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## Sunday Blessings

Good Morning

*Enjoy your day!*



Dear Lord,  
please bless  
and keep us  
safe from all  
harm, seen, and  
unseen, in  
Jesus' name,  
Amen.

### Sunday, Jan. 12

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m. (Milestones 6th graders and sophomores), Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

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

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

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

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

### Monday, Jan. 13

Senior Menu: Chicken and rice casserole, mixed vegetables, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Corn dog, baked beans.

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Boys JH/JV hosting Invitational Tournament, 5 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 7. p.m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

United Methodist: PEOPLE Meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, Jan. 14

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones.

School Breakfast: Chicken strips, fries.

JH Basketball hosts Roncalli (7th at 6 p.m., 8th at 7 p.m.)

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council meeting, 6 p.m.

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## GHS Boys Basketball

### Lennox Orioles Dominate Offensive Boards to Hold Off Groton Area Tigers 63-55



**Gage Sippel puts up this shot in the Lennox game. Sippel had the season's first double-double with 10 points and 10 rebounds.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

The Groton Area Tigers came out strong against the visiting Lennox Orioles, but the Orioles' dominance on the offensive glass and timely scoring helped them secure a hard-fought 63-55 victory in a tightly contested matchup.

#### First Quarter: Groton Takes Control Early

Groton got off to a hot start, jumping out to a 5-0 lead and finishing the first quarter ahead 14-7. The Tigers were efficient offensively, shooting 45% (5 of 11) from the field, while Lennox struggled, hitting just 21% (3 of 14). Groton's strong defensive presence and rebounding set the tone early, as they looked poised to dictate the pace of the game.

#### Second Quarter: Lennox Strikes Back

The second quarter saw the Orioles come alive with a 14-point run, erasing the Tigers' lead and going ahead 23-19. Groton quickly rallied to reclaim the lead at 25-23, but Lennox's sharp shooting (69% on 9 of 13 attempts) tied the game at 27 heading into halftime. The Tigers shot 38% (5 of 13) in the quarter and leaned on solid teamwork, but Lennox's offensive surge signaled a shift in momentum.

#### Third Quarter: Momentum Swings Back and Forth

Lennox carried their second-quarter momentum into the third, scoring the first basket to take a 29-27 lead. The Tigers fought back, tying the game at 32 and briefly reclaiming the lead at 43-42 with 1:22 left in the quarter. Groton built a four-point cushion at 46-42, but the Orioles closed the quarter on a 5-0 run to take a slim 47-46 lead. Lennox shot an impressive 62% (8 of 13) in the period, while Groton managed 39% (7 of 18), keeping the game competitive.

#### Fourth Quarter: Lennox Secures the Win

The final quarter featured four early lead changes, with Groton's last advantage coming at 51-50. From there, Lennox took control, seizing a 53-51 lead and dominating the offensive boards to extend their advantage. The Tigers struggled to find their rhythm offensively,

shooting just 25% (3 of 12) in the quarter, while Lennox hit 50% (6 of 12). The Orioles' ability to capitalize on second-chance opportunities sealed their 63-55 victory.

#### Key Performances

For Lennox, Tate Gerdes delivered a stellar performance with 28 points, leading all scorers. Boston Katzer added 15 points, while Leighton Smith chipped in 8, and Drake Mikkelsen and Teegan Musser each contributed 6. The Orioles' relentless pursuit of offensive rebounds was a critical factor, as they overcame their struggles at the free-throw line (5 of 16, 31%).

Groton was led by Ryder Johnson's 25 points before he fouled out late in the game. Gage Sippel notched Groton Area's first double-double of the season with 10 points and 10 rebounds, while Keegen Tracy added 8 points and a team-high 7 assists. Karson Zac scored 7 points, and Turner Thompson added 2. Sippel's defensive presence was notable with 4 blocks, while Johnson added 2. Despite their strong effort, the Tigers were undone by 16 turnovers and missed opportunities late in the game.

#### Season Update

The win improved Lennox's record to 6-1, while Groton dropped to 5-3. The Tigers will look to bounce

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back in their next matchup as they aim to regain their winning form. Meanwhile, Lennox continues to build momentum as one of the top teams in the state.

- Story compiled by ChatGPT

In an interview with GDILIVE.COM, Coach Brian Dolan said, "We're a better team today than when we got on the bus yesterday. We knew this was going to be a tough Friday, Saturday. We got a split. So on to the next."

The Tigers had a tough time containing Lennox's Tate Gerdes who finished with 28 points including five three-pointers. Dolan said, "He's a heck of a basketball player. If we can't stop him and he can shoot it like that, then you're in trouble. He's a heck of an athlete. And he got the better of us today. We had a little slow feet. You know, but again, the kids tried. They played hard, and I think they've represented this community very well the last 24 hours. And like I said, we're better than we were when we got on the bus yesterday. And now, we get tomorrow off then three days of practice to get ready for TZ. Then we have a big one next Saturday, Dakota Valley, and we'll be better for that one. So we're just going to keep doing what we do. Very proud of the kids. I'm very proud of them. They have nothing to hang their heads, nothing. All I can tell them is thank you because they've given us, the coaches, everything they had in their gas tank the last 24 hours- everything they've had, and what else can we ask for?"

Ryder Johnson: 25 points, 1 rebound, 1 assist, 1 steal, 5 fouls, 2 blocks.

Gage Sippel: 10 points, 10 rebounds, 4 fouls, 4 blocks.

Keegen Tracy: 8 points, 2 rebounds, 7 assists, 3 steals, 2 fouls.

Karson Zak: 7 points, 3 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals, 3 fouls.

Becker Bosma: 3 points, 8 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Turner Thompson: 2 points, 2 rebounds, 3 fouls.

Jayden Schwan: 1 rebound.

Blake Pauli: 1 rebound.

3-pointers: Johnson-4, Tracy-2, Sippel-1, Bosma-1.

2-Pointers: 12-25 48%, 3-Pointers: 8-25 32%, Free Throws: 7-13 54%, 28 rebounds, 16 turnovers, 14 assists, 7 steals, 19 fouls, 6 blocks.

Scoring for Lennox: Tate Gerdes 28, Boston Katzer 15, Layton Smith 8, Drake Mikkelsen 6, Teegan Musser 6.

Total Field Goals: 26-52 50%, Free Throws: 5-16 31%, 16 fouls, 14 rebounds.

Lennox won the junior varsity game, 43-36, leading at the quarterstops at 19-2, 26-12 and 35-21.

Jayden Schwan led Groton Area with 14 points followed by Asher Johnson with 12, Anthony Tracy eight and Ethan Koll 2.

Eli Plank led Lennox with 16 points.

Lennox won the C game, 52-42. The game was tied at nine after the first period and Groton Area held a 26-23 lead at half time. There were five lead changes and the game was tied once as Lennox took a 38-37 lead into the fourth quarter and went on to win, 52-42.

Asher Johnson led Groton Area with 18 points followed by Anthony Tracy with 10, Conner Kroll six. Jordan Schwan and Jace Johnson with three each and Ryder Schelle added two points.

Preston Sandal led Lennox with 16 points while Mavrick Stockwell had 14 and Justin Butler added 11.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The junior varsity and C games were sponsored by The Johnson Agency. The varsity game sponsors were Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Locke Electric, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover. Paul Kosel did the play-by-play of all three games with Jeslyn running the camera of the junior varsity and varsity games.



## GHS Girls Basketball

# Lennox Orioles Outlast Groton Tigers in Saturday Showdown

The Groton Area Tigers hosted the Lennox Orioles on Saturday in an exciting girls' basketball matchup, but it was Lennox who emerged victorious with a 49-39 win. The game was a back-and-forth battle featuring numerous lead changes, gritty defense, and clutch shooting from both teams.

### **First Quarter: A Tight Start**

The game tipped off with both teams trading early baskets, and the lead changed hands twice in the first quarter. Lennox edged ahead, shooting an efficient 56% (5-of-9) from the field to Groton's 38% (5-of-13). By the quarter's end, the Orioles held a narrow 13-11 lead.

### **Second Quarter: Orioles Surge Ahead**

The second quarter saw Lennox extend their advantage with strong defense and timely scoring. They opened up a 10-point lead at 23-13, taking control of the game. Groton managed to trim the deficit slightly before halftime, thanks in part to Riley Dunker, who powered the Tigers with 10 first-half points. Despite their efforts, the Tigers struggled to find consistency, shooting just 25% (3-of-12) in the quarter. Lennox, shooting 44% (4-of-9), took a 23-18 lead into the break.

### **Third Quarter: Tigers Fight Back**

After halftime, the Tigers came roaring back. The Hanson sisters, Kennedy and Brooklyn, ignited the offense with back-to-back three-pointers, tying the game at 24. Groton even grabbed a brief 26-24 lead before the game turned into a seesaw battle. The lead changed hands five times before Lennox closed the quarter with a slim 37-34 advantage. Groton shot an impressive 50% (6-of-12) in the third quarter, while Lennox was held to 38% (3-of-8).

### **Fourth Quarter: Lennox Closes the Door**

Despite Groton's momentum in the third quarter, Lennox controlled the fourth. Their efficient shooting (44%, 4-of-9) and ability to capitalize at the free-throw line sealed the game. Groton struggled to find their rhythm offensively, shooting just 28% (2-of-7). Lennox's poise under pressure allowed them to extend their lead and secure the 49-39 victory.

### **Key Statistics and Performers**

Both teams made 16 field goals, but Lennox's edge came from beyond the arc and at the free-throw line. The Orioles sank one more three-pointer than the Tigers and converted 9-of-14 free throws (64%) compared to Groton's 1-of-2. Groton's 22 team fouls played a pivotal role in the outcome.



**Kennedy Hansen guards Lennox's Andie Peters.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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Taryn Traphagen led the Tigers with 11 points, including three three-pointers, and added one block. Rylee Dunker contributed 10 points, all in the first half, while Kennedy Hansen added 7. Jaedyn Penning and Faith Traphagen chipped in 4 points each, and Brooklyn Hansen finished with 3 points. The Tigers tallied 11 assists, 9 steals, and 13 turnovers, 8 of which came in the second half.

- Story compiled by ChatGPT

In an interview with GDILIVE.COM, Coach Matt Locke said, "It came down to exactly what we thought, what we said it was going to come down to. It was their dribble drive and us being able to stay in front of them, and when we didn't, they made us pay.

"We had a long time there in the first half when we didn't get much done on offense again. You have to give Lennox credit, too. They practice every day and play, too. We had the game scouted correctly. I mean, it just... We said that it's going to come down to whether or not we can stay in front of them. And when they do their dribble drive, if they get good looks for threes, they made more threes."

Lennox made seven three-pointers in the game. "That's more than they made in the three games that I watched. We knew it was going to be a battle, and that's what it was. It was a hard-fought battle.

There were too many spurts of back-to-back-to-back bad possessions, whether it's on an offense or defense. We eliminated that for the most part previously, and then tonight we kind of went back to that. I'll have to go back and watch it again."

## What's Next

Groton will look to bounce back in their next game, while Lennox aims to build on their strong performance. The Tigers will travel to Tiospa Zina on Thursday as part of a doubleheader, then will play Dakota Valley at the Hanson Classic in Mitchell at 4 p.m. on Saturday while the boys travel to Dakota Valley on the same day.

Trayn Traphagen: 11 points, 1 rebound, 2 assists, 1 steal, 3 fouls, 1 block.

Rylee Dunker: 10 points, 2 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal, 2 fouls.

Kennedy Hansen: 7 points, 1 rebound, 5 fouls.

Jaedyn Penning: 4 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, 5 fouls.

Faith Traphagen: 4 points, 5 rebounds, 1 assist, 2 steals, 1 foul.

Brooklyn Hansen: 3 points, 2 rebounds, 1 steal, 1 foul.

Jerica Locke: 3 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals, 3 fouls.

Laila Roberts: 2 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, 1 foul.

Chesney Weber: 1 rebound, 1 steal, 1 foul.

3-Pointers: Taryn Traphagen-3, Kennedy Hansen-2, Brooklyn Hansen-1.

2-Pointers: 10-29 34%, 3-pointers: 6-17 35%, Free Throws: 1-2 50%, 19 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 11 assists, 9 steals, 22 fouls, 1 block.



**Laila Roberts dribbles around her Lennox defender.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



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Libby Kranz led Lennox with 18 points followed by Andie Peters with nine, Bergan Musser eight, Tori Gerdes five, Karlie Bosma and Ryan Hanssen each had three and Gavyn Herlyn added two points.

Total Field Goals: 16-35 45%, Free Throws: 9-14 64%, 10 fouls, 15 turnovers.

Lennox's balanced attack and defensive intensity improved their record to 5-4 on the season, while Groton dropped to 5-2.

Lennox won the junior varsity game, 34-29. Sydney Locke led Groton Area with 11 points followed by Chesney Weber with seven, McKenna Tietz five, Kella Tracy four and Talli Wright two.

Both games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The junior varsity game was sponsored by Adam and Nicole Wright. The varsity game sponsors were Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Locke Electric, Krueger Brothers, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover. Shane Clark did the play-by-play of both girls games with Jeslyn running the camera.



**Rylee Dunker made this shot late in the first half to cut Lennox's lead to five at 23-18.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**The Groton Area Dance Team performed at half time of the boys basketball game Saturday.**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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**Gretchen Dinger was chosen as the second runner-up at the South Dakota Snow Queen festival held Saturday in Aberdeen.** (Photo from Elizabeth Bahr's Facebook Page)



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## Wrestling squad takes second at Jesse James Invite

The Groton Area boys wrestling team took second place at the Jesse James Invitational wrestling meet held Saturday in Garretson.

Christian Ehresmann took first place at 157 pounds, Donavon Block, Walker Zoellner and Korbin Kucker all placed second, in third place were Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Ben Hoeft and Gavin Englund; Layne Johnson placed fourth; in fifth place were Kason Oswald, Charlie Forst and Karter Moody; and in sixth place were Chris Schwab and Isaiah Scepaniak.

**Team Points:** 1. Tri-Valley 280.0; 2. Groton Area 224.5; 3. Beresford/Alcester-Hudson 187.5; 4. Elk Point-Jefferson 166.0; 5. Flandreau 162.0; 6. Garretson 145.0; 7. Lennox 132.5; 8. Marion/Freeman 75.0; 9. Chester Area 56.0; 10. Baltic 16.0; 11. Scotland 9.0; 12. Hanson 6.0.

### **157: Christian Ehresmann (12-2) placed 1st and scored 30.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 12-2 won by forfeit over Forfeit Forfeit (Elk Point-Jefferson) 0-4 (For.)

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 12-2 won by forfeit over Forfeit Forfeit (Tri-Valley) 0-2 (For.)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 12-2 won by fall over Caden Schurch (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 11-12 (Fall 2:43)

1st Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 12-2 won by fall over Treyson Richter (Tri-Valley) 14-3 (Fall 1:19)

### **132: Donavon Block (11-5) placed 2nd and scored 22.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 11-5 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 11-5 won by fall over Austin Bata (Elk Point-Jefferson) 1-4 (Fall 2:51)

Semifinal - Donavon Block (Groton Area) 11-5 won by fall over gabriel frias (Flandreau) 15-10 (Fall 5:51)

1st Place Match - Dexton Miller (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 13-3 won by fall over Donavon Block (Groton Area) 11-5 (Fall 3:32)

### **150: Walker Zoellner (12-5) placed 2nd and scored 24.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 12-5 won by fall over Nick Prouty (Elk Point-Jefferson) 4-13 (Fall 2:55)

Quarterfinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 12-5 won by fall over Major Richter (Tri-Valley) 5-10 (Fall 3:56)

Semifinal - Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 12-5 won by fall over Karzen Sommervold (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 13-10 (Fall 1:07)

1st Place Match - Ramsey Williams (Lennox) 19-4 won by tech fall over Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) 12-5 (TF-1.5 4:18 (20-3))

### **175: Korbin Kucker (13-2) placed 2nd and scored 22.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-2 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-2 won by fall over James Wirth (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 0-2 (Fall 2:47)

Semifinal - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-2 won by fall over Justin Klein (Flandreau) 18-7 (Fall 1:33)

1st Place Match - Landyn Reiser (Tri-Valley) 17-1 won by major decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-2 (MD 10-1)

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## **113: Keegan Kucker (12-6) placed 3rd and scored 17.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 12-6 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 12-6 received a bye () (Bye)  
Semifinal - Bennett Farley (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 12-9 won by decision over Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 12-6 (Dec 11-5)  
Cons. Semi - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 12-6 won by major decision over Kamryn Dice (Elk Point-Jefferson) 11-11 (MD 13-0)  
3rd Place Match - Keegan Kucker (Groton Area) 12-6 won by fall over Legend Frederick (Tri-Valley) 9-5 (Fall 2:37)

## **120: Kyson Kucker (11-4) placed 3rd and scored 18.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 11-4 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 11-4 won by fall over Lukas Ludwig (Garretson) 2-8 (Fall 1:43)  
Semifinal - Teague Bergjord (Flandreau) 16-6 won by fall over Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 11-4 (Fall 5:29)  
Cons. Semi - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 11-4 won by fall over CJ Peterson (Chester Area) 7-9 (Fall 2:22)  
3rd Place Match - Kyson Kucker (Groton Area) 11-4 won by decision over Cade Aasheim (Lennox) 7-10 (Dec 9-8)

## **165: Ben Hoeft (12-9) placed 3rd and scored 17.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 12-9 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 12-9 won by decision over Jesus Mendoza (Tri-Valley) 2-4 (Dec 5-0)  
Semifinal - Brock Bonte (Garretson) 14-5 won by fall over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 12-9 (Fall 1:29)  
Cons. Semi - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 12-9 won by fall over Corbin Buom (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 1-13 (Fall 2:21)  
3rd Place Match - Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) 12-9 won by major decision over Hayden Pearson (Flandreau) 5-9 (MD 10-2)

## **285: Gavin Englund (12-3) placed 3rd and scored 20.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 won by fall over Oliver Nedved (Baltic) 0-7 (Fall 2:15)  
Semifinal - Luke Nehlich (Tri-Valley) 13-5 won by decision over Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 (Dec 9-7)  
Cons. Semi - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 won by fall over Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 (Fall 0:06)  
3rd Place Match - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 won by fall over Addison Peterson (Elk Point-Jefferson) 10-12 (Fall 4:44)

## **190: Layne Johnson (3-10) placed 4th and scored 16.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Nate Haar (Lennox) 6-5 won by fall over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 (Fall 2:53)  
Cons. Round 2 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 3 - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 won by fall over Jackson Runyon (Scotland) 0-8 (Fall 1:54)  
Cons. Semi - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 (Fall 1:47)  
3rd Place Match - Nate Haar (Lennox) 6-5 won by fall over Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 (Fall 0:20)

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## **138: Kason Oswald (5-8) placed 5th and scored 13.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Landry Sims (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 5-6 won by fall over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 (Fall 1:22)  
Cons. Round 2 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 3 - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 won by fall over Talon Miller (Garretson) 3-6 (Fall 1:46)  
Cons. Semi - Drew Chester (Garretson) 3-4 won by decision over Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 (Dec 13-12)  
5th Place Match - Kason Oswald (Groton Area) 5-8 won by fall over Will Sly (Tri-Valley) 2-9 (Fall 4:57)

## **215: Charlie Frost (9-7) placed 5th and scored 11.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 9-7 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 9-7 won by decision over Ruben Chicoine (Elk Point-Jefferson) 4-9 (Dec 12-8)  
Semifinal - Aiden Hilbelink (Chester Area) 15-4 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 9-7 (Fall 3:33)  
Cons. Semi - Emory Lefers (Lennox) 2-4 won by fall over Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 9-7 (Fall 0:48)  
5th Place Match - Charlie Frost (Groton Area) 9-7 won by fall over Ruben Chicoine (Elk Point-Jefferson) 4-9 (Fall 2:51)

## **285: Karter Moody (7-4) placed 5th.**

Champ. Round 1 - Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Addison Peterson (Elk Point-Jefferson) 10-12 won by fall over Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 (Fall 3:54)  
Cons. Round 2 - Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 3 - Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 won by tech fall over Connor Neumayr (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 3-10 (TF-1.5 3:29 (20-1))  
Cons. Semi - Gavin Englund (Groton Area) 12-3 won by fall over Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 (Fall 0:06)  
5th Place Match - Karter Moody (Groton Area) 7-4 won by fall over Titon Peters (Flandreau) 3-3 (Fall 2:12)

## **144: Chris Schwab (8-10) placed 6th and scored 9.5 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Owen Rigg (Elk Point-Jefferson) 3-4 won by fall over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 (Fall 3:00)  
Cons. Round 1 - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 2 - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 won by tech fall over Gavin Denherder (Garretson) 6-7 (TF-1.5 3:00 (16-1))  
Cons. Round 3 - Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 won by fall over Justin Mundt (Garretson) 1-2 (Fall 0:39)  
Cons. Semi - Owen Rigg (Elk Point-Jefferson) 3-4 won by major decision over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 (MD 22-13)  
5th Place Match - Jackson Williams (Tri-Valley) 8-10 won by fall over Chris Schwab (Groton Area) 8-10 (Fall 4:18)

## **190: Isaiah Scepaniak (1-5) placed 6th.**

Champ. Round 1 - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 won by fall over Westin Switzer (Hanson) 2-7 (Fall 3:00)  
Semifinal - Gunner Ewing (Elk Point-Jefferson) 18-3 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 (Fall 1:02)  
Cons. Semi - Layne Johnson (Groton Area) 3-10 won by fall over Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 (Fall 1:47)  
5th Place Match - Rhyder Behnke (Flandreau) 3-11 won by fall over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 1-5 (Fall 2:34)



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## **126: Noah Scepaniak (6-8) scored 5.0 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 6-8 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Chase Arend (Garretson) 9-8 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 6-8 (Fall 3:12)  
Cons. Round 2 - Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 6-8 won by fall over Justin Del Cid (Baltic) 1-6 (Fall 1:21)  
Cons. Round 3 - Kedren Fergen (Lennox) 8-13 won by fall over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) 6-8 (Fall 2:33)

## **132: Greyson Flores (0-6).**

Champ. Round 1 - Greyson Flores (Groton Area) 0-6 received a bye () (Bye)  
Quarterfinal - Dexton Miller (Beresford/Alcester-Hudson) 13-3 won by fall over Greyson Flores (Groton Area) 0-6 (Fall 2:41)  
Cons. Round 2 - Greyson Flores (Groton Area) 0-6 received a bye () (Bye)  
Cons. Round 3 - Bence Bonte (Garretson) 8-9 won by decision over Greyson Flores (Groton Area) 0-6 (Dec 11-10)

## **Krueger places first at Lyman Tournament**

Liza Krueger took first place at the Mid Dakota Bride of the Monster girls wrestling tournament held Saturday at Lyman High School.

## **100: Liza Krueger (26-2) placed 1st and scored 26.5 team points.**

Champ. Round 1 - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 26-2 won by tech fall over Lizzy Fees (Faith) 1-2 (TF-1.5 2:07 (17-2))  
Quarterfinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 26-2 won by fall over Jewel Gannon (Canton) 14-8 (Fall 3:25)  
Semifinal - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 26-2 won by major decision over Emery Voelker (Tea Area) 7-4 (MD 14-0)  
1st Place Match - Liza Krueger (Groton Area) 26-2 won by decision over Shaylee Speck (Pierre T.F. Riggs) 13-3 (Dec 6-0)

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## **NSU Women's Basketball**

### **Northern State Cruises to 94-48 Win Against Augustana**

Sioux Falls, S.D. – An explosive offense led the Northern State University women's basketball team to a 94-48 victory over Augustana to close out the week. The Wolves posted a season-high 46-point margin over the Vikings, along with 19 second-chance points. Six players scored in double figures, with Michaela Jewett leading the charge, contributing 23 points and nine rebounds.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 94, AUGIE 48

Records: NSU 10-6 (NSIC 7-3), AUGIE 3-14 (NSIC 1-10)

Attendance: 1012

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State recorded 25 points in the first quarter, 30 in the second, 19 in the third, and 20 in the fourth for a season-high 94 total points

The Wolves were efficient from the field, shooting 54.4% from the floor, 47.6% from beyond the arc, and 90.9% from the free-throw line

They tallied 46 points in the paint, 27 points off the bench, 19 second-chance points, 17 points off turnovers, and 16 fast break points

Michaela Jewett led the way with 23 points and grabbed nine boards, shooting 52.6% from the floor

The first player off the bench was Izzy Moore, who scored 15 points, connecting on 5-of-7 shots from the floor and 2-of-4 from beyond the three-point line

Morgan Fiedler and Madelyn Bragg followed with 14 and 13 points, respectively

In addition, Bragg added eight rebounds while shooting perfectly from the floor

Rianna Fillipi was the playmaker for the Wolves with eight assists, and Alayna Benike grabbed 11 rebounds on the night

#### NORTHERN STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Michaela Jewett: 23 points, 9 rebounds, 52.6% FG

Izzy Moore: 15 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists, 71.4% FG

Morgan Fiedler: 14 points, 2 assists, 60.0% FG

Madelyn Bragg: 13 points, 8 rebounds, 2 steals, 100% FG

Rianna Fillipi: 12 points, 8 rebounds, 8 assists, 66.6% 3PT

Alayna Benike: 5 points, 11 rebounds, 7 assists

#### UP NEXT

Northern State is back on the road to take on Southwest Minnesota State and Sioux Falls. Tip-offs are set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 17, from Marshall, Minn., against the Mustangs, and 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 18, from Sioux Falls, S.D., against the Cougars.

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## **NSU Men's Basketball**

### **Wayne State Pulls Away from Northern State in Second Half**

Wayne, Neb. – The Northern State University men's basketball opened their road trip with a loss at Wayne State College. James Glenn and Ethan Russell led the team with 17 points apiece; a career high for Russell.

#### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 61, WSC 84

Records: NSU 1-14 (0-4 NSIC), WSC 9-7 (3-7 NSIC)

Attendance: 385

#### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern tallied 30 points in the first and 31 in the second, while Wayne scored 37 in the first and 47 in the second

They recorded 29 rebounds, eight assists, six steals, and four blocks, shooting 39.1% from the floor, 43.5% from the 3-point line, and 68.2% from the foul line

The Wolves scored 22 points off the bench, 14 points in the paint, and 14 points off turnovers

Russell drained four 3-pointers in the win, leading the Wolves in the contest and off the bench

Glenn added 17 as well, shooting 60.0% from the floor with three rebounds and two assists

Kaleb Mitchell added nine points, as well as a team second best seven rebounds, while Marcus Burks led the team with nine rebounds and four assists

#### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Ethan Russell: 17 points, 45.4 field goal%, 1 assist, 1 block

James Glenn: 17 points, 60.0 field goal%, 3 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 steal

#### UP NEXT

Northern returns to action tomorrow evening at Augustana University. Tip-off is set for 5:30 p.m. against the Vikings from the Elmen Center on the AU campus.



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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

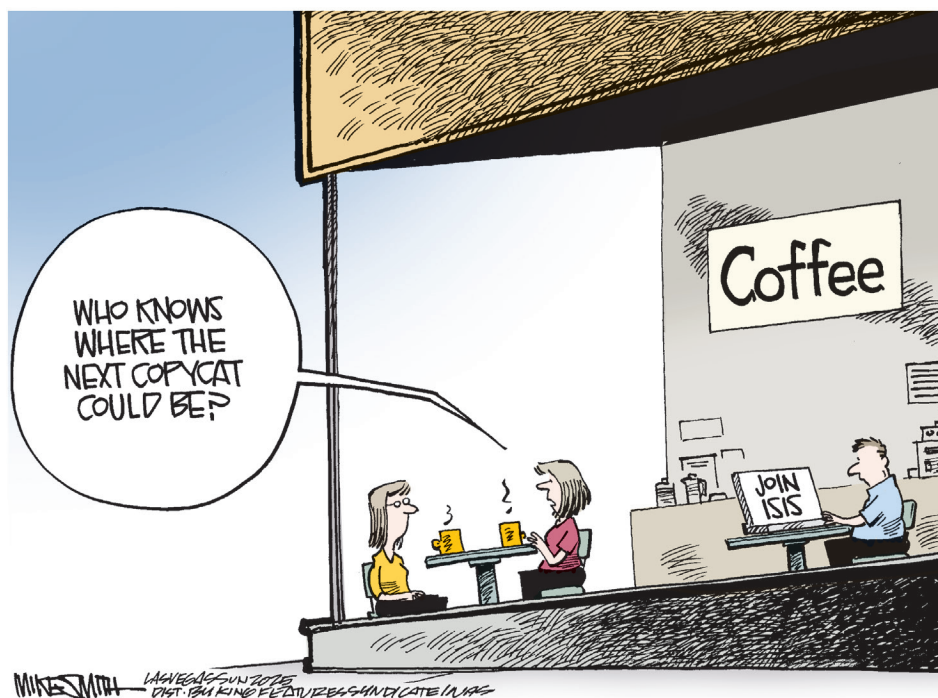
*To his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.*

JUDGES 14: 5,6

*Detail of "Samson Rending the Lion"  
by Albrecht Dürer (1497-98)*



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## BIBLE

## TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Hebrews (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In Matthew 16:23, to whom did Jesus say, "Get thee behind me, Satan"? *Andrew, Rizpah, Elijah, Peter*

3. Who was stoned to death for preaching that Jesus was the Savior? *Stephen, Joel, Asa, Malachi*

4. How many men did Nebuchadnezzar see walking in the fiery furnace? *2, 4, 20, 40*

5. According to Luke 2:4, what village was known as "The City of David"? *Nimrod, Antioch, Bethlehem, Babylon*

6. From the Bible, who could be called "Mr. Patience"? *Naaman, Jairus, Philippi, Job*

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Peter, 3) Stephen, 4) Four, 5) Bethlehem, 6) Job

*Find expanded trivia online with Wilson Casey at [www.patreon.com/triviaguy](http://www.patreon.com/triviaguy). FREE TRIAL!*



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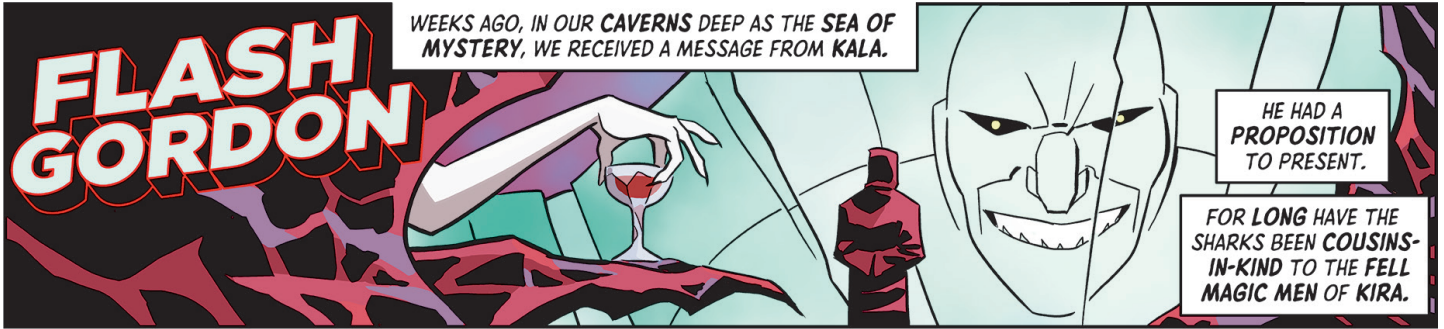
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**FLASH GORDON**

WEEKS AGO, IN OUR CAVERNS DEEP AS THE SEA OF MYSTERY, WE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM KALA.

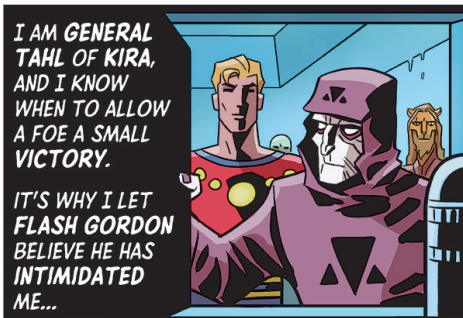
HE HAD A PROPOSITION TO PRESENT.

FOR LONG HAVE THE SHARKS BEEN COUSINS-IN-KIND TO THE FELL MAGIC MEN OF KIRA.



I AM GENERAL TAHL OF KIRA, AND I KNOW WHEN TO ALLOW A FOE A SMALL VICTORY.

IT'S WHY I LET FLASH GORDON BELIEVE HE HAS INTIMIDATED ME...



...INTO REVEALING MY PURPOSE HERE IN SHARK CITY:

TO EXAMINE THE STRANGE CODEX THE SHARK MEN RECOVERED FROM A ROGUE FRIGIAN MISSILE.



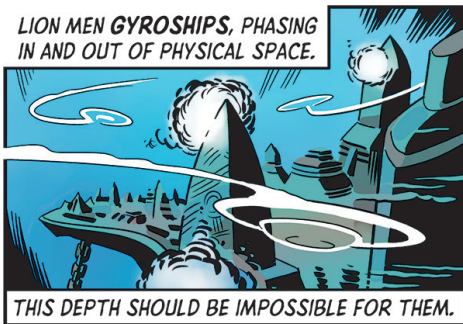
AS THE SHARKS CORNER THE REBELS, THE CITY QUAKES.

IT IS UNDER SEIGE.



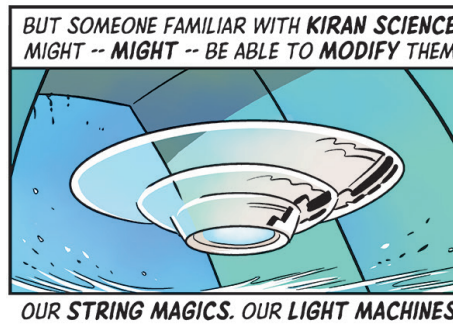
LION MEN GYROSHIPS, PHASING IN AND OUT OF PHYSICAL SPACE.

THIS DEPTH SHOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM.



BUT SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH KIRAN SCIENCE MIGHT -- MIGHT -- BE ABLE TO MODIFY THEM.

OUR STRING MAGICS. OUR LIGHT MACHINES.



SOMEONE LIKE DOCTOR HANS ZARKOV.

DAN SCHKADE 1-12-25

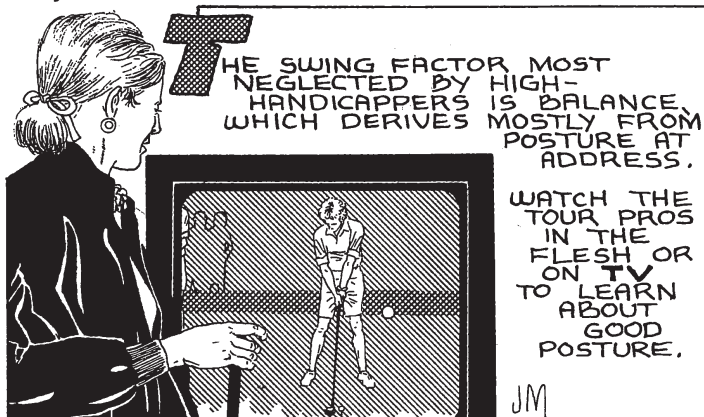
NEXT: DEEP BLUE



## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

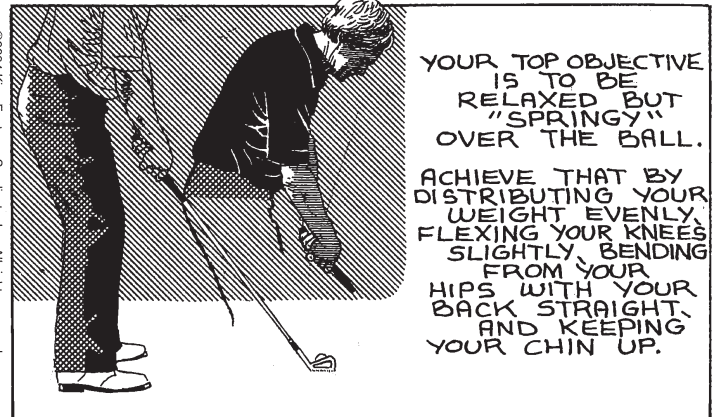
**T**HE SWING FACTOR MOST NEGLECTED BY HIGH-HANDICAPPERS IS BALANCE, WHICH DERIVES MOSTLY FROM POSTURE AT ADDRESS.

WATCH THE TOUR PROS IN THE FLESH OR ON TV TO LEARN ABOUT GOOD POSTURE.



YOUR TOP OBJECTIVE IS TO BE RELAXED BUT "SPRINGY" OVER THE BALL.

ACHIEVE THAT BY DISTRIBUTING YOUR WEIGHT EVENLY, FLEXING YOUR KNEES SLIGHTLY, BENDING FROM YOUR HIPS WITH YOUR BACK STRAIGHT, AND KEEPING YOUR CHIN UP.





## Steroid Injections Provide Amazing Relief From Shingles Pain

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your recent column on shingles. I am 66 and in fairly good health. I had both Shingrix shots about five years ago and take hydroxyurea for polycythemia vera (PV).

Around Aug. 1, I noticed some spots on my forearm that appeared to be a spider bite. I went to my family doctor, and she immediately diagnosed me with shingles and put me on gabapentin, which didn't help much. The next month was complete misery.

I never really had itching or an extensive rash, but intense pain and burning developed from the top of my neck down to my left thumb and forefinger. My wife read that hydroxyurea lowers your immune system,

which is probably why I had such a bad case of shingles despite the Shingrix shots.

My cousin is a retired anesthesiologist and recommended an epidural steroid injection (ESI) that would help me immediately. I had the injection, and within 24 hours, I had an 80% improvement in my pain level. Over the next month, the pain decreased another 10% to 15%. I went from being almost incapacitated to being able to live again in 24 hours. The outcome was life-changing!

It seems that doctors need to be brought up to date on ESIs for shingles. I understand that the studies are inconclusive, but the on-the-ground results seem to show that it is effective. The pain from shingles has to be experienced to really understand how debilitating it can be. ESIs are fairly inexpensive, and even if they only helped slightly, they would be worth the cost. To have the improvement I found is priceless.

-- Anon.

ANSWER: I often recommend the vaccine to prevent shingles, but as your case shows, the vaccine isn't perfect. I agree that your PV and its treatment with hydroxyurea may have predisposed you to the complication of shingles you had, called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). You are quite right that the pain can be extraordinarily severe.

I am glad you wrote because steroid injections are not a treatment that I have written about before. As you say, not all trials found a benefit, but the largest trial found that intrathecal injections (which are similar to epidural injections but are found to be more effective in a small trial) led to excellent or good pain relief in 90% of people with intractable PHN, compared to 4% in people who didn't receive treatment.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a healthy 50-year-old man. When I was at the pharmacy recently, they said I could get a vaccine for pneumonia. Is this something I should do? -- S.I.

ANSWER: The pneumonia vaccine at age 50 is a new recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The risk for developing severe pneumonia from the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae* starts to increase at age 50 and becomes much higher after 65. The new vaccines (PCV20 and PCV21 under the brand name Prevnar) have long-lasting protection for many strains of this bacterial species.

If you haven't had this vaccine and are over 50, you should consider it during your next visit. (It's OK to get the vaccine at the same time as the flu or COVID vaccines.)

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

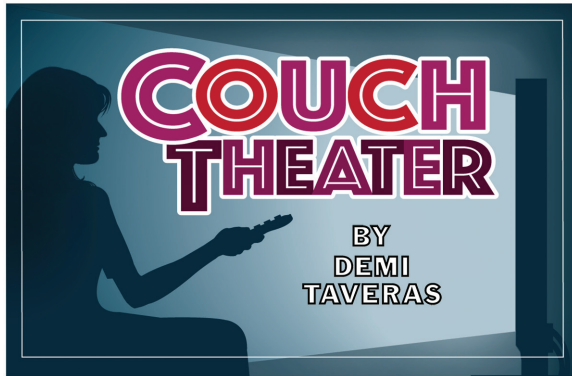
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**From left, Sebastian Stan, Renate Reinsve and Adam Pearson star in "A Different Man."** (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB )

"Back in Action" (PG-13) -- Who's been missing 2000s movie darling Cameron Diaz ("Gangs of New York," "Charlie's Angels")? This action-comedy film premiering Jan. 17 marks her first film in nine years, and she's starring alongside her former "Annie" co-star Jamie Foxx ("Not Another Church

Movie"). They play former CIA spies, Emily and Matt, who have been enjoying married life with their two children when their secret identities are suddenly revealed. They get thrown back into the chaotic world of espionage and pray that muscle memory carries them through their missions. While it's great to see Diaz literally back in action, this film is overly reminiscent of hundreds of other action films that streaming services continue to tout out every month. (Looking at you, "The Fall Guy.") (Netflix)

"Unstoppable" (PG-13) -- Someone who hasn't been missed but could be hoping for a better year is Jennifer Lopez. In this heartwarming film, she takes on a supporting role to Jharrel Jerome's ("I'm a Virgo") leading role as real-life wrestler Anthony Robles. Robles was born without a right leg and grew up with his single mother, Judy (Lopez), in Mesa, Arizona. But his tumultuous upbringing creates a strong fighting spirit within him, and amid his difficulties, he joins his school's wrestling team and becomes an unstoppable force to reckon with. Michael Pena ("Narcos: Mexico"), Bobby Cannavale ("MaXXXine"), and Don Cheadle ("Fight Night: The Million Dollar Heist") co-star in this biographical sports film, out on Jan. 16. (Amazon Prime Video)

"A Different Man" (R) -- This psychological black-comedy film helped Sebastian Stan ("The Apprentice") bring home a Golden Globe recently for his performance as Edward Lemuel, an aspiring actor with the condition neurofibromatosis that disfigures his face. When given the opportunity, Edward jumps at the chance to cure his condition and assumes a completely new identity, named Guy, to match his new face. Shortly after, Guy learns that a play is being developed based on his old life and, thinking he's perfect for the role, auditions for it. But he gets overshadowed by another actor, Oswald (Adam Pearson), who has accepted his own neurofibromatosis diagnosis, causing Guy to realize that the only thing he was lacking in the first place was acceptance of himself. Premieres Jan. 17. (Max)

In Case You Missed It

"Tar" (R) -- Over her three decades of working as an actress, Cate Blanchett ("Borderlands") has undoubtedly built a respectable repertoire of work. This includes this psychological-drama film, where Blanchett takes center stage as conductor Lydia Tar. Taking place in Berlin, the film follows Lydia as she prepares her orchestra for a live recording of "Mahler's Fifth Symphony." Unfiltered, unbothered and unapologetic, Lydia draws in her fellow musicians with her one-of-a-kind talent and expertise but also pushes them away with her tough, no-nonsense exterior, which makes her sudden fall from stardom very intriguing. Blanchett won the Golden Globe in 2023 for her performance as Lydia. Available now. (Hulu)

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1. Which 1984 film featured "The Heat Is On"?
2. Name the only James Bond film theme song to ever top the charts.
3. Which Helen Reddy song is about a young girl who lives her life listening to the radio and creating imaginary lovers?
4. Name the artists who were killed in the Iowa plane crash in 1959.
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I realize the best part of love is the thinnest slice, And it don't count for much, but I'm not letting go."

Answers

1. "Beverly Hills Cop." The song was later used as a theme song for the Miami Heat basketball team in 1988.
2. "A View to a Kill," by Duran Duran in 1985. The song was later nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song. It lost out to Lionel Richie's "Say You, Say Me" for "White Nights."
3. "Angie Baby," in 1974. The strange storyline of the song has left many wondering what really happened to her "secret lover."
4. Buddy Holly, "The Big Bopper" (J.P. Richardson) and Ritchie Valens.
5. "Lost in Love," by Air Supply in 1979. The song has been used in the film "Private Lessons" and in a "Family Guy" episode.

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## GRIN *and* BEAR IT <sup>Wagner</sup>



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## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps

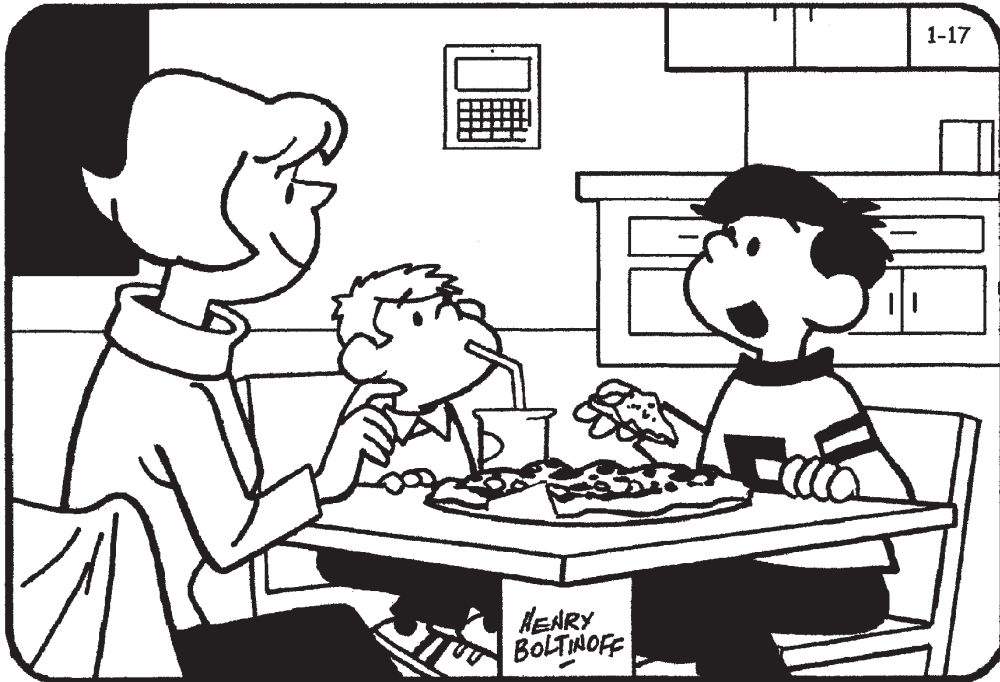


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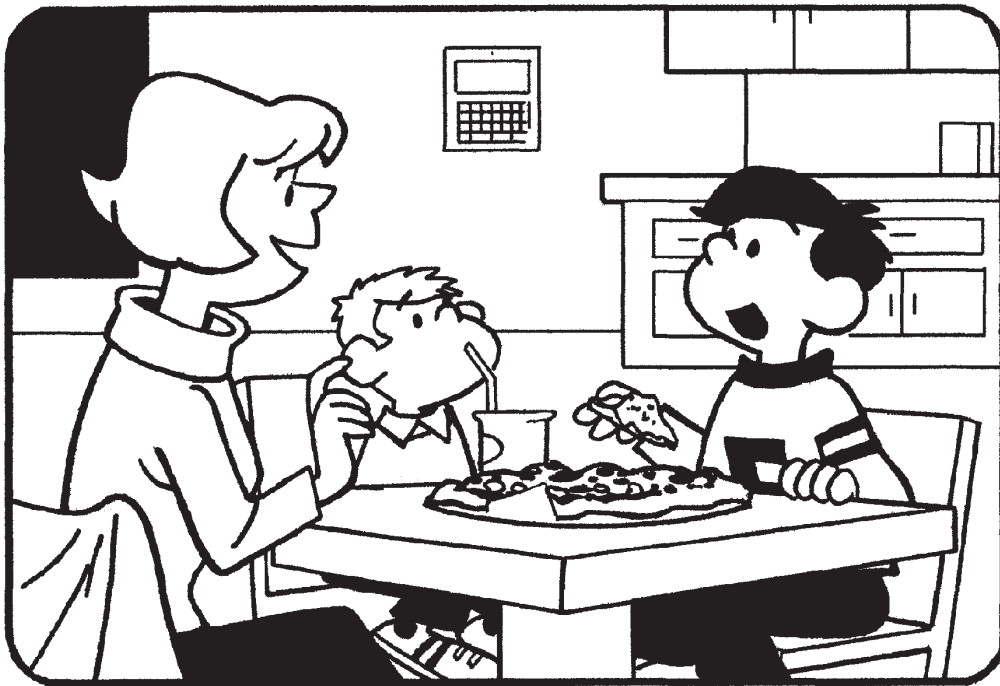
"What's this about you refusing to be released into my custody?"

## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Fingers are not showing. 2. Counter is not as wide. 3. Hand is moved. 4. Mouth is open. 5. Straw is different. 6. Table is thicker.



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\* If you're expecting your first child, heed this bit of advice: Assemble and otherwise try out complicated items right away, while you have the time to learn how to work them. New dad Dan had a heck of a time trying to load bags into his brand-new Diaper Genie in the middle of the night.

\* Bloodstains on clothing can be really tough to treat. The best way to get a bloodstain out of clothing is by dousing the stain with hydrogen peroxide and washing immediately as usual.

\* "I love to refinish and paint furniture pieces and woodcrafts. I always check my local recycling center for small amounts of "recycled" paint. Usually, someone has gotten rid of good paint, and the people at the recycling center are happy to have it used." -- B.B. in Virginia

\* Toothpaste works well as a silver polish. Wet your silver, plop a little non-gel toothpaste on it and rub gently with a damp, clean rag. Rinse well with a separate rag, and buff dry. Then just step back and let it shine.

\* If you've ever oversalted soup, don't worry; here's a great tip to recover your meal. Just cut a single potato into several large slices. Add them to the soup, and they will soak up the extra salt. Remove before serving.

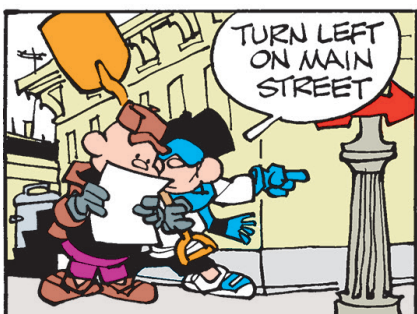
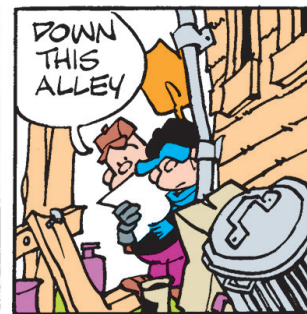
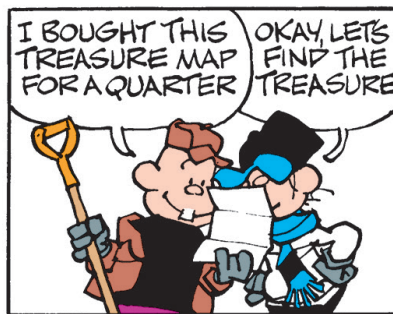
\* S.W. of South Carolina has this tip to share: "If you can't seem to keep track of your keys, make an extra set for those mornings when you are running late and can't spare the time to look for them. It has saved me a lot of stress, for sure."

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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## TIGER

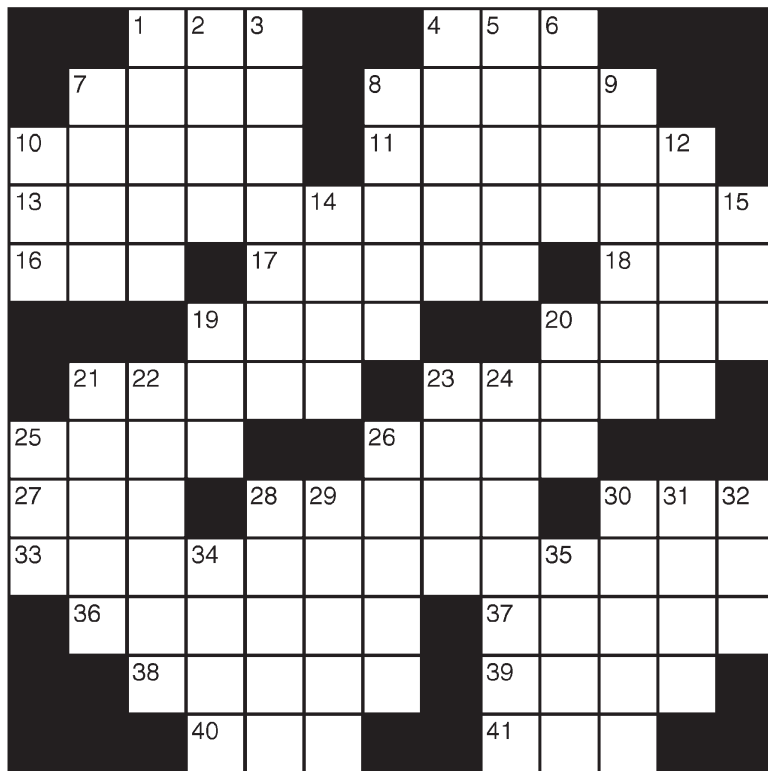
by BUD BLAKE



## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Kitten's cry
- 4 Bit of advice
- 7 Prop for Sherlock
- 8 Vice President Burr
- 10 Ancient Greek region
- 11 Future ferns
- 13 Mental agility
- 16 Rds.
- 17 Pitches
- 18 Stickum
- 19 Unpaid TV ads
- 20 Close
- 21 Revue segments
- 23 Lover's meeting



- 25 Smack a baseball
  - 26 1982 sci-fi film
  - 27 Signing need
  - 28 "— of One's Own"
  - 30 1959 Kingston Trio hit
  - 33 Burger King, for one
  - 36 Kilt pattern
  - 37 Lubricated
  - 38 Canary snacks
  - 39 Hosp. scans
  - 40 Triage ctrs.
  - 41 Salty expanse
- DOWN**
- 1 Short skirts
  - 2 Grand tale
  - 3 Least strong
  - 4 Piglike mammal
  - 5 Golf clubs
  - 6 Beans go-with
  - 7 Sulk
  - 8 Campfire leftovers
  - 9 Stallion sounds
  - 10 Mensa stats
  - 12 Animal's nose
  - 14 "Jabberwocky" starter
  - 15 Inherited
  - 19 Peach center
  - 20 Wd. from Roget
  - 21 Hard work
  - 22 Sunflower State
  - 23 Walked (on)
  - 24 Date movies, for short
  - 25 Beach lotion letters
  - 26 Animated figures
  - 28 Pursuing
  - 29 Highways
  - 30 Sasha's sister
  - 31 Alliances
  - 32 Moreover
  - 34 Sloth's home
  - 35 Employ

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## — King Crossword —

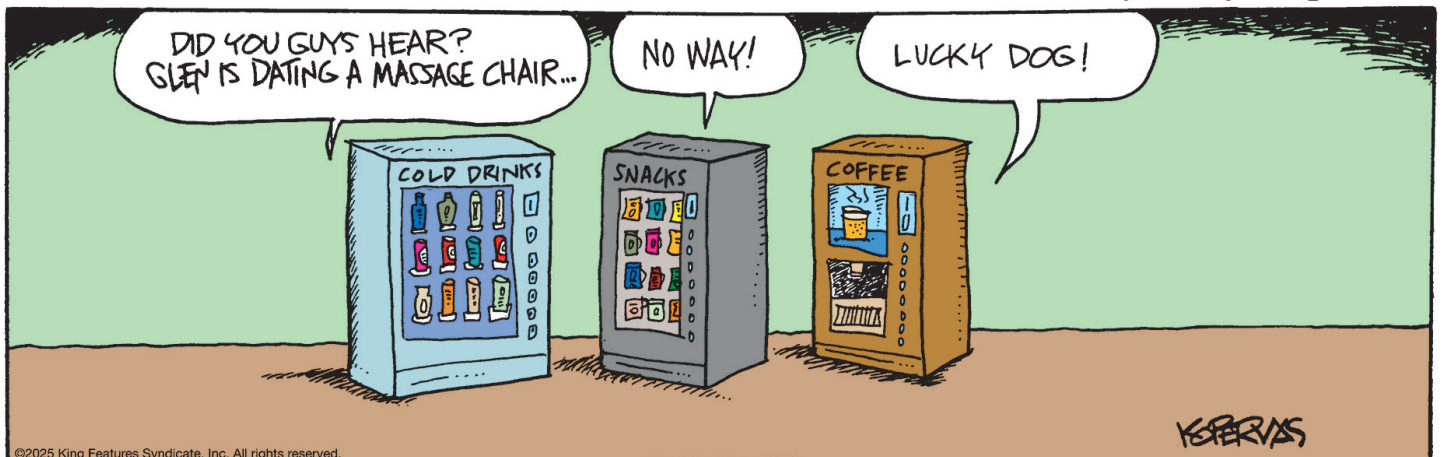
Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.



Out on a Limb

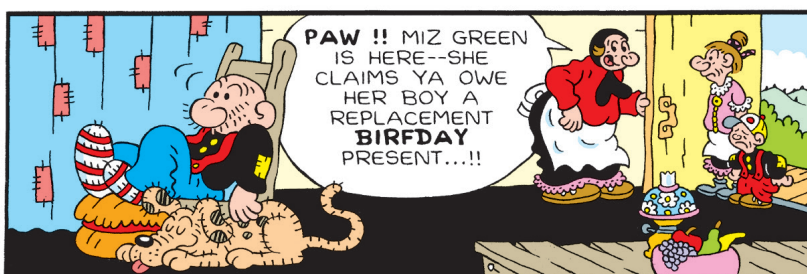
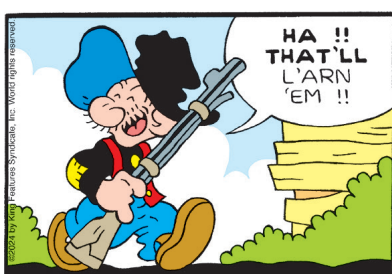
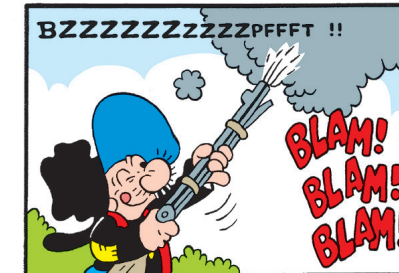
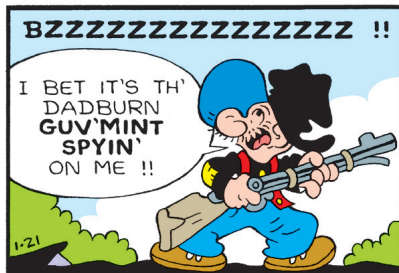
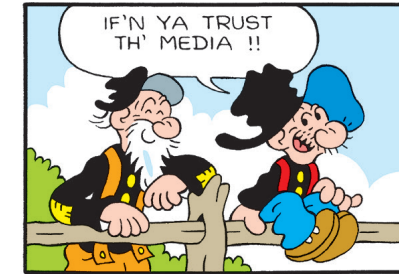
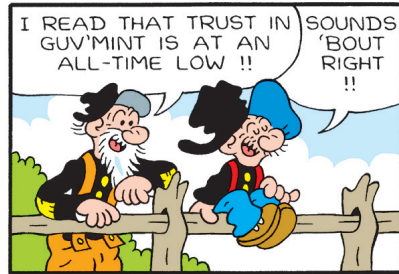
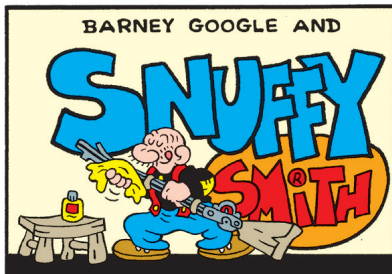
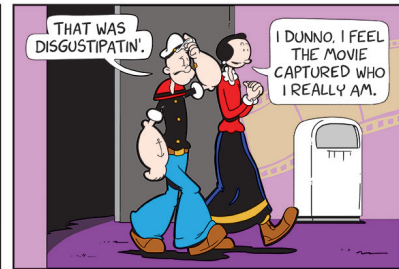
by Gary Kopervas





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Hal Foster's  
**Prince Valiant**  
 BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

GUNDAR HARLS SHIPS HAVE MADE IMPRESSIVE TIME ROUNDING THE BULK OF IBERIA- ALL ARE NOW AWESTRUCK AS THEY TURN EAST INTO ANOTHER WORLD...

...ONE DESPERATELY MISSED BY THOSE BORN TO SOUTHERN WATERS AND TEMPERATE CLIMES. ALETA'S AND BUKOTA'S HEARTS LEAP AS THEY FEEL THEIR HOMES DRAW NEAR.

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FOR THEY ARE PASSING THROUGH THE MASSIVE PILLARS OF HERCULES- HARD BY MONS CALPE TO THEIR NORTH, AND ITS TWIN MONS COLUMNNA IN THE DISTANT SOUTH - LEAVING THE COLD ATLANTIC BEHIND FOR THE LANGUID MEDITERRANEAN.

THIS, TO VAL, IS THE SEA OF MYTHS- ONCE A ROMAN "LAKE," NOW A THOROUGHFARE FOR BYZANTIUM, BUT ALWAYS BELONGING TO THE HEROIC SPIRIT OF ANCIENT GREECE.

YEATES NEXT: Enchanted 4006

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

I'M ADDICTED TO SEAWEED!!

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MAYBE YOU SHOULD SEEK KELP?

# Groton Daily Independent

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## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Guard yourself against AI tricks

The year is off to a roaring start when it comes to scams. To hear the experts tell it, we have AI to thank for a lot of it. AI, or artificial intelligence, is enhancing some of the scams that were already out there and creating more as the technology increases.

Our goal: to get through 2025 without losing a single dollar to the crooks.

Last month the FBI put out an alert focusing on scams created by artificial intelligence and ways to protect ourselves.

AI-generated text creates fake social media profiles, emails, websites and texts that push financial frauds like investment and romance schemes to trick us into sending money or disclosing personal information.

AI-generated pictures can include fake driver's licenses or credentials for fake law enforcement. As an indication of how low they'll go, AI can even create fake pictures of natural disasters that tug at our heartstrings and convince us to open our wallets and send money.

AI-generated audio can impersonate public figures or our loved ones and, again, the purpose is to make us believe something ... and open our wallets.

It's the same with AI-generated videos: to make us believe something is real when it isn't.

No. 1 on the FBI's list of ways to protect ourselves is to have a secret word or phrase with family so we can verify our identity.

As always, if you're suspicious about a call you receive, hang up.

Don't send anyone you don't know any cash or gift cards. Don't post your photos online. If they're online now, take them down.

As a start in staying safe from AI, search online for "how to spot AI text" so you can learn to recognize it. Then look for images and audio. Get up to speed on the different ways AI can fool you. Sadly, we need to be wary at all times now.

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1. What driver won his third career NASCAR Cup Series season title with a victory in the 2024 championship race at Phoenix Raceway?

2. Nicknamed "King Fish," what 1993 American League Rookie of the Year played his entire Major League Baseball career with the Angels organization from 1992-2006?

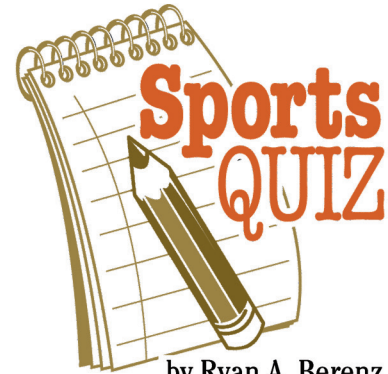
3. A new world record for women's sports attendance was set in August 2023 when a crowd of 92,003 filled Nebraska's Memorial Stadium to watch what event?

4. At what athletic and cultural festival do participants perform feats of strength like the caber toss, keg toss, sheaf toss and stone put?

5. Name the two teams who compete in the "Farmageddon" college football rivalry game.

6. What American figure skater, who won three straight pairs U.S. championships from 1970-72, was married to Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw from 1976-83?

7. What women's professional three-on-three basketball league, founded in 2023, includes teams Laces BC, Lunar Owls BC, Mist BC and Vinyl BC?



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. Joey Logano.

2. Tim Salmon.

3. Nebraska vs. Omaha in an NCAA women's volleyball match.

4. Scottish Highland games.

5. The Iowa State Cyclones and Kansas State Wildcats.

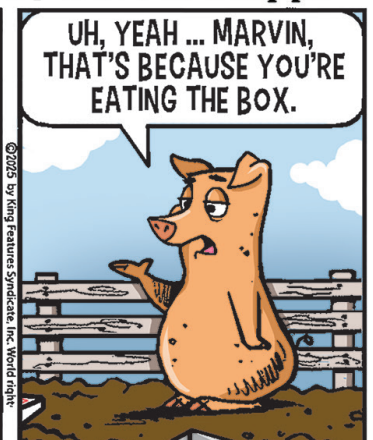
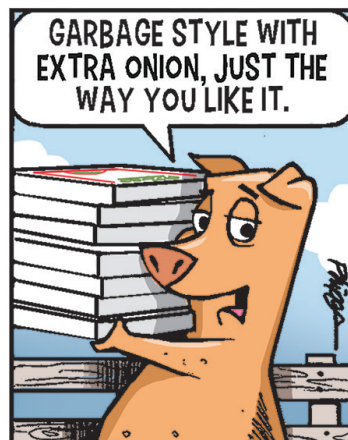
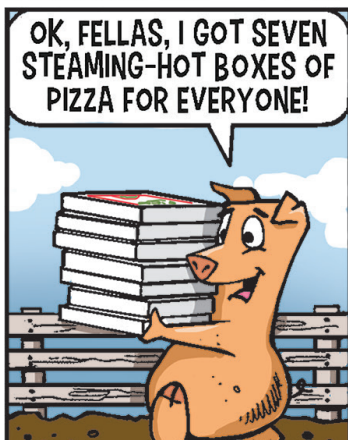
6. JoJo Starbuck.

7. Unrivaled.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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## New Year, New Cat



DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My parents at Christmas said I'm finally old enough to have a kitten! We are going to the local Humane Society this weekend to adopt one. What suggestions do you have so that I train the kitten right? -- William in Manassas, Virginia

DEAR WILLIAM: Grab a book on cat care at the local bookstore or library and read it cover to cover. While cats are considered to be easier to care for than dogs, they still need to be properly house-trained and given a routine (which helps immensely with reducing anxiety-related behaviors, too).

I'm sure you've already stocked up on kitten food, though it's a good idea not to buy too much to begin

with. You'll want to try a few different brands and types of food -- dry, wet or fresh -- to see what the kitten likes and how well he responds to each.

When you pick up your new kitten, talk to the shelter staff to learn about any particular behaviors the kitten has, any health issues that need monitoring, and any advice they have for getting him or her settled in. Cats being prepared for adoption are sometimes fostered out to make sure they can live easily with humans and to observe them for any health or behavioral issues that need to be ironed out before they're ready to go to a forever family. The shelter will have that information for you so that there are no surprises (like territorial peeing).

Congratulations, and best of luck! Sounds like you will soon have a new friend in the household.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

\* In Switzerland, it is illegal to mow a front lawn while dressed as Elvis Presley.

\* Have a yen for learning about things that go bump in the night? You can get a Ph.D in parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh.

\* Red Bull energy drink was originally called Red Water Buffalo.

\* There was a Russian game show that would have you steal a car, and if you didn't get caught by the police within

35 minutes, you'd win the car. Otherwise, you would be arrested.

\* Benjamin Franklin invented a mechanical arm for reaching books on high shelves.

\* When English Romantic poet William Blake was only 4 years old he claimed to see God through a window. Throughout the rest of his life, Blake said he often communed with angels, and he incorporated these visions into his art.

\* Sulfhemoglobinemia is a condition that causes a person to develop green blood.

\* Translated literally, the Japanese words for wrist and ankle are "hand neck" and "foot neck."

\* In 2015, two brothers from Spain attempted to sell a fake portrait by Francisco de Goya to a sheikh for a cool 1.5 million euros, only to discover that he'd paid them in photocopied money. The pair were arrested when they tried to deposit their ill-gotten gains in a Geneva bank.

\* A study done by the University of Glasgow found that dogs appear to prefer reggae and soft rock over other genres of music.

\* The first mention of the word "pizza" was in a Latin text written in southern Italy in 997 CE.

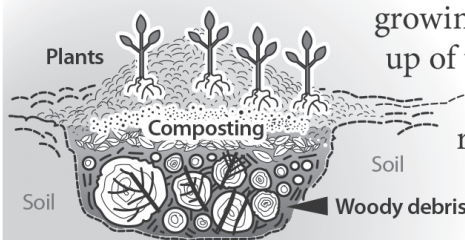
\* The eponymous character in Dolly Parton's hit song "Jolene" was based on a bank teller who flirted mercilessly with Dolly's husband.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "It ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to." -- W.C. Fields

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## The Garden Bug



**Hugelkultur** is a traditional European gardening practice whereby fallen branches, logs and other woody debris are put into a pit, covered with compost, and then with a growing medium into which a garden is planted. The buried wood acts like a sponge for moisture as it decays, and also provides nutrients for the soil, which are tapped into by the growing plants. The vertical building up of the pile maximizes space. This method dramatically reduces the need for irrigation.

— Brenda Weaver

Source: <https://www.almanac.com/what-hugelkultur-ultimate-raised-bed>





by Freddy Groves

## When the Punishment Does Not Fit the Crime

I had to read the sentence three times before I understood that it really did say what I thought it did: A Department of Veterans Affairs nurse stole pain drugs from dying patients and got a slap on the wrist.

The name was familiar, and I realized that yes, I'd written about this nurse earlier this year when she pleaded guilty to diverting the drugs. I said at the time that the maximum possible sentence of four years was way too short for the crimes.

Specifically, this nurse would take the pain drugs intended for patients in intensive care and only give a partial dose. She would take the rest of the dose herself and falsify the medical records. She did this to one patient alone 19 times in nine days. She even volunteered to care for a certain patient so she could steal his drugs.

The three drugs in question were hydromorphone (which is two to eight times stronger than morphine), fentanyl (which is 50-100 times more potent than morphine and heroin) and oxycodone -- all high-power medications for serious pain. Can you imagine being the patient who needed the pain relief and didn't get it?

As someone who once had surgery that required morphine afterward for pain control, I can't imagine the horror of experiencing pain and not getting relief from medication that your doctor has ordered ... because the nurse is stealing it.

And I said at the time, four possible years in prison for these crimes would not be enough.

But now she's finally been sentenced, and what did she get for punishment? Two years of probation. And that's what I had to read three times, because surely it didn't really say that -- except it did. And of that two years, the first six months will be home confinement.

I wish someone would explain to me how hanging out at home for a few months and then being on probation is anywhere near the right punishment for these crimes.

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## Wishing Well®

2	6	5	3	7	8	7	8	5	7	6	5	3
L	A	D	A	J	I	O	M	O	Y	P	Y	D
8	4	6	2	6	7	3	2	5	4	8	4	8
P	C	P	O	L	F	O	O	O	L	O	E	R
5	2	7	8	5	6	7	8	5	7	5	7	6
U	K	R	T	R	Y	O	A	V	M	E	H	W
4	8	6	5	2	3	5	2	8	4	2	3	8
A	N	I	R	T	O	Y	O	T	R	T	R	M
7	4	7	5	6	2	7	8	6	3	2	7	4
U	T	M	B	L	H	O	A	L	O	E	R	H
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P	I	E	P	I	F	N	E	K	O	L	U	N
5	3	2	4	6	5	6	4	6	2	4	2	2
S	S	T	I	W	T	E	N	R	U	G	R	E

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the smallest continent by area?
2. MOVIES: What is Deadpool's real name in the movie series?
3. MEASUREMENTS: How many ounces are in 1 gallon?
4. TELEVISION: What is the name of the character that Jason Bateman plays in "Ozark"?
5. FOOD & DRINK: What is the dimple at the bottom of a wine bottle called?
6. U.S. CITIES: Which city also is known as Motown?
7. LITERATURE: The movie "Bridget Jones Diary" is loosely based on which novel?
8. ANIMAL KINGDOM: Which is the only big cat that doesn't roar?
9. MEDICAL: What is a common name for fasciculation?
10. LANGUAGE: What does the Latin term "magnum opus" mean?

### Answers

1. Australia (Oceania).
2. Wade Wilson.
3. 128.
4. Marty Byrde.
5. Punt.
6. Detroit, Michigan.
7. "Pride and Prejudice."
8. The cheetah.
9. Muscle twitch.
10. "Great work."

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

## **Education Savings Accounts: Empowering Parents, Enhancing Education By: Dr. Joseph Graves**

In her 2024 Budget Address, Governor Noem announced an educational innovation for the parents and students of South Dakota: Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs). She explained that this investment would pay for a portion of private school tuition or curriculum for alternative education for South Dakota kids. And this endeavor has my full support.

Now, I spent 38 years, well over half my life, working in public schools. I love what they do for the children of our state and nation. And South Dakota has some excellent public schools. All four of my children graduated from the Mitchell School District after receiving an education that allowed them to succeed anywhere. Which they promptly did.

So, if all that is true, why am I supporting the ESA bill? After all, some public-school advocates have boisterously voiced their objection to this concept.

First, we must empower families in their decision-making on the education of their children. For ages, educators have known that the number one factor in a child's academic success is the active involvement of their parents. That needs to begin with the selection of their preferred school option. For a myriad of reasons, some parents view the default option, public school, as less than appealing. They want a different opportunity for their child, and they should have options.

Second, such school options should be available to all parents, regardless of ability to pay. If your immediate response is that such options already exist – private schools and homeschooling – you are correct. But they only exist for some parents: parents who have enough money to pay private school tuition or have one parent leave the workforce in order to teach at the family homeschool. Some parents don't have that ability. They struggle to pay the mortgage and put food on the table. Tuition will put their family budget in the red, as will going from two breadwinners to one. Education can be expensive, but that shouldn't mean that those without should be left with just one option.

Third, South Dakota has educational deserts, and we need to fix that. Nobody likes to talk about it, but we have parts of our state where literally 0% of students read at grade level. Most people don't concern themselves with that reality because it doesn't affect their children. But that is the sort of neglect no society should tolerate. ESAs will make academic achievement possible by providing more opportunities for their students.

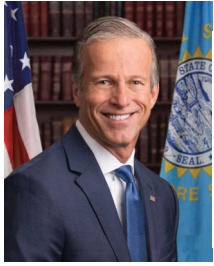
Finally, we need to provide greater competition within the educational marketplace. In every field of human endeavor, performance improves with greater levels of competition. In this way, ESAs will benefit public schools, as well. Let's unleash that powerful force for improvement on all schools.

The program is straightforward. Parents of eligible students who apply would receive access to an ESA, amounting to 40% of the allocation provided to public schools for each of their students, or about \$3,000. Parents could use the funds to pay tuition for private schools, microschools (programs in which homeschooled students gather for instruction), virtual school courses, and various materials for alternative instruction. They could also use the funds to purchase curriculum, instructional materials, and some limited technology to support their education.

The education status quo is simply not good enough. Improving it requires something new. Decades of new educational programs and increased spending have not done the trick, unless the trick is increasing taxes and ballooning federal budgets. On behalf of children and parents who currently feel left without viable options, I absolutely support ESAs.

*Dr. Joseph Graves is the Cabinet Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Education.*





**JOHN THUNE**  
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

## A Tribute to Coach Jerry Applebee

I was saddened to learn of legendary Murdo coach Jerry Applebee's passing earlier this month. As he was for many people in the Murdo community, Coach Applebee was a formative figure in my life. He was my basketball and track coach, and he set an example for us athletes of hard work, determination, and sportsmanship.

The man we called Coach App leaves a proud legacy, which includes the annual Jones County Invitational basketball tournament that he and my dad started in 1969. I have fond memories of playing in that tournament, and I still love attending it. I know he'll be looking down as the teams take the court for this year's tournament – a court that is named in his honor.

Among the memories I have of Coach Applebee, a lot of them are on that court. You could never miss his loud voice bouncing off the ceiling in that auditorium. The stands could be full, the game at full throttle, but you could be sure that when Jones County was playing a basketball game, you could hear Coach Applebee's raspy, strong, and resonant voice anywhere in the gymnasium.

That was as true in track and field. If our dirt track was too wet, we might run to the local airport and do our workouts on the runway. He would stand at one end; the runners would stand on the other a half mile away – even then you could hear him. When we ran the state track meet at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls, you could hear his voice up in the crowd telling you to do better and run harder.

One of my clearest memories of Coach Applebee happened during my senior year. We were playing in the district championship basketball game with a chance to make the playoffs and maybe go to the state tournament, every Murdo kid's dream. We were playing our rival Lyman County, and it was a back-and-forth game. We were down one point with five seconds to go, so Coach App called a play. My teammate inbounded the ball, one set a screen for me on the baseline, I fired off a shot, and it bounced off the back of the rim. We lost the game.

After the game, I was devastated. I had lost my last opportunity to play in the state basketball tournament. I felt like I had let myself and my teammates down. As I was sitting in the locker room by myself, Coach Applebee came in and tapped me on the shoulder. He said, "John, it's time to get on the bus. And by the way, track starts next week." Track wasn't my favorite sport, but he was sending an important message, which is: You gave it your best shot, you gave it everything you had, there's always another sport, there's another day, and you're going to get another opportunity down the road.

I'm going to miss seeing Coach Applebee on my visits to Murdo, and I remain deeply grateful for everything he taught me.

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## Protect and Strengthen America

### **BIG Update**

On Monday, January 6, I attended the Joint Session to count electoral votes of the 2024 election, confirming that President Donald Trump won the election. With less than two weeks until the inauguration, I'm looking forward to having a president in the White House who will help secure the border, cut spending, get tough on China, and make government more efficient.

### **BIG Idea**

In February 2024, Laken Riley, a University of Georgia nursing student, was brutally murdered by a Venezuelan illegal immigrant while she was on a jog. The suspected murderer had been arrested and released multiple times in the years prior. This murder should have never happened.

This week, the House passed the Laken Riley Act, with bipartisan support, to protect our communities. The bill would require Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to take custody of illegal aliens who are convicted or admitted to committing burglary, theft, larceny, or shoplifting. We have to keep our streets safe so tragic events like Riley's murder don't happen again.

### **BIG News**

I introduced a bill to allow President Trump to re-purchase the Panama Canal. Some think this is a crazy idea, but it is one of many excellent strategic options to safeguard North America from China.

In recent years, China has increased its presence in the Panama Canal. Not only does China have managing rights for the two ports on both sides of the canal, but they have also established Chinese companies on the land adjacent to the canal. U.S. leaders are concerned that such infrastructure presence from China could pose a security vulnerability, as ninety percent of military cargo travels by commercial ships. Further, any blockades in the canal would force ocean shippers to travel an additional 8,000 miles around South America. Any disruption in the canal would have devastating consequences for America's national, economic, and food security, and not to mention cause significant delays, higher shipping costs, and increased prices for goods.

America must project strength abroad – owning and operating the Panama Canal might be an important step towards a stronger America and a more secure globe.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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## Ugly is as Ugly Sees

I was drinking a cup of coffee in the middle of the shopping mall. I don't like going to shopping malls, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sent me to get a new dress shirt for Sundays.

I told her I could wear the same one I wore last year, but she has different ideas about the dress code.

I was drinking coffee to settle my nerves and then pick up a dress shirt for the year. I don't know why I need one every year because they all look the same to me, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage supervises my dress code.

While enjoying my coffee for a moment, I watched people as they walked by. It took me a while, but I began noticing the people walking by me.

One person was walking toward me, and I almost fainted. I have seen ugly people before, but this one baked the cake. Maybe it was my glasses, but I had never seen anybody as ugly as that before. Of course, I try not to look in my bathroom mirror.

Then, another person was coming my way who looked as ugly as the first person I saw. I begin to see ugly people all over the place. I didn't know if I died and was transported to some planet or something but a lot of ugly people surrounded me.

I will admit that among these ugly people were some very nice-looking people, but there were not quite as many as I would have liked to see.

An older woman walked by very slowly, and I saw her face. From what I could tell, 50 years ago she had a complete facelift. I'm sure it looked okay at the time, but over the years, that beautiful face developed into a very ugly, wrinkly one.

I will never know why people have facelifts, tummy tucks, and all that kind of plastic stuff. When somebody young gets a facelift, they don't realize that if they live for the next 50 years, they're going to look very bad. A facelift is not forever.

I read about a woman going for a complete makeover. I don't know what they call it, but it was going to cost her over \$150,000. If I had \$150,000, I would not put it on my face!

Why are people so obsessed with how they look? Why are looks so important to most people?

I thought about that as I sat there drinking my coffee, wondering how my life would change if I got a facelift, a tummy tuck, or whatever else they do.

The longer I sat there, the uglier people were as they walked by. But I got to thinking—maybe they were looking at me and thinking I was the ugliest person they'd seen all day. At that moment, whenever anybody walked by and looked at me, I smiled—just in case.



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When I got home that night, I hung up my new shirt and went into the living room, where The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was setting.

"Did you get the dress shirt I sent you to get?" She said very sarcastically.

"I did," I said with a smile.

Then I sat down, looked at her, and said, "Do you think I should go and get a facelift? And if so, where do you recommend I ought to go?"

As soon as she calmed down from laughing, she said, "The recommendation I would give you is that antique store just around the block." Then she laughed some more.

I was quiet for a moment, and then heard her say, "Is anything wrong with the mirror in your bathroom? Maybe you need to get a new mirror."

Around our living room are pictures of our children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. Looking at them, I responded, "Aren't those children cute? They look so lovely, don't they?"

Of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was on my side with that and agreed that our grandkids were all very cute.

I then got serious and asked her, "What if some of them grow up to be as ugly as me?"

I heard a loud gasp from her side of the room, and when it quieted down, she said, "That's not possible!"

I then went to my computer, where I had a bunch of photographs. I pulled up one and showed it to her. "What do you think of that picture?"

She looked at it and said, "That's a very cute young boy."

"That picture is of me when I was young. Now look at me."

I brought up another cute picture and showed it to her. "Do you know who this is?"

She smiled and said, "That's a picture of me when I was young."

"I wonder," I said sarcastically, "if ugly runs only in my family."

All I heard from her side of the room was snickering, and I wasn't going to ask any more questions.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

My heart is more important than my face.

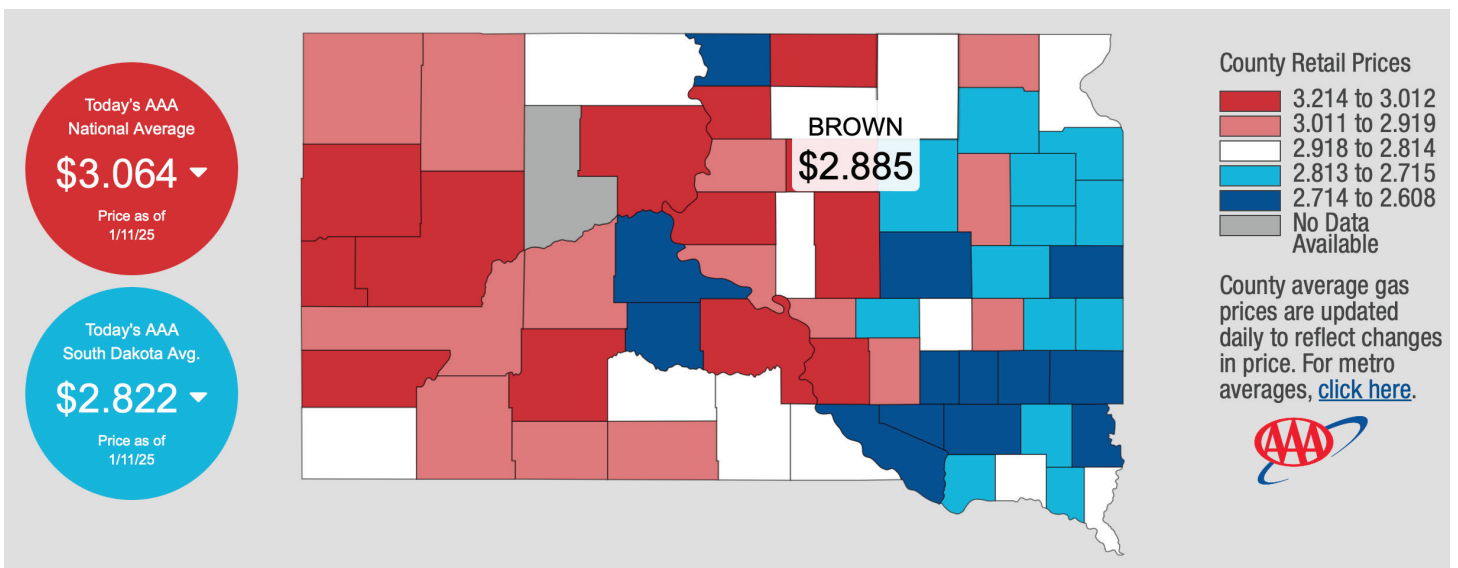
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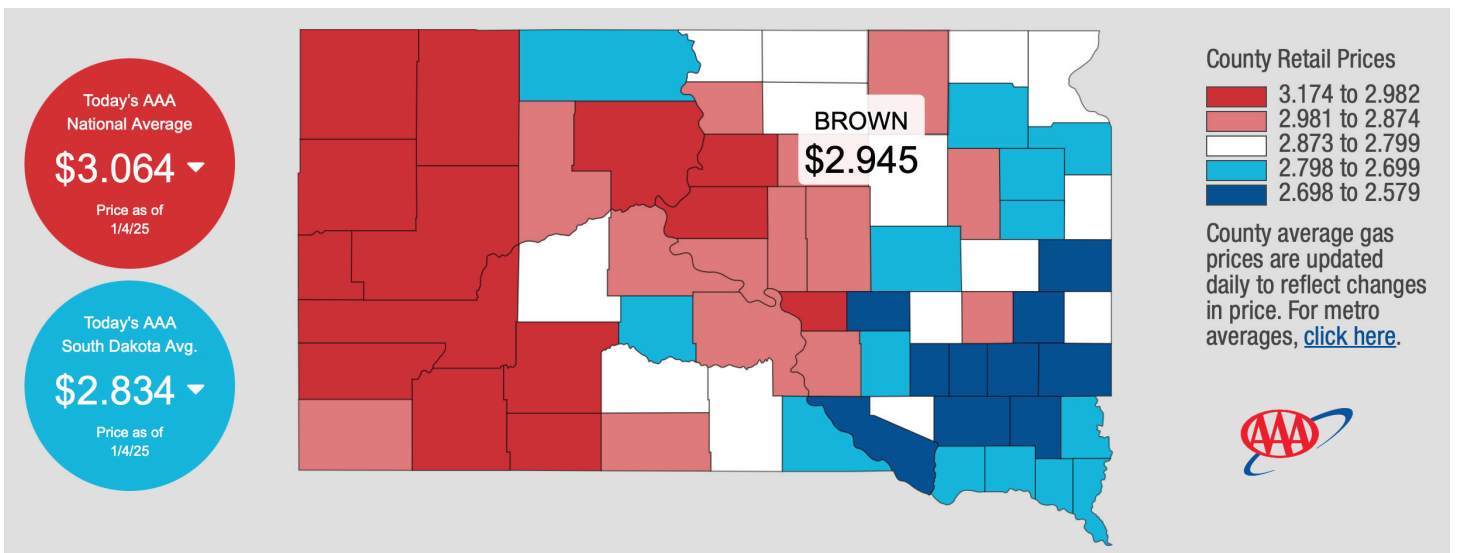
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.822	\$3.045	\$3.458	\$3.289
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.825	\$3.049	\$3.453	\$3.279
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.834	\$3.042	\$3.478	\$3.261
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.818	\$3.036	\$3.426	\$3.240
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.882	\$3.062	\$3.529	\$3.721

### This Week



### Last Week



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## Drought Classification

None

D0 (Abnormally Dry)

D1 (Moderate Drought)

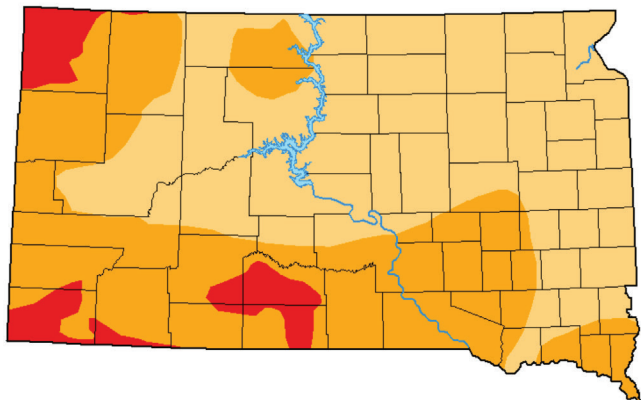
D2 (Severe Drought)

D3 (Extreme Drought)

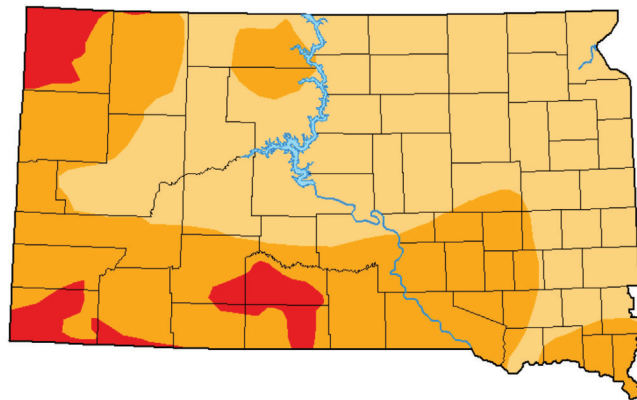
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

No Data

## Drought Monitor



January 7



December 31

Based on 30 to 60-day SPI along with a lack of early season snowpack, a 1-category degradation was made to southwestern Colorado. Farther to the north across northwestern Colorado, improving snowpack resulted in a minor reduction in abnormal dryness (D0). Southwestern Nebraska has received little to no precipitation during the past 7 weeks, prompting an expansion of D0. In addition, above-normal temperatures during the late fall and into the early winter exacerbated increasing short-term dryness. Heavy precipitation (more than 1 inch, liquid equivalent) for this time of year resulted in a 1-category improvement to northeastern Kansas. No changes were made to the Dakotas and early January is one of the driest times of the year.



## EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: What is Jimmy Carter's environmental legacy?  
-- B.N., Athens, GA

Jimmy Carter, the 39th U.S. President, made a lasting impact on environmental policy. His robust initiatives to protect natural resources and advance clean energy established the foundation for environmental policy in subsequent decades. Despite obstacles, his efforts in land preservation, energy efficiency and climate activism still impact environmental policy in the present day.

One of Carter's most significant actions, a symbolic one, was installing solar panels on the White House. And he signed the National Energy Act, which reduced U.S. dependence on foreign oil and encouraged the use of alternative energy sources. "The energy crisis is real. It is worldwide. It is a clear and present danger..." Carter stated during his presidency, emphasizing the urgency of moving to sustainable energy. Carter also created the Department of Energy in 1977 to consolidate management and energy policy. The move displayed his foresight in addressing energy security and climate issues. This laid out the groundwork for the renewable energy sector's growth in subsequent decades.

Carter's dedication to conservation was equally effective. His administration included multiple wildlife reserves, national parks and public lands in the federal portfolio. Specifically, he enacted the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, which protected over 100 million acres of Alaska wilderness, enlarged the National Park System and protected priceless ecosystems for future generations. Reinforcing existing environmental codification was another order for Carter. He reinforced the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, and in 1980, signed the Superfund law to clean up hazardous waste sites.

After leaving office, Carter continued to work for the environment. Through the Carter Center, he promoted sustainable farming and clean energy. His work with Habitat for Humanity promoted affordable and sustainable housing as a foundation of environmental and social justice. "Habitat has successfully removed the stigma of charity by substituting it with a sense of partnership," Carter voiced. Carter's environmental vision faced difficulties. Economic struggles limited the scope of some initiatives. Additionally, President Reagan removed the White House solar panels, indicating a retreat from Carter's vision. But his cutting-edge advocacy inspired subsequent efforts on climate change and conservation.

Jimmy Carter's environmental legacy serves as a reminder that fearlessness and long-term vision are important in addressing today's ecological challenges. His leadership continues to inspire. Ultimately, his efforts underscore the mutuality of protecting the environment, sustainable development, and social justice.



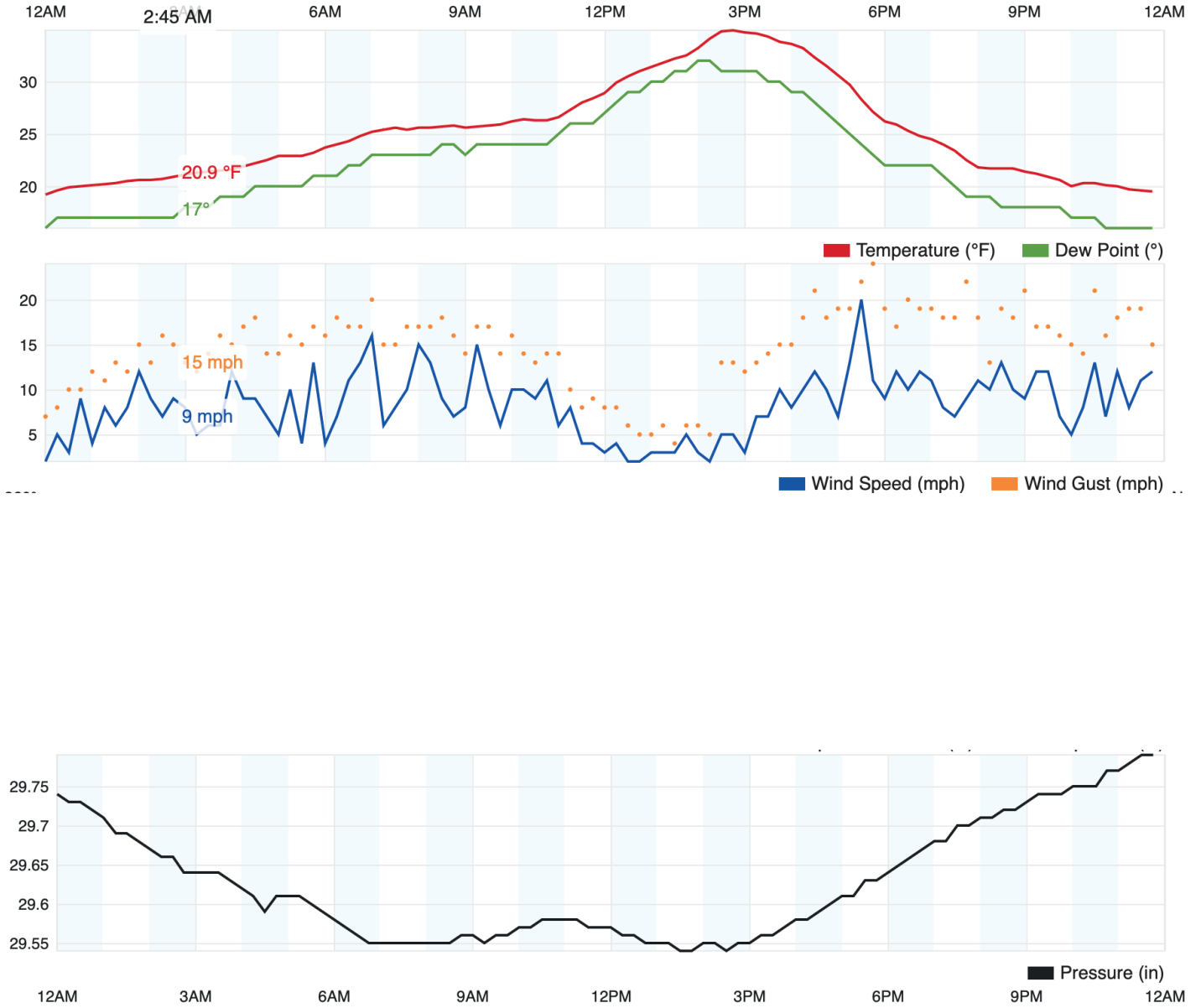
**Jimmy Carter is famous for installing solar panels on the White House and shepherding the nation through the oil crises of the 1970s.**

Credit: Utenriksdepartementet UD, FlickrCC

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 11 °F ↓

Slight Chance  
Snow and  
Blustery then  
Mostly Cloudy

Tonight



Low: -4 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Monday



High: 5 °F

Cold

Monday Night



Low: -18 °F

Mostly Clear

Tuesday



High: 12 °F

Mostly Sunny

## Today

## Looking Ahead



Falling  
Temperatures  
Through The Day

Snow Ending By  
Mid-Day  
Patchy Blowing  
Snow

### Monday



Lows: 0 to -6  
Highs: 1 to 18

### Tuesday



Clear East  
Light Snow West

Lows: 6 to -15  
Highs: 10 to 27

### Wednesday



Lows: 14 to -2  
Highs: 33 to 41

The Warmer Temp Range Can Be Expected Across The Missouri Valley and West  
Colder Temperature Range For The Northeast and Western Minnesota

Snow will continue to push through mainly eastern South Dakota this morning, with falling temperatures through the day. It will be a cold start to the work week, though temperatures moderate for the later half. This will only be a temporary warmup, with another blast of Arctic air for next weekend.



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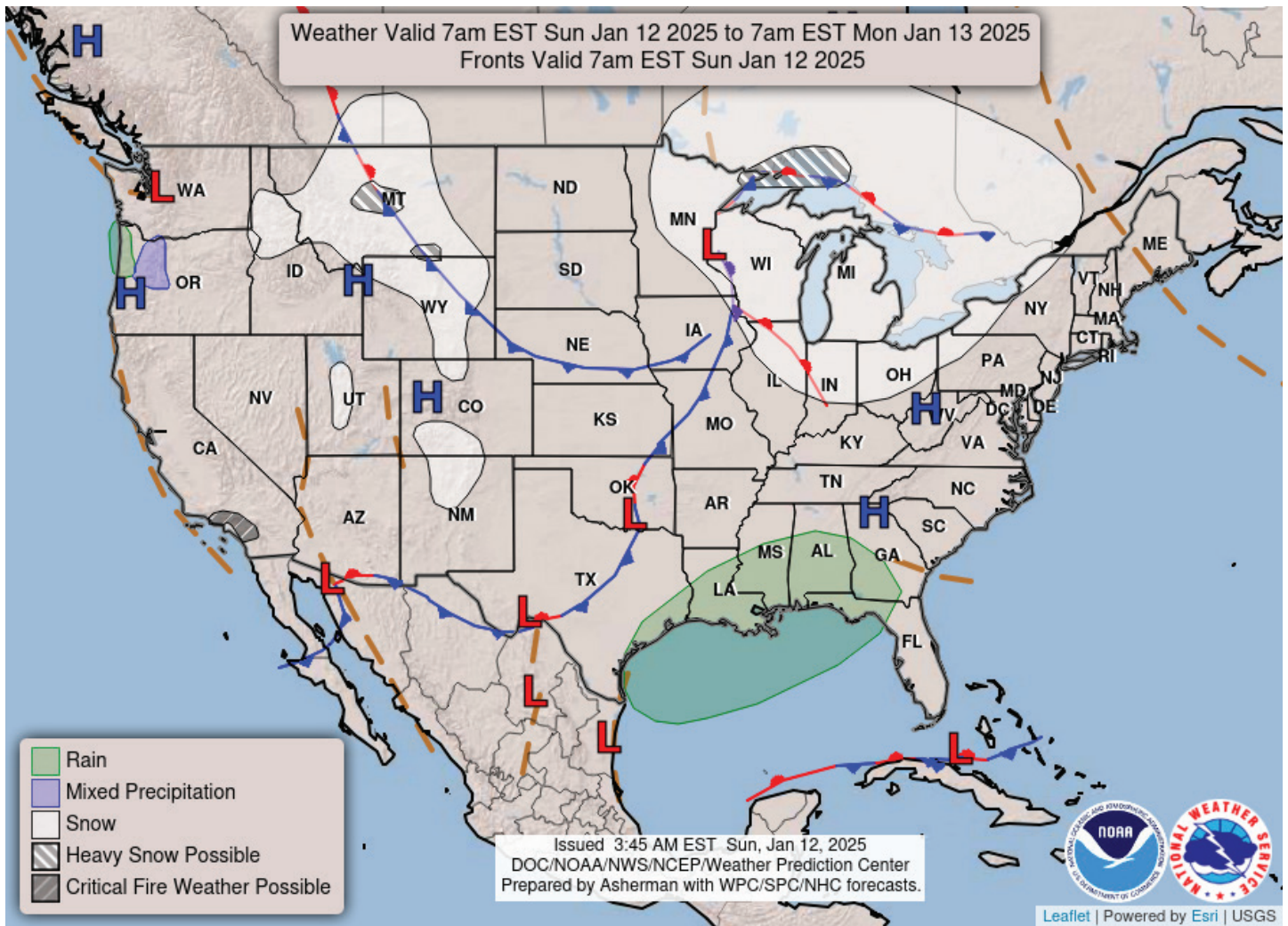
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 35 °F at 2:38 PM**  
**Low Temp: 19 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 24 mph at 5:42 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1987  
Record Low: -46 in 1912  
Average High: 23  
Average Low: 2  
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.25  
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 0.25  
Precip Year to Date: 21.71  
Sunset Tonight: 5:13:51 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:07:26 am

Day length: 9 hours, 5 minutes



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## Today in Weather History

January 12, 1912: The all-time coldest temperature ever recorded at Aberdeen and Timber Lake, South Dakota, was 46 degrees below zero on this date in 1912. On February 8th, 1895, 46 degrees below zero was also recorded in Aberdeen. The record low for this date was also set at Watertown, with 38 degrees below zero.

January 12, 1997: On January 12th, 1997, some of the greatest snow depths were recorded across central and northeast South Dakota. Ipswich had 29 inches on the ground, Aberdeen had 30 inches, Timber Lake had 31 inches, Mobridge had 34 inches, and Waubay had 38 inches. Some of the highest snow depths were recorded at Summit, Sand Lake, and Eureka. Summit had 42 inches of snow on the ground on January 12th, Sand Lake had 47 inches, and Eureka had a snow depth of 50 inches. The snow depth at Aberdeen was the all-time record, and Mobridge was just an inch shy of their 35-inch record snow depth.

1886: With a reading of 26 degrees below zero, Bowling Green, Kentucky, recorded its coldest temperature on record.

1888: Children's or Schoolhouse Blizzard occurred on this day. The blizzard killed 235 people, many of whom were children on their way home from school, across the Northern Plains.

1890: A tornado touched down at St. Louis, Missouri, and crossed the Mississippi River, ending just south of Venice. The worst damage from this tornado occurred in St. Louis. Further east and northeast, one tornado in McLean County passed through downtown Cooksville, destroying at least a dozen buildings, while a tornado in Richland County destroyed four homes northeast of Olney. In all, over 100 homes and other buildings were unroofed or damaged. The storm caused four deaths and 15 injuries.

1912 - The morning low of 47 degrees below zero at Washta IA established a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1985: A record snowstorm struck portions of western and south-central Texas. All snowfall records dating back to 1885 were easily broken. Austin measured 3.6 inches, and Del Rio received 8.6 inches. San Antonio saw a record-setting 13.5 inches from this event.

1987 - Twenty-seven cities in the Upper Midwest reported new record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 72 degrees at Valentine NE and 76 degrees at Rapid City SD set records for the month of January. (National Weather Summary)

1988 - Parts of North Dakota finally got their first snow of the winter season, and it came with a fury as a blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 14 inches at Fargo ND, winds gusted to 65 mph at Windom MN, and wind chill readings in North Dakota reached 60 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A dozen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. Fort Myers FL reported a record high of 86 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - Gale force winds produce squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in northwest Pennsylvania ranged up to eleven inches at Conneautville and Meadville. Barnes Corners, in western New York State, was buried under 27 inches of snow in two days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: A magnitude 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti, leaving over 200,000 people dead.



## GRACE AND GUIDANCE

Whenever I look into the eyes of a newborn child or watch as little hands and arms reach out for love and affection, I realize once again the true meaning of helplessness and hope. It is impossible for that little one to care for itself. Infants know no one or nothing and have to depend completely on others for everything.

And that little one does not know that he or she has only one life to live. Since it is impossible to relive one second of our lives or retrace one step that we take, it is critical to know that God has provided a path and a plan for each of us.

His Word states very clearly, "It is not in man to direct his steps!" If it is not in ourselves, where do we find the directions that each of us need in our lives?

In the Lord!

An insightful king once declared, "He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name!"

If we allow God to guide us and to guard us, He will. But He can only do this if we allow Him to govern our lives. If we choose to go our own way and do our own thing, we cannot expect God to protect us and provide for us. We cannot blame Him for the problems we create, the tragedies that occur or the disasters that await us if refuse His Lordship!

Our Shepherd has a plan for each of us that will lead us to peaceful meadows and quiet streams.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to surrender our lives completely to You so we may enjoy the good things in life that You have planned for each of us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : – He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Psalm 23:3

*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:  
01.10.25

9 23 39 65 66 22

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$95,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.11.25

7 10 16 47 52 1

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$21,510,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.11.25

21 22 26 27 48 12

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 56 Mins  
54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.11.25

4 6 7 16 23

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

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.11.25

22 24 25 44 53 20

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

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.11.25

3 6 32 37 65 4

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$285,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[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

## Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Belle Fourche 59, Douglas 21  
Bennett County 57, Wall 47  
Chester 61, Alcester-Hudson 29  
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 52, Chamberlain 41, OT  
Clark-Willow Lake 53, Webster 27  
Corsica/Stickney 54, Scotland/Menno 30  
Custer 54, Newcastle, Wyo. 14  
Elk Point-Jefferson 60, Dell Rapids 26  
Faulkton 53, North Central 38  
Freeman 62, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 54  
Harding County 55, Faith 30  
Harrisburg 54, Huron 53  
Kadoka 76, Colome 19  
Lennox 49, Groton 39  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 35, Garretson 13  
Oelrichs 57, Takini 23  
Parkston 58, Miller 27  
Rapid City Stevens 59, Sioux Falls Jefferson 40  
Sioux Center, Iowa 49, Tea 43  
Sioux Falls Christian 58, Hamlin 47  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 39, Rapid City Central 35  
Sioux Falls Washington 74, T F Riggs High School 53  
Sisseton 57, Oakes, N.D. 44  
Waubay/Summit 61, Wilmot 57  
Waverly-South Shore 40, Leola-Frederick High School 24  
Winner 53, Gregory 41  
Border Battle Challenge=  
West Fargo Horace, N.D. 60, Wagner 38  
Redfield Holiday Classic=  
Estelline-Hendricks 52, Little Wound 21  
Langford 35, Redfield 30  
Northwestern 53, Florence-Henry 31

### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Campbell County, Wyo. 64, St Thomas More 62  
Chester 61, Alcester-Hudson 58  
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 55, Chamberlain 27  
Clark-Willow Lake 70, Webster 34  
Corsica/Stickney 53, Scotland/Menno 41  
Custer 66, Newcastle, Wyo. 31  
Dell Rapids 37, Elk Point-Jefferson 33  
Douglas 50, Belle Fourche 40  
Freeman 75, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 56

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Garretson 49, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 36  
Groton 63, Lennox 55  
Harding County 55, Faith 46  
Hillsboro-Central Valley, N.D. 60, Milbank 51  
Huron 69, Harrisburg 64  
Kadoka 76, Colome 21  
Leola-Frederick High School 56, Waverly-South Shore 43  
North Central 62, Faulkton 56  
Oelrichs 81, Takini 29  
Parkston 57, Miller 50  
Sioux County, Neb. 51, Edgemont 40  
Sioux Falls Christian 75, Hamlin 60  
Sioux Falls Jefferson 79, Rapid City Stevens 78, 30T  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 65, Rapid City Central 52  
Sioux Falls Washington 77, T F Riggs High School 73  
Sioux Valley 60, Wolsey-Wessington 51  
Wall 67, Bennett County 19  
Watertown 58, Great Plains Lutheran 36  
Waubay/Summit 61, Wilmot 28  
Western Christian, Iowa 61, Tea 43

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

## **Barnstable's 28 lead St. Thomas over South Dakota 119-104**

By The Associated Press undefined

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Miles Barnstable's 28 points helped St. Thomas defeat South Dakota 119-104 on Saturday night.

Barnstable shot 8 of 14 from the field, including 4 for 8 from 3-point range, and went 8 for 9 from the line for the Tommies (14-5, 4-0 Summit League). Kendall Blue shot 5 for 7 (2 for 3 from 3-point range) and 5 of 6 from the free-throw line to add 17 points. Carter Bjerke had 16 points and shot 4 for 10 (4 for 8 from 3-point range) and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line.

Isaac Bruns led the way for the Coyotes (10-8, 1-2) with 22 points. South Dakota also got 21 points, six rebounds and two steals from Chase Forte. Quandre Bullock had 19 points and four assists.

## **Marquel Sutton, JJ White score 24 apiece to propel Omaha to 87-80 victory over South Dakota State**

By The Associated Press undefined

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Marquel Sutton and JJ White both scored 24 to guide Omaha to an 87-80 victory over South Dakota State on Saturday.

Sutton also had eight rebounds for the Mavericks (10-9, 4-0 Summit League). White added seven assists. Lance Waddles hit two 3-pointers and scored 19 as Omaha won its sixth straight.

The Jackrabbits (10-8, 1-2) were led by Kalen Garry with 27 points and four assists. Oscar Cluff added 17 points and six rebounds. Joe Sayler had 11 points.

## Croatia's President Milanović overwhelming favorite to win reelection in a runoff vote

By SASA KAVIC Associated Press

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — Croatia's incumbent President Zoran Milanović was the overwhelming favorite to win reelection as he faced a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff presidential vote on Sunday.

The left-leaning Milanović comfortably won the first round of voting on Dec. 29, leaving his main challenger, Dragan Primorac, a forensic scientist who had unsuccessfully run for presidency previously, and six other candidates far behind.

"I am hoping for a victory," Milanović said after voting. "I believe in victory because I think I am worth it and because it is important, primarily because it is important."

The runoff between the top two contenders was necessary because Milanović fell short of securing 50% of the vote by just 5,000 votes, while Primorac trailed far behind with 19%.

The election comes as the European Union and NATO member country of 3.8 million people struggles with biting inflation, corruption scandals and a labor shortage.

Milanović, 58, is an outspoken critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. He is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump for his combative style of communication with political opponents.

On Sunday, he again criticized Brussels as "in many ways non-democratic" and run by unelected officials. The EU position that "if you don't think the same as I do, then you're the enemy" amounts to "mental violence," Milanović said.

"That's not the modern Europe I want to live and work in," he said. "I will work on changing it, as much as I can as the president of a small nation."

Milanović served as prime minister in the past with a mixed record. He has been a fierce critic of current Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and the pair have long sparred with each other.

Milanović regularly accuses Plenković and his conservative Croatian Democratic Union party of systemic corruption, while Plenković has labeled Milanović "pro-Russian" and a threat to Croatia's international standing.

Primorac echoed this position as he cast his ballot on Sunday. He said the presidential vote was "very important" and "about the future of Croatia, ... about the future of our homeland, our citizens, and, really, the direction that it would go from here."

Political analyst Visoslav Raos said the increasingly outspoken Milanović has no motive to "try to please someone or try to control himself."

"If there was no cooperation with the prime minister for the first five years (of his presidency), why would it be now?" he added.

Though the presidency is largely ceremonial in Croatia, an elected president holds political authority and acts as the supreme military commander.

Despite limited powers, many believe the presidential position is key for the political balance of power in a country mainly governed by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) since gaining independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

Primorac, 59, entered politics in the early 2000s, when he was science and education minister in the HDZ-led government. He unsuccessfully ran for the presidency in 2009, and after that mainly focused on his academic career including lecturing at universities in the United States, China and in Croatia.

Milanović denied he is pro-Russian but last year blocked the dispatch of five Croatian officers to NATO's mission in Germany called Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine. He also pledged he would never approve sending Croatian soldiers as part of any NATO mission to Ukraine. Plenković and his government say there is no such proposal.



## Germany says sanctions against Syrian war crimes suspects must stay but people need relief

By BARAA ANWER Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Germany's foreign minister said Sunday that sanctions against Syrian officials responsible for war crimes must remain in place but called for a "smart approach" to provide relief to the Syrian population after last month's overthrow of President Bashar Assad.

Annalena Baerbock spoke to reporters after arriving in Saudi Arabia for a conference on Syria's future attended by top European and Middle Eastern diplomats.

Germany is one of several countries that imposed sanctions on the Assad government over its brutal crackdown on dissent. Those penalties could hinder Syria's recovery from nearly 14 years of civil war that killed an estimated 500,000 people and displaced half the prewar population of 23 million.

"Sanctions against Assad's henchmen who committed serious crimes during the civil war must remain in place," Baerbock said. "But Germany proposes to take a smart approach to sanctions, providing rapid relief for the Syrian population. Syrians now need a quick dividend from the transition of power."

Baerbock announced an additional 50 million euros (\$51.2 million) in German aid for food, emergency shelters and medical care, highlighting the ongoing struggles of millions of Syrians displaced by the war.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, who also attended the meeting, said European countries want to see a government that includes all of Syria's religious and ethnic communities. "We want to see inclusivity of women also in the process, so these are the things that we are going to discuss," she said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said his country, which was a strong supporter of the Syrian opposition to Assad, would try to aid Syria in normalizing ties with the international community.

He said it was important to establish "a balance between the expectations of the international community and the realities faced by the new administration in Syria."

He pledged Turkish support to the new government, especially in combating threats from the Islamic State group. "As Turkey, we are ready to do our part to ease the difficult path ahead for the Syrian people," he said in comments carried by Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency.

Last week, the United States eased some of its restrictions on Syria, with the U.S. Treasury issuing a general license, lasting six months, that authorizes certain transactions with the Syrian government, including some energy sales and incidental transactions.

The U.S. has also dropped a \$10 million bounty it had offered for the capture of Ahmad al-Sharaa, a Syrian rebel leader formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, whose forces led the ouster of Assad last month. Al-Sharaa was a former senior al-Qaida militant who broke with the group years ago and has pledged an inclusive Syria that respects the rights of religious minorities.

The rebels led a lightning insurgency that ousted Assad on Dec. 8 and ended his family's decades-long rule.

Much of the world severed ties with Assad and imposed sanctions on his government — and its Russian and Iranian allies — over alleged war crimes and the manufacturing of the amphetamine-like stimulant Captagon, which reportedly generated billions of dollars as packages of the little white pills were smuggled across Syria's porous borders.

With Assad out of the picture, Syria's new authorities hope that the international community will pour money into the country to rebuild its battered infrastructure and make its economy viable again.

## 15 killed in an explosion and fire at a gas station in central Yemen

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — An explosion at a gas station triggered a massive fire in central Yemen, killing at least 15 people, health officials said Sunday.

The explosion occurred Saturday at the Zaher district in the province of Bayda, the Houthi rebel-run Health Ministry said in a statement. At least 67 others were injured, including 40 in critical condition.

The ministry said rescue teams were searching for those reported missing. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the explosion.

Footage circulated online showing a massive fire that sent columns of smoke into the sky and left vehicles charred and burning.

Bayda is controlled by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who have been at war with Yemen's internationally recognized government for more than a decade.

Yemen's civil war began in 2014, when the rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in March 2015, backed at the time by the U.S., in an effort to restore the internationally recognized government.

The war has killed more than 150,000 people including civilians and combatants, and in recent years deteriorated largely into a stalemate and caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

## **Los Angeles wildfires death toll rises as crews fight heavy winds to save homes and landmarks**

By JAE HONG, HOLLY RAMER and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The death toll from the wildfires ravaging the Los Angeles area rose to 16 as crews battled to cut off the spreading blazes before potentially strong winds return that could push the flames toward some of the city's most famous landmarks.

Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire, the Los Angeles County coroner's office said in a statement Saturday evening.

The previous number of confirmed fatalities before Saturday was 11, but officials said they expected that figure to rise as teams with cadaver dogs conduct systematic grid searches in leveled neighborhoods. Authorities have established a center where people can report the missing.

There were fears that winds could move the fires toward the J. Paul Getty Museum and the University of California, Los Angeles, while new evacuation warnings left more homeowners on edge.

By Saturday evening, Cal Fire reported the Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth and Hurst fires had consumed about 62 square miles (160 square kilometers), an area larger than San Francisco. The Palisades and Eaton fires accounted for 59 square miles (nearly 153 square kilometers).

In a briefing posted online Saturday evening, Michael Traum of the California Office of Emergency Services said 150,000 people in Los Angeles County were under evacuation orders, with more than 700 people taking refuge in nine shelters.

Crews from California and nine other states are part of the ongoing response that includes 1,354 fire engines, 84 aircraft and more than 14,000 personnel, including newly arrived firefighters from Mexico, he said.

With Cal Fire reporting containment of the Palisades Fire at 11% and the Eaton Fire at 15% on Saturday night, the fight is set to continue.

"Weather conditions are still critical and another round of strong winds is expected starting Monday," Traum said.

Fighting to save public and private areas

A fierce battle occurred Saturday in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities not far from the Pacific coast, where swooping helicopters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. Firefighters on the ground used hoses in an attempt to beat back leaping flames as thick smoke blanketed the chaparral-covered hillside.

CalFire Operations Chief Christian Litz said Saturday that a main focus was the Palisades Fire burning in the canyon area, not far from the UCLA campus.

New evacuations were ordered Friday evening after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire.

The National Weather Service warned that strong Santa Ana winds could soon return. Those winds have

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been largely blamed for turning the wildfires into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around to city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

The fire also threatened to jump over Interstate 405 and into densely populated areas in the Hollywood Hills and San Fernando Valley.

## Historical cost

The fires that began Tuesday just north of downtown LA have burned more than 12,000 structures.

Firefighters for the first time made progress Friday afternoon on the Eaton Fire north of Pasadena, which has burned more than 7,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, outbuildings and vehicles. Most evacuation orders for the area were lifted, officials said.

No cause has been determined for the largest fires and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion.

## Overflowing kindness

Volunteers overflowed donation centers and some had to be turned away at locations including the Santa Anita Park horse racing track, where people who lost their homes sifted through stacks of donated shirts, blankets and other household goods.

Altadena resident Jose Luis Godinez said three homes occupied by more than a dozen of his family members were destroyed.

"Everything is gone," he said, speaking in Spanish. "All my family lived in those three houses and now we have nothing."

## Officials warn against returning

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna warned residents against venturing back to destroyed homes to sift through rubble for keepsakes.

"We have people driving up and around trying to get in just to look. Stay away," Luna said, urging people to abide by curfews.

Officials on Saturday warned the ash can contain lead, arsenic, asbestos and other harmful materials.

"If you're kicking that stuff up, you're breathing it in," said Chris Thomas, a spokesman for the unified incident command at the Palisades Fire who warned the material was "toxic."

Residents will be allowed to return with protective gear after damage teams evaluate their properties, Thomas said.

## Leadership accused of skimping

LA Mayor Karen Bass faces a critical test of her leadership during the city's greatest crisis in decades, but allegations of leadership failures, political blame and investigations have begun.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday ordered state officials to determine why a 117 million-gallon (440 million-liter) reservoir was out of service and some hydrants had run dry.

Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said city leadership failed her department by not providing enough money for firefighting. She also criticized the lack of water.

"When a firefighter comes up to a hydrant, we expect there's going to be water," Crowley said.

The level of devastation is jarring even in a state that regularly confronts massive wildfires. Traum of the state Office of Emergency Services said those impacted by the fires can apply online for immediate government assistance.

## A startup city in Kenya tries to tackle Africa's problem of urbanizing while poor

By ADRIAN BLOMFIELD Associated Press

KIAMBU, Kenya (AP) — Turn into Tatu City on the outskirts of Kenya's capital, Nairobi, and it feels like entering a different world.

Even the country's most reckless drivers are transformed, slowing to a crawl and not tossing trash out the window — thanks to surveillance cameras and rigorously enforced penalties for speeding and littering.



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For the 5,000 people who have moved into Tatu, a “startup city” that welcomed its first residents four years ago, the ruthless upholding of such rules makes the place appealing.

“Tatu has more law and order than other places,” said Valerie Akoko, a digital content creator who moved in two years ago. “I’ve never seen Tatu City dirty.”

Situated on 5,000 acres, Tatu City aspires to be what its name suggests: a city, privately owned, that its designers hope will eventually have a population of 250,000. It is already home to 88 businesses employing 15,000 people. They include CCI Global, which operates a 5,000-seat call center, and Zhende Medical, a Chinese medical supply manufacturer.

There are similar projects around the world. But in sub-Saharan Africa, champions of the idea hope that new-city developments can address the continent’s urbanization conundrum: While the growth of cities has rolled back poverty elsewhere, the region has largely been an exception.

History suggests that as people move into cities, productivity increases, wages rise, exports grow and a country gets richer. But in Africa, urbanization has rarely unleashed such economic transformation.

In theory, Africa should be prospering. The continent’s urban population is set to grow by 900 million by 2050, according to the United Nations, more than the present urban population of Europe and North America combined.

But sub-Saharan Africa is urbanizing while still poor.

“Towns and cities in Africa today simply lack the tax base needed to invest in the urban infrastructure needed to accommodate the tsunami of people being added to their ranks in a short period of time,” said Kurtis Lockhart, director of the Africa Urban Lab, a research center at the African School of Economics in Zanzibar.

Weak property rights and political tensions can make the problem worse.

Even Tatu City has battled Kenyan politicians and politically connected businessmen. In 2018, the London Court of International Arbitration ruled in favor of the development’s multinational owner, Rendeavour, in a dispute with its Kenyan former partners, including a former governor of the central bank. The dispute delayed project development by several years.

Last year, Tatu City’s Kenya head, Preston Mendenhall, took the unusual step of accusing the governor of the county where the development is based of extortion, saying he had demanded land worth \$33 million in exchange for approving its updated master plan. The governor denied it and is suing Tatu City and Mendenhall for defamation. No ruling has been made.

Still, the case for building new cities, complete with new infrastructure, is compelling to some. The Charter Cities Institute, a Washington-based nonprofit, argues that, done properly, such projects could drive growth, create jobs and “lift tens of millions of people out of poverty.” The institute sees Tatu City as a model.

Yet building new cities is hard. Africa is littered with failed projects.

A handful have shown promise. Angola’s Quilamba city, whose construction began in 2002, is arguably the most successful, with a population of more than 130,000. It was built by CITIC, a state-owned Chinese company, but is owned by the Angolan government.

Perhaps a dozen new city projects — from Zanzibar to Zambia — are underway in Africa that stand a chance of emulating Quilamba, experts reckon. Of these, Tatu is the farthest along, with 26,400 people already living, working or studying there.

Experts agree that the private sector must play a role in African urbanization, saying African states are too fiscally constrained to fill the investment gap themselves. Rendeavour, a private company with a multibillion-dollar balance sheet, has deep enough pockets to make a difference.

But leaving city-building to the private sector alone can cause problems, for instance by worsening inequality. The average price of a property at Eko Atlantic, a new-city development on the outskirts of Lagos, is \$415,000, far beyond the means of most Nigerians.

“Startup cities can serve as hubs for innovation and alleviate pressure on overcrowded urban centers,” said Anacláudia Rossbach, executive director of the UN’s Human Settlements Program, or UN-Habitat. “However, to be impactful, they must prioritize inclusivity, affordability and integration with existing urban

areas, ensuring they serve all socioeconomic groups rather than becoming isolated enclaves for elites.”

A one-bedroom apartment in Tatu City sells for \$45,500, still beyond the means of most Kenyans, but within reach of some in the emerging middle class. Kenya’s per capita GDP was \$1,961 in 2023, according to the World Bank.

The development collaborates with Kenya’s government, which has designated Tatu City a special economic zone. That means companies setting up there are eligible for tax benefits and other incentives, making it a model of private-public partnership, experts say.

Tatu City also appeals to businesses and residents with its transparent governance structure and services that are often lacking elsewhere in Kenya, including its own water supply and energy grid. It falls under national law but can set its own rules on matters like traffic and what kind of houses can be built, with all plans requiring approval from Tatu’s management.

“If you look at the infrastructure, if you look at the utilities, if you look at the controls, if you look at the security, it is one of the best,” said Sylvester Njuguna, who lives and owns a restaurant there.

Unlike many startup cities built far from urban centers, Tatu City is 12 miles (19 kilometers) north of Nairobi, close enough to plug into its labor markets.

According to Lockhart with the Africa Urban Lab, new city projects usually succeed if they are close enough to a major urban center and house both a high-quality anchor tenant — CCI Global in Tatu City’s case — and good schools. They should operate under effective management and respond to market demand.

Tatu meets these criteria and, unlike many grandiosely conceived African city projects, it has grown organically like Rendeavour’s other city projects in Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia and the Congo, according to Mendenhall.

“We are building what the market needs,” he said. “We are not putting all the infrastructure on day one.”

## **Fires burn Los Angeles schools and destroy outdoor education sanctuaries**

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and SHARON LURYE AP Education Writers

For Irina Contreras, a program manager for Los Angeles County’s Department of Arts and Culture, outdoor education was a refuge for both her and her daughter during the pandemic.

Now, much of that refuge has been burned in the raging wildfires around Los Angeles.

Her 7-year-old daughter, Ceiba, hikes with a kid’s adventure group called Hawks and attended Matilija, a bilingual forest school for preschool and kindergarten. Rain or shine, she and her friends would spend their days climbing, jumping, hiking, and swimming in places like Eaton Canyon Nature Area, a 190-acre (77-hectare) preserve near Altadena, now destroyed by fire.

Ceiba learned to ask plants for permission before taking samples to glue into her nature journal. Once, her group discovered a hidden path that led behind a waterfall. Ceiba couldn’t stop talking about it for days.

For parents like Contreras, the wildfires have been devastating not just because of the loss of life and thousands of homes. They are mourning natural and educational areas that served as sanctuaries and learning spaces for local families, especially in the years since the pandemic. The fires have torn through natural areas that served every type of educational setting: public and private schools, nature-based pre-schools, homeschool groups, summer camps and more.

They have burned school buildings, too, including Odyssey Charter School in Altadena, which Miguel Ordeñana’s children attend.

“The community has been devastated by the fire,” said Ordeñana, senior manager of community science at the Natural History Museum. “It’s been a challenge to carefully share that news with my children and help them work through their emotions. A lot of their friends lost their homes. And we don’t know the impact to school staff, like their teachers, but a lot of them live in that area as well and have lost their homes.”

Some areas untouched by fire were inaccessible because of poor air quality. Griffith Park, home of the Hollywood sign, had not been affected by the end of the week but it’s not clear when the air quality there will be good enough to resume outdoor programs, said Ordeñana, who was the first to capture on camera

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a late puma in the nearby area that gained fame under the name P-22.

Ordeñana said his family was able to connect with some other families from Odyssey Charter School for pizza and an indoor playdate, but he is uncertain what the days will look like for them with school closures already extending through next week.

All schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest, were closed Friday because of heavy smoke and ash over the city. Classes will not resume until conditions improve, officials said. Pasadena Unified School District also closed schools and several of its campuses sustained damage, including Eliot Arts Magnet Middle School.

The California Department of Education released a statement Wednesday saying 335 schools from Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and San Diego counties were closed. It was unclear how many would be closed Monday.

During the pandemic, Contreras felt like she was stuck on a screen. She devoted much of her energy to working, writing and organizing, but her daughter's outdoor education helped her better understand the value of stepping away from the grind.

Contreras feels confident the outdoor programs will return, although it's unclear when it will be safe for people to hike around areas like Eaton Canyon.

"The nature center is gone," Richard Smart, superintendent of the Eaton Canyon Natural Area in Pasadena, said Thursday. "The wildflowers, the shrubs are gone." The park hosted dozens of school field trips a year and Smart estimates more than a thousand students visited yearly.

"Teachers liked it because it was also free, it was local, it was nearby. And it was a place to see nature — wild nature but also in a friendly, safe environment," he said.

Only a few exterior walls of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center were left standing, he said.

"For many of the local school districts, we truly were in their backyard, and now they won't be able to use it for the foreseeable future," he said. "The park is such a touchstone for people in the community, and so to lose that is just, devastating is not even the right word. It feels indescribable."

Many parents and teachers are likely wondering what to do and where to take their children as fires continue to burn across Los Angeles, said Lila Higgins, a senior manager for community science at the Natural History Museum and author of "Wild L.A.," a field trip and nature guidebook.

A certified forest therapy guide, Higgins says time in nature lowers heart rates, lowers blood pressure and helps children with attention deficit disorder feel more calm and relaxed.

"For children's cognitive development, time in nature and time spent connecting with nature is so important," she said. Outdoor spaces also can help children learn how to develop relationships through connections with animals, understand orientation through space by following trails and map-reading and understand human impact on wildlife.

"A lot of the places that we're talking about are really popular with homeschoolers, but they also are a destination for some field trips, certainly places like Eaton Canyon," said Greg Pauly, co-author of "Wild L.A." and director of the Urban Nature Research Center at the museum. "I do think it's safe to say that people are going to continue to be interacting with those landscapes and it will hopefully still be a field trip destination in the future. But it's certainly going to be a while before that happens."

"This is the reality of modern Southern California," he said. "Fire changes the landscape and people's lives shockingly often."

## States are preparing to help or thwart Trump's second-term plans

By DAVID A. LIEB and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Do you live in a red state, a blue state, or one where Republicans and Democrats share power?

Your answer might provide the best indicator of what to expect from your governor and state lawmakers as President-elect Donald Trump takes office and legislatures convene.

In many cases, political party identification has come to define public policy, percolating from the nation's

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capital down to the 50 statehouses.

Many Republican state officials are aligning with Trump's policies by pledging to help him crack down on illegal immigration, for example. Some Democratic state officials are mounting a resistance movement, looking for ways to shield their states from potential federal policies restricting abortion and transgender rights, among other things. Some prominent Democratic governors, meanwhile, have taken a more conciliatory approach in an effort to forge a working relationship with the new administration.

Here's a look at what to expect in some policy areas:

## Immigration

Governors and lawmakers in red states are lining up behind Trump's pledge to crack down on illegal immigration and deport many who are living in the U.S. illegally. A joint statement from 26 Republican governors said they "stand ready to utilize every tool at our disposal — whether through state law enforcement or the National Guard — to support President Trump in this vital mission."

Republican lawmakers in a growing number of states are proposing to give local law officers the power to arrest people who entered the country illegally, mirroring a recent Texas law that has been placed on hold while courts consider whether it unconstitutionally usurps federal authority. One bill in Missouri would offer a \$1,000 reward to informants who tip off authorities about people in the country illegally and allow private bounty hunters to find and detain them.

Governors in some blue states are taking a wait-and-see approach to Trump's immigration plans, willing to cooperate on deporting people who commit crimes but not in using the National Guard for widespread roundups of immigrants living in the U.S. illegally.

Other Democratic-led jurisdictions are bracing for a showdown. The California Legislature has convened a special session to erect shields against Trump's policies on immigration and other issues.

## Abortion

Most U.S. abortions are carried out using drugs rather than through surgical procedures, and that is where the current abortion fight is focused.

At least four states — Indiana, Missouri, New Hampshire and Tennessee — have bills introduced aimed at banning pills. None take the same approach as Louisiana, which last year classified the drugs as controlled dangerous substances.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton is suing a New York doctor, claiming she wrongly prescribed via telehealth and sent pills to a Texas woman, even though a New York law aims to protect such prescriptions.

And the Republican attorneys general of Idaho, Kansas and Missouri are in court trying to roll back federal approvals of one of the pills usually used in abortion.

## Education

Several efforts to expand the use of public money to pay for kids to attend private school suffered high-profile defeats in the November elections, including in Nebraska, Kentucky and Colorado.

But Trump's victory is seen as a boon for such efforts, which in recent years have exploded in popularity. A dozen states, almost all red, have programs allowing any student to apply for government funding for private education, including at religious schools.

With Trump in office, states could see more incentives such as block grants or tax benefits to adopt or expand models like vouchers, which subsidize private school tuition for families. Texas, for example, is expected to see momentum on the school choice front, with a number of voucher proponents winning seats in the Legislature.

Many conservative states also are pushing to bring Christianity into public K-12 education through moves such as requiring schools to teach the Bible and post the Ten Commandments. Trump has promised to promote prayer and Bible reading in schools, with current courts more amenable to religion in the public sphere, including schools.

In Texas, officials in November approved a curriculum that intertwines language arts with biblical lessons and the state education superintendent in Oklahoma has sought to require Bible-related lessons.

## Diversity

Efforts to end diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, initiatives are expected to expand in Republican-led



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states under Trump, who has vowed to get rid of perceived “wokeness” in education. More higher education institutions may join the ranks of those already dismantling diversity offices in states such as Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Texas.

Attorneys general and legislatures in red states also are likely to put pressure on the private sector to pare back DEI initiatives. A Tennessee law provides one model, forbidding financial institutions from considering a customer’s participation in “diversity, equity and inclusion training.”

## Transgender issues

Republican lawmakers are expected to keep pushing for restrictions on the rights of transgender people, particularly transgender minors.

More than 30 such bills have been proposed in Texas. Although Texas and other states have bans on gender-affirming care for transgender minors, there are calls to go further, such as barring Medicaid and other state-funded government programs from spending on gender-affirming care for people of any age.

In his campaign last year, Trump leaned into attacks on transgender rights, suggesting a looming shift in federal policy.

The future of some of the measures could rest on a U.S. Supreme Court ruling expected this year on whether Tennessee had the right to ban gender-affirming care for transgender minors.

Most Republican-controlled states already have laws banning or limiting gender-affirming care for minors and participation in women’s and girls sports for transgender women and girls. Several also dictate which school restrooms transgender people may use.

## Public health

With an incoming presidential administration that has indicated fluoride and vaccines might be in its crosshairs, lawmakers in a few states have filed bills that would end fluoridation programs and further restrict COVID-19 mandates.

Health and Human Services Secretary-nominee Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a lawyer with no medical or public health degrees, has called fluoride an “industrial waste” and said in a Nov. 2 post on X that the Trump administration would “advise all U.S. water systems” to stop putting fluoride in the water. The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water has long been considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century because it prevents tooth decay.

Arkansas lawmakers have filed bills to repeal a statewide fluoridation program and allow local public water systems to hold elections so residents can decide whether to put fluoride in the water. Montana also has a proposed bill to “ban the use of fluoride,” though the full text of the bill isn’t available yet.

Vaccination laws and mandates are still in play in state governments, too. Alabama may consider changing its vaccination laws to require parental consent for any vaccine to be given to a minor age 14 or older; currently, children that age can decide whether they want medical services. Wyoming has a bill that would impose a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 on a business or entity that gets state or federal money if found to discriminate based on whether someone is wearing a mask, has had a COVID-19 vaccination or has been tested for COVID-19.

It’s not clear whether these or other bills will get consideration.

## **Lebanese whose homes were destroyed in the war want to rebuild. Many face a long wait**

By SALLY ABOU ALJOUD Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Six weeks into a ceasefire that halted the war between Israel and Hezbollah, many displaced Lebanese whose homes were destroyed in the fighting want to rebuild — but reconstruction and compensation are slow in coming.

Large swaths of southern and eastern Lebanon, as well as Beirut’s southern suburbs, lie in ruins, tens of thousands of houses reduced to rubble in Israeli airstrikes. The World Bank estimated in a report in November — before the ceasefire later that month — that losses to Lebanon’s infrastructure amount to

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some \$3.4 billion.

In the south, residents of dozens of villages along the Lebanon-Israel border can't go back because Israeli soldiers are still there. Under the U.S.-negotiated ceasefire deal, Israeli forces are supposed to withdraw by Jan. 26 but there are doubts they will.

Other terms of the deal are also uncertain — after Hezbollah's withdrawal, the Lebanese army is to step in and dismantle the militants' combat positions in the south. Israeli officials have complained the Lebanese troops are not moving in fast enough — to which they say the Israeli troops need to get out first.

Reconstruction prospects — and who will foot the bill — remain unclear.

In 2006, after the monthlong Israel-Hezbollah war, Hezbollah financed much of the \$2.8 billion reconstruction with ally Iran's support.

The Lebanese militant group has said it would do so again and has begun making some payments. But Hezbollah, which is also a powerful political party, has suffered significant losses in this latest war and for its part, Iran is now mired in a crippling economic crisis.

The cash-strapped and long paralyzed Lebanese government is in little position to help and international donors may be stretched by the post-war needs in the Gaza Strip and neighboring Syria.

Many Lebanese say they are waiting for Hezbollah's promised compensation. Others say they received some money from the group — much less than the cost of the damage to their homes.

Manal, a 53-year-old mother of four from the southern village of Marjayoun has been displaced with her family for over a year, since Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in support of its ally Hamas in Gaza.

Israel responded with shelling and airstrikes in southern Lebanon. In July, Manal's family heard that their home was destroyed. The family has now sought compensation from Hezbollah.

"We haven't received any money yet," said Manal, giving only her first name for fear of reprisals. "Maybe our turn hasn't arrived."

On a recent day in southern Beirut, where airstrikes had hit just 100 meters (yards) away from his home, Mohammad watched as an excavator cleared debris, dust swirling in the air.

He said his father went to Hezbollah officials and got \$2,500 — not enough to cover \$4,000 worth of damage to their home.

"Dad took the money and left, thinking it was pointless to argue," said Mohammad, who also gave only his first name for fear of repercussions. He said his uncle was offered only \$194 for a similarly damaged home.

When the uncle complained, Mohammad said, Hezbollah asked him, "We sacrificed our blood, what did you do in the war?"

Others, however, say Hezbollah has compensated them fairly.

Abdallah Skaiki, whose home — also in southern Beirut — was completely destroyed, said he received \$14,000 from Qard Al-Hasan, a Hezbollah-linked microfinance institution.

Hussein Khairredine, director of Jihad Binaa, the construction arm of Hezbollah, said the group is doing as much as it can. Its teams have surveyed over 80% of damaged houses across Lebanon, he said.

"We have begun compensating families," he said. "We have also started providing payments for a year's rent and compensations for furniture."

Khairredin said their payments include \$8,000 for furniture and \$6,000 for a year's rent for those living in Beirut. Those who are staying elsewhere get \$4,000 in money for rent.

Blueprints for each house are being prepared, he said, declining to elaborate on reconstruction plans.

"We are not waiting for the government," he added. "But of course, we urge the state to act."

There is little the government can do.

The World Bank's report from mid-November said Lebanon's infrastructure and economic losses from the war amount to \$8.5 billion. And that estimate doesn't take into account the last month of the war, Deputy Prime Minister Saadi Chami told The Associated Press.

"The government does not have the financial resources for reconstruction," he said bluntly.

The World Bank said 99,209 housing units were damaged — and 18% of them were completely destroyed.

In southern Beirut suburbs alone, satellite analysis by Lebanon's National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning identified 353 buildings completely destroyed and over 6,000 homes damaged.

Lebanese officials have appealed to the international community for funding. The government is working with the World Bank to get an updated damage assessment and hopes to set up a multi-donor trust fund.

The World Bank is also exploring an "emergency project for Lebanon," focused on targeted assistance for areas most in need, Chami said, though no concrete plan has yet emerged.

"If the World Bank gets involved, it will hopefully encourage the international community to donate money," Chami said.

Ali Daamouh, a Hezbollah official, said earlier this month that the group has mobilized 145 reconstruction teams, which include 1,250 engineers, 300 data analysts and hundreds of auditors — many apparently volunteers.

The compensations paid so far have come from "the Iranian people," Daamouh said, without specifying if the money was from Iran's government or private donors.

Jana, a 29-year-old architect, is volunteering with Hezbollah teams to survey the damage to her hometown of Nabatiyeh in southern Lebanon. Much of the city is destroyed, including an Ottoman-era market. Her father's warehouse was hit by airstrikes, and all the medical supplies stored there were consumed by a fire.

Hezbollah officials "told us not to promise people or discuss reconstruction because there is no clear plan or funding for it yet," she told the AP. She did not give her last name because she wasn't authorized to talk about Hezbollah's actions.

"They advised us to offer support and show the people that someone genuinely cares about their situation," she added.

## **North Korean troops in Ukraine gain battlefield experience, cementing alliance with Russia**

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — For weeks, Ukrainian troops braced for an unfamiliar enemy: North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Moscow's forces after Ukraine launched a lightning-fast incursion and seized territory in Russia's Kursk region over the summer.

Their arrival marked a new and alarming phase in the war. And while initially inexperienced on the battlefield, North Korean troops have adapted quickly — a development that could have far-reaching consequences as they gain combat knowledge in the war against Ukraine.

Unlike the Russian troops Ukraine has been battling for nearly three years, Kyiv's forces were uncertain about what to expect from this new adversary, drawn into the war after Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement pledging military assistance using "all means" if either were attacked.

One Ukrainian soldier who has witnessed North Koreans in battle described them as disciplined and highly methodical, saying they were more professional than their Russian counterparts. The soldier spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive military issue.

However, other soldiers, including Ukrainian special forces, have shared battlefield drone footage on the Telegram messaging app mocking their tactics as outdated.

Nevertheless, there is consensus among Ukrainian soldiers, military intelligence and others monitoring developments on the ground: While Pyongyang's troops lacked battlefield experience when they arrived, that has been changing quickly.

With 1.2 million troops, North Korea's military ranks among the largest standing armies globally. But its post-Korean War foreign engagements have been limited, leaving them inexperienced with modern warfare technologies like drones.

"For the first time in decades, the North Korean army is gaining real military experience," said Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency. "This is a global challenge — not just for

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Ukraine and Europe, but for the entire world.”

Identifying the presence of North Korean troops

Despite Ukrainian, U.S. and South Korean assertions that Pyongyang has sent 10,000-12,000 troops to fight alongside Russia in the Kursk border region, Moscow has never publicly acknowledged the North Korean forces.

While reports of their presence first emerged in October, Ukrainian troops only confirmed engagement on the ground in December.

Analysts say that without the influx of North Korean troops, Russia would have struggled to pursue its strategy of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk.

While Moscow’s counterattack in Kursk has inflicted thousands of Ukrainian casualties, Kyiv’s overstretched forces have managed to hold on to about half of the 984 square kilometers (380 square miles) seized in August, though the situation remains dynamic. Besides the symbolic impact of Ukraine’s success capturing Russian territory, control of Kursk could also be a bargaining chip in any ceasefire negotiations.

According to Ukraine’s intelligence agency, the North Korean soldiers are operating alongside Russian units, with the latter providing reconnaissance and electronic warfare support.

The North Koreans wear Russian military uniforms with fake military IDs in their pockets, according to a report by a Ukrainian military unit that has observed them on the battlefield, and they could easily be mistaken for Russian soldiers.

The subterfuge means Moscow and “its representatives at the U.N. can deny the facts,” said Yusov, the Ukrainian military intelligence spokesperson.

Among the things proving their presence is that they have been heard speaking Korean with North Korean accents in intercepted communications, Yusov said.

He said the North Korean troops are using their own weapons and equipment and have learned to cope with the improvised explosives-laden drones that have become emblematic of the war, first-hand experience even some NATO-member countries don’t have.

“This is a new level of threat,” Yusov said. “Regional countries must prepare for what this means in the future.”

North Koreans gain invaluable experience on the battlefield

The North Koreans’ early missteps were largely caused by inexperience, such as moving in large groups in open terrain, making them easy targets for drones and artillery strikes.

According to the Ukrainian military unit’s report, the North Korean soldiers were spotted easily as they moved in single-file columns through forest in groups of three, with 3 to 5 meters (yards) between soldiers. On open terrain, they moved in dispersed formations of five to 15 soldiers, making them vulnerable and leading to heavy losses.

However, during night operations, their movements were swift and units oriented themselves using red flashlights along routes, the report said.

“They’re fast, physically well-prepared, and act strictly according to their algorithms,” said the Ukrainian soldier who spoke to the AP. “If you drill the same routines for years, to the point where they can be executed blindfolded, it will yield results.”

Despite their discipline, their lack of combat experience hindered their effectiveness. The Ukrainian military reported that North Korean troops often sustained heavy losses, with many killed by drones.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy put the number of killed or wounded North Koreans at 4,000, though U.S. estimates are lower, at around 1,200.

“Much of their military doctrine and training is based on strategies and experiences from over half a century ago,” said Glib Voloskyi, a military analyst with the Ukrainian think tank CBA Initiatives Center.

The large-group formations date to when artillery accuracy was significantly lower, and observing troop movements much more difficult. Today, reconnaissance and so-called first-person view drones, or FPVs, that transmit video allowing soldiers to strike targets in real time have made the battlefield highly transparent, and anyone stepping onto it without cover, let alone moving in groups, is immediately spotted.



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"But it is only a matter of time before they acquire the necessary skills to improve their combat effectiveness, which, combined with their discipline and training, could make them a significant military force," Voloskyi said.

No surrender policy means few North Korean POWs

After weeks of fighting, Ukrainian soldiers have taken only two prisoners of war. In announcing the capture Saturday, Zelenskyy said taking them alive "was not easy" because of efforts to conceal the North Koreans' presence and avoid their interrogation by Ukraine.

North Korean soldiers avoid surrendering at all costs, Zelenskyy said.

This may stem from North Korean internal propaganda that portrays capture as the ultimate disgrace, analysts said.

"To be captured alive is considered a betrayal of the country, the leader and everything they stand for," said Seongmin Lee of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation, who defected from North Korea in 2009.

This belief is instilled from a young age and reinforced throughout military training, he said. "Because of the disgrace associated with the capitulation, heroic soldiers are supposed to save the last of their bullets to kill themselves," Lee said.

Lee said he shared photos of dead North Korean soldiers with contacts back home. "Most North Koreans don't even know what is going on," he said.

Dorothy Camille Shea, the deputy U.S. ambassador to the U.N., warned of the dangers posed by the rapidly improving battlefield skills the North Korean troops are gaining fighting in Kursk.

North Korea "is significantly benefiting from receiving Russian military equipment, technology and experience, rendering it more capable of waging war against its neighbors," Shea told the 15-member U.N. Security Council on Wednesday.

As an added potential benefit, she said, North Korea "will likely be eager to leverage these improvements to promote weapons sales and military training contracts globally."

## Los Angeles County medical examiner's office confirms wildfire death toll rises to 16

By JAE HONG, HOLLY RAMER and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles County medical examiner's office confirmed the death toll from the wildfires ravaging the area has risen to 16.

The total of confirmed fatalities stands at 16 victims, and the cases remain under investigation. Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire, and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire, the coroner's office said in a statement Saturday evening.

The previous number of confirmed fatalities was 11, but officials said they expected that figure to rise as cadaver dogs search leveled neighborhoods and crews assess the devastation. Authorities have established a center where people can report the missing.

Firefighters raced to cut off spreading wildfires before potentially strong winds return that could push the flames toward the world famous J. Paul Getty Museum and the University of California, Los Angeles, while new evacuation warnings left more homeowners on edge.

A fierce battle against the flames was underway in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities not far from the Pacific coast, where swooping helicopters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. Firefighters on the ground used hoses in an attempt to beat back leaping flames as thick smoke blanketed the chaparral-covered hillside.

At a briefing, CalFire Operations Chief Christian Litz said a main focus Saturday would be the Palisades Fire burning in the canyon area, not far from the UCLA campus.

"We need to be aggressive out there," Litz said.

County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said the LA area "had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak, and even more Angelenos evacuated due to the northeast expansion of the Palisades Fire."

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Light breezes were fanning the flames, but the National Weather Service warned that strong Santa Ana winds — the nemesis of firefighters — could soon return. Those winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around to city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

The fire also was threatening to jump over Interstate 405 and into densely populated areas in the Hollywood Hills and San Fernando Valley.

The hunt for bodies continues

The grim work of sifting through the devastation continued Saturday, with teams conducting systematic grid searches with cadaver dogs, said Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna. He said a family assistance center was being established in Pasadena, and he urged residents to abide by curfews.

"We have people driving up and around trying to get in just to look. Stay away," he said.

The fires have consumed about 56 square miles (145 square kilometers), an area larger than San Francisco. Tens of thousands of people remained under evacuation orders and new evacuations were ordered Friday evening after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire.

Since the fires first began Tuesday just north of downtown LA, they have burned more than 12,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, outbuildings and vehicles.

No cause has been determined for the largest fires, and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion.

Rays of kindness amid the devastation

So many volunteers showed up to help at donation centers Saturday that some were being turned away. That was the case at a YMCA in the Koreatown neighborhood. By late morning, cars with would-be helpers were also being turned back from the Santa Anita Park horse racing track, where donations of necessities were being accepted.

At the race track Friday, people who lost their homes could be seen sifting through stacks of donated shirts, blankets and other household goods. Altadena resident Jose Luis Godinez said three homes occupied by more than a dozen of his family members were destroyed.

"Everything is gone," he said, speaking in Spanish. "All my family lived in those three houses and now we have nothing."

Officials warn against returning to burned homes

Some residents have been venturing back to see what can be salvaged after wildfires destroyed their homes, sifting through rubble for keepsakes. But officials on Saturday urged them to stay away, warning that the ash can contain lead, arsenic, asbestos and other harmful materials.

"If you're kicking that stuff up, you're breathing it in," said Chris Thomas, a spokesman for the unified incident command at the Palisades Fire. "All of that stuff is toxic."

Residents will be allowed to return, with protective gear, after damage teams have evaluated their properties, Thomas said.

City leadership accused of skimping on firefighting funds

Allegations of leadership failures and political blame have begun and so have investigations. Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday ordered state officials to determine why a 117 million-gallon (440 million-liter) reservoir was out of service and some hydrants had run dry. Meanwhile, Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said city leadership failed her department by not providing enough money for firefighting. She also criticized the lack of water.

"When a firefighter comes up to a hydrant, we expect there's going to be water," she said.

Progress made on fighting the Eaton fire

Firefighters for the first time made progress Friday afternoon on the Eaton Fire north of Pasadena, which has burned more than 7,000 structures. Officials said most evacuation orders for the area had been lifted.

LA Mayor Karen Bass, who faces a critical test of her leadership as her city endures its greatest crisis in decades, said several smaller fires also were stopped.

The level of devastation is jarring even in a state that regularly confronts massive wildfires.

## Canada's former leader Chrétien has blunt advice for Trump: 'Give your head a shake!'

By JIM MORRIS Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's remarks that Canada should become the 51st state drew condemnation and a patriotic outburst on Saturday from a former Canadian prime minister who offered blunt advice to the incoming U.S. leader: "Give your head a shake!"

Jean Chrétien, who was Canada's prime minister from 1993 to 2003, joined a chorus of officials from the northern U.S. neighbor who say Trump's remarks are no longer a joke and may undermine America's closest ally.

Canada would never agree to become part of the United States, Chrétien wrote in an article published in The Globe and Mail newspaper, celebrating his 91st birthday.

He extolled his nation's love of independence and said Trump's remarks amounted to "totally unacceptable insults and unprecedented threats" to Canadian sovereignty.

"To Donald Trump, from one old guy to another, give your head a shake!" Chrétien said. "What could make you think that Canadians would ever give up the best country in the world — and make no mistake that is what we are — to join the United States?"

Trump has tossed expansionist rhetoric not just at Canada but also at other U.S. allies, with arguments that the frontiers of American power need to be extended to the Danish territory of Greenland, and southward to include the Panama Canal.

And while many European leaders have been measured in their response, Canadians have not held back.

"If you think that threatening and insulting us is going to win us over, you really don't know a thing about us," Chrétien wrote in the article. "We may look easy-going, mild-mannered. But make no mistake, we have spine and toughness."

The U.S. imports approximately 60% of its crude oil from Canada, which is also the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

Canadian officials have been talking to incoming Trump administration officials about increasing border security in an effort to avoid a sweeping 25% tariff that Trump has threatened to impose on all Canadian products.

When Trump imposed higher tariffs during his first term in office, other countries responded with retaliatory tariffs of their own. Canada announced billions of new duties in 2018 against the U.S. in a tit-for-tat response to new taxes on Canadian steel and aluminum.

## Far-right party's convention draws protests as Germany's election campaign warms up

By FANNY BRODERSEN and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

RIESA, Germany (AP) — Thousands of people demonstrated against a convention of the far-right Alternative for Germany on Saturday, blocking some roads and delaying the meeting's start as parties launched their campaigns for the country's election next month.

A heavy police presence was in place in Riesa — in the eastern state of Saxony, a stronghold of Alternative for Germany, or AfD — and officers cleared some protesters from the streets. However, the two-day convention started a little over two hours late as many delegates' trips to the venue were slowed by blockades.

AfD formally nominated co-leader Alice Weidel as its candidate for chancellor by acclamation. Weidel, who was among those held up, thanked delegates for "defying the left-wing mob and getting here."

Polls show AfD in second place ahead of the Feb. 23 election, with about 20% support. However, Weidel — who this week held a live chat with tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has endorsed the party, on his X platform — has no realistic chance of becoming Germany's leader as other parties refuse to work with AfD.

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It is the mainstream conservative opposition Union bloc that leads polls with around 30% and its candidate, Friedrich Merz, is the favorite to become the next chancellor.

The Union is focusing on boosting Germany's stagnant economy in particular and on reducing irregular migration. Weidel assailed it as a "party of fraudsters" Saturday, urging people to "vote for the original" and strengthen her party.

She called for closing Germany's borders to undocumented migration and large-scale deportations of asylum-seekers, making clear that she has no problem with the politically charged term "remigration."

She pledged to return to service the Nord Stream gas pipeline that was damaged in 2022 explosions shortly after Russia cut off gas supplies to Germany, and won loud applause for saying that AfD would tear down all wind turbines — which she described as "windmills of shame" — if it came to power.

At a news conference in Hamburg, Merz concentrated on his own party's offer of "fundamental change" after the unpopular and notoriously rancorous coalition of center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz collapsed.

He said he aims to lead "a government that stops arguing; a government that draws up reliable laws that also endure in the longer term," producing a reliable environment for domestic and foreign investors. "Then we will have higher potential growth, and then we will have higher actual growth again."

Scholz is hoping for a come-from-behind victory, but there has been little sign of significant movement so far in polls that show support for his Social Democrats at 14-17%. His coalition government collapsed in November when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize the economy, leading to an early election.

Scholz conceded Saturday that mistakes were made and said that "maybe I should also have ended the coalition earlier." But he said that it's time to look to the future. "Let's fight," he told delegates at a party convention in Berlin, which formally confirmed his nomination as its candidate in a show of hands.

He accused Merz's Union of having no serious plans to tackle Germany's problems and said it is making "expensive promises for the absolute top earners" that would "rip a gigantic crater in our budget."

Scholz, who has made Germany one of the leading weapons suppliers to Ukraine in its war with Russia but refused to send it Taurus long-range cruise missiles, again pledged to maintain his "steadfast and prudent" approach.

And he reiterated his pushback against President-elect Donald Trump's recently expressed designs on Greenland and other territories, declaring without naming Trump that "the principle of the inviolability of borders applies to every country, whether it lies to the east of us or the west; every state must keep to this principle, whether it is a small state or a very big and powerful one."

Merz said that "public finger-pointing from Germany has never made an impression in America, and as a rule has achieved the opposite."

## **Israel's Netanyahu sends Mossad director to Gaza ceasefire talks in Qatar in sign of progress**

By WAFAA SHURAFU and NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is sending the director of the Mossad foreign intelligence agency to ceasefire negotiations in Qatar, his office said Saturday, in a sign of progress in talks on the war in Gaza.

It was not immediately clear when David Barnea would travel to Qatar's capital, Doha, for the latest round of indirect talks between Israel and the Hamas militant group, but there is U.S. pressure for a deal before the presidential inauguration on Jan. 20. Barnea's presence means high-level Israeli officials who would need to sign off on any agreement are now involved.

Just one brief ceasefire has been achieved in 15 months of war, and that was in the earliest weeks of fighting. The talks mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar have repeatedly stalled since then.

Under discussion is a phased ceasefire, with Netanyahu signaling he is committed only to the first phase, a partial hostage release in exchange for a weeklong halt in fighting.

Hamas has insisted on a full Israeli troop withdrawal from the largely devastated territory, but Netanyahu



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has insisted on destroying Hamas' ability to fight in Gaza. On Thursday, Gaza's Health Ministry said over 46,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war, the majority women and children, though it doesn't say how many were fighters or civilians.

Also being sent to Qatar are the head of Israel's Shin Bet internal security agency and military and political advisers. Netanyahu's office said the decision followed a meeting with his defense minister, security chiefs and negotiators "on behalf of the outgoing and incoming U.S. administrations."

The office also released a photo showing Netanyahu with President-elect Donald Trump's incoming special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, who was in Qatar this week.

Families of the roughly 100 hostages still held in Gaza after being seized in the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack that sparked the war are pressing Netanyahu to reach a deal to bring their loved ones home. Israelis rallied again on Saturday night in the city of Tel Aviv, with photos of hostages on display.

"We join together in the hope that the talks in Doha succeed," outgoing U.S. Ambassador Jack Lew said at the rally. "We're encouraged by the news today, but we know we can't stop."

The recovery of two hostages' bodies in the past week renewed fears that time is running out. Hamas has said that after months of heavy fighting, it isn't sure who is alive or dead.

"Return with an agreement that ensures the return of all hostages, down to the last one — the living for rehabilitation and the deceased for proper burial in their homeland," said a statement by a group representing some hostages' families.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said this week a deal is "very close" and he hoped to complete it before handing over diplomacy to the incoming Trump administration. But U.S. officials have expressed similar optimism on several occasions over the past year.

Issues in the talks have included which hostages would be released in the first part of a phased ceasefire deal, which Palestinian prisoners would be released and the extent of any Israeli troop withdrawal from population centers in Gaza.

The toll

Hamas and other groups killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages into Gaza in the attack that started the war. 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's military announced the deaths of four soldiers in northern Gaza on Saturday, without details. At least 400 soldiers have been killed in the war. Six others were killed this week in largely isolated northern Gaza, where Israel has been pressing an offensive against regrouping Hamas militants.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 militants during the war, without providing evidence.

Inside Gaza

On Saturday, an airstrike killed a 5-year-old girl and two male relatives in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where an AP team saw them.

The girl's body, in a pink sweater, was wrapped in foil and placed on the floor of the morgue. Her father knelt and pressed his face to hers. "God!" he cried.

Another Israeli airstrike killed at least eight Palestinians — including two children and two women — in a school-turned-shelter in northern Gaza, according to the Civil Defense, first responders affiliated with the Hamas-run government. It said the strike on the Halawa school that shelters displaced people in the Jabaliya area also wounded 30 others, including 19 children.

Israel's military said it struck a Hamas command center at a former school in Jabaliya, without giving evidence.

And a strike killed four people on a street in Gaza City, said Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Basal. Overall, Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 32 bodies had arrived at hospitals in the past 24 hours.

"I ask the world, do you hear us? Do we exist?" said Hamza Saleh, one of the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents who have been displaced. He spoke on Friday in the southern city of Khan Younis as children and others jostled for food aid, while hunger grows.

## Mayotte on red alert again as another cyclone heads toward the French territory off Africa

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — The French territory of Mayotte was put on red alert Saturday as another cyclone headed toward the islands off Africa that were devastated by their worst storm in nearly a century last month.

The Prefecture of Mayotte said the red alert warning was issued at 10 p.m. local time in preparation for the arrival of Cyclone Dikeledi, which made landfall in northern Madagascar earlier Saturday and was moving west toward Mayotte.

Dikeledi was expected to reach Mayotte early Sunday. Emergency personnel and law enforcement were on high alert and “everything is being put in place to protect the population,” the French Interior Ministry said. It said Dikeledi would likely weaken to a strong tropical storm as it neared Mayotte.

The French meteorological department, Meteo, said Dikeledi would still bring strong winds and heavy rain, although it was expected to pass approximately 75 kilometers (46 miles) to the south of Mayotte. Wind gusts could reach up to 110 kph (68 mph), Meteo said.

Mayotte has not yet recovered from the impact of Cyclone Chido, which ripped through the archipelago a month ago, causing extensive damage to France’s poorest department. Authorities say at least 39 people were killed in Mayotte and more than 2,000 were injured by Chido, but French Prime Minister François Bayrou warned on a visit to the islands two weeks ago that the final death toll could be several hundred.

It was the worst cyclone to hit Mayotte in 90 years, officials said, leaving a trail of destruction and flattening entire neighborhoods as it passed. Mayotte, a densely populated archipelago of over 320,000 people off the east coast of Africa, is also home to an estimated 100,000 migrants. Many people live in precarious shantytowns, which were the worst hit by Chido.

More than 100 others died in Mozambique and Malawi as Chido moved on after smashing Mayotte and made landfall on mainland Africa.

While Dikeledi was not expected to be as strong as Chido — which brought winds of more than 200 kph (124 mph) — authorities were expecting more rain and mudslides were a major risk, said Mayotte Prefect Francois-Xavier Bieuville, the French government’s top official on the islands.

November to April is cyclone season in the southwestern Indian Ocean, and the region has been pummeled by a series of strong ones in recent years. The worst was Cyclone Idai in 2019, which killed more than 1,500 people in Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe and affected more than 3 million people.

## Special counsel Jack Smith has resigned after submitting his Trump report, Justice Department says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Special counsel Jack Smith has resigned from the Justice Department after submitting his investigative report on President-elect Donald Trump, an expected move that comes amid legal wrangling over how much of that document can be made public in the days ahead.

The department disclosed Smith’s departure in a court filing Saturday, saying he had resigned one day earlier. The resignation, 10 days before Trump is inaugurated, follows the conclusion of two unsuccessful criminal prosecutions against Trump that were withdrawn following Trump’s White House win in November.

At issue now is the fate of a two-volume report that Smith and his team had prepared about their twin investigations into Trump’s efforts to overturn the results of his 2020 election and his hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

The Justice Department had been expected to make the document public in the final days of the Biden administration, but the Trump-appointed judge who presided over the classified documents case granted a defense request to at least temporarily halt its release. Two of Trump’s co-defendants in that case, Trump

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valet Walt Nauta and Mar-a-Lago property manager Carlos De Oliveira, had argued that the release of the report would be unfairly prejudicial, an argument that the Trump legal team joined in.

The department responded by saying that it would withhold from public release the classified documents volume as long as criminal proceedings against Nauta and De Oliveira remain pending. Though U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon had dismissed the case last July, a Smith team appeal of that decision related to the two co-defendants remained pending.

But prosecutors said they intended to proceed with the release of the election interference volume.

In an emergency motion late Friday, they asked the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to swiftly lift an injunction from Cannon that had barred them from releasing any portion of the report. They separately told Cannon on Saturday that she had no authority to halt the release of the report, but she responded with an order directing prosecutors to file an additional brief by Sunday.

The appeals court on Thursday night denied an emergency defense bid to block the release of the election interference report, which covers Trump's efforts before Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, to undo the results of the 2020 election. But it left in place Cannon's injunction that said none of the findings could be released until three days after the matter was resolved by the appeals court.

The Justice Department told the appeals court in its emergency motion that Cannon's order was "plainly erroneous."

"The Attorney General is the Senate-confirmed head of the Department of Justice and is vested with the authority to supervise all officers and employees of the Department," the Justice Department said. "The Attorney General thus has authority to decide whether to release an investigative report prepared by his subordinates."

Justice Department regulations call for special counsels to produce reports at the conclusion of their work, and it's customary for such documents to be made public no matter the subject.

William Barr, attorney general during Trump's first term, released a special counsel report examining Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and potential ties to the Trump campaign.

Biden's attorney general, Merrick Garland, has also released special counsel reports, including about Biden's handling of classified information before Biden became president.

## Powerful winter storm that dumped snow in US South maintains its icy grip

By JEFF AMY and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Flight cancellations piled up and officials warned of continuing dangerous roads Saturday in the wake of a winter storm that brought biting cold and wet snow to the U.S. South, leading to school closures and disrupting travel.

The storm was moving out to sea off the East Coast on Saturday, leaving behind a forecast for snow showers in the Appalachian Mountains and New England. But temperatures were expected to plunge after sundown in the South, raising the risk that melting snow will refreeze, turning roadways treacherously glazed with ice.

"I definitely don't think everything's going to completely melt," said Scott Carroll, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Atlanta. "Especially the secondary roads will probably still have some slush on them."

Major roads are mostly clear, but tie-ups at affected airports remain

Main thoroughfares were mostly clear, but traffic remained light Saturday. The Atlanta Hawks postponed their scheduled afternoon game against the Houston Rockets, citing the icy conditions.

Major airports including those in Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina, continued to report disruptions. While flights were operating, airlines canceled and delayed more flights after Friday's weather slowed travel to a crawl.

By Saturday afternoon about 1,000 flights in and out of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport were canceled or delayed, according to tracking software FlightAware. Security lines in the terminal were also extremely long.

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Sarah Waithera Wanyoike, who lives in the Atlanta suburb of Lilburn, arrived at the world's busiest airport before sunrise Friday to catch an Ethiopian Airlines flight to her job in Zimbabwe.

The plane boarded after a delay but never left, discharging passengers back to the gate after taxiing around for six hours. Wanyoike said her luggage remained on the plane and she dared not try to go home because she was told to be back at the gate before dawn.

"People slept with their babies on the floors last night," Wanyoike said Saturday.

Delta Air Lines, the largest carrier at the airport, said Saturday that it was "working to stabilize" operations at its Atlanta hub and anticipated "resumption of reliable service this weekend."

Richmond drops boil-water advisory after nearly a week

Virginia's capital lifted the advisory Saturday morning, nearly a week after a snow storm cut power and caused a malfunction to the city's water system.

Mayor Danny Avula said lab tests confirmed that the water is safe to drink, adding that boil-water advisories had been lifted for some surrounding counties as well.

The temporary halting of the system affected more than 200,000 people, some of whom lacked water in their homes because of diminished pressure.

Freezing rain pushed up electrical outages above 110,000 in Georgia on Friday night. Power crews restored all but a few thousand by Saturday evening, though. The National Weather Service reported small amounts of ice accumulation around Atlanta from the freezing rain.

Parts of mountainous western North Carolina saw as much as 4.5 inches (about 11 centimeters) of snow in a 24-hour period through 7 a.m. Saturday, according to the National Weather Service. And parts of middle Tennessee saw nearly 6 inches (about 15 centimeters) by the same morning.

Earlier this week the storm brought heavy snow and slick roads to much of Texas and Oklahoma before moving east. Arkansas and North Carolina mobilized National Guard troops for tasks such as helping stranded motorists, and governors declared states of emergency.

Nashville starts digging out

Businesses and churches started digging out from under several inches of snow that fell on Nashville, Tennessee, in order to reopen for the weekend.

At Judah Temple of Praise, church members on Saturday shoveled, salted and blew snow off the sidewalks and the parking lot in advance of the next day's services.

"We're not going to use the excuse of a parking lot covered in snow to not show up and praise our God tomorrow," elder Myyah Lockhart said.

Andy Atkins, co-owner of the Bad Luck Burger Club food truck in east Nashville, brushed off picnic tables with a broom and shoveled the sidewalk in front of his business. After closing down Friday, he hoped that customers would show up again.

"Having a day off is good for the soul, but is bad for the pocket, you know," Atkins said.

Alabama schools could remain closed if ice doesn't melt off secondary roads

School was canceled on Friday for millions of children from Texas to Georgia and as far east as South Carolina, giving them a rare snow day. On Saturday, officials in northern Alabama said schools could remain closed Monday if ice doesn't melt off secondary roads.

The storm piled up more than a year's worth of snowfall on some cities.

As much as a foot (about 31 centimeters) fell in parts of Arkansas, and there were reports of nearly 10 inches (about 25 centimeters) in Little Rock, which averages 3.8 inches (9.7 centimeters) a year.

More than 7 inches (about 18 centimeters) fell at Memphis International Airport in Tennessee. The city usually sees 2.7 inches (6.9 centimeters) a year.

The storm also dumped as much as 7 inches (about 18 centimeters) in some spots in central Oklahoma and northern Texas.

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually spins around the North Pole, but it sometimes ventures south into the U.S., Europe and Asia. Some experts say such events are happening more frequently, paradoxically, because of a warming world.

The cold snap coincided with rare January wildfires tearing through the Los Angeles area.



## **Trams collide in the French city of Strasbourg, injuring dozens, though none critically**

PARIS (AP) — Two trams collided in Strasbourg in eastern France on Saturday, causing dozens of injuries, though none critical, authorities said. The accident took place during the afternoon in a tunnel leading to the station near the city's central train station.

An additional 100 people, though uninjured, were assessed for shock or stress, said René Cellier, director of the Bas-Rhin Fire and Rescue Service. Emergency services deployed 130 firefighters, 50 rescue vehicles and established a wide safety perimeter.

"Around 50 people are in a state of relative emergency, with injuries such as scalp wounds, clavicle fractures and knee sprains. But there are no critical injuries. It could have been much worse," Cellier said.

The exact cause of the collision was unclear but local media reported that one of the trams was reversing at the time.

Mayor Jeanne Barseghian, who visited the site, described the incident as a "brutal collision" and expressed her gratitude to emergency responders. "I am at the station with the injured and rescuers. Thank you for your mobilization," she said on X. She urged the public not to obstruct rescue operations.

Images shared on social media showed two severely damaged tram cars, one of which had derailed in the tunnel.

Strasbourg, the first major French city to reinstate tram services in 1994, had not experienced a significant tram accident until now, according to French media. Authorities launched an investigation to determine what caused the collision.

Cleanup operations continued Saturday evening, and residents were advised to avoid the area around the train station.

## **LA's fire chief is at the center of a public spat with City Hall as wildfires rage**

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

Kristin Crowley was elevated to Los Angeles fire chief in 2022 at a time of turmoil in a department consumed by complaints of rampant hazing, harassment and discrimination among its 3,400-member ranks. As a career firefighter, she was portrayed by the then-mayor as a stabilizing force.

Three years later, the mood between Crowley and City Hall has changed.

The wildfire in Pacific Palisades that has burned more than 5,000 structures to become the most destructive in city history has put leaders on the defensive and led Crowley to engage in a public spat with Mayor Karen Bass over resources even as the battle against flames continues across the Los Angeles area.

Crowley publicly criticized the city Friday for budget cuts that she said have made it harder for firefighters to do their jobs at a time when they are seeing more calls. She also cast blame on the city for water running out Tuesday when about 20% of the hydrants tapped to fight the Palisades fire went dry.

"I'm not a politician, I'm a public servant. It's my job as the fire chief for Los Angeles city fire dept to make sure our firefighters have exactly what they need to do their jobs," she told CNN.

Her comments and perceived falling-out with Bass prompted so much speculation about her job security that the union issued a statement Friday assuring rank-and-file members that she had not been fired.

The following day the mayor sought to tamp down the tension.

"Let me be clear about something: The fire chief and I are focused on fighting these fires and saving lives, and any differences that we might have will be worked out in private," Bass said at a news conference. "But right now our first and most important obligation to Angelenos is to get through this crisis."

This followed several days of Crowley getting swept into the national political fray over diversity, equity and inclusion policies that conservatives believe have gone too far in American institutions. Crowley, who is openly gay and the city's first female fire chief, has made diversifying the overwhelmingly male department a priority.

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"What we are seeing (was) largely preventable," talk show host Megyn Kelly said on her show. "LA's fire chief has made not filling the fire hydrants top priority, but diversity."

There's no evidence that Crowley's efforts to diversify the department have hampered the fight. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is in charge of providing water for the hydrants, and its leaders have said they were overwhelmed by the intense demand on a municipal system not designed to fight wildfires, particularly as firefighting aircraft was grounded. Gov. Gavin Newsom has ordered an investigation into what happened, and Crowley herself added to the criticism.

"When a firefighter comes up to a hydrant, we expect there's going to be water," she said during a local news interview.

Philadelphia Managing Director Adam K. Thiel, who previously served as that city's fire commissioner, suggested that people reserve judgment until the fires can be investigated. He noted that firefighters cannot control the weather, a key factor in battling wildfires.

"Firefighting, to a regular person, probably appears to be a relatively simple process of putting water on a fire," said Thiel, who knows Crowley and praised her experience. "In reality every firefighting operation, in any environment, is inherently volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous."

Former Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti appointed Crowley to the job amid complaints about a frat house culture in the department that was sometimes hostile to women and minorities. Several lawsuits alleged hazing and harassment, and federal investigators found evidence of discrimination.

At the time Crowley was sworn in, women accounted for just 3.5 percent of the uniformed membership, a figure that's not unusual for a department. A survey found that half the uniformed women in the department — along with 40% of Blacks, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders — felt harassment was a problem.

Crowley, whose wife is a retired firefighter, told the Los Angeles Times in 2022 that she planned to ensure all of employees "come to work and feel safe and feel heard."

Two years later, she was facing budget cuts that she warned could hamper the department's ability to respond to emergencies, including wildfires. She highlighted the elimination of civilian positions and \$7 million in overtime pay.

The reduction in overtime has limited the department's ability to prepare and train for "large scale emergencies," such as wildfires and earthquakes, Crowley said, and programs like air operations. The department has also lost mechanics, leading to delays in repairing the vehicle fleet, she said.

Other city officials say the department's budget was later boosted, but it's unclear how much of that went to firefighting resources. Bass has said the department has the resources needed to do its job and she will address specifics once the crisis subsides.

Crowley, who grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, came to firefighting after what she called "a really unique journey."

A high school and college athlete, she studied biology at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, with plans to become an orthopedic surgeon. Two weeks after graduation, she moved to California.

A stint as a paramedic changed her career path. She did an internship with the fire department and was hooked.

"That was it," she told WBAY-TV in Green Bay in March 2022. "Within a few seconds of me entering into the fire station, it was just such a wonderful connection to what I had being a student-athlete for the majority of my life, and I tell you, it was a perfect fit."

Crowley has now been with the department for a quarter century, serving in nearly every role, including fire marshal, engineer and battalion chief. Garcetti had described Crowley as not only a trailblazer but the most qualified person.

"The protection of our city first and foremost has to go to the human being who is best prepared to lead. But let me be clear, that is Kristin Crowley," he said.

## North Carolina's new Democratic governor pledges to rebuild after Helene, work with GOP

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein kicked off his term in office Saturday by praising the resilience of the state's residents following Hurricane Helene and pledging to "cut through red tape to help people rebuild quicker."

The Democrat also offered an upbeat message, expressing his willingness to work with the Republican-controlled General Assembly on a host of issues, from creating jobs and recruiting teachers to smashing drug rings and combating the devastating effects of fentanyl.

"We must overcome the unprecedented storm that ravaged our state and the everyday struggles that impact our neighbors," Stein said. "And we will."

The new governor invoked "North Carolina Strong" and created a picture of state lawmakers "working together across our differences to get things done."

"We have real problems to solve, and we do not have time to settle petty political scores or fight divisive culture wars," Stein said. "I want to stand with you as we fight for our people, not with each other."

Stein spoke during a televised address from the House chambers of the old Capitol building, with an audience that was mainly family and some staff. An outdoor ceremony next to the old Capitol had been scheduled for Saturday as part of a larger public inauguration for Stein and other statewide elected executive branch officials within what is called the Council of State. But it was canceled because of winter weather.

Forecasts for snow, sleet and freezing rain prompted the state inaugural committee to call off public festivities, including a block party that could be rescheduled. Officials also postponed inauguration parties previously scheduled for Friday and Saturday nights.

Stein and several Council of State members — the lieutenant governor, attorney general and state treasurer among them — had already taken their official oaths in private or small ceremonies early in the new year. Stein, who succeeded term-limited Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper, gave a brief speech at his Jan. 1 swearing-in. Saturday's inaugural address, streamed by North Carolina public television, was longer, at about 15 minutes.

Stein, the attorney general for the past eight years, defeated then-Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson by nearly 15 percentage points in November's election. From the beginning, he signaled Hurricane Helene recovery as a top early-term priority. Stein has visited western North Carolina twice since Jan. 1 and issued a half-dozen executive orders on the state government's response to the historic flooding.

Republican state legislative leaders sounded hopeful on the General Assembly's opening day this week that they could work with Stein to approve more hurricane recovery money early in 2025.

On more partisan issues, Stein is in a better position than Cooper was to permanently block legislation that he vetoes. Republicans are now one House seat short of the veto-proof majority they held in the legislature during Cooper's term, meaning Stein's vetoes can hold if House Democrats remain united.

When Cooper became governor in 2017, snow and sleet forced cancellations of a public swearing-in ceremony and inaugural parade. Four years later, after Cooper's reelection, COVID-19 restrictions derailed gatherings. A made-for-television inauguration ceremony for Cooper and other Council members was held outside the Executive Mansion.

## New Orleans attack raises familiar debate: Can Bourbon Street be made safe?

By JACK BROOK, JIM MUSTIAN and SARA CLINE Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The second-guessing began before the bodies had been cleared from the debris of the deadly Bourbon Street truck attack.

A law firm signed up survivors of what it called a "predictable and preventable" tragedy. Politicians parried blame for the latest mass-casualty event in New Orleans' infamous adult playground. And investigations targeted the ill-fated removal of the street's bollards, steel columns designed to restrict vehicle access.

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But as the city seeks to recover and beefs up security ahead of next month's Super Bowl and Carnival season, law enforcement and community leaders are confronting an existential question as old as the entertainment district: Can Bourbon Street be protected in a way that preserves its unique, round-the-clock revelry?

"Once we start to hear what it's actually going to take to secure the French Quarter and the Mardi Gras parade routes, I don't know if this city is going to have an appetite for all that," said Rafael Goyeneche, a former prosecutor who is president of the Metropolitan Crime Commission watchdog group.

"If we try to make New Orleans as secure as an airport, people aren't going to like it," he said. "This isn't Disney World."

Shock and grief have given way to finger-pointing over whether additional security could have stopped — or mitigated — the Islamic State group-inspired attack, which killed 14 people when Shamsud-Din Jabbar drove a pickup through a New Year's crowd.

In the difficult days since, proposals for new safety measures have ranged from banning vehicular traffic in the French Quarter to turning the historic neighborhood into a state park.

Many locals who depend on tourism agree that something has to give.

"It's just too wide open. It's too trustworthy down here," said Bryan Casey, 53, a native New Orleanian who has worked on Bourbon Street since the late 1990s and waits tables at Galatoire's, an upscale restaurant that opened in 1905. Casey and his colleagues wiped blood off the wall after the attack as bodies lay mangled in front of the establishment.

Bourbon Street should have been made into a pedestrian mall long ago, Casey said: "There's people watching and they're going to get you, so you got to be careful."

Much of the immediate focus has centered on the absence of the bollards, which had stopped working reliably and were being replaced ahead of the Super Bowl.

City leaders have been criticized for the timing of that project and failing to implement a suitable replacement during their repair. A lawsuit filed Thursday on behalf of victims alleged the city "had years of opportunities" to patch up vulnerabilities.

But a half dozen current and former law enforcement officials in Louisiana described the bollard issue as a red herring, saying that even if they had been functioning they may not have prevented the attack given how hell-bent Jabbar appeared on creating carnage.

The broader safety conundrum is more complex, they said, given the quarter's dense, alcohol-fueled crowds and structural challenges inherent to an early 18th-century neighborhood built for horse-drawn buggies. Policing here is even more complicated in a city with notoriously high crime, a chronic shortage of officers and a new state law allowing permit-less concealed carry of firearms.

"I don't know of another place that has the same challenges for protecting people," said Ronnie Jones, a public safety consultant who served in the Louisiana State Police for 32 years, including as deputy superintendent.

"A lot of people in public safety don't want to talk about it, but we just can't guarantee that everybody going to the French Quarter is going to be safe," Jones said. "There's a tradeoff here, and we've never, ever, found that balance."

The city's newly hired security consultant, William J. Bratton, a former New York City police commissioner, said he recognizes the importance of maintaining a festive atmosphere during carnival even as he works with city police to bolster security over the next few months.

"One of the things I talked about is developing security provisions that don't change Mardi Gras, don't change the flavor of it, the excitement of it and the nature of it," Bratton said at a news conference this week. "To develop security protocols that don't become so intrusive, so disruptive."

The New Year's attack was far from the first deadly vehicle incident on Bourbon Street.

In 1972, one person died and 18 were injured when a teenager fleeing police in a stolen car crashed through metal barricades and sped down the thoroughfare at 70 mph (about 113 kph). Ten years later a man smashed through steel barricades and careened down nearly seven blocks, injuring at least 11. And in 1995, an intoxicated 63-year-old man drove a beer van through a crowd attending a St. Patrick's Day



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parade, killing one and injuring 38.

More recent Bourbon Street tragedies have involved gun violence, including multiple fatal shootings last year. In 2014, a mass shooting killed a 21-year-old woman and wounded nine others, including a bystander shot through her cheek. Two years later a person was killed and nine others were wounded in a shooting.

Many of those incidents prompted similar calls for change and accountability, raising questions about civil liberties and what, if anything, the city is willing to sacrifice in the name of public safety. City, state and federal law enforcement officials have offered varying solutions that critics have said were mere stopgaps, likening them to putting Band-Aids on a wound that has never quite healed.

"I was part of those conversations when we were looking to create a very robust security package, including metal detectors and infrared technology that could alert if something metal was in someone's clothing — none of that ever materialized," said Michael Harrison, a former head of New Orleans police who later became commissioner in Baltimore. "There are ways to prevent ramming attacks. There's not yet a way to prevent people from walking on Bourbon Street and doing bad things."

Pedicab driver Jody "Cajun Queen" Boudreaux, 65, said Bourbon Street has always embodied New Orleans' laissez-faire charm and she is not sure whether the city has the will to shore up its lax security.

"We're a target, clearly. They know we have holes, they know we are all scrambling and they also know that our vibe is 'Laissez les bons temps rouler'" she said, invoking the famous Cajun French saying that means, "Let the good times roll." "I think it can be balanced, I truly do."

Andrew Monteverde, co-vice president of the New Orleans Firefighters Association, said first responders and law enforcement deal with a raft of emergencies, from extinguishing fires to saving people in cardiac arrest. The more that limited resources are dedicated to one part of the city, he added, the less is available to deal for elsewhere.

"Could you possibly make the French Quarter so secure that you couldn't even spit on the sidewalk?" he said. "Maybe, but then what would you trade off?"

At The Beach on Bourbon Street, where workers screen clubgoers at every entrance with handheld metal detectors, general manager Woody Ryder has become inured to the frequent shootings after working there for seven years. "There's crazy people out there," he said.

But the recent attack has made him uneasy. Ryder and his staff are still recovering from witnessing what he and others likened to a "war zone."

"The city has already failed us," he said. "I'm hesitant as soon as I turn on Bourbon Street."

## **Biden honors Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom**

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Saturday honored Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with distinction, the highest civilian award given by the president, saying the pontiff was "a light of faith, hope, and love that shines brightly across the world."

Biden had been scheduled to present the medal to the pope in person on Saturday in Rome on what was to be the final overseas trip of his presidency, but Biden canceled his travel plans so he could monitor the wildfires in California.

The White House said Biden bestowed the award to the pope during a phone call in which they also discussed efforts to promote peace and alleviate suffering around the world.

It's the only time Biden has presented the honor with distinction during his presidency. Biden himself is a recipient of the award with distinction, recognized when he was vice president by then-President Barack Obama in a surprise ceremony eight years ago. That was the only time in Obama's two terms when he awarded that version of the medal.

The citation for the pope says "his mission of serving the poor has never ceased. A loving pastor, he joyfully answers children's questions about God. A challenging teacher, he commands us to fight for peace and protect the planet. A welcoming leader, he reaches out to different faiths."

Biden is preparing to leave office Jan. 20 and has doled out honors to prominent individuals, including

supporters and allies, in recent weeks.

## **Sam Moore, who sang 'Soul Man' in Sam & Dave duo, dies at 89 because of surgery complications**

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (AP) — Sam Moore, the surviving half and higher voice of the 1960s duo Sam & Dave that was known for such definitive hits of the era as "Soul Man" and "Hold On, I'm Comin,'" has died. He was 89.

Publicist Jeremy Westby said Moore died Friday morning in Coral Gables, Florida, due to complications while recovering from surgery. No additional details were immediately available.

Moore, whose admirers ranged from Al Green to Bruce Springsteen, was inducted with Dave Prater into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

"Over on E Street, we are heartbroken to hear of the death of Sam Moore, one of America's greatest soul voices," Springsteen said Saturday on Instagram. "He was filled with stories of the halcyon days of soul music, and to the end had that edge of deep authenticity in his voice I could only wonder at."

At the Memphis, Tennessee-based Stax Records, Moore and Prater ranked only behind Otis Redding as the label's biggest stars. They transformed the "call and response" of gospel music into a frenzied stage show and recorded some of soul music's most enduring hits, which also included "You Don't Know Like I Know," "When Something is Wrong With My Baby" and "I Thank You."

Most of their hits were written and produced by the team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter and featured the Stax house band Booker T. & the MGs, whose guitarist Steve Cropper received one of music's most famous shoutouts when Sam & Dave called "Play it, Steve" midway through "Soul Man."

Like many '60s soul acts, Sam & Dave faded after the decade ended. But "Soul Man" hit the charts again in the late 1970s when "Blues Brothers" John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd recorded it with many of the same musicians. Moore had mixed feelings about the hit becoming associated with the "Saturday Night Live" stars, remembering how young people believed it originated with the Blues Brothers.

In 2008, the movie "Soul Men" depicted a pair of aging, estranged singers who bore more than a little resemblance to Sam & Dave. Moore lost a lawsuit claiming the resemblance was too close.

He also spent years suing Prater after Prater hired a substitute and toured as the New Sam & Dave. Prater died in a 1988 car crash in Georgia.

In 1993, Moore was among numerous artists who pressed legal claims that the record industry had cheated them out of retirement benefits. Moore and other artists sued multiple record companies and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Moore told The Associated Press in 1994 that he joined the legal effort after learning, despite his million-selling records, his pension amounted to just \$2,285, which he could take as a lump sum or in payments of \$73 monthly.

"Two thousand dollars for my lifetime?" Moore said then. "If you're making a profit off of me, give me some too. Don't give me cornbread and tell me it's biscuits."

Moore also became involved in politics. He wrote the song "Dole Man," modeled on "Soul Man," for Republican Bob Dole's presidential campaign in 1996. In 2017, he was among the few entertainers who performed for Republican President Donald Trump's inaugural festivities. Eight years earlier, Moore had objected when Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign used "Hold On, I'm Comin'."

Moore was born Oct. 12, 1935, in Miami and got his start singing in church.

He and Prater performed in soul and R&B clubs in the 1950s, but didn't meet until 1961 in Miami. Moore helped coach Prater on the lyrics of a song and they quickly became a popular local duo. In 1965, after signing with Atlantic Records, producer Jerry Wexler sent them to the label's Stax subsidiary in Memphis.

Moore and Prater argued often and Moore told the AP in 2006 that a drug habit, which he kicked in 1981, played a part in the band's troubles and later made entertainment executives leery of giving him a fresh start. The duo broke up in 1970 and neither had another major hit, though Moore did work often with Springsteen, whom Moore would call one of his closest friends. They performed together on stage

and sang on each other's albums, including on the high energy duet "Real World."

"RIP Sam Moore," Springsteen sideman Steve Van Zandt posted on X. "Him and Dave Prater were the inspiration for me and Johnny to start Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes. An important righteous wonderful man."

He married his wife, Joyce, in 1982, and she helped him get treatment for his addiction that he credited with saving his life.

"I did a lot of cruise ships, I did a lot of oldies shows," during those struggles, he said, adding that he once opened for a group of Elvis impersonators.

"That's funny to think back to it now. And I did a lot of shows where if I did a show with an oldie show, I had to actually audition," he said. "But you know what? You keep your mouth shut and you get up there and you sing as hard and perform as hard as you can, and get the little money and go on about your business and try and pay those bills. I'm laughing about it now, but at that time, man, it was really serious."

Moore kept recording and singing. He was a frequent performer at the Kennedy Center Honors and sang for Obama among other presidents.

Moore is survived by his wife, Joyce; daughter, Michell; and two grandchildren.

## Rudy Giuliani's Florida condo and World Series rings at stake in trial over assets

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After he was found in contempt twice in one week, Rudy Giuliani faces another potentially treacherous week ahead at a trial to determine whether his Florida condominium and three World Series rings must be turned over to two Georgia election workers who won a \$148 million defamation award against him.

The former New York City mayor was found in contempt on Friday by a Washington judge for repeating false claims that the workers corruptly counted votes in the 2020 presidential election. Last Monday, a New York judge found him in contempt for failing to adequately turn over evidence about his assets.

On Thursday, Giuliani, 80, faces trial in New York over whether he can keep his Palm Beach, Florida, condominium, which he asserts he established as his permanent residence a year ago, and whether he must turn over three World Series rings that he says he gave to his son in 2018.

Judge Lewis J. Liman, who will preside over the juryless trial in Manhattan federal court, is the same jurist who found Giuliani in contempt last Monday.

With his contempt order, Liman made rulings setting Giuliani back in the upcoming trial. He said Giuliani cannot offer testimony about texts or emails to show that he moved his residence to Florida since he failed to turn over any texts or emails as part of the pretrial exchange of evidence between lawyers.

Liman said he can also make adverse inferences about "gaps" in evidence resulting from Giuliani's failure to turn over materials, including by rejecting any claims that Giuliani changed his professional services, such as doctors and lawyers, to individuals practicing in Florida after Jan. 1, 2024.

Giuliani has conceded that he sometimes did not turn over everything requested in the case because he believed what was being sought was overly broad, inappropriate or even a "trap" set by lawyers for the plaintiffs.

A request for comment Saturday was sent to a spokesperson for the former private attorney to President-elect Donald Trump.

At a November hearing, Giuliani said he was "not impoverished," but his assets were tied up because of multiple legal proceedings he faces in several states.

Liman also issued an order several days ago asking all sides to describe whether the World Series rings Giuliani purchased from the New York Yankees should be stored with the court for safekeeping until it can be decided who will get them.

Lawyers for Andrew Giuliani said the rings are safely located in the bedroom closet of his New York City residence in a doorman building.

The judge raised the possibility of the court keeping the rings after Giuliani testified last Monday that he doesn't know what happened to a valuable signed Joe DiMaggio baseball jersey after he last saw it at his Manhattan apartment about four months ago.

Following the testimony, lawyers for the election workers submitted written arguments to refute the claims that Giuliani gave the rings to his son in 2018. They noted, for instance, that Giuliani's bankruptcy submission in 2023 listed the rings among his property.

The Florida property and World Series rings are the primary assets still in dispute from a portfolio of Giuliani assets that was estimated to exceed \$10 million. The Palm Beach condominium is believed to be worth more than \$3 million.

He has already given up assets including a New York City apartment worth about \$5 million, a 1980 Mercedes once owned by movie star Lauren Bacall and numerous luxury watches and other belongings.

The Georgia election workers, Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Wandrea "Shaye" Moss, won the defamation judgment against Giuliani after saying his lies about the 2020 presidential election being stolen led to death threats that made them fear for their lives.

## **The LA county wildfires could be the costliest in US history, early estimates say**

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The wildfires that erupted this week across Los Angeles County are still raging, but already are projected to be among the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history.

The devastating blazes have killed at least 11 people and incinerated more than 12,000 structures since Tuesday, laying waste to entire neighborhoods once home to multimillion-dollar properties.

While it's still too early for an accurate tally of the financial toll, the losses so far likely make the wildfires the costliest ever in the U.S., according to various estimates.

A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion. By comparison, AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic losses caused by Hurricane Helene, which tore across six southeastern states last fall, at \$225 billion to \$250 billion.

"This will be the costliest wildfire in California modern history and also very likely the costliest wildfire in U.S. modern history, because of the fires occurring in the densely populated areas around Los Angeles with some of the highest-valued real estate in the country," said Jonathan Porter, the private firm's chief meteorologist.

AccuWeather factors in a multitude of variables in its estimates, including damage to homes, businesses, infrastructure and vehicles, as well as immediate and long-term health care costs, lost wages and supply chain interruptions.

The insurance broker Aon PLC also said Friday that the L.A. County wildfires will likely end up being the costliest in U.S. history, although it did not issue an estimate. Aon ranks a wildfire known as the Camp Fire in Paradise, California, in 2018 as the costliest in U.S. history up to now at \$12.5 billion, adjusted for inflation. The Camp Fire killed 85 people and destroyed about 11,000 homes.

The L.A. County wildfires, which were fueled by hurricane-force Santa Ana winds and an extreme drought, remained largely uncontained Saturday. That means the final tally of losses from the blazes is likely to increase, perhaps substantially.

"To put this into perspective, the total damage and economic loss from this wildfire disaster could reach nearly 4% of the annual GDP of the state of California," AccuWeather's Porter said.

In a report Friday, Moody's also concluded that the wildfires would prove to be the costliest in U.S. history, specifically because they have ripped through densely populated areas with higher-end properties.

While the state is no stranger to major wildfires, they have generally been concentrated in inland areas that are not densely populated. That's led to less destruction per acre, and in damage to less expensive homes, Moody's noted.

That's far from the case this time, with one of the largest conflagrations destroying thousands of properties



across the Pacific Palisades and Malibu, home to many Hollywood stars and executives with multimillion-dollar properties. Already, numerous celebrities have lost homes to the fires.

"The scale and intensity of the blazes, combined with their geographic footprint, suggest a staggering price tag, both in terms of the human cost and the economic toll," Moody's analysts wrote. The report did not include a preliminary cost estimate of the wildfire damage.

It could be several months before a concrete tally of the financial losses from the wildfires will be possible. "We're in the very early stages of this disaster," Porter said.

## Ukraine says it captured 2 North Korean soldiers fighting for Russia

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's forces have captured two North Korean soldiers fighting alongside Russian forces in Russia's Kursk border region, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday, the first such claim by Kyiv since North Korea sent thousands of troops to shore up Moscow's war effort on the other side of the world.

Zelenskyy made the comments days after Ukraine, facing a slow Russian onslaught in the east, began pressing new attacks in Kursk to retain ground captured in a lightning incursion in August — the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II.

Moscow's counterattack has left Ukrainian forces outstretched and demoralized, killing and wounding thousands and retaking more than 40% of the 984 square kilometers (380 square miles) of Kursk Ukraine had seized.

"Our soldiers have captured North Korean soldiers in Kursk. These are two soldiers who, although wounded, survived, were taken to Kyiv, and are communicating" with Ukrainian security services, Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram messaging app.

He shared photos of two men resting on cots in a room with bars over the windows. Both wore bandages, one around his jaw and the other around both hands and wrists.

Zelenskyy said capturing the soldiers alive was "not easy." He asserted that Russian and North Korean forces fighting in Kursk have tried to conceal the presence of North Korean soldiers, including by killing wounded comrades on the battlefield to avoid their capture and interrogation by Kyiv.

Ukraine's security service SBU on Saturday said one of the soldiers had no documents at all, while the other had been carrying a Russian military ID card in the name of a man from Tuva, a Russian region bordering Mongolia.

According to the SBU, one of the soldiers claimed he had been told he was going to Russia for training, rather than to fight against Ukraine. He said his combat unit, made up of North Koreans, only received one week of training alongside Russian troops before being sent to the front.

A senior Ukrainian military official said last month that a couple hundred North Korean troops fighting alongside Russian forces in Kursk have been killed or wounded in battle.

Ukraine estimates that 10,000 to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia. The White House and Pentagon said the North Korean forces have been battling on the front lines in largely infantry positions. They have been fighting with Russian units and, in some cases, independently around Kursk.

Its full-scale invasion three years ago left Russia holding a fifth of Ukraine, and Zelenskyy has hinted that he hopes controlling Kursk will help force Moscow to negotiate an end to the war. But multiple Ukrainian and Western officials in Kyiv last month told The Associated Press that they fear gambling on Kursk will weaken the whole 1000-kilometer (621-mile) front line, and Ukraine is losing precious ground in the east.

Zelenskyy welcomes new US sanctions against Russia

Zelenskyy spoke to U.S. President Joe Biden following the announcement of a new U.S. sanctions package on Russia's critically important energy sector, according to Zelenskyy's Telegram account.

The sanctions target more than 180 oil-carrying vessels that are suspected to be part of a shadow fleet utilized by the Kremlin to evade oil sanctions, as well as Russian energy majors, traders, oil field service firms and energy officials. Several of the vessels targeted are also suspected of shipping sanctioned Iranian

oil, according to the Treasury Department.

"It is very important that America has now struck at Russia's shadow tanker fleet and at companies such as Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftegaz, which accumulate money for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin personally. He must feel the price of his war, losing from his wallets," Zelenskyy said, referencing two Russian energy giants blacklisted along with dozens of subsidiaries.

In response to the sanctions, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that "Washington's hostile actions will not go unanswered" but did not provide details of any planned countermeasures.

High number of Ukrainian drones hints at improved arms industry

Meanwhile in Russia, Ukrainian drones overnight slammed into apartment blocks in western Tambov province, blowing out windows and damaging balconies in two five-story blocks, acting regional Gov. Yegveniy Pervyshov said. There were injuries, he said, without giving details.

Russia shot down 85 Ukrainian drones, mostly targeting the south and west, the Defense Ministry reported Saturday. At the same time, Russia attacked its neighbor with 74 drones overnight into Saturday, according to Ukraine's air force.

The relatively high number of Ukrainian drones, as cited by Russian officials, appeared to hint at Kyiv's efforts to ramp up domestic weapons production with the likely goal of inflicting damage comparable to that wrought by Moscow.

## Uyghurs detained in Thailand say they face deportation and persecution in China

By DAKE KANG and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A group of Uyghur men who were detained in Thailand over a decade ago say that the Thai government is preparing to deport them to China, alarming activists and family members who say the men are at risk of abuse and torture if they are sent back.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press, 43 Uyghur men held in Bangkok made a public appeal to halt what they called an imminent threat of deportation.

"We could be imprisoned, and we might even lose our lives," the letter said. "We urgently appeal to all international organizations and countries concerned with human rights to intervene immediately to save us from this tragic fate before it is too late."

The Uyghurs are a Turkic, majority Muslim ethnicity native to China's far west Xinjiang region. After decades of conflict with Beijing over discrimination and suppression of their cultural identity, the Chinese government launched a brutal crackdown on the Uyghurs that some Western governments deem a genocide. Hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs, possibly a million or more, were swept into camps and prisons, with former detainees reporting abuse, disease, and in some cases, death.

Over 300 Uyghurs fleeing China were detained in 2014 by Thai authorities near the Malaysian border. In 2015, Thailand deported 109 detainees to China against their will, prompting an international outcry. Another group of 173 Uyghurs, mostly women and children, were sent to Turkey, leaving 53 Uyghurs stuck in Thai immigration detention and seeking asylum. Since then, five have died in detention, including two children.

Of the 48 still detained by Thai authorities, five are serving prison terms after a failed escape attempt. It is unclear whether they face the same fate as those in immigration detention.

Advocates and relatives describe harsh conditions in immigration detention. They say the men are fed poorly, kept in overcrowded concrete cells with few toilets, denied sanitary goods like toothbrushes or razors, and are forbidden contact with relatives, lawyers, and international organizations. The Thai government's treatment of the detainees may constitute a violation of international law, according to a February 2024 letter sent to the Thai government by United Nations human rights experts.

The immigration police said they have been trying to take care of the detainees as best as they could.

Recordings and chat records obtained exclusively by the AP show that on Jan. 8, the Uyghur detainees were asked to sign voluntary deportation papers by Thai immigration officials.

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The move panicked detainees, as similar documents were presented to the Uyghurs deported to China in 2015. The detainees refused to sign.

Three people, including a Thai lawmaker and two others in touch with Thai authorities, told the AP there have been recent discussions within the government about deporting the Uyghurs to China, though the people had not yet seen or heard of any formal directive to do so.

Two of the people said that Thai officials pushing for the deportations are choosing to do so now because this year is the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China, and because of the perception that backlash from Washington will be muted as the U.S. prepares for a presidential transition in less than two weeks.

The people spoke on condition of anonymity in order to describe sensitive internal discussions. The Thai and Chinese foreign ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Beijing says the Uyghurs are jihadists, but has not presented evidence. Uyghur activists and rights groups say the men are innocent and expressed alarm over their possible deportation, saying they face persecution, imprisonment, and possible death back in China.

"There's no evidence that the 43 Uyghurs have committed any crime," said Peter Irwin, Associate Director for Research and Advocacy at the Uyghur Human Rights Project. "The group has a clear right not to be deported and they're acting within international law by fleeing China."

On Saturday morning, the detention center where the Uyghurs are being held was quiet. A guard told a visiting AP journalist the center was closed until Monday.

Two people with direct knowledge of the matter told the AP that all of the Uyghurs detained in Thailand submitted asylum applications to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which the AP verified by reviewing copies of the letters. The U.N. agency acknowledged receipt of the applications but has been barred from visiting the Uyghurs by the Thai government to this day, the people said.

The discussions of possible deportation had also reached the UN.

"We heard the unconfirmed reports as well and promptly checked with the authorities who have assured us to the contrary," said Babar Baloch, a spokesperson for UNHCR. "We continue to remind the authorities of their obligations on non-refoulement and to advocate for alternatives to detention."

The principle of non-refoulement, under international law, states that no one should be returned to a country where they may face torture.

Relatives of three of the Uyghurs detained told the AP that they were worried about the safety of their loved ones.

"We are all in the same situation — constant worry and fear," said Bilal Ablet, whose elder brother is detained in Thailand. "World governments all know about this, but I think they're pretending not to see or hear anything because they're afraid of Chinese pressure."

Ablet added that Thai officials told his brother no other government was willing to accept the Uyghurs, though an April 2023 letter authored by the chairwoman of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand first leaked to the New York Times Magazine and independently seen by the AP said there are "countries that are ready to take these detainees to settle down."

Abdullah Muhammad, a Uyghur living in Turkey, said his father Muhammad Ahun is one of the men detained in Thailand. Muhammad says though his father crossed into Thailand illegally, he was innocent of any other crime and had already paid fines and spent over a decade in detention.

"I don't understand what this is for. Why?" Muhammad said. "We have nothing to do with terrorism and we have not committed any terrorism."

## **NBA postpones Rockets vs. Hawks game because of winter storm**

ATLANTA (AP) — The game between the Houston Rockets and Atlanta Hawks scheduled for Saturday has been postponed because of a winter storm.

The NBA said the decision was made "to prioritize the safety of the players, fans and staff due to the severe weather and hazardous icy conditions in the Atlanta area."

The league said a date for a rescheduled game will be announced at a later time. The Rockets' team flight arrived in Atlanta before the postponement was announced.

A winter storm dumped snow and ice on the Atlanta area Friday and roads were expected to refreeze Saturday night.

Power outage numbers around Atlanta crept up Friday night as falling trees on power lines became a widespread issue. More than 110,000 customers were without electricity, mostly in the Atlanta area.

On Friday, four passengers were injured after a Delta Air Lines jet bound for Minneapolis aborted its takeoff. Delta spokesperson Morgan Durrant said the plane experienced an engine problem.

While the issue happened during the snowstorm that caused widespread cancellations and delays in Atlanta — the world's busiest airport — officials couldn't say if the problem was related to the weather.

The 201 passengers, two pilots and five flight attendants aboard evacuated the Boeing 757-300 using inflatable slides and were bused back to a concourse. One of the injured passengers was taken to a hospital, while three were treated at the airport for minor injuries.

## Many Democrats don't think they'll see a woman become president, AP-NORC poll finds

By STEVE PEOPLES and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Democrats are harboring strong feelings of stress and gloom as the new year begins. And many are questioning whether their party's commitment to diverse candidates — especially women — may lead to further political struggles in the Donald Trump era.

A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that a significant number of Democrats believe that it may be decades before the United States will get its first female president.

Specifically, about 4 in 10 Democrats said it's "not very likely" or "not at all likely" that a woman will be elected to the nation's highest office in their lifetime, according to a December AP-NORC poll. That's compared with about one-quarter of Republicans who feel the same.

While despondency is hardly unique for a political party after a high-profile loss, that finding reflects the deep depression that has set in among Democrats about the country and their party after Trump soundly defeated Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee.

Such concerns may already be shaping the Democratic National Committee's search for a new leader. For the first time in more than a decade, the top candidates for the job are all white men.

And looking further ahead, the party's pessimism is influencing early conversations about the contest for the 2028 presidential nomination.

"We knew men hated women. The last election showed, for some of us, that we underestimated the extent to which some women hate other women," said Gilda Cobb-Hunter, a Democratic state representative from South Carolina and former president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. "America is as racist and misogynist as it has always been."

Democrats have nominated a woman to run against Trump in two of the past three presidential elections. In both cases, Trump won decisively, over Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Harris in 2024. The Democrat who unseated Trump — Joe Biden in 2020 — was a white man.

Adding insult to injury for many Democrats was the long list of allegations brought by women against Trump. He was found liable in civil court for sexual abuse and convicted for a hush money case involving an adult film star. He was once caught on tape bragging that he could grab women's genitals without consent because he was a celebrity.

Still, Trump narrowly carried every key swing state in November. Harris had the advantage among women, winning 53% to Trump's 46%, but that margin was somewhat narrower than Biden's. Trump's support held steady among white women, with slightly more than half supporting him, similar to 2020.

Most Democrats — about 7 in 10 — believe 2025 will be a worse year for the U.S. than 2024, the AP-NORC poll found. That's compared with about 4 in 10 U.S. adults who feel that way.



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The poll also found that Democrats were less likely to be feeling "happy" or "hopeful" about 2025 for them personally. Instead, about 4 in 10 Democrats said "stressed" described their feelings extremely or very well, while roughly one-third of Democrats said this about the word "gloomy."

Meanwhile, majorities of Republicans and conservatives said "happy" described how they feel about 2025 at least very well. A similar share said the same about "hopeful."

"It's so dark out there right now," said poll respondent Rachel Wineman, a 41-year-old Democrat from Murrieta, California. "My family and I are circling the wagons, trying to keep our heads down and survive."

There are early signs that this loss has triggered questions about a core commitment of the modern-day Democratic Party to support minority groups, including women, while pushing diverse candidates into positions of power.

Some Democratic leaders fear that Trump's strong success with working-class white voters — and his modest gains among Blacks and Latinos in the election — may signal a political realignment that could transform the political landscape for years to come unless the party changes its approach.

The vote for a DNC chair offers the first clue as to the direction of the party during the second Trump administration. The election is three weeks away, and the leading candidates are Ben Wikler, the Wisconsin state chair, and Ken Martin, the Minnesota state party chair.

Either would be the first white man in the job since Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine left the position in 2011.

Martin and Wikler are considered the strong front-runners in a field of eight candidates who qualified for a DNC candidate forum Saturday, the first of four such gatherings before the Feb. 1 election at the committee's winter meeting in suburban Washington.

Two candidates are women: former presidential contender Marianne Williamson and Quintessa Hathaway, a former congressional candidate, educator and civil rights activist.

The outgoing chair, Jaime Harrison, who is Black, said in a statement that the committee will be well-positioned to compete in future elections and push back against Trump's policies.

"Democrats stand ready to hold him accountable," Harrison said. "We will continue to invest in all 50 states to build power from the local level on up and elect Democrats across the country."

Meanwhile, some rank-and-file Democrats in early primary states are openly wondering whether the party's next White House nominee would be at a disadvantage if that person is not a straight white man who is Christian. Barack Obama is the only Black man to have been elected president in American history.

New Hampshire Democrat Thalia Flores said Harris' loss has made her rethink the political viability of rising stars such as Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who is gay, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who is Jewish, or Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, the most prominent woman expected to weigh a 2028 presidential bid.

"Kamala's loss can impact those kind of candidates, too, because anybody who's not a mainstream white guy is maybe not a good bet," Flores said, indicating that such concerns would not affect her personal vote in the next presidential primary. "It's a shame that we're even having the conversation."

She added, "The American people can't seem to support a woman."

Overall, the AP-NORC poll found that about one-quarter of Americans said it was extremely or very likely that the country will elect a woman as president in their lifetime. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults thought it was somewhat likely and about one-third said it was not very likely or not at all likely.

Such feelings are consistent among Americans regardless of age or gender, although Black Americans are more likely than white or Hispanic adults to say it's "not very likely" or "not likely at all" to happen in their lifetime.

Sarah Burnett, a 49-year-old small business owner from Edgerton, Missouri, said she's feeling "dread" about the direction of the country in 2025.

"All of us are not looking forward to the next four years," she said.

As for whether she thinks the U.S. will elect a woman in her lifetime, she said she's trying to be optimistic.

"Yes, there's going to be sexism involved, misogyny, the patriarchy and all of that. ... But we did have a Black president," Burnett said. "So yes, I would expect a woman to be elected. Do I have high expectations? No."

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## Today in History: January 12

### Joe Namath, New York Jets win Super Bowl III

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Jan. 12, the 12th day of 2025. There are 353 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 12, 1969, the biggest upset in Super Bowl history occurred as the New York Jets of the American Football League defeated the Baltimore Colts of the National Football League 16-7 in Super Bowl III, played at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

Also on this date:

In 1915, the U.S. House of Representatives rejected, 204-174, a proposed constitutional amendment to give women nationwide the right to vote.

In 1932, Hattie W. Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman to win election to the U.S. Senate after initially being appointed to serve out the remainder of the term of her late husband, Thaddeus.

In 1935, aviator Amelia Earhart completed an 18-hour trip from Honolulu to Oakland, California, making her the first person to fly solo across any part of the Pacific Ocean.

In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma*, unanimously ruled that state law schools could not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race.

In 1959, Berry Gordy Jr. founded Motown Records (originally Tamla Records) in Detroit.

In 1966, "Batman" premiered on ABC, starring Adam West and Burt Ward.

In 2010, Haiti was struck by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that the Haitian government estimated killed some 300,000 people.

Today's birthdays: Author Haruki Murakami is 76. Filmmaker Wayne Wang is 76. Football Hall of Famer Drew Pearson is 74. Writer Walter Mosley is 73. Media personality Howard Stern is 71. Filmmaker John Lasseter is 68. Broadcast journalist Christiane Amanpour is 67. Actor Oliver Platt is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Dominique Wilkins is 65. Entrepreneur Jeff Bezos is 61. Musician-filmmaker Rob Zombie is 60. Rock singer Zack de la Rocha (Rage Against the Machine) is 55. Rapper Raekwon (Wu Tang Clan) is 55. Singer Melanie Chisholm (Spice Girls) is 51. Hockey Hall of Famer Marián Hossa is 46. Actor Issa Rae is 40. Singer Zayn Malik is 32.