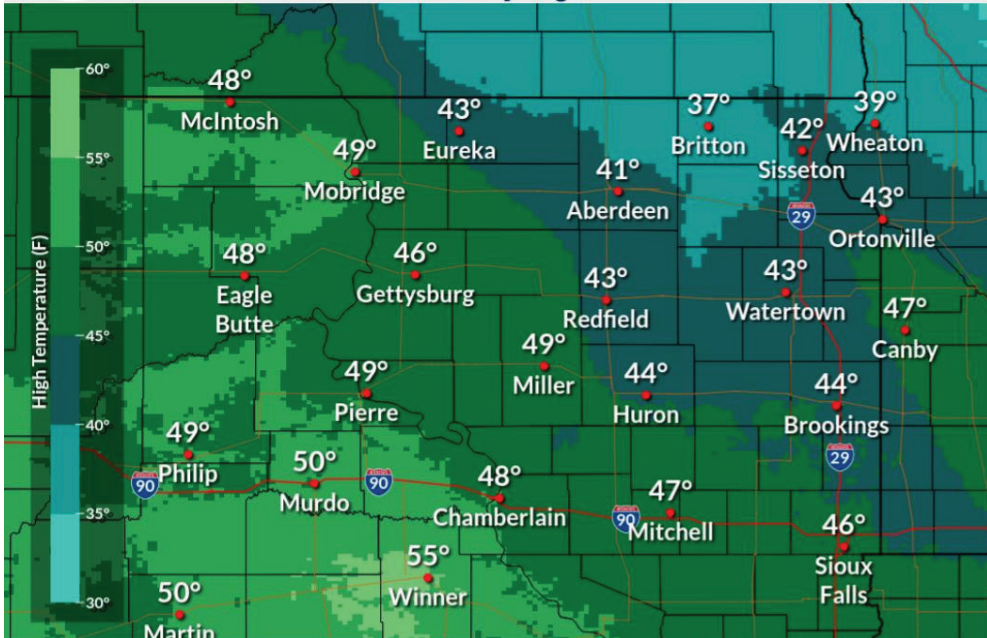
Chance Snow



## Warm Weekend Ahead

December 28, 2024  
3:23 AM

### Saturday Highs



- Highs 10-20 degrees above average both Saturday and Sunday
- Skies becoming cloudy in the afternoon Saturday
- Clear skies Sunday



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Highs for today will be 10-20 degrees above normal, or in the 40s to around 50! Some clouds will move in this afternoon but clear out for Sunday and continued above average temps. Take advantage of the nice weather while you can!

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 16 of 49

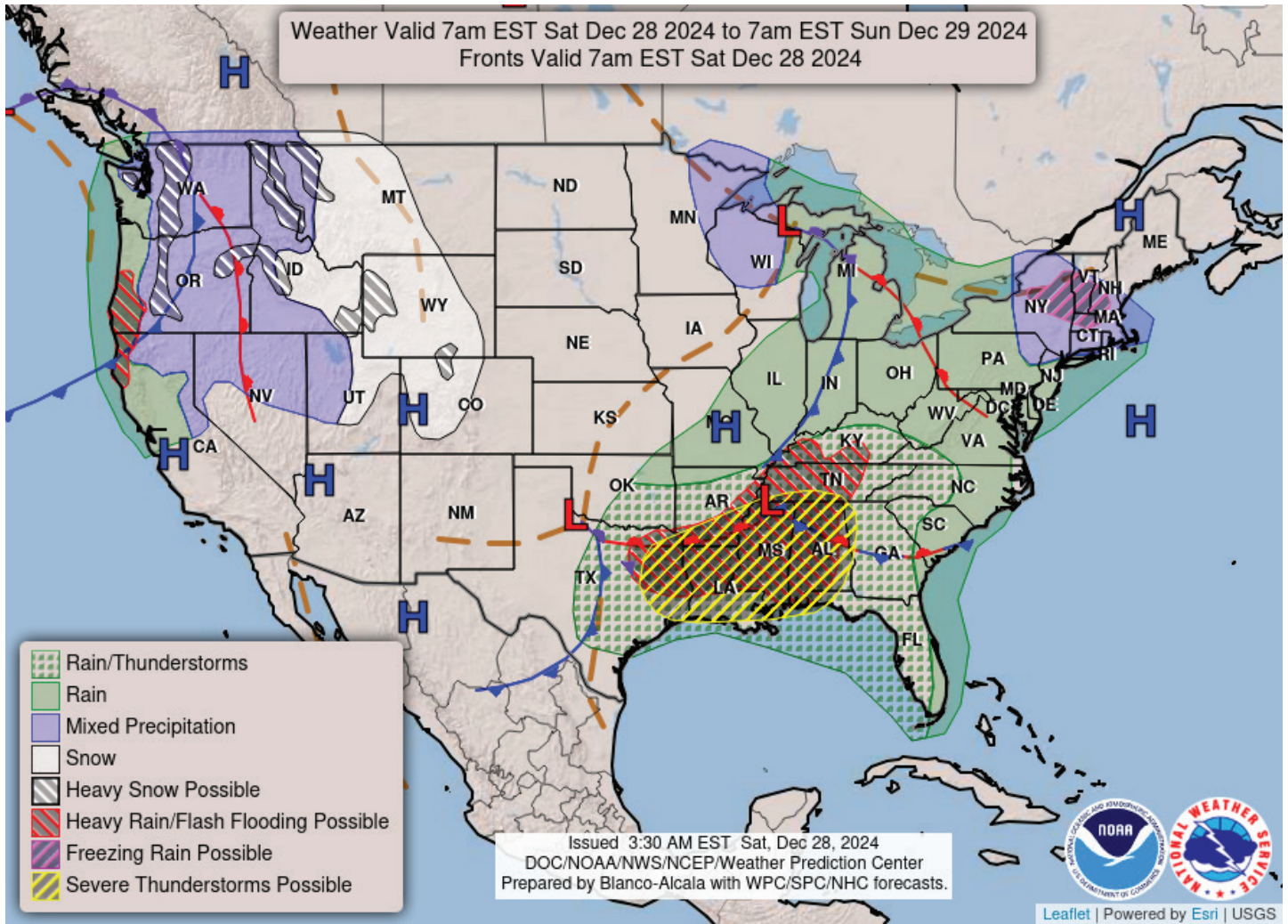
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 45 °F at 3:06 PM**  
**Low Temp: 30 °F at 11:18 PM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 1:32 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 8 hours, 48 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1898  
Record Low: -24 in 1924  
Average High: 25  
Average Low: 4  
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.54  
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 21.75  
Precip Year to Date: 21.71  
Sunset Tonight: 4:58:30 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:15 am





# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 17 of 49

## Today in Weather History

December 28, 2000: Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to around 65 mph, occurred across central and north central South Dakota in the morning. The high winds resulted in blizzard conditions at some locations just east of the Missouri River. Further east, in northeast South Dakota, northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph combined with newly fallen snow to generate blizzard conditions from the morning into the early afternoon hours. Travel was terrible in many places, and many motorists found themselves in ditches. There were also several non-injury accidents.

1839 - The third storm in two weeks hit the northeastern U.S. It brought two more feet of snow to Hartford, CT, and Worcester, MA. Whole gales swept the coast causing many wrecks. (David Ludlum)

1879: Tay Bridge is the main-line railway across the Tay River in Scotland, between the city of Dundee and the suburb of Wormit in Fife. During the evening hours of December 28, 1879, winds were said to blow at right angles to the bridge. Witnesses said the storm was as severe as they had seen in 20 to 30 years. The winds at Glasgow and Aberdeen were measured at 71 mph. Winds were estimated to be 80 mph in Dundee. A passenger train departed at 7:13 pm was said to disappear three minutes later. The train was found at the bottom of the river, along with the high rafters and much of the ironwork of their supporting piers. There were no survivors. The Court of Inquiry report concluded that "The fall of the bridge was occasioned by the insufficiency of the cross bracing and its fastenings to sustain the force of the gale."

1897 - The temperature at Dayville, OR, hit 81 degrees to establish a state record for December. (The Weather Channel)

1924 - Iowa experienced its coldest December morning of record. Morning lows averaged 25 degrees below zero for the 104 weather stations across the state.

1955 - Anchorage, AK, was buried under 17.7 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1958 - Albuquerque, NM, received 14.2 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour record. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Upper Great Lakes Region. Up to twenty inches of snow buried southern Minnesota, and 20 to 40 mph northwesterly winds produced snow drifts six feet high, and reduced visibilities to near zero at times in blowing snow. There were a thousand traffic accidents in Michigan during the storm, resulting in thirty-five injuries. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds behind a cold front claimed three lives in eastern Pennsylvania, and injured a dozen others in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Maryland. Winds gusted to 87 mph at Hammon-ton NJ and in the Washington D.C. area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls continued to bring snow to the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior and Lake Ontario. Syracuse NY received 8.5 inches of snow to push the total for the month past their previous December record of 57 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A severe snow storm hit northern California and southern Oregon. As much as 2 feet of snow fell along Interstate 5 closing a 150-mile stretch of the interstate, stranding hundreds of travelers. Winds from the storm caused power outages to more than 200,000 customers in California and Oregon. One man died of a heart attack after helping other drivers. (CNN)

2004 - Los Angeles (downtown) broke a daily rainfall record for the month of December (5.55 inches). This was the third wettest calendar day in Los Angeles since records began in 1877.

2005 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms across portions of the southeast United States on the 28th produced hail, high winds and a few tornadoes. The states of Georgia and Tennessee were the most affected. (NCDC)



## Why Fathers Matter

We rarely think of Joseph when we speak of Mary and her son, Jesus. But Joseph was a very special individual as well.

In describing him, Matthew says that he was a “just” or “righteous” man. And, because of that, he was a “decent,” “fair” and “righteous” man. When he was faced with an incredibly difficult decision, an angel appeared and advised him to “go ahead with your marriage to Mary.”

Initially, Scripture informs us, “that not wanting to disgrace her, he planned to send her away.” He was well aware of the fact that stoning was the legal prescription for what people would think of Mary’s being pregnant without being married. If he took Mary to be his wife, he could be humiliated or ridiculed by those around him. But he chose to obey the command of the angel to marry her. As a “righteous” man he was also a “merciful” man, a man willing to listen to, hear from, and obey God. Joseph was a man of great character.

But there is more. Not only was he righteous, merciful, and obedient to the voice of God, but he was a man who was sensitive and discrete. Joseph was open to the voice of God and responded immediately when God spoke to him and protected the reputation and honor of Mary – thereby revealing he was a man of integrity.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for fathers everywhere who will strive to be like the earthly father of Your Son. We ask that You raise up men of integrity to honor You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 1:18-25 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

*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

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 19 of 49

## 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](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent [www.397news.com](http://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](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 20 of 49



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.27.24

3 7 37 49 55 6

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

4 5 40 42 52 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$19,010,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins  
10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.27.24

15 21 24 32 43 11

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins  
9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

14 24 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$180,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins  
9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

8 29 30 47 57 1

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 9  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

15 26 27 30 35 3

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$145,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 9  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 21 of 49

## Upcoming Groton Events

- 01/05/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/26/2025 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
- 01/26/2025 87th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 02/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 02/05/2025 FB Live Electronic Hwy 12 Sign Drawing City Hall 12pm
- 03/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
- 04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 06/07/2025 Day of Play
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Langford 49, Wilmot 43

McLaughlin 55, Mandaree, N.D. 23

#### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Dupree 58, Lead-Deadwood 55

McLaughlin 50, Mandaree, N.D. 15

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

## **Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who instituted economic reforms, cremated in New Delhi**

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Manmohan Singh, the former Indian prime minister widely regarded as the architect of the country's economic reform program, was cremated after a state funeral on Saturday as politicians and the public mourned his death.

The veteran leader, who was also credited for a landmark nuclear deal with the United States, died late Thursday at age 92.

Singh's body was taken Saturday morning to the headquarters of his Congress party in New Delhi, where party leaders and activists paid tributes to him and chanted "Manmohan Singh lives forever."

Abhishek Bishnoi, a party leader, said Singh's death was big loss for the country. "He used to speak little, but his talent and his actions spoke louder than his words," he said.

Later, Singh's body was transported to a crematorium ground for his last rites as soldiers beat drums.

Government officials, politicians and family members paid their last respects to Singh, whose casket was adorned with flowers and wrapped in the Indian flag. Security personnel honored him with a ceremonial gun salute.

Indian President Draupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called Singh one of the country's "most distinguished leaders," and several Cabinet ministers participated in the funeral ceremony.

Singh's body was then transferred to a pyre as religious hymns played and cremated.

Authorities declared a seven-day mourning period and canceled all cultural and entertainment events during that time. Government buildings across India are flying the national flag at half-staff.

A mild-mannered technocrat, Singh was prime minister for 10 years and leader of the Congress party in Parliament's upper house, earning a reputation as a man of great personal integrity. He was chosen to be prime minister in 2004 by Sonia Gandhi, the widow of assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Singh was reelected in 2009, but his second term was clouded by financial scandals and corruption charges over the organization of the 2010 Commonwealth Games. This led to the Congress party's crushing defeat in 2014 national elections by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party under the leadership of Narendra Modi.

Singh adopted a low profile after relinquishing the post of prime minister.

As finance minister, Singh in 1991 instituted reforms that moved India away from a socialist-patterned economy and toward a capitalist model in the face of a huge balance of payments deficit, skirting a potential economic crisis.

Singh was the first Sikh to hold the country's top post and made a public apology in Parliament for the

1984 Sikh Massacre in which some 3,000 Sikhs were killed after then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.

In a move hailed as one of his biggest achievements apart from economic reforms, Singh ended India's nuclear isolation by signing a deal with the U.S. that gave India access to American nuclear technology.

But the deal hurt his coalition government, with Communist allies withdrawing their support and criticism of the agreement growing within India in 2008 when it was finalized.

## **Bloodied Ukrainian troops risk losing more hard-won land in Kursk to Russia**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Five months after their shock offensive into Russia, Ukrainian troops are bloodied and demoralized by the rising risk of defeat in Kursk, a region some want to hold at all costs while others question the value of having gone in at all.

Battles are so intense that some Ukrainian commanders can't evacuate the dead. Communication lags and poorly timed tactics have cost lives, and troops have little way to counterattack, seven front-line soldiers and commanders told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity so they could discuss sensitive operations.

Since being caught unaware by the lightning Ukrainian incursion, Russia has amassed more than 50,000 troops in the region, including some from its ally North Korea. Precise numbers are hard to obtain, but Moscow's counterattack has killed and wounded thousands and the overstretched Ukrainians have lost more than 40% of the 984 square kilometers (380 square miles) of Kursk they seized in August.

Its full-scale invasion three years ago left Russia holding a fifth of Ukraine, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has hinted that he hopes controlling Kursk will help force Moscow to negotiate an end to the war. But five Ukrainian and Western officials in Kyiv who spoke on condition of anonymity to freely discuss sensitive military matters said they fear gambling on Kursk will weaken the whole 1000-kilometer (621-mile) front line, and Ukraine is losing precious ground in the east.

"We have, as they say, hit a hornet's nest. We have stirred up another hot spot," said Stepan Lutsiv, a major in the 95th Airborne Assault Brigade.

The border raid that became an occupation

Army chief Oleksandr Syrskyi has said that Ukraine launched the operation because officials thought Russia was about to launch a new attack on northeast Ukraine.

It began on Aug. 5 with an order to leave Ukraine's Sumy region for what they thought would be a nine-day raid to stun the enemy. It became an occupation that Ukrainians welcomed as their smaller country gained leverage and embarrassed Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Gathering his men, one company commander told them: "We're making history; the whole world will know about us because this hasn't been done since World War II.

Privately, he was less certain.

"It seemed crazy," he said. "I didn't understand why."

Shocked by success achieved largely because the Russians were caught by surprise, the Ukrainians were ordered to advance beyond the original mission to the town of Korenevo, 25 kilometers (16 miles) into Russia. That was one of the first places where Russian troops counterattacked.

By early November the Russians began regaining territory rapidly. Once in awe of what they accomplished, troops' opinions are shifting as they come to terms with losses. The company commander said half of his troops are dead or wounded.

Some front-line commanders said conditions are tough, morale is low and troops are questioning command decisions, even the very purpose of occupying Kursk.

Another commander said that some orders his men have received don't reflect reality because of delays in communication. Delays occur especially when territory is lost to Russian troops, he said.

"They don't understand where our side is, where the enemy is, what's under our control, and what isn't,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 24 of 49

he said. "They don't understand the operational situation, we so act at our own discretion."

One platoon commander said higher ups have repeatedly turned down his requests to change his unit's defensive position because he knows his men can't hold the line.

"Those people who stand until the end are ending up MIA," he said. He said he also knows of at least 20 Ukrainian soldiers whose bodies had been abandoned over the last four months because the battles were too intense to evacuate them without more casualties.

No option to retreat as Russia doubles down

Ukrainian soldiers said they were not prepared for the aggressive Russian response in Kursk, and cannot counterattack or pull back.

"There's no other option. We'll fight here because if we just pull back to our borders, they won't stop; they'll keep advancing," said one drone unit commander.

The AP requested comment from Ukraine's General Staff but did not receive a response before publication.

American longer-range weapons have slowed the Russian advance and North Korean soldiers who joined the fighting last month are easy targets for drones and artillery because they lack combat discipline and often move in large groups in the open, Ukrainian troops said.

On Monday, Zelenskyy said 3,000 North Korean soldiers had been killed and wounded. But they appear to be learning from their mistakes, soldiers added, by becoming more adept at camouflaging near forested lines.

One clash took place last week near Vorontsovo tract, a forested area between the settlements of Kremenne and Vorontsovo.

Until last week, the area was under Ukraine's control. This week part of it has been lost to Russian forces and Ukrainian troops fear they will reach a crucial logistics route.

Eyeing frontline losses in the eastern region known as the Donbas — where Russia is closing on a crucial supply hub — some soldiers are more vocal about whether Kursk has been worth it.

"All the military can think about now is that Donbas has simply been sold," the platoon commander said. "At what price?"

## Winning ticket for \$1.22 billion lottery jackpot sold in California, Mega Millions says

By The Associated Press undefined

ATLANTA (AP) — At least one Mega Millions player has plenty of dough to ring in the New Year after drawing the winning number. After three months without anyone winning the top prize in the lottery, a ticket worth an estimated \$1.22 billion was sold in California for the drawing Friday night, according to the Mega Millions website.

The winning ticket matched the white balls 3, 7, 37, 49, 55 and the gold Mega Ball 6. The identity of the winner or winners was not immediately known.

The total amount of the Mega Millions jackpot would only be distributed to a winner who chooses an annuity paid over 29 years. Nearly all grand prize winners opt to take a cash payout, which for Friday night's drawing is an estimated \$549.7 million.

Despite the game's long odds of 1 in 302.6 million, players continued to purchase tickets as the size of the grand prize grew. Until Friday, the last time a Mega Millions player hit the top prize was Sept. 10.

The largest-ever Mega Millions jackpot ticket worth \$1.6 billion was sold in Florida in August 2023. Two prizes for its compatriot Powerball lottery have been larger.

Mega Millions and Powerball are sold in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Powerball also is sold in Puerto Rico.

Mega Millions ticket prices are set to rise from \$2 to \$5 in April. The increase will be one of many changes that officials say will result in improved jackpot odds, more frequent giant prizes and even larger payouts.



## 2 sailor deaths result in muted celebrations on winning yacht in Sydney to Hobart race

By DENNIS PASSA AP Sports Writer

Champagne corks often pop and loud, boisterous cheers are usually heard around Constitution Dock when the Sydney to Hobart line honors winner finishes in the Tasmanian state capital.

There were no such celebrations this year when defending champion LawConnect won the race in the early hours of Saturday morning, and with good reason: It came about 24 hours after two sailors died on separate boats in sail boom accidents two hours apart on a storm-ravaged first night of the race.

LawConnect, a 100-foot super maxi skippered by Australian tech millionaire Christian Beck, sailed up the River Derwent just after 2:30 a.m. Saturday. It had an elapsed time of 1 day, 13 hours, 35 minutes and 13 seconds, for the 628-nautical mile (722 miles, 1,160 kilometers) race that began Thursday in Sydney harbor.

Celestial V70 finished second, about 2 1/2 hours behind LawConnect, and Wild Thing 100 was third, about 25 minutes behind Celestial. Of the 104 starters, 29 had retired at sea or in port.

LawConnect crew member Tony Mutter said celebrations would be held privately out of respect of the two sailors who died. He said crew members were informed of the deaths on the morning of day two after a busy night battling the same stormy seas that caused the fatal accidents.

"I didn't actually hear it on the first night. I heard it in the early hours of the next morning," Mutter told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. "We were pretty busy. We were 100% focused on the race. Our navigator knew, and he had to just pick the right moment to let us know."

Mutter said the crew became "more somber" after being told about the deaths — "we were absolutely surprised and just felt for the other competitors."

On Friday, the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Sydney, which administers the yacht race, said that one sailor each on entrants Flying Fish Arctos and Bowline were killed after being struck by the boom, a large horizontal pole at the bottom of the sail.

Later the dead sailors were identified as Roy Quaden 55, from Western Australia state, a crew member on Flying Fish Arctos, and 65-year-old Nick Smith of South Australia, who was on Bowline.

New South Wales police said both yachts had been seized for evidence for a likely coroner's inquest. The Cruising Yacht Club said it would hold its own investigation.

Officials also said a sailor was washed overboard on another boat, but was rescued. That crew member was from Hobart yacht Porco Rosso, and he drifted a kilometer from the yacht before being rescued.

The incident triggered the crew member's emergency position-indicating radio beacon, a safety device that must be worn by all sailors in the race.

"That is one of the most terrifying experiences that you can have," said David Jacobs, vice-commodore of the CYCA. "(And) it was at night, which makes it tenfold more scary."

The deaths came 26 years after six sailors were killed in storms during the 1998 race, which initiated a state coronial inquest and mass reforms to the safety protocols — including the radio beacon on all sailors — that govern the race. There have been 13 fatalities in the 79-year history of the race, with four of those deaths resulting from sailor heart attacks.

The first all-Filipino crew of 15 sailors was entered in this year's race, but was among the retirements because of the weather. With veteran sailor Ernesto Echaz at the helm, Centennial 7 was one of six international entrants and includes sailors from the Philippines' national team and the country's navy.

Grant Wharington, the Australian skipper of third-place Wild Thing 100 and a veteran around-the-world sailor, described the Hobart race as "testing and boat breaking."

"There's some tragic things that have happened in the race this year," he said. "It makes you second-guess whether you should be doing it for yourself, for your own health, for your well-being, and for your family."

"At the end of the day, we challenge our own personalities and our bodies. We go and do these crazy things in life, and this is one of them, and we love it. I've done it 31 times. It holds great memories for me."

## Sportscaster Greg Gumbel dies from cancer at age 78

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Greg Gumbel, a longtime CBS sportscaster who broke barriers during his career calling some of the biggest sporting events, has died from cancer, according to a statement from family released by the network on Friday. He was 78.

"He leaves behind a legacy of love, inspiration and dedication to over 50 extraordinary years in the sports broadcast industry; and his iconic voice will never be forgotten," his wife Marcy Gumbel and daughter Michelle Gumbel said in a statement.

In March, Gumbel missed his first NCAA Tournament since 1997 due to what he said at the time were family health issues.

Gumbel was the studio host for CBS since returning to the network from NBC in 1998. Gumbel signed an extension with CBS last year that allowed him to continue hosting college basketball while stepping back from NFL announcing duties.

In 2001, he announced Super Bowl 35 for CBS, becoming the first Black announcer in the U.S. to call play-by-play of a major sports championship.

David Berson, president and CEO of CBS Sports, described Gumbel as someone who broke barriers and set standards for others during his years as a voice for fans in sports, including in the NFL and March Madness.

"A tremendous broadcaster and gifted storyteller, Greg led one of the most remarkable and groundbreaking sports broadcasting careers of all time," said Berson.

Gumbel had two stints at CBS, leaving the network for NBC when it lost football in 1994 and returning when it regained the contract in 1998.

He hosted CBS' coverage of the 1992 and 1994 Winter Olympics and called Major League Baseball games during its four-year run broadcasting the national pastime. In 1995, he hosted the World Figure Skating Championships and the following year hosted NBC's daytime coverage of the Olympic Summer Games in Atlanta.

But it was football and basketball where he was best known and made his biggest impact. Gumbel hosted CBS' NFL studio show, "The NFL Today" from 1990 to 1993 and again in 2004-05.

Earlier this year, Gumbel recalled replacing Brent Musburger as host of "The NFL Today" in 1990, describing it as intimidating and daunting.

"The fact that I got to sit in the same chair and do the same thing or try to do the same thing that he did was an incredible honor," he said.

Gumbel also called NFL games as the network's lead play-by-play announcer from 1998 to 2003, including Super Bowl 35 and 38. He returned to the NFL booth in 2005, leaving that role after the 2022 season.

"Like all who knew and loved him, I too am saddened by his death, yet also so very grateful to have known him in my life," Clark Kellogg, a CBS Sports college basketball game and studio analyst, said in a statement. "What a gift to be touched by such a good man and partner."

Gumbel was the older brother of Bryant Gumbel, the host of NBC's "Today" show and "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" on HBO. Bryant Gumbel received a lifetime achievement award at the Sports Emmys in 2003.

Greg Gumbel grew up in Chicago and graduated from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1967 with a degree in English. He had plans to become an English teacher, but after his brother got into sportscasting, he auditioned at WMAQ-TV, an NBC affiliate in Chicago in 1973, according to the book "You Are Looking Live!: How The NFL Today Revolutionized Sports Broadcasting." He was soon offered a position as week-end sports anchor.

"I'm kind of surprised I got the job. I certainly wasn't anyone who was polished," he said in the book. "By my own reckoning, it took me a good year to start to feel comfortable in front of a camera."

Gumbel also worked for ESPN and the Madison Square Garden network.

James Brown, who currently hosts "The NFL Today," described Gumbel on Friday as "Mr. Versatility and

also very telegenic.”

“It was my pleasure to call him a friend and one who could do anything that was given to him in the wake of an assignment,” he added.

Gumbel won local Emmy Awards during his long career and was the recipient of the 2007 Pat Summerall Award for excellence in sports broadcasting.

Outside of his career as a sportscaster, he was affiliated with the March of Dimes for three decades, including as a member of its board of trustees. He also was a member of the Sports Council for St Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital for 16 years.

## **A 9th telecoms firm has been hit by a massive Chinese espionage campaign, the White House says**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A ninth U.S. telecoms firm has been confirmed to have been hacked as part of a sprawling Chinese espionage campaign that gave officials in Beijing access to private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans, a top White House official said Friday.

Biden administration officials said this month that at least eight telecommunications companies, as well as dozens of nations, had been affected by the Chinese hacking blitz known as Salt Typhoon.

But deputy national security adviser Anne Neuberger told reporters Friday that a ninth victim had been identified after the administration released guidance to companies about how to hunt for Chinese culprits in their networks.

The update from Neuberger is the latest development in a massive hacking operation that has alarmed national security officials, exposed cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the private sector and laid bare China’s hacking sophistication.

The hackers compromised the networks of telecommunications companies to obtain customer call records and gain access to the private communications of what officials have said is a limited number of individuals. Though the FBI has not publicly identified any of the victims, officials believe senior U.S. government officials and prominent political figures are among those whose communications were accessed.

Neuberger said Friday that officials did not yet have a precise sense how many Americans overall were affected by Salt Typhoon, in part because the Chinese were careful about their techniques, but that a “large number” were in the Washington-Virginia area.

Officials believe the goal of the hackers was to identify who owned the phones and, if they were “government targets of interest,” spy on their texts and phone calls, she said.

The FBI said most of the people targeted by the hackers are “primarily involved in government or political activity.”

Neuberger said the episode highlighted the need for required cybersecurity practices in the telecommunications industry, something the Federal Communications Commission is to take up at a meeting next month. In addition, she said, the government was planning additional actions in coming weeks in response to the hacking campaign, though she did not say what they were.

“We know that voluntary cyber security practices are inadequate to protect against China, Russia and Iran hacking of our critical infrastructure,” she said.

The Chinese government has denied responsibility for the hacking.

## **Canadian Cabinet ministers meet with Trump’s nominee for commerce secretary in bid to avoid tariffs**

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Two Canadian Cabinet ministers left a meeting at Mar-a-Lago on Friday without assurances President-elect Donald Trump will back away from threatened tariffs on all products from the major American trading partner.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 28 of 49

The Canadians called the talks “productive” and said there would be further discussions but one official said the Americans remain fixated on the U.S. trade deficit with Canada.

Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc and Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly met with Howard Lutnick, Trump’s nominee for commerce secretary, as well as North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Trump’s pick to lead the Interior Department.

Trump has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian products if Canada does not stem what he calls a flow of migrants and fentanyl into the United States — even though far fewer of each cross into the U.S. from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened.

“Minister LeBlanc and Minister Joly had a positive, productive meeting at Mar-a-Lago with Howard Lutnick and Doug Burgum, as a follow-up to the dinner between the Prime Minister and President Trump last month,” said Jean-Sébastien Comeau, a spokesman for LeBlanc.

Comeau said both ministers outlined the measures in Canada’s billion-dollar plan to increase security at the border and reiterated “the shared commitment to strengthen border security as well as combat the harm caused by fentanyl to save Canadian and American lives.”

Comeau said Lutnick and Burgum agreed to relay the information to Trump.

A senior Canadian official, however, said the Americans remain preoccupied on the U.S. trade deficit with Canada and want it to shrink. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Trump has made an issue of the U.S. trade deficit, erroneously calling it a subsidy.

Canada’s ambassador to Washington, Kirsten Hillman, has said the U.S. had a \$75 billion trade deficit with Canada last year. But she noted a third of what Canada sells into the U.S. are energy exports and said there is a deficit when oil prices are high.

About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports and 85% of U.S. electricity imports are from Canada. Alberta alone sends 4.3 million barrels of oil per day to the U.S. which tends to consume about 20 million barrels a day.

The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Further discussions are expected in the coming weeks. Joly will also have dinner with U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham on Friday.

Trump has been trolling Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on social media in recent weeks by calling him the Governor of the 51st state.

Trudeau has not directly responded, but did post a link Thursday to a six-minute video on YouTube from 2010 in which American NBC journalist Tom Brokaw “explains Canada to Americans.”

“Some information about Canada for Americans” Trudeau wrote in the post on X.

The video, which originally aired during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, explains similarities between the two countries, the massive trading relationship and the actions of the Canadian military in World War 2 and Afghanistan.

“In our darkest hours Canada has been with us,” Brokaw says in the video. “In the long history of sovereign neighbors there has never been a relationship as close, productive and peaceful as the U.S. and Canada.”

Trudeau has told Trump that Americans would also suffer if the president-elect follows through on a plan to impose sweeping tariffs on Canadian products.

Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian dollars (\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day. Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states.

Flows of migrants and seizures of drugs are vastly different at the U.S.’s two land borders. 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.

## Israeli airstrikes hit a Yemen airport as a jet with hundreds onboard was landing, UN official says

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Israeli airstrikes hit Yemen's main airport as a civilian Airbus 320 with hundreds of passengers on board was landing and a U.N. delegation was waiting to leave, the U.N.'s top humanitarian official in Yemen said Friday.

Julien Harneis told U.N. reporters that the most frightening thing about the two airstrikes on Thursday wasn't their effect on him and about 15 others in the VIP lounge at the international airport in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, including the head of the U.N. World Health Organization.

Rather, it was the destruction of the airport control tower as a Yemenia Airways plane was taxiing in after touching down.

"Fortunately, that plane was able to land safely and the passengers were able to disembark, but it could have been far, far worse," said Harneis, who was with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in the lounge.

He said one airstrike landed approximately 300 meters (330 yards) south of the VIP lounge and another about 300 meters to the north around 4:45 p.m., while about five members of the U.N. team were outside the building.

"Not only obviously did we have zero indication of any potential airstrikes, but we cannot remember the last time there were airstrikes in Sanaa during daylight hours," Harneis said in a video news conference from Sanaa.

The U.N. said at least three people were killed and dozens injured in the strike. Among the injured was a crew member from the U.N. Humanitarian Air Service, which was about to fly the U.N. delegation of some 20 people out of Sanaa.

He suffered a serious leg injury from shrapnel and lost a lot of blood, Harneis said.

Immediately after the airstrikes, Harneis said, U.N. security officials moved the delegation out of the VIP building and into five armored cars where they waited for approximately 40 minutes to ascertain what happened and help the injured crew member.

He was taken to a hospital in Sanaa and underwent four hours of surgery while the rest of the delegation spent the night in a U.N. compound, Harneis said. The U.N. plane with Tedros and the U.N. team, including the injured crew member, was able to depart for Jordan on Friday afternoon — without an operating control tower.

The United Nations said the injured crew member was taken to a hospital in Jordan, and Tedros was heading back to Geneva, where WHO is based,

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who control Sanaa and much of the country's north, have gone after Israel since it started attacking Gaza following the Oct. 7, 2023 attacks by Gaza's Hamas militants on southern Israel. The Houthis have attacked ships in the Red Sea, disrupting one of the world's main maritime routes, and recently stepped up missile and drone attacks on Israel. Early Saturday, the Israeli Air Force reported intercepting yet another missile from Yemen, as sirens woke Israelis around Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

Israel has escalated its response.

The Israeli army said it wasn't aware that the WHO chief or U.N. delegation were at the Sanaa airport on Thursday. Israel said it bombed the airport because it is used by the Houthis and Iran.

Harneis responded, stressing that the airport is civilian, not military, and is used for transporting U.N. and other humanitarian workers, and for one civilian flight — Yemenia to and from Amman, Jordan. The flight operates as a result of an international agreement, and thousands of Yemenis have used the flight to get advanced medical treatment abroad, he said.

Yemen is the Arab world's poorest nation and has been engulfed in a 10-year civil war between the Houthi rebels, who control Sanaa and much of the country's north, and the internationally recognized

government forces in the south.

Tedros was in the country to discuss its worsening humanitarian crisis and to seek the release of about 50 people detained by the Houthis since June from the U.N., nongovernmental organizations and civil society.

Harneis said 18 million Yemenis — about half the country's population — need humanitarian assistance this year, and the U.N. expects the number to increase to 19 million next year because of the worsening economy.

In addition to airstrikes on the Sanaa airport, Israel has been attacking the country's key port of Hodeida, in western Yemen.

Harneis said Yemen relies on imports through Hodeida for 80% of its food and more than 90% of its medical supplies to the north.

A recent Israeli airstrike destroyed two tugboats and is estimated to have reduced the harbor's capacity by 50%, the U.N. official said, while damage from Thursday's airstrikes hasn't been assessed yet.

As for the detainees, Harneis said he joined the WHO chief at meetings with the Houthi prime minister, foreign minister and a member of the group's Supreme Political Council. He said they received commitments on the detainees' possible release and a pathway to it, and on conditions under which they are being held.

## Trump asks Supreme Court to delay TikTok ban so he can weigh in after he takes office

By HALELUYA HADERO and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

President-elect Donald Trump asked the Supreme Court on Friday to pause the potential TikTok ban from going into effect until his administration can pursue a "political resolution" to the issue.

The request came as TikTok and the Biden administration filed opposing briefs to the court, in which the company argued the court should strike down a law that could ban the platform by Jan. 19 while the government emphasized its position that the statute is needed to eliminate a national security risk.

"President Trump takes no position on the underlying merits of this dispute. Instead, he respectfully requests that the Court consider staying the Act's deadline for divestment of January 19, 2025, while it considers the merits of this case," said Trump's amicus brief, which supported neither party in the case and was written by D. John Sauer, Trump's choice for solicitor general.

The argument submitted to the court is the latest example of Trump inserting himself in national issues before he takes office. The Republican president-elect has already begun negotiating with other countries over his plans to impose tariffs, and he intervened earlier this month in a plan to fund the federal government, calling for a bipartisan plan to be rejected and sending Republicans back to the negotiating table.

He has been holding meetings with foreign leaders and business officials at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida while he assembles his administration, including a meeting last week with TikTok CEO Shou Chew.

Trump has reversed his position on the popular app, having tried to ban it during his first term in office over national security concerns. He joined the TikTok during his 2024 presidential campaign and his team used it to connect with younger voters, especially male voters, by pushing content that was often macho and aimed at going viral.

He said earlier this year that he still believed there were national security risks with TikTok, but that he opposed banning it.

The filings Friday come ahead of oral arguments scheduled for Jan. 10 on whether the law, which requires TikTok to divest from its China-based parent company or face a ban, unlawfully restricts speech in violation of the First Amendment. The law was signed by President Joe Biden in April after it passed Congress with broad bipartisan support. TikTok and ByteDance filed a legal challenge afterwards.

Earlier this month, a panel of three federal judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit unanimously upheld the statute, leading TikTok to appeal the case to the Supreme Court.

The brief from Trump said he opposes banning TikTok at this junction and "seeks the ability to resolve the issues at hand through political means once he takes office."

In their brief to the Supreme Court on Friday, attorneys for TikTok and its parent company ByteDance argued the federal appeals court erred in its ruling and based its decision on "alleged 'risks' that China could exercise control" over TikTok's U.S. platform by pressuring its foreign affiliates.

The Biden administration has argued in court that TikTok poses a national security risk due to its connections to China. Officials say Chinese authorities can compel ByteDance to hand over information on TikTok's U.S. patrons or use the platform to spread or suppress information.

But the government "concedes that it has no evidence China has ever attempted to do so," TikTok's legal filing said, adding that the U.S. fears are predicated on future risks.

In its filing Friday, the Biden administration said because TikTok "is integrated with ByteDance and relies on its propriety engine developed and maintained in China," its corporate structure carries with it risk.

## Judge signals that contempt hearing for Rudy Giuliani over his assets might not go well for him

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge is signaling that Rudy Giuliani's contempt hearing next Friday might not end so well for the former New York City mayor and onetime personal lawyer for President-elect Donald Trump as two Georgia election poll workers try to collect a \$148 million defamation award they won against him.

Judge Lewis J. Liman in Manhattan issued an order Friday in which he was dismissive of what he described as attempts by Giuliani and his lawyer to dodge providing information to the election workers' lawyers.

And he said the litigants should be ready at the contempt hearing to explain why he should not grant a request by lawyers for the two election workers that he make adverse inferences from evidence in the case that would put Giuliani's Palm Beach, Florida, condominium in danger of being surrendered to satisfy the defamation award.

The judge also said he may rule on the contempt request at the hearing.

Giuliani has maintained that the Palm Beach property is his personal residence now and should be shielded from the judgment. He faces a Jan. 16 trial before Liman over the disposition of his Florida residence and World Series rings.

Lawyers for the election workers filed the contempt request after saying Giuliani had failed to turn over a lease to his Manhattan apartment, a Mercedes, various watches and jewelry, a signed Joe DiMaggio shirt and other baseball mementos. The judge ordered Giuliani to turn over the items in October.

Giuliani's lawyers have predicted that Giuliani will eventually win custody of the items on appeal. A request for comment was sent to a lawyer for Giuliani, who was supposed to be deposed on Friday.

The contempt hearing follows a contentious November hearing in which Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, became angry at the judge and said Liman was treating him unfairly.

Giuliani was found liable last year for defaming the two Georgia poll workers by falsely accusing them of tampering with ballots during the 2020 presidential election.

The women said they faced death threats after Giuliani falsely claimed they sneaked in ballots in suitcases, counted ballots multiple times and tampered with voting machines.

## Bird flu virus likely mutated within a Louisiana patient, CDC says

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

A genetic analysis suggests the bird flu virus mutated inside a Louisiana patient who contracted the nation's first severe case of the illness, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said this week.

Scientists believe the mutations may allow the virus to better bind to receptors in the upper airways of humans — something they say is concerning but not a cause for alarm.

Michael Osterholm, a University of Minnesota infectious disease researcher, likened this binding interaction to a lock and key. To enter a cell, the virus needs to have a key that turns the lock, and this finding

means the virus may be changing to have a key that might work.

"Is this an indication that we may be closer to seeing a readily transmitted virus between people? No," Osterholm said. "Right now, this is a key that sits in the lock, but it doesn't open the door."

The virus has been causing sporadic, mostly mild illnesses in people in the U.S., and nearly all of those infected worked on dairy or poultry farms.

The Louisiana patient was hospitalized in critical condition with severe respiratory symptoms from bird flu after coming in contact with sick and dead birds in a backyard flock. The person, who has not been identified, is older than 65 and has underlying medical problems, officials said earlier this month.

The CDC stressed there has been no known transmission of the virus from the Louisiana patient to anyone else. The agency said its findings about the mutations were "concerning," but the risk to the general public from the outbreak "has not changed and remains low."

Still, Osterholm said, scientists should continue to follow what's happening with mutations carefully.

"There will be additional influenza pandemics and they could be much worse than we saw with COVID," he said. "We know that the pandemic clock is ticking. We just don't know what time it is."

## **Man indicted in burning death of woman inside a New York City subway train, prosecutors say**

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The man accused of burning a sleeping woman to death inside a New York City subway train has been indicted on murder and arson charges, prosecutors announced Friday, as authorities continue working to identify the victim.

Sebastian Zapeta is accused by prosecutors of lighting the woman on fire on a stopped F train at Brooklyn's Coney Island station Sunday morning, then fanning the flames with a shirt, causing her to become engulfed in the blaze, before sitting on platform bench and watching as she burned.

"This was a malicious deed. A sleeping, vulnerable woman on our subway system," Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said after a brief court hearing where the indictment was announced.

He said Zapeta has been charged with multiple counts of murder as well as an arson charge. The top charge carries a maximum sentence of life in prison without parole. The indictment will be unsealed on Jan. 7.

Zapeta, 33, was not present at the hearing, and his attorney declined to comment afterwards.

Zapeta, who federal immigration officials said is a Guatemalan citizen who entered the U.S. illegally, was taken into custody later Sunday. During questioning by police, prosecutors say he claimed not to know what had happened, noting that he consumes alcohol, but identified himself in photos and surveillance video showing the fire being lit.

He was initially charged in a criminal complaint with murder and arson earlier this week. Such filings are often a first step in the criminal process because, in New York, all felony cases require a grand jury indictment to proceed to trial unless a defendant waives that requirement.

Gonzalez told reporters that police and medical examiners are working to identify the woman using fingerprints and advanced DNA techniques, while also retracing her steps before the killing.

"Our hearts go out not only to this victim, but we know that there's a family," Gonzalez said. "Just because someone appears to have been living in the situation of homelessness does not mean that there's not going to be family devastated by the tragic way she lost her life."

A Brooklyn address for Zapeta released by police after his arrest matches a shelter that provides housing and substance abuse support. Federal immigration officials said he was deported in 2018 but returned to the U.S. illegally sometime after that.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams has directed police to work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's investigative team to explore criminal charges against Zapeta under the federal arson statute, a spokesperson for the mayor's office said this week.



Gonzalez argued Friday that the state charges brought by his office could result in a more severe penalty. "I have a lot of confidence in the people of Brooklyn and the people who come and serve on jury duty here, and I think that this crime took place in New York City, in Brooklyn, and that the people of this county should serve on the jury there," Gonzalez said.

The harrowing episode has renewed discussion about safety in the nation's largest mass transit system. Overall, crime in the subway is relatively rare, with trains and platforms generally as safe as any other public place in New York City. Police data shows major crimes were down this year through November, compared to the same period in 2023.

But homicides were up, with nine killings through November versus five during the same time frame last year. That figure doesn't include the woman who was burned to death, nor a man who was fatally stabbed at a Queens subway station the same day.

High-profile attacks such as stabbings and shovings also put many riders on edge in a city where millions ride the rails every day.

"When you have these incidents, it overshadows the success and it plays on the psyche of New Yorkers," Adams said in a televised interview earlier this week, noting that many high-profile incidents involve people with mental health issues.

## **Azerbaijani and U.S. officials suggest plane that crashed may have been hit by weapons fire**

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian air defense systems may have brought down an Azerbaijani airliner this week, a U.S. official said Friday after an Azerbaijani minister also suggested the plane was hit by a weapon, citing expert analysis and survivor accounts.

Friday's assessments by Roshan Nabiyev and White House national security spokesman John Kirby echoed those made by outside aviation experts who blamed the crash on Russian air defense systems responding to a Ukrainian attack. These statements raised pressure on Russia, where officials said a drone attack was underway in the region where the Azerbaijan Airlines flight was heading for a landing. They did not address statements blaming air defenses.

Kirby told reporters on Friday that the U.S. "have seen some early indications that would certainly point to the possibility that this jet was brought down by Russian air defense systems," but refused to elaborate, citing an ongoing investigation.

Pressed on whether the U.S. has intelligence that helped lead to that conclusion, or was simply relying on informed speculation from experts based on visual assessments of the crash, Kirby characterized the short answer as "yes" but said he'd "leave it at that," without providing further details.

The plane was flying from Azerbaijan's capital of Baku to Grozny, the regional capital of the Russian republic of Chechnya, on Wednesday when it turned toward Kazakhstan and crashed while making an attempt to land. The crash killed 38 people and left all 29 survivors injured.

Nabiyev, Azerbaijan's minister of digital development and transportation, told Azerbaijani media that "preliminary conclusions by experts point at external impact," as does witness testimony.

"The type of weapon used in the impact will be determined during the probe," Nabiyev said.

Passengers and crew who survived the crash told Azerbaijani media that they heard loud noises on the aircraft as it was circling over Grozny.

Flight attendant Aydan Rahimli said that after one noise, the oxygen masks automatically released. She said that she went to perform first aid on a colleague, Zulfugar Asadov, and then they heard another bang.

Asadov said that the noises sounded like something hitting the plane from outside. Shortly afterwards, he sustained a sudden injury like a "deep wound, the arm was lacerated as if someone hit me in the arm with an ax," he added. He denied a claim from Kazakh officials that an oxygen canister exploded inside the plane.

Two other survivors recounted hearing explosions before the plane went down: Jerova Salihat told

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 34 of 49

Azerbaijani television in an interview in the hospital that “something exploded” near her leg, and Vafa Shabanova said that “there were two explosions in the sky, and an hour and a half later the plane crashed to the ground.”

Dmitry Yarov, head of Russia’s civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia, said Friday that as the plane was preparing to land in Grozny in deep fog, Ukrainian drones were targeting the city, prompting authorities to close the area to air traffic.

Yarov said that after the captain made two unsuccessful attempts to land, he was offered other airports but decided to fly to Aktau in Kazakhstan, across the Caspian Sea.

He didn’t comment on statements from some aviation experts, who pointed out that holes seen in the plane’s tail section suggested that it could have come under fire from Russian air defense systems.

Ukrainian drones have previously attacked Grozny and other areas in the Russian North Caucasus.

Azerbaijan Airlines blamed the crash on unspecified “physical and technical interference” and announced the suspension of flights to several Russian airports. It didn’t say where the interference came from or provide any further details.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declined to comment on the claims that the plane was hit by Russian air defenses, saying that it will be up to investigators to determine the cause of the crash.

“The air incident is being investigated, and we don’t believe we have the right to make any assessments until the conclusions are made as a result of the investigation,” Peskov said in a conference call with reporters.

If it’s proven that the plane crashed after being hit by Russian air defenses, it would be the second deadly civil aviation accident linked to fighting in Ukraine. Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was downed with a Russian surface-to-air missile, killing all 298 people aboard, as it flew over the area in eastern Ukraine controlled by Moscow-backed separatists in 2014.

Russia has denied responsibility, but a Dutch court in 2022 convicted two Russians and a pro-Russia Ukrainian man for their role in downing the plane with an air defense system brought into Ukraine from a Russian military base.

Investigators from Azerbaijan are working in Grozny as part of the probe of Wednesday’s crash, the Azerbaijani Prosecutor General’s office said in a statement.

Following Wednesday’s suspension of flights from Baku to Grozny and Makhachkala, Azerbaijan Airlines announced Friday that it would also halt service to eight more Russian cities.

The company will continue to operate flights to six Russian cities, including Moscow and St. Petersburg. Those cities also have been repeatedly targeted by Ukrainian drone strikes in the past.

Kazakhstan’s Qazaq Air also announced Friday that it was suspending flights from Astana to the Russian city of Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains for a month.

FlyDubai also halted flights to Sochi and Mineralnye Vody in southern Russia for the next few days.

The day before, Israel’s El Al carrier suspended flights from Tel Aviv to Moscow citing “developments in Russia’s airspace.” The airline said it would reassess the situation next week.

## Final crystal triangles installed on Times Square ball ahead of New Year’s Eve

BY MELISSA GOLDIN undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — The last of the crystal triangles that make up this year’s Times Square New Year’s Eve ball were installed on Friday morning, marking the first time in 10 years that all 2,688 were replaced at once.

Rapper Pitbull and inventor Joy Mangano were among those on hand to help the organizers of the celebration put the final pieces in place atop One Times Square, the skyscraper from which the 11,875-pound (5,386-kilogram) geodesic sphere drops to mark the new year.

A New Year’s Eve ball was first dropped in Times Square in 1907. Built by a young immigrant metalworker

named Jacob Starr, the 700-pound (318-kilogram), 5-foot (1.52-meter) diameter ball was made of iron and wood and featured 100 25-watt light bulbs. Six newer versions of the ball have been featured in the century-plus since that first celebration.

The only years no ball drop occurred were 1942 and 1943, when the city instituted a nightly "dimout" during World War II to protect itself from attacks. Crowds instead celebrated the new year with a moment of silence followed by chimes rung from the base of One Times Square.

## Israeli troops forcibly remove staff and patients from northern Gaza hospital, officials say

By WAFAA SHURAF, FATMA KHALED and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli troops stormed one of the last hospitals operating in northern Gaza on Friday, forcing many staff and patients outside to strip in winter weather, the territory's health ministry said. The army denied claims it had entered or set fire to the complex and accused Hamas of using the facility for cover.

Kamal Adwan Hospital has been hit multiple times over the past three months by Israeli troops waging an offensive against Hamas fighters in surrounding neighborhoods, according to staff. The ministry said a strike on the hospital a day earlier killed five medical staff.

Israel's military said it was conducting operations against Hamas infrastructure and militants in the area and had ordered people out of the hospital, but said it had not entered the complex as of Friday night. It repeated claims that Hamas militants operate inside Kamal Adwan but provided no evidence. Hospital officials have denied that.

The Health Ministry said troops forced medical personnel and patients to assemble in the yard and remove their clothes. Some were led to an unknown location, while some patients were sent to the nearby Indonesian Hospital, which was knocked out of operation after an Israel raid this week.

Israeli troops during raids frequently carry out mass detentions, stripping men to their underwear for questioning in what the military says is a security measure as they search for Hamas fighters.

The Associated Press doesn't have access to Kamal Adwan, but armed plainclothes members of the Hamas-led police forces have been seen in other hospitals, maintaining security but also controlling access to parts of the facilities.

The Health Ministry said Israeli troops also set fires in several parts of Kamal Adwan, including the lab and surgery department. It said 25 patients and 60 health workers remained in the hospital. The account could not be independently confirmed, and attempts to reach hospital staff were unsuccessful.

"Fire is ablaze everywhere in the hospital," an unidentified staff member said in an audio message posted on social media accounts of hospital director Hossam Abu Safiya. The staffer said some evacuated patients had been unhooked from oxygen.

"There are currently patients who could die at any moment," she said.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, denied the accusations.

"While IDF troops were not in the hospital, a small fire broke out in an empty building inside the hospital that is under control," he said Friday night. He said a preliminary investigation found "no connection" between military activity and the fire.

The Israeli military heavily restricts the movements of Palestinians in Gaza and has barred foreign journalists from entering the territory throughout the war, making it difficult to verify information.

"These actions put the lives of all of these people in even more danger than what they faced before," U.N. spokesperson Stephanie Tremblay told journalists, and noted colleagues' reports of "significant damage" to the hospital. It should be protected as international law requires, she added.

A largely isolated north

Since October, Israel's offensive has virtually sealed off the northern Gaza areas of Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya and leveled large parts of them. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced out but

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 36 of 49

thousands are believed to remain in the area, where Kamal Adwan and two other hospitals are located. Troops raided Kamal Adwan in October, and on Tuesday troops stormed and evacuated the Indonesian Hospital.

The area has been cut off from food and other aid for months, raising fears of famine. The United Nations says Israeli troops allowed just four humanitarian deliveries to the area from Dec. 1 to Dec. 23.

The Israeli rights group Physicians for Human Rights-Israel this week petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice, seeking a halt to military attacks on Kamal Adwan. It warned that forcibly evacuating the hospital would "abandon thousands of residents in northern Gaza." Before the latest deaths Thursday, the group documented five other staffers killed by Israeli fire since October.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza vowing to destroy Hamas after the group's Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel in which militants killed around 1,200 people and abducted some 250 others. Around 100 Israelis remain captive in Gaza, around a third believed to be dead.

Israel's nearly 15-month-old campaign of bombardment and offensives has devastated the territory's health sector. A year ago, it carried out raids on hospitals in northern Gaza, including Kamal Adwan, Indonesian and al-Awda Hospital, saying they served as bases for Hamas, though it presented little evidence.

Israel's campaign has killed more than 45,400 Palestinians, more than half women and children, and wounded more than 108,000 others, according to the Health Ministry. Its count does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Deaths from the cold in Gaza

More than 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians have been driven from their homes, most now sheltering in sprawling tent camps in south and central Gaza.

Children and adults, many barefoot, huddled Friday on the cold sand in tents whose plastic and cloth sheets whipped in the wind. Overnight temperatures can dip into the 40s Fahrenheit (below 10 Celsius), and sea spray from the Mediterranean can dampen tents just steps away.

"I swear to God, their mother and I cover ourselves with one blanket and we cover (their five children) with three blankets that we got from neighbors. Sea waters drowned everything that was ours," said Muhammad al-Sous, displaced from Beit Lahiya in the north.

The children collect plastic bottles to make fires, and pile under the blankets when their only set of clothes is washed and dried in the wind.

At least three babies in Gaza have died from exposure to cold in recent days, doctors there have said, and the Health Ministry said an adult — a nurse who worked at the European Hospital — also died this week.

## **An online debate over foreign workers in tech shows tensions in Trump's political coalition**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — An online spat between factions of Donald Trump's supporters over immigration and the tech industry has thrown internal divisions in his political movement into public display, previewing the fissures and contradictory views his coalition could bring to the White House.

The rift laid bare the tensions between the newest flank of Trump's movement — wealthy members of the tech world including billionaire Elon Musk and fellow entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and their call for more highly skilled workers in their industry — and people in Trump's Make America Great Again base who championed his hardline immigration policies.

The debate touched off this week when Laura Loomer, a right-wing provocateur with a history of racist and conspiratorial comments, criticized Trump's selection of Sriram Krishnan as an adviser on artificial intelligence policy in his coming administration. Krishnan favors the ability to bring more skilled immigrants into the U.S.

Loomer declared the stance to be "not America First policy" and said the tech executives who have aligned themselves with Trump were doing so to enrich themselves.

Much of the debate played out on the social media network X, which Musk owns.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 37 of 49

Loomer's comments sparked a back-and-forth with venture capitalist and former PayPal executive David Sacks, whom Trump has tapped to be the "White House A.I. & Crypto Czar." Musk and Ramaswamy, whom Trump has tasked with finding ways to cut the federal government, weighed in, defending the tech industry's need to bring in foreign workers.

It bloomed into a larger debate with more figures from the hard-right weighing in about the need to hire U.S. workers, whether values in American culture can produce the best engineers, free speech on the internet, the newfound influence tech figures have in Trump's world and what his political movement stands for.

Trump has not yet weighed in on the rift. His presidential transition team did not respond to questions about positions on visas for highly skilled workers or the debate between his supporters online. Instead, his team instead sent a link to a post on X by longtime adviser and immigration hard-liner Stephen Miller that was a transcript of a speech Trump gave in 2020 at Mount Rushmore in which he praised figures and moments from American history.

Musk, the world's richest man who has grown remarkably close to the president-elect, was a central figure in the debate, not only for his stature in Trump's movement but his stance on the tech industry's hiring of foreign workers.

Technology companies say H-1B visas for skilled workers, used by software engineers and others in the tech industry, are critical for hard-to-fill positions. But critics have said they undercut U.S. citizens who could take those jobs. Some on the right have called for the program to be eliminated, not expanded.

Born in South Africa, Musk was once on an H-1B visa himself and defended the industry's need to bring in foreign workers.

"There is a permanent shortage of excellent engineering talent," he said in a post. "It is the fundamental limiting factor in Silicon Valley."

Trump's own positions over the years have reflected the divide in his movement.

His tough immigration policies, including his pledge for a mass deportation, were central to his winning presidential campaign. He has focused on immigrants who come into the U.S. illegally but he has also sought curbs on legal immigration, including family-based visas.

As a presidential candidate in 2016, Trump called the H-1B visa program "very bad" and "unfair" for U.S. workers. After he became president, Trump in 2017 issued a "Buy American and Hire American" executive order, which directed Cabinet members to suggest changes to ensure H-1B visas were awarded to the highest-paid or most-skilled applicants to protect American workers.

Trump's businesses, however, have hired foreign workers, including waiters and cooks at his Mar-a-Lago club, and his social media company behind his Truth Social app has used the H-1B program for highly skilled workers.

During his 2024 campaign for president, as he made immigration his signature issue, Trump said immigrants in the country illegally are "poisoning the blood of our country" and promised to carry out the largest deportation operation in U.S. history.

But in a sharp departure from his usual alarmist message around immigration generally, Trump told a podcast this year that he wants to give automatic green cards to foreign students who graduate from U.S. colleges.

"I think you should get automatically, as part of your diploma, a green card to be able to stay in this country," he told the "All-In" podcast with people from the venture capital and technology world.

Those comments came on the cusp of Trump's budding alliance with tech industry figures, but he did not make the idea a regular part of his campaign message or detail any plans to pursue such changes.

## Warren Upton, the oldest living survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor, dies at 105

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Warren Upton, the oldest living survivor of the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the last remaining survivor of the USS Utah, has died. He was 105.

Upton died Wednesday at a hospital in Los Gatos, California, after suffering a bout of pneumonia, said Kathleen Farley, the California state chair of the Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors.

The Utah, a battleship, was moored at Pearl Harbor when Japanese planes began bombing the Hawaii naval base in the early hours of Dec. 7, 1941, in an attack that propelled the U.S. into World War II.

Upton told The Associated Press in 2020 that he had been getting ready to shave when he felt the first torpedo hit the Utah. He recalled that no one on board knew what made the ship shake. Then, the second torpedo hit and the ship began to list and capsize.

The then-22-year-old swam ashore to Ford Island, where he jumped in a trench to avoid Japanese planes strafing the area. He stayed for about 30 minutes until a truck came and took him to safety.

Upton said he didn't mind talking about what happened during the attack. Instead, what upset him was that he kept losing shipmates over the years. By 2020, there were only three crew members of the Utah still alive, including himself.

There were an estimated 87,000 military personnel on Oahu on the day of the attack, according to military historian J. Michael Wenger. After Upton's death, there are only 15 still alive.

## US to send \$1.25 billion in weapons to Ukraine, pushing to get aid out before Biden leaves office

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is expected to announce that it will send \$1.25 billion in military assistance to Ukraine, U.S. officials said Friday, as the Biden administration pushes to get as much aid to Kyiv as possible before leaving office on Jan. 20.

The large package of aid includes a significant amount of munitions, including for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems and the HAWK air defense system. It also will provide Stinger missiles and 155 mm- and 105 mm artillery rounds, officials said.

The officials, who said they expect the announcement to be made on Monday, spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public.

The new aid comes as Russia has launched a barrage of attacks against Ukraine's power facilities in recent days, although Ukraine has said it intercepted a significant number of the missiles and drones. Russian and Ukrainian forces are also still in a bitter battle around the Russian border region of Kursk, where Moscow has sent thousands of North Korean troops to help reclaim territory taken by Ukraine.

Earlier this month, senior defense officials acknowledged that the Defense Department may not be able to send all of the remaining \$5.6 billion in Pentagon weapons and equipment stocks passed by Congress for Ukraine before President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in.

Trump has talked about getting some type of negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia, and spoken about his relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Many U.S. and European leaders are concerned that it might result in a poor deal for Ukraine and they worry that he won't provide Ukraine with all the weapons funding approved by Congress.

The aid in the new package is in presidential drawdown authority, which allows the Pentagon to take weapons off the shelves and send them quickly to Ukraine. This latest assistance would reduce the remaining amount to about \$4.35 billion.

Officials have said they hope that an influx of aid will help strengthen Ukraine's hand, should Zelenskyy decide it's time to negotiate.

One senior defense official said that while the U.S. will continue to provide weapons to Ukraine until Jan.

20, there may well be funds remaining that will be available for the incoming Trump administration to spend.

According to the Pentagon, there is also about \$1.2 billion remaining in longer-term funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which is used to pay for weapons contracts that would not be delivered for a year or more. Officials have said the administration anticipates releasing all of that money before the end of the calendar year.

If the new package is included, the U.S. has provided more than \$64 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022.

## What Snoop wants: Arizona Bowl gives NIL opportunities to players for Colorado State, Miami (Ohio)

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Snoop Dogg has nearly as many ties to football as he does to rap music.

The entertainer coached youth football for years and created the Snoop League, an after-school program for inner city Los Angeles youths. Snoop has been a guest analyst on football broadcasts and his son, Cordell Broadus, played Division I football.

When Snoop took his latest step, becoming the sponsor of a bowl game, he had a demand: Find a way for all players in the game to receive name, image and likeness (NIL) money.

"This was Snoop's idea," said Kym Adair, executive director of the Snoop Dogg Arizona Bowl presented by Gin & Juice. "He was having conversations with people he knows in the college football world and I got a call that said he wants us to be the first bowl to make this commitment and that's what we did."

The beneficiaries are Colorado State and Miami (Ohio), who will conclude their seasons Saturday at Arizona Stadium in the Arizona Bowl. The bowl is classified as a 501(c)(3), so all revenue goes to charity. And, being one of the few bowls not tied to ESPN, it opens the door for unique sponsorship opportunities.

The bowl was previously sponsored by Barstool Sports and the digital media company used its own cast of characters on the broadcast, which was streamed on its digital platforms.

Snoop Dogg takes over this year. The rapper/entertainer is the latest celebrity to sponsor a bowl, following the footsteps of Jimmy Kimmel and Rob Gronkowski at the LA Bowl.

And, Snoop being Snoop, he wanted to put his own spin on his own bowl.

"College football fans are exhausted by the constant talk around NIL, conference realignment, coach movement, transfer portal and super conferences," Snoop said in a video posted on social media. "So it's time that we get back to the roots of college football — when it was focused on the colleges, the players and the competition, the community, the fan experience and the pageantry."

With that will be an NIL component.

The bowl can't pay players just for playing in the bowl, but both teams participated in football clinics on Friday and will get paid for their services. Other bowls have given single players NIL opportunities, but this is believed to be the first to offer it to every player on both teams.

"I love the fact that the Arizona Bowl is unique and tries new things, and obviously having Snoop here is unique," Colorado State coach Jay Norvell said. "The NIL component, it's the future. It's what football has become now. We think it's fantastic for our kids and then the interaction with the kids is the hidden gem of the whole thing."

The NIL component of the Snoop Dogg Arizona Bowl comes a month after a similar effort in The Players Era Festival basketball tournament in Las Vegas. The eight-team tournament said it paid out \$9 million in NIL money to participating players for activities outside the competition. It also offered \$50 million in NIL opportunities over the next three years for services and activities compliant with NCAA regulations.

Are the Players Era Festival and Arizona Bowl the start of a new future? It is not out of the question in big-time college athletics, where schools are already preparing for the era of revenue sharing with players next year.

"Revenue sharing between the players and the athletic departments is already on the horizon, so whether that takes the place of these types of arrangements or they're completely separate has yet to

be determined," Adair said. "We're just trying to be flexible, ahead of the curve and make an impact any way we can."

Just the way Snoop wants it.

## Maryland sues maker of Gore-Tex over pollution from toxic 'forever chemicals'

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

Maryland is suing the company that produces the waterproof material Gore-Tex often used for raincoats and other outdoor gear, alleging its leaders kept using "forever chemicals" long after learning about serious health risks associated with them.

The complaint, which was filed last week in federal court, focuses on a cluster of 13 facilities in north-eastern Maryland operated by Delaware-based W.L. Gore & Associates. It alleges the company polluted the air and water around its facilities with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, jeopardizing the health of surrounding communities while raking in profits.

The lawsuit adds to other claims filed in recent years, including a class action on behalf of Cecil County residents in 2023 demanding Gore foot the bill for water filtration systems, medical bills and other damages associated with decades of harmful pollution in the largely rural community.

"PFAS are linked to cancer, weakened immune systems, and can even harm the ability to bear children," Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown said in a statement. "It is unacceptable for any company to knowingly contaminate our drinking water with these toxins, putting Marylanders at risk of severe health conditions."

Gore spokesperson Donna Leinwand Leger said the company is "surprised by the Maryland Attorney General's decision to initiate legal action, particularly in light of our proactive and intensive engagement with state regulators over the past two years."

"We have been working with Maryland, employing the most current, reliable science and technology to assess the potential impact of our operations and guide our ongoing, collaborative efforts to protect the environment," the company said in a statement, noting a Dec. 18 report that contains nearly two years of groundwater testing results.

But attorney Philip Federico, who represents plaintiffs in the class action and other lawsuits against Gore, called the company's efforts "too little, much too late." In the meantime, he said, residents are continuing to suffer — one of his clients was recently diagnosed with kidney cancer.

"It's typical corporate environmental contamination," he said. "They're in no hurry to fix the problem."

The synthetic chemicals are especially harmful because they're nearly indestructible and can build up in various environments, including the human body. In addition to cancers and immune system problems, exposure to certain levels of PFAS has been linked to increased cholesterol levels, reproductive health issues and developmental delays in children, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Gore leaders failed to warn people living near its Maryland facilities about the potential impacts, hoping to protect their corporate image and avoid liability, according to the state's lawsuit. The result has been "a toxic legacy for generations to come," the lawsuit alleges.

Since the chemicals are already in the local environment, protecting residents now often means installing complex and expensive water filtration systems. People with private wells have found highly elevated levels of dangerous chemicals in their water, according to the class action lawsuit.

The Maryland facilities are located in a rural area just across the border from Delaware, where Gore has become a longtime fixture in the community. The company, which today employs more than 13,000 people, was founded in 1958 after Wilbert Gore left the chemical giant DuPont to start his own business.

Its profile rose with the development of Gore-Tex, a lightweight waterproof material created by stretching polytetrafluoroethylene, which is better known by the brand name Teflon that's used to coat nonstick pans. The membrane within Gore-Tex fabric has billions of pores that are smaller than water droplets, making it especially effective for outdoor gear.



The state's complaint traces Gore's longstanding relationship with DuPont, arguing that information about the chemicals' dangers was long known within both companies as they sought to keep things quiet and boost profits. It alleges that as early as 1961, DuPont scientists knew the chemical caused adverse liver reactions in rats and dogs.

DuPont has faced widespread litigation in recent years. Along with two spinoff companies, it announced a \$1.18 billion deal last year to resolve complaints of polluting many U.S. drinking water systems with forever chemicals.

The Maryland lawsuit seeks to hold Gore responsible for costs associated with the state's ongoing investigations and cleanup efforts, among other damages. State oversight has ramped up following litigation from residents alleging their drinking water was contaminated.

Until then, the company operated in Cecil County with little scrutiny.

Gore announced in 2014 that it had eliminated perfluorooctanoic acid from the raw materials used to create Gore-Tex. But it's still causing long-term impacts because it persists for so long in the environment, attorneys say.

Over the past two years, Gore has hired an environmental consulting firm to conduct testing in the area and provided bottled water and water filtration systems to residents near certain Maryland facilities, according to a webpage describing its efforts.

Recent testing of drinking water at residences near certain Gore sites revealed perfluorooctanoic acid levels well above what the EPA considers safe, according to state officials.

Attorneys for the state acknowledged Gore's ongoing efforts to investigate and address the problem but said the company needs to step up and be a better neighbor.

"While we appreciate Gore's limited investigation to ascertain the extent of PFAS contamination around its facilities, much more needs to be done to protect the community and the health of residents," Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Serena McIlwain said in a statement. "We must remove these forever chemicals from our natural resources urgently, and we expect responsible parties to pay for this remediation."

## Alex Ovechkin is on track to break Wayne Gretzky's NHL career goals record

By The Associated Press undefined

Alex Ovechkin of the Washington Capitals is closing in on the NHL career goals record of 894 held by Wayne Gretzky.

Ovechkin has 868 goals after scoring 15 in the first 18 games this season. He needs 27 to set a new record.

Ovechkin entered the season 42 short of breaking a record by "The Great One" that long seemed unapproachable. The 39-year-old Russian is in his 20th NHL season and was on pace to get to 895 in February before breaking his left leg in a shin-on-shin collision in November. Ovechkin could resume his pursuit as soon as Saturday night at Toronto in the Capitals' first game out of the Christmas break.

Alex Ovechkin's last goal scored

Ovechkin scored twice in a 6-2 win over the Utah Hockey Club on Nov. 18, getting goals 867 and 868 in his first game in Salt Lake City before leaving in the third period.

When is Ovechkin's next game?

Ovechkin seems on track to play Saturday at the Maple Leafs. He has scored 44 goals against them during his career, tied for the fifth-most among all opponents.

If not Saturday, the Capitals visit Detroit on Sunday and host Boston on Tuesday in a New Year's Eve matinee.

What are Ovechkin's stats?

Ovechkin already owns the NHL records for power-play goals with 316 and shots on goal with 6,690.

He also has 132 game-winning goals, four away from breaking Jaromir Jagr's mark (135).

Ovechkin has scored on 178 different goaltenders and counting, tying Jagr.

Ovechkin has 177 multi-goal games, second to Gretzky (189).

Ovechkin earlier this season became the 60th player to record 700 career assists and is now at 707. He joined Gretzky, Gordie Howe, Jagr, Marcel Dionne and Phil Esposito as the only players with 700 goals and 700 assists.

Who are the NHL's leading scorers?

Ovechkin, after climbing past Mike Gartner (708), Esposito (717), Dionne (731), Brett Hull (741) and Jagr (766), scored goal No. 802 on Dec. 23, 2022, to move into second all time behind Gretzky (894).

Who previously held the career goals record?

Gretzky has held the record since scoring his 802nd goal on March 23, 1994, to pass Howe. He added 92 more before retiring in 1999 after a total of 1,487 games over 20 seasons. Ovechkin has played in 1,444 total games so far.

Gretzky holds 55 NHL records and even if his goals mark falls to Ovechkin — which he has said he is excited about — two seem truly untouchable: 2,857 total points and 1,963 assists, which is more than anyone else has in goals and assists combined.

## **Court rules Georgia lawmakers can subpoena Fani Willis for information related to her Trump case**

By KATE BRUMBACK and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A judge has ruled that the Georgia state Senate can subpoena Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis as part of a inquiry into whether she has engaged in misconduct during her prosecution of President-elect Donald Trump but is giving Willis the chance to contest whether lawmakers' demands are overly broad.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Shukura Ingram filed the order Monday, telling Willis she has until Jan. 13 to submit arguments over whether the subpoenas seek legally shielded or confidential information. Ingram wrote that she would issue a final order later saying what Willis had to respond to.

Willis, though, wants the ruling overturned.

"We believe the ruling is wrong and will appeal," former Georgia Gov. Roy Barnes, who is representing Willis in the case, wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

A state appeals court earlier this month removed Willis from the Georgia election interference case against Donald Trump and others, citing an "appearance of impropriety" that might not typically warrant such a removal. The Georgia Court of Appeals panel said in a 2-1 ruling that because of the romantic relationship Willis had with special prosecutor Nathan Wade "this is the rare case in which disqualification is mandated and no other remedy will suffice to restore public confidence in the integrity of these proceedings."

Willis' office immediately filed a notice of intent to ask the Georgia Supreme Court to review the decision.

The Republican-led Senate committee sent subpoenas to Willis in August seeking to compel her to testify during its September meeting and to produce scores of documents. The committee was formed earlier this year to examine allegations of "various forms of misconduct" by Willis, an elected Democrat, during her prosecution of Trump and others over their efforts to overturn the former president's 2020 election loss in Georgia.

The resolution creating the committee focused in particular on Willis' hiring of Wade to lead the prosecution against Trump and others. The resolution said the relationship amounted to a "clear conflict of interest and a fraud upon the taxpayers" of the county and state.

Barnes, Willis' attorney, argued that the Senate committee did not have the power to subpoena her. He also argued that the subpoenas were overly broad and not related to a legitimate legislative need, saying the committee is seeking confidential and privileged information, as well as private and personal information.

Willis' challenge was pending in mid-September when she skipped a hearing during which the committee members had hoped to question her.

In October, the committee asked Ingram to require Willis to comply with the subpoenas. The committee's lawyers wrote in a court filing that Willis' failure to do so had delayed its ability to finish its inquiry and to provide recommendations for any legislation or changes in appropriations that might result.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee ruled in March that Willis' actions showed a "tremendous lapse in judgment," but he did not find a conflict of interest that would disqualify Willis. He said she could continue her prosecution as long as Wade stepped aside, which he did.

Willis and Wade have acknowledged the relationship but have said it began after he was hired and ended before the indictment against Trump was filed.

One wrinkle in the proceedings is that the current Georgia legislative term will end when lawmakers are sworn in for their new term on Jan. 13. However, Republican state Sen. Greg Dolezal of Cumming said last week that he will file legislation to reestablish the committee at the beginning of the 2025 legislative session.

"The law is clear, and the ruling confirms what we knew all along," Dolezal wrote in a text Friday. "Judge Ingram rejected every argument made by Willis in her attempt to dodge providing testimony to the committee under oath. I look forward to D.A. Willis honoring the subpoena and providing documents and testimony to our committee."

Republican Lt. Gov. Burt Jones has said he would support Dolezal's move, saying in a statement last week that Willis' "refusal to come before the committee is unacceptable and addressing these issues to require accountability will be a priority for the Senate."

## **Most Americans blame insurance profits and denials alongside the killer in UHC CEO death, poll finds**

By LINLEY SANDERS, TOM MURPHY and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans believe health insurance profits and coverage denials share responsibility for the killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO — although not as much as the person who pulled the trigger, according to a new poll.

In the survey from NORC at the University of Chicago, about 8 in 10 U.S. adults said the person who committed the killing has "a great deal" or "a moderate amount" of responsibility for the Dec. 4 shooting of Brian Thompson.

Despite that, some have cast Luigi Mangione, the 26-year-old suspect charged with Thompson's murder, as a heroic figure in the aftermath of his arrest, which gave rise to an outpouring of grievances about insurance companies. Police say the words "delay," "deny" and "depose" were scrawled on the ammunition investigators found at the scene, echoing a phrase commonly used to describe insurer tactics to avoid paying claims.

UnitedHealthcare has said Mangione was not a client.

About 7 in 10 adults say that denials for health care coverage by insurance companies, or the profits made by health insurance companies, also bear at least "a moderate amount" of responsibility for Thompson's death. Younger Americans are particularly likely to see the murder as the result of a confluence of forces rather than just one person's action.

Americans see a wide range of factors contributing to UHC CEO's killing

The poll finds that the story of the slaying is being followed widely. About 7 in 10 said they had heard or read "a lot" or "some" about Thompson's death.

Multiple factors were seen as responsible. About half in the poll believe that at least "a moderate amount" of blame is rooted in wealth or income inequality, although they did not think other factors like political divisions in the U.S. held the same level of responsibility.

Patients and doctors often complain about coverage denials and other complications interfering with care, especially for serious illnesses like cancer and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Insurance industry critics frequently point to company profits in questioning whether the interests of patients are their top focus.

UnitedHealthcare made more than \$16 billion in profit last year, before interest and taxes, on \$281 bil-

lion in revenue. Insurers frequently note that most of the revenue they bring in goes back out the door to pay for care. UnitedHealthcare said this month that it pays about 90% of medical claims when they are submitted. The insurer has not provided details about how many claims that involves.

For young people, blame is spread equally between insurers and the killer

Americans under 30 are especially likely to think a mix of factors is to blame for Thompson's death. They say that insurance company denials and profits are about as responsible as Thompson's killer for his death. About 7 in 10 U.S. adults between 18 and 29 say "a great deal" or "a moderate amount" of responsibility falls on profits made by health insurance companies, denials for health care coverage by health insurance companies or the person who committed the killing.

Young people are also the least likely age group to say "a great deal" of responsibility falls on the person who committed the killing. Only about 4 in 10 say that, compared with about 6 in 10 between 30 and 59. Roughly 8 in 10 adults over 60 say that person deserves "a great deal" of responsibility.

About two-thirds of young people place at least a moderate level of blame on wealth or income inequality, in general.

People under 30 are more likely to place blame on the media, with 54% saying that compared with about one-third of older adults.

About 3 in 10 struggled with coverage from health insurance in the last year

Frustrations with health insurers, coverage and the complicated U.S. health care system have been simmering for years among patients.

About 3 in 10 Americans say they have had a problem getting coverage from their health insurer in the last year, whether those involved problems finding a suitable provider in-network, a claim getting denied or issues getting prior authorization or insurer approval before care happens. These struggles are more prevalent among Americans under 60.

UnitedHealthcare says prior authorizations help eliminate waste in the system and let people know whether care will be covered before it is delivered. It says less than 2% of the insurer's customers experience a denial of care from prior authorizations annually.

Roughly 3 in 10 in the poll say immediate family or close friends have experienced problems getting coverage from their health insurer in the last year. Americans under 30 are among the most likely to say they don't have health insurance.

Most Americans get health coverage through their job or by purchasing individual policies. Separate, government-funded programs provide coverage for people with low incomes or those who are age 65 and over or have severe illnesses or disabilities.

## Takeaways from AP's report on social safety nets in states that ban abortion

By LAURA UNGAR and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — States with restrictive abortion laws generally have more porous safety nets for mothers and young children, according to recent research and an analysis by The Associated Press.

Tennessee is an example of how this plays out. Tennessee residents of childbearing age are more likely to live in maternal care deserts and face overall doctor shortages. Women, infants and children are less likely to be enrolled in a government nutrition program known as WIC. And Tennessee is one of only 10 states that hasn't expanded Medicaid to a greater share of low-income families.

The AP reported on how safety net programs in Tennessee and states with similarly strict abortion laws often fail families. Here are some key takeaways.

Medicaid doesn't cover as many low-income residents

The Republican supermajority in the Tennessee legislature has long rebuffed efforts to expand Medicaid to people earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level — about \$35,600 for a family of three.

Earlier this year, a federal judge ruled TennCare — the state's Medicaid program — unlawfully terminated coverage for thousands of families and had a "lethargic" response to nearly 250,000 children losing cover-

age because of paperwork problems.

Republican Gov. Bill Lee argues that his administration has enhanced services. For example, it boosted its Medicaid coverage for mothers in 2022 from 60 days postpartum to one year, which allowed an additional 3,000 moms to use the program each year.

The state also raised the Medicaid income limit for parents to the poverty level — nearly \$26,000 for a family of three — and began offering recipients 100 free diapers a month for babies under 2.

“Pro-life is much more than defending the lives of the unborn,” Lee said in his 2023 annual address to lawmakers and echoed more recently on social media. “This is not a matter of politics. This is about human dignity.”

Safety net programs can be difficult to navigate

Moms described several aid programs as rife with red tape and other challenges.

Anika Chillis of Memphis was on WIC for several months after her son was born, but then went without because of a mistake during the renewal process — eventually getting it restored with help from the nonprofit Tennessee Justice Center.

Taylor Cagnacci of Kingsport, who is pregnant and has a 1-year-old, said she was on the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — formerly known as food stamps — for a while but missed an appointment and was unclear about the steps after that. The process to get recertified was “such a headache” that she’s going without SNAP.

“I just felt like it was purposely being made difficult so that I would just give up,” she said.

The issues extend beyond Tennessee. Women with young children in states where abortion is banned or limited to early weeks of pregnancy said it can be tough to get social services there, according to a survey by the health policy research organization KFF. Nearly half said it’s difficult for women in their state to get food stamps, for example, compared with 3 in 10 in states where abortion is generally available.

Charities can’t fill the gap

Of Tennessee’s 2.8 million households, 30% earn above the poverty level but not enough to afford the basic cost of living in their counties, according to a recent report. Often, they don’t qualify for government help.

A fragmented patchwork of charities can help, but they don’t cover the entire state. Some nonprofits are hindered in helping by government agencies’ income rules. And most charities are constrained by the ebb and flow of donations.

Nonprofit leaders fear that safety net gaps may grow with a new administration in Washington and a GOP-controlled Congress. Republicans could seek significant changes to federal assistance programs they’ve long criticized, like Medicaid and food stamps.

“We’ve been through four years of a Trump administration, and the goal under the Trump administration was to cut social services,” said Signe Anderson, the Tennessee Justice Center’s senior director of nutrition advocacy. “I’m concerned ... for families in Tennessee and across the country.”

## Chinese man sentenced to death for killing 35 people after driving into a crowd

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — A court in China has sentenced a man to death for killing 35 people last month by driving into a crowd, in an attack that raised national concern about mass killings.

Fan Weiqiu was venting his anger because he was unhappy with his divorce settlement, the court in the southern city of Zhuhai said in handing down the sentence on Friday. The victims were exercising at a sports center. Fan pleaded guilty to endangering public safety by dangerous means, a court statement said.

Fan’s “criminal motive was extremely despicable, the nature of the crime was extremely vile, the means of the crime were particularly cruel, and the consequences of the crime were particularly severe, resulting in great social harm,” the court said.

The attack was one of several in China in late October and November and spurred Chinese leader Xi

Jinping to order local governments to take steps to prevent future “extreme cases.” His order prompted vows from local leaders to examine personal disputes that could trigger aggression, from marital troubles to disagreements over inheritance.

Fan’s sentence was the second one handed down in quick succession just weeks after the recent attacks, much faster than court cases normally take in China.

A court earlier this week gave a suspended death sentence with a two-year reprieve to a driver who injured 30 people when he drove into elementary school students and parents in Hunan province. Such sentences are usually commuted to life in prison.

The court in the city of Changde said the driver was taking out his frustrations after losing money he had invested.

Such attacks on crowds, with a vehicle or a knife, are not new in China, but the spate this fall and the high number of victims in the Zhuhai attack renewed the focus on the issue. The attackers are often taking out their anger and frustration over a personal matter in what are known as “revenge on society” crimes.

Chinese authorities keep a tight lid on any reports about the attacks, censoring videos and eyewitness accounts posted on social media and releasing only basic information, often many hours afterward.

The death toll in Zhuhai wasn’t announced until 24 hours after the attack. In addition to the 35 people killed, another 43 were injured, police said. The driver, Fan, who was 62 years old, was found in his vehicle trying to stab himself with a knife, a police statement said.

Police set up barricades the day after the attack and barred people from entering the sports complex. Members of the public left bouquets of flowers by an adjacent square instead.

## **Q&A: Avicii documentary director on celebrating the late DJ without exploiting his death**

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Avicii, the groundbreaking Swedish DJ-producer, died six years ago at 28. Two new movies hitting Netflix next week aim to celebrate his life.

His death was a tragedy that reverberated around the world — much like his music, which brought unexpected genres and collaborators into his melodic EDM through forward-thinking, chart-topping hits like “Wake Me Up!” and “Hey Brother.”

A short concert film captured at what became his final performance, “Avicii — My Last Show,” and a full-length documentary, “Avicii — I’m Tim,” will premiere Tuesday on Netflix. They work to celebrate the artist born Tim Bergling, capturing his early life, the songs that made him an idiosyncratic talent, his insatiable curiosity and hunger for reinvention, and the people he left behind.

Miraculously, Avicii himself narrates a lot of the film — pulled from archival interviews and some never before published.

Capturing Avicii’s life and career was no easy feat, director Henrik Burman told The Associated Press. The project took half a decade, beginning before the pandemic and not long after the DJ’s death. Burman’s interviews were long and many. “To know people around Tim,” he says, was the only way “to know Tim.”

Burman discussed Avicii’s life, career and legacy with the AP. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: How did you approach this project?

BURMAN: I would say from the beginning, the first thing I knew I wanted to do was find my story ... the story that I wanted to tell about Tim. But the most important (aspect) was time. I wanted this to be a project with no time limits ... I wanted it to be a slow process. And I wanted to have a lot of time for research. And the people close to Tim, I didn’t want to force them into anything. I didn’t want to push it. I wanted them to see and learn what I wanted to tell, you know, my story and my vision.

AP: The structure is compelling; it really focuses on Avicii’s life and his biggest songs that shifted genre — you avoid casting his career as “it was the 2010s and EDM was massive.” There’s a lot of research.

BURMAN: I had access to a lot of material ... I was looking for clues all the time ... I’ve watched so, so

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 47 of 49

many hours of, you know, interviews with Tim just to see, "OK, he says this again. And it was like the eighth time that year. OK. That should be important." ... It was kind of a puzzle and yeah, it was huge research work.

Sometimes, in the material that I had ... he was like, "If there's a documentary, ever, about me, this should be in it." ... There's a story in the film, in the beginning, from where he is a kid. He tells a story to the interviewer. And he says, "When I was a kid, I wasn't like a really nice person. For a few years, I was kind of bullying people. And I was around 6 or 7. And after a while I realized that people didn't like me, so after a summer, I was thinking about this, and I decided, 'I need to change ... and see what happens.' And then people liked me again." And when he told that story, he was like, "That's a really important story. That's a story that needs to be in a documentary, if it's ever a documentary about me, because that says so much about me as a person."

I was trying to find clues and stories and listen and ... early on, I was quite sure that I wanted to tell the story from Miami Ultra (Music Festival) and what happened there. That was kind of a key moment for me, and that was a huge key moment for Tim. But when I realized that this ... needs to be the center of my story, at the midpoint for my story, I realized that I had something to hold on to.

AP: The childhood story reflects his interest in creative transformation, too. How do you aim to capture his spirit and not center his death?

BURMAN: That is hard. I have from the beginning ... tried to explain my vision for this film ... But I reached out to a lot of friends, and of course his family, and I got their blessing.

When I got this kind of group of people that said yes to being in the film that I could start to ask more questions and have deeper conversations. But again, we needed time ... I wanted to work gently, that was very important.

AP: And you have footage of Tim in the womb! It is very different than what could've very easily been an exploitative version of the film.

BURMAN: I wanted to make an intimate and personal story and not speculate ... to find the right tone, you need time. And since we started work ... one, one-and-a-half years after Tim passed, I just knew that we needed time. And, of course, people around Tim needed a lot of time.

AP: What is Avicii's legacy?

BURMAN: You can answer that question in so many ways. But if you're talking about the music, and the music that he produced and wrote, he was so much ahead of his time, I would say. And you can hear the legacy of Avicii in the music today. You can hear it in the production in new music and hits from today. If you listen to the music — go back and listen to the music now that he released like 10 years ago, it sounds so fresh, modern, and I would say timeless.

AP: What do you hope viewers take away from this film?

BURMAN: Someone said to me that the film is so much about Tim, but at the same time, it's so kind of universal. And I thought that was beautiful because life is not simple. There are no easy answers. And everything is complex and multilayered. So, that's what I aim to contribute to Tim's story. And I also really hope that even the most hardcore fans get a new, fresh perspective of Tim as a person and Avicii as an artist.

## China sanctions 7 companies over US military assistance to Taiwan

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese government placed sanctions on seven companies on Friday in response to recent U.S. announcements of military sales and aid to Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as part of its territory.

The sanctions also come in response to the recent approval of the U.S. government's annual defense spending bill, which a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said "includes multiple negative sections on China."

China objects to American military assistance for Taiwan and often imposes sanctions on related companies after a sale or aid package is announced. The sanctions generally have a limited impact, because American defense companies don't sell arms or other military goods to China. The U.S. is the main supplier

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 48 of 49

of weapons to Taiwan for its defense.

The seven companies being sanctioned are Insitu Inc., Hudson Technologies Co., Saronic Technologies, Inc., Raytheon Canada, Raytheon Australia, Aerkomm Inc. and Oceaneering International Inc., the Foreign Ministry statement said. It said that "relevant senior executives" of the companies are also sanctioned, without naming any.

Any assets they have in China will be frozen, and organizations and individuals in China are prohibited from engaging in any activity with them, it said.

U.S. President Joe Biden last week authorized up to \$571 million in Defense Department material and services and military education and training for Taiwan. Separately, the Defense Department announced that \$295 million in military sales had been approved.

The U.S. defense bill boosts military spending to \$895 billion and directs resources toward a more confrontational approach to China. It establishes a fund that could be used to send military resources to Taiwan in much the same way that the U.S. has backed Ukraine. It also expands a ban on U.S. military purchases of Chinese products ranging from drone technology to garlic for military commissaries.

Zhang Xiaogang, a Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson, said earlier this week that the U.S. is hyping up the "so-called" threat from China to justify increased military spending.

"U.S. military spending has topped the world and keeps increasing every year," he said at a press conference. "This fully exposes the belligerent nature of the U.S. and its obsession with hegemony and expansion."

The Foreign Ministry statement said the U.S. moves violate agreements between the two countries on Taiwan, interfere in China's domestic affairs and undermine the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Taiwan's government said earlier this month that China had sent dozens of ships into nearby seas to practice a blockade of the island, a move that Taiwan said undermined peace and stability and disrupted international shipping and trade. China has not confirmed or commented on the reported military activity.

## Germany's president dissolves parliament, sets national election for Feb. 23

By DAVID McHUGH Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday ordered parliament dissolved and set new elections for Feb. 23 in the wake of the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, saying it was the only way to give the country a stable government capable of tackling its problems.

Scholz lost a confidence vote on Dec. 16 and leads a minority government after his unpopular and notoriously rancorous three-party coalition collapsed on Nov. 6 when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize Germany's stagnant economy.

Steinmeier said he made the decision because it was clear after consultation with party leaders that there was no agreement among Germany's political parties on a majority for a new government in the current parliament.

"It is precisely in difficult times like these that stability requires a government capable of taking action and a reliable majority in parliament," he said as he made the announcement in Berlin.

"Therefore I am convinced that for the good of our country new elections are the right way."

Since the post-World War II constitution doesn't allow the Bundestag to dissolve itself, it was up to Steinmeier to decide whether to dissolve parliament and call an election. He had 21 days to make that decision. Once parliament is dissolved, the election must be held within 60 days. Leaders of several major parties agreed earlier on the election date of Feb. 23, seven months earlier than originally planned.

Steinmeier warned about outside interference in the poll, saying it is "a danger to democracy, whether it is covert, as was evidently the case recently in the Romanian elections, or open and blatant, as is currently being practiced particularly intensively on platform X."

A top Romanian court annulled the first round of the country's presidential election, days after allegations emerged that Russia ran a coordinated online campaign to promote the far-right outsider who won the first round.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 186 ~ 49 of 49

The campaign is already well underway. Polls show Scholz's party trailing the conservative opposition Union bloc led by Friedrich Merz. Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck of the environmentalist Greens, the remaining partner in Scholz's government, is also bidding for the top job — though his party is further back. If recent polls hold up, the likely next government would be led by Merz as chancellor in coalition with at least one other party.

Key issues include immigration, how to get the sluggish economy going, and how best to aid Ukraine in its struggle against Russia.

The populist, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany, or AfD, which is polling strongly, has nominated Alice Weidel as its candidate for chancellor but has no chance of taking the job because other parties refuse to work with it.

Germany's electoral system traditionally produces coalitions, and polls show no party anywhere near an absolute majority on its own. The election is expected to be followed by weeks of negotiations to form a new government.

It's only the fourth time that the Bundestag has been dissolved ahead of schedule under Germany's post-World War II constitution. It happened under Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1972, Helmut Kohl in 1982 and Gerhard Schroeder in 2005. Schroeder used the confidence vote to engineer an early election narrowly won by center-right challenger Angela Merkel.

## Today in History: December 28, U.S. Afghan war formally ends

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Dec. 28, the 363rd day of 2024. There are three days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 28, 2014, the U.S. war in Afghanistan came to a formal end after 13 years with a quiet flag-lowering ceremony in Kabul that marked the transition of the fighting from U.S.-led combat troops to the country's own security forces.

Also on this date:

In 1895, the Lumiere brothers, Auguste and Louis, held the first public showing of their films in Paris.

In 1908, a major earthquake followed by a tsunami devastated the Italian cities of Messina and Reggio Calabria, killing at least 70,000 people.

In 1912, San Francisco's Municipal Railway began operations with Mayor James Rolph Jr. at the controls of Streetcar No. 1 as 50,000 spectators looked on.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1972, Kim Il Sung, the premier of North Korea, was named the country's president under a new constitution.

In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon.

In 1981, Elizabeth Jordan Carr, the first American "test-tube" baby, was born in Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1991, nine people died in a crush of people trying to get into a celebrity charity basketball game at City College in New York.

In 2015, a grand jury in Cleveland declined to indict two white police officers in the killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who was Black. He was shot while carrying what turned out to be a toy pellet gun.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Denzel Washington is 70. TV personality Gayle King is 70. Hockey Hall of Famer Ray Bourque is 64. Linux creator Linus Torvalds is 55. Political commentator Ana Navarro is 53. TV host-comedian Seth Meyers is 51. Actor Joe Manganiello is 48. Musician John Legend is 46. Actor André Holland is 45. Actor Sienna Miller is 43. Actor Jessie Buckley is 35.