

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 1 of 64

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- NSU Men's Basketball](#)
- [4- NSU Women's Basketball](#)
- [5- Thune Delivers First Remarks as Senate Majority Leader](#)
- [8- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [8- JV/C Game sponsor list](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: In first speech as U.S. Senate majority leader, Thune pledges to protect filibuster](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Carbon pipeline company asks SD regulator to recuse herself; regulator declines](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Former Attorney General Vargo returns to state work with appointment by Jackley](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Trump to be sentenced in hush money case but avoid jail time](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Louisiana's Mike Johnson elected U.S. House speaker by GOP in cliff-hanger vote](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Biden blocks deal to sell U.S. Steel, saying it should be domestically owned and operated](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, Jan. 4

Boys Wrestling Tournament at Webster, 10 a.m.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main  
Basketball Double Header hosts Redfield ((Boys Girls JV at 1 p.m.; Boys JV/ at 2 p.m.; Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity to follow)

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



## Sunday, Jan. 5

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Communion Sunday: Conde worship, 8:15 a.m.; Groton worship, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Time, 10:30 a.m.; Britton worship, 11:15 a.m.

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.;

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9:45 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; No Sunday School

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 2 of 64

# 1440

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

## **Johnson Keeps Gavel**

House Republican Mike Johnson (LA-4) was reelected speaker yesterday, securing exactly the 218 votes needed to take the gavel for a second term after a pair of GOP holdouts who initially voted against him flipped their votes.

Johnson, 52, clinched the role on the first ballot, winning over all but one Republican lawmaker, including holdout Reps. Ralph Norman (R, SC-5) and Keith Self (R, TX-3). Rep. Thomas Massie (R, KY-4) voted against Johnson, supporting Majority Whip Tom Emmer (R, MN-6).

Johnson's win avoided a repeat of the start of last year's Congress when the House subjected former Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R, CA-20) to 15 rounds of voting across four days before he secured the speakership, only to be ousted nine months later. The House of Representatives can now begin business, including counting electoral votes Monday.

On the other side of the US Capitol, Vice President Kamala Harris swore in the 119th Congress' senators.

## **US Surgeon General urges cancer warnings on alcoholic drinks.**

US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy called for alcoholic beverages to carry warning labels about the increased risk of cancer associated with their consumption. The recommendation is based on conclusive research establishing a link between alcohol and at least seven types of cancer, including breast, liver, and throat.

## **Biden blocks proposed sale of US Steel to Japan's Nippon Steel.**

President Joe Biden has blocked the nearly \$15B proposed deal for Nippon Steel to acquire US Steel, citing national security concerns and the importance of maintaining a domestically owned steel industry. The decision came after the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States failed to reach a consensus on the potential national security risks, leaving the final verdict to Biden.

## **US fines JetBlue \$2M for chronic flight delays on East Coast routes.**

The penalty from the US Department of Transportation is the first of its kind against an airline, and half of the fine will be distributed to affected passengers as compensation. The department found four routes that consistently arrived late between June 2022 and November 2023, attributing the delays to JetBlue's "unrealistic scheduling." JetBlue argued air traffic control issues were also a factor.

## **Apple agrees to settle \$95M class action lawsuit over Siri recordings.**

The lawsuit alleges Apple's virtual assistant Siri recorded users' conversations without consent and shared them with third parties, contradicting the tech giant's privacy commitments. If approved, the settlement could compensate millions of eligible Apple device users who owned devices from September 2014 to December 2024, with potential payouts of up to \$20 per device.

## **South Korea's impeached president defies arrest warrant after standoff.**

South Korean law enforcement officers attempted to arrest impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol at his residence Friday but were thwarted by a barricade of roughly 200 soldiers and security guards. Law enforcement eventually withdrew from the compound due to safety concerns after a six-hour standoff. Yoon faces criminal charges of abuse of authority after a short-lived martial law declaration last month.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Jeanne H. in Reno, Nevada.

"I take my dog to a dog park that is about 5 acres in size. One day, I was walking all over the fields with Dante for about 25 minutes. Then I returned to our truck, pressed the starter button & saw 'Key not detected.' I was very upset. We ran back on the field to a group of men with their dogs, and I asked if anyone had found a key fob. No. However, all of them immediately fanned out across the field searching with me. Within 5 minutes, I heard, 'Are these yours?' I was so happy. It would have taken me hours to find the fob alone. I am very grateful for their thoughtfulness."

## NSU Men's Basketball

### **Men's Basketball Falls to Minnesota Duluth in 2025 Opener**

Aberdeen, S.D. – In their first game of 2025, the Northern State University men's basketball team fell to Minnesota Duluth. The Wolves got off to a quick start, however fell behind and trailed at the half. UMD then out-scored NSU 38-29 in the second.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 72, UMD 83

Records: NSU 1-12 (0-7 NSIC), UMD 8-5 (3-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 1494

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern led by as much as 14 at the half way point of the first and held a lead for the majority of the half. The Wolves shot 48.3% from the floor, 50.0% from the 3-point line with 11 made 3-pointers, and 45.5% from the foul line

They scored 30 points in the paint, 19 points off the bench, and 18 points off turnovers

In addition, they tallied 21 rebounds, a game leading 24 assists, nine steals, and two blocks

Devon Brooke matched his career high with 16 points, knocking down 5-of-8 from the floor with four made from beyond the arc

Tobi Obiora and Kaleb Mitchell followed with 12 and ten points respectively, both shooting above 60.0% from the floor

Marcus Burks and Kwat Abdelkarim each tallied career highs in assists with eight and six respectively, while James Glenn added seven

Glenn recorded a team leading and career high four steals

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Devon Brooke: 16 points, 62.5 field goal%, 2 assists

Tobi Obiora: 12 points, 62.5 field goal%, 3 rebounds

Kaleb Mitchell: 10 points, 71.4 field goal%, 2 rebounds

#### UP NEXT

Northern returns to Wachs Arena today for a 6 p.m. match-up against Concordia-St. Paul.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 4 of 64

## NSU Women's Basketball

### **Wolves Cruise to 30-Point Victory Over Bulldogs**

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University women's basketball team came out strong, securing a dominant 73-43 victory over Minnesota Duluth. Four Wolves scored in double figures, while the team also set a season-high with 25 points off turnovers on the night.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 73, UMD 43

Records: NSU 8-5 (NSIC 5-2), UMD 4-9 (NSIC 2-6)

Attendance: 1225

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State came out strong, posting 16 points in the first quarter and extending their lead with 26 in the second. They continued their momentum with 8 points in the third and capped off the game with 23 points in the fourth

The Wolves were efficient on offense, shooting 48.3% from the field and 44.5% from beyond the arc. NSU dominated in the paint with 42 points, while also setting a season-high of 25 points off turnovers and contributing 18 points from the bench

Madelyn Bragg led the way with 18 points, six rebounds, and three blocks on the night

Rianna Fillipi orchestrated the offense, recording five assists, six steals, and adding 15 points to the victory

Alayna Benike and Izzy Moore followed behind, finishing with 13 and 12 points, respectively, while also grabbing 8 and 6 rebounds

#### NORTHERN STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 18 points, 6 rebounds, 3 blocks

Rianna Fillipi: 15 points, 8 rebounds, 6 steals, 5 assists, 63.6% FG

Alayna Benike: 13 points, 8 rebounds, 3 assists, 62.5% FG

Izzy Moore: 12 points, 6 rebounds, 100% FG

#### UP NEXT

Northern State is back in action to take on No. 16 Concordia-St. Paul at Wachs Arena. Tip-off is slated for 4 p.m. today, Saturday, January 4, against the Golden Bears



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 5 of 64

## Thune Delivers First Remarks as Senate Majority Leader

"My Republican colleagues have trusted me to lead our party – and the Senate – in the next Congress, and I will work every day to be worthy of that trust."

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) today delivered his first remarks on the Senate floor as the majority leader for the 119th Congress:

Thune's remarks below (as delivered):

"Mr. President, before I begin my remarks, I want to mention the deadly terrorist attack that took place in New Orleans in the early hours of New Year's Day.

"This ISIS-inspired attack took the lives of 14 innocent victims, and injured at least 30 others.

"My prayers today – along with the prayers of so many Americans – are with all those grieving the loss of a loved one, and with the injured and their families.

"In Las Vegas, law enforcement agents are working around the clock to understand the motivation of an Army soldier who blew up a Tesla truck in front of the Trump hotel on the same day, injuring seven others.

"We expect our federal, state, and local law enforcement to pursue every lead so that the American people understand what led to both of these attacks.

"Mr. President, I also want to mention the passing of former President Jimmy Carter, who died peacefully on December 29 at his home in Georgia at the age of 100.

"He was governor of Georgia and president of the United States, but was perhaps even better known for the work he did after leaving office to promote peace and help those in need – most notably through his decades-long work with Habitat for Humanity.

"I will have much more to say about President Carter next week, but for today I just want to extend my condolences – and my prayers – to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, as they mourn their father and grandfather.

"Mr. President, I want to welcome members to the 119th Congress – particularly those freshman senators who took the oath of office this morning.

"And congratulations to the new secretary of the Senate – a great South Dakotan – and the new Senate sergeant at arms, who are assuming their roles today.

"I am grateful for their service.

"Mr. President, the words of the oath, which we hear at the start of each new Congress, are a reminder of the profound responsibility with which we have been entrusted – and that is to 'support and defend the Constitution of the United States.'

"Two hundred and thirty-seven years ago, representatives from the states gathered together in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and produced something essentially unique in human history – a blueprint for our new country, founded not on history or conquest but on a set of ideas.

"It was not a perfect document, as even our Founders attested by making provision for amendments.

"But it was and remains one of the greatest and most important political documents in the history of the world.

"It has made us a country that people around the world look to as a beacon of freedom, a shining city on a hill.

"And it is the solemn responsibility of those of us here in Congress to preserve our Constitution, to guard it against enemies both foreign and domestic, and to ensure that it continues to stand so that our nation continues to stand as a bulwark of freedom and human rights.

"Mr. President, when it came time to draft the Constitution, the Founders established safeguards – checks and balances – throughout our government to keep the government in check and ensure that the rights of all Americans were protected.

"One of those safeguards was the United States Senate.

"In his discussion of the Senate in Federalist 62, the author notes, and I quote, '... a senate, as a second branch of the legislative assembly, distinct from, and dividing the power with, a first, must be in all cases a salutary check on the government. It doubles the security to the people, by requiring the concurrence of two distinct bodies in schemes of usurpation or perfidy ...'

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 6 of 64

"He further notes, and I quote, 'that as the improbability of sinister combinations will be in proportion to the dissimilarity in the genius of the two bodies, it must be politic to distinguish them from each other by every circumstance which will consist with a due harmony in all proper measures, and with the genuine principles of republican government.'

"And the Founders did indeed distinguish the House from the Senate.

"They made the Senate smaller and senators' terms of office longer, with the intention of creating a more stable, more thoughtful, and more deliberative legislative body to check ill-considered or intemperate legislation and protect the rights of the American people.

"And as the past 237 years attest, it is a structure that has served our nation well.

"Unfortunately, today there are a lot of people out there who would like to see the Senate turn into a copy of the House of Representatives.

"That, Mr. President, is not what our Founders intended – or what our country needs.

"And one of my priorities as leader will be to ensure that the Senate stays the Senate.

"That means preserving the legislative filibuster – the Senate rule that today has perhaps the greatest impact in preserving the Founders' vision of the Senate.

"It also means restoring the Senate as a place of discussion and deliberation.

"That includes empowering committees, restoring regular order, and engaging in extended debate on the Senate floor, where all members should have a chance to make their voices – and the voices of their constituents – heard.

"We have a lot to do this Congress.

"Border security.

"Extending the tax relief Republicans delivered during the first Trump administration.

"Lifting burdensome and expensive government regulations to help American businesses – and families – flourish.

"Providing for our nation's defense in an increasingly unstable world.

"Bringing appropriations bills to the floor for serious deliberation, so that we make the best possible use of taxpayer dollars.

"An overdue farm bill to update farm programs for farmers and ranchers to reflect current agriculture needs.

"And Mr. President, the list goes on.

"Mr. President, in past years I have listened to speeches delivered by other leaders welcoming members to the new Congress and discussing the agenda for the coming months.

"I now find myself in the position of delivering that speech.

"My Republican colleagues have trusted me to lead our party – and the Senate – in the next Congress, and I will work every day to be worthy of that trust.

"My philosophy of leadership comes from my dad.

"He was a basketball coach at our high school, and he had some very strong opinions about the right way to play.

"Sports to him was not about personal glory. It was about elevating the team.

"He hated ball hogs.

"If somebody else was in a better position to take the shot, you always made the extra pass.

"You didn't try to pad your own statistics.

"It's an attitude which I've tried to carry with me throughout my life.

"And it's an attitude I intend to carry with me to the leader office.

"My job is to be of service – to my colleagues and to our country.

"Mr. President, I am here today addressing the Senate in this role because of the confidence my colleagues have placed in me.

"But I am here first of all because of the confidence placed in me by the people of South Dakota.

"Without the trust that they have given me, I would not have had an opportunity to serve at all, much less have the opportunity to serve as the majority leader of the United States Senate.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 7 of 64

"And my first priority here in Congress is always, always to serve the people of my state.

"Mr. President, I grew up in small-town South Dakota, in the town of Murdo – population today: roughly 500 people.

"We didn't even have a traffic light when I was growing up there.

"And I wouldn't have had it any other way.

"Life in Murdo had a beautiful simplicity.

"Sure, it had one or two drawbacks.

"With a population that small, we Thune kids could be sure that our parents would have heard all about any of our misdemeanors before we even made it home.

"But small-town life was wonderful.

"In Murdo, you know everyone, and everyone knows you.

"And that gave us a sense of community and belonging that we carry to this day.

"I remember the day I told my mother I was going to run for Congress.

"She was thrilled, and confidently told me, 'I know you'll carry Murdo.'

"In Murdo I learned the character of South Dakotans – the work ethic, the commitment to freedom coupled with a belief in personal responsibility, the sense of responsibility to the broader community.

"Growing up, we knew that if a roof collapsed under the weight of snow, or a windstorm came through and wiped out a barn, or we lost a friend or family member, the whole community would rally around to help.

"And that same attitude is reflected in towns across our state.

"The South Dakota values I learned growing up helped shape my political philosophy: my belief that government should be limited, and that it is best when it's closest to the people – and that if a matter can be handled at the state or local level, it should be.

"That the legacy of the past is something to be cherished and preserved – while leaving room for change and adaptation when needed.

"That freedom is a sacred gift, and one that must be defended – and that with freedom comes responsibility.

"And, finally, that while government is necessary, government is not where we should look for salvation.

"Mr. President, none of us gets where we are alone.

"And I owe thanks to many people.

"To my parents, Pat and Harold, who gave us Thune kids undying love and commitment, a strong set of values, and the most precious gift of all, faith.

"To my brothers and sister.

"To my beloved wife, Kimberley, who is here with me today.

"And let me say, Mr. President, I married up.

"And I am grateful every day for Kimberley's love and wisdom, her advice and support, and her endless patience.

"It's not an easy thing to be married to a member of Congress.

"And it's not an easy thing to have a member of Congress for a dad either.

"And I am grateful not only for my wife's unending support but for the support of my daughters Brittany and Larissa.

"They are here today in the Senate, as well, with their husbands Luke and Scott and with our grandchildren – John Mark, Lucy, Henley, Hewitt, Haven, and one yet-to-be-named little one on the way – who have brought me and Kimberley an immense amount of joy.

"Mr. President, not one of us here in Congress could last a day without our staffs.

"And so I want to thank all of those who spend and have spent long days – and long nights – in my office serving South Dakotans and the American people.

"Finally, Mr. President, I thank God, who has richly blessed me in every way.

"As it says in the Scriptures, 'For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.'

"Mr. President, I yield the floor."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 8 of 64

**Coming up on GDILIVE.COM**

**GT**

Groton Area  
Tigers



**Saturday, Jan. 4**

**1:00 Girls JV**

**followed by Boys JV**

**Both sponsored by  
Groton Chiropractic Clinic**

**Then Girls Varsity Game  
and**

**Boys Varsity Game**

**\$5 ticket or  
GDI Subscription  
required to watch the games.**

**GDILIVE.COM**

**GT**

Groton Area  
Tigers

**Text Paul at  
605-397-7460**

**Any interest in any of  
these basketball games on  
GDILIVE.COM?  
They are \$25 each.**

~~Boys Redfield JV~~

~~Girls Redfield JV~~

~~Boys Warner JV~~

Girls Warner JV

Girls Clark/Willow Lake JV

~~Boys Clark/Willow Lake C~~

Boys Clark/Willow Lake JV

Boys Lennox C

Boys Lennox JV

Girls Lennox JV

Girls Lennox C

Boys Tiospa Zina JV

Girls Tiospa Zina JV

~~Boys Dakota Valley C~~

Boys Dakota Valley JV





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### In first speech as U.S. Senate majority leader, Thune pledges to protect filibuster

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JANUARY 3, 2025 2:21 PM

WASHINGTON — Republicans took control of the U.S. Senate Friday under the new leadership of South Dakota's John Thune, who promised to keep intact the body's legislative filibuster — the 60-vote threshold for major legislation that some Democrats had targeted for elimination.

Thune follows in the footsteps of the longest-serving Senate GOP leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, and takes the reins as Republicans prepare to control the Senate, House and White House once President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan. 20.

In his first opening remarks as leader, Thune said he would restore the upper chamber as "a place of discussion and deliberation" as the body pursues an aggressive agenda to overhaul immigration and extend 2017 tax cuts — not to mention actually funding the government, albeit months late, once temporary measures expire in March.

Republicans are eying the budget reconciliation process — a legislative maneuver that allows the Senate to avoid the 60-vote filibuster — to achieve as many of the party's political goals as can be justified in the one-per-fiscal-year budget resolution. Democrats used reconciliation twice during their unified government in the 117th Congress.

Still, Thune hammered in his opening remarks at the start of the 119th Congress that the Senate must remain the "more stable, more thoughtful, more deliberative" body.

"Unfortunately, today there are a lot of people who would like to see the Senate turn into a copy of the House of Representatives," Thune said on the floor.

"And that," he continued, "is not what our founders intended or what our country needs. One of my priorities as leader will be to ensure that the Senate stays the Senate. That means preserving the legislative filibuster."

Thune described the 60-vote rule as having the "greatest impact on preserving the founders' vision of the United States Senate."

Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who's served in the chamber since 1981, resumed the position of Senate president pro tempore Friday — a role he last held from 2019 to 2021.

Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, now the body's minority leader, said on the floor Friday that he looks forward to working with Thune and wants to continue "to reach across the aisle."

"I want to work with the new Republican leader to keep that bipartisan streak going in the new year. I



**Sen. John Thune, Republican of South Dakota, speaks during a press conference inside the U.S. Capitol on March 20, 2024.** (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

don't expect we'll agree on everything or even many things," Schumer said. "But there are still opportunities to improve the lives of the American people, if we're willing to work together."

## New senators

Ten new senators were sworn in Friday, including several Republicans who flipped Democratic-held seats. Among them were Republican Sen. David McCormick, who ousted Pennsylvania's longtime Democratic Sen. Bob Casey; Sen. Tim Sheehy, a Republican who flipped Montana's Senate seat formerly held by Democrat Jon Tester; and the GOP's new Sen. Bernie Moreno, who wrested the seat from Ohio's longtime Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown.

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice was not among the lawmakers who took the oath Friday. Justice, a Republican who won the seat held by outgoing independent Joe Manchin III, will remain the state's governor until Jan. 13 before heading to the Senate.

New Democratic Sens. Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland and Lisa Blunt Rochester of Delaware made history Friday as the first two Black women to serve simultaneously in the upper chamber.

Other newly sworn senators on Friday included Republicans Jim Banks of Indiana and John Curtis of Utah, as well as Democrats Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Ruben Gallego of Arizona.

Democratic Sens. Adam Schiff of California and New Jersey's Andy Kim took their oaths in December.

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

## Carbon pipeline company asks SD regulator to recuse herself; regulator declines

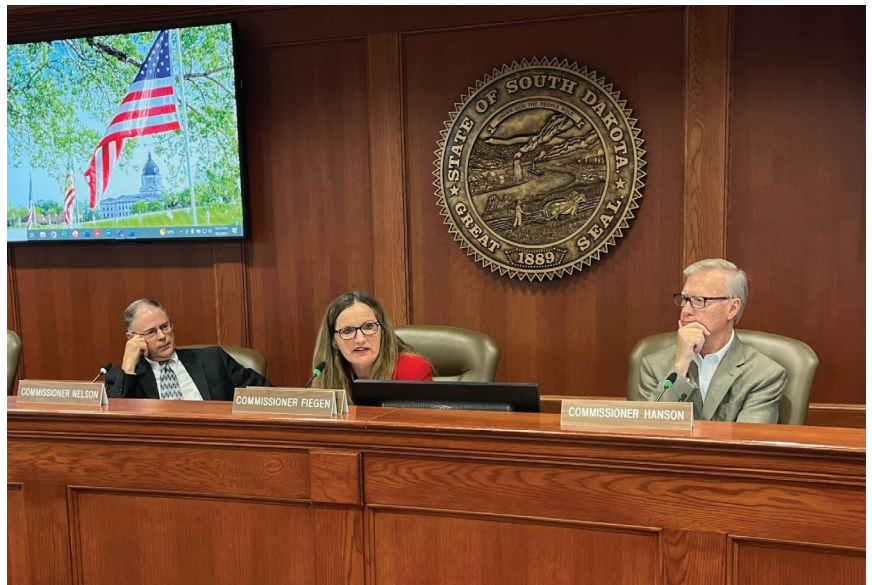
**Commissioner's relatives control a trust that owns land on the route, but she says 'I do not have a legal conflict'**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 3, 2025 1:13 PM**

The company proposing a carbon dioxide pipeline has formally requested that a South Dakota regulator recuse herself from the project's permit application because of an alleged conflict of interest, but the regulator said she does not have "a legal conflict."

In a letter sent Thursday, Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions asked Public Utilities Commissioner Kristie Fiegen to disqualify herself. That would allow the governor to appoint another state official to fill in for Fiegen during the three-member commission's consideration of the application.

Summit wants to construct a \$9 billion, five-state pipeline to capture and transport some of the carbon dioxide emitted by 57 ethanol plants to an underground storage area in North Dakota. The project would capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-



**South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioners, from left, Chris Nelson, Kristie Fiegen and Gary Hanson participate in a meeting Sept. 6, 2023, at the Capitol in Pierre.** (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 11 of 64

trapping carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

This is Summit's second application in South Dakota, after the Public Utilities Commission rejected the first application in 2023. Fiegen recused herself from those proceedings and was replaced by State Treasurer Josh Haeder.

At the time, Fiegen wrote a recusal letter saying she had a conflict because the pipeline "would cross land owned by my sister-in-law (my husband's sister) and her husband." Fiegen also recused herself from an earlier, separate crude oil pipeline permit application for a similar reason.

Fiegen has not recused herself from the new application, but Summit said the same conflict exists.

"As with your previous decisions," said the company's new letter to Fiegen, "the facts and established South Dakota law support a decision that you should step aside."

On Friday, Fiegen responded with a letter to Summit. In its entirety, Fiegen's letter said, "I am an elected Public Utilities Commissioner and will carry out my duties as such. I do not have a legal conflict. I am sitting on the docket."

The Summit letter also drew criticism from an attorney representing landowners opposed to the pipeline, Brian Jorde, of Domina Law Group in Omaha, who disputed the allegation that Fiegen has a conflict of interest.

"From my viewpoint she never had a conflict that rises to the level of recusal and certainly doesn't now," Jorde wrote. "The isolated fact that she is related by marriage to a trustee of a trust that owns land that signed an easement with Summit is not a direct conflict."

## The alleged conflict

The commission's rejection of Summit's first application was partly due to the route's conflicts with several county ordinances. Those ordinances mandate minimum distances between pipelines and existing features. Summit's new route includes some adjustments.

The original pipeline route crossed three parcels in Minnehaha County owned by Fiegen's sister-in-law and her husband, Jean Fiegen-Ordal and Jeffrey Ordal, and three parcels in McCook County owned by the Jeffrey A. Ordal Living Trust, which lists the couple as trustees.

Summit said it paid a total of \$175,000 for easements and future crop damages on that land, including \$88,000 to the Ordals. Summit declined to tell Searchlight where the remainder of the money went, but public records show the Ordals sold their Minnehaha County land after signing the easement documents in 2022.

The new pipeline route would cross the same parcels — the Minnehaha County land that the Ordals no longer own, and the McCook County land that's still owned by the Ordals' trust.

## Summit: Litigation possible

Summit's new letter said the logic that motivated Fiegen's prior recusal remains unchanged. The company said her involvement risks violating South Dakota law, which the company said bars officials from participating in matters where conflicts of interest exist.

The letter said Fiegen's failure to recuse herself could lead to litigation, an appeal of the commission's eventual permit decision, and delays in the permitting process.

"Because your family has a direct interest in the approval or denial of the permit, and because you previously recused yourself in two dockets based on the same facts, a court almost certainly would find it inappropriate for you to participate in this docket," the letter says.

The Public Utilities Commission will host a series of public input meetings Jan. 15-17 in eastern South Dakota cities near the pipeline route. The project has a storage permit in North Dakota and route permits in North Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota, while Nebraska has no state permitting process for carbon pipelines. The project also faces litigation from opponents in multiple states.

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



## Former Attorney General Vargo returns to state work with appointment by Jackley

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 3, 2025 11:55 AM

Former South Dakota Attorney General Mark Vargo will serve as assistant attorney general for the state's police commission, after a rotation of staff members formerly advised the commission.

Attorney General Marty Jackley appointed Vargo to the position on Dec. 31, Jackley's office said Friday. Vargo, who was appointed attorney general in 2022 after former Attorney General Jason Ravensborg's impeachment and removal from office, will advise the state's Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission on training requirements and certification hearings.

"Former Attorney General Vargo understands the importance of law enforcement certification when it comes to protecting the public,"

Jackley said in a news release. "Law enforcement that the public can trust is vital, and former Attorney General Vargo will provide the advice for the commission to make informed decisions."

Vargo previously served as an assistant U.S. attorney for South Dakota from 1996 to 2011 and as Pennington County state's attorney from 2013 until 2023, taking a leave of absence to serve temporarily as attorney general. He resigned from the county position shortly after his six-month stint as attorney general to take a 20-month, non-governmental job in Thailand "establishing the rule of law in southeast Asia," Vargo told the Rapid City Journal upon his resignation.

*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.*



**Mark Vargo, right, shakes hands with members of the Wambli Ska Society on Sept. 13, 2022, in Pierre.** (Courtesy of SD Attorney General's Office)

## Trump to be sentenced in hush money case but avoid jail time

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JANUARY 3, 2025 4:46 PM

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to be sentenced in New York on 34 felony convictions on Jan. 10, just days ahead of his presidential inauguration, according to an order issued Friday by New York Justice Juan Merchan.

Merchan wrote he won't seek incarceration for Trump but rather an "unconditional discharge" that would leave Trump with a criminal record in New York but avoids any serious penalties. A Trump spokesperson on Friday indicated the president-elect would fight the sentencing.

Trump, who is set to be sworn in as the 47th president on Jan. 20, has all but seen his multiple criminal cases go quiet after winning the 2024 presidential election in November.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 13 of 64

Trump made history in May as the first former president to become a convicted felon after a jury found him guilty of falsifying business records to hide a hush-money scheme involving his personal lawyer Michael Cohen and adult film actress Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

Trump's New York sentencing date was delayed multiple times, including shortly after Trump's win on Nov. 5 prompted Merchan to pause and examine moving forward with sentencing a president-elect.

Trump's attorneys also held up their client's sentencing as they fought evidence presented in the case after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in July that former presidents are shielded from criminal prosecution for official acts.

Merchan ultimately ruled on Dec. 16 that the majority of Trump's case "related entirely to unofficial conduct entitled to no immunity protection."



**President-elect Donald Trump prepares to speak at the conservative gathering AmericaFest in Phoenix on Dec. 29, 2024.** (Photo by Gage Skidmore | CC BY-SA 2.0)

## No jail time for Trump

In his Friday order, Merchan said the complex situation involving Trump likely will never be seen again. "Finding no legal impediment to sentencing and recognizing that Presidential immunity will likely attach once Defendant takes his Oath of Office, it is incumbent upon this Court to set this matter down for the imposition of sentence prior to January 20, 2025," Merchan wrote, adding that all further avenues have been exhausted "in what is an unprecedented, and likely never to be repeated legal scenario."

"This Court must sentence Defendant within a reasonable time following verdict; and Defendant must be permitted to avail himself of every available appeal, a path he has made clear he intends to pursue but which only becomes fully available upon sentencing," Merchan continued.

Merchan has given Trump the option to appear in person or virtually for the sentencing.

Merchan's order comes as the U.S. Department of Justice special counsel Jack Smith, citing a longstanding protocol of not prosecuting sitting presidents, closed Trump's two federal cases — one alleging election interference in the 2020 presidential election, and the other focused on classified documents illegally stashed at Trump's Florida resort after his first presidency.

## 'Witch Hunt'

Steven Cheung, Trump communications director, issued a statement Friday criticizing Merchan as "deeply conflicted" and alleging the judge is in "direct violation of the Supreme Court's Immunity decision and other longstanding jurisprudence."

"This lawless case should have never been brought and the Constitution demands that it be immediately dismissed," Cheung continued. "President Trump must be allowed to continue the Presidential Transition process and to execute the vital duties of the presidency, unobstructed by the remains of this or any remnants of the Witch Hunts. There should be no sentencing, and President Trump will continue fighting against these hoaxes until they are all dead."

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



## Louisiana's Mike Johnson elected U.S. House speaker by GOP in cliff-hanger vote

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JANUARY 3, 2025

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republicans on Friday elected Louisiana Rep. Mike Johnson as their speaker for the 119th Congress, following weeks of speculation about whether the GOP would begin another protracted, public dispute over leadership.

The drama-filled vote ensured that Johnson, who was first elected speaker in October 2023, will hold the gavel as Republicans embark on an ambitious legislative agenda that includes overhauling the country's immigration system and the tax code.

Johnson won the votes of 218 Republicans, while 215 Democrats voted for New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries.

Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, South Carolina Rep. Ralph Norman and Texas Rep. Keith Self all originally voted for other members for speaker. But after several conversations, on and off the floor, Norman and Self switched their votes to Johnson.

The November elections handed the GOP unified control of government, which will formally begin on Jan. 20 when President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office.

"This Congress will renounce the status quo and we will listen to the voices of the people. We will act quickly and we will start by defending our nation's borders — that's our number one priority," Johnson said during a floor speech following the vote. "In coordination with President Trump, this Congress will give our border and immigration enforcement agents the resources they need to do their job."

Unified Republican control of government, he said, would also deport people in the country without legal status and finish building a border wall.

Johnson said during the next two years, the GOP would take up bills to cut taxes, expand energy production and "reduce the size and scope of government."

### Trump support

Trump endorsed Johnson earlier this week and reiterated his support before the vote Friday in a social media post, writing Johnson is "a fine man of great ability, who is very close to having 100% support."

"A win for Mike today will be a big win for the Republican Party, and yet another acknowledgment of our 129 year most consequential Presidential Election!! – A BIG AFFIRMATION, INDEED. MAGA!"

Self told reporters that he switched his vote after speaking with Trump and Johnson about GOP priorities, such as reconciliation.



**U.S. Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La., center, and Rep. Marjorie Tayler Greene, R-Ga., left, talk with fellow representatives as they arrive for the first day of the 119th Congress in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol Building on Jan. 3, 2025 in Washington, D.C.** (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 15 of 64

"President Trump has the same emphasis that I do," Self said. "We have got to make sure this Congress is as strong as possible when we go up against the Senate on (a) reconciliation package, because there's their debate on what the reconciliation package even looks like."

Norman told reporters that he switched his vote after Johnson "gave us the assurance that he was going to fight for everything as it moves forward."

Republicans are planning to use the complicated budget reconciliation process to pass several of their policy goals, but that process has strict rules in order to get around the Senate's 60-vote legislative filibuster.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, the South Dakota Republican who took over as the head of that chamber on Friday, pledged to keep that procedural hurdle in place for non-reconciliation bills.

## 'Meaningful spending reforms'

Johnson released three commitments just ahead of the speaker vote, writing on social media that "Republicans have a real opportunity in the next two years to make meaningful spending reforms to eliminate trillions in waste, fraud, and abuse, and end the weaponization of government."

He pledged to establish "a working group comprised of independent experts – not corrupted by lobbyists and special interests – to work with DOGE and our committees on implementing recommended government and spending reforms to protect the American taxpayer."

Trump has tasked Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy with starting an outside group, dubbed the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, to recommend spending cuts to Congress, though the two could face considerable push back depending on what the recommendations are.

Johnson wrote in his social media post that he would instruct the working group to review "existing audits of federal agencies and entities created by Congress" and release a report on its findings.

Lastly, Johnson wrote he would "request" that "House committees undertake aggressive authorizations and appropriations reviews, including providing additional resources where needed, to expose irresponsible or illegal practices and hold agencies/individuals accountable that have weaponized government against the American people."

## Contrast with McCarthy battle

Johnson's election on the first ballot marked a somewhat smoother start to this Congress than the last one, in January 2023, when it took the House GOP 15 rounds of voting over several days before members elected then-Rep. Kevin McCarthy as speaker.

Nine months later, McCarthy was stripped of the role and it took Republicans about a month to coalesce around Johnson, following failed bids from Louisiana's Steve Scalise, Ohio's Jim Jordan and Minnesota's Tom Emmer.

Johnson will need to work closely with Thune to keep the two chambers aligned on policy.

The two have a daunting list of legislative goals they'll need to unify GOP lawmakers around, amid extremely thin majorities.

Voters elected Republicans to 220 House seats and gave Democrats 215 House representatives, one of the closest majorities in the country's history.

Johnson will have an even narrower margin of victory since former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz didn't take the oath of office on Friday after choosing to resign from Congress in late December before an Ethics Committee investigation was released.

Two additional House Republicans are expected to depart sometime in the weeks ahead to take up positions in the Trump administration. Special elections to replace those three lawmakers will take months and won't necessarily guarantee voters will elect Republicans to represent those districts.

In the Senate, Republicans hold 53 seats, giving Thune a bit more room to negotiate on policy, though not much.

The narrow majorities will require both far-right and centrist Republicans to support sweeping bills that are likely to address complicated policy areas, like immigration and taxes — an extremely challenging task.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 16 of 64

Republicans were able to pass a broad tax law in 2017 when they last held unified control of government, but they occupied 241 House seats at the time.

While all 51 Senate Republicans voted for the final version of that bill, a dozen House GOP lawmakers voted against the package and three didn't vote.

## Former state legislators in 119th Congress

Nearly half of the 119th Congress — 247 of the 535 members — were former state or territorial legislators, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Twelve states — Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin — have at least six former state legislators serving in the new Congress.

California, Florida, New York and Texas each have at least 11 prior state legislators in the 119th Congress.

The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee said 120 of the 260 Democrats were previous state legislators.

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

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

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

## Biden blocks deal to sell U.S. Steel, saying it should be domestically owned and operated

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JANUARY 3, 2025 8:54 AM

President Joe Biden announced early Friday he will block the sale of U.S. Steel to the Japanese company Nippon Steel, in one of the last acts of his presidency.

Biden had said that U.S. Steel should remain a domestically owned and operated company, so the order was not a surprise. The White House in December called for "serious scrutiny" of the \$14.1 billion deal, which was under review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an executive branch body.

"We need major U.S. companies representing the major share of US steelmaking capacity to keep leading the fight on behalf of America's national interests," Biden said in a Friday statement. "As a committee of national security and trade experts across the



**President Joe Biden delivers remarks on Sunday, Dec. 29, 2024, in Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.** (Official White

House Photo by Erin Scott)



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 17 of 64

executive branch determined, this acquisition would place one of America's largest steel producers under foreign control and create risk for our national security and our critical supply chains.

"So, that is why I am taking action to block this deal. It is my solemn responsibility as President to ensure that, now and long into the future, America has a strong domestically owned and operated steel industry that can continue to power our national sources of strength at home and abroad; and it is a fulfillment of that responsibility to block foreign ownership of this vital American company. U.S. Steel will remain a proud American company – one that's American-owned, American-operated, by American union steelworkers – the best in the world," he said.

The sale, which was valued at \$14.9 billion when accounting for assumption of debt, was opposed by the United Steelworkers International union, a powerful labor group that had continually urged Biden, who saw union workers as a key part of his political coalition, to keep U.S. Steel domestically owned. The union renewed that request in a Wednesday social media post.

In a Friday statement, USW President David McCall thanked Biden and said the union members had "no doubt that it's the right move for our members and our national security."

"We're grateful for President Biden's willingness to take bold action to maintain a strong domestic steel industry and for his lifelong commitment to American workers," McCall said. "Moving forward, we're confident that with responsible management, U.S. Steel will continue to support good jobs, healthy communities and robust national and economic security well into the future."

U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel issued a joint statement that the companies were "dismayed" with the decision and vowed to "take all appropriate action to protect" their legal rights.

The transaction would have boosted the steel industry in the United States, thanks to billions of dollars the Japanese company had planned to put into U.S. facilities.

"Blocking this transaction means denying billions of committed investment to extend the life of U. S. Steel's aging facilities and putting thousands of good-paying, family-sustaining union jobs at risk," the joint statement said. "In short, we believe that President Biden has sacrificed the future of American steelworkers for his own political agenda."

U.S. Steel and Nippon added that they had serious doubts about the process that led to CFIUS' evaluation, calling it "deeply corrupted by politics" and "pre-determined."

In a separate blistering statement, U.S. Steel President and CEO David B. Burritt called the decision a "shameful and corrupt" deal with McCall, said it would hurt the company and its workers and vowed to "fight President Biden's political corruption."

Biden "gave a political payback to a union boss out of touch with his members while harming our company's future, our workers, and our national security," Burritt wrote. "He insulted Japan... and put American competitiveness at risk. The Chinese Communist Party leaders in Beijing are dancing in the streets."

Biden did not meet with U.S. Steel leaders "to learn the facts," Burritt continued.

"Our employees and communities deserve better. We needed a president who knows how to get the best deal for America and work hard to make it happen."

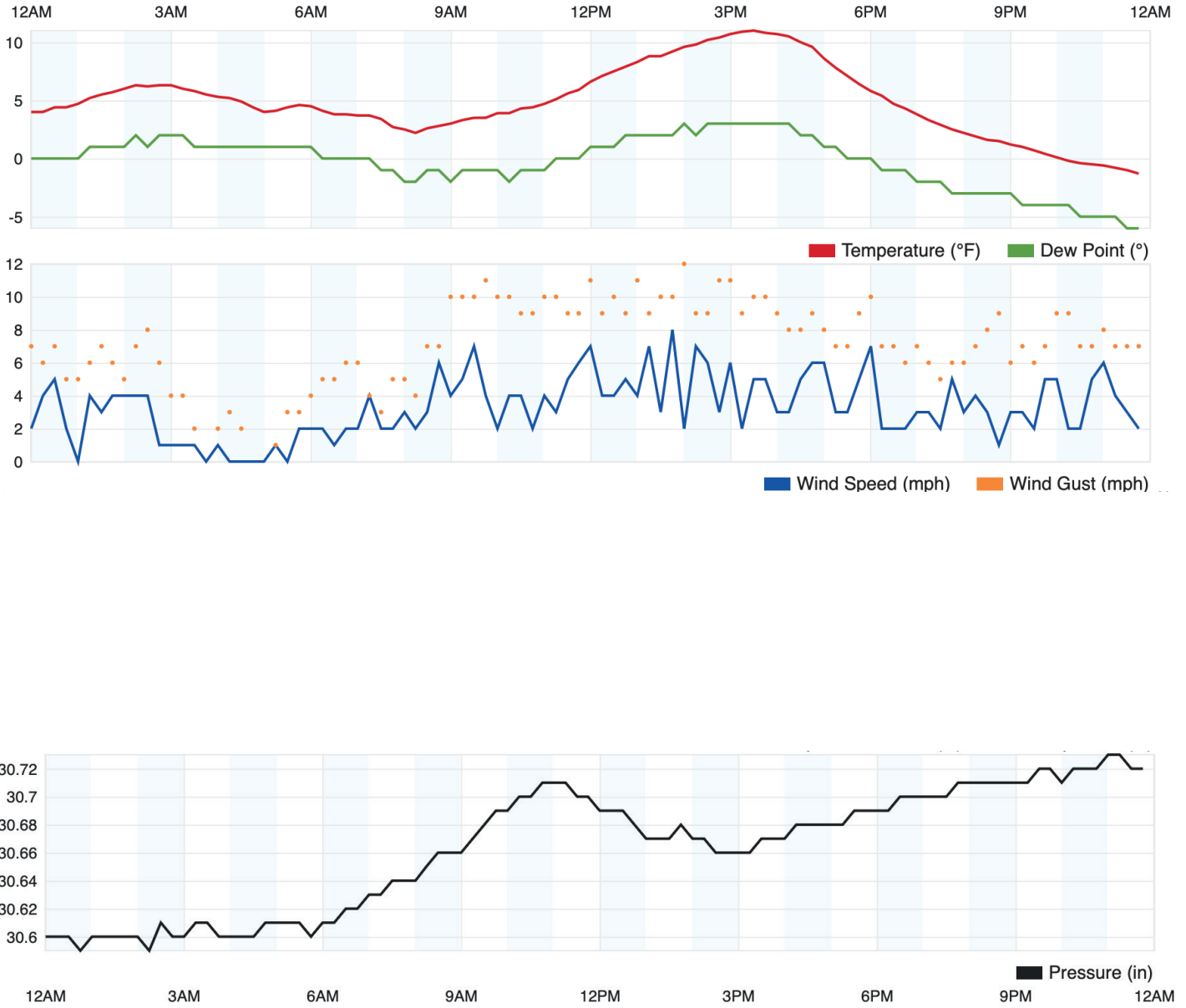
Biden issued the order under the Defense Production Act, which allows the president to intervene in private industrial matters if national security is threatened. In his statement, he argued that retaining a strong steel industry was essential for national security.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 18 of 64

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 19 of 64

Today



High: 5 °F

Cold

Tonight



Low: -7 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 6 °F

Cold

Sunday Night



Low: -6 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Monday



High: 13 °F

Mostly Cloudy



## Snow Continuing into the Nighttime Hours

January 4, 2025  
4:18 AM

No significant changes to snow totals

### Key Messages

- A [Winter Weather Advisory](#) is in effect for accumulating snowfall this weekend.
- In general, **2 to 5 inches** are forecast across central SD today through Sunday morning.
- Two main waves of snow are expected, occurring this morning and again this evening.

### NEW What Has Changed?

- Snow potentially ending sooner early Sunday morning.

### Next Scheduled Update

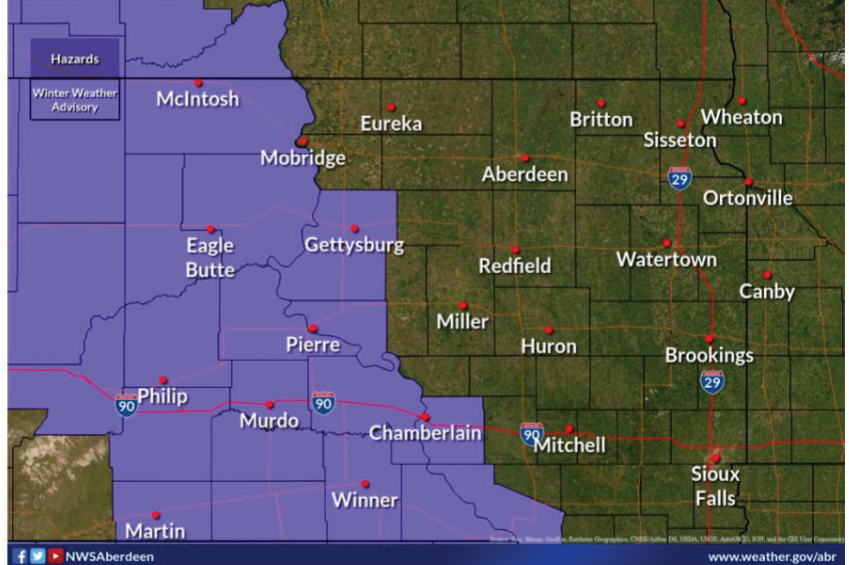
- This Afternoon

### Current Headlines - Winter Weather Advisory

In effect through Sunday morning

Weather Forecast Office  
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Jan 04, 2025 4:01 AM CST



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

President Joe Biden delivers remarks on Sunday, Dec. 29, 2024, in Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. (Official White House Photo by Erin Scott)

# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 20 of 64



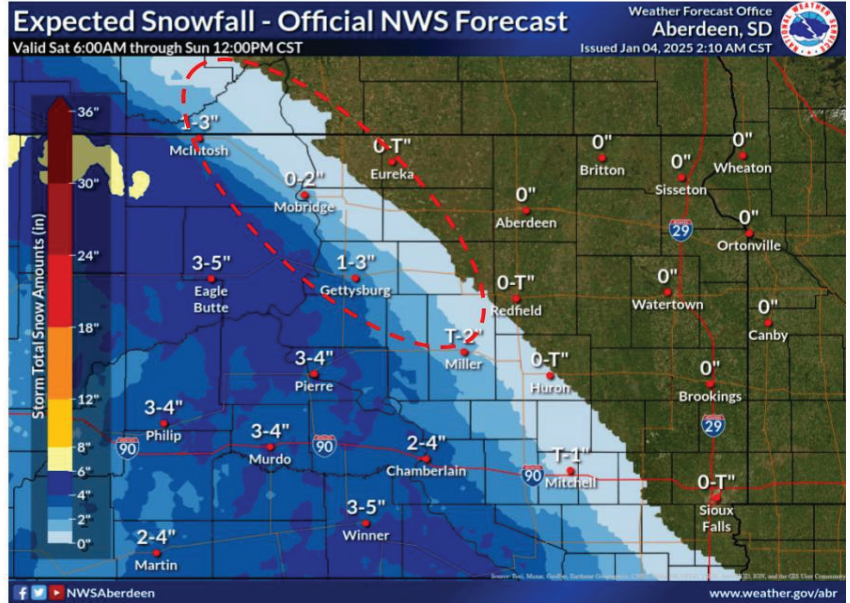
## How Much Snow is Expected?

January 4, 2025  
4:22 AM

Highest accumulations across western/central SD.

### Key Messages

- Highest accumulations are expected along and west of the Missouri River.
- Drier air in place further east will limit snow accumulations, with areas from the James River and east missing out on this storm system.
- The greatest uncertainty in snowfall totals remains over north central South Dakota, where a sharp cutoff to the snow is expected.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Still expecting a general 2 to 5 inches of snow across central South Dakota through early Sunday morning.



## Cold Temperatures To Stick Around

January 4, 2025  
4:25 AM

Below normal temperatures expected through Wednesday

- Wind chills will be below 0° across central and NE South Dakota, as well as western Minnesota through Wed.
- Under these conditions, frostbite and hypothermia can occur in as little as 30 minutes. Limit outdoor activity when possible and bundle up if you have to go outside.

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



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The cold air mass in place across the Northern Plains looks to stick around until Wednesday of next week, before being replaced by more mild air. Wind chill values will stay below zero for most locations for the next few days.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 21 of 64

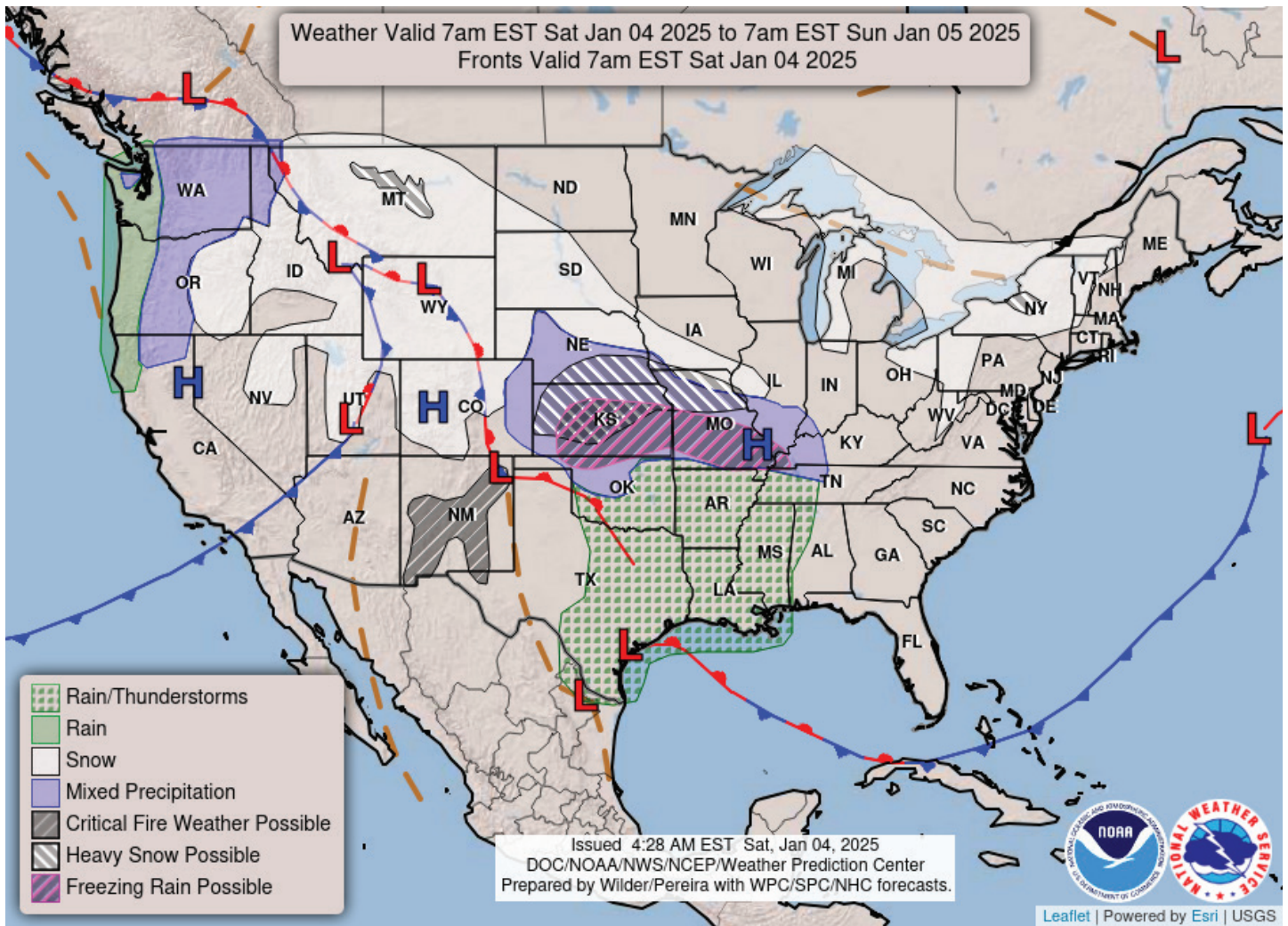
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 11 °F at 3:33 PM**  
**Low Temp: -1 °F at 11:30 PM**  
**Wind: 13 mph at 2:49 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 8 hours, 54 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 54 in 2012  
Record Low: -34 in 1912  
Average High: 24  
Average Low: 3  
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.08  
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.08  
Precip Year to Date: 21.71  
Sunset Tonight: 5:04:51 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:10 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 22 of 64

## Today in Weather History

January 4, 1986: Snowfall amounts of 1 to 3 inches and winds gusting to around 40 mph produced ground blizzard conditions in western South Dakota. Visibility was near zero in many locations, with blowing and drifting snow blocking some roads. Some roads were closed in western South Dakota. Several accidents occurred, with many cars ending up in the ditch.

January 4, 2005: Heavy snow of up to 10 inches fell across much of Lyman and Jones counties from the 4th until mid-morning of the 5th.

1641: According to historical records, Mount Parker, a stratovolcano on Mindanao Island in the Philippines, erupted on this day. The eruption caused the formation of a crater lake called Lake Maughan.

1888 - Sacramento, CA, received 3.5 inches of snow, an all-time record for that location. The heaviest snow in recent history was two inches on February 5th in 1976. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1917: A tornado with estimated F3 damage cut a 15-mile path and struck a school at Vireton in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, killing 16 people. It ranks as the 4th worst school tornado disaster in U.S. history.

1971 - A blizzard raged from Kansas to Wisconsin, claiming 27 lives in Iowa. Winds reached 50 mph, and the storm produced up to 20 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1982 - Milwaukee, WI, was shut down completely as a storm buried the city under 16 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst storm in thirty-five years. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm moving off the Pacific Ocean spread wintery weather across the southwestern U.S., with heavy snow extending from southern California to western Wyoming. Up to 15 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of southern California, and rainfall totals in California ranged up to 2.20 inches in the Chino area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Frigid arctic air invading the central and eastern U.S. left Florida about the only safe refuge from the cold and snow. A storm in the western U.S. soaked Bodega Bay in central California with 3.12 inches of rain. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - Up to a foot of snow blanketed the mountains of West Virginia, and strong winds in the northeastern U.S. produced wind chill readings as cold as 60 degrees below zero in Maine. Mount Washington NH reported wind gusts to 136 mph along with a temperature of 30 below zero! (National Weather Summary)

1990 - A winter storm moving out of the southwestern U.S. spread heavy snow across Nebraska and Iowa into Wisconsin. Snowfall totals in Nebraska ranged up to 7 inches at Auburn and Tecumseh. Totals in Iowa ranged up to 11 inches at Carlisle. In Iowa, most of the snow fell between midnight and 4 AM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994 - A major winter storm blanketed much of the northeastern U.S. with heavy snow. More than two feet was reported in northwestern Pennsylvania, with 33 inches at Waynesburg. There were ten heart attacks, and 185 injuries, related to the heavy snow in northwest Pennsylvania. Whiteout conditions were reported in Vermont and northeastern New York State. A wind gusts to 75 mph was clocked at Shaftsbury VT. In the Adirondacks of eastern New York State, the town of Tupper reported five inches of snow between 1 PM and 2 PM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2018: NOAA's GOES-East satellite caught a dramatic view of the Bombogenesis 'Bomb Cyclone' moving up the East Coast on the morning of January 4, 2018. The powerful nor'easter is battering coastal areas with heavy snow and strong winds, from Florida to Maine. Notice the long line of clouds stretching over a thousand miles south of the storm. The storm is drawing moisture all the way from deep in the Caribbean.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 23 of 64



## B.I.A.K.!

A farmer from the Midwest decided to visit his congressman. The day he arrived in Washington, he discovered that the congressman was too bogged down in committee meetings to meet with him. Having more time than interests, he decided to wander through the halls, observe the different people who were hurrying from one office to another and try to understand what was going on.

The next morning when he arrived for his visit he appeared with a handmade lapel badge with the letters, B.I.A.K.! Puzzled, his congressman asked, "What does B.I.A.K. stand for?"

With no hesitation the old farmer said, "Boy, am I confused!"

The congressman thought for a moment and then replied, "Sir, you don't spell confused with a 'K'; it is spelled with a 'C.'"

"Mister," he said, "you just don't know how confused I am since I got here!"

It is not that way with God. His Word has taken the "confusion" out of His plan for our salvation. It is clear, concise, convincing and compelling. We read in The Amplified Bible, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping) and you will be saved." Any questions?

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for Your immeasurable love, undeserved grace and understandable plan of salvation. Thank You for being our Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And they answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus [as your personal Savior and entrust yourself to Him] and you will be saved, you and your household [if they also believe]." Acts 16:31

*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, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 24 of 64

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](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



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.03.25

20 42 46 59 69 19

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$62,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.01.25

1 2 8 14 30 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$19,840,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 30 Mins  
42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.03.25

14 15 20 23 28 12

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins  
43 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.01.25

6 18 20 27 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$200,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins  
43 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.01.25

8 10 25 33 66 20

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 14 Mins  
42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.01.25

6 12 28 35 66 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$200,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 14 Mins  
42 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 26 of 64

## 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 27 of 64

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

### Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

#### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Aberdeen Roncalli 72, Webster 32  
Baltic 52, Colman-Egan 49  
Beresford 57, Parker 44  
Brandon Valley 57, Watertown 36  
Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 61, Bon Homme 25  
Corsica/Stickney 40, Canistota 25  
Custer 56, Sioux Valley 37  
Deubrook 59, Chester 56  
Deuel 73, Britton-Hecla 53  
Estelline-Hendricks 66, Canton 38  
Ethan 61, Scotland/Menno 45  
Florence-Henry 66, Tri-State, N.D. 50  
Hamlin 74, Castlewood 52  
Hanson 60, Irene-Wakonda 42  
Harding County 58, Philip 51  
Howard 66, Freeman 45  
Iroquois-Lake Preston 67, Highmore-Harrold 55  
Madison 62, Belle Fourche 23  
McCook Central-Montrose 45, Kimball-White Lake 11  
Parkston 49, Winner 37  
Rapid City Christian 84, Shiloh, N.D. 57  
Sisseton 48, Richland, N.D. 40  
St Thomas More 59, Sturgis Brown High School 37  
Stanley County 55, Herreid-Selby 43  
Todd County 59, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58  
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 68, Freeman Academy-Marion 34  
Vermillion 84, Tri-Valley 56  
Viborg-Hurley 63, Pine Ridge 58  
Wagner 66, Avon 52  
West Central 62, Hill City 45  
Wilmot 57, Ipswich 54  
Yankton 64, Brookings 56

#### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Belle Fourche 53, Madison 15  
Beresford 59, Parker 28  
Bon Homme 56, Bridgewater-Emery 44  
Brandon Valley 58, Watertown 23  
Brookings 64, Yankton 33  
Canton 60, Estelline-Hendricks 29  
Chester 50, Deubrook 45  
Colman-Egan 71, Baltic 17  
Dakota Valley 60, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Neb. 51

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 28 of 64

Deuel 53, Britton-Hecla 45  
Ethan 58, Scotland/Menno 22  
Freeman 51, Howard 31  
Hamlin 54, Castlewood 20  
Hanson 56, Irene-Wakonda 34  
Harrisburg 48, Mitchell 46  
Herreid-Selby 44, Stanley County 28  
Highmore-Harrold 42, Iroquois-Lake Preston 22  
Lakota Tech 91, Hot Springs 22  
Lemmon High School 63, Newell 14  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 39, Lennox 33  
Parkston 65, Dakota Valley 44  
Parkston 65, Winner 44  
Rapid City Christian 59, Shiloh, N.D. 32  
Rapid City Stevens 67, Rapid City Central 39  
Sioux Falls Christian 60, West Central 56  
Sioux Valley 62, Custer 43  
Todd County 62, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58  
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 40, Freeman Academy-Marion 18  
Vermillion 49, Tri-Valley 46  
Wagner 58, Avon 43

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

## Republican Mike Johnson reelected House speaker in dramatic floor vote

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Mike Johnson narrowly won reelection Friday as House speaker on a first ballot, overcoming hard-right GOP holdouts in a tense standoff and buoyed by a nod of support from President-elect Donald Trump.

The uneasy scene brought an ominous start to the first day of the new Congress. A small collection of hardline Republicans convened in the back of the House chamber, one by one declining to vote or choosing another lawmaker. Johnson's face turned grim, acknowledging fresh turmoil and signaling trouble ahead for him as Trump returns to the White House with unified GOP control of Washington.

In the end, however, Johnson was able to flip two holdouts who switched to support him, with help from Trump, who called the dissenting Republican lawmakers from the golf course. The final tally was 218-215.

Johnson, visibly relieved, vowed to "reject business as usual" in his first speech with the gavel.

"We're going to drastically cut back the size and scope of government," he promised.

Johnson's weak grip on the gavel has threatened not only his own survival but Trump's ambitious agenda of tax cuts and mass deportations as Republicans sweep to power in the House and the Senate. The stark vote tally laid bare the challenges he faces. Even backing from Trump himself, usually a surer bet for Republicans, was no guarantee of Johnson's ability to stay in the speaker's office.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries attempted to push past the Republican tumult of the past two years, saying it was time to come together, put party politics aside "to get things done" for Americans.

What was once a ceremonial day with newly elected lawmakers arriving to be sworn into office, often with family, friends and children in tow — Republicans this year wearing long, Trump-style red ties — has evolved into a high-stakes vote for the office of House speaker, among the most powerful elected positions in Washington. Vice President Kamala Harris swore in the senators.

While the Senate is able to convene on its own and has already elected party leaders — Sen. John Thune



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 29 of 64

as the Republican majority leader, who vowed in his first speech to preserve the legislative filibuster, and Sen. Chuck Schumer for the Democratic minority — the House must first elect its speaker. It's a role required by the Constitution, second in the line of succession to the president.

With opposition from his own GOP colleagues, Johnson arrived at the Capitol with outward confidence after working into the night to sway dissenters. A flop by Johnson could have thrown Monday's congressional certification of Trump's 2024 election victory into turmoil.

Trump had endorsed Johnson, and was on the phone during the vote to secure the outcome. "Mike will be a Great Speaker, and our Country will be the beneficiary," Trump posted on social media after the vote.

Congress has been here before, when it took Republicans nearly a week and 15 rounds of voting to elect Kevin McCarthy as speaker in 2023, a spectacle otherwise unseen in modern times. McCarthy was then dumped by his party, a historic first, but he was also part of a long list of GOP speakers chased to early exits.

The stakes were higher this year as Trump prepares to return to the White House with the House and Senate in GOP control and promising to deliver big on a 100-day agenda.

Johnson worked diligently up to the final moments to prevent losing his post. He had spent New Year's Day at Mar-a-Lago as he positioned himself alongside Trump. The speaker often portrays himself as the "quarterback" who will be executing the political plays called by the "coach," the president-elect.

During the dramatic roll call, the strain on Johnson was clear. More than a half-dozen Republicans refused to vote for him, many from the conservative Freedom Caucus simply staying silent as their names were called.

The chamber came to a standstill, and then a few of those Republican holdouts announced their support. But Johnson was still falling short. One hard "no" was Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., who voted for a different GOP leader and had made it clear he would not switch.

But there were two others. Johnson's allies huddled with Reps. Ralph Norman of South Carolina and Keith Self of Texas, some taking calls and passing them their phones. Trump called all three of them. Norman said later that Trump told him, "Mike's the only one who can be elected."

Johnson led the two GOP lawmakers off the chamber floor. A short time later, Johnson reentered the chamber upbeat, and Norman and Self cast their votes for him, to cheers.

Eventually, Johnson and all the House lawmakers were sworn into office.

Johnson commands one of the slimmest majorities in modern times, having lost seats in the November election. With the sudden resignation of Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., the tally dropped to 219-215. That leaves Johnson relying on almost every Republican for support to reach the typical 218 threshold for a majority in the face of Democratic opposition — on the speaker's vote or other party priorities.

Texas GOP Rep. Chip Roy was among the most notable holdouts, a Freedom Caucus member who lashed into Republican leadership's handling of the year-end spending bill for failing to cut spending.

"Something MUST change," Roy posted on social media. He eventually voted for Johnson.

It's unclear what concessions Johnson made to win support. Already, centrist conservatives pushed a new House rule that would require at least nine members of the majority party on any resolution to oust the speaker — raising the threshold McCarthy had lowered to just one.

Members of the Freedom Caucus released a list of demands after its members delivered votes to make Johnson speaker, including on immigration, federal spending cuts and banning members of Congress from stock trading.

In many ways, Johnson has no choice but to endure political hazing from his colleagues, as they remind him of who has leverage in their lopsided relationship. He was a last-ditch choice for the office, rising from the back bench once other leaders failed in the aftermath of McCarthy's ouster.

The speaker's election dominated the opening of the new Congress, which brings a roster of history-making members.

In the Senate, two Black women — Lisa Blunt Rochester of Delaware and Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland — were sworn in, both wearing suits in the white of the suffragettes. It is the first time in the nation's

history two Black women senators will serve at the same time.

Sen.-elect Andy Kim of New Jersey also is making history as the first Korean American to join the chamber. In the House, Sarah McBride is the first openly transgender person in the Congress.

## **Soldier who died by suicide in Las Vegas told ex-girlfriend of pain and exhaustion after Afghanistan**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The highly decorated Special Forces soldier who died by suicide in a Cybertruck explosion on New Year's Day confided to a former girlfriend who had served as an Army nurse that he faced significant pain and exhaustion that she says were key symptoms of traumatic brain injury.

Green Beret Matthew Livelsberger, 37, was a five-time recipient of the Bronze Star, including one with a V device for valor under fire. He had an exemplary military record that spanned the globe and a new baby born last year. But he struggled with the mental and physical toll of his service, which required him to kill and caused him to witness the deaths of fellow soldiers.

Livelsberger mostly bore that burden in private but recently sought treatment for depression from the Army, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that have not been made public.

He also found a confidant in the former nurse, who he began dating in 2018.

Alicia Arritt, 39, and Livelsberger met through a dating app while both were in Colorado Springs. Arritt had served at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, the largest U.S. military medical facility in Europe, where many of the worst combat injuries from Iraq and Afghanistan were initially treated before being flown to the U.S.

There she saw and treated traumatic brain injuries, or TBIs, which troops suffered from incoming fire and roadside bombs. Serious but hard to diagnose, such injuries can have lingering effects that might take years to surface.

"I saw a lot of bad injuries. But the personality changes can happen later," Arritt said.

In texts and images he shared with Arritt, Livelsberger raised the curtain a bit on what he was facing.

"Just some concussions," he said in a text about a deployment to Helmand Province in Afghanistan. He sent her a photo of a graphic tattoo he got on his arm of two skulls pierced by bullets to mark lives he took in Afghanistan. He talked about exhaustion and pain, not being able to sleep and reliving the violence of his deployment.

"My life has been a personal hell for the last year," he told Arritt during the early days of their dating, according to text messages she provided to the AP. "It's refreshing to have such a nice person come along."

On Friday Las Vegas law enforcement officers released excerpts of messages Livelsberger left behind showing the manner in which Livelsberger killed himself was intentional, meant both as a "wakeup call" but also to "cleanse the demons" he was facing from losing fellow soldiers and taking lives.

Livelsberger's death in front of the Trump Hotel using a truck produced by Elon Musk's Tesla company has raised questions as to whether this was an act of political violence.

Officials said Friday that Livelsberger apparently harbored no ill will toward President-elect Donald Trump, and Arritt said both she and Livelsberger were Tesla fans.

"I had a Tesla too that I rescued from a junkyard in 2019, and we used to work on it together, bond over it," Arritt said.

The pair stopped talking regularly after they broke up in 2021, and she had not heard from him in more than two years when he texted out of the blue Dec. 28, and again Dec. 31. The upbeat messages included a video of him driving the Cybertruck and another one of its dancing headlights; the vehicle can sync up its lighting and music.

But she also said Livelsberger felt things "very deeply and I could see him using symbolism" of both the truck and the hotel.

"He wasn't impulsive," Arritt said. "I don't see him doing this impulsively, so my suspicion would be that

he was probably thinking it out.”

Arritt served on active duty from 2003 to 2007 and then was in the Army Reserve from until 2011. With Livelsberger she saw symptoms of TBI as early as 2018.

“He would go through periods of withdrawal, and he struggled with depression and memory loss,” Arritt said.

“I don’t know what drove him to do this, but I think the military didn’t get him help when he needed it.”

But Livelsberger was also sweet and kind, she recalled: “He had a really deep well of inner strength and character, and he just had a lot of integrity.”

Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters Friday that it has turned over all Livelsberger’s medical records to local law enforcement, and encouraged troops facing mental health challenges to seek care through one of the military’s support networks.

“If you need help, if you feel that you need to seek any type of mental health treatment, or just to talk to someone — to seek the services that are available, either on base or off,” Singh said.

When Livelsberger struggled during the time they were dating, Arritt prodded him to get help. But he would not, saying it could cost him his ability to deploy if he was found medically unfit.

“There was a lot of stigma in his unit, they were, you know, big, strong, Special Forces guys there, there was no weakness allowed and mental health is weakness is what they saw,” she said.

Livelsberger seeking treatment for depression was first reported by CNN.

## Jimmy Carter’s state funeral starts Saturday. Here is what to know

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Six days of funeral observances for former President Jimmy Carter begin Saturday in Georgia, where he died on Dec. 29 at the age of 100.

The first events reflect Carter’s climb up the political ladder, from the tiny town of Plains, Georgia, to decades on the global stage as a humanitarian and advocate for democracy.

Here is what to know about the initial ceremonies and what happens next:

The start honors Carter’s deep roots in rural south Georgia

The proceedings, streamed on apnews.com and the Associated Press YouTube channel, are scheduled to begin at 10:15 a.m. EST Saturday with the Carter family arriving at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center in Americus.

Former Secret Service agents who protected Carter will serve as pallbearers, walking alongside the hearse as it exits the campus on its way to Plains.

James Earl Carter Jr. lived more than 80 of his 100 years in and around the town, which still has fewer than 700 people, not much more than when he was born on Oct. 1, 1924. Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton also grew up in rural settings, but Carter stands out for returning and remaining in his birthplace for his long post-presidency.

The motorcade will move through downtown Plains, which spans just a few blocks, passing near the girlhood home of first lady Rosalynn Smith Carter, who died in November 2023 at the age of 96, and near where the couple operated the family peanut warehouses. The route also includes the old train depot that served as Jimmy Carter’s 1976 presidential campaign headquarters and the gas station once run by Carter’s younger brother Billy.

The motorcade will then pass by the Methodist church where the Carters married in 1946, and the home where they lived and died. The former president will be buried there alongside Rosalynn.

The Carters built the one-story house, now surrounded by Secret Service fencing, before his first state Senate campaign in 1962 and lived out their lives there with the exception of four years in the Governor’s Mansion and four more in the White House.

A stop at Carter’s boyhood home — a blend of privilege, hard work

The military-run schedule calls for a 10:50 a.m. stop in front of Carter’s family farm and boyhood home in Archery, outside Plains, after passing the cemetery where the former president’s parents, James Earl

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 32 of 64

Carter Sr. and Lillian Carter, are buried.

The farm now is part of the Jimmy Carter National Historical Park. The National Park Service will ring the old farm bell 39 times to honor the 39th president.

Carter was the first president born in a hospital. But the home had no electricity or running water when he was born, and he worked his father's land during the Great Depression. Still, the Carters had relative privilege and status. Earl employed Black tenant farming families. The elder Carter also owned a store in Plains and was a local civic and political leader. Lillian was a nurse and she delivered Rosalynn. The property still includes a tennis court Earl had built for the family.

It was Earl's death in 1953 that set Jimmy on course toward the Oval Office. The younger Carters had left Plains after he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy. But Jimmy abandoned a promising career as a submarine officer and early participant in the Pentagon's nuclear program to take over the family's peanut business after his father's death. Within a decade, he was elected to the Georgia state Senate.

Lying in repose in Atlanta, where Carter was a politician and global figure

From Archery, the motorcade will head north to Atlanta and will stop at 3 p.m. outside at the Georgia Capitol, where he served as a state senator from 1963 to 1967 and governor from 1971 to 1975. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens will lead a moment of silence. While former governors are honored with state-run funerals, presidents — even if they served as governors — are memorialized with national rites run by the federal government.

The motorcade then is scheduled to arrive at the Carter Presidential Center at 3:45 p.m., with a private service at 4 p.m. The campus includes Carter's presidential library and The Carter Center, established by the former president and first lady in 1982.

From 7 p.m. Saturday through 6 a.m. Monday, Carter will lie in repose for the public to pay respects around the clock.

The ceremony is expected to include some of The Carter Center's global staff of 3,000, whose work concentrating on international diplomacy and mediation, election monitoring and fighting disease in the developing world continues to set a standard for what former presidents can accomplish.

Jimmy Carter, who delivered its annual reports until 2019, won the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize in part for this post-presidential work. His grandson Jason Carter now chairs the board.

What's next: A return to Washington

Carter's remains will travel next to Washington, where he will lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda until his funeral at 10 a.m. Thursday at the Washington National Cathedral. All the living presidents have been invited, and Joe Biden, a Carter ally, will deliver a eulogy.

The Carter family then will return to bury its patriarch in Plains after a private hometown funeral at 3:45 p.m. at Maranatha Baptist Church, where Carter, a devout evangelical, taught Sunday School for decades.

Carter will be buried afterward in a private graveside service, in a plot visible from the front porch of his home.

## Hillary Clinton, George Soros and Denzel Washington will receive the highest US civilian honor

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Democratic philanthropist George Soros and actor-director Denzel Washington will be awarded the nation's highest civilian honor on Saturday in a White House ceremony.

President Joe Biden will bestow the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 19 of the most famous names in politics, sports, entertainment, civil rights, LGBTQ+ advocacy and science.

The White House said the recipients have made "exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors."

Four medals are to be awarded posthumously. They are going to Fannie Lou Hamer, who founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and laid the groundwork for the 1965 Voting Rights Act; former



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 33 of 64

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy; George W. Romney, who served as both a Michigan governor and secretary of housing and urban development; and Ash Carter, the former secretary of defense.

Kennedy is father to Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for health and human services secretary. Romney is the father of former Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney, one of Trump's strongest conservative critics.

Major philanthropists receiving the award include Spanish American chef José Andrés, whose World Central Kitchen charity has become one of the world's most recognized food relief organizations, and Bono, the frontman for rock band U2 and a social justice activist.

Sports and entertainment stars being recognized include professional soccer player Lionel Messi; retired Los Angeles Lakers basketball legend and businessman Earvin "Magic" Johnson; actor Michael J. Fox, who is an outspoken advocate for Parkinson's disease research and development; and William Sanford Nye, known to generations of students as "Bill Nye the Science Guy."

Other awardees include conservationist Jane Goodall; longtime Vogue Magazine editor-in-chief Anna Wintour; American fashion designer Ralph Lauren; American Film Institute founder George Stevens Jr.; entrepreneur and LGBTQ+ activist Tim Gill; and David Rubenstein, co-founder of The Carlyle Group global investment firm.

Last year, Biden bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on 19 people, including the late Medgar Evers, House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina and actor Michelle Yeoh.

## What to know as snow, freezing rain and bitter cold heads through much of the US

A major winter storm forecast to produce heavy snow, significant ice and frigid temperatures was set to begin in the central U.S. on Saturday and move east over the next several days, according to the National Weather Service.

Here is what to know about the storm expected to affect millions in the eastern two-thirds of the country:  
Major winter storm sets up

A large system made landfall along the West Coast on Friday afternoon, bringing rain to the Pacific Northwest with snow expected in the Cascade Mountains, according to meteorologists.

The system will be responsible for the development of a major winter storm from the Central Plains to the Mid-Atlantic this weekend into early next week.

Snow to fall throughout Central Plains and move east

By Saturday evening, widespread heavy snow is likely in areas between central Kansas and Indiana, especially along and north of Interstate 70, where there is a high chance of at least 8 inches (20.3 centimeters).

For places in the region that typically experience the highest snow totals, it may be the heaviest snowfall in at least a decade, meteorologists said.

The storm will then move into the Ohio Valley, where severe travel disruptions are expected. It will reach the Mid-Atlantic states on Sunday into Monday.

Blizzard conditions possible

Wind gusts higher than 35 mph (56 kph) and heavy rates of snowfall could lead to blizzard conditions, particularly in Kansas and nearby portions of the Central Plains by Sunday morning.

Whiteout conditions may make driving dangerous to impossible and heighten the risk of becoming stranded.

Freezing rain expected from eastern Kansas to the Ozarks

Dangerous sleet and freezing rain, particularly detrimental to power lines, also is anticipated to start Saturday from eastern Kansas to Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and much of Kentucky and West Virginia.

Treacherous travel conditions are expected with power outages likely in areas with more than a quarter-inch (a half centimeter) of ice accumulation.

"It's going to be a mess, a potential disaster," private meteorologist Ryan Maue said.

Frigid air from the Arctic to blast areas as far south as Florida



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 34 of 64

Starting Monday, hundreds of millions of people in the eastern two-thirds of the country will experience dangerous, bone-chilling air and wind chills, forecasters said.

Temperatures could be 12 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit (7 to 14 degrees Celsius) colder than normal as the polar vortex stretches down from the high Arctic.

"This could lead to the coldest January for the U.S. since 2011," AccuWeather Director of Forecast Operations Dan DePodwin said Friday, noting there could be up to a week or more of "temperatures that are well below historical average."

The biggest drop below normal is likely to be centered over the Ohio Valley, but significant and unusual cold will extend south to the Gulf Coast, said Danny Barandiaran, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center.

A hard freeze is even expected in Florida, he added.

"The wind chills are going to be brutal," Woodwell Climate Research Institute climate scientist Jennifer Francis said. "Just because the globe is warming doesn't mean these cold snaps are going away."

Weather may be triggered by a fast-warming Arctic

The brutal weather may be triggered in part by a fast-warming Arctic, a reminder that climate change gooses weather extremes, said Judah Cohen, seasonal forecast director at the private firm Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

The polar vortex — ultra-cold air spinning like a top — usually stays above the North Pole, but sometimes stretches down to the U.S., Europe or Asia, causing intense doses of cold.

Cohen and colleagues have published several studies showing an increase in the polar vortex stretching or wandering. Cohen and others published a study last month attributing the cold outbreaks partly to changes from an Arctic that is warming four times faster than the rest of the globe.

## **New Orleans attack came as officials warned of an escalating threat of international terrorism**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After Hamas launched the deadly assault on Israel that triggered retaliatory airstrikes on Gaza, FBI Director Christopher Wray said he feared the Middle East violence could embolden individuals or groups to carry out attacks inside the United States.

Months later, after extremists with the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate killed more than 140 people at a Russian concert hall, Wray sounded the alarm about the potential for a similar coordinated attack closer to home.

Following these months of warnings about a resurgent terrorism threat, an Army veteran inspired by IS slammed a pickup truck into crowds celebrating New Year's in New Orleans. But the culprit did not coordinate with international operatives, nor was he part of any broader plot. Instead, he embodied a longstanding concern that snapped into focus in the years after the Sept. 11 attacks and never evaporated: the threat from homegrown extremists who radicalize on their own before committing mass violence in the name of foreign groups.

"I have never seen the threat landscape this worrying, not just from a counterterrorism perspective but from state-sponsored threats," said Christopher Costa, a former career intelligence officer and senior director for counterterrorism at the White House National Security Council in the first Trump administration.

He said the "grab-bag of grievances" that may have driven 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Jabbar to act — he had multiple divorces and financial pressures and noted in a video posted before the rampage that he thought of killing his family — was consistent with the profile of other attackers. And it coincided with a climate of global instability that has given extra incentive to troubled people prone to violence, from the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks that launched the war in Gaza to the dramatic overthrow last month of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"You pick the grievance, and then you'll find the ideology to act on it," Costa said. "Now it includes Oct. 7, it includes IS — and why IS is so important right now is because it is resurging as a result of what IS

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 35 of 64

could perceive as a victory in Syria.”

The New Orleans attack that killed 14 is thought to be the deadliest IS-inspired assault on U.S. soil since a 2016 massacre of 49 people inside a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, by a gunman who professed allegiance to the group’s then-leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. That shooting occurred at a time when the FBI was racing to disrupt a surge in plots by “lone wolves” who were drawn to act by Islamic State propaganda or even to travel to the group’s so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

The threat never abated, as evidenced by the FBI’s October arrest of an Afghan man in Oklahoma who authorities say was inspired by the Islamic State group to plot an Election Day attack.

But more brazen and coordinated efforts originating from overseas have drawn greater public attention recently, such as Iranian assassination plots targeting public officials, including President-elect Donald Trump. Add to the mix the turmoil in the Middle East, which has prompted demonstrations in the U.S., the 2021 collapse of the Afghan government that gave rise to Taliban leadership, and concerns about those with Islamic State ties entering the U.S. through the southern border.

The swirl of concerns led Wray to tell The Associated Press in August that he was “hard-pressed to think of a time in my career where so many different kinds of threats are all elevated at once.”

That such a deadly assault in New Orleans was carried out by a lone actor without any direction from overseas underscores the volatile and unpredictable nature of the terrorism threat as well as the challenges in stopping violence from such individuals.

“It’s a very, very difficult law enforcement challenge, much more difficult than dealing with someone who may have had active communications with overseas actors, for example, or having a distinct online profile in which they were consuming and participating in extremist activity in the online space,” said Nicholas Rasmussen, the counterterrorism coordinator for the Department of Homeland Security.

“If you don’t have that,” he added, “then you are very much reliant on that bystander phenomenon.”

There’s no indication that Jabbar, who was fatally shot in a firefight with police, was ever on law enforcement’s radar prior to the attack. FBI investigators, however, have turned up significant signs of planning, including suspected bomb-making materials in his short-term New Orleans rental property and his Houston home, the FBI said in a statement Friday.

Though officials say he wasn’t aided by conspirators, Jabbar’s method — ramming a truck into bystanders — is a favored option for Islamic State followers, and a pro-IS media unit on Dec. 30 encouraged attacks at New Year’s Eve celebrations in the U.S. and other countries, according to an intelligence bulletin from the FBI and DHS seen by The Associated Press.

The terrorism threat is set to be inherited in just over two weeks by Trump and an FBI that’s bracing for a dramatic leadership change with the nomination of Kash Patel. Patel has long been skeptical of the FBI’s use of its national security powers and has spoken of breaking off the bureau’s “intel shops” from the rest of its crime-fighting activities. It’s unclear how the New Orleans attack might affect any plans he has if confirmed to the post.

There’s no question that the turmoil in Syria — and what it could mean for the Islamic State group’s ability to reconstitute and inspire supporters in the West — is a major national security wild card.

Assad’s ouster and the arrival of the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, as Syria’s main power broker have been met with degrees of relief but also alarm. Apart from HTS’ past affiliation with al-Qaida, the collapse of Assad’s military has raised fears of a power vacuum that many believe IS will seek to exploit.

Assad’s departure also has opened a window for Turkey to expand operations against Kurdish fighters in northern Syria that it believes are terrorists. The Syrian Defense Forces have been key U.S. allies in the fight against IS and operate detention camps for thousands of captured foreign fighters.

U.S. and European officials are concerned that intensified Turkish attacks against the SDF may contribute to a potential IS resurgence.

None of that conflict made a New Year’s Day attack on U.S. soil by someone claiming inspiration from IS easily predictable, especially since such violence is far rarer than in the Middle East or Europe, said Natana DeLong-Bas, a professor of theology and Islamic Studies at Boston College.

Even so, she noted, "any idiot" can rent a vehicle.

"The means that he used were very simple and straightforward and accessible to anyone," she said.

## Trump's sentencing is set for Jan. 10.

### Here's what could happen next

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Faced with the never-before-seen dilemma of how, when or even whether to sentence a former and future U.S. president, the judge in President-elect Donald Trump's hush money case made a dramatic decision that could nevertheless bring the case to a muted end.

In a ruling Friday, Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan scheduled the sentencing for 10 days before Trump's inauguration — but the judge indicated that he's leaning toward a sentence that would amount to just closing the case without any real punishment. He said Trump could attend the Jan. 10 proceeding remotely because of his transition duties.

Still, that would leave Trump headed back to the White House with a felony conviction.

Will it come to that? Trump wants the conviction thrown out and the case dismissed, and communications director Steven Cheung said the president-elect will "keep fighting." But it's tough to predict just what will unfold in this unprecedented, unpredictable case. Here are some key questions and what we know about the answers:

Remind me: Why is Trump awaiting sentencing?

Trump was convicted in May of 34 felony counts of falsifying his business' records. They pertained to a \$130,000 payment, made through his former personal lawyer in 2016, to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from publicizing her story of having had sex with Trump a decade earlier. He denies her claim and says he's done nothing wrong.

Trump's sentencing was initially set for July 11. But at his lawyers' request, the proceeding was postponed twice, eventually landing on a date in late November, after the presidential election. Then Trump won, and Merchan put everything on hold to consider what to do.

What did the judge just order?

Merchan denied Trump's request to toss out the conviction and the entire case. The judge ordered Trump to appear — virtually or in person, as he chooses — for sentencing at 9:30 a.m. Jan. 10.

What will Trump's sentence be?

That won't be final until the judge pronounces it, and he noted that by law, he has to give prosecutors and Trump an opportunity to weigh in. The charges carry potential penalties ranging from a fine or probation to up to four years in prison.

But the judge wrote that "the most viable option" appears to be what's called an unconditional discharge. It wraps up a case without imprisonment, a fine or probation. But an unconditional discharge leaves a defendant's conviction on the books.

And by law, every person convicted of a felony in New York must provide a DNA sample for the state's crime databank, even in cases of an unconditional discharge.

Can Trump appeal to stop the sentencing from happening?

It's murky. Appealing a conviction or sentence is one thing, but the ins and outs of challenging other types of decisions during a case are complicated.

Former Manhattan Judge Diane Kiesel said that under New York law, Friday's ruling can't be appealed, but that "doesn't mean he's not going to try."

Meanwhile, Trump's lawyers have been trying to get a federal court to take control of the case. Prosecutors are due to file a response with the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals by Jan. 13, three days after Trump now is to be sentenced.

The defense also has suggested it would seek the U.S. Supreme Court's intervention if Merchan didn't throw out the case. In a Nov. 25 letter to the judge, Trump's attorneys contended that the U.S. Constitution permits an appeal to the high court because the defense is making arguments about presidential immunity.

Much of their argument concerns the Supreme Court's July ruling on that topic, which afforded considerable legal protections to presidents. Trump's attorneys might try to convince the Supreme Court that it needs to follow up by getting involved now in the hush money case.

A Trump spokesperson said no decision had been made on whether to challenge Merchan's ruling.

What do prosecutors say about all this?

They declined to comment on Merchan's ruling. They had previously encouraged him to uphold the verdict and offered options such as delaying sentencing until Trump left office, promising no jail time, or closing the case by noting he was convicted but never sentenced because of presidential immunity. Merchan said he found those ideas untenable.

Can Trump appeal his conviction?

Yes. But by law, he can't do that until he's sentenced.

Could Trump pardon himself once he's president?

Not in this case. Presidential pardons apply only to federal crimes. Trump was convicted in a New York state court.

## **The fragile Israel-Hezbollah truce is holding so far, despite violations**

By ABBY SEWELL and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A fragile ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has held up for over a month, even as its terms seem unlikely to be met by the agreed-upon deadline.

The deal struck on Nov. 27 to halt the war required Hezbollah to immediately lay down its arms in southern Lebanon and gave Israel 60 days to withdraw its forces there and hand over control to the Lebanese army and U.N. peacekeepers.

So far, Israel has withdrawn from just two of the dozens of towns it holds in southern Lebanon. And it has continued striking what it says are bases belonging to Hezbollah, which it accuses of attempting to launch rockets and move weapons before they can be confiscated and destroyed.

Hezbollah, which was severely diminished during nearly 14 months of war, has threatened to resume fighting if Israel does not fully withdraw its forces by the 60-day deadline.

Yet despite accusations from both sides about hundreds of ceasefire violations, the truce is likely to hold, analysts say. That is good news for thousands of Israeli and Lebanese families displaced by the war still waiting to return home.

"The ceasefire agreement is rather opaque and open to interpretation," said Firas Maksad, a senior fellow with the Middle East Institute in Washington. That flexibility, he said, may give it a better chance of holding in the face of changing circumstances, including the ouster of Syria's longtime leader, Bashar Assad, just days after the ceasefire took effect.

With Assad gone, Hezbollah lost a vital route for smuggling weapons from Iran. While that further weakened Hezbollah's hand, Israel had already agreed to the U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023 — the day after Hamas launched a deadly attack into Israel that ignited the ongoing war in Gaza. Since then, Israeli air and ground assaults have killed more than 4,000 people in Lebanon, including hundreds of civilians. At the height of the war, more than 1 million Lebanese people were displaced.

Hezbollah rockets forced some 60,000 from their homes in northern Israel, and killed 76 people in Israel, including 31 soldiers. Almost 50 Israeli soldiers were killed during operations inside Lebanon.

Here's a look at the terms of the ceasefire and its prospects for ending hostilities over the long-term.

What does the ceasefire agreement say?

The agreement says that both Hezbollah and Israel will halt "offensive" military actions, but that they can act in self-defense, although it is not entirely clear how that term may be interpreted.

The Lebanese army is tasked with preventing Hezbollah and other militant groups from launching attacks



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 38 of 64

into Israel. It is also required to dismantle Hezbollah facilities and weapons in southern Lebanon — activities that might eventually be expanded to the rest of Lebanon, although it is not explicit in the ceasefire agreement.

The United States, France, Israel, Lebanon and the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, are responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement.

“The key question is not whether the deal will hold, but what version of it will be implemented,” Maksad, the analyst, said.

Is the ceasefire being implemented?

Hezbollah has for the most part halted its rocket and drone fire into Israel, and Israel has stopped attacking Hezbollah in most areas of Lebanon. But Israel has launched regular airstrikes on what it says are militant sites in southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa Valley.

Israeli forces have so far withdrawn from two towns in southern Lebanon - Khiam and Shamaa. They remain in some 60 others, according to the International Organization for Migration, and around 160,000 Lebanese remain displaced.

Lebanon has accused Israel of repeatedly violating the ceasefire agreement and last week submitted a complaint to the U.N. Security Council that says Israel launched some 816 “ground and air attacks” between the start of the ceasefire and Dec. 22, 2023.

The complaint said the attacks have hindered the Lebanese army’s efforts to deploy in the south and uphold its end of the ceasefire agreement.

Israel says Hezbollah has violated the ceasefire hundreds of times and has also complained to the Security Council. It accused Hezbollah militants of moving ammunition, attempting to attack Israeli soldiers, and preparing and launching rockets towards northern Israel, among other things.

Until it hands over control of more towns to the Lebanese army, Israeli troops have been destroying Hezbollah infrastructure, including weapons warehouses and underground tunnels. Lebanese authorities say Israel has also destroyed civilian houses and infrastructure.

What happens after the ceasefire has been in place for 60 days?

Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanese towns has been slower than anticipated because of a lack of Lebanese army troops ready to take over, according to Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, a military spokesman. Lebanon disputes this, and says it is waiting for Israel to withdraw before entering the towns.

Shoshani said Israel is satisfied with the Lebanese army’s control of the areas it has already withdrawn from, and that while it would prefer a faster transfer of power, security is its most important objective.

Israel does not consider the 60-day timetable for withdrawal to be “sacred,” said Harel Chorev, an expert on Israel-Lebanon relations at Tel Aviv University who estimates that Lebanon will need to recruit and deploy thousands more troops before Israel will be ready to hand over control.

Hezbollah officials have said that if Israeli forces remain in Lebanon 60 days past the start of the ceasefire, the militant group might return to attacking them. But Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Kassem said Wednesday that, for now, the group is holding off to give the Lebanese state a chance to “take responsibility” for enforcing the agreement.

Over the final two months of the war, Hezbollah suffered major blows to its leadership, weapons and forces from a barrage of Israeli airstrikes, and a ground invasion that led to fierce battles in southern Lebanon. The fall of Assad was another big setback.

“The power imbalance suggests Israel may want to ensure greater freedom of action after the 60-day period,” Maksad, the analyst, said. And Hezbollah, in its weakened position, now has a “strong interest” in making sure the deal doesn’t fall apart altogether “despite Israeli violations,” he said.

While Hezbollah may not be in a position to return to open war with Israel, it or other groups could mount guerilla attacks using light weaponry if Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon, said former Lebanese army Gen. Hassan Jouni. And even if Israel does withdraw all of its ground forces, Jouni said, the Israeli military could continue to carry out sporadic airstrikes in Lebanon, much as it has done in Syria for years.



## Sunday school class with Jimmy Carter: What it was like

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

PLAINS, Ga. (AP) — It never got old.

No matter how many times one crammed into the modest sanctuary at Maranatha Baptist Church, there was always some wisdom to be gleaned from the measured, Bible-inspired words of Jimmy Carter.

This was another side of the 39th president, a down-to-earth man of steadfast faith who somehow found time to teach Sunday school classes when he wasn't building homes for the needy, or advocating for fair elections, or helping eradicate awful diseases.

For young and old, straight and gay, believers and nonbelievers, Black and white and brown, Maranatha was a far-off-the-beaten path destination in southwest Georgia where Carter, well into his 90s, stayed connected with his fellow citizens of the world.

Anyone willing to make the trek to his hometown of Plains, with its one blinking caution light and residents numbering in the hundreds, was rewarded with access to a white-haired man who once occupied the highest office in the land.

Carter taught his Sunday school class roughly twice a month to accommodate crowds that sometimes swelled to more than 500. (On the other Sundays, no more than a couple dozen regulars and a handful of visitors usually attended services).

Here, the former commander-in-chief and the onetime first lady, his wife of more than seven decades, were simply Mr. Jimmy and Ms. Rosalynn. And when it came to worshipping with them, all were welcome.

Sundays with Mr. Jimmy

Before the former president entered the sanctuary, with a bomb-sniffing dog outside and Secret Service agents scattered around, a strict set of rules would be laid out by Ms. Jan — Jan Williams, a longtime church member and friend of the Carters. She would have made quite a drill sergeant.

It felt like a good-cop, bad-cop routine. Ms. Jan barking out rules you knew had come straight from Mr. Jimmy, who studied nuclear physics and approached all things with an engineer's orderly mind.

Most important for those wanting a photo with the Carters — and nearly everyone did — you had to stay for the main 11 a.m. church service. Picture-taking began around noon.

If you left the church grounds before that, there was no coming back. If you stayed, you followed rules. No autographs. No handshakes. No attempts at conversation beyond a brief "good morning" or "thank you."

Carter, consistently in sports jacket, slacks and bolo tie, would start his lesson by moving around the sanctuary, asking with a straight face if there were any visitors — that always got a laugh — and where they were from. In my many trips to Maranatha, I'm sure I heard all 50 states, not to mention an array of far-flung countries.

If anyone answered Washington, D.C., the answer was predictable. "I used to live there," the one-term president would say, breaking into that toothy grin.

Carter's Bible lessons focused on central themes: God gives life, loves unconditionally and provides the freedom to live a completely successful life. But the lesson usually began with an anecdote about what he'd been up to or his perspective on world affairs.

Carter could talk about building homes with Habitat for Humanity or bemoan U.S. conflicts since World War II. He could talk about his work with The Elders, a group of former world leaders, or a trip out West to go trout fishing with Ted Turner. He could talk about The Carter Center's successes in eliminating the guinea worm, or his long friendships with Willie Nelson and Bob Dylan.

"Willie Nelson is an old friend. He used to come visit me in the White House," Carter related once, touching ever so gently on Nelson's affection for weed.

"I don't know what Willie and my children did after I went to bed. I've heard rumors," the former president said, with a sly grin and a wink that suggested he believed every word.

My favorite: Carter telling of his latest book project and how he had long used encyclopedias for research.

Carter decided the collection was taking up too much space, so he boxed it up and headed out to local schools and libraries, figuring someone would eagerly take a donation from an ex-president. Instead, he

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 40 of 64

got a standard refrain: Sorry, no one uses encyclopedias anymore.

I recall the punchline. "How do I look up things now?" asked the man born five years after World War I ended. Pause. Then: "Google."

Memories of visits

During most of my visits to Maranatha, Carter spoke for 45 minutes without sitting down. His mind remained sharp, with only an occasional glance at the notes tucked inside his Bible, but his body became more and more feeble as he moved deeper into his 90s. He talked openly about the ravages of aging.

He resisted church members' pleadings to take a seat while teaching. I was there the first time he tried it, in August 2018.

"I'm uncomfortable sitting down," he said, "but I guess I'll get used to it."

Not that time. Carter sat for less than 10 minutes before rising. He stood at the table for the rest of class.

Returning the following year, Carter had relented to using a white, remote-controlled chair. After climbing aboard — voilà — a flick of a switch would slowly lift him above the lectern, visible even to those sitting in the back.

If there wasn't enough room in the sanctuary, rows of folding chairs were set up in the fellowship hall and a handful of tiny classrooms. Carter's lesson would be shown on TVs linked to a feed from the main room.

A letdown for visitors? Perhaps. But relegation to a back room had its benefits.

Carter, who usually arrived about 15 minutes before the start of his 10 a.m. lesson, would swing by these rooms before heading to the sanctuary. He would even take a few questions, which didn't happen in front of the big crowd.

After a 2018 profile by The Washington Post told of the Carters having regular Saturday night dinners at friend Jill Stuckey's house, which included one glass each of "bargain-brand Chardonnay," I asked Carter how many glasses of wine he'd had the night before.

"I'll say one," Carter replied with a sly grin. Stuckey, standing behind him, shook her head and held up two fingers.

No matter where you sat — main sanctuary or back room — everyone got their picture taken with Mr. Jimmy and Ms. Rosalynn. For many, this seemed the biggest reward.

When we first started attending, those pictures were taken under a tree just outside the church. After being diagnosed with cancer in 2015, Carter and his wife would pose with visitors inside the sanctuary. Carter liked to joke about what a burden it was to sit for all those pictures, which surely numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

"I'll be delighted to have photographs made with all of you," he quipped after one of his final lessons. "Actually, since I'm in church, I better say I'll be willing to have photographs made with all of you."

For my family, those pictures show a son growing from boy to man with Mr. Jimmy and Ms. Rosalynn filling out the frames. What a treasure they are.

The final lesson

Turnout for Carter's Sunday school lessons dipped during the Great Recession. But the crowds returned after his cancer announcement, with some folks lining up outside the church the night before.

Carter declared himself cancer-free, but other health challenges began to catch up with him. After an October 2019 fall at his home left him with a slightly fractured pelvis, the church announced Carter would not teach his next class on Nov. 3, a lesson we had planned to attend. Disappointed, we canceled our hotel reservation.

But Mr. Jimmy wasn't done just yet.

The church had canceled without checking with him. He made it clear that he was NOT cancelling. We quickly rebooked. Carter's lesson that day, based on the Book of Job, was especially poignant in retrospect.

"I'm going to start by asking you a very profound question," he said. "How many of you believe in life after death?"

Carter conceded to having doubts for most of his life, right up to being stricken by cancer, which finally erased any skepticism. When the end on this world came, he would be ready.

"We don't have anything to dread after death," Carter said with a reassuring smile.

At the end of his lesson, he challenged everyone to do one good deed for a stranger. "I'm going to hold you to it," Carter promised.

He never got the chance.

His health continued to decline, sidelining him through the Christmas season. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the world in 2020.

By that summer, it was clear that Mr. Jimmy's treasured role as spreader of the gospel, which he began at 18 and resumed after his presidency, was over.

## **Soldier who blew up Tesla at Trump hotel left note saying blast was to be a 'wake up call' for US**

By RIO YAMAT, TARA COPP, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A highly decorated Army soldier who fatally shot himself in a Tesla Cybertruck just before it blew up outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas left notes saying the New Year's Day explosion was a stunt to serve as a "wake up call" for the country's ills, investigators said Friday.

Matthew Livelsberger, a 37-year-old Green Beret from Colorado Springs, Colorado, also wrote in notes he left on his cellphone that he needed to "cleanse" his mind "of the brothers I've lost and relieve myself of the burden of the lives I took." Livelsberger served in the Army since 2006 and deployed twice to Afghanistan.

"This was not a terrorist attack, it was a wake up call. Americans only pay attention to spectacles and violence. What better way to get my point across than a stunt with fireworks and explosives," Livelsberger wrote in one letter found by authorities and released Friday.

The explosion caused minor injuries to seven people but virtually no damage to the Trump International Hotel. Authorities said that Livelsberger acted alone.

Livelsberger's letters covered a range of topics including political grievances, societal problems and both domestic and international issues, including the war in Ukraine. He said in one letter that the U.S. was "terminally ill and headed toward collapse."

Tesla engineers, meanwhile, helped extract data from the Cybertruck for investigators, including Livelsberger's path between charging stations from Colorado through New Mexico and Arizona and on to Las Vegas, according to Assistant Sheriff Dori Koren.

"We still have a large volume of data to go through," Koren said Friday. "There's thousands if not millions of videos and photos and documents and web history and all of those things that need to be analyzed."

The new details came as investigators were still trying to determine whether Livelsberger sought to make a political point with the Tesla and the hotel bearing the president-elect's name.

Livelsberger harbored no ill will toward President-elect Donald Trump, law enforcement officials said. In one of the notes he left, he said the country needed to "rally around" Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

Musk has recently become a member of Trump's inner circle. Neither Trump nor Musk was in Las Vegas on Wednesday, the day of the explosion. Both had attended Trump's New Year's Eve party at his South Florida estate.

"Although this incident is more public and more sensational than usual, it ultimately appears to be a tragic case of suicide involving a heavily decorated combat veteran who was struggling with PTSD and other issues," Spencer Evans, the FBI special agent in charge in Las Vegas, said Friday.

Livelsberger died of a self-inflicted gunshot to the head. Investigators have not yet explained how Livelsberger shot himself inside the Cybertruck while simultaneously igniting fireworks and camp fuel packed inside, causing the explosion.

Among the charred items found inside were a handgun at Livelsberger's feet, another firearm, fireworks, a passport, a military ID, credit cards, an iPhone and a smartwatch. Authorities said both guns were purchased legally.

In recent years Livelsberger confided to Alicia Arritt, a former girlfriend who had served as an Army nurse, that he faced significant pain and exhaustion she attributed to traumatic brain injury.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 42 of 64

He opened up to Arritt, 39, whom he met and began dating in Colorado in 2018, about exhaustion, pain that kept him up at night, and reliving violence from his deployment in Afghanistan, Arritt said.

"My life has been a personal hell for the last year," he told Arritt in text messages during their early days of dating that she shared with The Associated Press.

The Green Berets are highly trained U.S. Army special forces who specialize in guerrilla warfare and unconventional fighting tactics. Livelsberger rose through the ranks and deployed twice to Afghanistan and served in Ukraine, Tajikistan, Georgia and Congo, according to the Army. He recently returned from an overseas assignment in Germany and was on approved leave when he died.

He was awarded five Bronze Stars, including one with a valor device for courage under fire, a combat infantry badge and an Army Commendation Medal with valor.

Authorities searched a townhouse in Livelsberger's hometown of Colorado Springs Thursday as part of the investigation. Neighbors said the man who lived there had a wife and a baby.

Across-the-street neighbor Cindy Helwig said she last saw him when he asked to borrow a tool to fix an SUV.

"He was a normal guy," said Helwig.

The explosion came hours after 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar rammed a truck into a crowd in New Orleans' famed French Quarter early on New Year's Day, killing at least 14 people before being shot to death by police. The FBI says they believe Jabbar acted alone and that it is being investigated as a terrorist attack.

## How filmmakers and actors in Asia and the Asian diaspora are expanding representation

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

Twenty years after he was a young, struggling actor in Toronto, Thomas Lo is now the one giving young Asian actors their big breaks. He just had to go to Hong Kong to do it.

The Chinese Canadian has been the creative director of one of the island city's biggest TV broadcasting companies for only a few years, but is already making original English-language content to reach viewers around the world.

"It was a bit of a full-circle moment for me," Lo told The Associated Press. "You see more Asians but you're still seeing the same Asians on screen, right? We're looking for more opportunities on a grander scale and it's not just in front of the camera. It's behind the camera as well."

It's vastly different to work as an Asian actor in North American hubs — Toronto, Los Angeles, New York — than in those in Asia — such as Hong Kong or Taipei. Actors in Asia don't as often have to deal with auditioning for stereotypical characters, being the only Asian on a set or getting tokenized. Historically, many Asian American and Canadian actors have even relocated from the West to countries in Asia to find better opportunities in entertainment.

A few film and TV producers on both sides of the Pacific, however, are looking to shake up those dynamics by crisscrossing their show biz ecosystems. The hope is a win-win with fledgling talent in the Asian diaspora gaining global exposure — and Asia-based productions getting wider audiences. For example the Hulu series "Shogun," which won 18 Emmys, demonstrated a successful collaboration between Japanese and Western cast and crew — which included Japanese Americans.

At the helm of Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), Lo led its first collaboration with an American company — on an original TV drama with scenes in both English and Cantonese. Two crews on two different continents filmed "Cross My Mind," a series about a Chinese American aspiring music producer in Los Angeles (Nathan Ing) who becomes telepathically connected to a Hong Kong advertising executive (Cantopop singer Jocelyn Chan).

Chan, 30, was born in Hong Kong but spent ages 3-11 in Vancouver, British Columbia. She returned to Hong Kong for her music career partly because of concern about succeeding in North America.

"A lot of people probably had similar sentiments to me where it's more possible if we came back to this



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 43 of 64

home," Chan said of finding success in the entertainment industry in Asia. "We all feel like we have two homes."

Her role in "Cross My Mind" is powerful, assertive and far from Western stereotypes of Asian women as meek.

The partnership between Los Angeles-based Wong Fu Productions and TVB started with one side sliding into the other's DMs on Instagram.

"It'd be cool if we can kind of tap into their audience of what they built because that's who we're trying to speak with," Lo said, about reaching Asian American viewers.

Wong Fu, which started in 2003, is now a thriving YouTube channel of Asian American-centered skits and other content. Simu Liu was among its then-emerging actors.

"Now we have actors that want to work with us for free and are just like 'Put us in whatever,' knowing that it's a way to connect with Asian Americans first," said Wesley Chan, Wong Fu co-founder and creative director. "Then that can also be a way to propel them."

Wesley Chan, no relation to Jocelyn, was intrigued by the challenge of shepherding a story that incorporates Asian and Asian American protagonists. He and his team wrote six episodes of "Cross My Mind" in six months to film in 2022.

"We knew that they wanted to make a story that could kind of show the cultural differences between an American and someone in Hong Kong," he said. "I thought that was really cool because to even know that there is a difference — or to share that there's a difference — I think is a nuance that is not seen very often."

Meshing work styles was no small feat. Wesley Chan noticed crews in Los Angeles and Hong Kong — where there are no unions — worked differently. It in some ways paralleled the bicultural nature of the show itself.

The show premiered in April 2023 on myTV Super, TVB's streaming platform that has 9 million subscribers. It debuted the following December in the U.S. on two new streaming platforms that have since merged into GoldenTV, which focuses on English language content for Asian American viewers.

"There's two different audiences on both sides of the world, but it's still content that I think has eyeballs," said Takashi Cheng, GoldenTV's founder. "The fact that they need English-language programming tells you that American or English content is not dead. It's in fact very much attractive in foreign countries."

GoldenTV has gained thousands of subscribers since launching nearly two years ago, Cheng said. The platform plans to grow with unscripted shows. In September, it premiered entertainment news show "The Takeaway," hosted by influencer Michelle Park. Actor Daniel Wu ("American Born Chinese") is developing a docuseries on his love of racing.

Wu, 50, rose to fame after moving to Hong Kong. Someone like Wu — who was born in the San Francisco Bay Area, became a Hong Kong cinema star and then pivoted to Hollywood — is a "rarity," Lo said. Before digital audiences, it was difficult to alternate between Asian and American screens, he continued.

"I think we were a breath of fresh air for those actors and talents and artists, when we said that we're going to be producing English content," Lo said. "There is an audience that's untapped here."

Wesley Chan said Wong Fu is not ruling out being "a conduit" for more crossover collaborations.

Jocelyn Chan is still maintaining her singing career with hit singles and a solo Hong Kong concert this year. But she says the success of "Cross My Mind," has given her the courage to think about acting beyond Hong Kong. She's now looking for an agent in Canada.

"It kind of pushed me to not wait," said Chan, who is also a sound healer and practitioner. She also thinks there's more space for talent who grew up bicultural. "It's almost like an even more niche representation within the wider Asian representation."

## **New Orleans attack and Vegas explosion highlight extremist violence by active military and veterans**

By JASON DEAREN, MICHELLE R. SMITH and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

While much remains unknown about the man who carried out an attack in New Orleans on New Year's and another who died in an explosion in Las Vegas the same day, the violence highlights the increased role of people with military experience in ideologically driven attacks, especially those that seek mass casualties.

In New Orleans, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a veteran of the U.S. Army, was killed by police after a deadly rampage in a pickup truck that left 14 others dead and injured dozens more. It's being investigated as an act of terrorism inspired by the Islamic State group.

In Las Vegas, officials say Matthew Livelsberger, an active duty member of the U.S. Army Special Forces, shot himself in the head in a Tesla Cybertruck packed with firework mortars and camp fuel canisters, shortly before it exploded outside the entrance of the Trump International Hotel, injuring seven people. On Friday, investigators said Livelsberger wrote that the explosion was meant to serve as a "wake up call" and that the country was "terminally ill and headed toward collapse."

Service members and veterans who radicalize make up a tiny fraction of a percentage point of the millions and millions who have honorably served their country. But an Associated Press investigation published last year found that radicalization among both veterans and active duty service members was on the rise and that hundreds of people with military backgrounds had been arrested for extremist crimes since 2017. The AP found that extremist plots they were involved in during that period had killed or injured nearly 100 people.

The AP also found multiple issues with the Pentagon's efforts to address extremism in the ranks, including that there is still no force-wide system to track it, and that a cornerstone report on the issue contained old data, misleading analyses and ignored evidence of the problem.

Since 2017, both veterans and active duty service members radicalized at a faster rate than people without military backgrounds, according to data from terrorism researchers at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, at the University of Maryland. Less than 1% of the adult population is currently serving in the U.S. military, but active duty military members make up a disproportionate 3.2% of the extremist cases START researchers found between 2017 and 2022.

While the number of people with military backgrounds involved in violent extremist plots remains small, the participation of active military and veterans gave extremist plots more potential for mass injury or death, according to data collected and analyzed by the AP and START.

More than 480 people with a military background were accused of ideologically driven extremist crimes from 2017 through 2023, including the more than 230 arrested in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection — 18% of those arrested for the attack as of late last year, according to START. The data tracked individuals with military backgrounds, most of whom were veterans, involved in plans to kill, injure or inflict damage for political, social, economic or religious goals.

The AP's analysis found that plots involving people with military backgrounds were more likely to involve mass casualties, weapons training or firearms than plots that didn't include someone with a military background. This held true whether or not the plots were carried out.

The jihadist ideology of the Islamic State group apparently connected to the New Orleans attack would make it an outlier in the motivations of previous attacks involving people with military backgrounds. Only around 9% of such extremists with military backgrounds subscribed to jihadist ideologies, START researchers found. More than 80% identified with far-right, anti-government or white supremacist ideologies, with the rest split among far-left or other motivations.

Still, there have been a number of significant attacks motivated by the Islamic State and jihadist ideology in which the attackers had U.S. military backgrounds. In 2017, a U.S. Army National Guard veteran who'd served in Iraq killed five people in a mass shooting at the Fort Lauderdale airport in Florida after radicalizing via jihadist message boards and vowing support for the Islamic State. In 2009, an Army psychiatrist and officer opened fire at Fort Hood, Texas, and killed 13 people, wounding dozens more. The shooter

had been in contact with a known al-Qaida operative prior to the shooting.

In the shadow of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol — led in part by veterans — law enforcement officials said the threat from domestic violent extremists was one of the most persistent and pressing terror threats to the United States. The Pentagon has said it is “committed to understanding the root causes of extremism and ensuring such behavior is promptly and appropriately addressed and reported to the proper authorities.”

Kristofer Goldsmith, an Army veteran and CEO of Task Force Butler Institute, which trains veterans to research and counter extremism, said the problem of violent extremism in the military cuts across ideological lines. Still, he said, while the Biden administration tried to put in place efforts to address it, Republicans in Congress opposed them for political reasons.

“They threw, you know, every roadblock that they could in saying that all veterans are being called extremists by the Biden administration,” Goldsmith said. “And now we’re in a situation where we’re four years behind where we could have been.”

During their long military careers, both Jabbar and Livelsberger served time at the U.S. Army base formerly known as Fort Bragg in North Carolina, one of the nation’s largest military bases. One of the officials who spoke to the AP said there is no overlap in their assignments at the base, now called Fort Liberty.

Goldsmith said he is concerned that the incoming Trump administration will focus on the New Orleans attack and ISIS and ignore that most deadly attacks in the United States in recent history have come from the far right, particularly if Trump’s nominee for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, is confirmed.

Hegseth has justified the medieval Crusades that pitted Christians against Muslims, criticized the Pentagon’s efforts to address extremism in the ranks and ahead of Joe Biden’s inauguration in the weeks after the Jan. 6 attack was himself flagged by a fellow National Guard member as a possible “insider threat.”

## **Judge sets Trump’s sentencing in hush money case for Jan. 10, but signals no jail time**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In an extraordinary turn, a judge Friday set President-elect Donald Trump’s sentencing in his hush money criminal case for Jan. 10 — little over a week before he’s due to return to the White House — but indicated he wouldn’t be jailed.

The development nevertheless leaves Trump on course to be the first president to take office convicted of felony crimes.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan, who presided over Trump’s trial, signaled in a written decision that he’d sentence the former and future president to what’s known as an unconditional discharge, in which a conviction stands but the case is closed without jail time, a fine or probation. Trump can appear virtually for sentencing, if he chooses.

Rejecting Trump’s push to dismiss the verdict and throw out the case on presidential immunity grounds and because of his impending second term, Merchan wrote that only “bringing finality to this matter” would serve the interests of justice.

He said he sought to balance Trump’s ability to govern, “unencumbered” by the case, against other interests: the U.S. Supreme Court’s July ruling on presidential immunity and the public’s expectation “that all are equal and no one is above the law,” and the importance of respecting a jury verdict.

“This court is simply not persuaded that the first factor outweighs the others at this stage of the proceeding,” Merchan wrote in an 18-page decision.

Trump lashed out at Merchan on his Truth Social platform Friday, writing that it “would be the end of the Presidency as we know it” if the judge’s ruling is allowed to stand.

He repeated his claims that the case was an “illegitimate political attack” and “nothing but a Rigged Charade” perpetuated by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat. He didn’t elaborate on potential next legal moves.

Bragg’s office declined to comment on Merchan’s ruling.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 46 of 64

Former Manhattan Judge Diane Kiesel said the ruling can't be appealed under New York law, but Trump nonetheless might try to appeal it. In any event, he can appeal his conviction — a step that can't be taken until he is sentenced — but he won't be able to pardon himself. Trump's case was tried in state court, but presidential pardons only apply to federal crimes.

Trump takes office Jan. 20 as the first former president to be convicted of a crime and the first convicted criminal to be elected to the office.

The Republican was found guilty in May of 34 counts of falsifying business records.

The charges involved an alleged scheme to hide a hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in the last weeks of Trump's first campaign in 2016. The payout was made to keep her from publicizing claims she'd had sex with the married Trump years earlier. He says that her story is false and that he did nothing wrong.

The case centered on how Trump accounted for reimbursing his personal attorney at the time, Michael Cohen, for the Daniels payment. Cohen on Friday called Merchan's decision to go ahead with the sentencing "judicious and appropriate."

The conviction left Trump, 78, facing the possibility of punishment ranging from a fine or probation to up to four years in prison. His sentencing initially was set for last July 11, then postponed twice at the defense's request.

Then, after Trump's Nov. 5 election, Merchan delayed the sentencing again so the defense and prosecution could weigh in on the future of the case.

Trump's lawyers urged Merchan to toss it. They said it would otherwise pose unconstitutional "disruptions" to the incoming president's ability to run the country.

Prosecutors acknowledged there should be some accommodation for his upcoming presidency, but they insisted the conviction should stand.

They suggested various options, such as freezing the case during his term or guaranteeing him a no-jail sentence. They also proposed closing the case while formally noting both his conviction and his undecided appeal — a novel idea drawn from what some state courts do when criminal defendants die while appealing their cases.

Merchan ruled that Trump's current status as president-elect does not afford him the same immunity as a sitting president. Setting the verdict aside and dismissing the case would be a "drastic" step and would "undermine the Rule of Law in immeasurable ways," Merchan wrote.

Before Trump's November election, his lawyers sought to reverse his conviction for a different reason: the Supreme Court's immunity decision, which gave presidents broad protection from criminal prosecution.

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

The Trump hush money attorneys contended that the jury got some evidence that should have been shielded by presidential immunity. Merchan later rejected that argument, but in the meantime, the election raised new issues.

While urging Merchan to nix the conviction, Trump also sought to move the case to federal court, where he could also assert immunity. A federal judge repeatedly said no, but Trump appealed.

The hush money case was the only one of Trump's four criminal indictments to go to trial.

Since the election, special counsel Jack Smith has ended his two federal cases. One pertained to Trump's efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss; the other alleged he hoarded classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

A separate, state-level election interference case in Georgia is in limbo after an appeals court removed prosecutor Fani Willis from the case.

Trump's lawyers argued that Smith's decision to dismiss the federal indictments against Trump should propel a dismissal of the New York hush money case, as well. But Merchan said he found that argument unpersuasive, noting that the hush money case was in a "vastly" different stage.



## **New Orleans attacker had suspected bomb materials at home, reserved truck weeks ago, officials say**

By JIM MUSTIAN, JACK BROOK, STEPHEN SMITH and SARA CLINE Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The man who rammed a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revelers in New Orleans had suspected bomb-making materials at his home and reserved the vehicle used in the deadly attack more than six weeks earlier, law enforcement officials told The Associated Press on Friday.

Federal authorities searching the home of Shamsud-Din Jabbar in Houston found a workbench in the garage and hazardous materials believed to have been used to make explosive devices, according to law enforcement officials familiar with the search. The officials were not authorized to speak about the ongoing inquiry and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity.

The FBI investigation also revealed that Jabbar purchased a cooler in Vidor, Texas, hours before the attack and gun oil from a store in Sulphur, Louisiana, the officials said. Authorities also determined Jabbar booked his rental of the pickup truck on Nov. 14, suggesting he may have been plotting the attack for more than six weeks.

Authorities say 14 people were killed and about 30 were injured in the attack early Wednesday by Jabbar, a former Army soldier who posted several videos on his Facebook hours before the attack previewing the violence he would unleash and proclaiming his support for the Islamic State militant group. The coroner's office listed the cause of death for all 14 victims as "blunt force injuries."

Jabbar, 42, was fatally shot in a firefight with police at the scene of the deadly crash on Bourbon Street, famous worldwide for its festive vibes in New Orleans' historic French Quarter.

Authorities found crude bombs that had been planted in the neighborhood in an apparent attempt to cause more carnage. Two improvised explosive devices left in coolers several blocks apart were rendered safe at the scene, officials said. Other devices were determined to be nonfunctional.

Investigators recovered from Jabbar's rental truck a transmitter intended to trigger the two bombs, the FBI said in a statement Friday. It also said authorities found bomb-making materials at the New Orleans home Jabbar rented prior to the attack. Jabbar tried to burn the house down by setting a small fire in a hallway and placing accelerants to help spread it, the FBI said. The flames burned out before firefighters arrived.

Authorities on Friday were still investigating Jabbar's motives and how he carried out the attack. They say he exited the crashed truck wearing a ballistic vest and helmet and fired at police, wounding at least two officers before he was fatally shot by officers returning fire.

New Orleans police declined to say Friday how many shots were fired by Jabbar and police, and whether any bystanders may have been hit, citing the active investigation.

Stella Cziment, who heads the city's civilian-run Office of the Independent Police Monitor, said investigators are working to account for "every single bullet that was fired" and whether any of them struck bystanders.

Bourbon Street was solemn Friday. A day after the crime scene reopened to the public, locals and tourists stopped to pay respects to victims of the attack as the sound of bucket drums echoed. People shed tears while gathering at a growing memorial. Some left flowers and candles while others dropped to their knees to say a quick prayer.

"New Orleans is about having a good time, you know, just trying to live your best life," said Tony Lightfoot, who works in Baton Rouge and was visiting New Orleans with his son. He said the attacker "just decided to disrupt all of that."

Thirteen people remained hospitalized. Eight people were in intensive care at University Medical Center New Orleans, spokesperson Carolina Giepert said.

The White House said President Joe Biden would travel to New Orleans next week. The president and first lady planned to visit Monday to "grieve with the families and community members impacted by the tragic attack."

Police used multiple vehicles and barricades on Friday to block traffic at Bourbon and Canal streets as crowds of pedestrians swelled. Other law enforcement agencies helped city officers provide extra security,

said Reese Harper, a spokesperson for the New Orleans Police Department.

The first parade of the Carnival season leading up to Mardi Gras was scheduled to take place Monday. New Orleans will also host the Super Bowl on Feb. 9.

"This enhanced safety effort will continue daily, not just during large events," Harper said in a statement.

In a previous effort to protect the French Quarter, the city had installed steel columns known as bollards to restrict vehicle access to Bourbon Street. The posts retracted to allow for deliveries to bars and restaurants, until — gummed up by Mardi Gras beads, beer and other detritus — they stopped working reliably.

So when New Year's Eve arrived, the bollards were gone. They were being replaced ahead of the Super Bowl.

Meanwhile, New Orleans City Council President Helena Moreno took steps toward launching an investigation of the attack. In a memo to another council member obtained by AP, Moreno said she was initiating the creation of a local and state legislative committee "dedicated to reviewing the incident and its implications."

"This committee will play a crucial role in assessing our current policies, enhancing security measures, and ensuring that we are adequately prepared to respond to any future threats," Moreno wrote.

The FBI concluded Jabbar was not aided by anyone else in the attack, which killed an 18-year-old aspiring nurse, a single mother, a father of two and a former Princeton University football star, among others.

Thirteen of the 14 victims have been identified by the New Orleans coroner's office, with the youngest listed as 18 and the oldest 63. Most of the victims were in their 20s. One victim, whose identity was withheld by the coroner's office at the request of family, was a British citizen.

It was the deadliest IS-inspired assault on U.S. soil in years, laying bare what federal officials have warned is a resurgent international terrorism threat.

## **The French Quarter's metal barriers were gone on New Year's, leaving a critical security gap**

By RYAN FOLEY and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

After an Islamic State sympathizer rammed a truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in 2016, horrified New Orleans leaders were anxious to protect their city's famed French Quarter, where crowds of revelers pack the cobblestone streets, especially during big events like Mardi Gras.

By the next year, steel columns known as bollards were installed to restrict vehicle access to Bourbon Street. The posts retracted to allow for deliveries to its bars and restaurants, until — gummed up by Mardi Gras beads, beer and other detritus — their tracks stopped working reliably.

So when New Year's Eve arrived, the bollards were gone. They were being replaced ahead of the Super Bowl, which New Orleans will host on Feb. 9.

That left a critical security gap as thousands of New Year's revelers crowded Bourbon Street. Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a U.S. Army veteran inspired by the Islamic State group, exploited that gap when he drove a truck onto a sidewalk early Wednesday and sped around a police car stationed as a temporary barricade, killing 14 people.

It was the attack New Orleans had feared since the deadly 2016 rampage in the French Riviera city of Nice that killed 86 people — and one that could have been prevented or limited with temporary or permanent vehicle barriers, said Rob Reiter, an expert on protecting retail stores and crowds from accelerating vehicles for the Security Industry Association.

"This was foreseeable and predictable and preventable," Reiter said. "It's clearly a failure of safety and security."

The terrorism threat to New Orleans was long apparent. Five years ago, a New York-based firm was hired to conduct a "discreet, confidential physical security and vulnerability assessment" of the city's French Quarter.

A confidential portion of the firm's report addressed concerns about the threat of a vehicular ramming attack, The New York Times reported. It also warned the city's Bourbon Street bollards did "not appear to work" and recommended fixing them immediately.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 49 of 64

A public version of the firm's report for the French Quarter Management District — a political subdivision of the state of Louisiana — merely called for imposing more vehicle restrictions on Bourbon Street. It mentioned the threat of terrorism only in passing.

"It's very troubling that this problem was identified in 2019 and the incoming City Council was not made aware of this recommendation, nor were we made aware of what steps were being taken to resolve this significant issue," New Orleans Councilman JP Morrell told The Associated Press on Friday.

Former New Orleans Police Superintendent Michael Harrison, who led the department from 2014 until 2019, said the bollards were reinforced by large public service vehicles such as dump and trash trucks, placed to prevent other vehicles from entering. Harrison said he and then-Mayor Mitch Landrieu wanted to further "fortify" the bollards.

"It was a lesson learned from Nice," Harrison said Thursday. "I remember vividly the mayor saying, 'We have to learn the lesson now. Let's do it now.'"

But Reiter, whose association represents companies that manufacture and install bollards, said the city failed to adequately maintain the tracks the bollards moved on. The tracks got "gummed up" by everything from beer to Mardi Gras beads and stopped working reliably, he said.

Concentric Security, an Alabama-based firm that provided oversight for the installation of the bollards, said the system functioned as envisioned at the time.

"But we did observe Mardi Gras beads and other debris inside the bollard wells after a routine examination" later, a company spokesperson said. The company declined to release additional details, citing confidentiality concerns.

Heald LTD, the United Kingdom-based company that designed the bollards installed in 2017, said "basic maintenance and cleaning is all that is required" for upkeep.

City officials were removing the Heald-designed barriers and replacing them with a different system of stainless steel bollards before the upcoming Super Bowl.

Reiter questioned why the city did not deploy temporary physical barriers that it owns for New Year's Eve. "Had they taken the usual measures and done them in the usual proximity to where he made his turn, they absolutely stop this thing," Reiter said.

"If they put the measures further back, it's possible that he would have had enough speed to get past the first set of barriers but he would have disabled the vehicle. So the amount of penetration would have been much smaller and the casualties would have been much fewer," Reiter added.

Harrison, the former police commissioner, said the bollards alone may not have prevented the bloodshed.

"He had explosive devices in the truck. He had guns. He had other things that he could have gotten out of the truck and done as much damage outside of the truck," said Harrison, who now runs a New Orleans-based consulting company.

Michael Rodriguez, vice president at California-based 1-800-Bollards, said his company recently shipped 106 stainless steel bollards to New Orleans for its Bourbon Street project.

He said the city requested part of the shipment be expedited so installation could be completed before the Super Bowl, and the company put the order on a fast track.

But, Rodriguez said, the public will never know what impact they could have had on the attack.

"They weren't installed. That's the obstacle," he said. "Bollards are great for a visual and an actual barrier. But if they aren't installed or deployed or engaged, then they're really not going to do anything."

## **An Arizona prisoner is asking to be executed sooner than the state wants**

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona death row prisoner asked the state's highest court to skip legal formalities and schedule his execution earlier than authorities were aiming for, pushing as he had in the past to have his death sentence carried out.

Aaron Brian Gunches' execution would mark a resumption of Arizona's use of the death penalty after a two-year pause while it reviewed its procedures.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 50 of 64

In a handwritten court filing this week, Gunches asked the state Supreme Court to schedule his execution for mid-February for his murder conviction in the 2002 killing of Ted Price.

Gunches, who isn't a lawyer but is representing himself, said his death sentence is "long overdue" and that the state was dragging its feet in asking the court for a legal briefing schedule leading up to the execution.

Attorney General Kris Mayes' office, which is seeking Gunches' execution, said a briefing schedule is needed to ensure corrections officials can meet execution requirements, such as testing for the pentobarbital that will be used for his lethal injection.

Two years ago, Gunches asked the Arizona Supreme Court to issue his execution warrant, saying justice could be served and the victim's families could get closure.

Gunches had been set to be put to death in April 2023. But Gov. Katie Hobbs' office said the state wasn't prepared to enforce the death penalty because it lacked staff with expertise to carry out executions.

Hobbs, a Democrat, had promised not to carry out any executions until there was confidence the state can do so without violating any laws. The review Hobbs had ordered effectively ended in November when she dismissed the retired federal magistrate judge she had appointed to head the review.

Gunches pleaded guilty to a murder charge in the shooting death of Price, his girlfriend's ex-husband, near the Phoenix suburb of Mesa.

Arizona, which has 111 prisoners on death row, last carried out three executions in 2022 following a nearly eight-year hiatus brought on by criticism that a 2014 execution was botched and because of difficulties obtaining drugs for execution.

Since then, the state has been criticized for taking too long to insert an IV for lethal injection into a condemned prisoner.

## **Biden blocks \$14 billion acquisition of US Steel by Japan's Nippon Steel**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN, JOSH BOAK and MARC LEVY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has blocked the nearly \$15 billion proposed deal for Nippon Steel of Japan to purchase Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel — affirming his earlier vow on the presidential campaign trail to prevent the acquisition of Steeltown USA's most storied steel company.

The proposed deal kicked up an election year political maelstrom across America's industrial heartland and blocking it drew a threat of litigation from Nippon Steel.

"We need major U.S. companies representing the major share of US steelmaking capacity to keep leading the fight on behalf of America's national interests," Biden said in a Friday morning statement.

Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel blasted the decision, saying in a joint statement that Biden's blocking the deal "reflects a clear violation of due process and the law" in a process it said was "manipulated" to advance Biden's political agenda.

It also insisted that Biden cited no credible evidence of the deal presenting a national security problem and suggested it will sue, saying "we are left with no choice but to take all appropriate action to protect our legal rights."

Biden's decision comes after the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, known as CFIUS, failed to reach consensus on the possible national security risks of the deal last month, and sent a long-awaited report on the merger to Biden. He had 15 days to reach a final decision.

The committee, chaired by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and made up of other Cabinet members, can recommend that the president block a transaction, and federal law gives the president that power.

A U.S. official familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press last month that some federal agencies represented on the panel were skeptical that allowing a Japanese company to buy an American-owned steelmaker would create national security risks.

The decision comes just weeks before the Democratic president is set to leave office and could damage relations between the U.S. and Japan, which is America's biggest ally in Asia and its largest foreign holder of U.S. debt.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 51 of 64

In their statement, the two steel companies said it's "shocking — and deeply troubling" that the U.S. would reject a transaction that advances U.S. interests and "treat an ally like Japan in this way."

"Unfortunately, it sends a chilling message to any company based in a U.S. allied country contemplating significant investment in the United States," the companies said.

Biden previously came out against the deal during the presidential campaign — and was backed by the United Steelworkers, concerned over whether the company would honor existing labor agreements or slash jobs, as well as over the firm's financial transparency.

"It is important that we maintain strong American steel companies powered by American steel workers," Biden said in a March statement, while he was still seeking reelection to the presidency before dropping out of the race. "U.S. Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated."

President-elect Donald Trump has also opposed the acquisition and vowed in December on his Truth Social platform to block the deal and to use tax incentives and tariffs to boost U.S. Steel's fortunes.

On Friday, Steelworkers President David McCall said the union is grateful for Biden's move to block the sale and, in a video news conference, called it the "right move for our members and for America's national security."

McCall had long questioned Nippon Steel's status as an honest broker for U.S. national trade interests and reiterated that Friday, calling Nippon Steel a "serial trade cheater" that would degrade U.S. steelmaking and had, for decades, undermined the domestic steel industry by dumping its products into U.S. markets.

"Allowing it to purchase U.S. Steel would have offered it the opportunity to further destabilize our trade system from within and in the process, compromise our ability to meet our own national security and critical infrastructure needs," McCall said.

McCall insisted that U.S. Steel — which is profitable and reported \$1.8 billion on its balance sheet — has the financial wherewithal to make the company strong. Nippon Steel's offer was a "huge windfall" for executives and investors, but not for America or workers, McCall said.

However, U.S. Steel has warned that, without Nippon Steel's cash, it will shift production away from its aging blast furnaces to cheaper non-union electric arc furnaces and move its headquarters out of Pittsburgh.

For its part, Nippon Steel had said it is best positioned to help American steel compete in an industry dominated by the Chinese and to invest billions in United Steelworkers-represented facilities, including the company's aging blast furnaces in Pennsylvania and Indiana.

It pledged to protect U.S. Steel in trade matters, and promised not to import steel slabs that would compete with the blast furnaces.

Nippon Steel announced in December 2023 that it planned to buy the steel producer for \$14.9 billion in cash and debt, and committed to keep the U.S. Steel name and Pittsburgh headquarters. Despite that, its proposal raised concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains and U.S. national security.

The announcement came during a tide of renewed political support for rebuilding America's manufacturing sector and followed a long stretch of protectionist U.S. tariffs that analysts say have helped reinvigorate domestic steel.

Nippon Steel waged a public relations campaign to consolidate support, even offering \$5,000 in closing bonuses to U.S. Steel employees, a nearly \$100 million expense.

A number of conservatives and business groups like the U.S. Chamber had publicly backed the deal, as Nippon Steel began to win over some Steelworkers union members and mayors in areas near its blast furnaces.

Nippon Steel was the world's fourth largest steelmaker in 2023, according to World Steel Association figures. U.S. Steel was 24th.

## Surgeon General calls for new label on drinks to warn Americans of alcohol's cancer risk

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alcohol is a leading cause of cancer, a risk that should be clearly labeled on drinks Americans consume, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy proposed on Friday.

Murthy's advisory comes as research and evidence mounts about the bad effects that alcohol has on human health, but his proposal for a label would require a rare approval from the U.S. Congress.

Americans should be better informed about the link between alcohol and cancer, in particular, Murthy argues in his advisory, noting alcohol consumption is to blame for nearly one million preventable cancer cases in the U.S. over the last decade. About 20,000 people die every year from those alcohol-related cancer cases, according to his advisory.

Bottles of beer, wine and liquor already carry warning labels that say pregnant women should not drink and that alcohol consumption can impair someone's ability to drive a car. But Murthy's proposed label would go even further, raising awareness about the risk for cancer, too.

"It's pretty crazy that there's a lot more information on a can of peas than on a bottle of whiskey," said Dr. Timothy Naimi, who directs the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. "Consumers have the right to basic information about health risks, serving size and drinks per container."

Consuming alcohol raises the risk of developing at least seven types of cancer diseases, including liver, breast and throat cancer, research has found. His advisory also notes that as a person's alcohol consumption goes up, so does the risk for developing those illnesses.

"For individuals, be aware that cancer risk increases as you drink more alcohol," Murthy wrote Friday on the social media platform X. "As you consider whether or how much to drink, keep in mind that less is better when it comes to cancer risk."

Even with the Surgeon General's advisory and new research that shows the dangers of drinking, it's unlikely Congress would act swiftly to enact a new Surgeon General's warning on alcohol products.

It's been nearly four decades since Congress approved the first government warning label on alcohol, the one that says pregnant women shouldn't drink and warns about the dangers of driving while drinking. No updates have been made since then.

Before that, Congress approved a label on cigarettes cautioning users that smoking is hazardous to health, a move that is credited with helping America substantially reduce its bad habit.

Any effort to add a cancer warning label to alcohol would face significant push back from a well-funded and powerful beverage industry, which spends nearly \$30 million every year lobbying Congress.

Other research around alcohol, including reports that moderate drinking can be associated with lower risks to of heart disease compared to no alcohol consumption, should be considered, said Amanda Berger of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

"Many lifestyle choices carry potential risks, and it is the federal government's role to determine any proposed changes to the warning statements based on the entire body of scientific research," Berger said in a statement.

The surgeon general's advisory comes as the government is in the process of updating dietary guidelines, including those around alcohol, that will form the cornerstone of federal food programs and policy. The updated guidelines are expected later this year.

The current guidelines recommend women have one drink or fewer per day while men should stick to two or fewer.

## **New York governor to push for expanded mental health laws, citing violence on subway**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York Gov. Kathy Hochul wants to expand the state's involuntary commitment laws to allow hospitals to compel more mentally ill people into treatment, following a series of violent crimes in the New York City subway system.

In a statement Friday, Hochul, a Democrat, said she would push to change mental health care laws during the coming legislative session in an attempt to address what she described as a surge of crimes on the subway.

"Many of these horrific incidents have involved people with serious untreated mental illness, the result of a failure to get treatment to people who are living on the streets and are disconnected from our mental health care system," she said.

"We have a duty to protect the public from random acts of violence, and the only fair and compassionate thing to do is to get our fellow New Yorkers the help they need."

Most people with mental illness are not violent and they are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than perpetrators, according to mental health experts.

The governor did not detail exactly what her legislation would change or offer other specifics of her plan. Instead, she said "currently hospitals are able to commit individuals whose mental illness puts themselves or others at risk of serious harm, and this legislation will expand that definition to ensure more people receive the care they need."

Hochul also said she would introduce another proposal to improve the process in which courts can order people to undergo assisted outpatient treatments for mental illness and make it easier for people to voluntarily sign up for those services.

State law currently allows police to compel people to be taken to hospitals for evaluation if they appear to be mentally ill and their behavior poses a risk of physical harm to themselves or others. Psychiatrists must then determine whether such patients need to be hospitalized against their will in a delicate and complex process involving several factors.

Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said forcing more people into involuntary commitment "doesn't make us safer, it distracts us from addressing the roots of our problems, and it threatens New Yorkers' rights and liberties."

It is unclear how the governor's plan will fare in the state Legislature, which is controlled by Democrats and begins its annual legislative session later this month.

Carl Heastie, the Democratic speaker of the state Assembly, told reporters that there is a "global acknowledgement that we have to do more on mental health," but that he would have to see exactly what the governor is proposing. A spokesperson for Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Democratic majority leader, said "clearly, public safety is a major focus of the majority. We want all New Yorkers to feel safe. We look forward to seeing the details of the governor's plan so we can discuss it further."

Hochul's statement came after a series of violent encounters in New York City's subways, many of which have attracted national attention and heightened fears over the safety of the country's busiest subway system.

In recent weeks, a man was shoved onto subway tracks ahead of an incoming train on New Year's Eve, a sleeping woman was burned to death and a man slashed two people with a knife in Manhattan's Grand Central subway station on Christmas Eve.

Medical histories of suspects in those three cases were not immediately clear, though New York City Mayor Eric Adams has said the man accused of the attack in Grand Central had a history of mental illness and the father of the suspect in the shoving told the New York Times that he had become concerned about his son's mental health in the weeks before the incident.

Violent crime is rare on the subway, which carried more than 1 billion riders in 2024. Still, random stab-bings and shoves, along with other incidents, have unnerved riders and attracted heavy attention online.

Major crimes on the subways were down through November compared with the same period last year, but killings rose from five to nine, according to police data. Still, some have pointed to an increase in assaults since prior to the pandemic — there were 326 recorded through November in 2019, compared to 521 in the same period in 2024.

Adams, a Democrat, has for years pressed the state Legislature to expand mental health care laws and has previously endorsed a policy that would allow hospitals to involuntarily commit a person if he or she is unable to meet their own basic needs for food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

“Denying a person life-saving psychiatric care because their mental illness prevents them from recognizing their desperate need for it is an unacceptable abdication of our moral responsibility,” the mayor said in a statement after Hochul’s announcement.

## **New Majority Leader Thune kicks off Senate session with pledge to preserve filibuster**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — New Senate Majority Leader John Thune is kicking off the new session with a promise to preserve the filibuster, saying in his first floor speech as leader that his priority will be to “ensure the Senate stays the Senate.”

Thune, R-S.D., and Senate Republicans are taking power on Friday a little more than two weeks before Donald Trump will be inaugurated, cementing a firm GOP hold on Washington. And Thune will have to navigate his new responsibilities along with the new president, who has made clear he expects allegiance from Congress — and has previously called for eliminating the filibuster.

Opening up the two-year Senate session Friday after new and returning senators were sworn in, Thune said the legislative tactic that allows senators to delay consideration of a measure and require 60 votes for passage has “perhaps the greatest impact in preserving the Founders’ vision of the Senate.”

“There are a lot of people out there who would like to see the Senate turn into a copy of the House of Representatives,” Thune said. “And that is not what our founders intended or what our country needs.”

Senate Republicans have long maintained that the filibuster remain in place despite Trump’s pleas to eliminate it and speed his agenda during the first half of his first term, when Republicans also had control of the White House and Congress. Many Democrats wanted to eliminate the filibuster in the early days of President Joe Biden’s term, but were stymied by moderates in the Senate Democratic caucus who said it would upend the Senate’s deliberative role. Former West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.V., has called it “the holy grail of democracy.”

While Republicans aren’t ready to eliminate the filibuster, which will make it harder to win some votes in the new 53-47 Senate, they are preparing to try and quickly pass much Trump’s agenda through a legislative mechanism that circumvents it. Like Democrats during Biden’s term, they are planning to use a process called budget reconciliation that would allow them to approve bills on party-line votes, with a simple majority. Early priorities will be border security and reviving tax cuts from Trump’s first term.

The Senate will also have to approve Trump’s Cabinet nominees, some of whom have already faced skepticism from Republican senators, once he is inaugurated on Jan. 20. Hearings are expected to begin before then.

Thune was elected by the GOP conference in November to replace Mitch McConnell, the longtime Republican leader who announced last year that he would stay in the Senate but step down from leadership. Outgoing Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who will remain Democratic leader, advised Thune in a floor speech on Friday to work in a bipartisan way on legislation, pointing to bills like an infrastructure package passed by the Democratic majority during the first half of Biden’s presidency.

“The majority leader sets the tone and that tone determines to a large extent how successful we’ll be moving forward,” Schumer said.

It’s unclear though, how much leverage or desire Thune will have to seek out bipartisanship as Trump has pressured him already to circumvent Senate rules and pass some of his Cabinet nominees without votes.



Ahead of the inevitable partisan fights, though, there was a celebratory mood Friday as nine new senators were sworn in – four Democrats and five Republicans. Vice President Kamala Harris presided as they approached the dais in groups of four, along with returning senators, taking the oath of office and signing a ceremonial book. Vice President-elect JD Vance, still an Ohio senator, was also on the floor and stood up with new Ohio Sen. Bernie Moreno, a Republican who defeated Democrat Sherrod Brown, as he was sworn in.

Two newly-elected Democrats were already sworn in last month to fill vacancies and were sworn in again on Friday. California Sen. Adam Schiff was elected to fill the seat of the late Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein and New Jersey Sen. Andy Kim replaced former Sen. Bob Menendez, who resigned last year after his federal conviction on bribery charges.

A sixth Republican, Jim Justice of West Virginia, announced last month that he will wait to enter the Senate until after his successor as West Virginia's governor, Republican Patrick Morrisey, is sworn in on Jan. 13.

## Israeli strikes kill at least 42 in Gaza as ceasefire talks set to resume in Qatar

By WAFAA SHURAF, FATMA KHALED and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli strikes killed at least 42 people in Gaza, including children, overnight and into Friday, hospital and emergency response workers said, as health workers and Israel's military traded claims over reported evacuation orders for two hospitals in the territory's largely isolated north.

The assertions over Al-Awda and Indonesian hospitals occurred as stalled ceasefire talks to end nearly 15 months of war were set to resume in Qatar.

Staff at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said that more than a dozen women and children were killed in strikes in central Gaza, including in Nuseirat, Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al-Balah. Dozens of people were killed across the enclave the previous day.

"We woke up to the missile strike. We found the whole house disintegrated," Abdul Rahman Al-Nabrisi said in the Maghazi refugee camp.

Later Friday, officials at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said that an airstrike killed three people in a car in Zawaida in central Gaza. And the Civil Defense, first responders affiliated with the Hamas-run government, said that an airstrike killed seven people, including four children and a woman, in the Shijaiyah neighborhood outside Gaza City, and another strike killed two people at Al-Samer junction in Gaza City.

The Israeli army said in a statement that during the past day it had struck dozens of Hamas gathering points and command centers throughout Gaza. And it warned people to leave an area of central Gaza, saying that it would attack following launches toward Israel. The military said that a few projectiles entered from central and northern Gaza, with no injuries reported.

Freelance journalist Omar al-Derawi was among those killed Friday. A press vest was placed on his shroud. The Committee to Protect Journalists said last month that more than 130 Palestinian reporters have been killed in the war.

Israelis also woke up to attacks. Israel said that missiles were fired from Yemen, setting off air raid sirens in Jerusalem and central Israel and sending people scrambling to shelters. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. The Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen often claim responsibility.

Concerns about hospitals in northern Gaza

While the U.N. Security Council met Friday to discuss the war's effects on hospitals in Gaza, a hospital in the north, Al-Awda, said in a statement that Israel's military had told staff and patients to immediately evacuate. It didn't give details.

And a nurse at the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza told The Associated Press they had received orders to evacuate. Speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly, the nurse said that they were still there with 19 people, including eight patients, and staffers had asked for ambulances.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 56 of 64

Israel's military said that it wasn't "operating to evacuate" Al-Awda or Indonesian hospitals.

"Messages were sent to reiterate to officials in the health authorities that there is no need to evacuate the hospital," it said of Indonesian.

Neither side's statements could be immediately verified. 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.

The war's effect on hospitals has been a contentious issue as the health system has been largely devastated. Israel has repeatedly accused Hamas of operating out of hospitals and said that the military tries to protect the facilities. The military has carried out raids on several hospitals, including Al-Awda and Indonesian, during the war.

U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk told the Security Council on Friday that a recent report by his office documented "at least 136 strikes on at least 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities in Gaza, which caused significant death and injury among doctors, nurses, medical staff and other civilians and damaged or destroyed many of the buildings targeted." He said both sides must protect the facilities.

More talks in Qatar

Hamas said in a statement that indirect ceasefire negotiations would resume Friday, a day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said that he authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue the talks in Qatar.

The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled. Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed. But the militants, while greatly weakened, have repeatedly regrouped, often after Israeli forces withdraw from areas.

The war was sparked by Hamas-led militants' attack into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. They killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed more than 45,500 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead. The ministry doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally.

Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced about 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times. Winter has now arrived, and hundreds of thousands are sheltering in tents near the sea.

## How drinking alcohol can affect your health

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

With the new year comes Dry January and a new surgeon general's advisory on alcohol and cancer risk. Moderate drinking was once thought to have benefits for the heart, but better research methods have thrown cold water on that.

"Drinking less is a great way to be healthier," said Dr. Timothy Naimi, who directs the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research at the University of Victoria in British Columbia.

On Friday, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy called for updating the existing surgeon general's health warning label on alcohol-containing beverages to include the risk of cancer. His proposal would require approval from Congress.

What's the harm in drinking alcohol?

Drinking raises the risk of several types of cancer, including colon, liver, breast and mouth and throat. Alcohol breaks down in the body into a substance called acetaldehyde, which can damage your cells and stop them from repairing themselves. That creates the conditions for cancer to grow.

Thousands of U.S. deaths per year could be prevented if people followed the government's dietary guidelines, Naimi said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 57 of 64

Those guidelines advise men to limit themselves to two drinks or fewer per day and women to one drink or fewer per day. One drink is the equivalent of about one 12-ounce can of beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine or a shot of liquor.

According to Murthy's advisory, there are about 100,000 alcohol-related cancer cases and about 20,000 alcohol-related cancer deaths annually in the United States.

"As you consider whether or how much to drink, keep in mind that less is better when it comes to cancer risk," Murthy wrote Friday on the social media platform X.

What about moderate drinking?

That idea that moderate drinking has health benefits came from imperfect studies comparing groups of people by how much they drink. Usually, that was measured at one point in time. And none of the studies randomly assigned people to drink or not drink, so they couldn't prove cause and effect.

People who report drinking moderately tend to have higher levels of education, higher incomes and better access to health care, said Naimi.

"It turns out that when you adjust for those things, the benefits tend to disappear," he said.

Another problem: Most studies didn't include younger people. Almost half of the people who die from alcohol-related causes die before the age of 50.

"If you're studying people who survived into middle age, didn't quit drinking because of a problem and didn't become a heavy drinker, that's a very select group," Naimi said. "It creates an appearance of a benefit for moderate drinkers that is actually a statistical illusion."

Other studies challenge the idea that alcohol has benefits. These studies compare people with a gene variant that makes it unpleasant to drink to people without the gene variant. People with the variant tend to drink very little or not at all. One of these studies found people with the gene variant have a lower risk of heart disease — another blow to the idea that alcohol protects people from heart problems.

What do guidelines say?

Guidelines vary a lot from country to country but the overall trend is toward drinking less.

The United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Holland and Australia recently reviewed new evidence and lowered their alcohol consumption recommendations. Ireland will require cancer warning labels on alcohol starting in 2026.

"The scientific consensus has shifted due to the overwhelming evidence linking alcohol to over 200 health conditions, including cancers, cardiovascular diseases and injuries," said Carina Ferreira-Borges, regional adviser for alcohol at the World Health Organization regional office for Europe.

Naimi served on an advisory committee that wanted to lower the U.S. recommendation for men to one drink per day. That advice was considered and rejected when the federal recommendations came out in 2020.

"The simple message that's best supported by the evidence is that, if you drink, less is better when it comes to health," Naimi said. \_\_\_\_\_

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Why Apple TV+ is offering a free weekend of binge-watching

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Apple TV+ is hoping people will make a dent in the Strategic Popcorn Reserve by bingeing its streaming TV and movies for free this weekend in what experts are calling a canny promotion.

The two-day offer this Saturday and Sunday is intended to give viewers a taste of what's behind the Apple paywall and get them hooked, ready to fork over \$9.99 a month in the U.S.

Michael D. Smith, a professor of information technology and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University, said the two-day window is not too short to ignore and not too long to satisfy all demand.

"This is not 'I'm going to let you binge-watch this over the course of three or four days or a week or a couple weeks and then maybe you won't subscribe next month,'" he said. "This is, 'I'm giving you two

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 58 of 64

days to explore my catalog. And I'm hoping that you're going to find something in there that maybe you'll binge. Maybe you'll have time to binge the first six episodes, but it's so cool you've got to come back and you're going to be willing to subscribe to come back."

While entertainment companies often use promotions and discounts to lure new customers, Apple TV+'s pitch has no catches, like entering personal info or credit card numbers. All you need is an Apple ID, which is free and which many people already have from the days of 99-cent song downloads.

What can you see behind the paywall? The Emmy-winning "Ted Lasso" and "The Morning Show" and other buzzy series like "Silo," "Shrinking," "Severance," "Bad Sisters," "Slow Horses," "Disclaimer" and "Presumed Innocent."

Movies include "Fly Me to the Moon," "The Instigators," "Spirited," "Ghosted," "Argylle," "Palmer," "Napoleon" and "Killers of the Flower Moon."

Smith suspects that by the end of the weekend, Apple will have lots of data to sharpen its approach to new customers and returning ones, like himself. Apple will learn, for example, what genres are hot, which shows attract viewers and how long people spend watching.

Smith will be logging in to watch "Ted Lasso" with his son but also wants to check out "Severance" with his daughter. Two days likely won't be enough to watch both to the end.

"It's kind of like a mall, right? I've got an anchor tenant. For me, it's 'Ted Lasso.' That gets me to the mall. And once I'm at the mall, I'm going to wander around and discover some other stuff there. And they're hoping that the two days isn't long enough for me to shop," he said. "My guess it's going to pay off."

There is some evidence that long bingeing widows don't help streamers build customers. A 2020 study by Miguel Godinho de Matos and Pedro Ferreira for the Initiative for Digital Entertainment Analytics at Carnegie Mellon found that binge-watching over several weeks reduces the post-trial likelihood of paid subscriptions.

Apple's weekend deal is clearly an attempt to shake up its numbers. As of October 2024, it had an estimated 25 million subscribers, making it the eighth most popular streaming service by subscribers. Netflix, in No. 1, has 282.7 million.

"Apple TV+ never really truly took off, even though they do have a series of really high-quality TV shows," says Bo "Bobby" Zhou, a business professor at the University of Maryland. "They are trying to offer a promotional period to let a wider viewer base sample their content in the hope that some of them will be converted."

Other streamers are also offering deals, like Hulu's free 30-day trial, Starz's \$2-a-month plan or Peacock's three-month trial for Samsung Galaxy owners. If viewers miss the Apple TV+ weekend offer, the streamer already has a free 7-day trial promotion going. It has lots of other offers though Target, Best Buy, Samsung and for buyers of Apple devices, too.

Jared Newman, a technology journalist who publishes the newsletter Cord Cutter Weekly, said the promotion seems to be part of a big push by Apple to up its subscribers. The streamer recently agreed to be distributed through Amazon and there are signals it may want to experiment with an ad-supported tier.

"They really need to get their numbers up and need to get more people on board whatever way possible," he said. "It may be just another way to test the waters of who would access their service if they didn't have to pay for it."

Zhou has seen the industry change from single paid downloads to unlimited access to subscribers and anticipates a future with different tiers of subscribers — say, one free episode for non-subscribers and a full season for diehard fans. Anything to get some buzz.

"I think the battle amongst tech giants is all about content differentiation," he said. "How can I capture consumers' attention? Because attention is the most valuable asset of anyone."



## **A double dose of nasty winter is about to smack much of the US with snow, ice and biting cold**

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A strong snow and ice storm followed by brutally cold conditions will soon smack the eastern two-thirds of the United States as frigid air escapes the Arctic, plunging as far south as Florida, meteorologists forecast.

Starting Saturday, millions of people are going to be hit by moderate to heavy snow from Kansas City to Washington — including a high chance of at least 8 inches of snow between central Kansas and Indiana — the National Weather Service warned Friday. Dangerous ice particularly lethal to power lines — “so heavy like paste, it’s hard to move,” said private meteorologist Ryan Maue — is likely to set in just south of that in southern Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and much of Kentucky and West Virginia.

“It’s going to be a mess, a potential disaster,” Maue said. “This is something we haven’t seen in quite a while.”

National Weather Service meteorologist Alex Lamers said Friday that the potential for blizzard conditions is increasing, particularly in Kansas and neighboring portions of the Central Plains, and that wind gusts may reach 50 mph at times.

As the storm moves out on Monday, hundreds of millions of people in the eastern two-thirds of the nation will be plunged into dangerous bone-chilling air and wind chills all week, government and private forecasters said. Temperatures could be 12 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit (7 to 14 degrees Celsius) colder than normal as the dreaded polar vortex stretches down from the high Arctic bringing chilly weather, they said.

“This could lead to the coldest January for the U.S. since 2011,” AccuWeather Director of Forecast Operations Dan DePodwin said Friday. “It’s not just one day of this. It’s going to be three to five, in some cases a week or more of temperatures that are well below historical average.”

The biggest drop below normal is likely to be centered over the Ohio Valley, but significant unusual cold will extend southward all the way to the Gulf Coast, said Danny Barandiaran, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center.

Forecasts have moderated a bit from last week when some computer models envisioned the worst cold spell in decades. Now it’s unlikely many cold records will break, but it will still have a big impact on the country, Barandiaran said.

There should even be a hard freeze in Florida, while areas near the Canadian border will be around zero, Barandiaran said.

“It’s not going to thaw out for awhile,” Maue said.

Woodwell Climate Research Institute climate scientist Jennifer Francis said the initial blasting winds from the north may shock people after a fairly warm last couple of years.

“The wind chills are going to be brutal,” she said. “There’ll be a lot of whining, but it is winter. ... Just because the globe is warming doesn’t mean these cold snaps are going away.”

This double dose of nasty weather may be triggered in part by a fast-warming Arctic, serving as a not-so-gentle reminder that climate change gooses weather extremes, even winter ones, said Francis and Judah Cohen, seasonal forecast director at the private firm Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

The polar vortex, ultra-cold air spinning like a top 15 to 30 miles high, usually stays penned up above the North Pole. But sometimes it escapes or stretches down to the United States, Europe or Asia. And that’s when large numbers of people get intense doses of cold.

Cohen and colleagues have published several studies showing an increase in the polar vortex stretching or wandering. Cohen, Francis and others last month published a study that attributed these cold outbreaks partly to changes from an Arctic that’s warming four times faster than the rest of the globe.

The change in temperature and loss of Arctic sea ice make the jet stream — the river of air that moves storm fronts — wavier, allowing plunges of cold air to come south and extreme weather to stay put, Francis said.

What’s about to hit “is a really good example of these kinds of cases,” Francis said.

## Republicans' trust in accuracy of US elections jumps after Trump's win, AP-NORC poll finds

By LINLEY SANDERS and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A majority of Republicans say they are confident in the 2024 vote count after Donald Trump's win, according to a new poll that finds a sharp turnaround from GOP voters' skepticism about U.S. elections after the president-elect spent four years lying about his loss to President Joe Biden.

About 6 in 10 Republicans said they have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence that the votes in last year's presidential election were counted correctly nationwide, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's a sharp rise from about 2 in 10 Republicans who were confident in an AP-NORC poll in October. And about two-thirds of Republicans in the new survey said they were confident in their state's vote count, up from about 4 in 10 before the election.

That helped drive up the share of Americans saying they have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence in the accuracy of the election to about 6 in 10. That's higher than in October, when roughly half of Americans said they were highly confident the votes would be counted accurately.

The mood is substantially different than it was four years ago, when Trump's supporters, fueled by his false claims of a stolen election, assaulted police and smashed their way into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, to interrupt the certification of Biden's victory. Weeks later, an AP-NORC poll found that about two-thirds of Republicans said Biden was not legitimately elected president.

That belief persisted throughout Biden's presidency and until last year's election, as Trump continued to sow doubt about the accuracy of U.S. elections. He even did so on Election Day in the hours before it was clear he would win.

But since Trump's victory in November, Republicans' suspicions about election security at all levels — including confidence in their own local election officials — have ebbed substantially.

There were no indications of trouble before the election despite Trump's attempts to lay the groundwork to challenge the accuracy of the count if he lost the vote. Nor were there any real questions over the integrity of the 2020 count, which was confirmed by a wide range of state audits, recounts and reviews, some of which were led by Republicans, including Trump's own Department of Justice.

Threats toward local election officials soared after 2020, leading to a wave of veteran administrators leaving office. In a potential sign that those hostilities might ease, the poll found that about 7 in 10 Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence that votes in the 2024 presidential election were counted accurately by their local election officials, up from about 6 in 10 in October.

That movement was almost entirely driven by Republicans: About 7 in 10 were highly confident in local officials' counts in December, compared with about half in October.

One group's confidence in the integrity of the election ticked down — Democrats. Their confidence in the national vote count declined from about 7 in 10 to about 6 in 10, although their certainty in the accuracy of state vote counts remained stable.

Still, the dip in Democratic confidence is nowhere near the scale of skepticism among Republicans after Trump's defeat in 2020. The Democratic candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris, conceded her loss to Trump the day after Election Day and there has been no organized Democratic effort to prevent the handover of the presidency to Trump, as there was among some conservatives in 2020 to try to block Biden from ascending to the presidency.

## South Korea's impeached president defies warrant after hourslong standoff

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean investigators left the official residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after a near-six-hour standoff on Friday during which he defied their attempt to detain him. It's the latest confrontation in a political crisis that has paralyzed South Korean politics and seen two heads

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 61 of 64

of state impeached in under a month.

The country's anti-corruption agency said it withdrew its investigators after the presidential security service blocked them from entering Yoon's residence for hours, due to concerns about their safety.

The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces and expressed "serious regret about the attitude of the suspect, who did not comply with the legal process."

It said detaining Yoon would be "virtually impossible" as long as he is protected by the presidential security service. The agency plans to "strongly demand" that the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, instruct the service to comply with their execution of the detainment warrant.

Outside the residence, a large group of pro-Yoon protesters braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him.

The National Police Agency said it planned to investigate the chief and deputy chiefs of the presidential security service on suspicion of obstructing official duty and summoned them for questioning on Saturday.

Yoon, a former prosecutor, has resisted investigators' attempts to question him for weeks. The last time he is known to have left the residence was on Dec. 12, when he went to the nearby presidential office to make a televised statement to the nation, making a defiant statement that he will fight efforts to oust him.

Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by an opposition-dominated parliament, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly.

Parliament overturned the declaration within hours in an unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events.

A Seoul court issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence on Tuesday, but enforcing them is complicated as long as he remains in his official residence.

Yoon's lawyers, who filed a challenge to the warrant on Thursday, say it cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge.

The office said it will discuss further actions but did not immediately say whether it would make another attempt to detain Yoon. The warrant for his detention is valid for one week.

Yoon's lawyers have also argued that the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, lacks the authority to investigate rebellion charges. They said that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon, and could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens." They didn't elaborate further on the claim.

If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours.

During a background briefing to reporters, an official from the anti-corruption agency said its investigators were able to approach within 200 meters (yards) of Yoon's residence but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity per department rules, said three of its prosecutors were eventually allowed to approach the building but they weren't able to confirm whether Yoon was inside.

While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detainments, which would amount to an infringement on judicial authority, said Park Seong-bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

"There's a high possibility that the act of blocking the execution of a detainment warrant would constitute an obstruction of official duty," he said.

The law requiring consent of the person in charge for searches in locations with potential military secrets could continue to hinder Yoon's detainment. Courts often require law enforcement officials to obtain search

warrants with detainment warrants in case they need to search the site to locate the suspect, which is also what the anti-corruption agency did in their pursuit of Yoon.

It's unlikely that the approval could come from the country's acting leader, Choi, as it would be difficult to see him as the person in charge of Yoon's residence, Park said.

Park Chan-dae, floor leader of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, called the anti-corruption agency's withdrawal regrettable and urged the agency to make another attempt to detain Yoon on Friday.

Kwon Young-se, who heads the emergency leadership committee of Yoon's conservative People Power Party, called the agency's effort to detain Yoon "highly unfair and exceedingly improper," saying that there is no risk of Yoon attempting to flee or to destroy evidence.

Thousands of police officers gathered at Yoon's residence on Friday, forming a perimeter around a growing group of pro-Yoon protesters who braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him. There were no immediate reports of major clashes outside the residence.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law.

Yoon's presidential powers have been suspended since the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him. At least six justices on the nine-member Constitutional Court must vote in favor to remove him from office.

The National Assembly voted last week to impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who became acting president after Yoon's powers were suspended, over his reluctance to fill three Constitutional Court vacancies ahead of the court's review of Yoon's case.

Facing growing pressure, the new acting president, Choi, appointed two new justices on Tuesday, which could increase the chances of the court upholding Yoon's impeachment.

## **Come home, Ghana told the African diaspora.**

### **Now some Black Americans take its citizenship**

By ANNIE RISEMBERG Associated Press

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Flipping through a family album, Keachia Bowers paused on a photo of her as a baby on her father's lap as he held the 1978 album "Africa Stand Alone" by the Jamaican reggae band Culture.

"When I was 10 years old, I was supposed to come to Ghana with him," she said. A day earlier, she had marked 10 years since her father's death. Though he was a Pan-Africanist who dreamed of visiting Ghana, he never made it here.

Bowers and her husband, Damon Smith, however, are among the 524 diaspora members, mostly Black Americans, who were granted Ghanaian citizenship in a ceremony in November.

Bowers and Smith moved to Ghana from Florida in 2023 after visiting the region several times between them since the '90s. They now run a tour business that caters to Black people who want to visit Ghana or elsewhere in West Africa, or like them have come to consider a permanent move.

The November group was the largest one granted citizenship since Ghana launched the "Year of the Return" program, aimed at attracting the Black diaspora, in 2019. It marked 400 years since the first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619.

Ghana's Tourism Authority and the Office of Diaspora Affairs have extended the program into "Beyond the Return," which fosters the relationship with diasporans. Hundreds have been granted citizenship, including people from Canada, the U.K. and Jamaica.

Bowers said moving to Ghana gave her family a certain feeling of ease they didn't have in the U.S.

"When we see Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, all these stories of people being murdered just in their home, living in their home and being murdered at the hands of police brutality, hearing about it creates trauma," she said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 63 of 64

She also worried about her son Tsadik, 14.

Tsadik towers over loved ones in the way that lanky teenage boys often do. He is shy but opens up around his younger sister Tselah, 11, and the family's dog, Apollo.

"In America, being a Black male with locs who's very tall for his age, he is treated like a threat," Bowers said.

Americans face few obstacles to living in Ghana, with most people paying an annual residency fee. But Bowers said getting citizenship signified more than simply living in Ghana.

"I didn't need (citizenship) to tell me that I'm African. Anywhere that I go in the world and someone looks at me, I'm melanated," she said.

"But my ancestors who wanted to return and come back home, those ancestors who never made it back," she said, "that passport, for me, is for them."

Between 10 to 15 million people were forcibly taken from Africa to the Americas during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the majority from West and Central Africa.

Ghana, then a British colony known as the Gold Coast, was a main point of departure.

As memorials to the slave trade become tourist destinations across West Africa, painful reminders of its brutality are easily accessible. From Ghana to Senegal to Benin, one can visit variations of the "Door of No Return," haunting doorways that open to the Atlantic Ocean where slaves left Africa, and their families, for the last time.

The joy that people feel in finding connections that were broken long ago is palpable. Videos of the recent citizenship ceremony show men and women of all ages waving Ghanaian flags and cheering.

Deijha Gordon, 33, was one of them.

"I first visited Ghana in 2015. From then on, I knew this is a place that I wanted to be and a place where I wanted to show other diasporans, African-Americans, that we have a place where we belong," she said.

She moved from Brooklyn to Ghana in 2019 and opened a food truck, Deijha Vu's Jerk Hut, selling Jamaican food.

Between bagging to-go orders and speaking to a Black American tourist couple, she explained how she built the business from scratch.

Gordon was giddy while recalling the moment she got citizenship.

"It just feels good to have a connection to an African country as an African-American, as a Black American. Because back in America we don't have anything to trace our roots to but Africa. To have that connection here, I feel like I've done something right," she said.

Like Bowers, Gordon has had a stream of people reaching out and asking about the citizenship process.

The path is not clearly defined. Citizenship must come from a concession from Ghana's presidency, a process made legal under the 2000 Citizenship Act. It's granted to those residing in Ghana who have told the Office of Diaspora Affairs that they are interested in citizenship.

Ghana's government in part describes the program as a benefit to the economy and focuses on investment opportunities for those wishing to relocate.

Festus Owooson with the local nonprofit Migration Advocacy Center said that though the government emphasizes the economic angle, the real benefits of citizenship are intangible.

"I don't think (recipients) were crying because they have landed a gold mine, or they've found oil or some kind of business opportunity. But it's something so relieving, which you cannot put value or a price on," he said.

President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration, which launched the "Year of the Return," is on its way out. Ghana's main opposition party won the presidential election on Dec. 7.

But Owooson said Black Americans and other diaspora citizens are likely to continue receiving citizenship by presidential concession.

Citizenship also can pass to the next generation. The children of Bowers and Smith received it automatically after their parents' ceremony.

Bowers' father, like her husband and children, was a follower of the Rastafari faith. "Part of the Rastafarian tradition is to repatriate. We see repatriation as the ultimate experience that you can have on this

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 04, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 191 ~ 64 of 64

earth," she said.

She believes that her father is proud of her. "I really feel like he's smiling, where he is. He wanted to experience this for himself, so he's experiencing it through me."

## Today in History: January 4

### Nancy Pelosi becomes first female speaker of the House

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Jan. 4, the fourth day of 2025. There are 361 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 4, 2007, Nancy Pelosi was elected the first female speaker of the House as Democrats took control of Congress.

Also on this date:

In 1853, New Yorker Solomon Northup regained his freedom after being kidnapped in Washington, D.C., and forced into slavery in 1841; he would later tell his story in his memoir, "Twelve Years a Slave."

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union address in which he outlined the goals of his "Great Society" initiative.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon refused to hand over tape recordings and documents subpoenaed by the Senate Watergate Committee.

In 1999, Europe's new currency, the euro, got off to a strong start on its first trading day, rising against the dollar on world currency markets.

In 2006, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a significant stroke; his official powers were transferred to his deputy, Ehud Olmert (EH'-hood OHL'-murt). (Sharon remained in a coma until his death in January 2014.)

In 2010, the Burj Khalifa, the tallest structure in the world, opened in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dyan Cannon is 88. Guitarist John McLaughlin is 83. Author-historian Doris Kearns Goodwin is 82. Country singer Patty Loveless is 68. Singer Michael Stipe (R.E.M.) is 65. Actor Julia Ormond is 60. NFL running back Derrick Henry is 31. Singer-actor Coco Jones is 27. NBA center Victor Wembanyama is 21.