

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, Jan. 20

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

NO SCHOOL

Boys JV/JH Wrestling at Redfield, 5:30 p.m.
Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 21

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, mixed vegetables, fruit, biscuits.
School Breakfast: Waffles.
School Lunch: Hot dots, tater tots.
Boys JH Basketball hosts Northwestern, 7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.
Girls Basketball hosts Northwestern (JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)
Boys Wrestling Tri-angular at Clark with Clark/Willow Lake and Hamlin, 6 p.m.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

Boys JH Invitational Wrestling at Simmons Middle School, 4 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
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 22

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Chicken Lo Mein, mixed vegetables.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

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1440

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

Inauguration Day

President-elect Donald Trump will be formally sworn in today, becoming the 47th president of the United States. The ceremony comes eight years after he was sworn in for his first term and makes Trump only the second US president to serve nonconsecutive terms alongside Grover Cleveland (1885-89, 1893-97). Former Ohio Sen. JD Vance will become the third-youngest vice president in history at 40 years old.

The event—typically held on the US Capitol's West Front, overlooking the National Mall—will be moved inside to the building's rotunda as a polar vortex brings plunging temperatures to most of the country. It marks the first time the ceremony has been held indoors since Ronald Reagan's second term in 1985.

All four living presidents—Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden—are expected to attend.

Trump is expected to take a number of actions on campaign priorities on his first day back in office, including reported immigration sweeps in Chicago targeting roughly 300 unauthorized migrants with histories of violent crimes starting tomorrow.

Gaza Truce Begins

Three Israeli women who were held hostage by Hamas in the Gaza Strip for roughly 470 days were released yesterday after a long-awaited ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel went into effect. About 90 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel were also released. The temporary truce is seen as a potential path to ending the 15-month war.

The three women are among a set of 33 hostages Hamas is expected to free in the next six weeks in exchange for hundreds of imprisoned Palestinians. The exchange is part of the first phase of the ceasefire deal, which includes a 42-day pause in fighting and a withdrawal of Israeli forces from densely populated areas in Gaza.

Negotiations for a second phase, in which more hostages will be freed, will begin next month. A third phase—to be fully determined later—is expected to focus on Gaza's reconstruction and the return of any remaining deceased hostages. Israel believes roughly 95 hostages remain, with about one-third deceased. Hamas abducted around 250 people during its Oct. 7, 2023, cross-border attack.

NFL's Final Four

The NFL conference championships are set after a weekend of action, with the final four featuring three familiar faces and one newcomer.

Led by star QB Patrick Mahomes, the Kansas City Chiefs return to the AFC championship for the seventh straight year, continuing their quest to become the first team in NFL history to win three consecutive Super Bowls. The Chiefs, who beat the Houston Texans 23-14, will face the Buffalo Bills, who held off the Baltimore Ravens 27-25.

In the NFC, the Washington Commanders reached their first conference championship since 1991, upsetting the top-seeded Detroit Lions 45-31. Washington will face a division rival in the Philadelphia Eagles, who outlasted the Los Angeles Rams 28-22. Philadelphia rode running back Saquon Barkley, who notched 205 yards, including touchdown runs of 78 and 62 yards.

All four will play next weekend, with the winners facing off Sunday, Feb. 9, in Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans.

Separately, No. 8 Ohio State and No. 7 Notre Dame face off tonight for the college football national championship (7:30 pm ET, ESPN). Ohio State enters as an 8.5-point favorite to win the title.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Moana 2" becomes Disney's third 2024 release to top \$1B at global box office ... and Disney's "Mufasa" leads MLK weekend box office.

Coco Gauff, Novak Djokovic, and Carlos Alcaraz among tennis stars advancing to 2025 Australian Open quarterfinals.

Bob Dylan memorabilia auction nets \$1.5M from the sale of around 60 items, including draft of lyrics for "Mr. Tambourine Man" that garnered \$508K.

Science & Technology

Apple suspends AI-powered news feature over inaccurate summaries of headlines and stories.

Ant study reveals the insects use simple rules via chemical signals to achieve smooth travel in large groups; researchers hope to apply learnings to autonomous vehicle traffic flows.

Researchers discover bacteria growing in a polymer solution form long, twisting cable-like structures; finding has applications ranging from treating cystic fibrosis to making new biofilms.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up Friday (S&P 500 1.0%, Dow 0.8%, Nasdaq 1.5%), with S&P and Dow posting best week since early November.

Justice Department sues Walgreens, alleges the chain knowingly filled millions of unlawful opioid prescriptions; suit follows four separate whistleblower complaints.

President-elect Donald Trump launches cryptocurrency; \$TRUMP passes \$11B market capitalization in two days, with fully diluted value near \$60B.

Politics & World Affairs

TikTok briefly goes dark, turns back on for US users as President-elect Donald Trump signals he will sign 90-day extension after taking office.

Death toll in LA fires reaches 27, Palisades and Eaton fires about 50% and 75% contained with risk of extreme wind returning this week; see updates.

CNN found liable of defamation over 2021 story suggesting US Navy veteran Zachary Young charged excessive fees and implying he was part of a black market to evacuate Afghans; network to pay \$5M in damages.

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The Presidential Medal of Freedom

By Aaron "Hammer" Grant

Having witnessed many medals bestowed by Presidents in the last few years, I thought it proper to write about what the Presidential Medal of Freedom is, and where it came from. Now, while I was active in the United States Marine Corps, I have witnessed many medals bestowed and have had the honor to conduct the ceremony on occasion. Every single time one was given, from the Medal of Honor to the Purple Heart, from the Silver Star to the National Defense Medal, every time was a good, sacred moment; and I saw it on their face. I don't have to tell you how hard it is to keep a straight face when a Purple Heart is bestowed - just imagine when a medal is bestowed, no matter what it is, it is never done lightly and is never done without sacrifice. Every single medal that is upon the chest of millions of military men and women, and millions of veterans was gotten with sacrifice. Medals represent deployments and battle - of course, but they also represent the missed Thanksgivings and Christmas. The cost of life and limb, and the cost of failed marriages. The missed birthdays and the father - daughter dance. Medals represent the full measure of service one gives to God, family, and country - a country that may never know their name. That is honor. Medals are so much more than cloth and anodized gold; they represent a life sacrificed by the one who bears them.

But what is the Presidential Medal of Freedom? Where did it come from? The idea was conceived by John F. Kennedy to honor civilian service. It is the highest honor a person may receive for faithful service in private or public endeavors recommended to the President, or by the President himself. It is equal alongside the Congressional Gold Medal bestowed for national appreciation of distinguished achievements particularly for the United States of America. But what makes the Presidential Medal of Freedom different is that the current President of the United States may bestow it upon whom he pleases, not just by recommendation. It may be bestowed to citizens and non-citizens - anyone who has significantly, virtuously contributed to the United States especially at the sacrifice of personal liberty and well-being. It is a medal unlike any other, and rightfully so. Nearly 700 of them bestowed since 1963, and it is also the only medal that has been recommended for nothing other than "distinction." A few of the well-known recipients are Mother Teresa, Margret Thatcher, Rosa Parks, and Fred "Mister" Rogers; all honored for significant contributions to society and world peace.

Mother Theresa was one of the most influential, remarkable women in history to receive the Medal. Serving the "poorest of the poor" from the slums of Calcutta to the Slavic states, Serbia, and so many others, the "Missionaries of Charity" that she founded grew to 4,500 nuns who were utterly dedicated to helping the poor. God knows how many lives have been saved thanks to the missionary of incredible women who now serve in over 130 countries. Margret Thatcher's ideals ought to be studied throughout the world. This longest-serving British Prime Minister was named the "Iron Lady" by journalists that covered her unswerving, uncompromising, and highly quotable "Thatcherism" that led to a British boom in what was a slugging, overregulated economy. Through the 1980's her leadership was admired even by enemies of her conservative policies. Rosa Parks, the "First Lady of Civil Rights" took more than a seat on a bus refusing to move for a white person, she aided the start of a movement that changed the world from generational hate to generational equality. And Mr. Rogers, the television star aired "Mister Rogers Neighborhood" from 1968-2001 emphasizing the emotional and physical needs of children in a society filled with broken homes. His mission, like Mother Teresa, Thatcher, and Parks' left the world a better place than when they found it. All of them are incredible models of human spirit, kindness, and compassion deserving honor indeed.

In the last few years, the Office of the President has bestowed thirty-five. The Presidential Medal of Freedom Honorees includes notables such as Robert F. Kennedy, Michael J. Fox, and Fannie Lou Hamer, and many others for making the world a better place. The president also chose George Soros and Hillary Clinton, personalities of whom many Americans outright despise. For good reason Soros did not attend the ceremony having his son receive it instead - George Soros is wanted in many countries for being an economic hitman, and billionaire financier of countless liberal district attorneys who now wage lawfare

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in modern America. His generously funds hundreds of non-profits whose money has delivered pallets of bricks to Portland just in time for demonstrators to pick them up. He funds the campaigns of anyone who will interpret the United States Constitution loosely and send down the memory hole hundreds of years of Constitutional wisdom in the name of "democracy." Touted as an "holocaust survivor," he did survive Nazi Germany – as a Hitler Youth Officer once saying, "it was the best time of my life." Almost none of this pertinent information is accessible thanks to his influence over information. The other infamous character, Hillary Clinton rightly was the Secretary of State under President Obama, but also presided over Benghazi, and an email controversy that every American ought to know about. She also is well-known for the "Clinton Foundation Scandal" where foreign governments chipped-in to buy influence in the White House. There is also an adage growing in America: "don't mess with a Clinton." It is a fact many of their liabilities have died under suspicious circumstances. There is so much more, but the point is clear: is this honor?

It is plain to see that the medal rests upon virtue. One of the realities of our Constitutional Republic is that it heavily rests upon the virtue of the President. Vested in America's first citizen, her Commander in Chief is the duty to build America by recognizing those who he admires as examples of what honor really looks like. Take notice of how the President stands behind the individual when he bestows the medal: a symbolic moment where the office honors the recipient – a role model, according to the President, whom all Americans ought to emulate. The virtue of the President, the virtue of the office is thereby seen in the ones whom he chooses to receive the highest honor. The waning days of every administration are filled with praise celebrating duty and sacrifice. The news captures the very moment in a collage of what the President strove for, and in his mind, what America ought to strive for.

The faces come and go, and the people watch it all live stream. Each receives the medal whether people agree with it or not. But I will proffer that all are role models indeed – some for virtue, some for vice. All of them are actors we have watched for many years. We have watched them make good choices, and bad ones. We have seen their conscience in a single word. If we have paid attention, we have seen what we ought to emulate, and what we should not. We have witnessed what is good for America, and what is not. Perhaps that's what really counts then. These are people of vice and virtue. What they have done for the good or detriment of America is mostly plain to see, so let's learn from them. More and more the office of the President is kin to the soul of America; it doesn't take the Presidential Medal of Freedom to see that. But if we choose to learn from the honorees behind the medal, who knows what sort of America we can build when duty, honor, and virtue are at the forefront of all of our minds.

Mr. Grant is a lifelong US Marine and veteran of the Iraq War. He is a Christian, Family guy, teacher, and award-winning author. He also heads a movement to honor the Purple Heart for combat-incurred PTSD, an undeniable war-wound that is the cause of so much veteran suicide. It is his mission to honor veterans for their daily, living sacrifice for America with a tangible recognition that America is with them even in the darkest hours. It is his belief that the Purple Heart properly honored will save countless lives. It is his hope that it is noticed by the President of the United States who can make it reality by the stroke of a pen.

By Design, Aaron "Hammer" Grant
Staff NCO - US Marine Corps
Author, Teacher, Consultant
Master of Military History
Combat Peer Support Specialist

Marine Corps League Commandant
Legion County Commander
V.F.W. Commander

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Kansas Governor Proposes another \$30M to Address Dwindling Water Supply

Gov. Laura Kelly says it's up to lawmakers now to ensure western Kansas doesn't dry up and become deserted

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly proposed creating a state natural resources office and spending another \$30 million each year to address the state's water crisis in her State of the State address Wednesday night.

In her speech, Kelly, a Democrat, looked back over the first 25 years of the 21st century and said she sees "so many good things on the horizon" in the next 75 years. But she called the state's dwindling water supply "seriously concerning."

"Without that water, the agricultural industry that fuels our economy and sustains our rural way of life cannot survive," Kelly said.

The Ogallala Aquifer, which provides water to the western third of the state, has been dwindling for decades. But despite warnings over the years that the Ogallala, the largest underground store of freshwater in the nation, was a finite resource, the state allowed crop irrigation to drain parts of the aquifer to crisis levels.

"Forget making it 75 years down the road," she said. "Some parts of western Kansas don't have the groundwater to last another 75 years."

For that reason, Kelly said, she and other lawmakers have been working to "change decades of inaction on our water supply." Officials have spread out across the state to listen to farmers, ranchers and other stakeholders.

"As a result, we've set a goal: from now on, each generation will work to protect our water supply for the next two generations that follow," she said, calling it "the multigenerational promise."

Kelly's budget proposal, expected to be released Thursday, will include another \$30 million each year for water priorities. That's on top of an additional \$35 million the Kansas Legislature authorized for water priorities in 2023.

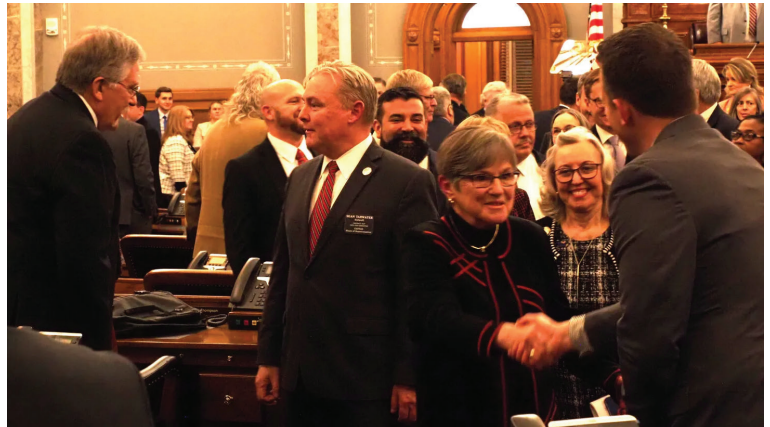
She did not specify how the additional resources might be spent. The state has been pushing local groundwater agencies to come up with plans to address the aquifer decline.

To address the state's water crisis, Kelly proposed creating a singular office to govern water issues and streamline conservation efforts. Right now, she said, there are 14 agencies governing water in Kansas, making it "difficult, if not impossible, to align efforts around policy planning and investment."

Kansas lawmakers considered reorganizing state agencies that address water in 2022, but it never made it out of the Kansas House Water Committee.

Kelly also proposed creating a long-term strategy "to ensure that Kansans have the water supply they need to exist ... for generations to come."

More than 35 years ago, Kelly said, the Kansas Legislature created the first comprehensive transportation plan to effectively build and manage roads and other infrastructure. It needs something similar, she



Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly proposed spending more money to preserve the state's dwindling water supply in her State of the State Address Wednesday night. (Grace Hills/Kansas Reflector)

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said, to ensure Kansans "have the water needed to farm their land, preserve their communities and their way of life."

Kelly said the decisions lawmakers make touch "every aspect of the lives of the people we work for." She said the Kansas the next generations will inherit "is up to us right now."

"Is our agricultural economy booming because we preserved our water ... or is rural Kansas dried up and deserted?" Kelly said. "That's up to us."

Allison Kite is a data reporter for The Missouri Independent and Kansas Reflector, with a focus on the environment and agriculture. A graduate of the University of Kansas, she's covered state government in both Topeka and Jefferson City, and most recently was City Hall reporter for The Kansas City Star.

Kansas Reflector is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.

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Roncalli JV Girls
Roncalli C Boys
Roncalli JV Boys
Webster C Girls
Webster JV Girls



Company Executives Fight Lawsuit over Junked Wind-Turbine Blades

Global Fiberglass Solutions and its CEO, Donald Lilly, are named as defendants in the case, as is Ronald Albrecht, one of Global's corporate officers.

The top executives of a company accused of abandoning junked wind-turbine blades across Iowa say they shouldn't be held liable for their companies' actions.

Last fall, the State of Iowa sued a Washington-state company and its executives for allegedly dumping tons of old wind-turbine blades around Iowa, in violation of the state's solid-waste laws.

The lawsuit alleges that for over seven years, Global Fiberglass Solutions failed to properly dispose of decommissioned wind-turbine blades and stockpiled them at multiple locations in Iowa.

The lawsuit, filed in Iowa District Court for Jasper County, seeks payment of civil penalties and a court injunction to prevent any additional violations of the state's solid-waste laws.

Global Fiberglass Solutions and its CEO, Donald Lilly, are named as defendants in the case, as is Ronald Albrecht, one of Global's corporate officers.

In recent court filings, attorneys for Lilly and Albrecht have argued the two men should be dismissed from the case, saying the court lacks jurisdiction in the matter because the two have never been to Iowa and were not "personally involved in the transactions and conduct" at issue.

In response, lawyers for the state are arguing that one need not set foot in Iowa to be subject to the court's jurisdiction over non-residents. The state claims Lilly and Albrecht managed and directed the activities of Global Fiberglass Solutions and its affiliates, GFS Holding, GFS Trust and GFSI-MHE.

As the two highest-ranking officers of Global Fiberglass Solutions, Lilly and Albrecht "are in a position of responsibility to influence corporate decision making," the state alleges, adding that the two men "could have affected the companies' actions or inactions that led to the violations of Iowa's solid waste laws."

A trial setting conference in the case is scheduled for Jan. 21.

The lawsuit claims that General Electric, which provides parts and equipment for wind turbines, and MidAmerican Energy, which owns wind turbines in Iowa, each hired Global in 2017 to recycle their decommissioned wind-turbine blades.

MidAmerican and General Electric paid Global "millions of dollars," the lawsuit alleges, to cut up, transport, and recycle the blades. Typically, such blades are about 170 feet long and weigh roughly 16 tons.

Rather than recycle the blades, the lawsuit claims Global instead dumped roughly 1,300 of them at four locations around the state: Newton, Atlantic, and a site in Ellsworth that was used to store blades that were originally dumped in Fort Dodge.

In December 2020, the lawsuit alleges, Global agreed to a consent order obligating the company to "take



Global Fiberglass Solutions accumulated about 400 old wind turbine blades near Ellsworth along U.S. Interstate 35. (Photo by Jared Strong/Iowa Capital Dispatch)

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a number of concrete steps to purchase, install, and commence using recycling equipment” to process a certain percentage of the blades according to a series of deadlines.

The company was also required to post a \$2 million surety bond to defray state expenses should the DNR be forced to remove and dispose of the blades because of Global’s lack of compliance with the consent order.

The DNR then agreed to extend the deadline for posting the bond until April 1, 2021.

Global never posted the bond, according to the lawsuit, and so the DNR ordered Global to remove all of the blades scattered at the disposal sites. Global didn’t comply with that order and in July 2021, the matter was referred to the Iowa attorney general’s office for legal action.

The state’s lawsuit against Global was filed in September 2024, three years after that referral. It seeks a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 per day for each day the company was out of compliance with Iowa’s solid-waste laws.

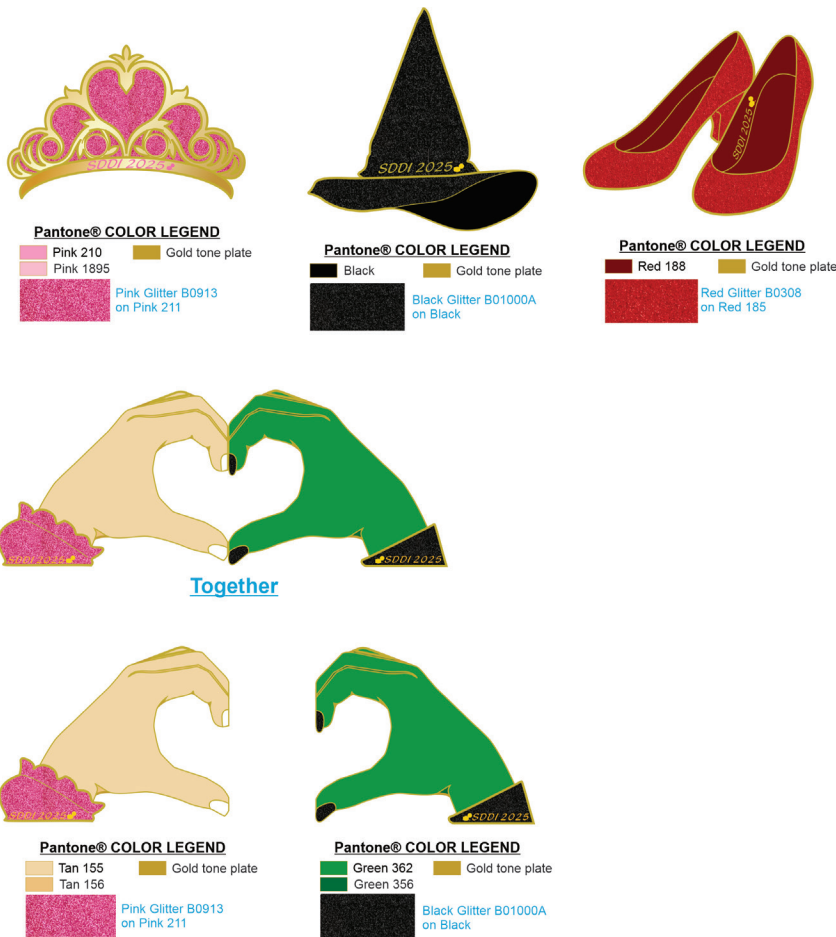
Deputy Editor Clark Kauffman has worked during the past 30 years as both an investigative reporter and editorial writer at two of Iowa’s largest newspapers, the Des Moines Register and the Quad-City Times. He has won numerous state and national awards for reporting and editorial writing.

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SDDI Pins

Five pins are off to production for the South Dakota Destination Imagination. It is hoped they will be available for the regional tournaments. The east river tournament will be held March 22 at Webster, the west river tournament will be held March 15 in Rapid City at St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary, and the State Tournament will be held April 5th in Pierre at the Middle School. Global Finals are May 22-25 in Kansas City.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The divisional round of the playoffs was played this past weekend, and since the Minnesota Vikings' season is over, here is a breakdown of the four games that lead to the Conference Championships.

The divisional round kicked off Saturday, as the defending Super Bowl champion Chiefs welcomed the Houston Texans to Kansas City. Behind QB Patrick Mahomes, and with the help of Taylor Swift's boyfriend and the refs, the Chiefs secured a 23-14 victory. This was Mahomes' seventh season as a starter, and this will be his seventh consecutive AFC Championship appearance. The Chiefs are looking to become the first team in NFL history to win three Super Bowls in a row, and they are two wins away from achieving that feat. The Texans, meanwhile, couldn't stop the Chiefs' pass rush, who sacked QB C.J. Stroud eight times. The Texans have never won a divisional-round playoff game.

Saturday evening, the Detroit Lions hosted the Washington Commanders. This was the first time in their history that the Lions were the top team in the NFC, and according to Vegas, the Commanders were the biggest underdogs in the divisional round. However, thanks to five Detroit turnovers, Washington left Ford Field with a 45-31 win. Midway through the second quarter, a Lions' TD gave them a 14-10 lead, but Washington scored on their next possession and followed that up with a pick-six of Jared Goff to take a 24-14 lead. The 42 points scored in the second quarter are the most scored in a quarter in NFL history.

On Sunday, the Philadelphia Eagles and Los Angeles Rams battled for the chance to face off against the Washington Commanders in the NFC conference championship game. The snow didn't seem to slow down the Eagles' running game, and the Rams appeared to have used up all their feel-good-story points in their win against the Vikings, as Philadelphia came out on top 28-22. Unlike the games on Saturday, however, this game came down to the final minutes. The Rams got the ball back with two minutes left in the fourth quarter, and a touchdown (and successful extra point) would have secured the victory. Unfortunately for Rams fans, Stafford took a sack on third down and threw a wildly inaccurate pass on fourth down, giving the ball back to the Eagles who just had to kneel down to lock in the win.

The Final game of the weekend featured the Baltimore Ravens traveling to Buffalo to battle the Bills, a matchup of the top two candidates for league MVP. This was the best game of the divisional round, as Lamar Jackson and the Ravens got the ball back, down eight points, with three and a half minutes left in the fourth quarter. They drove down the field, going 88 yards on eight plays to score a TD. Still down by two points, Baltimore needed to complete a two-point conversion to tie the game but were unsuccessful. The Bills secured ensuing the onside kick, which secured the victory.

Looking ahead, the conference championship games are set. The first game will kick off at 2 pm Sunday, with the Washington Commanders traveling to Philly to take on the Eagles. Then, at 5:30 pm, Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills will be in Kansas City to take on Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs. The winners of these games will meet two weeks later in the Super Bowl.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Tuition freeze is thawing: Tight budget could drive SD college costs up after years of relief

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 19, 2025 12:00 PM

South Dakota's era of public university tuition freezes is likely coming to an end.

Students have benefited from three consecutive tuition freezes supported by the Legislature. The state Board of Regents absorbed some cost increases during that time and years prior to hold the line on tuition and fees, Executive Director Nathan Lukkes told lawmakers Thursday during a Senate Education Committee at the Capitol in Pierre.

The university system is not requesting any increases to its budget this year, acknowledging the state's lower-than-anticipated revenue. Gov. Kristi Noem proposed cutting the system's funding by roughly \$11 million, including a \$2 million operational cut and a \$9 million cut to the system's building maintenance fund.

"We're hoping not to lose anymore than we have to," Lukkes said.

South Dakota has created a "competitive advantage" with the most affordable college costs compared to surrounding states, Lukkes said, based on the total cost for an in-state undergraduate degree. The total cost in South Dakota increased 5.2% in the last five years, while costs in neighboring states went up by 11.1% or more.

That's primarily due to efforts by the Legislature and the system to keep tuition rates flat, including tuition freezes and work to trim redundancies in the system and cut under-attended classes and programs since 2021.

"It was tough," Lukkes said, "but it was the right thing to do."

Montana has the closest undergraduate costs to South Dakota this year, about \$100 more than a South Dakota in-state degree, but an 18% increase since 2021.

Regental spokeswoman Shuree Mortenson said the system will watch how the fiscal year 2026 budget develops over the legislative session to plan and discuss potential tuition and fee increases for the next school year. That discussion will happen during the board's April meeting.

"We will continue to be mindful of our current and future students and will do our best to minimize any potential increases," Mortenson said in an emailed statement.

Public university enrollment is increasing, due to efforts to recruit in-state and out-of-state students. As the number of college-age students decreases nationwide because of lower population numbers, Lukkes said, universities will have to be "increasingly competitive" to attract students within the state and across the country.

Last fall, Lukkes touted the state's low tuition rate compared to surrounding states to the Government Operations and Audit Committee. But he told lawmakers at the time that South Dakota falls behind once



South Dakota Board of Regents Executive Director Nathan Lukkes presents to the House Education Committee during the 2024 legislative session. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

income-based financial aid programs are factored in. Those programs are more robust in other states.

A 15% increase in funding for South Dakota's Opportunity Scholarship in 2023 and the launch of the Freedom Scholarship in 2022 have helped improve the options for students with lower incomes.

"Even though we've gotten a lot better, we're way behind the competition," Lukkes said at the time.

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

Memphis man recounts teenage days aiding worker's strike during King's last visit to the city

Joe Calhoun launched his activism during the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike, listening to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders in the Civil Rights Movement

BY: HOLLY MCCALL - JANUARY 20, 2025 6:00 AM

MEMPHIS — At the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis one September day, tourists pause solemnly before a group of life-size statues, some crafted in Tennessee National Guard uniforms, others with red and white signs draped around their necks that proclaim, "I Am a Man."

The visitors are of all ages. Some of the older people doubtless remember the genesis of the "I Am a Man" slogan — the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike in which workers wore the signs to point out their humanity in the face of hazardous working conditions.

One man stands apart from the whispering guests. Joe Calhoun needs no videos or displays to remind him of the strike depicted in the museum exhibit.

He lived it.

Calhoun, now 75, assembled the strikers' signs as a teen during the three-week period he worked adjacent to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights icon's final visit to Memphis before he was assassinated on April 4, 1968.



Joe Calhoun, photographed at the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, needs no reminders of the 1968 sanitation workers strike. He lived it. (Photo by John Partipilo for the

Tennessee Lookout)

'I didn't understand the scope'

Calhoun moved with his family to Memphis in 1967. His father was a U.S. Air Force officer and was stationed overseas until Calhoun was 15. Life in Memphis was a culture shock.

"I lived in Memphis towards the end of the Jim Crow laws, but the treatment was still the same," Calhoun said. "There was segregation in stores. Black people could buy clothes but you couldn't try them on."

"It was completely foreign to anything I had experienced," he said. "I came from a very protected and multicultural environment in the military and living out of the country. My background didn't give me what I needed to arm myself."

Just months before Calhoun graduated from Melrose High School in Orange Mound, a Black neighborhood

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on the south side of Memphis, two trash collectors — Echol Cole and Robert Walker — were crushed as they loaded garbage into a malfunctioning truck. The February 1968 incident wasn't the first time workers had been killed in a similarly gruesome fashion, but Memphis officials still refused to replace the faulty equipment.

The deaths of Cole and Walker were the last straw for their fellow workers, most of whom were Black and worked for low pay in filthy and dangerous conditions, treated more like animals than humans, they would say while on strike.

When a call went out for volunteers to assist with the strike, Calhoun saw an opportunity to get involved, assembling the iconic signs with the phrase on them chosen as a statement of the workers' humanity.

"The whole civil rights thing was new to me, and I just thought that what was going on was wrong," Calhoun said. "So when a call went out for high school and college students to help with the strike, I saw an opportunity."

Calhoun said his parents were concerned about him traveling from their home to the staging site of the strike at the Clayborn Temple near Beale Street in the heart of downtown Memphis. The city was tense, a curfew was imposed and the National Guard deployed to keep order.

For three weeks, Calhoun lived in the church attic, listening as King and other national civil rights leaders, like Bayard Rustin, James Bevel, Rev. James Lawson and Stokely Carmichael, planned how to get better conditions and higher pay for the sanitation workers.

"I was in a meeting with them. I got coffee and cigarettes for Rev. King and others. I was a runner for them," Calhoun said. "But I didn't understand the scope of what was happening. You know when you are young, and your teacher tells you to do something, you do it without thinking about the long-term ramifications of what you are doing."

The 1968 strike wasn't the first time workers had tried to gain concessions from Memphis. They had been granted a charter for a local union from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in 1964 and also went on strike in 1966 but failed. King's presence in 1968 drew national attention to the workers' plight, and it was in Memphis the day before his assassination that he gave his last speech, known as "I've Been to the Mountaintop."

Organizers with AFSCME negotiated a deal with Memphis officials to recognize a sanitation workers union, bringing the strike to a close on April 16.

Feet in the movement

King was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel. Just as the Civil Rights Movement didn't die with him, neither did Calhoun cease his activity.

Shortly after King's murder, Calhoun traveled to Washington, D.C., to help fulfill King's plan for a Poor People's Campaign, living in Resurrection City, the 42-day tent encampment on the National Mall.

In 1969, as a member of the Memphis Invaders, a group that fused the organizing strategies of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the more militant Black Panthers, Calhoun participated in 1969's Walk Against Fear from Memphis to Little Rock, Arkansas.

Calhoun had met Invaders leader Lance "Sweet Willie Wine" Watson — he later changed his name to Suhkara A. Yahweh — during the sanitation strike. By the time Watson staged the Walk Against Fear, Calhoun was working for VISTA, a federal anti-poverty program, in Forrest City, Arkansas, Watson's staging point for the march.

During the 135-mile walk, Calhoun and other members of the group faced daily threats of violence from white Arkansans, including, he recalled, from members of the University of Arkansas football team packed into a flatbed truck in Hazen.

Taking a break and finding a new mission

Around 1970, the Invaders disbanded. Calhoun married in 1974, had children and devoted himself to them and his career as a historian.

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His children grew up and moved away.

"After they moved to California, I woke up and thought: now what?" Calhoun said. "Over the last 10 or 12 years, I've gotten reinvolved."

In 2020, after police in Minneapolis killed George Floyd, Calhoun joined a Memphis Black Lives Matters march in protest. He carried a sign that read: "I marched in '68. Marching in 2020." Now, he said, he's updated the sign.

"I changed 2020 to 2021, then 2022, and now I'm changing it to 2025.

"People ask me what is different about marches today and in the '60s. Seventy percent of the marchers in Black Lives Matter marches were not of color," Calhoun said. "Marchers were seeing how people in other parts of the country were treated."

He has mentored Tennessee state Rep. Justin Pearson, the Memphis Democrat who made national news as one of the Tennessee Three when the Republican-dominated Tennessee House expelled Pearson for leading a gun safety rally on the House floor in 2023.

These days, Calhoun serves as operations manager for The Withers Collection, a museum just around the corner from the Lorraine Motel that houses the work of Black photojournalist Ernest Withers. He documented the Civil Rights Movement, and the museum features photos of the significant figures in the movement — including Calhoun.

"Everything I do is for my grandchildren," he said. "It may be selfish, but I want them to live in a better world."

An award-winning columnist, Holly McCall, editor of the Tennessee Lookout, is a fixture in Tennessee media and politics, with decades of experience. She began her journalism career covering City Hall with Suburban News Publications in Columbus, Ohio, and wrote for the Joplin Globe in Missouri and the Nashville Business Journal. She has served as political analyst for WZTV Fox 17 and provided communications consulting for political campaigns at all levels, from city council to presidential. Holly brings a deep wealth of knowledge about Tennessee's political processes and players and likes nothing better than getting into the weeds of how political deals are made.

EARTHTALK



One of the most promising ways to reduce methane is altering cows' diets. Credit: Pexels.com.

Dear EarthTalk: I've heard that cattle cause a large share of global methane emissions that fuel global warming. What can be done besides reducing or eliminating meat consumption? – N.V.

Methane is a greenhouse gas that is 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide (CO₂) when trapping heat in the atmosphere and is responsible for nearly half of the 1.1-degree Celsius increase in global temperatures. The gas is short-lived and gets broken down into CO₂ and water vapor after a decade.

Cattle are ruminants: their stomachs allow them to digest fiber-rich foods like grass and hay. This produces methane, expelled as gas when cattle belch. Every year, a single cow will belch around 220 pounds of methane, which is oxidized to CO₂, absorbed by plants and reintroduced into cows' diets.

One of the most promising ways to reduce methane is altering cows' diets. Methane is primarily produced by the digestion of fiber, so feeding cattle grains and fats like corn and barley may lower methane output. A study led CU Boulder, NIST, and Kansas State University explored this idea, feeding cows sorghum, a more sustainable crop requiring less water and fertilizer. Initial findings reveal minor differences in emissions, but further research will determine if these changes are statistically significant. Another approach, tested by scientists at UC Davis, involved adding one percent red seaweed to cattle feed, which reduced methane emissions by up to 60 percent without affecting milk production.

Another potential solution is genetic selection. Cattle living on the same farm, eating identical amounts of feed, can produce different amounts of methane because of certain genetic traits. Scientists are exploring possibilities of breeding for these traits or breeding cattle with bulls to reduce emissions. Additionally, methane reducing feed additives, which incorporate less than one percent of cattle diets, can interrupt the methane-formation process and reduce emissions. However, certain additives require further approval for animal health. Methane-reducing vaccines are also a viable solution that requires further testing, and are unlikely to be available before the end of the decade.

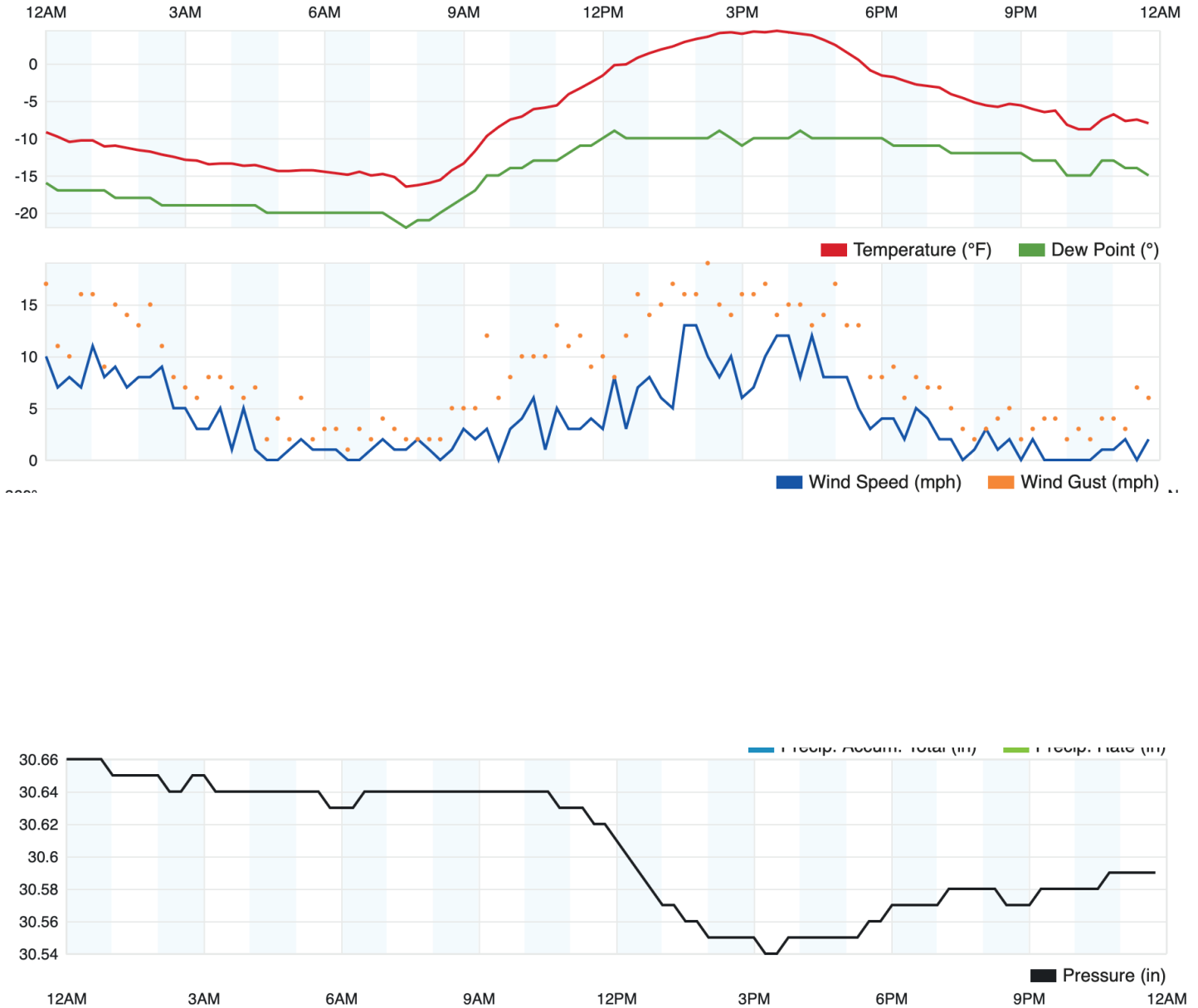
Changing management practices is expensive and many farmers have no economic incentives to adopt such methods. Therefore, many countries and organizations are developing a Payment for Environmental Services (PES) program to financially support these changes. Economists argue that these programs need to be tailored to meet the specific funding needs of farmers across different regions. Emissions intensity varies greatly across different countries based on their income level, with 6-16 times more intense emissions in lower income countries, due to less efficient systems.

Anyone can make a difference by supporting sustainable agriculture, advocating for policy changes, reducing food waste, adopting a plant-based diet and spreading awareness about this issue.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

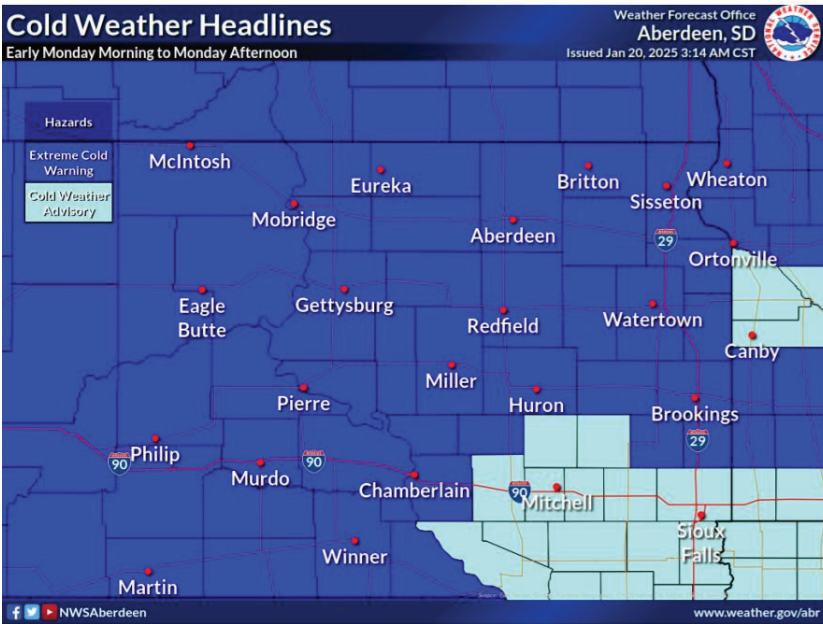


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Cold Weather Advisory					
M.L.King Day	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	
High: -9 °F	Low: -18 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 31 °F	
Chance Flurries and Blustery then Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Chance Snow and Blustery	

Arctic Air Creating Cold Weather Hazards January 20, 2025 4:44 AM



Key Messages

- Very cold, Arctic air in place through early Tuesday morning. Dangerous Wind Chills expected
- **Extreme Cold Warning** over the area through Monday morning
- There are additional **Cold Weather headlines Monday afternoon through Tuesday morning**

NEW What Has Changed

- The Extreme Cold Warning has expanded over Codington, Hamlin, Grant, and Deuel counties through Monday morning

Next Scheduled Update

- Monday Afternoon

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration U.S. Department of Commerce National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Dangerously cold temperatures and wind chills are expected through Tuesday. Cold Weather Advisories are in effect through Tuesday morning with Extreme Cold Warnings over northeastern SD and west central MN through Monday morning.

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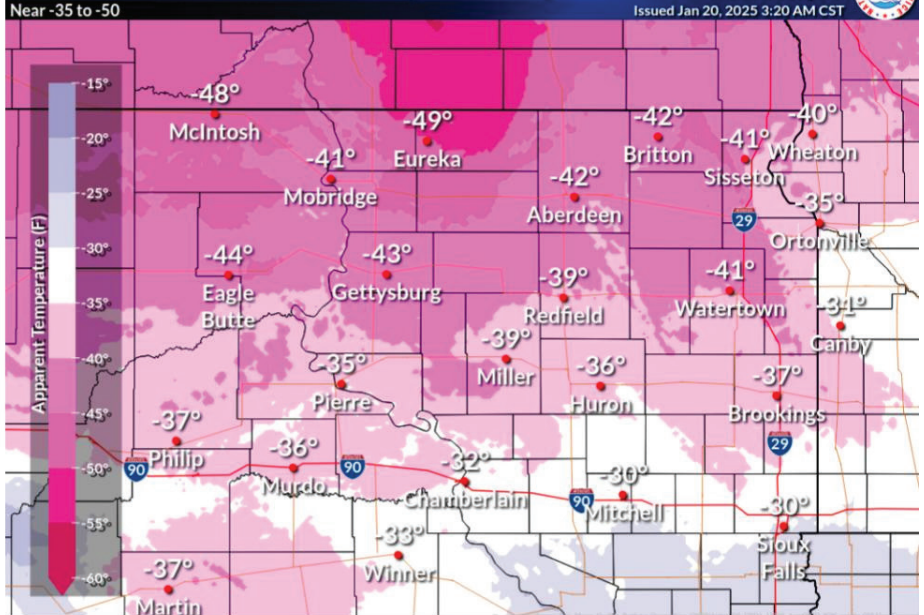
Monday Morning

January 20, 2025
4:44 AM

- **Extreme Cold Warning** for much of the area through Monday Morning
 - Low Temperatures -10 to -20°
 - Winds 5 to 20 mph
 - **Lowest Wind Chills** -35 to near -50°
- Frostbite may occur in fewer than 10-30 minutes to exposed skin



Lowest Wind Chills Monday Morning



Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Jan 20, 2025 3:20 AM CST

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

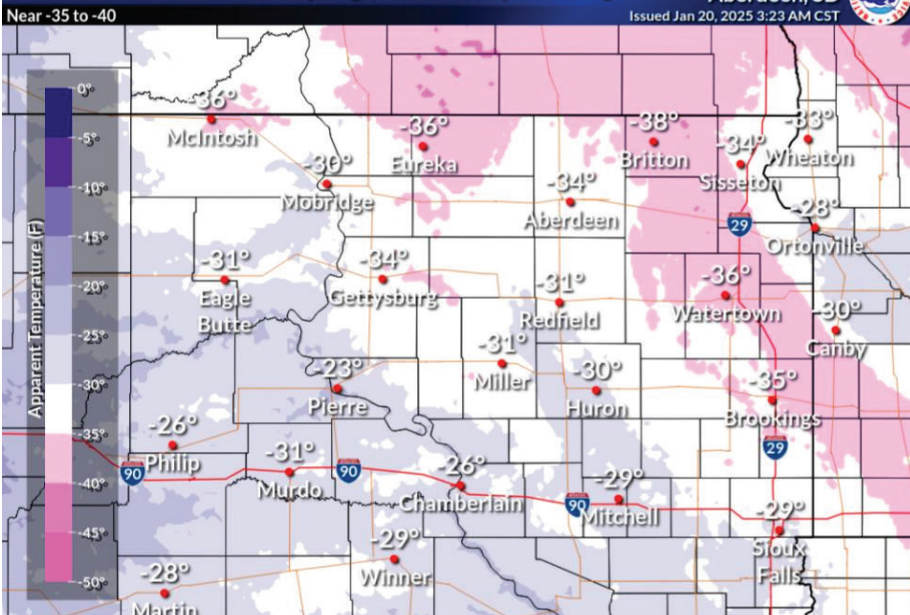
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Monday Night through Tuesday Morning

January 20, 2025
4:55 AM

Lowest Wind Chills Monday Night to Tuesday Morning



- **Extreme Cold Warnings** for far northeast SD and west central MN and **Cold Weather Advisories** for central and northeast SD for Monday night through Tuesday Morning
 - Low Temperatures -15 to -22°
 - Winds 5 to 15 mph
 - **Lowest Wind Chills** -25 to around -40°



- Frostbite may occur in fewer than 10-30 minutes to exposed skin

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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URGENT - WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

300 AM CST Mon Jan 20 2025

Corson-Campbell-McPherson-Brown-Walworth-Edmunds-Dewey-Potter-Faulk-Spink-Clark-Stanley-Sully-Hughes-Hyde-Hand-Jones-Lyman-Buffalo-

Including the cities of McIntosh, Redfield, Highmore, Isabel, Kennebec, Fort Thompson, Ipswich, Onida, Pierre, Aberdeen, Mobridge, Faulkton, Herreid, Eureka, Clark, Murdo, Miller, Fort Pierre, and Gettysburg

**...EXTREME COLD WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL NOON TODAY...
...COLD WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM NOON TODAY TO NOON
TUESDAY...**

* WHAT...For the Extreme Cold Warning, dangerously cold wind chills as low as 46 below. For the Cold Weather Advisory, very cold wind chills as low as 43 below expected.

* WHERE...Portions of central, north central, and northeast South Dakota.

* WHEN...For the Extreme Cold Warning, until noon CST /11 AM MST/ today. For the Cold Weather Advisory, from noon CST /11 AM MST/ today to noon CST /11 AM MST/ Tuesday.

* IMPACTS...The dangerously cold wind chills as low as 45 below zero could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes. Frostbite and hypothermia will occur if unprotected skin is exposed to these temperatures.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Dress in layers including a hat, face mask, and gloves if you must go outside.

Keep pets indoors as much as possible.

Use caution while traveling outside. Wear appropriate clothing, a hat, and gloves.

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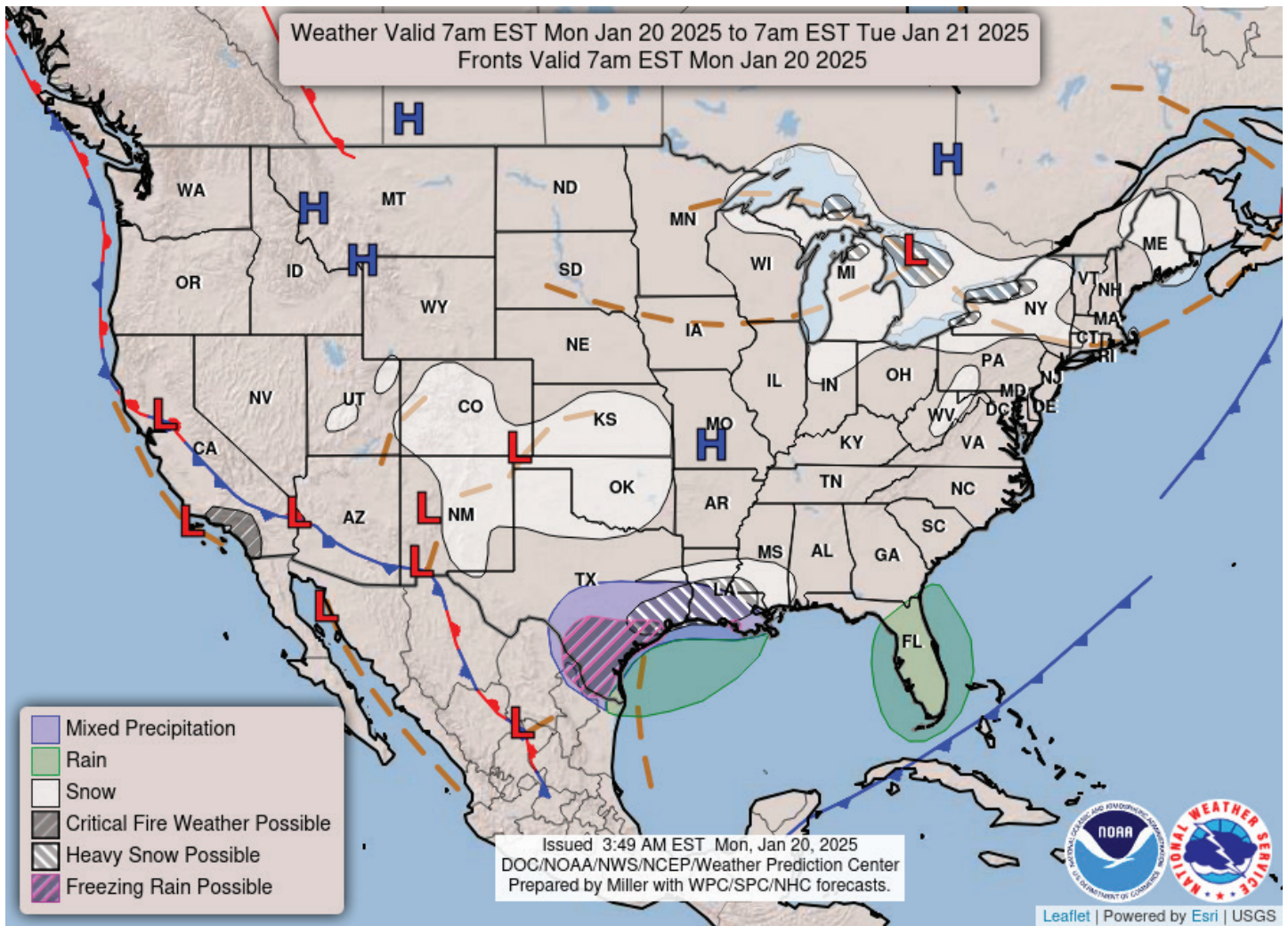
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 5 °F at 3:41 PM
Low Temp: -17 °F at 7:56 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 2:15 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 21 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1944
Record Low: -29 in 1936
Average High: 24
Average Low: 1
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.38
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.38
Precip Year to Date: 21.71
Sunset Tonight: 5:24:13 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02:04 am



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Today in Weather History

January 20, 1944: A late January warm-up occurred on this date in weather history in 1944. Temperatures rose into the upper 50s to the mid-60s across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Overnight lows in the 20s and lower 30s were above the normal highs for the year. Record highs were set at Aberdeen, Kennebec, Sisseton, and Watertown. Watertown rose to 56 degrees, Sisseton rose to 58 degrees, Aberdeen rose to 60 degrees, and Kennebec rose to 65 degrees. Also, Mobridge rose to 57 degrees, and Pierre rose to 61 degrees.

1863: The famous "Mud March" begins in the Fredericksburg area of Virginia.

1883: Yuma, Arizona, sets its all-time record low of 22 degrees. The record is tied in 1911 and again in 1937.

1937: The wettest Inaugural Day of record with 1.77 inches of rain in 24 hours. Temperatures were only in the 30s as Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for his second term.

1943 - Strange vertical antics took place in the Black Hills of South Dakota. While the temperature at Deadwood was a frigid 16 degrees below zero, the town of Lead, just a mile and a half away, but 600 feet higher in elevation, reported a balmy 52 degree reading. (David Ludlum)

1954: Rogers Pass, Montana, plunged to 70 degrees below zero to establish a new record for the lower 48 states.

1978 - A paralyzing "Nor'easter" produced a record 21 inches of snow at Boston, 15 to 20 inches in Rhode Island, and one to two feet of snow in Pennsylvania. Winds along the coast of Connecticut gusted to 70 mph. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds lingered along the northern Atlantic coast in the wake of a holiday weekend storm. High winds along the eastern slopes of the Northern Rockies gusted to 67 mph at Livingston MT, and high winds in southern California gusted to 70 mph near San Bernardino. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the Upper Midwest produced heavy snow and gale force winds. Up to 27.5 inches of snow was reported along the Lake Superior shoreline of Michigan, with 22 inches at Marquette. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The temperature in the Washington D.C. area warmed into the lower 50s for the Presidential Inauguration during the late morning hours, before gusty northwest winds ushered in colder air that afternoon. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - While heavy thunderstorm rains drenched the Central Gulf Coast States, with 4.23 inches reported at Centreville AL in 24 hours, unseasonably warm weather continued across Florida. Five cities in Florida reported record high temperatures for the date. Tampa FL equalled their record high for January of 85 degrees. (National Weather Summary)



LOOKING FOR GOD'S GIFT

A young child ran to his neighbor's workshop in tears. His friend put his strong arm around the small boy's shoulder and asked, "What's wrong, my young friend? Why are you crying?"

"I can't sing and I can't play," sobbed Antonio.

"Well, my little friend," said Amati, "there are many ways of making music. If you have music in your heart, nothing else matters."

Antonio felt better after hearing the comforting words of his friend. And the expression of concern he felt through the hug made him know that someone cared for him deeply. As a result of this kindness, he began to visit with Amati and started to learn the craft of making violins. The day finally arrived when the violins made by Antonio Stradivarius were recognized as the finest violins in the world.

God has a perfect plan for each of us. He wants to take the "raw" gifts He has given us and transform them through His power into deeds of power and glory that reflect His grace.

Though at times it may seem as though we are struggling to find a purpose in life and a way to honor Him, we must always remember that He will never leave us or forsake us as long as we look to Him for guidance.

God wants what is best for us but we will never know what that is until we surrender completely to Him.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to recognize the fact that You have something unique for each of us to do to build Your Kingdom and willingly surrender ourselves to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : Christian brothers, I ask you from my heart to give your bodies to God because of His loving-kindness to us. Let your bodies be a living and holy gift given to God. He is pleased with this kind of gift. This is the true worship that you should give Him. Romans 12:1-2

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: 01.17.25

8 10 37 54 69 22

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 22 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.18.25

16 28 41 47 52 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$22,070,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 37 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.19.25

8 24 35 43 46 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 52 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.18.25

8 11 19 20 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 52 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.18.25

7 34 40 48 57 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.18.25

14 31 35 64 69 23

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 21 Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Millions across the US brace for plummeting temperatures and winter storms

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Residents across the country from the Northern Plains to the tip of Maine are bracing for dangerously low temperatures as tens of millions of residents along the East Coast contend with a thick blanket of snow — and more snowfall in the forecast.

Winter storm warnings issued by the National Weather Service were in effect for parts of the Mid-Atlantic through Monday morning, and warnings began in New England on Sunday afternoon. Heavy lake-effect snow was expected in western New York state Monday through Wednesday morning, with 2 to 3 feet (about 60 to 90 centimeters) possible in some areas including Oswego along Lake Ontario.

Marc Chenard, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland, projected that as many as 70 million residents will be under some kind of winter storm warning in the coming days.

Return of the Arctic blast

Sunday snowfall was just the start of a chaotic week of weather. Much of the Eastern Seaboard will be enduring some of the coldest temperatures this winter.

An area from the Rockies into the Northern Plains will see colder than normal weather over several days, with temperatures forecast to drop to between minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 34 degrees Celsius) to minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 48 degrees Celsius) on Monday. Sub-zero wind chills are forecast to reach as far south as Oklahoma and the Tennessee Valley.

Minnesota residents were urged to wear appropriate clothing and carry a survival kit for travel. Kristi Rollwagen, director of homeland security and emergency management at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, also urged motorists to drive with a full tank of gas and a fully charged cellphone to keep in touch with loved ones.

"It's not something we haven't experienced before, it's just a good reminder that it does get cold in Minnesota," Rollwagen said.

Meanwhile, temperatures in Washington, D.C., are expected to dip into the 20s (about minus 7 C to minus 1 C) with wind gusts upwards of 30 mph (48 kph), Chenard said. The forecast prompted President-elect Donald Trump's inaugural ceremony to be moved inside the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.

Like earlier this month, this latest cold snap comes from a disruption in the polar vortex, the ring of cold air usually trapped about the North Pole.

The cold air will moderate as it moves southward and eastward, but the Central and Eastern U.S. will still experience temperatures in the teens and 20s Monday into Tuesday, Chenard said. The Mid-Atlantic and Northeast also will have highs in the teens and 20s, lows in the single digits and below zero degrees F (minus 18 C), and wind chills below zero.

Unusual mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain

The colder temperatures will dip into the South early this week, where as many as 30 million people starting Monday could see a wintry mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain. The unusual conditions are expected to stretch from Texas into northern Florida and the Carolinas. Impacts are expected starting Monday night in Texas and then spreading across the Gulf Coast and Southeast on Tuesday into Wednesday.

Frigid air combined with a low-pressure system over the Gulf is behind the storm, which could bring heavy snow just south of the Interstate 20 corridor across northern Louisiana and into Mississippi and a mix of snow, sleet, and freezing rain near the Interstate 10 corridor from Houston to Mobile, Alabama.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry on Saturday issued a state of emergency ahead of the severe weather, urging residents to prepare and keep watch on the forecast.

Trump returning to power after unprecedented comeback, emboldened to reshape American institutions

By ZEKE MILLER, CHRIS MEGERIAN and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, will be sworn in as the 47th president on Monday, taking charge as Republicans assume unified control of Washington and set out to reshape the country's institutions.

Trump will act swiftly after the ceremony, with executive orders already prepared for his signature to jumpstart deportations, increase fossil fuel development and reduce civil service protections for government workers, promising that his term will bring about "a brand new day of American strength and prosperity, dignity and pride."

He plans to try to strike a hopeful tone and call for unity, according to excerpts of his prepared speech provided by a Trump official, who insisted on anonymity to preview the speech.

"I return to the presidency confident and optimistic that we are at the start of a thrilling new era of national success," the excerpts say. "A tide of change is sweeping the country."

Frigid weather is rewriting the pageantry of the day. Trump's swearing-in was moved indoors to the Capitol Rotunda — the first time that has happened in 40 years — and the inaugural parade was replaced by an event at a downtown arena. Throngs of Trump supporters who descended on the city to watch the inaugural ceremony on the West Front of the Capitol from the National Mall will be left to find somewhere else to view the festivities.

"God has a plan," said Terry Barber, 46, who drove nonstop from near Augusta, Georgia, to reach Washington. "I'm good with it."

Trump's speech excerpts spell out that he plans to sign a series of "historic executive orders."

"With these actions, we will begin the complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense," they say. "My message to Americans today is that it is time for us to once again act with courage, vigor, and the vitality of history's greatest civilization."

When Trump takes the oath of office at noon, he will realize a political comeback without precedent in American history. Four years ago, he was voted out of the White House during an economic collapse caused by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Trump denied his defeat and tried to cling to power. He directed his supporters to march on the Capitol while lawmakers were certifying the election results, sparking a riot that interrupted the country's tradition of the peaceful transfer of power.

But Trump never lost his grip on the Republican Party and was undeterred by criminal cases and two assassination attempts as he steamrolled rivals and harnessed voters' exasperation with inflation and illegal immigration.

Now Trump will be the first person convicted of a felony — for falsifying business records related to hush money payments — to serve as president. He will pledge to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution from the same spot that was overrun by his supporters on Jan. 6, 2021. He's said that one of his first acts in office will be to pardon many of those who participated in the riot.

Eight years after he first entered the White House as a political newcomer, Trump is far more familiar with the operations of federal government and emboldened to bend it to his vision. He has promised retribution against his political opponents and critics, and placed personal loyalty as a prime qualification for appointments to his administration.

He has pledged to go further and move faster in enacting his agenda than during his first term, and already the country's political, business and technology leaders have realigned themselves to accommodate Trump. Democrats who once formed a "resistance" are now divided over whether to work with Trump or defy him. Billionaires have lined up to meet with Trump as they acknowledge his unrivaled power in Washington and ability to wield the levers of government to help or hurt their interests.

Trump has pledged to bring quick change to the country by curtailing immigration, enacting tariffs on imports and rolling back Democrats' climate and social initiatives.

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Long skeptical of American alliances, his "America First" foreign policy is being watched warily at home and abroad as Russia's invasion of Ukraine will soon enter its third year and a fragile ceasefire appears to be holding in Gaza after more than 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas.

Trump, who spent Saturday and Sunday night at Blair House across from the White House, will begin Monday with a prayer service at St. John's Episcopal Church. Then he and his wife Melania will be greeted at the executive mansion by President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden for the customary tea. It's a stark departure from four years ago, when Trump refused to acknowledge Biden's victory or attend his inauguration.

The two men and their spouses will head to the Capitol in a joint motorcade ahead of the swearing-in.

Vice President-elect JD Vance will be sworn-in first, taking the oath read by Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh on a bible given to him by his great-grandmother. Trump will follow, using both a family bible and the one used by President Abraham Lincoln at his 1861 inauguration as Chief Justice John Roberts administers his oath.

The inaugural festivities began Saturday, when Trump arrived in Washington on a government jet and viewed fireworks at his private golf club in suburban Virginia. On Sunday, he laid a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery and rallied his supporters at Washington's downtown Capital One Arena.

A cadre of billionaires and tech titans who have sought to curry favor with Trump and have donated handsomely to his inaugural festivities, including Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos, will be in attendance.

Also present will be the head of TikTok, the popular Chinese-owned social media app deemed a national security risk by the U.S. Trump has promised to lift an effective ban on TikTok through one of many executive orders expected to be issued on Monday as the new president attempts to show quick progress.

At his Sunday rally, Trump teased dozens of coming executive actions, promising that "by the time the sun sets" on Monday he will have signed executive orders involving border security and immigration policy, including a revival of Trump's first-term effort to shut down access to many new entries under what's called Title 42 emergency provisions.

Others orders are expected to allow more oil and gas drilling by rolling back Biden-era policies on domestic energy production and rescind Biden's recent directive on artificial intelligence.

More changes are planned for the federal workforce. Trump wants to unwind diversity, equity and inclusion programs known as DEI, require employees to come back to the office and lay the groundwork to reduce staff.

"Expect shock and awe," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

"What I've been urging the president, and my colleagues, to do is stay laser-focused on delivering on our promises," Cruz said. "And that's what I expect that we're going to do."

With control of Congress, Republicans are also working alongside the incoming Trump administration on legislation that will further roll back Biden administration policies and institute their own priorities.

"The president is going to come in with a flurry of executive orders," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La. "And we are going to be working alongside the administration and in tandem."

Pope Francis calls Trump's plans of mass deportation of immigrants 'a disgrace'

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis said Donald Trump's plans to impose mass deportations of immigrants would be a "disgrace," as he weighed in on the incoming U.S. president's pledges nearly a decade after calling him "not Christian" for wanting to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border.

Francis made the comments during an appearance at an evening talk show, and then followed up Monday with an official telegram of congratulations to Trump on the day of his inauguration. Francis said he prayed that America would live up to its ideals of being a "land of opportunity and welcome for all."

"It is my hope that under your leadership the American people will prosper and always strive to build a

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more just society, where there is no room for hatred, discrimination or exclusion," he wrote in the telegram.

History's first Latin American pope was asked Sunday night about the Trump administration pledges of deportations during an appearance on a popular Italian talk show, *Che Tempo Che Fa*.

"If true, this will be a disgrace, because it makes the poor wretches who have nothing pay the bill" for the problem, Francis said. "This won't do! This is not the way to solve things. That's not how things are resolved."

Trump, who is being sworn in on Monday, made mass deportations a signature issue of his campaign and has promised a raft of first-day orders to remake immigration policy.

During his first campaign for the presidency, in 2016, Francis was asked about Trump's plans to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Speaking after he celebrated Mass along the border, Francis famously said anyone who builds a wall to keep out migrants is "not Christian."

Many U.S. bishops have firmly opposed Trump's deportation plan, with the incoming archbishop of Washington D.C., Cardinal Robert McElroy, saying such policies were "incompatible with Catholic doctrine." It was a reference to the Biblical call to "welcome the stranger."

Another cardinal close to Francis, Chicago Cardinal Blasé Cupich, said the reports of mass deportations targeting the Chicago area "are not only profoundly disturbing but also wound us deeply."

In a statement delivered from the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City on Sunday, Cupich said governments have the responsibility to protect borders and communities.

"But we also are committed to defending the rights of all people, and protecting their human dignity," according to the text of his statement.

Francis, who grew up in Argentina in a family of Italian immigrants, has long prioritized the plight of migrants and called for governments to welcome, protect and integrate them, within their means. He has said the dignity and rights of migrants trump any national security concerns.

Middle East latest: Released Israeli hostage says she has 'returned to life'

By The Associated Press undefined

One of the Israeli hostages freed on the first day of the Gaza ceasefire said Monday in her first comments since being released that she has "returned to life."

Emily Damari, 28, was one of three hostages freed Sunday after spending 471 days in captivity. Officials at a hospital that received them said their condition was stable.

In an Instagram story, which was shared by Israeli media, Damari thanked her family and the large protest movement that coalesced to advocate for the release of the hostages. "Thank you thank you thank you I'm the happiest in the world," she said.

Damari, a dual Israeli-British citizen, returned from captivity with a bandage on one hand and authorities said she had lost two fingers during Hamas' attack on Oct. 7, 2023. As she arrived to a hospital on Sunday she waved at a crowd that had gathered and footage later showed her joyfully reuniting with her family.

Her mother, Mandy Damari, said in a statement later Monday that Damari was "doing much better than any of us could ever have anticipated."

The three Israeli hostages left Hamas captivity on Sunday and returned to Israel, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jail, leaving both Israelis and Palestinians torn between celebration and trepidation as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold.

Here's the latest:

Israeli soldier killed in the West Bank

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military says a soldier was killed and another was seriously wounded in the West Bank.

The military declined to provide further details. Israeli media reported Monday that the soldiers' vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in the northern West Bank overnight.

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Israel has been battling Palestinian militants in the northern part of the occupied West Bank for years. The violence escalated after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack out of the Gaza Strip ignited the war there.

The deadly blast came hours after a long-awaited ceasefire took hold in Gaza. Israel captured Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want an independent state encompassing all three territories.

Turkey reopens consulate in Aleppo

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey reopened its consulate in Syria's largest city, Aleppo, raising its flag at the building for the first time in 12 years, Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

The opening on Monday comes weeks after the Turkish Embassy resumed its operations in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on Dec. 14.

Turkey had closed down its diplomatic missions in Syria in 2012 due to security concerns amid the civil war, during which Turkey supported forces opposed to the government of former President Bashar Assad.

Prior to the Syria conflict, Aleppo, located some 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the Turkish border, was an important center for trade between Turkey and Syria.

Yemen's Houthis say they'll limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Houthi rebels have signaled they will limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor to only Israeli-affiliated ships as a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip took hold.

The Houthis made the announcement in an email sent to shippers and others on Sunday. The Houthis separately planned a military statement on Monday, likely about the decision.

The Houthis, through their Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center, made the announcement by saying it was "stopping sanctions" on the other vessels it has previously targeted since it started attacks in November 2023.

The Houthis have targeted about 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip started in October 2023, after Hamas' surprise attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage.

Freed Palestinian medical student says her 'joy is limited'

BEITUNIA, West Bank — Bara'a Al-Fuqha, 22, hugged her family as she stepped off the white Red Cross bus and into the sea of cheering Palestinians welcoming the 90 Palestinians freed by Israel early Monday.

A medical student at Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem before her arrest, she had spent around six months in Damon Prison. She said she was held under administrative detention — a policy of indefinite imprisonment without formal charge or trial that Israel almost exclusively uses against Palestinians. Israel says that the cases of Palestinians released as part of the exchange with Hamas for Israeli hostages all relate to state security charges.

Al-Fuqha said her conditions in Israeli prison were "terrible," her access to food and water limited.

"It was like, when we tried to hold our heads high, the guards would do their best to hold us down," she said.

But now, reunited with her family, al-Fuqha displayed a sense of relief and defiance.

"Thank God, I am here with my family, I'm satisfied," she said. "But my joy is limited, because so many among us Palestinians are being tortured and abused. Our people in Gaza are suffering. God willing, we will work to free them, too."

That reflected a wider feeling in the crowd, with many saying this release offered a small, if fleeting, moment of joy, tempered by the 15 months of death and destruction in Gaza.

UN says more than 630 trucks with humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip

JERUSALEM — United Nations humanitarian officials say that more than 630 trucks of humanitarian aid have entered the besieged Gaza Strip, in implementation of the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.

In a post on social media platform X, Tom Fletcher, the United Nations under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs said that over 630 trucks entered Gaza on Sunday, with at least 300 of them bringing humanitarian assistance into the north.

"There is no time to lose," Fletcher wrote. "After 15 months of relentless war, the humanitarian needs

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are staggering.”

The Gaza ceasefire deal, which began Sunday with an initial phase lasting six weeks, calls for the entry into Gaza of 600 trucks carrying humanitarian relief daily. Over the course of the deal's first stage, 33 Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity in Gaza will also be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

Aid workers have been scrambling to address Gaza's dire humanitarian needs after 15 months of devastating war and tough Israeli restrictions on aid deliveries and the movement of convoys within Gaza. Lawlessness and looting by armed gangs has also been a major obstacle to aid distribution.

Before this latest Israel-Hamas war began, Gaza was under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade that allowed the entry of some 500 trucks a day carrying commercial supplies and humanitarian aid.

Hamas says delay in release of Palestinian prisoners the result of a conflict over list of names
JERUSALEM — Hamas' office of prisoner affairs has issued a statement saying the delay in Israel's release of Palestinian prisoners was the result of a last-minute conflict over the names on the list.

Seven hours after three Israeli hostages were released from Hamas captivity in Gaza on Sunday, Palestinian crowds gathered outside Israel's Ofer prison near the West Bank city of Ramallah were still waiting for the release of 90 Palestinians.

The Hamas statement said: "During the process of checking the names of the prisoners being released from Ofer prison, there was found to be one female prisoner missing."

Hamas said that its officials were in communication with mediators and the Red Cross in hopes of pressuring Israel "to adhere to the agreed-upon list of prisoners." It said that the issue was being resolved and it expected the buses of the released prisoners to soon depart.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the delay.

Israeli military fires projectiles and moves journalists awaiting release of Palestinian prisoners

The Israeli military has been firing projectiles and moving journalists waiting to cover the release of Palestinian prisoners as part of the ceasefire that began Sunday. That's according to AP video, which showed smoke trailing from objects landing nearby.

The release of the 90 prisoners will take place in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Nearly seven hours have passed since the first three hostages were released from Gaza shortly after the ceasefire began.

It is now approaching 1 a.m. local time. Israel's military has warned Palestinians against public celebration.

As ceasefire takes hold, Hamas returns 3 Israeli hostages and Israel frees 90 Palestinian prisoners

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY, MELANIE LIDMAN and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — After 15 months of collective grief and anxiety, three Israeli hostages left Hamas captivity and returned to Israel, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jail, leaving both Israelis and Palestinians torn between celebration and trepidation as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold Sunday.

The skies above Gaza and Israel were silent for the first time in over a year, and Palestinians began returning to what was left of the homes they fled across the war-ravaged enclave, started to check on relatives left behind and, in many cases, to bury their dead. After months of tight Israeli restrictions, more than 600 trucks carrying humanitarian aid rolled into the devastated territory.

The ceasefire that went into effect Sunday morning stirred modest hopes for ending the Israel-Hamas war.

But in Israel, the joy of seeing freed hostages Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, and Doron Steinbrecher reunited with their families was tempered by major questions over the fate of the nearly 100 others abducted in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, still in captivity in Gaza.

Damari, Gonen and Steinbrecher were the first among 33 Israeli hostages who are meant to be released in the coming six weeks in a deal that includes a pause in fighting, the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and increased fuel and aid deliveries for Gaza.

What happens after the deal's first phase of 42 days is uncertain. The agreement's subsequent stages call for more releases of hostages and prisoners and a permanent end to the war.

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But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was pressured by the outgoing Biden administration and incoming Trump administration to secure a deal before the president-elect's inauguration Monday in Washington, has said he received assurances from Trump that Israel could continue fighting Hamas if necessary.

On Sunday, many Israelis stayed glued to TV screens all afternoon to glimpse the women being released through the windows of the Red Cross ambulance. Footage showed them thronged by thousands of jostling Palestinians, including Hamas gunmen wearing green headbands, as militants handed them over to the Red Cross on a packed street in Gaza City.

"An entire nation embraces you," Netanyahu said.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right lawmaker who resigned on Sunday from Netanyahu's governing coalition over the ceasefire, said the nation was "happy and excited" for their release.

In videos released by the Israeli government, the women were seen weeping and hugging their family members. Damari raised her bandaged hand in triumph.

The military said she lost two fingers in the Hamas-led militant attack on Oct. 7, 2023, that killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and resulted in the abduction of some 250 others.

Applause erupted among the thousands who gathered to watch the poignant scenes on large screens at Hostages Square, the Tel Aviv plaza where families and supporters of hostages have been protesting weekly to demand a ceasefire deal.

It took another seven hours for such scenes to unfold in the occupied West Bank, where the mood was initially subdued as the Israeli military warned that public celebrations for the released prisoners would be punished.

But scuffles with Israeli security forces and hours of waiting did little to deter the crowds that flooded the streets around 1 a.m., as large white buses carrying 90 Palestinian detainees — all women or teens — exited the gates of Ofer prison, near the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Drivers revved their engines in celebration. Fireworks erupted. Several men climbed on top of the bus and hoisted three Hamas flags. "God is greater!" the crowds shouted.

Many of those released expressed elation tinged with grief for the devastation wrought by the war in Gaza.

A "double feeling" is how the most prominent detainee freed, Khalida Jarrar, 62, described it. Jarrar is a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a secular leftist faction that was involved in attacks against Israel in the 1970s but later scaled back militant activities. Since her arrest in late 2023, she was held under indefinitely renewable administrative detention — a widely criticized practice that Israel uses against Palestinians.

"There's this double feeling we're living in, on the one hand, this feeling of freedom, that we thank everyone for, and on the other hand, this pain, of losing so many Palestinian martyrs," she told The Associated Press.

All of those being released had been detained for what Israel called offenses related to its security, from throwing stones and promoting violence on social media to more serious accusations such as attempted murder.

The next release of hostages and prisoners is due Saturday. In just over two weeks, talks are to begin on the far more challenging second phase of the ceasefire agreement.

'Joy mixed with pain'

In Gaza, there was palpable relief at the prospect of six weeks without fighting and Israeli bombardment that so far has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the fatalities but does not distinguish between civilians and fighters.

The skies above the besieged territory were free of Israeli warplanes for the first day since a weeklong ceasefire in November 2023 that freed over 100 hostages, offering Palestinians a chance to take stock of the devastation.

"This ceasefire was a joy mixed with pain," said Rami Nofal, a displaced man from Gaza City, explaining that his son was killed in an Israeli airstrike.

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Triumphant Hamas militants appeared at some celebrations, as crowds chanted slogans in support of them. The Hamas-run police reemerged from months of hiding.

Some families set off for home on foot, their belongings loaded on donkey carts.

In the southern city of Rafah, residents returned to find massive destruction that they described as a dystopia. Some found human remains in the rubble.

"It's like what you see in a Hollywood horror movie," Mohamed Abu Taha said as he inspected the ruins of his family's home.

Israelis divided over deal

In Israel, the scenes of Hamas gunmen celebrating openly in the streets of Gaza underscored divisions over the ceasefire deal.

Asher Pizem, 35, from the city of Sderot, said the deal had merely postponed Israel's next confrontation with Hamas. He also criticized Israel for allowing aid into Gaza, saying it would contribute to the militant group's revival.

"They will take the time and attack again," he said, looking out over Gaza's smoldering ruins from a small hill in southern Israel with other Israelis gathered to watch as the agreement went into effect. Warplanes roared, helicopters thudded and drones buzzed in the final moments before the ceasefire.

An immense toll

The toll of the war has been staggering, and new details about its scale and impact will emerge.

Israeli forces were pulling back from some areas of Gaza, in line with the ceasefire agreement, residents of northern Gaza reported.

Some 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced. Rebuilding — if the ceasefire leads to the war's end — will take several years at least.

There should be a surge of humanitarian aid, with hundreds of trucks entering Gaza daily, far more than Israel allowed before.

"This is a moment of tremendous hope," U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said. "Fragile, yet vital."

Billionaires' wealth soared in 2024, anti-poverty group says as the elites prepare for another Davos

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Billionaires' wealth grew three times faster in 2024 than the year before, a top anti-poverty group reported on Monday as some of the world's political and financial elite prepared for an annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland.

Oxfam International, in its latest assessment of global inequality timed to the opening of the World Economic Forum meeting, also predicts at least five trillionaires will crop up over the next decade. A year ago, the group forecast that only one trillionaire would appear during that time.

Oxfam's research adds weight to a warning by outgoing President Joe Biden last week of a "dangerous concentration of power in the hands of very few ultra-wealthy people." The group's sharp-edged report, titled "Takers Not Makers," also says the number of people in poverty has barely budged since 1990.

The World Economic Forum expects to host some 3,000 attendees, including business executives, academics, government officials, and civic group leaders at its annual meeting in the Alpine village of Davos.

What's the worry about? ... The 'new aristocracy'

President-elect Donald Trump, who visited Davos twice during his first term and was set to take the oath of office on Monday, is expected to take part in the forum's event by video on Thursday. He has long championed wealth accumulation — including his own — and counts multibillionaire Elon Musk as a top adviser.

"What you're seeing at the moment is a billionaire president taking oaths today, backed by the richest man. So this is pretty much the jewel in the crown of the global oligarchies," Amitabh Behar, executive director of Oxfam International, said in an interview, referring to Trump and Musk.

"It's not about one specific individual. It's the economic system that we have created where the billionaires are now pretty much being able to shape economic policies, social policies, which eventually gives

them more and more profit," he added.

Like Biden's call for making billionaires "begin to pay their fair share" through the U.S. tax code, Oxfam — a global advocacy group — called on governments to tax the richest to reduce inequality and extreme wealth, and to "dismantle the new aristocracy."

The group called for steps like the break-up of monopolies, capping CEO pay, and regulation of corporations to ensure they pay "living wages" to workers.

How are the poorest faring?

Many investors racked up strong gains in 2024, with strong performances for top tech companies and stock-market indexes like the S&P 500, as well as the price of gold and cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Oxfam said billionaire wealth grew by \$2 trillion last year, or roughly \$5.7 billion a day, three-times faster than in 2023. The number of billionaires rose by 204 to 2,769, and the 10 richest men saw their wealth rise nearly \$100 million a day on average, it said.

Citing World Bank data, the group pointed to lingering poverty, saying the number of people living on less than \$6.85 per day has "barely changed" since 1990. Oxfam used Forbes' Real-Time Billionaire List" as of end-November for data on the ultra-rich.

By contrast, at least four new billionaires were "minted" every week in 2024, and three-fifths of billionaire wealth comes from inheritance, monopoly power or "crony connections," it said.

On average, Oxfam said, low- and middle-income countries are spending nearly half their national budgets on debt repayments. It also noted that life expectancy in Africa is just under 64 years of age, compared to over 79 years in Europe.

Will it be business as usual at Davos again this year?

Despite the growing gap between the über rich and the poor, the annual Davos confab, which formally begins on Tuesday, will likely focus this year again on making money and doing deals, with strongman leaders on the rise in some Western countries and progressive causes like diversity and climate change waning in the business world.

The continued rise of artificial intelligence as a tool for business to reap greater efficiencies will also again be a central theme in Davos, despite worries in many sectors that AI could upend many white-collar jobs and displace workers in an array of industries.

Trump's return for a second term will likely be on many lips in Davos, as will lingering conflicts, including wars in Ukraine and Sudan, along with hopes for a continuation of a cease-fire that began on Sunday between Hamas and Israel, pausing their devastating 15-month war in Gaza.

Forum organizers last week issued a survey conducted among 900 experts for "Global Risks Report," which found that conflicts between countries was the top concern, followed by extreme weather, economic confrontation, misinformation and disinformation, and "societal polarization" — a nod to the gap between rich and poor.

As in past years, protesters calling for more economic equality, taxing the rich and pressing other demands took to the streets. Some blocked roads to Davos, snarling traffic in places and delaying trips for some attendees to the event, which runs through Friday.

As Trump returns to the White House, families prepare for mass deportations

By GISELA SALOMON AND SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Parents around Nora Sanidgo's large, rectangular dining table had lunch before signing documents to make the Nicaraguan immigrant a legal guardian of their children, entrusting them to her if they are deported. She gave a list of what to carry with them: birth certificates, medical and school records, immigration documents, her phone number.

"Talk to your children and tell them what can happen, let them have my phone number on hand, let them learn it, let them record it," Sandigo said Sunday.

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For the group at Sandigo's southwest Miami home and for millions in the United States illegally or with temporary legal status, the start of Donald Trump's second term as president on Monday comes with a feeling that their time in the U.S. may end soon. Trump made mass deportations a signature issue of his campaign and has promised a raft of first-day orders to remake immigration policy.

"You don't have to be afraid, you have to be prepared," Sandigo told the group of about 20 people, including small children, who watched a demonstration of how to respond if immigration officers knock on their door. "Take precautions wherever you are."

Sandigo, who came to the U.S. in 1988, has volunteered to be guardian for more than 2,000 children in 15 years, including at least 30 since December. A notary was on hand Sunday.

Erlinda, a single mother from El Salvador who arrived in 2013, signed legal rights to her U.S.-born children, ages 10 and 8. She said she applied for asylum but doesn't know the status of her case.

"I am afraid for my children, that they will live the terror of not seeing their mother for a day, for a month, for a year," said Erlinda, 45, who asked to be identified by first name only due to fears of being detained.

Plans for deportation arrests appeared to be in flux after news leaked of an operation in Chicago this week. Trump's "border czar" Tom Homan said on Fox News Sunday that Chicago was "not off the table, but we're reconsidering when and how we do it." He said the leak raised concerns about officer safety.

So-called sanctuary cities, which limit how local police cooperate with federal immigration authorities, have been a favorite Trump target, especially Chicago. Reports that his initial push would be in the nation's third-largest city brought a new sense of urgency and fear.

Chicago became a sanctuary city in the 1980s and has beefed up policies since, including after Trump first took office in 2017. Last week, the City Council heartily rejected a longshot plan calling for exceptions allowing local police to work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on deportation cases for people accused or convicted of crimes.

The Rev. Homero Sanchez said he didn't realize the depth of fear in the Chicago immigrant community he serves until someone asked him to handle the sale of their family's home and other finances if they are picked up after Trump takes office.

"They feel they have been targeted for who they are. They feel like they're reviving this fear they had eight years ago," said Sanchez, who serves the St. Rita of Cascia Parish on Chicago's South Side. "They're feeling like something is going to happen. This is not their city because of the threat."

Sanchez, whose congregation has consisted mostly of people of Mexican descent since the 1980s, devoted Sunday Mass "to solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters."

Cardinal Blase Cupich, who leads the Archdiocese of Chicago, said reports of the city being targeted by immigration officers were "not only profoundly disturbing but also wound us deeply."

"We are proud of our legacy of immigration that continues in our day to renew the city we love," Cupich said Sunday during a visit to Mexico City, according to a copy of his prepared remarks.

ICE arrests a fraction of targets in its street operations, though Trump is expected to cast a wider net than President Joe Biden, whose focus on picking up people away from the border was largely limited to those with serious criminal histories or who pose a risk to national security.

Biden's administration also ended the practice of mass worksite arrests, which were common under Trump, including a 2019 operation targeting Mississippi chicken plants.

Trump aides have said immigration officers will arrest others, such as spouses or roommates, who are not targets but happen to be in the country illegally.

Poland wants the EU focused on security.

Its border with Belarus highlights the challenges

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

POLOWCE, Poland (AP) — Poland's six-month presidency of the European Union is firmly focused on security. As Europe's biggest land war in decades rages, fewer places highlight the challenges and contradictions of defending the bloc and its values more starkly than the border with Belarus.

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Some 13,000 border guards and soldiers protect around 400 kilometers (250 miles) of border. It's become a buffer zone since Belarus' ally, Russia, invaded neighboring Ukraine three years ago. Similar fortifications farther north line Poland's frontier with the Russian region of Kaliningrad.

Poland is Ukraine's top logistical backer. Most of the Western-supplied arms, ammunition and equipment helping to keep Ukraine's armed forces afloat transit through. Russia, meanwhile, uses Belarus as a staging ground for its invasion.

At the border near the town of Połowce, a 5.5-meter (18-foot) steel barrier strung with razor wire and topped by security cameras separates once-friendly communities that war has turned into wary rivals. Drones, helicopters and armored vehicles keep watch.

The border crossing is closed. Around 40 border guards and troops could be seen on Jan. 16, when the Polish EU presidency invited 60 reporters from international media to witness the security effort.

The road was strewn with layers of concrete obstacles and concertina wire likely to dissuade an advancing army. Border guards peered into Belarus.

It's needed, the government in Warsaw says, because Russia and Belarus are waging a particular kind of hybrid warfare: helping groups of migrants — mostly from Africa or the Middle East — to break through the border to provoke and destabilize Poland and the rest of Europe.

"We have tightened our visa policy, and above all we have decided to suspend the right to asylum wherever we are dealing with mass border crossings organized by Belarus and Russia," Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters on Friday.

When migrants are equated with danger

Almost 30,000 attempted border crossings were spotted last year. Most are young men, often from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Polish authorities say they arrive in Belarus on tourist or student visas and are helped across for a fee ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

Poland says they're assisted by the Belarus security services and other "organizers." They're mostly Ukrainians, perhaps fallen on hard times since fleeing the war. They can earn \$500 for each person they help, border officials say.

Border guards claim to be routinely attacked. One guard was killed last year and several injured.

They say that migrants shoot slingshots, throw small explosives or rocks, or use pepper spray on guards. More than 400 incidents were recorded last year in this section of the border, with 307 people hospitalized.

The deputy commander of the Podlaski border guard division, Col. Andrzej Stasiulewicz, said the migrants are hard to discourage. "Warning shots don't work, so force is needed," he said. Reporters were shown video and photos purported to show migrants assailing the border.

Stasiulewicz said their actions are "very unpredictable, and very precise and coordinated."

Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders paints a different picture. The charity says it's treated more than 400 people since November 2022, "many of them stranded for weeks in uninhabitable forests and exposed to violent practices at the border."

People suffered from exhaustion, hypothermia, dehydration and mental health issues. Last year, it noted "a sharp increase in people carrying the scars of physical assaults, including bruises and dog bites."

It's almost impossible to independently verify such reports. The area is off limits. NGOs and media must apply for a permit to enter. EU and international agencies that work with migrants are not invited either, although migrants are provided with their contact details should they want to complain.

"Turnbacks" not "pushbacks," Poland insists

Stasiulewicz said those who force their way in "are sent back to Belarus, which is in line with our legal framework."

The Norwegian Refugee Council, a migrant aid charity, has another take. It said that nearly 9,000 "violent pushbacks" have been reported by NGOs in what it describes as "Europe's death zone" since 2021.

Pushbacks — depriving someone who may be in fear for their safety of their right to apply for asylum — are illegal under international law.

Polish Undersecretary of State Maciej Duszczczyk rejects the pushback allegations. He prefers "turnbacks."

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The rationale is that migrants are obliged to apply for asylum in good faith at open border points, not force their way in.

The nearest place they can do that is in Terespol, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Połowce.

Halting asylum in the name of security

As far as the Polish authorities are concerned, their methods are working. The number of people arriving in Połowce has dropped significantly. Around 670 people applied for asylum there last year, and none to mid-January. The Office for Foreigners was empty when reporters visited.

To keep numbers down, the government intends to suspend asylum applications in times of crisis.

A draft law winding its way through parliament would see the border shut for 60 days if Warsaw suspects that migrants are being "weaponized" — should they approach the border in large groups, try to intimidate Polish officers or damage border infrastructure.

"If anyone uses violence against the border guards, we close the border," Duszczyk said.

Doctors Without Borders says this could have "dramatic consequences." It's urged Poland "to drastically change course of action" and do all it can to protect migrants and refugees.

But EU leaders signed off on Poland's actions at a summit last month. Countries on Europe's eastern flank received a greenlight to suspend the right to protection when they believe that Belarus and Russia are "weaponizing" migrants.

When security and migration get political

Ultimately, security and migration policies are highly politicized. Tusk has been in power for more than a year but his party's candidate in a presidential election in May faces a strong challenge from a nationalist opponent.

The EU shifted further right in June after elections to the European Parliament, with nationalists and populists shaking Europe's foundations, particularly in major powers France and Germany. Tusk believes that tough migration policy can win back voters.

"If we do not want to hand over these matters to radicals, extremists, populists, we must find the right answers so that no one in the world doubts that democratic states are able to effectively defend themselves against illegal migration," he said on Friday.

He described the "tough protection" of borders as a "sacred duty." Poland's borders also make up the 27-nation EU's external frontier. For Tusk, his country's security is Europe's security. It's a similar argument made by Hungary's staunchly nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán.

Josh Allen scores 2 TDs, Bills force 3 turnovers to beat Ravens 27-25 and reach AFC title game

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Josh Allen heard the "MVP! MVP!" chants directed at him from the stands, but Buffalo's quarterback deflected the credit following the Bills' hard-fought victory in the divisional playoff round.

This season's Bills were thought to be thin on both sides of the ball. And it wasn't one player or one unit that led to Buffalo beating Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens 27-25 on Sunday night, ending its string of three straight losses at this stage of the postseason and moving on to play the two-time defending champion Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC title game next Sunday.

It was everyone.

"What a complete win," Allen said. "All year, this team has heard we've got no talent, we're too small, we can't stop the run, we're not good enough to compete. We've just put our head down and worked hard. I'm so proud of our defense. I'm so proud of our offense and special teams."

Allen rushed for touchdowns of 1 and 4 yards, but he threw for only 127 yards and rushed for 20. Buffalo finished with a modest 273 yards of offense that included rookie Ray Davis scoring on a 1-yard run.

How about that often maligned defense, which gave up 271 yards rushing in a 35-10 loss to Baltimore in Week 4?

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On Sunday, the Bills allowed 176 yards rushing and 416 overall to the Ravens, but compensated by forcing three turnovers.

"We were motivated all week, man," said linebacker Terrel Bernard, who forced and recovered Mark Andrews' fumble to set up Tyler Bass' 21-yard field goal with 3:29 left. "We put a lot of work into it. And to see the results start to pay off right now, I can't say enough about this team."

The Bills made fewer mistakes than the Ravens on a snow-slicked field and hung on when the usually sure-handed and wide-open Andrews dropped a 2-point conversion pass from Jackson, allowing the ball to bounce off his chest with 1:33 left. Jackson connected with a sliding Isaiah Likely for a 24-yard touchdown to give the Ravens a chance to tie it.

Baltimore tried an onside kick and cornerback Rasul Douglas fielded the ball on two hops.

Buffalo closed its season 10-0 at home, including a 30-21 win over the previously unbeaten Chiefs in Week 11. Now the Bills head to Kansas City, where they've been eliminated twice in the past four years — more recently in an unforgettable finish three years ago, when Buffalo blew a three-point lead in the final 13 seconds of regulation and lost 42-36 in overtime.

"We know what they are. They're the perennial of what you want to be in the NFL," Allen said. "You've got to beat them to get past them. So, you know, we're going to enjoy this one tonight."

The Ravens had one of the NFL's most productive offenses in the regular season but fell a win short of reaching the conference title game, which they lost to the Chiefs a year ago. Scrutiny of Jackson's playoff performances will only increase as he fell to 3-5 in the postseason.

"We got to get over this, because we're right there," said Jackson, who dropped to 1-5 when committing a turnover in the playoffs. "I'm tired of being right there. We need to punch in that ticket."

Baltimore fell to 5-8 in the divisional round, including 1-4 in its last five.

Jackson finished 18 of 25 for 254 yards and two touchdowns, including a 16-yarder to Rashod Bateman to cap Baltimore's first possession.

In a showdown of MVP candidates, Jackson lost the turnover battle with an interception and a fumble, while Allen enjoyed his 11th turnover-free game of the season.

"It was uncharacteristic to have turnovers like that. There were opportunities for us to not have those, but we had them," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. "You try to bounce back from them in the course of the game. You can't take them back."

Andrews did not make himself available after his critical drop, but got plenty of support from his teammates.

"One play doesn't define anybody. He's the all-time leading touchdown receiver in Ravens history," safety Kyle Hamilton said. "He's been a consistent beacon of success the whole time he's been here."

The Bills leaned on the complementary football that allowed them to match a franchise record with 13 regular-season wins, become the NFL's first team to score 30 touchdowns passing and rushing, and do so without a receiver gaining 900 yards. Defensively, Buffalo finished the regular season with a league-best plus-24 turnover differential.

"The mindset is what it's all about," coach Sean McDermott said. "These guys believed, played to win, and you find a way, right?"

The Bills limited Derrick Henry to 84 yards rushing and a touchdown on 16 carries after he had a season-high 199 yards in Week 4.

Allen's 1-yard touchdown run with 8:49 left in the second quarter gave the Bills the lead for good at 14-7.

That score was set up by Jackson's fumble. Facing second-and-10 at the Buffalo 28, Jackson first had to secure a high snap. After gaining control, he attempted to scramble forward, only to lose the ball when safety Damar Hamlin grabbed the quarterback by the ankle.

Von Miller scooped up the fumble and was finally chased down at Baltimore's 24.

The Ravens failed on both 2-point conversion attempts, with linebacker Matt Milano batting down Jackson's pass attempt after Henry scored to make it 21-19.

Up next

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The Bills get a rematch of the AFC championship game after the 2020 season, which Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs won 38-24. That Kansas City team lost the Super Bowl to Tom Brady and Tampa Bay.

Trump pledges a series of Day 1 executive actions to end 'four long years of American decline'

By WILL WEISSERT, FATIMA HUSSEIN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump used a raucous rally Sunday on the eve of his inauguration to promise swift Day 1 action remaking the federal government, shifting federal priorities at breakneck speed and ensuring that “the curtain closes on four long years of American decline.”

Supporters filled nearly all of the 20,000-plus-seat Capital One Arena in downtown Washington for a “Make America Great” victory celebration, and cheered as Trump said he’d take quick action on everything from cracking down on the U.S.-Mexico border to promoting oil drilling, reining in the federal workforce and eradicating diversity programs.

“We’re going to give them the best first day, the biggest first week and the most extraordinary first 100 days of any presidency in American history,” said Trump, who also promised to roll back executive actions by his predecessor, outgoing President Joe Biden, “within hours.”

In an unusual move, Trump entered at the arena’s concourse level and deliberately made his way down the stairs before his speech, stopping frequently to pump his fist and pose for pictures with rallygoers. It was even more surreal after he finished speaking, when the Village People took the stage and the president-elect sang — and even briefly danced — along to “YMCA,” an unofficial anthem of his campaign.

Trump said he’d jump start his agenda with a series of unilateral actions from the White House, telling the crowd, “You’re going to see executive orders that are going to make you extremely happy. Lots of them.”

“Tomorrow we will not waste a single moment,” he vowed later to attendees at a dinner reception.

Sunday was Trump’s first full day back in Washington since his Election Day victory and gave him a chance to energize core supporters before the official pomp of Inauguration Day. Unlike when Trump helped spark a mob of his supporters to attack the Capitol and tried to retain power in 2021 after his loss to Biden, officials did not expect massive protests, unrest or violence.

Instead, jubilant crowds reveled in Trump’s coming second term and MAGA’s total control of the Republican Party.

Yet even with a comfortable Electoral College victory and his party in full — albeit narrow — control of Congress, the incoming president is one of the most polarizing figures in U.S. history, with nearly as many fierce detractors as ardent supporters. That means it could be difficult for Trump to fulfill postelection pledges to promote bipartisanship while healing political differences.

Trump has nonetheless insisted that unity will be a theme of his inauguration speech Monday, along with strength and fairness — despite spending months as a candidate saying that if elected he would seek retribution against political enemies.

That was the theme of much of his rally speech Sunday, when Trump returned to the greatest hits of his campaign — as if the race against Vice President Kamala Harris weren’t already long decided. Trump denounced “migrant crime” by evoking one of his favorite fictional characters, Hannibal Lecter, and promised to stamp out “woke” policies and oppose transgender rights.

“Tomorrow, at noon, the curtain closes on four long years of American decline, and we begin a brand new day of American strength and prosperity, dignity and pride,” Trump said, adding, “Once and for all, we’re going to end the reign of a failed and corrupt political establishment in Washington.”

The event also featured a performance by Kid Rock, who performed “All Summer Long” despite a cold mix of rain and snow falling outside. Others taking the stage included singer Lee Greenwood, whose “God Bless the USA” is a Trump favorite.

Billionaire Tesla owner Elon Musk — who Trump has tasked with helping run a special commission to make the federal government more efficient — took the stage and said “we’re looking forward to making

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a lot of changes." Jon Voight, an actor named by Trump as a special ambassador to Hollywood, declared the president-elect "our hero. A man who never gave up on the American people, and we the people never gave up on him."

Stephen Miller, Trump's pick to be deputy chief of staff and a key architect of the administration's promised hard-line immigration policies, vowed that "justice is coming."

"We are about to get our country back and our democracy back," Miller said, adding "Donald J. Trump is about to save this country."

With frigid temperatures expected Monday, Trump directed most of Monday's outdoor events to be moved indoors, and officials held a rehearsal Sunday for his swearing-in in the U.S. Capitol's Rotunda, which holds only 600 people compared to the 250,000-plus guests who had tickets to view the inauguration from around the Capitol grounds.

Also Sunday, Trump had breakfast privately with Republican senators at Blair House, the president's official guest residence, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, and took to his social media site to comment on the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and the U.S. ban on TikTok.

"Hostages starting to come out today!." Trump wrote.

Overnight, millions of U.S. users of TikTok lost the ability to watch videos on the social media platform as a federal ban on the app took effect. Though the site later began working again for some users, the disruptions reflected a new law requiring its China-based parent company, ByteDance, to divest for national security reasons.

The company made a personal appeal to Trump to intervene, posting a message saying, "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office."

Trump subsequently posted, "I'm asking companies not to let TikTok stay dark!" He promised to issue an executive order Monday "to extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security." The president-elect also wrote that he was interested in the U.S. owning 50% of TikTok in a "joint venture" model, though he did not offer much detail on what that would look like.

Another stop for Trump on Sunday were snow-covered graves at Arlington National Cemetery, where he and Vice President-elect JD Vance — each wearing dark overcoats and red ties — walked together to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for a wreath-laying ceremony that included the playing of taps. Trump mouthed "thank you" after placing the wreath.

The pair later spent nearly half an hour in Section 60, the burial site for military personnel killed while fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, talking with families of soldiers who died in the 2021 Kabul airport bombing.

The scene was far different than in August, when two Trump campaign staff members reportedly verbally "abused and pushed" aside a cemetery official who tried to stop them from filming and photographing in Section 60.

Middle East latest: Israel releases 90 Palestinian prisoners after Hamas frees 3 Israeli hostages

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel has freed 90 Palestinian prisoners and detainees. The release came early Monday, more than seven hours after three Israeli hostages released from Hamas captivity in Gaza returned to Israel.

A large bus carrying dozens of Palestinian detainees exited the gates of Israel's Ofer prison, just outside the West Bank city of Ramallah. Israel's military, which occupies the West Bank, warned Palestinians against public celebration, but crowds thronged the buses after they left the prison, some people climbing on top or waving flags, including those of Hamas.

There were fireworks and whistles, and shouts of "God is great." Those released were hoisted onto others' shoulders or embraced.

According to a list provided by the Palestinian Authority's Commission for Prisoners' Affairs, all of those

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released are women or teens, the youngest 15. Israel detained them for what it said were offenses related to Israel's security, from throwing stones to more serious accusations like attempted murder.

The Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel killed some 1,200 people and left some 250 others captive. Nearly 100 hostages remain in Gaza.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed more than 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half the dead.

Here's the latest:

Freed Palestinian medical student says her 'joy is limited'

BEITUNIA, West Bank — Bara'a Al-Fuqha, 22, hugged her family as she stepped off the white Red Cross bus and into the sea of cheering Palestinians welcoming the 90 Palestinians freed by Israel early Monday.

A medical student at Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem before her arrest, she had spent around six months in Damon Prison. She said she was held under administrative detention — a policy of indefinite imprisonment without formal charge or trial that Israel almost exclusively uses against Palestinians. Israel says that the cases of Palestinians released as part of the exchange with Hamas for Israeli hostages all relate to state security charges.

Al-Fuqha said her conditions in Israeli prison were "terrible," her access to food and water limited.

"It was like, when we tried to hold our heads high, the guards would do their best to hold us down," she said.

But now, reunited with her family, al-Fuqha displayed a sense of relief and defiance.

"Thank God, I am here with my family, I'm satisfied," she said. "But my joy is limited, because so many among us Palestinians are being tortured and abused. Our people in Gaza are suffering. God willing, we will work to free them, too."

That reflected a wider feeling in the crowd, with many saying this release offered a small, if fleeting, moment of joy, tempered by the 15 months of death and destruction in Gaza.

UN says more than 630 trucks with humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip

JERUSALEM — United Nations humanitarian officials say that more than 630 trucks of humanitarian aid have entered the besieged Gaza Strip, in implementation of the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.

In a post on social media platform X, Tom Fletcher, the United Nations under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs said that over 630 trucks entered Gaza on Sunday, with at least 300 of them bringing humanitarian assistance into the north.

"There is no time to lose," Fletcher wrote. "After 15 months of relentless war, the humanitarian needs are staggering."

The Gaza ceasefire deal, which began Sunday with an initial phase lasting six weeks, calls for the entry into Gaza of 600 trucks carrying humanitarian relief daily. Over the course of the deal's first stage, 33 Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity in Gaza will also be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

Aid workers have been scrambling to address Gaza's dire humanitarian needs after 15 months of devastating war and tough Israeli restrictions on aid deliveries and the movement of convoys within Gaza. Lawlessness and looting by armed gangs has also been a major obstacle to aid distribution.

Before this latest Israel-Hamas war began, Gaza was under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade that allowed the entry of some 500 trucks a day carrying commercial supplies and humanitarian aid.

Hamas says delay in release of Palestinian prisoners the result of a conflict over list of names

JERUSALEM — Hamas' office of prisoner affairs has issued a statement saying the delay in Israel's release of Palestinian prisoners was the result of a last-minute conflict over the names on the list.

Seven hours after three Israeli hostages were released from Hamas captivity in Gaza on Sunday, Palestinian crowds gathered outside Israel's Ofer prison near the West Bank city of Ramallah were still waiting for the release of 90 Palestinians.

The Hamas statement said: "During the process of checking the names of the prisoners being released

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from Ofer prison, there was found to be one female prisoner missing."

Hamas said that its officials were in communication with mediators and the Red Cross in hopes of pressuring Israel "to adhere to the agreed-upon list of prisoners." It said that the issue was being resolved and it expected the buses of the released prisoners to soon depart.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the delay.

Israeli military fires projectiles and moves journalists awaiting release of Palestinian prisoners

The Israeli military has been firing projectiles and moving journalists waiting to cover the release of Palestinian prisoners as part of the ceasefire that began Sunday. That's according to AP video, which showed smoke trailing from objects landing nearby.

The release of the 90 prisoners will take place in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Nearly seven hours have passed since the first three hostages were released from Gaza shortly after the ceasefire began.

It is now approaching 1 a.m. local time. Israel's military has warned Palestinians against public celebration.

Trump's national security adviser says US will back Israel if Hamas runs afoul of ceasefire deal

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump's incoming national security adviser says the U.S. has assured Israel that if Hamas runs afoul of a Gaza ceasefire deal, "we will be with them."

Michael Waltz said on CNN's "State of the Union" that trust and confidence is why Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "felt comfortable pushing this through his government."

He says the Trump administration will support Israel as it is "going to do what it has to do" to ensure Hamas never rules the Palestinian territory again.

First photos show hostages reuniting with their mothers

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military released the first photos of the hostages reuniting with their mothers at a reception center in southern Israel, before they were flown by helicopter to the hospital.

In the photos, the women embrace their mothers. Merav Leshem Gonen cradled her daughter Romi, beaming. Emily Damari embraced her mother, and in a video call with her brother, showed off a hand where she lost two fingers on Oct. 7. Doron Steinbrecher and her mother Simona embraced in a fierce hug.

The hostages and their mothers have arrived at a hospital in central Israel, where they will reunite with the rest of their family and receive medical treatment. They are expected to stay in the hospital for a number of days. All of the hostages were able to walk under their own power, despite concerns about their conditions.

Outside of the hospital, hundreds of people danced and cheered to welcome the hostages back to Israel.

Israel's ambassador to US credits Trump and degrading of Hamas for ceasefire deal

WASHINGTON — Israel's ambassador to the United States credited President-elect Donald Trump's administration, along with his country's degrading of Hamas, for the ceasefire deal that took effect Sunday.

Ambassador Michael Herzog said Hamas realized they were on their own in their fight and "Trump came into the picture and said he wants a deal," pushing them toward it.

On "Fox News Sunday," he noted the "unprecedented cooperation" between President Joe Biden's team and Trump's envoys.

Going forward, he says he sees "a role for the U.S. and other regional actors to apply and create alternatives to Hamas and stabilize the situation."

Starmer says release of a British-Israeli woman is 'a wonderful news'

LONDON — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has described the release of a British-Israeli woman along with two other hostages Sunday as "wonderful and long-overdue news."

He also cautioned that the world must not forget about those still in captivity by Hamas militants.

Emily Damari, 28, who has dual British and Israeli nationality, was one of the three female hostages freed Sunday. Her mother, Mandy, released a statement of thanks for supporters "who never stopped saying her name."

"After 471 days Emily is finally home," her mother said.

Starmer said despite the news, Sunday "also represents another day of suffering for those who haven't made it home yet."

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"While this ceasefire deal should be welcomed, we must not forget about those who remain in captivity under Hamas," he said. "We must now see the remaining phases of the ceasefire deal implemented in full and on schedule, including the release of those remaining hostages and a surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza."

Father of an Israeli-American hostage grateful to Trump for work on ceasefire

The father of an Israel-American held by Hamas says he's grateful for the incoming Trump administration for its work on getting the ceasefire deal over the finish line.

Jonathan Dekel-Chen, father of hostage Sagui Dekel-Chen, says the outgoing Biden administration "did extraordinary work" on the framework of the deal.

"However, it took a tweet, the subsequent statements from President-elect Trump to get this home," the father said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." "And what we ask of President Trump and his team is to keep their finger on this."

President Joe Biden's top Middle East adviser, Brett McGurk, said Sunday that Sagui Dekel-Chen is one of the two Israeli-American hostages who will be released in the first phase of the ceasefire agreement over the coming weeks.

Biden's Mideast adviser expects 800 trucks of aid into Gaza on Sunday

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's top Middle East adviser says "we have a full ceasefire in effect" and expects 800 trucks of humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza on Sunday.

Brett McGurk helped hammer out a deal in Doha, Qatar, along with President-elect Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and other mediators from Qatar and Egypt.

He noted on CBS' "Face the Nation" that two Israeli-American hostages will come out in the first phase of the deal over the coming weeks.

"We've been working seamlessly with the incoming team. I think this is a testament to President Biden and to President Trump allowing us to work together," he said.

Relatives of hostages overcome with joy

TEL AVIV, Israel — They jumped and clapped, and cried out and wept. Israel's military has released footage of relatives watching the three released hostages meeting military representatives after being released.

The military said the three women had reached the initial reception point in Israel to be reunited with their mothers. They would have an initial medical assessment and go to a hospital.

"This is an exciting day," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement, and told the freed women that "an entire nation embraces you."

AP drone footage shows a devastated landscape in southern Gaza

Drone footage by The Associated Press in the opening hours of the ceasefire in Gaza shows a gray and devastated landscape in the southern city of Khan Younis.

The footage of what had been densely populated neighborhoods shows roofs caved in, shattered buildings and massive support beams holding up nothing at all.

The images also show Palestinians moving on foot on some of the city's streets as people begin to assess the damage without the threat of Israeli fire.

The United Nations has said much of Gaza's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed.

Biden says 'the guns in Gaza have gone silent'

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Joe Biden says "the guns in Gaza have gone silent" under a ceasefire deal he outlined in May.

Biden spoke during a visit to a church in North Charleston, South Carolina.

Speaking of the hostages that were being released under the ceasefire, Biden said he had just received a call saying the three were being released. Although he stressed that it was early and it wasn't immediately clear whether they were out of Gaza, Biden said: "They appear to be in good health."

Biden said it now falls on the Trump administration to help implement the deal.

"I was pleased to have our team speak as one voice in the final days. It was both necessary and effective and unprecedented," Biden said.

"Success is going to require persistence and continuing support for our friends in the region, and the

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belief in diplomacy backed by deterrence," the president said.

Palestinians in the West Bank gather for the expected release of 90 prisoners from Israel
RAMALLAH, West Bank — Families and friends of some of the Palestinians prisoners set to be released from Israel in exchange for hostages in Gaza gathered in Ramallah as cars honked and people waved the Palestinian flag.

About 90 Palestinian prisoners from the West Bank and Jerusalem will be released Sunday after Hamas freed the three Israeli hostages. The Palestinians include 69 women.

Fadia Barghouti was arrested from Ramallah in April and spent three months in prison without being given a reason, she said. Tonight she hopes to see friends she had been detained with.

"I'm happy, because of the ceasefire people can live peacefully," she said.

She said the war in Gaza is evidence that no one in the Middle East can live peacefully until Palestinians have their rights.

3 released hostages are with Israeli forces in Gaza

TEL AVIV, Israel — Three Israeli hostages released from Gaza have been handed over to Israeli forces there in the first test of a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The three hostages are Romi Gonen, 24, kidnapped from the Nova music festival, Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

Later on Sunday, Israel is expected to release around 90 Palestinian prisoners.

A gradual release of 33 captives over the next six weeks has been agreed on. In exchange, Israel will release almost 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and Palestinians from Gaza who have been detained.

Palestinian prisoners set for release include 69 women and youngest is 15

BEIRUT — The 90 Palestinian prisoners set to be released Sunday in exchange for three hostages held by Hamas include 69 women, according to a list provided to The Associated Press.

The youngest is Mahmoud Aliowat, 15.

The prisoners to be released include Khalida Jarrar, 62, a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a leftist faction with an armed group that has carried out attacks on Israelis. New York-based Human Rights Watch said her repeated arrests are part of Israel's wider crackdown on non-violent political opposition.

Dalal Khaseeb, 53, the sister of former Hamas second-in-command Saleh Arouri, is also on the list, which was provided by Hamas. Arouri was killed in an Israeli strike in a southern Beirut suburb in January 2024.

Also listed for release is Abla Abdelrasoul, 68, the wife of detained PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat who killed an Israeli Cabinet minister in 2001 and has been serving a 30-year sentence.

Head of Rafah municipality says the city is a disaster zone

CAIRO — The head of the Rafah municipality in Gaza has told journalists that it has become a "disaster city," with massive destruction there.

Ahmed al-Sufi said Israel's military has destroyed a large part of the infrastructure including water, electricity and road networks, in addition to thousands of homes and public facilities.

"Rafah faces a humanitarian tragedy," he said, as Palestinians across the territory are beginning to discover the scope of the destruction in the first hours of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Macron says France will work on full implementation of the ceasefire

PARIS — President Emmanuel Macron says France intends to work with other nations to ensure "the full implementation" of the Gaza ceasefire.

A statement Sunday from his office said Macron "is delighted that the Israeli Cabinet approved the ceasefire agreement" and that "he warmly thanked the Egyptian, Qatari and American mediators who contributed to it."

His office said Macron spoke Saturday by phone with the families of two French-Israeli hostages still in captivity, Ofer Kalderon and Ohad Yahalomi.

The statement said their families "have been living for 15 months in an anguish that the entire French nation shares. ... Ohad and Ofer are now both on the first list of hostages to be released." Macron has said that the two are on the list of 33 hostages to be released in the first phase of the ceasefire deal.

French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau expressed concerns about the hostages' health.

"I don't know in what condition they will return. We don't know how many are alive or dead and, among the living, in what psychological state we'll find them in. But the hostages will be progressively released. It's a good thing," he told French broadcaster BFMTV.

Trump's national security adviser praises Gaza ceasefire

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump's choice for national security adviser says the Gaza ceasefire deal should be "celebrated."

"We will see three women coming out alive," Michael Waltz, Trump's pick to be his national security, told CBS of the first hostages set to be released. "Had we not entered this, these people would have died."

Waltz said the hostages held by Hamas have been captive longer than U.S. hostages held during the Iranian crisis in 1979, "but now we're going to have a Reagan moment."

That recalled those hostage being freed after 444 days when Ronald Reagan took office in 1981.

"We're going to have President Trump being sworn-in as hostages are coming out alive," Waltz said.

Palestinians trek across rubble to return to their homes as Gaza ceasefire takes hold

By SAMY MAGDY and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Even before the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas was fully in place on Sunday, Palestinians in the war-battered Gaza Strip began to return to the remains of the homes they had evacuated during the 15-month war.

Majida Abu Jarad made quick work of packing the contents of her family's temporary lodging in the sprawling tent city of Muwasi, just north of the strip's southern border with Egypt.

At the start of the war, they were forced to flee their house in Gaza's northern town of Beit Hanoun, where they used to gather around the kitchen table or on the roof on summer evenings amid the scent of roses and jasmine.

The house from those fond memories is gone, and for the past year, Abu Jarad, her husband and their six daughters have trekked the length of the Gaza Strip, following one evacuation order after another by the Israeli military.

Seven times they fled, she said, and each time, their lives became more unrecognizable to them as they crowded with strangers to sleep in a school classroom, searching for water in a vast tent camp or sleeping on the street.

Now the family is preparing to begin the trek home — or to whatever remains of it — and to reunite with relatives who remained in the north.

"As soon as they said that the truce would start on Sunday, we started packing our bags and deciding what we would take, not caring that we would still be living in tents," Abu Jarad said.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 people. Some 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

The Israeli military bombardment that followed the attack has flattened large swaths of Gaza and displaced 1.9 million of its 2.3 million residents.

Over 46,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the fatalities but does not distinguish between civilians and fighters. The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

A long walk home through the devastation of Gaza

Even before the ceasefire officially took effect — and as tank shelling continued overnight and into the morning — many Palestinians began trekking through the wreckage to reach their homes, some on foot and others hauling their belongings on donkey carts.

"They're returning to retrieve their loved ones under the rubble," said Mohamed Mahdi, a displaced

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Palestinian and father of two. He was forced to leave his three-story home in Gaza City's southeastern Zaytoun neighborhood a few months ago.

Mahdi managed to reach his home Sunday morning, walking amid the rubble from western Gaza. On the road he said he saw the Hamas-run police force being deployed to the streets in Gaza City, helping people returning to their homes.

Despite the vast scale of the destruction and uncertain prospects for rebuilding, "people were celebrating," he said. "They started clearing the streets and removing the rubble of their homes. It's a moment they've waited for for 15 months."

Um Saber, a 48-year-old widow and mother of six, returned to her hometown of Beit Lahiya. She asked to be identified only by her honorific, meaning "mother of Saber," out of safety concerns.

Speaking by phone, she said her family had found bodies in the street as they trekked home, some of which appeared to have been lying in the open for weeks.

When they reached Beit Lahiya, they found their home and much of the surrounding area reduced to rubble, she said. Some families immediately began digging through the debris in search of missing loved ones. Others began trying to clear areas where they could set up tents.

A hospital destroyed

Um Saber said she also found the area's Kamal Adwan Hospital "completely destroyed."

"It's no longer a hospital at all," she said. "They destroyed everything."

The hospital has been hit multiple times by Israeli forces waging an offensive in largely isolated northern Gaza against Hamas fighters it says have regrouped.

The military has claimed that Hamas militants operate inside Kamal Adwan, which hospital officials have denied.

In Gaza's southern city of Rafah, residents returned to find massive destruction across the city that was once a hub for displaced families fleeing Israel's bombardment elsewhere. Some found human remains amid the rubble of houses and the streets.

"It's an indescribable scene. It's like you see in a Hollywood horror movie," said Mohamed Abu Taha, a Rafah resident, speaking to The Associated Press as he and his brother were inspecting his family home. "Flattened houses, human remains, skulls and other body parts, in the street and in the rubble."

He shared footage of piles of rubble that he said had been his family's house. "I want to know how they destroyed our home."

Taking advantage of the ceasefire

The families' return to their homes comes amid looming uncertainty about whether the ceasefire deal will bring more than a temporary halt to the fighting, who will govern the enclave and how it will be rebuilt.

Not all families will be able to return home immediately. Under the terms of the deal, returning displaced people will only be able to cross the Netzarim corridor from south to north beginning seven days into the ceasefire.

At that point, the agreement says civilians would be allowed to cross into the north on foot without being searched, while a private company to be agreed upon by Israel and the mediators would search vehicles.

"We hope that the ceasefire will continue (and be) permanent, so that we can return to our homes and our children can return to their schools," Rami Nofal, a displaced man from Gaza City, said from his shelter in the central city of Deir al-Balah.

Those who do return may face a long wait to rebuild their houses.

The United Nations has said that reconstruction could take more than 350 years if Gaza remains under an Israeli blockade. Using satellite data, the United Nations estimated last month that 69% of the structures in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, including more than 245,000 homes. With over 100 trucks working full time, it would take more than 15 years just to clear the rubble away.

But for many families, the immediate relief overrode fears about the future.

"We will remain in a tent, but the difference is that the bleeding will stop, the fear will stop, and we will sleep reassured," Abu Jarad said.

Barkley runs for 78- and 62-yard TDs in the snow and Eagles top Rams 28-22 to head to NFC title game

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Saquon Barkley blew through a hole and ran untouched in the wintry mix, the Eagles' 2,000-yard rusher smacking his helmet with his hand on his final snowy steps of a 78-yard touchdown run.

The Rams had braced for gusty winds and a heightened chance of snow on a trip to Philadelphia.

They were blown over by Barkley.

Barkley waved his arms in celebration as he scampered along the back of the end zone before he slid into the snow — Slide, Eagles, Slide! — in the late-game playoff celebration.

Barkley dashed through the snow for touchdown runs of 78 and 62 yards and finished with 205 yards rushing, Jalen Hurts had a 44-yard scoring run and the Eagles held on against the turnover-happy Rams 28-22 on Sunday to reach the NFC championship game for the second time in three years.

"This is the reason why I came here," Barkley said. "This was the best opportunity to play in a game like this."

Barkley, who left the Giants in free agency to sign a three-year deal for \$26 million guaranteed, ran for a 62-yard score in the first half and stretched the lead in the fourth on the 78-yard score that gave him four touchdowns of 60-plus yards in two games this season against the Rams.

Barkley gave Hurts a little heads up before the snap that a special play was about to develop.

"It was fun, It was a play that I asked for," Barkley said. "It's a beautiful thing when stuff like that happens."

These Philly Snow Birds had cause for celebration -- they will host the NFC championship game Sunday against Washington after the Commanders stunned No. 1 seed Detroit on Saturday.

The Rams kept the upset threat alive — caused in large part by two missed extra points by Philadelphia's Jake Elliott.

Matthew Stafford, who threw for 324 yards with sore ribs, kept the Rams in it with a 4-yard TD pass to Colby Parkinson that made it 28-22. The Rams got the ball back with two minutes left and Stafford completed consecutive passes of 11 and 37 yards to move the ball into Eagles territory.

But Stafford was sacked by Jalen Carter on third down and threw an incomplete pass on fourth down to end the threat.

That came after the Rams suffered from a flurry of fumbles in the fourth quarter, one by running back Kyren Williams that led to a field goal for the Eagles and a strip-sack of Stafford that led to another kick by Elliott to give Philadelphia a 22-15 lead.

The Eagles are set to host the NFC championship game for the fifth time since Lincoln Financial Field opened in 2003.

Eagles defenders frolicked in the winter mess and made snow angels in the end zone to celebrate the turnovers. Some brave frigid fans went shirtless — and yes, even Santa Claus was in the house, without a report of any snowball throwing.

Stadium workers used snow blowers to clear yard lines and hash marks, while Eagles scooped and kicked away snow to clear a circle for Elliott's field goal attempts.

Hurts threw for just 128 yards, his mobility hampered in the second half after he was fitted for a knee brace. He didn't miss any snaps, but was easily mauled on the safety. He was sacked seven times.

Hurts suffered a concussion that cost him in two games in a loss at Washington in December. It was the Eagles' only loss after they returned from the bye with a 2-2 record.

Hurts said he expected to play against the Commanders.

Barkley had 118 total yards at the break, but the Rams' defense — coming off a nine-sack effort against Minnesota — sacked Hurts three times in the half. Hurts was sacked on consecutive plays to end the first half, a total loss of 16 yards that knocked the Eagles out of field goal range.

The Eagles borrowed from the playbook used in their November win in Los Angeles when big plays —

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Barkley had touchdown runs of 70 and 72 yards — helped them cruise to a comfortable win.

Hurts rushed for the longest TD of his career, a 44-yarder on the fifth play of the game that sent a cold crowd still buzzing from the pregame theatrics into a frenzy. Elliott missed an extra point for the second straight playoff game.

After converting a fourth down on the drive, Stafford hit Tyler Higbee for a 4-yard TD that made it 7-6. Only six days earlier, Higbee spit up blood in the playoff win over Minnesota and was taken to the hospital with a chest injury.

Barkley scored on a 62-yard run for a 13-7 lead, but not before the 2,105-yard rusher slowed near the end zone and looked back to clown the trailing Jared Verse. Barkley had his fifth touchdown run of 50-plus yards of the season and was the first player with three TD runs of 60-plus against one team since Baltimore's Jamal Lewis did it against the Browns in 2003.

"Rain, sleet, or snow, he's been able to pound, pound, pound, and then take it off," Hurts said "That was fun. That was cute. Just being able to pop it out first for us."

Verse got trolled by Barkley after the Rams rookie linebacker and Pennsylvania native said he "hates Eagles fans." The first-round draft pick attended high school in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, which is about 100 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Verse egged on fans during pregame warmups and relished the boos that rained him on in the light snow. Once the game started, the Eagles showed on the big screen Verse on the bench and fans booed again.

Verse winked at the camera, stamping his name on the list of Philly sports villains.

"I think I'm up here pretty shocked because I know a lot of people didn't believe we could come in here, but we had the full expectation to come in here," and win, Rams coach Sean McVay said. "I don't think anybody ever really expected the end of the season to be right now and the finality of it is tough for me to swallow."

Injuries

Rams: DE Braden Fiske had a knee injury.

Eagles: CB Quinyon Mitchell suffered a shoulder injury.

Fire-ravaged Southern California braces for gusty winds and heightened wildfire risk

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Southern Californians are bracing for gusty winds and a heightened risk of wildfires, less than two weeks after the outbreak of deadly blazes that have killed at least 27 people and charred thousands of homes.

The National Weather Service has issued a warning of a "particularly dangerous situation" for parts of Los Angeles and Ventura counties from Monday afternoon through Tuesday morning due to low humidity and damaging Santa Ana winds. Gusts could peak at 70 mph (113 kph) along the coast and 100 mph (160 kph) in the mountains and foothills.

Windy weather and single-digit humidity are expected to linger through Thursday, said Rich Thompson, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service. He said the fire risk is also elevated because the region hasn't seen rain since April.

Critical fire weather with wind gusts up to 60 mph (97 kph) was also forecast for Southern California communities stretching to San Diego on Monday and Tuesday, with residents urged to take steps to get ready to evacuate such as creating an emergency kit and keeping cars filled with at least a half tank of gas. A windblown dust and ash advisory was also issued, as high winds could disperse ash from existing fire zones across Southern California.

The warnings come as firefighters continue to battle two major blazes in the Los Angeles area, the Palisades and Eaton fires, which have destroyed more than 14,000 structures since they broke out during fierce winds on Jan. 7. The Palisades fire was 52% contained on Sunday and the Eaton fire 81% contained, according to fire officials.

Firefighters have made progress on the perimeter of the Palisades fire, which has blackened more than

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37 square miles (96 square kilometers) near the Pacific coast, but there are areas in the interior that continue to burn, said Dan Collins, a spokesperson for the Palisades fire incident.

"There is always a possibility in a red flag warning something hot, or some type of burning material from the interior, could be perhaps whipped up and blown across the containment lines," Collins said.

While firefighters are fairly confident the Eaton fire further inland will remain contained, there are concerns a new fire could break out with vegetation especially dry for this time of year, said Carlos Herrera, an Eaton fire spokesperson.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has positioned fire engines, water-dropping aircraft and hand crews across the region to enable a quick response should a new fire break out, according to the governor's office of emergency services.

"This proactive approach has proven to be a critical component of California's wildfire response strategy, reducing response times and containing fires before they escalate," the office said.

Damage estimates have continued to climb for the Palisades and Eaton fires nearly two weeks since they began. Inspectors have fanned out to check buildings and assess damages, but Collins said it is impossible to know whether the remaining structures affected in the Palisades fire are intact.

"Our damage inspection teams have to inspect every structure within the fire perimeter," Collins said. "They're about two-thirds of the way done."

Fire officials said they were focused on repopulating evacuated areas, with residents allowed to return Sunday to the hillside area of Pacific Palisades known as the highlands.

Authorities said two people were arrested Saturday while attempting to enter an evacuation zone for the Palisades fire and are being investigated for impersonating firefighters. The pair were wearing turnout gear and claimed to be from an Oregon fire agency, but they weren't, and the truck they were driving had been bought at auction, the Los Angeles County sheriff's department said in a statement.

Biden urges Americans to 'keep the faith' as he spends final full day as president in South Carolina

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Joe Biden spent his final full day as president Sunday in South Carolina, urging Americans to "keep the faith in a better day to come" and reflecting on the influence of both the civil rights movement and the state itself in his political trajectory.

On the eve of Monday's inauguration of Republican President-elect Donald Trump, Biden delivered a final farewell from a state that holds special meaning after his commanding win in its 2020 Democratic primary set him up to achieve his life's goal of winning election as president.

Biden spoke to the congregation of Royal Missionary Baptist Church about why he entered public service — Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were political heroes, he said. And in a nod to South Carolina Democrats, he said: "I owe you big."

The day before the federal holiday honoring King, the slain civil rights leader, Biden struck a more hopeful tone for the future of the country than his televised farewell address last Wednesday, when he warned about an "oligarchy" of the ultrawealthy taking root and a "tech-industrial complex" impeding the future of democracy.

"We know the struggle to redeeming the soul of this nation is difficult and ongoing," Biden said Sunday. "We must hold on to hope. We must stay engaged. We must always keep the faith in a better day to come."

He added: "I'm not going anywhere" — and the congregation applauded.

Biden later toured the International African American Museum in Charleston which was built on a waterfront site where tens of thousands of enslaved Africans were brought to the U.S. from the late 1760s through 1808.

He spoke about efforts to ensure an administration "that looks like America," pointing to people like Lloyd Austin, who was Biden's secretary of defense and the first Black person in the job. Speaking of his nomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to the Supreme Court, he leaned toward

the microphone and said: "And by the way, she's smarter than those guys."

"We're proving that by remembering our history, we can make history," Biden said.

As he spoke, at a Trump rally back in Washington, speaker after speaker slammed Biden's presidency before the president-elect got on stage, previewing what was to come after Trump takes office.

Before the church service, as hostages started to be released under a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas that the U.S. helped broker, Biden said "the guns in Gaza have gone silent." He noted that in May he had outlined the agreement to halt the fighting.

"Now it falls on the next administration to help implement this deal. I was pleased to have our team speak as one voice in the final days," Biden said, before urging Trump to keep supporting regional allies and using diplomacy to maintain the hard-won deal.

Biden has been dogged by critics who oppose his administration for shipping arms to Israel and say the U.S. didn't push its ally hard enough to ease a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As his motorcade moved through Charleston, a group chanted "Biden is a war criminal" and held a banner saying "Biden's legacy=genocide."

After commenting on the ceasefire, Biden and first lady Jill Biden took their seats in the front pew at the church. At least several hundred congregants sang gospel songs, rising to their feet and swaying and clapping. A choir led the musical selections from behind the pulpit before the program later shifted to focus on King.

Biden was introduced at both stops by Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., a key ally who called the president his "longtime friend." Clyburn cited a number of presidents who were underappreciated in office but were later looked on more fondly. He added Biden to that list.

"So I want to say to you, good friend, very little appreciation has been shown recently but faint not. History will be very kind to you," Clyburn said.

In 2020, Biden saw his campaign flounder after he lost the opening contests in New Hampshire, Iowa and Nevada. But at the fourth stop, South Carolina — where Black voters make up a majority of the Democratic electorate — he was lifted to victory after Clyburn's endorsement.

After taking office, Biden pushed for South Carolina to open the Democratic Party's nominating process for 2024, instead of New Hampshire. He easily won the state's primary last year, but after faltering in a debate against Trump, Biden dropped out of the race under pressure from many Democrats. Notably, Clyburn was not among them.

TikTok restores service for US users based on Trump's promised executive order

By HALELUYA HADERO Associated Press

TikTok restored service to users in the United States on Sunday just hours after the popular video-sharing platform went dark in response to a federal ban, which President-elect Donald Trump said he would try to pause by executive order on his first day in office.

Trump said he planned to issue the order to give TikTok's China-based parent company more time to find an approved buyer before the ban takes full effect. He announced the move on his Truth Social account as millions of U.S. TikTok users awoke to discover they could no longer access the TikTok app or platform.

But by Sunday afternoon, a message greeted those who signed on thanking them — and the president-elect — for their support.

"As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the U.S.!" the message read.

TikTok said it shut down the platform late Saturday because of a federal law that required parent company ByteDance to sell its U.S. operation by Sunday. Google and Apple also removed TikTok from their digital stores. The law, which passed with wide bipartisan support in April, allows for steep fines.

While the company that runs TikTok in the U.S. said on X that the steps Trump outlined Sunday provided "the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties," the TikTok app remained unavailable for download in Apple and Google's app stores.

"It was a brilliant marketing stunt for both TikTok and incoming president Donald Trump," Jasmine Enberg,

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an analyst with market research firm Emarketer, said. "By abruptly shutting off service, TikTok proved how unpopular the ban was among its users."

Why was TikTok banned? What can Trump do about it?

The law that took effect Sunday required ByteDance to cut ties with the platform's U.S. operations due to national security concerns. However, the statute authorized the sitting president to grant a 90-day extension if a viable sale was underway.

Although investors made some offers, ByteDance has said it would not sell. Trump said his order would "extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect" and "confirm that there will be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before my order."

It wasn't immediately clear how Trump's promised action would fare from a legal standpoint since the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld the ban on Friday and the statute came into force the day before Trump's return to the White House. Rep. Mike Gallagher, a Republican from Wisconsin and the bill's author, said on Fox News Sunday that "there is no extension" for TikTok.

"Let me tell you, as the person who wrote the bill, the extension was within the 270-day window, which closed at 12:01 a.m. this morning," he said, adding that only if the president certifies there are "legally binding documents" showing a divestiture is on the way would there be an extension.

"I think Trump can at least make an argument that the language is meant to cover any president," University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias said.

Some lawmakers who voted for the sale-or-ban law, including some of Trump's fellow Republicans, remain in favor of it. Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas warned companies Sunday not to provide TikTok with technical support.

"Any company that hosts, distributes, services, or otherwise facilitates communist-controlled TikTok could face hundreds of billions of dollars of ruinous liability under the law," Cotton wrote on X. "Think about it."

Constitutional and business law attorney Kirk McGill said he thinks Trump lacks the legal authority to suspend the ban but it's unlikely the question would reach a court in the time it might take TikTok to find a buyer.

It's also unlikely that Apple or Google will face legal consequences if they move forward with Trump's demands, given that his administration would have to initiate any prosecutions, McGill said.

"In the next week or two, before the courts have the chance to do anything, this is certainly going to be a political fight, not a legal one," McGill said.

TikTok shuts off — but only temporarily?

The on-and-off availability of TikTok came after the Supreme Court ruled that the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China outweighed concerns about limiting speech by the app or its millions of U.S. users.

When TikTok users in the U.S. tried to watch or post videos on the platform as of Saturday night, they saw a pop-up message under the headline, "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now."

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S.," the message said. "Unfortunately that means you can't use TikTok for now."

The app was removed late Saturday from prominent app stores and remained so as of Sunday afternoon. Apple told customers it also took down other apps developed by ByteDance. They included Lemon8, which some influencers had promoted as a TikTok alternative, the popular video editing app CapCut and photo editor Hpic.

"Apple is obligated to follow the laws in the jurisdictions where it operates," the company said.

Google declined to comment. Apple did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment on the day's developments.

Experts had said the law as written did not require TikTok to take down its platform, only for app stores to remove it. Current users expected to continue to have access to videos until a lack of updates caused the app to stop working.

After TikTok was back online Sunday, content creator Tiffany Watson, 20, said she was "pretty hopeful" it would stay up. At the same time, Watson said her dedication "solely" to the platform declined during

the months the threat of a ban loomed.

"Overall, I hope that creators will succeed and find community in spite of the unpredictability of TikTok," she said.

Will the ban's timing help TikTok?

Trump's plan to spare TikTok on his first day in office reflected the ban's coincidental timing and the unusual mix of political considerations surrounding a social media platform that first gained popularity with often silly videos featuring dances and music clips.

During his first presidential term, Trump in 2020 issued executive orders banning dealings with ByteDance and the owners of the Chinese messaging app WeChat, moves that courts subsequently blocked.

Trump has since credited TikTok with helping him win support from young voters in last year's presidential election. TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to attend Trump's inauguration with a prime seating location.

Trump's choice for national security adviser, Michael Waltz, told CBS News on Sunday that the president-elect discussed TikTok during a weekend call with Chinese President Xi Jinping "and they agreed to work together on this."

The Biden administration has also stressed in recent days that it did not intend to implement or enforce the ban before Trump takes office on Monday.

Who are possible buyers of TikTok?

ByteDance has publicly insisted it would not sell TikTok, and no likely buyer has emerged.

On Saturday, artificial intelligence startup Perplexity AI submitted a proposal to ByteDance to create a new entity that merges Perplexity with TikTok's U.S. business, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Perplexity is not asking to purchase the ByteDance algorithm that feeds TikTok user's videos based on their interests.

In Washington, lawmakers and administration officials have long warned that the algorithm is vulnerable to manipulation by China. To date, the U.S. has not publicly provided evidence of TikTok providing user data to Chinese authorities or tinkering with the algorithm to benefit Chinese interests.

Another unknown is whether Trump will remain a TikTok fan.

"He's flip-flopped on his stance toward TikTok before, and there's no guarantee he won't do so again," EMarketer's Enberg said.

Immigrants in Chicago and other US cities brace for expected Trump deportation arrests

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The Rev. Homero Sanchez said he didn't realize the depth of fear in the Chicago immigrant community he serves until someone asked him to handle the sale of their family's home and other finances if they are picked up this week when President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Immigrants in large cities have been preparing for mass arrests since Trump won election in November, but reports that his initial push would be in the Chicago area has brought a new sense of urgency and fear.

"They feel they have been targeted for who they are. They feel like they're reviving this fear they had eight years ago," said Sanchez of St. Rita of Cascia Parish on Chicago's South Side. "They're feeling like something is going to happen. This is not their city because of the threat."

Sanchez, whose congregation has consisted mostly of people of Mexican descent since the 1980s, devoted Sunday Mass "to solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters."

Some immigrants in the country without legal status have been designating power of attorney to trusted friends, making plans for childcare in case of separations and installing security cameras on their doors in case immigration agents come. Others have left voluntarily, as Trump aides have encouraged them to do.

Plans for deportation arrests are in flux, but federal immigration officers will target more than 300 people with histories of egregious, violent crimes after Trump takes office Monday, one official said Saturday, speaking on condition of anonymity because the plans have not been made public.

The operation will be concentrated in the Chicago area and continue all week, subject to potential weather

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delays, the official said. Temperatures in Chicago dipped to 6 degrees Fahrenheit (-14.4 degrees Celsius) with cold temperatures forecast throughout the week.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrests a fraction of its targets in such operations, though Trump is expected to cast a wider net than President Joe Biden, whose focus on picking up people away from the border was largely limited to those with serious criminal histories or who pose a risk to national security. Biden's administration also ended the practice of mass worksite arrests, which were common under Trump, including a 2019 operation targeting Mississippi chicken plants.

Trump aides have said they will arrest others, such as spouses or roommates, who are not targets but happen to be in the country illegally.

Trump told NBC News on Saturday that mass deportations remain a top priority. He didn't give an exact date or city where they'll start, but he said they would begin soon.

"It'll begin very early, very quickly," he said, adding: "I can't say which cities because things are evolving. And I don't think we want to say what city. You'll see it firsthand."

Sanctuary cities, which limit how local police can cooperate with federal immigration agents, have been one of Trump's favorite targets — especially Chicago.

The nation's third-largest city became a so-called sanctuary city in the 1980s and has beefed up its policies multiple times since, including after Trump first took office in 2017. Last week, the City Council heartily rejected a longshot plan calling for exceptions allowing local police to work with ICE agents on deportation cases for people accused or convicted of crimes.

Trump's incoming so-called "border czar" Tom Homan blasted top Democratic leaders in the state during a visit to the Chicago area last month where he indicated enforcement would start there. But in recent days he told media outlets that plans were evolving.

Homan said on the Fox News program "America's Newsroom" on Sunday that Chicago was still on the table but that the new administration was "reconsidering when and how we do it."

An ICE spokesperson referred questions Sunday to the Trump transition team, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The plan was reported earlier by The Wall Street Journal, which said the operation is expected to begin Tuesday.

Community and religious leaders in Chicago said they were disappointed with the potential operation, but ready.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson said Sunday on X that his "commitment to protecting and supporting this city remains unwavering."

Cardinal Blase Cupich, who leads the Archdiocese of Chicago, spoke out as well.

"The reports being circulated of planned mass deportations targeting the Chicago area are not only profoundly disturbing but also wound us deeply," Cupich said Sunday during a visit to Mexico City, according to a copy of his prepared remarks. "We are proud of our legacy of immigration that continues in our day to renew the city we love."

Immigrant rights advocates in Chicago rallied Saturday, including Democratic U.S. Reps. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia and Delia Ramirez. They urged immigrants in Chicago to remain calm and exercise their rights, particularly to remain silent and refuse to allow officers into their homes without warrants. Some advocacy groups have planned legal workshops anticipating mass arrests next week.

Ramirez planned to skip Monday's inauguration to post flyers in immigrant-heavy Chicago neighborhoods with information on what to do in case of an encounter with immigration agents.

"We won't let our guard down in Chicago," Garcia wrote on X.

Carlos, an immigrant from Mexico, has lived in the Chicago area for decades. The 56-year-old doesn't have legal status to stay in the country but has work authorization in construction and welding. He declined to give his last name and discuss details of his immigration status for fear of being targeted for deportation.

He has three children who have legal status to stay in the country through the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, which remains in legal limbo.

Carlos said the family's contingency planning for deportation includes finding someone to manage their bank accounts, home and car. They've also installed a camera on their suburban Chicago home and plan

to screen all visitors.

"If people come to the house, don't open the door," he explained. "Ask who it is. Don't open it unless they have an order."

Heavy snow and frigid Arctic blast put 70 million across the US under winter storm warnings

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Tens of millions of residents along the East Coast are bracing for several inches of snow Sunday followed by dangerously cold temperatures that will grip much of the country from the Northern Plains to the tip of Maine.

Winter storm warnings issued by the National Weather Service have already gone into effect for parts of the Mid-Atlantic through Monday morning, with the forecast projecting up to a half foot (15 centimeters) of snow. Warnings will begin in New England on Sunday afternoon, with parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and Connecticut seeing as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of snow.

Marc Chenard, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park Maryland, projected that as many as 70 million residents will be under some kind of winter storm warning in the coming days including in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Large cities such as Philadelphia, New York and Boston could see several inches of snow this evening with the highest totals accumulating outside of major cities.

"There will certainly be some more hazardous road conditions anywhere from D.C. up the whole I-95 corridor and then inland from there later today and tonight," Chenard said. "Then it gets quite cold behind that. By Monday morning, any roads that haven't been treated or cleared will still likely be some hazardous travel conditions."

The snowfall was disrupting airline flights along the Eastern Seaboard. Nearly 130 flights at New York City-area airports were canceled and nearly 90 others were delayed, according to the FlightAware flight tracking service. Dozens of flights also were canceled or delayed at airports around Washington, D.C., and Boston.

In New York City, Mayor Eric Adams urged city residents to take the subway and buses if they have to travel during the storm, making the task easier for crews to clear the streets. He said people who need help with heating or frozen pipes can call 311, and he asked residents to check on their neighbors during the frigid weather.

"Cold temperatures, high winds tomorrow, could be dangerous," Adams told reporters on Saturday afternoon. "We have to be here for each other and make sure our pets and other parts of New York are safe."

The weather service said there was a chance of snow showers Sunday afternoon and evening in western New York state, where the Buffalo Bills are hosting the Baltimore Ravens in an NFL playoff game starting at 6:30 p.m.. Heavier, lake-effect snow was expected in that part of the state Monday through Wednesday morning, with 2 feet to 3 feet (about 60 to 90 centimeters) possible in some areas including Oswego along Lake Ontario.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy declared a state emergency for all 21 counties in the Garden State. A winter storm warning was in effect for 10 counties in the northern part of the state, where 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 centimeters) of snow is expected to fall from Sunday afternoon through the late evening.

Cities and towns were opening warming centers for the next several days to protect people from the freezing temperatures.

Return of the Arctic blast

But the snow is just the start of a chaotic week of weather.

Much of the Eastern Seaboard will be enduring some of the coldest temperatures this winter.

An area from the Rockies into the Northern Plains will see colder than normal temperatures over several days with temperatures dropping to minus 30 degrees F (minus 34 degrees C) to minus 55 F (minus 48 C) on Sunday and Monday. Wind chills of minus 40 F (minus 40 C) were already recorded in parts of North Dakota and Minnesota. Sub-zero wind chills are forecast to reach as far south as Oklahoma and

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the Tennessee Valley.

Minnesota residents were urged to wear appropriate clothing and carry a survival kit for travel. Kristi Rollwagen, director of homeland security and emergency management at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, also urged motorists to drive with a full tank of gas and a fully charged cellphone to keep in touch with loved ones.

"It's not something we haven't experienced before, it's just a good reminder that it does get cold in Minnesota," Rollwagen said.

The cold weather forecasted for Monday for Washington, D.C., prompted President-elect Donald Trump's inaugural ceremony to be moved inside the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.

"It's going to be a cold day in Washington, D.C. on Monday. That's for sure," Chenard said, noting temperatures will be in the 20s with wind gust upwards of 30 mph (48 kph).

As happened earlier this month, this latest cold snap comes from a disruption in the polar vortex, the ring of cold air usually trapped about the North Pole.

The cold air will moderate as it moves southward and eastward, but the Central and Eastern U.S. will still experience temperatures in the teens and 20s Monday into Tuesday, Chenard said. The Mid-Atlantic and Northeast also will have highs in the teens and 20s, lows in the single digits and below zero degrees F (minus 18 C) and wind chills below zero.

Unusual mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain

The colder temperatures will dip into the South early this week, where as many as 30 million people starting Monday could see a wintry mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain. The unusual conditions are expected to stretch from Texas into northern Florida and the Carolinas. Impacts are expected starting Monday night in Texas and then spreading across the Gulf Coast and Southeast on Tuesday into Wednesday.

Frigid air combined with a low-pressure system over the Gulf is behind the storm, which could bring heavy snow just south of the Interstate 20 corridor across northern Louisiana and into Mississippi and a mix of snow, sleet, and freezing rain near the Interstate 10 corridor from Houston to Mobile, Alabama.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry on Saturday issued a state of emergency ahead of the severe weather, urging residents to prepare and keep watch on the forecast.

Civil rights leaders and King family mark MLK Day as a special call to action as Trump takes office

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in as president of the United States inside the Capitol's rotunda, he will do so facing a bust of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on the federal holiday commemorating King's legacy.

It's a disquieting contrast for some civil rights advocates who wish to fulfill the late reverend's dream of non-violent social revolution.

Events honoring King and advocating for his vision of a just society will occur across the nation as many in the U.S. observe the peaceful transfer of power in the capital. The concurrent events have been met with mixed feelings by civil rights leaders, who broadly reviled Trump's rhetoric and stances on race and civil rights during his third presidential campaign.

But many leaders, including King's own family, see the juxtaposition as a poignant contrast and a chance to refocus the work of advancing civil rights in a new political era.

"I'm glad it occurred on that day because it gives the United States of America and the world the contrast in pictures. Is this the way you want to go — or is this the way you want to go?" said the Rev. Bernice King, the late King's youngest daughter and CEO of the King Center.

"It's not a day that he can be the star, which he loves to be," King's daughter said of Trump. "He has to contend with that legacy on that day, regardless of how he manages it and handles it in his presentation. I hope those around him are advising him well to honor the day appropriately in his speech."

This is the third time in the nearly 40 years since the federal King holiday became law that it coincides

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with a presidential inauguration. Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama also were sworn in for their second terms on the holiday. Both praised King in their remarks; it is yet to be seen if and how Trump — who falsely claimed his first inauguration had larger crowds than King's March on Washington — will acknowledge the day.

"Will he sound a message of unity and a presidency for all, or will he continue to focus on his base and some of the divisive policies he's championed, like an anti-DEI stance, rounding up immigrants and cutting important parts of the social safety net through this DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) process?" asked Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League civil rights group.

Morial added that Trump's inauguration landing on MLK Day represented "a contradiction of values."

Many civil rights leaders will spend the day commemorating King's legacy after a week of public and private organizing, giving speeches and strategizing how to respond to the incoming administration's agenda.

"It's the best of times and the worst of times," said Derrick Johnson, president of the NAACP, an organization whose members mentored, collaborated and clashed with King throughout the Civil Rights Movement.

"Our mission doesn't change. Our job is to make democracy work for all, to make sure that equal protection is ensured under the law," Johnson said. He added that the group "doesn't want to assume" the Trump administration can't be a partner on advancing civil rights or racial justice.

On Wednesday, Johnson and other civil rights leaders met with Congressional Black Caucus members on Capitol Hill to discuss how to work with and to oppose the Trump administration. That same day, the National Action Network, a civil rights group founded by the Rev. Al Sharpton, hosted a breakfast at which Vice President Kamala Harris urged attendees to stay motivated.

"Ours is a journey," she said. "Whatever the outcome of any particular moment, we can never be defeated. Our spirit can never be defeated, because when that happens, we won't win."

Martin Luther King III, the late King's eldest son, prayed with Harris on stage. King had campaigned for Harris in the fall and called her an advocate who "speaks to our better angels" and "embodies Dr. King's legacy."

Many racial justice advocates are set to organize demonstrations, vigils and community service events to mark the holiday and prepare for what they consider an adversarial administration.

Some groups are reflecting on parallels and differences with how King organized in the face of explicitly white supremacist state and local governments and geopolitical tumult.

"The hostility is similar, particularly in that there is a mobilized, active and aggressive extremist-right hell bent on unraveling rights and any sense of shared purpose, shared problems or shared solutions," said Maya Wiley, CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. What differs, Wiley said, is the understanding "there has to be opportunity for everyone."

King himself worried the legal protections he dedicated his life to realizing would not be followed by greater anti-discrimination efforts or social programs. He proposed it would take white Americans embracing a deeper kinship with Black Americans and engaging in economic and social solidarity to see change.

A year before his 1968 assassination, King wrote in his final book that giving a Black person their "due" often required "special treatment."

"I am aware of the fact that this has been a troublesome concept for many liberals, since it conflicts with their traditional ideal of equal opportunity and equal treatment of people according to their individual merits," King wrote in the 1967 book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community." "But this is a day which demands new thinking and the reevaluation of old concepts."

King's advocacy for "new concepts" found an heir in the enactment of affirmative action policies in workplaces and schools. Many advocates of diversity, equity and inclusion policies see such programs as realizing his vision, though that argument has come under withering scrutiny from conservative activists.

Trump's views on race have been criticized for decades. The federal government sued Trump for allegedly discriminating against Black apartment seekers in the 1970s. He was instrumental in promoting the "birther" conspiracy theory that Obama was not born in the U.S. And his campaign rhetoric about immigrants and urban communities since 2015 up to November's election has been derided as prejudiced.

As president, Trump enacted some criminal justice reform laws that civil rights advocates praised but

then proposed harsh crackdowns on 2020 racial reckoning protests.

In April, Trump did not dispute the notion that "anti-white racism" now represents a greater problem in the U.S. than systemic racism against Black Americans.

"I think there is a definite anti-white feeling in this country and that can't be allowed either," Trump said during an interview with Time magazine.

Janiyah Thomas, a spokesperson for the Trump transition, said Trump's inauguration would be "monumental, turning a new leaf and ushering in the golden age of America" and said Americans should remember "wise words" from King: "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

At the end of his life, King reflected on the early backlash to civil rights, especially with integrated housing developments, interracial marriage and necessary economic and social programs. He expressed frustration with then-President Lyndon B. Johnson for prolonging the Vietnam War rather than making a greater investment in anti-poverty efforts.

"This is where the civil rights movement stands today. We will err and falter as we climb the unfamiliar slopes of steep mountains, but there is no alternative, well-trod, level path," King wrote. "There will be agonizing setbacks along with creative advances. Our consolation is that no one can know the true taste of victory if he has never swallowed defeat."

Why are lone homes left standing after the fires?

It's not entirely luck

By ED DAVEY and INGRID LOBET Associated Press

Emails and videos of burned buildings in Los Angeles next to those left standing have been flying back and forth among architects, builders and fire safety specialists around the world.

For many homeowners, like Enrique Balcazar, the sometimes scattershot nature of the carnage can seem like random chance. Balcazar, a real estate agent, posted video that showed little more than chimneys remaining of most homes on his block after fire leapt through his Altadena neighborhood. Balcazar stood on his neighbor's destroyed classic Mustang to douse his smoldering roof, but his home was otherwise fine.

"It's an older house and it still has the old wood sidings," Balcazar said. "To me there's nothing explainable in logical or scientific reason of why my house would not have burned."

Many experts say luck does play a part. After all, wind can shift 180 degrees in a split second, pushing fire away from your house and towards a neighbor's. But they also say there are many ways that homes can be made less vulnerable to fire.

"Because there are, say, 50 ways a fire can burn your house," said Greg Faulkner of Faulkner Architects in California, who has focused on less combustible home exteriors for more than a decade. "If you eliminate half of those, or three-quarters of them, that's not luck, that's increasing your odds."

People in fire country generally know that trees, landscaping and wood fences near homes can be a fire risk. Architects and contractors are going beyond that, using newer materials and techniques in roofing, walls and windows to keep buildings standing. The measures do add cost to the homes — around 3% to 6%, Faulkner said, or as much as 10% for the most robust protection.

Many of these experts no longer use wood siding. Where it is used, or still allowed, it needs to have a fire-resistant barrier underneath, often made of gypsum, the same material used to make drywall. That way if the wood catches fire, it takes longer for the heat to reach inside the home

But even with that, you're still putting a combustible material on the building, said Richard Schuh, with Nielsen : Schuh Architects. "So that would be something we would avoid. Use of fire-resistant materials is critical."

Stucco, a cement material, is a common exterior for Southern California houses and it's fire-resistant. Reviewing AP photographs showing buildings still standing, Arnold Tarling, who has four decades experience in fire protection and building inspection in Britain, said houses with stucco walls appeared to survive the Los Angeles fires better. Yet if more of them had had a layer of gypsum beneath the stucco, it would

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have given more protection from the heat, he said.

Windows are a huge factor in whether a home burns down, because so much heat is transmitted through them. Double-pane windows significantly slow heat coming from the burning building next door.

"The outside layer protects the inside layer until it fails," said Schuh. Codes in many places require one of the two panes to be tempered, which is much more resistant to heat than conventional glass, he said.

Tarling noted one intact Malibu beachfront home, surrounded by gutted buildings. He speculated that the fact that no windows faced a neighbor helped protect it because radiated heat couldn't penetrate as easily.

In his buildings, Faulkner builds in fire shutters that can slide closed and cover the windows.

Then there's the roof — a convenient landing pad for fire embers.

Simpler roof lines can allow red-hot embers to slide off. Spanish Mission, for example, is an iconic Los Angeles style — part of what says "Hollywood" in movies about the city, for example, as well as a reminder of its Mexican and Spanish history. That style doesn't always have simple roof lines — the knee walls that are common on Mission-style roofs create corners.

"The embers could, just like snow, gather in that corner," Faulkner said.

Many roofs in the U.S. are covered in asphalt. Areas that are designated as wildfire-prone in California — an ever-growing area — are required to use roofing that delays the transfer of heat to the inside of the building, called one-hour or Class A.

Still, asphalt is a petroleum product. Some building professionals prefer metal, which doesn't burn. Metal has its own downside, though: It conducts heat. Putting a layer of gypsum under a metal roof is becoming a common practice in some areas.

Maybe as important as which material is used on a roof is whether the roof offers fire a way to get in. Here, as in so many tradeoffs, one effort to do good conflicts with another: Contractors have been more careful over the years to make sure moisture doesn't build up in attics by making sure air circulates, using those vents that are visible on many roofs or under eaves.

But in a powerful fire, Schuh says, "if you're on the side where the wind is putting pressure against the house, it's also blowing the flames into the house like a blow torch," and fire gets in through the vents.

On the other side of the house, it can create a vacuum, several experts said, sucking fire in.

But you can't easily just eliminate roof ventilation because it will cause moisture problems, said Cesar Martin Gomez, an architect at the University of Navarra, Spain, who's worked for 25 years in building services.

Faulkner said in some buildings he's eliminating the need for ventilation in the roof structure by sealing the spaces. Schuh is using a cover on roof vents that can actually respond to fire with a mesh that closes.

Martin Gomez noted that in some parts of Australia, new homes are required to have water tanks. "If each home has the ability to protect itself, fire won't be able to spread as much," he said.

And some homes in the U.S. are now built with sprinkler systems for the outside of the house, not just the inside. It sprays water with a soapy solution to make it flow over the surface of the building, Schuh said.

"You're adding one more layer of protection to your building, and that's more of a priority now than ever because your insurance company may or not be around for you," he said.

Today in History: January 20

American hostages released from Iran after 444 days

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Jan. 20, the 20th day of 2025. There are 345 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 20, 1981, Iran released 52 Americans it had held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan.

Also on this date:

In 1841, the island of Hong Kong was ceded by China to Great Britain. It returned to Chinese control in

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July 1997.

In 1936, Britain's King George V died after his physician injected the mortally ill monarch with morphine and cocaine to hasten his death. The king was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII, who abdicated the throne 11 months later to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for his second term as president, becoming the first chief executive to be inaugurated on Jan. 20; prior to the adoption of the 20th Amendment in 1933, presidential terms began on March 4.

In 1961, in his inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy urged Americans, "ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

In 1986, the United States observed the first federal holiday in honor of killed civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

In 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation's first Black president.

In 2011, federal authorities orchestrated one of the biggest Mafia takedowns in FBI history, charging 127 suspected mobsters and associates in the Northeast with murders, extortion and other crimes spanning decades.

In 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States, as protesters registered their rage against the new president in a chaotic confrontation with police just blocks from the inaugural parade.

Today's birthdays: Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin is 95. Olympic figure skating gold medalist Carol Heiss Jenkins is 85. Film director David Lynch is 79. Rock musician Paul Stanley (KISS) is 73. Comedian Bill Maher is 69. Olympic swimming gold medalist John Naber is 69. Country singer John Michael Montgomery is 60. Actor Rainn Wilson is 59. Political consultant Kellyanne Conway is 58. Actor Skeet Ulrich is 55. Musician Questlove (The Roots) is 54. Politician Nikki Haley is 53. Country singer Brantley Gilbert is 40.