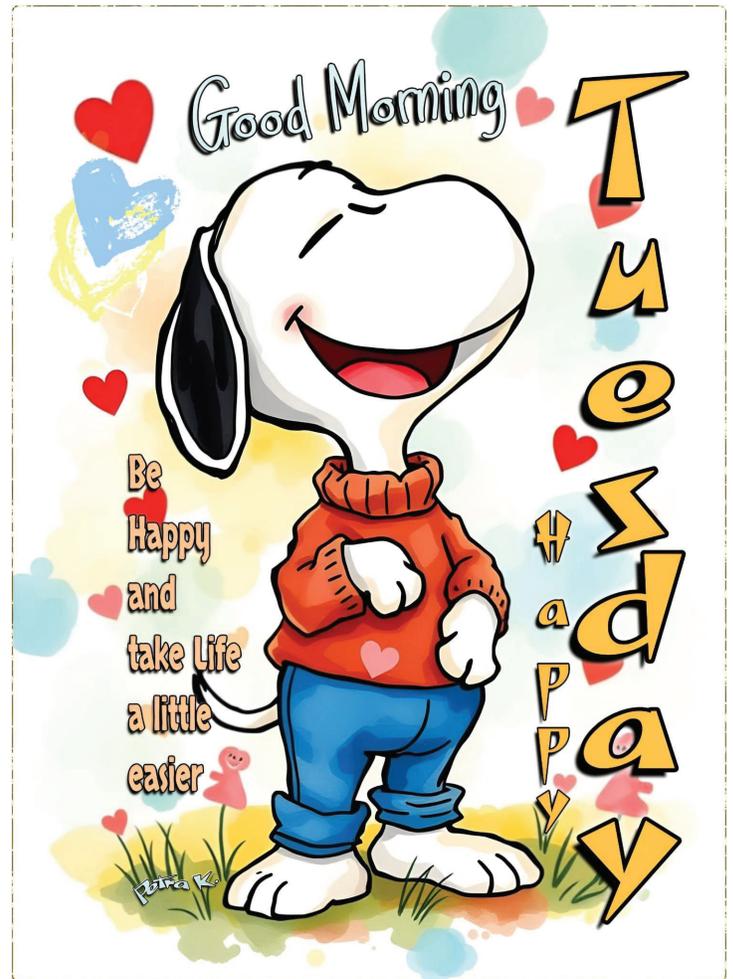


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Tuesday, Jan. 7

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, masehd potato with gravy, oriental blend, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, bread sticks.

Basketball Double Header hosts Warner ((Girls JV at 4 p.m.; Boys JV at 5:15 p.m.; Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity to follow)

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

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

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 8

Senior Menu: Baked turkey crunch, Italian blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Cheese stuffed breadsticks, marinara sauce.

Groton Chamber Board Meeting, 6 p.m., at City Hall

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

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

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

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1440

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

Trudeau to Resign

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced yesterday he would resign from office, paving the way for his Liberal Party to choose a replacement ahead of general elections expected to take place by October. The move may help avoid a no-confidence vote by the legislature, which appeared likely after the New Democratic Party withdrew its support from Trudeau's coalition government.

Assuming power in 2015, Trudeau entered office with significant popular support while championing a progressive agenda. His approval ratings have since sunk from around 65% to close to 20%, driven in part by inflation, a housing crunch, and concerns over high levels of immigration. He was also criticized by members of his administration—including Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, who resigned last month—over how to respond to tariff threats from President-elect Donald Trump.

Trudeau said he would remain in office while the party chooses a successor.

Disney's Live TV Deal

Disney has agreed to combine its Hulu+ Live TV service with FuboTV, forming North America's second-largest live TV streamer. The combined business will boast more than 6 million subscribers, behind YouTube TV's roughly 8 million subscribers.

The deal resolves litigation over the formation of Venu Sports—a joint venture from Disney's ESPN, Fox, and Warner Bros.—which a judge blocked last year after FuboTV sued on antitrust grounds. As part of the legal settlement, Disney, Fox, and Warner Bros. will pay Fubo \$220M in cash; Disney will additionally provide a \$145M term loan to Fubo in 2026. If the Fubo-Disney deal fails to close or gain regulatory approval, Disney will owe Fubo a \$130M termination fee. Fubo shares soared more than 250% on yesterday's news.

Disney will own 70% of the combined business, which will operate under the publicly traded Fubo name. Fubo and Hulu+ Live TV will be available to subscribers separately; the deal excludes Hulu's original content streaming platform.

Gadgets Galore in Vegas

The 2025 Consumer Electronics Show begins today in Las Vegas, bringing together global companies, industry leaders, and tech enthusiasts for one of the world's largest electronics and tech events. With about 150,000 attendees and 4,500 exhibitors expected, the event will showcase the future of a projected \$537B technology market.

The event features high-profile keynotes, including Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, along with press events, product launches, and a vast exhibition space. While artificial intelligence, especially AI agents and generative AI, will remain a focal point, the conference will also delve into digital health, energy transition, aging technology, and more. Attendees can expect to see the latest in smart TVs, home appliances, and innovative transportation concepts, with major automakers expected to debut cutting-edge electric vehicles, including a hands-on flying car experience.

Other highlights include innovative products such as shoe attachments that monitor muscle load for athletes and needle-free medical injections.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Auburn University student Abbie Stockard crowned Miss America 2025; Miss Texas Annette Addo-Yobo named runner-up.

Actors Zendaya and Tom Holland reportedly engaged.

2025 Golden Globes ceremony brings in 10.1 million viewers, a 7% increase over 2024.

Tech-infused golf league TGL, founded by Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, launches tonight (9 pm ET, ESPN).

Jacksonville Jaguars' Doug Pederson, New England Patriots' Jerod Mayo among NFL head coach firings on NFL's "Black Monday".

Science & Technology

First fatal case of the H5N1 bird flu in humans recorded in the US; Louisiana patient had underlying medical conditions, officials say transmission between humans is rare, and broader risk remains low.

Lead pollution from mining and smelting operations likely caused an IQ decline in the population of ancient Rome; may be the first known example of widespread industrial pollution.

Researchers discover protein that gives energy-storing white fat cells the calorie-burning ability of brown fat cells when suppressed.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +1.2%), with S&P 500 and Nasdaq led by chip stocks; Nvidia closes at record high, peer Micron Technology closes up 10% after electronics manufacturer Foxconn reports record Q4 revenue.

US Steel and Japan's Nippon Steel sue Biden administration over decision to block Nippon's nearly \$15B proposed acquisition of US Steel; President Joe Biden struck down the deal last week on national security grounds.

Michael Barr, Federal Reserve's vice chair for supervision, to resign from role Feb. 28 or sooner if President-elect Donald Trump appoints a successor; Barr to continue to serve on central bank's board of governors until 2032.

Politics & World Affairs

Congress formally certifies President-elect Donald Trump's electoral win in the 2024 presidential election.

Rudy Giuliani held in contempt of court in \$148M election workers' defamation judgment case.

At least four people dead, including from road accidents, after winter storm brings heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures to US Midwest and East Coast.

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy begins trial over allegedly accepting illegal campaign funds in 2007 from then-Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

January 7, 2025 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

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

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
4. Department Reports
5. Delinquent Utility Bill Notice Discussion
6. Skating Rink Discussion
7. Authorization to Bid 2025 Roof Repairs
8. Employee Salaries and Volunteer List
9. 2025 Fee Schedule
10. Election Date – April 8, 2025
 - 3-Year Term Ending:
 - Scott Hanlon - Mayor
 - 2-Year Terms Ending:
 - Shirley Wells – Ward 2
 - Karyn Babcock – Ward 3
 - 1-Year Appointment Ending:
 - Kevin Nehls – Ward 1
11. First Reading of Ordinance No. 784 – Water Rates
12. First Reading of Ordinance No. 785 – Sewer Rates
13. Minutes
14. Bills
15. Begin Accepting Applications for Summer Recreational Positions:
 - Baseball Coordinator
 - Softball Coordinator
 - Legion Coach
 - Jr. Legion Coach
 - Jr. Teener Coach
 - Girls' Softball Coaches (U8/U10/U12/U14)
 - Day Baseball/Softball Coach
 - Concessions Manager
 - Swimming Pool Manager
16. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
17. Adjournment

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY
January 7, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Blessing – Fr. Samson
3. Administer Oaths
 - a. Commissioners: Duane Sutton & Kyler Dinger
 - b. State's Attorney: Karly Winter
4. Elect 2025 Chairman
5. Elect 2025 Vice-Chairman
6. Approval of the Agenda
7. Commission Reorganization Meeting for 2025
 - a. Update Board Book
 - i. 2025 Committee Appointments
 - ii. Expense Policy – Brown County Boards
 - iii. ADA Coordinator
 - iv. Appointed Officials
 1. County Highway Superintendent
 - v. Adopt Resolution to approve Investment Policy/Depositories
 - vi. Officials Newspaper(s)
 - vii. Adopt Resolution regarding Tax Deed Notices
 - viii. Volunteers for Work Comp Purposes
 1. Cert
 2. Chaplains
 3. Citizens Corp Council
 4. Dive Team
 5. Fair Board
 - ix. Board Appointments
 1. Communications Council
 2. Dacotah Prairie Museum
 3. Planning & Zoning Board
 4. Weed & Pest
 5. 4-H
 6. NECOG
 7. Farm Service Agency
 - x. Range Fire Suppression Assistance
 - xi. Safety Committee & SDPAA Representatives
 - xii. SD Public Assurance Alliance Representatives
 - xiii. Homeland Security Regional Review Board
 - xiv. Housing & Redevelopment Commission of Brown County
 - xv. Regional Railroad Authority Commission
 - b. Approve DOE Fees
 - c. Approve Fairgrounds Rental Rates
 - d. Approve Richmond Youth Camp Rates
 - e. Approve Planning & Zoning Fees
 - f. Approve Weed & Pest Application Fees
 - g. Adopt Resolution for Designation of Deputies in Auditor, Treasurer and Register of Deeds
 - h. Adopt Resolution for Interest Policy
 - i. Approve Expense Policy - Employees

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- j. Adopt Resolution for Expense Policy – Elections Officials
8. Opportunity for Public Comment
9. Adopt Resolution for Local Control
10. Adopt Resolution for Eminent Domain
11. Approve Transfer of 2002 Pick-up from Maintenance to Fairgrounds
12. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of December 31, 2024
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignments
 - e. Landfill Tonnage Report for December 2024
 - f. Auditor’s Report of Accounts for November & December 2024
 - g. Travel Requests
 - h. LEMPG 1st Qtr, Report
 - i. Surplus Law Books from Court-Room
13. Other Business
14. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
15. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission.

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board) - Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

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Ice Conditions Improving, Angler Reminded to Pick Up After Themselves

If the weatherman is correct, Mother Nature appears to have finally decided to settle into winter. With future forecasts showcasing negative temps, anglers will be anxious to hit the hard water and try their luck at ice fishing.

We have had numerous reports of anglers already finding success on the ice, and we want to share a few reminders about ways anglers can be respectful out on the hard water.

Easy ways to show respect are:

Always clean up trash left on the ice;

Discard fish cleanings properly and never leave fish on the ice;

Maintain adequate fishing distance between anglers/shacks; and,

Avoid blocking approaches, driveways, or other areas of travel adjacent to waterbodies you are fishing.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator, Tanner Davis, is also reminding anglers it is against the law to dispose/dump your live bait down the ice hole. It is also illegal to move bait in lakes, rivers, or streams of water. Please dispose of bait properly off the water.

In preparation for area lakes freezing over, state boat docks were removed prior to ice up, and local aquatic and parks staff inspected docks for any new zebra mussel populations. While inspecting docks at Lake Poinsett, parks staff detected a zebra mussel at Prestrude's boat ramp on the east side of the lake.

With this confirmation, following an additional suspect mussel previously, the Lake Poinsett/Dry Lake Complex is now deemed positive for zebra mussels. It is up to everyone to slow the spread of AIS in South Dakota. Everyone needs to do their part and Clean, Drain, Dry when recreating on South Dakota waters throughout the entire season.

For more information related to AIS, please visit sdleastwanted.sd.gov. Here, you can find AIS laws and regulations, species

information, view our interactive AIS map which shows all positive waters, as well as report any suspect AIS found on the Citizen Monitoring page.

As a reminder, if you find a suspect AIS, please take a clear photo with report the suspect AIS to your local GFP office, and a trained staff member will follow up. Please do not transport the suspect AIS.

Happy New Years and tight lines!

On GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers
GT



Tuesday, Jan. 7

Warner at Groton

4:00 Girls JV

Sponsored by

Adam & Nicole Wright

5:10 Boys JV

Anonymous Sponsor

Girls Varsity Game

and

Boys Varsity Game

\$5 ticket or

GDI Subscription

required to watch the games.



Main theme for South Dakota politics in 2025? Buckle up.

BY STU WHITNEY

South Dakota News Watch

Though it's an off year in election terms, 2025 will pack a considerable punch within the scope of South Dakota politics.

The drama begins in January, when Gov. Kristi Noem is scheduled to begin committee hearings in Washington after being appointed as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security by incoming President Donald Trump, whose inauguration is Jan. 20.

Noem's proposed executive branch role is just part of South Dakota's influence in the nation's capital. Sen. John Thune was chosen by his Republican colleagues as Senate Majority Leader in November, and Rep. Dusty Johnson has emerged as a close adviser to Speaker Mike Johnson in the House of Representatives.

In Pierre, the surging populist GOP wing assumes control of legislative leadership as Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden prepares to take the reins from Noem in a challenging budget year, with the session starting Jan. 14.

Amid this backdrop, candidates will start plotting for 2026, when South Dakota will elect a new governor as well as hold races for U.S. Senate and U.S. House and constitutional offices such as attorney general, secretary of state and state treasurer.

Here's a quick rundown of what to expect as a jam-packed political year begins:

Noem fast-tracked as Homeland Secretary

Noem's appointment to Homeland Security is considered high-priority by the Trump administration as it seeks to hit the ground running on proposed immigration reforms.

The South Dakota governor's confirmation timeline is right behind Trump's choices for Secretary of Defense (Pete Hegseth) and Secretary of State (Marco Rubio), with those national security picks expected to have committee hearings the week starting Jan. 13.

Noem has met with members of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which is chaired by Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky and will consider her nomination.

She cannot be formally nominated until Trump is sworn in Jan. 20, and the committee can't vote until that occurs. So the earliest that her appointment can be confirmed by the committee and sent to the full



Gov. Kristi Noem introduces Donald Trump during a Sept. 8, 2023, event in Rapid City, where Noem endorsed him for president. (Photo: Samantha Laurey / Argus Leader)

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Senate is likely Jan. 21 or 22.

Republicans hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate, which means they can lose three GOP votes and still pass measures or appointees, with Vice President-elect J.D. Vance breaking ties.

If Noem survives, as most expect, Trump's team wants her to be publicly active out of the gate, which likely means a trip to the Southern border to stress a crackdown on illegal immigration.

As a member of the House, Dusty Johnson is not involved in the confirmation process. But he told News Watch that he's confident South Dakota's governor will hold up under the "advise and consent" scrutiny of the Senate.

"There are certainly some appointments that are more controversial in nature," Johnson said. "(Noem) is a pretty straightforward, traditional, conservative pick, and I would think she's in excellent shape. She knows how to make decisions and doesn't get scared at the prospect of making a tough call."

As for how the 53-year-old Noem will handle a job that puts her in charge of a network of 22 agencies and 260,000 employees tasked with keeping the United States safe from outside threats, there are differences of opinion.

Jeh Johnson, who served as Homeland Security secretary under President Barack Obama from 2013-17, told News Watch in November that he wishes Noem success "in promoting the department's missions and its people."

But Johnson, former general counsel of the Department of Defense, added a note of caution as Noem prepares to join an administration that has vowed to carry out mass deportations of illegal immigrants in the country, facing likely legislative and legal hurdles along the way.

"I fear she will be placed in the untenable position of having to publicly defend the Trump Administration's most controversial and harshest immigration enforcement policies," Jeh Johnson said. "I suspect there will be many days when she wishes she were back in South Dakota."

Thune bolsters relationship with Trump

Thune is settling into his role as Senate majority leader, a job he apprenticed for while serving as a right-hand man for former longtime Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who remains in the Senate.

One of Thune's biggest challenges will be managing the demands and expectations of Trump, who has called for quick action from Senate Republicans on confirming Cabinet posts and getting in step with White House prerogatives.

Thune would prefer to insulate the Senate from such pressure under the constitutional balance of power. That wish was granted in December, when 38 GOP senators voted against Trump's preferred bill to extend government funding while also suspending the debt limit for two years, which would have eased the path for White House priorities such as border spending and tax cuts.



South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley speaks during a media briefing on Oct. 9, 2024 at police enforcement center in Sioux Falls. (Photo: Samantha Laurey / Argus Leader)

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Congress later passed a temporary funding bill that did not address the debt ceiling, despite Trump saying on social media that he would support primary challenges against Republicans who opposed his wishes.

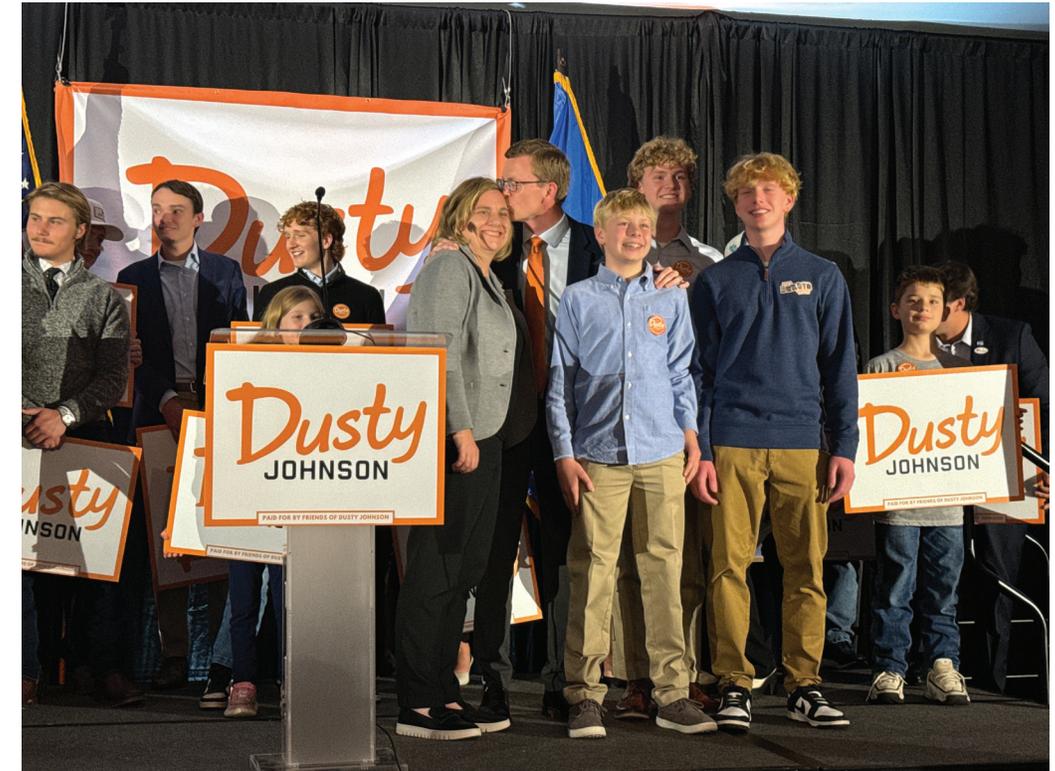
Thune's rocky relationship with Trump, dating back to the 2016 presidential campaign and inflamed by the U.S. Capitol riot of Jan. 6, 2021, has seen signs of recent repair.

Thune and Trump were seen hanging out together in a private suite at the Army-Navy football game on Dec. 14, and Thune also visited the President-elect at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida recently to discuss legislative strategy.

Another fragile alliance, the one involving Thune and Noem that highlights their contrasting political styles, is not necessarily under repair but is being mitigated for what both consider the greater good of Republican leadership in Washington.

Thune met with Noem to discuss her Homeland Security appointment and the shared recognition that many of Trump's immigration aims will run through the Senate and Noem's office if she's confirmed.

Thune has listed border security as one of his top political priorities entering the 2025 session, along with tax relief, military strength and energy deregulation.



South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson kisses his wife, Jacquelyn, and stands with his three sons after declaring victory in his U.S. House re-election race at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Nov. 5, 2024. (Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

Johnson rises in House stature, eyes 2026

Though the 2026 primary for South Dakota governor is still 18 months away, the race has been bubbling beneath the surface for months.

Dusty Johnson has been the most active among potential contenders, building a campaign war chest of more than \$5.5 million while wrangling top-level South Dakota donors in anticipation of a race that could begin as early as spring 2025.

Other likely candidates include Rhoden and Attorney General Marty Jackley as well as a contender from the populist wing, with state Rep. Scott Odenbach of Spearfish mentioned frequently after recently being named House majority leader.

Odenbach worked closely with Speaker of the House Jon Hansen of Dell Rapids to bolster anti-abortion and landowner rights initiatives while urging the ouster of "establishment" legislative incumbents in the 2024 election, all of which were successful efforts.

Jackley, who saw Noem run to the right in defeating him for the 2018 gubernatorial nomination, is determined to better position himself this time. He has assembled volunteer campaign staff for whether he runs for governor or attorney general in 2026, showcasing hardline stances against illegal immigration, abortion

and gun control.

The 54-year-old Sturgis native has made the pilgrimage to Mar-a-Lago and has a working relationship with former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, the U.S. attorney general nominee who is part of Trump's current inner circle.

Most political observers agree that a Trump endorsement could be a game-changer in any South Dakota statewide race, and the president-elect has supported conservative state AGs before in their pursuit of higher office.

Barring such a development, running for governor could be an uphill climb for Jackley, who had about \$500,000 in his campaign coffers at the last reporting date and limited options for coveted in-state donors after Johnson's early efforts.

"One thing I learned from high school and college athletics is that my coach would tell me, 'Run your own race,'" Jackley told News Watch. "So it doesn't make any difference to me if somebody else is running for governor. I'm going to do what is best for me and the state, and that decision won't be affected by other individuals."

Johnson has insisted that he's in no hurry to formally launch a gubernatorial campaign. One political insider noted that there's no advantage to "hanging out there as a punching bag for 14 or 15 months, especially when you've got so much money and you're well known."

He has hired a media consultant to help keep him well-positioned amid a temperamental Republican electorate in South Dakota, with the goal of fending off Trump-fueled challenges against him.

The congressman shared with top supporters an internal poll from Axis Research that showed him at 31% among 306 "known Republican primary voters" in South Dakota from Nov. 10-12, compared to 22% for Jackley, 10% for Rhoden and 7% for former state legislator and U.S. House candidate Taffy Howard. The poll showed 31% as undecided, with a margin of error of 5.6 percentage points.

Johnson's visibility as a sitting U.S. congressman gives him an early edge, said Jon Schaff, a political science professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen. But the undecided numbers and the fact that Rhoden hasn't become governor yet means there's a long way to go.

"My strong suspicion is that Dusty is way ahead of the other figures in name recognition, giving his support a bit of an artificial strength," Schaff told News Watch. "As other candidates raise money and increase



U.S. Sen. John Thune talks to a supporter at a GOP election night gathering at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls on Nov. 5, 2024.

(Photo: Stu Whitney / South Dakota News Watch)

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their name recognition, the numbers may change."

A Mason-Dixon poll co-sponsored by News Watch in October showed Johnson with a favorability rating of 51% among Republicans in the state, well behind Noem (76%) and Trump (72%). Those results bolstered the conventional wisdom that he needs to win over hard-right voters to secure the GOP primary.

For now, Johnson is focused on his work in Congress, where he has emerged a key dealmaker as Republican leadership walks the tightrope of a razor-thin majority in the House. He has emphasized his coordination with the Trump administration as it seeks to carry out its agenda in Congress.

"Right now, 99% of my time is focused on this first 100 days (of Trump's presidency)," Johnson, 48, told News Watch. "You know, shame on us if we don't secure the border, cut regulations and push back on the Chinese Communist Party. And if I take my eye off those things, our chance of success won't be as good."

Rhoden prepares to take reins in Pierre

One of the state's biggest political stories in 2025 could be the ascension of Rhoden, who will likely become the first South Dakota governor to assume office in the middle of a legislative session in Pierre.

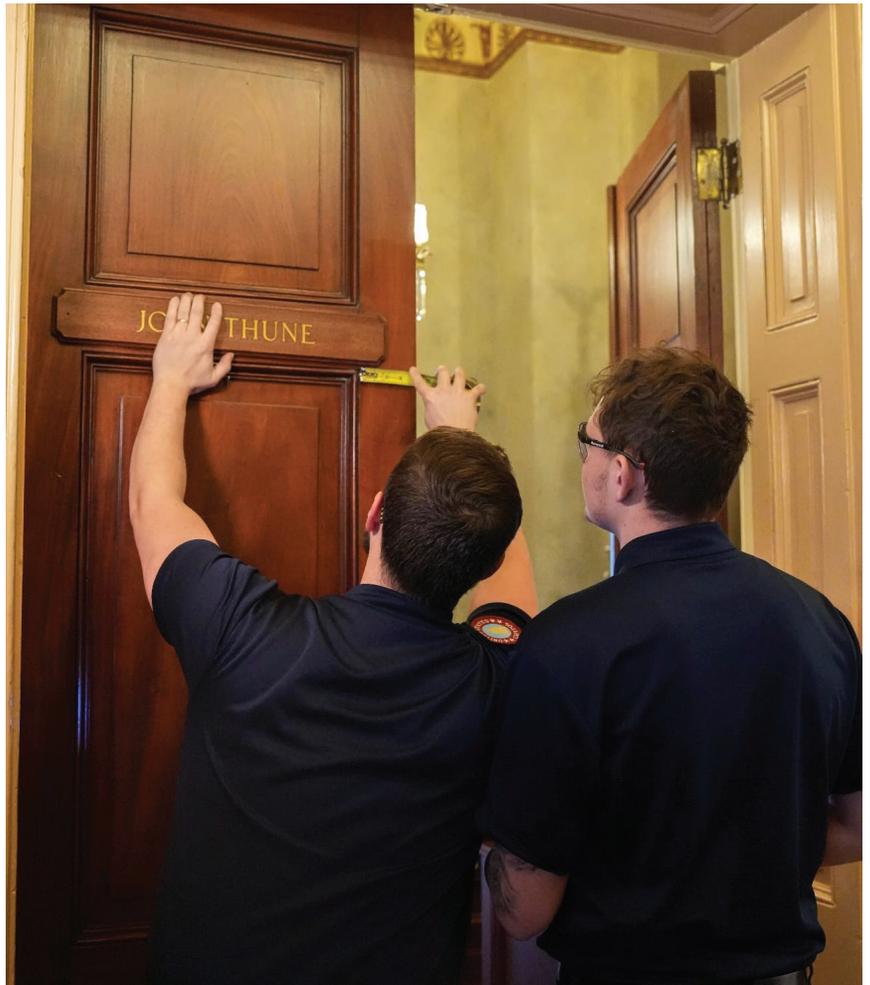
The 65-year-old Meade County rancher is already sizing up a Legislature fraught with budgetary battles and potential Republican infighting. The 2024 election was a triumph for limited government populists, who seized leadership roles and will test the remaining influence of pro-business institutionalists when it comes to pipelines, prison projects and property tax.

Rhoden, a legislative veteran who ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in 2014, will have ample opportunity to prove his political dexterity in the current GOP environment, setting the tone for a potential re-election bid.

The Union Center resident has assembled a "kitchen cabinet" to prepare for his new role. That group of close advisers includes former Governor's Office of Economic Development Commissioner Steve Westra; Board of Regents president and former state legislator Tim Rave; and Sioux Falls lawyer and lobbyist Matt McCaulley.

The search for a lieutenant governor has focused on Sioux Falls to provide a West River/East River balance come election time. Rhoden's preferred choice is Westra, but there are concerns about whether his past GOED battles with limited-government legislators would complicate his confirmation.

Christine Erickson, a former state legislator and Sioux Falls city councilor who has West River roots, has



Workers install Sen. John Thune's nameplate on the door of the Senate Republican Leaders suite at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 3, 2025. Thune was chosen by his Republican colleagues as Senate Majority Leader in November. (Photo: Courtesy of Thune staff)

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also been considered for the role.

From an electoral view, Rhoden has a chance to use the increased visibility of the governor's office as a launching pad for 2026. While not a polished speaker, his status as a "true-blue cowboy from Union Center" is seen by political insiders as a potentially effective counter to Dusty Johnson's bookish zeal.

Rhoden's ability to raise money and encourage allies may hinge on how he handles the upcoming legislative session. Having served in both the House and Senate, he understands the process well enough to navigate the choppy waters of a Republican party divide.

He'll need to complement those efforts with the executive mettle and mature leadership that South Dakotans want to see as the face of their state moving forward.

Plenty of comparisons have been made to Walter Dale Miller, another West River rancher and veteran legislator who served as lieutenant governor under Gov. George Mickelson. Miller took the reins of leadership at age 67 after Mickelson was killed in a plane crash in April 1993.

Miller ran for governor as an incumbent in 1994 and was challenged by Bill Janklow, a former governor and more savvy politician who won by a margin of 54% to 46%, setting up his return to Pierre for two terms.

Rounds aims for re-election in 2026

The general consensus is that 70-year-old Sen. Mike Rounds, who is up for re-election in 2026, will enter the fray at least one more time to seek a third term in Washington.

This means that Rounds, who has publicly criticized Trump's stances at times in the past, might need to tread lightly to avoid a populist primary challenge in a state where opposing Trump too stridently can alter political fortunes.

Thune, by contrast, isn't up for re-election until 2028, the final year of Trump's term.

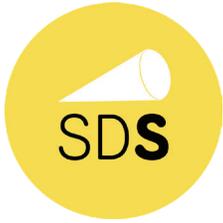
Rounds has not ruled out running for governor as a means of returning home to Pierre, where he served as a state legislator and was South Dakota governor from 2003-2011.

The gubernatorial option was viewed by some as a contingency plan for Rounds if Noem decided to run for Senate, though Trump's presidential win and Noem's administration role shifts that scenario.

The names most frequently mentioned for U.S. House in 2026, assuming Dusty Johnson runs for governor, are state Sen. Casey Crabtree of Madison and state Rep. Tony Venhuizen of Sioux Falls, former chief of staff to Daugaard and Noem.

Howard, who challenged Johnson from the right in the 2022 U.S. House primary and finished with 41% of the vote, is also a possibility for the 2026 race.

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



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COMMENTARY

John Thune has a chance to be an example of civility for the country

New majority leader displays his calmer approach to politics in Sunday TV interviews
by Seth Tupper

National political journalists are beating a path to John Thune's door since his recent elevation to U.S. Senate majority leader. He has responded with refreshingly boring interviews, including on Sunday's episodes of "Face the Nation" and "Meet the Press."

Political junkies aren't bored. They're parsing every word he says about the filibuster, Cabinet nominees, border security, taxes and the national debt.

But to the average person who's grown accustomed to Trump-era politics, Thune's civility may sound a bit dull. His Sunday interviews did not include any name-calling, any assertion of "alternative facts," or any demonization of the opposing party or the media.

That's a good thing. When the political pot is boiling over, somebody should turn down the heat. Maybe an old-fashioned Republican from South Dakota is the right guy for the job.

Of course, he'll soon be counteracted by a new-fashioned Republican from his own state. That's South Dakota governor and next secretary of the federal Department of Homeland Security (pending Senate confirmation), Kristi Noem. Her recent book, "No Going Back," showed exactly how un-Thune-like she is, with her sensational disclosures about fatally shooting a dog and a goat and her retracted tale of meeting North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un.

The controversy generated by those portions of the book obscured Noem's central message. She thinks outrageous antics like Trump's are the right way to do politics now and forevermore and that drama-averse



U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, talks to reporters about a proposed budget continuing resolution at the U.S. Capitol on Dec. 18, 2024, in Washington, D.C. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

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politicians like Thune — although she didn't single him out specifically — are ineffectual relics.

Meanwhile, some Americans who still hope there's a chance of "going back" to a more civil brand of pre-Trump politics are investing a lot of hope in Thune. He has inspired some of that hope with answers to questions like the one Margaret Brennan of "Face the Nation" asked him about Trump.

"Will you tell him when you think he's wrong?" Brennan asked.

"I will," Thune said.

Before Democrats and moderate Republicans anoint Thune as their savior, they'll want to consider the rest of his response: "And I think my job is to do everything I can to help him achieve success."

Thune often gives a dual answer to questions about Trump. What he seems to be signaling is that he's willing to stand against the worst of the president-elect's potential transgressions against the Constitution, the rule of law and common decency. But as he made clear to Brennan, Thune has "the same set of objectives" as Trump on a lot of policy matters.

All of that means Thune has a tricky path to navigate, because he's likely to be criticized as insufficiently devoted to Trump and insufficiently opposed to him, sometimes simultaneously. Consider Thune's response to Kristen Welker on "Meet the Press" when she asked if he supports Trump's pledge to pardon people involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

"That's ultimately going to be a decision that President Trump is going to have to make," Thune said, adding that he's focused on the future and not "looking in the rearview mirror."

Welker tried one more time, asking what message it would send if Trump pardons people who attacked police officers. Again, Thune evaded. "The pardon authority exists with him," Thune said before pivoting to other topics.

It was a typically Thune response: careful, reserved, and mindful of the unforeseen consequences of saying too much. He's always been like that, which is why it's important to consider what he doesn't say.

He didn't say he supports pardoning Jan. 6 rioters. Similarly, when Brennan and Welker asked about the fate of Trump's Cabinet nominees, Thune did not pledge unconditional support for all of them but said he'll give them a fair confirmation process in the Senate. When asked if he supports or thinks it's realistic to carry out Trump's plan to deport all of the estimated 11 million people living in the country illegally, Thune didn't say yes. He spoke of starting with deportations for unauthorized immigrants who've committed crimes or have pending deportation orders.

And when Welker asked Thune to describe the state of his relationship with Trump, he didn't say it was good. He said it's "evolving."

That was a response loaded with baggage including Thune's call for Trump to drop out of the 2016 presidential race after the release of the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape, and Trump's later attempt at convincing Noem to challenge Thune in a primary election.

If Thune wants any meaningful legislation signed into law in the next several years, his relationship with Trump will have to keep evolving.

Let's just hope, for the sake of South Dakota and the country, that Thune's political style never evolves too far from the civility he displayed in his first major broadcast television interviews as majority leader.

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

Johnson reintroduces bill to protect Wounded Knee Massacre site

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 6, 2025 11:48 AM

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, reintroduced a bill Monday to protect 40 acres at the Wounded Knee Massacre site on behalf of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Johnson's Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act passed the House in 2023 but didn't make it through the Senate last year. The new session of Congress began Friday.

"I'm hopeful the bill passes this Congress to provide greater tribal sovereignty to this sacred land," Johnson said in a news release.

The massacre occurred on Dec. 29, 1890. Lakota people were camped near Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation

in southwestern South Dakota, where they were surrounded by hundreds of Army soldiers. A shot rang out while the soldiers tried to disarm the camp, and chaotic shooting ensued.

Fewer than 40 soldiers were killed (some by friendly fire, according to historians), while estimates of Lakota deaths ran from 200 to 300 or more, depending on the source. After some of the bodies froze on the ground for several days, a military-led burial party dumped them into a mass grave.

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

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, told South Dakota Searchlight that he plans to reintroduce his own version of the bill soon in the Senate. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-North Carolina, took advantage of rules last November allowing a single senator to block consideration of the House-passed bill.

"We'll do whatever we can to help the leaders of the two tribes to get this accomplished," Rounds said. "This is their request. This is not a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats all agree this should be done. One way or another, we'll get it completed."

Tillis has opposed several tribal-related bills in an attempt to get senators to support his own bill to federally recognize the Lumbee Tribe in North Carolina. He called out the leaders of the Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes for allegedly not supporting his efforts. Rounds said Tillis may seek federal recognition in a "different direction" with President-elect Donald Trump's impending inauguration.

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out called the new bill "wholly uncontroversial" in Johnson's Monday news release.

"This sacred site should forever serve to remind us of where we as a country have been and as a marker for how much further we have to go," Star Comes Out said.



An arch topped with a cross marks the entrance to the Wounded Knee Memorial and cemetery on the Pine Ridge Reservation on June 30, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Meanwhile, efforts to rescind medals of honor awarded to soldiers who participated in the massacre remain in limbo. The medals were subjected to a review last year by the Department of Defense, but there hasn't been an announcement of the review panel's recommendations.

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.

As demand for weight-loss drugs rises, states grapple with Medicaid coverage

Some researchers question long-term cost savings for state programs

BY: SHALINA CHATLANI - JANUARY 6, 2025 9:30 AM

Over her three-decade career, weight management physician Dr. Sarah Ro has seen hundreds of patients. Many of them are on Medicaid and have become yo-yo dieters who, despite their best efforts at changing their eating habits and lifestyles, cannot seem to shed the pounds hurting their health.

"They have a tremendous amount of disease burden," said Ro, medical director of the University of North Carolina Physicians Network weight management program, which serves patients from marginalized communities at clinics across the state. "All the complications that you could think of."

But the increasingly popular drug therapy known as GLP-1s could help, she said.

GLP-1 drugs mimic a hormone in the intestinal tract to balance the body's blood sugar levels. And while GLP-1 drugs such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Zepbound have been around for years to help patients with diabetes, they are growing in popularity to treat patients in need of significant weight loss. That's because the drugs also send the brain a signal that reduces hunger.

Due to their high list price in the United States — ranging from about \$940 to \$1,350 a month before insurance, rebates or discounts — many patients can't afford them.

But now that these drugs are in greater demand from both patients and doctors, state Medicaid pro-



Boxes of the diabetes drug Ozempic rest on a pharmacy counter.

(Photo illustration by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

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grams are grappling with whether to cover them for weight loss, both for reasons of equity and to save on future health expenditures. Some researchers, however, question whether the drugs can help lower costs in the long run.

Last August, North Carolina began covering some federal Food and Drug Administration-approved GLP-1s for obesity treatment among some populations. South Carolina began its coverage Nov. 1. At least 12 other states cover GLP-1s for obesity treatment.

"For me, it wasn't ever an option not to cover it," said Kody Kinsley, who just ended his term as secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services under former Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper.

"The first big reason was just a sense of doing what is right for folks," Kinsley told Stateline. He also thinks coverage is the right investment economically, estimating that the North Carolina Medicaid program spends about a billion dollars a year on obesity-related expenses.

He told Stateline that funding drugs that can cut those costs down by even a small percentage is worth it over the long run. He also noted that Medicaid covers other expensive drugs. The department expects the cost of covering GLP-1s to be about \$16 million a year under the new policy. By comparison, coverage for Dupixent, a drug commonly used to treat eczema, runs the state about \$28 million a year.

"It is my experience that the only time we seem to really get up in arms as a society about the cost of a drug — to the point where we are willing to not cover it — is when it is for some sort of stigmatized disease," Kinsley told Stateline.

Obesity, he noted, is a recognized medical condition.

Medicaid spending

Medicaid programs cover some GLP-1 drugs to treat obesity in at least 13 other states: California, Delaware, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia and Wisconsin.

An annual survey from the health policy research organization KFF recently found that half of the remaining state Medicaid programs are considering covering the drugs, but that the high costs are still prohibitive for most despite federal matches and rebate programs with drug manufacturers.

State officials say health equity — the idea that all groups regardless of background deserve equal access to health care — is one of the main reasons they are considering the coverage, but that they worry higher costs will put pressure on their Medicaid budgets, said KFF senior policy analyst Liz Williams, who co-authored the survey of state Medicaid program directors.

Medicaid spending on GLP-1s for all conditions increased from \$597.3 million for about 755,000 prescriptions in 2019, to \$3.9 billion for 3.8 million prescriptions in 2023, according to KFF. It's hard to tell, however, how much of the increase is solely for obesity vs. diabetes, or a combination of both, the study noted.

Some states in KFF's survey said they are considering whether coverage expansion in the future may reduce long-term Medicaid spending on chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease.

But one researcher, John Cawley, a professor of economics and public policy at Cornell University, and his colleagues found that while obesity "basically doubles a person's annual health care costs," the savings associated with public insurance plans covering GLP-1s for just obesity treatment are dependent on the patient's starting body mass index, or BMI.

A healthy weight is a BMI of up to 25. People who are obese, based on their height and weight, have an amount of fat on their bodies representing a BMI of 30 or higher.

"You shouldn't expect to see almost any cost savings for somebody whose BMI is around 30 or 31," Cawley told Stateline. He noted that most significant savings would happen at a starting BMI of around 40, but added that "those savings still may not be great enough to pay for the current list price of these drugs."

Cawley said there are numerous other reasons to cover the drug, though, such as improving someone's quality of life.

An 'obesogenic environment'

Ro, the weight management doctor, told Stateline that across North Carolina, people in vulnerable com-

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munities can be predisposed to developing obesity because they often live within what's known as an "obesogenic environment" — a combination of physical, economic and social factors that promotes obesity.

Residents struggle with losing weight not only due to a diet of unhealthy foods, but also because of generational genetics, a dearth of grocery stores with healthy foods, and busy schedules with multiple jobs and a lack of child care. Many cities in the state aren't that "walkable," leaving many residents with few options for basic exercise.

And some of the state's most popular foods are high-fat, high-sugar dishes such as pork shoulder slathered in sugary and smoky barbecue sauce, peach cobbler, fried shrimp and fried green tomatoes. North Carolina is the "buckle of the barbecue belt," Kinsley said.

There, 70% of residents are either overweight or obese. Obesity is linked to several comorbidities, such as diabetes and heart failure. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 34% of North Carolina adults — compared with 40% nationally — are obese.

That rate rises across demographic groups. While white North Carolinians experience an obesity rate of 32%, Hispanic populations sit at 34%, Indigenous North Carolinians are at 38%, and Black North Carolinians have a rate of 48%.

Most Medicaid enrollees in the state are people of color.

In late November, the Biden administration proposed a new rule to require Medicaid and Medicare programs to cover GLP-1s for weight loss. The incoming Trump administration will have to decide whether to approve those changes.

The Biden administration estimates that the change would cost the federal government about \$11 billion over the course of 10 years for Medicaid. States would have to pay an estimated \$3.8 billion.

While states assess their capacities and the federal government considers its plans, Ro said her patients are getting a better shot at getting healthier by having access to the coverage.

"GLP-1s are not the answer for everybody," Ro told Stateline. "But If I have a high-risk patient with heart disease, with sleep apnea and advanced liver disease, this could be a lifesaving medication."

Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.

Trump's election as president certified by Congress, four years after Capitol attack

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND JENNIFER SHUTT - JAN. 6, 2025 4:46 PM

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers certified President-elect Donald Trump's win Monday in a smooth process that four years ago was disrupted by a violent mob of Trump supporters bent on stopping Congress from formally declaring President Joe Biden's 2020 victory.

Vice President Kamala Harris — the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee defeated by Trump — presided over the afternoon joint session. Senators and representatives counted and certified the 312 Electoral College votes for Trump that secured his second term in office, this time accompanied by Sen. J.D. Vance of Ohio as his vice president.

"Today was obviously a very important day. It was about what should be the norm and what the American people should be able to take for granted, which is that one of the most important pillars of our democracy is that there will be a peaceful transfer of power," Harris, who won 226 Electoral College votes, told reporters after lawmakers concluded the ceremony.

The process wrapped up in just under 40 minutes with no objections — a stark contrast to four years ago, when Republicans objected to Arizona and Pennsylvania results, and Trump supporters breached the Capitol, sending lawmakers into hiding for several hours.

Former Vice President Mike Pence said Monday in a statement published on X that he welcomed "the return of order and civility to these historic proceedings."

"The peaceful transfer of power is the hallmark of our democracy and today, members of both parties in

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the House and Senate along with the vice president certified the election of our new president and vice president without controversy or objection," wrote Pence, who in 2021 resisted intense pressure from Trump to stop Congress from certifying the results.

On that day, the rioters chanted "Hang Mike Pence" and erected a makeshift gallows on the west side of the Capitol.



Inside the House chamber

Harris entered the chamber just before 1 p.m. Eastern on Monday, with senators following in line behind her.

Lawmakers read aloud the Electoral College vote totals for each state. Harris stood at the dais as results were reported, including the states she and running mate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz won.

Of the 538 Electoral College votes, at least 270 are needed to win.

Lawmakers on each side of the chamber applauded, and some even stood, when vote totals were announced for their party's candidate.

Vance, sitting beside GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, applauded during the reading of votes.

Ahead of Monday's certification, Democratic Reps. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Jamie Raskin of Maryland sat together chatting near the back of the chamber for several minutes.

Thompson chaired the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Raskin, who was a member of the committee, has spoken out as recently as last week against Trump's promise to pardon the defendants charged in the attack.

Pardon advocates gather nearby

Blocks away, at a Capitol Hill hotel, a series of speakers called for full pardons for people convicted of participating in the riot.

The group, a collection of far-right social media figures, framed the 2021 riot as a peaceful protest — even as they openly advocated for the pardons of people who committed violence.

"I believe there should be pardons for every single J6er, including the very most violent ones," said Cara Castronuova, boxer, advocate and reporter for the pro-Trump news site Gateway Pundit.

Security fencing surrounded the Capitol, where an increased police presence monitored the grounds and inside the building.

The U.S. Secret Service led security planning for the day, which was elevated to a "National Special Security Event," — the first time a count of the Electoral College votes received the designation.

However, pedestrian and vehicle traffic outside the Capitol remained light after roughly 6 inches of snow fell overnight and into the morning.

Staff crossing paths with U.S. Capitol police officers in the hallways and House basement cafe remarked

U.S. Senate pages carrying the Electoral College certificates in wooden ballot boxes walk through the Capitol rotunda on their way to the U.S. House chamber on Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

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on the attack four years ago and wished the officers a quiet day.

Fake electors, pressure on Pence

In the 64 days between 2020's presidential election and Congress' certification of Biden's win, Trump and his supporters led a campaign to overturn the results.

Trump and his private attorneys schemed to develop slates of fake electors in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump also launched a heavy pressure campaign on Pence to thwart Congress' certification of Biden's victory and rallied his supporters to march to the Capitol as he led a "Stop the Steal" rally just hours before lawmakers convened on Jan. 6, 2021.

By day's end, rioters had assaulted over 140 police officers and caused approximately \$2.8 million in damage to the Capitol.

The U.S. Justice Department launched its largest-ever investigation following the attack and, as of December, had charged 1,572 defendants.

Over a third of the defendants were charged with assaulting, resisting or impeding law enforcement, and 171 were charged with using a deadly weapon.

Police were 'punched, tackled, tased and attacked'

Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a statement Monday marking the Justice Department's years-long investigation "to hold accountable those criminally responsible for the January 6 attack on our democracy."

"On this day, four years ago, police officers were brutally assaulted while bravely defending the United States Capitol. They were punched, tackled, tased, and attacked with chemical agents that burned their eyes and skin. Today, I am thinking of the officers who still bear the scars of that day as well as the loved ones of the five officers who lost their lives in the line of duty as a result of what happened to them on January 6, 2021."

Democratic lawmakers and House Chaplain Margaret Grun Kibben marked the anniversary Monday by holding a moment of prayer on the first floor of the Capitol, where rioters first breached the building four years ago.

"What was intended to be a historical parliamentary procedure turned quickly into turmoil and frustration and anger and fear," Kibben said. "We pray now that on this day, four years later, that You would enter into the space in a much different way; in a way that allows for peace and for conversation and for reconciliation."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said afterward that pardoning the people who attacked the Capitol four years ago would "set a terrible example for the future in America and for the world that it was okay, it was forgivable to do this."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the events of Jan. 6, 2021 "will forever live in infamy."

"A violent mob attacked the Capitol as part of a concerted effort to halt the peaceful transfer of power in the United States of America for the first time in our history," Jeffries said. "Thanks to the bravery, courage and sacrifice of heroic police officers and the law enforcement community, the effort to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election was unsuccessful."

Republicans saw 'peaceful grandmothers'

House Speaker Mike Johnson released a statement Monday celebrating the vote certification and Trump's win as the "greatest political comeback in American history." He did not mention the 2021 attack and his office did not respond to requests for comment about it from States Newsroom.

The Louisianan, whose narrow election as speaker on Friday was boosted by a Trump endorsement, was among the Republicans who refused to certify Arizona's and Pennsylvania's slates of electors even after the violent mob stormed the Capitol.

GOP Rep. Mike Collins of Georgia posted on X on Monday that Jan. 6, 2021, amounted to "thousands

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of peaceful grandmothers gathered in Washington, D.C., to take a self-guided, albeit unauthorized, tour of the U.S. Capitol building.”

“Earlier that day, President Trump held a rally, where supporters walked to the Capitol to peacefully protest the certification of the 2020 election. During this time, some individuals entered the Capitol, took photos, and explored the building before leaving,” Collins wrote. “Since then, hundreds of peaceful protesters have been hunted down, arrested, held in solitary confinement, and treated unjustly.”

On whether Trump should pardon those defendants charged in the Jan. 6 riot, GOP South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told reporters Monday he believed those who were charged with assaulting law enforcement should be “put in a different category.” But ultimately, Graham said, that decision is up to Trump.

Louisiana’s Cassidy said he couldn’t comment on Trump likely pardoning people convicted of crimes based on their actions on Jan. 6, 2021.

“I mean, it’s a statement without detail, and so it’s hard for me to give thoughts,” Cassidy said, adding he needs to know which people Trump plans to pardon and on what basis. “And so until you see that, it’s hard to have a thought.”

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a Republican, said she suspected it wasn’t easy for Harris to oversee the certification of her defeat, but said she was glad this year included a peaceful transition of power.

“Well, I thought it was very orderly,” Capito said. “I thought it was very well handled by the vice president as the president of the Senate — it couldn’t have been easy for her. And I think that the peaceful transfer of power is something that makes us all proud to be Americans.”

Changes after the violent attack

Congress is required by law to convene at 1 p.m. Eastern on the sixth day of January following a presidential election year to certify each state’s slate of electors. The vice president, serving in the role of president of the Senate, presides over the process.

Lawmakers amended the law to clarify the vice president’s role after Trump’s actions toward Pence.

Monday’s certification marked the first time lawmakers used the new law, known as the Electoral Count Act.

The bill, signed into law in 2022, updated an 1887 election law that made it unclear what the vice president’s role was in certifying election results.

The new law, spearheaded by Sen. Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, and former Sen. Joe Manchin III, a West Virginia independent, raises the threshold for objections to a state’s electoral votes and clarifies the vice president’s role as purely ceremonial in certifying electoral results.

Previously, only one U.S. House representative and one U.S. senator needed to make an objection to an elector or slate of electors, but under the new law, one-fifth of the members from each chamber need to lodge an objection.

Minnesota Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar, the outgoing chair of the Senate Rules Committee who helped pass the Electoral Count Act out of committee, said in a statement that “no matter your party, we must uphold the right of all Americans to make their voices heard in our free and fair elections.”

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

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.

Biden signs bill expanding Social Security benefits for retired teachers, public employees

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JANUARY 6, 2025 11:58 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has expanded Social Security benefits for more than 2 million Americans by signing broadly bipartisan legislation that Congress approved late last year.

The ceremony on Sunday marked one of the last times Biden is expected to sign major legislation as president, since Congress is now controlled by Republicans and his term is set to end on Jan. 20, when President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office.

"By signing this bill, we're extending Social Security benefits for millions of teachers ... and other public employees, and their spouses and survivors," Biden said. "That means an estimated average of \$360 per month increase. That's a big deal."

The nearly 2.5 million people covered under the new law, he said, would "receive a lump sum payment of thousands of dollars to make up for the shortfall in benefits they should have gotten in 2024."

The House voted 327-75 in November to pass the bill and the Senate voted 76-20 in December to send the bill to Biden.

The new law eliminates the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset that for decades had reduced the amount some Americans receive in Social Security benefits.

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins, who attended the signing ceremony at the White House, released a written statement saying she was "pleased" that "these unfair provisions in our Social Security system have finally been repealed."

"This is a victory for thousands of teachers, first responders, public servants, and the countless advocates who fought for years to correct this unfairness," Collins wrote. "For too long, the WEP and GPO have denied retirees and their spouses the Social Security benefits they earned through years of work and contributions to the system. This law ensures that public service will no longer come at the expense of one's earned retirement benefits."

Former U.S. Rep. Abigail Spanberger, a Democrat who chose not to seek reelection to Congress to pur-



President Joe Biden gives a pen to Bette Marafino, president of the Connecticut Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans, after he signed the Social Security Fairness Act during an event in the East Room of the White House on Jan. 5, 2025, in Washington, D.C. At left are Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra. The legislation will expand Social Security benefits for millions of retired Americans, including firefighters, police officers and teachers. (Photo by Kent Nishimura/Getty Images)

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sue a run for the Virginia governor's office, wrote on social media that eliminating the two provisions had been a long time coming.

"Our retired police officers, firefighters, teachers, and public employees worked for DECADES to right this wrong," wrote Spanberger, who co-sponsored the House version of the bill last Congress.

Insolvency date moves up

The expansion of benefits is expected to cost \$195.65 billion during the next 10 years and move up the program's insolvency date by about six months, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

"If H.R. 82 was enacted, the balance of the (Old-Age and Survivors Insurance) trust fund would, CBO projects, be exhausted roughly half a year earlier than it would be under current law," CBO Director Phillip L. Swagel wrote in a letter to Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley. "The agency estimates that under current law, the balance of the OASI trust fund would be exhausted during fiscal year 2033."

Other members of Congress attending the signing ceremony included Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, Minnesota Democratic Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Ohio Republican Rep. Mike Carey, Louisiana Democratic Rep. Troy Carter, Louisiana Republican Reps. Clay Higgins and Julia Letlow, Ohio Democratic Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Greg Landsman and Virginia Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott, according to a list provided by the White House.

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.

Biden to ban future offshore drilling across more than 600 million acres

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JANUARY 6, 2025 6:43 AM

With just two weeks left in his presidency, Joe Biden will prohibit future oil and gas drilling off the entire East and West coasts, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and the remaining portions of Alaska's Northern Bering Sea.

Biden will sign two memoranda Monday to permanently ban offshore drilling over more than 625 acres of ocean to advance his commitment to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030, a White House statement said.

The orders come at the request of bipartisan state and local leaders in coastal areas, Biden said, and reflect that the paltry fossil fuel resources in those areas would not be worth the risks of environmental, health and economic harms that could result from oil and gas exploration.

"In balancing the many uses and benefits of America's ocean, it is clear to me that the relatively minimal fossil fuel potential in the areas I am withdrawing do not justify the environmental, public health, and economic risks that would come from new leasing and drilling," Biden said in the statement.

President-elect Donald Trump, who will take office Jan. 20, criticized Biden throughout last year's campaign for moves Trump said lowered the country's energy production. A temporary freeze on oil and gas leases, rejection of the Keystone XL Pipeline and other environmental measures taken by the Biden administration were part of what led to increased costs for consumers, Trump argued.

Economists have said that connection is dubious, but Trump is expected to pursue policies to expand oil and gas production.

'I'll unban it'

In a statement Monday morning, Trump spokesperson Karoline Leavitt strongly criticized Biden's move. "This is a disgraceful decision designed to exact political revenge on the American people who gave Presi-

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dent Trump a mandate to increase drilling and lower gas prices. Rest assured, Joe Biden will fail, and we will drill, baby, drill," she said.

In a Monday morning radio interview, Trump pledged to roll back the move.

"It's ridiculous," he told host Hugh Hewitt. "I'll unban it immediately. I will unban it. I have the right to unban it immediately."

It's unclear, however, if Trump would have the authority to undo Biden's action on his own.

A similar issue played out in courts during Trump's first term, but was eventually dismissed after he lost his 2020 reelection bid.

In April 2017, Trump issued an executive order to revoke offshore drilling restrictions his predecessor, President Barack Obama, had placed.

Environmental groups sued and a federal court in Alaska sided against the Trump administration, reasoning that the law governing offshore drilling, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, allows a president to withdraw areas from drilling but does not allow a president to revoke those withdrawals.

The Trump administration appealed in 2019, but the issue was resolved before an appeals decision when Biden took office and reinstated the Obama withdrawals in 2021. The court dismissed the case as moot without ruling on the merits of presidential authority.

That means the precedent set at the district court level should remain for Trump's second presidency, Seth Nelson, a spokesperson for the environmental group Evergreen Action, said Monday.

"This precedent suggests that President-elect Trump would face significant legal obstacles in attempting to reverse President Biden's ban through executive order, requiring an act of Congress instead," Nelson wrote in an email.

John Seibels, a spokesman for U.S. House Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman, an Arkansas Republican, said Monday that reversing the ban would likely require Congress' cooperation.

"It's still early, but based on what we've seen, this will likely require work by congress to roll back this ban," he wrote in an email.

In a Monday statement, Westerman said the House GOP majority would work with Trump to increase energy production, saying that Congress would use the legislative procedure known as budget reconciliation to reverse Biden energy policies.

"While the federal deficit grows, President Biden's decision to lock away 625 million acres of future energy potential undermines one of our nation's greatest revenue streams—energy receipts, second only to income taxes," Westerman said. "In the 119th Congress, we will use every tool, including reconciliation, to restore and unleash these revenues."



Cleanup workers search for contaminated sand and seaweed in front of drilling platforms and container ships about one week after an oil spill from an offshore oil platform on Oct. 9, 2021, in Huntington Beach, California. (Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

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'We do not need to choose'

Biden, though, described offshore drilling in the vast areas he is protecting as detrimental to long-term U.S. economic health, in part by protecting fishing and tourism industries.

"We do not need to choose between protecting the environment and growing our economy, or between keeping our ocean healthy, our coastlines resilient, and the food they produce secure and keeping energy prices low," Biden said. "Those are false choices. Protecting America's coasts and ocean is the right thing to do, and will help communities and the economy to flourish for generations to come."

The protections "have no expiration date, and prohibit all future oil and natural gas leasing in the areas withdrawn," according to a fact sheet from the White House.

The orders protect 334 million acres of coast along the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, stretching from the Maine-Canada border to the tip of Florida.

Nearly 250 million acres of Pacific coastline that is the habitat for "seals, sea lions, whales, fish, and countless seabirds" off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington will be protected. Governors of the three states had asked for the protections, according to the fact sheet. The last federal lease sale off the mainland West Coast was in 1984.

And 44 million acres of the Northern Bering Sea will be protected. The protections were sought by many Alaska Native communities, the White House said.

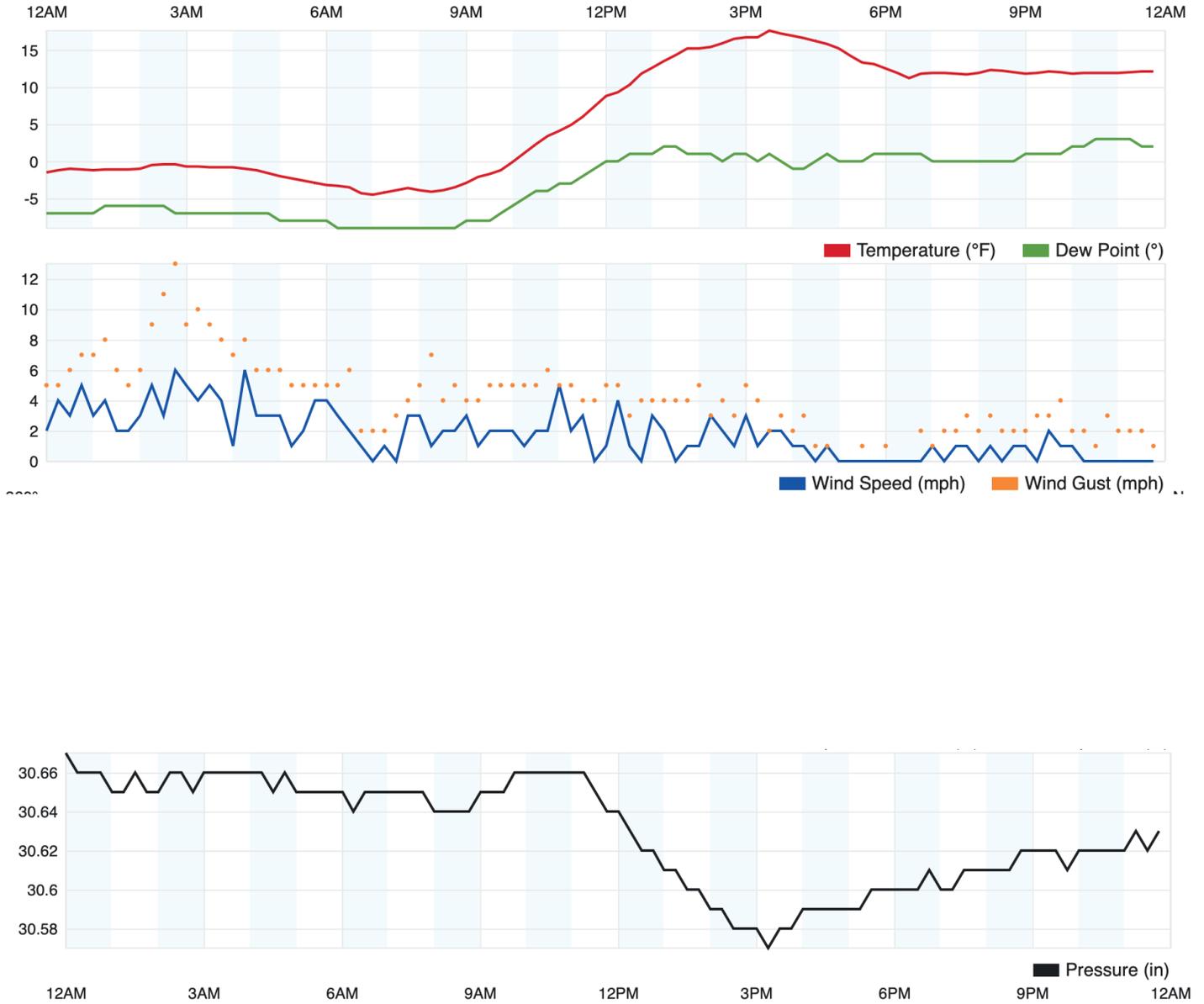
"This is an area where oil and gas development would pose severe dangers to coastal communities, and where the health of these waters is critically important to food security and to the culture of more than 70 coastal Tribes, including the Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Inupiaq people who have relied on these resources for millennia," the White House said.

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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Tuesday



High: 12 °F

Slight Chance
Snow then
Sunny

Tuesday Night



Low: 2 °F

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 25 °F

Mostly Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 15 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 35 °F

Chance Snow
and Breezy

Tuesday



Highs: 10 to 15°

Wednesday



Highs: 20 to 32°

Thursday



Highs: 28 to 35°

“Warmer!”

Upcoming Forecast



Key Messages

- 20 to 30% chance of light snow west of the James River through early Tuesday morning
 - New snow accumulations generally less than a half inch
- A couple more rounds of light snow (20 to 35% chance) possible Thursday and Saturday
- Average to above average temps middle through end of week

A system over the region will continue to bring light snow showers (20-35%) for locations mainly west of the James River through early Tuesday morning. New snow accumulations will generally be less than a half inch. Otherwise, a couple of systems will pass over the area Thursday and Saturday, bringing more chances (20-35%) of light snow to the area. We will finally crawl out of this cold tundra we have been in with “warmer” temperatures expected Wednesday through the end of the week. Thursday’s highs will run about 10 to 15 degrees above average!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 18 °F at 3:30 PM

Low Temp: -5 °F at 6:56 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 2:40 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 58 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 54 in 1963

Record Low: -39 in 1912

Average High: 23

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.15

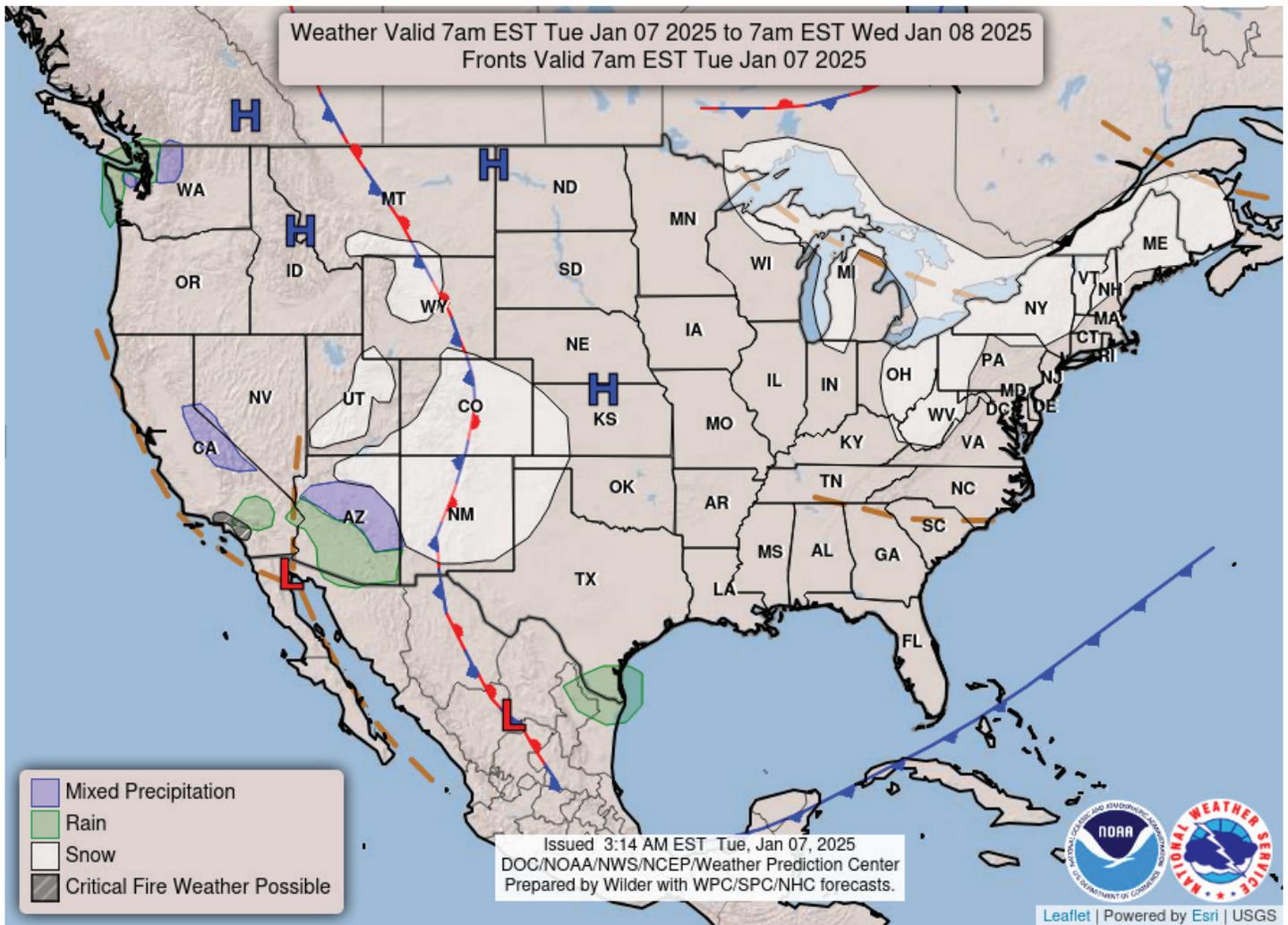
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.15

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 5:08:02 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:28 am



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Today in Weather History

January 7, 1873: A blizzard raged across the Great Plains. Many pioneers, unprepared for the cold and snow, perished in the tristate region of southwest Minnesota, northwestern Iowa, and southeastern South Dakota. Visibility was down to three feet. Cows suffocated in the deep drifts, and trains were stuck for days. More than 70 people died; some bodies were not found until spring.

The following appears on pages 260-261 in the "History of Dakota Territory" by George Kingsbury. "On the 7th of January, 1873, a brother and sister of "John Foster," aged respectively fourteen and twelve years, went a short distance from home and soon afterward a blizzard came up suddenly. The children wandered in the storm to an old sod house that stood out on the prairie and there sought shelter from the driving snow. However, as the house was roofless, it afforded but poor protection against the blizzard, and the children perished, their bodies being buried in the snow. Our subject and the father were absent from home at the time. Weeks passed, and despite continued searching, the bodies of the children were not found, but in March, a neighbor dreamed that the children were in the old house, and on the 16th of that month, their bodies were found there."

January 7, 1980: A strong area of low pressure moved out of the northern Rockies across South Dakota and central Minnesota on January 6th and 7th. Heavy snow, along with very high winds, caused widespread blowing and drifting snow with low visibilities. Many roads were closed, and many motorists were stranded. Snowfall amounts across western and northern Minnesota were from 7 to 12 inches.

January 7, 1989: Heavy snowfall of 5 to 19 inches fell in the north and east-central South Dakota on the 6th and 7th. Snow and blowing snow reduced visibilities to near zero in many locations as winds gusted to near 50 mph. Part of Interstate 29 north of Sisseton closed the night of the 7th. Icy roads contributed to a school bus accident that injured eight boys. Extreme wind chills of 30 to 60 below also occurred. Snowfall amounts included 8 inches in Sisseton, with 12 to 19 inches across Marshall and Roberts counties.

This storm also affected northern Minnesota from the 6th through the 8th with heavy snowfall of 8 to 12 inches with local amounts of 24 to 26 inches. The heavy snow was followed by an Arctic intrusion, which brought in 35 to 50 mph winds. Snowdrifts were from 5 to 10 feet in some areas. The strong winds caused near-blizzard conditions along with extremely low wind chills.

1873 - A blizzard raged across the Great Plains. Many pioneers, unprepared for the cold and snow, perished in southwest Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1966: Tropical Cyclone Denise dropped 45 inches of rain on La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean in 12 hours and 71.80 inches of rain in 48 hours through the 8th.

1971 - The temperature at Hawley Lake, located southeast of McNary, AZ, plunged to 40 degrees below zero to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

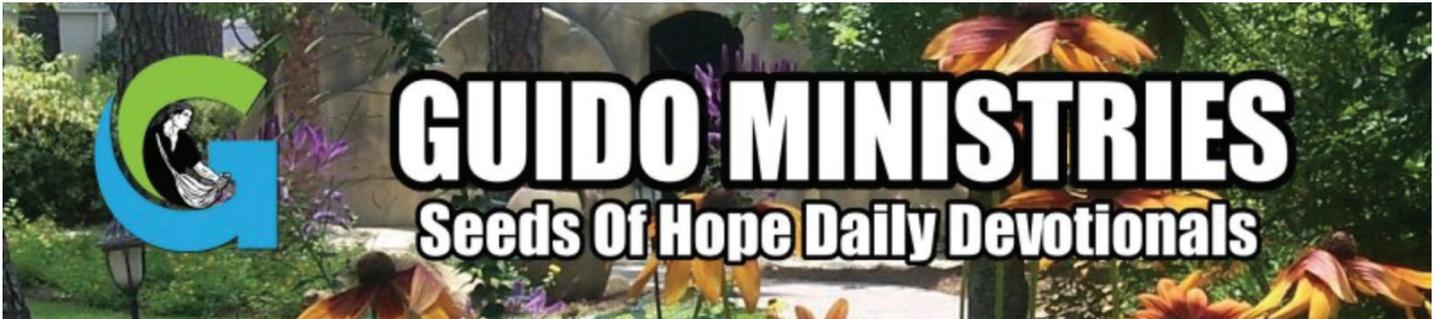
1987 - A storm in the southwestern U.S. produced 30 inches of snow north of Zion National Park in southern Utah, with 18 inches reported at Cedar Canyon UT. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm in the southeastern U.S. produced 27 inches of snow in the Bad Creek area of South Carolina, and claimed the lives of two million chickens in Alabama. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989: Empty foundations are all that remain of four homes on the southwest end of Allendale, Illinois after an F4 tornado ripped through. The tornado was extremely rare due to its strength and the fact that it occurred so far north during the middle of meteorological winter.

1990 - A rapidly intensifying low pressure system and a vigorous cold front brought heavy rain and high winds to the Pacific Northwest. Two to five inches rains soaked western Washington and western Oregon, and winds gusting above 70 mph caused extensive damage. Wind gusts on Rattlesnake Ridge in Washington State reached 130 mph. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A rare, EF3 tornado tracked across southeastern Wisconsin. Experiencing a tornado in Wisconsin in January is extremely rare. In fact, it had only happened once between 1950 and 2007, when an F3 tornado affected parts of Green and Rock Counties on January 24, 1967. That tornado in South Central Wisconsin was part of a much larger outbreak of 30 tornadoes across mostly Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. Wisconsin ended up with 30 tornadoes in 1967.



BUT IS IT YOUR PSALM?

The 23rd Psalm has been called "Everybody's Psalm" because it describes how God can meet all the needs of every Christian.

Are you looking for direction? The Lord will be your Shepherd providing you direction and safe passage throughout life.

Are you in need? As our Shepherd, He has everything we need.

Are you tired? He will provide the rest you need in meadows that are green and peaceful.

Are you anxious? He will lead you beside peaceful streams.

Are you weak? He will provide all the strength you need from His resources.

Are you having difficulty finding your way through life? He will lead you along right paths.

Are you going through dark valleys? He will walk beside you and protect your every step of life's journey with His might.

Are you hungry? He will prepare a feast for you even though you are surrounded by your enemies.

Are you weary of life's journey? He will anoint you with His refreshing, healing oil.

Is your cup empty? He will fill it until it overflows with mercy and goodness and thoughtfulness.

And His unfailing love will surround you until you are with Him in His house. Forever.

Prayer: We rejoice in the goodness of Your grace, our Father, knowing that You will always care for Your own. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23

Tags: Psalm 23

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.25

20 42 46 59 69 19

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$62,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 30 Mins
DRAW: 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.25

15 34 45 50 51 8

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,610,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 45
DRAW: Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.25

6 22 31 39 44 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 17 Hrs 14
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.04.25

20 26 29 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 14
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.25

41 44 54 57 64 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 29
DRAW: Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.25

17 34 46 66 67 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$240,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 29
DRAW: Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Beresford 48, Akron-Westfield, Iowa 32
Brookings 34, Tea 24
Canistota 49, Platte-Geddes 18
Centerville 51, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 41
Chester 52, Gayville-Volin High School 47
De Smet 53, Deuel 34
Ipswich 57, Ellendale, N.D. 35
Sisseton 75, Aberdeen Christian 17

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Belfield, N.D. 65, Harding County 55
Deuel 65, De Smet 58
Elkton-Lake Benton 69, Tri-Valley 53
Hankinson, N.D. 74, Waverly-South Shore 43
Herreid-Selby 56, North Central 51
Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 70, Garretson 41
Madison 89, Deubrook 55
McCook Central-Montrose 63, Scotland/Menno 25
Sioux Falls Lutheran 63, Arlington 54
Tea 68, Brookings 38

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

Middle East latest: Israel's military launches wave of raids across the occupied West Bank

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military launched a wave of raids across the occupied West Bank overnight and into Tuesday, killing at least three Palestinians it said were militants after a deadly shooting attack the day before.

The army said it killed two Palestinian militants in an airstrike after they fired at troops in the area of Tamun, a village in the northern West Bank. It said another militant was killed in "close-quarters combat" in the nearby village of Taluza and that an Israeli soldier was severely wounded there.

The military said it arrested more than 20 suspected militants in different parts of the territory.

It said the overnight operations were not related to the shooting the day before, in which gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying Israelis in the West Bank, killing two women in their 70s and a 35-year-old policeman before fleeing the scene.

Israeli forces were pursuing those attackers in separate operations.

Palestinians have carried out scores of shooting, stabbing and car-ramming attacks against Israelis, especially during the past 15 months of the Israel-Hamas war. Israel has launched near-nightly military raids across the territory that frequently trigger gunbattles with militants and have also killed civilians.

There has also been a sharp rise in attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers, leading the United States to impose sanctions.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want it to form the main part of their future state.

North Korea says it tested hypersonic intermediate range missile aimed at remote Pacific targets

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Tuesday its latest weapons test was a new hypersonic intermediate-range missile designed to strike remote targets in the Pacific as leader Kim Jong Un vowed to further expand his collection of nuclear-capable weapons to counter rival nations.

The North Korean state media report came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea launching a missile that flew 1,100 kilometers (685 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The launch, conducted weeks before Donald Trump returns as U.S. president, came off a torrid year in weapons testing.

North Korea demonstrated multiple weapons systems last year that can target its neighbors and the United States, including solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles, and there are concerns that its military capabilities could advance further through technology transfers from Russia, as the two countries align over the war in Ukraine.

North Korea in recent years has flight tested various intermediate-range missiles, which if perfected, could reach the U.S. Pacific military hub of Guam. In recent months, North has been testing combining these missiles with purported hypersonic warheads to improve their survivability.

North Korea since 2021 has been testing various hypersonic weapons designed to fly at more than five times the speed of sound. The speed and maneuverability of such weapons aim to withstand regional missile defense systems. However, it's unclear whether these missiles are consistently flying at the speeds the North claims.

The North's state media said Kim supervised Monday's launch, and that the weapon traveled 1,500 kilometers (932 miles), during which it reached two different peaks of 99.8 kilometers (62 miles) and 42.5 kilometers (26.4 miles) and achieved a speed amounting to 12 times the speed of sound, before accurately striking a sea target.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the South Korean military believes North Korea was exaggerating capabilities of the system, saying the missile covered less distance and that there was no second peak.

Lee said the test was likely a followup to another hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile test last April and said it would be difficult to use such systems in a relatively small territory like the Korean Peninsula. He said the South Korean and U.S. militaries were continuing to analyze the missile.

Kim described the missile as a crucial achievement in his goals to bolster the North's nuclear deterrence by building an arsenal "no one can respond to," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"The hypersonic missile system will reliably contain any rivals in the Pacific region that can affect the security of our state," the agency quoted Kim as saying.

Kim reiterated that his nuclear push was aimed at countering "different security threats the hostile forces posed to our state," but KCNA didn't mention any direct criticism toward Washington, Seoul or Tokyo.

The launch took place while U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting Seoul for talks with South Korean allies over the North Korean nuclear threat and other issues.

In a news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul on Monday, Blinken condemned North Korea's launch, which violated U.N. Security Council resolutions against the North's weapons programs. He also reiterated concerns about the growing alignment between North Korea and Russia in Moscow's war on Ukraine. He described the military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow as a "two-way street," saying Russia has been providing military equipment and training to the North and "intends to share space and satellite technology."

According to U.S., Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops and conventional weapons systems to support Moscow's war campaign. There are concerns that Russia could transfer to North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, which could potentially enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear-armed military.

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At a year-end political conference, Kim Jong Un vowed to implement the “toughest” anti-U.S. policy and criticized the Biden administration’s efforts to strengthen security cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo, which he described as a “nuclear military bloc for aggression.”

North Korean state media did not specify Kim’s policy plans or mention any specific comments about Trump. During his first term as president, Trump met Kim three times for talks on the North’s nuclear program.

Even if Trump returns to the White House, a quick resumption of diplomacy with North Korea could be unlikely. Kim’s strengthened position — built on his expanded nuclear arsenal, deepening alliance with Russia and the weakening enforcement of U.S. international sanctions — presents new challenges to resolving the nuclear standoff, experts say.

Long silenced by fear, Syrians now speak about rampant torture under Assad

By SARAH EL DEEB and MALAK HARB Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Handcuffed and squatting on the floor, Abdullah Zahra saw smoke rising from his cellmate’s flesh as his torturers gave him electric shocks.

Then it was Zahra’s turn. They hanged the 20-year-old university student from his wrists until his toes barely touched the floor and electrocuted and beat him for two hours. They made his father watch and taunted him about his son’s torment.

That was 2012, and the entire security apparatus of Syria’s then-President Bashar Assad was deployed to crush the protests that had arisen against his rule.

With Assad’s fall a month ago, the machinery of death that he ran is starting to come out into the open.

It was systematic and well-organized, growing to more than 100 detention facilities where torture, brutality, sexual violence and mass executions were rampant, according to activists, rights group and former prisoners. Security agents spared no one, not even Assad’s own soldiers. Young men and women were detained for simply living in districts where protests were held.

As tens of thousands disappeared over more than a decade, a blanket of fear kept the Syrian population silent. People rarely told anyone that a loved one had vanished for fear they too could be reported to security agencies.

Now, everyone is talking. The insurgents who swept Assad out of power opened detention facilities, releasing prisoners and allowing the public to bear witness. Crowds swarmed, searching for answers, bodies of their loved ones, and ways to heal.

The Associated Press visited seven of these facilities in Damascus and spoke to nine former detainees, some released on Dec. 8, the day Assad was ousted. Some details of the accounts by those who spoke to the AP could not be independently confirmed, but they matched past reports by former detainees to human rights groups.

Days after Assad’s fall, Zahra — now 33 -- came to visit Branch 215, a detention facility run by military intelligence in Damascus where he was held for two months. In an underground dungeon, he stepped into the windowless, 4-by-4-meter (yard) cell where he says he was held with 100 other inmates.

Each man was allowed a floor tile to squat on, Zahra said. When ventilators weren’t running -- either intentionally or because of a power failure -- some suffocated. Men went mad; torture wounds festered. When a cellmate died, they stowed his body next to the cell’s toilet until jailers came to collect corpses, Zahra said.

“Death was the least bad thing,” he said. “We reached a place where death was easier than staying here for one minute.”

Assad’s system of repression grew as civil war raged

Zahra was arrested along with his father after security agents killed one of his brothers, a well-known anti-Assad graffiti artist. After they were released, Zahra fled to opposition-held areas. Within a few months, security agents returned and dragged off 13 of his male relatives, including a younger brother

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and, again, his father.

They were brought to Branch 215. All were tortured and killed. Zahra later recognized their bodies among photos leaked by a defector that showed the corpses of thousands killed while in detention. Their bodies were never recovered, and how and when they died is unknown.

Rights groups estimate at least 150,000 people went missing after anti-government protests began in 2011, most vanishing into Assad's prison network. Many of them were killed, either in mass executions or from torture and prison conditions. The exact number remains unknown.

Even before the uprising, Assad had ruled with an iron fist. But as peaceful protests turned into a full-fledged civil war that would last 14 years, Assad rapidly expanded his system of repression.

New detention facilities sprung up in security compounds, military airports and under buildings — all run by military, security and intelligence agencies.

Touring the site of his torture and detention, Zahra hoped to find some sign of his lost relatives. But there was nothing. At home, his aunt, Rajaa Zahra, saw the pictures of her killed children for the first time. She had refused to look at the leaked photos before. She lost three of her six sons in Branch 215 and a fourth was killed at a protest. Her brother, she said, had three sons, now he has only one.

"They were hoping to finish off all the young men of the country."

Syrians were tortured with 'the tire' and 'magic carpet'

The Assad regime's tortures had names.

One was called the "magic carpet," where a detainee was strapped to a hinged wooden plank that bends in half, folding his head to his feet, which are then beaten.

Abdul-Karim Hajeko said he endured this five times. His torturers stomped on his back during interrogations at the Criminal Security branch, and his vertebrae are still broken.

"My screams would go to heaven. Once a doctor came down from the fourth floor (to the ground floor) because of my screams," he said.

He was also put in "the tire." His legs were bent inside a car tire as interrogators beat his back and feet with a plastic baton. When they were done, he said, a guard ordered him to kiss the tire and thank it for teaching him "how to behave." Hajeko was later taken to the notorious Saydnaya Prison, where he was held for six years.

Many prisoners said the tire was inflicted for rule violations -- like making noise, raising one's head in front of guards, or praying -- or for no reason at all.

Mahmoud Abdulbaki, a non-commissioned air force officer who defected from service, was put in the tire during detention at a military police facility. They forced him to count the lashes — up to 200 — and if he made a mistake, the torturer would start over.

"People's hearts stopped following a beating," the 37-year-old said.

He was later held at Saydnaya, where he said guards would terrorize inmates by rolling a tire down the corridor lined with cells and beat on the bars with their batons. Wherever it stopped, the entire cell would be subjected to the tire.

Altogether, Abdulbaki spent nearly six years in prison over different periods. He was among those freed on the day Assad fled Syria.

Saleh Turki Yahia said a cellmate died nearly every day during the seven months in 2012 he was held at the Palestine Branch, a detention facility run by the General Intelligence Agency.

He recounted how one man bled in the cell for days after returning from a torture session where interrogators rammed a pipe into him. When the inmates tried to move him, "all his fluids poured out from his backside. The wound opened from the back, and he died," he said.

Yahya said he was given electric shocks, hanged from his wrists, beaten on his feet. He lost half his body weight and nearly tore his own skin scratching from scabies.

"They broke us," he said, breaking into tears. "Look at Syria, it is all old men ... A whole generation is destroyed."

But with Assad gone, he was back visiting the Palestine Branch.

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"I came to express myself. I want to tell."

The mounting evidence will be used in trials

Torture continued up to the end of Assad's rule.

Rasha Barakat, 34, said she and her sister were detained in March from their homes in Saqba, a town outside Damascus.

Inside a security branch, she was led past her husband, who had been arrested hours earlier and was being interrogated. He was kneeling on the floor, his face green, she said. It was her last brief glimpse of him: He died in custody.

During her own hours-long interrogation, she said, security agents threatened to bring in her sons, 5- and 7-years-old, if she didn't confess. She was beaten. Female security agents stripped her and poured cold water on her, leaving her shivering naked for two hours. She spent eight days in isolation, hearing beatings nearby.

Eventually she was taken to Adra, Damascus' central prison, tried and sentenced to five years for supporting rebel groups, charges she said were made up.

There she stayed until insurgents broke into Adra in December and told her she was free. An estimated 30,000 prisoners were released as fighters opened up prisons during their march to Damascus.

Barakat said she is happy to see her kids again. But "I am destroyed psychologically ... Something is missing. It is hard to keep going."

Now comes the monumental task of accounting for the missing and compiling evidence that could one day be used to prosecute Assad's officials, whether by Syrian or international courts.

Hundreds of thousands of documents remain scattered through the former detention facilities, many labeled classified, in storage rooms commonly underground. Some seen by the AP included transcripts of phone conversations, even between military officers; intelligence files on activists; and a list of hundreds of prisoners killed in detention.

Shadi Haroun, who spent 10 years imprisoned, has been charting Assad's prison structure and documenting former detainees' experiences from exile in Turkey. After Assad's fall, he rushed back to Syria and toured detention sites.

The documents, he said, show the bureaucracy behind the killings. "They know what they are doing, it is organized."

Civil defense workers are tracking down mass graves where tens of thousands are believed to be buried. At least 10 have been identified around Damascus, mostly from residents' reports, and five others elsewhere around the country. Authorities say they are not ready to open them.

A U.N. body known as the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism has offered to help Syria's new interim administration in collecting, organizing and analyzing all the material. Since 2011, it has been compiling evidence and supporting investigations in over 200 criminal cases against figures in Assad's government.

Robert Petit, director of the U.N. body, said the task is so enormous, no one entity can do it alone. The priority would be to identify the architects of the brutality.

Many want answers now.

Officials cannot just declare that the missing are presumed dead, said Wafaa Mustafa, a Syrian journalist, whose father was detained and killed 12 years ago.

"No one gets to tell the families what happened without evidence, without search, without work."

The next round of bitter cold and snow will hit the southern US

By PATRICK WHITTLE and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — The next round of bitter cold was set to envelop the southern U.S. on Tuesday, after the first significant winter storm of the year blasted a huge swath of the country with ice, snow and wind.

The immense storm system brought disruption even to areas of the country that usually escape winter's

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wrath, downing trees in some Southern states, threatening a freeze in Florida and causing people in Dallas to dip deep into their wardrobes for hats and gloves.

By early Tuesday, wind chill temperatures could dip into the teens to low-20's (as low as minus 10.5 C) from Texas across the Gulf Coast, according to the National Weather Service. A low-pressure system is then expected to form as soon as Wednesday near south Texas, bringing the potential of snow to parts of the state that include Dallas, as well as to Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

The polar vortex that dipped south over the weekend kept much of the country east of the Rockies in its frigid grip Monday, making many roads treacherous, forcing school closures, and causing widespread power outages and flight cancellations.

Ice and snow blanketed major roads in Kansas, western Nebraska and parts of Indiana, where the National Guard was activated to help stranded motorists. The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings for Kansas and Missouri, where blizzard conditions brought wind gusts of up to 45 mph (72 kph). The warnings extended to New Jersey into early Tuesday.

A Kentucky truck stop was jammed with big rigs forced off an icy and snow-covered Interstate 75 on Monday just outside Cincinnati. A long haul driver from Los Angeles carrying a load of rugs to Georgia, Michael Taylor said he saw numerous cars and trucks stuck in ditches and was dealing with icy windshield wipers before he pulled off the interstate.

"It was too dangerous. I didn't want to kill myself or anyone else," he said.

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually spins around the North Pole, but it sometimes plunges south into the U.S., Europe and Asia. Studies show that a fast-warming Arctic is partly to blame for the increasing frequency of the polar vortex extending its grip.

Temperatures plunge across the country

The eastern two-thirds of the U.S. dealt with bone-chilling cold and wind chills Monday, with temperatures in some areas far below normal.

A cold weather advisory will take effect early Tuesday across the Gulf Coast. In Texas' capital of Austin and surrounding cities, wind chills could drop as low as 15 degrees (minus 9.4 C).

The Northeast was expected to get several cold days.

Transportation has been tricky

Hundreds of car accidents were reported in Virginia, Indiana, Kansas and Kentucky, where a state trooper was treated for non-life-threatening injuries after his patrol car was hit.

Virginia State Police responded to at least 430 crashes Sunday and Monday, including one that was fatal. Police said other weather-related fatal accidents occurred Sunday near Charleston, West Virginia, and Monday in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Kansas saw two deadly crashes over the weekend.

More than 2,300 flights were canceled and at least 9,100 more were delayed nationwide as of Monday night, according to tracking platform FlightAware. Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport reported that about 58% of arrivals and 70% of departures had been canceled.

A record 8 inches (more than 20 centimeters) of snow fell Sunday at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, leading to dozens of flight cancellations that lingered into Monday. About 4 inches (about 10 centimeters) fell Monday across the Cincinnati area, where car and truck crashes shut at least two major routes leading into downtown.

More snow and ice are expected

In Indiana, snow covered stretches of Interstate 64, Interstate 69 and U.S. Route 41, leading authorities to plead with people to stay home.

"It's snowing so hard, the snow plows go through and then within a half hour the roadways are completely covered again," State Police Sgt. Todd Ringle said.

The Mid-Atlantic region had been forecast to get another 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of snow on Monday. Dangerously cold temperatures were expected to follow, with nighttime lows falling into the single digits (below minus 12.7 C) through the middle of the week across the Central Plains and into the Mississippi and Ohio valleys.

In North Texas, 2 to 5 inches (about 5 to 13 centimeters) of snow was expected beginning Thursday,

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according to the National Weather Service. Snow could also hit Oklahoma and Arkansas, with some parts potentially getting more than 4 inches (about 10 centimeters).

Classes canceled in several states

School closings were widespread, with districts in Indiana, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri and Kansas canceling or delaying the start of classes Monday. Among them was Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, which canceled classes and other school activities for its nearly 100,000 students.

Classes were also canceled in Maryland, where Gov. Wes Moore declared a state of emergency Sunday and announced that state government offices would also be closed Monday. Government offices also were closed Monday in Kentucky, where Gov. Andy Beshear declared a state of emergency.

Tens of thousands are without power

Many were in the dark as temperatures plunged. More than 218,000 customers were without power Monday night across Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois, Missouri and North Carolina, according to electric utility tracking website PowerOutage.us.

In Virginia's capital city, a power outage caused a temporary malfunction in the water system, officials said Monday afternoon. Richmond officials asked those in the city of more than 200,000 people to refrain from drinking tap water or washing dishes without boiling the water first. The city also asked people to conserve their water, such as by taking shorter showers.

City officials said they were working nonstop to bring the system back online.

Long silenced by fear, Syrians now speak about rampant torture under Assad

By SARAH EL DEEB and MALAK HARB Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Handcuffed and squatting on the floor, Abdullah Zahra saw smoke rising from his cellmate's flesh as his torturers gave him electric shocks.

Then it was Zahra's turn. They hanged the 20-year-old university student from his wrists and electrocuted and beat him for two hours. They made his father watch and taunted him about his son's torment.

That was 2012, and the entire security apparatus of Syria's then-President Bashar Assad was deployed to crush the protests against his rule.

With Assad's fall a month ago, the machinery of death that he ran is starting to come out into the open.

It was systematic and well-organized, growing to more than 100 detention facilities into which tens of thousands disappeared over more than a decade. Torture, sexual violence and mass executions were rampant, according to rights groups and former prisoners.

A blanket of fear kept Syrians silent about their experiences or lost loved ones. But now, everyone is talking. After the insurgents who swept Assad out of power on Dec. 8 opened prisons and detention facilities, crowds swarmed in, searching for answers, bodies of loved ones, and ways to heal.

The Associated Press visited seven of these facilities in Damascus and spoke to nine former detainees. Some details of the accounts by those who spoke to the AP could not be independently confirmed, but they matched past reports by former detainees to human rights groups.

Days after Assad's fall, Zahra — now 33 — came to visit Branch 215, a detention facility run by military intelligence in Damascus where he was held for two months.

There, he said, he was kept in a windowless underground cell, 4-by-4-meters (yards) and crammed with 100 other inmates. When ventilators were cut off — either intentionally or because of a power failure — some suffocated. Men went mad; torture wounds festered. When a cellmate died, they stowed his body next to the cell's toilet until jailers collected corpses, Zahra said.

"Death was the least bad thing," he said. "We reached a place where death was easier than staying here for one minute."

Assad's system of repression grew as civil war raged

After he and his father were released, Zahra fled to opposition-held areas. Within a few months, security agents returned and dragged off 13 of his male relatives, including a younger brother and, again, his father.

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All were killed. Zahra later recognized their bodies among photos leaked by a defector showing thousands killed in detention. Their bodies were never recovered.

Rights groups estimate at least 150,000 people went missing since anti-government protests began in 2011, most vanishing into detention facilities. Many were killed, either in mass executions or from torture and prison conditions. The exact number remains unknown.

Even before the uprising, Assad had ruled with an iron fist. But as protests turned into a civil war that would last 14 years, Assad expanded his system of repression. New detention facilities run by military, security and intelligence agencies sprung up in security compounds, military airports and under buildings.

At Branch 215, Zahra hoped to find some sign of his lost relatives. But there was nothing. At home, his aunt, Rajaa Zahra, looked at the leaked pictures of her killed children for the first time – something she had long refused to do. She lost four of her six sons in Assad's crackdowns. Her brother, she said, lost two of his three sons.

"They were hoping to finish off all the young men of the country."

Syrians were tortured with 'the tire' and 'magic carpet'

The tortures had names. One was called the "magic carpet," where a detainee was strapped to a hinged wooden plank that bends in half, folding his head to his feet, which were then beaten.

Abdul-Karim Hajeko said he endured this five times. His torturers stomped on his back during interrogations at the Criminal Security branch, and his vertebrae are still broken.

"My screams would go to heaven. Once a doctor came down from the fourth floor (to the ground floor) because of my screams," he said.

He was also put in "the tire." His legs were bent inside a car tire as interrogators beat his back and feet. Afterward, they ordered him to kiss the tire and thank it for teaching him "how to behave."

Many prisoners said the tire was inflicted for rule violations -- like making noise, raising one's head in front of guards, or praying – or for no reason at all.

Saleh Turki Yahia said a cellmate died nearly every day during the seven months in 2012 he was held at the Palestine Branch, a detention facility run by the General Intelligence Agency. He said he was given electric shocks, hanged from his wrists, beaten on his feet. He lost half his body weight and nearly tore his own skin scratching from scabies.

"They broke us," he said, breaking into tears as he visited the Palestine Branch. "A whole generation is destroyed."

The mounting evidence will be used in trials

Now comes the monumental task of accounting for the missing and compiling evidence that could one day be used to prosecute Assad's officials, whether by Syrian or international courts.

Hundreds of thousands of documents remain scattered throughout detention facilities. Some seen by the AP included transcripts of phone conversations; intelligence files on activists; and a list of hundreds of prisoners killed in detention. At least 15 mass graves have been identified around Damascus and elsewhere around the country.

A U.N. body known as the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism has offered to help the new interim administration in collecting, organizing and analyzing all the material. Since 2011, it has been compiling evidence and supporting investigations in over 200 criminal cases against figures in Assad's government.

Many want answers now.

Officials cannot just declare that the missing are presumed dead, said Wafaa Mustafa, a Syrian journalist, whose father was detained and killed 12 years ago.

"No one gets to tell the families what happened without evidence, without search, without work."

Canada's Liberals look for a new prime minister as Trump threatens tariffs and an election looms

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation after facing an increasing loss of support both within his party and in the country.

Now Trudeau's Liberal Party must find a new leader while dealing with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's threats to impose steep tariffs on Canadian goods and with Canada's election just months away.

Trudeau said Monday he plans to stay on as prime minister until a new party leader is chosen.

He could not recover after Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, long one of his most powerful and loyal ministers, resigned from the Cabinet last month.

Trudeau, the 53-year-old scion of Pierre Trudeau, one of Canada's most famous prime ministers, became deeply unpopular with voters over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing as well as surging immigration.

What's next for Canada?

A new Canadian leader is unlikely to be named before Trump is inaugurated on Jan. 20.

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada. Trump keeps calling Canada the 51st state and has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian goods if the government does not stem what Trump calls a flow of migrants and drugs into the U.S. — even though far fewer of them cross the border from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened with tariffs.

Trump also remains preoccupied with the U.S. trade deficit with Canada, erroneously calling it a subsidy. Canada's ambassador to Washington, Kirsten Hillman, has said the U.S. had a \$75 billion trade deficit with Canada last year. But she noted that a third of what Canada sells to the U.S. are energy exports and that there is a deficit when oil prices are high.

If Trump applies tariffs, a trade war looms. Canada has vowed to retaliate.

When will there be a new prime minister?

The Liberals need to elect a new leader before Parliament resumes March 24 because all three opposition parties say they will bring down the Liberal government in a no-confidence vote at the first opportunity, which would trigger an election. The new leader might not be prime minister for long.

A spring election would very likely favor the opposing Conservative Party.

Who will be the next prime minister?

It's not often that central bank governors get compared to rock stars. But Mark Carney, the former head of the Bank of Canada, was considered just that in 2012 when he was named the first foreigner to serve as governor of the Bank of England since it was founded in 1694. The appointment of a Canadian won bipartisan praise in Britain after Canada recovered faster than many other countries from the 2008 financial crisis. He gained a reputation along the way as a tough regulator.

Few people in the world have Carney's qualifications. He is a highly educated economist with Wall Street experience who is widely credited with helping Canada dodge the worst of the 2008 global economic crisis and helping the U.K. manage Brexit. Carney has long been interested in entering politics and becoming prime minister but lacks political experience.

Freeland is also a front-runner. Trudeau told Freeland last month he no longer wanted her to serve as finance minister but that she could remain deputy prime minister and the point person for U.S.-Canada relations. An official close to Freeland said Freeland couldn't continue serving as a minister knowing she no longer enjoyed Trudeau's confidence. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. The person added it's far too early to make declarations but said Freeland would talk to her colleagues this week and discuss next steps.

After she resigned, Trump called Freeland "totally toxic" and "not at all conducive to making deals." Freeland is many things that would seem to irritate Trump: a liberal Canadian former journalist. She is a globalist who sits on the board of the World Economic Forum. Freeland, who is of Ukrainian heritage, also

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has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its war against Russia.

Another possible candidate is the new finance minister, Dominic LeBlanc. The former public safety minister, and a close friend of Trudeau, LeBlanc recently joined the prime minister at a dinner with Trump at Mar-a-Lago. LeBlanc was Trudeau's babysitter when Trudeau was a child.

Is it too late for the Liberals?

Recent polls suggest the Liberals' chances of winning the next election look slim. In the latest poll by Nanos, the Liberals trail the opposition Conservatives 47% to 21%.

"Trudeau's announcement might help the Liberals in the polls in the short run and, once a new leader is selected, things could improve further at least for a little while but that would not be so hard because, right now, they're so low in the polls," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

"Moreover, because Trudeau waited so long to announce his resignation, this will leave little time to his successor and the party to prepare for early elections," Béland said.

Many analysts say Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre will form the next government. Poilievre, for years the party's go-to attack dog, is a firebrand populist who blamed Canada's cost of living crisis on Trudeau. The 45-year-old Poilievre is a career politician who attracted large crowds during his run for his party's leadership. He has vowed to scrap a carbon tax and defund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Trump's sentencing still on for Friday after judge rebuffs his push for a delay while he appeals

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump remains on track to be sentenced this week in his hush money case after a judge on Monday denied his request to halt proceedings while he appeals a ruling that upheld the historic verdict.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan ordered sentencing to proceed as scheduled on Friday, a little more than a week before Trump's inauguration. The judge rejected a push by Trump's lawyers to postpone it indefinitely while they ask a state appeals court to reverse his decision last week that let the conviction stand.

Trump, on course to be the first president to take office convicted of crimes, can still ask the appeals court to delay sentencing or seek to have another court intervene. His lawyers have previously suggested taking the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump's lawyers have told Merchan that if his sentencing happens, he will appear by video rather than in person. The judge had given him the option, acceding to the demands of the presidential transition process.

Last Friday, Merchan denied Trump's bid to throw out his conviction and dismiss the case because of his impending return to the White House, but signaled he is not likely to sentence the Republican to any punishment for his conviction on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform after Merchan ruled that it "would be the end of the Presidency as we know it" if it is allowed to stand.

Trump's lawyers, who are also challenging Merchan's prior refusal to toss the case on presidential immunity grounds, filed appeal paperwork Monday in the appellate division of the state's trial court. No arguments have been scheduled.

"Today, President Trump's legal team moved to stop the unlawful sentencing in the Manhattan D.A.'s Witch Hunt," Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said. "The Supreme Court's historic decision on Immunity, the state constitution of New York, and other established legal precedent mandate that this meritless hoax be immediately dismissed."

Trump's lawyers did not immediately ask the appeals court to halt Trump's sentencing.

In a separate filing with Merchan, they argued that the appeal should automatically pause the case. If it didn't, they said he should step in and do it himself — an idea he rejected.

Manhattan prosecutors had urged Merchan to proceed with sentencing as scheduled, "given the strong

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public interest in prompt prosecution and the finality of criminal proceedings.”

Prosecutors blamed Trump for pushing his sentencing to the brink of his second term by repeatedly seeking to postpone his sentencing, originally scheduled for July.

“He should not now be heard to complain of harm from delays he caused,” they wrote in a court filing Monday afternoon, hours before Merchan ruled.

Any delay in sentencing could run out the clock on closing the case before Trump’s second term begins Jan. 20.

The Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, which provides legal advice and guidance to federal agencies, has maintained that a sitting president is immune from criminal proceedings. If sentencing doesn’t happen before Trump is sworn in, waiting until he leaves office in 2029 “may become the only viable option,” Merchan said in his ruling.

If sentencing proceeds on Friday as scheduled, Trump’s lawyers argued, he will be appealing the verdict while in office and will be “forced to deal with criminal proceedings for years to come.” They raised an improbable scenario in which, if Trump wins his appeal, he could be then subjected to another criminal trial while in office.

In upholding the verdict and rejecting Trump’s bids for dismissal, Merchan wrote that the interests of justice would only be served by “bringing finality to this matter” through sentencing. He said giving Trump what’s known as an unconditional discharge — closing the case without jail time, a fine or probation — “appears to be the most viable solution.”

Trump’s lawyers were unmoved, arguing that the “meritless case” was fostered by “numerous legal errors,” including rulings by Merchan they say flew in the face of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision last July that granted presidents broad immunity from prosecution.

“The Court’s non-binding preview of its current thinking regarding a hypothetical sentencing does not mitigate these bedrock federal constitutional violations,” defense lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote.

Trump has selected both of them for high-ranking Justice Department positions.

Trump will have an opportunity to speak at his sentencing, as will his lawyers and prosecutors. He can only appeal the verdict after he is sentenced.

The charges involved an alleged scheme to hide a hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in the last weeks of Trump’s 2016 campaign to keep her from publicizing claims she’d had sex with him 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 then-personal lawyer Michael Cohen, who had made the payment to Daniels. The conviction carried the possibility of punishment ranging from a fine or probation to up to four years in prison.

Cohen, a key prosecution witness who had previously called for Trump to be put in prison, said that “based upon all of the intervening circumstances” Merchan’s decision to sentence Trump without punishment “is both judicious and appropriate.”

Trump’s sentencing initially was set for last July 11, then postponed twice at the defense’s request. 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.

Biden tells New Orleans mourners they are not alone as he honors victims of attack

By COLLEEN LONG and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — President Joe Biden told mourners in New Orleans on Monday that they are not alone as he paid tribute to victims of the deadly New Year’s attack and channeled the pain felt by their loved ones.

Biden made the remarks at St. Louis Cathedral in the city’s historic French Quarter, not far from the area where an Army veteran drove a truck into revelers last week, killing 14 and injuring 30 more.

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Biden praised "so many that ran toward the chaos, trying to help save others," including first responders. He noted the city's enduring strength and resilience amid tragedy, invoking past devastation like Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"The city's people get back up," Biden said. "That's the spirit of America as well."

Biden met privately with grieving families, survivors and first responders before the prayer service. He also stopped at a makeshift memorial where the attack had begun to unfold. It is being investigated as an act of terrorism inspired by the Islamic State group.

Biden has made dozens of visits to sites of violence, natural disaster and other calamities during his four years in office. With two weeks left, Monday's visit to New Orleans could be his last such trip.

In his remarks Monday, Biden alluded to the personal loss in his own life and recounted words of collective grief he's delivered time and again as president. He acknowledged the searing loss the grieving families will feel at holidays and birthdays to come, along with the small details they will miss about their loved ones.

"We know what it's like to lose a piece of our soul. The anger. The emptiness," he said.

He told the grieving families that they will eventually reach a day when the memory of their loved ones will make them smile before it makes them cry.

"It will take time, but I promise you, it will come. I promise you," he said.

Before he met privately with the victims' families, Biden and first lady Jill Biden made their first stop in the city at a memorial that sprung up on Bourbon Street at the spot where the attack started.

Flowers and messages were left at the bases of the crosses erected on the sidewalk. After Jill Biden placed white flowers at the memorial, she and the president stood in silence and bowed their heads.

At the public prayer service at the cathedral, a rendition of "Amazing Grace" was performed with a New Orleans jazz spin. The Bidens placed a candle at the altar. The president then returned to his seat in front pew, shutting his eyes tight in prayer.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One on the way to Louisiana that Biden "believes this is also an important part of the job that he believes he needs to do as president."

It's a grim task that presidents perform, though not every leader has embraced the role with such intimacy as the 82-year-old Biden, who has experienced a lot of personal tragedy in his own life. His first wife and baby daughter died in a car accident in the early 1970s, and his elder son, Beau, died of cancer in 2015.

"I've been there. There's nothing you can really say to somebody that's just had such a tragic loss," Biden told reporters Sunday in a preview of his visit. "My message is going to be personal if I get to get them alone."

Biden often takes the opportunity at such bleak occasions to speak behind closed doors with the families, offer up his personal phone number in case people want to talk later on and talk about grief in stark, personal terms.

The Democratic president will continue on to California following his stop in New Orleans. With a snowstorm hitting the Washington region on Monday, Biden's trip began with Air Force One starting its takeoff from inside a large hangar instead of on the tarmac as thick snow covered the ground at Joint Base Andrews and snowplows worked to clear the runway.

In New Orleans on Jan. 1, the driver plowed into a crowd on Bourbon Street. Shamsud-Din Jabbar, who steered his speeding truck around a barricade and plowed into the crowd, later was fatally shot in a firefight with police.

Jabbar, an American citizen from Texas, had posted five videos on his Facebook account in the hours before the attack in which he proclaimed his support for the Islamic State militant group and previewed the violence that he would soon unleash in the French Quarter.

Biden on Sunday pushed back against conspiracy theories surrounding the attack, and he urged New Orleans residents to ignore them.

"I spent literally 17, 18 hours with the intelligence community from the time this happened to establish exactly what happened, to establish beyond any reasonable doubt that New Orleans was the act of a single man who acted alone," he said. "All this talk about conspiracies with other people, there's not evidence

of that — zero.”

The youngest victim was 18 years old, and the oldest was 63. Most victims were in their 20s. They came from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, New Jersey and Great Britain.

Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Republican, was asked on “Fox News Sunday” what the city was hoping for from Biden’s visit.

“How can we not feel for both the families of those who die but also those who’ve been injured in their families?” he asked.

“The best thing that the city, the state, and the federal government can do is do their best to make sure that this does not happen again. And what we can do as a people is to make sure that we don’t live our lives in fear or in terror — but live our lives bravely and with liberty, and then support those families however they need support.”

Jean-Pierre said Monday that Biden was directing additional resources to help New Orleans with major upcoming events, including Mardi Gras and the Super Bowl, with both events being assigned the highest level of federal support for security measures.

Nippon Steel stands firm on a US Steel takeover and denies risks cited by Biden

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Nippon Steel was standing firm on its proposed \$15 billion acquisition of U.S. Steel, Chief Executive Eiji Hashimoto said Tuesday after President Joe Biden’s blocked the top Japanese steelmaker’s move.

“There is no reason or need to give up,” he told reporters at company headquarters in Tokyo. “We are convinced it’s clearly beneficial for both nations.”

While acknowledging the effort may take time, he stressed the companies’ latest legal action in the U.S. was a key development.

Nippon Steel Corp. and U.S. Steel filed federal lawsuits Monday challenging the Biden administration’s decision as ignoring “the rule of law.”

In separate lawsuits in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, the steelmakers challenged the Biden administration’s move, noting the acquisition will “enhance, not threaten, United States national security.”

In blocking the transaction Friday, Biden said U.S. companies producing steel need to “keep leading the fight on behalf of America’s national interests.”

Proponents of the takeover, which surfaced more than a year ago, say Japan is a U.S. ally, as well as a top investor in American companies.

They also argue Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel coming together makes for a viable force in an industry now dominated by the Chinese, creating jobs and economic impact of up to \$1 billion.

Hashimoto reiterated that Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel were “united as one” in wanting the deal. They both feel Biden’s decision is unlawful and invalid, and hope to win understanding for their effort, he told reporters.

The U.S. market remains a key part of Nippon Steel’s global strategy, said Hashimoto.

U.S. Steel Corp. has accused the Biden administration of interference.

“We will vigorously defend our rights to complete this transaction and secure the future of U.S. Steel,” the Pittsburgh-based manufacturer said in a recent statement.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba also supports the deal, denying any security concerns.

Biden leaves the White House on Jan. 20, but incoming President Donald Trump also opposes the acquisition.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States reviewing the deal earlier didn’t reach a consensus on possible national security risks.

Fitch Group's CreditSights categorized the opposition to the deal as primarily political, while noting U.S. Steel can remain "a standalone company," benefiting from a recent rise in steel prices. "In short, U.S. Steel does not necessarily need to be sold," it said in an analysis Monday.

Minneapolis agrees to overhaul police training and force policies after George Floyd's murder

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minneapolis City Council on Monday approved an agreement with the federal government to overhaul the city's police training and use-of-force policies in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

The deal incorporates and builds on changes the Minneapolis Police Department has made since Floyd, a Black man, was killed by a white officer in 2020, prompting a national reckoning with police brutality and racism.

The 171-page agreement, filed in federal court shortly after the council voted 12-0 to approve it, says the department will require its officers to "promote the sanctity of human life as the highest priority in their activities." It says officers must "carry out their law enforcement duties with professionalism and respect for the dignity of every person." And it says they must not allow race, gender or ethnicity "to influence any decision to use force, including the amount or type of force used."

The agreement, known as a consent decree, will put the department under long-term court supervision. It had been under negotiation since the Department of Justice issued a scathing critique of the city's police in June 2023.

Department officials alleged that police engaged in systematic racial discrimination, violated constitutional rights and disregarded the safety of people in custody for years before Floyd was killed. The report was the result of a sweeping two-year investigation that confirmed many citizen complaints about police conduct. It found that Minneapolis officers used excessive force, including "unjustified deadly force," and violated the rights of people engaged in constitutionally protected speech.

"George Floyd's death was not just a tragedy, it was a galvanizing force for the city and for the nation," Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, said at a news conference. "All eyes remain on Minneapolis, and with this consent decree, we now have a roadmap for reform that will help this community heal while strengthening trust between law enforcement and the people they serve."

An independent monitor will oversee the changes and a judge must approve them. A hearing has not yet been scheduled, but officials hope that approval comes quickly.

During his first administration, President-elect Donald Trump was critical of consent decrees as anti-police. Finalizing the Minneapolis agreement before he returns to office Jan. 20 would make it harder for him to undercut the deal, because changes would require court approval. Clarke declined to predict how vigorously the incoming administration will or won't try to enforce the consent decree.

The council's brief public vote followed an hourslong closed-door discussion.

"I'd like to thank our community for standing together, united in this, and for having patience with us as we have traveled a very, very long and challenging journey," Council President Elliott Payne said after the vote. "We're just beginning, and we know we have a long way to go. Our success will only be realized when we all work together on what is arguably one of the most important issues in the life of our city."

Council member Robin Wonsley said in a statement before the vote that she has "no faith that the Trump administration will be a serious partner" in implementing the agreement.

"Having a federal consent decree signed and in place is valuable to police reform efforts, but we need to be sober about the fact that it will take local political will to hold the city and the (Mayor Jacob) Frey administration accountable to implementing and enforcing the terms of the consent decree," she said.

A state court judge in 2023 approved a similar agreement between Minneapolis and the Minnesota De-

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partment of Human Rights after the state agency issued its own blistering report in 2022. The state investigation found that the city's police had engaged in a pattern of race discrimination for at least a decade.

The Justice Department has opened 12 similar investigations of state and local law enforcement agencies since April 2021, many in response to high-profile deaths at the hands of police. Assuming court approval, Clarke said, the department will be enforcing 16 policing "pattern and practices" settlements across the country. She said 30 years of experience shows that they lead to "important and tangible progress toward better, safer, and lawful policing."

The department has reached agreements with Seattle, New Orleans, Baltimore, Chicago and Ferguson, Missouri. A consent decree with Louisville, Kentucky, after an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor is waiting court approval. In Memphis, Tennessee, the mayor last month pushed back against pressure for a consent decree there, saying his city has made hundreds of positive changes since the beating death of Tyre Nichols.

Consent decrees require law enforcement to meet specific goals before federal oversight is removed, a process that often takes years and millions of dollars. A major reason Minneapolis hired Brian O'Hara as police chief in 2022 was his experience implementing a consent decree in Newark, New Jersey.

O'Hara noted that the city would be the first in the country to operate under both federal and state consent decrees. He said they showed in Newark that consent decrees can lead to meaningful change.

"We are not going to just comply with its terms, but we will exceed expectations and we will make change real for people on the street," the chief said. "Together, we will make Minneapolis a place where everyone feels safer, and they know that Minneapolis cops will have their back."

The mayor told reporters that officers will rise to the occasion.

"I trust the members of this department to show up every day, that you will be committed to being the change reflected in this agreement," Frey said. "You have the ability, you have the obligation, and you have the responsibility to set the tone. Show the rest of the country, in fact, the rest of the world, what good constitutional policing looks like."

Polar vortex keeps much of the US in its icy grip

By PATRICK WHITTLE and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — A huge swath of the U.S. was blasted with ice, snow and wind on Monday as the polar vortex that dipped south over the weekend kept much of the country east of the Rockies in its frigid grip, making many roads treacherous, forcing school closures, and causing widespread power outages and flight cancellations.

The immense storm system brought disruption to areas of the country that usually escape winter's wrath, downing trees in some Southern states, threatening a freeze in Florida and causing people in Dallas to dip deep into their wardrobes for hats and gloves.

Washington, D.C., received heavy snow as President-elect Donald Trump's victory was certified. Taking advantage of the rare snowstorm in the nation's capital, revelers engaged in a snowball fight in front of the Washington Monument as flags flew at half-staff in memory of former President Jimmy Carter.

In Kentucky's biggest city, Louisville, Hugh Ross used his shovel Monday to break sheets of ice that were covering his driveway. Frozen rain fell atop snow that arrived Sunday, which he said "couldn't have been worse."

"You've got to break it up first," Ross explained. "If you don't do that, you're wasting your time. I did a couple of layers yesterday, so I had to make sure I wasn't in too bad of shape today."

Ice and snow blanketed major roads in Kansas, western Nebraska and parts of Indiana, where the National Guard was activated to help stranded motorists. The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings for Kansas and Missouri, where blizzard conditions brought wind gusts of up to 45 mph (72 kph). The warnings extended to New Jersey into early Tuesday.

At the storied Calumet Farm in central Kentucky, the thoroughbreds were led to their stalls Sunday afternoon before freezing rain turned their pastures into a slick glaze of snow and ice.

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"The ice is the worst part," Eddie Kane, the farm manager, said Monday. "I still haven't turned them out because it's still a little bit too dangerous. It's like an ice skating rink out there in the fields."

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually spins around the North Pole, but it sometimes plunges southward into the U.S., Europe and Asia. Studies show that a fast-warming Arctic is partly to blame for the increasing frequency of the polar vortex extending its grip.

Temperatures plunge

Starting Monday, the eastern two-thirds of the U.S. dealt with bone-chilling cold and wind chills, forecasters said, predicting temperatures ranging from 12 to 25 degrees (7 to 14 degrees Celsius) below normal in many areas.

The Northeast was expected to get several cold days, said Jon Palmer, a weather service meteorologist based in Gray, Maine.

The cold was expected to grip the Eastern Seaboard as far south as Georgia, with temperatures dropping into the low single digits (minus 15 to minus 17 Celsius) in some coastal areas, Palmer said.

Classes canceled

School closings were widespread, with districts in Indiana, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri and Kansas canceling or delaying the start of classes Monday. Among them was Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, which canceled classes and other school activities for its nearly 100,000 students.

Classes were also canceled in Maryland, where Gov. Wes Moore declared a state of emergency Sunday and announced that state government offices would also be closed Monday.

Car wrecks abound

At least 600 motorists were stranded in Missouri over the weekend, authorities said. Hundreds of car accidents were reported in Virginia, Indiana, Kansas and Kentucky, where a state trooper was treated for non-life-threatening injuries after his patrol car was hit.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, who declared a state emergency, said government buildings would be closed Monday.

"We see far too many wrecks out there for people that do not have to be on the roads," Beshear said.

Kansas saw two deadly crashes over the weekend. Gov. Laura Kelly closed state offices in the Topeka area through Tuesday, as did many school districts.

Virginia State Police responded to at least 430 crashes Sunday and Monday. One man died and more than 20 people were injured. Police said other weather-related fatal accidents occurred Sunday near Charleston, West Virginia, and Monday in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

By midday Monday, state troopers in Maryland had responded to at least 475 calls for service, including 123 reported crashes and 156 unattended vehicles since 1 a.m., Maryland State Police said on social media.

More snow and ice are expected

In Indiana, snow covered stretches of Interstate 64, Interstate 69 and U.S. Route 41, leading authorities to plead with people to stay home.

"It's snowing so hard, the snow plows go through and then within a half hour the roadways are completely covered again," State Police Sgt. Todd Ringle said.

Topeka, Kansas, reported 14.5 inches (nearly 37 centimeters) by about 8 p.m. Sunday, according to the weather service.

Kansas City International Airport received 11 inches (28 centimeters) of snow on Sunday, breaking the previous record for the day of 10.1 inches (26 centimeters) set in 1962, according to the weather service's office in Kansas City, Missouri. In Kentucky, Louisville recorded 7.7 inches (nearly 20 centimeters) of snow on Sunday, shattering the date's previous record of 3 inches (nearly 8 centimeters) set in 1910.

The Mid-Atlantic region was expected to get another 6 inches to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of snow on Monday, the weather service's Weather Prediction Center warned. Dangerously cold temperatures were expected to follow, with nighttime lows falling into the single digits through the middle of the week across the Central Plains and into the Mississippi and Ohio valleys.

Thousands without power

Many were in the dark as temperatures plunged. More than 250,000 customers were without power

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early Monday across Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois and Missouri, according to electric utility tracking website PowerOutage.us.

In Virginia's capital city, a power outage caused a temporary malfunction in the water system, officials said Monday afternoon. Richmond officials asked citizens in the city of more than 200,000 people to refrain from drinking tap water or washing dishes without boiling the water first. The city also asked residents to conserve their water, such as by taking shorter showers.

City officials said they were working nonstop to bring the system back online.

Air and rail travel are snarled

More than 2,500 flights were canceled and at least 6,500 more were delayed nationwide as of Monday morning, according to tracking platform FlightAware. Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport reported that about 58% of arrivals and 70% of departures had been canceled.

A record 8 inches (more than 20 centimeters) of snow fell Sunday at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, leading to dozens of flight cancellations that lingered into Monday. A few more inches of snow were expected Monday across the Cincinnati area, where car and truck crashes Monday morning shutdown at least two major routes leading into downtown.

McDonald's is the latest company to roll back diversity goals

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Four years after launching a push for more diversity in its ranks, McDonald's is ending some of its diversity practices, citing a U.S. Supreme Court decision that outlawed affirmative action in college admissions.

McDonald's is the latest big company to shift its tactics in the wake of the 2023 ruling and a conservative backlash against diversity, equity and inclusion programs. Walmart, John Deere, Harley-Davidson and others rolled back their DEI initiatives last year.

McDonald's said Monday it will retire specific goals for achieving diversity at senior leadership levels. It also intends to end a program that encourages its suppliers to develop diversity training and to increase the number of minority group members represented within their own leadership ranks.

McDonald's said it will also pause "external surveys." The burger giant didn't elaborate, but several other companies, including Lowe's and Ford Motor Co., suspended their participation in an annual survey by the Human Rights Campaign that measures workplace inclusion for LGBTQ+ employees.

McDonald's, which has its headquarters in Chicago, rolled out a series of diversity initiatives in 2021 after a spate of sexual harassment lawsuits filed by employees and a lawsuit alleging discrimination brought by a group of Black former McDonald's franchise owners.

"As a world-leading brand that considers inclusion one of our core values, we will accept nothing less than real, measurable progress in our efforts to lead with empathy, treat people with dignity and respect, and seek out diverse points of view to drive better decision-making," McDonald's Chairman and CEO Chris Kempczinski wrote in a LinkedIn post at the time.

But McDonald's said Monday that the "shifting legal landscape" after the Supreme Court decision and the actions of other corporations caused it to take a hard look at its own policies.

A shifting political landscape may also have played a role. President-elect Donald Trump is a vocal opponent of diversity, equity and inclusion programs. Trump tapped Stephen Miller, a former adviser who leads a group called America First Legal that has aggressively challenged corporate DEI policies, as his incoming deputy chief of policy.

Vice President-elect JD Vance introduced a bill in the Senate last summer to end such programs in the federal government.

Robby Starbuck, a conservative political commentator who has threatened consumer boycotts of prominent consumer brands that don't retreat from their diversity programs, said Monday on X that he recently told McDonald's he would be doing a story on its "woke policies."

McDonald's said it had been considering updates to its policies for several months and planned to time the announcement to the start of this year.

In an open letter to employees and franchisees, McDonald's senior leadership team said it remains committed to inclusion and believes a diverse workforce is a competitive advantage. The company said 30% of its U.S. leaders are members of underrepresented groups, up from 29% in 2021. McDonald's previously committed to reaching 35% by the end of this year.

McDonald's said it has achieved one of the goals it announced in 2021: gender pay equity at all levels of the company. It also said it met three years early a goal of having 25% of total supplier spending go to diverse-owned businesses.

McDonald's said it would continue to support efforts that ensure a diverse base of employees, suppliers and franchisees, but its diversity team will now be referred to as the Global Inclusion Team. The company said it would also continue to report its demographic information.

The McDonald's Hispanic Owner-Operators Association said it had no comment on the policy change Monday. A message seeking comment was left with the National Black McDonald's Operators Association.

The Latest: Snow, ice and frigid temperatures make for a dangerous winter mix

By The Associated Press undefined

A major winter blast of snow, ice, wind and plunging temperatures in the U.S. stirred dangerous travel conditions from central and southern states all the way to the East Coast early Monday, prompting schools and government offices in several states to close.

Over the weekend, at least 600 motorists were stranded in Missouri, authorities said. Hundreds of car accidents were reported in Virginia, Indiana, Kansas and Kentucky.

Winter weather often causes flight delays and cancellations. While airlines can't control the weather, they are required in the U.S. to provide refunds to customers whose flights are canceled.

Here's the latest:

Winter storm blamed for boil-water advisory in Virginia's capital

A weather-related power outage has caused a malfunction in the water system of Virginia's capital city, officials said Monday afternoon.

Richmond officials asked citizens in the city of more than 200,000 people to refrain from drinking tap water or washing dishes and brushing their teeth without boiling the water first. The city also asked residents to conserve their water.

City officials said they're working around the clock to bring the system back online.

"Our top priority is the health and safety of our residents and neighbors," Mayor Danny Avula said in a news release.

Roads are still treacherous in Kansas, governor says

The Kansas Highway Patrol has reported nearly 200 crashes from Saturday morning through Monday morning, two of them deadly.

On Saturday, a tractor-trailer jackknifed in the ice in the western part of the state, killing a pickup truck's driver. And two others died Sunday when an SUV rolled down an embankment in Wichita.

Gov. Laura Kelly closed state offices in the Topeka area through Tuesday, and many school districts followed suit.

"Although crews are making progress, the roads remain hazardous," Kelly said in a news release.

A third person has died in a storm-related traffic accident

A fatal accident in North Carolina is being blamed on the winter storm that's moving through the East Coast.

Police in Winston-Salem say a vehicle lost control on an icy overpass along U.S. Route 52 and hit several trees early Monday. The driver was pronounced dead at the scene.

At least two other people have died in weather-related traffic accidents in Virginia and West Virginia. The accidents were among hundreds reported across Virginia, West Virginia, Indiana, Kansas, North Carolina and Kentucky.

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The winter storm has contributed to at least 2 deaths in traffic accidents

In Virginia, a 32-year-old man died Sunday night in Wakefield, south of Richmond, after his truck ran off a road and struck a tree. Police said, among other contributing factors, the man was driving too fast for the wintry conditions on the roadway.

In West Virginia, a driver lost control of her vehicle and it struck a concrete median Sunday on Interstate 77 south of Charleston. A tractor-trailer then struck the woman and another vehicle that stopped to help. The driver, Alexis Vega, 25, of Cleveland, Ohio, later died at a hospital. State police Lt. L.T. Goldie Jr. said the weather was a factor in the accident.

Kansas reopens interstates but cautions drivers of icy roads

The Kansas Department of Transportation says it has reopened the final stretch of Interstate 70 that was closed because of blizzard conditions.

The department said other highways in the state also are reopening, but it urged drivers to go slow and be careful because some stretches remain icy and snow packed.

West Coast faces much different weather threat

As the eastern U.S. shivers under a polar vortex, some on the West Coast face a very different weather threat: dry conditions conducive for wildfires.

Winds will whip up and humidity levels will drop in Southern California this week, raising the risk for fires in parched areas still recovering from a recent destructive blaze, forecasters warned Monday.

"Scattered downed trees and power outages are likely, in addition to rapid fire growth and extreme behavior with any fire starts," the weather service office for Los Angeles said on the social platform X.

Recent dry winds, including the notorious Santa Anas, have contributed to warmer-than-average temperatures in Southern California, where there's been very little rain so far this season.

Read more about weather in California

Biden's trip begins, unusually, inside a hangar

In a move reminiscent of secret presidential trips to war zones, President Joe Biden's trip to New Orleans and Los Angeles on Monday began inside a hangar, rather than on the tarmac as is customary, due to the inclement weather.

Air Force One was sheltered from the snow inside a secure hangar at the airbase outside of Washington, as Biden departed during an early afternoon lull in the snowfall.

In another change from normal procedures, reporters were not permitted to take photos or video of Biden boarding the plane due to Air Force security policies inside the hangar.

Hundreds of calls for service in Maryland

By midday Monday, state troopers in Maryland had responded to at least 475 calls for service, including 123 reported crashes and 156 unattended vehicles since 1 a.m., Maryland State Police said in a social media post.

Olympic athlete enjoys a ski on National Mall during snowstorm

A Team USA athlete who competed in the 2018 and 2022 Winter Olympics got to cross-country ski on the National Mall during a rare snowstorm Monday.

Two-time Olympian Clare Egan recently moved to Washington D.C. in 2024 and thought "my skiing days were maybe behind me."

That was until Washington D.C. was hit with more than 5 inches of heavy, wet snow.

Egan and a friend then strapped on their skies.

"This is awesome. Best snow day ever," Egan told the AP.

Egan competed in the biathlon, which combines cross-country skiing with rifle shooting.

Ice-coated trees down power lines in eastern Kentucky

In eastern Kentucky, ice-coated trees downed power lines and blocked roads. During the outage peak, about half of the electric customers in Magoffin County were without power, said Matt Wireman, the county judge-executive.

By midday Monday, about 20% of customers still lacked power, he said.

"Our (power) lines are hanging with icicles inches long," Wireman said.

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Road crews in the Appalachian county faced a backlog of rural roads that needed to be cleared of downed trees.

Warming centers were set up for people lacking power at home, though residents typically take refuge with relatives or neighbors.

The race was on to clear roads and restore power ahead of bitter cold temperatures expected later in the week.

Hundreds of flights disrupted around the U.S.

The winter storm brought chilly misery for airline passengers across the United States on Monday with thousands of flights canceled or delayed, especially around the nation's capital.

According to tracking platform FlightAware.com, more than 800 flights were canceled or delayed in and out of Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C., which saw several inches of snow with more in the forecast as President-elect Donald Trump's victory was set to be certified.

More than 300 flights were impacted at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

So far, Chicago O'Hare International had 730 flights called off or postponed.

Truckers pulling off the roads outside Cincinnati

A Kentucky truck stop was jammed with big rigs forced off an icy and snow-covered Interstate 75 on Monday just outside Cincinnati.

"It was too dangerous. I didn't want to kill myself or anyone else," said Michael Taylor, a long-haul driver from Los Angeles who was carrying a load of rugs to Macon, Georgia.

He saw numerous cars and trucks stuck in ditches and stopped beneath an overpass to clear ice from his windshield wipers before finally pulling off the interstate. "It was crazy. I know when it's time to get off the roads," he said.

Bad weather causes vehicle crashes in Indiana, Virginia

By mid-Monday morning, there were 259 crashes and 271 reports of vehicles sliding off roadways statewide in Indiana, according to a post by the Indiana State Police on the social media site X.

The State Police Indianapolis District reported 151 crashes, including 12 with injuries. Troopers also assisted on more than 100 vehicles that were disabled or stuck in the snow.

In Virginia, state police said they responded to 248 crashes in the span of seven hours Monday, although police noted that not all of the accidents may be related to the storm.

What to do when winter weather interrupts flights and air travel

Winter weather often causes flight delays and cancellations. While airlines can't control the weather, they are required in the U.S. to provide refunds to customers whose flights are canceled.

If you no longer want to take the trip, or found another way of getting to your destination, the airline is legally required to refund your money, even if you bought a nonrefundable ticket. It doesn't matter why the flight was canceled.

When airlines expect bad weather to create problems for flights, they often give travelers a chance to postpone their trips by a few days without having to pay a fee.

It's better to be stuck at home or in a hotel than to be stranded in an airport terminal, so use the airline's app or flight websites to make sure that your flight is still on before heading to the airport. Airlines usually cancel flights hours or even days before departure time.

President Biden's slight change in travel plans due to weather

The snowy weather in Washington forced a slight change in the travel plans for President Joe Biden.

Biden is heading to New Orleans on Monday to help console victims of the New Year's Day truck attack.

Biden will drive to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland to board Air Force One for the flight. He typically flies directly to the base aboard the Marine One helicopter.

Texans warned about cold temperatures

In Texas, the state's independent grid operator issued a weather warning Monday for residents to be aware of cold temperatures.

Forecasts show major cities like Houston hitting below 30 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 1 degree Celsius)

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throughout the week. Grid conditions are expected to remain normal despite the higher demand for electricity and experts don't foresee any major problems to occur.

President Biden monitoring weather situation

President Joe Biden and his team are closely monitoring the severe winter weather across much of the U.S., the White House said in a statement Monday.

White House spokesperson Jeremy Edwards said Biden has directed senior White House Officials to be in close touch with their state and local counterparts in the affected areas. Support will be offered as needed.

"We want to encourage all Americans affected by this weather to take it seriously, continue to monitor forecasts, and heed the warnings of local officials," Edwards said.

Kentucky governor says injured state trooper recovering

A Kentucky State Police trooper is recovering at home after his police cruiser was rear-ended by another vehicle while he responded to a collision on Interstate 65 in southcentral Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear said Monday.

Beshear also urged residents to stay off the roads Monday as highway crews continued to clear roadways.

"This is a significant snow and ice event, so the roadways are still dangerous," the governor said. "You might be able to see the pavement but that doesn't mean that it's not slick. A half an inch of ice is very hard to treat, especially when it coats everything."

Kentucky State Police dispatchers reported more than 170 vehicle accidents and over 280 stranded motorists who were helped, he said.

Kentucky thoroughbreds 'ride' out winter storm in their stalls

The thoroughbreds residing at storied Calumet Farm in central Kentucky were riding out the winter storm in the safety of their stalls. The horses were led back to the barns Sunday afternoon before freezing rain turned pastures into a slick glaze of snow and ice.

"The ice is the worst part," Eddie Kane, the farm manager at Calumet, said Monday. "I still haven't turned them out because it's still a little bit too dangerous. It's like an ice-skating rink out there in the fields."

The horses do fine in the snow, he said, but the ice created too much risk to keep them outside.

"Horses would rather be outside than in a stall," Kane said. "But I just do it for my own peace of mind."

Grain rations are bumped up for the horses amid the cold and they eat as much hay as they want, Kane said.

Indianapolis under storm warning, some health offices closed

Marion County Public Health Department offices in Indianapolis were closed Monday due to poor weather. All clinics and walk-in services operated by the health department also are closed. The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning Monday for the Indianapolis area, with snow possible, a high temperature near 28 degrees Fahrenheit and wind gusts as high as 32 mph.

An essential travel watch due to snow was declared Sunday night for Wayne County, Richmond and Centerville, all in eastern Indiana. Only essential travel, like driving to and from work or school, essential medical care, and for supplies or shelter, will be permitted on county roads under the declaration, according to the county. Parking on all county roads and their right-of-way is prohibited.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb on Sunday activated the state's National Guard to assist state and local responders with support during the winter storm.

More than 200 vehicle crashes in Virginia in 12-hour period

In Virginia, state police said in a news release they responded to more than 200 crashes between 4 p.m. Sunday and 4 a.m. Monday, although not all were storm related.

Several accidents included injuries, while one was fatal. A 32-year-old man died around midnight in Wakefield, which is south of Richmond, after his truck ran off the road and struck a tree. Police said he was driving too fast for roadway conditions and wasn't wearing a seat belt, while alcohol appears to be a factor.

Cincinnati airport sees record snowfall

A record 8 inches of snow fell Sunday at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, leading to dozens of flight cancellations that lingered into Monday.

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A few more inches of snow was expected Monday across the Cincinnati area, where car and truck crashes Monday morning shutdown at least two major routes leading into downtown.

Schools closing as storm conditions intensify in some areas

School closings are expected to be widespread Monday. Districts in Indiana, Virginia and Kentucky began announcing cancellations and delays on Sunday afternoon. Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools canceled classes, extracurricular activities and athletics for its nearly 100,000 students.

Classes also have been cancelled in Maryland, where Gov. Wes Moore declared a state of emergency Sunday and announced the state government would be closed Monday.

"Keeping Marylanders safe is our top priority. Please stay off the roads during this storm. Prepare your home and family and charge your communications devices in case you lose power," Moore said in a statement.

Louisiana AG orders security investigation as Biden directs resources to help New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill ordered on Monday an investigation into safety and security deficiencies in New Orleans, where an Army veteran sped around a police blockade and raced down Bourbon Street, killing 14 New Year's revelers.

"The People of Louisiana deserve answers," Murrill said in a statement. "We are committed to getting a full and complete picture of what was done or not done, and more importantly, what needs to change so we can prevent this from ever happening again."

President Joe Biden visited New Orleans Monday to meet with the families of those killed and first responders. He also directed additional resources to help New Orleans with major upcoming events, including Mardi Gras and the Super Bowl. Both have been upgraded and given the special event assessment rating of one, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

"The Biden-Harris administration has determined that these significant events require extensive federal interagency support, and we will use every tool available to fill local capability shortfalls to assure safe and secure events," she told reporters traveling with Biden to New Orleans.

The attack last week was carried out by Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a former U.S. Army soldier who had proclaimed his support for the Islamic State militant group. He was killed in a firefight with police.

The steel columns known as bollards that had previously been installed to restrict vehicle access to Bourbon Street were in the process of being replaced ahead of the Super Bowl, which New Orleans will host on Feb. 9.

Murrill said she directed the Louisiana Bureau of Investigation to conduct a "full review" of security plans for New Year's Eve and the Sugar Bowl. The probe should "explore all aspects of the planning for and execution of security measures" for Jan. 1. That would include existing security assessments and recommendations; funding sources and the use of state, federal, and local funding for security measures; assets and allocations; operational failures; and state, local and federal coordination.

The New Orleans Chief of Police, District Attorney, Inspector General and City Council members have "pledged complete support and cooperation with this review," Murrill said.

"It's my hope that our findings will help provide our law enforcement officers and the City of New Orleans with the tools and insight they need to best ensure the safety of the community and our many visitors," Murrill said.

The additional federal assistance offered by Biden could include explosive detection, K-9 teams, and cyber risk assessments, screening of venues and field intelligence teams, and air security and tactical operations support.

"There's no higher priority to the president than the safety and security of the American people," Jean-Pierre said. "We will continue to ensure we do everything possible to get to the bottom of this horrific event, while also ensuring that this community has the resources they need in the wake of this tragedy."

On Jan. 6, lawmakers remember the carnage of 2021 in sharply different ways

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some lawmakers emotionally recalled the violence. Others said they'd rather move on. And some said it wasn't violent at all.

The certification Monday of Donald Trump's presidential victory further exposed the divide, and the tension, among members of Congress over Jan. 6, 2021 — as Trump has called the bloody attack by his supporters "a day of love" and has promised to pardon rioters who have been convicted of crimes related to that day once he is in office.

Unlike four years ago, when the joint session of Congress to count electoral votes was interrupted by rioters trying to break down the doors, there was very little drama this Jan. 6 and no overt tension in the room as lawmakers read out each state's electoral votes. Vice President Kamala Harris gaveled down her own defeat. Democrats did not object to any of the votes.

Standing beside windows where Trump's supporters first broke into the building that day, Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer said Democrats want to "serve as an example" for Republicans.

The Democrats lost last year's election, Schumer said, but "when you lose an election you roll up your sleeves and try for the next one. You don't deny that you lost."

The rioters who violently breached the Capitol four years ago, breaking in after a brutal fight with police, were echoing Trump's false claims that the election was stolen and that President Joe Biden's win was "rigged." Trump maintained — and still maintains — that he won the election even though it was certified by all 50 states and courts across the country reaffirmed Biden's win.

Four years later, the Republican Party is still divided over the attack. On Monday, as they gleefully certified Trump's win, some GOP lawmakers made a point of downplaying the violence four years ago, defending the more than 1,250 rioters convicted of crimes.

Rep. Mike Collins, R-Ga., posted on X early Monday morning that "individuals entered the Capitol, took photos, and explored the building before leaving," and have since been "hunted down" and treated unjustly. Just after the joint session ended, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., repeated her plea that all of the rioters be pardoned and said "this country should never allow this type of abuse of our justice system again."

Other Republicans remembered the day differently — a signal that Trump's pledge to pardon rioters could become politically fraught even within his own party. It's unclear, so far, whether he will try to pardon all of them or just those who were not violent.

"I was here," said Republican South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of Trump's closest allies. "Ask the cops who got beaten up. Not everybody was violent, but there was definitely violence, and the people who defiled the Capitol and attacked police officers, they deserve to be held accountable."

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota said that "the violence that occurred on that particular day, I will not forget."

"It was real," he said. "And we have to recognize that was a very, very bad day in our country's history."

More common are Republicans who don't want to talk about it at all.

"That was a long day and I don't want to rehash it," said Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin, who was then in the House and helped blockade the doors as rioters tried to beat them down. He said he hadn't talked about it since the one-year anniversary of the attack.

"That's in the past for me," Mullin said. "I tell people all the time, you can't drive out the rearview mirror."

New Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters, "I was here, and I've said what I have to say about that day, and I'm now looking forward."

On possible pardons, "it's going to be a call that the president has to make," Thune said.

Democrats marked the fourth anniversary by remembering their own experiences that day, and preparing for Trump's return to office.

Georgia Rep. Hank Johnson said after the session that he was angry that they were there to certify Trump's win after what happened last time.

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"We performed our perfunctory duty," Johnson said. "It should have been perfunctory four years ago. I'm angry that it was not."

Johnson was trapped in the House gallery with other Democrats who were spacing out in the chamber amid the coronavirus pandemic. The group was trapped as people tried to beat the doors down below, and ducked below seats as rioters hunting lawmakers were rattling the doors behind them.

Some members of that group — who have dubbed themselves the "gallery group" — gathered for a photo Monday. Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal posted the photo on X.

"We will not forget," she wrote.

Metropolitan Police Officer Daniel Hodges, one of the hundreds of police officers who fought the rioters four years ago, sat in the gallery on Monday as Congress certified Trump's win, a guest of California Sen. Adam Schiff.

Hodges, who was captured on video crushed between two doors as some of the rioters beat him, said he found this year's proceeding to be "very dry" — like it should have been four years ago, he said.

Otherwise, he was marking the day by doing his job, like many of the other officers who spent the day protecting the city and members of Congress.

"I was at work before this and I'm going back to work afterward," he said.

Hurdles remain as Israel and Hamas once again inch toward a ceasefire deal

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel and Hamas once again appear to be inching toward a ceasefire that could wind down the 15-month war in Gaza and bring home dozens of Israelis held hostage there.

Both Israel and Hamas are under pressure from outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump to reach a deal before the Jan. 20 inauguration. But the sides have come close before, only to have talks collapse over various disagreements.

The latest round of negotiations has bogged down over the names of hostages to be released in a first phase, according to Israeli, Egyptian and Hamas officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing ongoing negotiations.

Israel wants assurances that the hostages are alive, while Hamas says that after months of heavy fighting, it isn't sure who is alive or dead.

Other hurdles remain.

The first phase, expected to last for six to eight weeks, would also include a halt in fighting, a release of Palestinian prisoners and a surge in aid to the besieged Gaza Strip, according to the officials. The last phase would include the release of any remaining hostages, an end to the war, and talks on reconstruction and who will govern Gaza going forward.

"If we don't get it across the finish line in the next two weeks, I'm confident that it will get to completion at some point, hopefully sooner rather than later," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Seoul on Monday.

Here's a closer look at the key issues holding up a deal:

The release of hostages from Gaza

During its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, Hamas and other groups killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages into Gaza. A truce in November 2023 freed more than 100 hostages, while others have been rescued or their remains have been recovered over the past year.

Israel says about 100 hostages remain in Gaza — at least a third of whom it believes were killed during the Oct. 7 attack or died in captivity.

The first batch of hostages to be released is expected to be made up mostly of women, older people and people with medical conditions, according to the Israeli, Egyptian and Hamas officials.

On Monday, a Hamas official shared with AP a list of 34 names of hostages it said were slated for release. An Egyptian official confirmed the list had been the focus of recent discussions.

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But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the names were from a list Israel had submitted months ago. "As of now, Israel has not received any confirmation or comment by Hamas regarding the status of the hostages appearing on the list," it said.

A second Hamas official on Monday released a list of 14 names the group claimed Israel had removed from consideration after they were approved by Hamas and substituted with other names. Israel did not respond for a request for comment, but it has pronounced the 14 people dead.

An Israeli official said the current impasse was due to Hamas' refusal to provide information on the conditions of the hostages, while another official said the departure of the head of the Mossad intelligence agency for negotiations in Qatar was on hold.

A Hamas official, meanwhile, said that "no one knows" the conditions of all of the hostages. Hamas officials have said that due to the war, they cannot provide a full accounting until there is a truce.

Since the war began, over 45,800 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to local health authorities, who say women and children make up more than half of those killed. They do not say how many of the dead were militants.

Pausing the war or ending it?

Families of hostages reacted angrily to reports of the phased approach, saying the government should instead be pursuing a deal that releases all the captives at once. They say time is running out to bring people home safely.

"This morning, I and everyone in Israel woke up and discovered that the state of Israel has put together a Schindler's List — 34 people who will be able to hug their families again, and 66 others whose fate will be sealed," said Yotam Cohen, whose brother Nimrod, an Israeli soldier held hostage, did not appear on the published list.

Netanyahu has said he supports a partial deal that pauses the war, but he has rejected Hamas' demands for a full Israeli withdrawal that would end the war. Netanyahu has vowed to continue fighting until he achieves "total victory" — including the destruction of Hamas' military capabilities.

Israel has inflicted heavy damage on Hamas. But the group continues to stage attacks in Gaza and to fire rockets into Israel. That could portend an open-ended war that could drag on for months or years.

The Hostages Forum, a grassroots group representing many hostage families, said it was time for a comprehensive deal.

"We know more than half are still alive and need immediate rehabilitation, while those who were murdered must be returned for proper burial," it said. "We have no more time to waste. A hostage ceasefire agreement must be sealed now!"

The release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel

As part of the deal, Israel is expected to free hundreds of imprisoned Palestinians, including dozens who were convicted in bloody attacks.

Israel has a history of large-scale prisoner releases, and hundreds were freed in the November 2023 deal. But the sides have disagreed over the exact number and names of the prisoners to be freed. Hamas wants high-profile prisoners included. Israeli officials have ruled out the release of Marwan Barghouti, who tops Hamas' wish list.

Netanyahu's governing coalition includes hardliners who oppose such releases, with some even pledging to quit the government if too many concessions are made. They point to a 2011 prisoner release that included the former Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, a mastermind of the Oct. 7 attacks who was killed by Israel in October.

The return of Palestinians to their homes in Gaza

The war has displaced an estimated 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people, according to U.N. estimates, with the hard-hit northern sector of the territory largely emptied of its prewar population.

During the first phase of the developing deal, Israel is expected to withdraw troops from Palestinian population centers and allow some of the displaced to return home. But the extent of the pullback and the number of people allowed to return must still be worked out, the officials say.

Canada's Trudeau announces resignation after nearly a decade as prime minister

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation Monday after nearly a decade in power, bowing to rising discontent over his leadership and growing turmoil within his government signaled by the abrupt departure of his finance minister.

Trudeau, the latest incumbent to be driven out by rising voter dissatisfaction worldwide, said it became clear to him that he cannot "be the leader during the next elections due to internal battles." He planned to stay on as prime minister until a new leader of the Liberal Party is chosen.

"I don't easily back down faced with a fight, especially a very important one for our party and the country. But I do this job because the interests of Canadians and the well being of democracy" are "something that I hold dear," said Trudeau, who was initially teary-eyed at the announcement outside his official residence.

He said Parliament, which had been due to resume Jan. 27, would be suspended until March 24. The timing will allow for a Liberal Party leadership race.

All three main opposition parties have said they plan to topple the Liberal Party in a no-confidence vote when Parliament resumes, so a spring election after the Liberals pick a new leader was almost assured.

"The Liberal Party of Canada is an important institution in the history of our great country and democracy. A new prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party will carry its values and ideals into that next election," Trudeau said. "I am excited to see that process unfold in the months ahead."

Trudeau came to power in 2015 after 10 years of Conservative Party rule and was initially hailed for returning the country to its liberal past. But the 53-year-old scion of one of Canada's most famous prime ministers became deeply unpopular with voters in recent years over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing, and surging immigration.

Speaking in a recorded message posted on X, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre said Canadians "desperate to turn the page on this dark chapter in our history might be relieved" that Trudeau is leaving. "But what has really changed? Every Liberal MP in power today and every potential Liberal leadership contender fighting for the top job helped Justin Trudeau break the country over the last nine years."

Other opposition leaders added their own criticism, including Jagmeet Singh, who leads the leftist New Democratic Party.

"It doesn't matter who the next Liberal is. They've let you down. They do not deserve another chance," said Singh, who propped up Trudeau's party for years.

The president of the Liberal party, Sachit Mehra, said party members were "immensely grateful" to Trudeau for delivering "transformational progress" for Canadians, including \$10-a-day child care, dental care and a national climate plan. Mehra said he would call a meeting this week to begin selecting a new leader.

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada internationally. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian goods if the government does not stem what Trump calls a flow of migrants and drugs in the U.S. — even though far fewer of them cross into the U.S. from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened.

Canada is a major exporter of oil and natural gas to the U.S., which also relies on its northern neighbor for steel, aluminum and automobiles.

After Trudeau's announcement, Trump, who for weeks has referred to Canada as the 51st state, did so again and incorrectly claimed on social media that the prime minister resigned because Canada relies on subsidies from the U.S. to stay afloat.

Trudeau kept publicly mum in recent weeks, despite intensifying pressure for him to step down.

"His long silence following this political drama speaks volumes about the weakness of his current position," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Canada's former finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, announced her resignation from Trudeau's Cabinet on Dec. 16, criticizing some of Trudeau's economic priorities in the face of Trump's threats. The move, which came shortly after the housing minister quit, stunned the country and raised questions about how

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much longer the increasingly unpopular Trudeau could stay in his job.

Freeland and Trudeau had disagreed about two recently announced policies: a temporary sales tax holiday on goods ranging from children's clothes to beer, and plans to send every citizen a check for \$250 Canadian (\$174). Freeland, who was also deputy prime minister, said Canada could not afford "costly political gimmicks."

"Our country is facing a grave challenge," Freeland wrote in her resignation letter. "That means keeping our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves we may need for a coming tariff war."

Trudeau had planned to run for a fourth term despite his party's displeasure. Prime ministers in Canada can stay in office as long as their government or party has the confidence of a majority in the House of Commons, but no Canadian prime minister in more than a century has won four straight terms.

Trudeau's party recently suffered upsets in special elections in two districts in Toronto and Montreal that it has held for years. And based on the latest polls, his chances for success looked slim. In the latest poll by Nanos, the Liberals trailed Conservatives 47% to 21%.

Over his long tenure, Trudeau embraced an array of causes favored by his liberal base. He spoke in favor of immigration at a time other countries were trying to tighten their borders. He championed diversity and gender equality, appointing a Cabinet that was equal parts men and women. He legalized cannabis.

His efforts to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection were criticized by both the right and left. He levied a tax on carbon emissions and rescued a stalled pipeline expansion project to get more of Alberta's oil to international markets.

Fewer people died from COVID-19 in Canada than elsewhere, and his government provided massive financial support. But animosity grew among those opposed to vaccine mandates. Flags with Trudeau's name and expletives became a common sight in rural regions.

A combination of scandal and unpopular policies damaged his prospects over time.

Trudeau's father swept to power in 1968 and led Canada for almost 16 years, becoming a storied name in the country's history, most notably by opening its doors wide to immigrants. Pierre Trudeau was often compared to John F. Kennedy and remains one of the few Canadian politicians who are recognized in the U.S.

Born while his father was prime minister, the younger Trudeau became an international celebrity upon being elected. He appeared on the cover of America's Rolling Stone magazine under the headline "Why Can't He Be Our President?"

Tall and trim, with movie-star looks, Justin Trudeau channeled the star power — if not quite the political heft — of his father.

He became the second-youngest prime minister in Canada's history, and rivals said his age was a liability when he first sought office. But he won a sweeping mandate in a come-from-behind victory in 2015.

Trudeau is a former teacher, nightclub bouncer and snowboard instructor who has three children with his ex-wife, a former model and TV host.

Congress certifies Trump's 2024 win, without the Jan. 6 mob violence of four years ago

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK, FARNOUSH AMIRI and MATT BROWN Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress certified President-elect Donald Trump as the winner of the 2024 election in proceedings Monday that unfolded without challenge, in stark contrast to the Jan. 6, 2021, violence as his mob of supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

Lawmakers convened under heavy security and a winter snowstorm to meet the date required by law to certify the election. Layers of tall black fences flanked the Capitol complex in a stark reminder of what happened four years ago, when a defeated Trump sent rallygoers to "fight like hell" in what became the most gruesome attack on the seat of American democracy in 200 years.

The whole process this time concluded swiftly and without unrest. One by one, a tally of the electoral votes from each state was read aloud to polite applause in the House, no one objected and the results

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were certified.

"Today, America's democracy stood," Vice President Kamala Harris, a Democrat, said after presiding over the session — as is the role of her office — and her own defeat to Trump.

But Trump's legacy from 2021 leaves an extraordinary fact: The candidate who tried to overturn the previous election won this time and is legitimately returning to the White House, his inauguration in two weeks.

While Monday's outcome revived a U.S. tradition that launches the peaceful transfer of presidential power, what's unclear is if Jan. 6, 2021, was the anomaly or if this year's calm becomes the outlier.

Trump denies that he lost four years ago, muses about staying beyond the Constitution's two-term White House limit and promises to pardon some of the more than 1,250 people who have pleaded guilty or were convicted of crimes for the Capitol siege. He calls Jan. 6, 2021, a "day of love."

Trump said online Monday that Congress was certifying a "GREAT" election victory and called it "A BIG MOMENT IN HISTORY."

Still, American democracy has proven to be resilient, and Congress, the branch of government closest to the people, came together to affirm the choice of Americans.

With pomp and tradition, the day unfolded as it has countless times before, with the arrival of ceremonial mahogany boxes filled with the electoral certificates from the states — boxes that staff were frantically grabbing and protecting when Trump's mob stormed the building last time.

Senators walked across the Capitol — which four years ago had filled with roaming rioters, some defecating and menacingly calling out for leaders, others engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police — to the House to begin certifying the vote.

The House chaplain, Margaret Kibben, who delivered a prayer during the violence four years ago, made a simple request as the chamber opened to "shine your light in the darkness."

Harris stood at the dais where then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi was abruptly rushed to safety last time as the mob closed in and lawmakers fumbled to put on gas masks and flee, and shots rang out as police killed Ashli Babbitt, a Trump supporter trying to climb through a broken glass door toward the chamber.

And Harris certified her own defeat — much the way Democrat Al Gore did in 2001, Republican Richard Nixon did in 1961 and then-Vice President Mike Pence did four years ago.

When Harris read the tally, the chamber broke into applause: first Republicans for Trump's 312 electoral votes, then Democrats for Harris' 226.

Vice President-elect JD Vance had joined his former Senate colleagues in the front row, and was surrounded afterward with congratulatory handshakes, hugs and photos.

Within half an hour the process was done.

There are new procedural rules in place after what happened four years ago, when Republicans echoed Trump's lie that the election was fraudulent and challenged the results their own states had certified.

Under changes to the Electoral Count Act, it now requires one-fifth of lawmakers, instead of just one in each chamber, to raise any objections to election results.

But none of that was necessary.

Republicans who challenged the 2020 election results now express greater trust in U.S. elections after Trump defeated Harris.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., who led the House floor challenge in 2021, said people at the time were so astonished by the election's outcome and there were "lots of claims and allegations."

This time, he said: "I think the win was so decisive. ... It stifled most of that."

And Democrats frustrated by Trump's victory nevertheless accepted the choice of the American voters, with House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries saying his side of the aisle is not "infested" with election deniers.

"There are no election deniers on our side of the aisle," Jeffries said last week on the first day of the new Congress, to applause from Democrats in the chamber.

Harris said afterward that Jan. 6 this time was "about what should be the norm and what the American people should be able to take for granted, which is one of the most important pillars of our democracy:

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the peaceful transfer of power.”

Last time, far-right militias helped lead the mob to break into the Capitol in a war zone-like scene. Officers have described being crushed and pepper-sprayed and beaten with Trump flag poles, “slipping in other people’s blood.”

Leaders of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys have been convicted of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Many others faced prison, probation, home confinement or other penalties.

Pence, who had been rushed into hiding that day as rioters threatened to hang him for his refusal to reject Biden’s win, wrote online that he welcomed what he called “the return of order and civility” to the certification process.

Trump was impeached by the House on the charge of inciting an insurrection that day but was acquitted by the Senate. At the time, GOP leader Mitch McConnell blamed Trump for the siege but said his culpability was for the courts to decide.

Federal prosecutors subsequently issued a four-count indictment of Trump for working to overturn the election, but special counsel Jack Smith withdrew the case last month after Trump won reelection, adhering to Justice Department guidelines that sitting presidents cannot be prosecuted.

Biden, in one of his outgoing acts, awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal to Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and former Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., who had been the chair and vice chair of the congressional committee that conducted an investigation into Jan. 6, 2021.

Trump has said those who worked on the Jan. 6 committee should be locked up.

CES 2025 is here. What can we expect from the annual show of all things tech?

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — CES, the annual trade show of all things tech, is upon us.

The multi-day event, organized by the Consumer Technology Association, kicks off this week in Las Vegas — where swaths of the latest gadgets and advances across industries like personal tech, transportation, health care, sustainability and more are set to be on display. And, like last year, artificial intelligence is everywhere you look.

CES 2024 saw more than 138,000 attendees, according to the CTA, and organizers expect to see at least that amount again for this year’s show. Over 4,500 exhibitors, including 1,400 startups, are also anticipated across 2.5 million net square feet of floor space this week.

“These are the people getting together, focusing on solving some of the world’s biggest problems — and magic occurs.” Gary Shapiro, CEO and vice chair of the CTA, told The Associated Press ahead of this week’s show.

Formerly known as the Consumer Electronics Show, CES brings attendees and exhibitors from around the globe, with Shapiro noting that organizers expect some 50,000 attendees to come from outside the U.S. Beyond an array of startups, big-name companies set to make appearances this year include Nvidia, Delta Air Lines, Honda, Volvo, Panasonic and L’Oréal.

There may be some increased security this year. CES 2025 arrives less than one week after a highly decorated Army soldier fatally shot himself in a Tesla Cybertruck packed with explosives before it burst into flames outside of President-elect Donald Trump’s hotel in Las Vegas — not far from much of the trade show’s planned event space. Shapiro said that organizers regularly work with officials for event safety and that “modest” changes were made in response to recent events, but couldn’t go into further detail.

The AP spoke with Shapiro about what to expect for CES 2025. The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

CES 2025 is here. What are the main themes we can expect this week?

CES 2025 will be an exceptional leap forward in terms of innovation and technology, with a focus on a variety of themes important to the future of humanity. Over 4,000 companies will be here, on literally miles and miles of exhibit space. And they’ll be showing solutions to fundamental human problems — like

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access to food, clean air, clean water and mobility, as well as health care technology.

We also have newer categories. We're seeing more technology for the disability community, for example. Products that can serve people with disabilities had a large presence last year, and we expect that to be even bigger this year. Overall, the show is serving humanity and using technology and innovation to fill in gaps where we need a lot more work.

AI is everywhere again this year. Are there any specific trends we should keep an eye out for?

Generative AI is affecting virtually every area. Just about every major exhibitor will be talking about AI in one form or another at CES this week. For businesses, the focus is more on enterprise and productivity. But for individuals, it's about personalization.

We'll see exhibitors, such as PC companies, focusing on personalization in new products for the PC and laptop marketplace. And then there's AI being used in mobility — and not just in features for cars and self-driving. It's for all sorts of vehicles, including agricultural products from companies like Caterpillar and John Deere.

What kind of oversight is there for the gadgets and products we'll see at CES this week?

The industry representing the companies involved welcomes government regulation. The government's job is to say this is what is unsafe. And so the companies know what is legal and what is not. At the same time, a big challenge is if government stops innovation — so the question is for every country is finding that balance.

How could policies from the incoming Trump administration — like proposed tariffs on foreign goods — impact consumer products like those seen at CES?

We expect the Trump administration to take a much more pro-business approach that favors innovation, including a focus on all sorts of energy sources, which is very important important. But tariffs are taxes. And we know that they are inflationary and paid for by consumers.

If we go forward with the proposals that the President-elect has indicated he may put in place, there would be severe impacts on the prosperity of the U.S. It depends on how exactly these tariffs are adopted but under some of the proposals, we estimate a range of a 30 to 50% price increases for basic products like PCs, cell phones, laptops, tablets, smartwatches and all sorts of different products that consumers get a great value on today. That means that fewer people will be able to access these products. And, of course, other countries may then retaliate against U.S. exports. We don't want to go in that direction.

Are there any increased safety precautions CES is taking following last week's Cybertruck explosion?

CES has always focused on safety. There's a lot of things we can't talk about, but suffice it to say, we work with federal, state, local and facility officials for lots of planning. We've made some modest changes given the recent events, but we're always trying to do it better.

CES also arrives a month after the fatal shooting of UnitedHealthcare's CEO. Have companies made any additional security requests for their attending executives?

I think companies are excited to come here. And any requests we've gotten have been extremely isolated.

Having top executives here, especially after COVID, is very special. People are focused on coming to Las Vegas and having this opportunity to meet face-to-face and finding the serendipity and discovery that happens when you're making these business connections in person. That's why trade shows like CES and others are such important events for the world.

Hundreds of Capitol riot prosecutions are in limbo as a DC court awaits Trump's White House return

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's the largest prosecution in Justice Department history — with reams of evidence, harrowing videos and hundreds of convictions of the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Now Donald Trump's return to power has thrown into question the future of the more than 1,500 federal cases brought over the last four years.

Jan. 6 trials, guilty pleas and sentencings have continued chugging along in Washington's federal court

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despite Trump's promise to pardon rioters, whom he has called "political prisoners" and "hostages" he contends were treated too harshly.

In a statement Monday, Attorney General Merrick Garland said Justice Department prosecutors "have sought to hold accountable those criminally responsible for the January 6 attack on our democracy with unrelenting integrity."

"They have conducted themselves in a manner that adheres to the rule of law and honors our obligation to protect the civil rights and civil liberties of everyone in this country," Garland said.

Here's a look at where the prosecutions stand on the fourth anniversary of the Capitol riot and what could happen next:

Hundreds of arrests, guilty pleas and prison sentences

More than 1,500 people across the U.S. have been charged with federal crimes related to the deadly riot. Hundreds of people who did not engage in destruction or violence were charged only with misdemeanor offenses for entering the Capitol illegally. Others were charged with felony offenses, including assault for beating police officers. Leaders of the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys extremist groups were convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors described as plots to use violence to stop the peaceful transfer of power from Trump, a Republican, to Joe Biden, a Democrat.

About 250 people have been convicted of crimes by a judge or a jury after a trial. Only two people were acquitted of all charges by judges after bench trials. No jury has fully acquitted a Capitol riot defendant. At least 1,020 others had pleaded guilty as of Jan. 1.

More than 1,000 rioters have already been sentenced, with over 700 receiving at least some time behind bars. The rest were given some combination of probation, community service, home detention or fines.

The longest sentence, 22 years, went to former Proud Boys national chairman Enrique Tarrio, who was convicted of seditious conspiracy along with three lieutenants. A California man with a history of political violence got 20 years in prison for repeatedly attacking police with flagpoles and other makeshift weapons during the riot. And Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes is serving an 18-year prison sentence for seditious conspiracy and other offenses.

Dozens of cases are still winding through the court

More than 100 Jan. 6 defendants are scheduled to stand trial in 2025, while at least 168 riot defendants are set to be sentenced this year.

The FBI has continued to arrest people on Capitol riot charges since Trump's electoral victory in November. The Justice Department says prosecutors are still evaluating nearly 200 riot cases investigated by the FBI, including more than 60 cases in which the suspects are accused of assaulting or interfering with police officers who were guarding the Capitol.

Citing Trump's promise of pardons, several defendants have sought to have their cases delayed — with little success.

In denying one such request, U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth, who was nominated to the bench by President Ronald Reagan, a Republican, wrote: "This Court recently had the occasion to discuss what effect the speculative possibility of a presidential pardon has on the timetable for a pending criminal matter. In short: little to none."

One defendant who convinced a judge to postpone his trial, William Pope, told the court that the "American people gave President Trump a mandate to carry out the agenda he campaigned on, which includes ending the January 6 prosecutions and pardoning those who exercised First Amendment rights at the Capitol." Pope has now asked the judge to allow him to travel to Washington to attend Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20.

Scope of Trump's potential pardons remains unclear

Trump embraced the Jan. 6 rioters on the campaign trail, downplaying the violence that was broadcast on live TV and has been documented extensively through video, testimony and other evidence in the federal cases.

Trump has vowed to begin issuing pardons of Jan. 6 rioters on his first day in office. He has said he will look at individuals on a case-by-case basis, but he has not explained how he will decide who receives

such relief.

He has said there may be “some exceptions” — if “somebody was radical, crazy.” But he has not ruled out pardons for people convicted of serious crimes, like assaulting police officers. When confronted in a recent NBC News interview about the dozens of people who have pleaded guilty to assaulting law enforcement, Trump responded: “Because they had no choice.”

In a letter dated Monday to Trump, a lawyer for Tarrio urged the president-elect to pardon the former Proud Boys leader, who was convicted of seditious conspiracy.

Judges decry efforts to rewrite the history of Jan. 6

Many judges in Washington’s federal court have condemned the depiction of the rioters as “political prisoners,” and some have raised alarm about the potential pardons.

“No matter what ultimately becomes of the Capital Riots cases already concluded and still pending, the true story of what happened on January 6, 2021 will never change,” Judge Lamberth recently said in a statement when handing down a sentence.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, who was nominated to the bench by Trump, has said it would be “beyond frustrating and disappointing” if Trump hands out mass pardons to rioters.

In another case, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta alluded to the prospect of a pardon for Rhodes, the Oath Keepers founder convicted of seditious conspiracy.

“The notion that Stewart Rhodes could be absolved of his actions is frightening and ought to be frightening to anyone who cares about democracy in this country,” said Mehta, who was nominated by President Barack Obama, a Democrat.

Austrian far right gets mandate to try to lead a government for the first time since World War II

By PHILIPP JENNE and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — The leader of Austria’s Freedom Party received a mandate Monday to try to form a new government, which would be the first headed by the far right since World War II if he succeeds.

The anti-immigration and euroskeptic Freedom Party, which opposes sanctions against Russia and is led by Herbert Kickl, won Austria’s parliamentary election in September. It took 28.8% of the vote and beat outgoing Chancellor Karl Nehammer’s conservative Austrian People’s Party into second place.

But in October, President Alexander Van der Bellen gave Nehammer the first chance to form a new government after Nehammer’s party said it wouldn’t go into government with the Freedom Party under Kickl and others refused to work with the Freedom Party at all. Those efforts to form a governing alliance without the far right collapsed in the first few days of the new year and Nehammer said Saturday that he would resign.

The People’s Party then signaled that it might be open to working under Kickl. Van der Bellen said after meeting Kickl for about an hour at the presidential palace Monday that he had tasked the Freedom Party leader with holding talks with the People’s Party to form a new government.

“I did not take this step lightly,” the president told reporters. “I will continue to take care that the principles and rules of our constitution are correctly respected and adhered to.”

The far right and the conservatives have governed together before, but on previous occasions with the Freedom Party as the junior partner. Most recently, they ran Austria from 2017 to 2019 in a government in which Kickl — a 56-year-old with a taste for provocation — served as interior minister. It collapsed in a scandal surrounding the Freedom Party’s leader at the time.

Coalition talks between the far right and conservatives aren’t guaranteed to succeed, but there are no longer any other realistic options in the current parliament and polls suggest that a new election soon could strengthen the Freedom Party further.

In its election program titled “Fortress Austria,” the Freedom Party has called for the “remigration of uninvited foreigners,” for achieving a more “homogeneous” nation by tightly controlling borders and sus-

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pending the right to asylum via an emergency law.

The Freedom Party also calls for an end to sanctions against Russia, is highly critical of Western military aid to Ukraine and wants to bow out of the European Sky Shield Initiative, a missile defense project launched by Germany. Kickl has criticized "elites" in Brussels and called for some powers to be brought back from the European Union to Austria.

The Freedom Party is part of a right-wing populist alliance in the European Parliament, Patriots for Europe, which also includes the parties of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and of the Netherlands' Geert Wilders, whose party dominates the Netherlands' new government,

Van der Bellen noted that the new government won't face an easy task.

"The economic environment is difficult. Austria is in a persistent recession, unemployment is rising; at the same time our state budget must be restructured," he said. "It's not likely that all the measures will be popular, but they will have to be implemented."

He also pointed to the geopolitical threats Austria faces, particularly as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, and pointed to the importance of "constructively strengthening European cooperation in the Union, also in the interest of Austrian industry and exporters."

And the head of state, a liberal who originally hails from the environmentalist Greens, said that he and Kickl had discussed media freedom in Austria at length.

Kickl is confident of finding "viable solutions" in coalition talks, "and he wants this responsibility," the president said.

Kickl strode past reporters without commenting as he left the meeting.

Around 200-300 demonstrators gathered outside the presidential palace as he spoke with Van der Bellen.

"We don't want to wake in a fascist country. We also don't want to wake up in an authoritarian system like in Hungary," protester Martin Fuchs said. "We want to maintain democracy in Austria and strengthen it."

Today in History: January 7, gunmen kill 12 at Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 7, the seventh day of 2025. There are 358 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 7, 2015, masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a French newspaper that had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad, methodically killing 12 people, including the editor, before escaping. (Two suspects were killed two days later.)

Also on this date:

In 1610, astronomer Galileo Galilei observed four of Jupiter's moons for the first time.

In 1955, singer Marian Anderson became the first Black American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, in Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera."

In 1979, Vietnamese forces captured the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, overthrowing the Khmer Rouge government.

In 2022, three white men who chased and killed Ahmaud Arbery were sentenced to life in prison; a judge in Georgia denied any chance of parole for the father and son who armed themselves and initiated the deadly pursuit of the 25-year-old Black man after spotting him running in their neighborhood.

In 2023, Republican Kevin McCarthy was elected speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives on a historic post-midnight 15th ballot, overcoming holdouts from his own ranks after a chaotic week that tested the new GOP majority's ability to govern.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Kenny Loggins is 77. Actor David Caruso is 69. TV journalist Katie Couric is 68. Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., is 64. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., is 62. Actor Nicolas Cage is 61. Actor Jeremy Renner is 54. Country singer-musician John Rich is 51. Racing driver Lewis Hamilton is 40. NFL quarterback Lamar Jackson is 28. Actor Marcus Scribner is 25. Jay-Z and Beyoncé's daughter Blue Ivy Carter is 13.